

COUNCIL MEETING TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2020

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19.	Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Quigley, seconded by Councillor MA McKillop (Independent Consultants)	<i>Amended Notice of Motion carried</i>

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE COUNCIL
HELD IN CIVIC HEADQUARTERS, COLERAINE ON
TUESDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2020 AT 7:05PM**

In the Chair : The Mayor, Councillor Bateson

Members Present : Alderman Boyle, Fielding, Finlay, McCandless,
McCorkell, McKeown, S McKillop and Robinson

Councillors Anderson, Beattie, Callan, Chivers,
Dallat O'Driscoll, Hillis, Holmes, Hunter, Knight-McQuillan,
McAuley, McCaw, McGlinchey, MA McKillop, C McLaughlin,
McLean, McMullan, McQuillan, C McShane, P McShane,
Mulholland, Nicholl, Peacock, Quigley, Schenning, Scott,
Watton and Wilson

Officers Present : D Jackson, Chief Executive
M Quinn, Director of Corporate Services
A McPeake, Director of Environmental Services
R Baker, Director of Leisure & Development
D Wright, Chief Finance Officer
W McCullough, Head of Wellbeing & Sport
S McMaw, Head of Performance
D Hunter, Council Solicitor
P Donaghy, Democratic & Central Services Manager
S Duggan, Civic Support & Committee & Member Services Officer

In Attendance : Civic Facilities Manager
Internal Auditor

Public (20 No)
Press (1 No)

1. THE MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor opened the meeting, he highlighted the Zachary Geddis Trust, which had opened a new premises, given to them by Hidden Treasures thrift shop, Coleraine. He advised it was a central hub for the community in tackling mental health, offering counselling, workshops and organising coffee mornings. The Mayor congratulated the achievement of the Trust in tackling mental health.

The Mayor informed Council he had welcomed St Conor's College to the Parlour. St Conor's was an amalgamation of his former school in Kilrea.

The U14 boys had won the Under 14 Ulster Championship and he congratulated their success.

The Mayor highlighted a visit to Cloonavin by members of Castlerock Wednesday Club celebrating their 50th Anniversary. He stated the group was the lifeblood of the community of Castlerock.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Alderman Duddy; Councillors Baird, McGurk and Wallace.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Mayor advised the Notice of Motion on the Agenda (proposed by Councillor Quigley, seconded by Councillor MA McKillop) would be considered at that point in the Order of Business and would not be referred to a committee meeting, as was normal procedure.

Councillor Quigley disagreed with the Ruling; it was proposed by Councillor Quigley, seconded by Councillor P McShane that Council consider the Notice of Motion after the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee Minutes on the Agenda.

The Mayor, on his Ruling, advised the Order of Business would be conducted as set out on the Agenda.

3. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Declarations of Interest were recorded for:

Councillor Chivers in Leisure and Development Committee Minutes, Village Renewal, Item 7, Funding Additional Villages, Drumsurn.

Councillor Holmes in Leisure and Development Committee minutes, RDP Items, (Item 6, Lower Bann Project and Item 7, Funding Additional Villages).

Councillor Knight-McQuillan in Leisure and Development Committee minutes, RDP Items, (Item 6, Lower Bann Project and Item 7, Funding Additional Villages).

Alderman Fielding in Leisure and Development Committee Minutes, RDP Items, (Item 6, Lower Bann Project and Item 7, Funding Additional Villages).

Councillor Hunter in Leisure and Development Committee Minutes, RDP (Item 6, Lower Bann Project and Item 7, Funding Additional Villages).

4. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD TUESDAY 7 JANUARY 2020

Matters Arising

4.1 Accuracy of the Minutes

Councillor P McShane advised on page 9, 5th paragraph, to insert the words, “*not have to*” between ‘*should*’ and ‘*decide*’.

Councillor McQuillan clarified his comments, at Item 23.1, he used the word “*equipment*”, in the context of ‘*barriers*’ and ‘*marquees*’.

4.2 Confirmation of the Minutes

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Council Meeting held Tuesday 7 January 2020 are confirmed as a correct record, including the points of accuracy noted above at Item 4.1.

5. MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 18 DECEMBER 2019

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held Wednesday 18 December 2019 are received and noted.

6. MINUTES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY 14 JANUARY 2020

Councillor Mulholland presented the Minutes and proposed their adoption, pending any matters arising.

Matters Arising

6.1 Commercial Waste Collection Service (Item 18)

MOTION TO PROCEED ‘IN COMMITTEE’

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor Hunter and

AGREED – that Council move ‘*In Committee*’.

*** Public/Press left the meeting at 7.12PM.**

In response to a question, the Director of Environmental Services advised Council were 15% more expensive than private sector, the

assumed rise in prices was based on continuing to keep the existing customer base. He advised the increase what not cost recovery.

Councillor Holmes stated Council was using ratepayer's money to subsidise a loss making business that brought down the private sector. He stated a third party arrangement would save 2 bin lorries, 6 agency staff, £80,000.

Councillor McQuillan stated his support for the substantial proposal.

Alderman Hillis supported Councillor Holmes' amendment.

The Director of Environmental Services clarified 6 staff could be redeployed.

Amendment

Proposed by Councillor Holmes

Seconded by Councillor Wilson

- That Council arrange collection by a Third Party.

Councillor McMullan disagreed with privatisation, he stated Council did not know what would happen to the workforce, what the private sector would charge and stated his support for the original substantive motion.

The Mayor put the Amendment to the Council to vote.

8 Members voted For, 25 Members voted Against, 0 Members Abstained.

The Mayor declared the Amendment lost.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN PUBLIC'

Proposed by Councillor Hunter

Seconded by Alderman McKeown

- that Council move *'In Public'*.

* **Press/Public re-joined the meeting at 7.26PM.**

6.2 Adoption of the Minutes

Proposed by Councillor Mulholland

Seconded by Alderman Fielding and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Environmental Services Committee Meeting held Tuesday 14 January 2020 are adopted and recommendations therein approved.

7. MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY 16 JANUARY 2020

Councillor Peacock presented the Minutes and proposed their adoption, subject to any matters arising.

Matters Arising

7.1 Period 8 Management Accounts (Item 5)

Councillor P McShane advised he wished to speak on '*In Committee*', Item 5, The Mayor advised the confidential matter would be taken after Corporate Policy & Resources Committee Minutes.

7.2 Adoption of the Minutes

Proposed by Councillor Peacock
Seconded by Councillor Schenning and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held Thursday 16 January 2020 are adopted and recommendations therein approved.

8. MINUTES OF LEISURE & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY 21 JANUARY 2020

Councillor Callan presented the Minutes and proposed their adoption, subject to any matters arising.

Matters Arising

8.1 Funding Additional Village Projects (Item 7)

Councillor P McShane queried whether any of the three villages had been informed their current proposals had been rejected or had they been updated subsequent to 31 January.

The Director of Leisure and Development advised discussion only had been undertaken with the 3 villages, nothing was confirmed at this stage. The Director advised he would confirm the accuracy of the information with the Rural Development Programme Manager and get back to Councillor P McShane.

Councillor MA McKillop referred to information supplied at the meeting which had not been recorded regarding funding.

The Director of Leisure and Development advised the Rural Development Programme Village Renewal was £100,000 cap on the total Council contribution of 25% of the overall projects.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Leisure and Development Committee held Tuesday 21 January 2020 are adopted and recommendations therein approved.

9. MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY 28 JANUARY 2020

Councillor C McShane presented the Minutes and proposed their adoption, pending any matters arising.

Proposed by Councillor C McShane
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held Tuesday 28 January 2020 are adopted and recommendations therein approved.

MOTION TO PROCEED ‘IN COMMITTEE’

Proposed by Councillor Mulholland
Seconded by Councillor Dallat O’Driscoll and

AGREED – that Council move ‘*In Committee*’.

* **Press/Public left the meeting at 7.32PM.**

10. MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY 16 JANUARY 2020, ‘IN COMMITTEE’.

Matters Arising ‘In Committee’

10.1 Period 8 Management Accounts (Item 5)

Councillor P McShane queried the current deficit, the Management Accounts Period 8 end was £605,000 and in one month had rose to £640,000.

The Chief Finance Officer advised the reason for the rise was debt financing from the sinking fund for interest only loans over 2 years that had been overcharged and corrected, to benefit the current year. He

advised the current draft Period 9 Management Accounts deficit was £231,000 approximately.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN PUBLIC'

Proposed by Councillor Peacock
Seconded by Councillor McGlinchey and

AGREED – that Council move *'In Public'*.

* **Press/Public re-joined the meeting at 7.34PM.**

11. SAVINGS PROPOSALS

Report, previously circulated, presented by the Chief Executive.

The purpose of the report was to set before members a set of savings initiatives recommended by officers for inclusion in the rates estimates for 2020/21.

These measures have been previously provided to members at various committees and the rates workshop on Monday 27th January 2020 and discussed in detail.

The savings were set out in the appendices to the report.

It is recommended that Council considers and approves the savings initiatives as set out in the appendices for inclusion in the rates estimates.

A report detailing Leisure and Development service reduction or income generation proposals was circulated.

A report, Efficiency/Savings/Income Generation Proposals – Environmental Services was circulated.

It is recommended that Members consider and approve the proposals presented within this paper.

Alderman Boyle proposed the 10% Riverside Theatre cut be taken out and considered at a later date at the Leisure and Development Committee. She advised a Portrush Music Society petition had raised almost 2,000 signatures in 36 hours, opposing the cut. Alderman Boyle informed Council of the Riverside Theatre Managers core themes, presented to the Riverside Committee - Culture Tourism, Mental Health and Wellbeing, Arts and Science including STEM, Arts and Education and, Arts and Business. She advised a previous Riverside Director stated global research had shown for every £1 spent on the Arts, the community got £3-£7 back.

Proposed by Alderman Boyle
Seconded by Councillor McGlinchey

- That Council approve the savings initiatives as set out in the appendices for inclusion in the rates estimates, excluding the proposed 10 % reduction to Riverside Theatre; for this to be discussed at the Leisure and Development Committee.

The Mayor clarified the proposals were presented at Elected Member Workshops and Party Group meetings.

During further consideration and debate and following requests for clarification surrounding the papers presented, the Director of Leisure and Development clarified:

- Implementation of Terms and Conditions for staff in Sport and Wellbeing, these were predicted figures, there was a lot of work yet to be done with discussions with Unions and staff (serial 18);
- The total gross income in Sport & Wellbeing was circa£3M, plus 3% income generation equated to £100,000;
- A Partnership was not in place with Green Lane Museum as a Volunteer Policy was required to be agreed, to reduce Agency staff requirement, there would be no imminent service reduction;
- Removal of the Air Show was set out at serial 34, to include the NW200 Festival, a duplicated event in two parts;
- Efficiencies regarding staff mileage was in relation to that particular department (serial 1).

During further consideration and debate and following requests for clarification surrounding the papers presented, the Chief Finance Officer advised:

- Essential Car User Policy would be brought to Corporate Policy & Resources Committee in due course;
- Council's Car Loan Scheme did not generate savings, a small amount of income was attached to it;
- PEACE IV outstanding funding was claimed back and did not affect budgets as was accounted for;
- Councils Accounts had never been qualified, they were unqualified every Year.

During debate, Alderman Boyle raised Standing Order 18.11, *Duration of Speech*, regarding remarks from Councillor P McShane, the Mayor overruled, asking Councillor P McShane to close his remarks

The Mayor declared a recess at 8.09PM.

* **The meeting reconvened at 8.39PM.**

In response to earlier comments the Chief Executive clarified Party break-out sessions had been agreed on the proposal of Councillors Callan and Schenning at the December Finance Committee meeting.

Councillor C McShane stated the Savings Proposals and Striking the Rate Items were interlinked. Councillor C McShane outlined the frustration felt by some Members concerning the nature of the Workshops held, frustration from Independent Members and possibly from within Party Groups.

Amendment

Councillor C McShane

Seconded by Councillor Peacock

- That this Council agrees to appoint CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) to give immediate and urgent assistance with the current rate setting process and to defer any decision ahead of the legal timeframe of 15th February to allow CIPFA to make recommendations and report to Members and to work with Council to prepare medium term financial plan and financial resilience review.

In response to a request for clarification, the Chief Executive advised CIPFA had been used previously to train Audit Committee Members, their availability would need to be checked to include reporting within a few days' notice.

Councillor C McShane advised this would allow Councillors to have confidence, to speak as one unit, to go forward and discuss and agree based on the external advice and guidance through the rate setting process. She advised CIPFA could be installed immediately, to provide an interim report, that Members meet early next week in advance of setting the rate of 15th February.

The Mayor declared a recess at 8.49PM.

* **The meeting reconvened at 9.04PM.**

Councillor Wilson, on behalf of his Party advised co-operation, leadership and the ability to take tough decisions was required, he did not feel delaying the decision was going to benefit Council.

Councillor P McShane voiced his dissatisfaction with the rate setting process, including the Mayor's ruling concerning the order of business and the Notice of Motion.

Councillor Callan agreed with Councillor Wilson, he stated Parties willing to take difficult decisions needed to look at what was required to be done. He supported Councillor C McShane, being prudent to have a second opinion to bring all options back on the table.

Alderman McCandless referred to the teamwork that had occurred within the September Finance Committee, he considered this was required to get back on track and employees needed to see leadership and direction. He enquired as to the cost of CIPFA. Alderman McCandless felt a 3-year projection was also required.

Councillor MA McKillop supported the proposal agreeing to the principle that, she advised, was similar to her Motion, ensuring internal good governance and transparency and an external audit.

Councillor McCaw stated his support for the proposal, he requested a 4-year term plan, that experts were required to come in and look, the decisions would ultimately be made by the democratically Elected Members. Councillor McCaw felt trust had been broken and needed to be restored.

Councillor Peacock referred to aspirational savings, Council did not have concrete facts and figures and required external independent advice, she advised there may be further savings they were unaware of.

Councillor Holmes referred to the PwC report, Audit Office report, that Council should take a decision based on the papers in front of them that had been discussed during September and October and decisions were not being made, he stated Councils expenditure required income to match it.

Alderman Finlay stated extra income could have been generated in car parking charges.

Councillor Watton referred to an adverse atmosphere, he was not a member of the Finance Committee and had been kept from the Party Leads Forum and during d'Hondt selections. Councillor Watton stated he did not support the cuts.

In response to a request for clarification, the Chief Executive advised, in relation to 'Call In', it would carry beyond the statutory deadline and be reported to the Department.

Councillor McQuillan raised a Point of Order, he considered speaking only once would stifle debate. The Mayor overruled and cited from Standing Order 18.10, *Member Shall Not Speak More Than Once*.

The Mayor declared a recess at 9.29PM.

* **The meeting reconvened at 9.36PM.**

Councillor C McShane requested a recorded vote.

The Mayor put the Amendment to the Council to vote:

For (26)	Alderman Boyle, Fielding, Finlay, McCorkell, S McKillop, Robinson
	Councillors Anderson, Bateson, Beattie, Callan, Chivers, Dallat O'Driscoll, Knight-McQuillan, McAuley, McCaw, MA McKillop, McLaughlin, McLean, McMullan, McQuillan, C McShane, Mulholland, Nicholl, Peacock, Schenning, Scott
Against (6)	Alderman Hillis, McCandless, McKeown
	Councillors Holmes, Hunter, Wilson
Abstain (3)	Councillors P McShane, Quigley, Watton

The Mayor declared the Amendment carried.

12. STRIKE THE DOMESTIC AND NON-DOMESTIC RATE 2020/21

Reports, previously circulated.

The Chief Executive advised the Item would now be deferred.

Report Items undernoted, 12, 12.1, 12.2, 12.3, 12.4 were circulated, however, they were not considered in light of the decision to defer.

12.1 Rates Estimates

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the financial pressures being faced by Council in terms of budgeting and the setting of the rate for 2020/21. The summary table details the estimated budget to be considered in the setting of the rate for 2020/21.

This budget round has been an extremely difficult and challenging one for a number of reasons, some of which are mention later in this report. It cannot be ignored that Council has significantly reduced its General reserve over the last two complete financial years and the position remains challenging in the current financial year. With that in mind it is vital that the budget agreed and the rate struck are balanced in financial terms thereby minimising any risk of further diminishment of the General Reserve during 2020/21 to unsustainable levels. When striking the rate Council must consider fully and agree the necessary measures that will be required to ensure that the rate being set is sufficient to meet the needs of the services in financial terms.

Background

In considering this draft of the rates there are a number of significant high level pressures which have been incorporated.

Wages and Salaries – by far the largest cost to the Council. In recent years pay awards have been weighted towards those at the lowest pay grades in an effort to bring these up to at least National Minimum Wage. Union demands have been extremely high from their initial position which is not sustainable from an affordability viewpoint and the negotiation process is ongoing. For the purposes of this budget wages and salary costs have been increased by 2% for a pay award but also taking into account pay increments and employers pension contribution regarding agency staff. In addition in this version of the estimates the employer's contribution rate for pensions has been reduced by 0.5%, the annual lump sum payment to NILGOSC regarding deficit recovery of £277,100 has been removed and staff who have taken voluntary severance has been removed, note the voluntary severance savings will be included within departmental savings schedules.

Zero Based Budgeting – the recent work which took a ground up approach to estimate ongoing costs for all council services has been taken into account when preparing this initial set of estimates with several major cost areas

having been revised for example, waste contracts, landfill provision, fuel costs, repairs and maintenance, etc.

Applied Balance – the applied balance of £2.38m which was included in last year’s estimates has been removed accounting for 5.33% of the estimated increase.

Other Factors

Land and Property Services (LPS) have recently provided us Estimated Penny Product (EPP). This figure is how much rates income is generated by adding a penny to the rate, the higher this figure the better.

The EPP, which has been included in the rates estimates tabled below at 3.7, is £1,879,280. This figure takes into account the results of the recent non-domestic revaluation therefore whilst in numerical terms it has increased the real effect after being adjusted for inflation is approximately 0.45%. The inflationary effect is removed by way of a conversion factor which means that the direct comparator for rates increase purposes is the domestic rate figure.

Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) which, along with interest payable, makes up the Council’s capital financing has been estimated for this budget taking into account;

- capitalisation of severance
- continuing capital programme

The estimated MRP and interest figure included in this draft is £9,652,908, an increase of £405,663 on the previous year.

Rates Support Grant (RSG) is a topic that has attracted a lot of attention in recent times. In 2018/19 Council benefitted from a recalculation of the allocation of the grant and this was included in the 2019/20 rates estimates. During 2019/20 whilst Council’s allocation of grant was increased the total amount of grant available was reduced from £16,865,280 to £15,865,000 meaning Council’s allocation was reduced to £2,571,995, a reduction of £219,898 against the estimated figure at rate strike. Department for Communities (DfC) indicate that budgetary pressures continue to threaten the amount allocated to this grant and it is likely to face a cut of approximately 5%, taking this into account the RSG figure in this budget has been reduced by £350,270 to £2,441,623. Further to previous reports Council has now received the final percentage allocation of RSG and this is yet more bad news for Council. Our allocation has dropped from 16.21% to 13.65% meaning a further reduction in our RSG budget, in total the reduction in grant assuming DfC apply a 5% cut to the total grant pot is now £734,599 and this has been reflected in the table below. This has had a significant detrimental effect on the rates being equivalent to approximately 1.63% on the rates.

Inflationary increases have been applied to the following cost areas:

Electricity	18%
Oil	5%

Gas	5%
Insurance	5%

Rates estimates summary 2020/21

The rates table circulated takes into account all savings agreed by Council at the date of writing this report. The second table included at 3.9 illustrates the rates strike position assuming that all savings recommendations are agreed fully by Council.

Rates Estimate Summary 2020/21 (subject to savings being agreed by Council)

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, Annual Estimates, Year Ended 31 March 2021 table, circulated.

Legislation - Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Under the above legislation in section 3(2) the duty of Council in relation to budget setting is set out as follows:

A council, before the prescribed date each year,

- (a) shall consider the estimates for the next financial year;*
- (b) may revise the estimates in such manner as the Council thinks fit;*
- (c) shall approve the estimates, subject to any revision under paragraph (b);*
- (d) shall authorise the expenditure included in the estimates; and*
- (e) shall fix for the next financial year the amount estimated to be required to be raised by means of rates made by the Council.*

It is recommended that Council considers the budgets presented together with savings agreed previously and strikes the rate for 2020/21. This will include approval of the Chief Executive's reports on the robustness of the estimates and reserves and the prudential indicators.

12.2 Report by the Chief Financial Officer on 2020/21 Estimates

Under Section 4 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 the Chief Financial Officer of a council shall submit to the council a report on the robustness of the estimates and the Council shall have regard to that report when considering the estimates.

Councils budgets and finances have been under extreme pressures in recent times leading to reductions in the level of reserves being held by Council. The continued reduction of these reserves cannot continue otherwise the reserves will be below sustainable levels. Consequently Council officers have in this budgeting round undertaken a most extensive exercise of zero based budgeting for all areas and services of Council in order to ascertain the level of funding

required to continue to provide council services at their current levels and these figures are reflected in the rates estimates presented.

The single largest proportion of the gross expenditure is salaries and wages budgets. These budgets include adequate provision for employers pension and national insurance costs, taking into account the 0.5% reduction in employer's pension costs being introduced for all employers from 1st April 2020, plus an estimated 2% pay award for all employees since there is not yet an agreement with unions on this matter. No provision however has been made for replacement cover for sickness absence.

On the income side the Estimated Penny Product calculated by Land & Property Services has been used to calculate the District Rates.

The Transferred Functions Grant and De-rating Grant penny products together with the Rates Support Grant allocation (as updated has been supplied by the Department for Communities (DfC)) have been included in the estimates, this includes an estimated decrease of 26% approximately in the level of Rates Support Grant expected to be received due to the expected reduction to the funding for this grant by DfC and the reduction in Council's allocation of this grant. Assumptions have been made about the level of grants from other government departments where final offers or indications have not yet been received.

In conclusion it is vital that the rate council sets is sufficient to meet the requirements of Council services and minimizes the risk of further reduction of reserves.

I am broadly satisfied that the estimates put before Council this evening are sufficiently robust to enable the Council to deliver its services to a satisfactory level, in normal circumstances in 2020/21.

12.3 Report by the Chief Financial Officer on the reserves

Under Section 6 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 the Chief Financial Officer shall submit to the Council a report on the adequacy of any proposed financial reserves for a financial year and the Council shall have regard to that report when considering the estimates.

At 31st March 2019 the General Fund balance of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council amounted to £3.762m equating to 6.19% of the Net Operating Expenditure.

Department for Communities (DfC) guidance indicates that the General Fund Level should be between 5% and 7.5% (£3.040m and £4.561m) of the Net Operating Expenditure.

Council budgets are under extreme pressures and as a result it is anticipated that the level of reserves will reduce further in the current financial year below the 5% threshold. Council will still have sufficient

reserve in order to continue its day to day operations however the budget agreed will need to be fully financed in order to protect the reserves from further reduction.

12.4 Prudential Indicators for 2019/20 to 2022/23

Under Section 6 of the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 the Chief Financial Officer shall submit to the Council a report on the adequacy of any proposed financial reserves for a financial year and the Council shall have regard to that report when considering the estimates.

At 31st March 2019 the General Fund balance of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council amounted to £3.762m equating to 6.19% of the Net Operating Expenditure.

Department for Communities (DfC) guidance indicates that the General Fund Level should be between 5% and 7.5% (£3.040m and £4.561m) of the Net Operating Expenditure.

Council budgets are under extreme pressures and as a result it is anticipated that the level of reserves will reduce further in the current financial year below the 5% threshold. Council will still have sufficient reserve in order to continue its day to day operations however the budget agreed will need to be fully financed in order to protect the reserves from further reduction.

13. MATTERS FOR REPORTING TO PARTNERSHIP PANEL – LOCAL GOVERNMENT SIDE

The Chief Executive advised the next meeting had been scheduled to take place in June.

There were no matters for reporting to the Partnership Panel.

14. CONFERENCES

There were no conferences.

15. CORRESPONDENCE

Information report, previously circulated.

15.1 Housing Council January Bulletin

The Northern Ireland Housing Council met on Thursday, 9th January 2020 at 10.30 am in the City Hall Belfast.

15.2 NILGA Strategic Consultations with Member Councils – Council Led Reform, £3.5 billion Shared Prosperity Fund for Northern Ireland, Shared Services

NILGA, your 11-council owned policy, investment and development body, is keen during the financial year 2020/2021 to develop in partnership 3 specific strands of council led actions which will help to maintain and improve our public services, keep rates at prudent levels, apply new investment channels for capital developments and adopt a transformative approach to shared services across councils driven by what each and every council in local government here wants and needs to be sustainable.

From Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council's perspective, we ask that council offers corporate comment on each of the planned consultations across the 11 councils on the above matters, upon receipt of which NILGA will co-ordinate and apply the findings with each council and Solace, putting policy & practice during 2020/2021 into place.

It is recommended that Council note the correspondence.

RESOLVED – that Council note the correspondence schedule, items 15.1-15.2 inclusive.

16. CONSULTATION SCHEDULE

Information report, previously circulated.

16.1 DfI Roads, Designation of Traffic sensitive streets, Consolidation Order;

16.2 Northern Ireland Office, Consultation Exercise on Same Sex Marriage Religious Protections and Conversion Entitlements;

16.3 Department for the Economy, Call for Evidence to inform the development of a new Energy Strategy for Northern Ireland;

16.4 Department for Communities, Grosvenor Barracks, Enniskillen, application for outline planning permission.

RESOLVED – that Council note the Consultation schedule, Items 16.1-16.4 inclusive.

17. SEAL DOCUMENTS

Members were advised of the undernoted items for signing and sealing by Council, approval having been previously granted and all necessary legislative requirements being met.

17.1 Grave Registry Certificates No's 4876 – 4894;

17.2 Agreement for Gift for Capital Works – Cockpit Brae West Car Park, Ballymoney (L&P SC 190807/CP&R 190820/CM 190827).

Proposed by Councillor Nicholl
Seconded by Councillor Peacock and

RESOLVED - that the sealing of documents as listed (Items 17.1-17.2) be approved.

18. NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR MCMULLAN, SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR PEACOCK

'That this Council recognises the important role people with Down Syndrome have in our society. We further recognise the important role parents, family members and carers have in the day to day life of their loved ones.

That this Council now recognises World Down Syndrome Day on 21st March each year, and in doing so we are acknowledging all men, women and children with Down Syndrome in our Council area'.

The Mayor advised, in accordance with Standing Orders, the matter would be referred, without discussion, to the Corporate Policy & Resources Committee.

* ***Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, Director of Leisure & Development, Director of Environmental Services, Chief Finance Officer, Council Solicitor left the meeting at 9.42PM.***

* ***Head of Performance, Head of Wellbeing & Sport, Internal Auditor had left the meeting at this stage in proceedings.***

The Mayor asked Council whether they wished to move 'In Committee', as the Agenda Item related to staff matters.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN COMMITTEE'

Proposed by Councillor Holmes
Seconded by Alderman Hillis

- That Council move *'In Committee'*.

The Mayor put the proposal to the Council to vote.
18 Members voted For; 14 Members voted Against.
The Mayor declared the motion carried.

* **Press/Public left the meeting at 9.44PM.**

Following a question from a member regarding the vacation of the Senior Management and subsequent direction from the Mayor, the Democratic and Central Services Manager left the Chamber to gain additional information.

* **Democratic & Central Services Manager left the Chamber at 9.49PM.**

* **Democratic & Central Services Manager re-joined the meeting.**

The Mayor, having received the information, advised Council the reason the Senior Management had left the Chamber was due to a conflict of interest.

**19. NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR QUIGLEY,
SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR MA MCKILLOP**

'This council agrees to appoint independent consultants, specialising in senior management assessment, and takes immediate steps to advertise, interview and appoint accordingly. Such consultants to prepare an independent report and present to council within a three-month time scale.'

Councillor Quigley spoke in support of the Notice of Motion, she advised this was the only Council to have their accounts qualified by a local government auditor, as there were serious issues with them. She advised an independent consultant was required. Councillor Quigley referred to adhering to the Code of Conduct, the 7 principles of public life. She had a moral responsibility to constituents to take control of the situation, correct it and ensure it would not happen again, to ensure openness and transparency.

Councillor MA McKillop, having seconded the Notice of Motion outlined her support, she advised a hike in rates would not solve the financial problem.

Councillor Peacock agreed with the Notice of Motion, she asked the proposer, Councillor Quigley to amend the Motion to remove the word *'senior'*, as it stood, she felt the Motion was too narrow and add,

'This review will look at performance review and measures, at every level of the organisation a root and branch review, in the interests of transparency and public confidence.'

Councillor Quigley confirmed she was content with the amended text.

Councillor McCaw stated his support for the amended Notice of Motion.

* **Councillor Wilson left the meeting at 9.55PM.**

Councillor P McShane stated issues had been highlighted at the Audit Committee, there were 2 more issues to follow, that an investigation must include a forensic audit, independent from Officers and the Board of the organisation.

Councillor P McShane asked the Motion be amended further to remove '*appoint accordingly*', and include,

'appoint a fully external, independent, forensic auditor'.

Councillor Quigley confirmed she was content with the further amended text.

Councillor Callan referred to the current PwC audit which had highlighted significant changes and a range of options, PwC were under contract for 6 months, he felt the Notice of Motion could be supplied to PwC to undertake the work.

Councillor Callan stated Councillor Quigley had said Councils accounts were not qualified, the Chief Finance Officer stated they were and he therefore expressed concern surrounding the Northern Ireland Audit Office, he stated there was no evidence to support what Councillor Quigley had stated. He advised any accusation of fraud should be raised with the proper authorities, NIAO, Public Ombudsman and Police.

* **Alderman Finlay left the meeting at 10.07PM during above considerations.**

Councillor Holmes stated the Notice of Motion had changed dramatically, Council had employed PwC and now CIPFA, he stated performance management and forensic audit were two very different disciplines, he advised Councillors to read the reports.

Councillor McMullan distanced himself from remarks concerning '*fraud*', he stated this was a matter for authorities and not for this forum.

In response to a request from Councillor McLean concerning, '*What was the truth?*', Councillors P McShane and Quigley respectively referred to the Judicial Review Judgment from Justice McCloskey, Councillor P McShane

stated information should have been highlighted by Officers and had not been.

The Mayor clarified the wording of the amended Notice of Motion:

“That this Council agrees to appoint independent consultants specialising in management assessment and takes immediate steps to advertise, interview and appoint a fully external independent forensic auditor. Such consultants to prepare an independent report and present to Council within 3 months. This review will look at performance review and measures, at every level of the organisation a root and branch review, in the interests of transparency and public confidence.”

The Mayor put the above amended Notice of Motion to the Council to vote. 14 Members voted For; 13 Members voted Against; 2 Members Abstained. The Mayor declared the amended Notice of Motion Carried.

For (14)	Councillors Bateson, Beattie, Chivers, Dallat O’Driscoll, MA McKillop, McLaughlin, McMullan, McQuillan, P McShane, Mulholland, Nicholl, Peacock, Quigley, Schenning
Against (13)	Alderman Hillis, McCandless, McCorkell, McKeown, S McKillop, Robinson
	Councillors Callan, Holmes, Hunter, Knight-McQuillan, McAuley, McLean, Scott
Abstain (2)	Alderman Boyle
	Councillor McCaw

MOTION TO PROCEED ‘IN PUBLIC’

Proposed by Councillor Nicholl
Seconded by Councillor Peacock and

AGREED – that Council move ‘In Public’.

This being all the business, the Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 10.28PM.

Mayor