

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF SPECIAL MEETING OF
NORTH TIPPERARY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE
COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, LIMERICK ROAD,
NENAGH ON MONDAY, 29th JUNE at 11.0'CLOCK.**

Present

Cllr. Denis Ryan, Mayor - Presided

Cllrs Dr. Phyll Bugler; Jim Casey; John Carroll; Billy Clancy; Pauline Coonan; Ger Darcy; John Hogan; John Kennedy; Micheál Lowry; Hughie McGrath; John 'Rocky' McGrath; Jonathan Meaney; Eddie Moran; Séamus Morris; Virginia O'Dowd; Michael O'Meara; Mattie Ryan; Michael Smith

Apology

Cllrs. Jim Ryan and Seamus Hanafin.

Also Present

Terry Ó Niadh, County Manager; Matt Shortt, Director of Services; Paddy Heffernan, Director of Services; Karl Cashen, Director of Services; Marcus O'Connor, Director of Services; Liam McCarthy, Head of Finance; Rosemary Joyce, Meetings Administrator/Senior Executive Officer, Ger Lynch, Head of IS; Kieran Callanan, Senior Executive Engineer; Michael Hayes, Senior Executive Engineer, Ruairi Boland, Senior Executive Engineer, Peter Fee, Act. Senior Executive Engineer, Breda Moloney, Administrative Officer and Mary Quigley, Acting Senior Staff Officer

**1.1
Financial Matters**

Mr. T. Ó Niadh advised that the anticipated notification of the cut of approximately €620,000 in the Local Government Fund had been received. The Head of Finance would outline proposed budget cuts in order to meet this shortfall in income. A further reduction in the Local Government Fund may take place before the end of the year. In addition there were reductions in the level of receiving in some areas. Further proposals may need to be brought forward to the members in September.

Mr. L. McCarthy then gave a presentation which outlined the following:

- budgetary projections at national level from 2009-2013;
- the deterioration in public finances at national level;
- the overall financial position of North Tipperary County Council;
- reductions in grants for roads, house construction and water rural/small schemes;
- challenges in terms of revenue income from rates, water and landfill charges;
- impact on the capital programme
- changes in payroll and other costs
- proposed reductions in expenditure to match the reduction in Local Government Fund income of €619,839

The proposed reductions in expenditure to match the reduction in Local Government Fund were as follows:

Energy Savings	€ 140,000
LGCSB	€ 24,203
Health & Safety Consultant	€ 2,568
Dog Pound	€ 2,850
Pride of Place	€ 4,650
Heritage Expenditure	€ 27,000
Recruitment	€ 10,000
Aertel	€ 5,000
Training	€ 30,000
Travel	€ 156,498
Staff – temporary and maternity cover	€ 120,000
September 2009 Increases Pay	€ 98,000

In response to queries from members Mr. T. Ó Niadh advised that the energy savings were mainly at water plants arising from work done in conjunction with the Tipperary Energy Agency. He also advised that the focus in training would be on mandatory training such as Health & Safety. He informed members that the same contractors were using the landfill as had been last year however the Council was being advised that the contractors were collecting less. 10% cut had been made at budget time in respect of the amount of travel across the board and the Government had since reduced the travel rate by 25%. In relation to staff he advised that the same number of temporary outdoor staff had not been taken on in 2009 and where contracts come to an end they cannot be extended. He gave details of his meetings with all staff. The need for efficiencies and flexibility was recognised.

Cllr. J. Casey expressed concern that the overtime cutbacks resulted in the toilets in Terryglass being closed at week-ends in the height of the tourism season. He also indicated that letting go of temporary staff was a false economy as it resulted in additional costs in Social Welfare rather than achieving overall savings.

Members expressed concern that the reduction in waste going into the landfill arose from illegal dumping. They also expressed concern at the position in relation to temporary staff on roads and the effect on roads that this would have.

Following discussion it was agreed that the use of AERTEL should be discontinued in 2010.

In response to queries on staff reductions Mr. P. Heffernan advised that there were 14 indoor staff whose contracts had expired and there would be a further 10 before the end of the current year. 7 staff on maternity leave had not been replaced and there would be more by year end. In addition there were staff who were availing of family friendly policies which results in a reduction in staff man days. In the case of general operatives there were 42 currently employed – the number in previous years was approximately 60. 33 of the 42 had contracts which would expire in August and the moratorium would prevent contracts being extended.

Cllr. D. Ryan asked if all permanent jobs were secure based on the amounts now in the budget. Mr. T. Ó Niadh advised that this would depend on future cuts in funding. He stated that the Local Government Fund was made up of two parts – Government grant and receipts from Motor Tax. New car registrations up to the end of May were down 60%. Income to the Local Government Fund was down significantly. There were no proposals to reduce hours or further reduce numbers as of today however this could not be guaranteed into the future. It would depend on the national situation and how the local authority's income was affected as a consequence.

2.1 Roads

Cllr. D. Ryan welcomed the Areas Engineers to the meeting.

Mr. M. O'Connor outlined that there were 3,000 km of roads in North Tipperary and the budget had been reduced from €22 million to €16 million. It was not possible to provide the same level of service with a reduction of this order. He outlined the type of works carried out on roads – overlay, strengthening, surface dressing and patching. He gave details of the area structure and staff numbers and the operation of the Machinery Yard. He advised that the contracts of temporary workers which are due to expire in August will not be renewed. This may result in the need to redeploy staff between areas. He outlined that there was very little if any money available for hedge cutting and that work would have to be prioritized and priority given to repairing pavement defects. He appealed to landowners to cut their hedges and stated that hedge cutting by the Council would be confined to junctions.

Mr. O'Connor outlined the three different approaches to patching – the one man patcher of which the Council had 3 units which moved between General Service Supervisors' areas; the

conventional patching unit of which the Council had one and the use of delay set macadam which was less satisfactory. He referred to the weather conditions which had resulted in work being done in less than ideal conditions. He advised that machinery hire is done through an e-tendering system and that, following a re-tendering process, average reductions of 12% had been achieved. He explained that machines are hired for a period however contractors may sometimes leave a machine on site until the next site is ready.

Members raised various concerns relating to roads. They stated that roads were the main issue they met on the doorstep in the run up to the local elections. They stressed the need to examine work practices and to achieve Value for Money. Cllr. J. Hogan suggested that rather than reconstructing whole sections of roads it might be sufficient to just do the edge and that this should be explored for the future. He also indicated that communities would be prepared to do work on cul de sacs and rural roads if permitted to by the Council.

Cllr. G. Darcy said that one of the biggest issues that needed to be tackled was the lack of hedge trimming which resulted in dangerous situations. He stated that there was a need to ensure that verges were cut as well as hedges. He also referred to the need to do ordinary tedious work such as opening inlets. He advised that something needed to be done to make C.A.R.S. and L.I.S. less expensive as they were not being taken up.

Cllr. J. Kennedy referred to problems with markings on roads fading away and to flooding problems which arise every year. He also asked about who will be responsible for servicing public lighting when the E.S.B. cease to have responsibility.

Cllr. P. Coonan spoke of the level of regulation that is in place in relation to insurance and health and safety.

Cllr. J. Casey stated that there was a need to look at pricing systems as the Council's costs were very expensive compared to the private sector. He also asked if flexitime could be used to get more value out of the patching units.

Cllr. B. Clancy asked if the Council could tap into sponsorship from companies for roads.

Other members spoke in support of the points raised.

Mr. K. Callanan and Mr. M O' Connor responded to queries. They outlined insurance difficulties relating to local communities carrying out work on roads and cited a case in Kerry where a serious accident had occurred and both the Council and the local group were found responsible. Mr. O' Connor clarified that hedgecutting is the responsibility of the landowner. He advised that a significant part of the cost of works done on roads relates to private contractors. An open tendering process is used and the market sets the rates not the Council.

Mr. T. Ó Niadh advised that if there was a community group who was prepared to come forward with a proposal in relation to road repairs the Council would listen to them but would have to be guided by the law and by the insurers. He advised that local authorities are shareholders in I.P.B.M.I. and that elected members are on the Board. He welcomed the debate that had taken place.

Members raised queries in relation to travellers who were parked at a number of locations in the county including Knockalton, Clonmona and the N52. Responsibility for dealing with this was discussed and members were advised that the Council was responsible for accommodation issues relating to travellers. Dealing with illegal parking was the responsibility of the Gardaí.

**3.1
Employment
Creation**

It was agreed to defer consideration of this item to 20th July 2009 in advance of the monthly Council Meeting.

This concluded the business of the Meeting, a true copy of which we hereby certify.

Signed: _____
**Cllr. D. Ryan,
Mayor**

Date: _____

Signed: _____
**Ms. Rosemary Joyce
Meetings Administrator/
Senior Executive Officer.**

Date: _____