

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Minutes of Meeting No. 913 held "in committee" in the Council Chamber, Borough Offices, Riada House, Ballymoney, on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010 at 2.00 p.m.

**In the Chair:** Mayor, Alderman Frank Campbell

**Present:** **Aldermen:**  
C Cousley MBE (Deputy Mayor)  
H Connolly  
J Simpson

**Councillors:**  
A Cavlan  
J Finlay  
B Kennedy  
R Halliday  
M McCamphill  
A Patterson  
E Robinson  
I Stevenson

**Apologies** **Councillors:**  
P McGuigan  
D McKay, MLA  
M Storey, MLA

**913.1 RATE ESTIMATE 2010-2011****Introduction:**

The Chief Executive referred to Version 4 of the Rates Estimates book, dated 11<sup>th</sup> January 2010, and advised that it has a domestic rate increase of 13%, against a target of no greater than 5%. He and his colleagues had worked hard to make savings from the 22% figure in the last book considered by members. He explained that Council face several very large inescapable increases in budget due to factors such as: the need to rebuild reserves; provide for landfill site closure; extra landfill tax; and salaries and wages increases. Smaller but significant increases are needed for building maintenance, rates, energy and utilities.

He indicated that the task of getting to 5% is huge. It requires a further reduction of almost £400k from the figures in the book (v.4). This would not be achieved by tinkering – by cutting £100s here or even £500s there and cannot be achieved without making major cuts to existing services. Since those decisions need to be taken by Council, possible service savings options,

which had been costed were set them out on separate sheets, circulated, to be presented later in the meeting by each of the Directors and himself and the consequences explained. Work is continuing within Borough Services Directorate to produce options for possible savings in Amenities budgets. Further options for cutting services and reducing costs across the board will be produced. The Chief Executive stated that if all the costed proposals set out in the paper circulated were accepted and all the voluntary contributions currently made by Council, details circulated, were removed, around £170k of extra savings still needs to be found. Referring to the work to be done the Chief Executive commented: "I cannot overstate the scale of the task."

The Chief Executive suggested that Council first consider the Rates book and the associated paper detailing the main budget increases in the rates book (v.4) The Director of Central and Leisure Services will present that and members will have the opportunity to ask questions or make suggestions for management to consider. After that he suggested that members consider the options paper setting out costed proposals for further savings identified by the two directors and himself, each officer dealing with those relating to his/her services. A table detailing contributions council make to external bodies, totaling around £132k, which equates to 2.66% on the rate, was circulated.

Concluding the Chief Executive stated that in order to produce the next version of the rates book management need to know which options are agreed and which are rejected by Council. The Corporate Management Team is meeting tomorrow (12/1/2010) to consider the scale of further reductions needed, based on the decisions made by Council at this meeting. He believed that Council will need two more meetings before the rate can be struck.

- **During the Chief Executive's introduction the following members joined the meeting: Councillor Kennedy, Councillor McCamphill and Councillor Halliday, at 2.08 p.m., Councillor Stevenson at 2.10 p.m.**

The Chief Executive and Directors responded to questions by members. Included in the matters which engaged members attention were – financial provision for landfill closure and consequences for non-provision; requirement for contingency to build up reserves; adjusted reserve position in year end accounts @ 31.3.2009; capital fund ringfenced for specific purposes and additional vacant property income of £100,000 in 2009/10.

#### **Proposed Budget Increases:**

The Director of Central and Leisure Services presented paper, circulated, with summary of proposed budget increases, covering contingency to build reserves, bank interest, landfill site closure provision, salaries & wages, services budget increases and capital projects, totaling £645,644 (13.04%). She dealt in detail with the material budget increases per service and the 4 no. projects included in the capital programme – The Robert Dunlop Memorial Garden, Riverside Park Paths upgrade; grave shoring system and IT equipment for the Leisure Centre, total cost £424,500, with loan charges of £32,896 in the incoming year.

Issues arising which engaged members attention included: policy for provision of Christmas Trees in villages; maintenance contracts re. Council's estate; landfill tax, tonnage figures and haulage costs; advice services – level of provision, contribution and accommodation costs; costs for use of accommodation and facilities and provision of services granted to events and organizations in addition to financial contributions.

- **The following members retired from the meeting during discussion on this matter – Councillor Halliday – 3.45 p.m.; Councillor Patterson – 4.00 p.m.; Councillor Kennedy – 4.10 p.m.; Alderman Cousley – 4.20 p.m.; Alderman Connolly – 4.35 p.m.**

### **Services delivered during severe weather conditions**

Councillor Finlay led tributes to refuse collection squads and other outdoor staff for the dedicated service delivered in very severe weather conditions. Other members associated themselves with these comments. In response the Chief Executive on behalf of staff thanked the members for their kind remarks, commenting that no staff had been off on Friday despite the worsening conditions and this was great credit to staff, particularly those working outdoors.

### **Contributions to External Bodies**

A schedule of contributions to external bodies in 2009-10, including the additional in-year contributions approved by Council and others identified for consideration in the year 2010-11 was circulated. The Chief Executive indicated that the total voluntary contributions, discounting those to statutory bodies, contractual commitments and the specified bodies contributions deducted by DOE from general grant, were £132,070 (revised to £123,070 taking account of grant of £9,000 from DSD for advice services). Members opted to defer consideration of the contributions schedule at this stage. *Members are asked to note that the North Antrim Community Network has submitted an application for funding of £3,000 for the year 2010/11.*

### **Adjournment of meeting**

**The meeting adjourned at 4.50 p.m. and reconvened at 5.15 p.m., with Councillor Simpson and Councillor Stevenson not having returned.**

### **Service Savings Options 2010-2011**

A paper of possible options for service savings across the two directorates and office of the Chief Executive, circulated. The Chief Executive and Directors presented the section of the paper for their respective areas, as follows, and responded to members questions. The Director of Borough Services presented eight options in respect of Environmental Services – Street Cleansing and Waste Collection, totaling £37,897.96 or £40,519.74.

- **During presentation of the above options Councillor Stevenson and Alderman Simpson joined the meeting, at 5.20 p.m.**

During discussion there was a general consensus that public facing services should be protected and the present level of service should not be reduced.

Meeting **Agreed** not to accept five of the options, to accept option suspending the brown bin service for five months (November – March), producing a saving of £16,262.40 and to defer consideration of options (2 no) for removal or reduced services at Civic Amenity Sites.

**Councillor Robinson joined the meeting during discussion on the options, at 6.00 p.m. and Councillor McCamphill and Councillor Cavlan retired from the meeting at 6.15 p.m.**

The Director of Central & Leisure Services presented six options in respect of leisure services – cultural services, summer scheme and community support, totaling £36,500. She advised that she was reviewing options for leisure centre services and would bring these to the next meeting.

The meeting **Agreed** not to accept any of the options.

The Chief Executive presented seven options – Economic Development (2 options), totaling £9,800 or £7,800 and Member Allowances, Mayor's Allowance, Official Visits/Functions (5 options) in respect of which the level of saving, if any, was left for Council to indicate.

The meeting **Agreed** not to accept any of the options.

- **Councillor Robinson retired from the meeting at 7.30 p.m. during consideration of these options.**

The Chief Executive invited members to put forward suggestions for services they wished to review or reduce or spend areas they would wish management to review. The following areas were identified by members –

- Consider alternative arrangements for delivering services/projects within existing resources by not filling posts currently vacant;
- Review level of course/conference/travel provision across all services.
- Review overtime working

It was proposed by Councillor Stevenson seconded by Councillor Finlay and **Agreed:** that Council meet again on Monday 25<sup>th</sup> January at 10.00 a.m. to give further consideration to the rate estimate.

**The meeting concluded at 7.30 p.m.**