

COUNCIL MEETING THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2019

Table of Adoptions

No	Item	<i>Summary of Key Adoptions</i>
3	Strike the Domestic and Non-Domestic Rate 2019/20	<p><i>1.5% increase in the district rates 2019/20;</i></p> <p><i>approve the report by the Chief Financial Officer on Reserves General – 2019/20;</i></p> <p><i>approve the report by the Chief Financial Officer on the 2019/20 estimates</i></p>

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN CIVIC HEADQUARTERS, COLERAINE ON
THURSDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2019 AT 7.00 PM**

In the Chair : Mayor, Councillor Chivers

Members Present : Alderman Blair, Campbell, Cole, Finlay, Hillis, King, McKeown and Robinson

Councillors Baird, Beattie, Callan, Clarke, Deighan, Fielding, Holmes, Hunter, Knight-McQuillan, MA McKillop, McCandless, McCaw, McCorkell, McGurk, McLaughlin, McShane C, McShane P, A Mulholland, K Mulholland, Nicholl, Quigley, Stevenson, Watton and Wilson

Officers Present : D Jackson, Chief Executive
R Baker, Director, Leisure and Development
A McPeake, Director, Environmental Services
D Wright, Chief Finance Officer
S McMaw, Head of Performance
S Duggan, Civic Support & Committee & Member Services Officer

In Attendance : Press (1 no)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Councillors Loftus, McGlinchey and S McKillop.

2. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations on interest.

3. STRIKE THE DOMESTIC AND NON-DOMESTIC RATE 2019/20

The Chief Executive advised of pressure facing Council of 9%, whilst Officers requiring 2-3% equating to an inflationary increase, to be combined with efficiency proposals for the next year.

The Chief Finance Officer read from a prepared statement:

'Madam Mayor as we enter the final weeks of the first term of the new Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council with the aim of striking the rate for the first year of the second term it would be prudent to take a few moments to review where we have come from and what has been achieved in the last four years.'

I have been asked recently what savings has this council made especially when it comes to rate setting and we are confronted with ever increasing cost pressures.

In setting the rate for 2015/16 Council had to contend with a rates pressure of approximately 8.5% (£3.31m), in 2016/17 this was 12.5% (£4.997m), in 2017/18 2.61% (£1.12m) and last year amounted to just over 7% (£3.1m).

The resultant rates increases for each year were as follows

<i>2015/16</i>	<i>1.5%</i>
<i>2016/17</i>	<i>0%</i>
<i>2017/18</i>	<i>0%</i>
<i>2018/19</i>	<i>0%</i>

Over the four years of the first term of Council approximately 30% of rates pressures were faced and yet we raised rates by only 1.5%. Some of the rates increases were admittedly offset by income increases and from higher levels of rates income being collected but much of that pressure was absorbed by your officers implementing cost saving measures across the entire range of council services.

As a result of the efforts of both members and officers our rate payers have enjoyed a sustained period of stability over the last four years, at least in so far as council is concerned because whilst Council has striven to keep costs down the regional rate has continued to rise year on year over the same period. That said ratepayers in the former Limavady and Moyle areas continue to enjoy significantly lower rates than before the four legacy council merged to form Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Whilst the performance of the first term of Council could be commended Council cannot afford to rest on its laurels as we enter into a new term. There is a never ending demand for Council services and it is vital that these services are maintained at as high a level as is possible and this will mean difficult decisions being made including the inevitable of having to increase the district rate.

In this current cycle of budget setting Council has again found itself faced with an increasing cost base. The out workings of a 2 year pay deal dealing with living wage issues, the ever increasing burden caused by waste collection and the disposal of that waste with fewer avenues becoming available for that disposal and with other inflationary pressures beginning to increase in ways that we have avoided for the last few years a continuation of the recent policy on rates increases is becoming increasing unlikely and much more difficult to achieve.

Members have all received various papers setting out the budgetary position together with options from officers which can be used to reduce those cost pressures being faced this year.

Madam Mayor in light of the information provided by officers it is recommended that members consider the level at which the District Rate is to be struck for the 2019/2020 financial year'.

* **Alderman Cole arrived at the meeting at 7.05PM.**

Councillor Holmes proposed a rates freeze for the year ahead, stating Council required radical thinking, efficiencies had not yet been driven through, savings were required to be delivered in leisure centres, and there were opportunities within Council's estate. Councillor Holmes concluded, with pressures facing businesses, it would be unfair to ask ratepayers to shoulder efficiencies Council has not yet delivered.

Councillor Baird seconded Councillors Holmes' proposal stating a zero rate would be highly beneficial for businesses, home owners and tenants of rented property, that Council demonstrated a prudent attitude to rates setting whilst providing exemplary services to citizens.

Proposed by Councillor Holmes
Seconded by Councillor Baird

- that Council apply a 0% freeze to the District Rates 2019/20.

* **Councillor Nicholl arrived at the meeting at 7.10PM**

Councillor Stevenson stated his opposition to a 0% rates freeze.

Councillor K Mulholland stated a 0% rate was not good for small businesses or residents, as it had resulted in raising the price for services. Councillor K Mulholland supported a rate increase of 2.5% and to use Reserves, rather than cutting services.

The Chief Finance Officer clarified a 2.5% rates increase would result in an increase, in terms of the district rate, for a house with a NAV (net asset value) of £100,000 per year of £9 per year and £200,000 NAV of £18 per year.

Amendment

Proposed by Councillor K Mulholland
Seconded by Councillor Nicholl

- that Council apply a 2.5% modest increase to the District Rates 2019/20;
that Council use Reserves rather than cutting services.

Councillor McCaw considered 0% was not feasible, as no concrete proposals had been put forward on how to obtain efficiencies and was not sustainable and proposed a 1.5% increase on the district rates.

Councillor Deighan seconded Councillor McCaw's amendment, advising Council could not control fuel, energy and insurance costs and stated SDLP support for a 1.5% increase in the district rates.

Amendment

Proposed by Councillor McCaw

Seconded by Councillor Deighan

- that Council apply a 1.5% increase to the District Rates 2019/20.

Councillor Clarke stated there were opportunities at the start of the term to make savings with RPA, and outlined disappointment in the progression of disposal of assets, reform of leisure centre operations, that there were opportunities to raise revenues. Councillor Clarke advised 0% was not achievable this year, however, may be in the future, that the focus was now on efficiencies and stated DUP support for a 1.5% rates increase.

Councillor Watton supported a 1.5% increase in the District Rates, and to use Reserves, along with sale of land and to seek revenues.

Councillor K Mulholland sought clarification of Councillor McCaw's proposal.

Councillor McCaw clarified supporting the opportunity to use Reserves to achieve a 1.5% increase, by not putting an immediate burden on ratepayers, to avoid cutting services, to fund the organisation.

The Chief Finance Officer clarified the Department recommends 5%-7.5% net retention of operating expenditure, £2.78M-£4.17M deemed to be acceptable.

Councillor Clarke clarified the DUP's position was not to dip into Reserves, that decisions already been taken needed to be implemented, the use of Reserves being the last resort.

The Mayor put the Amendment by Councillor K Mulholland, seconded by Councillor Nicholl to the Council to vote.

6 Members voted For, 25 members voted Against, 2 Members Abstained.

The Mayor declared the Amendment lost.

Councillor K Mulholland sought a recess prior to taking the next vote.

Proposed by Councillor K Mulholland
Seconded by Councillor C McShane and

AGREED – that Council hold a recess.

* **Recess 7.40PM.**

* **The meeting reconvened at 7.48PM.**

Councillor K Mulholland advised Sinn Féin would support a 1.5% increase on the basis it had been confirmed by the proposer and seconder of the 1.5% rate increase, Reserves would be used to avoid cuts to essential services and funds.

The Mayor put the Amendment by Councillor McCaw, seconded by Councillor Deighan to the Council to vote.

23 Members voted For, 8 Members voted Against, 2 Members Abstained.

The Mayor declared the Amendment carried.

The Chief Finance Officer referred to text within the tabled reports, that an insert of 1.5% increase in the District Rates for 2019/20 would now be applied.

Proposed by Councillor A Mulholland
Seconded by Councillor Callan and

AGREED – that Council approve the report by the Chief Financial Officer on Reserves General – 2019/20, circulated; and the report by the Chief Financial Officer on the 2019/20 estimates, circulated.

There being no further business the Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 7.50PM.

Mayor