

**SPECIAL MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY
COUNCIL HELD ONLINE VIA ZOOM**

ON

MONDAY 25TH JANUARY 2021 AT 2:00 P.M.

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J Sinnamon

TRANSCRIPT OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, JANUARY 25TH 2021:

CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon, member, can you hear me?

ADMINISTRATOR: Yes.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon. You are very welcome to our special meeting to deal with our Notice of Motion and just before I start, I just want to say thank you to each and every one of you for making the time to be here with us to go through the Notice of Motions. Some of them are here a very long time, so before we start, I think I will go to Lorraine and ask her to take a roll call, please.

ADMINISTRATOR: Okay, Cathaoirleach, thank you. Welcome everyone to the statutory meeting which is open to the press and to the public. So, elected members, if you would keep your mobile phones switched to silent, please do not leave the online meeting without informing the Cathaoirleach to ensure that a quorum remains. You may send a chat to indicate you wish to speak or raise your hand. Speakers should keep their microphone on when they are speaking. While you are not speaking keep your microphone on mute. The microphones can be sensitive and will pick up sounds like pencils tapping and paper shuffling. If you a member does lose their connection please inform the meeting's administrator. Okay. Cathaoirleach, we will go for a roll call for attendance. Cllr Tommy Annesley.

CLLR ANNESLEY: Here.

ADMINISTRATOR: Joe Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: Here.

ADMINISTRATOR: Vincent Blake, here.

ADMINISTRATOR: Cllr M Kavanagh.

>>: Here.

ADMINISTRATOR: Avril Cronin.

>>: Present.

ADMINISTRATOR: Shay Cullen.

>>: Present.

ADMINISTRATOR: Erika Doyle. Cllr Gail Dunne. Cllr Dunne, I know you are present.

>>: Present.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Anne Ferris.

>>: Present.

ADMINISTRATOR: Pat Fitzgerald.

>>: Present.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Tom Fortune.

>>: Present.

ADMINISTRATOR: Patsy Glennon.

>>: Present.

ADMINISTRATOR: Cllr M Kavanagh. Pat Kennedy.

>>: Present.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Peir Leonard.

>>: Present.

ADMINISTRATOR: Grace McManus.

>>: Here.

>>: Cllr Derek Mitchell.

>>: Present.

>>: Cllr Miriam Murphy.

ADMINISTRATOR: Jodie Neary, Cllr Dermot O'Brien.

>>: Here.

>>: Paul O'Brien.

>>: Here.

ADMINISTRATOR: Cllr R O'Connor. Gerry O'Neill?

>>: Present.

ADMINISTRATOR: Lourda Scott.

>>: Present.

CLLR SCOTT: Here.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Was that Cllr O'Connor? Lourda Scott?

>>: Here.

ADMINISTRATOR: John Snell. Gerry Walsh?

>>: Present.

ADMINISTRATOR: Irene Winters? Okay. Cllr R O'Connor, Cllr Miriam Murphy.

CLLR O'CONNOR: Present.

ADMINISTRATOR: Cllr M Kavanagh. Cllr Erika Doyle. Okay. We will proceed at 2.00pm. So Cathaoirleach, we have a number of votes of sympathy.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes.

ADMINISTRATOR: For Jim Carroll, father-in-law of June Carroll, staff members. For Trish Frost, sister of Barbara Doolan, staff member in housing. For Sally Cahill, who is a former local authority official. And for Theo English a former Tipperary hurler and grandfather to Laura O'Callaghan, our disability officer.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Have any of the members any votes of sympathy they want to express?

CLLR O'NEILL: I would like to offer my sympathy to the many families in the locality, especially in the Baltinglass area, who I think it's up to 7 people lost their lives in the last seven days and just to extent my sympathies to the families. It's been a very traumatic time in that part of the county and again, as I say, I offer my deepest sympathy to all of the families involved.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr O'Neill, anyone else want to come in? No. Okay. We will just take a moment to remember all of the people that have passed away and their families and their loved ones.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Eternal rest grant unto them and perpetual light shine on them.

CATHAOIRLEACH: The first motion is in the name of Cllr Mags Crean and it's the 5th of January 2020. I will go to Lorraine for the response.

ADMINISTRATOR: This motion asks us to explore the drafting of bye-laws and this has been done over the last period of time, so the law agent has both examined and explored if the objective of the motion could or has been translated into bye-laws elsewhere in this jurisdiction and this council could consider, for its own consideration or adaptation, or if there are grounds to create them uniquely for Wicklow County Council.

So the objective of a proposed bye-law is to regulate enforcement of unspecified areas within the county regarding the sources of intimidation, harassment or nuisance occurring where in the county where women's health services are provided. We have established that in 2019, Louth County Council passed a motion in similar terms to the purpose of the bye-law suggested here, but took legal advice by way of counsel opinion, after the fact, which established that the purpose of this proposal is ultra vires the council's powers in any such motion to direct the process for the purpose of the investigation and preparation of bye-laws would be void. The law agent has examined and summarised the legal advice with the benefit of Louth County Council's experience, which confirms the position, that the objective of such bye-laws is outside the remit of the power of the council and would therefore be ultra vires and void. The relevant law is set out in the law agent's advice and the key points are as follows:

The Law and the creation of bye-laws is governed by the Local Government Act 2001. It clearly sets out the provisions that apply. The council, as a creature of statute has only the powers identified in that legislation. Section 199 sets out those powers and limitations. The objective of a bye-law must relate to an area within the control of the council. Therefore, it excludes lands, or services not under the control or management of the local authority. A gathering adjacent to a facility while possibly on the public road is protected by the enforcement powers of the Gardaí in relation to public order matters and road safety.

Under Section 199, a local authority may make a bye-law for or in relation to the use, operation, or protection, or regulation of management or services, in relation to any connected matter. While Wicklow County Council is the road authority for Wicklow and therefore in charge of all public roads, including footpaths in the county. It has no jurisdiction in relation to the provision of health services which is a matter for the Minister for Health and the HSE.

If there is existing legislation to enable the powers mooted then they cannot be reimagined for the local authority to lawfully acquire. The Council has no jurisdiction in relation to the maintenance of public order which is a matter for the Garda which criminalises some of the things alluded to in the motion. A section of those are set out, which entail the Criminal Justice Public Order Act, the Criminal Justice and Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1977 or Section 10 of the Roads Act which creates a potential hazard to road users. There is also specification involving the provision of service in relation to the Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018. In conclusion the law agent is saying that the intent to make bye-laws for the purposes identified in the motion are ultra vires.

The Council as the council is not allowed to make legally binding for those and such legislation is more properly a matter for the Oireachtas. There are a significant number of criminal sanctions viable to the Gardaí within their powers that cannot be duplicated by a local authority. Furthermore

the council involves a duty of care to employees and the enforcement would require the support and authority that clearly fall within the remit of the Gardaí powers. So, for completeness of advice there are also constitutional issues that could arise in the suggestion of limiting the right to free speech and peaceful protest.

The key point however is that the council, as a creature of statute does not have the powers as defined in the Local Government Act to create the bye-law objective put forward in this motion and while the members have it within their own function to explore and decide on matters for discussion, it is pertinent that the objectives of those discussions should have a legal standing. Section 199(2)(b) says that it may not be used for a purpose that is governed by another enact. In this case the criminal order act and control is specifically within the remit of the Gardaí. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Crean, do you want to?

CLLR CREAN: I have my timer here set for three minutes. I hear the response and thank you for the law agent for looking into that. In response to that, I hear that for practicality, if the motion should be reworded in some way so it's not about protecting individuals and we can make it broader in the sense that I would still like to think we could support this motion, fellow councillors could and bring it further. I don't want to have to go to vote because I know this is not a for or against issue, it's a nuanced area for moral and historical reasons. I get that, I know that everyone here believes in women's rights to safety and dignity and liberty, obviously when enforcement comes in, it gets more nuanced for people.

I purposely worded the motion so it was about wording the bye-laws and it wasn't committing the council to do anything about them. I have liaised with national organisations like Lawyers for Choice who have their own legal experts and some of the rationale put forward by the law agent would be disputed by their legal interpretation. So it's quite a nuanced area. I know that the Gardaí have spoken about the fact that it's covered by the Public Order Act but the expertise of other legal experts they would say that that doesn't, it doesn't satisfy this type of protest, particularly if people are standing and they are not using anything particularly intimidatory except for photos and pictures... so that can cover another range of conduct and are more proactive than reactive, than it being left to healthcare staff to ring the Gardaí every time.

I know this motion was delayed, but it's timely that it's this month that we are dealing with it, because we just had the Mother and Baby Report and that reminder of that whole legacy of shame that controlled women in this country. Although where he have had state apology and the Government have engaged meaningfully, I think the attitudes are still exist here and they are practiced in anti-abortion practice, they are using shame to control women. At the end of the day I would ask fellow councillors to support this at least to explore it further and employ other engagement of legal advice and also the protection of children, if it's

other causes causing it to the council. There is [INAUDIBLE], there is other spaces where we control individuals behaviours, so the Gardaí can also control.

This is really a motion about addressing that legacy of shame, taking action on a local level to progress it and ensuring that women in our county can access legal healthcare, whether you agree with abortion or not, just legal and needed healthcare. It's about their right to safety, dignity and privacy. I hear about the dignity of staff, well what about the safety of these women? We have concerns about even addressing protesters for staff and obviously the Gardaí can be involved as well in terms of other bye-laws. In terms of free speech, because I am absolutely for freedom of assembly, organisations like the ICL have addressed this, doing an analysis of access zones. We have those expert organisations for that reason and this type of process punches down, not up. It's behaviour that is about controlling women and their choices, the intention to control and shun them. It's not like similar protests that would necessarily be punching up the weight. At the end of the day it's about controlling individual choice and people still protest outside the designated zone and others that aren't. So that is.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Crean. Cllr Anne Ferris, did you want to come in?

CLLR FERRIS: Yes, I just want to first of all commend Cllr Crean for tabling this motion. I note it's on the agenda for a year. Members will remember when that motion was tabled there were a lot of reports of protests outside the National Maternity Hospital and I think this is where it stemmed from. Because it is a difficult decision and it's very important that we separate, as Cllr Crean, the topic of protests outside healthcare facilities that women will go to. We need to separate that in the motion from the issue of abortion, because I know that can divide people, but we have to remember that it could be our sisters our daughters, our mothers, whatever going to seek advice and information and to have to try and seek this information by passing by people who have, they may be saying the rosary, there is nothing wrong with that, but they have the graphic photos and posters outside which is very intimidating.

I recognise what Lorraine has said and what the law agent has said that it would be ultra vires for us to try and introduce bye-laws and particularly it would be a waste of time and resources if they are not going to be valid, but I do think that we should all take on board what Cllr Mags Crean has tabled. It is an issue close to the heart of many women in this country, but not only women, but their partners, their husbands, the relatives. I think we should agree in the spirit of the way the motion was tabled that we should support it. Now, I think that it probably needs to be, as Cllr Crean has said, it probably needs to be reworded. I think this Council should be pushing and calling on Government to introduce the necessary legislation to that bye-laws will not be necessary.

Again it's a national matter, but it is something that I think individual councils should be able to raise at their meetings and to push the

Government to do it and particularly to put pressure on our five TDs and our Senator to bring this up in the Dail. I think we should do that, we should pass a motion like that and also that the motion would be distributed to all other local authorities in the country. Again I like to say I commend Cllr Crean on this, I think because of Covid shortly after that, we haven't seen such evidence of it, because of obviously the restrictions about crowds and things, but I do fear for when the whole emergency of Covid is over that we will see a re-emergence of the protests outside these clinics and hospitals and, as I say, no matter how you feel or how you stand on the abortion issue, it is every woman's right to go and seek advice and seek whatever is necessary for her wellbeing and for her choice to be able to go into these clinics and hospitals without fear of intimidation. So I would suggest, I don't know, maybe Lorraine could advise us on this, whether it would be good to withdraw the motion and table another one, which should come up shortly because we are hoping to clear all the motions today. Again, at the end of the day, Mags, it is your decision, but I certainly support the spirit of your motion. And thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Anne Ferris. I will bring you back in on that Lorraine. Lourda Scott, did you want to come in on that?

CLLR SCOTT: Yes, thank you, **chair** and Cllr Crean for identifying that. As Cllr Anne Ferris identified this is an issue of intimidation and particularly around maternity hospitals which was seen before Covid. The necessity of this legislation to prevent, these sort of intimidation protests was raised when the Termination of Pregnancy Bill was being discussed in the Dail, so the necessity of laws around this has been well-known and well-signalled to the Government and is very important. It's important to point out that it's every person's right to attend maternity hospital, for whatever reason they are attending a maternity hospital, without being intimidated. I just want to state on the record here, I can personally attest to having lost several pregnancies, the absolute grotesqueness of the imagery used in those protests. I actually felt very personally upset myself just viewing those protests, let alone if I had to view them attending a hospital, to attend an appointment for pregnancy loss. I have friends who have lost babies almost full term and they have had to go through these people holding up this grotesque imagery intimidating the healthcare staff attending their own day job as well there is a place for protest, that is outside the Dail, not outside healthcare. Cllr Mags Crean, you made me flag, there is regulation for safe access to the Termination of Pregnancy Bill is on the table. While I support your motion, I think it needs to be reworded before we can do anything with it. I don't know if part of that would send a strong letter from the council to write to the Minister for Health to move the bill, but again, thank you for raising it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Lourda Scott. I know there is three more looking to come in. I will come back to Mags. So, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, if you could come in.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: I will be short. Again commending Cllr Mags Crean for bringing this motion forward. For me this isn't actually an abortion issue, it's a women's health issue. I want to be able to go and access women's health services and not have to be embarrassed or

shamed. I want both my daughters to be able do that as well. I think it's timely as well that we are discussing this. One of the most harrowing comments, or not one of the most, I mean there was so many, one of the comments that really stood to me in the mother and baby report was someone who was a single parent was when the issue of lone parents came to the Dail for a vote, there wasn't a single comment on it, there wasn't a single comment for or against and that was representative of all of the parties and no parties. Nobody had a comment or a view on it. I think it's a real reflection of the number of female councillors and that is not taking away from a male councillors, but it is a real reflection of the fact that we have so many women as councillors now on Wicklow County Council that these types of issues are being brought to the forefront and being discussed. So I like to congratulate Cllr Crean on bringing this forward.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr R O'Connor.

CLLR O'CONNOR: I want to come in quick and say well done to Cllr Crean. On the topic of the lawyer response, I kind of find it's kind of strange in the sense that the lawyer is saying this is why it can't happen, but rather than saying, okay, it's worded like this, if we changed the wording like this then it can happen. That kind of says quite a lot. Different wording can be found to (sound distortion)...

CATHAOIRLEACH: I think you are gone, Rory. Cllr McManus.

CLLR McMANUS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I just want to chime in with my own congratulations to Cllr Crean on this. Just say for all the speakers so far, I really appreciate the sharing of personal stories in this, with the aim of progressing and taking action on such a serious issue. It's not easy to share your personal experience and so I just really, I admire the speakers who have done this so far. I have had my own experience with covering graphic imagery, it wasn't outside a healthcare setting but I know how harmful it can be. In doing so I met a woman who had a miscarriage and she came over and gave me a hug and said thank you for covering these, you don't know how upsetting it is to walk past.

I do agree with Cllr Anne Ferris, I appreciate that Lorraine has done research for us and started that exploratory process. If that could be circulated to the members to have a look at that would be great so we can look at it ourselves and try and find the best which to make the call for these exclusionary zones. I agree with everything that people have said about protests and I love a good protest, but this is about protecting people in vulnerable scenarios, families in vulnerable scenarios to well done Cllr Crean and for the speaker so father in sharing their experiences.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: First of all I want to commend Cllr Crean on the motion and I want to commend the fair way she has put her case. As we all know the question of abortion rights has been a divisive issue in this country for many years. However, the people have spoken on the issue, the people have made their views clear and from my point of view, when people are wanting to access legally provided healthcare facilities they should be able to do so peacefully and without any opposition or any kind of harassment or intimidation of any kind trying to access those facilities. I fully agree

with Cllr Crean on that and I am quite happy to second the motion if anyone else hasn't already seconded it? I don't think it needs to be reworded at the moment. As I read it, it says, "*That the Council explores the drafting the bye-laws.*" Which gives scope to look at the wording and see if it can be a little bit more suited to what is being said, but I would prefer to see it passed today rather than sent off for another day. If we agree to the motion, we are agreeing to explore the wording. On that basis I would be very happy to support it and congratulations Cllr Crean as well.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr M Kavanagh.

CLLR M KAVANAGH: Just a couple of questions. Has any other council passed the motion and if they did, was the wording different to the wording in this motion? Secondly, I agree with Cllr Behan, we are only voting to explore the issue, not to actually come up with the wording today. The other thing I would just like to say is that if you can park the issue around women accessing services in the maternity hospitals, if you can park the abortion issue and say is there another situation where a group accessing a service would be targeted? What would the outcome be and I would say that there would be, it would be banned immediately. I just couldn't see it happening if a certain section of the community was trying to avail of a service somewhere and were being met with the violent and graphic type of imagery that and banners and taunts and effects that are used. So, as I said, just park the issue of abortion for the moment. It was a highly divisive issue and it's not the issue here today, it's the rights of people just to access something and if other councils are able to pass this motion then why couldn't we? Thank you.

ADMINISTRATOR: Thank you, Cllr M Kavanagh. Before I go back to Cllr Crean, I am going to ask Lorraine, do you know of other councils who have passed this motion.

ADMINISTRATOR: Obviously this is a very emotive issue. The motion asks Wicklow County Council to explore the drafting of bye-laws. I have been in touch with Cllr Crean in this matter and we have explored extensively the drafting of bye-laws for this situation. So just to say that Louth County Council received a similar Notice of Motion back in 2019. They obtained senior counsel advice which advised that it was ultra vires and should be withdrawn. I reached out to the meeting's administrator's network sector and of the 28 local authorities 14 came back to say they hadn't received a motion like that. Dublin City Council did receive a similar motion which again they ruled on as being ultra vires. The motion is asking Wicklow County Council to regulate the control of public roads and foot paths adjacent to healthcare facilities. What the law agent is saying is if there is existing legislation to enable, then Wicklow County Council or no other local authority can reimagine those powers. So the council has no jurisdiction in relation to public order, this rests within other legal enactments such as the Criminal Justice Act, the Roads Act and the Gardaí have the powers. So the motion, the wording as it is is ultra vires and should be withdrawn.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Gerry Walsh, you have your hand up.

CLLR WALSH: Just do come in there, I know just is a suggestion that we raise it at our joint police committee when we raise it. Obviously people

have the right to protest, but when they step over the line that intimidate and harass people accessing health services that needs to be stopped and the message needs to get out loud and clear. So just for, in addition, I know we are looking at rewording this or whatever decision we come to, I think it's also a matter we should highlight with the chief Superintendent at next Monday's meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Crean can I come back to you for final comment. Sorry.

CLLR O'NEILL: Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I have gone back to Cllr Crean now. Cllr Mags Crean thank you, Cathaoirleach, I know that Wicklow County Council have done a lot of work so I genuinely appreciate that. I would ask it has happened in the UK, emailing and other Municipal Districts in the UK have done it. I know the laws are different, but I know a lot of advocacy organisations in Ireland have looked at the UK and looked at the legal situation in Ireland. I have been in touch with those over the last few weeks. I was looking here to reword the motion so it's about urging the progress of national legislation, but at an interim measure that a Wicklow County Council law agent could seek independent law experts or at some point, continue to explore this issue. I do think, even when national legislation comes it's going to take time and even when it comes there is probably going to be a role for local authorities. So, you know, we could be, it wouldn't be a waste of time to be ahead on this issue. I do thank people for sharing their personal stories here and for all the support. It's really progressive that the council has had this dignified and fair discussion on a very sensitive issue. Thank you very much for chairing it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Crean, what would you like us to do in relation to moving forward with your motion?

CLLR CREAN: I will have it reworded. So I could put in a reworded motion or I could amend it now, if people want to read it out.

ADMINISTRATOR: Just to be helpful, Cathaoirleach, you would be better off to withdraw this motion. There are procedures in relation to amending motions, it talks about leaving out words and adding in words. The motion would have to be circulated to the floor to read and to come to agreement on. I think everyone is in support of the spirit of the motion and that certainly has support. Cllr Crean, if you want to work on a revised motion and we will hear it for the March meeting? List it for the March meeting?

CLLR CREAN: Okay.

CLLR O'NEILL: Cathaoirleach, are we allowed in here? I, want to express my concern at the right of assembly. I am on the police board and I haven't heard, I have heard no mention whatsoever of people being intimidated in this county and in actual fact I don't even think there is even an abortion clinic in the county. I would be totally against any intimidation of any type, especially of vulnerable people and I would condemn it outright, but I haven't been aware, I haven't heard of anything. But I would also be concerned of the right to assemble and protest. I wouldn't like to think we were going down the road of Donald Trump where blacks are not allowed protest and whites are. I would be cautious of that. The abortion issue was very decisive and if people have an agenda there, where they wish to express their concerns or whatever

the case may be, that they are allowed do it in the proper fashion and I would give anyone any right to protest anywhere. But I definitely would not support any sort of intimidation by anyone, but I think on the outset, with what Lorraine has said, I think this motion is doomed to fail at the moment looking at it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr O'Neill. Thank you, Cllr Crean, Cllr Crean, can you confirm you are withdrawing that for now and you are going to work on the wording and bring it up in the march meeting.

CLLR CREAN: I would be happy with that.

ADMINISTRATOR: Cllr Crean, I will be happy to speak with you and help you to word it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Notice number two in the number of Paul O'Brien and Cllr John Mullen, 2nd of March 2020. I will go to Lorraine for a response on that. Hello, Lorraine, can you hear me?

ADMINISTRATOR: Sorry, Cathaoirleach. This relates to activity on social media. So just to say that the elected members have been circulated with a Code of Conduct for elected members in July 2019 which they are requested to sign up to and which covers social media use and use of council equipment. So a list of examples are set out on page 15 of that code. Councillors are also expected to comply with the LA computers acceptable use policy and should abide by the term and conditions outlined by the council on taking up office.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr O'Brien, do you want to come in.

CLLR P O'BRIEN: Yes, thank you for having this meeting. We all understand there is a Code of Conduct, but we believe it's being ignored and we should go further. Cllr Mullen and I are proposing this motion in a chance to bring up some civility. We believe no colleague should promote their own career by running down their colleagues. Posing for a photo will not solve a problem, laying the blame will not solve any problem and inciting spores to target individuals will not solve any issues. By all means let's hold ourselves accountable and others accountable for their belief but do so in a civilised manner. Politics should not be about warfare, but reaching a by partisan agreement for those who elect us. The politics of hatred should have no place in our society. We have witnessed that in the last few weeks and let no one say that can't come to our shores. We have a responsibility to act in a civilised manner that includes not inciting our spores or to attack our perceived opponents. We should respect the right to voice your opinion without fear of being attacked by others, therefore we are proposing that us as elected representatives should manage our own social media page, delete inappropriate comments and to show leadership in this regard. We believe myself and Cllr Mullen believe that if we need to act serious about that by showing leadership, so unless Cllr Mullen wants to come in after me on that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Mullen.

CLLR MULLEN: Thank, Cathaoirleach and thanks again Paul for putting together the motion and for my colleagues showing up to go through these motions. It's similarly related to the previous motion. Intimidation can't be allowed whether it's on the streets or online. It was in the context of that motion was put down on the 2nd of March, just after a

General Election where there was a massive amount of very negative and organised online intimidation of candidates. I think we are the first rung of the ladder as democratically elected politicians. It's behove on us, not just for ourselves to follow basic standards of decency in communication with others, but our supporters. Because let's not pretend that this online activity is spontaneous and the anger and rage out there is happening overnight all by itself. We can be passionate about issues and very annoyed with government and with political parties, but when it's organised and targeted to intimidate candidates and to stifle public debate we have to say no. No matter who wins an election or a council seat, democracy has basic standards as Cllr Behan said, there was a referendum, the decision was made, we move on, that is what we do in a democracy. I think as councillors we have a duty to be the first line of defence of democracy and say I am not going to tolerate online intimidation, particularly when it's organised.

I think there are studying being done into the organised intimidation that happened in the last election and no doubt it will be done in future election. We have to call it out and say we are not going to tolerate it anymore. That is why this motion is here and I hope colleagues can support it and see the intent behind it. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Mullen. Colleague, what do you, any views on Cllr Mullen and Cllr O'Brien's? Cllr Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: Just to say I fully support the proposer and seconder of the motion. At recent meetings of the association Of Irish Local Government which we are represented, I have raised this issue on behalf all of us that it should be a nationwide matter of all public representatives that they treat each other properly and with respect and that they treat the public with respect and that they are entitled to expect respect from their colleagues. Unless we have a discussion like this, it's going to be very difficult to actually move that forward and I welcome the fact that we are talking about it here today. I can't see anything wrong with anything that has been said by the two councillors who have spoken on it and I would propose, or sorry, I would certainly like to see us unanimously supporting it, because social media abuse and bullying is a scourge in politics and in other walks of life, but particularly in politics and nobody who is brave enough to put their names forward to the people, whether they get elected or not, should be subjected to any kind of intimidation or bullying as a result of them being brave enough to put their names before the public. It's often the hurlers on the ditch, the people who have no courage are the ones who spew this poison on to social media and nobody can have any respect for them in my book. I do have full respect for every single person who is elected as a public representative in this county. I know we all respect each other, but we should also prove it on social media and other channels.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Well said. Cllr Gail Dunne.

CLLR DUNNE: Totally agree with this motion. For someone who has been targeted on social media, it's not very nice and while I can take it, people have to realise that we have families and we have families who are listening and looking at this. It's not very fair on them to see a loved one

being targeted like this. I think it's terrible to think that people would do this. I hate to think too that it's organised but I suppose it is organised. I know any of my supporters, if I, I have never seen any of my supporters putting anything up like that, but if I did I would be the first to tell them to take it down. I totally support this motion. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. There is nobody else looking to come in. Can I take it everyone is in agreement with this? Yeah.

ADMINISTRATOR: Cathaoirleach, the motion asks that the councillors sign declarations indicating agreement or non-agreement with the measure and this would be published and updated annually on the council's website. So are the elected members proposing that this motion be described on the website and we will just say all Wicklow County Councillors sign up for this? Is that what we are saying? Rather than sign declarations indicating agreement and how did the elected members want to move forward with it?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr O'Brien, do you want to come in and clarify that.

CLLR P O'BRIEN: Thank you, watered for County Council came up with a similar initiative, it's basically just a one page and I can get it from you from Waterford City Council it might be, sorry. It's basically a one-pager, agreeing to abide by this motion.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, well we are in agreement with you, Cllr O'Brien, will you get that and forward it on to Lorraine.

ADMINISTRATOR: Is that agreed elected members? Agreed. Okay.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Notice of Motion number three is in the name of Cllr Tommy Annesley. There is no response. Cllr Annesley, can I bring you in on this Notice of Motion.

CLLR ANNESLEY: When this motion came forward to me it was Christmas before 2019. I said I would put it on the agenda. I had to read it again and again and I found it hard to understand. I contacted the people that gave it to me and they sent me a terrible lot of documentation. What this motion is saying parental alienation happens in all walks of life. It happens in male and female, the separated people use the children as weapons against their spouse or their partner and since this motion has been put down a year ago, people have contacted me about this and I didn't realise it was as serious in my constituency as it actually is. I have had four cases in the last six months about this, what is happening. So that is why I put it down, I put it down not really understanding it in March and I have learnt more, because every time I was supposed to be on a motion I was reading more and more on it. So it is, it's in all of our areas, this motion to solve this problem and it was only passed by two councils in the last 12 month, sorry not in the last 12 months, but before I brought to Wicklow, since I brought to Wicklow, it's been passed by every single council in the state, so we are probably the last council to pass this motion. It, I know the abortion clinic was very personal, but separation is very personal as well and the last people that should be upset in a separation is the children. I think we all agree on that one, but that is basically where this is coming from. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Annesley, Cllr Annesley, you are proposing this Notice of Motion, do you have a seconder for it?

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: I would like to second it, Cathaoirleach, if I could.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Seconded by Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy. Are the members in agreement on this motion? Yeah.

ADMINISTRATOR: I think, does Cllr Peir Leonard want to come in?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Peir Leonard, did you want to come in.

CLLR LEONARD: I want to commend Tommy on putting this forward. I think that nobody wins when kids are alienating. Kids neat both their parent, mother and father and people need to sometimes put their differences aside and see the bigger picture and move forward. So I totally support this motion and well done, Tommy.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Pat Fitzgerald.

CLLR FITZGERALD: I just want to support the motion and I have been talking to Cllr Annesley about it. Unfortunately I am well aware of it on a personal level and how it is affecting children, psychological manipulation of children. We certainly need to look at civil and criminal legislation because the impact on children is horrendous. As I say, I am well aware, since Cllr Annesley spoke to me about this motion in, even in the Arklow area and further afield how children are being manipulated by one side or the other and certainly people get away lightly and we all know where things are being said about the husband or the mother or the father and certainly the incidence of it are substantially increasing and it gives me, at times when I listen to it, it really is heart-breaking to see the way the kid has been manipulated to make accusations against the mother or father. I think was it in the Seanad recently it was discussed and I think it needs to be looked at by our legislators and we need to get something done to stop it, because in some cases there are people who are suicidal because of it. I could say I know some people who are having huge mental issues because the child has been manipulated and it needs to be looked as it has been in other countries.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I think we are all in agreement with it anyway, it's passed. So thank you, Cllr Annesley.

CLLR ANNESLEY: Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry. Did someone want to, Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: It's the next motion, sorry.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, the next motion.

ADMINISTRATOR: Motion number three involves writing to the Department. So the elected members are all in agreement with that?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah, I think all in agreement. Notice number four is in the Baltinglass Municipal District councillors, I am going to go to Dr Colm Lavery for a response on that.

COLM: I suppose TII have informed us that the proposed N81 bypass scheme is currently suspended. What this means is that it's not envisaged that the scheme will progress during the life span of the current national development plan from 2018-2027. However the NVP is under review and the Department of public expenditure and reform are seeking submissions on the NPP open until this week, the 29th of January. I would is a say that we and the council continue to work closely with the Transport Ireland. Significant work has been done to upgrade the route, including north/south of Hollywood which has just been signed off and is substantially complete before Christmas of this year.

Further safety improvement schemes are presently being progressed as are significant investments in road surface improvements and if you just bear with me for a minute, just to say that we are currently looking at and we have received approval from TII to progress four schemes on the N81 south of Hollywood. They are the N81 Tuckmill Lower, Hangman's Bend and the west project. So we are progressing those in accordance with phases 1-4 of the TII project management guidelines. Given the overlap in the four schemes we have got their agreement to assess that full corridor for phase one from north of Baltinglass to north of Irishtown West. So the overall length of that corridor under consideration is 12.8km to be exact.

So we have a draft feasibility report. That is gone to TII once we get approval for that we will be looking at option, selecting for the various improvements that can be made to that section of the road. I would also point out that this year we have got a one million euro allocation from TII to carry out safety improvements on the road from Blessington to Russborough, plus capital maintenance schemes, so they are about 1km in length. So north of Hollywood and then just south of Knockroe as well. Those are the works that are being carried out on the N81. I suppose on the Tallaght to Hollywood scheme it is currently suspended in terms of TII's consideration and funding for that scheme and hopefully it will be considered further in the review of the NDP that is going to be going under way.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Dr Lavery. Because this is in the name of the Baltinglass Municipal District and there is another one later on in the Bray Municipal District, I am going to go to the chair of each Municipal District first or if they want to delegate someone to speak on it. So Patsy Glennon, you are the chair of the Baltinglass Municipal District, I know there is other members who want to come in. Do you want to speak on it as chair or delegate to that to someone to come in?

CLLR GLENNON: I will speak on it first, but then perhaps the more senior colleagues who have been working on this for longer. Look, I like to thank Colm for his progress report, any improvements are welcome, but it doesn't really address the issue. The issue is (sound distortion)...

CATHAOIRLEACH: You are gone, Patsy.

CLLR GLENNON: The councils supported this matter, sorry, can you hear me.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We can't hear you, Patsy. There is interference there.

CLLR GLENNON: Can you hear me now?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes.

CLLR GLENNON: Okay, it's obviously signal, again... (sound distortion)

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Patsy, you are coming and going, we can't hear you.

CLLR GLENNON: Someone else might like to give it a bash.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, I am going to go to Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Thank you, chairman, I will be brief. Just a couple of things, Colm, thank you for that update and could the council, could we make a submission on the review of the NDP to ask for the Hollywood to Tallaght proposed route that funding be allocated for that route, which we

have been fighting for many years. And also the extra works that you are proposing that, going from Baltinglass as far as Blessington or 12km north of Baltinglass. It's very welcome and I it would be great to see progress, because there is a few bad bends in that area. The Knockroe bends great to see them done, but that went on for 10, 15 years before we saw the light of day last year. Great to see the improvements further south you are referring to and that is very welcome.

Briefly, the nature of this motion was something that I brought up about two years ago in that it struck me that the other County Councils that the N81 effects are not making any lobbying through the Parliament. It goes from South Dublin from Tallaght down to Brittas and lots of parts of Kildare as it weaves its way from north of Blessington down as far as south of Hollywood, it goes through parts of Kildare and a lot of people who live in county Kildare use the N81. Obviously we all know two miles out of Baltinglass it enters County Carlow.

So I really feel that West Wicklow and South Wicklow councillors have been fighting a lone battle in this and the other three counties that have been affected by this haven't pulled their wait as regards lobbying. That was the purpose of the motion to write to the councils and try and bring them on board and get them to take a better interest in the upgrade of the N81 which does affect their counties. The N81, if it was upgraded, would take a lot of traffic off the N7. Every car going from Dublin to Galway going south uses the N7 by Naas. The N81 would relieve that and would be beneficial to those neighbouring counties. That is really the main purpose to bring those on board as regards lobbying to upgrade the N81.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Avril Cronin.

CLLR CRONIN: Thank you for giving us the time to go through these motions. The issue with the N81 has been going on numerous years, long before I became a councillor. In 2007 I worked at the NRDO as a student and they were planning the route for the N81 and here we are now in 2021 and I am a councillor and we still have had no progress on the upgrade of the N81. While all the developments are welcome, the work on Knockroe Bend and the work from south of Blessington to Russborough, while they are welcome, there is a big issue and the issue is the whole road needs to be upgraded. It is the main route for Dublin for people here in West Wicklow and as a commuter myself I use that road every day going to work. I do think that we need to get our other councillor colleagues, sorry did you lose me there?

CATHAOIRLEACH: No.

CLLR CRONIN: We need to get our colleagues on side, if we can push it, it would be great, but sometimes we feel we are on our own in the Baltinglass Municipal District and if we could get the full council support to push this with our colleagues in South Dublin and Kildare I think we might be able to progress a little bit further. So thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to try and re-establish with Cllr Glennon. Are you there?

CLLR GLENNON: I have knocked off my camera in the hope it might improve the sound. I like to join with my colleagues. It's the only route to

Dublin that hasn't been... the land is frozen for this new road and it's a matter of trying to encourage the TII and Government to put it back on the agenda. It fell off the spatial strategy and it fell aside. There will be no progress outside this side of the county until the road is done. It's an essential part of the infrastructure that is essential to the uplifting of this area. We are really urging the rest of the council to support us in this motion to see can we get it reignited. I know that Cllr O'Neill is passionate about this issue so I will hand over to him to say a few words on it. He was involved on campaigning before I was elected as was Cllr Timmins and Blake as well. It's an issue we need to get support and hopefully progress made on.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Gerry O'Neill, do you want to say a word.

CLLR O'NEILL: Again I want to thank my colleague, Patsy Glennon. And thank Colm for his presentation there. We welcome any improvement south of Blessington and it's great there are works taking place there and more intended for this year. The issue north of Blessington is the major one and as Cllr Glennon pointed out there, there is a 300 metre wide strip frozen from Blessington to Tallaght and that means that farmers are left in limbo, people are being denied planning permission to build, formers aren't allowed to put a shed up. That land is frozen. What we would seek is we have to make our mind up whether this project is going ahead some time or another. If it's not that they have to defreeze the land. It's not right that people have year in year out as Cllr Cronin pointed out we are talking about 15 years this is going on. It's not fair on people. Another important thing it looks like Roadstone will be getting the go ahead to landfill in Redbog, which means that the N81 will be used, there will be a truck every two-and-a-half minutes extra on the road. It means that the landfill is in Kildare, but it will be brought from Dublin. On the N81 through Wicklow and then if there are any levies when it's dumped in Kildare, it will be Kildare County Council that will be, that will benefit.

So that road, that section of the road from Dublin border to Blessington is absolutely vital. It's not fair to impose another couple of hundred lorries a day on the road without some sort of promise of an upgrade. I pointed out in the past that maybe now is the time to strike with Roadstone. The zone here against the backfilling of the old quarry. I mean there will be more space and more recreation area, so it's not a question of that. But what we are looking for is something out of it. We are providing the road and we are getting nothing from it.

So I think now is the time maybe to talk to Roadstone, to get this moving that there will be, there can be huge improvements and there can be huge improvements even if the decision is not to go ahead with the new road, which we all want, we all want the new road in place, but if it's a case that it's not going ahead, there could be huge improvements to that. It's absolutely. The state of that road as such, the narrow parts of it, it's not fair, it's absolutely not fair to give planning, to give permission there for the use of that, as I say, where we have a truck every two-and-a-half minutes we have an extra truck on the road.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Cllr O'Neill. Just to be fair, Cllr Behan, did you want to come in?

CLLR BEHAN: Just if the members in that area, in the Baltinglass area are finished I want to add my support. Maybe they are not finished.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I wanted to offer it to Cllr Mullen and Blake if they want to say something on there. There does seem to be agreement with the councillors from the west. If you want to come in and speak on it briefly.

CLLR MULLEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, as my colleagues have said, Gerry and others who have been campaigning on this for years. It's unacceptable that the only main road into Dublin now, the N81 has been left unaccounted for with regards upgrades. The landowners in particular must, at this stage wonder what public planning is about, because this is ridiculous. To have land frozen for infrastructural development and that infrastructural development to take over 20 years. It's ridiculous. It can't stand. I am appreciative, of my colleagues making their views known.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Blake, do you want to say something?

CLLR BLAKE: I am okay. No need.

CLLR BEHAN: Just to say I support what the members in Baltinglass have seen. There is no count there is a strong feeling in west Wicklow, I have seen it at a General Election time and when I am over there. People feel very neglected in that part of the county. I think it's incumbent on the rest of us to support our colleagues in the west when they are looking for something that certainly would be demanded day in, day out on the other part of the county if we didn't have it. I mean people are just entitled to have a proper means of access to their homes and their businesses and a safe means of access. I think we should all support the councillors from the west in progressing that particular proposal.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: One point, going back to Cllr Timmins, the councillors can make a submission to the national development plan. We will be making one by can do a separate one on behalf of the councillors and circulate it to the Oireachtas members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Chief Executive. I think we are all in agreement to support our colleagues in west Wicklow, is that fair to say? Is that all agreed.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Agreed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. Notice of Motion number five in the name of Cllr Peir Leonard, I will go to Lorraine for a response on this.

ADMINISTRATOR: Yes, we can confirm that a study of the entire Wicklow coastline is being completed in partnership with Irish Rail. The purpose of the study is to identify the impacts of coastal erosion along the coastline and to identify suitable engineering solutions to prevent further deterioration at a number of areas including north Arklow. Once the report is complete, Wicklow County Council will continue to work with the office of public works with regard to implementing any solutions for North Arklow and other areas along the coastline. A presentation will be given to the elected members at our February 1st meeting, that is next Monday.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Leonard, do you want to respond to that?

CLLR LEONARD: I would like to respond to that. I appreciate that and I am aware of study that is being done. I am also very aware, there is a lot

of funding for climate change and it's going to be available hopefully in the next few years. The importance of having shovel-ready plans ready to protect our east coast. As a child I spent many hours on the north beach in Arklow and we have lost that amenity and we have been very, lagging behind with our maritime, the economic and the social, the whole maritime has been put on the long finger I think. One of the most important things we can do is protect our coast and protect our habitats on the coast and protect those amenities for people, especially now in times of pandemics and other things. I think that it's really important to have that funding in place, or like a feasibility study with a plan in place and a timeline on it to be able to go for funding when it comes. I just would wonder, would we be ready for that with the Iarnród Éireann, will that be enough to apply for coastal erosion, to complete the works?

CLLR BOURKE: Can I come in there? Just in support of Cllr Leonard, this is something that is really required. Beach nourishment of north beach is badly needed. There should be a body of work done on this, because over the last 20 years we have repeated, I am told we have repeatedly made applications to the OPW for funding for groynes and such like at north beach. So the council should have a fair body of work done on that which they need to dust down and have a look at again, if the OPW are compiling a fresh report, just for your information.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to bring the Chief Executive in, but we are getting a presentation next Monday.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, yes, there is a lot of work done in terms of the report that was carried out by the consultants. Iarnród Éireann have confirmed they have been in contact with them, so that is a significant project. I mentioned the last day, 200 million, that sort of funding. So they have been approved to put a funding scheme in place. We hope to have that completed and into the OT and NTA in Q2 of 21. That is significant in its own right. There is a project Steering Group, we will be representing on that group. That is the project as a whole. Now, bare funding will be in relation to the railway. As you go down to Arklow you are outside of that and you are into the OPW. But there is a lot of work to be done in what are their proposals and cost benefit analysis for each section. But at least that is done to engage with the OPW and send it in. So there is progress.

CLLR MITCHELL: That is good news about progress, that the Chief Executive said. This report has been ongoing for a number of years. I understand the board of Iarnród Éireann have been holding it up for six months. We do need to have the report and work out the priorities and deal with the issues in a coherent way. It's not right that it's been delayed so long.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: In fairness they did the work with the Department of transport in the interim and they have them on board to support them to move it to the next face which requires significant funding. So progress has been made I would say.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We will leave that until next Monday and get the presentation, is that fair enough?

CLLR LEONARD: Yes, I know I have another motion and I have my daughter's graduation to go to online, so if we can move things along.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We wish your daughter well. The next motion is motion number 6, Cllr Peir Leonard and Cllr M Kavanagh, the 20th of April 2020,ly go to Lorraine for a response.

ADMINISTRATOR: Just to say that a number of Wicklow MD elected members had to leave to attend their Wicklow Municipal District members. This motion is in two parts. One is in relation to the rent system, similar to used in Wexford County Council that would allow tenants to pay their rent in the Post Office and another that they support an awareness campaign to support the transfer of social welfare payments to the Post Office in the emergency period. They are set out there.

In terms of the first part of the response, Wicklow County Council offers the following payment methods. Bank, credit unions, standing order and transfer. Household Budget Scheme, the Department of social protection, payment via bank card or telephone, payment in person at offices in Wicklow County Council, outside Covid-19 restriction levels postal and the rent collector. Wexford County Council offers the rent payment card system to tenants because unlike Wicklow County Council they do not have rent collectors. Moreover, like Wicklow County Council, their preferred payment options are the Household Budget Scheme which is also operated by An Post or a standing order as they make sure that payments are regular and on time, thereby avoiding arrears. These happen to be more cost effective and efficient. The rent payment system is similar to the Household Budget Scheme, however the latter scheme is considered to be a guaranteed payment method, as the client cannot cancel the deduction themselves. To this end Wicklow County Council would be prioritising the expansion of the household budget option and the development of an online payment facility, rather than introducing the proposed Rent Repayment Card at this time. Wicklow County Council will however continue to review all the rent payment options on an ongoing basis to improve the collection of rates.

Just before it goes out to the floor, just in terms of the second part of the motion. In line with the latest HSE and World Health Organisation advice around social distancing and in order to fight the spread of Covid-19 virus, the Department of Social Protection took the decision to facilitate social welfare recipients getting payment into their bank account, this will mean no longer having to pick up payments in the Post Office. In addition An Post always allows an agent to collect their payment.

At this moment in time, Wicklow County Council does not believe it would be advisable to object to a temporary procedure brought in to combat the spread of Covid, this can be revisited again following the pandemic, if it's considered to be an issue.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Peir Leonard, are you happy with that response?

CLLR LEONARD: Yes, I understand the response and I had got the response from Brian as well, but I would like to proceed with my, with the first part of my motion, if that is possible and put it to the vote. Because I have spoken to many, like the Post Offices in, all around the country, but

in Wicklow, we have many little Post Offices and they are really truly the heart of every town centre. I think that there is a lot more to this than just a payment. This is providing people a social outlet, while providing jobs in the town centre and the spin-off to local businesses on the main street are equally as important as having a facility.

Most of the Post Offices that I have spoken to are in favour of the rent card, if the members would like to go on to and research later on to bill pay on an post website, there is many other payments that can be paid through the system and the rent card also. A lot of County Councils right across Ireland are all listed on the An Post website as having signed up. I like to put it to the members to vote on it. I think it's a good thing.

The second part I am willing to postpone that until post Covid or when things get back to normal, but I do think we need to support our Post Offices and prevent the Council from getting into any more arrears at the moment. At the moment, as it stands the social housing and the Household Budget Scheme is surrendered. It's not working because the banks don't use it, so anyone who has signed up to the Household Budget Scheme, they have a lot of people I have been speaking to are in substantial arrears because they didn't realise this and because the payment is going directly to their bank, they have become in debt now and the council have over two million arrears at the moment, so that has increased from 2019. So I think introducing this rent card would be a good thing.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: I want to support the motion, I think it's excellent. The Government do a lot of talking about supporting the postal service and the Post Office. I think it's a huge social enterprise and it's benefiting now from a new momentum because of Parcel Post because of Covid-19. I really agree with everything that Cllr Leonard has just said, I am sure that Cllr Kavanagh would have put in point, but unfortunately she has gone off to the Municipal District, which is a clash, so it's a pity that that happened. I would agree with Cllr Peir Leonard and I would be the seconder if it needs one.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Walsh.

CLLR WALSH: Just to support the motion and Cllr Leonard referred to the arrears at the last meeting, I think the figure was in and around 2.5 million. Any proposal to address that and the fact of people getting into arrears. Obviously there is a two-pronged approach and the knock-on effect in supporting the Post Office at the same time, so certainly I would support measures such as this.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: I would like to support the first part of the motion as well, I think it's very appropriate. I had a number of queries from people as well. People from outside the county they are also able to use it, so it's a very worthwhile service to have out there. I too would commend Cllr Peir Leonard on putting forward the motion. Certainly the first part she has alluded to I would support as well.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Pat Fitzgerald.

CLLR FITZGERALD: Can you hear me?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Go ahead.

CLLR FITZGERALD: I support the motion. I think it's a very good motion, it gives the option to people to go to the Post Office and pay their rent. The difficulty I see at the moment here is that I have had two people last week who normally pay in the council offices, but the woman had €1300 up one had 1050. There is a difficulty with people holding money in their times at this time, and people are aware that they are because people talk. I think that the motion of Cllr Peir Leonard and Cllr M Kavanagh is a very good motion, I am aware of the situation in Wexford, but I know that some of the smaller Post Offices it would be of benefit to them as well. I am well aware, obviously because of the Covid restrictions, the Post Offices at the moment, there are queues outside the Post Offices, but when we are over the Covid, the situation with Covid, I certainly think it should be looked at. I think it will be a help to the people who maybe are in difficulty. I think it should be looked at and hopefully when we are back to normal, Wicklow County Council would consider it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Pat Fitzgerald.

CLLR McMANUS: I am also happy to support the second part of this motion. Maybe it's something that the housing SPC should look at as well. We look at all of the ways that we in non-Covid times can collect rent and if we can support our tenants in any problems they are facing so that we can deal with the rent arrears, maybe that is something the housing SPC could look at.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. So, Cllr Leonard, I think you have broad support here. Cllr McManus is saying send it to the SPC. Are you in agreement with that.

ADMINISTRATOR: This is an operational issue and the head of finance has said in his response, while we are prioritising the expansion of household budget option which is also administered via the Post Office, that Wicklow County Council will continue to review all payment options on an ongoing basis to improve collection, so I think the response is there.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Leonard, are you happy with that.

CLLR LEONARD: I would still like to put it...

ADMINISTRATOR: There is no dissent, I think your motion has support.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, we will move on.

CLLR BEHAN: On a point of order. If there is no dissent it should be declared carried.

ADMINISTRATOR: Yeah, but Cathaoirleach, it is an operational issue for Wicklow County Council, I mean the views and the spirit of the motion is accepted and Wicklow County Council will continue to review all rent payment options on an ongoing base tone of voice improve collection rates.

CLLR BEHAN: We are entitled to put down a motion and entitled to vote on it. The meeting's administrator has already pointed out it's unanimously agreed, that should be noted in the minutes that it is agreed by the councillors.

ADMINISTRATOR: That would of course be.

CATHAOIRLEACH: It will be, it would have to be. Is that agreed then? Yeah, okay. We will move on to item number 7. Notice of Motion in the

names of Cllr Anne Ferris, Paul O'Brien, Lourda Scott, Cllr Erika Doyle and Cllr Jodie Neary. I will go to Cllr Nicholls on this.

(Short break during presentation).

ADMINISTRATOR: This is in relation to opening the stillbirth register to the public.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. Members, does anyone want to come in on this? Cllr Grace McManus.

CLLR McMANUS: Just to give members a very quick rationale for this, so this came from campaigners in Wicklow and there is campaigners across the State looking for this change. At the moment if a family has a stillbirth the register is closed save in very specific circumstances and the fear is in future generations, if someone is looking up their family history, certain members may be excluded if they are on a closed register, that is only accessible to the mother and father. I have to say, I met the campaigners and they were so compassionate and mindful, which is why they have put in the opt out clause. They recognise this is not a universal want for everyone who may experience a stillbirth, so they are trying to find a balance between opening it up and dealing with the wants of other parents. I think it's, the minister, in fairness is working on it, I know it's a national issue, but because it came to me from people in Wicklow who were very courageous in sharing their stories and I am asking members to take a stand and ask that that be addressed nationally. If anyone has any questions I will answer them if I can.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Does anyone want to come in on that? Nobody is looking to come in.

CLLR FERRIS: Just to say that I fully support that motion.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Crean.

CLLR CREAN: I am conscious of time, I am coming in to support.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Grace McManus. A seconder?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr O'Brien and we are all in agreement. Thank you.

Notice number ten is in the names of Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, Cllr Dermot O'Brien, Cllr Melanie Corrigan, Cllr Grace McManus, Cllr Joe Behan, Cllr Erika Doyle, Cllr Anne Ferris and Cllr Rory O'Connor. So I will go to Colm Lavery for a response.

COLM: Just on the issue, the issue of a full-time fire services is under consideration by the transportation, water and emergency services SPC. Indeed it was discussed recently at our SPC of the 12th of January. The motion itself refers to the chief fire officer's report he produced back in 2014. That report, the chief fire officer has prepared a new report which is updated with 2016 census and most up to date available statistics. We have asked the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management in the Department of Housing and Local Government to peer review the report and to update with any, the statistics, both regionally and nationally that they may have available to them, which is not, which are obviously not available to us.

I suppose the Directorate is currently finalising a capacity review of all 25, 27 fire authorities throughout the country, which obviously includes ourselves here in Wicklow County Council and it is agreed that it will get the experts that were deployed on that capacity review to undertake a review of the chief fire officer's report into the full-time fire service in Bray. Just to say that the National Directorate have retained an independent advisor to it, his name is Dr Brian Sweeney, a former chief fire officer of Strathclyde fire and rescue service in Scotland and Dr Sweeney has a PhD in fire studies so he will review the report and the outcome of that review will be brought back to the SPC in the first instance. Just while I have the floor, I might just indicate some of the progress that has been made in relation to fire services in the county.

First of all, to say that we have ran a very successful recruitment campaign in terms of fire officers in 2020. We have recruited, we had sought to recruit 16 officers and 12 have been recruited. This would allow us in terms of Bray to have a second pump fully manned when those officers have completed their training. We have also been very successful in terms of capital allocations to the fire services in county Wicklow, as you will be aware. We have recently been approved funding for two new fire stations in Dunlavin and Baltinglass at a million euro each. We have also received funding for a new fire engine and also funding for two water tankers on the capital side.

Just as well maybe to add that the report on the service indicators in local authorities has recently been published and it indicates for mobilisation times in terms of our fire service that we are currently, in 2019, the mobilisation time, the average time that is taken in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in part-time stations in respect of fire instances is 5.25 minutes in Wicklow. So this has come down from a figure in 2013 and a significant improvement and it's higher than the national average and would be considered an excellence response time. Also then just to say that the average time taken in, sorry, that was another point.

So we are just achieving about 40% of our first-time attendance at scenes within ten minutes as well, which again is considered excellent when it's compared to other fire services across the country. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Director. I am going to do as I did in the Baltinglass one, I am going to Cllr Anne Ferris first or are if she wants to nominate someone to speak on her behalf.

CLLR FERRIS: I would like to nominate Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy to speak and then also Cllr Dermot O'Brien and Cllr Grace McManus, because, just for your information, there were two separate motions down at the Bray Municipal District for discussion by the councillors, so I nominate Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy to speak first.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Thank you, Anne, thank you, Cathaoirleach.

Thank you, Colm for the information you provided there. Obviously the Bray town councillors have been actively watching changes and improvement in the fire service. That has been an issue, which has been

going on in Bray for a long time. It's an issue I would have been aware of when I was school and that wasn't today or yesterday! We are not the first group of councillors to bring this forward, many have walked in our shoes beforehand and have raised this issue time and time again.

Bray is significantly changing and our population is growing rapidly. The types of buildings that we have in the town is changing. We have a new town centre, a primary healthcare centre, four star apartment blocks going on the southern cross. The landscape is changing and not only that we have had historically heart-breaking situations in the town, involving part-time fire services and the fire services themselves. It was a motion that was brought by a number of us to this council grouping and it was one that, of all of the issues that come to our table, we all stood together, unanimously. There was a really strong sense that it wasn't a political issue, this was very much a community issue and that nothing less than a full independent review of the fire service in the town would do. That is acknowledging the work of your department, Colm and the work of all the fire service staff. But it really has to be fully independent, looking at the whole service and looking at the wellbeing of the staff there, who have had to deal with some really horrific things over the last number of years. We think of the fire service, we think of just fires, I mean recently they were called out to support my own family in an attempted suicide situation and they are doing much more than dealing with fires. They are taking those issues themselves and they are taking them home. That is why the inclusion of the wellbeing of the fire service staff, which Grace put forward is so important. They are having to deal with people in their own community and servicing us in our own community. That is why I feel really passionate about this and really strongly about it. As I am sure my other councillors do. It has to be a full, independent of the local authority review of the fire service in Bray that is serving Bray, Enniskerry and Kilmacanogue. I would urge councillors to support the Bray councillors in this motion, it's something we are passionate about.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Sorry, councillor, I don't know who you said wanted to come in secondly on that? You mentioned two.

CLLR FERRIS: Cllr Dermot and Grace McManus.

CLLR McMANUS: I will let Dermot speak because he was the second name on it.

CLLR D O'BRIEN: I won't repeat what Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy said, as she said we are aligned in this. The things that jump out at me, I know that the Chief Executive is required to produce reports, that is part of his job and I am sure he does it to the highest standard. But the terms of reference of a piece of work like this are critically important because that is how we set out the vision for the future of Bray alongside what it needs in order to ensure the safety of its people. We do health checks and feasibility studies for our harbours and Glendalough master plans and we pay lots of money for outside experts to do that stuff, so I think the investment in doing an independent review is, will only serve us well. It's not to create antagonism between the work of the Chief and anything else, I think it's really to honour what is needed for the future of Bray.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Grace McManus.

CLLR McMANUS: I won't go over what the two other councillors have said, other than I agree. When we talk about the fire service, recruitment and retention has been brought to us as an issue. I wonder even the stress and pressure they must be under to try and respond while in traffic, things you wouldn't think of but that came back to us when speaking with them. The stress that they must be under. So we really and Dermot is right, we want that to be included in the terms of reference and Aoife too, so just to hammer that point, that we have really considered every word in this motion and it means something and so I am happy to support it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Joe Behan. Sorry, Joe, you need to unmute.

CLLR BEHAN: Sorry. Thanks, Cathaoirleach, just to support my colleagues. In fact, at the SPC as we worked on what our programme was going to be when we started this term of office, I proposed a review of the full-time fire proposal should be undertaken by the SPC. I want to thank the Director and the fire officer for the work they have done on that. I look forward to seeing the report coming back to the SPC where we can have a detailed look at it and bring it, I would hope, to the Municipal District and also to the County Council to have further detailed discussion. All of the arguments have been very well-made by my colleagues.

I just would reiterate where a lot of this campaign started was 31 years ago, when almost the entire family, the Cassidy family lost their lives in a fire in Old Court Estate on St Stephen's night. That happened within a few hundred metres of the fire station. That is where many people saw that there was a mismatch between having a beautiful building and people working in it certain times of the day and people lost their lives on that occasion and we have had many tragedies since then. I want to pay tribute to the member of the reserve fire service at the moment. I think they do an excellent job and I also welcome the fact there has been an improvement and increased employment opportunities and increased recruitment, particularly in the Bray area.

I note that Cllr Fortune has put a message in the chat that he wants Greystones to be included in this review. There is no doubt that Greystones' population is also hugely increasing. There is an argument for looking at the entire north Wicklow area, I know the Greystones brigade come in to support the Bray brigade at the moment, and there is a lot of co-operation between both. I think it's an issue, as a Council we are going to have to come down to because the population is increasing so much. But I want to acknowledge and thank all of members in the Bray for their unity on this issue.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Derek Mitchell.

CLLR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I hear what is being said and there's a been significant problems getting retained firefighters in Bray and with the time to get to the station. At one stage there was a plan to provide a full-time fire service in Bray which involved closing Greystones station and I wouldn't be in favour of that. I am very satisfied with the service that is provided by the retained fire service in Greystones. They have managed to recruit a full complement of people I understand and I

would be happy with that. Certainly I have no harm seeing it reviewed, but I believe we get a worse service if there was a full-time service in Bray and Greystones station was closed, I think the times would be more. And I think that I am very pleased with the service provided by the current retained service in Greystones. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Mitchell. Just wondering when is the review due? Colm?

COLM: No specific date on it, Cathaoirleach, it's, we were pushing that the chief fire officer, retired chief fire officer in Strathclyde would do it as quickly as possible, now that we are coming to the end of the review of the 27 fire authorities throughout the country. I suppose by asking the national directorate and asking the expert from Strathclyde Fire Service to carry out the report, we felt that this was a quicker way of maybe getting a report back to the council on the full-time service fire in Bray, but also given his expertise in that he is retained by the National Directorate to advise on fire matters throughout the country and here in Ireland and obviously his expertise from abroad and in Scotland. The fact he is a doctor, he is holding a doctorate in fire services, we felt that his expertise would bring the independence that is required to the actual report, so I suppose there was two aspects to it.

He is, I suppose the renowned fire expert that is used by the Department in all of their studies. He has carried out a capacity review of the 27 fire authorities throughout the country, which is presently, which we have a report on and he is presently finalising the actions to come out of that, plus the fact that having the report updated by our chief fire officer and provided to the national directorate and to the doctor, we felt this was a quicker way of getting a study, a comprehensive study on a full-time fire services back to the council.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Gerry. Quickly.

CLLR WALSH: I fully support the motion, but I want to request that it takes consideration of the impact on Greystones, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy in her opening speech referred to the increased development in Bray in recent years, that also applies to the Greystones area in relation to the significant development that has taken place particularly since 2016 and future planned developments. So, again, I welcome the review, but I would like to ensure that any review includes the impacts of the Greystones. We have a great service there at present and we wouldn't like to see anything undermine that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Walsh. Cllr Anne Ferris, I will close with you on this, are you happy with the responses?

CLLR FERRIS: There is a couple of things, Cathaoirleach, I like to thank Colm for his reply there, except that I don't know if I missed it, but I certainly still have no idea as to when you might expect the review back? Is it in the next 12 months or two years or two months or whatever? And, secondly, I would and I would be glad and I think other members would be glad and pleased to see that report. I see Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy indicating there, so I would, I will pass over to her, if you don't mind.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Sorry, Cathaoirleach, I will be quiet, I won't be quiet, I will just be short! There is two issues. Cllr O'Brien raised them. Bray councillors haven't had an opportunity to see the terms of reference calling for this report. So we haven't had the opportunity to put into it what we believe needs to be in the report. There is a question over the independent nature of the report. In relation to the comments on Greystones, I am sure that will be taken into consideration, but this is really about as Cllr Behan said a 30-year-old issue for Bray and it's really a big issue in our community and I would urge that we take a vote on it, I would urge you to support us and that we have an independent review nor a full-time fire service in Bray as the motion states.

Whatever that ends up encompassing when the terms of reference are looked at by the councillors in Bray Municipal District, that will be included, but that is really what we are looking for here. We are all coming together on this issue. It's, I can't stress how important it is to the community that this gets looked at. So I would urge you to support us on that and give us...

CLLR FORTUNE: My mic has come back. Chair. My mic has been acting up.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We can hear you.

CLLR FORTUNE: For most of the meeting. I am sure a lot of you might be glad to hear that. I put a note up on this discussion, I just wanted to say that I, obviously I fully support the motion, I think it's an excellent motion and I understand fully the logic and the background to it. My comment then was that the Greystones district has a population now of 30,000 people or thereabouts and I think if there is going to be review, maybe that could be looked at as well. Or maybe a separate review, I note what Cllr Mitchell said earlier, my comment is not in any way to replace it, my comment is to look at the Greystones District on a more full-time basis than we currently experience. Our area is expanding at a fast rate as well and I think Cllr Behan made the comment about North Wicklow, that needs to be looked at, but Greystones need as strong review as well to improve it as well.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Tom Fortune. Lorraine did you want to come in.

ADMINISTRATOR: Just to say in relation to Cllr Fortune and Cllr Walsh the motion before us is that Wicklow County Council should examine a report for a full-time fire service for Bray. That is what it asks us to do, it doesn't mention Greystones. I note the comment, unless the motion needs to be amended, other than that it's about Bray. The Director of Services has said that it's agreed that the experts deployed to the capacity review, that we undertake a review into a full-time service for Bray. That is what it says and that the outcome of the report will be brought back to the SPC in the first instance.

CLLR FERRIS: Can I come back in? Again, I can understand that and I can see the point where maybe some people might think there is a review going on already, so there is no point in having an independent review. As I said earlier, there is no sight or sound of when this review will be made available to the members and as Cllr O'Brien said, we haven't seen the

terms of reference. I agree that all members of the Bray Municipal District signed this motion, okay the Greystones members have their own issues in relation to their own service and perhaps they put down a Notice of Motion as well, but I think we should go ahead with this vote. Maybe if we could get clarification on when we would get the report back from Colm or from Frank. But I think we should go ahead with this vote because, as Cllr Behan said this is going on 31 years since that family were tragically killed and council after council after council in Bray it's always been a priority, so I think we should go ahead with this because we are all agreed on it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to bring in the Chief Executive first.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: The review is independent, there is no question about that. Dr Brian Sweeney, I have met him previously working in another local authority, but it is a fully independent review. He has a PhD in the area, he is a chief fire officer from outside the jurisdiction, he can come in and look at it independently. I think we have that. We can come back to you with a date, unless you have one.

COLM: We are hoping it will be back with us in the first quarter. Obviously the capacity review was taking up his time, up until now, but we are hoping he will be able to concentrate on the report going forward, so we would hope to have it back in the first quarter, but we can check and see if there is a more definitive date than that.

CLLR FERRIS: Thank, I welcome that, Colm and that won't be too long for us to wait. In the meantime, I still believe that we should pass this motion and if there is, as the Chief Executive is saying, an independent review going on, because the person conducting it is independent, that is well and good but I think for a start the members in Bray like to see the terms of reference, would like to see some kind of provisional report as to the works that are going on, but I still think that we should vote on this motion today. I think it should be recorded as to how serious the situation is, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy outlined how big Bray has gotten over the past good many years and I think it's long time now since we had our full-time service in Bray.

I would like to just mention as well there have been people campaigning outside the Bray Town Hall offices for many years, calling for our own fire service there and unfortunately some of those people who have been campaigning have actually died since then and didn't see their dream come through. They were relatives of people who died. I think as a mark of respect we should pass the motion here and we can explore it, we can explore it further from then.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you, Cllr Anne Ferris. Can I take that as a proposal?

CLLR FERRIS: Yes, I propose it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Cllr Anne Ferris.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: I will second it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: By Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy. So we will take a vote on it.

ADMINISTRATOR: Just to clarify the situation in relation to votes because this came up earlier at the meeting. It's in your standing orders votes and

divisions. Every question should be determined by a show of hands unless three members request a division, in which case the names for and against the motion should be taken down in writing and recorded in the minutes. So as meeting's administrator, when I ask is there no dissent, if there is no dissent, I assume that all members present and participating in this meeting in time are for the motion.

CLLR FERRIS: I am happy with that, Cathaoirleach. Unless there are any dissenters.

ADMINISTRATOR: Any dissent? Three members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: There is no dissent, is there? No.

CLLR FERRIS: The motion has been passed?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes. Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Notice of Motion number 11 in the names of Cllr Miriam Murphy and Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, December 2020. I will go to Lorraine for a response.

ADMINISTRATOR: This relates to the issue of supporting a right to a personal assistance service to have freedom and control over all aspects of their lives to enable them to fully participate in an inclusive society as equals. It's set out on the agenda. The response is that this is a matter for the elected members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Excuse me, Cllr Miriam Murphy, I don't think is with us.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: I can speak on this. I spoke with Cllr Miriam Murphy today, she is unable to come to today's meeting. Really what Cllr Miriam Murphy and I were looking for is a statement of support from our fellow councillors. There is no action required by the local authority or yourselves individually, the responsibility for supporting PAs, lies with a different department. However the Independent Living Movement are looking for local authority councillors to make a statement of support. So this motion is basically asking for ourselves here today to state that we support this motion, that individuals who wish to live independently and have additional needs, as Cllr Murphy would say herself if she was able to be present. She spoke to me this morning. She would not be able to live independently without the support she is getting. She feels lucky to have those supports but it's actually not look, it's an entitlement, so it's really looking for the motion to be passed and for the statement of support by ourselves. That is what is being sought.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, I think we all would be in agreement with that.

CLLR NEARY: Can I just come in there?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Jodie Neary. Yes.

CLLR NEARY: I very much support this motion. I wrote that motion that is referenced there in it by Thomas Pringle and it was accepted cross-party in the Dail. Unfortunately it hasn't been acted on by those in Government, which is disappointing, so I do think that showing our support today would add that little bit of pressure and awareness of the need to have this. Because it's very important that everyone is given the opportunity to live with full autonomy as possible, including people with disabilities, but they need the resources and it needs to be equal access to those resources, so, thank you, to Miriam for bringing this forward and for everyone's support on it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Can I take this is being proposed by yourself, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy and Cllr Miriam Murphy and there is no dissent here? I think we are all in agreement are we.

ADMINISTRATOR: We have a seconder, Cathaoirleach, who is present.

CLLR McMANUS: I can second it.

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Are you able to, Grace.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Grace McManus. We are all in agreement? No dissent?

ADMINISTRATOR: No dissent.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Notice number 12 is in the name of Cllr R O'Connor, the 11th of November 2020. I will go to Lorraine for a response.

ADMINISTRATOR: The motion is set out there, that the council in advance of the Enniskerry town plan review and make it a priority to establish the creation of a greenway from Dublin to Enniskerry within the plan. Wicklow County Council will liaise with Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council to examine the feasibility of the proposal. Also with the Bray MD plan of which Enniskerry is a part of. Submissions and applications can be made at that time.

CLLR O'CONNOR: I just want to say that I welcome that. The whole aim of this is as many of you know, Enniskerry has a big cyclist economy, a lot of our local shops depend on them for their income and I am very much happy to hear that and I look forward to the plan ahead. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr O'Connor. I will go on to item number 13 then. Notice of Motion in the names of Cllr M Kavanagh, Cllr Peir Leonard, the 24th of November 2020. I will go to Lorraine for a response.

ADMINISTRATOR: As both of these elected members aren't present, one having to leave and the other for the MD meeting, it suggests that we move it to the next meeting unless an lighted member present, want me to move forward it with it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Do you want to leave it to the next meeting or deal with it now.

CLLR BEHAN: I propose we defer it until the next meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We will defer it, proposed by Joe Behan and seconded by Gerry Walsh. Notice 15 is in the name of Cllr Peir Leonard, that is the same she is not present.

CLLR BEHAN: I propose that be deferred to the next meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH: If can I have a seconder for that?

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: I can second that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Number 15 is in the name of, Cllr Edward Timmins, the 30th of November 2020. Lorraine, I will go to you again.

ADMINISTRATOR: The motion there is set out asking the council to call on and request the presence of President Michael D Higgins to advance Irish soldiers of the 35th infantry battalion who served in the Siege of Jadotville in the DRC. Again, Cathaoirleach, this is a matter for the elected members to consider.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Edward Timmins, are you there?

CLLR TIMMINS: I am. Thank you for facilitating this Notice of Motion. This has been circulated in other councils successfully around the country and I have spoken to a number of people, retired people from the defence forces about the situation. The people who were involved in this siege

were very brave and they were put up a fight and they were vastly outnumbered by the other side by mercenaries and others.

Some haven't ever had their bravery recognised. This is really a blight on the defence forces that this matter is still outstanding, there was a book written about it a few years ago by Declan Power, who is an expert, in this area, about the siege of Jadotville. Anyone I have spoken to who knows the history of it, agrees they should be recognised and they haven't been to date. That is why I like to bring this motion to the council today.

CLLR BOURKE: I would like to second it, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you Cllr Edward Timmins for bringing that and thank you, Cllr Bourke for seconding that. Is everyone in agreement with that notice? No sis sent, take it as being carried? Yes. Thank you.

CLLR FERRIS: Well done, Edward.

CATHAOIRLEACH: The next is notice number 16, again it's in the name of Cllr Edward Timmins, the 2nd of December 2020. I will go to you, Lorraine, for a response.

ADMINISTRATOR: Again the motion is set out there on the agenda and the response is that this is a worthwhile proposal and it also might be appropriate to copy the Chief Executive of Tourism Ireland in this correspondence. As they have a role in promoting the island of Ireland.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Thank you, again, I will be brief. This motion is self-explanatory, I am wandering slightly outside what the council does, but we are in the business of tourism and promoting tourism and this is, to me is an area that is crying out to be dealt with and has been neglected. I mean I think if something like the wild Atlantic way, a simple idea which has reaped huge rewards to the west coast of this country in terms of tourism and profile. Similarly we have a massive heritage link with US Presidents and needless to say many tourists from America come to this country and are not aware of a lot of it. Especially there is quite a strong link to Northern Ireland, a lot of former Presidents have family links to Northern Ireland. So I would propose that this area is explored and is developed and I believe it could reap rewards. People are more interested in heritage and history, that whole area is a huge area of tourism and it's a fantastic way, if you ever go to another country, if you investigate and follow up on person or people, it's a great way of discovering people and countryside and discovering history and meeting new people and, I think it is the way that tourism is going to go in terms of people looking at culture and history and I think this could take off in future.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Edward Timmins, I think it's a good notice. Gerry O'Neill.

CLLR O'NEILL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would second that motion in a big way there. I think there is a huge market to be tapped there in America. We are here at the moment in Blessington which twinned up with the city of Nebraska, the amount of people throughout America, whether they took part in the civil war or this, that or the other, there is a huge interest from America in Ireland, apart from the President end of it, you know. So I think if we can do anything there to open the gets to

encourage that type of business, we are actually here, we are at the moment in Blessington we are looking for if we can see if we can find a relation of Joe Biden around and we would be on the map. I fully support Cllr Timmins, fully support his motion.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr O'Neill. The Notice of Motion is proposed by Cllr Edward Timmins and seconded by Gerry O'Neill. Are we all in favour? Yeah. No dissents. Agreed. That is carried.

ADMINISTRATOR: Thank you, members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Notice of Motion number 17 in the names of Melanie Corrigan and Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy. I will go to Lorraine.

ADMINISTRATOR: That motion is set out on the agenda and the response is that this matter can be referred to the newly established Disability and Inclusion Steering Committee for inclusion in their action plan which is being developed at present.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Melanie Corrigan.

CLLR CORRIGAN: I want to say that one in six people have problems understanding basic text and one in four basic maths. They don't believe this has political process and this needs to be addressed for families, communities and the economy. This became prevalent to me and we had a Part 8 in Enniskerry and the amount who came to me looking for understanding of it. It's not the way it's written, it's the way that it's presented, I think NALA accessed local authority staff and public service workers and you as councillors, if we understood some sort of NALA training which gives editing and presenting training services it would be much more easier way of getting the information, the correct informed out to people in the community. It's not just people with low literacy, it's people who are dyslexic, dyspraxic and visual issues. It's something we should all be looking at and through work that is going out in the community to make it more accessible for everyone to be able to understand. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy. Did you look to come in?

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, I will be quick. Thank you, Lorraine for that response. We have raised it at the new Wicklow Disability Committee, they are supportive of it. I suppose what we are calling for here is a statement of support from owl the council Ayres to say that they have the full backing of the councillors, so when they go to put it in their work plan they've can go ahead. If that would be possible that would be great.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Can I come in briefly on that. I think this is a really good motion and it hits to heart of general communication between state bodies and members of the public. I include Wicklow County Council, with all due respect in that list as well. I often see communication from the Council and other state bodies and I can't understand what they are saying. If you look at often planning reports, the jargon that is used, so I think that when state body, including the Council, I suppose we can speak more for the council, when they are communicating with members of the public, I think it would be helpful to simplify what the message is and not to speak in jargon type terms, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Does anyone else want to come in?

CLLR CRONIN: I want to offer my support to that motion. It's an important motion that Cllr Corrigan and Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy have brought forward. It's a huge issue that everyone is facing every day, so I want to offer my support to both of them on their motion.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I take that, Cllr Corrigan as a proposal and from Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, is that seconded from yourself?

CLLR FLYNN KENNEDY: Yeah.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Are we all in agreement with this? There is no dissent? Motion is carried. That concludes the agenda, so it does. We had 17 notices of motion, I want to thank everyone for taking the time to be there. There is two notices that we are going to carry forward that we didn't get to because people had to leave the meeting. I want to thank you for coming here today to get us through the notices of motion, some of these have been here since 2019 and I want to thank everyone from the executive and the members for facilitating the meeting and coming along and giving your time to go through them. Thank you, everyone, I appreciate it.

CLLR FERRIS: Well done, Cathaoirleach.

ADMINISTRATOR: Thank you, members.