

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings of the Special Council meeting held in the Council Chamber, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB on Monday 14th February 2005 at 4.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor Ms J Bunting
(in the Chair)

ALDERMEN: C Hall
M Henderson (from 4.10 p.m.)
Mrs I Robinson MP MLA (from 4.14 p.m.)
P D Robinson MP MLA

COUNCILLORS: J Beattie
M Copeland MLA
Mrs S Duncan
D Drysdale
B Hanvey
Miss R Hughes MBE
M Long
Ms B McBurney
J Norris
M Robinson MLA (from 4.13 p.m.)
Mrs G Rice
T Sandford
J White

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive, Director of Finance & Leisure Services, Director of Administration and Community Services, Director of Technical & Environmental Services, Finance Manager and Assistant Members' Services Officer.

APOLOGIES:- Apologies were received on behalf of Aldermen Osborne and Councillor Stevenson.

An apology for late arrival to the meeting was received on behalf of Alderman Henderson.

2005/75 : STRIKING OF THE DISTRICT RATES FOR THE 2005/2006 FINANCIAL YEAR

On behalf of the Finance and Leisure Services Committee and the Estimates Working Group, Councillor Beattie presented the Estimates for the financial year 2005/2006.

He outlined that before making provisions for 2005/2006, the Council had to consider the reduction in General Grant entitlement; additional provision to cover employers' contribution; the cost of living pay settlement for the workforce and the further increase in landfill tax. He added that these general provisions, which were totally beyond the Council's control, amounted to £478,000.00 or 5.37 pence on the rates.

He then detailed for Members a number of schemes and projects which the Council would be completing next year, as follows:

- Waste recycling strategy – provision for the next roll out of the tricycle scheme, additional leasing charges in respect of new Council vehicles and the recruitment of a Business Support Officer to assist with the mechanics of waste management and the supervision of recycling performance targets
- Opening of the new 18 hole golf course and clubhouse involving a capital investment of approximately £3 million
- Two 18 hole American Adventure Golf sites at the Leisure Park, along with the 8 screen cinema complex and a 60 bedroom budget family hotel
- Construction of new water-based multipurpose synthetic pitch at the Billy Neill Centre which was attracting £200,000.00 lottery funding
- Hanwood Trust - opening of new centre in Tullycarnet with the Council as a major partner to provide the capital investment
- Provision for new community centre in Moneyreagh
- Feasibility study in respect of development of leisure facilities
- Provision for election expenses

Alderman Henderson arrived at this point at 4.10 p.m.

Councillor Beattie then outlined in detail a number of initiatives being put in place to achieve efficiencies in the services that the Council delivers.

He thanked his colleagues on the Estimates Working Group and the Finance and Leisure Services Committee for their valued support throughout the estimates process. He also passed on his appreciation to the Chief Executive and his Management Team for the amount of time and effort afforded to the exercise

Alderman Mrs Robinson and Councillor Robinson arrived at this point in the meeting at 4.13 p.m.

Councillor Beattie continued by stating that he would specifically like to thank the Director of Finance and Leisure Services and his staff for the enormous input into the preparation of the rates and the professional manner in which the figures had been compiled.

He then proposed the following rates for the 2005/2006 financial year, as follows:

Non-Domestic District Rate	14.1918 pence
Domestic District Rate	118.79 pence

Councillor Mrs Rice seconded the proposal. She continued by thanking Council Officers and the Members on the Estimates Working Group for all their hard work over the past months in achieving a rate which was below the current inflation rate. She welcomed the provision for play facilities in Carryduff and the increased budget for dealing with the dog fouling problem across the Borough.

Alderman Henderson concurred and he also thanked the Estimates Working Group for managing to keep the rates below inflation, whilst keeping Castlereagh the premier Borough.

Alderman Peter Robinson thanked Councillor Beattie for the many hours he had spent on the estimates process and also the Chief Executive and all the Directors for their co-operation in compiling the figures.

He added that once again, in real terms, Castlereagh had the lowest rate in Northern Ireland. He indicated that unfortunately this fact had been distorted by the significant subsidies provided by the Government to both Magherafelt and Fermanagh Councils of approximately £1.4 million of Resources Element, with Castlereagh receiving nothing. He expressed the view that it was an appalling situation that those less prudent Councils were financially rewarded, and those that worked hard to achieve value for money for its ratepayers, received nothing.

Alderman Robinson continued by stating that the Council had proposed to carry out a number of schemes over the next twelve months, indicating that the Council continued to develop. He added that no matter how good a level of service the Council provided, there were parts of the Borough which were not growing in population, and to continue to develop in such areas was not practical, and in terms of leisure and community facilities, the case now may be to maintain and improve the existing facilities

He outlined that he was sure that Councillor Beattie would agree that during the estimates process, much of the burden was carried by the Director of Finance and Leisure Services, and despite all the pressure placed on him, the Director remained very approachable.

Alderman Peter Robinson concluded by thanking all the Members on the Estimates Working Group and commented that in light of the burden that would be placed on ratepayers over the next number of months, he was of the view that the Council had put forward a rate which was reasonable and could be justified.

Councillor Hanvey outlined that the Members of the Estimates Working Group had each been given the opportunity to put their points of view across. He added that he welcomed the fact that the feasibility study into leisure provision was progressing. He also paid tribute to the Estimates Working Group and Council Officers.

Councillor Sandford, Deputy Chairman of the Estimates Working Group also put forward his appreciation to the relevant Council staff.

Councillor Ms Bunting then asked Members to vote on the proposal, and it was

RESOLVED (unanimously) That the Council agrees to set the following rates in respect of the 2005/2006 financial year:

Non-Domestic District Rate	14.1918p
Domestic District Rate	118.79p

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 4.35 p.m.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

MAYOR