

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2023
RECONVENED ON MONDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2023
RECONVEND ON TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2023**

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No	Item	Decision
1.	Apologies	<i>Councillor McAuley and Storey</i>
2.	Declarations of Members' Interests	<i>None</i>
3.	Strike the Domestic and Non-Domestic Rate 2022-23	<p><i>That all Independent and smaller parties inclusive of Alliance and PUP be included in all-party talks.</i></p> <p><i>That the meeting be adjourned to allow group leads to get together with the Chief Executive in advance of the reconvened meeting to be held on Monday 13th February.</i></p> <p><i>That the meeting is adjourned, to reconvene on Monday 13 February 2023 at 7.00PM</i></p>
Reconvened Council Meeting held Monday 13th February 2023		
4.	Apologies	<p><i>Councillor Dallat O'Driscoll</i></p> <p><i>Council approve that BBC record the meeting</i></p>
5.	Declarations of Interest	<i>None</i>

<p>6.</p>	<p>Strike the Domestic and Non-Domestic Rate 2022-23</p>	<p><u>Amendment Lost</u> <i>That Council increase the existing car parking charges by 20p per hour;</i> <i>That Council does not cancel Halloween events;</i> <i>That Council does not close Cushendall Visitor Information Centre;</i> <i>That Council accept the rest of Councillor McAuley's motion.</i></p> <p><u>Motion Lost</u> <i>That Council accept the assumed savings on fuel, pay roll, gas and electricity,</i> <i>That Council accept the investment income;</i> <i>That Council accept the Environmental Services savings, trade waste and Leisure and Development savings, all of the document Mr Baker took Council through, with the exception of excluding the Grant Funding programme,</i> <i>That Council harmonise Car Parking in the four main towns, bringing them all to a 70:30 ratio, on a minimum charge of 50p per hour;</i> <i>That would bring the rate to 11.07% and to mitigate that, take</i></p>
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		£1.8M out of the Financial Recovery Reserve, to bring the rate to 7.95%
	Reconvened Council Meeting held Tuesday 14th February 2023	
7.	Apologies	Councillors Callaghan and McAuley
8.	Declarations of Interest	None
9.	Strike the Domestic and Non-Domestic Rate 2022-23	<p><u>Motion Lost</u></p> <p><i>That Council write to the Department of Communities and inform them that Council are not in a position to set a rate at this time, given the unknowns which would be revealed next week.</i></p> <p><i>That Council accept the Fuel savings ie gas and electricity; and investment income;</i></p> <p><i>-That Council accept the Environmental Service savings on trade waste;</i></p> <p><i>-That Council accept the Leisure and Development savings, with the exception of Grant Funding and Halloween events;</i></p> <p><i>-That Council defer consideration of car parking with the provision that there is a debate early in new mandate around car parking.</i></p>

		<p><i>That Council approve the Chief Executive report on Adequacy of Reserves; - the Chief Executive report on Robustness of Estimates; - Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 to 2025/26.</i></p>
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**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND VIA VIDEO
CONFERENCE ON
THURSDAY 9 FEBRUARY AT 7:00 PM**

In the Chair : The Mayor, Councillor Wallace (C)

Members Present : Alderman Baird (C), Boyle (R), Duddy (R), Fielding (R), Hillis (C), Knight-McQuillan (R), McKeown (R), A McQuillan (C), S McKillop (R) and McLean (C)

Councillors Anderson (C), Bateson (R), Beattie (R), Callan (R), Callaghan (C), Chivers (R), Dallat O'Driscoll (R), Holmes (R/C), Hunter (R), McCandless (C), McCaw (R), McCorkell (R), McGurk (R) MA McKillop (R), McMullan (R), C McShane (R), P McShane (C), C McQuillan (R), McGlinchey (R), Mulholland (R), Nicholl (R), Peacock (R), Quigley (R), Schenning (R), Scott (C), Watton (C) and Wilson (C)

Officers Present : D Jackson, Chief Executive (C)
M Quinn, Director of Corporate Services (C)
R Baker, Director of Leisure and Development (C)
A McPeake, Director of Environmental Services (C)
D Wright, Chief Finance Officer (C)
P Donaghy, Democratic and Central Services Manager (R)
I Owens, Committee & Member Services Officer (C)
J Keen, Committee & Member Services Officer (C)

Officers In Attendance: J Welsh, Head of Community and Culture (R)
W McCullough, Head of Sport and Wellbeing (R)
A Ruddy, Audit, Risk and Governance Manager (R)
L Clyde, Financial Accountant (R)
J Culkin, Management Accountant (R)
E Callaghan, Accountant (R)
A McAuley, Corporate Communications and PR Manager (R)
A Lennox, Mobile Operations Officer (C)
C Thompson, ICT Officer (C)

Press (3 No) (R)

Public (1 No) (R)

Key – C = Attended In The Chamber
R = Attended Remotely

The Chief Executive undertook a roll call.

The Mayor advised Council of its obligations and protocol whilst the meeting was being audio recorded; and with the remote meetings protocol.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Councillors McAuley and Storey.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. STRIKE THE DOMESTIC AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES 2022-23

3.1 Report by the Chief Financial Officer on the Estimates.

Report, previously circulated was presented by the Chief Finance Officer, who provided commentary.

Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to set out a number of options available to Council to assist with the setting of a budget and thereby striking the district rate factors for the Financial Year 2023/24.

Current Position

The current rates pressure sits at **17.47%** in the District Rate Factor taking into account all currently known or projected cost pressures and income variations. Currently inflation as denoted by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is running at 9.2% indicating that significant inflationary pressures continue to affect the costs of service delivery. There are a couple of headline factors included within this namely Rates Support Grant and the applied balance in last year's estimates which have had an impact as indicated below:

Rates Support Grant	£1,513,922	2.73%
Applied balance	£1,851,660	3.42%

Assumption savings

The budgets as they currently sit include a number of assumptions around costs such as wages, gas, electricity and fuel which are basically projections of where we think these costs may go in the next 12 months, it is feasible that these assumptions may be too high and could be reduced thereby reducing the estimated burden on the rate payer, albeit that the more reductions are implemented the more risk we introduce that there may not be adequate budget to cover the eventual costs as they arise. The table below does set out some reductions that may be taken advantage of without introducing too much risk to the Council:

Expense type	Reduction	Monetary Value	% on the rate
Payroll	Assumed pay award reduced from £1,925 to £1,200	£965,451	1.78%
Fuel	Reduce to current pump price	£122,923	0.23%

Electricity	Reduce to projected year end costs	£190,805	0.35%
Gas	Reduce to projected year end costs	£375,682	0.69%
Total		£1,647,410	3.05%
Overall rate increase	Assuming all the above are implemented		14.42%

Payroll

The current iteration of the rates estimates includes provision for the current year National Joint Council (NJC) pay award, which was an increase in pay amounting to £1,925 per annum per fulltime employee effective from 1 April 2022, to repeat in 2023/24. It is conceivable that the 2023/24 pay award will not be as generous as the current year therefore Council may decide to reduce the assumption thereby creating a reduction in the burden to the rate payer. We do know that one Council is including a 2% pay award in their calculations. Others have been similar to this Council assuming, initially at least, something closer to the current NJC deal. If we were to reduce the assumed pay award to £1,200 per fulltime employee per annum this would generate a saving of approximately £958,000.

The cost of the NJC pay deal in total is approximately £2.43m for the 2023/24 year. In 2022/23 Council had already provided for a 2% pay award so the additional cost of the pay deal in 2022/23 was approximately £1.64m. Added to this are the additional costs of the spinal points included within the local pay deal which are adding £0.71m each to the annual pay bill, therefore taking all of the above into account Council is looking at a potential increase in employee costs in the region of £5.5m compared to the 2022/23 budget, this is after taking into account some modest savings in terms of employers National Insurance and Employers Pension contributions.

It is recommended that Council reduce the pay award assumption from £1,925 to £1,200 per fulltime employee.

Fuel

Current inclusion in the rates estimates for vehicle fuel allows for further increased costs during 2023/24. There has in recent times been modest reductions in the local fuel prices therefore Council could reduce its assumption on vehicle fuel. Assuming a pump price of £1.60 per litre for fuel would see a reduction in the budget for fuel of approximately £122,923.

It is recommended that Council reduce the assumed price for fuel to £1.60 per litre.

Utility costs

The current budget estimates include for increased electricity and gas prices for 2023/24. The volatility in this sector does appear to be reducing therefore Council could reduce the assumed costing for utilities for the 2023/24 budget. Assuming the market does become more settled in the near future Council could base its estimates on current year projections, doing so would generate a reduction in the budget for electricity of approximately £190,805 and for gas of £375,682, both have been calculated using month 9 costs and projecting to year end.

It is recommended that Council reduce the utility budgets using period 9 costings projected to year end.

Additional Income

The current budgeted estimates include only those income increases that have received Council approval or those that do not require Council approval, these include Holiday and Leisure Park charges and rental incomes following rental reviews and increased income at Letterloan. The table below demonstrates some additional income that could be implemented should Council agree:

Income type	Increase	Monetary Value	% on the rate
Harbour fees	Inflationary level increases	£37,000	0.07%
Investment income	Estimate increased	£75,000	0.14%
Trade waste	Inflationary level increases	£39,960	0.07%
Car parking	20p per hr increase on all current sites	£458,000	0.84%
Car parking	Harmonisation across all towns 70% charge/30% free	£333,963	0.61%
Car parking	Additional sites eg: Ballintoy/Portballintrae	£169,000	0.31%
Total		£1,112,923	2.04%
Overall rate increase	Assuming all the above are implemented		12.38%

Harbour fees

Council may choose to apply inflationary increases to Harbour income. The cost of providing services at our facilities is increasing as a result of all the pressures detailed above and others and Council therefore has to decide does the customer pay, as we seek to recover some of the additional costs, or the rate payer pays as we increase the subsidy to those services. Inflationary increases across harbours would increase income by approximately £37,000.

It is recommended that Council consider inflationary increases to Harbour income

Trade waste fees

Council may choose to apply inflationary increases to waste income.. The cost of providing services at our facilities is increasing as a result of all the pressures detailed above and others and Council therefore has to decide does the customer pay, as we seek to recover some of the additional costs, or the rate payer pays as we increase the subsidy to those services. Inflationary increases on waste services would increase income by approximately £39,960.

It is recommended that Council consider inflationary increases to Harbour income

Investment income

Council holds significant cash reserves and these funds are invested to gain returns as part of the treasury management function. With Bank of England base rate increases there are some more attractive returns to be had from investments therefore Council can expect to gain an increased return from its Treasury Management activities.

It is recommended that Council increases the investment income budget by £75,000.

Car parks

There have been a number of papers presented to Council over the autumn and winter regarding car parking charges, a brief summary of which is included in the table above. Those reports have been attached as appendices to this paper to allow Council to consider the options contained therein in order to reduce the rate payer burden by increasing charges and therefore the income generated by this service.

It is recommended that Council consider the options for car parking charges with a view to increasing income thereby reducing the increase on the rate.

Service adjustments

The current budget estimates makes provision for the current level of service provision, the table below details areas of service revision which if agreed by Council could reduce the budgetary pressure by the amounts indicated:

Service area	Adjustment	Monetary Value	% on the rate
Waste Collection	3 weekly collections	£610,000	1.12%
Sport & Well Being	As per appendix	£396,700	0.73%
Tourism & Recreation	As per appendix	£266,000	0.49%
Community & Culture	As per appendix	£15,000	0.03%
Prosperity & place	As per appendix	£73,000	0.13%
Grant funding programmes	As per appendix	£565,500	1.04%
Total		£1,926,200	3.54%
Overall rate increase	Assuming all the above are implemented		8.84%

The report previously presented to Council regarding the above service adjustment has been attached as an appendix to this paper for Council's consideration.

It is recommended that Council consider the option for service adjustment to reduce the cost of the service and therefore the increase on the rate.

Applied balance

The budget estimates do not include any applied balance from reserves currently, in the rates estimates for 2022/23 Council approved an applied balance of £1,851,660. Council may decide to do something similar this year, many Councils are also doing so, as an example an applied balance would require approximately **£480,000**, to bring the rate increase to **7.95%**.

- * **Councillor Holmes joined the meeting in the Chamber at 7.10 pm having previously attended remotely.**

The Chief Executive provided options to undertake Party break-out sessions.

Some Elected Members felt that there was insufficient information available to reach a decision and that Workshops held earlier in the year, while useful, were not what Elected Members needed or wished for and that a full Council Workshop for Rates Setting should have taken place in January 2023.

Councillor P McShane concurred with Councillor Peacock and referred to millions of pounds wasted by Council on investigations, poor management and a lack of information. Councillor P McShane wished it to be noted that those lowest paid employees were blameless in this regard.

The Chief Executive referred to reporting of Rates Estimates in September for Environmental Services; October for Leisure and Development and November for Corporate Policy and Resources as well as three workshops, some of which were poorly attended by Elected Members.

Alderman A McQuillan asked for an update regarding the Dunluce Centre, Market Yard and HMRC VAT claim.

The Chief Executive vacated his seat at 7.25 pm and the Director of Environmental Services presided.

The Director of Environmental Services advised that the contract had been agreed and sale was currently being progressed through Solicitors for the Dunluce Centre.

The Director of Environmental Services advised there was currently no tenant leasing Market Yard and the recent tenant, by mutual agreement had terminated their lease and a report would be brought in March to determine next steps.

The Chief Executive assumed his seat at 7.30 pm and presided.

The Chief Finance Officer reported that a case taken against HMRC by all 11 Councils in Northern Ireland was an ongoing process with the initial case having been won by Council's and overturned as a result of an appeal by HMRC at a tribunal. Outcome is currently awaited regarding the Court of Appeal which Council proceeded to on legal advice and preliminary information was available with no actual facts or figures.

Councillor P McShane suggested that two weeks advance notification should be provided to Elected Members in relation to the Sealing of Documents at meetings and asked for his comments to be recorded.

The Chief Executive provided figures including the unavoidable salary costs of £5M and the fact that further pay awards may not be communicated until Summer 2023; Rolling over £1M applied balance from last year; Lost £1.5m in Rates Support Grant; that to stand still costs to Council are up by 15% in broad terms.

The Chief Executive referred to 15% pressure highlighted by the Chief Finance Officer including sensible assumptions and cost savings proposals which could bring the rate down to a reasonable level.

The Chief Executive confirmed that Year End Period 9 was £100,000 favourable in an extremely challenging year with high inflation rates and high energy costs with finances marginally ahead of budget and pointed to good work of Senior Officers and the Finance Committee in achieving the current financial position.

The Chief Executive said that a replication of last year's approach could be taken on Monday 13th or Tuesday 14th using physical break-out sessions with a link to

those not in the Chamber and adopt a line by line approach to accommodate a Rates Strike on Tuesday.

The Chief Executive pointed to the mechanism of providing savings, confirming that the discretionary pressure was 2.5% with everything else locked in, in respect of Salaries and Rates Support Grant.

The Mayor encouraged Elected Members to avail of the opportunity to meet with Directors who were in attendance this evening, as a party or individually after the close of the meeting.

Councillor Watton referred to the fact that Independent and smaller parties are not included in Group Leads discussions and round party talks involving Officers and stressed the importance of all Elected Members being involved in the entire Rates Setting process. Councillor Mulholland suggested that all Independent members meet together.

The Mayor said that he could not see any progress being made at this evening's meeting.

Councillor Wilson suggested having a recess for party groupings followed by a workshop given the time which was available to Elected Members this evening.

Councillor Schenning said wished to second proposal by Councillor Watton and the Mayor confirmed that Councillor Watton had not made a proposal.

Proposed by Councillor Schenning

Seconded by Councillor McCaw

- that all Independent and smaller parties inclusive of Alliance and PUP be included in all-party talks.

Councillor Scott urged all Elected Members to attend in the Chamber on Monday night referring to difficulties undertaking a round robin to include those attending remotely.

At the request of Councillor Wilson the Mayor confirmed that break out rooms were currently scheduled for all Elected Members to include Independents, Alliance and PUP.

Councillor P McShane stated he had to resort to Freedom of Information requests to obtain information and suggested that no other Elected Member would have to resort to this.

The Mayor declared a 15 minute recess at 8 pm.

The Mayor declared a further 30 minute recess at 8.15 pm.

The meeting reconvened at 8.45 pm.

The Mayor asked Councillor Schenning to confirm her Proposal.

The Mayor declared the motion carried given that there was no dissent.

RESOLVED - that all Independent and smaller parties inclusive of Alliance and PUP be included in all-party talks.

Proposed by Councillor Scott
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and

RESOLVED - that the meeting be adjourned to allow group leads to get together with the Chief Executive in advance of the reconvened meeting to be held on Monday 13th February.

Councillor Wilson asked for the caveat that information is disseminated to all Elected Members and Councillor Scott was in agreement.

At the request of Councillor Peacock the Mayor confirmed that there had been two lengthy recesses to allow political parties to have discussions outside of the Chamber and confirmed that Chief Officers were not party to these discussions.

The Mayor ruled at 9.10pm that the Meeting was adjourned to Monday 13th February 2023.

RESOLVED – That the meeting is adjourned, to reconvene on Monday 13 February 2023 at 7.00PM.

**RECONVENED COUNCIL MEETING
HELD MONDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2023 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER
AND VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE
(ADJOURNED FROM THURSDAY 9TH FEBRUARY 2023)**

In the Chair : The Mayor, Councillor Wallace (C)

Members Present : Alderman Baird (C), Boyle (C), Duddy (C), Fielding (C), Hillis (C), Knight-McQuillan (C), McKeown (C), A McQuillan (C), S McKillop (R) and McLean (C)

Councillors Anderson (C), Bateson (R), Beattie (R), Callan (C), Callaghan (C), Chivers (R), Holmes (R/C), Hunter (R), McAuley (C), McCandless (C), McCaw (C), McCorkell (C), McGurk (R) MA McKillop (C), McMullan (R), C McShane (C), P McShane (C), C McQuillan (C), McGlinchey (R), Mulholland (C), Nicholl (R), Peacock (C), Quigley (R), Schenning (C), Scott (C), Store (C), Watton (C) and Wilson (C)

Officers Present : D Jackson, Chief Executive (C)
M Quinn, Director of Corporate Services (C)
R Baker, Director of Leisure and Development (C)
A McPeake, Director of Environmental Services (C)
D Wright, Chief Finance Officer (C)
P Donaghy, Democratic & Central Services Manager (R)
J Keen, Committee & Member Services Officer (C)
S Duggan, Civic Support & Committee & member Services Officer (C)

**Officers In :
Attendance** L Clyde, Financial Accountant (R)
J Culkin, Management Accountant (R)
E Callaghan, Accountant (R)
J Welsh, Head of Community & Culture (R)
L Irwin, PR Officer (R)

J Winfield, ICT Operations Manager (R)
A Lennox, Mobile Operations Officer (C)
C Thompson, ICT Officer (C)

Press (2 No) (R)
Public (2 No) (R)

Key – C = Attended In The Chamber
R = Attended Remotely

The Chief Executive undertook a roll call.

The Mayor advised Council of its obligations and protocol whilst the meeting was being audio recorded; and with the remote meetings protocol.

4. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Councillor Dallat O'Driscoll.

5. STRIKE THE DOMESTIC AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES 2022-23

The Mayor advised BBC had asked to record proceedings and put it to the meeting.

RESOLVED – that Council approve that BBC record the meeting.

The Mayor summarised the previous meeting.

The Mayor invited Elected Members to break into Party Group meetings and he advised Officers would circulate and take queries.

The Chief Executive detailed the Party room allocations.

The Mayor declared a recess at 7.09pm.

*** The meeting reconvened at 9.47pm.**

Alderman Boyle advised Meetings were still taking place with Officers.

The Mayor declared a recess at 9.48pm.

*** The meeting reconvened at 9.52pm.**

Proposed by Councillor McAuley

Seconded by Councillor Scott

- That Council accept the assumed savings on fuel, pay roll, gas and electricity,
- That Council accept the investment income;
- That Council accept the Environmental Services savings, trade waste and Leisure and Development savings, all of the document Mr Baker took Council through, with the exception of excluding the Grant Funding programme,
- That Council harmonise Car Parking in the four main towns, bringing them all to a 70:30 ratio, on a minimum charge of 50p per hour;
- That would bring the rate to 11.07% and to mitigate that, take £1.8M out of the Financial Recovery Reserve, to bring the rate to 7.95%.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed Councillor McAuley's figures.

Alderman Hillis requested a recess. He sought clarification of the proposed harmonisation of car parks 70:30, assuming that it would bring in car parking charges for Ballycastle and extra in Portrush.

Councillor McAuley confirmed that was correct.

Councillor P McShane stated concern with the rates setting process that a rate would be struck and in the next few weeks, Council put £0.5M on Insurance.

Amendment

Proposed by Councillor Peacock

Seconded by Councillor C McQuillan

- That Council increase the existing car parking charges by 20p per hour;
- That Council does not cancel Halloween events;
- That Council does not close Cushendall Visitor Information Centre;
- That Council accept the rest of Councillor McAuley's motion.

Alderman Boyle requested clarification regarding the John Hewitt Bursary.

The Mayor clarified Grant Funding had not been included.

Councillor McMullan clarified a mistake had been made and the Director of Leisure and Development advised Cushendall Visitor Centre was being kept in.

Elected Members stated disagreement car parking charges going up to 80p per hour, and those not being charged anything at all remaining the same and fairness across the Borough.

Elected Members debated car parking charges.

Councillor Schenning requested clarification of the Trade Waste. Councillor McAuley referred to point 4 of the booklet - inflationary level increases.

Referring to the Amendment by Councillor Peacock, the Chief Finance Officer clarified the Applied Balance would increase from £1.81M to £2.08M.

Councillor Peacock clarified the issue was additional car parking with no consultation and asked what the figure would be if Abbey Street Car Park and The Mall, Car Park Coleraine were removed.

The Director of Environmental Services advised increasing the existing car parks 20p per hour would raise revenue income to £604,000 and to keep Abbey Street Car Park and The Mall, Car Park Coleraine as-is, the income would be £448,000, a reduction of £156,000.

The Mayor declared a recess at 10.33pm.

*** The meeting reconvened at 10.45pm.**

Councillor Hunter requested clarification Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust and Sperrins had been removed. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed this.

The Mayor put the Amendment to the Council to vote.

13 Members voted For, 24 members voted Against, 2 Members Abstained.

The Mayor declared the Amendment lost.

The Mayor put the substantive motion to the Council to vote.
18 Members voted For, 20 Members voted Against, 1 Member Abstained.
The mayor declared the substantive motion lost.

Councillor Wilson requested a recess.

The Mayor declared a recess at 10.54pm.

* **The Meeting reconvened at 11.08pm.**

The Mayor declared the meeting adjourned to Tuesday 14 February 2023 at 7.00PM.

RESOVLED – that the meeting does adjourn to Tuesday 14 February 2023 at 7.00pm.

The meeting adjourned at 11.11pm.

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE RECONVENED MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER AND
VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE ON
TUESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2023 AT 7:00PM
(adjourned from Monday 13 February 2023)**

In the Chair : The Mayor, Councillor Wallace (C)

Members Present : Alderman Baird (C), Boyle (C), Duddy (C), Fielding (C), Hillis (C), Knight-McQuillan (C), McKeown (R), A McQuillan (C), S McKillop (C) and McLean (C)

Councillors Anderson (C), Bateson (R), Beattie (R) Chivers (R), Dallat O'Driscoll (R), Holmes (C), Hunter (R), McCandless (C), McCaw (C), McCorkell (C), McGurk (R) MA McKillop (R), McMullan (R), C McShane (C), P McShane (C), C McQuillan (C), McGlinchey (R), Mulholland (C), Nicholl (R), Peacock (C), Quigley (R), Schenning (R), Scott (C), Storey (C), Watton (C) and Wilson (C)

Officers Present : D Jackson, Chief Executive (C)
M Quinn, Director of Corporate Services (R)
A McPeake, Director of Environmental Services (C)
D Wright, Chief Finance Officer (C)
P Donaghy, Democratic & Central Services Manager (R)
S Duggan, Civic Support and Committee & Member Services Officer (C)
I Owens, Committee & Member Services Officer (C)

Officers In Attendance: J Welsh, Head of Community & Culture (R)
L Clyde, Financial Accountant (R)
J Culkin, Management Accountant (R)
E Callaghan, Accountant (R)
L Irwin, PR Officer (R)

A Lennox, Mobile Operations officer (R)
C Ballentine, ICT Officer (C)

In Attendance: Press (3 no.) (R)
Public (1 no.) (R)

Key – C = Attended In The Chamber
R = Attended Remotely

The Chief Executive undertook a roll call.

The Mayor advised Council of its obligations and protocol whilst the meeting was being audio recorded; and with the remote meetings protocol.

6. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Councillor Callaghan and Councillor McAuley.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

8. STRIKE THE DOMESTIC AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES 2022-23

The Mayor welcomed all those in attendance and invited proposals from the floor.

Councillor MA McKillop referred to Cushendall Visitor Information Centre and asked for clarity on how long was left of the Service Level Agreement with Glens of Antrim Historical Society and questioned why the matter was being considered as part of the rates setting process as her understanding was that there was one year left in the Service level Agreement.

Alderman Baird wished also to speak on the same matter and pointed to the many benefits of the relationship with Glens of Antrim Historical Society.

As the Director of Leisure and Development was not in attendance the Chief Executive advised that this matter be taken off any proposals for consideration at this meeting.

Councillor McCorkell suggested that Horse Trading should continue at the Auld Lammas Fair and referred to the absence of discussion and debate around each aspect of the savings proposals.

Councillor Quigley raised the issue of 3-weekly black bin collections for those with no medical condition or having families of six people or more.

The Director of Environmental Services confirmed that a second blue bin could be availed of. The Director of Environmental Services referred to the current consultation and Equal Impact Assessment which was considering the needs of those with young children with a view to collecting that waste separately.

Proposed by Councillor P McShane
Seconded by Councillor Mulholland

-that Council write to the Department of Communities and inform them that Council are not in a position to set a rate at this time, given the unknowns which would be revealed next week.

At the request of Alderman Duddy the Mayor confirmed that the significant happening next week was potentially the Special Council Meeting to be held on Monday 20th February.

Alderman McLean said it would be a dereliction of duty not to set the rate and felt that a decision was very near, saying it would be impossible to predict what Councillor P McShane was making reference to.

At the request of the Mayor Councillor P McShane confirmed his proposal.

The Mayor put the proposal to the Council to vote.
2 Members voted for, 32 Members voted Against, 0 Members Abstained.
The Mayor declared the Motion Lost.

The Mayor invited proposals from Elected Members.

The Mayor declared a recess at 7.25 pm.

The meeting resumed at 8.00 pm.

Proposed by Councillor Scott
Seconded by Alderman McLean

-that Council:

- accept the Fuel savings ie gas and electricity; and investment income;
- accept the Environmental Service savings on trade waste;
- accept Leisure and Development savings with the exception of Grant Funding and Halloween Funding;
- that Council defer car parking with the provision that there is a debate early in new mandate around car parking.

Councillor Scott asked for clarity that by applying a balance of £2.61M from Financial Recovery Fund, the rate achieved should be 7.95%.

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that to achieve an increase in domestic rate at 7.95%; A balance of £2.612m would be applied and that the non-domestic rate increase at that level is 4.79%.

Councillor P McShane asked what was remaining in reserves and sought clarity of the funding source. The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the source of funding was the Financial Recovery Reserve which would leave £4.4M in Financial Recovery Reserve at end of 2023/24.

The Mayor put the Proposal to the Council to vote.
26 Members voted For; 9 Members voted Against; 1 Members Abstained.
The Mayor declared the Motion Carried.

RESOLVED –

- That Council accept the Fuel savings ie gas and electricity; and investment income;
- That Council accept the Environmental Service savings on trade waste;
- That Council accept the Leisure and Development savings, with the exception of Grant Funding and Halloween events;

- That Council defer consideration of car parking with the provision that there is a debate early in new mandate around car parking.

The Chief Finance Officer referred to further documents tabled on the Agenda which required approval as follows:-

Chief Executive report on Adequacy of Reserves
Chief Executive report on Robustness of Estimates
Prudential Indicators

The Chief Finance Officer advised the report on Estimations at paragraph 3.3 had been amended to reflect proposal accepted.

Councillor P McShane asked for the percentage figure without balance applied from reserves and the Chief Finance Officer advised the figure was approximately 5%.

Proposed by Councillor Holmes
Seconded by Alderman Hillis and

RESOLVED -that Council approve

- the Chief Executive report on Adequacy of Reserves;
- the Chief Executive report on Robustness of Estimates;
- Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 to 2025/26.

The Mayor put the Proposal to the Council to Vote.
34 Members voted For; 3 Members voted Against; 0 Members Abstained.
The Mayor declared the Motion Carried.

This being all the business, The Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 8.20 pm.

Mayor