

Minutes of Greystones Municipal District Budget Meeting, held in Civic Offices, Greystones on Thursday 9th October 2014

Present: Councillor T. Fortune, Cathaoirleach
Councillors N. Lawless, G. McLoughlin, D. Mitchell, G. Walsh & J. Whitmore

Also Present: Ms. L. Lynch, Head of Finance, Wicklow County Council
Mr. J. Lane, Municipal District Manager
Ms. M. Porter, Meetings Administrator
Mr. R. O'Hanlon, District Engineer
Ms. K. Coughlan, Meetings Secretary

A copy of the Draft Budgetary Plan for the Greystones Municipal District had been circulated to the members with the agenda, together with a table showing the overall General Municipal Allocation across the five Municipal Districts and a letter from the Chief Executive outlining the procedures.

Ms. L. Lynch gave a summary of the four stages of the budget process i.e. decision on Local Property Tax, Draft Budgetary Plan, Local Authority Budget and Schedule of MD Works. She stated that the main budget for the municipal district would be included in the Schedule of Works and that the Draft Budget under consideration at this meeting mainly covered discretionary expenditure. She pointed out that the Draft Budgetary Plan could be adopted or amended. She stated that it was not possible to adjourn the budget meeting and pointed out that if the Draft Budgetary Plan was not adopted by the members, the Chief Executive could adopt it on their behalf. She acknowledged that the timeframe for the budget process was tight and that this was complicated by the unification of the previous town councils and the subsequent movement of staff and inconsistencies in practices regarding charge codes. She pointed out that the figures in the Draft Budgetary Plan were based on amounts provided in the current year and re-iterated that the full amounts to be spent in the district would become clear when the Schedule of Works was drawn up in December or January next.

Members were critical of the short-time frame for adopting the budget and the fact that they had no real information about the total budget for the area and nothing to compare figures to. They were not happy that allocations for the Greystones MD were less than those of the Bray and Arklow MDs. They also suggested that the Council should make a bigger effort to draw down funding that was available from various sources and pointed out that Wicklow had a very bad record in this regard. They were critical of the fact that Local Property Tax promised better services locally but that this had not materialised.

Ms. L. Lynch stated that housing, roads and other services which tended to be better funded in the past in the former Town Council areas, would be equalised over a number of years. She pointed out that funding from the Town Charge in Greystones was no longer available to the County Council and pointed out that funding commitments for pensions, staff and other services remained high. She stated again that the Wicklow County Council budget meeting in November would be to allocate funds to various headings and that the sums

allocated would then be divided between the MDs and a schedule of works would be sent to the members. She pointed out that the members could decide how the figures in the schedule were spent but could not change the total amount. She re-iterated that the total amount to be spent in the area will be much higher than the figure included in the Draft Budgetary Plan and that the schedule of works would detail the extensive amount of works.

Mr. J. Lane informed the members that all the usual works like street cleaning, road gritting, etc. would be carried out as usual. He stated that the thirty two members of Wicklow County Council would agree the total budget for the county and how it was divided between the MDs.

Members referred to monies that were collected this year as a result of penalties in relation to NPPR charges. They were informed by Ms. L. Lynch that this money would most likely have to be used to pay off part of the Council's €3.5 million deficit. She stated that she was seeking clarification from the Department of the Environment in relation to this and would report back to the Council's Finance Committee. Some members felt that this money should be used for an agreed special once-off project in the town and others suggested that the money was unfairly charged in the first place and that this should be looked at.

In relation to monies provided by the Town Councils that had not been spent, the members were informed that this would be spent on the items that the monies were provided for.

The members then voted on the resolution to adopt the Draft Budgetary Plan for Greystones Municipal District for the financial year ending 31st December 2015. Councillors G. McLoughlin, D. Mitchell, G. Walsh and J. Whitmore voted in favour while Councillors T. Fortune and N. Lawless voted against.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Signed: _____
Meetings Administrator

Dated: _____