

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



Wicklow County Council
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTAIN

Transcript of the County Council Special Meeting Held on 21 July 2014 In the County Council Chamber, Wicklow



Text streamed live to the web on www.seewritenow.ie



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7 Wicklow County Council Special Meeting, 21st July 2014:

8
9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon members. Before we start, it was with great sadness that
10 we learned last week of the passing of a former Councillor, Vincent McElheron, who served
11 both on this authority, and at Arklow urban and district level. He was hugely popular individual,
12 and it's with great sympathy that we learned of his passing. His removal was on Friday and he
13 was buried on Saturday in Arklow. Also since we last met, Turlough Hughes, father of Terry in
14 IT, has also passed away, so we offer sympathy to both those families. Cllr Fitzgerald.

15 Cllr FITZGERALD: Just former Cllr McElheron has represented the people of Arklow and
16 South Wicklow, Arklow since 1985, and for a period of nine years the people of South Wicklow,
17 and last Wednesday, his death came as a great shock to all in the community. He was described
18 as a local legend, he certainly was a local legend, certainly people came from all over Ireland to
19 pay their respects to former Cllr McElheron. He is a great loss to our community, and there is
20 not a doubt about it, he would have made a great daily representative to be quite honest about it,
21 he went before the people once in 1992, but he was a very intelligent person. He knew Local
22 Government, he had a great knowledge of Local Government. He was a great person to give
23 advice, and he certainly gave it to many Councillors over many years, and we mightn't have
24 listened to it all but we got it, so I have to say I was shocked last week when I heard of his
25 demise. It was sudden, while he had been ill for some years, he had been attending Council
26 meetings up to the last Council, he attended our last meeting on the second Wednesday in May,
27 and certainly it the respect in which him and his family are held is testament to the huge crowds
28 that attended his removal and internment. On behalf of the Chairman of the municipal area, I
29 want to pay my tributes to him as a public representative and as an advisor. Thank you.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Chairman. Cllr O'Neill.

31 Cllr O'NEILL: On the death of the -- (INAUDIBLE) in Eastern Ukraine last week, Edel
32 Mahady, she was great - she was - her whole family were from Blessington (INAUDIBLE), I
33 spent two hours with her relatives the other night, and she loved Wicklow and loved Blessington,
34 so I would add her name to the sympathies today.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Bourke.

2 Cllr BOURKE: Thank you Cathaoirleach, I would like to join with Cllr Fitzgerald in expressing
3 my deepest sympathies to the McElheron family on the passing of Vincent. We had an
4 opportunity at the municipal district Council last Friday, at a special sitting, to pay our respects
5 to him. I would like to say again that he will be missed, his knowledge and his friendship will be
6 sorely missed by anybody in Local Government that ever had any dealings with him. I think
7 there would be few that would have the understanding of how the system works, as Vincent had
8 and the grasp of how to go about his business in organising Local Government. So there will
9 never be the likes of Vincent again and please God may he rest in peace.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Blake?

11 Cllr BLAKE: Thanks Chairman, I would like to join with my colleagues in sympathising with
12 the McElheron family on the death of Vincent in Arklow. I had the privilege to serve with him
13 in for a short period of time in the Council chamber. During that period of time, he was never
14 behind the door -- he put forward the best interests of Arklow Town, he made no apologies
15 during his time serving on here in Wicklow County Council and in Arklow in putting forward
16 the best interests of the people of Arklow. He was involved in numerous things that the people
17 have said here, working with the Government departments, he worked in business in Arklow as
18 well and members of the Arklow pipe band probably gave him the due recognition by piping
19 from the church to the graveyard on Saturday morning. It was a great tribute to him and
20 members of the band often said he was a great supporter of theirs, no matter where they turned
21 up, anywhere in Ireland, it wasn't unusual for Vincent to be there supporting him as well. On my
22 own behalf and on behalf of the people who served here, as I said I served with him a short
23 period of time in the Council, it was a privilege to know him, he was a very good friend and a
24 big loss to the people of Arklow and his family, I regret his passing at a rather young age in that
25 regard.

26

27 I would also like when I have the mic here to also on the death of Kate Davis from Tinahely, the
28 mother of Ken Davis from the PURE Project in the Wicklow mountains. If we could add the
29 name of Kay Davis to the votes of sympathy.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune.

31 Cllr FORTUNE: Thanks Cathaoirleach, just on my own behalf and on behalf of the independent
32 group and also in my capacity as chairperson of the Greystones municipal district, I would like
33 to be associated with the remarks for Vincent. He was a very unique character in my experience,
34 I can recall having a number of conversations with him and one in particular when he was

1 explaining the intricacies of all the PR he had been involved in throughout his life in politics, it
2 was very interesting. I would just like to extend condolences to his immediate and extended
3 family on this very, very sad occasion.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Councillor - who is lit up, Cllr McDonald.

5 Cllr McDONALD: On behalf of the Sinn Fein group and myself offer our condolences and
6 sympathies to the family and all of Vincent's colleagues here in the Chamber. A couple of new
7 recruits to the Arklow municipal area were never fortunate enough to be able to enjoy his
8 experiences and his knowledge and I am sure we have got pretty big boots to fill and I just want
9 to say he will be sorely missed in Arklow.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Brady.

11 Cllr BRADY: Thanks Cathaoirleach, Cathaoirleach, can I just seek condolences there for the in
12 excess of 500 people who have been killed in the Gaza Strip over the last couple of weeks. I
13 think it would be amiss not to send our condolences to all the Palestinian people at this time of
14 huge loss to them there as I stated, over 500 people have been murdered at this point, and can I
15 ask that we do, when we are standing up, we acknowledge that fact. Can I also ask that we as a
16 Council would send a letter to the Israeli Embassy, to the Ambassador voicing our concern as a
17 Local Authority with regard the ongoing operation in the Gaza Strip which is targeting the
18 innocence of victims, over 80% of the 500 people that have been murdered over the last couple
19 of weeks have been innocent civilians, many of which are women and children. I think the latest
20 was today where an entire family of nine people were butchered in their home in the Gaza Strip.
21 So can I ask that a letter would be sent to the Israeli ambassador. Thank you.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have I agreement on that letter?

23 Cllr VANCE: No.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: We will deal with it after votes of sympathy then okay. Thank you
25 Councillor. Cllr Vance? Chairman, Cllr Brady should remember what caused this in the first
26 place from three innocent young lads were going home from school when they were kidnapped
27 and murdered, and he didn't recognise that, that that was the major, one of the major causes of
28 this conflict in the first place. And he never proposed any sympathy to the families of those
29 three kids that were taken when they were on their way home from school.

30
31 In regard to what the other - in regard to Vincent McElheron, I want to obviously on behalf of
32 the Fianna Fail group extend our sympathies to Vincent McElheron's family. I have known him
33 for a long long time, I sat beside him in the County Council for nine years and I found him to be
34 a very enthusiastic worker for the county and particularly for the area that he represented.; a

1 colourful character, no doubt. And one of the people that would always have a comment on and
2 was always interested in doing what he could for the county as well, so it was a shock, like what
3 Cllr Fitzgerald said, when I heard of his death last week, but he did and has made and will I am
4 sure - some of the decisions that he made will have made a contribution to the Arklow area over
5 the years and he will be remembered for that, thank you Chairman.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Chairman. Cllr Ruttle.

7 Cllr RUTTLE: Two things I would like to be associated with the vote of the Byrne family of
8 Blessington over the dreadful incident of what can be described as the maverick behaviour we
9 have seen in Ukraine. A dreadful business. And also to express my sympathy to families and
10 friends of Vincent McElheron who served on this Council with me many years ago. He was a
11 man of a lot of talent, brain power and knowledge. And also great company, great
12 conversationalist and wonderful ideas and things like that, and he will be sadly missed and as I
13 say in Irish ... (SPEAKS IN IRISH).

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Kavanagh.

15 Cllr KAVANAGH: I would like to support Cllr Brady's proposal that we express condolences to
16 the victims of the Gaza Strip or any surveillance - civilians that are murdered, particularly
17 children, in these areas. They are civilians, and it is a heinous international crime and I would
18 like to support that.

19
20 I would also like to support the proposal that we would express our condolences to the victims of
21 the Malaysian airline catastrophe, to all those victims and perhaps a book of condolences that we
22 might be able to send to their relatives might be included in that, thank you.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Winters.

24 Cllr WINTERS: Just to join with everybody in expressing my condolences to the family and
25 friends of Councillor Vincent McElheron who on the occasions that I met him was a real
26 character, and he will be missed and to say that where I do agree that we should express
27 sympathy for the people of the Malaysian aircraft, and for the people who have died as a result
28 of the trouble in the Gaza Strip, I think to discuss letters is a separate matter and shouldn't be
29 done at the time of a vote of sympathy. A vote of sympathy is a mark of respect for the people
30 who have died, the letter is a completely different subject and should be taken under any other
31 business.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Are you coming back in Councillor, no? Cllr Vance? No. Okay. While
33 I might suggest to Cllr Brady, if you want to formulate the wording of a letter and circulate it to
34 the members, we will have a discussion and a vote on it, okay. Okay, we will stand for a

1 moment.

2
3 (A minute's silence)

4
5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, item number one, this was deferred from the last meeting, to note
6 the Annual Financial Statement 2013, previously circulated. It was deferred from the meeting of
7 the 7th. Lorraine?

8 MS LYNCH: Hello again. The Annual Financial Statement was coming up from this morning
9 was the result of the annual budget, it's the statement that was circulated to yourselves is the
10 statement of activity on the capital account and the revenue account for 2013. I suppose just
11 very quickly, we - it's prepared in accordance with our accounting code of practice and under the
12 legislation and regulations that I referenced this morning, 2001 Act and this would have been
13 2002 regulations, but as amended in the 2014 regulations, this is the statement of what happened
14 for the year, the revenue account, capital account, debtors, creditors, the whole lot is in there. In
15 those 30, 40 pages. What happens with this, once it's considered by yourselves is the Local
16 Government Auditor will audit it, he should be starting that formally in September, and then he
17 will prepare an audit report on whether it's a true and fair reflection of the activities of the year.

18
19 Just a couple of things, highlights, or low lights, there was a total spend of 125 million in 2013,
20 95 million on revenue, 30 million on capital. Unfortunately, on the revenue account this year,
21 we have made a loss of 526,000. The bulk of the reason for that I suppose was in terms of
22 providing for bad debt provision, and we had a large write-off of rates. I will come back to that
23 in just a moment.

24
25 On the other areas I suppose that there were variances would be in housing and building with the
26 local property tax and social houses to cater for, there was additional spending on tenancy
27 management, travel accommodation and increased activity on the RAS scheme. In road
28 transportation and infrastructure, there was additional expenditure on road grants and so on, but
29 that was counteracted by grants we would have received from the National Roads Authority.
30 Water services, there was an overspend on expenditure due in the main for bad debt provision
31 for the water charges. They've been brought in by Irish Water, but we have to provide a certain
32 percentage towards the bad debt provision for the older legacy debt.

33
34 On the flip side, I suppose we received additional income for newly commissioned plants for

1 operation and maintenance, a subsidy we get through from the department. In planning, we had
2 a slight increase to planning fees, which could be good news, and a sign of improvement in the
3 economy. Environmental services, a fairly large variance, mainly because environmental
4 services, we collect landfill levy from Greenstar for operating the landfill out here by the
5 Beehive in Ballynagran and we have to pay that over. It's in and out. You have a variance on
6 both income and expenditure that way, about four million. Again as part of the audit for 2012,
7 there was a review - review done of debtors in the environment area, and we have to increase our
8 bad debt provision and it's like we will have to write a number of those debtors off, so we have
9 increased our bad debt provision in 2013 to account for that. Recreation and amenity slightly
10 over budget on expenditure, and income, but it's small. The main reason is the way we treat the
11 sports partnership spending and income.

12
13 Education, health and welfare, it was under budget for grants because we are phasing out our
14 control on them, and what we are spending on that we are transferring over to Susie, so they'll
15 start petering out and we have a new expenditure line for 2013 was Arklow Harbour.

16 Miscellaneous services, there is a big increase in that I suppose in terms we had a large write-off
17 of rates of 3.5 million, which is significantly higher than previous years. The main reason for
18 that would have been for one particularly large debt, the owners of which are gone into NAMA,
19 and are gone into receivership, so we had to take the hit of that debt for 2013.

20
21 And then going back to a conversation we had this morning, there was the vacancy, we would
22 have about two, two and a half million of a vacancy for rates which will impact on our
23 expenditure account as well.

24
25 In terms of debtor collections, we would have had an increase across rents, water and housing
26 loans and there was a small decrease in rates, that's just proving, still proving difficult to collect.
27 It was rent from 71 to 75%. Outside of that, we have spent 29 million on the capital account,
28 most of that would have been housing, water and roads, and the rest, I suppose the way this
29 report is broken down, the first ten pages of the report is contextualising - making it easier to
30 read. Then we have the notes which include the balance sheet, income and expenditure account
31 and there is a further breakdown by appendices. I don't propose to go through them individually
32 but if there are any questions or details you need, come and talk to me, meet me, I will give you
33 whatever information I can here today, if not, if you want to ask me individually or separately, I
34 can provide the breakdown as needed.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Lorraine. Cllr Behan.

2 Mr BEHAN: Thank you Cathaoirleach and first of all can I just pay tribute to Lorraine for the
3 professional manner in which she does this job and for her very frank explanation there, I am just
4 looking for a couple more if I can please Cathaoirleach.

5

6 First of all, the development contribution is table 8, the Roman numerals table 8, it's difficult to
7 understand really how much - and this is the question, how much money is Wicklow County
8 Council holding at the moment as development contributions? In other words money that we
9 have taken for planning applications and haven't spent yet? What was the figure at the end of
10 2013 to be more accurate as we are talking about the AFS.

11

12 Secondly under current assets there is a figure given of 5.1 million euro under the heading urban
13 account. I just want to check what does urban account mean, is that money that the urban
14 councils gave to the County Council in previous years up to the end of 2013, and if so, what is
15 that money supposed to be earmarked for?

16

17 Thirdly, if it's not quite clear to me how much money we got from property tax taken from
18 residents in Co Wicklow from the time it began. Did we get any in the financial year of 2013?
19 The next point with regard to the rates and the large write-off of rates, I am surprised to hear that
20 a lot of it is due to one particular business, and I am wondering in the context of transparency,
21 and accountability, can the finance officer identify first of all what is the business we are talking
22 about that went into NAMA, and secondly are any of those rates recoverable from NAMA as
23 they apparently have taken over that business, or taken it under their control? Can we actually
24 get some of those rates back?

25

26 It does point to another problem: There are many businesses right across the county who are
27 suffering at the moment because they can't pay the commercial rates as it is, and I would just like
28 clarification, I understand the Government have issued some kind of an order that rates from the
29 urbans are to be equalised over a period of the next number of years, and Councillors may be
30 aware that the rates in the urbans are very different, and it seems that the trend will be to increase
31 rates where they're already lower, rather than bringing the rates where they're higher back down
32 to a lower level. I think that puts a lot of pressure on existing businesses, particularly small
33 businesses, throughout the urban areas of the county. I am just wondering am I right in saying
34 that's Government policy, that rates are to be increased in the cheaper rated urban areas at the

1 moment? Thank you.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor, we will take the answers at the end. Cllr Bourke.

3 Cllr BOURKE: Cathaoirleach yes, first of all I would like to compliment Lorraine and her team
4 there in the professional manner they prepared these figures for us. There is a lot of detail in
5 them and sometimes it's difficult to pinpoint what you are looking for. For the last two years we
6 have had this meeting, I remember some of the local press able to come out with headlines
7 afterwards saying we have got 50 million on deposit, we have 30 million on deposit, we have
8 more money than we need and yet Councillors can't get anything done. I just wonder what will
9 the spin be this year on the adoption of our Annual Financial Statement will be. Maybe the
10 Manager could clarify how much money we do actually have on deposit to make it easier for the
11 editors of local papers when they're trying to, I suppose, reflect perhaps some of the work of the
12 members of the Wicklow County Council in a bad light for not being able to get things done on
13 behalf of our constituencies. How much money is actually on deposit at the moment

14 SPEAKER:

15 Cllr CASEY: I would like to thank Lorraine. I have a question in relation to Irish Water. We
16 are carrying over a 2 million deficit in relation to the water. Now for a number of years, and my
17 question I suppose is today how is that going to be treated moving forward, seeing as that Irish
18 Water should now have the responsibility and the liability of that two million, and do we know
19 at this stage have we negotiated the figure with Irish Water in relation to debt that they're taking
20 over, that we are carrying on our books at the moment. This is only the county figure, this
21 excludes the towns in that as well. Also then what is left then, how are we going to write that off
22 ourselves? Do we propose writing that off in a one year period or over a number of years. Just
23 in relation to Cllr Bourke's in relation to deposit, we could have money on deposit, but it could
24 be earmarked for capital projects, the money on deposit is normally spent, so it's important that
25 we get the accurate figure that we have surplus rather than deposit.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune.

27 Cllr FORTUNE: Some of the questions have been asked so I won't reask them. A couple of
28 things, the local property tax, how much of that in 2013 that we took in did we actually end up
29 handing over to Irish Water? And also it comes back to the question that Cllr Behan asked, the
30 miscellaneous, the 3.5 million, I think Lorraine said when she was making the point that it was -
31 she mentioned the word developer, I think she did, maybe I am wrong, if this is the case I would
32 just be interested to know - I think it would be in everyone's interests to know who it might be
33 because there was something in the media over the weekend whereby NAMA are going to invite
34 a number of developers in to assist with the - whatever proposal is going to be done on Dublin

1 docks. I would just like to know what's going on. There is a lot of people out there hurting
2 extremely in all shapes and sizes. It's very important we are properly informed of what we are
3 talking about. I think the information we are being given needs to be more detailed rather than
4 giving us an overview thumb print that doesn't tell us anything at all. After all at the end of the
5 day, we are the public representatives of the public, all elected, and I think we are entitled to
6 know the information in its fullest form.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Winters.

8 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks very much Lorraine for the report and the breakdown. Just a couple of
9 questions and they're just I suppose more asides than ... how do we make income from
10 fluoridation, there is an income of 83,814 euro and I just wondered how does that happen or
11 where does it come from? And I also would agree with what Cllr Casey has said in relation to
12 Irish Water and who is going to - are they going to pay us the two million or what happens that
13 two million balance? Thanks.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Cullen.

15 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Yes Chairman. I mean how much will we be refund there in the last 12
16 months for the Charlesland road back to that developer, we were never told how much the bond
17 refund was to that developer. Would you please inform us there please, thank you.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: I think that's all the speakers. Just to let a few of the members who
19 arrived this afternoon know that we did have a very useful workshop this morning, the lead-up to
20 the budget. Some of the issues were discussed like the equalisation of the rates, commercial
21 rates, and also in relation to the property tax that we have to inform the Department before 30th
22 September if we intend to reduce or increase the property tax, so what was suggested this
23 morning was that there is a public consultation period which starts - is going to be advertised on
24 Wednesday, which runs to 25th August. The first meeting in September, we will have another
25 budgetary presentation, and we will then have a look at the second meeting in September at the
26 local property tax and decide whether we are going to increase or decrease it or keep it at the
27 same level; that we would have ample opportunity before 30th September to make a submission
28 to the department. But look, I will let Lorraine back in to answer those questions.

29 MS LYNCH: The figures for development contributions, any development contributions we
30 receive for water have been spent. Anything we have received for recreation and amenity have
31 been spent or assigned to something like the Arklow library. And as regards roads
32 infrastructure, I suppose we have a difficulty there in that we have the Wicklow Port Access
33 route in which we have a deficit of about 25 million on, and we have development contributions
34 that are prepared and assigned for other projects. I don't have a definite in that this is what is

1 assigned and this is what is left. I don't have this as part of the AFS. It's something we consider
2 when we go to do the three year capital programme and look at what we plan to do over the next
3 number of years and what development contributions we have. Maybe we can address it as part
4 of that, when we are doing the capital programme for 2015 on.

5
6 As regards the urban account, that is the money that we are owed by the Town Councils to the
7 County Council at the end of 2013.

8 Mr BEHAN: So you have written that off, I presume?

9 LORRAINE: No, no, they have it in their books as going to the County Council.

10 Mr BEHAN: Is it owed as county demand?

11 MS LYNCH: It's specifically the county demand.

12
13 Property tax, we - in 2013, we didn't receive anything from property tax, we got our general
14 purpose grant of 19 million, we didn't receive income from the local property tax as a Local
15 Authority.

16
17 The other thing ... the rates, we wrote off 3.5 million. The bulk of that was rates that were due
18 on vacant property. There was a large rate write-off which was from, it was a business that had
19 gone into receivership, it wasn't a developer, it was a business that went into receivership, and it
20 was a large business in the tourism sector. I would like to leave it at that.

21
22 The rates, it was something I suppose going back to this morning, in terms of the equalisation,
23 and harmonisation of rates, and just very briefly for those that weren't there this morning, yes we
24 have to harmonise the rates. We have four different rates across the four former authorities and
25 they have to be harmonised into one rate over a maximum period of ten years. That is something
26 that has to be decided here at full Council, something to be decided in September. There is a gap
27 between the lowest of 63.26 to the highest of 76.78, the highest, the middle, the lowest, halfway
28 from here to there, it's something we have to decide. We put together figures and options and
29 the impact on it. Someone said this morning, we have to look at the impact on who benefits, is it
30 just the large companies who benefit if we reduce it and we have to look at the impact on if we
31 reduce it, we reduce income and therefore our ability to provide services.

32
33 It's something that provided under the 2014 Local Government Act.

1 On deposit at the end of 2013 we had - on the balance sheet it says we have a total of 37 million.
2 Of that, 11 million was refundable deposits, so planning bonds and so on that we take in and
3 once the planning conditions are adhered to, it's refunded. 27 million on deposit, I suppose the
4 way the funding particularly from Central Government works, a lot of the funding we get at the
5 end of the year, so we put in claims throughout the year and get it at the end of the year, at the
6 end of the year, we have a nice amount of money on deposit, but again that is earmarked. We
7 would have paid off a capital monies that were due on the Bray Shanganagh scheme in 2014, so
8 it would be towards accruals that we would have on capital schemes and outstanding
9 commitments. The rates we are currently getting are anything from 0.03 to 1.45. The rates have
10 fallen through the floor. What we invest in is no risk rates, we try and keep them in investment
11 grade I suppose, banks, and the other side is we have to have access, reasonable access, we can't
12 put it out for a year or two years because we may have to - in terms of our cash, we have to have
13 access on it. We put it on variable, a week, month, three months, six months and it's managed on
14 a daily basis.

15
16 On commercial water, sorry just in relation to the investments, and linked to bonds, that bond
17 refund Cllr Cullen, I don't have that information here in front of me.

18 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Chairman, with respect, you were asked that question at the date you
19 were bringing the resolution to refund that refunds and you have gave the same answer that you
20 didn't have information. When you are producing this document here today, I would have
21 thought that you would have given that substantial amount of money as finance officer, that you
22 would have that figure, I think that's a reasonable question for a finance officer to have.

23 COUNTY MANAGER: Sorry Chairman there was no money refunded in respect --

24 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: The bond?

25 COUNTY MANAGER: In respect of the Bond, the bond was not a cash deposit, it was an
26 insurance bond from an insurance company.

27 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: How much was that for?

28 COUNTY MANAGER: I don't have the figure, I will check it out, there was no cash refunded.

29 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Can you circulate the figure to us.

30 COUNTY MANAGER: Absolutely but just to emphasise there was no cash refunded.

31 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: You might circulate the figure Chairman.

32 MS LYNCH: Finally on the commercial water and the debtors, we have gone through an
33 exercise that the debtor figure there at the end of the year was just over two million. Irish Water
34 are buying out that debtor. They're buying it out on the basis of a formula, there is six different

1 criteria that we have to look at our debtors on and they're providing a percentage buyout. The
2 six criteria I have in front of me, it kind of depends whether the company is bankrupt or
3 insolvent, whether the property is vacant, if there is a payment plan that they weren't adhering to,
4 if there is a dispute over the amount owed and if it's statute barred. So some of those we have to
5 provide 100% for, some of them we have to provide a 25% bad debt provision on. We have that
6 done, we submit that through to Irish Water and come to an agreement on what they'll buy it out
7 as. For Wicklow County Council, you are looking that they'll provide about 1.9 million of the
8 2.-- that doesn't make sense, sorry. 1.3 million of the 1.9 million.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

10 Cllr CASEY: How do we intend writing that off?

11 MS LYNCH: That was part of why we had a deficit in 2013, we provided for a bad debt of that.

12 Cllr CASEY: We don't have to provide for that in the future?

13 MS LYNCH: No.

14 Cllr BRADY: I just wanted to come in on the issue of the local property tax, it's on item four of
15 the agenda, I would be concerned you are proposing to make a decision while we haven't
16 discussed the issue of the property tax. At the last Council meeting I asked for it to appear on
17 the agenda, so maybe if we have a dedicated discussion around that instead of making plans to
18 kick it down the road until September, if you are going to deal with it now, I mean I would like
19 to make specific proposals on the issue or if you want to leave it over and deal with it when we
20 reach it on the agenda, I will hold off...

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: The item on the agenda was from the last meeting where you specifically
22 mentioned the 8% clause. We are not going into get into...

23 Cllr BRADY: It's down on the agenda there to discuss the local property tax, so I mean we
24 either deal with it as an item on the agenda or deal with it under the AFS.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: We will talk about that when we get to the item. Okay.

26 COUNTY MANAGER: In relation to the query about the bond that was released in respect of
27 Charlesland, the insurance bond was for the sum of 330,000 euro.

28 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Manager through the Chair, what was the company dealing with it, was
29 it Zapi's?

30 COUNTY MANAGER: Zapi development.

31 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Who was the beneficiary of the insurance bond?

32 COUNTY MANAGER: I don't have that information, but the developer was Zapi developer.

33 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: You don't have the name --

34 COUNTY MANAGER: The question was how much it was, we got the answer for that, it was

1 in respect of the Zapi development in Charlesland, which was a development by Mountbrook
2 Homes and Ballymore Homes.

3 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Mr Mulryan and Sean Dunne.

4 COUNTY MANAGER: There were various developers involved there, as I am sure you were
5 aware. As to who which of them the insurance bond was issued, I don't know. We can check
6 that information out.

7 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Could you get that information and circulate it. That would be very
8 good of you, thank you.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: We are going to move on, thanks Lorraine. I need a proposer, Cllr Casey,
10 seconded Cllr Behan.

11 Cllr FORTUNE: Chairman, I am going to abstain.

12 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Chairman, I abstain as well.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Will I take a roll call.

14 Cllr CASEY: For the fun of it.

15 MS GALLAGHER: This is for the Annual Financial Statement 2013, to adopt it.

16
17 (A vote was taken)

18
19 MS GALLAGHER: 24 for, four not present, four abstained.

20 Cllr FORTUNE: Just on a point of clarification, the reason I am abstaining is because of the
21 comments I made earlier, I feel that everything we are being told is not clear enough, it's not
22 explained enough, I don't think we should be looking for loads of explanations at the meeting, I
23 think they should have come in advance. That's the reason why I am doing that. Going forward,
24 I would ask that the information we are getting in regards to the numbers and accounts and
25 everything else, that they're explained in a better format so as that the questions are answered
26 before we have to try and get someone of an accountancy qualification to assess them before we
27 come in and talk about them.

28 MS LYNCH: Just on that Cathaoirleach, the accounts are a statutory format, they're the way
29 they have to be presented prepared and put together. They're sent out to the members seven days
30 in advance of the meeting so that if to give the time, if there are any questions that you want to
31 have raised or answered here at the meeting, you can contact me or any member of the finance
32 team or come in and sit down and we will take you through them if needs be as we have done
33 before. And it's to give that timeframe to submit questions and we can do our best then to have
34 the information there in the day or to circulate afterwards.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Very quickly Councillor.

2 Cllr VANCE: Particularly for new members, it's just that we have always had a system here
3 where when you get a report in plenty of time, that if there is any queries, rather than raise them
4 at a Council meeting like this can be quite difficult, that the office of whoever it is that is given
5 the report has always to my knowledge been available to any member to go in and pose a
6 question on any particular thing irrespective of what it may be, and I presume that's the case still,
7 that any Councillor and any experienced Councillor would be well aware that that facility had
8 been open to them to question anything and get an explanation for anything that may appear on
9 any particular document.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah, I don't want to open this back up now, we are moving on. Cllr
11 Cullen. The last word now.

12 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Just Chairman, I have just put on the record here, I have asked
13 Miss Lynch a written question about an important issue that's come to my attention and I have
14 left another letter to her response today and I would expect an expeditious full response, I just
15 want to put that on the record - full response. Thank you.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am moving on now. I will ask the Director of Housing to join us. Item
17 number two.

18 Director NICHOLSON: Thank you Cathaoirleach. I did give the members a full presentation at
19 your induction day on the 30th June, and there was nearly 50 slides, so I didn't want to repeat
20 any of those slides today, so what I have tried to do is give you some different slides, just
21 highlight some key areas affecting the housing directorate both nationally and locally.

22
23 Just as a bit of background, we are dealing with an unprecedented number of families presenting
24 as at risk of homelessness throughout the county, it's currently running at three families per day
25 coming into County Buildings, it's taking up a huge amount of staff time, because each case can
26 effectively lose a whole day for a member of staff trying to organise accommodation. It's getting
27 worse every week. There is three reasons for it: Rising rents are forcing families out of the
28 private rented market. Rent supplement thresholds are too low, and families can't come up with
29 the balance themselves. Many private rented properties are currently being repossessed, and are
30 being withdrawn from the rental market and being put up for sale by lending agencies, and the
31 tenants are being asked to leave, often at very short notice. The first place they come is down
32 here. And many of the units that were previously offered to us to house families socially have
33 now been withdrawn, because the landlords can get more money on the open market. It's
34 probably fair to say if you had a property now for letting, you could almost invite tenders

1 because the rents are rising at such a rate, you could almost offer it to the highest tender, that's
2 how bad it's gone.

3
4 Just looking at some of the challenges for the housing directorate, just setting the context: The
5 one positive thing housing remains a core function in the new Local Government era. Where we
6 have lost water functions, driving licenses, education grants and national roads, housing remains
7 a core function. Housing units in all local authorities, and this information comes from various
8 meetings around the country, are becoming very, very busy stressful places, and are really only
9 understood and appreciated by those working in the Housing Department. I would encourage
10 any member who wishes to spend some time in the Housing Department to do so. Come in
11 some day and see if for yourself the kind of pressure. We have no difficulty if anyone wants to
12 do that, come in and shadow one of the staff. It would be a great eye opener. Some members
13 are in and out all the time, they've witnessed some of this. It's quite a sight to see distressed
14 families appearing looking for accommodation and we have nothing to offer them. It can be
15 very distressing for the staff as well. It's very hard to give bad news to people. Because we are
16 in the business of giving people good news, and it's very, very hard to give them bad.

17
18 The Government have prioritised housing and I think it's only right that we should be prioritising
19 housing as well. That's why I welcome this opportunity today to have a Special Meeting on
20 housing.

21
22 What we are led to believe is that there is thousands of empty estates all over the country, all
23 available for social tenants. The private sector are willing to step up to the plate and offer us all
24 sorts of accommodation, but in all discussions we have had with the private sector and private
25 developers, there is no altruism being displayed. They're not coming in to help fellow citizens,
26 they want something out of it, they want the land for nothing, the build to lease and own the
27 properties after ten years. There is nobody offering anything and getting nothing back. We are
28 told there is there is numerous housing associations only too keen to get involved. That's not our
29 experience. There is very few housing associations with the capacity to get involved in
30 providing social housing. There is very few prepared to go and borrow money and build houses
31 for us. There is probably only three or four who have the capacity to do it. We are told there is
32 lots of properties available through the last scheme. There isn't, most of the last properties have
33 been taken back because you can get more on the open market. We are led to believe the
34 financial institutions are lending again, that's not our experience.

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The reality is summed up very well by Kitty Holland in a recent Irish Times article where she spoke about the housing crisis and they were her words, housing crisis. No houses have been built in the past seven years, and she spoke to several housing directors who described the job as being manic, very difficult, soul destroying and one commenting who would want to be a Director of housing in a Local Authority?

The problem, there is 90,000 households assessed as qualifying for housing support as of May 2013. That was the last time it was assessed. 44% are single persons. 30% single with one or more children. 72% solely dependent on social welfare. The most important figure is that of the 75% in private rented accommodation, two thirds of those are in receipt of rent supplement. They won't be on the housing list on 31st January, because they'll be in receipt of housing assistance payment. We are in competition with the private sector for funding and there is an overreliance on the private sector to meet housing needs.

The problem, NAMA, banks, receivers and all the vacant properties, if we take this problem, whose problem are we solving, theirs or ours? The cost base is too high, we have to deal with local property tax, because it's payable on social housing, that's a charge against the housing programme. We have boiler maintenance, health and safety, septic tanks, we have in excess of 100 houses also with septic tanks and there is an added cost on that. Tenant expectations are extremely high. They expect to get immediate response when they ring up. They don't accept the argument there is no money. They just want immediate response. And of course there is no house building programme. How are we going to accommodate those on the list at all?

Some of the internal pressures, housing stock is on a five year cycle, we are finishing last years houses, done a final account for three years previously, designing and planning new houses and then buying land for five years hence. We bought a lot of land over the past few years, having been driven by the Department to buy land. We are now in a lot of debt because we borrowed money to buy this land and trying to service this debt is a problem. The Land Aggregation Scheme didn't deliver what we thought. It was grossly oversubscribed and that scheme hasn't - that was a scheme where we could transfer our land to the housing agency and that hasn't been as beneficial as we thought it might be, just too many applications, so we have to continue to service existing loans, even though there is no house building programme. There is a new differential rent scheme coming down the tracks, a major piece of work to do, having to deal

1 with almost 4,500 rents. There is a new Tenant Purchase Scheme being developed which we
2 haven't got much detail of yet. I even question whether we should sell any housing stock at the
3 moment. In the past it made sense to sell houses when we were replacing them every year.
4 Because we are not replacing them, why would we sell stock when we have less and less of it.
5 The housing assistance payment is coming down the tracks first of January, and we simply don't
6 know the extent of that and how it's going to affect us, but it's not going to be good news, that's
7 going to be a huge burden on the housing staff, a lot of work involved with that, we are getting
8 in transfers of thousands of houses which we have to inspect, and assess people and that's not
9 going to be fun. There is a huge increase in anti-social behaviour in our estates, and primarily
10 because of the unemployment situation, more and more people are at home all day, and people,
11angers get frayed and relations have that have been cordial have broken down, and we are
12 getting dragged into these cases more and more as time goes on.

13
14 Just some facts: Recent analysis by the ESRI has estimated that we need at least 20,000 new
15 houses each year, which are not being built. There are some dwellings each year through
16 redevelopment or dilapidation. We estimate 25,000 houses each year for the next 15 years
17 nationally. There is no sign of us building those at the moment. Competing demands: There is
18 more and more special categories of people looking for housing. We have been asked to reserve
19 allocations of these class of people, the more special categories we reserve, the less we have for
20 other applicants, travellers, homeless, residential care people, disability sector, release of sexual
21 offenders, people with medical needs. The more we are asked to allocate a certain percentage of
22 our stock to, the less we have for other applicants.

23
24 Housing waiting lists, what are the options available to those on the list? Local Authority,
25 standard housing, what we are relying on now is casual vacancies, we allocate 100 houses every
26 year through casual vacancies, people leave the Council house and buy their own house, or
27 people pass or emigrate. The private rented sector, that's getting more difficult because people
28 can't afford the rents and approved housing bonds. People still want the Local Authority option
29 and really there is five reasons why: One is because they're paying differential rent because of
30 their income, they have a tenancy for life, it can be transferable on death often, passed down to a
31 son or daughter and they have the option of tenant purchase. That's why people still would
32 prefer to have a Council house as opposed to a private rented house.

33
34 Further considerations, sharply increasing rents in the private sector as I mentioned earlier,

1 rented supplement has been forced out in favour of those who can pay more. Many landlords are
2 advertising for non rent supplements applicants only. RAS tenants are being affected. There is a
3 huge increase in the applications for the housing adaptation grants, the chance for us to keep
4 people in their own houses, rather than going to the housing list and we can't cope with the
5 demand for these at the moment. And there is no money available for adaptations for Council
6 houses, which is very unfair that if people with a disability in a Council house cannot avail of
7 those funds because they're only available for private houses. There is also an increasing rent
8 arrears for those who are lucky enough to have a house.

9
10 Some things you might be interested in, housing tenure, we still have an obsession with owning
11 our own homes, and owner occupied homes, 62% in urban areas, 84% in rural areas, 18.5% of
12 the houses are private rented and 78.73% local authorities, which means 30% of the housing
13 stock between private rented, social rented or approved housing bodies.

14
15 Looking at household composition, the trend nationally is towards smaller households. Most of
16 our applicants would be three person households, husband, wife and one child. That's according
17 to the papers.

18
19 I mentioned this earlier, 79,000 units required over the period of 2014 to 2018. Average annual
20 requirement of 16,000 units which will peak in 2018 at 21,000 units. I put together some slides
21 on the housing assistance payment. All long-term social housing services will come together
22 under the Local Authority system for the first time ever. One advantage of the HAP payment is
23 that HAP recipients who get jobs will continue to be eligible but their rent will change. Moving
24 those with a short-term need from rent supplement to the long-term housing assistance payment
25 and it gives greater flexibility in dealing with applicants for houses.

26
27 How does HAP differ from rent supplement? Under the housing assistance payment, the
28 recipient sources their own accommodation in the private rented sector. We pay the landlord,
29 and then the recipient pays the differential rate based on the rent scheme. The same rent scheme
30 based on the HAP and the Council houses. There will be a direct deduction of rent at source,
31 which will deal with arrears. The department have indicated that HAP has to be cost neutral, we
32 won't have the luxury of setting our own rate of HAP which is unfortunate but it can't cost any
33 more money than the rent supplement. We will be responsible for all households where housing
34 need has been determined. And the most important thing is that if you are offered a HAP,

1 Housing Assistance Payment, your housing need will be deemed to have been met. You won't
2 be offered anything else. It's being rolled out this year, and it will become countrywide from
3 first January 2015.

4
5 Just some concluding comments, my new Chairman of the Housing SPC Cllr Snell and I have
6 had a meeting and he set out his stall. He has told me what he wants over the next five years.
7 Housing maintenance budget is inadequate and should be increased and we should be aiming,
8 our target should be 20% of rental income, not immediately but over a period of a few years. In
9 Wicklow County Council's case, that would be 1.25 million. The housing budget - the homeless
10 budget needs to be increased to deal with a growing problem. We do get finance, grants from
11 the Department, it goes nowhere near what we need to accommodate the homeless, it's way
12 short. If that budget doesn't increase, we are going to have to provide more money of our own to
13 deal with the homeless. We have an obligation for the homeless, we haven't had the option of
14 not doing it. There should be a separate budget for housing adaptation grants for social houses.
15 There is none at the moment and it's not fair, those people are missing out on getting their houses
16 adapted. And the local property tax should be decoupled from the housing budget, it's an unfair
17 charge on the housing budget, it should be apportioned pro rata across all budgets.

18
19 The rent supplement rates, HAP rates should reflect the rental market in each county. Ideally it
20 would be great if we could set our own rates, but there is a review going on at the moment, and I
21 would hope there would be some flexibility to at least change the existing rate because they're
22 not high enough in Wicklow as you all know. And then the new Minister has indicated that
23 housing is top of his current agenda, so I think it's only fair that we should properly resource the
24 housing unit here to reflect the Minister's wishes. Thank you.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Michael. Who is lit up, Cllr Fitzgerald.

26 Cllr FITZGERALD: Thanks Cathaoirleach. As the Director says, today we are facing the
27 greatest housing crisis in this county in many, many years. There has been a lack of social
28 housing bills over many years, in my own town of Arklow, the last house built was in 2004. We
29 got some permission to buy some houses, but 2004. Ten years ago is when the last house was
30 built. As the Director said, the rent allowance sections are given 100 days notice to people who
31 can not get their rent down to the acceptable figure as set down by the Department and the
32 instruction is unless you get the rent reduction, you cannot stay in the house and you move to
33 another area. If there is an illness in the house, they might let you stay there.

1 I want to thank particularly one lady in the Director's housing section there for her work for the
2 homeless, and for the co-operation that she has given me in helping people my home town and
3 throughout South Wicklow. Landlords are not renewing their contracts because private rents are
4 now 20% in excess of what the rent supplement limits are. The new Tenant Purchase Scheme
5 will be good for some people but bad for others because it will lead to a shortage of social
6 housing in the long-term. Certainly the situation with house inspections, because the Director
7 stated that will be within the remit of the County Council in January, and it's my view that a lot
8 of people will find themselves homeless as a result of that inspection, where some houses might
9 not be up to scratch because maybe people were let stay in them because of the shortage of
10 housing available, and we are facing into a further crisis then next January and February.

11
12 The other issue is that the Government has stated that 77,000 people will be taken off the
13 housing list either this year or early next year because they're housed as such with rent
14 supplement or Rental Accommodation Scheme or whatever. And that's going to lead to huge
15 problems. People want their own homes, but they have no chance of getting their own homes.

16
17 I want to just ask a question there which I set down there a couple of weeks ago, the situation
18 with the ten houses that were cleared by the Department to be purchased out of the internal
19 capital receipts by Arklow Town Council, Arklow Town Council got notice on 6th of May
20 despite the decisions having been made on 6th of April, there was no time to purchase them
21 houses and I think it's totally wrong if them houses are not purchased. Irrespective of what
22 happens with internal capital receipts throughout the county, it is a fact that they should be
23 purchased, 4.3 million is a fine amount of money that is within the coffers of Wicklow County
24 Council, that money was raised in the Arklow area, and a lot of it was from house sales and
25 grants provided. The Department have been queried why that hasn't happened. We have sent a
26 letter to the Department last week why that hasn't happened. There are ten houses for sale and
27 there doesn't seem to be any progress on it and I am looking for an answer to that today.

28
29 Certainly there is no prospect of anyone, no social housing as I understand it in the municipal
30 area.

31
32 The other issue on housing, Cllr Snell brought it up there, the housing adaption grants. I know
33 of at least three people in social housing where there are serious illnesses, I am not going to go
34 into them, but certainly something needs to be done, because people living in social housing

1 have the same right as people in private houses to have their houses, have the same facilities for
2 those in need. So certainly that needs to be looked at. I mean the total figure is probably around
3 90,000. There is a lot of 90,000s being spent here and I would suggest some of it could be -
4 these people need the housing supports and they should be looked after as quickly as possible.
5

6 I again want to thank the Director and his staff for the efforts because in the last three months,
7 the pressure has come on people over the last three months to leave their homes because they
8 can't get the rents reduced. This - the rents were reduced as a result of a survey back in early last
9 year by a genius in Sligo who decided that the rents that the Department were paying were too
10 high. But certainly they're not too high in the Arklow area, and certainly as the Minister in her
11 last act maybe, I got a letter from the Minister that after the review she hopes to be in a position
12 to raise the figure for rent allowances in Wicklow, excluding North Wicklow, as quickly as
13 possible. I think urgent - it is the singular most important issue in this county. There are so
14 many people that need houses, there is people going back to live with their parents in their 40s,
15 that's a serious issue. It needs to be corrected as soon as possible.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Behan.

17 Cllr BEHAN: Chairman, I would like to thank the Director for his presentation and I have to say
18 it's one of the most depressing presentations I have ever heard on housing since I first became a
19 public representative in 1985. But I thank Director Nicholson for his frankness and directness,
20 because I think that's what we actually need as public representatives here in this county. I think
21 we are moving from a crisis to a dire emergency. And I have heard the stories of families
22 arriving here in the office every day, the same thing is happening in Bray, I am sure it's
23 happening in other offices across the county as well. And it's quite obvious to me, I don't know
24 whether anyone else will agree with me on this, but the Government policy is wrong. This
25 Government and the last Government have effectively decided to hand money over to private
26 landlords to fulfill the social housing need of this country, and in fact that practice has been
27 going on probably for the last 30 years.
28

29 Now if one thinks back on the history of this country, I think it might have been in the 30s, there
30 was a huge housing construction programme in this country, when the country really had no
31 money; many of the older Local Authority estates were built in those years, the 30s and the 40s.
32 In the 80s when we had the last major recession, a huge number of Local Authority houses were
33 built in this county and around the country. And to me, it's obvious that we need to start building
34 our own social housing stock again. As Mr Nicholson has said, this Council and all other

1 councils were encouraged to buy land to create a land bank to build houses and then we are told
2 there is no money to build them and the land is lying idle across this county and around the
3 country. So I think the first thing we should do is if people agree with it, we should pass an
4 emergency motion here today declaring this to be a housing emergency for the people of this
5 county, calling on the Government to immediately provide the funding to us and to other local
6 authorities to start the house building programme again. But I think we probably won't be
7 listened to as just one authority, so I would also suggest that we write to every other County
8 Council in the country, and indicate to them that we see that we have a major problem here, but
9 we assume that every Council in the country is having the same difficulty, and that hopefully if
10 all local authorities joined together, we would finally get action from the Government on what is,
11 I think, the number one problem facing this Council. So I want to make those two proposals if I
12 can Cathaoirleach.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you I am happy to second those proposals. Cllr Murphy.

14 Cllr MURPHY: I suppose I am going to give you a little bit of a good story, but it's going back
15 about 18 years ago. I can actually say that I am one of the lucky recipients through The Director
16 of Services here to have obtained an independent house from the Council. It wasn't easy. I was
17 very shy at the time, and I suppose I learned how to fight, and I suppose that's why I am here
18 today, because I went on the Council housing list. It was a decision between getting a car or a
19 home, and I went for the home. But I had to fight for that. It took me four years to actually - for
20 somebody to listen to say, yes, I am entitled to a Local Authority house, and I have to say for the
21 insight of Michael at the top table, who gave me that right to live my life independently, and it
22 has just been a success story, and I am still grateful to Michael and to Arklow Town Council. I
23 was one of the lucky ones, because at that time there was money; at that time I suppose it was
24 new to people with disabilities to go and live independently. I was 35 years when I moved out
25 of my own family home. So it was very new.

26
27 The situation has got probably a lot worse then, and as Cllr Behan has said, today it is a crisis.
28 It's also a crisis for people who are disadvantaged and who cannot get "a normal home."

29
30 Part of the other thing I would like to say is the funding for the adaptation grants, that can be just
31 a simple ramp going into a home, but that ramp is actually the barrier to that person living
32 independently or not. To us it's a simple ramp. But it's not. It's their front door, whether they
33 can get in or out of it. So we need funding. We need drastic funding. And what Cllr Behan has
34 suggested, I think we all individually need to lobby our TDs, and we also probably need a

1 meeting with the new environmental officer as well. So Michael, I am still grateful, thank you.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Snell.

3 Cllr SNELL: Thanks to you Cathaoirleach for accommodating this meeting here today and I
4 think it was hugely important for everybody, everybody in the Chamber, not just the new
5 members; people who are here many, many years. I know there is some people here over 30
6 years, vastly experienced. But at the same time, we have never encountered anything like what
7 we are encountering at the moment in regards to housing, so I would like to thank Michael for
8 not sugar coating the issue, actually putting it out there the way it is, it's a reality. I think his
9 invitation to everybody is an excellent idea, because as someone who comes in here daily, I see
10 what goes on in the housing section, and I would encourage like the Director has, for people to
11 come in and see what's going on.

12
13 When we talk about homelessness, everyone gets a picture in their head that it's mainly single
14 men or single women, and nobody ever envisaged that we would see a time when we would
15 have complete families homeless, and that is happening too often, way too often at the moment.
16 I know I personally deal with at least 20 homeless families through no fault of their own and I
17 am sure every elected member in this Chamber is dealing with these families. Every single
18 person sitting in here. And they're all acutely aware of what's going on out there. There is a lot
19 that we can do by starting with our own budget and tackling housing within our own budget and
20 our own county here. I do believe we need collective thinking. I agree with Cllr Behan there. I
21 think we need to start thinking outside the box. We need to start approaching our TDs. I think
22 it's refreshing to hear what Cllr Murphy had to say there with regards to her own personal
23 experience. But just like what Cllr Fitzgerald said earlier: There is still families out there who
24 weren't lucky enough to avail of what Cllr Murphy availed of. There is families out there who
25 are suffering, and they're actually, they're in hospitals, they can't come back to their own houses
26 because they're social houses. Yet if they were privately owned, they'd have more of a chance of
27 availing of some of these grants. There is not enough funding there, but at the same time we
28 have to make do with what we have, while we lobby and push, and I do hope and I believe that
29 the Government and the Ministers involved now realise the urgency that's there, because it's
30 throughout the whole State. But I believe that we are unique in Wicklow, because at this
31 moment and time, there is very, very few rented properties out there in Co Wicklow; very few
32 throughout the whole county. At one time you could say you could go to the South of the county
33 and you could pick up houses cheap enough to rent. That's not the fact now. There is not a lot
34 of houses to rent. The Government made an awful error by reducing the rent supplement from

1 725 on a three bedroomed property to 625 in East Wicklow, West Wicklow, and South
2 Wicklow. Out of the 625, the applicants were only entitled to 490 maximum. The price of
3 properties over the last couple of months in particular, a three-bedroomed property has gone -
4 which were going on the market for 800 to 850, cannot be got now for less than €1,000. People
5 cannot afford the rented market. It's just not happening. The RAS scheme which was excellent
6 for people who wanted stability who weren't on the housing list too long and it was a four year
7 contract, is now becoming not an option because there is not enough properties out there,
8 landlords are not out there prepared to put their property on the market on the RAS scheme. I
9 believe that with our new Housing SPC, whoever comes on it, come on it with an open mind,
10 come on it with a good work ethic, because we will have to work damn hard to address the
11 issues that's out there. I do believe that collectively we can do it. An example of banging the
12 head against the wall is that since I was elected in 2009, I have raised an issue consistently on
13 two housing estates in Newtownmountkennedy, Sycamore Drive and Mountainview Drive.
14 Before my time in 2009, I think three years prior to that, they were promised there would be
15 energy upgrade works there. And it just shows, at this moment and time, there is 445,000 being
16 achieved through the housing staff in Wicklow County Council to address some of the issues.
17 And I do say some of the issues. But again it is a good news story that there is funding there, we
18 know how to go about it and draw it down. And the sad part is that we have many more housing
19 estates out there that could avail of it, and I know that the housing staff are working hard to
20 address that. Another point that a lot of media have picked up on over the last number of years,
21 and I know the West elected representatives have raised it on many many occasions here, there is
22 a housing estate in Blessington, 1.2 million has been secured through the Director and his staff to
23 address a lot of social issues, and a lot of faults within the building programme that's been done
24 over there. I was delighted to go out only three days ago and meet three families who have
25 moved into their new accommodation and that's all down to hard work. We could all sit here
26 and give out and try and grab the cheap headlines, but I think it's about trying to address the
27 issue. So I wish everyone the best of luck that comes on the Housing SPC, but I would
28 encourage everybody to drop into the housing staff, you know the issues, you know the problems
29 we have, and it's up to each and every one of us to do our damndest to address it.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Councillor. Cllr Brady.

31 Cllr BRADY: Thanks Cathaoirleach, and thank you for agreeing to have a Special Meeting. I
32 know you stated early on that you fully intended having a Special Meeting to deal with the
33 housing crisis or the housing emergency as it is now. I want to thank Michael and also all the
34 staff in the housing section who have a terrible, terribly difficult job in dealing with the crisis

1 that unfortunately isn't just unfolding over the last number of weeks or months, it's been going
2 on now for the last seven years at least, as Michael stated it was seven years ago was the last
3 time a social house was constructed here in Co Wicklow. And it's frightening, frightening
4 statistic.

5
6 I think we as a Local Authority have identified this as a crisis and an emergency going back a
7 considerable period of time. 16 months ago there was an emergency meeting called here, a
8 Special Meeting, to deal with the housing crisis. We all sat around here, or some of the longer
9 serving members sat around here and discussed it and probably let a bit of steam off, and
10 unfortunately one of the only motions to come out of that particular meeting was to request a
11 meeting with now thankfully gone housing Minister Jan O'Sullivan, which unfortunately fell on
12 deaf ears. And that call had been repeated again and again, not just in this Local Authority, but
13 also within the Town Councils as well. Because I know similar motions have been passed in
14 Bray Town Council and other councils so we have a new housing Minister and hopefully,
15 hopefully with that comes a new housing policy. Because the existing housing policy is to
16 blame why we have three families arriving here in County Buildings on a daily basis, presenting
17 themselves as homeless. It's the existing policy of not building any social houses and investing
18 solely in the private market which is exacerbating the homeless situation. I mean I was
19 contacted over the weekend by a homeless guy who can't even get homeless accommodation.
20 The accommodation in Brighton Terrace in Bray is packed to capacity. The newly opened
21 shelter here in Wicklow Town has a waiting list. To get into emergency shelter in Dublin,
22 people have to ring up at ten o'clock that night to try get into the shelters in Dublin, and it's hit
23 and miss. There is no guarantee that they will get into the shelters there.

24
25 So it is crisis point, and unfortunately, the policies that have gone prior to now are being
26 compounded by some of the policies that are still in place and continue to be in place. I think
27 with the new HAP when it comes in, that will continue the housing crisis. I think a number of
28 members have identified and I spoke previously about it that people who are in receipt of rent
29 supplements, many of them unfortunately are in sub-standard accommodation. When HAP is
30 implemented and in force here in Wicklow on 1st of January, those people will be deemed to
31 have had their housing requirements met, and they will be removed from the housing list. Many
32 of those have spent many many years. In most areas now in Wicklow, people are being told it's
33 going to be 12 years before they're considered for a house. Many of those people have waited
34 not far off the 1 years and now they're going to be removed from the housing list, left in

1 sub-standard accommodation. I don't think we have the resources here to carry out assessments
2 on all of those properties before we take them in under our control, and that is going to
3 unfortunately create more homelessness in my opinion. So that policy is going to have a serious,
4 serious knock-on effect. And unfortunately we are going to need additional funding to go into
5 the provision of homeless services.

6
7 I think the only way to deal with the homeless situation is to invest in the construction of new
8 houses and I know we have articulated that here around the Chamber many times, including back
9 in 2013, even some Government Councillors acknowledged that fact, that there needed to be a
10 shift in Government policy. So the pressure needs to be exerted there.

11
12 But I think we as a Local Authority have also, I suppose, mechanisms at our disposal that we
13 should bring forward in trying to help to tackle this problem. I think I will deal with one of them
14 now in a second, but the other thing there I just want to deal with, and again unfortunately there
15 is talk around changing this, and if it does happen, it's going to continue to lead to homelessness,
16 and that's part 5 of the Housing Act. It has been floated that the Government are looking at
17 making amendments to that, either reducing it from 20%, which any housing estates over five
18 houses has to provide 20% social or afford - social and affordable housing. There are opt outs to
19 that particular scheme. The Government are talking about reducing that or doing away with it
20 completely. And I think if that does happen, it will be retrograde. Because while there is not too
21 many new builds happening at the moment, the private market, inevitably that's going to change
22 and when it does change, that's going to help out the homeless situation here in Wicklow. There
23 have been problems here in the past that this Council has allowed developers the opt out clause
24 there and have availed of money as opposed to the finished product, i.e. the house, and I think
25 that's needs to change.

26
27 Instead of us all sitting here passing motions and giving out about the Government and passing
28 motions about the situation that we know is there, it is a crisis, let's call a spade a spade, I think
29 we have within our power to go some of the way to addressing the situation. And the Director
30 spoke about the voluntary sector, and not being, there not being too many voluntary bodies out
31 there coming with proposals and that. I would like to see this Council, and it is achievable, it's
32 happened in other local authorities, that the Local Authority actually sets up a housing trust
33 themselves and becomes a homeless trust, kind of a separation between the Council and the
34 housing trust, that is created. And that trust then goes and seeks funding. Now there is funding

1 out there. Let's be under no illusions, there is funding out there available to this Government
2 under the strategic investment fund and other sources there, also in the private sector there, the
3 finance sector, funding could be found. I think that can one way this Council could go about
4 doing that, setting up a housing trust and I think that should be looked at. Can I just ask...

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Wrap up.

6 Cllr BRADY: It is a very, very important issue, just can I ask the question because there has
7 been substantial land banks amassed in this Council and the other local authorities, the Town
8 Councils over the last number of years. Do we have an itinerary, do we know how many acres
9 we have at our disposal now of serviced land banks, and as to whether that's been categorised
10 with permission for housing, I know some areas in Bray there had been different plans drawn up
11 for the sites, can we get a breakdown on that?

12
13 Can I just make two proposals, two motions dealing with the two issues I identified, part 5 and
14 the housing trust and the first motion there is that Wicklow County Council establishes a housing
15 trust to try tackle the housing crisis that exists and raises funds independently of the national
16 debt in order to build social housing in similar ways to voluntary bodies who have continued to
17 increase their housing stock in recent years. That's the first motion Cathaoirleach. And I have
18 spoken to the Chairman of the SPC, the Housing SPC and he has agreed that will be looked at in
19 the Housing SPC, but I think it needs to become a policy of this Council.

20
21 The second motion Cathaoirleach is that Wicklow County Council opposes any change to part 5
22 of the Housing Act which provides 20% social and affordable housing in all newly built housing
23 estates, furthermore that Wicklow County Council will not accept any opt outs by developers
24 such as serviced sites or taking the monetary value of providing the 20% social and affordable
25 housing.

26
27 So can I propose those two motions Cathaoirleach.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have you a seconder for those.

29 Cllr KAVANAGH: I second the second motion please.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: The first motion, I would suggest that the SPC would take a look at it,
31 and maybe restrictions to the setting up.

32 Cllr BRADY: It has been done in other local authorities Cathaoirleach.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: I would ask Cllr Snell maybe to have a look at that.

34 Cllr SNELL: Yeah, that's no problem Cathaoirleach.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

2 Cllr BLAKE: Have we adopted the second motion, because I am not in favour of the second
3 motion, I want to keep our options open on what we do.

4 Cllr VANCE: Chairman, that's what the SPCs are for to recommend policy to the Council.
5 Could I suggest there would be a full discussion at Cllr Snell's thing and bring a recommendation
6 back to the full Council for to be discussed after their first meeting. I mean that's what the SPCs
7 are set up for to set up a policy for this Council.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: I think the part 5 is more of a planning, it comes under planning.

9 Cllr VANCE: Maybe that should go to the planning SPC then.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Chairman of the planning?

11 Cllr BLAKE: I have no problem. But I just said it myself, I have my options, and my
12 preference is to keep our options open. I think in the past that was part of our problem, we stuck
13 rigidly to part 5, we didn't keep our options open in the past and it led to a number of problems
14 in relation to it.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am a big supporter of the part 5 myself but I fully understand where you
16 are coming from, there are certain developments where it's not suitable.

17 Cllr BRADY: Just on a point of clarity, just on that particular motion, there is two points to it,
18 one is opposing any proposed changes to part 5. As I stated in what I said there, the Government
19 is looking at the part 5s request a view of either temporarily suspending it as they say...

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: You could write to the department seeking clarification on what the
21 reasons are for...

22 Cllr BRADY: About any proposed changes, but the second...

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: We can seek clarification.

24 Cllr BRADY: The second point, maybe we can get a report on it, because the part 5 has been
25 about now for a number of years and I know in fairness to Bray Town Council, when they were
26 a separate authority, they rigidly enforced the part 5 and took - they wouldn't take monetary gain,
27 they received the end product which was a house or an apartment. Can we get a breakdown as to
28 what the policy of Wicklow County Council has been, how many units we have got for the part
29 5, and how many serviced sites or monetary --

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: And we will get planning to maybe have a discussion on the policy
31 surrounding part 5. Okay, thank you Councillor. Cllr Cullen.

32 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Chairman, yes, Chairman, all I have to say is that in the 1980s, we had a
33 Liam Kavanagh who was a TD in this county and he was a Minister and during the 1980s, this
34 Council were able to build an average of 500 houses a year in this county from '83 to '88. And

1 when - I think this is not properly recognised and the man has not been given enough credit for
2 it, when Liam Kavanagh left office in '88, there was no-one on a waiting list in this county. We
3 actually had surplus houses. So if it could be done in the 1980s, when we were in the middle of
4 the depth of recession, it could be done today. And in the 1980s, there was actually less money
5 around than there is now. So there is a precedent, just go back to the 80s, when the political will
6 was in this county to do so, we eradicated the waiting list in this county. I think that was done
7 then and it can be done now. Perhaps we should go to Mr Kavanagh, and ask him for some
8 advice on how to get it done.

9
10 I look Chairman here at housing, there is a huge demographic change going on in this country
11 regards housing. It's not as it was. There is a huge demographics, changes have occurred. And I
12 have a view that we take for instance the Glending estate in Blessington, I opposed that building
13 there because it was built on a flood plain and I was proved correct. In fairness to Cllr Ruttle as
14 Chairman of the local area, he had it on the agenda for several years, but the million and a half
15 money spent dealing with the fact we built on a flood plain in Blessington would have built
16 another 60 to 80 houses in West Wicklow if that money hadn't been spent correcting an obvious
17 mistake in the first place, we would have had another 60 or 80 families housed.

18
19 Another thing is Chairman, what I would say is that the Director says in his presentation that oh
20 tenants are anxious when they ring up about faults in our houses and what do they expect us to
21 do? A person, a private landlord would be expected to deal with a complaint or deal with a fault
22 in a house - at once. We don't say I am the County Council, I will send someone down to look at
23 it in two to three months. If that conduct is not tolerable in the private rental area, it shouldn't be
24 tolerable to people in social houses - Council housed tenants are paying as much rent as those in
25 private rent. We have people in Council houses paying 150 euro a week, that's not cheap, they're
26 entitled to the same entitlements to have the repairs carried out. Because at the end of the day,
27 it's the rents from the Council house tenants is actually now keeping this Council funded. The
28 millions that people are paying in rents from social houses are paying for the maintenance and
29 upkeep of this Council. So it's not acceptable for somebody to come up and say well they can't
30 expect to get the same service that they would expect from a private landlord as they would from
31 the Council. They are entitled to exactly the same expeditious service. I feel any complaint
32 should be dealt with within a matter of 48, 72 hours, or even earlier, within 24 hours.

33
34 Chairman, I think myself, I think myself that we need a change in directors of the Council. I

1 think people have been in the one positions too long. They've become stale. I think we need a
2 switch around, radical changes to get things done. If you keep repeating the same format and it
3 continually fails, we have to look again and say maybe perhaps someone else will have a
4 brighter idea. I think there is some merit in what Cllr Brady proposed in his proposals. I think
5 there is some merit. We have five Government TDs in this county and we know have a
6 Minister, Minister Harris, and I think perhaps we should be looking to meet Minister Harris as
7 well to see what can be done, can he use his good offices, he is in finance after all and finance do
8 provide funding for environment and houses and I think it would be very prudent, maybe
9 Chairman yourself, send a delegation to Deputy Simon Harris and see could he direct some
10 funds from his department in the environment to deal with the undoubted housing crisis facing
11 this county. I don't see any - now you know there is some suggestion that if the housing crisis
12 continues to grow we can all blame Cllr Snell. I am not going to go down that road just yet! But
13 Chairman --

14 Cllr BRADY: You tell us how your meeting with the new Minister comes along and if you
15 secure the funding sure he will sort out the problem.

16 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Maybe Cllr Snell and yourself should go and a meet Deputy Harris and
17 see could he coax the Department of Finance to give the Council some extra - Wicklow - that
18 seems to me to be probably the best way to go. We have a Minister in the county now and that's
19 to be welcomed and I think I am sure Deputy Harris in fairness to the man will do his best for the
20 county, as he has always done. If anyone can get Wicklow an extra few pound, I think Deputy
21 Harris will work very hard to do that.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. We have failed to wish our congratulations to
23 Deputy Harris by the way.

24 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: I would like to propose that we do Chairman.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Matthews. No, hold on. Cllr Kavanagh.

26 Cllr KAVANAGH:

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: There is no screen, it's September we are getting a screen. I am just going
28 on the lights. I can't see some lights. When the light, it's a queuing system, when the light stays
29 on, you are next to speak, so Cllr Kavanagh.

30 Cllr KAVANAGH: , first of all I would like to say this is a national crisis and this crisis has not
31 been created by the local authorities, I am sure all local authorities throughout the country are in
32 the same position, and this crisis has been created by the Government with their failure to deal
33 with it or plan for it. I would like to place it firmly in the lap of the Government to deal with this.

1 I wonder is it Government policy in fact, and if that policy has been directed by the Troika that
2 the Government and the local authorities will be forced to cut back on the provision of social
3 houses, housing, to free the local authorities from the local property tax, the maintenance of
4 those buildings, the administration of social housing, rent arrears, septic tanks and all the
5 expenses that are incurred through the provision of social housing. So I would like to know
6 maybe I propose we write to the Government and ask them is it their policy to divert away from
7 the provision of social housing into the private rental market, because otherwise we are just
8 throwing sugar at this problem we are trying to deal with it on our own without funding from the
9 Government. So I would like to place it firmly back in their laps. If it has come from the
10 Troika, the Troika are coming from a very different place, they don't have the same housing
11 crisis abroad that we have here, they don't have the same history of provision of homes and they
12 certainly don't have the same history of, that Ireland has had in relation to land ownership and
13 home ownership. So I think we need some clarification from the Government on that, whether it
14 is their policy to actually support social provision or hand it into the hands of the private market.
15

16 Just as regards what we can do and how we can be maybe a bit more creative in the provision of
17 housing, I know when I bought my house 30 years ago, it was on one of those social housing
18 schemes of the day, whereby the Local Authority provided the land, and the developers built the
19 houses, so we got our house at quite a substantially reduced rate because we didn't have, as
20 residents of the town, we didn't have to pay for the land part of it, it was just the house. So I
21 wonder if we - I think maybe Cllr Brady has already called for a list of what land banks we have,
22 that maybe some deal could be done with developers that they could build on that land and offer
23 to people. Because I know people calling to me, we have different categories of people looking
24 for houses. We have people who are on no income at all, people on very low incomes and we
25 have people in the middle income bracket who are all falling into that category where they can't
26 afford homes and maybe if we even tackle it category by category, provide maybe affordable
27 housing for people in the middle income bracket who can afford to pay something but not too
28 much, and that might relieve a section anyway of that sector who are looking for houses if we
29 can. And also the refurbishment of any derelict or damaged houses that we might have in
30 housing stock, here in Wicklow we have four houses, that maybe they could be offered to
31 applicants on a rent free basis for a number of years if they want to refurbish those houses
32 themselves because I don't think we have the finances to refurbish those houses ourselves. There
33 could be ways in which we could do a deal.
34

1 Also as regards any new developments which hopefully might be coming on stream, that there
2 isn't a back door opt out to provide social housing. I think that's what Cllr Brady referred to in
3 the section - part 5 motion that he proposed, that there will be no opt out clause for developers to
4 get out of providing social housing. Thank you.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Bourke.

6 Cllr BOURKE: Yes Cathaoirleach, I think this is a very important meeting, in fact it could be a
7 watershed if there were meetings like this all over the country happening in the next few weeks,
8 it might have an influence and impact on Government policy. I was looking across the room
9 there at Teresa O'Brien, our senior staff officer and I was reminiscing and thinking about God be
10 with the days when you could go into Teresa on a Monday and the following Monday she would
11 have a couple of houses sorted out for you. Long gone are those days unfortunately where she
12 was able to hand out 100 keys every year probably of new houses when I first came on the
13 Council and in subsequent years.

14 Cllr VANCE: She got you re-elected!

15 Cllr BOURKE: We were handing out at least 100 keys.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: She is handing out roads every week now.

17 Cllr BOURKE: Wouldn't it be lovely to get back to that position again Cathaoirleach and I
18 really do think that is important that with everybody putting pressure on that we get a funding
19 stream to allow us to start rebuilding houses. I have been on the SPC for housing for five years,
20 and even the previous Government brought in the policy that we would stop building houses and
21 rent only. I think the Director and all the members of that housing committee warned this
22 wouldn't work and it was only storing up problems, but it fell on deaf ears, and as Cllr Snell
23 knows, it's been a tough job to try and have our voices heard at national Government, and I think
24 it's probably the fault of the permanent civil service in the Housing Department, in the
25 Department of Environment, where the fault lies, because I do believe that elected members,
26 TDs, Ministers, all believe that we should be building houses, but it's finding a mechanism to
27 release a funding stream is the key to solving this problem. I think we should be going back to
28 meet - a delegation at least immediately should be going to meet the new Minister for Housing
29 and environment.

30 Cllr BRADY: It's the Government, not the civil servants.

31 Cllr BOURKE: I beg to differ with you.

32 Cllr BRADY: You would as a Government party member.

33 Cllr BOURKE: The permanent civil service have too much power in the country and I believe
34 that, as I have stated already, that if we go back to meet with the Ministers to impress on them

1 the importance of having the policy reversed and the mechanism found, it could actually resolve
2 this problem to a great extent.

3
4 The part 5 as suggested by Cllr Brady there, that's very fine, I certainly support that to a point,
5 but if the Manager was offered 50 houses under part 5 tomorrow, would he have the money to
6 pay for them? That's a question I don't think even the Manager could answer.

7
8 Looking at housing in general, housing repairs, Cllr Kelly as the outgoing Cathaoirleach, argued
9 for a greater share of the budget in the Council to be spent on repairing our houses. Currently
10 only about 5% of the revenue budget is spent on housing repairs for housing of the rents that are
11 generated. It was about 5 and a half to six million was our rent. Now it's going to be ten million.
12 And the suggestion that the Housing SPC kept putting forward was we should be spending 20%
13 of our rents should be reinvestigated in housing repairs. I believe it's very important that we
14 should all be pushing for a greater share of the Revenue budget, of rents collected, should go
15 back into repairs because we have an awful lot of serious housing difficulties with poorly
16 maintained Council houses. That's going to be as big an issue for us if we don't do something
17 about it as the shortage of housing.

18
19 Finally I would just like to ask did we ever get a rebate from the department for the 3 million we
20 spent, that we had to spend to complete the deal for the Three Trout field in Charlesland? And if
21 not, what a shame it is that that 3 million - we are out of pocket by it and how much we could
22 have done on housing repairs or even built a few units with it, I would just like clarity on that too
23 please. Thank you.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Matthews.

25 Cllr MATTHEWS: Two points there, the figure 7 years, little or no houses built in the last seven
26 years, is that to do with a lack of privately built housing on the part 5 contribution we would
27 have got from that? Or to do with direct funding from the Government as well or a combination
28 of both?

29
30 I am sure you share the concerns that the other members have expressed there, and I am not sure
31 that I have heard it coming from the Government, I have heard it coming more from the
32 developer lobby that they would like to see the part 5 reduced to 10%, which will obviously suit
33 them. Now we need to keep a careful eye on that, we know about the relationship between the
34 developers and Government over the last ten, 15 years in the housing crisis, so that really needs

1 to be looked at. But sticking rigidly to the part 5 doesn't always suit the Local Authority, but it
2 should be the Local Authority that leads that and decides where the flexibility is within that; and
3 is it a contribution, a land contribution, a housing contribution made by the developer? There
4 needs to be real clarity on that, and we need transparency on that, it can't be lead by the
5 developer, what suits him, it needs to be done by what suits our needs here.

6
7 The ESRI figure there, 20 to 25,000 houses per year, is that including social housing or is that
8 just private housing, that figure? And would that include then part 5 contribution from that?
9

10 And the second point on the land banks that we have, I don't know how much of it there is, but
11 would we have the resources, or - actually this is one for the Housing SPC to look at, there is
12 community lead building projects I have had a look at, they tend to be European based, Belgium
13 or Finland have done some work on this. Would we have the resources within our Housing
14 Department to facilitate or work on that type of project? There is one down in Cloughjordan in
15 Tipperary. It was more towards a sustainable passive housing project, whereas we could maybe
16 aim it more towards an affordable housing project. Because with a considerable amount of
17 construction work in this county and country that need work, and if it's something that can be
18 done in partnership, where we supply the land, the sites at an affordable rate, facilitate a
19 community led building of it, would that just be a nightmare for you to take on with everything
20 else, or is it something you could foresee that you could maybe get involved in. Thanks
21 Chairman.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune.

23 Cllr FORTUNE: Thanks Cathaoirleach. Can I just thank the Director for the presentation and
24 like other Councillors have said, I must say he was very honest and forthright in his presentation.
25 I find dealing with the Director the very same approach, and with his staff. I think they do a
26 tremendous job with very, very little resources. So I am not going to repeat things people have
27 said, just a few general comments. Cllr Fitzgerald captured what I really want to say, I think
28 what he said was in his opening comments can be found in every single area right around the
29 county. So I will say that for a start. I do actually believe that we need change. We need
30 change in the way we do things. Remember we were supposed to have got that under this paper
31 called First Things First. I just wonder who was the author of that in the first instance. I know
32 who the author was in the book that it was taken from, but I think the person who put it into the
33 report we got I would question really didn't think it through. So the Director said that one of the
34 first things he said to us was it's now very, very stressful. And I have actually seen that first

1 hand coming into the Council, because I have had to come in like other Councillors and explain
2 that such-and-such a family are going to be on the road, mother and three kids, I am dealing with
3 an auctioneer on a regular basis who has been extremely helpful to many families and he tries to
4 interact between myself and the Local Authority. So I mean that is - I think that's an absolutely
5 crazy situation. And in the first instance what should happen I think, and we have had a kind of
6 a structural change within the executive and the Local Authority, so I would think that this is a
7 crisis, it's gone - it's an emergency I think one Councillor said. Therefore we should look at the
8 whole staff situation within the Local Authority and see can extra resources be given to the
9 Director of Housing so as people can be dealt with in a fair humane and human way. People are
10 so stressed, and people are proud as well. Every one of us are proud in different ways and we
11 don't like being insulted or made feel small. And I know that's not done intentionally. But
12 unfortunately, the pressure and the stress that's all around the system, I think that's happening. I
13 think that's really a shame. The homelessness thing is really really probably the most serious
14 problem we have got at the moment. This whole idea where the drop in rent supplement and
15 someone said earlier said the Minister or someone in the department said they'd look at
16 increasing the rent supplements with the exception of North Wicklow. I think that's also crazy.
17 Because there is people in the village I live in who can't afford the rents that they're being asked
18 to pay and what's happened is it was a policy put in to bring down rents on the basis that
19 landlords would be forced to bring their rents down. What's happened is the rents are going up.
20
21 Now the one problem I find and I am - in a reasonably ongoing basis is that there is a total lack
22 of empathy coming out of the department where they've taken an action like this, they're not
23 stupid people, they know what the market is like, so supply and demand is in situ and they
24 should know that. What's going to happen, with the crisis we have got, at best what's going to
25 happen is that hard cases will be dealt with. But there is a lot, there is a lot of other cases out
26 there. I will just give you one quick example Chair if I may. I have been lobbying for a single
27 mum for about a year and a half now, she has a nine, ten-year-old child and she is doing the best
28 she can for herself, she is trying to work and everything like that. But she needs to be housed in
29 a proper manner. And because she is trying to be a bit independent and do for herself, the
30 system doesn't cater for that. I think that's immoral in the way I look at life. We have had all
31 these kind of meetings here before, we come up with all kinds of ideas. We have had meetings
32 with the Department over the years. But nothing happens. So I think where the - because it's
33 such an emergency, I think our TDs now have to stand up and be counted. After all their the
34 senior public representatives in this county and they've got to sit down with us in a real

1 workmanlike way or work womanlike way, they need to do that and then go into the Dáil and
2 talk to the people they need to talk to. The doors they need to talk through or behind are where
3 they are. That's what needs to happen. We as Councillors, we can jump up and down, we can
4 create a fuss, make all kinds of suggestions, but if we don't have 110% the support from our five
5 TDs of what we are advocating, nothing, nothing will happen. So I would say coming out of
6 today as an action that we should immediately talk with our TDs, bring them into a meeting here,
7 call another meeting if we have to. There is nothing more important, a lot of us have said. If we
8 need another meeting to be called, let's call it and let's get an action put in place that they're
9 going to have to act on. Again, as I - I will finish as I began, I think the housing section in this
10 Council is in an impossible situation. You just picture families coming into the desk in reception
11 in the County Council and they've nowhere to live. What is the housing officers and the housing
12 staff, what are they supposed to do? I mean that shouldn't be allowed go on another week. So I
13 would say that if we have to have another Special Meeting next week with our TDs, we should
14 have it.

15 Cllr BRADY: Just on a point of information, were the TDs invited to today's meeting?

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: No.

17 Cllr BRADY: I know, they're on summer recess, and I think the agenda is circulated to them as
18 well in advance of the meeting, and really they should have made the effort to be here if they
19 seen it it was on the agenda, it's a housing crisis.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Ruttle.

21 Cllr RUTTLE: Yes Cathaoirleach, think of what Cllr Bourke said there, Charles Dickens said,
22 "There is nothing as bad in the bad times as the recollections of the good times." I also had that
23 visits with Teresa O'Brien too, but they're gone now. Cathaoirleach, thank you Director for your
24 presentations, a very grim picture, warts and all, no embellishments. I won't repeat what a lot of
25 people said, but the solution lies beyond this Chamber really. It's elsewhere. It's a question of
26 priorities at Government level and what needs to be done. What we have seen where we meet
27 people, in our constituencies, in our homes, Council offices, is totally unacceptable. People sat
28 on the side of the street with six black bags, their possessions in them, with nowhere to go, is not
29 acceptable at all. I believe if this were allowed to continue, we are heading to develop a two-tier
30 country where we are creating an economy, not a society, a group of people will be left behind,
31 and left behind for a long time. When we look at these frightening statistics about the number of
32 houses that want to be built and what confidence have we looking at what's happened to date that
33 they will be built, are we looking at the development of a trailer park society or something.
34 Where will people go? These people have very limited options when you haven't got money,

1 you have limited options. Unless we provide them with some level of Local Authority housing
2 where they can live, what are their options, very, very few. You will see the re-emergence of
3 mobile homes, caravans in back gardens, and other options which are not suitable. That should
4 not be allowed happen and it's totally socially unacceptable. All of us are encountering it all the
5 time. I can't believe our TDs are not as well. They have to be. They're meeting, emails,
6 messages, at clinics, they must see what's happening in our areas. All councils in Ireland, I
7 cannot believe that any Council in Ireland would not be voicing the fears and concerns we have
8 here today. I spoke here about three months ago at length on this issue as well. We can only
9 speak for so long. We have to get some response from central powers. As I said earlier, it's
10 about prioritisation, money can be found for certain things, there is no more important thing than
11 giving somebody the dignity of having a roof over their head to house their family and
12 themselves. And all of us are encountering this on a daily basis.

13
14 I too would like to pay tribute to our housing staff. They're under a lot of pressure. They're
15 getting a lot of very hard stories. They have hearts too. They're not heartless people. They're
16 seeing it. We all see this. and I have personal experience of how good they've been in dealing
17 with people in dreadful situations. But from one thing that must go forward from here is that we
18 must and we demand action be taken at Government level to deal with this, because we cannot
19 just allow it to go on. When you hear the accounts of what's coming in on the 1st of January,
20 you say is this just another example of how we create another quango, give it another name,
21 eliminate the people from the list and go on as if everything is all right. It's not all right. It's
22 pathetic when people come to all of us looking for help and we can see at the current time no
23 help being available to them. That's not what it's about. Politics is about the art of the possible
24 and the art of finding solutions. At this level and national level and Governmental level, there
25 must be some solutions or at least the beginnings of a solution to this problem. It cannot be done
26 in a month, but there must be some beginning to the solution to allow people to have the dignity
27 of home. Thank you Cathaoirleach.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Blake.

29 Cllr BLAKE: Thank you Cathaoirleach and I thank the Director of Services for his presentation
30 today, it's good to hear a good news story from Cllr Murphy here today from her experience of
31 dealing with the County Council in the past. And while we are very acutely aware that we are in
32 a crisis situation in terms of the need for housing in this town, I must also acknowledge the work
33 that has been done in the housing section, I will just mention one area, that is the insulation
34 programme that was carried out in the last couple of years, it's been a great success and certainly

1 a lot of people who had concerns and were continuously approaching Councillors and TDs as
2 well to make them well aware of what the problems are, that those people are the ones who have
3 been looked after. So while we are acutely aware of the huge problems out there, there has been
4 a number of good news stories as well from the housing section.

5
6 I have no problem whatsoever in supporting Cllr Behan's proposal that we should be engaging
7 with other local authorities to highlight the problems we are experiencing here in Co Wicklow.
8 We are close to Dublin which probably acerbrates the problem in that regard as well. But
9 certainly we do need a co-ordinated approach from all the local authorities to ensure we do get
10 back into a programme of house building of local authorities. Not alone would it help the people
11 out there who are crying out for a house for themselves, but also it would help the building trade,
12 if people were being engaged in that particular activity for quite a number of years and who have
13 found themselves unemployed over the last few years.

14
15 I welcome Cllr Snell's appointment as the Cathaoirleach of the SPC. I certainly do support his
16 initiative in looking for 20% of the rental income, it's certainly ambitious aspect in regards to it.
17 Certainly over the years, we have failed at our budget meetings here to ensure that we did put
18 adequate funding into the - looking after our own houses particularly in regards the allocation of
19 the needs of people, particularly elderly people, who were in need of changing maybe the
20 bathroom into a shower facility, so we have failed them in that regard. But we failed here at the
21 budget meetings as well, and bearing in mind what went on at last year's budget where we had
22 no proposals whatsoever to look after any aspects for old people. I would have no problem
23 supporting a proposal where we have a co-ordinated approach looking for all local authorities to
24 approach the Government in terms of providing sufficient funds for a new housing programme
25 in this county.

26
27 I would like to support Cllr Matthews' assertion there regarding part 5. I have always been under
28 the opinion that we should keep our options open. Every county has a different priority in
29 looking after its people. I think we in Wicklow here should take the initiative of doing what's in
30 our own best interests here for the people of Co Wicklow in whatever aspect of the part 5 being
31 forward. Thanks very much Chairman.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Winters.

33 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathaoirleach. Just to thank the Director for his presentation and to say
34 that there are a lot of schemes, there is the RAS scheme, and the HAP scheme, and there's no

1 panacea for everything, but I do welcome the new HAP scheme. I think it addresses the problem
2 of people who stay out of the workforce in order to keep rent allowance. At least on the HAP
3 scheme you will be allowed work and still receive, I suppose, housing at affordable rate. I hear
4 people saying what bad landlords we are, the reason everybody wants to be a County Council
5 tenant is because we really are one of the best landlords in the country. We are not perfect, but
6 we are the only landlords in the country that says oh your income has dropped, we will drop your
7 rent to a suitable level that you can afford. And I think that maybe we don't give ourselves
8 enough credit for the things that we actually do do well. But it doesn't matter what scheme is in
9 place, or how much money we throw at it, at the moment on daft.ie today there are 17 houses
10 available for rent within my electoral area. Not one of them is available within either the rent
11 allowance scheme or the new HAP scheme rates. It doesn't matter what scheme is in place, I
12 know that Cllr Cullen I think it was said that County Council tenants paid the same as private
13 tenants. That's patently not true, because if you are a private tenant, some of the houses that are
14 available for rent today, I think the lowest priced one was a one-bedroomed house for 700 euro.
15 We would allow a maximum of 400 euro under that system, under the rent allowance scheme,
16 and depending on the person's financial circumstances, they could be paying us anything from 26
17 or 32 euro up to I think the maximum rent that we charge is 150, is it? Yeah. So it is good to be
18 a Council tenant and everybody wants to be a Council tenant and we shouldn't constantly give
19 out about what we don't do. We do do some things well. Thanks.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Vance.

21 Cllr VANCE: Thank you Chairman. To say I am very disappointed in Teresa O'Brien, I was
22 under the impression I was the only one that was getting houses out of her. Now I hear she has
23 been looking after other members of the Council as well!

24
25 Anyway, Chairman, just in regard to this, I have been highlighting this for the last three years in
26 regard to the housing crisis, and it is a crisis. Cllr Behan is right in that. And it's been coming
27 for a long time because we don't build houses. It's as simple as that. And there is a demand
28 there, it's supply and demand.

29
30 And since I have been on the Council, there have been massive changes in regard to fluctuation
31 in houses, in regard to housing supply and housing demand, and various things like that, and Cllr
32 Cullen was saying about in the 80s when there was Local Authority houses being built in
33 Wicklow, he mentioned 500, I don't know if it was 500 or not, but there was a good bit of
34 building going on in Co Wicklow, but we suffered the problems of them years later when there

1 was, they were built in all the wrong areas and very large developments and it caused all sorts of
2 social problems, so much so that the Council stopped doing that and started building smaller
3 cluster of houses which is much more beneficial to the community. And it caused an awful lot
4 of particular problems at that particular stage.

5
6 One of the reasons why - I mean we don't have any derelict houses here. Probably we would be
7 the most responsible Local Authority in the country in regard to housing, and we don't have any
8 derelict house, and consequently we have very little part 5s and various things like that. So
9 effectively, we are being punished for behaving properly when most other counties are going
10 mad in regard to building and we have all this dereliction throughout the country.

11
12 And one thing I am disappointed here is that there is different forms of what I would regard as
13 public housing. There is obviously the social housing, there is the homeless element, but there is
14 also the affordable element. Nobody mentioned anything about affordable houses. In actual
15 fact, there is quite a number of people in Co Wicklow who are actually looking to buy a house at
16 an affordable rate. And we have always been very good at providing land and various things like
17 that over the years in doing that, and in actual fact there is plenty of people even on the housing
18 list that could afford to buy a house at affordable rates. But the situation is getting very serious,
19 particularly in the North of the county now with escalating house prices in the Dublin region
20 now, and it's getting very difficult even to find an affordable house.

21
22 We talked about a land bank there, maybe the Director could give the Councillors, tell the
23 Councillors exactly how much land we have available, and where that land is. I think that's key
24 in regard to anything that we have. Over the years that we have bought land, we have been
25 encouraged to buy land and throughout the county and I would like to know where that land is, is
26 it in the places where we need social and affordable houses, where exactly is it, I would like to
27 know where it is?

28
29 He also says something there about voluntary bodies and the fact that they don't seem that
30 interested in coming into Wicklow, I just wonder, certainly I know one voluntary body had a
31 very bad experience of coming into Wicklow a number of years ago when they were negotiating
32 for land, and they were very badly burned when an individual upped the price very significantly
33 and I don't think they've been back to the county since. I just wonder how many other agencies
34 are involved, or have been in contact with the Director in regard to providing the type of housing

1 like this?

2
3 Also I think there was a veiled criticism of staff there from one of the Councillors. Could I just
4 say in my experience anyway, the hardest job in the Council is in the Housing Department. And
5 for every house that goes out, there is 50 people out there that says that they should have got that
6 house instead of the person that got it and the difficulty then is that sometimes, sometimes, most
7 people are fine, but you get a situation where people can be very abusive in regards to staff and
8 that, and they have to have a certain mentality to put up with it, and certainly it's my experience
9 anyway that anyone who survives in housing can survive anywhere in any section of the
10 Council. It's the hardest job on the Council. It's the easiest job when you are giving out houses,
11 it's the hardest job when there is not enough houses and there is the type of demand we have at
12 the moment and it's very difficult and I think we should appreciate the staff, certainly I do, both
13 in Bray and in Wicklow, that I have had to deal with in regard to housing, that they carry on their
14 duties in a very sympathetic way to the people that they have to deal with. Thank you Chairman.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Cllr Mitchell.

16 Cllr MITCHELL: Yeah thank you Cathaoirleach. I just wanted to say that I support the 20%
17 social housing rule, but I do believe we should allow flexibility. However, I would like to know
18 when and how that flexibility is exercised in the area I represent. I have seen a number of
19 housing estates constructed and I can't see where the social houses are under this 20% rule. I am
20 never informed for instance that some flexibility has been allowed, and I think the Councillors
21 within the area should be informed when flexibility is allowed, and why that happens, what's the
22 reason for doing it.

23
24 A lot of people have said a lot about the housing crisis here today. And I suppose the title is the
25 social housing crisis, but there is also a major private housing crisis. It's very, very difficult to
26 direct property privately in the area which I represent and I think probably in the Bray area as
27 well. And the prices have gone up quite a lot. And it's really - there is really tremendous
28 competition for it. What's needed is building more houses and more houses being available to
29 rent.

30
31 Now there is a very large amount of land in Co Wicklow which is zoned for building, and indeed
32 a large amount of land I think certainly in the area I represent, which has got full planning
33 permission for housing and yet that housing is not being built. Why is this? The way to solve
34 the housing crisis is to build more houses. And as far as I know throughout the entire greater

1 Dublin region, the - there is a lot of houses which have full planning permission and certainly
2 have zoning, which are not being built. We need to get those houses built. I think quite a lot of
3 politically correct decisions have been made which have made it more difficult to get those
4 houses built. For instance the receipt building, construction regulations which we have
5 discussed here at length probably added 10,000 to the cost of building a house, the various heat
6 and insulation requirements have added another 20,000. So there are other regulations as well,
7 which have probably in total added around 50,000 to the cost of building a house. If you make
8 something more expensive, there will be less of it. And that's unfortunately, I think, what's
9 happened, and I suppose the problems with the banks means there is not enough money to
10 purchase those houses. But here we have quite a large amount of land in Wicklow and in the
11 greater Dublin region which has planning permission for houses and certainly has zoning and it's
12 not being built and somehow we need to change that.

13
14 I also think that these regulations make it more difficult to change older buildings, particularly
15 multi use buildings into residences, because they add significantly to the cost of dealing with
16 older buildings, and I think it's counter productive in a housing crisis to have all these regulations
17 in place. It's also rather strange to be forcing people who lived in bed sits for many years, for
18 them to be required to be made homeless because bed sits are now illegal, and adding to the
19 homeless crisis during this housing crisis.

20
21 So I think there is a number of national issues to do with these standards, which are making it
22 more expensive and making it more difficult to get these houses built. It's getting the houses
23 built that would solve the housing crisis. Just giving more money for the rental for social
24 housing will obviously help, but it doesn't actually solve the problem because it still leaves a
25 shortage. It will help those on the social housing list, but we must get more built and that's the
26 message we have to get out there somehow. Thank you.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr O'Neill.

28 Cllr O'NEILL: Cathaoirleach, I would also like to thank Michael Nicholson for his contribution,
29 I think he was very honest and frank and I have only been in here four weeks, but I know myself
30 that the housing section have a stressful job, and I would say, I just noticed that over the four
31 weeks. I would say they bring it home with them. It's a tough job.

32
33 I do think again there is criticism from political parties here and people who have been in power
34 over the last 12 years. We had Fianna Fail, Labour, Fine Gael and the Green Party in power, you

1 had some areas 15 years without a Local Authority house being built. So I think that's - in my
2 town in West Wicklow there during the elections, I came across six people who had been evicted
3 from their houses. Evicted. Some of them I met down the road in estates where they were
4 availing of rent subsidies or whatever. And those houses I know are still empty. It's a case of
5 who is really running the show here, is it the Government or the banks or what? When you see a
6 half billion last year paid out in rent subsidies throughout the 26 counties, sure that's crazy stuff.
7 Indirectly that's paying the mortgages of speculators. So it's really, it's getting this by the scruff
8 of the neck where the real problem is and I see the real problem is in Government, I know we
9 can do so much here, but we have people here, Councillors here who are members of
10 (INAUDIBLE) and I think in all honesty could we really bring this problem to the doors of
11 Leinster House. In Blessington alone I know of one landlord in Dubai, and he has 19 properties
12 in Blessington and everyone one of those, the people in them are availing of rent subsidies. In
13 other words, what we are doing is paying his mortgage. So I really believe that's where the huge
14 problem is, that we have to grab this by the scruff of the neck in Leinster House. Whatever way
15 we do it, I don't know. But I think that's the solution there.

16
17 Another one maybe I noticed in my young life in Wicklow County Council is the amount of over
18 the last couple of year in fact, the planning issues on one-off housing and the amount of people
19 that could actually be in housing if there was less of a problem in gaining planning permission
20 for the one-off houses. I know some people at the moment who are giving up hope of getting
21 planning, and that's not entirely Wicklow County Council's house, because I know some people
22 here in the Council have given the go ahead on one-off houses, yet serial objectors come in and
23 object to Bord Pleanala. You have one individual in South Dublin, Michael McCoy, who
24 stopped 30 houses here in West Wicklow over the period of three and a half year. Some of those
25 people are on the housing list.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: He appealed it, An Bord Pleanala made the decision.

27 Cllr O'NEILL: They wouldn't have had to made the decision unless he appealed it.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's all the speakers. I would just make a quick comment before I let
29 Michael back in. Certainly I think that the overreliance on the private rental sector is absolute
30 madness, and it is Government policy. It's not anybody else. The Government have made a
31 conscious decision not to fund the construction of social houses. It's as simple as that. The rent,
32 the private rented sector is already clogged up with people who are waiting to buy houses
33 privately and they're not there, or can't get money from financial institutions to buy houses. So
34 the private rented sector is already congested with people, without the people on the social

1 housing list already. So the rented market is totally overheated already.

2
3 To add to that problem with people on the housing list is absolute madness in my view. The 1st
4 of January next, it's only going to get worse. It's only going to make the problem worse. I
5 would just hope we have some very important budgetary decisions to make, and I would just
6 hope that people are not populist and say on one hand that they're going to increase the housing
7 maintenance budget and on the other hand look to decrease our income from various means.
8 Now I have an open mind on the local property tax, but if we reduce it by 15%, the reality is we
9 are taking 2.53 million out of our budget. So if we do that, if we choose to do that as members,
10 it is going to be very difficult then to increase the levels of expenditure in any other sector,
11 including housing maintenance. That is the reality. So we have to give it a lot of consideration
12 and thought. Our budget is important insofar as we have to balance the books. Unlike the
13 Government, we cannot run a deficit. So just for the members to be conscious of that fact. We
14 cannot say on one hand we are going to increase the housing maintenance budget substantially,
15 and then seek to decrease our income in other sectors.

16
17 Okay, look I will let in the Director, a lot of what was said were statements, there wasn't a whole
18 lot of questions in there. I will let you in.

19 Director NICHOLSON: There were a few questions. A lot of the discussions, first of all, can I
20 thank all the members for their robust discussion on housing matters and certainly there is a lot
21 of food for thought there for the Housing SPC when it gets going again later on in the year.
22 Certainly a lot of the issues we will address through the Housing SPC, most of the issues were
23 more pertinent to the Housing SPC. A couple of specific questions that I will try and answer.
24 With regard to things like housing trusts and community led building projects, I suppose do we
25 have the capacity in-house to do it, absolutely not, we don't. When the house building
26 programme stopped, we lost a lot of our technical staff because we didn't need them, so we
27 would have no architectural staff, no quantity surveying staff and an awful lot less technical
28 staff. Even if the house building programme was relaunched tomorrow, we would have to
29 engage in either a major recruitment drive or farm out a lot of our work. Certainly the SPC will
30 look at those suggestions about community led approach and housing trusts.

31
32 A lot of questions about part 5, the policy of this Council was never to take money, the policy of
33 this Council was always to take housing units and failing housing units, we would take land.
34 And I wonder was that a good idea, because a lot of my colleagues took money from day one

1 when it suited them and managed to build up quite a large purse, which they could then use on
2 spending on other housing initiatives, so I don't know whether it was a good idea. I agree we
3 need the flexibility. There may be occasions where we don't need land in a particular area and it
4 might be more prudent to take money. I think I would like to leave that open to the particular
5 application. We shot ourselves in the foot on a couple of occasions by not taking money. We
6 could have used some of the money to deal with housing application grants for Council houses
7 had we had money in surplus and we didn't have.

8
9 Just a couple of other questions that were asked. Yeah Cllr Fitzgerald's specific question, I have
10 no authority to buy ten houses for Arklow Town Council, the planning permission was given to
11 Arklow Town Council and from their internal capital receipts which are now Wicklow County
12 Council's capital receipts, they're all the one. I am waiting to find out whether or not the overall
13 picture is in credit or debt. If I am instructed to buy ten houses Councillor, I would certainly buy
14 ten houses but I am waiting to see if we have the money to buy those ten houses, when all the
15 figures are amalgamated together.

16
17 With regard, I mentioned social houses and housing adaptation grants, I think we need a separate
18 fund for that. Bear in mind, if you go into housing, you take it off somewhere else, that's the
19 decision you have to take.

20
21 With regard to housing accommodation, Housing Assistance Payment in January, we won't be
22 taking sub-standard accommodation. We would have to inspect all the accommodation, and we
23 will only take accommodation that meets certain criteria and that in itself could lead to more
24 problems down the road. I suspect we will take all the accommodation on day one and bring all
25 landlords time to bring their accommodation up to scratch. I suspect there will be a lead-in to
26 allow us time to get all the accommodation up to scratch. Certainly any suggestion we would be
27 accepting sub-standard accommodation, we certainly won't be, we can't do that.

28
29 I will prepare for the SPC a list of all the lands that are owned by the Council. It's a very good
30 idea, we will look and see what we have. We have lands in most parts of the county. One thing
31 we have to check is whether we have water and sewage. Again I suppose the elephant in the
32 room is Irish Water, we have to make sure that we have the capacity to put in housing schemes
33 and we may check with Irish Water with regard to capacity of sewage and water systems, so we
34 will do that as well. Cllr Cullen says I have gone stale. As someone who has sat on the SPC for

1 the last ten years, I think he must have gone off completely!

2
3 The idea of allowing tenants to do their own repairs, this has often come up as a suggestion, but
4 we have to be very, very careful because we have health and safety obligations when we do a
5 house. If I allow a tenant to do their own repairs and they don't do it right and we get sued, I will
6 be sitting in the dock and asked why did you allow this unqualified tenant to do certain works?
7 It's not actually the solution because it leaves ourselves completely wide open. If we allow
8 someone to do repairs and they do it wrong, we will be crucified. It's fraught with danger, but
9 we will look at it.

10
11 I think, oh yeah, why are houses not being built? We have offered private site developments, we
12 do it every year, and while there is huge interest in people buying private sites and building their
13 own houses, they simply can't get the finance to build. That seems to be the problem. They can't
14 get loans to build the houses, that seems to be true this year. I think I have answered all the
15 questions, but all the other issues I will bring to the Housing SPC and come back with a report
16 on the land and land availability. Thank you Cathaoirleach.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Michael. I will let in the Manager.

18 COUNTY MANAGER: Chairman, the Government issued a document last week setting out its
19 priorities in the short to medium term. It listed six priorities and one of those was improving
20 housing availability and affordability, one of six priorities, so certainly Government are attaching
21 considerable priority to dealing with the housing crisis that is beginning to emerge.

22
23 The two pages of that ten page document are devoted to housing, and in particular, it says the
24 Government will examine the possibilities for a new and innovative roles for local authorities in
25 housing provision via means such as municipal housing committees and arms length
26 management organisations. So Government is examining that at the present time. They have
27 committed to publishing a social housing strategy later this year in the fourth quarter, and they're
28 also committed to ending homelessness and the need to sleep rough by 2016. The new Minister
29 for the Environment, Alan Kelly, met with the County and City Management Association last
30 week, and emphasised to us that he regarded the provision of housing as a very major priority
31 both for him and for the Government over the coming period, and we will get further details of
32 specific measures that the Government will use to deal with that problem.

33
34 In the meantime in the expectation and hope that there will be some new house building, I have

1 asked the Housing Director to carry out a review of the various housing sites that we own, and to
2 look at where they are from the point of view of starting work if a new house building
3 programme is given to us by Government.

4
5 The objective would be to make various sites shovel ready as early as possible to get them
6 through design, to get them through Part 8s and so on, so that if there is money available from
7 Government later this year or next year for housing construction, that we will be well positioned
8 to avail of that. And obviously to look at issues or obstacles that might prevent particular sites
9 going ahead. So I think the point made by the members that this is a major crisis is well made, I
10 think the Government and the Minister have already recognised that and have listed it as a
11 priority to be tackled and certainly so far as we are concerned within the County Council, we
12 will do everything possible with the finance that might be available from Government to
13 improve the supply of housing.

14
15 In relation to the point made bit Cathaoirleach, I think it's a very vital point, on one hand we
16 have members talking about the need to improve various services, including housing
17 maintenance and so on and the next item on the agenda is dealing with the local property tax,
18 and some members have already indicated the desire to reduce that by up to 15%. It's a matter
19 for the members. That's what the members were elected for, to make these choices, to decide on
20 priorities. But I take, it goes without saying, that if you reduce funding, you can't at the same
21 time improve services. If you want to improve services, improve facilities, deal with the various
22 issues that you have identified apart from calling on Government to provide funding and
23 providing money for the capital programme, there are issues that are within the control of this
24 Council itself, all it requires is for the members to take those decisions and to provide the
25 funding, and I think that's why it's so important that members understand the budgetary
26 constraints that we are working under and the options available to them and I thank the members
27 who were able to turn up this morning to the workshop and again as the Chairman said, we will
28 have a further workshop in September, so that the members are fully conversed with the choices
29 available to them and the implications of those choices they make, it is very important -
30 decisions in September and later on in November when they adopt the budget. Thanks
31 Chairman.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, okay just to bring this to a conclusion, okay, there was some
33 various proposals, correct me if I am wrong, Cllr Brady had proposed on the part 5 which the
34 planning SPC have agreed to look at through Cllr Blake as Chair. The housing trust element,

1 again we have passed Cllr Snell's Housing SPC to have a look at the aspects around that. Cllr
2 Cullen proposed that myself and Cllr Snell will meet the TDs, so I am prepared to do that along
3 with Cllr Snell. Cllr Behan proposed that we would declare this housing crisis an emergency,
4 that we would inform the Department of - the Department of such and also that other local
5 authorities would be informed of the same, so I am happy to second that, and do that.

6
7 Was there any other proposals? Cllr Fitzgerald.

8 Cllr FITZGERALD: I just want to come in on something else.

9 Cllr FORTUNE: I actually proposed that we would get the TDs into a meeting.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: If you allow Cllr Snell and myself to meet with the TDs and we will have
11 a discussion with them and see if they're available to attend here or have a good talk, we can
12 meet with them when they're available and we can certainly have a discussion with them.

13 Cllr BOURKE: I was suggesting you meet with the Minister for housing and environment at
14 some stage in the near future as well if at all possible.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Let's meet our own five TDs first and they may be able to throw some
16 light on the policy that the Manager has read out that's coming down the track. I think 2014 was
17 a date that was put on that policy, so that may be at an advanced stage, so maybe the TDs could
18 talk to us about that.

19
20 Was there any other proposals?

21 Cllr FITZGERALD: I just want an answer to my question, the Director states he has no
22 authority to buy ten houses. We were never told on that one point that this - we were told the
23 Council were going to be amalgamated, but there was no question of permission not being given
24 by them ten houses. I was in the Department, this shouldn't be an issue, 4.3 million goes into the
25 accounts of Wicklow County Council from internal capital receipts. There was never a question
26 of these ten houses not being purchased. It is quite annoying. I asked this question a month ago.
27 I still haven't got an answer. The Director has no authority to buy ten houses and now we are
28 going to get the answer that's swallowed in with the negative from the other Council.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Lorraine.

30 MS LYNCH: I will just come in on that, with the amalgamation of Town Councils, at the first
31 of June the assets and the liabilities of the Town Councils became the assets and liabilities of the
32 County Council under the Local Government Act. So the financial position needs to be analysed
33 and taken into account. When we look at the combined housing capital account of the new
34 Wicklow County Council, the amalgamated four local authorities, the account has a deficit of ten

1 million, that's net of any ACR in credits or whatever. That's ten million that we have to finance
2 out of our own resources. With that ten million sitting there as a deficit, we can't afford to buy
3 ten houses out of ACRs in Arklow unfortunately.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: I will let Cllr Brady in first.

5 Cllr BRADY: Cathaoirleach just on something totally separate, just on the two motions that I
6 proposed there, I would be happy to let them go to the SPCs, but on the part 5, it would be
7 interesting to get a breakdown on how many services we did get in lieu of rigidly enforcing the
8 part 5 and how many units we got from it as well. Just on the point made there by Cllr Bourke, I
9 think the letter that is going to the Department stating that this is a housing emergency, I think
10 we should also ask the new housing Minister to meet a cross party delegation from the Council
11 to hit home the point, because the Chief Executive read out the - this Government's short-term
12 objectives and housing is one of them. Unfortunately Alan Kelly's predecessor Jan O'Sullivan
13 refused to meet the Council. I think if they are serious about dealing with this emergency, the
14 least they could do is meet with a cross party delegation, we can meet the five TDs, but they
15 don't have policy control at their hands. So I think the letter going to the department should also
16 ask that we have a meeting with the new Minister.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: I have no issue with that: Cllr Fortune.

18 Cllr FORTUNE: I am a bit concerned being told that in answer to Cllr Fitzgerald that there is -
19 we are in the red for ten million, when we have amalgamated all the stuff from the other Town
20 Councils. We are after having a meeting for the last three hours, there has been lots of
21 contributions and if I understood her correctly, that 10 million is going to have to be found when
22 we sit down to sort out budgets and various things and I think the answer back to Cllr Fitzgerald
23 was that well there won't be any money there for those ten houses. I just think, this is one of the
24 comments I made when I made my contribution, you see this is what happens, we have these
25 debates, all the councils with the best will in the world put forward their best foot, say come on
26 let's get this done, then we get told that. That's the reason why I abstained on the figures earlier
27 on, because we are not being given the full information when stuff is being given to us - in my
28 view. If I am mistaken let someone explain to me where I am wrong, and I will accept it, but
29 that's the perception I have. When we asked the question earlier on, I asked earlier on, there was
30 none of the property tax came to us in 2013, but I did ask the question how much went over to
31 Irish Water. That question wasn't answered. That's why I abstained. So we have got to stop
32 playing word games and let's be fair about all this stuff. Because it's just crazy. I mean we are
33 after talking to the Director for the last few hours, he is after answering us back and based on
34 what Miss Lynch has said in two seconds, what's going on, are we going to go off and talk to the

1 Ministers about this. I think we need to get real about what we are at.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Cullen.

3 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Chairman, sorry, Chairman, I made a proposal that, I know Councillors
4 said we are going to meet the five TDs, but the only TD with power, financial power, is Deputy
5 Simon Harris and he is the Wicklow TD. Now I am sure Michael Noonan is - when the
6 Department of the Environment go looking for money, they have to go to the Department of
7 Finance first, and the Department of Finance gives the Department of the Environment their
8 allocation. Now I am being brutal about it, but I am being truthful about it that I am sure
9 Michael Noonan is going to look after Limerick County Council or corporation or whatever they
10 have down there and I think if you look next year at their capital housing allocation, it will be
11 quite significant, but the Department of Environment will also have to go to Deputy Simon
12 Harris, as deputy in the Department of Finance and he is going to have a say in what the capital
13 allocation is, and I think that Deputy Harris should be our first port of call. He is the guy who is
14 going to be helping signing the cheques in the Department of the Environment for housing and
15 he is a Wicklow TD and we are fortunate that he is now a Minister in a very important position
16 over the money, and I think if you are, if anyone has any bit of sense, the first man you would go
17 to is the man with the money bags and that's Deputy Harris. Harris has the money and we are
18 looking to build houses for people and I think we should stop fluting around the countryside and
19 giving out about everybody when we have a Minister 20 mile up the road who has the money
20 bags who is going to be signing the cheques for the Department of the Environment, that's the
21 man we should be going to get an allocation for Co Wicklow and I think we should be, in
22 fairness to him, we should give him that chance. I think Simon, Deputy Harris was a Councillor
23 here in this Council, he was a very good Councillor and I think he has been, he appears to me to
24 be a very effective - he knows how to get things done and I am sure he will put the best interests
25 of Wicklow to the fore, but I think in fairness you should go Chairman as a matter of urgency
26 with Councillor, anyone else there, and go and meet Deputy Harris and ask can you make an
27 allocation to the Department of the Environment and all the sneer and jeers around here is not
28 going to change the reality that he is the Minister over the money bags, he is the man who can
29 deliver the money for Wicklow and he is one of our TDs, but he is also more than a TD, he is
30 now the deputy Minister in the most important portfolio in the cabinet, finance, and we should
31 be going to that man. That's the first man you should be going to. If anyone has any common
32 sense, you follow the money, he has the money, we are looking for it for building houses. And if
33 we are serious about dealing with the housing crisis in this county and the only way to do that is
34 to get money, let's at least show Minister Harris respect and go and send a deputation to him and

1 I would ask you to do that as a matter of urgency.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Murphy.

3 Cllr MURPHY: I secondly would like to support our Chairman of Arklow municipal, Cllr
4 Fitzgerald. I mean these ten houses, we have listened to this for the last probably three or four
5 year, and this, these ten houses was a shining little light of hope for ten families in Arklow. And
6 now these people are going to be thrown aside because they're put into a bigger pot, out of no
7 fault of their own. I am sorry, that's not acceptable. And it's certainly as Cllr Fortune has said,
8 we have sat here for two and a half hours, and we have all got maybe a little bit of hope saying
9 Wicklow County Council are going to do something, either by communication on paper or by
10 visiting our TDs. It's not enough. I am sorry, it's not enough. And I would like to propose that
11 the chairpersons of the municipal groups and yourself and the housing officer go together as one.
12 Because then each area can fight for their corner.

13

14 But we also need copies of anything that's going to be sent out to the TDs, because we all need to
15 be singing out of the one hymn sheet. And that's the problem here. Some of us are not singing
16 out of the one hymn sheet. But I think from here on in, today, is a sign that we need to follow up
17 immediately, immediately, the housing crisis, and that we all sing out of the same hymn sheet.

18 Cllr FITZGERALD: Could I just ask Chairman for the next meeting what total finance came
19 across from Arklow Town Council other than the 4.3 million. There is a bigger figure than that
20 came across. The financial statement up to the end of May.

21 MS LYNCH: The net finances on the housing side is 3.9 million.

22 Cllr FITZGERALD: Yes and what other monies came over?

23 MS LYNCH: I don't have it in front of me, sorry, all the assets and all the liabilities --

24 Cllr FITZGERALD: The assets exceed the liabilities by more than 3.9 million.

25 MS LYNCH: Arklow Town Council also put across a deficit, so it's assets and liabilities.

26 Cllr FITZGERALD: I understand that.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Whitmore.

28 Cllr WHITMORE: I am going to take a step back, you asked about proposals. I don't think Cllr
29 Mitchell put it as a formal proposal, but I think it was a good suggestion that we look at land that
30 has been zoned and has planning permission on it and could we encourage developers to come
31 and build on that land and maybe the SPC could look at that when discussing policy issues. Just
32 in relation to the SPC, it's just occurred to me that it could be two or three months before that's
33 established, is that correct, so I suppose we will be talking today about, this is an emergency, we
34 are in a crisis and I am wondering whether there is a possibility to get that group up and running

1 a lot quicker. The other SPCs, there is not as much of an urgency to get them moving but with
2 the Housing SPC, I think that would be got to get that up and running as soon as possible.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's down for...

4 MS GALLAGHER: 22nd August, it will be the first week in September, the 8th of September.

5 Cllr VANCE: Chairman, there is nothing to stop the chairpersons of the SPCs in doing
6 something and reporting back to the SPC, so they can be working for the next few months
7 themselves. They know what the feelings of the Council are. So rather than waste time, because
8 you just can't do it because it has to go out to public display, it has to be ratified by the members
9 of the Council and various things like that, but there is nothing to stop the Chairman or the
10 chairpersons of the SPCs who have been nominated, so they can go and work and meet with
11 yourselves who they have to meet.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: It's on public display until 22nd August, the SPC, draft SPC scheme.

13 Cllr BRADY: Cathaoirleach, I am conscious of the time there, now I have a written question
14 down, I think thought it would come up under Irish Water and I think it's very important that we
15 get an answer on that and also the letter there to the Israeli ambassador as well. I would like to
16 get those dealt with before we finish the meeting, and I know, I mean this is a very, very serious
17 issue that we are dealing with and I don't want to rush it, so if we need a time extension to deal
18 with those issues --

19 Cllr VANCE: Too late.

20 Cllr BRADY: Sorry, you are not the Chair, he is.

21 Cllr VANCE: It's too late, it doesn't matter who is in the Chair.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am happy...

23 Cllr BRADY: You had your time in the Chair.

24 Cllr VANCE: You should take example about who is in the Chair as well.

25 Cllr BRADY: Oh I will. You will learn.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am happy to make a decision on the letter that's been circulated, but we
27 will probably need a roll call, we haven't got consensus on this, whether to send this letter that
28 has been submitted by Cllr Brady or not, so we will take a roll call, everybody has a copy.

29 Cllr MITCHELL: I can't even read it. And I think dealing with Irish Water is much more
30 important than dealing with Gaza or somewhere, where we have no authority whatsoever. We
31 have little authority over Irish Water, never mind somewhere out in the Middle East.

32 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Before you go anywhere or leave any subject, I made a proposal that
33 yourself and whoever you like would go and meet...

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: That was agreed.

1 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: To meet Deputy Harris or Minister Harris, because the estimates are
2 now being prepared for September for the Department of the environment for the October
3 estimates, so I think it's critically important that a delegation would go to him in his office as
4 Minister, okay people can say you go and see other TDs, there is no-one stopping that either, but
5 there is the protocol that he is a Minister and that protocol should be respected and I want to
6 formally propose Chairman that you would lead a delegation yourself and maybe Cllr Snell to go
7 and meet Minister Harris on a one-off to see what could he do to help. I propose that if I have a
8 seconder.

9 Cllr WINTERS: I will second that.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Well look, I will make contact with Deputy Harris, and if he wants to
11 meet on his own or with the other TDs, I am sure Cllr Snell and myself will be flexible on that. I
12 am going to have to get that letter printed up.

13 Cllr BRADY: Can I read it out Cathaoirleach. It was written in quite a hurry, I will read it out,
14 it's important, as we sat here another five Palestinians were killed.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, I am moving on with the agenda.

16 Cllr BRADY: Sorry, can I read it out then.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: No, I thought we could handle it quickly. Item number three, discussion
18 -- I am moving on to Irish Water, you are wasting time, come on.

19 Cllr BRADY: That's typical.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Item number three, discussion of Irish Water.

21 Cllr MITCHELL: Cathaoirleach.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Hold on, we have a letter to read out first, we did request that somebody
23 from Irish Water would come make presentation or come and meet us, but ...

24 MS GALLAGHER: Cathaoirleach, this matter was brought up as a suspension of standing
25 orders at the last meeting in relation to the absence of any out of hours emergency cover to fix
26 water leaks and at that time the elected members wanted a representative to attend this meeting.
27 They requested via the environmental offices and the response has come back, "Many thanks for
28 your query in taking my call this afternoon. I have spoken to Elizabeth regarding your request
29 and unfortunately Irish Water is not in a position to attend Council meetings at the moment as
30 there are approximately 31 Local Authority meetings each month. We do not have the resources
31 to attend. Should Councillors have any specific queries they'd like addressed, we have a local
32 representative support desk that deals specifically with any queries from local representatives,
33 they can be contacted by emailing localrepsupport@water.ie or call 1890278278 and ask to
34 speak to the local representative support desk."

1 Cllr FORTUNE: What was the email you called out?

2 MS GALLAGHER: Localrepsupport@water.ie.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Mitchell.

4 Cllr MITCHELL: One short-term and one longer term issue to do with Irish Water. The first
5 problem is that on the 27th of May, the local, the new secondary school being built in
6 Greystones applied for water. They still haven't got it today, which is eight weeks later. The
7 school is being built in 15 weeks and is to open on approximately the 1st of September, that's
8 seven weeks to go. Now it seems to me as if to take eight weeks to provide water and so far it's
9 been all bureaucracy, there has been nobody with a shovel or spanner has turned up, eight weeks
10 in bureaucracy with Irish Water trying to get water for what is an expensive national project to
11 build a new school is excessive. It seems to me Irish Water are expecting the children to bring
12 the water with them on the first day in September. I don't understand how it can take so long to
13 provide water. That's the first thing.

14

15 The second thing is I put down a motion together with Cllr McLoughlin for the next meeting of
16 the Council, and I would like us to ask Irish Water to produce a written report on the investment
17 and timeframe needed to eliminate water shortages, which have occurred during the annual
18 spring algae season, also to identify how future shortages will be spread across the entire water
19 region instead of being confined to North Wicklow, the source of most of the region's water.
20 The recent water shortage which occurred due to these recent annual algae, which was provided
21 to the entire county which provides all the water to the Dublin region, it affected Greystones in
22 particular, but also affected the areas of Delgany, Enniskerry, and Kilmacanogue. It's
23 completely unacceptable that the shortage was restricted to the area which produces the water for
24 the whole of the Dublin region. I note from the procedures of Irish Water which was circulated
25 to us, that they won't answer motions from area committees or municipal districts, they'll only do
26 it for the full Council, which is why I have asked for this to go through. So I would like to ask
27 for a written report on the investment and timeframe needed and also how they're going to
28 spread the future shortages across the entire region.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Cllr Fortune, it's five to five.

30 Cllr FORTUNE: Very quickly, I will be very quickly.

31 Cllr BRADY: Cathaoirleach, can I ask that the written question be dealt with before the end of
32 the meeting.

33 Cllr FORTUNE: Can I get a response through somebody in the executive of why we are not
34 officially having a contact in Irish Water for Wicklow. That's what I was told when I rang them.

1 That's number one.

2
3 Number two, at least for our September meeting, can I have some kind of explanation on the
4 structure and set-up of Irish Water, because there is an article in one of yesterday - Sunday's
5 papers that stated, listed all kinds of people that are involved as supposed to have offshore set-up
6 and etcetera, etcetera. So I think it's important we as public representatives dealing with such a
7 serious resource as water, it's very vague what the whole set-up is. I had an experience where I
8 rang them for a resident in Greystones and at the end of the phone they asked me was Greystones
9 in Kildare. They need to be basically educated on geography as well. The structure of the
10 organisation, who they are, how they're related to the whole company organisation, how that's all
11 done, I would like an explanation of that at the next meeting. I think what was in the paper, if
12 it's accurate was quite concerning, particularly in regard to cost. We are going to be talking
13 about cost and water charges and everything else and the budget and everything else. What
14 controls are in there, are they going to be flying up, there is a lot of ridiculous stuff in the papers
15 about water being reduced to children. We need answers to all of that and I would like that done
16 very properly and thoroughly at the September meeting. I would like somebody to second that.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: There is a few Councillors indicated to speak. We will put this item back
18 on the agenda for next week with your indulgence we will leave it now, we haven't time, we
19 have run out of time, we will get the urgent question answered, and that's it for - we are three
20 minutes to five, we have an urgent question in, we have Irish Water put back on the agenda.

21 Cllr WINTERS: If I send in a question about Irish Water rather than putting it in in September,
22 if I send it in now, can I get an answer in September?

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah, okay. Just finish with an answer to the urgent question.

24 Cllr BRADY: It was an email initially sent to the Bray Municipal District Cathaoirleach just in
25 relation to a serious fire in Bray last Wednesday where seven businesses were burnt to the
26 ground and a serious concern was expressed by fire fighters and locals that there was serious,
27 serious difficulties with water pressure in the area that may have allowed the fire to spread and
28 grow because of the serious situation. So it was referred from Bray to the environment section
29 here, so I just asked for it to be taken as a written question.

30 MS GALLAGHER: Okay, this is in response to the question, the main fire engine which
31 operated the fire is fitted with a series of water meters that records the flow of water into the
32 main pump, and the flow of water out and the pump indicated that it was receiving a supply of
33 750 litres of water per minute or three quarters a metre tonne of water per minute. In addition a
34 second fire engine was operated to go the rear of the building using the same water system from

1 the town mains in the area it is estimated that it was using in the region of 200 litres per minute.
2 Due to the nature of the site, the need to operate fire crews and fire engines in different locations,
3 three separate fire hydrants were connected to the fire pumps, this ensured a maximum supply
4 from the main water system was achieved. As is standard practice for large fires, a water tanker
5 from Greystones was also at the scene to back up the main supply to augment the supply that
6 was required and to provide a reserve on site, so as not to interfere with the supply to the fire
7 engines as the fire in the water tanker was filled on the south side of Bray. This was particularly
8 useful when the hydraulic platform was delivering additional water at the high level. It's
9 estimated that peak usage of one tonne of water per minute, water services in Wicklow County
10 Council have indicated that 400 tonnes of water was used at the incident. Personnel were at the
11 incident and assured water supplies on the area were focused on the location of the fire. Fire
12 services are not generally concerned about the water pressure at an incident. The flow of water
13 and the pressure can be boosted by the large water pumps integrating the fire engines. At no
14 time was the water supply considered inadequate for the circumstances." (Quoted).

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you members. See you at the next meeting.

16
17 The meeting concluded
18

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