

Minutes of the resumed Budget Meeting of Bray Town Council held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bray on Tuesday 24th January 2006 at 7.30 p.m.

Present: Councillor Deirdre De Burca, Cathaoirleach
Councillor Joe Behan
Councillor John Brady
Councillor Caroline Burrell
Councillor Bríd Collins
Councillor Anne Egan
Councillor Ciaran O'Brien
Councillor Pat Vance
Councillor John McManus
Councillor David Grant

Also present: Mr. Des O'Brien, Director of Services
Ms. Triona Irving, Acting Town Clerk
Mr. Sean O'Neill, Town Engineer
Mr. David Forde, Administrative Officer, Finance

Apologies: Councillor John Byrne
Councillor Anne Ferris

8615 Programme Group 5 – Environmental Protection

The Administrative Officer for Finance gave the members a short presentation on Environmental Protection.

Estimated Expenditure - €1,610,981

Estimated Income - €338,000

The members then raised the following points –

Heavy Duty Collection

- We put in €54,000 for this and we are then told that only €16,000 was spent. That means we did not spend €38,000. This is a serious issue.
- The advertisement for the West Ward was too small and a lot of people missed it. The system failed this year.
- The Municipal Policy Committee should look at how this scheme could be advertised and how to make it more attractive.
- This was advertised in the North Wicklow Times but it was not delivered around some estates.
- When this scheme was advertised properly it was very effective. This is the key to making it successful.
- This scheme is a sham. 216 items were collected during the year and it works out at nearly €60 per item. This is certainly not value for money and needs to be reviewed.
- Can we revert back to a skip system and ensure the skips are monitored?

Dargle Flood Protection

- Is there enough money allocated for this - €20,300?
- How much is in the de-silting fund?
- The whole river needs to be de-silted, not just the slang.
- The Office of Public Works has a major role to play – has any funding been applied for?
- Is this included in a major emergency plan for Bray?
- What money has been put by in case of a flood?

Recycling Scheme

- Hopefully this will be up and running soon.
- We need to look at the overall policy with this as it could be a waste of money.
- This was introduced to encourage people to recycle. It should be introduced to areas where it is needed.
- Director of Environmental Services in Wicklow County Council said that this would be open in April 2006.
- This is a pilot scheme. There was no guarantee that it would work but if it is carried out the way it was envisaged it will work and then we should extend to other RAPID areas.

Domestic Refuse and Waivers

- Good to hear Greenstar are charging the same prices as last year.
- Opposed to handing over the towns refuse collection to a private monopoly. We should be doing as much as possible to help out people who are being crippled by these charges.
- Can the Council collect refuse on a waiver scheme?
- Has there been any request's from any Councillor's about bringing back a Council collection?
- There is now competition in the town for Greenstar.
- The waiver system was a very successful scheme but the amount of money we have this year is not enough.
- Have the officials been in contact with Greenstar because a lot of people have trouble with lifting bags. Can some sort of waiver scheme for bins be brought in?

Street Cleaning

Wicklow County Council do not pay Bray Town Council for street cleaning carried out for them. The suction cleaner Bray Town Council owns has been spotted cleaning in Greystones. Is this true and why are we being charged?

Miscellaneous

- Environmental enhancement of Bray – Beautiful Bray does not exist anymore – is it not now called tidy towns?
- Town Rejuvenation Plan – need to look at every aspect of the town and maybe compare to other towns.
- Litter - €11,000 received in fines is welcome.
- Have we allocated money for new lifeguards?

- Springfield Burial Ground – has a new scheme been introduced as there has been a great improvement there.
- Litter fines – how many were issued last year?
- St. Kilian's Car Park – when the mobile recycling scheme here is discontinued can the bottle banks be removed?
- Emergency Plan – Little Bray needs a plan and the residents in the area need to be assured.

The Administrative Officer for Finance responded with the following –

- Dargle Flood Protection - €30,000 in the fund at present. De-silting is set at €15,000 each year.
- Beautiful Bray – unsure if this is now known as Tidy Towns.
- Lifeguards – this service was reviewed in 2005 and Lifeguards hours were cut.
- Domestic Refuse collection – no Councillors approached me regarding this.
- Mobile recycling scheme - €52,000 in the budget, €12,000 for the emptying of bottle banks.

The acting Town Clerk then stated that –

- Heavy Duty Collection – this was the first year and we will take on board what members have said. We feel it was advertised in an appropriate way.
- Pilot Recycling Scheme – Wicklow County Council will be collecting materials on a weekly basis. It will be monitored. Education of residents is vital to success of scheme.
- Flood Protection – Bray Town Council have not been successful in applying for funding from the Office of Public Works.
- Wicklow County Council has a general major emergency plan for the whole county.
- Domestic Refuse Collection – have not been approached by any Councillor.

The Town Engineer stated the following –

- Suction sweeper – this does not leave Bray.
- Springfield cemetery – contractor cuts the grass.

The Town Manager stated the following –

- We have a high measure of litter fines for the size of our town. People can always complain to us about people who are littering however, they will be needed to give evidence in court.

8616– Programme Group 6 – Recreation and Amenity

The members were advised of the following estimated expenditure and income under this programme group.

Estimated Expenditure - €1,872,597

Estimated Income - €508,000

The members raised the following points -

Swimming Pool

- Work will not begin in 2006. This is very disappointing. Feedback would be appreciated.
- How much is expected to be in the fund for this?
- Concerned about the delay.
- This will be put on the agenda every month.

Parks Operation

- Massive over-spend last year. There is a serious problem with parks around the town, especially in Ballywaltrim.
- Is the amount of money allocated towards this sufficient? This needs to be looked at.
- Grass cutting - €90,000 given last year. Are any of Bray Town Council's staff still cutting grass around the town or is all given to contractors?
- Grass cutting grants not advertised – how are people supposed to know to apply?
- Is there a park's plan for this year?

Cliff Walk

- €5,000 was given to this – unfortunate nothing was spent. Does this mean the amount of money did not have to be allocated?
- This money could definitely have been used.
- Can we have an update on this?

Ballywaltrim Playing pitches / Changing rooms / Playground

- CCTV – there has been a lot of vandalism recently so a CCTV camera would be welcomed.
- Unless we invest in a high level of maintenance it will not succeed.
- Important that this Council carries out the repairs here as a necessity.

Community Employment Scheme

- Where does this operate in Bray?
- Fassaroe Community Centre – what is the €8,000 for?
- Looking after pitches should be the responsibility of the Council.
- Can the grass be cut at end of February instead of waiting until the end of March?

Seafront and Miscellaneous

- Esplanade – removal of seaweed on the Seafront – has this been provided for?
- Can we get a machine to pick up the grass when it is cut?
- Welcome the increase for the Seafront and acknowledge the work the staff are doing.
- Bandstand – did we not agree a scheme of work for this area?
- Can we get a report on what money is being spent on the Seafront?
- Drinking on the Seafront – along with the Gardai, we need to sort this out.
- Can we try to get a Parks Department for Bray Town Council?
- More attention is needed on the Southern end of the Seafront.
- Can the railings on the Seafront be painted the colour they used to be years ago?
- Heritage Centre – is there funding due towards this from Bray Town Council?
- It is time we looked at how much the Heritage Centre is used – we are spending a lot of money on this.
- Every €2 we spend on parks, €1 is given to Wicklow County Council – what does Wicklow County Council do under these headings for Bray?

Councillor Joe Behan then proposed that Bray Town Council co-operate with St. Fergal's Church to come to some agreement to link up with them and maintain a CCTV system.

Councillor Behan also proposed that a grass cutting application form be drawn up and sent to all the Residents Associations that we are aware of in Bray.

The Town Manager informed the members of the following –

- We did not spend the €5,000 for the cliff walk. Work is due to be carried out on the Greystones side. This is a natural walkway so it will never be as safe as a footpath.
- Swimming Pool – Part VIII to be advertised shortly, would be hopeful of going to tender in the Autumn.

The Town Engineer responded as follows -

- Some grass cutting is carried out by our own staff.
- Paving has been ordered for around the bandstand.
- Drinking on the Seafront – Gardai have assured us that there are enough Garda patrols on the seafront.
- Painting of railings would cost €100,000.

It was proposed by the Cathaoirleach and seconded by Councillor John McManus to extend the meeting until 11 o'clock.

It was also agreed to take the rest of the programme groups together.

8617– Programme Group 7 & 8– Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare and Miscellaneous Services & Central Management Charges

The members were advised of the following estimated expenditure and income under this programme group.

Estimated Expenditure (Programme Group 7) - €296,800

Estimated Income - €249,500

Estimated Expenditure (Programme Group 8) - €1,337,352

Estimated Income - €170,000

The members raised the following points -

Schools Meals

- Do we still have a schools meals committee?
- Can the officials send a letter to the schools to encourage healthier eating?
- Health and safety in the workplace – we should hold training in the Civic Offices.
- Have the relevant schools been consulted regarding this?

Central Management Charge

- €50,000 for the emergency call-out service but we only spent €8,000.
- This service is simply not good enough. Would like a review of the whole process.
- This service is doing the minimum work possible.
- Staff are emailed next day with details of calls made.

Staff Training

- Huge increases here – what will we be getting for this?

Conferences

- Last year this was cut and it was welcomed. During the year a notice of motion was put in saying the figures should be split between the groups. Why did this not happen?

Miscellaneous

- Civic Receptions - this was money well spent and would like to see a lot more allocated this year.
- Legal Costs - €45,000 – we need to look at how we are spending our money in future on this.
- Defibrillators – is there a possibility of putting one of these in the Civic Offices?

The Administrative Officer for Finance responded as follows –

- School Meals – have not consulted with schools yet.

- Staff Training – envisaged to provide staff with training i.e. return to learning, health and safety, financial training etc.

The Town Engineer responded as follows –

- Bray Town Council does not have a call-out service – it is an out of hour’s answering service.
- Unfair to say the officials do not answer these calls as I have been called out on numerous times.

Councillor Joe Behan responded that this was the Town Engineer's job and referred to the fact that members are not allowed to contact staff directly but must use the out of hour’s telephone service.

The Town Manager responded as follows –

- Disappointing that Councillors are attacking the Bray Town Council staff like this. We are not a vanity service for them.
- This service not only sends an email, but they will also ring to try and contact a member of staff and inform them of any problem.
- I will not stand for bullying from some members of this council.

The members then recessed for a ten - minute break.

After the break the Cathaoirleach informed the members that it is now time to decide the budget, if it will be adopted or not. The members then raised the following points –

- Buoyancy in Planning fees – reduce expenditure this year on Fire Safety Audit
- Increase charges to Wicklow County Council and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council by the same percentage as rates increase.
- 7% increase in rates unacceptable.
- Outturn figures appear to be more ‘guesstimates’ than estimates this year.
- One person from each group should sit-down with the manager and come back with a proposal.
- If the budget is adopted it is giving the manager the power to charge what he wants in respect of housing rents.

Councillor Joe Behan proposed that the members do not pass this budget and that it be passed onto the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. He also added that he will vote against any proposals to pass the budget on principle.

Councillor Ciaran O’Brien stated that if the budget is not passed tonight the members will be giving it back to the Minister who put us in this position in the first place.

The Administrative Officer for Finance informed the members that a reduction in the commercial rate from 7% to 4.5% would require a cut in expenditure of €100,000.

It was agreed to take a short break in order for a member from each group to discuss proposals to make cuts in expenditure with the Council officials.

When the meeting resumed Councillor John McManus proposed to reduce the commercial rate to 4.5% making cuts in expenditure on Fire Safety Audit, Central Management Charge and bulk water supply and to increase income from planning fees and water charges.

In addition the following provisions were to be included –

- Volunteers Bureau - €3,000
- Peoples Park Playground - €15,000
- St. Patrick’s Day festival - €4,000
- Bray Seaside Festival - €4,000
- Planned Maintenance - €10,000

Councillor McManus’s proposal was then seconded by Councillor Ciaran O’Brien. A vote was then taken on this proposal.

Proposal: to reduce the commercial rate to 4.5% making cuts in expenditure on fire safety audit, central management charge and bulk water supply and to increase income from planning fees and water charges		
	FOR	AGAINST
Councillor Joe Behan		✓
Councillor John Brady	✓	
Councillor Caroline Burrell	✓	
Councillor John Byrne	Absent	
Councillor Brid Collins	✓	
Councillor Deirdre De Burca	✓	
Councillor Anne Egan	✓	
Councillor Anne Ferris	Absent	
Councillor David Grant		✓
Councillor John McManus	✓	
Councillor Ciaran O’Brien	✓	
Councillor Pat Vance	Absent	
Result	7	2

The proposal to adopt the budget 2006 was carried by 7 votes to 2 votes.

This concluded the Budget meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Signed: _____
Town Clerk

Dated: _____