

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE POLICY GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.00 am on Wednesday 4th November 2020 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Dundalk.

In attendance:

Members:	Cllr. D. Minogue Cllr. E. Coffey Cllr. Joanna Byrne Cllr. P. Smith
Apologies:	Cllr. M. Doyle Cllr. L. Reilly
Officials:	Joan Martin, Chief Executive Joe McGuinness, Director of Services Frank Pentony, Director of Services Paddy Donnelly, Director of Services Bernie Woods, Head of Finance Gráinne Tuomey, Meetings Administrator

1. **Minutes of 7th October**

Proposed by Cllr Emma Coffey
Seconded by Cllr Dolores Minogue

2. **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

3. **Meeting Arrangements**

Members discussed the recent Ministerial Order which allows for “*meetings to be held remotely by local authorities. Any decision made or vote taken or other act done at such a meeting shall be as good and effectual as a decision made or vote taken or other act done by the members concerned would have been if such a meeting had been held in person.*”

Members were advised that prior to this happening that Standing Orders would have to be proposed to be amended in person at each of the Council and Municipal/Borough meetings.

Following discussion it was agreed that it should be proposed at each of the Council and Municipal Meetings to amend standing orders to allow for a blended meeting option allowing both remote and face to face attendance of Members. Members were advised that a one item special meeting in each location could be called and that a forum could attend but that it was up to members to decide on this.

It was agreed to propose an amendment for December Council Meeting at the next November meeting as it was too late to put on the agenda for the November Council Meeting.

Council Officials to explore process on how to accommodate blended meetings with IT and develop procedure document.

4. Budget 2021

The Chief Executive briefed the members in relation to 2021 Budget proposal and in particular highlighted the following points:

- Expenditure in 2019 was €124m, expected expenditure in 2021 is €130m however funds in from Dept and out to AHBs account for a significant portion
- Covid Costs –
 - Covid-19 expenditure costs of circa €1.5m to date
- No increase to LPT to buffer lost income
- October 2% staff pay restoration was 80% funded by Department
- Funding forthcoming from Dept for Rates Waiver and decrease in bad debt provision had increased outlook

The CE advised that initially the deficit looked like it ran to unmanageable amounts it now looks like it is in the range of 0.75m which while still meaning cuts need to be made in some areas, is not an unmanageable amount and it is foreseen that members allocation might be able to be increased.

In conclusion the CE felt there would be no dramatic difference to the 2021 budget.

5. Council Meeting Agenda

Members discussed a notice of motion submitted on Stephenstown Pond and expressed concern that this was a private/civil matter and not an item suitable for Council Member consideration. Members were advised that it was not considered within the Council's power to set up sub-committees on items where the council had no direct involvement.

Members Allocations were proposed by Cllr Emma Coffey and seconded by Cllr Pio Smyth.

There were no conferences or events noted for recommendation. Members were reminded that same procedure applies on online conferences and events where fees are liable.

6. Agree Dates for January Municipal Meetings

Members agreed to move Municipal Meetings to the second week in January in order to give staff time to get agenda out due to Christmas leave closure. Monthly Council Meeting to be held as normal schedule.

7. Members Communication Plan

Joe McGuinness advised that the reps were being monitored constantly and improvements had been made.

Concern was raised by both Officials and Members around items of discussion in Whips meetings being raised as leverage in reps and in MD and Council meetings. It was felt that this goes against the purpose of Whips meetings which were to allow full and frank discussions prior to items being raised in official meetings.

A protocol is to be explored to issue to whips.

9. **SPC Work Programmes**

Members advised SPC meetings were still going ahead.

Particular items highlighted were the

- Regeneration programmes for Dundalk and Drogheda Towns,
- Variety of services provided by the library staff,
- Level of professionalism and dedication of both Housing and Library Staff.

14. **AOB**

Issue raised by Members were:

- The local level of items being discussed at County Council Meetings
- The time taken by Councillors on local and on one item issues
- The lack of respect shown to Chair at recent Council Meetings
- The level of Condolences and Congratulations raised

It was agreed that Council Officials would explore implementing protocols on Condolences.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded.

The Minutes were confirmed at a meeting of the Corporate Policy Group held on:

Date: _____

Cathaoirleach: _____

Meetings Administrator: _____