

# WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



Wicklow County Council  
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTAIN

## **Transcript of the County Council Budget Meeting Held on 24 November 2014 In the County Council Chamber, Wicklow**



Text streamed live to the web on [www.seewritenow.ie](http://www.seewritenow.ie)



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7 Wicklow County Council Annual Budget Meeting, 24th of November 2014:

8  
9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Good morning members. Just very quickly, before we start, I'll give you  
10 some sort of indication how I hope this will proceed!

11  
12 It's my intention to take the manager's preamble as read, we don't need to get into a huge big  
13 preamble before the actual figures and nitty-gritty.

14  
15 We'll go through the different programmes, after which then I'll let people in to have a general  
16 discussion on the budget, and proposals. So we'll go straight into the actual programmes, we'll  
17 go through the figures in each programme and then after that we'll have our general discussion,  
18 no point in having a general discussion at the start then for the budget to be amended, and  
19 another discussion afterwards.

20  
21 So we'll go into the actual detail of the figures, then we'll have our discussion.

22 Cllr BEHAN: Chairman on a point of order. About three meetings ago the Council was  
23 informed that there was a sum of in excess of 2 million euro had come into the receipts of the  
24 Council that wasn't expected under the second home tax or NPPR or whatever the proper title of  
25 it is, okay?

26  
27 And I firmly believe that we should have an absolute guarantee here, before we discuss the  
28 estimates, that that 2 million euro will be available for us to decide how it's going to be spent.  
29 It's public money, we are the public representatives, we own this process, and I would like us to  
30 agree now, that that money will be available for us to decide. We might decide some of it might  
31 go towards the deficit or some of it might not.

32  
33 On a point of principle this money is for us to decide where it goes, not anybody else. And I  
34 would ask that we make that decision first and foremost, so we know we have this money to

1 spend when we come to making our final decisions. I'd like to propose that.

2 Cllr FORTUNE: I second that chair.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, look, a lot of councillors have indicated in relation to the NPPR,  
4 when we're making proposals I don't see the merit of having it at the start of the meeting. When  
5 councillors are making their proposals to add money or take money away from proposals I think  
6 we'll have discussion on it. I know a number of councillors want to have a discussion on that  
7 particular point. So what I'd like to do is just go through the draft in front of us, then if it's  
8 agreed to add money to the programmes, we can take proposals from the councillors, okay? Cllr  
9 Brady?

10 Cllr BRADY: Thanks Cathaoirleach, I agree with all of that, I'm not going to touch on that  
11 Cathaoirleach, I just hope that you and other members will join me in congratulating our new  
12 world -- our world champion again, Katie Taylor, this morning in the small hours of this  
13 morning she won her fifth consecutive world championship in South Korea, a huge achievement  
14 bearing in mind she's a six time European champion and of course Olympic champion as well, so  
15 it's a huge, huge achievement.

16  
17 It's only right that we acknowledge that here at our meeting. And maybe send out a letter of  
18 congratulations maybe a bouquet of flowers to Katie, it's a huge, huge achievement to remain on  
19 top of her game like that for so long, undefeated, and I think we need to look at some way of  
20 marking that achievement. I know we've given her the Freedom of the County, we've set up a  
21 bursary fund, we've given her civic receptions, but I think we need to look at some way of  
22 marking this, it is another huge milestone that needs to be marked. Probably the best Irish  
23 athlete we've ever seen, unfortunately our national broadcaster maybe doesn't see it that way,  
24 unfortunately they didn't show the fight this morning, I don't think it was on RTÉ radio as well,  
25 thankfully TG4 showed it this morning, so full credit to them, but it certainly is showing up our  
26 national broadcaster. And maybe a letter could be sent to them just to ask them why they didn't  
27 think it was important to show the fight.

28  
29 But just a huge, huge congratulations to Katie, Pete who was in her corner and Zorro also  
30 another great Wicklow resident also in her corner. Huge achievement, congratulations to her,  
31 her family and everyone that's been following her over the many years. Thanks Cathaoirleach.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks councillor. I concur with all that. Her bursary is actually being  
33 presented in the next couple of weeks, to a girl from Roundwood. Cllr Thornhill?

34 Cllr THORNHILL: (Congratulates Katie in Irish!)

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr O'Neill.

2 Cllr O'NEILL: I just want to add my voice, I have been involved in boxing all my life. I want to  
3 add my voice congratulating Katie. I had the honour of manager of the Irish senior team, on a  
4 trip to Canada where Katie boxed nine year ago.

5  
6 Just looking at the fight this morning again, she boxed at 60 kilo in Toronto nine year ago, still at  
7 60 kilo.

8  
9 I second Cllr Brady, my colleague here, because really, if we could honour her in some sort of  
10 way, she is a great represent -- ambassador for young people, maybe if we go down that line, get  
11 her out and about in the county, she's a role model.

12 Cllr FORTUNE: I'd like to be associated with those remarks, I think it's absolutely fantastic  
13 achievement, what she's achieved. And also privileged to present her with freedom of the county  
14 a number of years ago. I think she brought tremendous honour to this county and it should be  
15 marked, the way it's been proposed, I'm sure all members will agree with that.

16 Cllr O'BRIEN: I think what Cllr O'Neill said there, he said a role model, that's what Katie  
17 Taylor is, a role model for everyone in the chamber here, what she has done over the past  
18 number of years, she's a multi-talented sports woman, I have many great memories of Katie, I'll  
19 give you one particular incident. Cllr Walsh I think was singing the praises of David Kelly last  
20 week, I had the fortune to start with Sheedy Cudihy, a mighty hurler, we were playing an under  
21 12 match against Eire Óg, a boys match, they decided to put the best player on Billy Cudihy, he  
22 said she gave him such a roasting he didn't surface for a week after.

23  
24 That was Katie, she's always in good humour, she's the kind of person -- I remember going into a  
25 supermarket once and not spotting her, but Katie Taylor spotted me, world champion, that says  
26 an awful lot about the woman she is. She treated everyone the same, she never changed since  
27 she became a world champion. She did what Kerry couldn't do, what Kilkenny couldn't do! She  
28 did the five in a row!

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks councillor and Billy got over it as well! Cllr Ryan?

30 Cllr RYAN: Is it me? Again I'd like to be associated with everything everybody said. I think  
31 there's a little danger that we nearly take it for granted now that Katie Taylor is going to become  
32 a world champion again and again, she's just spectacular in what she does, she is an official  
33 ambassador for Bray and we couldn't ask for a better one.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Fitzgerald.

1 Cllr FITZGERALD: Just obviously a great performance this morning and listening to Katie  
2 Taylor on the radio, you could see the commentator said she was enthusiastic today as when she  
3 won her first world medal, and certainly it has a huge impact throughout the county on boxing  
4 club, I'm not a member of Arklow boxing club but I know, Gerry would be aware more than I  
5 would, the number of female that is have joined Arklow boxing club, one or two of them are  
6 fairly successful, one is a Leinster champion at this stage and she has ambitions to be the next  
7 Katie Taylor when Katie retires, in fact. But that's the way to be.

8  
9 But it was a tremendous performance and listening to the radio, it was highly emotional, her  
10 speech, her input on the radio from herself and her father and the other gentleman. It's great for  
11 the county, great for Ireland and the impact it's having on young people in sports is tremendous  
12 and that's very important as well.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Murphy?

14 Cllr MURPHY: I'd like to express congratulations as well, I suppose the men have all spoke  
15 about the sporting, but I think as a woman she showed where equality is at its best, and also  
16 being part of Wicklow tourism, she certainly put Wicklow on the map, she put our county on the  
17 map and she has never forgot where she came from. And her strength is that she believes in  
18 what she does, and as Cllr Fitzgerald said, she certainly put the bar up for the youth of Wicklow  
19 and Ireland and around the world. Every club you speak to or attend, the amount of little girls  
20 and teenage girls attending and believing in themselves and just a fantastic role model, so well  
21 done.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks councillor. Okay. We'll get straight into the budget. I'll ask  
23 Mr Nicholson and Mr Doyle, sorry Mr Quirke. It's housing and roads.

24 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Just to give an outline, we're going to consider housing and building and  
25 roads -- I'll start shouting before the end of the day you'll be all right!

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Don't lose your voice.

27 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Might be better off! Right housing and building and road transport and  
28 safety, that's division A and B, just to very briefly say on page 56 is table A which tells the  
29 estimated expenditure for housing is 17,301,128. And estimated income is 18,052,426 and that's  
30 broken down further in table B on page 57 and on table F on pages 65 to 67.

31  
32 For roads then the estimated expenditure is 22,432,594 with income budgeted at 12,208,222 and  
33 again that's broken down on table B by service on page 57 and on table F by sub service on  
34 pages 68 to 70. There's not a lot to say on that.

1 Cllr FITZGERALD: Just I'm particularly interested in housing, can I ask the director a question,  
2 it mightn't be directly related to the budget, but there has been funding provided in, for Arklow  
3 under the jobs payment construction initiative of 540,000 and 300,000 under the housing capital  
4 programme which is a total amount of 840,000, and I did receive communication last week from  
5 the Minister supporting the acquisition of units, that's a matter for the local authority as the  
6 housing authority to identify the social housing need and respond as required. And that did not  
7 rule out the local authority purchasing houses. So I just want to ask the director, this is just a  
8 first question if you could respond? Is there any, at this stage any indication that Wicklow  
9 County Council will use the funding of 840,000 for the purchase of houses in Arklow?

10 DIRECTOR NICHOLSON: Well I suppose it's nice to start off with good news councillor.  
11 You're right there was 300,000 allocated earlier in the year to Arklow Town Council for new  
12 build and further 540,000 allocated through the jobs initiative, 840,000 and I have received only  
13 on Friday permission from the Department to use up that money by acquiring houses in Arklow.  
14 I have already been in contact with auctioneers and it will be my intention to spend that money  
15 immediately and have it all spent by the end of the year.

16  
17 So it should certainly buy us four, maybe five houses.

18 Cllr FITZGERALD: Certainly, can I just say that's great news and I want to thank the Minister  
19 for his positive response last Friday, I want to make it quite clear it's slightly different from  
20 previous communications, where it didn't seem to be possible to do that, but I want to thank the  
21 director of housing and the manager for Arklow. And this is not a political issue, but I couldn't  
22 ask that question myself in the Dáil, but I got two other people to ask it Barry Cowans and  
23 Deputy Billy Timmins, and I want to thank them for their support and it is a good day for  
24 Arklow, the fact is that we can spend 840,000 on social housing.

25  
26 Just one other issue with that budget, what is the figure included in that budget for central  
27 heating? Because I know that in the Arklow municipal district there's a lot of people awaiting  
28 work done and I just can't decipher the figure there, because I would be proposing part of the  
29 budget process that we include that budget, could I just have an answer to that question please?

30 DIRECTOR NICHOLSON: There's no specific provision in the budget for central heating as  
31 such, there's almost 2 million for housing maintenance in general, some may include central  
32 heating, but nothing specific for central heating. What we can do is what we've been doing up to  
33 now, is use capital financing from the department, we receive an allocation every year and that  
34 allows us to do some central heating, so we regard central heating as planned maintenance, as

1 opposed to response maintenance. So there's no specific provision for central heating per se.

2 Cllr FITZGERALD: One final question, local property tax on 4,301 social houses, what  
3 programmes, I can't figure that out, where is that coming from? What programme is included in  
4 it?

5 DIRECTOR NICHOLSON: Unfortunately it's included in programme 1, it's 377,950 which is  
6 €90 per house on excess of 4,000 houses, it's a charge on the housing.

7 Cllr FITZGERALD: Which code is that in?

8 DIRECTOR NICHOLSON: It's not listed separately, it's in programme 1.

9 Cllr FITZGERALD: Does that affect our ability to build houses? Buy houses, or repair houses?

10 DIRECTOR NICHOLSON: No, housing capital programme is always capital, it doesn't affect  
11 the budget when we get an allocation to build or buy houses, it's always separate. It's  
12 unfortunate we have to pay out 400,000 on local property tax for social houses and it's  
13 unfortunate it hit the housing programme, it's 400 grand, that's unfortunate.

14 Cllr FITZGERALD: Before I finish I just want to thank the other five municipal district  
15 councillors for their support over the last few months in trying to get social housing for Arklow  
16 and I very much welcome the fact that today that you are in the position director to go ahead and  
17 purchase houses. Thank you.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, we'll take all the members' questions first and then let him answer,  
19 because there might be duplication. Cllr Bourke?

20 Cllr BOURKE: I'm delighted with that good news that the director announced about house  
21 purchases in Arklow and delighted that the government have released this funding, I hope it's the  
22 start of a continuous funding stream as it seems that the policy of the previous government has  
23 been reversed and we'll get social housing now on a larger scale throughout the county.

24  
25 A couple of points just in relation to housing, the tenant purchase scheme is mentioned and it's  
26 been going on for a long time, it's a disappointment it hasn't been announced that we have this  
27 new tenant purchase scheme yet, I wonder does the director have any up-to-date news on the  
28 tenant purchase scheme?

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Try and stick to the budget councillor.

30 Cllr BOURKE: With regard to the central heating programme proposed, we have had people in  
31 the past looking to go back to solid fuel who had had previous conversions to central heating, I  
32 just wonder is it possible if we are going to embark on a central heating programme could we  
33 have a dual purpose system where people could either use their back boilers or stoves in tandem  
34 with oil fired central heating, because last year there were a number of people who found it

1 difficult to buy oil to keep their houses heated with central heating and couldn't revert back to  
2 back boiler use. So that's a possible issue I'd like to flag and have it addressed.

3  
4 There seems to have been an over spend last year of about 500,000 in the housing repair budget,  
5 I was wondering could we get a breakdown of the overspend? I'm not complaining about an  
6 overspend in housing repairs if it is actually in repairs per se, because we generally are not  
7 spending enough money on our housing stock, and if at all possible I'd like to see housing repairs  
8 improved, and increased budget for that.

9  
10 So as I said if I can get those couple of points answered.

11 Cllr BLAKE: Thanks Cathaoirleach, Cllr Bourke asked the first question in relation to 500,000,  
12 that's only barely mentioned here on the last occasion that we had a meeting about the  
13 overspend, certainly we're not complaining about overspending, but I would be conscious of the  
14 effect it would have on our overall budget for the coming year as well.

15  
16 But one question I would ask is in relation to the actual ability of people out there to purchase  
17 local authority houses, we have been promised for the last year or year and a half that we'll have  
18 a new scheme in place, it doesn't appear to have come on board as yet, I'll ask maybe have we an  
19 update in regards to the possibility of allowing tenants to purchase local authority houses,  
20 certainly it would have an impact on the budget in the future with regard to our ability to spend.

21  
22 There is a significant amount of money in the programme for RAS, just a breakdown on where  
23 all that money is spent or coming in from, so maybe the roads as well, touch on that aspect of it,  
24 but I'll just ask those questions first of all.

25 Cllr BRADY: A couple of points here just in relation to housing, I think all members would  
26 agree it's one of the critical areas facing us as a local authority, to try not just come to terms with  
27 the huge housing crisis that's out there, but also the crisis that exists in terms of the maintenance  
28 of some of our properties within the county, that would probably explain as to why there was an  
29 overspend in the budget last year. It's unfortunate that our budget is down on the overspend, but  
30 marginally up I suppose on what was adopted by the Council last year, but it does, it raises the  
31 question and it's being spoken about not just at the housing SPC, but also in the chamber here as  
32 well, in relation to the rent accrued by the Council, much of that is actually ringfenced to go back  
33 into the maintenance of our properties, the figure of 20% has been bandied about a number of  
34 times as a figure that we would hope to achieve, would be ringfenced to go back into the



1 maintenance, so can I ask as to whether the marginal increase is anywhere near the 20% of  
2 revenue from tenant's rent, or are we still a bit off of that? I think it is something, it's a figure  
3 that is achievable and it's certainly the least amount that should be going back into the  
4 maintenance of the properties.

5  
6 At a meeting last week with Lorraine I asked a question, I don't know whether she had a chance  
7 to get the answers, just in relation to the spend from the Town Councils with regard housing  
8 maintenance over the last number of years, because I know the figure that's being proposed here  
9 would see an actual reduction in the amount of maintenance per house when you break it down  
10 per house, for what was the Bray Town Council area, I think in the previous housing SPC, there  
11 was some sort of a process there that would see the Town Councils and the old County Council  
12 spend kind of, harmonisation process being put in place to ensure that all Council properties  
13 received more or less the same amount of money with regard maintenance, but it appears there is  
14 going to be a huge reduction in the amount of money being spent on the housing stock in Bray,  
15 so whether we have that breakdown I'd be certainly interested in seeing that.

16  
17 Just in relation to the heading under housing estate management and tenancy management, both  
18 figures are actually down on what was adopted by the members last year, and I suppose the  
19 figures there when it says adopted by the Council, I wonder is that the County Council spend or  
20 is that encompassing the Town Council figures as well? Because there is a reduction there. And  
21 when we're dealing with our local authority estates there's problems in some areas of behaviour  
22 and other activities where it's critical that we have estate development officers on the ground, it's  
23 crucial that we have money going into those areas for residents associations, for estate  
24 development associations and that. So if there is any reduction there it is going to have a  
25 detrimental impact on building up those communities and empowering those communities as  
26 well.

27  
28 Just in relation to the homeless services and homeless grants to other bodies. Again this is a  
29 critical area and we've had figures given out by Michael at the housing SPC and other meetings  
30 that last year up to this point there were 70 families presented as homeless, this year I think it's, it  
31 may have exceeded 100 families have presented homeless to the Council here, unfortunately  
32 that's a figure that's continuing to grow and because of the flawed and failed policies of this  
33 government with regard to social leasing initiatives such as RAS where there is no properties out  
34 there or a huge shortage in properties, we have a lot of landlords now opting out of RAS and

1 that's becoming a huge problem, not just here for the staff but obviously for the families as well.  
2 I asked the question here, I think it was the last meeting, just for a breakdown on the number of  
3 families who are currently in hotels, the cost of that, the cost over the last number of years so I'm  
4 not sure as to whether the director has had a chance to get that answer, I know it was a fairly  
5 comprehensive question that was asked, but I think it would be very important to see those  
6 figures. Because whilst there has been some positive moves towards addressing the need for  
7 homelessness with regard to the facility here in Wicklow Town, we have Brighton Terrace in  
8 Bray as well, but there is a huge need there for more to be done with regard to homeless women  
9 and children, where those figures are continuing to rise and rise.

10  
11 I'm not sure as to what specific funding is being provided in there for that particular area, I know  
12 we have a couple of units here in Wicklow Town which are unfortunately bursting at their  
13 seams, but there is a huge demand there.

14  
15 Also in relation to Brighton Terrace, there's some issues there.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: This is a budget meeting, I know there is issues. Keep to the budget.

17 Cllr BRADY: It's a specific question, absolutely. I think unfortunately some of those problems  
18 are around the lack of services provided for the individuals that are in that property, I know there  
19 is changes being made there, there was an advertisement in the local media looking for people,  
20 or properties to provide that service in the county. But it's critical that we do have the additional  
21 services and supports around that. So I just ask as to whether there is a specific fund there to  
22 ensure that those services are provided, because it's wrong just to put someone in a homeless  
23 shelter or accommodation and walk away saying that the job is done, because it's not. It has not  
24 just implication for the person in it, it has ramifications for neighbours that may live beside the  
25 facility as well, so it's crucial that there is the funding there for that. So if we can get some  
26 clarity on that.

27  
28 Just in relation to - I just want to see as to whether it is going to have any impact on this budget  
29 or whether the County Manager has received any information via a memo from the department,  
30 it's in relation to Irish Water and the changes that were announced last week, just bear with me  
31 Cathaoirleach, that there was a suggestion there that Council tenants who fail to pay their water  
32 charges could see those payments added on to Council rents and I believe there was a memo sent  
33 out last week to all chief executives.

1 Now I just seek some clarity on that, because if it is the case where this Council is -- it's going to  
2 become a debt collector for Irish Water, it's going to have huge implications on our tenants who  
3 may end up being in arrears and there's implications with regard to that as well Cathaoirleach.

4  
5 Just a final point on housing Cathaoirleach. There's been substantial investment from the  
6 department, which is welcome, with regard to energy efficiency, and upgrading our housing  
7 stock and I know there's a second phase there, which will hopefully come in and see the  
8 replacement of windows and doors, but unfortunately there are some houses that probably fall  
9 outside of that, they are not fit, or not suitable for that energy efficiency, and I know they are  
10 looking at different ways of tackling that with regard maybe external insulation and that, but  
11 there are, in my opinion, some houses that will still fall out of the remit of that particular scheme.  
12 There's talk here about central heating and a fund for central heating, I have always said it's  
13 pointless putting in central heating unless windows and doors are to a high standard.  
14 Unfortunately a lot of our housing stock is still very, very poorly served when it comes to  
15 windows and doors, many single pane windows, old timber frames in many cases literally falling  
16 out. I believe there needs to be a specific ringfenced programme there for windows and doors, if  
17 we are talking about central heating, that needs to be replicated by a replacement window and  
18 door programme in the county here as well Cathaoirleach.

19  
20 That's on that particular heading, just in relation to road and transport Cathaoirleach.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: We'll come back to that.

22 Cllr BRADY: I thought you were taking the two?

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: I know but there are so many housing questions we'll come back to roads.

24 Cllr Behan?

25 Cllr BEHAN: Just three queries, page 13 of the document has an objective there, plan for and  
26 facilitate the provision of affordable housing, can the director indicate has he had any word from  
27 the department yet about the housing, new strategy where they are allegedly going to be offered  
28 2 or something billion for building of social housing and in particular we, as a Council, are we  
29 ready in terms of suitable staff to take advantage of whatever additional funding will come our  
30 way in that regard and can he tell us when we might expect word on that?

31  
32 Secondly on page 14 on the AO3, there is an indication that the housing rents system is going to  
33 change some time during 2015. Now there may well also be ramifications for tenants in advance  
34 of any national change because there may be different rent arrangements at the moment, let's say

1 between Bray Town Council or former Town Council and the other Town Councils and  
2 Wicklow County Council, so could the director comment on that, what exactly can we expect in  
3 terms of housing rent for 2015?  
4

5 And thirdly on page 16 on the housing grants to assist private households, would the director or  
6 the finance director maybe tell us are we expecting an increase in generally, in provision under  
7 those headings? Are we going to continue to fund applications received prior to now or is there  
8 going to be a new round of applications around that? Thank you.

9 Cllr SNELL: Just a few points to raise on this session. I'm sort of baffled to be honest with you  
10 to hear in regards to local property tax, Wicklow County Council is paying on average 90 euro  
11 that's in or around 400,000, when you don't see it coming up on figures here and I want to thank  
12 you before I go any further in regards to accommodating all the groups here in meeting the  
13 financial officers of the Council, I think it's been very helpful, I think it should shorten the  
14 meeting to a certain degree, but I'm disappointed when I hear the likes of this, because it doesn't  
15 show in any figures.  
16

17 So that 400,000 gets you thinking when you look at the rent. You say the rent from housing, the  
18 income from rent from housing adopted by the Council in 2014 was 1.1 million -- sorry 11.1  
19 million. And then the estimation for 2015 is 11.6 million. Which is obviously an increase of  
20 504,000. Are we saying that the public is going to pay for the local property tax on their own  
21 houses? How can we justify that? I certainly won't partake in any of that nonsense, that the  
22 members of the public in local authority houses, are we saying they are going to pay the local  
23 property tax? Because it's startling to find out that 400,000 -- for one I don't agree it should be  
24 coming from the housing budget at all, it should certainly not be coming from the housing  
25 budget.  
26

27 If you go to page 62, Cathaoirleach, table D and you look at the actual source of income to run  
28 the organisation of Wicklow County Council, by and large it's the housing section that's drawing  
29 in the biggest bulk of money to run this local authority, 11.6 million, apart from landfill charges  
30 10 million, everything else comes a long, long way behind that. And it's very disappointing then  
31 to hear that we don't get to retain a significant proportion of what's generated from the income to  
32 do what other members, and rightly what they are saying, in regards to maintenance of our local  
33 authority housing stock.  
34

1 Whether we like it or not we are landlords, this local authority is the landlord of over 4,000  
2 dwellings and I concur with some of what's been said, but just a point, I know Cllr Bourke said  
3 about some people would like the option to go back to solid fuel heating, in other words back  
4 boilers, and I agree it is an issue, people can't afford gas, can't afford oil, but I would like to point  
5 out that I'm aware of an awful lot of people who haven't the option to go back to solid fuel  
6 because they don't have any other form of central heating, they don't have a back boiler, they  
7 don't have gas and they don't have oil. We're landlords to these tenants, most of them you'll find  
8 are good tenants for over 30 years, and because they remained in the house that they are in today  
9 no works of significant change has took place on any of their properties.

10  
11 So I think they are the people we have to address first and foremost, they are the people who  
12 we're obligated to. Think about it, if you went home tonight and you only had an open fire and  
13 no back boiler and no radiators in any of your other bedrooms, kitchen or bathroom, I guarantee  
14 you we'd be in here singing a different tune if we all had to live in them circumstances. I think  
15 it's very unfair to look at the figures here and say that we're trying to do our best for the housing  
16 section. We're not doing our best for the housing section, we're not doing our best for the  
17 tenants, yet we're glad to take that 11.6 million off the back of these people, and Cllr Behan's  
18 right when he points out in regards to the insinuation that rent will go up in 2015, in a lot of  
19 cases we should be reducing the rent on these people.

20  
21 If we can't provide the very basics of windows, doors and central heating and we're talking about  
22 increasing the rent? There will have to be a harmonisation across the sector where no matter  
23 what part of the county you live the rent will be the same, but we need to get our act in order  
24 first, before we start addressing the likes of that.

25  
26 People think that we're getting 3.1 million for the maintenance of local authority housing units.  
27 And then when you come to this breakdown here, the draft of estimates, you see over 1 million  
28 is for salary and wages, other payroll costs 2.7 or 207,000, purchase of equipment 2,200, revenue  
29 transfers quarter of a million, repairs and maintenance 46,000, and you go right along and what  
30 really throws me altogether is other establishments 378,100 and it says note 3 when you go down  
31 to note 3, other establishment expenses includes cleaning/canteen. What in the name of God is  
32 that all about? What are we cleaning and what's the canteen got to do with anything?

33  
34 If we're being realistic and we look down here at the administration of homeless services, zero.

1 Homeless grants from other bodies is an increase, a small increase, but not sufficient in regards  
2 to addressing the real issue, which is homeless families, apart from homeless individuals,  
3 families. And everyone knows, everyone in this chamber knows families, they know individuals  
4 who have come to them looking for help, and we have a golden opportunity to try and address  
5 this, our Ministers, our TDs, and in fairness the allocation of 2.2 billion made by the government  
6 will have to be accessed through this local authority, some of that funding, to address the  
7 housing issue that's out there at the moment.

8  
9 Out of the budget we're saying here that the RAS operations is 5.1 million, so when you actually  
10 look at what's being adopted or people are hoping to adopt here today, 17 million, and our  
11 tenants are out there saying my God Wicklow County Council have 17 million to spend on their  
12 housing stock, and then you look and say well actually they don't, because when you take out the  
13 5.1 million, that's governed by central government, it's coming from their pot to Wicklow  
14 County Council, we have no real hand or act to play in that, so that funding is not available to  
15 the local authority, goes directly to private landlords, who in turn squirrel it away for their own  
16 use. And yet at a time when it's very hard to get your head around the figures because every  
17 Town Council, the old Town Councils have come into play now, so -- and I accept everything  
18 that Lorraine and Breda said, it will only be next year we get a true picture of the figures, it's  
19 blatantly obvious that the reduction in housing estate management is there in black and white,  
20 tenancy management is there and yet this is a sector of Wicklow County Council which is now  
21 taking on the role of Arklow Town Council, Bray Town Council, Wicklow Town Council,  
22 Greystones Town Council, a huge extra workload and we're reducing the funding for them. I  
23 think if we're being serious about housing and I know for a fact everyone in this chamber is  
24 serious about housing, I think we have to relook at these figures, I welcome the discussion, but  
25 certainly I have an awful lot of questions that I posed there. I do want an answer on local  
26 property tax and I want to see where in the figures that is, because that to me is disingenuous for  
27 one and unacceptable for two. Thanks Cathaoirleach.

28 Cllr CASEY: I'll be very brief, just in relation to the rental income of 11.6 million, is that net of  
29 any uncollectable rent and if not where is the bad debt provision in relation to the rents? Thank  
30 you.

31 Cllr TIMMINS: Just briefly as well, three short questions. Just in relation to the housing  
32 purchase loans in 2013, we just did four, in 2014 there were just four, I'm wondering what's the  
33 prospect of that have increasing in 2015? Especially now with the new restrictions, planning  
34 restrictions on people needing 20% deposit to purchase, I wonder is there anything we can do to

1 help people who want to help themselves and buy houses, so I'd like some information on that, in  
2 tandem with Cllr Blake's question of people actually buying the homes, I'm interested in that as  
3 well, it's put on hold, it's in limbo at the moment, I'd like an indication if that's going to happen.  
4

5 Two other short questions, you referred to the Glending estate, summons have been issued to the  
6 various parties, I'd like to know the legal status in relation to that process, that court process, it  
7 just seems to be dragging on for years, I think we should do everything we can to get the Council  
8 recoup some money, a lot of money has been spent there, I'd like to know what the up-to-date  
9 legal position is there.

10  
11 Lastly some good work was done in west Wicklow in energy efficiency in 2014 on the houses  
12 and I'm wondering -- it's referred to here on page 13 in the energy efficiency, but I want to know  
13 what's envisaged for 2015, thank you.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Winters?

15 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathaoirleach, just in relation to road transport and safety, under the  
16 traffic management improvement last year we adopted an expenditure of 3.5 million we only  
17 spent 1.8 million...

18 Cllr BRADY: I thought we were coming back to that section.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Roads? We're coming back, Cllr Blake and Brady too. We'll just deal  
20 with housing, my fault. There's been so many questions on housing. Cllr Murphy?

21 Cllr MURPHY: I totally agree with a lot of what the previous speakers spoke about and just one  
22 or two things, great news about the Arklow area or whatever, and purchasing of houses, and I'm  
23 sure that whoever is lucky enough to purchase these houses will be purchasing high quality  
24 houses, which goes without saying, but our own stock is not near at all, high quality. And as Cllr  
25 John Snell said we have long-term tenants who are living in inadequate housing, and also people  
26 with disabilities. Two weeks ago Wicklow County Council got a housing steering committee on  
27 disability in housing and we sat for two hours with people from agencies and it was a brilliant,  
28 brilliant meeting, and the hope is that Wicklow County Council are going to try to accommodate  
29 people with disabilities who are on the housing list for an awful long time and try to get people  
30 who are in institutions and congregated settings out to live independently, brilliant, absolutely  
31 brilliant, but I don't think it's going to be as simple as that.

32  
33 We at present have people who are tenants of Wicklow County Council for years, who are living  
34 in inadequate housing which is, as Cllr John Snell said we are the landlords of, the funding for

1 disability grants has been cut by an awful high percentage, cases now are done on a priority  
2 basis, but everybody with disability or any special needs are a priority. Money is running out  
3 halfway in the year, they are going on a file until the following year, is that good enough? I  
4 don't think so.

5  
6 So I want to know where is the funding coming from DPG grants. We all know people here who  
7 are being, their health disimproved since they went on the list, but then another priority person  
8 comes along and they have gone down the list. I know for a fact, us people in Arklow,  
9 municipal group know of somebody in a hospital in Dublin at the moment because that person  
10 can't be housed. So she is institutionalised in a hospital setting, very sad situation. And that's  
11 only one we all know of. So we really need to look at our own stock across the board. Thank  
12 you.

13 Cllr FORTUNE: Thanks Cathaoirleach, Cllr Snell covered a couple of things I wanted to look  
14 at. But a couple of specific questions, we have got housing estates out there built recently in the  
15 last recent years and there are serious issues with a number, I am thinking of Farrankelly -- have  
16 we anything included, behind the numbers here that's going to once and for all really finalise the  
17 issues that are there.

18  
19 Also I'm aware that there's been one or two problems in Woolford as well, where people are now  
20 faced with expenses as a result of for example a pipe that has burst, the pipe has been fixed but  
21 there has been collateral damage and people just don't have the funding to repair it, that kind of  
22 thing isn't their fault, because it seems to be the construction flaw with the, from the building of  
23 the house.

24  
25 I'm just wondering, because I'm a little concerned, we seem to be doing the same old, same old  
26 again, maybe that's the way, just an observation, maybe that's the way we should do it, but I'm  
27 really trying to get -- what I'm trying to say is have we got a practical solution to the problems  
28 out there? Like rent allowance, what are we -- how are we going to cover and deal with rent  
29 allowance? There is tenants out there worried to death because the rental allowance is not  
30 covering their rent, they are being pressurised in all kinds of different ways, what are we doing  
31 within our structure going forward to deal with that? I don't see that, I'm not picking that up  
32 anywhere and just an observation again, I do think that the summary in the front of the pack does  
33 require some discussion, as to how it relates to the numbers. I know you said you'd do it a  
34 different way.



1 CATHAOIRLEACH: We'll have a discussion.

2 Cllr FORTUNE: There is relevance in there, we are saying things and putting out a message to  
3 the public at large and you get into the numbers and say how are we going to do this? I don't see  
4 it happening, so we just have to be honest and fair with people, there are expectations out there  
5 now from people because of change that has been happening, like property tax and water  
6 charges, so we do need to demonstrate in a fair, open manner what's going on, because I'm just  
7 looking at the initial numbers and it's very hard to figure out what's behind a lot of them.

8 Cllr LAWLESS: Thank you Cathaoirleach, first of all I'd like to thank Lorraine and Breda as  
9 well for meeting with the groups last week, it was very informative and as a new councillor it  
10 also helped me get my head around the mechanism of how the budget works. I'd like to thank  
11 Breda actually for the spreadsheet, I went through it in great detail and there's a lot of figures that  
12 stand out that I would like, maybe some answers around.

13

14 In regard to housing, obviously we all know the money is needed in housing, it's huge,  
15 homelessness is huge. But I'm just looking on the spreadsheet on others and it says note 1 and  
16 just goes down to operational expenses including insurance, RAS payments, library books -- like  
17 the RAS programme brings in 5.1 million, sorry doesn't bring in, it goes out. But then there's  
18 over 692,000 -- I'm just wondering what actually is that, in the heading, is that insurance because  
19 insurance shouldn't cost that much, and is that money there that can be relocated into the areas  
20 that we have been discussing here?

21

22 The other area I was looking at is well is travelling subs, I have been looking throughout all  
23 sections. Travel and subs just for housing alone accumulating to 113,272. Now I do understand  
24 we all have to get paid for expenses if we are using our own vehicles, my question is are people  
25 getting paid twice under certain headings? Is there a way of saving? Some of the travel and  
26 subs is actually more than we got in our budget in the municipal district, so these are questions  
27 I'm looking at, the finer details of the figures and seeing can some of this money, can there be  
28 savings made and put back into where we need it within housing, thank you.

29 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just one question about the proposed rent stabilisation that comes into effect  
30 in 2015, I'd like to ask the manager if he knows anything about it, we have an estimated figure  
31 for rental income, is that going to be completely thrown out with this new scheme or do we  
32 know, any idea of what's happening with that?

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Okay. Mr Nicholson. Over to you.

34 DIRECTOR NICHOLSON: Thank you Cathaoirleach. Just a quite questions, I'll go through

1           them all as quickly as I can in as much detail as I can, if the members feel I haven't answered  
2           them sufficiently I'll be here all day or any time in the future.

3  
4           A good few questions about new tenant purchase scheme. I attended a meeting in Limerick last  
5           week where they announced details of the new scheme, it will be called the Incremental  
6           Purchase Scheme, it will be broadly in line with previous tenant purchase schemes where tenants  
7           can buy their houses, still waiting on final details, but it will be introduced very, very soon and  
8           certainly in the full year, 2015, tenants will be able to buy their houses under this new tenant  
9           purchase scheme.

10  
11          It will be a radically different scheme than previous schemes, in previous schemes the tenant got  
12          3% discount for each year of tenancy up to a maximum of 30%, this new scheme is based  
13          entirely on income. So it's a scheme that's been designed based on tenant's ability to pay, as  
14          opposed to length of tenancy. There will also be a claw back, this is to prevent purchasers  
15          selling immediately after buying and making profits, there will be a claw back facility where any  
16          discount will have to be clawed back -- so much per year claw back depending when they  
17          actually sell their homes. So that's good.

18  
19          I think it's expected to be fully implemented in the second quarter of 2015, so certainly before  
20          the summer of next year it will be fully implemented across all local authorities, so that's an  
21          update on the Incremental Purchase Scheme, it was a huge pent up demand, we are getting  
22          questions every other week about it, it looks like it's finally come through.

23  
24          We have had requests for people to go back to back boilers but there is a big focus in the housing  
25          section on energy efficiency and government are giving a lot of money to allow us to improve  
26          energy efficiency across the board, solid fuel is not energy efficient, it's one of the most  
27          inefficient fuel systems to have in a house, so it's not something we encourage, however we do  
28          appreciate that some people are struggling with oil and gas and we have facilitated tenants with a  
29          payment scheme for the gas, where they can install meters and pay as you go, and we'll certainly  
30          do that if anybody has difficulty paying their gas. We can also do this for electricity as well,  
31          most houses have now got these meters to pay as you go. Certainly we won't rule out solid fuel  
32          back boilers, but just to make the point they are not energy efficient and it's something we are  
33          conscious of, BER ratings and that, we're conscious of not going backwards when we're making  
34          such progress on energy efficiency, also the funding from the Department would not allow the

1 install back boilers, they focus entirely on insulation, gas and new boilers.

2  
3 Housing repair budget is always exceeded every year, there's never enough money for housing  
4 repairs to be perfectly honest with you. I make no apologies for overspending, because there are  
5 certain repairs we simply have to do in emergencies, particularly with health and safety issue,  
6 water and electricity in particular. But we do have an increased budget, maybe this year we  
7 won't need to overspend.

8  
9 In relation to 20%, I think in 2015 for the first time ever our total rental income will be 11  
10 million and our total expenditure on housing maintenance will be almost 2.1 million, 20% is 2.2,  
11 so we're almost at 20% of our rental income this year on housing maintenance, so we finally  
12 achieved what we have been doing for the last number of years, we're almost at 20%, so that's  
13 good news.

14  
15 It's not my intention to spend anymore money on housing in Bray than the rest of the county, that  
16 wouldn't be fair, the fact that Bray tenants have had more money spent by Bray Town Council I  
17 don't think that's the case, I don't see why a house in Bray should get more money spent on it,  
18 we'll try and make sure every house gets the same allocation and I make no apologies for that.

19  
20 The residents association budget is not decreased, it actually went up by 10,000, that's in view of  
21 the fact we have more associations this year than previous years, we're encouraging more  
22 associations all the time, we need more money. We have an increase in homeless facilities again  
23 you can never have enough money for homeless, I could have double the budget and still not  
24 enough, but we have an increase next year for homelessness, so it goes some way to meeting the  
25 pent up demand.

26  
27 The RAS scheme costs us 5 million, but we get it back, it goes in and comes out, that 5 million  
28 goes entirely to landlords and we claim back from the Department and give back on a month by  
29 month basis. The RAS scheme doesn't cost any money, and all the overheads we also recoup  
30 that, RAS scheme is self financing. We also get cheaper rents out of them and that goes into the  
31 rent figures as well.

32  
33 We have advertised for services for the homeless in Bray, we have got a couple of inquiries and I  
34 will bring back a report later, we'll discuss it at Council meetings. But there is funding in place

1 for Brighton Terrace in 2015.

2  
3 I have received no correspondence in relation to tenants being charged for water charges, as far  
4 as we're concerned water charges is entirely a matter for the user of the water, entirely a matter  
5 for the tenants. Energy efficiency spend, we have been getting an allocation every year and  
6 we're spending it very well, I hope to get it again next year. I do accept that some houses are not  
7 suitable for energy efficiency, but we don't just do central heating, we do energy efficiency to  
8 upgrade a house, we do insulation, we'll often pump walls as well, so we don't just put in central  
9 heating, I agree with the members, there is no point just putting in central heating if the other  
10 insulation is not up to scratch.

11  
12 Housing strategy was supposed to be launched last week, it wasn't, there was some delay, so it  
13 hasn't been launched yet, I have no word yet on a housing construction programme for next year,  
14 but I am expecting one and expect it to be signed off shortly. We were hoping for word last  
15 week, but it is on the way. How ready are we? I suppose we're currently checking all our land  
16 and checking water and sewerage facilities and checking ownership and getting sites ready, we  
17 do need staff, I can't do it without staff, we'll need to recruit staff or hire consultants, which I  
18 don't want to do, we have sought staff from the Department, we have no word yet. I'm hoping  
19 when we get announcement from the Department I hope it comes with some easing of the  
20 moratorium of staff, because there is no point giving an allocation if we can't build without the  
21 staff.

22  
23 There will be a new rent scheme next year, it will be one rent scheme to apply across the whole  
24 county, at the moment we have different schemes, there is one scheme for the county, not much  
25 detail as yet, except it will be €30 per week -- it won't be a national scheme as such, it will be a  
26 rent scheme, each authority has to adopt it's own scheme, it's a reserve function, so the members  
27 will adopt the function in 2015 and you will adopt it following certain guidelines, it won't be a  
28 national scheme as such, it will be national parameters and we may come up with a scheme. It's  
29 the first time it's been a reserve function of the members.

30  
31 Housing allocation grants, we get an allocation every year, generally about 750 grand, no  
32 indication of that increase or decrease next year, but we certainly expect that to remain at least at  
33 the same level, in fact the budget made reference to the fact it could go up, so maybe we'll get an  
34 increase next year, we spend it all, we have a huge number of applications right across the sector

1 under 3 headings, it would be nice to get a higher allocation and maybe we will next year.

2  
3 There's normally an increase in rents, if you look at the figures presented to you, in 2014 out turn  
4 was effectively 11.7 million, the budget for next year is 11.6, so it's more or less in line with this  
5 year's out turn, so we're not anticipating any huge increase in rent next year, it should more or  
6 less stay the same even with the new scheme.

7  
8 The figure included in the budget is the net figure, we normally assume 90% collection not  
9 100%, we always assume difficulty collecting some rent.

10  
11 There is very little interest in people applying to the Council for house loans, there is no real  
12 advantage in getting a loan from the Council, it's the same as getting a loan from the private  
13 sector, so really that's why we haven't been getting any interest in it. You have to have been  
14 turned down for a loan from other financial institutions before you can apply to the Council for a  
15 loan, so why would we give someone a loan if they were turned down by a financial institution?

16  
17 Energy efficiency this year was spent primarily in west Wicklow, that's where our housing stock  
18 according to BER results needed most efficiency, we hope to get an allocation in 2015 and we'll  
19 look at the BER, the fact that we have done a BER on every house means we can target those  
20 with low BER ratings, we got the money last year and this year we targeted the low BER ratings,  
21 so I'm not sure what part of the county it will be, but certainly based on the BER ratings.

22  
23 Glending is an ongoing saga, we're making significant progress, we have refurbished most of the  
24 houses, still a few more to go, the legal process is very, very slow. We have to get this right, we  
25 have to make sure we have all our ducks lined up. If we go in there we could very well, despite  
26 all the evidence, we could very well lose that case if we're not careful, so we won't go to court  
27 until we have absolutely everything lined up, that's a very slow process, there are so many  
28 people involved in that, not just taking one case, we're taking a number of cases, and there's a lot.  
29 In the meantime we're doing the work, being funded by the Department. There is a clear  
30 understanding we'll get all this money back from those responsible for doing the shoddy  
31 workmanship, whether that's one, two, three or four suppliers. The Department are paying us the  
32 money on the understanding we get it all back through court cases.

33  
34 I do accept the point made about when we buy houses on the market we buy top quality houses,

1 that's all we buy, that may seem unfair to those in existing houses who may not be so good, but  
2 just to make the point when we allocate these houses we don't necessarily allocate them to  
3 people off the list, we often transfer people into these houses that gives us a chance to do up the  
4 houses that become vacated, so it may turn out some tenants will transfer to these houses, so it  
5 could be good news for them as well.

6  
7 I accept the point about the disability sector, we are going to have to spend a bit more time on  
8 designing houses to cater for those with disabilities, very few of our stock would be disability  
9 friendly, and we need to spend more. Unfortunately when we come to buy houses it's rare to buy  
10 a house that has been adapted and we depend on the housing adaptation grants to adapt the  
11 houses.

12  
13 Yes, we have some problem estates, Glending is only one, we have problem, estates. It's not a  
14 budget issue because all the money spent on those is capital allocation, sometimes we use a  
15 bond, we have a bond, or retention money, or sometimes in the case of Glending we get money  
16 from the Department, so it's not an issue for the budget we don't have to spend any of the  
17 maintenance money on those problems.

18  
19 We accept the rent allowance is too low, particularly in parts of Wicklow, we have made a case  
20 to the Department of Social Protection to increase the rent allowance.

21  
22 The rent allowance in Bray of 1,000 a month is the highest in the country, so we have got Bray  
23 separated in recent years, which is good. We want to make sure though that rent allowance is  
24 increased and landlords simply don't increase the rents, we want to make sure it benefits the  
25 tenant, as opposed to benefiting the landlord, but that's being reviewed at the moment by the  
26 Department, they are carrying out a review of all rent allowances and also rent caps so we'll  
27 await word on that.

28  
29 Travel and subsistence of 113,000 is a very small amount of money for the staff I have in the  
30 housing section, that has significantly reduced over the last number of years, it has been cut  
31 drastically from what it was, and the rates themselves have been cut and we're very, very  
32 conscious in housing, we share travel all the time, I'm sure the members do too when they travel.  
33 We only use cars when we haven't got buses or rail, and we don't generally claim subs, so it's a  
34 very, very small amount of money and has been drastically cut.

1  
2 Update of the housing assistance payment, there are a number of County Councils at the moment  
3 piloting housing assistance payment, I have a list of them here, Limerick City and county, Cork  
4 county, Waterford county, Louth county, Kilkenny county, based on the results of those pilots it  
5 will be rolled out to other local authorities, we'll expect to get it next year, not sure what quarter,  
6 I suspect the latter part of next year, we'll learn from what our colleagues in these counties  
7 experienced, it's going reasonably well and the Department is intent on rolling it out. So the  
8 good news is by the time we get the scheme, all the teething problems will be ironed out, it will  
9 kick in next year, it won't affect us too much, we'll require more staff to implement it because we  
10 have to inspect a lot of houses and we haven't got any inspection staff and we'll need more office  
11 staff as well, it's quite a complicated scheme, and anybody who gets assistance will be taken off  
12 the housing list, that's the first thing we must remember. So that's all the questions I think. If I  
13 missed any or anyone wants to talk to me I'm here all day.

14 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Just a couple of things to follow on from Michael and to clarify. Firstly  
15 in relation to the estate management, the decrease is just a reallocation of staff, I think I  
16 mentioned this in a number of meetings with the Town and County Council amalgamations they  
17 are now charged to the municipal district, it's not a reduction of budget, it's reallocation of staff.

18  
19 In terms of the rental income and rents, the 11.6 million includes about 1 million for RAS, so our  
20 rental income is about 10.5 million and on direct maintenance, as Michael mentioned, we're  
21 spending about 2.1 million, that's over 20% for 2015. What it doesn't include, and you can add  
22 on on top of that, is because you're insuring your houses, which is another 600,000, your LPT if  
23 you want to include that it brings it up to 29 percent, so we are over and above by a good stretch  
24 in terms of spending 20% of rent on housing maintenance and that's outside any staff costs, in  
25 terms of administration or travel accommodation or anything along those lines.

26  
27 In addition there was one other question on the other costs, Cllr Lawless raised it, particularly for  
28 -- what's included in the overall total of that 7.9 million, there's 5.2 million relates to RAS  
29 payment to landlords straight out, another 2.5 is insurance and the balance then is about 250,000  
30 which covers meals for firemen, library books and some arts activities that's the total in there.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Chief executive wants to come in.

32 COUNTY MANAGER: Just in relation to housing construction programme, next year we've  
33 indicated to the Department that there's four things really that we need to have in place in order  
34 to get on with the programme next year, the first thing is a number of units that the Department

1 would allow us to build, the second thing is the money to pay for it, the third thing is we would  
2 need to engage consultants to do some work for us on it, and the fourth thing is we would need  
3 additional staff.

4  
5 Obviously we won't know the number of units or the available funding until next year, but in  
6 order to try and get ourselves into a position that we'll be able to respond more quickly and to try  
7 and get sites shovel ready, we'll be advertising very shortly for consultants that we would be able  
8 to use then if we need them to help with particular schemes, and in addition to that it's clear that  
9 we'll need some additional staff, because we've run down the housing construction area over the  
10 last five or six years because we were told there wouldn't be housing construction programmes  
11 again, so we expect to advertise for some additional staff in the housing area next week -- sorry  
12 this week in fact, we're working on ads at the moment to do that, and again the position is what  
13 we hope to do is have panels of people in place if and when we get an allocation and if and when  
14 the employment of additional staff is approved, that we'll be able to immediately contact people  
15 and ask them to start rather than starting to advertise when the jobs are sanctioned, so we'll try  
16 and be ready to respond immediately that the government makes a decision in this area.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you. And just in addition to that, Cllr Snell and myself and  
18 senior staff member from housing went to Leinster House and met members of the Oireachtas,  
19 just to push the points and what I'll do is get Cllr Snell to give a report to the next Council  
20 meeting on the points that came out of that discussion.

21 Cllr RUTTLE: Just quickly going back to what Mr Nicholson said, I agree back boilers are very  
22 inefficient, but when people approach me about heating in their house it's not back boilers, it's  
23 stoves which are much more efficient, they are 80% efficiency as against the back boiler 25 to  
24 30. And they can be purchased well under a thousand for any housing, they have a very high  
25 level of efficiency, but I consider back boiler as an antiquated system, where if you go into any,  
26 even on the retail end of the trade, well under a thousand euro you can purchase even in that area  
27 the retail end, a stove which will heat a house very efficiently, that's what people are talking  
28 about, not traditional back boiler.

29  
30 The other issue on housing, from the environmental service, funding and the manager talking  
31 about staff for housing development, the situation we have in west Wicklow where we have two  
32 towns, one town hasn't got the sewerage capacity and the other hasn't got water capacity, yet we  
33 have properties there which cost us probably in the region of maybe 15, 16 million. What comes  
34 on, we can't do anything, but we have expenses there.



1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you councillor.

2 Cllr BOURKE: Just on a point of information...

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Brady on a point of clarification?

4 Cllr BRADY: Just a couple of things. I raise this issue of the notion that the Councils would be  
5 asked to become debt collectors for Irish Water with a view of any tenants that possibly didn't  
6 pay their water charges that it could in some way be added to rents, I think that suggestion was  
7 made last week in Leinster House and carried in the Irish Times, there was a suggestion that a  
8 memo had been sent out to all local authorities in regard to that possibility, just to get  
9 clarification on that.

10

11 Just a second thing in relation to the Housing Assistance Payment, I think it's an area that is  
12 going to cause huge difficulty there and I've seen no money being allocated for it, I think it was  
13 suggested this was due to come in in January, the director says it could be the latter end of next  
14 year, but there's going to be huge difficulty for here people who are now going to become  
15 Council tenants taken off the housing list, many of those who are unfortunately in substandard  
16 accommodation now at the moment are going to be deemed to have their housing requirements  
17 met in substandard accommodation. So there's going to be a real onus on this Council to get out  
18 and carry out checks on those houses before they are taken in as Council tenants. So I'm  
19 surprised that there's no money been earmarked for that process and maybe the director, maybe  
20 it's a case of we don't know when it's coming so we can't actually provide for it, but it will cause  
21 huge difficulties not just in terms of that, but also I have a genuine fear that it's going to add to  
22 the homeless crisis that we have, because these people are deemed to be in unsuitable properties,  
23 it's going to cause a substantial amount of money for landlords to bring the properties up to a  
24 suitable standard, there's a dilemma for them and knock-on effect. We know the critical  
25 situation out there with regard the onus on private sector filling that.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay we get the point. Cllr Bourke?

27 Cllr BOURKE: The director mentioned a pent up demand for the tenant purchase scheme  
28 coming in next year, could I propose whatever revenue stream we get could be ringfenced within  
29 the capital or revenue budget of the housing section and councillors would have a say in how it  
30 would be spent, because it could be half a million euro if there is a half dozen houses say, or up  
31 to a million.

32 Cllr BLAKE: Just briefly, throughout the year we have had some bit of confusion with regard to  
33 the repairs and who was actually responsible for repairs, whether it was the local engineer. We  
34 went to the office there on numerous occasion, we were told to go to the central office here in

1 Wicklow, I'm looking in the future with the new district set up, will there be a greater allocation  
2 of money that the engineers at local level will be responsible for a greater distribution of that  
3 money? And secondly in relation to Cllr Ruttle's question about the new type of furnace out  
4 there, burners, have you as director of services got any objection to people actually putting those  
5 in or what is the procedure?

6 Cllr LAWLESS: Just a quick question back to Lorraine, sorry Lorraine to nit-pick on things,  
7 just in relation to the response to heading of others, you were saying 2.2 million is on insurance,  
8 5 on RAS and the rest on arts, costs and library books, etcetera. Can you just clarify, just in  
9 regards to the insurance costs, I'm just noticing in, say just for example roads there, there's about  
10 nine different headings, are they separate insurance costs for each of those headings that are on  
11 that sheet? If not, what are costs, library books and meals do they cover if they are not  
12 insurance. Just clarification for myself please, Lorraine, thank you.

13 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just a clarification in relation to the rent, the director said under this new  
14 scheme, it says here the national minimum rent will be set, so while it might be a reserve  
15 function, is it the case that the national minimum rate will be €30 per week and just how does  
16 that relate to the current minimum rent, what's the differential there and how will it affect the  
17 budget that we have before us here?

18 Cllr SNELL: Just in regards to other establishment expenses, can we get a breakdown of the  
19 378,100, other housing maintenance. And also the local property tax, the 400,000 that's paid, I  
20 totally disagree it should come from the housing budget at all, and I'm a little bit dismayed that  
21 it's not actually there in the breakdown that we can see it, I feel that that 400,000 would be better  
22 spent, unlike what all other members have said, in regard to we have an outdated antiquated  
23 system as Cllr Ruttle said, in regards to back boilers, so let's get out and tackle it. What would  
24 we call stone age, people who only have an open fire? Because believe me we have hundreds  
25 who only have an open fire, they don't have a back boiler, people who have back boilers want  
26 other systems, people with other systems want to go back to back boilers, 400,000 should be  
27 ringfenced back into the housing budget, I totally disagree it should have come out in the first  
28 place and it certainly should have been shown in the figures and just to get me a breakdown on  
29 the 378,000 as well please.

30 DIRECTOR NICHOLSON: We have no objection to people putting in stoves, we can't afford to  
31 put in stoves in every house, but certainly if somebody wants to put in a stove we have no issue  
32 with it.

33  
34 There is a problem with water sewerage schemes when we look at the new builds for next year,

1 when we get the allocation one thing we have to be careful is where do we have water and  
2 sewerage facilities that's going to determine where we can build and that's something we're  
3 currently looking at to see where we have capacity and don't have capacity, and focus on those  
4 areas where we have capacity, but luckily for us the areas where we have high demand we  
5 actually have water and sewerage at the moment, so that doesn't seem to be a big issue for us.  
6

7 I didn't see any memo about Irish Water and us being debt collectors for them, now I wasn't in  
8 the office three days last week, maybe it came in then, I haven't seen a memo yet, if there is one  
9 on the way I will wait and see what it says, but I don't envisage us collecting debt for Irish  
10 Water.  
11

12 Repairs, the way the repairs will be carried out in 2015 is the same as the latter half of this year,  
13 the total housing maintenance budget will be broken down over each municipal district and each  
14 looks after their own housing repairs, so repairs will be reported to the municipal district and  
15 they have their budget from within the overall budget, so that's how the repairs will be done.  
16 We'll keep an eye the expenditure and control.  
17

18 There is no allocation for HAP in the budget, because I don't envisage Wicklow being included  
19 until latter 2015, I don't envisage we'll spend any money in 2015 in the Housing Assistance  
20 Payment, it will be 2016 before we spend money, that's why there is no provision in the budget.  
21 If we get brought into the system earlier we'll deal with that, but I don't anticipate it at the  
22 moment and I can only base the budget on what's going to happen. I don't think we'll be in HAP  
23 paying out money until the following year.  
24

25 Our minimum rent is €27 per week and we are told to expect €30, so we're almost there, other  
26 local authorities are much lower and will have to bring up rents, but we're lucky, we're nearly at  
27 30. But also some tenants might benefit from the new parameters, so we're not quite sure, we  
28 have been told some tenants will gain, some will lose, but that the overall figures should be more  
29 or less the same, that's why we haven't really increased rental income, we expect it to be around  
30 the same.  
31

32 Tenant purchase, yeah we'll get some capital income from sales of tenant purchase houses, it is  
33 capital, we can't use it for day-to-day running expenses. But it becomes part of our internal  
34 capital receipts and we can use that money for housing, capital for buying houses or for doing

1 planned maintenance, so yes we'll see a benefit, if there is a huge influx of people buying houses  
2 we'll see a huge increase in capital as opposed to revenue.

3 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Sorry, to come back on two questions, firstly on Cllr Snell, the 378,000  
4 it's the LPT. On the social houses that's 378,000.

5 Cllr SNELL: The local property tax?

6 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Yes. And on the -- going back to Council Lawless on the question on  
7 insurance, what's in those roles, basically our insurance costs are 2.4 million, they include public  
8 liability, employer's liability, property, professional indemnity and so on, a number of different  
9 policies we allocate them over the different code. Roads, public liability is one of the bigger  
10 premiums and most of the public liability, claims would be in the roads area, so that is insurance  
11 costs.

12 Cllr LAWLESS: That's all I wanted to clarify, thanks Lorraine.

13 COUNTY MANAGER: Chairman in relation to Irish Water the government did announce a  
14 package of proposals last week in relation to the new arrangements for collecting water charges  
15 and so on, one of those did say that local authorities would have responsibility for collecting  
16 water charges in respect of tenants who were in arrears. Other than the details that are in the  
17 government announcement, which was publicised in the papers last week and on various  
18 government websites we have no further detail as to how it will work, and what exactly the  
19 changes will be, but certainly the Minister did announce this in the Dáil last week.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you.

21 Cllr BRADY: Just on that point Cathaoirleach, can I ask that we're kept fully informed about  
22 any proposals around that, because I think if there is an attempt to make us become debt  
23 collectors for Irish Water and heap it on to our tenants, many of whom are in arrears already, it  
24 will only compound difficulties that some of our tenants are in, push them further into arrears  
25 and the potential for evictions, etcetera, increases. So I think we as members need to be kept  
26 fully informed of anything coming down from the Department in regard to that.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Fair enough. Thank you Michael. Mr Quirke wants to assume the hot  
28 seat? Okay, we'll take questions on roads.

29 Cllr BOURKE: Just two quick questions there. One is in relation to some of the local roads that  
30 have been used as diversions for the N11 Rathnew to Arklow road improvement works, roads  
31 around say Jack White's area and Dunganstown, will some of those get an upgrade? A lot of  
32 potholing and extra wear and tear they have had to endure from the diversions that have been in  
33 place, because I believe there was a precedent when the Arklow bypass was built, some of the  
34 local roads were improved because there was a number of those roads have deteriorated and

1 need attention badly.

2  
3 The second point was with regard to public lighting, we discussed at the municipal district  
4 meeting in Arklow last month, there is unhappiness about the speed at which public lights are  
5 maintained and bulbs being replaced, we were hoping that perhaps somebody from the Airtricity  
6 company would be going around at night monitoring which bulbs needs to be changed, because  
7 it's taking months in cases for them to respond to public requests when they are logged in by  
8 public, they should have a dedicated person checking what lights are out and need to be replaced.  
9 Thank you.

10 Cllr TIMMINS: Thank you Chairman, briefly on page 68 the second note, the maintenance  
11 figure, I am very disappointed in how low it is, 174 versus 1.1 last year, I think if we are serious  
12 about economic development in this county we need to look at developing our national  
13 secondary route down the other side of the county, the other side of the hill coming down from  
14 Dublin.

15  
16 And it tends to be forgotten about a little bit, the other issue is the whole safety issue of the N81,  
17 so I'd like to see some push now, maybe with the economic upturn happening, that we could look  
18 at serious outcome to update the N81 and in particular to look at pursuing the proposal that was  
19 brought out two years ago of a new N81 basically from Tallaght bypass down as far as  
20 Hollywood Cross area, that's something that should be on our radar, should be on the agenda of  
21 this Council going forward over the next couple of years and it's something that I'd like to see a  
22 lot of effort going into and even while we're waiting for that big project, just to see that more is  
23 done on that dangerous road and there's big emphasis in this county, the economic development  
24 it needs to be county wide down the west and even down to the southwest of the county, so I  
25 asked that that's firmly on the radar going forward.

26 Cllr LAWLESS: Just in regard to traffic calming, it's a subject that I've been approached with by  
27 many residents around the Greystones district, in particular Kilcoole, there's a new policy that  
28 came in which the residents in Druids Brook and Beaufort Crescent I believed filled in, they  
29 were looking for traffic calming measures along that road going up to Newtown. There was a  
30 costing and my figures could be wrong, so you can correct me, but it came in quite high around  
31 70,000 but there was only 40,000 allocated. This is two years ago and these people are still  
32 looking for this traffic calming measure, I'm just wondering does this fall under the heading of  
33 traffic improvement measures, the 2.5 million? My fear would be this money would actually be  
34 swallowed up and not spent on what it was supposed to be spent on, I'd like update information

1 in around that please, thank you.

2 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathairleach, just in relation to the roads, last year we adopted an  
3 expenditure of 428,000 for B2 we actually spent 1.1 million and this year the manager is  
4 suggesting we adopt 274,000, realistically we are not going to maintain any roads for 274,000,  
5 there's 100,000 gone in salaries, 61,000 in just machine and plant hire so we're not going to  
6 spend any money -- I look at the budget and think if it's not realistic and we know we're not  
7 going to achieve that, we have to put in figures that are realistic, that we can achieve, we know  
8 that we'll not, if we spent 1.1 million last year, we'll not just spend a quarter of a million this  
9 year. So wherever it comes from, we have to actually put in an accurate figure that actually  
10 reflects what we are going to have to do during the year, we're just not going to be able to do  
11 that.

12 Cllr BEHAN: Just two questions, first of all page 18 public lighting, are we in anyway  
13 responsible for public lighting on the N11 or N81? And if we're not maybe we could get in  
14 touch with the NRA, because between the Fassaroe turn off and the turn off for Delgany there  
15 are 32 public lights not working, there are 15 public lights between the Fassaroe turn off and just  
16 the south, past the southern turn off at Bray and another 17 between Kilmacanogue and just  
17 beyond the Glenview Hotel which is outrageous, on such a busy carriageway that so many  
18 public lights are out of action and have been for some time. It's obviously an indication of  
19 complete neglect by some agency. I'm hoping it's the NRA rather than ourselves, but I think it's  
20 a matter of some urgency that should be dealt with and I would ask that Sean might give us some  
21 information, if he has any information as to who is responsible.

22  
23 Secondly, on page 19 maintenance and management of car parking. Now I'm not sure about the  
24 members of the other areas, but certainly I feel in Bray that the pay parking system is certainly  
25 partly responsible for the reduction in business in the main shopping centre of the town, it's a  
26 complete disincentive, when it's hard enough to get them to come to our own towns rather than  
27 go into Dundrum and Cornelscourt and so on.

28  
29 Now there's a statement here that there's going to be a review of paid parking during 2015 and I'd  
30 like a little bit more information about what that review will mean, how will it be conducted?  
31 How the members of the Council will be involved in it? And how both the members of the  
32 public and also the traders who pay the rates to this authority are going to be consulted and  
33 involved in any review? Because to my mind it's one of the most crucial issues facing traders  
34 right across the county. And there's huge income coming into what was Bray Town Council is

1 now Wicklow County Council from Bray alone in parking charges, and I'm quite sure in the  
2 other areas there is similar -- particularly Greystones obviously comes to mind.

3  
4 I would also say we should make a stand right here and now that under no circumstances will we  
5 allow any clamping to be introduced in any part of the county as part of any review of paid  
6 parking, because again that is a huge disincentive for people who want to come into the town to  
7 buy a few things in a few shops, support local traders if they are worried they are going to be  
8 clamped, because they spend an extra five or ten minutes. So again issues that are very, very  
9 important to the public but also to traders, and I welcome the review, but I'm going to look for  
10 relaxing of the paid parking regime, not for it to become more cumbersome and difficult. So  
11 perhaps Mr Quirke might give an indication of how that review will look, how we'll be involved.  
12 Cllr BRADY: Just a couple of points here, just firstly on page 69 under maintenance and  
13 management of car parks, last year there was a figure adopted by the Council of 240,000, that is  
14 shooting up this year to 439,000, which is a huge increase, so maybe we could get some clarity  
15 around that. And just with regard to the review of parking that Cllr Behan spoke about there, I  
16 have concerns around that as well, particularly around the Bray area, because the traffic wardens  
17 in the Bray area are the only wardens directly employed by the Council anywhere within the  
18 county, the scheme in Greystones is operated privately, the same in Arklow and Wicklow Town  
19 as well.

20  
21 I hear that there's changes being proposed there, that they want to try and privatise the service in  
22 Bray, bring in the same operators that are operating in those three areas and I have real concerns  
23 around that. I think the guys that are in place in Bray do an excellent job, they know the people,  
24 they give a little bit of leeway where it's needed, whereas the private operators in other parts of  
25 the county I've heard horrific stories about how they operate, how quick they are in to give  
26 tickets for people and I have real concern there, so can I ask as to whether that is what is being  
27 looked at here within that review, whether it will come back before this full Council before any  
28 changes are implemented, specifically around Bray, but I agree with all of that stuff around  
29 clamping, etcetera. Again there's a private operated car park in the centre of Bray right beside  
30 the Council offices there, and it is creating mayhem, unfortunately the Council are the ones  
31 perceived to be the ones who actually operate that, it's not, it's in private ownership and private  
32 control, but it is wreaking havoc and driving people out of the town. Unfortunately it's outside  
33 of our hands, but I think it's a point well made, clamping does drive people away.

1 Just in relation to the traffic calming that Cllr Lawless touched on there, this is an issue I have  
2 also been working on, I suppose the residents in Kilcoole along that stretch of road, there was a  
3 policy adapted by this Council about two years ago, the new traffic calming policy, and the  
4 residents along that stretch of road were the first residents that actually followed that policy right  
5 the way through and got their proposal into the Council, there was a scheme drawn up, it was  
6 costed, last year at the budget there was a figure ringfenced, albeit short of what the figure that  
7 was needed to implement that scheme, it was stated that we could look at a scaled back version  
8 of the traffic calming needed in the area, unfortunately nothing has happened. So I want to know  
9 what happened to 30 or 40,000 set aside for traffic calming last year. I want to know where that  
10 money has gone, if it hasn't gone to the only scheme -- I think it still is the only group that have  
11 actually followed through the policy that we put in place, and seem to have been totally forgotten  
12 about. Can I just get some clarity on that, if we put in place policies and get residents to follow  
13 through and then there is nothing and yet the money seems to be spent elsewhere on other  
14 projects that's totally counter productive to maybe get a bit of clarity and maybe something from  
15 the top table to say the badly needed works in Kilcoole on that stretch of road, which have been  
16 backed up by Garda statistics, would be carried out in 2015.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Shay Cullen?

18 Cllr Shay CULLEN: Thanks Chairman, just getting back to the roads parts, there's no doubt the  
19 quality of our roads are deteriorating, particularly on minor roads and we need to continue to  
20 invest and improve our minor road network, particularly recently when we see the amount of  
21 rainfall that we've had and particularly the minor roads are not able to take the rain or inlets are  
22 blocked and so on, which obviously leads to dangerous situations, so it's imperative that we  
23 continue to improve our minor road network.

24  
25 With regards to traffic calming, it's a huge area of concern with all residents, particularly in our  
26 Wicklow municipal district area, and it's an area that there's a huge amount of concern from  
27 people, particularly with speed coming in and out of residential areas and again it's so important  
28 that we continue to invest in traffic calming measures to alleviate residents' concerns.

29  
30 Finally Chairman there's a proposed low cost safety improvement works there for 2015, again I  
31 would urge that we make sure those eight areas are certainly looked after in 2015, thank you.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks councillor. Cllr Kennedy.

33 Cllr KENNEDY: I was wondering if the moratorium on employment of staff was lifted have we  
34 made any provision for outdoor staff? I think we are at a dangerously low level of outdoor staff



1 at the moment and I think we do need to look at that and I hope we're making some provision if  
2 that moratorium was lifted.

3  
4 The other question I would like to ask is on Station Road in Rathdrum, it's a very busy road, we  
5 have a lot of pedestrians using that road from the town to the train station, we've no public  
6 lighting on that road, I'm wondering are we looking at that for the year ahead?

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay we'll get answers for that. Cllr Tommy Cullen.

8 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Thank you Chairman first and foremost on the local road the problem I  
9 see is water is getting to local roads a lot quicker than it used to, because of land reclamation and  
10 improved drainage on land, so water instead of taking three hours to get to the roads it's getting  
11 there in 25 minutes, which is causing huge problems for roads and outdoor staff, so I think there  
12 should be something extra in the budget for drainage on rural local roads.

13  
14 I have been making inquiries about the N81 and when is this effectively new road on the N81  
15 going to be constructed, and it's not a priority unfortunately with the government, and the  
16 government have transferred most of the road powers to the National Roads Authority from local  
17 authorities, so there's very little impact that this local authority have as a result of that  
18 government policy. The irony is that the government are committing 500 million of taxpayer's  
19 money and road tax from motor vehicles in this State to construct a motorway across Tyrone and  
20 Derry. Now maybe that was okay in the good times when money was plentiful, but to take 500  
21 million out of this jurisdiction and spend it on a motorway across Derry and Tyrone. When we  
22 need a bypass, a new road on the N81 that would cost one fifth of that, I think that's appalling.  
23 And I think all funding for that should be suspended and the money redirected to improve the  
24 road network here in the south where people pay their taxes. That's all, thank you.

25 Cllr MURPHY: Just a few issues there, just going back to what Cllr Kennedy said about the  
26 lighting in Rathdrum, I actually, the last meeting I went home on the train, I actually counted 21  
27 people departing from the train to Rathdrum station, which surprised me, so I can see the volume  
28 of people that use the train there.

29  
30 Also as Cllr Fitzgerald said many times in the municipal meetings, that the roads and likes of the  
31 domestic roads in Arklow and main streets in all towns hasn't been on in over 50, 60 years, so  
32 there's certain lack of funding there. And also we must remember that nowadays secondary  
33 roads are nearly as important as the main roads, because as the volume of people who are now  
34 living in the country and you know, these are paying taxes for their cars, but the maintenance on

1 the roads is just beyond belief. Some of them are like, well I suppose private swimming pools  
2 you might call them.

3  
4 On the lighting, again last week in the municipal Arklow meeting we had a very, very good  
5 discussion on Airtricity and the services it does and maybe lack of in some areas, but overall  
6 good. But some issues being reported was for 7 months we had no repair to the lights, but we  
7 discovered some of the area in the estate wasn't actually covered on their contract, so it has been  
8 reviewed and fixed up, but that was an issue that was just -- by just pure, somebody giving it  
9 time and Airtricity discovered this.

10  
11 Also a lot of the lighting on all our main streets is poor, and the traffic calming and signage I  
12 think is so important. Majority of these have young children playing in them and because it  
13 seems the amount of cars now it's very important to have that. And also our secondary road and  
14 maintenance of the road, as Cllr Cullen has previously said, this is all -- we need to improve our  
15 roads for tourism, we're sitting in the garden of Ireland, we're looking for tourism to come into  
16 our county, and we have, I won't say the word, bad roads, we need to maintain this and improve  
17 it and it needs to be reviewed every year. Thank you.

18 Cllr FITZGERALD: Just in the programme there's 20,000 for public lighting improvement and I  
19 presume that's county wide, but I do suggest in the Arklow municipal district the last figures we  
20 got there were 200 lights out and 63 of them were in Arklow, which is 30% of the lights, so there  
21 has to be a deficit there somewhere and I suggest some of the public lighting improvement  
22 should be in the Arklow municipal district.

23  
24 Just a question Cllr Brady alluded to, maintenance and management of car parks, where there is  
25 an increase of 70%, I do note that the income for parking fines and charges remains the same, is  
26 there something in that? Can I also say Cllr Bourke alluded to the difficulty with the roads  
27 caused by traffic being taken from the bypass, can I suggest and speak yourself director, I think  
28 you are writing to the NRA, the roads in the confines of Arklow are getting hammered to be  
29 quite honest about it, we suggest if every lorry is drawing 7 loads a day, which is 200 tonnes and  
30 over, 20 lorries over 400 tonnes a day leaving for the bypass which we welcome, but certainly  
31 it's the last chance to get anything done with them roads, because the Gorey bypass is finished,  
32 the Rathnew bypass is finished and we had the roads tore up previously and I don't think it's the  
33 Council that should pay to get them roads restored, there should be something in the contract, I  
34 don't think there is anything in this contract, where if there is damage done to roads in the town it

1 should be part of the contract, because it's going to be a lot of money to be spent in Arklow and  
2 the outskirts of Arklow, in the coming, after the bypass is finished, so I'd like to get an answer to  
3 that if there is any suggestion of funding being available.

4 Cllr MATTHEWS: Thank you Chairman. I think it's a question for Lorraine on the service  
5 support costs for public lighting there, sorry the BI99, it's gone up by 50,000, I'm wondering  
6 what the increase is there, so change over from district and Town Councils to County Council.

7  
8 The public lighting budget that seems very small, 20,000 I think that's -- I think that budget was  
9 actually Bray's budget in previous times. Is that to be split five ways, between districts? That's  
10 way below what's needed for public lighting.

11  
12 With regards to surface water run-off off private lands on to public roadways, how much is in the  
13 budget for dealing with that? Is that a problem? And Cllr Cullen referred to it there, it is getting  
14 worse and I saw run-off from private lands on to public roads in Bray last week, it was shocking  
15 to see the amount of water coming off it, it's not only a danger on the road but a danger for  
16 pedestrians. So I'd like to know where in the budget that is and if it's the responsibility of the  
17 landowner to deal with it, I'd like to see money in the budget to follow up and make sure that it's  
18 being dealt with by the landowner or else take action ourselves.

19  
20 Then a comment on the NTA funded schemes; we seem to be getting some very good value and  
21 great schemes through the NTA, so I hope we continue to work with them and take their  
22 guidance where applicable. Thank you Chairman.

23 Cllr SNELL: Again I suppose I'd like to start by congratulating Sean and his team in regards to  
24 works carried out to date. I think they almost have the National Transport Authority down to a  
25 fine art in regards to drawing down funding. And I still think there's projects that we'd all  
26 support, such as improvement works outside the school and again Sean and his team have done  
27 ferocious work around the likes of Glenealy and Ashford, traffic calming measures around  
28 Glendalough and Laragh and there are still some of these schemes coming on the list for works  
29 to be carried out this year coming.

30  
31 Again I know being realistic not all of these will be successful, but at least he's applying, putting  
32 in the applications, he is looking for funding, trying to source funding to better the county, not  
33 just in east coast but all over the county, the list is there for everyone to see.

1 I have a couple of questions just in regards to bridge maintenance. My understanding was that  
2 bridge maintenance was being carried out by our own staff up to quite recently, I just want an  
3 explanation, because I don't know the details, I see in brackets you have a company that carries  
4 out work for us, no funding anyway certainly allocated. But I thought the bridge maintenance  
5 crew were taken off the work programme for bridge maintenance and then they were sent back?  
6 Could I just have an explanation.

7  
8 Again I would share the concerns of fellow speakers in regards to public lighting, and it is down  
9 over 100,000, I just wonder how we're going to achieve that one. Now you go out any dark  
10 evening there, you probably see how we're achieving it, because I think somebody is going  
11 around turning off the lights, it's a full-time job reporting lights, and it's wholesale, no sooner do  
12 you get lights back on then lights further up the road are gone, for example the whole of  
13 Glenealy was in darkness two weeks ago. Rathnew main street is in darkness now the last  
14 couple of weeks, you get lights on further up the road they seem to be switched off.

15  
16 Just in regards to low cost remedial measures, sometimes I know it's important to get in and do  
17 low cost jobs, but if you take Season Park in Newtownmountkennedy for example, a housing  
18 estate of 220 houses, and I raised it here at budget meetings for the last number of years, it was  
19 like a patchwork quilt in regards to works, low cost review measures, but over a sustained period  
20 of time it's not low cost, because when you keep accumulating costs year on year it ends up quite  
21 considerable. Thankfully a lot of work has been done to date and made a huge difference.

22  
23 If I could have a breakdown on parking fines and charges? I want to distinguish between the  
24 fines and the charges. It's over 2 million and it's estimated it was 2.249 and it's estimated for this  
25 year it will be 2.089, I'm wondering could we have a breakdown specifically on the fines and  
26 what areas -- is that possible to get that? Distinguish between -- Lorraine?

27 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I'll try.

28 Cllr SNELL: Is it possible to get that between the local areas? That's grand. Again I just want  
29 to fully support the road safety promotion and education, I think it's a hugely important -- in  
30 regards to getting the message out there, particularly into schools and that, there is some great  
31 work being done there and I welcome the increase of the school wardens. Thanks.

32 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just in relation to heavy rainfall and flooding, which seems to be increasing  
33 lately, just would like to know what provision is made for footpath maintenance or footpath  
34 reinstatement? And particularly in relation to cobble lock footpaths which seem to me to be

1 lifting under heavy rainfall, people are tripping over them. And also road markings, which are  
2 affected by, not only traffic but heavy rain as well, road markings I know around Wicklow are  
3 very, very worn, and in relation to maybe drainage and gullies, cleaning and maintenance of  
4 gullies and maybe increased drainage to deal with flooding, we've had particular flooding in  
5 Bridge Street in Wicklow over the past couple of years which has been quite severe, I want to  
6 know if there are flooding grants that we can avail of to deal well these on a more preventive  
7 basis, rather than jumping in when the damage is done.

8 Cllr FORTUNE: Just a few points, on the N11, the NRA, I am wondering is it an NRA's  
9 responsibility or does it fall back on ourselves? In the recent heavy rain we've had, a number of  
10 people felt it was a bit unsafe, the surface water gathering on it.

11  
12 And in regards to winter maintenance, just looking again we're -- there appears to be a fairly  
13 tough winter coming ahead of us and I wonder are we happy with the funding in that category  
14 there? And on the public lighting end of it, 1.8 million, I am assuming just looking most of that  
15 is probably energy costs and I'm thinking as the day goes on we're going to get to a stage where  
16 we're going to look at where we're getting the money from, so I'm wondering on the breakdown  
17 of that is there anything over and above in that?

18  
19 Also I'd like to support the comments on the car parking, I think we need to be very -- I think we  
20 need to put business sense on to the whole car parking, because in some ways it's becoming a  
21 little bit of a negative, I am aware in my own area, it was brought into Greystones town by the  
22 chamber in order to help business, I know I'm a broken record on this, but I think it has gone  
23 somewhat the other way, I would support, we certainly need to look at that and shouldn't rush to  
24 clamping that's going to annoy people, you can travel from our area into Dundrum at any time of  
25 the day you go, in a short space of time, so we need to be sensible about that from a business  
26 perspective.

27  
28 Also on a positive note I had a question, but it's been dealt with, I want to thank the director and  
29 staff, I have been lobbying to try and get footpaths in the industrial estate in Kilcoole and that  
30 work has started, so I want to thank everyone for that. Because that's very, very important.

31 Cllr RUTTLE: Thank you. Just quickly to agree with some of the speakers, local roads are  
32 under pressure, we have had bad winters and they don't help, water of course is the great enemy,  
33 we hope predictions for this winter don't come true, to finish off what's left of them.

1 The issue of lights, we all get questions for lights, I remember a time when it was the discretion  
2 of the local councillor to say the number of lights and anyway we had a lights programme, that is  
3 gone now.

4  
5 The other thing it's not actually in this, but would the director have any indication at all of when  
6 the Department intend to reinstate the local improvement scheme? A lot of people in southwest  
7 Wicklow live on private lanes and over the years we got to do these lanes and improve people's  
8 lives immensely, but in recent years they don't exist at all, I would be anxious to know, find  
9 some information if there is a local improvement scheme for maintenance.

10  
11 Also Wicklow Gap, extra cats eyes, extra marking, fog, etcetera, what's the story there? And as  
12 the prediction we hear going around, I don't know whether they are backed up by the Met Office  
13 or not about bad winters, a very bad winter ahead, are we happy about the level of support we  
14 have in winter maintenance? I know we have level of salt in place, but are we ready if it comes  
15 as badly as some predictions?

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thanks. Mr Quirke?

17 DIRECTOR QUIRKE: I'm conscious of the fact you might be getting peckish, so I'll go through  
18 these as quickly as possible. Local roads and road damage as a result of the Rathnew/Arklow  
19 scheme, we look at that on an ongoing basis with the NRA to see if funding can be sourced, it's  
20 not within the contract as such, but we have got some additional funding, for instance you know  
21 that Ballymoyle lane has been done up, that's going to be the alternative to the motorway, which  
22 the Department have indicated that Rathnew/Arklow will be a motorway subject to classification  
23 and so on.

24  
25 Public lighting has been raised a number of times, we're currently in year 3 of a five year  
26 contract with Airtricity, there are certainly difficulties. They seem to manifest themselves in the  
27 Arklow area more than anywhere else and that may well be the fact of the age of the public  
28 lighting in Arklow. We have a dedicated engineer who is excellent on public lighting now, and  
29 anyone that has any reason to contact him knows he is on top of his game. We'll be meeting  
30 with Airtricity in the new year to review their performance, I wouldn't say we would be entirely  
31 happy, they have said they committed extra resources and they have also said the number of  
32 complaints has increased, so we want to get in behind that and see what's actually happening on  
33 the ground.

1 The national secondary Tallaght to Hollywood, there isn't any indication that that's going to go  
2 ahead and to be perfectly honest with you I would expect if it was to go ahead that it would start  
3 at the Tallaght end and you might well be waiting for a while for it to get to Hollywood. But  
4 there isn't even an indication that it's going to happen in any event.

5  
6 Traffic calming in Kilcoole, it wouldn't be fair to say nothing has happened, we have had a  
7 complete review with the municipal district engineer. What we propose to do is take this year's  
8 allocation and hold it over for next year and add from hopefully, leave it alone this year and add  
9 next year's allocation to this year's. We did look at trying to scale it down, we felt we weren't  
10 getting the safety measures required.

11  
12 Public lighting on the N81 or N11 is, primarily it's broken down at this stage, because you've got  
13 GSJ as you probably know that operate M11 from Bray to Ballinabarny, you have Bam who  
14 operate from Arklow to Gorey and us in the middle, it's a little complicated but that's the way it  
15 is. So we'll certainly take up the issue of public lighting with our own contractor and also with  
16 the NRA in regards to the other two, because GSJ and Bam their contract is directly with the  
17 NRA.

18  
19 Car parking review, at the moment there's car parking operators in Arklow, Wicklow,  
20 Greystones and it's more direct in Bray. But what we want to try and do is rationalise that and  
21 hopefully bring savings through that and look at the optimum system, it might well be breaking  
22 down the service in some ways that somebody will provide the traffic wardens, somebody else  
23 would do the maintenance on the machines and so on. Hopefully that we can bring in savings  
24 through that. What we propose to do when we've got a position on it is bring it back to the SPC,  
25 so it would be important that everybody is involved and everybody knows what's happening.  
26 There isn't any proposal for clamping at this point in time.

27  
28 The increase in -- okay I think it's the inclusion of the Town Councils that's the increase. Last  
29 year it would have been just on the basis of Wicklow County Council, now the town Councils  
30 are included.

31  
32 Outdoor staff, certainly is an issue for us in that the moratorium is there, we're trying to do at  
33 least the same amount with fewer people as time goes on, so that is a difficulty, I think we all  
34 welcome more staff in the areas and that will, in some areas it will be double the staff, so it is an

1 issue, but we'd certainly like to at least replace people we lose through retirements, etcetera, and  
2 we have in recent times made cases to do that.

3  
4 Drainage generally is an issue still, the biggest enemy of roads is water, any form, whether it's  
5 ice or rain water, so the idea is to try and keep water off the roads as much as we can.

6  
7 The Rathdrum lighting, additional lights really can only happen within the budget that we have,  
8 which is quite small, there is 1.8 million included for next year, and the breakdown of that is  
9 about 72% for energy and 28% for maintenance, so we can only do our maintenance and repairs  
10 out of that budget. We have managed to get some savings through tendering the energy element  
11 of it, that's where the reduction of 100,000 came there, and again I would have to pay tribute to  
12 Declan O'Brien who manages that end of it and he looks at every single line of the budget.

13  
14 Run-off from private lands, that is the responsibility of the landowner and we can serve notice  
15 where it happens and it is an issue, it's an issue not just from land but from private houses as  
16 well, suddenly you might have a driveway that water flows down onto the road, that's not  
17 uncommon. And we do serve notices on people to attenuate the run-off from their own lands.

18  
19 There has been good value from the NTA schemes, they haven't all -- you notice in the budget  
20 that there was 2.3 million in for last year, as it happened when we got the allocation in January it  
21 was only 2.3 million and there were a number of schemes which didn't proceed, so that's the  
22 difference between the out turn and the budget.

23  
24 The bridges staff, the reference to that there is just for national primary and national secondary.  
25 And our own bridge crew, we didn't have enough to keep them going because we went through  
26 this last year, but because of the allocation that we got, so we subsumed them into the area staff  
27 and then when we did get an allocation for bridges we brought them back together again and did  
28 the work because they have huge expertise and know all the bridges in the county, so we didn't  
29 want to do that, so we were able to bring them back together and do work in the current year.

30  
31 Footpath maintenance and markings etcetera, that all comes out of just road maintenance, there  
32 isn't a specific, the road and definition of a road includes footpath, so there isn't a specific  
33 allocation for footpaths or markings, it just comes out of road maintenance, so whatever you  
34 provide here, and actually the budget itself, we get about 44% of our budget through grants, so in



1 all of those figures there you have grant amounts included, which is what we expect to get for  
2 2015 and we expect it on the basis of what we got over the previous years, but that could go up  
3 or could come down as well of course. I think we're probably historically at a low point at this  
4 stage, I hope it wouldn't come down any further than it is.

5  
6 The N11 responsibility for flooding, again it comes back to this, is the GSJ and Bam, so I think  
7 it's the northern section that would be GSJ, they did come out and do some relief works there.  
8 Winter maintenance, are we prepared for it? Yes we are, but if you can tell me exactly what the  
9 weather is going to be like I'll tell you exactly how prepared we are.

10 Cllr RUTTLE: We're expecting the worst.

11 DIRECTOR QUIRKE: We probably budget for a country that's a little further south than here!  
12 We're optimistic every year that it will be a good winter and we have been lucky, what can you  
13 say, for the last two years, we didn't have the weather that we had in 2010/11. So that's not  
14 going to hold, it's going to go wrong again and it depends on how bad the weather is, we're ready  
15 for bad weather, if we got something like happened in New York we'll be in trouble.

16  
17 Local improvement scheme is the only other thing, actually they weren't done away with, but  
18 provision was there but you had to take it out of your own budget, our feeling was we need to  
19 maintain our own roads and improve our own roads rather than make money available for  
20 private roads. So it may be re-introduced as a specific grant, but I don't know.

21 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I'll keep it very quick. Just on, to confirm what Sean said, increase in  
22 BO901 there is a corresponding, due to Town Councils coming in but a corresponding decrease  
23 on B0601 we used to charge there but we're charging it all under BO901 and 02.

24  
25 In terms of parking, income has gone down from parking for 2015, that's based on the out turn  
26 we have for 2014 and I suppose of the nearly 2.1 million about 200,000 of it relates to parking  
27 fines and the balance relates to fees and charges. Cllr Snell asked that.

28  
29 With regards to service support costs in B05 that's the allocated central management charge,  
30 that's gone up overall, taking the towns into account there is more transactions going through in  
31 terms of public lighting and paying for energy costs that just increases it proportionally, just the  
32 allocation of the central management charge rather than any direct costs in there. That's it.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thanks. Now lunch is ready at 1.

34 Cllr TIMMINS: Just a point of clarification? I am aware of the director pointing out the

1 landowner's responsible if water comes from the landowner onto the road, I'd like to ask does the  
2 reverse apply, if the Council changed the road, i.e. raised the surface of the road and flooded  
3 someone's driveway, are the Council responsible?

4 DIRECTOR QUIRKE: Well there is authority for us to discharge water off the road onto private  
5 lands, but if we flood somebody's house because of something we did, then we have a problem.

6 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just I'd like to ask Lorraine in relation to the parking revenue that's gone  
7 down. And you said some of that, is in relation to fines, maybe the fines have gone down. But  
8 just, I want to know how much has it gone down by and does that reflect a lack of spend or a  
9 lack of parking in towns where people are taking their shopping elsewhere?

10 DIRECTOR LYNCH: It's gone down, on page 70, we would have budgeted last year for 2.249  
11 million and this year is 2.09 million so down 160,000, was it down depending on the area?

12 Arklow is down a little bit, it's down on fines a bit, it's across both fines and the actual fees. As  
13 regards what the actual trend is I don't have that information here, as to the reason behind it.

14 Cllr O'NEILL: Just the director mentioned the Hollywood to Tallaght new road, from the sound  
15 of it I believe it's 100 metres left and right that's frozen from the route they have decided on, and  
16 landowners, farmers, whatever, they are advised they can't do anything on those lands as regards  
17 building or outhouses or whatever, so I think it's a little bit unfair if it's not going ahead, it will  
18 be -- there should be some timescale on that, that those lands are frozen.

19 DIRECTOR QUIRKE: The NRA did indicate that when it seemed clear it wasn't going to go  
20 ahead in the short-term that they would look at individual cases where they felt it was maybe so  
21 far away from the building of the new road that it wasn't going to affect it, so they will look at  
22 individual cases and they have done.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thanks Sean. I know most of you are used to an hour for your  
24 lunch, but we'll push it -- we'll come back here at ten past two, is that okay?

25  
26 Luncheon adjournment

27  
28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Nolan wants to make a quick announcement?

29 Cllr NOLAN: Really briefly Cathaoirleach, nothing to do with the budget or anything, I just got  
30 a text off the Irish Blood Transfusion Service here, they are in the Grand Hotel today from 3 to 5  
31 and again from 7 to 9 and tomorrow from 5 till half 8 in the evening, and I think it's something  
32 that if you're available to do so, you should go down and give them a bit of your blood if  
33 possible. They do, they're crying out for donors, if anyone was available here to do that, it  
34 would really help them out. If we're out by 7 o'clock. And if anyone else is available to do it.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, a very noble cause it is. Thank you. Okay. We'll move on to  
2 water and environment.

3 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Thanks Cathaoirleach, just to confirm, we're looking at water services  
4 and environmental services together, so in water services there's an estimated expenditure in  
5 2015 of 8,688,555 and income of 8,030,982. And they are further broken down on pages 58, 71  
6 and 72. For environmental services we have an estimated budget of 21,679,887 with income  
7 budgeted 12,114,587 and again that's broken down by service on page 59, but on sub service and  
8 detail on pages 76, 77 and 78. That's it.

9 Cllr BEHAN: Sorry I thought you were going to -- are you taking questions on environment  
10 section as well? Now?

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah.

12 Cllr BEHAN: Okay. Page 35 Chairman, E111 operation of the fire service and it's the last point  
13 on objectives for 2015 under keeping community safe to prepare section 26 plan for fire services.  
14 Now I received correspondence from the Bray Trades Council, I'm not sure if other members  
15 did, asking that members be aware that there has been some sort of directive issued by the  
16 Department of the Environment under that particular section 26 plan requiring Councils to  
17 reduce the level of manning of part-time fire services. I'm not quite sure whether that is a dicta  
18 from central government or whether we have flexibility, but given the history of this county and  
19 the tragedies that have happened in the past, I certainly would not be in favour in anyway, shape  
20 or form, of any proposal to reduce manning of the retained fire service here in the county. And I  
21 just want clarification that by adopting -- if the estimate is adopted, we're not in some way  
22 accepting a provision like that as part of this statement, because I think it's not something that  
23 people in the county would want, I doubt very much if members of this Council would want it,  
24 and I want to pay tribute to the Bray Trade's Council for bringing it to my attention, I  
25 certainly wasn't aware it was in the offing, so perhaps we might get a comment from the director  
26 about it.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: That is a valid question.

28 Cllr BEHAN: I'm proposing here and now we don't accept any reduction in the manning levels  
29 of our retained fire service.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Well I did put the people you spoke of in touch with the SPC chair, Derek  
31 Mitchell, to have a discussion at SPC level on it. So maybe it might be prudent to get some  
32 feedback from the SPC before we, if you want to proceed with the proposal that's fine?

33 Cllr BEHAN: I'm not going to hold up the meeting, Chairman, the last thing you want is a long  
34 discussion about this I'm sure, but I do think it's an important issue of principle that we as

1 members, including those not on that committee would have a view on, and I think we should set  
2 out the principle on this from the very start.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: I might just let Mr Doyle in on that first.

4 Cllr FORTUNE: I'll second Cllr Behan's proposal if he is looking for a seconder.

5 DIRECTOR DOYLE: Let there be no confusion, there is nothing before the Council today that  
6 would adopt a section 26 plan. We have a current section 26 plan, it has to be updated to take  
7 into account keeping communities safe, the Chairman of the SPC is aware of the issue, I think  
8 the issue is clouded a little bit, I don't think it's necessarily portrayed properly, but there will be a  
9 full report with the -- from the Chief Fire Officer, and some time I'd say in the second quarter  
10 next year we'll be bringing the plan to the members for their consideration and adoption. It is an  
11 operational issue, we are aware of it, the Chief Fire Officer and myself are aware of it, we have  
12 had discussions and also discussed it with the Department of the Environment and it's a national  
13 issue, so I think it will be discussed later down the line, but there is nothing in this budget, it's  
14 just part of a programme of work that the Cathaoirleach of the SPC has.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: I think that may be the most prudent thing to do.

16 Cllr BEHAN: I don't have a problem, if the Finance Officer could indicate that there isn't a  
17 provision in this estimate for a reduction in money for wages for the retained fire service? In  
18 other words there hasn't been a saving put into the budget that would indicate that at some time  
19 during the year we're going to reduce that? Once that's stated categorically here I have no  
20 difficulty.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay we'll get that clarified.

22 DIRECTOR DOYLE: There's no reduction.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay Cllr Brady?

24 Cllr BRADY: Just to say I fully agree with that, prior to the elections SIPTU organised public  
25 meetings and asked representatives to be aware of section 26s and secondly to support their  
26 members who are rightfully fearful of the proposals contained in this, unfortunately some local  
27 authorities have pushed this through, that I am aware of.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Look we're not going to discuss it.

29 Cllr BRADY: There was a genuine fear that it would be, so I'm listening to what the director is  
30 saying that it's going through the SPC.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: We'll have a good discussion on this, it's not going to go in under the  
32 radar, okay. Back to the budget

33 Cllr BRADY: Just in relation to water services, just seeking a little bit of clarity with regard to  
34 Irish Water and the local property tax here in Wicklow. Because of the announcement there last

1 week with regard the so-called concessions from the government regarding water charges and  
2 the impact it has on what I think is a failed entity in Irish Water, the concept of Irish Water was  
3 that it was going to be self funding, that the water charges, the money collected from water  
4 charges was going to ensure that it was self funding, and with these so-called concessions now  
5 that is not going to be the case. And there is -- I suppose a feeling out there that the government  
6 are going to use the local property tax now that is being partially given back to local councils  
7 here and they are going to raid that pot to hand it over to Irish Water, which was the case here  
8 last year when the vast majority of money collected in Wicklow went directly over to Irish Water  
9 to install water meters, so can I just ask as to whether there is any clarity on that, whether there's  
10 been any memos issued with regard to that, as to whether the manager has heard any discussions  
11 via John Tierney, Irish Water or any other bodies? Because Irish Water, it is a failed entity.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: We're not going down that road okay.

13 Cllr BRADY: If the local property tax is going to be used again to raid, to feed this monster  
14 that's being created it's going to have huge implications here for us as a local authority. That's  
15 just in relation to water. I don't think there was anything else there Cathaoirleach. You're taking  
16 development management as well isn't it?

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: No leave that, environment.

18 Cllr BRADY: There was something under environment, it was a point I raised with Lorraine  
19 there last week, just around dangerous buildings and dangerous sites and that, there is a  
20 provision there in legislation where any of these dangerous sites can go on a derelict sites  
21 register, unfortunately we don't have a great track record with regard to following up on some of  
22 these, the site in Bray where the two firemen died in Adelaide Villas took years and years before  
23 any action was taken by the Council with regard to putting pressure on the owners of that site to  
24 make it safe. But there is a provision there within the legislation which allows us to serve a 3%  
25 levy on the owners of some of these sites that are dangerous, to staff, emergency staff, staff of  
26 this Council and also members of the public, they are also huge eye sores in many towns right  
27 across the county.

28  
29 I feel there is a chance for us not just to tackle those sites, but also to put pressure on the owners  
30 there by actually following through and serving the 3% levy, the market value of those properties  
31 and buildings and in turn make some revenue for this Council. There's nothing there, I asked  
32 this when I asked Lorraine there when I met her last week, as to whether we could get a  
33 breakdown as to how many sites are on the derelict sites register, how much money has come in  
34 via the 3% levy that could be served on these owners to clean up the sites, maybe if we can get a

1 little clarity on that.

2 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: With regards to the water services and public conveniences Brian, I just  
3 want to -- I see there is 150,000 allocated, is that allocated for a new public toilet at the harbour  
4 in Greystones? It's hugely needed, it doesn't only just affect tourists in north Wicklow, in the  
5 Greystones area, it also affects Bray as well, people go from Bray to Greystones and the final  
6 stop is an area that has huge money pumped into it, not one penny incurred by Wicklow County  
7 Council, the one thing that was there before the plan started in Greystones was a public toilet and  
8 that is not there any longer, it has to be reinstated and I want it put into the budget if at all  
9 possible. Thank you.

10 Cllr LAWLESS: Just two quick questions, one for Lorraine please, back to this spreadsheet  
11 again, sorry. Just under communications in regards to water supplies and waste water treatment,  
12 that 47,000, just if I can get a little clarity exactly what it is in communications? I presume it's to  
13 do with phones, internet or am I completely off track?

14  
15 And the other thing, under environment I notice for landfill operations and after care there is an  
16 extra estimate of 2.6 million this year, I'm just wondering why such a large estimate? I'm  
17 wondering what the extra 2.6 million is for, is it staff costs or is it something else? Thank you.

18 Cllr MATTHEWS: Thank you Chairman, in the environmental budget, environmental services  
19 budget, I'm happy to see that there's an increase of about 300,000 for operation of street cleaning  
20 services, but just looking for assurance that that is actually 300,000 that we have to spend, not  
21 just to do with Town Councils changing to Wicklow County Council it is actually an action  
22 plan?

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: We'll get you an answer.

24 Cllr MATTHEWS: Then some reassurance that we'll maintain the budget for litter collection  
25 and maintaining budgets for groups like tidy towns because they make a huge contribution to all  
26 our towns and tackling the problem of litter.

27

28 On the water section there is an indicator, it gives a cost for the price per head for water and the  
29 price per head for waste water treatment and that comes to €120, is that a real cost of supply of  
30 water and waste water treatment per head per person in the county? Thank you Chairman.

31 Cllr CASEY: Thank you Chairman. Mine are in relation to Irish Water and more specifically in  
32 relation to the announcement last week by the Minister that in his announcement Irish Water  
33 were liable for commercial rates to the value of 60 million up until his announcement, he now  
34 waived that cost and Irish Water no longer are liable for commercial rates, this has a significant

1 effect on this Council because the commercial rate bill for this Council was in the region of 1.3  
2 million. While I appreciate that the Minister has said this will now come from department  
3 funding, and we'll not be directly affected, my concern is does that include the total valuation of  
4 Irish property, or Irish Water property in the county, or is he only paying for historical valuations  
5 that have been billed prior to 2015?

6  
7 And the second thing is also in relation to Irish Water, essential management cost under fund.  
8 Which is now, which was 215,000 a few weeks ago and is now down to 108,000. Can I get  
9 clarity that we are providing this service to Irish Water and they just point blankly refuse to pay  
10 108,000 on the basis that they need to find cost savings? Thank you.

11 Cllr VANCE: Thank you Chairman, just in regard to the fire service, I was hoping to hear a  
12 proposal today, maybe it will come later on, with regard to a full-time service in north Wicklow,  
13 because people have been talking about this for years and I presume that there would be, this is  
14 the meeting where that proposal would be made, so I look forward to that maybe later on  
15 Chairman, from people who have been promising a lot of people in north Wicklow that they will  
16 supply this particular service.

17  
18 In regard to a waiver system for waste was, has been operating in Bray for as long as the waste  
19 service was taken away from the Council. I just can't see it in the estimate and maybe if  
20 Mr Doyle would indicate where it is, if it exists at all? I think there is 45,000 involved in this  
21 system that operates, Bray is the only place in the county that this exists in.

22  
23 And finally, could I just say on what Cllr Casey was saying, I was appalled to say the least, when  
24 I read that the government actually had handed over a €66 million present to Irish Water in  
25 regard to the rates, that they now are not going to pay and the local authority is not going to be at  
26 a loss, but the taxpayer is for the simple reason the taxpayer will fund 66 million in rates  
27 throughout the country in regard to provision there. So I think really and truly that's something  
28 that the general public I don't think are aware of, certainly the media wouldn't be aware of it as  
29 well in regard to this, that's a present that has gone by in the last week or so, that most people  
30 didn't even know about. Thank you Chairman.

31 Cllr WHITMORE: Just a question about fire prevention, it's section E12 I'm looking for  
32 clarification on exactly what's covered in that section.

33 Cllr FORTUNE: Thanks Cathaoirleach, just wondering, I don't see, I can't make it out in the  
34 numbers, is there a cost built in here somewhere to deal with leaks for example? Just to give a

1 quick example, Irish Water were installing their meters where I live the other day and they burst  
2 a pipe outside my house, and they seemed to have confusion about who was responsible, I know  
3 they made various calls but it took a day and a half to fix it, but my question is, is there  
4 something built in here to cover that eventuality, and is it clear how it works? Who talks to who  
5 and is there someone here to take responsibility for it?

6  
7 Also in the past week we've had extensive rainfall and flooding, there was a bit of a panic in my  
8 area the other night, the river had burst it's banks and again I just want to get, is there funding in  
9 here to cover that eventuality and who is going to deal with it? And with the confusion between  
10 obviously stuff passing over to Irish Water and Wicklow supposed to be a service agent and all  
11 of that, I just would like to get clarity on that. In asking for the clarity I'd like to know what kind  
12 of cost is built in, if anything, into these numbers.

13  
14 Also the code C0299, service support costs of 2.6 million, I just want to maybe get some clarity  
15 on that versus the out turn of that, there's obviously good reason, I just don't know what it is.  
16 Again I look for clarity of that 60 million that was talked about, I happened to be at a function  
17 over the weekend and the amount of questions I was asked about that was substantial and I really  
18 wasn't in a position to answer it, so maybe we can get clarification on that.

19  
20 Moving on to the environmental services the landfill charges, the estimated out turn is 7.5  
21 million versus 11.2 last year and we're estimating 10.2 this year, again I'd like to get an  
22 explanation about that, in case that there's any funding in there that can be saved -- because as I  
23 said earlier this morning, I recognise when the meeting really starts, we're going to have money  
24 to spend in our local areas in light of water charges and property tax, I'd like to know how that's  
25 made up and can those figures be looked at on the basis of can they be dealt with and will that  
26 provide more funding for us somewhere?

27 Cllr TIMMINS: Thank you Chairman, just draw your attention to page 33, environmental  
28 services, just key indicators, on the left-hand column we have bottom three figures, number of  
29 environmental complaints and number of incidents -- it says at the bottom those figures are  
30 based on 2013 indicators, now I looked back to the 2013 figures and the exact same figures were  
31 in 2013 and they are based on the 2012 indicators. So I'd just like to ask that these indicators be  
32 kept up to date, clearly they are based on 2012 figures, so they are fairly irrelevant, so I think it's  
33 important that especially some of those figures are very important, maybe there is something  
34 wrong, but it appears to me the figures have not been updated in a few years.



1 Cllr SNELL: Just a couple of items I'd like to bring up under the environmental services. First  
2 one I'd like to have some sort of clarity around is safety of structures and places, E1003  
3 emergency planning, budget of 40,000, just to clarify what is the function, the role of emergency  
4 planning in environmental services? Just to be clear on it.

5  
6 Under fire prevention 01203, inspection and monitoring of commercial facilities, there was no  
7 budget last year and no budget this term either, and just wondering is that because the onus is on  
8 the people who own the commercial facilities to provide up-to-date fire safety certificates or  
9 does environmental services not have a role to play in regards to commercial facilities?

10  
11 There's a reduction of 59,000 in the maintenance of burial grounds, and yet there's an increase of  
12 44,000 in service support costs, if I could just have a breakdown, it says that we, we Wicklow  
13 County Council, employ part-time registers to sell grave spaces, just in regards to much of the  
14 budget of the 288,000 goes to the people who are employed as part-time registrars and if  
15 somebody for whatever reason ceases to be a part-time registrar, is that position then advertised  
16 for the general public, or who decides who becomes part-time registrar and what interaction is  
17 there between them and Wicklow County Council?

18  
19 The litter warden service, I see there's a reduction of 51,000 and litter control initiatives is down  
20 to 12,000. I think we all know that the tidy towns pick up the slack on this to a certain degree, so  
21 I see under litter management we're going to hopefully prepare and adopt a county wide litter  
22 management plan for 2015, that's to be welcomed. Could I have a bit of clarity around ATM  
23 surveys to be carried out as part of the negotiated agreement between the Department and the  
24 banking sector -- like what's that all about?

25 Cllr KAVANAGH: Thanks Cathaoirleach, just in relation to fire prevention as well, under  
26 E1201 to E1299, fire prevention and education, there's nothing, I don't know if there's any in the  
27 budget there's a zero there anyway compared to previous years, I just wonder has any provision  
28 been made for fire prevention and education? Just in that section as well there's 6,000 for fire  
29 safety controls for the costs, yet service support costs are nearly 580,000, maybe Lorraine might  
30 explain that.

31  
32 The same with E0503, environmental awareness services, there's a zero there, I just wonder is  
33 provision being made for education and public awareness at all somewhere else maybe that I  
34 have overlooked it?

1  
2 And on water services, C0701 and C0799, agency and recruitable services, there's nothing there,  
3 zero for provision and yet the support service costs are 404,000 maybe you might just explain  
4 how that figure was reached as well.

5 DIRECTOR DOYLE: We've two items on the programme, group 4 we'll pick up on derelict  
6 sites mainly where the levy is in the environmental section, we deal with dangerous, so  
7 dangerous derelict site is on planning section.

8  
9 We have a concern operating the fire service and I have worked with a good number of  
10 councillors in the chamber with regard to old buildings, NAMA buildings, buildings half  
11 boarded up, we use the waste enforcement section to deal with the dumping aspect of it, I  
12 wouldn't say we're on top of it, but certainly each of the municipal districts are more, we support  
13 them more and more if they bring it to our attention. And it's not difficult -- it is a difficult one,  
14 sometimes if a property is in NAMA or with a receiver it's actually easier to get some work done  
15 on boarding up a property and making it secure. So the question of levy on the derelict sites is in  
16 the legislation and I'll let Lorraine answer, I don't think we've done anything to levy them, what  
17 we've tried to do is deal with them.

18  
19 Cllr McLoughlin, we've no provision in the budget for a toilet in Greystones harbour.

20  
21 The communications element, Cllr Lawless, a lot of our water systems are on GIS, which are  
22 phone lines, so a lot pay -- so if there is a problem in a plant it means a bell literally it's a phone.  
23 But we have, I think we have about 100 between pumping stations and plants, and that's  
24 recoupable by Irish Water, they pay for that. The landfill increase, a number of the councillors  
25 raised that, Ballynagran was not in operation for a full year, it was a contra item actually, we just  
26 act as agents for the Department of Environment, the levy is paid by Ballynagran, we receive it  
27 and just pass it on, so the fact of the matter was it was closed for a substantial amount of the  
28 year, which is an indicator for lack of out turn.

29  
30 So this year it's open presently, and we are budgeting that it will be open for the full year on the  
31 figures that we are doing the estimates.

32  
33 Cllr Matthews, the road sweeping, I think we've had to deal with a lot of different (inaudible)  
34 differentials and street sweeping and road cleaning are dealt with in the County Council and in

1 the three Town Councils in particular, and what -- that money is there, that's the money that will  
2 be divided over the municipal districts for street cleaning services. It has been one of the  
3 discussions that I know was at the Arklow municipal district Budget Meeting, was the support  
4 that tidy towns groups received both from Town Councils and also here from County Council  
5 through Maire Byrne, and we've substantial funding in the budget under that heading, again it  
6 will become clearer when it's allocated to each of the towns, but there will be a central work on  
7 that I think, whether that will be a central issue, the tidy towns -- community grants, etc.

8 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Tidy towns was part of the municipal district. So where there was a  
9 provision that was maintained, it's at the discretion of the councillors whether they want to use  
10 other provisions in the municipal budgetary plan to supplement it or not.

11 DIRECTOR DOYLE: Cllr Casey to deal with the CMC, we're still in discussion with Irish  
12 Water, Central Management Charge was a national issue being dealt with by the water services  
13 transition office in Irish Water and the Department, we have been told to reduce it, our budget,  
14 by 10% for Irish Water, that's our discussions evolved around a 10% discussion, quite  
15 considerably more than CMC, but it's complicated and that some of the staff that would have  
16 been in charge under CMC are now full-time staff being paid for by Irish Water so I think there  
17 will be a balancing act and we're I'd say a fortnight away from finalising a budget with Irish  
18 Water.

19  
20 The full-time service in Bray, that examination was complete, we made a presentation to the  
21 SPC recently, it is the intention to submit that report to the members of the Council at the  
22 December meeting on the 8th of December. There is no money in the budget for a waiver  
23 system for refuse.

24  
25 A number of councillors raised fire prevention and we've a lot of catchall codes in there, fire  
26 prevention is mainly the work carried out by the Chief Fire Officer and his staff, but using the  
27 fire fighters to go to schools, deal with fire service safety programmes in schools and make  
28 themselves available outside of the normal hours, all the work that -- most of their work will  
29 come under that heading, umbrella of fire prevention, whether they were fire planning,  
30 examination of fire certificates, inspection of premises.

31  
32 I take the point about figures in environment, I didn't notice that to be honest with you. Major  
33 emergency management, the small amount in there is for each municipal district to deal with  
34 emergencies, the bulk of emergency management is making contribution to facilities at regional

1 level that we have use for in the case of an emergency situation developing on the N11, mass  
2 casualty facility that's currently being constructed for the region, so that's a contribution to the  
3 region.

4  
5 I suppose there's a fluctuation within the budgets again and reflects how we would have traffic  
6 wardens in towns, the wardens employed to deal with traffic would also deal with litter, we  
7 authorise them to deal with litter in Greystones, they are authorised, we have a separate officer  
8 down in Arklow at the present time who is being incorporated in, so we have a little bit of  
9 movement around the budgets, but I'm satisfied that we have a good solid workforce and ethic in  
10 the section to deal with litter management, we have the resources within what we have put out  
11 there. Have I missed anything?

12 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Just on two things, following what Brian was saying about fire  
13 prevention and...

14 DIRECTOR DOYLE: Again I haven't got the part-time register, but generally it's outdoor staff,  
15 that we advertise among the outdoor staff if we have a vacancy and they get paid as an extra  
16 duty, it's a very small amount of money.

17 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Sorry, just on the E1299 the amount of money that's in there, the bulk of  
18 that is the salaries of fire officer staff we are talking about involved in fire prevention and fire  
19 awareness, together with retained fire fighters provided for under E11, but of course 579,439 is  
20 actually related to salaries.

21  
22 In terms of programme group C and service support costs across C01, 02, 03 and so on, they are  
23 payroll costs we incur carrying out water services on behalf of Irish Water and they are fully  
24 recouped, anything in C01, 02, 03, 06 are all fully recouped from Irish Water, that's where we're  
25 coding the salary and payroll as an agency basis on behalf of Irish Water.

26  
27 Finally in regards to the rates, we have no formal notification as regards the rates, there was the  
28 announcement last week that Irish Water will not be paying the commercial rates and that local  
29 authorities will be compensated, how or when I don't know anymore at this stage, but as soon as  
30 we know I'll pass on the information. That's it.

31 DIRECTOR DOYLE: There was a question about the stats that are in the cost of water and the  
32 cost of waste water services, as part of our service indicators, the figures are correct based on our  
33 expenditure. We won't have sight of 2014 of the same information, we operate any of our  
34 operational requirements, if we have to hire contractors or pay or organise for chemicals that's

1 going through the frameworks that Irish Water operate from, we have no sight of that  
2 information. So we won't have the full cost benefit analysis but for 2013 figures, that's just a  
3 rough calculation on the amount of money provided, divided by the population served by water  
4 services.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay points of clarification? Cllr Murphy?

6 Cllr MURPHY: Just on the maintenance of burial grounds, I think it's a very important issue,  
7 this has come up I suppose for the last year or two in Arklow municipal and the old Arklow  
8 Town Council, there was a subcommittee and a lot of really, really good work in maintaining the  
9 Arklow graveyard with a lot more to do, little things to do a lot more to do, and also that we need  
10 to continue that and also that I'm sure throughout the county that some of our graveyards are  
11 probably getting full to capacity and we need to plan now, not like the housing section where a  
12 crisis is here, we don't want the same thing in the burial ground, I think we need to be aware of  
13 that.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thank you. Cllr Brady.

15 Cllr BRADY: Just a point of clarity with regard litter fines, etcetera. At a recent district meeting  
16 we were informed in Bray that any litter issues are referred to the litter wardens here in Wicklow  
17 to deal with, to me it was apparent or it was felt that the traffic wardens employed in Bray who,  
18 under Bray Town Council, had the power to issue litter fines no longer had that power extended  
19 to them, now that contradicts what you had said there, director, with regard the operators and  
20 some of the other areas, can I just get clarity, can the traffic wardens in Bray, who are former  
21 Bray Town Council employees, now obviously Wicklow, do they have the powers to issue little  
22 fines, on the spot litter fines?

23 DIRECTOR DOYLE: I will have to check, I don't think anything has changed. We are looking  
24 at waste management as a central function all right. I'll just have to check.

25 Cllr WHITMORE: Just another question on the fire prevention unit, how many certificates  
26 would be issued, would you know?

27 DIRECTOR DOYLE: I'd have to check that.

28 Cllr FORTUNE: Just, maybe Brian already answered the landfill charges, you're -- we're saying  
29 we're estimating 12.1 million income on the landfill charges, versus last year 13.8, there's a  
30 difference of 1.7 million, is there a possibility that we could end up with that extra 1.7 million?  
31 In other words I'm only thinking of, from the perspective of again I keep saying, I said it twice  
32 already, I sense that we're going to have very little discretionary spend when we come to discuss  
33 it, we need to look everywhere we can where we can find some extra funding, I'm just  
34 wondering is there a gap or scope there, where there could be some money to spread across the

1 five districts?

2 DIRECTOR DOYLE: Unfortunately no. It's a straight -- like when they were closed last year  
3 no income, pending the ownership changes, and any money that's collected at the gate when it's  
4 open we have to, we just act for the Department of the Environment, we collect the money, it's  
5 lodged by ourselves and immediately transferred onto the Department of the Environment, so it  
6 is a contra item, it will be a contra item next year, whatever is collected at the gate lodged by  
7 County Council, transferred to the Department of the Environment, it's a government levy, they  
8 take the whole shooting gallery.

9 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just I don't feel my question has been answered, so as regards the  
10 environmental awareness, Brian you said that you note that figure and look at it again, but will  
11 we have it today? Because we're looking at the budget today.

12 DIRECTOR DOYLE: Hardly the -- but the service hasn't changed, all we're talking about here  
13 is the confusion of the Town Council budgets being amalgamated into the budget is a problem.

14 Cllr KAVANAGH: But is there a provision in the budget for environmental awareness? It's in  
15 another category is it?

16 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Yes it is, sorry Cllr Kavanagh.

17 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just you did say Lorraine under C03, 4, 5 and 6 whatever the service  
18 support costs, but this one as I say, that C07 where there is no provision for agency recouping  
19 services, this figure of 404 is considerably higher than last year which was 25,000, so I don't  
20 know what -- just I'd like to understand where is that differential.

21 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Again that's for staff, for Irish Water that are actually -- it's the ones that  
22 have got jobs, they are on secondment as such with Irish Water.

23 Cllr KAVANAGH: So it's for staff who are on secondment?

24 DIRECTOR LYNCH: It's fully recouped.

25 Cllr KAVANAGH: So that's fully recouped from Irish Water? Okay thanks.

26 Cllr BLAKE: Just in relation to the landfill operation, we had nearly 12 million adopted last  
27 year in the budget, it's now turning just over 8 million, I presume a lot of that is a contra charge  
28 as well. We had some presentations recently with regard to the facility in Wicklow, can I just  
29 ask where are we in relation to the Whitestown facility, is it near completion or certainly it's  
30 going on for a long time and 10.7 million -- sorry 10.184 million, is the vast majority of that  
31 money in there for remediation of the likes of Whitestown or where are we in relation to that, for  
32 the landfill sites in the county?

33 DIRECTOR DOYLE: We're practically finished. I think the problem that we encountered, we  
34 had to take out substantially more waste as we came across as we dug, we had to take out more

1 waste, that delayed us and a delay, naturally enough we got caught with the weather, but we have  
2 the bulk of the work done, the capping, putting in drainage and gas monitors, all that work is  
3 done, we've 70% of the landfill covered and it will be a spring job to go back, finalise the  
4 covering with topsoil and plant with grass, and that's the work that will be complete then at that  
5 stage. The monies is in programme 8. Division H. It's a capital -- agency.

6 Cllr BLAKE: Is that the last of the illegal landfills in County Wicklow then?

7 DIRECTOR DOYLE: It's the last of the ECJ landfills that Europe are chasing us on.

8 Cllr BLAKE: We have to be complimented on the work that's been done for quite a number of  
9 years that we've had a major issue, I think the management have to be complimented by the way  
10 they've followed through on it.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Well said. Okay thanks Mr Doyle. We'll move on to planning or  
12 development management.

13 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I just want to - what I think we're going to do is Des covers planning,  
14 now in divisions D, F, G and H it kind of covers areas of planning, economic development,  
15 recreation and amenity and community and enterprise, so what we'll do is maybe take, I'll call  
16 out division D which is planning, but also concerns the other two and then come back and do F,  
17 G and H after that, is that all right? So for development management, which is concerning  
18 planning, with a little economic development and some of community cultural and social  
19 development, has an estimated budget of 7,385,698 and income estimated at 2,119,159 and  
20 broken down at sub service levels on page 73 to 75. All yours Des.

21 Cllr TIMMINS: Just briefly before that, the indicators, page 23, can they be updated as well,  
22 they're the same as last year. Well just one of them in fairness, 2013 the 197,000, it was 197,000  
23 last year as well.

24 DIRECTOR O'BRIEN: I'll check that out councillor and come back to you.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you Mr O'Brien. Any more questions?

26 Cllr Shay CULLEN: Just a quick question thanks Chairman, just again on page 23%, age of  
27 applications granted 89%, could we have a breakdown of that figure? Is that a total with  
28 applications withdrawn or maybe breakdown of rural versus urban on applications?

29 DIRECTOR O'BRIEN: There are stats published which breakdown all the percentages for  
30 one-off houses, multi-house development, etcetera, this is just a headline figure here, I can get  
31 you those figures, e-mail it out to you if you like, they are easily available.

32 Cllr BRADY: Just to follow up on the question I asked Director O'Brien on derelict sites, I note  
33 the statistics there from January to 2014 to the end of September 2014, there are a total of 17  
34 sites were inspected under the legislation and I think there's 15 actually on the derelict sites

1 register. I know from, I'm on Bray Town Council, there were a number of sites on the register,  
2 has that proven difficult to actually collect the 3% levy that was levied on the owners of some of  
3 those sites? Do we have a breakdown Lorraine, I'm not sure, as to how much we've taken in on  
4 those and how much possibly we should be taking in on those?

5  
6 Now it's not, I don't think and it shouldn't be used solely as a revenue collection stream, it should  
7 be used to put maximum pressure on the owners of these sites to make sure that they are made  
8 safe, but it would be interesting to see how long some of those sites are on the derelict sites  
9 register, there is a huge problem in Bray with the AO Smith site, it's constantly being earmarked  
10 to go on the derelict sites register, you go in and they cut the grass or hedges and it's taken off,  
11 they do the bare minimum to ensure it's kept off the derelict sites register, even those it's posing  
12 huge problems and I'm sure that's replicated across the board on sites either on the register or that  
13 have been inspected. So can we get a bit of clarity on that?

14  
15 Just in relation to under development management, just tourist facilities operations, we're taking  
16 all of that now Cathaoirleach are we?

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: This comes under development management?

18 Cllr BRADY: Yeah, there is a huge decrease there in funding, last year it was just over 40,000  
19 this year it's down to just over 15,000 can I get some clarification around that? Are we talking  
20 about possibly a scaling back on tourist operations within the county or what does that entail?

21 Cllr SNELL: Again I see that we're planning -- a huge increase in planning fees, obviously if  
22 that materialises it's to be welcomed there for it has a knock-on effect for the wider public in  
23 general in regards to work and I hope, I certainly hope it materialises.

24  
25 An important part of our planning structure and development management, and I think it goes  
26 unnoticed to a certain degree, is the heritage aspect of conservation services and we have an  
27 excellent heritage officer in our department here. And I just wanted to know, maybe a little bit  
28 of explanation around the conservation grants, Des, expenditure has gone from 8,000 to  
29 projected 119,000, just to explain that.

30  
31 I would have a gripe in regards to income, it seems we don't get any source of income from the  
32 Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht. I know the Department of the Environment do contribute, and  
33 Department of Enterprise do, I just wondered was there a facility where they could help our  
34 heritage services here in Wicklow County Council?



1  
2 Also Cathaoirleach if I could, just in relation to enforcement, we all know enforcement, it leads  
3 to exorbitant costs at times and slightly -- projected figures are slightly down, but is the legal  
4 fees incorporated in the service support costs or where in development management is legal  
5 fees? And again just on the building control inspection costs, it's double from 51,000 to 115,000  
6 and I'm wondering is that because the Town Councils have been subsumed in now that we've  
7 taken on the role of building inspector for a whole county. I think it's a hugely important role  
8 that the local authority have to play, because it's no good coming whingeing after when there's  
9 problems with these buildings and I'd welcome these inspections, and I see that the building  
10 control enforcement cost has actually quadrupled, projected from 7 to 32,000, so we're obviously  
11 expecting to take action against a lot of these. So I'd just point that out Cathaoirleach.

12 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Just briefly, I'm just wondering Des are you aware that Carlow IT and  
13 Waterford IT are talking about combining together as one IT and what impact that will have  
14 actually on Clermont? If Wicklow is part of Carlow.

15 DIRECTOR O'BRIEN: That's one for Tom Murphy. We'll let Tom Murphy answer that in a  
16 minute.

17 Cllr MATTHEWS: Just under building control D08, the number of new buildings inspected is  
18 28%, I am wondering is there a target that's supposed to be aimed for in percentage of new  
19 buildings to be inspected, is there a recommended amount that we should inspect? And up in the  
20 Bray meeting when we were discussing the full-time fire service I think that would be a good use  
21 of firemen's time to carry out buildings and building inspections and building control acts, thank  
22 you Chairman.

23 Cllr MURPHY: Just two issues there as I was glancing, I took note of it as well, just from  
24 January 2014 to October '14 the Council received 196 written complaints which was an increase  
25 of 42 complaints, have those been addressed and what kind of complaints are they? Are they big  
26 or small? But they are still important when people took the time out to make a complaint.

27  
28 And also a subject I think that us as councillors here haven't probably studied enough, I know it's  
29 talked about for the last two or three years is the county, community, that big word, participation  
30 network, the passion that we all have, but these involved very down to Earth people keeping our  
31 community groups busy and are long standing members of the community and it's something I  
32 think that we really need to work on, I know there has been a lot of hiccups around the country,  
33 especially in Wicklow I was barred out of one of the meetings, but you know me, I have to have  
34 my say, but I think we need to concentrate on that and I think we need to be aware that this is

1 very important part of Wicklow County Council, and what way is the budget going to work  
2 around that?

3 Cllr LAWLESS: Just another general question just starting from code D down, the heading  
4 contribution to others, I'm just wondering is that money that you decide tourism needs an extra  
5 10,000 or whatever, I'm just curious what way that money is allocated? The reason being is it's  
6 1.5 million I'm wondering is that part of some discretionary money that we can play around with  
7 if we're looking for savings in other areas? Thank you.

8 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just D0903, town twinning, I noticed that's down this year, but I do  
9 welcome the fact that the enterprise office, there is an increased budget for that and also heritage  
10 and conservation grants, there's an increased budget for that as well, I think it was something in  
11 the County Development Plan in relation to conservation that where a building is a listed  
12 building or protected structure that consultation will be made with conservation architects before  
13 any work is done, so I hope that will be included in that increased budget.

14 DIRECTOR O'BRIEN: Okay, on derelict sites first of all, I agree with Cllr Brady the aim isn't  
15 to raise revenue it's to try and get people concentrated and has worked very, very well. Just  
16 taking the Wicklow County Council element of it, we were down to about four at the beginning  
17 of the year that could fall to one at this stage, we obviously got a lot of new sites from the old  
18 Town Councils and some of them nothing much happened for quite a while and we're working  
19 on that now.

20  
21 In Wicklow county we got some of the, any money we're entitled to get we got, one exception,  
22 that's one house still on the register. In Bray we've got a fair bit of income in from it, places like  
23 AO Smith, the problem with derelict sites is what most people consider a derelict building isn't  
24 necessarily a derelict building on the site, it has to be by reference to impact on buildings on the  
25 site, so you can have a very nice facade with no roof on it, that wouldn't be a derelict site under  
26 the Act because it wouldn't look derelict in reference to the site. AO Smith fits into that really,  
27 when it has broken windows and grass we growl at them and they come and do it, so it gets onto  
28 the register in the first place -- it's not a perfect Act but it does concentrate minds in many cases.

29  
30 On heritage, we only got 8,000 in 2013 but that was increased this year, there was a built  
31 leverage job scheme and we got an extra 119,000, that's why that's gone up so much, we're  
32 hoping to sustain that next year.

33  
34 Legal fees, that's, you'll see that under enforcement budget there. You'll notice we were

1 overspent last year, we generally win most cases, we don't win every case, but some of those  
2 cases we win we don't get costs, the case in Lough Dan would be an example where we won the  
3 case, but some of the cases people were allowed to stay, so we didn't get costs, so that's where it  
4 goes into. Many years costs were taken out of the Council budget but these ones were from  
5 three or four years earlier and they came home to roost eventually.

6  
7 It's just a fact of life, you don't win every single case you go for and even ones you do win you  
8 don't get costs given and even when you do you don't get costs paid, because it's expensive to  
9 pursue people in the courts. And lots of people out there sleep easily at night and don't worry  
10 about this.

11  
12 Building control no, we were always in -- building control always was done centrally, however  
13 we, most of the money is going to the new system of building control management system which  
14 is database done centrally, it's very interesting actually, it's all done with open source software,  
15 they were a couple of consultants came in to work on it, it cost 250,000 for a national system, it  
16 was cheaper than some of the systems you hear about, but there are costs for that, that's what  
17 these costs are.

18  
19 The target for inspections is as it always was, of 15%. I think we hit 30% last year that's  
20 probably a reflection on the amount of building activity rather than resources we had towards it.

21  
22 Firemen inspecting buildings, well you really have to be qualified in an awful lot of building  
23 technology, firemen wouldn't, for the most part, have those skills, so I don't think that would  
24 necessarily be a practical solution.

25  
26 We respond to every complaint we get Cllr Murphy, in enforcement, we don't always satisfy  
27 every complaint because sometimes they are not actually planning matters, they are often private  
28 matters, but every single complaint is dealt with and addressed. I think that's most of them.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thank you Mr O'Brien.

30 Cllr BRADY: Sorry Cathaoirleach...

31 Cllr LAWLESS: My question wasn't answered.

32 Cllr BRADY: Nor was my one.

33 Cllr LAWLESS: I would be more directed at Lorraine. Sorry, apologies.

34 Cllr BRADY: The question I had there in relation to the reduction there of tourist facility

1 operations.

2 DIRECTOR LYNCH: That's me, from a loan of capital transfer it finished in 2014, we don't  
3 need it next year.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay we'll deal with the last programmes together.

5 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I'll call out as with the last programmes and we can take all the questions  
6 related to Tom, Joe and myself. Three divisions left, one is recreation and amenity, which has a  
7 budget expenditure of 6,696,601. and income of 624,391 and that's broken down in further detail  
8 by sub service of pages 79 and 80. Division of G is agriculture, education, health and welfare,  
9 which is a budget expenditure of 2,108,961 and income of 1,363,119 again broken down in  
10 pages 81, 82 and 83 in sub service. Final one is miscellaneous sub services, budget expenditure  
11 12,244,332 and income of 4,467,073 again broken down by sub service on pages 84, 85 and 86.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Behan?

13 Cllr BEHAN: Chairman, it's not a question it's an observation, and it goes back to my proposal  
14 at the beginning of the meeting. And it's just an observation on page 86 the last page, the NPPR,  
15 the estimated out turn for the management of the Council is 2.675 million, so effectively,  
16 Chairman, we have 2.675 million extra to decide where we're going to allocate. I allowed -- if  
17 you like from your point of view you want to proceed with the rest of the meeting, but it is  
18 vitally important that we discuss this whole issue of what's going to happen that money before  
19 we make any other decisions Chairman.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's fine, I'll facilitate a discussion on it, okay? We'll just do these  
21 three programmes first.

22 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: You just -- briefly I just want you to confirm exactly what funding has  
23 been allocated to Wicklow tourism, the arts department and the Mermaid Arts Centre in Bray  
24 and the increase or decrease to either of those? Everything is lumped together, so I don't know  
25 exactly what's what, can you confirm that for me please.

26 DIRECTOR MURPHY: In relation to Katherine McLoughlin's previous question in relation to  
27 IT Carlow and Waterford IT, the Department of Education has instructed that some of the  
28 Institutes of Technology enter into discussions with a view to merging. IT Carlow and  
29 Waterford IT are two of the ITs that have been instructed to hold discussions and the provision is  
30 that these two institutes would amalgamate to create a multi-campus technological university for  
31 the South East, and we had a very successful graduation programme on Friday where 111  
32 students graduated. At the ceremonies the President of IT Carlow confirmed notwithstanding  
33 the difficulties in the discussions between the two Institutes of Technology, IT Carlow are very  
34 committed to the process of creating a multi-campus university for the South East, and that will

1 include IT -- Wicklow County Campus.

2 Cllr TIMMINS: Chairman I'm not sure if this topic is in there, broadband, I want to raise it  
3 briefly, can anything be done to improve broadband? I know it's by and large a national issue,  
4 but there have been department funds supposedly allocated to various villages, if we're serious  
5 again, economic development is the trend, it's the way this county is moving, where we're  
6 putting a lot of emphasis on, and rural broadband, in particular, all broadband but in particular  
7 rural is still in the dark ages and I think it should form part of any economic development  
8 decisions we make here, that that is a strategy in developing, encouraging economic  
9 development and even way beyond economic development, in this information technology age,  
10 people have access to good and reliability broadband in every part of this county, be it rural or  
11 large town.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thank you. Thank you Mr Murphy. Do you want to comment?

13 DIRECTOR MURPHY: Just to say Cathaoirleach that we'll be having a presentation to the  
14 Council shortly on the findings of the County Wicklow economic think tank, we had a gathering,  
15 a workshop a couple of weeks ago at the Glenview Hotel, and all through the work of the  
16 working group over the last year, this issue had been one that has consistently been raised, and I  
17 know that there's quite an amount of interest in it and I know it's a hit and miss map of  
18 broadband facilities in the county at the moment. I know as well that Cllr Whitmore as well has  
19 been doing some work on this and it's certainly an issue that needs to be addressed and will be  
20 one that will come up in the context of the economic action plan and we'll have to develop some  
21 sort of strategy to address the shortcomings in broadband availability.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thanks Tom. That's all the programmes.

23 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Could I have my question answered.

24 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Two questions I wanted to come back in, one is Cllr McLoughlin, for  
25 tourism there is 54,000 for Wicklow County Tourism and 55,000 for Bray Tourism, same as last  
26 year in both cases, no change. For the county arts centre, the Mermaid, there is a provision of  
27 319,000, again that's no change on last year. Arts, the arts programme is there under F0501  
28 there's a small increase of about 20,000 for arts for 2015.

29  
30 Just to come back to Cllr Lawless, the contributions include that type of thing, the contribution  
31 to the county arts, they include your tidy towns, your festivals, the contribution towards Arklow  
32 and Wicklow swimming pools, youth forum, senior forum, Pure, there's also some statutory  
33 contributions like for the regional assembly and different areas like that. I can give you more  
34 detailed breakdown, but they are the main ones in it. The statutory ones obviously we have no

1 discretion over, the other ones, it's at the discretion of members whether they want to give the  
2 contributions to bodies and so on, or tidy towns and that type of thing or not.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you.

4 Cllr BRADY: Sorry Cathaoirleach, I didn't realise you were taking them all there. I had a  
5 couple of questions around recreation and amenity. I was waiting on Joe to take the hot seat  
6 before I drew up the questions.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: He was halfway to the door.

8 Cllr BRADY: I'll take it easy on you Joe! Just a couple of...

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry members, a bit of hush, thank you.

10 Cllr BRADY: Just a couple of specific questions there around changes of funding there. Just in  
11 relation to parks, pitches and open spaces, last year there was a budget there of 1.2 million, just  
12 over 1.2 million, it's down to 1.086 million, there is a substantial decrease in funding, I'm not  
13 sure if I can get clarity on that. Again provision for beaches is down from 108,000 down to  
14 97,000, just to get clarification around that and the potential impact on our blue flags.

15  
16 Just the community grants, again there's a fairly substantial decrease there, can we get clarity on  
17 that, whether there's impact on community award schemes, that goes out every year, it's a  
18 valuable grant system that we have in place. Just the last thing with regard our libraries, last year  
19 or earlier this year there was a big change there due to staff with the local history studies service.  
20 I'm not sure whether we have anything back, I think the manager applied for a derogation there  
21 to allow us employ additional staff, so that service could be resumed, so I'm not sure as to  
22 whether there has been an update or as to whether there is any provision here of funding to try  
23 get that important service back up and operational again. So just to get some answers on those  
24 Cathaoirleach.

25 Cllr KAVANAGH: The community grants I noted that as well, it's down 46,000 I'd like to know  
26 is that a reduction to the grants we give out or to the number of people who seek those grants.

27  
28 The contributions to other bodies, that's F0502 and there seems to be some decrease from  
29 157,000 in last year's budget to zero, so maybe that could be explained?

30  
31 Also I'm picking out the zeros, wondering why there is a zero, recreation amenity, culture on  
32 page 80, there is nothing under that, maybe it's under some other heading, I'd like to know what  
33 other heading it's under. As well as environmental awareness where is that, and sports grants as  
34 well, where are they, what do they come under?

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Operation of dog warden services is zero for that as well, I don't know where that comes under, other animal welfare services 430, I would like to know what that's being spent on. So I'm just referring to page 83 for transport, tourism and sport, there's a zero so maybe Lorraine could point me out to where the sports grants are accessed. That's it.

Cllr MATTHEWS: Under the outdoor leisure operation, Cllr Brady covered a lot of it, I wanted more detail, we have a reduction of about 140,000 on parks, pitches and open spaces, I'd just like the director's view of where we're going, and the beaches as well we have a reduction of €20,000 on beaches and I don't think we should do that, in fact I'd like to see a policy adopted in Bray to increase the cleaning of the beach and foreshore, especially during the summer season. Under the operation of arts programmes we have festivals and concerts there, there is a doubling of the estimate there so I'm just wondering are we going to double the number of festivals or concerts or just double the amount of money we spend on the current ones that we have, thank you Chairman.

Cllr CASEY: Just Joe and then a few points of clarification with Lorraine. I just want to acknowledge the work that has been done in the last year in delivering playgrounds across the county, it was a huge positive for the county moving forward and to congratulate Joe working with the Leader programme, I think we have done a significant amount of work and I do welcome the increase in funding to maintain those playgrounds moving forward and we also look forward in east Wicklow to new playgrounds in Newtown and Rathnew.

But moving to Lorraine, I just need clarification on a few items, maybe a better understanding of how these are treated, on page 10 in the book, you're projecting a growth of rates of 1.178 million and then at the same time under miscellaneous you're striking off 1.180 so maybe take me through that process, I know you're not writing off the full 100% growth I know there is another reason behind it, maybe if you explain it better to get a better understanding.

Then in relation to the spreadsheet you gave us on Friday, under bad debts you have a total provision of 5.14 million, what of that would you know as write off as oppose to bad debts?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can we just deal with Joe's questions first and then I'll allow the members have a general discussion before we actually go to making a decision, okay. Cllr Snell is this related?

Cllr SNELL: You're not taking miscellaneous no? Just Joe's recreational?

CATHAOIRLEACH: We can take miscellaneous, but that's more of a general -- can I just ask

1 the members, a general discussion to come after that.

2 Cllr SNELL: Right, I'll fire away? I'd like to start on a positive anyway, we all know library  
3 services when Cllr George Jones was here, he was always battling his corner in fairness to him,  
4 and we note this time that there's actually an increase to the library service, that's to be  
5 welcomed, but I'd like to hone in if I could on the mobile library, I think it's something that's  
6 probably forgotten about here in the chamber, but it's a huge benefit to communities out there,  
7 particularly smaller rural communities, where the mobile library passes nowhere that's looking  
8 for this facility and is actually a great benefit to very many communities and schools in particular  
9 and I think it's great value for money and I commend Joe's vision and his department's work in  
10 this sector.

11  
12 Just in regards to the operation of the arts programme, again it's something that probably doesn't  
13 get the credit it should get, particularly the arts officer, a typical example of yesterday evening in  
14 the docklands in Dublin where there was over 500 school children from all over County  
15 Wicklow in a production of Blue Bottle the musical, and it was greatly attended by parents,  
16 teachers and officials from the Council, it's the likes of that is a lot of stuff that goes unseen by  
17 the members and the public at large, but these are projects that wouldn't happen without the  
18 interaction of the arts section and without the management of Wicklow County Council and it's  
19 to be commended.

20  
21 I see that concerts and festivals have doubled, I just wonder is that down to the incorporation  
22 of -- we now have sole responsibility for all Town Councils as well, the budget from that  
23 Lorraine, is now incorporated in the County Council, is that fair to say?

24  
25 Coming back to something I repeated when I spoke the last time, it's Arts, Heritage and  
26 Gaeltacht, I see they do contribute 20,000 to the recreation and amenity, but when you go  
27 through the whole book, it's the only funding that Wicklow County Council receives from this  
28 huge department based up in Leinster House, it's the only funding, 20,000, and I think that's  
29 something that maybe we should be battling, targeting, I'm sure there's an awful lot more  
30 funding available than what they're giving to us, that's the only source of information we get  
31 from them and it needs to be challenged. Just on the library fees, it's down from 76,000 to 66,  
32 but I would be more specific in looking for library fines, how much of that 66,000 is made up of  
33 fines, if we can have a breakdown of that?



1 Under agriculture, education, health and welfare, you took questions on that? I've raised it  
2 consistently for the last six budgets and I know the answer before they ask the question, but I  
3 would be looking for -- I thought you had an opportunity this time the operation of dog warden  
4 services, zero, other animal welfare services including horse control, it's a little bit of a  
5 contradiction because they are two separate departments. Horse control comes under the  
6 housing section, the dog warden services come under the environmental section. And I thought  
7 it a bit strange that we coupled them all in together. I would like to have seen them with their  
8 own code separated, horse welfare should remain under the control of the housing section and  
9 vice versa, because I don't think we get a true picture of the figures. And again just to - Cllr  
10 Casey made a case and it's something I wanted an answer to, that was refunds and irrecoverable  
11 rates 5.1 million, that's under miscellaneous. Plant and machinery operations, because I don't  
12 know enough about it, I assume the subcommittee that was set up to deal with finance will see  
13 are we getting value for money in regard to plant and machinery, 2.3 million, I know it's down  
14 200,000, I wonder are we getting value for money, maybe the subcommittee can look at that.

15  
16 The other one is coroner fees and expenses, I believe it shouldn't be a part of Wicklow County  
17 Council's remit whatsoever. I believe it should be a HSE function or role, not really Wicklow  
18 County Council. Thanks Cathaoirleach.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Shay Cullen.

20 Cllr Shay CULLEN: Thanks, a couple of questions, one is on leisure facility operations, the  
21 figure has gone from 123,000 to 270, is that maintenance of the facilities or are we subsidising  
22 the facilities?

23  
24 The second question is just a follow on from Cllr Snell there on the animal welfare services, if  
25 we can get a breakdown of that 430,000, that would be appreciated.

26  
27 And the final one was the payment of higher education grants, it seems to be a drastic reduction  
28 from 1.3 million down to 794,000, maybe a bit of clarification on that please. Thanks.

29 Cllr MURPHY: Just two things there. I'd like to echo what Cllr Casey said about the  
30 playgrounds, I think they are a fantastic item, especially down in Arklow and they are top class,  
31 but I just would like to point out that children with disabilities also need amenities like that and I  
32 think there is items that could be researched and looked into like an accessibility wheelchair  
33 swing, items like that, children with disabilities do go with their siblings to the playground as  
34 well and we should have inclusion.

1  
2 Also it's great to be sitting here knowing that Arklow is going to have a new facility next year of  
3 a library and civic offices, but I really and truly mean this, we want to push for a full stock of  
4 items of everything from Arklow library and full hours of staff as well, also I'd like to  
5 compliment the swimming pool facilities in Wicklow, again not going back to Arklow all the  
6 time, but it's very good to live there most times, but one of our engineers (inaudible) grant, two  
7 or three years ago, of accessibility, it's a fantastic facility and a great tourist attraction.

8  
9 Also going back to page 50 it's great to see accessibility in the book, but I think that the members  
10 of Wicklow County Council should read it and see -- understand the whole idea of accessibility  
11 across the board. Just this thing I would like to say, I'm part of, as you know, the Wicklow local  
12 authority access group, and we have had many meetings with Joe and Tom who are fantastic and  
13 have vision for the future for accessibility. Just to let you know that from our last meeting we  
14 are going to e-mail the Cathaoirleach and municipal district meetings of our meetings just to  
15 make awareness of it.

16  
17 I just like to see, I see the Wicklow local authority disability information plan for 2005 to 2015  
18 and just ask Joe is that including a review of the audit that was done about ten years ago? Which  
19 really, really needs to be updated and people must be aware that people with disabilities live in  
20 your constituency and these need to be on your agenda also.

21 Cllr RUTTLE: Certainly when you read through those pages on recreational amenity you can  
22 see the broad ranging services and involvement, it is through all the sector, through the library  
23 services, playgrounds, skate board, community, it's a hugely effective and it gets right into  
24 communities, it wouldn't be used maybe as a heavy hitter like housing or water, but it has a huge  
25 impact on people's lives and also crossing over with education I can see the huge impact it will  
26 have on the schools as well, and how we are participating, it's great networking between the  
27 Council and the Department here in their work and various areas, it's absolutely fabulous.

28  
29 Also I'd like to know the opening of the Arklow library, what are the financial implications for  
30 that in kitting out, etcetera, in this budget for us, on that point of time, also things that we'll be  
31 involved in as well, say the Pride of Place, I'd like to congratulate Festina Lente in Bray and also  
32 Wicklow Uplands, it was a pleasure to be there and see them taking the award for very good  
33 work and well done. But certainly when you look at the statement here on the narrative, page  
34 37, the book is the minimum to -- you can appreciate the crisis in having the book material in the

1 libraries that will have to be addressed. But certainly it's an area we are doing very well, we  
2 have an excellent officer here, it's very broad, it's getting into a lot of areas of life and it's  
3 something which I feel is hugely important in the connectivity between this body and the people  
4 who we represent. Thank you.

5 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Just a question Chairman, under miscellaneous there, what's the  
6 situation with regards to Irish Water and the proposed income from Irish Water? Presuming  
7 these figures were brought up, estimated on their provision of income from the previous scheme  
8 proposed by the government and the funding by Irish Water to the Council. What's the projected  
9 figures under the new proposal by the government and is there, what understanding have we got  
10 with regards to the shortfall that would seem to occur, have you done any figures on that?  
11 Because Irish Water is wrote all over these estimates.

12 Cllr THORNHILL: Cathaoirleach I'd just like to maybe zone in there on community grants,  
13 which I see is down to 212,000, the point I would like to make in relation to County Wicklow  
14 volunteer centres who do great work in, Cllr Ruttle mentioned about a lot of the voluntary work  
15 done throughout the county, the community is the operative word nowadays, they have put  
16 through their books 6,000 volunteers since 2004, which would equate to 165,000 hours valued at  
17 maybe 2 and a half million to the county and this work is great, because considering now with so  
18 many people out of work it's great for people's esteem and confidence and great for the  
19 community, for people to be involved. In 2014 they put, mentored 500 voluntary people, so they  
20 have also received Bray UDC and Arklow UDC and talking to these people, I was very  
21 impressed last Wednesday in Fassaroe, talked to some of the community, one of the things they  
22 miss out on is premises, the cost of premises, so well worthwhile effort to support, especially  
23 nowadays, community is very important word.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you councillor, did you want to make...

25 Cllr CASEY: No just more on the miscellaneous, I just had one other one. Just under transfers  
26 to revenue reserves under the plant and machinery operation, that 570, I assume that's the figure  
27 that would normally appear under AFS, under plant and materials in transfers from reserves,  
28 that's just a point of clarification, thank you.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay back to you Joe.

30 DIRECTOR LANE: The best way to handle this I'll take all the credit and deal with the good  
31 things and then Lorraine will deal with the bad news, if that's okay with everybody?

32  
33 A lot of the figures are treatments between the way -- the community grants, some of the gaps,  
34 there's 200 for the Pure community grants, the application form we do every year and the rest

1 you find a little bit in the library and a little bit in terms of, there was an extra given to Bray  
2 under the disposable grants last year which was a one-off, that's not included, the other sports  
3 grants this year would be under local sports improvement grant and would have to be Irish  
4 Sports Council approved.

5  
6 Likewise I think Lorraine will help with this, the question on leisure facilities gone up versus  
7 pitches and things, that's the treatment of the swimming pool in Wicklow Town -- or Arklow,  
8 one of them anyhow, it's included in facilities where it was, that's where the decrease in the open  
9 space/recreation was included, which two Councils commented on.

10  
11 That's two, two -- open spaces sorry. Arklow library, the majority of it is being dealt with in  
12 capital, all the books will be funded in capital, the effects on -- there is provision in the estimates  
13 for it, will be extra staff going on for hours from quarter three or quarter four, everything else is  
14 under capital that's the effects in there.

15  
16 Playgrounds, any surplus, there is a sizable investment, or there was a sizable under-investment  
17 over the last few years particularly in the County Council, there is also provision in the extra  
18 playground for surplus transfer to capital and that will deal with some of the replacement or  
19 bigger maintenance issues that have been affected over the last couple of years. I think that is it,  
20 over to you.

21 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I might have a bit of overlapping with what Joe said, but just -- as Joe  
22 said the decrease in F0301, parks and open spaces, the majority of that is for Arklow pool, which  
23 moved up to F0101, leisure facilities and operations, which explains part of the increase, the  
24 other part was Christmas lights which Arklow budgeted for there and that's now budgeted for  
25 under festivals and grants in division D. So it's movement, as we mentioned, and I have been  
26 telling you in meetings all along it's a movement just to align all the codings across Town  
27 Councils and County Council to keep us right going forward.

28  
29 F0401 community grants, again that's just a movement. There was 20,000 for Christmas lights  
30 of Wicklow Town moved back -- sorry moved to F0505. There was 10,000 again related to arts  
31 and that was moved to arts and 10,000 to tidy downs moved to division D, so it's not a cut, it's  
32 moving the budget to the appropriate division.

33  
34 F0502 same again, if you look at F0501 and 02 that was a contribution that was made to the

1 Mermaid Arts Centre, both Wicklow County Council and Bray Town Council made a provision,  
2 they have now been amalgamated under F0501, it's not a cut it's just a movement.

3  
4 F0505 the festivals, same thing, you'll be sick of me saying this, these are the festivals that  
5 would have been provided for under Town Council budgets and would have been brought up as  
6 part of the municipal district budgetary plans, so they have been moved from different areas and  
7 they are all in there, so the like of the jazz festival, Christmas, Patrick's Day, they are all in there.

8  
9 In relation to division G agriculture, education, health and welfare, in terms of the dog warden  
10 service, Cllr Snell, my apologies you raised this last year I should have changed it and I didn't, if  
11 I can change it as part of the adopted budget with the consent of the members we'll do it and  
12 have it right going forward, we'll do it with the adopted book and put dog wardens under dog  
13 warden service, the dog warden service is about 210,000 and control of horses is budgeted at  
14 about 220,000, so that's what makes up the two.

15  
16 In terms of the higher education grants, SUSI have taken over processing of higher education  
17 grants, we are running out the ones we have, that will start -- it dropped drastically in the last  
18 couple of years and will drop next year until we no longer process them in future.

19  
20 Coroners, it's something we are statutorily obliged to do and we pay the fees of coroners for  
21 undertaking their investigations and reports.

22  
23 In terms of plant and machinery, that is in relation to our own, we have our own stores and own  
24 machinery yard so we operate and own and maintain a lot of our own machinery that's hired out  
25 there, it's a contra so whatever we spend in terms of machinery maintenance, diesel, usage, staff,  
26 payroll of the drivers, that's all charged out there and charged out all the different roles, grants,  
27 codes, it's an income and expenditure, it's a contra. And the same with stores, they are different  
28 pieces of equipment and plant, again that's a contra.

29  
30 In terms of the rates, the way -- there's an increase on the income side of about 1.2 million and  
31 there's an increase on the strike-off of about 1.2 million. The reason is I suppose it was a slightly  
32 different accounting treatment across the four authorities, so in some instances authorities, let's  
33 say your rates bill for the year was 5 million and your strike-off was 500,000, so rather than  
34 providing income of 5 million and strike-off of 500,000, you may have provided a strike-off, or

1 income of 4.5 million, whereas we brought everyone up to provide under the accounting  
2 treatment what we have to do is provide full income and provide fully for the strike-off as well.  
3 Okay?

4  
5 And the last question on plant and machinery, that 570, the actual, what we do with plant and  
6 machinery it's like the playground, it's providing for replacement of machinery and providing for  
7 replacement of the fleet, any surplus made on the plant and machinery account we put it into a  
8 capital replacement fund for plant and machinery, that for 2013 was 400,000, there is 570 in  
9 there but there's a flip side of that that you're missing on the income side of about 150 or  
10 120,000, so you're looking about 400,000 net on that transfer. I think I got everything, but if not,  
11 I'm sure you'll let me know.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay clarification, Cllr Vance?

13 Cllr VANCE: Sorry Chairman I was looking for it, I couldn't find it until now, just in regard to  
14 the swimming pool in Arklow and Wicklow, and people who were here at the time would  
15 remember that I queried what was a flawed report a number of years ago in regard, when Bray  
16 hadn't got a swimming pool, in regard to the pools going into Arklow and Wicklow, which were  
17 recommended in that report. I said at the time that it was only a matter of time before this would  
18 come back to bite the Council and it now looks like it has. Because it was never on that you  
19 could have two pools in those two towns because they didn't have the population to keep it  
20 going. I said it at the time, I said it was a flawed report, now we have a situation which is the  
21 worst case scenario, where we're looking at providing substantial funding, which I believe for  
22 sports facilities we should be doing, but in this situation is that these were built on a very, very  
23 flawed report at that particular time, it was never, ever going to be economically possible to keep  
24 two pools on an even keel in the two areas because the population that existed in those two  
25 towns didn't warrant it.

26  
27 I'd like to know what are we talking about now in regard to a report on this? What is the future?  
28 I'd like to know exactly what is the problem in each of those pools, what their incomes are and  
29 how much the Council is expected or will be expected to put into these pools in the next few  
30 years and what can be done to make them more viable than they obviously are at the moment?  
31 This is significant funding that the Council are talking about putting into pools like this, I want  
32 to know, I agree for this year, that we do it this year, but I think we need to have a very, very  
33 serious look in regard to what's happening in the pools, their usage, their income and various  
34 things like that.

1  
2 There are two other pools operating in the north of the county, operating very successfully I  
3 believe, both Greystones and Bray. But it is a problem here in regard to this and I think it needs  
4 to, we need to look at it in a very serious level in regard to this, because if we're going to pump a  
5 significant amount of money into this we want to know that we're going to get value for this, and  
6 that there may be some chance of turning either these two facilities around, or we'll have to take  
7 a decision on it in regard to that. But I'd like to know what is proposed in regard to bringing a  
8 report before the Council in regard to what it says here, a review of the pools going to be taken  
9 and potential refurbishment, I'd like to know what's happening here in regard to what is the  
10 future here and what type of reports are we talking about bringing here and of course if we get a  
11 consultant, what's going to be the cost of these as well. Thank you Chairman.

12 Cllr KAVANAGH: Thanks Cathaoirleach. I'd like to ask again if somebody could direct me or  
13 point me to the sports allocations, the sports grants that were accessed last year or any provision  
14 for sports this year, because I can't find it, maybe you can direct me to it please.

15 Cllr Shay CULLEN: I would just like to concur with Cllr Vance on these pools, I asked the  
16 question earlier whether this figure of 270,000, it seems that we're subsidising these pools to a  
17 great extent, I think we need a detailed report of what is exactly happening with both of these  
18 pools, to be put before us and from here on we can make a decision whether they are viable or  
19 not to continue to subsidise at this rate, so it's important that we get some clarification on that in  
20 the future. Thank you.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Tommy Cullen.

22 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Thanks Chairman, thank you, about the funding of the -- about Irish  
23 Water and the new charging regime have they come back to you, but the other thing is  
24 Chairman, I thought I remember seeing in the papers about a High Court case involving the  
25 Council and freedom of information request over swimming pools in Wicklow, which the  
26 Council lost about an FOI, maybe Ms Lynch can give us some information on that.

27 Cllr FITZGERALD: I have listened to what Cllr Vance and Cllr Cullen, Cllr Shay Cullen, that  
28 swimming pool was built with a lot of public funding, I'm talking about the community, there  
29 was a huge campaign to get that swimming pool in place, there was a lot of people contributed to  
30 it at the time, there was a grant as well for that swimming pool and there is a huge effort being  
31 made by the management of the swimming pool to keep it in situ. I'm not aware of the figures,  
32 the figures would suggest there is some funding or support being given, it has ran quite  
33 successfully, we are in a town of 13,800 people with a further catchment area of 14,000, that's  
34 27,000, that swimming pool is used by people from north Wexford and south Wicklow. You can

1 imagine I've no problem with whatever you want to look into, but I would certainly do my  
2 utmost to make sure that that swimming pool remains in situ. That also includes the leisure  
3 facility on the far side, and there's extra plans to put more facilities in there, we have a lot of  
4 facilities there in that general area, there's many people attend that gym and many classes there  
5 for people with medical conditions advised to go to that facility and I certainly, it took a long,  
6 long time to get the swimming pool, the one we had was previously closed in the 70s and this  
7 one came about after probably the best part of 30 years of campaigning and fundraising and  
8 whatever else. Okay you have to look where the money is being spent, I would suggest there is  
9 more extravagant use of funding over the last 25 years than there has been on Arklow swimming  
10 pool, so I can tell you I will be resisting that, other councillors can speak for themselves from the  
11 Arklow area, but not on my watch will that close, I can tell you that. They can do whatever  
12 examinations you like, there may be cutbacks that have to be made, there is no way I'm going to  
13 stand over, as a public representative for the people of the town of Arklow and district of Arklow  
14 fought for, on my watch it won't happen.

15 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Chairman, clearly Nicky Kelly is badly missed on this Council.

16 Cllr FITZGERALD: I'm just after ringing him, he's the same!

17 Cllr KENNEDY: Thank you. I'll back up Cllr Fitzgerald with those remarks.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, I think what was asked by the members was a report. Not the  
19 closure.

20 Cllr Shay CULLEN: Do we want to clarify that?

21 Cllr VANCE: We want information on what's happening there, nobody mentioned anything  
22 about closing.

23 Cllr ANNESLEY: As for Nicky Kelly not being on the Council, we have six good councillors  
24 and over my dead body will that pool close over.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Cullen?

26 Cllr Shay CULLEN: Thanks, there was no mention of closing any swimming pool. We just  
27 want clarification, how much money we're subsidising both the swimming pool in Wicklow and  
28 Arklow by. It's as clear cut as that, there was no mention of any closure of any swimming pool.

29 Cllr FITZGERALD: There's many other ventures in this county being subsidised, you should  
30 query a bit more than that.

31 Cllr Shay CULLEN: All we asked for is a report.

32 Cllr FITZGERALD: Swimming pools are for the public good, look at some of the other  
33 ventures in the county.

34 Cllr Shay CULLEN: Maybe it's not run properly.



1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Through the chair please, come on. Now Mr Lane.

2 DIRECTOR LANE: We're currently finalising a tender document to get out to the consultants to  
3 look at the pool, that will, some of the issues you looked at particularly, short-term, the subsidy,  
4 what does it need, so members can make an informed decision what subsidy it needs, it will also  
5 deal with best practice, whether there is another operational way of dealing with this and also  
6 what long-term funds are needed, if so where they can be sourced from, that might make it more  
7 sustainable and if not it will come back here and you can make a decision on whether you are  
8 willing to subsidise it or not, if that's okay.

9 Cllr VANCE: When will we expect that report?

10 DIRECTOR LANE: The document itself it's like a feasible study in reverse, you are starting --  
11 the ones done for Bray and Greystones at the time, there was a certain expertise, at least two or  
12 three companies in the market that are not there now, so it's trying to get, I don't want  
13 engineering feasibility, I want a feasibility study for a facility of this nature, we're finalising that,  
14 it will be advertised over the next couple of weeks, it will be done in the year, it will be a  
15 tendering process, we'll give the report during the year some time.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. I want to get an answer for Cllr Tommy Cullen's question.

17 DIRECTOR LANE: There are no sports grants issued by the County Council per se, there is  
18 about 10 or 20,000 under the local sports partnership that's fully funded, but subject to the Irish  
19 Sports Council's particular requirements, I think it might be 10 or 20 in the last one or two years.  
20 The other one is the 200,000 community grants, there is no breakdown in those, the same as last  
21 year's community grants, everybody applies, community groups get it, Boy Scouts get it, sports  
22 groups get it, but there's no -- it's specific sports grant, bar the couple of quid under the local  
23 sports partnership and that is very subject to the ISC's requirements.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thank you. Lorraine?

25 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Just in terms of Cllr Cullen's questions, any expenditure we incur in  
26 respect of Irish Water is recouped as part of the re balancing exercise announced by the  
27 government last week. We are not aware, have no indication it will have any impact on the  
28 budget, as it stands before us today. In terms of the High Court case regarding freedom of  
29 information in the pools, that was a case taken against the information ombudsman not Wicklow  
30 County Council.

31 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Was that in relation to a number of swimming pools in the county?

32 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Yeah.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay I'm going to -- that concludes all the programmes.

34 Cllr KAVANAGH: Sorry Cathaoirleach, my light was on.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Very quickly councillor.

2 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just in relation to the local sports partnership. I know for instance we  
3 applied for a couple of consecutive years for the skate park and we were unsuccessful in getting  
4 funding from sports partnership for the skate park; I'm wondering over the years have we  
5 accessed any funding for the Sports Council or under these grants, if we haven't accessed them  
6 why haven't we or why haven't we been given them? Is it a case that other counties are getting  
7 sports grants that we are not getting, can we look at it to see what we have applied for and been  
8 turned down?  
9

10 Just in relation to the swimming pool report, I would hope that this report wouldn't just look at  
11 the, how much it cost to run it and the cost efficiencies of a swimming pool. We live in a seaside  
12 town here, as does Arklow, and the school children from here have lessons there. Those pools  
13 are full every day of children having swimming lessons as part of the educational programme,  
14 which contributed hugely to the summer swimming here and accidents -- so while it may be a  
15 cost to the Council, if it is something that is going to prevent loss of life in our community, all  
16 those things have to be weighed up as well, benefits have to be factored into the community as  
17 well.

18 DIRECTOR LANE: Okay I'm not sure about the skate park, I can't say how the ISC application  
19 would even fit for that, I'll check it out, I'm struggling with that particular one. Like I said the  
20 local sports partnership, the ISC decide how much, it's effectively their money, it doesn't fit in  
21 right now, I'll check out for you, like I said the feasibility study will come up with black and  
22 white figures to allow members to make an informed decision.

23 Cllr O'NEILL: Just on the recreational amenities there, from listening to councillors arguing  
24 about swimming pools in east Wicklow and whether they will close or open or whatever, to have  
25 such an amenity there, in the west of the county, we're jealous of these things in a big way, but  
26 I'm wondering whether the Council would ever seriously look at taking over the lakes of  
27 Blessington as an amenity, there's huge potential, we've argued for donkeys years about the  
28 water being supplied to Dublin, we got nothing back in the area, but I think the whole county  
29 could benefit if you look -- the ESB as such, they don't require the lake any longer. They don't  
30 generate electricity there as such. So I really think there should be some study done as regards  
31 looking at the potential of the lakes, angling and that, and this argument is thrown up every so  
32 often, but it's really, it's a gold mine there that is being left to just rot. Maybe the Council some  
33 day could have a look at the lake and see, okay it was different maybe 50,60 year ago with the  
34 use of the lake by the ESB, but it's not now you know. It should be developed. Should be

1 looked at.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: It's for another day Gerry all right. But I take your point. Cllr Ryan.

3 Cllr RYAN: I thought you were finished with all the points.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay that concludes the programmes, okay. Before we move on I'll let in  
5 Cllr Behan because he raised the issue of the NPPR.

6 Cllr BEHAN: Chairman, I have already made my argument, I don't want to delay people any  
7 longer, this is the first estimates meeting of this new Council, and I think it's important that  
8 whatever precedent we set here today is one that's reflective of the will of the people, not  
9 reflective of the will of the Council officials. We have all been elected here to represent the  
10 people, not the Council officials. We have a duty to make sure that we act in the interests of the  
11 people, not in the interests or at the request of Council officials. That's the first point.

12  
13 The second point is one of the very few powers we actually do have is to pass an estimate to  
14 decide on allocation of public money to make our priorities, whatever it might be, whether it's  
15 library services, sports grants, to alleviate rates for business people and so on, but it's our power,  
16 not the manager's power, the chief executive's power, it's our power.

17  
18 In addition to this additional money, which came as a result of a lot of pressure being put on a lot  
19 of people that we represent to come up with extra payments for second home tax, many of whom  
20 have gone into severe difficulty because of it, we have a duty, I know some people said it would  
21 be nice to give the money back, I don't think we are going to be able to do that, we have a duty to  
22 make sure that we decide where the money is spent. About three meetings ago the manager  
23 made an attempt to say that the auditor wouldn't allow us and would advise that this money be  
24 used to payoff debts and not be used to fund services that we want to see prioritised.

25  
26 At a meeting of the corporate policy committee a week ago, he said he'd go back to the auditor  
27 again and see what the auditor has to say and maybe we might consider a couple of projects sure  
28 maybe at some stage, we might allow you to spend this money in the way that either the manager  
29 or the auditor sees fit. Now there is no power either for an auditor or a County Manager, or a  
30 chief executive to tell us how to spend this money. That's number one.

31  
32 We may not get this opportunity again, because this is a once-off, if you like, extra bonus to this  
33 Council that can be used to ensure that projects that we all feel are important in our districts are  
34 funded, even if it's only for one year. And I have lots of ideas, but I think the fairest thing would

1 be for us to agree in principle that we're going to spend this money on behalf of the people we  
2 represent first of all, and then we can decide how we're going to spend it, my own suggestion  
3 would be that it would be decided on a pro rata basis between the five municipal districts, and  
4 meetings then in January when the municipal district budgets are being discussed we'll add that  
5 money in and decide to fund additional projects each in our own area.

6  
7 Obviously some of them will have to be only for one year, because it's a once-off sum of money,  
8 but as far as I'm concerned at a time of huge recession and great need in this county, I think it's  
9 important that we ensure that this money is spent for the benefit of the people. Chairman you  
10 have done an excellent job chairing this whole meeting, I want to pay tribute to you, out of  
11 respect to you I didn't push this at the beginning of the meeting, but I do think it's vitally  
12 important that we make a decision in principle, I'm suggesting we decide to spend it all in our  
13 local areas for projects that we agree on as public representatives. I would ask members to  
14 support that proposal.

15 Cllr TIMMINS: Just briefly Chairman, I'd like to welcome the moves that have happened in  
16 relation to the budget process set out in page 2 of this document, in particular the setting up of  
17 the finance budgeting committee, we have only met once, I think it's a really positive step in the  
18 direction of us councillors understanding what's actually going on here and having a real input  
19 into the budgetary process. I'd also like to compliment the finance staff of this Council, for the  
20 open and transparent way in which they gave us information and answered all our questions and  
21 even to the point of making suggestions as to how we can improve things better.

22  
23 As I see it this process is only at an early stage and will develop over the next year. I'd also point  
24 out while we're adopting a budget here today for 2015, this is, this shouldn't be seen as just a  
25 one-off event, through the budgetary committee or the full Council here I think we should be  
26 reviewing this budget on a quarterly basis. That's the way any normal business is managed, it's  
27 not good enough to arrive here one day in the year, get a load of figures, go away and forget  
28 about it for the next year. We need to constantly be seeing what's happening, how the figures are  
29 going throughout the year and I think quarterly would be a reasonable way of managing this.

30  
31 So I see the budgetary committee and future management reports, which are coming out every  
32 month as part of us members understanding what's going on financially and what's going to  
33 happen as the year progresses, and we don't have to wait till the end of the year to find out  
34 things. Like for instance how we're 700,000 behind at the end of the year that we see these

1 things happen throughout the year. So to me this has been the best budget meeting I have been  
2 at, it's the 11th I've been at, the previous ones we ended up arguing about 3,000 here and 5,000  
3 there, this budgetary meeting gave us more information than we had at previous meetings, it's  
4 still far from perfect and has a long way to go, but it's going in the right direction and there is  
5 enough weight around this table to make that happen and I'd also compliment the new  
6 councillors for bringing fresh ideas, fresh thinking to the way the process is conducted. I think  
7 the fact that there are 32, 17 new people, I think that actually helped the process and opened us  
8 all up and given -- brought questions forward to this meeting that wouldn't have been brought  
9 forward otherwise, so I'd like to compliment the new councillors on their input, openness and  
10 honesty and enthusiasm, because some ways when you're here a long number of years to get  
11 cynical about how the Council operates. A lot of people who come on new have a positive and  
12 open attitude, that's beneficial and that I believe is feeding into what's going to happen here  
13 today and hopefully what will happen in the future in relation to this Council.

14  
15 In relation to the decision to adopt or not the budget, could I ask if members oppose the adoption  
16 of the budget that they have the honesty to propose where the extra money would come from, it's  
17 easy to say no to all cuts and for all expenditure, life doesn't work like that, you pay a price for  
18 everything, there is no free lunch. So let's be honest if we are looking for changes that we justify  
19 where it comes from. Thank you.

20 Cllr RYAN: I too would obviously like to compliment the staff and members here, I think it's  
21 been a good budget meeting, I think there's a new level of transparency and I do know when I  
22 joined 11 years ago the document was just crazy, you couldn't read it or make sense of it, I think  
23 over the last number of weeks there has been many opportunities to ask detailed questions and  
24 get information in different ways, particularly Lorraine, even over the weekend sent a document  
25 to me just comparing Bray and Enniskerry, Kilmac area to what it was last time to what it is this  
26 time, and I think it's very difficult for everybody to do a like-for-like comparison when you're  
27 losing the Town Councils and they are being replaced by this one sole body, but the process that  
28 she made herself available for has been very, very useful.

29  
30 I suppose the unifying thing that everybody around the table wants to make sure is that we have  
31 a better county going forward, I suppose that's probably the one area that I'm a little confused as  
32 to where it fits. I know we have the County Development Plan coming up which I know is a  
33 planning document, the estimates is a financial budget document, I think the piece that's lacking  
34 is we never get a chance to talk about Wicklow and where we want to go with the county and

1 what we want to see it develop into. For me obviously it's a county that I want to see sizably  
2 better in five years time than it is today, and I just feel that there's a lack of opportunity to  
3 actually shape that and to say where we'd like to see it better, what would we like it to be in  
4 terms of a place to live, in terms of a place to -- we have been talking about community and the  
5 like, a place to exist and play and socialise and to work in too.

6  
7 So I don't know if there is an opportunity too to maybe have a workshop where we set a vision  
8 for this county and talk about the county we want to create in five years time and let all our  
9 budget documents from now on feed into that and build plans around that, because at the  
10 moment if I had to criticise this document I would say it's pretty much business as usual,  
11 honestly I don't think that's enough. I would like to see innovation and creativity brought to  
12 bear, I know other councillors are doing it around the country, I think it's absolutely necessary  
13 that we do it and then spend the next five years delivering on that plan, so one of the things I  
14 would be concerned about is 30% of the revenue of this Council is generated from the business  
15 community and I do think we are the highest rated Council in the Councils around us and also  
16 with the commercial water and the like, it's really a tough call. I think we have to be very careful  
17 if we're serious about job creation, that we have to start to re-balance that, I know we have the  
18 rate equalisation discussion to take place and we have to be careful about how we do that and we  
19 have to look after the job creation part of the economy in Wicklow.

20  
21 In terms of the NPPR, as you know I raised this issue the first moment I heard about it three  
22 weeks ago, at that stage we were told it was 2 million euro, it now has gone up to 2.6 million,  
23 and I know every time we mention it you are told it can't be done, it will be difficult to be done,  
24 but as far as I'm concerned much the same as Cllr Behan, it must be done. We've sucked money  
25 out of the economy here in Wicklow through this charge and I think the unfair penalties,  
26 absolutely the wrong the way it was done, but money is in the bank now, and from my point of  
27 view I really believe we do need to deliver on specific projects, we need to do two types, one  
28 strategic county wide projects and also to deliver to each of the municipal districts so they can  
29 control some spend in those areas, I think it's absolutely crucial that we deliver it and deliver it  
30 now, but I think it's important that we don't put this off, that we turn around and today, set aside  
31 how much of that money should go into the deficit, how much of that money should actually be  
32 spent and what should those things be done, because I think they need to start delivery right now.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Cllr Whitmore?

34 Cllr WHITMORE: I'm going to talk about the NPPR as well, I agree with Cllr Behan that this

1 chamber should decide where that money is being spent, I think we need to take a step back and  
2 decide how much money that we should be considering what we're going to spend? I think we  
3 all think, we are all in agreement that the NPPR charge was not fairly implemented. It was  
4 known as a second home charge, it was a self declaring charge and many people were not aware  
5 of it until mid August when they were told they had 4,000 in interest payments to pay. I think  
6 there's one particular group that I think have been treated particularly unfairly in the  
7 implementation of this charge and that would be those that you could term accidental landlords,  
8 so they are people who had to rent out their property because they no longer could afford to pay  
9 the mortgage on their homes and they are now renting somewhere cheaper elsewhere. Now I  
10 don't think those people should be the target of this charge. It would be my preference that we  
11 refund those people, either the charge in its entirety or part of it. I understand that it's a difficult  
12 thing to do, but I'm getting a sense that this is like, you know when you are a teenager and find  
13 €50, you know it's not the right thing to pocket it, you know it's not your money, but this is  
14 where we're at, we're spending money that's not ours. I think we should really investigate and  
15 see whether or not we can give some of this money back to people who should not have been  
16 charged in the first place.

17  
18 We need to take fairness into consideration here. I asked the Department whether or not we  
19 could refund this money, if it was within our remit, the response I got back was that under the  
20 Act it is a function of a local authority to collect NPPR charges and late payment fees due to it  
21 and all charges and late payment fees imposed and payable to the local authority are under the  
22 care and management of the local authority concerned. In this regard application of the  
23 legislation in particular circumstances, including refunds where appropriate, is a matter for the  
24 relevant local authority. So from reading that it is actually within our remit to open it back up  
25 and to see if we can refund some of this money to those accidental landlords.

26  
27 There is a procedure in place to refund the NPPR in three circumstances. And I think we should  
28 extend that to those accidental landlords. So while it's probably going to be logistically difficult  
29 for the Council to do, it's the right thing to do, it's the fair thing to do and I think we should as a  
30 Council ringfence a portion of the NPPR to allow for those accidental landlords to be refunded  
31 that money.

32 Cllr FORTUNE: At the start of the meeting I seconded Cllr Behan's proposal and I support his  
33 comments also a few moments ago. I think it's very, very important that this particular amount  
34 of money is used for the people of Wicklow, divided across the five districts, taking into account

1 maybe what Cllr Whitmore had said, because that will be a small amount of it where she  
2 outlined, it made sense. But it's very important for a number of reasons. One is we've been told  
3 -- also a comment I made is I kind of expected or thought that the Corporate Policy Group would  
4 have made some comment or address to us at the meeting because we were told at our AGM,  
5 this was outside of the chamber, this was the most important group in the Council, they have had  
6 a number of meetings, I just make that as an observation.

7  
8 But we were told in a number of meetings, we are not 100% certain, we have to get this year  
9 done, even though some say this year is the most important year, we have to get the base right,  
10 going forward on other years based on what happens this year. Even taking into account the  
11 finance group in the chamber will have more time, to look in and examine things minutely and  
12 get things done properly, as Cllr Ryan said, and also Cllr Ryan's comment, reading the pack you  
13 got, it's the same as every year, business as usual, I think that's wrong in the context of the  
14 changes we saw.

15  
16 But getting back to my main point, the fact that we have to learn a few bits and pieces, therefore  
17 it's equally more important this year that we have that extra funding to divide across districts and  
18 it may be possible when we go forward to properly examine all the cost centres, it may be able to  
19 save a pot of money that will look after us going forward, but in light of the pup that was sold to  
20 the public and the basis of our property tax, the water charges, we certainly need to be giving --  
21 with this budget, if it's to have any credibility at all, it has to give something back to the  
22 community out there, and that's another reason why I'm supporting what Cllr Behan is saying, I  
23 would think that if that's something that as members here we have to insist on that that happens,  
24 if not we're failing our electorate.

25 Cllr LAWLESS: I would just like to say again thank you to Lorraine and the team up in finance,  
26 this is my first budget and I was dreading the day, but I have to say it has been made a lot easier,  
27 and I would just like to commend Breda for doing that spreadsheet, I actually think it was really,  
28 really useful to have, I would have liked it a little sooner, but that's me because I just nit-pick  
29 through everything.

30  
31 I would have to agree with Cllr Timmins, I'm on the finance committee and I think we do need  
32 to meet quarterly and keep an eye on the budget throughout the year and it shouldn't be just a one  
33 event that we're handed all these figures a couple -- a week or so before we're suppose to make  
34 huge decisions. Also just in and around the NPPR, I would have to agree with other councillors



1 here, I think this needs to be discussed, I think we need to decide what we actually do with this  
2 money, it was taken from people that we represent, people that were fined that shouldn't have  
3 been fined, I really think we should look at this and see what way we can give back to these  
4 people and also can we maybe look at some projects as well, once-off projects within our own  
5 districts as well.

6  
7 So I really think the NPPR needs to be discussed and needs to be incorporated into this budget  
8 somehow. And again I just want to thank Lorraine again and her staff for today. Thank you.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Vance.

10 Cllr VANCE: Chairman thank you. Could I just also, like a number of other members,  
11 compliment you, I know you have put in an absolutely tremendous amount of work in bringing  
12 the budget meeting to this and giving people any information that they needed, so I know a  
13 tremendous amount of work you've done I want to compliment you for that.

14  
15 In regard to, we had a discussion earlier on and people were complimenting the officials because  
16 there was a deficit of 700,000 in this year's budget, everyone was complimenting the officials  
17 that there was a 500,000 overrun in housing, this was a great idea because it provided all the  
18 necessary facilities that are needed in that particular area, now I don't have a problem with that,  
19 because I think housing is an area that it's needed in, no other councillor did either. But there  
20 was a 700,000 overrun, and that has to be paid for. We just can't dismiss that, there's a cost for  
21 this, it's a 700,000 deficit and it has to be paid for.

22  
23 We also have other deficits there as well in regard to -- irrespective of whether if we decided at  
24 this meeting today to spend the whole 2.6 million on community projects on a yearly basis, that's  
25 still going to be there next year, that deficit is still going to have to be handled next year, so  
26 effectively whether we handle some of it today or some of it in the next four or five years, a  
27 significant amount of that money per year is going to have to be taken out to service even the  
28 loans that accrue in regard to that.

29  
30 Now I would regard this today as the first part of a five-year process, I think it was Cllr Ryan  
31 said it as well that we have five budgets, this should be towards a strategy in delivering services  
32 and improving services over that period. With anything, with any budget you have to have  
33 balance, you have to have balance between what you put in, what you take out and various  
34 things like that. I recognise and I understand all the needs that people have around the chamber

1 here in regard to housing and community facilities and various other issues as well, which I think  
2 need to be addressed, and certainly I'm not saying to the manager you can have the 2.6 million or  
3 anything like it. I think there should be a balance between what the manager might want to pay a  
4 certain amount off the deficit, but also there should be a significant amount, we should find a  
5 way within the budget process of delivering that significant amount and improvement of services  
6 that exists at the moment, because a lot of these services have been cut back over the years.

7  
8 So to my mind this is something about balance, getting the balance right between the two and  
9 not one side beating the hell out of the other. And let's have a budget that we can look at in five  
10 years time and say we've achieved something in regard to that. I think that's the best way to  
11 approach this and certainly I think it's the way my group will approach it anyway, Chairman,  
12 thank you.

13 Cllr CASEY: I'll be fairly brief Chairman, maybe just clarity on a number of issues, can we  
14 have clarity from the manager of exactly what is within our remit during the budgetary process,  
15 in relation to the NPPR, because I don't think it forms an actual part of the budgetary process,  
16 but I need clarification on that. Also can we have clarification on exactly the debt? First of all  
17 the debt for 2014 and historical debt, till we see exactly what in relation we're dealing with.  
18 Thank you Chairman.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Maybe I'll handover to the chief executive to clarify.

20 COUNTY MANAGER: Thanks Chairman, obviously every year there are some bits of over  
21 expenditure and some bits of increased income, the budget at the end of the day is an estimate of  
22 what will happen and obviously during the year things change and ultimately when the AFS is  
23 done it takes account of the pluses and minuses, I suppose the significant differences this year  
24 are we have about 2.6 million of income from the NPPR, which we hadn't budgeted for, and we  
25 also have an over expenditure in 2014 of about 700,000, so a net increase in income in 2014 of  
26 1.9 million.

27  
28 This doesn't form part of the 2015 budgetary position, what essentially happens is that the ups  
29 and downs are all captured in the AFS and they impact in either a positive or negative way on  
30 the closing deficit. At the beginning of the year we had a deficit on the revenue account of 3.5  
31 million, which had accumulated over many years, obviously as funding got tighter since the  
32 downturn in the economy there have been still demands for services without adequate provision  
33 being made, but a lot of the deficit of 3.5 million is a historic one, which existed for many years.

1 On the capital account there's a deficit of about 12 million and again this would be money spent  
2 on housing over the years that hasn't been matched by either loans or by government grants, and  
3 the hope would have been that the sale of local authority houses would have brought in internal  
4 capital receipts which would have funded that. But the position essentially at the moment is we  
5 had an opening deficit of 3.5 million on revenue, our over spend at the end of the third quarter  
6 this year is estimated at 700, if you take that 700,000 off the extra money from the NPPR, it  
7 leaves you with a net figure of 1.9 million, which is part of the 2014 out turn, and doesn't form  
8 part of the 2015 budget process.

9  
10 In relation to the 2015 budget process, we have included an income of 200,000 in 2015 which is  
11 taking account of the overall figures given to the members, we expect based on the number of  
12 agreements we have with people who had the NPPR, in some cases instead of paying up front  
13 we agreed to take it in instalments, quite a few of those extend into next year so the estimate for  
14 income from those is about 200,000, which as I said has been accounted for in the 2015 budget.  
15 We've discussed the position with the Department of the Environment, and based on the deficit  
16 the strong advice from the Department is that the NPPR should be used to reduce the deficit.

17  
18 The size of the deficit is something which the local government auditor obviously refers to each  
19 year in his annual report and he has made the case that we should be providing in each year's  
20 budget to reduce this, we haven't been providing adequately to reduce it within a reasonable  
21 period of time and certainly the local government auditor has been extremely unhappy with that,  
22 the reason we haven't been providing, we simply haven't had the capacity to in recent years to  
23 provide for that without cutting services even further than we've had to cut them in recent years.

24  
25 Obviously both myself and the rest of the management and all of the staff, we don't want to be  
26 cutting back on anything, our job here as officials is to try and provide the best possible services  
27 for the people of Wicklow to support the members in every way possible in doing that. On the  
28 other hand, we have an obligation to act in a prudent manner, to prepare the accounts in  
29 accordance with directions from the manager and so on. So it's a question of striking a right  
30 balance between, on the one hand dealing with the deficit over a reasonable period of time, and  
31 on the other hand providing as much services as possible, particularly at the present time when  
32 the economy is still struggling to recover. Obviously we want to provide the best possible  
33 services throughout the county in all sorts of areas and at the same time we need to get the  
34 balance right and deal with the deficit over a period of years, and we need to be able to assure

1 both the auditor and the Department that we'll be doing that in addition to obviously spending  
2 money going forward and so on.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Tommy Cullen.

4 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Just five months since the local election that everyone here went before  
5 the people and with the exception of Fine Gael party, the people here gave commitments to the  
6 public property tax and water charges I would like to see the people keep those commitments,  
7 usually the first estimates set the tone on how long people's duration on this Council will sit.

8  
9 Chairman, the estimates are a very important vote, but I just done some rough calculations, this  
10 year the government are going to take in something like 20 million euro in property taxes from  
11 the people of Wicklow, 20 million. In the coming year the government are going to be taking in  
12 possibly another 7 or 8 or 10 million in water taxes, on top of the property taxes. That's another  
13 25 to 27 million in taxes being extracted from the residents of this county.

14  
15 Those taxes are subsidised in the government cut backs to local government, so when people say  
16 what's the alternative? We are paying the highest income tax in the EU. We have this universal  
17 social charge that's not in any other EU country. We are paying stamp duty on property, in  
18 Britain for instance stamp duty is a property tax, you don't pay any stamp duty on a property up  
19 to one and a quarter million. So they don't have that property tax on that and if you do pay a  
20 form of rate for the house, you get the national health service, you get school meals, you get free  
21 school books, free creche for children, you bet bins collected for a reasonable price.

22  
23 But for all the property taxes and charges that are coming down the road, the people are getting  
24 nothing back, we are getting no services back. We're still paying the highest level of income tax  
25 in the western world. So Chairman, we're still committing to giving 500 million to build a  
26 motorway in a part of the UK jurisdiction whether you agree with it or not. And I just look at  
27 what's coming down, we're going to have a property review of everyone's home in this county  
28 starting next March. It will be an upward review on property tax, so anyone paying for instance  
29 250 a year property tax on their home in 2015, by 2016 they will be paying up to 600 or 700 in  
30 property tax review. So somewhere along the line someone has to say stop, this can't go on.

31  
32 And that's why the people are on the streets. I have never seen in my lifetime the political anger  
33 that's out there, I think it's bordering on revolution out there now. Even since the anger that has  
34 grown since the last Council election in May, it's now three times worse and for us to come

1 along here today and pretend there's nothing going on outside on the streets, there's nothing  
2 going on in the homes, nothing going out there business people are furious about the level of  
3 taxation and we can come here today and say sure we'll do this and it will be all right on the day,  
4 but what we are effectively -- in these estimates, dug into the estimates are property taxes and  
5 water charges and I gave a commitment to the people I will oppose. I don't agree with property  
6 taxes on principle, I think we have already paid through our direct taxation to this State, the State  
7 got enough money, it's hard enough for people to own a home in this country with the taxes we  
8 have to pay without burdening them with more property tax. And it's terrible on young people  
9 trying to start off to get a home now facing a review of property taxation from January 2015.

10  
11 Between January and March every household in this county is going to get another letter, to re  
12 value their houses and it's going to be an upward valuation and that will be more revenue taken  
13 out. So I would say to people sometimes you have to do what you gave a commitment to the  
14 electorate to do, it's only five months since people had the election and I would ask all the  
15 councillors here today to remember the commitments they gave.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Behan?

17 Cllr BEHAN: Chairman I want to compliment Cllr Whitmore's excellent work in regard to the  
18 cost of refunding some of the money to accidental landlords or even unwilling landlords,  
19 whatever way you want to put it. The answer she got from the Department shows even the  
20 Department can't argue that it is for us to decide how to spend the money, furthermore the  
21 manager has said if you listen carefully, has contradicted me that this is our decision what we do.

22  
23 He made a case that it should be used to payoff the deficit or some of the deficit, but he hasn't  
24 said because he can't, that it's not our power, it is our power. So we have a chance here now to  
25 make a decision for the people. And as far as I'm concerned we could go around the houses on  
26 this all night Chairman you don't want to do this, I think we should have a vote on this thing, and  
27 let's make a decision one way or the other. People may be worried about the fact that the  
28 manager says we have this big deficit. For as long as I can remember at Council meetings at  
29 estimates we've had deficits and the auditor would advise you start bringing down the deficit, if  
30 this NPPR hadn't come about there would have be a deficit and the sky wouldn't fall in, there is  
31 700,000 deficit run by the Council this year and the sky didn't fall in and it won't fall in next year  
32 either. Hopefully the economy improves and our economic situation will hopefully improve.

33  
34 I saw last week where a sink hole appeared somewhere in Kerry what we are about to be asked

1 to do is to allow 2.5 million disappear into the sink hole of Wicklow County Council never to be  
2 seen again. Having been extracted from many people who are in very difficult circumstances.  
3 Now I completely agree that the Cllr Whitmore and her suggestion, we should consider returning  
4 some of it. We should also ensure the rest is spread throughout the county for the benefit of the  
5 people. So I'd like to push my proposal Chairman.

6 Cllr FORTUNE: Again I support Cllr Behan's proposal. I think the meeting now, it's a very, a  
7 remark from one or two of the councillors earlier, we had a very tame meeting all day, because  
8 we basically went through programmes, but I wondered when the bite would come into it, and it  
9 reminds me of the AGM and the meeting we had subsequently after that for the positions on  
10 various committees a number of councillors made some statements and then teed it up for the  
11 manager to come in and say -- but he said something very, very important. He said that he has  
12 been advised to use the balance. He hasn't been told to use the balance. So what Cllr Behan  
13 says is very important. It really is the decision of members how we go about this.

14  
15 I think someone said earlier on it's the one -- there are so many powers taken away from  
16 councillors, even with the reform of local government, we have these municipal districts that  
17 have no teeth. So I think -- and you can go to anyone for advice, go to an accountant to a  
18 solicitor to get advice, you don't take advice verbatim, you listen to it and make a conscious  
19 decision. I think we need to do that, again as I said earlier when you read the report here, it's  
20 very bullish at the very beginning and as you get into where it's going to influence decisions, it  
21 gets threatening to a certain extent.

22  
23 So I would think, I'm with Cllr Behan on this 100%, we owe it to the people of Wicklow, we  
24 really do. As I said already when I spoke earlier, I support what Cllr Whitmore mentioned as  
25 well, I think rather than, we can stay here till 9 o'clock tonight having this debate, but why don't  
26 we vote on it?

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Cllr O'Brien?

28 Cllr O'BRIEN: As a new councillor I'm shocked at the complexity of the whole system, we're  
29 sitting down at a meeting and I'm asking myself what have we achieved since the start of the  
30 day? Has one homeless person been moved off the street? The system is way too complex,  
31 there is too much administration, it's too complex, I go totally with Cllr Behan putting money  
32 back into local areas so people can see what's to be done. The money flows in there, people pay  
33 their taxes, comes in fast, it doesn't come back out half as quick as it comes. Meanwhile there  
34 are children growing up that aren't looked after properly, I see, the budget seems to be about

1 balancing books and keeping things, the major thing at the moment is the children of this country  
2 they are the ones we have a duty to, they are the one to treaty equal, if we are to the treating them  
3 equally, we are doing something seriously wrong. We should write that out now, our focus  
4 should be on that. There are a lot of things in the book that I wouldn't be a bit happy with,  
5 organisations getting big grants that don't need them, they are not on the street, they are not  
6 homeless, they are not suffering, not growing up in areas that they shouldn't, the whole thing  
7 should be looked at properly, start focusing on the basic priorities, where everybody, every child  
8 is under a proper roof tonight, has proper safety and all the basic facilities, I don't think that is  
9 guaranteeing that. I would support Cllr Behan, going back towards decentralisation we have a  
10 mammoth organisation, 32 trying to get to talk, I'm just disappointed I have to say with the trend  
11 that we're not moving towards looking after the children of the country first and mother most and  
12 building our budget around that, if we did it that way we'd have a proper country in the morning.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Matthews.

14 Cllr MATTHEWS: Thank you Chairman, with regards to Cllr Behan's proposal I'd be  
15 supportive of that, but the talk of deficit, running a deficit doesn't matter as long as at some point  
16 in the future you will be reasonably confident of paying it off, there's households in this country  
17 running on monthly deficits or weekly deficits, but they are working their way out, so I'm not  
18 hugely concerned of running at a deficit because I think at some stage in the future we'll pay it  
19 off, but we have to strike a balance between having this whatever people want to it call it, a  
20 bonus payment we didn't know we had, and spending all next year or paying some off the deficit.  
21 Really I think we need to strike a balance here between the deficit and spending this, this money  
22 going to the municipal districts for discretionary spend.

23  
24 Sorry, one point on the refunds proposal that was made, I don't know how difficult it would be to  
25 tell the difference between people who didn't pay and thought they might get away with it and  
26 people who are caught and referred to as accidental landlords, I don't know how difficult it  
27 would be to implement that, take it on a case-by-case study, it might end up costing more than  
28 we would refund in the first place, that's one of the key factors you have to look at in taxation.  
29 So that needs to be carefully considered, I don't think we have enough information on hand today  
30 to look at that, if someone can provide me figures of how much fit into that and how much it cost  
31 to refund and what the figures are, that would come out of the 2.6 million, I'm happy to look at  
32 it. Chairman I'll leave it at that, thank you.

33 Cllr CASEY: Thank you Chairman. I would like to make an amendment to Cllr Behan's  
34 proposal based on the fact I believe the last six or seven hours we spent here is on a budgetary

1 process, which NPPR doesn't form a strategic part of. I have been trying to work on the idea  
2 how do we form that as part of the budgetary process. So I'm prepared to put the following  
3 amendment to the chamber and it's based on that NPPR brought in an additional 2.6 million in  
4 revenue of which 700,000 would have to go against the deficit for the forthcoming year, leaving  
5 the 1.9 million. So it's the 1.9 million I was trying to do a balancing act on.

6  
7 Taking the 2015 estimates, not the NPPR money, but the 2015 budgetary estimate, I am  
8 proposing a reduction in H01, profit and loss machinery account of the order of 200,000  
9 reducing from 570,000 down to 370,000. And reduction in H03 in administration of rates under  
10 bad debt provision and taking 800,000 out of that, reducing from 5.14 million to 4.34 million.  
11 And I'm doing that because I know and I would be asking the chief executive to use his  
12 discretion in the preparation of the annual financial statement for 2014 to address the figures I  
13 have said in relation to the plant and machinery account and the rates account and make the  
14 subsequent changes in the AFS in the reserve accounts and bad debt provision to account for  
15 that.

16  
17 Now I have made no decision in relation to how that million could be spent by the members here  
18 in the chamber, but I'm willing to make that proposal as giving a million through the estimate  
19 process rather than trying to go back on something that I believe we can't do, which is last year's  
20 2014 figure, and I believe if that million is on the table we should take a break and see how that  
21 million is spent. That would be my proposal or amendment to Cllr Behan's proposal.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Before we do that, Cllr Whitmore?

23 Cllr WHITMORE: In relation to Cllr Matthews' query, in general the people hit and treated  
24 most unfairly were accidental landlords, they are people who own one property, who can show  
25 that they are in negative equity and that they rent elsewhere. Now at the moment there are three  
26 refund procedures in place, one of them is if you own -- if you were in the process of selling and  
27 buying a home and you owned two properties at one stage, at the moment there are procedures in  
28 place where people have to come in and prove and show that they tick certain boxes and fulfil  
29 certain criteria that this would be an extension of that, they could come in and show they own  
30 one property, they are in negative equity and show a record of renting elsewhere, I'm not sure  
31 what the numbers are, how many people potentially were affected by this who could claim to be  
32 accidental landlords, which is why I would, I'd like a certain amount ringfenced and I would --  
33 my preference to be to have a two or three-month period where we advertise and ask people if  
34 they fall into these categories that they can come in and talk to us, and then once that period is



1 closed then any money that's left over can be distributed, whether to municipal districts or  
2 whatever -- so that would be my proposal.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have I a seconder?

4 Cllr RYAN: I was just about to. I think that's a smart way to actually do it, to ensure that it can  
5 be actually taken, the amendment, Cllr Casey's.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have I a seconder for Cllr Whitmore?

7 Cllr WINTERS: Can I speak on it first? I think she makes a lot of valid points, if roughly  
8 everyone was paying 4,000, we've taken in 2.4 million, we have 668 people have paid money.  
9 It's not such a vast amount to go through on an individual basis to see are there people there, but  
10 what we need to do is go through them and see how many, if there's three other ways you can get  
11 a refund and we're adding a fourth, do we have 2.6 million to take a million out of, in our  
12 estimates, how much of that money are we likely to have to refund through any of the schemes  
13 for accidental landlords? I agree with you, I think they should be refunded and I think we should  
14 give them back their money. So I am, but I want to know what the figures involved are.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I just say the stenographer has requested a break and it might be no  
16 harm for everybody, to give the officials an opportunity to divulge what Cllr Casey ...

17 Cllr BRADY: Cathaoirleach the amendment needs to be circulated.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Shall we have a recess for 15 minutes?

19 Cllr CASEY: Just a point, I'm not deciding where the money is spent, just proposing where the  
20 money is extracted.

21  
22 Short break

23  
24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you members. Before I start, there is going to be, we are going to  
25 have to take two votes on the harmonisation of the rates and the vacant rates proposal before the  
26 actual vote on the budget, because it's actually not part of the budget. But the figure, the  
27 equalised figure is contained in the budget report, so we have to take those two proposals before  
28 we actually vote on the actual budget, okay?

29  
30 Just getting back to the actual motions or proposals. Cllr Casey, you proposed the following  
31 amendment to the 2015 budget, I'll get Lorraine to read it out.

32 Cllr BEHAN: Sorry I thought I made the first proposal.

33 Cllr BRADY: That's not an amendment, it's a clear counter proposal.

34 MS GALLAGHER: I'm just reading it.

1 Cllr BEHAN: Sorry, I'm getting very excited.

2 MS GALLAGHER: This has been circulated, proposed by Cllr Casey and seconded by Cllr  
3 Ryan. Propose the following amendments to the 2015 budget: Reduction in H01, profit and loss  
4 machinery account, of 200,000, reduction in H03, administration of rates under bad debt  
5 provision of 800,000. Reducing P and L machinery from 570,000 to 370,000 and reducing bad  
6 debt provision sum from 5,140,000 to 4,340,000 and to ask the manager to make the changes to  
7 AFS 2014 to reflect the above.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. And Cllr Behan then made a proposal.

9 MS GALLAGHER: Proposed by Cllr Behan and seconded by Cllr Fortune. That this Council  
10 retains the full proceeds of the NPPR for 2014, i.e. 2,675,925 for disbursement on a  
11 proportionate basis between the 5 municipal districts with the provision of 300,000 to be  
12 ringfenced for the possible refunds to the proportion of second homeowners who were only put  
13 in this position because of their financial necessity to rent their first home.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. And Cllr Whitmore?

15 MS GALLAGHER: Can I have a seconder for Cllr Whitmore, Cllr Winters?

16 Cllr WINTERS: No, because I want to know how much money we're talking about.

17 MS GALLAGHER: Seconder?

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Kavanagh.

19 MS GALLAGHER: Proposal that Wicklow County Council ringfence a portion of the NPPR to  
20 allow the refunding of penalty payment to those individuals that can demonstrate that they are  
21 accidental landlords, i.e. owners of one property in negative equity where they rent elsewhere.  
22 That actually is the same as Cllr Behan's proposal.

23 Cllr WHITMORE: I have an amendment to Cllr Behan's proposal that would incorporate mine  
24 into his essentially. So in Cllr Behan's proposal where it says the 300,000 to be ringfenced for  
25 the possible refund to the proportion of second homeowners, I would change to accidental  
26 landlords and follow at the end of Cllr Behan's proposal I would include a proposal on how to  
27 implement the refund would be brought before Council in January.

28 Cllr BEHAN: I'm happy with that.

29 MS GALLAGHER: So proposal as to how to?

30 Cllr WHITMORE: Implement these refunds, will be brought before Council in January.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, now...

32 MS GALLAGHER: Sorry do we have a seconder for that?

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Behan.

34 MS GALLAGHER: Cllr Behan seconded that amendment?

1 Cllr KAVANAGH: Yours is withdrawn then?

2 Cllr WHITMORE: They are put together.

3 MS GALLAGHER: It's withdrawn.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: I want to let in the chief executive, there's some advice.

5 COUNTY MANAGER: Yeah, I asked the law agent to have a look at the circumstances in  
6 which we can grant refunds, and the law agent's advice, obviously he is doing this on the hoof, is  
7 that we don't have the power under the legislation to grant refunds in the circumstances that Cllr  
8 Whitmore mentioned. That's his advice at the moment, as I said he is responding on the hoof to  
9 the query, that is his preliminary view that it wouldn't be valid to grant refund, the legislation is  
10 specific as to who is exempt from the charge under section 4 of the Local Government Charges  
11 Act 2009. I see the law agent has joined us, but that's his response.

12 Cllr WHITMORE: Just in relation to that, I'm happy to work with the law agent over the next  
13 couple of months, I think a month or two will give us time to actually sort this out if it's a case it  
14 is not feasible that's something I can bring to Council in January, but I'd like to have some time  
15 to investigate it a bit further.

16 Cllr BEHAN: On that basis and on the basis of what the manager said and certainly agreeing  
17 with what Cllr Whitmore said I would agree with her point about it being ringfenced, at least we  
18 can discuss it in January that aspect of it. I'm still saying, the main point I'm making, the 2.675  
19 million is to be disbursed, minus 300,000, so 2.3 million to the five electoral areas, the rest we  
20 can discuss and get all the advice we need in the new year, but it doesn't change the substantive  
21 motion though as far as I'm concerned.

22 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: I just want to state that with regards to the proposal that Cllr Casey said I  
23 would like to see the balance, at least 300,000 of that goes back to those who have paid the  
24 monies, so I'm just putting that on the record. That whatever way the vote goes, that if 1 million  
25 goes to municipal districts, at least 300,000 of the balance goes back to the people who paid for  
26 it, I want to put my personal opinion on the record.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, just to be clear now, Cllr Casey has stitched this into the budget.  
28 It's an amendment to the budget. Cllr Behan's proposal is stand alone on the NPPR. So Cllr  
29 Behan was first ...

30 Cllr CASEY: Just on a point of -- maybe on a number of points of clarification. Number one, I  
31 also said as part of the proposal that I suggested a break to see how that million could be spent,  
32 and I would like to have time to do that, but secondly, this is the budgetary process, and am I  
33 right in saying that Cllr Behan's proposal has absolutely nothing to do with the budget? I just  
34 need clarity on this? Because it is the estimates we're sitting here agreeing today. And my

1 proposal is in relation to the estimates, Cllr Behan's proposal is in relation to NPPR money in  
2 relation to this current year, current fiscal year and absolutely nothing to do with the budget of  
3 2015, I think we need some clarity from the top table as to exactly what's going on here.

4  
5 The second thing, just in relation to the legal advice, we made the decision here a number of  
6 years ago that went against us in relation to something that was illegal and we voted it through.  
7 And since then we have been suffering on information in relation to social housing.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Well I want to get the budget dealt with first okay. Cllr Brady you want  
9 to come in?

10 Cllr BRADY: Yeah Cathaoirleach, just I'm a little bit, just in relation to the proposal from  
11 Fianna Fail, he is saying is directly tied into the budget, it's about freeing up a million euro, I  
12 take it he is not talking about the NPPR money, that 2.6 million is still completely separate or are  
13 you saying as part of this, because it's not contained in this amendment that the 2.6 goes to pay  
14 directly into the deficit, is that contained in the proposal here or what are you saying about the  
15 2.6 million?

16  
17 I think certainly from the Sinn Fein's perspective, I think the proposal from Cllr Behan and Cllr  
18 Whitmore is the more pragmatic of the two to be fair. There is over 2.6 million there of people's  
19 money that needs to firstly be, a portion of it ringfenced to go back in there and secondly our  
20 money, i.e. the guardians of the county, us democratically elected people, we have the first say  
21 and total control over that, where that money goes and certainly I will be, the Sinn Fein group  
22 will be supporting Cllr Behan and Cllr Whitmore's proposal, I don't see where the Fianna Fail  
23 one, whether they want to come in and clarify that, as to what exactly they are proposing to do  
24 with the 2.6 million, because it isn't contained in that, it's purely about freeing up 200,000 from  
25 the profit and loss and machinery and bad debt provision, bringing up 1 million euro. So there's  
26 no mention of the NPPR money. So maybe get some clarification there.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Matthews.

28 Cllr MATTHEWS: I was looking for clarification on the Fianna Fail proposal as well.

29 Cllr VANCE: We'll clarify that.

30 Cllr MATTHEWS: Just what is the implication of reducing profit and loss machinery by  
31 200,000 and the implication of H03 by 800,000, they are substantial figures.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: We'll let Lorraine in on that. Cllr Winters?

33 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathaoirleach, just if, as Cllr Casey said these are two separate things,  
34 when we have the estimates which we're looking at today and then we have the 2.6 million of the

1 NPPR, we don't actually have to wait to January, we could do it next week at the December  
2 meeting, my understanding is that the NPPR has to be decided before the end of the year, so  
3 whether it goes off the deficit or whether we choose to spend it, but whatever we decide with the  
4 NPPR today doesn't really make any difference to the estimates process does it?

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Well it's not part of the budget. Technically. It's income that was, the  
6 manager said it's income that came in 2014. Now I have no problem with the proposal, but we  
7 have to take the budget proposals first.

8 Cllr BEHAN: On a point of order can I -- I made this proposal at the very beginning of the  
9 meeting on the basis that this is money we already have. I honestly feel we have not been given  
10 a proper opportunity and if there had been more give earlier on when this was brought up two  
11 months ago from the management side, we may have had a resolution to this, but there wasn't, so  
12 my attitude really is that we need to make a decision about this money, first, then we look at the  
13 budget. If we give in now, basically what we're saying is that okay we're letting that money  
14 disappear and that it will be a whole range of arguments again about it will disappear at the end  
15 of December.

16  
17 The money is in the bank at the moment, it's lodged, it's money that has been paid. It will just be  
18 carried forward as a positive balance next year, the same way as if it was going to payoff a  
19 deficit, it would be used the other way, so I don't accept Chairman with the greatest of respect to  
20 you, that we should just go ahead with the budget and leapfrog over this very fundamental issue,  
21 which is a matter really of principle as far as we are concerned. Do we decide or the  
22 management decide? So on that basis I am going to have to ask you to take my proposal.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: I will take your proposal, but I have to deal with the budget first. We're  
24 dealing with the budget, that's what's before us.

25 Cllr BEHAN: It's part of the budget.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: It's not. We'll take your proposal after the budget.

27 Cllr BEHAN: I don't think we're getting a full reflection of the view of the members if you do it  
28 that way.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I ask Fianna Fail to clarify, Cllr Matthews and Cllr Brady raised it.

30 Cllr CASEY: Just as a point of clarification in the opening remark that the Council currently  
31 have a deficit of 3.5 million plus an operational deficit for the current year 2014, of an additional  
32 700,000 in or thereabouts, and I would be of the understanding that automatically the 700,000 is  
33 taken out of the NPPR money, which brings the deficit back to 3.5 million. And leaves the  
34 NPPR money at 1.9 million. And because this is a budgetary process for 2015 and the NPPR

1 money relates to 2014 and has nothing to do with 2014, I have picked two items in relation to the  
2 budgetary process that could be addressed in the annual financial statement of 2014, using the  
3 NPPR money.

4  
5 This is what I have done. But it actually forms my amendment, allows this Council to spend that  
6 1 million over the budgetary period of 2015. It allows the chief executive to use the NPPR  
7 money to address the amendment I have made in the financial statement of 2014, taking that 1  
8 million of the NPPR money and putting it in to the profit and loss machinery account and putting  
9 it into the bad debts provision in 2014, accounting for that 1 million.

10  
11 I am also more or less saying indirectly that the 900,000 left goes against a deficit of the 3.5  
12 million that we have. And we look over the next six or seven years to write off the remaining  
13 balance of the deficit that's left after that. If that's anyway clearer? Because we are dealing with  
14 a budgetary process for 2015 and regrettably the NPPR money relates to 2014, has nothing to do  
15 with what we're dealing with here today. And I'm using indirectly 1 million of the NPPR  
16 money, basically in theory is what I'm doing.

17 Cllr WHITMORE: I don't agree that the NPPR money doesn't relate to 2015, I think we always  
18 look at the budgets and work out where we would like that money to be used if we see areas that  
19 we don't think are focused on or we want to actually move our money towards, that would be  
20 significantly impacted on if we know that our districts will have two or three or four hundred  
21 thousand euro extra next year. So I think to actually say that the NPPR from 2014 isn't going to  
22 impact on our decisions that we make in relation to the 2015 budget is not correct.

23  
24 I think the Fianna Fail proposal, what it seems to have done is actually pulled 1.6 million of the  
25 NPPR and is now either giving it to the deficit or I don't know, putting it somewhere, where  
26 necessarily we as a Council will not want it spent.

27 Cllr BEHAN: It's a way of depriving the people of Wicklow of another 1 million euro, that's  
28 what's happening.

29 Cllr FORTUNE: Cllr Behan proposed this at the beginning of the meeting this morning, I  
30 seconded it, the motion myself and Cllr Behan have before the Council I think is very, very  
31 relevant. The -- I've lost track of where I was going with it now -- got a blank!

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'll come back to you.

33 Cllr FORTUNE: No, I know what it was. I don't accept the argument that the NPPR is not part  
34 of the process, it's in our pack that we were sent out, it's here as part of the numbers. So when

1 we were considering this pack and read this pack, when I reviewed this pack before I came to the  
2 meeting I see money in here, NPPR, I said fantastic, that will give us money to give back to our  
3 constituents, so again what I am saying is I again support what Cllr Behan is saying, I don't want  
4 to be isolated on that by any individual or any party, I seconded that motion, continually all day.

5 Cllr SNELL: It seems that the, there's been more contradictions here in the last half hour than  
6 I've witnessed in a lifetime. The waters have been muddied to a certain degree. Cllr Behan  
7 came in with a proposal which was seconded by Cllr Fortune, then Cllr Casey came in with a  
8 proposal, an amendment to the budget. You're saying that the NPPR is not part of the budgetary  
9 process, you therefore can't take Cllr Behan's motion.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: I didn't say I wasn't taking it. I said I'm dealing with the budget first.

11 Cllr SNELL: Yet the proposal you're looking at taking is Cllr Casey's, which is based on using  
12 more from the NPPR, he's talking about using money to pay the deficit of the 2.6 million and  
13 you're saying that's quite all right.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Casey's proposal, as I read, is to take 1 million out of the budget.

15 Cllr SNELL: But he is also factoring in that the remainder of the NPPR money will go to paying  
16 the deficit from the local authority, that's what he stated. I feel that we've just ground to a halt  
17 here. I'm delighted to see that there's a million euro can be saved from that budget, we spent  
18 nine or ten hours discussing it, I didn't think the way we were talking around the budget that  
19 there was two pence to be saved, now there's a million that can be made available, I think by all  
20 means, let us spend that million, let us put it into the various sections of this local authority that  
21 need it. Such as housing, but that 2.6 million from the NPPR, allowing for the couple of  
22 hundred thousand for Cllr Whitmore's proposal, that would be looked at in January, don't tell me  
23 there's one member of this local authority is going to turn down in the region of 460,000 to bring  
24 back to their municipal district, because that's what we're saying, that we're going to vote against  
25 bringing back 460,000 to our own area councils to be spent wisely, to be spent on projects that  
26 are fundamentally important to the people that elected us, this is crazy.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you.

28 Cllr BEHAN: Chairman on, a point of order, being realistic about this, if Cllr Casey's motion is  
29 passed mine falls, because he has incorporated the NPPR money in his proposal, which you said,  
30 or the manager has said you can't do. But he actually has done it. He has done it in a  
31 roundabout way, he was very honest, it's being clever with words and figures, but the net effect  
32 is he is using the NPPR to realise 1 million on one hand and payoff the deficit on the other, that's  
33 grand, a valid proposal. Your argument is it should be taken first, if it's taken first we can't have  
34 a vote on my proposal, because the money is gone if the budget is accepted. So it puts people

1 like me in a position where we have to vote against the budget, I don't necessarily want to vote  
2 against the budget, but I do want us to make a decision on the NPPR and I think it's natural  
3 justice as I did make it earlier this morning.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: What you are asking me to do is take a vote on something that's not part  
5 of the budget.

6 Cllr BEHAN: You can't take Cllr Casey's either then.

7 Cllr RYAN: This is quite complex. I think at the end of the day what I see is a situation where  
8 the manager and the officials may not want to be using this money and what we're trying to do is  
9 find a mechanism whereby we can actually incorporate it into the budget right now, I think that's  
10 something that we can and should do. And that's why I see the sense in the proposal, whereby  
11 we're actually dealing with the debt this year, because it's a current expenditure in this year, so  
12 the manager has the gift to do that and the power to do that, I would obviously love if the power  
13 was slightly different in the Council's all over Ireland, but it isn't. But this is a mechanism  
14 whereby we can actually get a million euro and agree how we'd like to see that million euro  
15 spent and I know from just talking there at the break, I definitely have areas that I personally  
16 would like to see that -- of that 1 million euro, that I believe tourism is something that's badly  
17 needed and certain projects that we should actually invest 100,000 in to drive tourism in this  
18 county.

19  
20 I also believe that economic development and jobs is another area I'd like to see 100,000 of that  
21 million go in and I'd also like to see from the housing perspective, we've already overspent in  
22 housing in repairs, but I'd like to see another 150,000 from that million go into housing  
23 repairs/central heating issue that has been raised at the SPC in terms that this can be the start of  
24 maybe a five-year plan to get the houses in this county that don't have central heating up to speed  
25 with central heating.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Before we take proposals, we have to get agreement on whether we take  
27 the million out or not.

28 Cllr BRADY: It's like a Santa Christmas list here, everyone trying to make proposals.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Hold on, wait your turn.

30 Cllr KAVANAGH: When Cllr Casey proposed his amendment Cllr Casey himself in his  
31 explanation referred to the NPPR several times, he referred to the NPPR and how that might be  
32 used to fill in, so you can't have one law for one and another for another. If Cllr Casey already  
33 referred in his explanation to NPPR then it is about NPPR and Cllr Behan's motion about NPPR  
34 came first. And NPPR is mentioned in the budget, I have a circle around it here. I had a circle



1 of 2.675 million and if Cllr Behan's motion is to take that off the book here then that's, as I  
2 would consider, the first motion of the day that has to be considered, whether we take that off the  
3 books first off.

4 Cllr CASEY: I'll hold off for a while.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Tommy Cullen.

6 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Chairman, this year we got in our own municipal area 24,000 to divide,  
7 Cllr Behan's proposal is to give each of the municipal areas nearly half a million of discretionary  
8 funding to spend in our areas, I'm sure all the councillors in Baltinglass have plenty of things  
9 they'd like to do with that half a million discretionary spending, and I think we're talking about  
10 the democratic change, that this changes what the local government will bring about, this is the  
11 first test of it, this is giving the councillors real power, giving councillors real budgets, giving  
12 councillors an opportunity to have certain discretionary funding in their own electoral area to  
13 help the people they were elected to serve. I have to compliment Cllr Behan on that proposal, it  
14 makes a lot of sense to me, it's very transparent and democratic and it's actually given some truth  
15 to the democratic process. We have been arguing for that type of autonomous power and  
16 spending power since I came on the Council, and this is the first real time that we have an  
17 opportunity to get it.

18  
19 Now I don't think it's a big thing what Cllr Behan is proposing, it's a windfall benefit to the  
20 county, and therefore it should be served to the county. Now anyone that talks about getting  
21 worked up about deficits, there's always been deficits of one sort or another in the Council,  
22 sometimes far more than 700,000, so I wouldn't want to get alarmed about deficit. And then  
23 people are arguing, Cllr Casey maybe -- Cllr Casey was arguing about bringing forward money,  
24 that's an argument to say you have a thousand euro on the 31st of December, but you can't spend  
25 the same thousand on the 1st of January, that would be a nonsensical argument. I think Cllr  
26 Behan's is very democratic and I would ask all councillors, of all persons to consider Cllr  
27 Behan's proposal as being reasonable, give some power to local councillors and spending power  
28 to our local area, as people we are to serve and we would be mad if we didn't support Cllr  
29 Behan's proposal.

30 Cllr FITZGERALD: Just quickly the mention of the NPPR being in budget, but the NPPR  
31 outcome, the 2.675 million is in the 2014 accounts. The figure in for this year for 2015 is  
32 200,000. So to take the 2.675 million do we have to make adjustments to the 2014 accounts if  
33 we're putting that by for next year for, as Cllr Behan is looking to give it back to the people as he  
34 said? Do we have to make -- what adjustments do we have to make? Cllr Casey's proposal

1 proposes adjustments to the profit and loss machinery account, administration of rates, reduce P  
2 and L machinery of a million euro to bring it back, to take it out of the expenditure for 2015, so  
3 what, maybe Lorraine might say, what do we have to do if we're taking 2.675 million out of the  
4 accounts for 2014? The only figure in the accounts for miscellaneous for NPPR is 200,000. I'm  
5 not clear on what has to be done, do we have to make changes to the different programmes?

6 Cllr VANCE: Cathaoirleach, I think it's absolute madness talking about using 2.6 million in  
7 regard to this, I talked earlier on and I was listening to what Cllr Matthews was saying in regard  
8 to getting a balance right between paying off some of the deficit we have. Because we took that  
9 2.6 million, we still have to face the problem of 3 and a half million of a deficit next year and the  
10 year after, it just doesn't go away. Effectively it means it's much harder next year, so effectively  
11 you're kicking the can down the road, you're saying listen we'll do it next year, but we'll handle it  
12 the following year and the following year, that's not going to go away.

13  
14 It's balance that we need in regard to paying off a little bit of it, not much and paying what Cllr  
15 Matthews said over a number of years, to pay the deficit off, that's possible. What's not  
16 responsible is to take the full amount of 2.6 million, knowing quite well that you're going to have  
17 to deal with this next year and the year after as well, it doesn't make any sense to me whatsoever  
18 in regard to doing that. Makes no sense whatsoever.

19 Cllr TIMMINS: Chairman, deficits are real, they are not just fiction, you can dismiss, it means  
20 money you didn't have you overspent. We all know what happened this country in the mid  
21 noughties, ten years ago, we over spent, we spent money we didn't have, we're still doing it  
22 today. The councillors who are first in the queue to spend the money, to grab the 2.6 million,  
23 let's spend it hooray, are the same councillors who are against every fundraising mechanism this  
24 Council ever done.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you councillor. Cllr Fortune?

26 Cllr FORTUNE: I think Cllr Timmins doesn't have the right to make that accusation against  
27 councillors, unless he is prepared to name them making a sweeping statement like that, I propose  
28 Chairman we are going around the houses, we're repeating ourselves, I propose you put Cllr  
29 Behan's proposal to the meeting for a vote, that will sort it out one way or another.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: My preference is to deal with the budget, but if the members want to deal  
31 with Cllr Behan's proposal? Bear in mind the manager has got legal advice on it so -- look do  
32 the members want to deal with Cllr Behan's?

33 Cllr BRADY: Can I make a point, I'll be very quick Cathaoirleach, I've sat here and listened to  
34 Fine Gael, Fianna Fail talk about deficits, financial deficits.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: We're not going there.

2 Cllr BRADY: I think it's an important point Cathaoirleach, we have an opportunity here to fill  
3 some real deficits, they are deficits in the community here, people who have been at the cutting  
4 face of austerity, community groups, organisations, different projects that will really benefit  
5 from this funding, so there is a real choice here and someone said earlier on, we throw 1.6  
6 million into a black hole and get no tangible benefits or we ringfence 2.6 million for the  
7 community deficits and to go back to a point Cllr O'Brien made earlier on about building around  
8 children, building around equality. So we have two distinct choices, throw money away into a  
9 black hole or start filling a community deficit that exists.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: I accept what Cllr O'Brien said, but deficit is real. It is real. The deficit  
11 is real, we cannot just dismiss it. We'll take Cllr Behan's motion.

12 Cllr CASEY: Hold on a second, can we have some advice on exactly what we're actually doing  
13 here? I honestly believe that...

14 COUNTY MANAGER: Well Chairman, democratic power is important but I suppose with  
15 power comes responsibility too and you have to consider matters carefully and make reasonable  
16 and rational decisions.

17

18 In relation to budget 2015, the provision in the budget is for 200,000 income and that's already  
19 been provided for in the budget and obviously there's expenditure to match it somewhere else.

20

21 In relation to the position to date as I said earlier, there's ups and downs under various headings.  
22 This year unlike recent years we have a surplus on the year, purely as a result of the NPPR. We  
23 have a deficit of 700,000 accumulated because we've spent more money in housing and other  
24 areas than had been provided, so taking this year on its own it would generate a surplus of 1.9  
25 million.

26

27 In addition we have to be mindful that we have two deficits, we have a deficit at the beginning of  
28 the year of 3.5 million on revenue account, which we should have been addressing, and we had I  
29 suppose there's two opportunities presented themselves this year to address it, one was the local  
30 property tax, we had up to 2.5 additional income there, members decided, it was their right to do  
31 so, it was a reserve function, to reduce the property tax by 15%, that took two and a half million  
32 out of the funds of the Council, which could have been used to address the deficit, the members  
33 decided not to and that was their democratic decision.

34

1 In relation to the NPPR, this is 2014 money, it's not open to the members to include that as part  
2 of the 2015 budget per se. Obviously the members have certain functions and reserve functions,  
3 on the other hand I'm the accounting officer of the Council, I have to prepare a set of accounts  
4 which are prudent, which deal with the realities of the situation and certainly one of the issues  
5 that has to be dealt with and has to be defended by me and the Council is how we deal with the  
6 deficits, so what I would suggest is members need to strike a balance between on the one hand  
7 spending some of the money on projects, which they feel would benefit the Council and benefit  
8 the various municipal districts, but on the other hand they need to address substantially the  
9 deficit that has been accumulated and in addition they need to be conscious that over the next six  
10 to ten years they are going to have to deal with the entire deficit that exists, and that's what  
11 prudence is all about, not simply because you get extra money let's go out and spend it, you have  
12 to look at what you owe as well, just as we would all do in our households if we owe significant  
13 sums of money, we get some extra money that we didn't expect to get, I think what one would  
14 say is we'll spend X amount on dealing with our indebtedness to others and go out and spend  
15 some on doing other things that need to be done.

16  
17 We've discussed the matter with the Department of the Environment and as I said their strong  
18 view is that the, because we have a deficit, it would be different if we were in surplus at the  
19 beginning of the year and didn't have a deficit, but because we have a deficit the advice is that  
20 the entire surplus of this year should be used to reduce the deficit. As I said each year, I have to  
21 defend to the local government auditor and to the Department ultimately why we haven't been  
22 tackling the deficit, obviously in a situation where we get some income that wasn't anticipated  
23 when we were doing last year's budget, in a situation where we get it, but we decide to go out  
24 and spend it nonetheless without tackling the deficit, it really would reduce the credibility of any  
25 possible defence I could put forward in relation to the accounts.

26 Cllr WALSH: Thank you Cathaoirleach, my point I was going to make was more or less  
27 answered by the CEO, I was just going to say would it be accurate to state the deficit we are  
28 talking about, if it's not wholly or partially addressed in this opportunity does it mean a negative  
29 impact on services going forward in the coming years?

30 COUNTY MANAGER: Yes.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Casey?

32 Cllr CASEY: Just on a point of clarification in relation to Cllr Behan's proposal, does it form  
33 part of the budgetary process? And where exactly does Cllr Behan's proposal fit into the  
34 budgetary process for 2015?

1 Cllr BEHAN: Chairman, I think we should just have the vote, we've had every possible thing  
2 thrown into this argument at this stage, I know that the manager has had a job to do and  
3 everybody is entitled to their own opinion. The simple fact of the matter is we decide what  
4 happens to this money, I have made a proposal that we allocate it to our five electoral areas  
5 subject to the possibility of returning some of the money, we have to see how that goes.

6  
7 It's a once-off opportunity, we won't get it again. Most people in the country would accept that  
8 the economy is beginning to improve, there hasn't been a huge amount of fat in this budget, if  
9 you like, that would say that we're vastly increasing our projected income into the future,  
10 hopefully if there is increased activity in planning, increased activity in business, etcetera,  
11 etcetera some of that deficit will gradually be paid off anyway and I think that's a prudent way to  
12 look at it, everybody's view of prudence is different, but nothing that the manager said today has  
13 said we must do what he says, we exercise our own judgment. I honestly think at the end of  
14 whatever it is today, ten hours, we should make a decision and...

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, we're going around in circles, I think we should go ahead and take  
16 Cllr Behan's proposal.

17 Cllr CASEY: Can I make my full proposal?

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: We have to agree the motion to take the million out first. We're dealing  
19 with Cllr Behan's. I've given my opinion, I don't feel it's part of the budget, we're just going in  
20 circles, so we'll deal with it, okay. We'll read out Cllr Behan's motion again.

21 MS GALLAGHER: That this Council retains the full proceeds to the NPPR for 2014 i.e.  
22 2.675,925 for disbursement on a proportionate basis between the five municipal districts with a  
23 provision of 300,000 to be ringfenced for a possible refund to the proportion of the second home  
24 owners who were only put in this position because of their financial necessity to rent their first  
25 home. That's proposed by Cllr Joe Behan and seconded by Cllr Fortune. Then it was amended  
26 to change homeowners to accidental landlord and the proposal how to implement the refund to  
27 be brought before the Council in January that's proposed by Cllr Whitmore and seconded by Cllr  
28 Behan, that's what you're voting on.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay we'll take a roll call.

30  
31 (Vote taken)

32  
33 MS GALLAGHER: 18 against. 1 not present and 13 for.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Now Cllr Casey's proposal.

1 Cllr CASEY: Okay, do you want to take it in its entirety at this stage where the money will be  
2 spent? Okay the proposal is as people have been circulated where the extraction of the money is  
3 coming from is H01, 200,000 profit and loss, H02 the administration of rates of 800,000, that's 1  
4 million, it's proposed to send that 1 million, as Cllr Ryan proposed a few minutes ago, tourism  
5 projects 100,000, economic development 100,000, central heating fund 150,000, community  
6 grant scheme increase by another 60,000, environmental community projects 60,000, library  
7 book fund 80,000, Bray municipal district, 112,500 and the remaining municipal districts  
8 84,375. That's my proposal in its entirety.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: A seconder for that?

10 Cllr BLAKE: I second that Chairman.

11 Cllr WHITMORE: Should that have been circulated to the members in its entirety?

12 Cllr FORTUNE: Can we see that in writing?

13 Cllr CASEY: We'll circulate it there then.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Are you replacing that motion -- amending that to show the 1 million  
15 euro.

16 Cllr CASEY: Where it's being spent, yeah.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, you might circulate that to the members.

18 Cllr KAVANAGH: Sorry Cathaoirleach, we haven't had any time to discuss allocations of  
19 where this money, if it was to be saved, should go, it's just being presented with this...

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: You can put in your own proposals, that's what Cllr Casey proposed.

21 Cllr KAVANAGH: That's fine. I suppose really what I want to know is, we've sat here now for  
22 I don't know how many hours, at the beginning, the first meeting we were here when we were  
23 elected and everything was decided, one of the councillors was on the radio, came on the radio  
24 and said well a pact was formed because only certain people could decide on the budget or  
25 would agree on a budget, I'm just wondering if this budget has already been decided upon by that  
26 voting pact, if we've just wasted the last eight or ten hours here, when it's already a done deal?

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: We haven't voted on the budget yet.

28 Cllr KAVANAGH: I'm just asking before we waste anymore time. Has it been agreed already,  
29 and are the rest of us just here to waste time?

30 Cllr BLAKE: Sorry Chairman, was there a pact on the previous proposal? We could say the  
31 same thing, there could be a pact on the previous proposal.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Ultimately you can vote against or for the budget, it's up to yourself.

33 Cllr FORTUNE: Just a point of clarification, as we're getting into this type of debate. I heard  
34 during the week from several sources that a deal had been done on the budget, the same way a

1 deal was done on the AGM, very same, if you look at the vote for the last motion, sure it proves  
2 the point, just proves the point.

3 Cllr FITZGERALD: Can I just say Chairman, I know nothing about a deal, I came in here  
4 today, I knew nothing about a deal as I said on the radio yesterday, everyone will come in with  
5 their own opinions, we vote as we do every year. And that's the situation. I knew nothing. I  
6 take offence Cllr Fortune, I knew nothing about a deal, I would think you would accept my  
7 word.

8 Cllr FORTUNE: I'm not doubting your word, I'm telling you what I was told.

9 Cllr FITZGERALD: That doesn't stop us discussing things this morning. Maybe I'm out of the  
10 loop.

11 Cllr FORTUNE: The pattern is the very same.

12 Cllr DORAN: You shouldn't listen to gossip Tom.

13 Cllr FORTUNE: I listen to everybody Pat then I make my own mind up. I'm not influenced by  
14 a culture or cults or groups, I go my own way.

15 Cllr RYAN: How did you become Chairman of the Council, Cllr Fortune? It's a fact you were  
16 part of a pact.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Matthews.

18 Cllr MATTHEWS: Just a clarification, that tourism project, the five headings there, will they be  
19 decided at municipal district level in...

20 Cllr CASEY: No, the first lot is county projects, the tourism project, economic development,  
21 central heating fund, community grants, environmental grants and library fund, they are county  
22 wide and the ones below is Bray municipal district is getting 112,500.

23 Cllr MATTHEWS: Thanks chair.

24 Cllr VANCE: Just clarification of that in regard to the housing as well, I think Mr Nicholson  
25 said that could be matched in regard to the Department fund putting certain amount of money in  
26 and it would go towards a very significant central heating fund that we could clear up, if next  
27 year again similar type money was put in the fund again next year, so that 150,000 could actually  
28 double in regard to that, and I don't think there's any member of the Council to vote against any  
29 of those projects, there is no pet projects of anyone around here I tell you, but we feel they are  
30 part of the community and the community is going to get this million euro back. I don't think --  
31 and Chairman could I just ask that we take a vote. People can vote against what's in there if they  
32 want. But I think it's very desirable from the community point of view.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Tommy Cullen.

34 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Yes, this has been proposed by Cllr Casey, if Cllr Behan's resolution

1 had been carried, come January we could have tripled the amount of expenditure on those  
2 headings, this is actually -- Cllr Casey's proposal is actually cutting by two thirds the amount of  
3 funding we could have spent on these items, that's disappointing.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's if you ignore the deficit of course. Cllr Snell?

5 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Chairman, you are supposed to be impartial.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: I have my own opinion. You're dismissing the deficit like it's nothing.

7 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: I wasn't dismissing the deficit.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Snell.

9 Cllr SNELL: Just looking at the breakdown here, I think it's probably a bit unfair to be presented  
10 with this breakdown and expect us to vote here and now on it because at the end of the day we  
11 need to analyse these figures. I respect everybody's right to vote for or against any given motion  
12 or topic, but there's things in this that obviously I would like to see implemented, but I feel that if  
13 we vote for this we're voting for a budget as a whole, and therefore I feel that 13 or 15 of us  
14 wasted our time coming into the chamber at all, because I think it was a done deal, I certainly  
15 think that. And I think to be fair to us, to give us an opportunity to go and look at this and see,  
16 just because one or two people analysed the figures in depth over the past week and this is their  
17 vision and they have the power to bring along a lot of people with them, doesn't mean that it  
18 should be shoved down the throats of everybody else.

19  
20 I feel that we'll vote on it, but I feel we should be given time to come up with alternatives. I  
21 think it's very unfair and there will be no point in saying to me, you as chair of the housing SPC  
22 voted against 150,000 to go into a central heating, when I in turn can turn around and say you in  
23 turn voted against 450 or 460,000 to go into central heating, it's just a game, it's a nonsense, I  
24 don't want to have any part of it. But I certainly want that due process should take place. I think  
25 we should have the courtesy at least, to pretend that we have some sort of a foothold on what's  
26 going on here. I think we should have ten or 15 minutes to analyse this, but I feel I probably  
27 won't vote for the budget and on the evidence of what I've seen going on to date, I feel sorry for  
28 that.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Cllr Winters?

30 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathaoirleach. Just in relation to the spending of these, for the tourism  
31 project, who controls the spending of that 100,000? Is that going to be given to Wicklow County  
32 Tourism or kept in the County Council? And the same with the economic development, is that  
33 going to be the LEO -- do we have the mechanism within the Council to allocate that money?

34 Cllr RYAN: In this Council I'd say.



1 Cllr O'BRIEN: Just fairly disappointing again to hear talking about deficit and in fact what we'll  
2 get from Cllr Casey is 500, most of it is going to be spent at county level, the big problem I had  
3 is total centralisation and the taking away of the local government, this is an opportunity to put  
4 2.6 million back into local areas where people can spend it, I am always a believer that when  
5 people spend their own money they spend it far better than centralised organisations. I am  
6 disgusted that this 500,000, that's all we're getting, we're still leaving 500,000 to be spent at  
7 county level, at a time when we're talking about kids and people homeless, and we're talking  
8 about balancing books. As Oscar Wilde said, "The best way to remain in the memory of the  
9 commercial class is to owe them something." And Iceland proved that. They didn't worry about  
10 paper money and banks. We have a long way to go before we start getting some profit going  
11 here. It shouldn't -- banks shouldn't drive everything, balancing books shouldn't drive  
12 everything, economics and stuff before the banks were heard of. The wild west. They raided the  
13 banks frequently and they kept the community going.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune?

15 Cllr FORTUNE: Thank you Cathaoirleach, I have to say, like Cllr Snell I'm disgusted, this is the  
16 third occasion since June, since our AGM I must say that I've ended up at the end of a meeting  
17 being absolutely disgusted at the carry on.

18  
19 At the end of the day like the group that have come together to make sure that it happens this  
20 way can huff and puff all they like, but the reality is, as Cllr Snell said, we had the opportunity,  
21 we put a motion before the chamber that would give 450,000 back into the five districts, which  
22 would get a massive amount of work done across all those areas, now we are being asked to  
23 accept 150 because the chamber wouldn't stand up for the public out there who have been  
24 suffering with property tax and water charges and who need some assistance, and what's  
25 happened is because there was an agreement done on this before we got here today and what Cllr  
26 Snell said is right, you take the 13 people who voted for Cllr Behan's motion, we might as well  
27 not have come here today, we have absolutely wasted our time, because this is a done deal and I  
28 heard that during the week.

29 Cllr MATTHEWS: Thank you Chairman, I asked earlier on, what's the implication for the profit  
30 and loss machinery account and what's the implication for the 800,000 being taken out of  
31 administration of rates and bad debt provision? I'd like clarification on that.

32 Cllr CASEY: I'll try and clarify what I understand is happening with it. In relation to reduction  
33 in the profit and loss account and the administration of rates, they are services that don't, it's a  
34 cost that doesn't affect any direct service in this Council. It's also a cost that can be addressed in

1 the 2014 Annual Financial Statement where the manager will have the discretion to increase the  
2 profit and loss reserves in 2014 out of the NPPR money, if he chooses to do so, and increase the  
3 bad debt provision by 500,000 out of the NPPR money if he decides to do so, but he has an  
4 option of addressing the two reductions I made in this year's budgetary process in the Annual  
5 Financial Statement of 2014 through the NPPR money.

6 Cllr KAVANAGH: I have a question in relation to the proposal. The proposal is to take a  
7 million out of the budget and you can correct me if I'm wrong, but the spending adds up to just  
8 over half a million, so I wonder where is the other half a million going?

9 Cllr RYAN: It's 84 per district.

10 Cllr KAVANAGH: Oh sorry, yeah.

11 Cllr RYAN: Cathaoirleach could I just ask for one slight change to that, it says library book  
12 fund, I believe there is a lot more in the library than just books, I'd like it to be just a library fund  
13 that leaves a degree of discretion to use that money in other things other than just books.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Okay, that's all the speakers. Cllr Casey's proposal.

15 Cllr BRADY: Cllr Snell made a proposal that we recess for ten minutes.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Another recess? No I think we'll just proceed. So this is the only  
17 amendment to the budget is it? No other amendments put forward?

18 Cllr WHITMORE: Are we at that point? I have a couple of proposals.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay we'll take this proposal. Hold on we'll take this one then I'll come  
20 back to you Jennifer.

21 Cllr KAVANAGH: Sorry, on a point of order, maybe Cllr Whitmore's might be something  
22 different to the vote that might impact on this.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Snell?

24 Cllr SNELL: Thanks Cathaoirleach, I'd like to make an amendment if I could, based on the  
25 million euro that just fell out of the sky. I'd like to make a proposal that 500,000 would go  
26 towards the housing section and 100,000 towards each municipal district, based on the fact that  
27 the tourism project already received an increase in the budget, a lot of speakers were very  
28 complimentary to what's already in there.

29  
30 The economic development, which Cllr Casey is chairperson of already received 100,000 in the  
31 budget, of an increase. The central heating fund could be incorporated into that 500,000, that  
32 500,000 could be spent on housing, on central heating or whatever the housing SPC would  
33 decide. The environmental community and library book fund, there was an increase in the  
34 library as was, and again not many members were looking for an increase there prior to Cllr

1 Behan's proposal.

2  
3 So if we have a million euro I suggest an awful lot of people made an awful lot of headlines out  
4 of the housing situation, we certainly want to address it, I assume from their -- I suppose their  
5 eagerness to partake in conversations and press releases on the issue. So we have now a  
6 situation where 500,000 is not ideal, but it would address the housing situation to a certain  
7 degree, it would make a little bit of a difference. And 100,000, which I believe each municipal  
8 district when they come in January to divvy out what technically is their budget, I think Cllr  
9 Tommy Cullen said it earlier in regards to west Wicklow talking about 24,000 or something  
10 crazy in regards to a budget. So there's an opportunity here for 100,000 right across the district,  
11 the five municipal districts get 100,000 each and not based on population or geographical spread  
12 or otherwise. 100,000 and let each municipal district membership decide what they want to do  
13 with that 100,000. I think it's far more practical than 80,000 to the library book fund when they  
14 have already got an increase. Far more practical when the economic development committee  
15 come back and show us that they have used the 100,000 that's already been implemented in the  
16 budget today, if it's passed. And certainly next year I would be in favour of supporting an  
17 increase, which would technically be 200,000 based on results and figures, and the tourism  
18 project as I say has already got an increase and they have run sufficiently up to date, I know they  
19 have struggled in regards to drawing funds, but based on what's in front of us, we're not going to  
20 make any tangible impact on any of them, 100,000, 60,000, 60,000. So my proposal is 500,000  
21 to go into the housing section and 100,000 for each of the municipal districts based on the same  
22 figures that Cllr Casey has drawn down in regards to H01 and H03, based on his 800,000. From  
23 the administration rates and plant and machinery.

24 Cllr CASEY: In all fairness, my amendments being there I think it deserves a vote at this stage,  
25 I would also like to correct Cllr Snell that tourism did not get a budgetary increase in 2015, that's  
26 incorrect. So I would ask my motion be taken, it has been proposed and seconded, it has been  
27 debated and I also would ask also that it is an adoption of the budget process.

28 Cllr BRADY: I'll second the amendment to that motion.

29 Cllr RUTTLE: I remember we were discussing earlier the figure mentioned already in the  
30 budget was the very bare minimum to try and deal anyway with the library service, I would  
31 object strongly to a diminution for the book fund, we have to do something in that area, it's  
32 hugely important.

33 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just further to what Cllr Snell was saying, I would like to propose that the  
34 half million be given to housing, as Cllr Snell proposed, and that these projects -- the figures for

1 these projects be halved so they will get half of what Cllr Casey proposed.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: So nothing for the municipal districts.

3 Cllr KAVANAGH: Half.

4 Cllr VANCE: Cathaoirleach, there is a proposal from Cllr Casey, I think you should take it. I  
5 think it's very difficult now certainly when people were talking to me during the week about  
6 community projects and various things like that, the best value that this Council get is in  
7 community grants. And it's ten fold, the amount of work the community put in for small grants  
8 that we get as well and all this, I don't think anyone could object to what that is, it's a balance  
9 throughout the whole county as well. So Chairman could I ask you that you take the vote on Cllr  
10 Casey's proposal?

11 Cllr FORTUNE: Chairman, 460,000 would have given massive grants to the community,  
12 massive grants.

13 Cllr WHITMORE: I have two proposals here that are separate to Cllr Casey's motion. One of  
14 the things I found throughout this whole process, we're looking at where we're spending money  
15 all the time, we're not looking at where money is coming in, we haven't investigated  
16 opportunities to increase the money that's coming into the Council, and we rely I think way too  
17 much on the commercial premises in this county carrying the County Council. I think one of the  
18 areas that we don't do particularly well in when you look at other counties is the amount of  
19 money we get in grants, some areas do very well, like we heard the NTA funding, we do very  
20 well from that side of the things, but when you look at grants from Heritage and the Gaeltacht,  
21 there are some areas we don't do well, so I think we need to identify grant sources and make sure  
22 we're getting as much of that money as possible from both EU and national grant sources.

23

24 So my first proposal is that Wicklow County Council present a business case to the Department  
25 for a derogation on the hiring embargo to employ a person solely responsible for the  
26 identification and application of grants. I think it should be a short-term contract, perhaps a two  
27 or three-year contract with specific targets to increase, to get extra grants into the Council.  
28 That's my first proposal.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can you submit that up here?

30 Cllr WHITMORE: My second proposal relates to Greystones harbour. As everyone is aware,  
31 we've had some discussions and issues down at the harbour recently because of the fishermen  
32 who had been involved in the consultation process and were under the impression that they  
33 would be facilitated once the harbour was fully developed, and that they would be  
34 accommodated, it now turns out that they may not be accommodated to the extent that they

1 would like. The marina part of the project is a private entity and in order for them to park in  
2 there they would have to pay the exact same rates as the yachts.

3  
4 The alternative berthing arrangements that may be available are for -- there is moorings in the  
5 harbour, in the public part of the harbour, however they are seasonal and I don't think they offer  
6 sufficient berthing facilities, so I think all in all the fishermen have not been facilitated in the  
7 manner they should have, following the development. My proposal -- actually the private  
8 marina costs are approximately €4,000 per year depending on the size of the boat, which is three  
9 or four times what was paid or what could be paid. So in Wicklow it's 1,100 per annum, in  
10 Arklow 750, I don't believe it's correct that the fishermen bear these costs and I would propose  
11 that Wicklow County Council set aside a budget of 15,000 to subsidise the berthing charges of  
12 fishing vessels in the marina at Greystones Harbour, if the fishing boats so wish.

13 Cllr CASEY: Chairman, can you take my proposal at this stage?

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: There are other proposals.

15 Cllr WHITMORE: I haven't finished.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: If you are proposing the budget in its entirety I want to make sure there  
17 are no other proposals before we actually vote on the actual budget. Continue Cllr Whitmore.

18 Cllr WHITMORE: So the first proposal I think we'll be looking at a cost of 60,000 per annum  
19 for that, second proposal as I said would be 15,000. I understand it's necessary to identify a  
20 place where that money can come from. I've had a look at the property management costs on  
21 page 31, so D10. In 2014, 286,000 was spent on developing a property asset register which  
22 identified the assets of the Council, correct me if I'm wrong here Lorraine -- identified the assets  
23 of the Council and the legalities and the ownership and sorted out legal issues such as that. So in  
24 2014 the amount spent on that was 286,000, the amount that's budgeted for the 2015 budget is  
25 398,000. So that's in excess of 100,000 extra this year.

26  
27 Now I can understand how getting the property management register -- in an ideal world we  
28 would get that resolved as quickly as possible. I don't think that there really is justification to  
29 increase the budget by 100,000 this year, particularly in light of how tight the budget is, so I  
30 would be recommending that both proposals I have made, that the money would come from that  
31 budget.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Now Lorraine is saying that's payroll, but I'll clarify that.

33 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Just to clarify that, most of this relates to a project that was started a  
34 number of years ago on the property register and it was combined across all sections in terms of

1 trying to identify property, ensure we have proper title and ensure we're managing property fully,  
2 it's an ongoing process. To compliment that and to ensure proper management, we have  
3 assigned more staff, so the increase is all payroll costs, it's not discretionary.

4 Cllr WHITMORE: So there is no option.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I make a suggestion, that if the municipal districts are given money  
6 that perhaps that 15,000 I think you would get good support.

7 Cllr WHITMORE: Well to be honest the responsibility for that should fall to the Council. I  
8 think the Wicklow County Council started a consultation process with the fishermen, they were  
9 not accommodated in the manner that they were told and that should be a cost that's borne by the  
10 full Council, not by the district.

11 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: I'd like to second what Cllr Whitmore has just said. The contract with  
12 regards to Greystones is absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the municipal district, it's  
13 100% Wicklow County Council, so therefore any costs incurred should come from Wicklow  
14 County Council not Greystones.

15 Cllr WHITMORE: We have requested people come to our meetings to meet with us and  
16 officials have refused to attend. So if we don't have the authority to request someone to come  
17 and discuss the project I don't think we should be responsible for funding.

18 Cllr SNELL: A point of clarification?

19 Cllr TIMMINS: Chairman, my light is on.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Whitmore, it can't come out of that that's non-discretionary, can you  
21 identify somewhere else perhaps?

22 Cllr WHITMORE: I don't know whether we can pull it out of the travel and subs or that would  
23 be discretionary?

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Right, okay.

25 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Just on travel and subs, it's something Michael Nicholson alluded to  
26 earlier, it's paid on a reduced rate than what it had been five years ago, it's cut by 25%, it's on the  
27 Revenue Commissioner's rates and people are paid for the travel incurred and we have gone  
28 through a process since 2009 when the budget and income has been cut and budget has been cut  
29 accordingly to reduce the costs of travel and subs and to minimise it, be it through shared travel,  
30 ensuring people use public transport where possible. In the truest sense of the word yes it is  
31 discretionary, but it will have an impact on the ability of people...

32 Cllr WHITMORE: The total travel and subs is 898,000 if we took 10% off the entire.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have I a seconder for that?

34 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: I'll second that.

1 Cllr WHITMORE: Ultimately in relation to the grants, the objective is to bring more money into  
2 the Council, so I think it would be a worthwhile activity.

3 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I think the councillor's point it will bring in more money, but what I will  
4 say is the travel budget has been cut and cut and cut and to take 10% off it just to let the  
5 councillors know, I'm not saying you can't do it, but it will have an impact.

6 Cllr WHITMORE: Perhaps there is somewhere else here from a discretionary funding  
7 perspective, because when we look at the budget we can try analyse it as much as possible but  
8 you are the best person to identify if there are any discretionary money here.

9 Cllr LAWLESS: I have a suggestion if you don't mind? Sorry if I skipped the queue, but just  
10 earlier on I asked about the contributions to others, that heading and I know you said some of  
11 that is statutory, so we can't touch it, but the rest is discretionary, maybe it's a possibility Jennifer  
12 we can take it out of that, there's 1.5 million sitting in there, is that a possibility Lorraine?  
13 Contributions, it's on the spreadsheet, contributions to others.

14 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Again what I will say on that, there is some statutory which we can't  
15 touch, the rest of it is money that has been given to the likes of arts centre, the likes of the  
16 twinning, the different voluntary and community groups across the board, what else have we got  
17 in there, it includes the festivals and concerts, so it is possible, yes to take it out of there but it  
18 will mean you're reducing the available contributions that have potentially been assigned to the  
19 likes of your community grant scheme, in terms of the arts, in terms of the festivals and concerts,  
20 that's just the decision that has to be there for councillors to make.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: It's up to you, do you want to take it from there to give it to this?

22 Cllr WHITMORE: Lorraine, is there any other areas?

23 DIRECTOR LYNCH: You say -- this is what I have been saying as regards the budget, it has  
24 been cut and cut over the last number of years and there is discretion in terms of we can decide  
25 where to put it, but in terms of scope to find additional funding, no there is not. One off the top  
26 of my head, one suggestion is taking in the proposal by Cllr Casey to use some of the economic  
27 development money, if it is something that's going to generate more money to do something like  
28 that, but that's open to the councillors to use some of that, particularly for the grant position.  
29 Obviously assuming we get sanction for that.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Is that agreed?

31 Cllr VANCE: Chairman, can we take Cllr Casey's proposal please.

32 Cllr TIMMINS: My light is on. Briefly in relation to Cllr Whitmore's first proposal, I put my  
33 light on, about appointing someone to look after grants, I totally agree with that, I proposed that  
34 at municipal district that someone is appointed at each municipal district, that part of their job is

1 to look to make sure each area gets all the grants available, that comes at no extra cost, you give  
2 someone in the municipal district the responsibility of doing that, that's what I already proposed  
3 back in June.

4 Cllr SNELL: Just a point of clarification. When I spoke the last time I mentioned about  
5 tourism, tourism in the budget, had a proposed increase on the last year. Cllr Casey said that  
6 tourism didn't get an increase, now on the booklet that I have tourism has an increase from 197  
7 to 230,000. So it is an increase and I just want to clarify, under the three headings on tourism,  
8 E05, we have tourism promotion, tourism facilities operations and service support costs. And  
9 the 100,000 here is a tourism project, that's very vague, tourism project, so it doesn't fall under  
10 any of the categories that's there, so is it going to be used on promotion, facilities or service  
11 support, because we're voting on something that doesn't technically have a code to go into  
12 anyway, and then I feel that I need to clarify that point that tourism has an increase, that's  
13 important, it did get an increase, I didn't make it up.

14 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just in relation to Cllr Whitmore's suggestion. There is provision in F03  
15 outdoor leisure areas operations for 1.9 million, could it come out of that?

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Just while Lorraine is looking at that, I think the first proposal is really  
17 not a budget matter, but I can put it on an agenda for a future meeting, is that okay?

18 Cllr WHITMORE: That's fine. Can it go onto the next meeting agenda?

19 MS GALLAGHER: January.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: We're fairly full on the 8th, but as soon as possible.

21 Cllr FORTUNE: I'd like to make a quick point chair in light of all the chat about deficit and  
22 everything else, have we any projections built in over the next two or three years based on the  
23 drive on the economic development side, in other words what do we envisage coming in from all  
24 of that that would give us extra revenue that would perhaps clear any deficit that might be there  
25 over the next three years?

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Well that's really a question for the economic SPC, but I'll let in the chief  
27 executive, he wants to make a comment.

28 COUNTY MANAGER: Chairman, the economic think tank made a number of  
29 recommendations and these will be brought to the Council next month and a presentation will be  
30 made on them. There was a presentation on the draft to a meeting in the Glenview Hotel that  
31 was arranged for councillors, but the attendance was quite poor at that, so it was intended to  
32 bring a presentation on it to the December Council meeting.

33  
34 In addition the Council has to prepare an economic and community plan and work has started on



1 various aspects of that, it will be done by the economic SPC and the LDCD, and thirdly we had  
2 to prepare an overall corporate plan for the next five years and we'll be starting work on that in  
3 the coming months. So once we have those plans in place and specific objectives and targets, it  
4 might be possible to give some sort of projections, but ultimately what will come in will depend  
5 on economic progress, on what government changes -- on what changes government might make  
6 to our funding arrangements and so on.

7  
8 Obviously if the number of unemployed reduces then the amount of tax receipts goes up and you  
9 would be hoping that local government will get a reasonable share of the increases in economic  
10 activity over the next few years, but it's not possible to forecast that at the moment, even during  
11 the good times from 1995 to 2006/2007 it really wasn't possible to reduce the deficit, the deficit  
12 has remained fairly stubbornly at the level it has, because we have been trying to play catch up,  
13 even if we get in extra money and there is an increase in economic activity, inevitably that will  
14 require additional resources to be put in the various things, for example the number of planning  
15 applications goes through the roof then obviously increased staff will have to be put into that  
16 area. In relation to housing we have been told that there will be a significant building  
17 programme starting next year continuing into future years, but that will require additional  
18 expenditure on staff going forward and so on. So what capacity there will be for future  
19 economic development to reduce the deficit is hard to predict.

20  
21 What is clear though is the members have a certain discretion in relation to the local property tax  
22 each year going forward, this year they decided to reduce it by 15%, obviously the local property  
23 tax is one mechanism where members will make a decision as to how much funding comes from  
24 the commercial sector by way -- and how much from the domestic sector by way of local  
25 property tax and equally how much might be used to address the deficit going forward.

26 Cllr FORTUNE: Chairman?

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Briefly councillor.

28 Cllr FORTUNE: I won't go into the responses the manager gave us, my question is still relevant,  
29 we have been sitting down trying to think tank a whole lot of stuff, surely we should have some  
30 idea, some kind of projections how we think it will happen over the next two or three years,  
31 that's just the point.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Just on Cllr Whitmore and Cllr Kavanagh's proposal.

33 DIRECTOR LYNCH: In the F03 and the 1.9 million is broken down in terms of the spreadsheet  
34 that was sent around to everybody, can you take 15,000? You can, you are probably affecting

1 something like travel, miscellaneous that type of area, no more so than you can take 15,000 out  
2 of travel, you can, but it will have impact.

3 Cllr WHITMORE: To take that out of travel and subs you're talking a few hundred out of each  
4 section.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, we need agreement on that proposal. We'll take a role call.

6 Cllr WINTERS: What about just 60 -- so you are just talking about 15 now?

7 Cllr WHITMORE: The other will come in January.

8 Cllr VANCE: What are we voting on?

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: It's on taking the 15,000 from the travel budget and Cllr Casey's with the  
10 budget.

11 Cllr VANCE: I have other projects in my area that I'm willing to put forward that didn't form  
12 part of that as well, anyone can do that, any councillor can have a pet project and say I want  
13 40,000 for this and 40,000 for that. We have to make choices.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: We're going to make the choice.

15 Cllr VANCE: Every councillor here can add to a budget, you know what I mean.

16 Cllr WHITMORE: This is 15,000 to facilitate the fishermen...

17 Cllr VANCE: You could use the 84,000 under our proposal in your municipal, use your 84,000.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Whitmore has proposed to take it out of this budget, we'll take a role  
19 call on that.

20 Cllr FITZGERALD: Out of what?

21 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Is it travel just across or in a particular service?

22 Cllr WHITMORE: Across, so 200 or 300 out of each of the line items.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay roll call.

24 Cllr TIMMINS: What's the proposal?

25 Cllr SNELL: I'm not being awkward, but genuinely I didn't hear a word of that.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay we'll clarify the proposals.

27 Cllr WINTERS: Can we have the proposal in writing?

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: No, it came in here late.

29 Cllr SNELL: What travel is it coming out of?

30 DIRECTOR LYNCH: I suppose that's what I wanted to clarify, I think Cllr Whitmore can  
31 correct me if I'm wrong to take 15,000 across travel, all sections, housing, roads, you can't take it  
32 out of water -- housing, roads, members, planning -- it will come out of every place.

33 Cllr VANCE: Chairman, that just reminds me a number of years ago, the same thing happened  
34 with officials, this is true, it happened in this Council, one official went out to the country and

1 rang the manager, my mileage is up, what will I do, get a taxi back? It goes to a ridiculous stage.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Every councillor is entitled to put in a proposal, we adjudicate on it. Cllr  
3 Behan?

4 Cllr BEHAN: Just a point of information Chairman. If councillors vote for Cllr Whitmore's  
5 proposal, by extension are they accepting the budget as proposed by Cllr Casey?

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's separate.

7 Cllr BEHAN: Nothing to do with this?

8 Cllr WINTERS: Can I just ask will this 15,000 be a rolling 15,000? Do we need to find it every  
9 year from here on?

10 Cllr WHITMORE: Potentially.

11 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: We might get it sorted.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Lorraine will read out the wording of the proposal.

13 MS GALLAGHER: Proposed by Cllr Whitmore, seconded by Cllr McLoughlin. It gives a  
14 background, but basically that Wicklow County Council set aside a budget of 15,000 to  
15 subsidise the berthing charges of fishing vessels in the marina at Greystones Harbour and Cllr  
16 Whitmore read out the background, if you like I can read it out again.

17

18 During the development of Greystones harbour, Wicklow County Council consulted with  
19 fishermen, as a result the fishermen were under the impression that they would be  
20 accommodated in the harbour once it was completed. Moorings may be made available to them  
21 but they are seasonal, in order to berth they must pay the same as yachts, approximately 4K,  
22 depending on the size of the boats. That is three or four times the amount paid in other ports in  
23 Wicklow, Wicklow 1,110 per annum, Arklow 750, Dun Laoghaire 600, Kilmore Quay 375,  
24 Waterford 100, Dunmore East 22.50 a month, Kinsale €20 per foot, 65 foot vessel -- these are  
25 examples as requested by the fishermen. A 33 foot in Greystones was 3,700 per annum, but this  
26 is a special deal to local fishermen.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

28 MS GALLAGHER: Okay.

29 COUNTY MANAGER: Chairman, the motion essentially is to propose to subsidise particular  
30 users of the harbour, it's a matter for the members to decide how to vote on that, there may be  
31 issues to the legality of a Council providing a subsidy to individuals using a particular service, I  
32 am not aware of any power that the Council has to do that, now the law agent would need to  
33 examine it obviously, and I'm not going to ask him to respond on the hoof without carefully  
34 considering it, but I think that would be legal issues in relation to us providing a subsidy to a

1 particular category of user, a private sector facility. Certainly I'm not aware of any legislation  
2 which gives us the power to do that, but we're certainly happy to do that and report on it to  
3 perhaps the January Council meeting as to whether or not we can do it. I'm not saying we can't  
4 do it, my initial reaction is we may not, but we'll be happy to examine it.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: There's lights all over the place, I'm going to go...

6 Cllr O'NEILL: Through the chair, can I get a copy of that in writing? I wasn't sure what I'm  
7 voting on.

8 Cllr SNELL: Just a point of clarification Cathaoirleach, this money is to subsidise a private  
9 company, I totally agree the fishermen seem to be getting a hard time down there, but the marina  
10 and everything to do with it down there, Wicklow County Council were instrumental in putting  
11 money in and achieving grants to make it what it is today, are the Council responsible for giving  
12 the contract to this private company who now we're going to subsidise from our budget to pay  
13 for the fishermen?

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'm not getting into the contract of the harbour.

15 Cllr SNELL: Well I just feel we're now asked to come back and take money out of the budget,  
16 which we spent maybe 11 or 12 hours talking about, to give to a private company who have  
17 already obviously sitting handsomely down there, on their contract, according to the figures that  
18 came on the screen there it's way out of proportion to every other area in Wicklow and Dublin,  
19 the fees, it seems to be quadruple the price that you can get for down around here. So why --  
20 like at the end of the day I think that's...

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: You don't have to vote for it okay.

22 Cllr SNELL: I do have to, because I have a responsibility to the people that elected me to do  
23 what's right and I'm not going to come in here and be told that suddenly we're going to take  
24 15,000 when I have to go out and face people who haven't got central heating, who haven't got  
25 windows and doors sitting putting their children to bed in extra clothes because they have no  
26 heating in their bedrooms and say by the way, I propose to give 15,000 annually to a private  
27 company sitting down in Greystones, it's totally ridiculous. Most of the members in this  
28 chamber know nothing about it, because it's a municipal district issue. We haven't a clue what's  
29 going on.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'm not going around the table.

31 Cllr BRADY: Just as a point of clarity.

32 Cllr WALSH: The 15,000 bearing in mind the average coast of a boat in the marina is averaging  
33 about 3,000, we're proposing to set aside 15, how many fishermen are we talking about, is it up  
34 to 15? What do we envisage that the fishermen, what will they be paying?

1 Cllr WHITMORE: It depends on the moorings that could potentially be available to them, it  
2 hasn't been decided yet, but the moorings will only be seasonal, so the fishermen will have to  
3 berth somewhere in the harbour over the winter period for six months.

4 Cllr WALSH: So it's off-season.

5 Cllr WHITMORE: The contract you're correct is a private company, they have a contract with  
6 Sisk, Wicklow County Council has no influence over that contract and we won't be subsidising a  
7 private company, we'll be subsidising and enabling a number of local fishermen to use their own  
8 harbour, they haven't been able to use it since the development began, they were told they would  
9 be allowed back in and they have not been allowed back in, at the moment some of them are now  
10 fishing out of Dun Laoghaire and have to drive from Greystones to Dun Laoghaire every  
11 morning to get on their boat to fish off Greystones, they should have been facilitated, we should  
12 have looked after them and we haven't. This is I think a way that we can actually bring them  
13 back into Greystones and just take a bit of pressure off them, so they feel they haven't been  
14 excluded in this harbour.

15 Cllr WALSH: Just the off-season?

16 Cllr WHITMORE: The off-season, the moorings are available during May and September. A  
17 lot of this is in discussions, but what I didn't want to happen is for the decision to be made and  
18 then no money to be available in order to facilitate them, so I think just a gesture on behalf of the  
19 Council, who did negotiate and who did consult with them, but didn't accommodate them in their  
20 plans.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, we are going down a total discussion on this.

22 Cllr BEHAN: I think we should discuss it in future.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Not today though. I accept that councillor, but we're having a discussion  
24 on the harbour in Greystones. We'll take the proposal. You can vote for it or against it, okay? If  
25 it's voted against maybe you can do something at municipal level, okay? So we'll take the  
26 proposal. Take a roll call.

27 Cllr WALSH: Just the figure, should it not be less than 15,000, we're talking the average cost  
28 for a year should be 3,000, three boats we're talking about three fishermen, so we're talking about  
29 half of that.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Whitmore specified 15, so that's the proposal.

31 Cllr WHITMORE: It's maximum.

32  
33 (Vote taken)

1 MS GALLAGHER: 14 for, 14 against, one not present and three abstaining.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. It's against then, I have the casting vote, I think it's more  
3 appropriate for the municipal district. Okay.

4

5 Okay, we'll move on to Cllr Casey's proposal. Are you proposing to adopt the budget with the  
6 amendment?

7 Cllr CASEY: Yes.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have I a seconder for that?

9 Cllr BLAKE: Second.

10

11 (Vote taken)

12

13 MS GALLAGHER: 19 for, 11 against, one not present and one abstaining.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you members, we have to do the rates, the equalisation of the  
15 rates.

16

17 Okay what's proposed was equalised rate would be 72.04. And it was also propose to do that  
18 over a period of six, okay have I proposer for that?

19 Cllr WINTERS: Can I just -- a question, say if we go for the 72.04, there's no increase for the  
20 people, for this year, it doesn't come into effect until 2016?

21 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Yes.

22 Cllr WINTERS: Does that mean all the people currently in the county at 77 have to pay the 77  
23 this year?

24 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Basically there is no change, whatever you are paying in 2014 you are  
25 paying in 2015, the exception being separate charges for Greystones and Rathdrum joint board,  
26 and the proposal is to introduce it over the next five years after that.

27 Cllr KAVANAGH: I suppose I have a question, I think you have given us cost neutral, that's  
28 cost neutral to the Council.

29 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Yeah to the budget.

30 Cllr KAVANAGH: I know you're saying it will cost in 2016, it won't be cost neutral to the  
31 small businesses affected, Wicklow pays the lowest rate so far, so it won't be cost neutral to them  
32 from 2016, is that right?

33 DIRECTOR LYNCH: No, it will be an incremental increase, that's why we propose to bring it  
34 in over a period of six years in total, just to clarify on that as well, in terms of where Wicklow

1 Town Council, you're talking 75% of the customers pay less than 3,000, so impact on them is a  
2 maximum of 66 per year. For 57% of them it's a maximum impact of 40 per year and bring it  
3 down again for over a quarter of them it's a maximum impact of 16 euro per year, that's what  
4 we're looking at trying to introduce over five years.

5 Cllr KAVANAGH: For these increases in the rates that these businesses would be expected to  
6 pay, what are they getting? What are they getting extra?

7 DIRECTOR LYNCH: What we have to do is achieve harmonisation and the reality is that the  
8 County Council had been higher and generating income on that basis, on that basis there is 56  
9 percent of the rates payers will be getting a reduction over those five years.

10 Cllr KAVANAGH: Not in Wicklow they won't, or Arklow.

11 DIRECTOR LYNCH: A percentage will be getting a decrease, the majority of the rate payers in  
12 the county will get a decrease.

13 Cllr KAVANAGH: In the county, I'm talking about Wicklow and Arklow, who will be...

14 DIRECTOR LYNCH: This is me being very straight, for years our argument would be that the  
15 towns in Wicklow and Arklow didn't increase their rates sufficiently, that's borne out, that's the  
16 reality, the County Council and members here took the hard decisions to increase rates over  
17 those years and generate the income and use that income, that same decision wasn't made in the  
18 Town Councils, that's where we have to begin to address that and that's why we went for the cost  
19 neutral to bring some up and some down and to account for that.

20 Cllr KAVANAGH: But what you're looking at is for revenue for the Council basically. But  
21 what do the businesses who are going to pay this increase stand to gain?

22 DIRECTOR LYNCH: The alternative is to bring it down and cut services and cutting your  
23 income, so you'll reduce your services that are available for the businesses in that regard anyway.  
24 And this is at a time -- this is at a time around the table we have been looking for increases and  
25 more services and that, we're now coming back and taking more income out of the budget, this is  
26 after five years of, six years of taking money out of the budget, and after years of towns not  
27 putting up the rates sufficiently to meet the needs and that's where it comes back to. We have  
28 deficits coming in from Arklow and Wicklow Town Council that are part of the problem for the  
29 overall deficit and that's one of the underlying reasons behind it.

30 Cllr KAVANAGH: I understand that Lorraine, can I ask you, the government allocation for last  
31 year and this year, maybe the year prior to that, 2013-14 has the allocation grant been reduced,  
32 the government allocation to this Council?

33 Cllr CASEY: It's gone.

34 DIRECTOR LYNCH: The governmental allocation grant, we would have got the general

1 purpose grant all along, it was adjusted for Irish Water in 2014 and because we were getting the  
2 money through recoupment of Irish Water it's completely changed with local property tax.

3 Cllr KAVANAGH: So we're only getting local property tax.

4 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Local property tax replaces general purpose grant.

5 Cllr KAVANAGH: So basically we're getting...

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: We're getting away from the rates.

7 Cllr KAVANAGH: No, I'm coming back to the point, so basically the property owners and  
8 business owners are expected to make up the shortfall. They are responsible for the budget.

9 They are, because there's no allocation.

10 DIRECTOR LYNCH: No, they're not.

11 COUNTY MANAGER: The local property tax that we're getting exceeds the government  
12 allocation, by over 800,000, it would have exceeded by a further two and a half million except  
13 the members took a decision to reduce the property tax by 15%, so potentially the extra money  
14 the Council would have got would have been 800,000 plus 2.5 million, the members decided not  
15 to take the 2.5 from householders, so the increase, the excess of the local property tax over the  
16 government grant that we would have got last year, when you take Irish Water and adjust it, is  
17 about 800,000 euro.

18  
19 In relation to the towns versus the county, traditionally the County Council has been heavily  
20 subsidising both Arklow Town Council and Wicklow Town Council. For many years the  
21 elected members in Wicklow Town and Arklow have failed to strike a rate that was adequate to  
22 provide the basic local government services within the towns. That level of subsidy now,  
23 because there is only one local authority, will be reduced through the rate harmonisation going  
24 forward, so there will be a fair distribution of the rate burden between people who had  
25 businesses in the towns and those who have businesses just outside town boundaries or in towns  
26 or villages that weren't municipal towns with their own rate authorities.

27 Cllr KAVANAGH: My point is prior to the local property tax coming in Councils were funded  
28 through the taxpayer, through the taxpayer basically through taxes, even though people are still  
29 paying taxes it's funded through the local property tax, which is an extra tax, now there is an  
30 increase for SMEs particularly, who I'm concerned about, they are being asked to pay this, we  
31 are still paying taxes, now local property tax and now increasing commercial rates, I just want to  
32 understand how is this going to help businesses in Wicklow, particularly Wicklow and Arklow  
33 when they have to pay more rates, commercial rates? How is that going to help and facilitate the  
34 growth of their business or even the continuation of their businesses and what are they getting



1 back in return that's going to support and promote their businesses?

2 COUNTY MANAGER: Two points, what the businesses get in return for the rates they pay is  
3 the whole series of things in the book that we have been discussing all day, footpaths, public  
4 lighting, subsidies for housing, all of these services that the local authority provides, helps create  
5 the environment in which business can flourish and thrive.

6  
7 In relation to the impact going forward of the harmonisation measure, the reality is the 56  
8 percent of rate payers in Wicklow over the period of six years that we're talking about actually  
9 see a reduction in the rates they will pay while the other 44% in the towns will see an increase,  
10 it's simply a fairer distribution of the rate burden between businesses in towns and outside town  
11 boundaries, it's a fairer distribution, it doesn't bring in an extra cent to Wicklow County Council.

12  
13 If the members want to further subsidise businesses going forward at each budget they will have  
14 discretion to vary the local property tax, it's open to the members if they decide to set a particular  
15 level of local property tax to set a different level of rates, that's a matter for the members to  
16 decide, but there is a limited pot of money and with the sort of responsibility that -- with the sort  
17 of powers that people have been talking about comes the responsibility to make those decisions.  
18 So each budget meeting it will be up to members to decide if we reduce the property tax by a  
19 certain percentage, we won't be able to reduce the rates going forward or members might decide  
20 they want to reduce rates by a percentage going forward, but as a result of that we have to  
21 increase the level of local property tax, those are decisions that are available to elected members  
22 where you balance the level of service you provide against where you provide income from and  
23 how you distribute it between the commercial sector and domestic sector. These are the  
24 decisions you made.

25 Cllr KAVANAGH: But the decision is being forced upon us, imposed from above.

26 COUNTY MANAGER: They are decisions you have made and voted for or against on the 22nd  
27 of September, it's a democratic decision made around the table.

28 Cllr FITZGERALD: I don't want to see any businesses getting increases, the fact is the manager  
29 said 56 percent of businesses in the county will see a decrease and 44% -- if you just analyse the  
30 sheet we got, in my own area of Arklow there is 151 businesses which will see an increase of  
31 €12 between now and January 2017, there is 170 businesses will see an increase of €28 per  
32 annum and 90 will have an increase of €48 per annum, which isn't a euro a week. But there has  
33 to be an encouragement here for people to pay rates whether by direct debit or whatever, and I  
34 know in other counties there is a 6% grant, let's call it, for people who pay by direct debit or pay

1 up front. So is there any -- are we taking cognisance of the fact that people would need  
2 encouragement to pay and is that being looked at that we have an encouragement for 2016, to get  
3 people to pay rates, to encourage people to pay rates, I think the figure in most counties is 6%,  
4 something in the order up to a maximum figure of 500, I presume we're considering that?

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's something I would certainly support councillor.

6 COUNTY MANAGER: Yes, we'll examine that in 2015. Be able to make recommendations for  
7 the 2016 budget. Obviously the increase or decrease won't take effect until 2016, people will  
8 pay a similar rate to what they're paying in 2014 in 2015. But it's something that needs looking  
9 at, we need to assess it and cost it and we'll do a report to the members on it.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, did you want to get in Cllr Ryan?

11 Cllr RYAN: No, you're all right.

12 MR O'DONNELL: I don't think we should increase rates at all, be it €1, 12 or €48,  
13 commercially at the moment Arklow is a ghost town and regardless of, like I said if it's €1, 12 or  
14 €48 it won't help, it will make matters worse, what we should concentrate on in Arklow alone is  
15 the rate payers already there, making things easier for them, not harder. I mean -- there are  
16 shops closing on almost a weekly basis, businesses going out of business, if you implement any  
17 kind of charges that are going to make it harder to keep businesses open and encourage business  
18 onto the main street -- putting up the rates is not going to help.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Can I have a proposer?

20 Cllr VANCE: Can I just ask for clarification on this. If we adopt 72 point whatever it is next  
21 year we can take a decision to go down on that figure if we so wish, is that correct? And next  
22 year we can also decide how many years we may be able to put that over? So effectively we  
23 can -- if we adopt this figure now, we effectively can drop that figure, but we can't go up, is that  
24 correct?

25 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Yes, we set the figure, we can't increase until everybody is at that figure.

26 Cllr VANCE: But it can be decreased, so next year, if we adopt that figure now, next year we  
27 can decrease that with other information throughout the year on improvements in the economy,  
28 various things like that, and then we can also decide next year as well on the amount of time that  
29 it can take and that can be up to ten years, isn't that correct? And during that period then the  
30 rates don't go up, isn't that correct?

31 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Until everybody is on the one rate.

32 Cllr VANCE: So during the period that we can agree, over a five or six-year period, the rates do  
33 not increase, isn't that correct?

34 DIRECTOR LYNCH: We set the rate, whatever time we take to get it, until everyone is at that

1 it can't go up. You can go down, you can vary the timeframe, agree a timeframe now and agree  
2 it, that can be adjusted but no, until everybody is at the one rate, take it two years, five years or  
3 longer, it can't go up.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Can I have a proposer to make it 72.04?

5 Cllr VANCE: I'll propose that.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Seconder.

7 Cllr TIMMINS: I'll second it.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Do you want to set it over the six years?

9 Cllr BEHAN: Sorry Chairman, I thought the proposal was for over a six or seven-year period, is  
10 that changed now?

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: You don't have to set the timeframe this year. It has to...

12 Cllr BEHAN: So there's no guarantee.

13 Cllr CASEY: It's up to us.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: To a period up to ten years, maximum of ten years.

15 Cllr VANCE: I'm suggesting we can reassess it next year and decide.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have you a big issue about setting it over six years to give some clarity to  
17 the businesses?

18 Cllr VANCE: In actual fact we can give clarity to businesses next year Chairman.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: You can set it at six and review it next year. You can change it next year  
20 councillor.

21 Cllr CASEY: You can change it up or down.

22 Cllr VANCE: If there is agreement on it I have no problem.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Is it agreed over six years?

24 Cllr BEHAN: No, I think it should be a longer period, not short.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay then we'll take a roll call on six years, 72.04.

26 Cllr FITZGERALD: Through the chair we can set whatever period we like, we can put ten years  
27 in and then next year if we have to amend it we have to amend it.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: It's proposed to put it at six and you can put it up to ten next year if you  
29 wish. We'll take a roll call.

30 Cllr KAVANAGH: What are we taking a roll call on?

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: 72.04 over six years, but timeframe can be varied next year if members  
32 feel they want to.

33

34 (Vote taken)

1  
2 MS GALLAGHER: 20 for, 10 against and two not present.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay we have to do the vacant rates. 100% proposed. Seconded. We'll  
4 take a roll call.

5 Cllr BEHAN: What's that, can you explain that?

6 DIRECTOR LYNCH: This is the vacancy relief, up to now it was set by legislation, anyone  
7 who had a vacant property could apply for vacancy relief and get 100% relief, they didn't have to  
8 pay rates, it's a discretion of the members to vary that and set it at whatever rate they want, be it  
9 100%, 50%, 25% relief, it's set by municipal district, so you could have a different rate in  
10 Greystones than you would have in Bray.

11 Cllr BEHAN: Why are we voting here?

12 DIRECTOR LYNCH: It has to be voted on here.

13 Cllr FITZGERALD: I'm totally against any change in the situation, I don't agree with rates on  
14 vacant premises. We've 161 rated premises in Arklow who are obviously not contributing to the  
15 coffers, we are decimated by unemployment, I will be totally against it, I won't support it, so  
16 100% provision, I wouldn't agree with any proposal to put rates demands on vacant premises.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you councillor. Cllr Matthews.

18 Cllr MATTHEWS: Thank you Chairman, just if Lorraine can clarify that again, we make the  
19 decision here on the percentage that we'll refund and then it's up to the municipal districts to  
20 implement, can you clarify that please?

21 DIRECTOR LYNCH: No decision is made here at full Council, for the five municipal districts  
22 then it's applied through the revenue office here, through rate collection. It can be different for  
23 each municipal district but the decision is decided here. It doesn't go back to the municipal  
24 district afterwards.

25 Cllr MATTHEWS: So the decision is made here to set the rate. And then what does the  
26 municipal district have the right to do?

27 DIRECTOR LYNCH: In this regard nothing. It's set here. But you can set -- at the moment the  
28 default is 100%, but we can decide or it can be decided by the members to set a rate of 90% for  
29 Bray municipal district, to set 100% for Arklow and Wicklow municipal district to set 85%, for  
30 example, you can have five different rates, one in each of the municipal districts, but it's agreed  
31 here and doesn't go back to the municipal district in terms of decision or anything like that, but  
32 it's agreed here at the full Council.

33 Cllr MATTHEWS: Well then Chairman I propose we adopt the 90% as recommended in the  
34 Manager's Report.

1 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Sorry for which districts?

2 Cllr MATTHEWS: For County Wicklow.

3 Cllr FITZGERALD: I won't run with that.

4 Cllr KAVANAGH: I'll second that. Can I just say just in support of that, if you might verify  
5 Lorraine that money that comes in on those rates will be, will go into the municipal, basically the  
6 general pot for the municipal districts, my concern is that there are lots of empty buildings being  
7 left to rack and ruin and the owners are not maintaining those buildings and they are an eyesore  
8 on main streets, bringing the whole place down. It's very hard for businesses to come in when  
9 they see ugly decrepit buildings not being maintained.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thanks. Cllr Brady do you want to make a comment?

11 Cllr BRADY: Just I'd have huge concerns about this, yes there probably are limited landlords  
12 sitting on properties there unwilling to reduce the rent, holding on to them, where this could be I  
13 suppose used to force them to reduce the rent, to get someone out of the property, but I think  
14 those people are limited in numbers and the difficulty here, if we adopt this here that in each of  
15 the districts, irrespective of what rate is set in the districts, it won't apply not just in the main  
16 urban areas in Bray and Arklow or whatever, it's going to be the case in all of the small rural  
17 towns as well. And that's where the huge difficulty there is, where genuine people sitting with a  
18 small little shop unit or whatever, and simply cannot let it out. They are going to have to be  
19 targeted as well by this, that's where the huge difficulty applies. It's all well and good proposing  
20 relief of 90% or whatever, but the people that are sitting on these properties will be targeted as  
21 much as the genuine person who simply cannot get someone to occupy the unit, no matter what  
22 they do, and in a lot of cases they are probably small families or whatever with a small unit and  
23 they are going to get hammered by this, so I think it's counter productive, I don't think it is going  
24 to work.

25 Cllr VANCE: Chairman, I would be totally opposed to this as well, I don't know of anybody  
26 with a vacant property in Bray that doesn't want to rent it. I know of plenty of people that have  
27 actually in the good times were making good rent, but they've halved and less than half of what  
28 they are letting their places out now, just to let them out. And I think it's absolutely crazy,  
29 people have no income coming in, you are punishing them because they have no income coming  
30 in, it doesn't make sense, we should be giving them sort of encouragement to get in, not the other  
31 way around. I think it's madness in this day and age to do things like that, you know, I think --  
32 absolutely I'm totally opposed, I think it won't solve any problems whatsoever, it will cause more  
33 problems than it solves.

34 Cllr SNELL: I'd like to thank Lorraine for going through this document many times through

1 corporate policy and indeed with the groups. I also share the same sentiment in regard, I have  
2 concerns, I also don't think it's worth implementing when you actually analyse the figures, if you  
3 take for example Wicklow Town, yes there are vacant units and we all want to see them  
4 occupied, but to implement this on the east Wicklow electoral area would mean that you're  
5 punishing a shop keeper or someone with a small unit in Glenealy, for example, by and large  
6 they also want to get tenants in to occupy their unit, but it's not always possible. And then to  
7 chase up the money on this, most of the vacant units whether it be in Arklow, Wicklow or  
8 wherever, by and large you're dealing with banks because the landlords aren't in full control,  
9 you're dealing with people who are in distress in regards to mortgage distress on the property,  
10 banks are coming in taking over, so how are we going to chase up this money? It will be quite  
11 small the figure, you're talking about a windfall for each municipal district, it's not there, you're  
12 talking about a couple of thousand euro at most if you were to chase it up, it's not possible. I  
13 think shop owners, people with retail units and the like they need a break. I think they need, if  
14 their premises is vacant it's not through choice believe me, I'm sure they'd rather have a tenant  
15 and I don't think implementing this 90%, is not going to work.

16  
17 Just one point of clarification, there is a motion there from Cllr Matthews seconded by Cllr  
18 Kavanagh for the whole county, if you are to take a vote on that you will have to take a vote on  
19 each area, you can't implement that.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: The proposal is for all of Wicklow.

21 Cllr SNELL: For the whole county? I just think it's ludicrous that someone could come in and  
22 tell the people of another electoral area what they can and can't do and they know their own area  
23 better. I think that's crazy.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Well there is a member from the east has seconded it.

25 Cllr SNELL: Well if you go to Annamoe and these places you won't get so many tenants for  
26 shop units, people are only thinking about Wicklow Town.

27 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathaoirleach. I just can't see how we've so many vacant premises, we  
28 can probably think that there's all of these landlords out there who just are holding on to their  
29 properties, if you go out to Laragh, Glendalough, these are all tiny villages with empty  
30 commercial properties and I don't think that we're in a buoyant enough place to be able to say to  
31 those landlords you must pay because you have been unable to find a tenant, and I just could not  
32 possibly agree to a 90%, at this time, in a couple of years time when the economy has picked up  
33 we can look at it again, but certainly not at the moment.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thank you. Cllr Murphy.

1 Cllr MURPHY: We can all sit here and we're, this is put on us, we are the local representatives  
2 who go out and deal with the Chamber of Commerce and we're practising every day trying to  
3 help the businesses and here we are we're proposing to put this, we are the ones that have to face  
4 these people, we are the ones getting e-mails, we are the ones going in black tie and fancy frills  
5 once a year to Chamber of Commerce dinners, best buddies and then want to come and impose  
6 this, sorry, not supporting that.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Now there are three speakers who have already spoken. A real point of  
8 clarification.

9 Cllr BRADY: Just a point of clarification, Cathaoirleach, it's been described as a potential  
10 windfall for Wicklow, if there was a 90% relief given, in other words the 10% vacancy rate set,  
11 how much would it actually cost us in terms of administration to follow up on?

12 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Whatever about the administration, I would also put a health warning on  
13 the percentage of it that you would actually be able to get in terms of getting from the landlord  
14 and through the collection process and all of that, and administration on top of it again you  
15 would want someone on it full-time.

16 Cllr BRADY: It could cost the Council is what you are saying.

17 DIRECTOR LYNCH: It would be very small, even let's say 300,000, 3.3 is your 10%, at half of  
18 it bring it down even to 150,000, in terms of what would be collectable, you could take another  
19 50,000 off that in terms of collection costs.

20 Cllr FITZGERALD: Just it's the wrong idea at the wrong time. We have businesses in Arklow  
21 at the moment, one had to put the price on his premises three weeks ago and reduced by 25% last  
22 week. We have no chance. People don't want their premises lying idle, I think we should  
23 concentrate on derelict sites, the well is dry and we're looking for something that's not there, I  
24 think we should forget about it to be honest with you.

25 Cllr O'NEILL: I'd prefer to see this motion withdrawn, if you go into Hollywood, Stratford, they  
26 are on their knees, now you are going to penalise them for being out? I think that's just cruel.  
27 It's cruel.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks councillor.

29 Cllr WALSH: I just find out on the spreadsheet we have a bad debt provision of rates so this  
30 will add to the difficulty we are having in collecting the system rates that are outstanding.

31 Cllr KAVANAGH: Just two things. One there is no problem hammering existing small  
32 businesses who are struggling to pay rent, pay their overheads and there's no problem about  
33 hitting them, but anyone as the person that seconded that proposal and I stand over it, if anyone  
34 from any other area wants to propose an amendment or variation I'm happy to consider it.

1 Cllr MATTHEWS: I appreciate it's a fairly unpopular motion, but what effect does it have when  
2 you charge zero rates to somebody, that has a knock-on effect to other businesses that are paying  
3 their full rates as well, I appreciate all the comments about the small rural areas, and I suppose  
4 the application lists for those areas is particular proof, but in certain urban areas you've got  
5 empty commercial sites that are absolutely run down and eyesores and no effort made by  
6 landlord or owners to try and bring them up to an attractive rentable property and I think this  
7 10%, it does provide some sort of incentive to make them try and do something, to make that  
8 property commercially viable. I do appreciate the comments that other members have made  
9 about difficulties created in rural areas, but how likely are we even to collect this? That's the  
10 other thing. Thank you Chairman.

11 Cllr CASEY: I'll be fairly brief. I think most people realistically want to rent their premises out,  
12 it's not that they don't want to rent their premises, I think maybe over the next year if we look at  
13 keeping the 100% intact, but looking at the criteria how you qualify for 100%, see can we hone  
14 in on that, on places where people are just holding it for the sake of holding it, there could be big  
15 international companies holding it and make criteria for qualifying for 100% a lot more strict  
16 than what it is at the moment that could help, keep the 100%, but make the criteria to qualify for  
17 100% harder.

18 Cllr MATTHEWS: Is that an amendment?

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, we're going with the proposal of 90% for the whole of County  
20 Wicklow.

21 Cllr MATTHEWS: Could we include an amendment? Incorporate some of what Cllr Casey  
22 said as well, the criteria for getting the 100% more strict.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's down the road.

24 Cllr CASEY: To look over the next year with the harmonisation.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's something to progress at SPC level.

26 Cllr VANCE: Maybe if Cllr Matthews withdrew the proposal on the condition we look at it with  
27 regard to the criteria, that could be adopted for next year's budget. So look at it for next year.

28 Cllr CASEY: We could look at prompt payments, vacancy and harmonisation and spend a bit of  
29 time on it.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: I don't want to put pressure on somebody to withdraw something.

31 Cllr VANCE: No, in order to be helpful.

32 Cllr MATTHEWS: The spirits of what it was recommended in, it's for economic stimulus and  
33 development of towns, but it probably is too broad a brush maybe, I take the points made by the  
34 rural representatives, so I am willing to withdraw that motion. Or this recommendation if my



1 seconder is also willing to do that as well.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: We still have to take a roll call on the 100% relief.

3

4 (Vote taken)

5

6 MS GALLAGHER: 27 for, 3 not present and two against. Just one item there the corporate --  
7 minutes of the Corporate Policy Group for 8th and 22nd of September, 13th and 17th of  
8 November and 6th of October have been circulated, can I get a proposer and seconder?

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposer Cllr Fitzgerald and seconded Cllr Casey. Okay that concludes  
10 the business.

11 MS GALLAGHER: I'd just like, first of all to let the members know that Conor Cummins, our  
12 local government auditor, sadly passed away last week, he spent a number of years here in  
13 Wicklow County Council. After a very short illness he sadly passed away, so if we pass a vote  
14 of sympathy to him and to his family.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: We'll stand at the end of the meeting for a moment. Just before we finish.

16 Cllr WINTERS: I'd just like to also propose a vote of thanks to the transcriber and to Susan, it's  
17 been a long day for both of them.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I thank you all for engaging, we didn't see eye to eye, especially  
19 before the meeting in all the various meetings and group meeting, a big thanks to Lorraine and  
20 Breda and all the finance team who are always open and transparent, there might have been  
21 figures we didn't really like, but that's the way, thanks to the chief executive as well. And we'll  
22 see you on the 8th is it?

23 COUNTY MANAGER: Just to thank you and the members for adopting this, it's been a long  
24 day, but a very worthwhile discussion and at least now there is certainty about the resources  
25 which the Council will have to deal with, projects and issues in Wicklow over the next 12  
26 months, so thanks to all the members for putting the effort into today's meeting.

27

28 We'll stand for a moment for Mr Cummins.

29

30 (Minute's silence)

31

32 Meeting concluded at 7.40pm

33

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