

# WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



Wicklow County Council  
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTAIN

## **Transcript of the County Council Meeting Held on 11 May 2015 In the County Council Chamber, Wicklow**



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



Telephone ..... (0404) 64355  
Fax ..... (0404) 64354  
Email ..... [info@pcr.ie](mailto:info@pcr.ie)  
Website ..... [www.pcr.ie](http://www.pcr.ie)

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6  
7 Wicklow County Council meeting, 11th of May 2015:

8  
9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon members. Take your seats and we'll make a start. Have I  
10 any votes of sympathy? No? Okay. Cllr Fortune

11 Cllr FORTUNE: Suspension of standing orders?

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah okay.

13 Cllr FORTUNE: Chair I put in two suspensions, one was to discuss the development at  
14 Blacklion Greystones, what I'll do is withdraw it as a suspension and refer it on to SPC, just if I  
15 maybe comment?

16  
17 The section members of the municipal district in grey stones have put in the following motion.  
18 Conscious of the fact that planning has an important role in promoting active and healthy living  
19 patterns for local communities Greystones municipal Council..." (Quoted). Now what I'm asking  
20 chair is we're looking for agreement from the members that the issue be referred to the next SPC  
21 for variation and then brought back to the next full Council meeting.

22  
23 I don't think we have a member from the district council on the planning SPC, so we're asking  
24 that we be allowed have a representative attend that meeting? I'm asking the group of members  
25 on that?

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: I would suggest that all Greystones members would be invited to discuss  
27 it at SPC level, if the members are happy it send it to the SPC? Maybe the Chairman Blake  
28 could extend an invitation to the Greystones members?

29 Cllr BLAKE: Yeah, it's open to any member to attend the SPC meeting, certainly no member of  
30 Greystones on the SPC, but it would be only appropriate that all six members or whatever  
31 members want to attend as such. But I hope that some progress can be made at the meeting  
32 rather than just delaying the whole aspect of the understanding of whatever the problem is in  
33 relation to planning or designation of that particular area, thank you Chairman.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

1 Cllr FORTUNE: Can I deal with the second one now? I'm also asking for a suspension of  
2 standing orders to discuss the attachment order that's put in place in the last week by Dáil  
3 Éireann, and its impact on tenants in Wicklow County Council, I won't go into it now, I'm  
4 conscious of things in our tenants handbook and various things like that and the impact it will  
5 have on people, I've had a number of calls I'm sure other members have had, people are  
6 concerned and frightened I'd like to have it discussed. If not possible to discuss it today maybe  
7 we can have a separate meeting to deal with it

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay is that agreed? Okay. We'll say quarter to five if the meeting  
9 doesn't finish sooner, at the end of the meeting.

10  
11 Okay item number 1, consider disposal of the interest in the property at Scott Park Bray to  
12 Katherine Owens. Proposed by Cllr Vance seconded by Cllr Matthews. Agreed?

13  
14 Item 2 to consider the report in accordance with Planning Act part 8 of the planning and  
15 development regulations in respect of construction of a play ground and recreation area in the  
16 townland of Merrymeeting in Rathnew.

17 Cllr SNELL: I propose that Chairman.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Cllr Snell, seconded by Cllr Casey, we have to take a roll  
19 call on that, okay?

20  
21 (Vote taken)

22  
23 MS GALLAGHER: 25 for and 7 not present.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

25 Cllr SNELL: Could I just thank the members for their support on this part 8, it's to be  
26 welcomed, I'd like to thank Wicklow County Council for their input to date on this project, it's  
27 something that's been lacking in the area of Rathnew for many, many years. The last playground  
28 we had went back to the 1970s, so it's a vastly built up area as people know, and it will enhance  
29 the area and bring great joy to the young people of Rathnew, it's a skate park with BMX  
30 facilities, small playground park in an area known as the old village. In an archaeologist's dig  
31 last week Cathaoirleach, unearthed was what goes back to the Bronze Age, a burnt mound it's  
32 known as, unfortunately it isn't a rarity, because there was 22 of them unearthed on the N11 on  
33 the Newtownmountkennedy bypass. When I consulted with the people who done the dig  
34 unfortunately they had to be covered up, so it will add to the whole area, it will be

1 commemorated and there will be a plaque to commemorate that Bronze Age find, but  
2 unfortunately there was no skeletons! Thanks Cathaoirleach.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks councillor, certainly it was great to see the playground open on  
4 the Murrough this week, later tomorrow actually the playground in Ballywaltrim in Bray will be  
5 open as well, so it's good to see. Okay we'll move on, item number 3, we have two parts to this  
6 okay. Brid Kilkenny will give the first part, to do with the social -- construction of social  
7 housing end of things, secondly Margaret Malone will give an update on homelessness situation.

8 MS KILKENNY: Good afternoon, my presentation to you the elected members of Wicklow  
9 County Council this afternoon on the social housing strategy 2020 given all the information  
10 that's been coming to us on, almost like a daily and weekly basis, I thought it might be an  
11 opportune time, we wanted to do this anyway, but because the goal posts keep changing we said  
12 we may as well do it now given that we have been given our housing construction allocation.

13  
14 So just like I said to you, the information from the department in respect of delivery of this  
15 strategy is being issued on a daily basis, so throughout my presentation I'll identify some gaps  
16 because we're not actually sure what's happening yet.

17  
18 So the background to the social housing strategy has come on, on a decade of transition, literally  
19 from the highs of the boom in 2005 to the more recent very little construction at all in the last  
20 number of years. There's also been a number of housing policy statements in this period, 2005  
21 right through 2013, and another aspect is that there's been increasing role of the approved  
22 housing bodies, our SPC made just before lunchtime, we had a presentation for one of the  
23 approved housing bodies, this would seem to be something that's coming in the future.

24  
25 There's also been over this period, there's also been a lot more housing provision through the  
26 private sector which was seen through RAS and other schemes. So the new housing strategy as  
27 the document is presented, this isn't my information, builds on the previous policies and seeks to  
28 support the national housing strategy for people with disabilities and also implementation of the  
29 State's response to homelessness.

30  
31 Housing expenditure since 2007 has dropped off dramatically. And I've just outlined the figures  
32 in 2008 there was 1.7 billion in expenditure, 6,000 units were completed or acquired. In 2013  
33 this figure dropped to 600 million and only 500 units were acquired. Just to go back on that, you  
34 can see the drop off.

1  
2 In other social housing provision has been provided through RAS and long-term social leasing.  
3 So there are difficulties with these schemes, one is that it's very dependant on the private rental  
4 sector, it is administratively very resource heavy. The RAS and RAS type agreements we have  
5 506 units, these are three-way contracts between local authority, landlord and tenant and you  
6 may have heard on the news this morning the availability of units in County Wicklow is very  
7 low. Long-term leasing we have 20 units, 16 of those in Bray and this is where we're in  
8 agreement with group housing body at Sunbeam House in Bray is one example, again these are  
9 in short supply.

10  
11 Other means of social housing that we can obtain is through part 5 process, again this is limited  
12 in Wicklow. The CAS, Capital Assistance Scheme, I know many of you may not be familiar  
13 with this, we don't have that many in Wicklow, but there's a lot coming on stream now. And this  
14 is for target groups like people with special needs, older people, people with disability, the  
15 homeless and traveller accommodation.

16  
17 The final scheme is called CALF, Capital Advance Leasing Facility, and again our presenter  
18 from this morning outlined they source 30% of their funding and 70% they try to raise in the  
19 private sector. So there's limited take up of this because the approved housing bodies under CAS  
20 get 100% and under this they get 30%.

21  
22 In 2013 a housing needs assessment was carried out and 90,000 households throughout the  
23 country indicated they have a housing need. 72% of this total show their only source of income  
24 was from social welfare. This diagram is just taken directly from the housing strategy indicating  
25 the break down of that, so you can see 42% is in the single person category, so there's been a  
26 change in housing need, years ago you were looking for two and three-bedroom houses, now it's  
27 more like one and two bedroom units.

28  
29 So the social housing strategy appears to be an attempt to address this huge need of 90,000  
30 households. It's broken into three pillars. Pillar 1 is the housing supply, that's the provision of  
31 units. The second is housing support, under the private rental sector. And pillar 3 is policy  
32 reform, they've got to do with housing provision full stop.

33  
34 Under pillar 1, I'm just going to go through the national document first and then I will address it

1 in terms of the implications for Wicklow, that will be after I do a break down of the document.  
2 So under pillar 1 it's for provision of 35,000 units by 2020. This will be provided through  
3 construction, acquisition, leasing, refurbishment, under part 5 and through NAMA special  
4 purpose vehicle. Strategy delivery is over two phases, phase 1 is current time between 2015 to  
5 2017 provision for 18,000 units and phase 2 -- these are the targets, to 2020 of 17,000.

6  
7 Under supply the expected delivery is as demonstrated, you will see that the top part of the graph  
8 in red is what they call current expenditure and blue is called capital. I had to try and get my  
9 head around this myself. So capital and current -- capital is reliance on Exchequer funding,  
10 purely coming from government funding. Current is off government balance sheet funding  
11 mechanisms.

12  
13 So in essence I wrote this down so I would remember it! It's basically trying to maximise  
14 funding through leverage of your assets. So that you use your assets to raise finance from  
15 sources other than the Exchequer, so that's where you have assets you use those in order to try  
16 and borrow money from banks or the European Investment Bank, or other financial institutions,  
17 you have to demonstrate that you are a worthy person, that you can generate, that you are worthy  
18 of being given a loan. So that is the tendency for the government, they want to move away from  
19 full on capital expenditure, to move over to these off government balance sheets.

20  
21 Under phase 1 between 2015 to 17 they are hoping to get 18,000 units, the capital spend is for  
22 7,000 and they are starting the move towards current of 11,000. This becomes greater then in the  
23 second phase of the delivery showing capital of 5,000 units but current still up at 12,000. Just to  
24 go back on the graph you can see the red bar is bigger than blue and currently even this year it's  
25 like a 40 to 60% split.

26  
27 Just a little more on-off government balance sheet funding. NAMA has developed a special  
28 purchase vehicle that's NARPS, National Asset Residential Property Service, basically it's like I  
29 said, NAMA is able to - they are looking at houses that are coming under debtor or receivership  
30 and making them available for social housing, that's the vehicle that's just set up. They are also  
31 looking at public private partnerships, this is where there will be partnerships between the  
32 private bodies to design, build and manage housing units that they will look after those for 25  
33 year period and return the asset at that time. And the other item they are looking for is this  
34 financial vehicle for the approved housing body it's, because without that they won't be able to

1 raise the sufficient funding, so the government are looking at all those currently. This comes  
2 under pillar 1 of the strategy.

3  
4 Other aspects of pillar 1 include -- I've just added these in at the end, they don't particularly  
5 affect us, Dublin social housing delivery task force, to deliver the housing need in the four local  
6 authorities, that's a special unit. Also existing stock, they are looking at voids, it doesn't apply to  
7 Wicklow, because up until the amalgamation, our section had wiped out voids, voids being  
8 defined as any unit that is over six months vacant. We had targeted that over the last number of  
9 years, we only had 11 units that were there as casual vacancies, but as I said to the SPC this  
10 morning, we are using funding provided for voids in particular to get some money back on our re  
11 letting, some of our properties coming back in require massive upgrades and at least there is  
12 some funding under that system. Following amalgamation we do have long-term voids in  
13 Wicklow and Bray that we are tackling and hopefully we'll have those completed by the end of  
14 this year. Also under pillar 1 supply there is also this enhanced role for approved housing  
15 bodies, that aspect, they are going to need to be more involved, they are the vehicle through  
16 which the government will be able to provide housing without having to touch the Exchequer.

17  
18 Pillar 2 is in relation to housing support. So within the country there are three main providers of  
19 social housing accommodation. The local authorities are by and large the greatest provision of  
20 social housing with 137,000 units, out of this 112,000 is by direct provision and 25,000 through  
21 RAS and other leasing mechanisms. Approved housing bodies are responsible for 27,000 in  
22 total and the private rental sector supports 75,000 households that are under rent supplement.

23  
24 Again taken directly from the strategy, this is the pie chart and you will see that if you add both  
25 the local authority stock and RAS units it's more than half, currently operated, but that is going  
26 to change the approved housing body, given the targets in the strategy, they are probably going  
27 to double that.

28  
29 So pillar 2 is housing support through private rental sector. So under phase 1 their target is  
30 32,000 units and this is to, there's a new scheme housing pact, I don't know if you had any  
31 information on that. The end of the slide I just have a breakdown of what it actually involves.  
32 Wicklow County Council aren't part of it yet, but as it's coming down the line there are a number  
33 of pilot local authorities have put HAP in place, but essentially it's moving people from rent  
34 supplement into HAP, still private sector but a different mechanism.

1  
2 So under the strategy the government hope to get 28,000 units within HAP between 2015 and  
3 17, and 4,000 under RAS. And in phase 2 you will see they are dropping off support for RAS  
4 and more towards HAP. That's demonstrated on this graph, again this is taken directly from the  
5 housing strategy itself, so you can see 2015 there is a lot more RAS units and by 2020 they hope  
6 most of the people will be in what's called the HAP payment section.

7  
8 So HAP is defined as Housing Assistance Payment, it's currently being piloted in a number of  
9 local authorities, where the tenant sources their own accommodation, the local authority pays the  
10 landlord, tenant pays a differential rent to local authority, the tenant can work full-time, that's the  
11 big plus in this scheme, that people who are, who want to work full-time are able to without loss  
12 of benefit. The negative is from their sense, housing need is considered to be met. They can still  
13 be on the transfer list but their housing need is considered met.

14  
15 The last pillar, I have just one slide on this, just to cover the strategy, in the area of reform there  
16 is a bit of detail in the strategy document but they are items the government are working on at  
17 present, so there is going to be a new national differential rent scheme, which means it will be  
18 standardised throughout the country. They are looking at new tenant purchase schemes, people  
19 will be looking to buy their property, looking at schemes for that. There is going to be new  
20 powers to deal with anti-social behaviour. There is a move towards choice based lettings, a bit  
21 like the HAP scheme, people choosing their own property or being offered property that they  
22 may be interested in. A housing passport is where people can be assessed for housing need in  
23 one local authority but maybe housed in another, that's being proposed also. There will be a  
24 revision in terms of part 5 in the forthcoming planning bill. There's going fob new housing  
25 assessment and allocation regulations under HAP. In addition to that there is the housing service  
26 plans, this is our service delivery plans, they will also be looked at and monitored over time.

27  
28 Just turning to Wicklow County Council now, as I say this is just the information we have been  
29 getting over the last couple of weeks and trying to put it together to let you know what is  
30 happening, then in the context of the information given to us last week in terms of Dunlavin,  
31 Rathdrum.

32  
33 So under capital expenditure, under phase 1 capital if you remember is Exchequer funding, our  
34 target over the period to 2017 is the only one I'm looking at now is for 438 units with a capital



1 budget set aside of 31 million. The 438 units is both capital and current. Under capital  
2 programme it's 156 units and we just recently were told that the allocation in monetary terms is  
3 28.9 million. So our construction by local authority is 50 units we were just notified last week,  
4 20 in Rathdrum and 30 in Dunlavin, and that's at a cost of 8.2 million. We also fall under voids  
5 programme 40 unit the average is 30,000 per unit giving 1.2 million, if you look at that figure we  
6 still have 66 units in this current programme that leaves us about 20 million, so in our  
7 discussions with the Department with regard to the allocation which I would like to say to you  
8 today that just landed with us, we were preparing our submission, we haven't met the  
9 Department yet, we were on their agenda to meet them, but we just hadn't, we got that  
10 notification of that allocation.

11  
12 But in our discussions with them, what they said is you still have 20 million and we can still look  
13 at the other sites and land that we have available to progress projects where we believe that there  
14 is more of a need. We still have the 20 million. And in addition to that with looking at that 20  
15 million we can look in terms of acquisition, if we get approval for CAS or as I said for  
16 construction. I hope that's clear?

17  
18 The point they are trying to make to us this morning is don't get hung up on just the, that's the  
19 only units we are going to get over the next couple of years it's not. We can still proceed with  
20 the sites and once we have our meeting with the Department it will be up to us to demonstrate  
21 where greatest need is.

22  
23 The current expenditure over the phase 2015 to '17 the 438 units is broken down over the current  
24 programme of 192 units, so this current programme again all has to do with expenditure, they  
25 can be achieved by leasing by local authority, either leasing, construction or acquisition by the  
26 approved housing bodies, so the target for Wicklow for 2015, just current year is 50, it will only  
27 be leasing, if you look at that number they are issuing us 28 million, it will only be a small  
28 number. So transfer to current expenditure within the next couple of years isn't going to happen,  
29 it will be mainly to do with leasing.

30  
31 So under pillar 2 is RAS support so for 2015 we have allocation for RAS units 45, again that's a  
32 difficult target given the market supply in the county. So Wicklow County Council under HAP  
33 support, we are not part of HAP yet.

1 So summary for Wicklow County Council in the next period 2015 to 2017 is under capital we  
2 have 156 units, out of those we have now 50 for capital construction by the local authority. The  
3 current is for 192 units, that SHCEP, they keep giving acronyms, Social Housing Current  
4 Expenditure Programme, so that's when they are going to start the shift from capital to current.  
5 So that gives us a total of 348 units under pillar 1, under pillar 2 we have RAS units of 90 over  
6 the period with 45 allocated this year, that gives the total of 438.

7  
8 So the full allocation for Wicklow from 2015 to 2017 is 438 units and 31 million.

9  
10 I just wanted to say something in relation to capital construction. When I show the units the 500  
11 units that were built in 2013, in 2014 Wicklow County Council built one but I want to let you  
12 know it isn't that we haven't been doing anything! We have tapped into as much as any available  
13 source of funding to work on our existing stock and deal with problem areas in the county. So in  
14 2014 under fabric upgrade works we made improvements to 274 units, we intend to continue  
15 with that programme this year, as you are aware we are moving into, now with the amalgamation  
16 we have taken in a lot more units that require phase 1 works before we move on to phase 2.

17  
18 We also applied for SEAI grant for better energy communities those of you who live close to  
19 Newtownmountkennedy know we did a lot of upgrade works, 64 units in Mountain View and  
20 Sycamore Drive estates.

21  
22 In addition to that pending remediation 15 units have been returned out of that 12 were never  
23 occupied, that wasn't all done in 2014, that programme started in end of 2012. Last year we  
24 returned 72 units under re letting scheme and we actually hope to better that this year because we  
25 have taken in the extra from Wicklow and Bray, which will be added to improvements. And we  
26 did one traveller, actually an extension to traveller accommodation in Ballintekin.

27  
28 So challenges ahead falling out of this strategy are as follows. Immediate challenges is local  
29 authority staffing, we did put in requests for senior executive architect, executive architect and  
30 executive QS. The QS will be starting in a month's time, I would prefer they got the architect up  
31 and running first, we haven't got sanction for executive architect we do have sanction for senior  
32 executive architect but that's a temporary post, I'm hoping there will be some news on that  
33 shortly.

1 Another challenge is procurement delays, at the moment, we had a number of strands to try and  
2 tackle the work we thought was coming down, we advertised for architect led multi-party  
3 framework for architects and we had 27 submissions and we have to come up with 8, and it has  
4 filled half my office, the submissions and amount of detail that has to go through even to bring  
5 that to a stage that we can set it out to set up, that's just consultancy end. We are now going to  
6 try and procure contractors again through a framework for the schemes. Many of you will know  
7 we currently have a framework, but it's only for upgrade works and re letting works, the scale of  
8 work required under this programme will require much more detailed programme and also the  
9 quantum of money involved will be quite considerable.

10  
11 Another challenge is the supply of private rental market I mentioned that already. And the other  
12 one I think is capacity of the approved housing bodies, as shown on earlier slide they have  
13 provision for 27,000, we are effectively asking them to double the work they are doing. The  
14 only thing I would say is some of the bigger ones have been getting themselves geared up, in  
15 some respects they are a good bit further in terms of their capability than the local authorities are,  
16 because lots have design teams and a lot of them have procured their contracting teams over the  
17 last number of years, because they could see this coming down the line.

18  
19 Just to say the approved housing bodies come under the same procurement constraints that we'll  
20 have, has to be advertised properly, because they are effectively deal with public money. The  
21 other huge challenge which Margaret will be talking about is homelessness, which is very much  
22 immediately and very much on our door and there is implications for our staff as well as people  
23 associated with homelessness.

24  
25 Medium term challenges, the introduction of HAP payment and expectations in relation to that,  
26 it is a shared service being handled in Limerick but there is quite an administrative burden within  
27 each County Council associated with it. Again sustainable mix of the step your of properties, I  
28 think going forward we don't want to just pick land where there is already much social housing  
29 and ending up with a ghettoisation in those areas, we need to get more of a social mix. Also the  
30 standards within the private rental sector that's another hole area to gear up to make sure we're  
31 carrying out sufficient inspections and that properties are suitable, this is a factor that's going to  
32 be looked at closely in terms of HAP.

33  
34 Then the increasing rate of rent arrears.

1  
2 Long-term challenges is the move from capital to current expenditure, unknown territory. Public  
3 private partnership again is new in relation to housing projects and now local authority and  
4 approved housing bodies, no doubt about that, we'll be in a lot more partnership because in order  
5 to deliver on this plan it won't happen without them. Thank you.

6 Cllr BRADY: Can I suggest because they will be two fairly comprehensive presentations if you  
7 take two of them together and only allow in accordance with standing orders, members to speak  
8 for 3 minutes in totality, on both issues, I think it will give a disservice to the two important  
9 separate but interlinked issues, but to expect someone to speak for a minute and a half on  
10 homelessness and a minute and a half on the issue there of housing construction programme over  
11 the next couple of years will be doing a disservice

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'll give you five minutes. Go ahead.

13 MARGARET: Good afternoon everybody. I suppose underpinning a lot of what Brid was  
14 talking about earlier is the urgency we're dealing with from a homelessness perspective, this is  
15 an area that's new to us to some degree, we have always had a homeless service provision in the  
16 county as every local authority has, but the demand on that service and the huge increase in  
17 numbers is something that we as a local authority were struggling with at the moment and lots of  
18 other support agencies out there are struggling with it and nationally we're struggling with it too.

19  
20 So in terms of homelessness and what we do from a local authority point of view, we are  
21 working within a national policy context, ultimately what the government is saying to us is that  
22 the end game should be not having emergency accommodation, it should be making sure that  
23 everybody has their own place to call home, and that in effect nobody should be homeless,  
24 because everybody should be able to sustain some type of tenancy with a level of support catered  
25 to their particular needs, that's the end game.

26  
27 Currently what we do from a local authority point of view, we try and make sure we get in there  
28 before people become homeless, so we have a lot of services around interventions around  
29 prevention to make sure we get in before people actually are at risk of losing their tenancy.  
30 Tenancy sustainment work, provision of emergency accommodation, but that's only one part of  
31 what we do, it isn't the whole picture in terms of homelessness. General housing supports, we  
32 try and make sure people at risk of homelessness are made aware of the range of supports that  
33 the housing section can offer to see that maybe they don't fit in one category but probably they  
34 do in another. And I suppose crucially working with other providers and other support services.

1 Because we certainly can't do this by ourselves.

2  
3 The issue of funding, it comes up time and time again, and I suppose it's a national picture to  
4 this, because we get a share of money that's divided out. I'll show you now if you can see where  
5 the mid east region is in that Wicklow gets funding as part of being a part of the mid east region  
6 which is Kildare, Meath and Wicklow. We're a tiny sliver in terms of the actual allocation we  
7 get nationally for homelessness, the large blue part of the pie chart, that's Dublin, they get the  
8 majority of funding for homelessness.

9  
10 Just to show it from another perspective, again the very first bar is Dublin and everywhere else is  
11 down along the way, I can't even see mid east region there but it's there somewhere. That's how  
12 funding is skewed in terms of service provision and in relation to numbers and population basis,  
13 but the argument a lot of us make is we're all feeling the strain nationally.

14  
15 Just to reiterate how much money we get at a national level. Our mid east region allocation for  
16 three counties for the last few years has been just over 800,000 and we get a 20% share of that.  
17 So Wicklow gets 162 odd thousand. The government did acknowledge the crisis situation that  
18 was happening last year and there was a supplementary payment made to mid east region again  
19 we got 20% of that so we got an extra 23,000.

20  
21 So what that means in a practical sense is we're raising a lot more money locally, diverting a lot  
22 more money locally towards homelessness. Just to show you, we spent nearly 230,000 in 2013  
23 on homelessness. This rose dramatically up to nearly 390,000 last year, based on what we're  
24 currently spending we're going to be well over 400,000 by the end of this year. Now those  
25 figures do include salary costs and overhead costs for Wicklow County Council, but they also  
26 include what we're spending in terms of direct provision. And particularly emergency  
27 accommodation, which is the most expensive part of the types of accommodation that we  
28 provide for homelessness.

29  
30 Rent supplement again a lot of the councillors here will be familiar with this issue and  
31 campaigning to get rent thresholds increased in the county to enable people to actually afford the  
32 properties that are out there on the private rented market, and affordability in north Wicklow,  
33 they just don't go hand in hand anymore, a lot of people are completely out-priced out of the  
34 private rented market, that's where we're seeing a lot of people coming to us from a

1 homelessness point of view.

2  
3 The issue of housing units going forward, trying to find these units, we spend our days going  
4 through Daft online, going through all the various property websites, we have councillors  
5 coming in to us advising us when something becomes available in their local area, but it's  
6 literally on a day by day basis going online first thing in the morning what's out there and trying  
7 to direct people at risk of homelessness towards the units often they are gone by the evening if  
8 not lunch time.

9  
10 So numbers presenting to bring it down to brass tacks I suppose, last year 2014, 128 adults, that's  
11 is somebody without a dependent, families then 90 families that's the make up, the scary thing is  
12 the number of children, 172 children last year.

13  
14 This year so far, 47 individuals, 60 families and they include 125 children. Again those numbers  
15 are unprecedented in a County Wicklow situation, we haven't experienced those types of figures  
16 before.

17  
18 Brid mentioned the issues around staffing resources and things are moving in the right direction  
19 now in that we haven't had somebody actually dedicate to homelessness service provision in the  
20 county, it's been an add on job to people for the last while, but given the scale of what we're  
21 dealing with and given that somebody needs to have a professional qualification to deal with the  
22 types of issues that we're dealing with, there is currently a recruitment process underway and we  
23 hope to have a grade 5 staff officer in situ by June whose job will exclusively be to deal with  
24 homelessness and to be supported by the rest of us.

25  
26 It's not all bleak, I know I'm painting a bleak enough picture, there are some things happening  
27 that are positive in the county, just to remind people we do have a top of the range facility in  
28 Wicklow town run by Sonas housing association, which caters for a number of women and  
29 children who are at risk of domestic violence and become homeless as a result, there are 7  
30 self-contained apartments in that facility and that's working out well, we'd be lost without it.  
31 Three one-beds, three two-bed and one one-bed apartment. We work closely with Bray  
32 Women's Refuge trying to ensure women coming out potentially have the opportunity to go into  
33 this facility.

1 Again you will be familiar with this project in Kilmantin Hill in Wicklow Town which ran last  
2 year as a supported temporary accommodation facility, it catered for people who needed  
3 emergency accommodation, men and women, it could take up to 16 people.

4  
5 So we were very lucky to have that facility last year and ran in conjunction with Dublin Simon  
6 Community, again running a facility like that with 24-hour support is hugely expensive, it was a  
7 pilot project, we were lucky Dublin Simon gave us money towards it last year, we put money  
8 towards it ourselves, but couldn't possibly maintain that level of investment and commitment to  
9 that type of project. There is a change, reconfigure happening at a county level. So from last  
10 week that facility in Kilmantin Hill is no longer the emergency facility for the county, that has  
11 now been reconfigured into more long-term housing, people can stay there for up two years as  
12 well, now 10 people are now calling that place their home for the next two years. And again we  
13 have a service level agreement with Dublin Simon to continue with that arrangement for the next  
14 two years.

15  
16 It means that we are trying to at a local level move away from the large scale big buildings  
17 where we provide emergency accommodation, and try make sure people get a chance to get their  
18 own home and get some type of tenancy in their own name. So what we are trying to do is  
19 source a number of houses around the county at the moment, where we can put up to 3 to 4  
20 people and have a visiting support or some type of support service going into those houses so  
21 people will have their own room, share a kitchen, share a sitting room, but have an agreement in  
22 place that is their place and once they abide by the rules of the house they are happy and  
23 welcome to stay there, again for a period of time up to two years probably initially, until we see  
24 how it goes.

25  
26 But what we want to try and do is move towards the housing first model and we don't want to be  
27 placing large scale big emergency facilities in towns we want to try, specifically Wicklow and  
28 Bray had this up until now, we want to try and spread the responsibility for dealing with  
29 homelessness around the county.

30  
31 We'll try and acquire units to do that, we'll look to see can we make available any of our own  
32 houses and look to build up as many relationships and specialist support services we can to help  
33 us to do this.

1 That means that we'll try to withdraw from the emergency facility that we currently run in Bray  
2 by the end of this year. And replace it with maybe a number of houses in Bray that would dilute  
3 the service across the town as opposed to having one big service in the town. But at the moment  
4 the service in Bray is the only emergency provision service, it can only take men, so if any men  
5 present as homeless we'll be referring them from around the county to Bray for the short-term.  
6

7 Other things that we're doing, we're going to start accepting a staff member from Wicklow over  
8 to Bray one day a week starting next week because of the demand that the staff in Bray are  
9 experiencing at the counter, we do need to try and assist and alleviate some of the pressures over  
10 there. So we'll do an outreach service one day a week and see how that goes. We'll continue to  
11 try and get in before people are at risk of losing their private rented and engage with landlords  
12 and try and extend people's stays and get rent supplement thresholds increased, to be fair to the  
13 rent supplement section nationally they are working with us, where we can make a case for  
14 people, particularly families they are increasing the thresholds.  
15

16 We are looking at what we're doing ourselves from allocation point of view, moving more  
17 towards making allocations on the basis of people who are at risk of homelessness, this can be a  
18 bit divisive and raise some alarm among some people, people feel there may be a fear that people  
19 will play the homelessness card to get an allocation.  
20

21 I suppose that's why we're here as housing professionals to make that judgment call. And to  
22 make an assessment of all the facts we have to hand, talk to community welfare, talk to rent  
23 supplement and other service providers, but as you can see from the figures there in 2013, just  
24 over 1% of our allocation went to people at risk of homelessness, that increased significantly last  
25 year up to nearly 12% and we'll be increasing that again in 2015.  
26

27 Currently the four local authorities in Dublin are actually under a Ministerial Directive to ensure  
28 up to 50% of the allocation are made to people at risk of homelessness to try and counter the  
29 number of families currently homeless in Dublin.  
30

31 The CALF funding stream that Brid mentioned in her presentation, that is yielding some units to  
32 us, we don't have them at the moment we'll have them hopefully by the end of the year, they  
33 include up to five units of accommodation in Bray. And the five units of accommodation in  
34 Wicklow Town, the Castle Street units that Dublin Simon are in the process of trying to bring



1 back into operation, according to Simon's latest dates they will have contractors on site in  
2 summer and we'll have people in there by the end of this year. Okay.

3  
4 So in a nutshell that gives you an idea of what's happening from a homelessness point of view  
5 and how we're trying to make sure some of the units we're working towards getting are directed  
6 towards alleviating homelessness in the county. Thank you.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thanks Margaret, Cllr Brady.

8 Cllr BRADY: Thanks Cathaoirleach, an awful lot of information to take in there in those two  
9 very comprehensive reports, I thank both Margaret and Brid for presenting them. I suppose the  
10 issue of homelessness has been carried over from the previous meeting when the question was  
11 tabled by myself looking for updated statistics around the issue, because I'm sure every member  
12 around the table has received many phone calls and represented families in particular who have  
13 either become homeless or are at risk of homelessness, I suppose the figures outlined by  
14 Margaret just paint a graphic picture as to what the reality on the ground is. I'm sure there's  
15 many other families out there who are either at risk or currently sharing accommodation with  
16 families as some people would call it sofa surfing as such, going from premises to premises and  
17 that, and the same can be said about adults as well.

18  
19 To hear this year alone 47 adults presented as homeless and 60 families including 125 children  
20 are currently homeless, I think it paints a very, very stark picture and when you hear the figures  
21 at a national level, stated currently there's 1,000 children nationally homeless, to hear that  
22 Wicklow is well over 12% of the national figure, paints a stark picture.

23  
24 There is a number of things at play, I'll touch on the building project in a second. I think the  
25 building project and emphasis on the private rental sector is going to have huge implications for  
26 us here in Wicklow as it is now at the moment, but many, many families that we're dealing with  
27 here now find themselves either being asked to leave private rented accommodation because the  
28 landlords can achieve higher present on the open private market, and without having proper rent  
29 controls in place that's going to continue, because the demand highly outweighs the supply.

30  
31 Brid mentioned there on the news today the lack of private rental accommodation out there in the  
32 market in Wicklow at the moment and people are experiencing that, hence lands Lords are  
33 ending tenancies putting people out, because they can get higher private rental. I don't think  
34 anything in this plan that the government have brought forward is going to tackle that, it's going

1 to further compound the difficulties that families are experiencing. I think the whole issue of the  
2 Housing Assistance Payment, HAP, will further compound the homeless crisis. Again I've  
3 stated previously that I think it's an attempt to artificially massage the figures in terms of  
4 reducing the current housing list here in Wicklow which currently stands at 3,585 families,  
5 taking people off rent supplement, making them Council tenants by taking them from rent  
6 supplement putting them under HAP doesn't address their housing situation, I don't believe, I  
7 think it will cause further implications for this Council because many of those properties are  
8 being operated by landlords who don't pay particular attention to the specifications, housing  
9 standards etcetera of them problems and now we are expected to take those properties on. I'm  
10 sure there will be proper checks and balances put in place to ensure we're not taking on board  
11 unacceptable or low standard accommodation and any of those will be rejected.

12  
13 I think that will leave those families in limbo as to whether they will be made homeless, what  
14 will happen. I propose there I'll put forward in a second, just around the whole issue of rent  
15 supplement, rent caps etcetera.

16  
17 But just on the other issue that Brid outlined around housing construction, I have been very  
18 critical of the government's plans to go ahead with just 50, two housing projects here in  
19 Wicklow, at this point Brid said 20 houses and 30 houses in Rathdrum and Dunlavin, the way it  
20 was put out in the media at national level was that was what we're getting. I think even if we get  
21 100% of the houses that the government are talking about, I think it's still going to fall well  
22 short, we're only looking at a figure of 438 units by 2017, I think that's a very unrealistic target,  
23 because again there's a major emphasis on private market and that simply isn't there at this point.

24  
25 I would be critical that there's only two schemes that are being progressed at this point. I think  
26 there was ten put into the department and only two were actually chosen out of that and they are  
27 in areas where yes there is a housing demand like all parts, every corner of this county, but I  
28 don't think they address the areas where there is a serious demand, places such as Arklow,  
29 Wicklow Town, the north end of the county in and around Bray and Greystones, etcetera. There  
30 is land there.

31  
32 Figures outlined this morning, I think we've 16 hectares in total here in the county that would be  
33 suitable for housing, social housing in our ownership, I think over 300 units could be developed  
34 on those. We have land in Bray that was purchased via compulsory purchase order for over €6

1 million, which unfortunately isn't included in this stage, we need to progress these plans  
2 immediately, and when I hear that we haven't been given government approval to employ a senior  
3 architect, I think that needs to be addressed. And I think this Council needs to agree to write a  
4 letter to Minister Alan Kelly immediately to ensure that any positions that need to be filled in  
5 this Council to ensure that we can progress all of those other schemes that need to get the  
6 planning stage, that he needs to pull down any barriers that are there, holding this process up or  
7 whatever and ensure the relevant staff are employed. So can I propose that firstly that I'll write  
8 to the Minister.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: I've given you 7 minutes.

10 Cllr BRADY: Thanks Cathaoirleach, secondly can I make a proposal around homeless, this  
11 unfortunately will continue to get out of hand, when there is one person homeless it's one too  
12 many, when we have 60 families including 125 children and 47 single adults, I think that paints a  
13 very, very stark picture. I think a couple of things that could make an immediate impact need to  
14 happen. Can I propose this, that we send this to the Minister, hopefully this can be agreed  
15 "Wicklow County Council calls on the Minister for Social Protection to increase rent supplement  
16 rates to help deal with the crisis leading to increase of homelessness, furthermore we call on the  
17 government to examine the possibility of introducing rent controls." And can I -- I propose that.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have I a seconder for that?

19 Cllr BRADY: That's a short-term measure to deal with it, I don't believe long-term there should  
20 be so much emphasis on private sector, I think this Council and local Councils are in a better  
21 position.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thanks councillor. Is that agreed that proposal?

23 MS GALLAGHER: Secunder?

24 Cllr BRADY: Can I ask that that would be forwarded, there's two proposal there Cathaoirleach,  
25 one just writing to the Minister around the staffing issue and the second is this, can I ask that  
26 both would be circulated.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thanks councillor. Cllr Ruttle?

28 Cllr RUTTLE: Yes, first I'd like to thank Brid and Margaret for their professional presentation,  
29 the figures present nationally and locally a grim picture of what is to be dealt with both on the  
30 actual building programme and the issue of homelessness separately.

31  
32 If I'm right we're allocated 438 units at 31 million going forward over those years. Now they are  
33 figures, because new people keep coming onto the lists etcetera the figures don't really add up  
34 against 3 and a half thousand I think on the waiting lists.

1  
2 However we have more solid figures on 20 units in Rathdrum and 30 in Dunlavin. I don't know  
3 all that much about Rathdrum but I know the situation in Dunlavin, from our point of view, we  
4 have been dealing with this at municipal authority level, Dunlavin has a severe water shortage  
5 problem and we can't build -- we have a funny situation, Dunlavin haven't got the water in  
6 Blessington you have unlimited water and no sewerage, before you can build any 30 units in  
7 Dunlavin to have to have a proper water supply and presently this doesn't exist. Again I hope  
8 this sort of thing doesn't upset the procedure where at least one area will begin. Because there is  
9 a big water problem in Dunlavin, we couldn't even put one house around Dunlavin at the  
10 moment. So that will have to be dealt with.

11  
12 As I said before possibly dealt with outside of the phase 2 of the west Wicklow water scheme,  
13 dealt with as a local sourced water supply at Dunlavin not waiting for this extension from  
14 Blessington on, all the logistical work there. But it's an issue that jumps out at me. The other  
15 thing is we've seen how this RAS scheme doesn't appear to work, it's not attractive, how can it be  
16 made more attractive what can we do to get more people into it?

17  
18 You are speaking here to people in the forefront it have every day, getting people in dreadful  
19 situations about to be made homeless, and we don't appear to do a lot for them a lot of the time,  
20 it requires a more broad national approach to deal with that. I always think social house  
21 something not just an investment in individual families it's an investment in society's future, you  
22 cannot allow a situation to evolve where you produce and continue to produce a twin track  
23 society, some who always have and some who never be able to have on the other side. In many  
24 cases through no fault of their own whatsoever.

25  
26 So I just think the figures, I'm never one to curse the -- I'm glad to see any authorities if we can  
27 build a 50 houses great, it's good to see some coming into the system our needs are greater than  
28 that and I'm sure the needs of many places in Ireland are greater and it has to be addressed but I'd  
29 like to know how to we coordinate and get over the issue with Dunlavin thanks.

30 Cllr WALSH: Just a similar point in relation to what Cllr Brady's point made there, in relation to  
31 Brid's presentation and the HAP system coming into replace RAS, the national target is 28,000  
32 between 2015 and 17, but I think experience from other couples where this scheme has been  
33 piloted in Limerick and Tallaght, talking to councillors in these areas it hasn't worked due to lack  
34 of finding landlords will get better rent on open market and are not engaging in the process, so I

1 agree with the point by Cllr Brady so increased funding is vital.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks. Cllr Fitzgerald?

3 Cllr FITZGERALD: Just it's fair to say we're facing into the biggest housing crisis in the  
4 country and we are, in the county. In County Wicklow we have 2428 on our housing list which I  
5 suggest should be bigger if everyone came in and put themselves on the housing list would be far  
6 greater, what we are offered here is 438 units which equates to 22% of, that will have an impact  
7 of 22% on the housing need assessments. Them figures were released on 2nd April, I got a copy  
8 by yet the break down, but the figures are leased of 31 million, I think I heard Brid saying you  
9 only got details that have recently. I got that on the 2nd April. I went on the radio about it, I did  
10 e-mail it in to some people here. So it should have been available.

11

12 But the fact is social housing spending has been slashed over many, many years and in my home  
13 town of Arklow the last house to be built in Arklow was in 2007. There has been houses  
14 purchased in the meantime, we have a difficulty there with sewerage treatment plant. But this is  
15 the fourth launch in recent times of housing promises and there has been no huge dent in the  
16 housing numbers, in fact it increased to 90,000.

17

18 I want to say thankfully to Margaret for the presentation, I want to thank the staff in the housing  
19 section for the work they have done over the last few months dealing with people who declared  
20 themselves homeless, people whose houses have been repossessed and I know at the moment in  
21 Arklow and places I know well there are 20 houses in the process of being repossessed there  
22 might be a mechanism where Councils can purchase the houses and maybe leave people in the  
23 houses, that's a bit down the line maybe, but certainly we have a huge problem.

24

25 Just on the rent allowance, I have to say that in the last two months there has been a change of  
26 attitude in the rent allowance section, they have been more amenable to letting people stay  
27 in-houses and pay represents to let people stay in-houses. In saying that I support Cllr Brady's  
28 motion, because other people are being forced out where there's not the flexibility that there  
29 should be. That's a short-term issue, because it can lead to other problems.

30

31 Today also in the paper just over 4,000 units available in the country which is one of the lowest  
32 in living memory that doesn't suggest we're going to get many houses for the RAS scheme,  
33 effectively probably our RAS numbers are declined because people are opting out of agreements  
34 and they see it as control of their own house, I know plenty of people find it difficult. I know

1 staff are doing their utmost to get suitable housing for the RAS scheme, but as I stated I welcome  
2 the 30 houses in Rathdrum in the Arklow Municipal District, a boost for people on the housing  
3 list, but I think the situation is going to get worse over the next few months. I did say as well  
4 22%, it will have an impact of 22% on the housing needs in Carlow it equates to 42% of the  
5 housing need, in Kilkenny it's 41%, it's a bit strange and in Tipperary it's 42%, that's strange the  
6 Minister is from Tipperary I presume, we got 22% of our housing needs, so if you work that  
7 through we're going to satisfy 22% of our housing need up to 2017, we have 2428 on the housing  
8 list, so if anyone goes on the housing list at 25 they will be 45 by the time they get a house that's  
9 the way it looks.

10  
11 So I just want to commend everything from the housing section but for the government to  
12 suggest they will provide nationally 7400 units or 1400 acquired by local authorities a thousand  
13 vacant local authority units will be returned to use, I don't know it must be something we don't  
14 know about and 2,000 rental accommodation scheme -- I suggest they are fairytale figures to be  
15 quite honest about it. I think the rental accommodation scheme will reduce not increase.

16  
17 So we have huge, huge problems, while I welcome Dunlavin and there is issues there and the  
18 units in Rathdrum, I'm very disappointed that Arklow didn't get a mention, because we have  
19 group down there available as such. There is other problems with sewerage, but the number of  
20 people on the housing list in the Arklow Municipal District, is 1,284, there is huge problems. I  
21 suggest we have the biggest problem in the county to be quite honest in the Arklow Municipal  
22 District. But I actually wouldn't give great credence to the figures produced not by yourself but  
23 by the government, the impact their announcements will have on the figures. As I say looking  
24 back, there have been four such announcements since November, one on the 2nd April, 31  
25 million. Then a further one last week or the week before and we're continuing to get  
26 announcements and we'll get more as the year goes on, but I don't think we're going to have a  
27 dent and I welcome the fact we're going to have a person here dealing solely with homeless  
28 people coming in here. Certainly it's needed but we have a huge, huge problem and it needs to  
29 be addressed, the only way you can get it sorted out is more money, that needs to come forward  
30 by the government. They can bring in whatever initiatives they like but we need more houses,  
31 that's what we'd like, it doesn't look like it will happen, it might happen, there might be a flurry  
32 in the next few months but nothing long-term. They invite people to come home from abroad,  
33 back to full employment where will they be housed? People coming back to Arklow and south  
34 Wicklow, there are no houses, so we'll just wait and see.

1 Cllr KAVANAGH: Thanks to Brid and Margaret for their presentation, and I don't think the  
2 figures come as a surprise to any of us as councillors or the Council staff, the figures we're  
3 dealing with, I do think responsibility has to be placed firmly on the lap of who is responsible, I  
4 have to say at a formal meeting like this, this is a shocking indictment on this government and  
5 the previous government that no proper planning provision has been made until this small  
6 piecemeal effort at the end of their tenure.

7  
8 If they weren't continuing with this austerity policy of bailing out banks we may put roofs over  
9 people's heads, particularly children, the escalating figure of homelessness is a disgrace and a  
10 national disgrace at that.

11  
12 I would call on the government to step in to prevent homelessness occurring in the first place by  
13 intervening with banks before families are rendered homeless with mortgages that are, mortgage  
14 interest rates spiralling out of control, I do think that's some place they could intervene so we can  
15 prevent further homelessness to some extent.

16  
17 I'd like to ask Brid just in regard to the units, she mentioned 50 units for Dunlavin and Rathdrum  
18 and 40 void units to be completed within the period 2015 to '17 and remainder of 66 units, that's  
19 156 local authority units, I wonder will extra become available through the housing associations,  
20 maybe you might tell us if there might be additional units coming from that area?

21  
22 A second thing I would like to ask about is public procurement contractors, one of the issues I'd  
23 like to raise in relation it that is the exclusion or otherwise of developers who have failed to pay  
24 development levies in the past, if that's something that we can look at, because there's no point in  
25 re employing developers who already Oh large amounts and haven't paid or made any effort to  
26 pay those levies in the past.

27  
28 And also standards, you talk about standards in the private rental market, I would ask that they  
29 would apply to the local authority houses as well, because standards are very high in the private  
30 rental market, even to the point of making it not worth the while of private market providers to  
31 bring their stock up to that standard and yet some of the local authority houses fall far below  
32 appropriate living standards. So I'd just like to ask about that.

33 Cllr SNELL: Thanks Cathaoirleach, I'd like to thank Margaret and Brid or the presentations,  
34 both very comprehensive in what they covered, I think it's hugely important that all the members

1 to get that update if they didn't already know, I'm sure each and every one of you know what's  
2 going on out there in the public domain.

3  
4 Just in regards to the government announcements, I do agree that we've had a few false dawns in  
5 the past, they were proposing 18,000 units by 2017, with a further 17,000 by 2020, but even if  
6 we only take the 18,000 units that they were proposing by the end of 2017, for Wicklow to just  
7 get an announcement of 50 of them 18,000, that's how long it's going to take to deliver these  
8 units, 2017, I appreciate Brid has outlined, I know behind the scenes you've done Trojan work I  
9 know it wasn't this local authority that selected them preferred options by the department, that  
10 there was ten areas submitted, Arklow, Bray, Greystones, Wicklow Town, numerous other areas,  
11 but 50 units, I'd like to welcome them at the same time, that's 50 families that will be housed.

12  
13 But we all know that we have to look to the voluntary housing section for as well and to the  
14 approved housing bodies, we had a presentation this morning where 54 units will be delivered  
15 through approved housing body of Cluid in Rathnew, 54 units which is more than what the  
16 Department is delivering of 50, and again they should be con stream come 2017.

17  
18 But just to give an indication, I share the frustration of previous speakers in regards to false  
19 dawns and previous announcement it was only last year we sat here as members funding secured  
20 for five units in Castle Street in Wicklow Town through the voluntary housing sector that is the  
21 Simon Community, that money still hadn't been in place up to a number of weeks ago, even  
22 though it was promised, even though the voluntary housing sector that's delivering that project  
23 was waiting on it. Now thankfully it was part of the presentation delivered here earlier and them  
24 units will be secured by the end of December of this year, but just to give an indication that  
25 we've heard all these things before, we've heard all the grand-standing of 35,000 units by 2020.  
26 Percent wise 50 out of 18,000 is a small drop in the ocean. Considering the vast array of the  
27 housing list.

28  
29 If I could just highlight in regards to the HAP payment, Housing Assistance Payment, for anyone  
30 that doesn't know, there is 90,000 families in receipt of rent allowance, on the housing list I  
31 should say, 75,000 in receipt of rent allowance. That means when the HAP payments eventually  
32 comes into County Wicklow, which it is, it's already rolled out in four or five other counties in  
33 the country, every one of them people in receipt of rent supplement, them 75,000 nationally will  
34 all be removed from the housing list, and I think that's only massaging the figures, because the



1 housing need is not in any shape or form met. We are all dealing with people in private rented  
2 where banks are coming and taking property back off landlord, there is no security. Even in  
3 RAS scheme we are dealing with families having to move out because of circumstances outside  
4 their own control. So 75,000 people will be taken off the housing list when HAP payment  
5 comes into place and I can't see the tangible benefits from changing from rent allowance to HAP  
6 scheme.

7  
8 It has been highlighted that you can be in receipt of work and therefore receive some sort of  
9 payment through the HAP, which you can't currently, but I've yet to see that being played out, I'd  
10 like to get the figures from Limerick and Cork and some of the other local authorities doing it  
11 now. But just to highlight the point, when that scheme comes into play, the local authority of  
12 Wicklow County Council will have to deliver that scheme and that means providing the staff to  
13 do that outside of the role that they are already doing and we all know that they are to the pin of  
14 their collar delivering the service they are doing at the moment. So we have to be mindful that  
15 when that scheme comes into play that they now will be expected to roll-out this programme,  
16 which is totally in my opinion, it's expecting too much from too few. And we'll be coming back  
17 to this chamber to highlight that point when it happens and we'll sit down with the chief  
18 executive.

19  
20 I'd also like to thank you Cathaoirleach for your input, people said do our TDs understand what's  
21 going on out there? You yourself and some members of the senior executive officers of the  
22 housing section met with our TDs and representatives of the TDs in Dáil Éireann to highlight  
23 this point and push it home. I know you have also been available to myself to be the approved  
24 housing agencies, because we know that's another stream of funding that needs to be tapped into,  
25 something that the Department is encouraging, and if we just take on the bear facts that they are  
26 providing more than what the Department is at the moment, 54 in comparison to 50, it's  
27 something we need to explore greatly.

28  
29 I won't cover what other people have said, but I would like to acknowledge that through the  
30 SEAI and better energy communities and thank Brid and her team for the work carried out to  
31 date, while we acknowledge there is a shortage of housing for the people on the housing list we  
32 must remember that, as a local authority we're still liable for the 2,500 housing stock in our  
33 ownership, therefore we're landlords and as landlords there's an obligation to make sure that the  
34 rent that's being brought in from these units is worth the roof that's over people's heads.

1  
2 I know Brid and Margaret and Joe, Michael before Joe have put in Trojan work to find funding  
3 that was available, whether fabric upgrade works, better energy SEAI funding, but I would  
4 encourage us to keep doing it, yes it's doom and gloom in regards of 50 units but there's 50  
5 families that will avail of those, another 54 families will avail of the voluntary housing sectors, 5  
6 families will avail of Castle Street, families avail of the project, you yourself had a part to play in  
7 with the five in Bray, I think we as a local authority need to keep pushing to get our fair share.

8  
9 I'd like to thank the housing section for everything they've done to date, I know your hands are  
10 tie to a certain degree, because without funding none of us can deliver anything, so it's  
11 imperative that we push on and I would share the consensus of the members from the Arklow  
12 area, while Rathdrum is in the electoral area of south Wicklow, it won't address the issue of the  
13 people from the old Town Council list of Arklow, therefore I do believe funding needs to be  
14 spent in acquiring houses down there. Thank you.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Bourke.

16 Cllr BOURKE: Thank you Cathaoirleach, first of all I'd like to say it's very frustrating to be here  
17 six months after we were first told there would be a house programme, that we still haven't got it  
18 going, we have only been given the allocation it will be another six months before we turn a sod  
19 on any, but I welcome the 50 or so units that will be coming on stream and the ones from the  
20 housing project that Cllr Snell was talking about earlier from Cluid in Rathnew.

21  
22 But I think we might be letting the Minister off the hook a little bit with Cllr Brady's suggestion.  
23 I think we should make that more stronger, word it more strongly, to re double our efforts to  
24 ensure that the next phase of the delivery of housing programme is brought forward, because it  
25 may not be too long before we have the staff in place hopefully, but we really need to get other  
26 areas looked after. We've seen the exclusion at the moment of Bray and Wicklow and Arklow  
27 and we really have to get projects going in those areas.

28  
29 So I think we should amend Cllr Brady's letter to put more pressure on the Minister to accelerate  
30 the second phase of the building programme to ensure that we have a clear goal and plan of  
31 exactly where we're going and when we'll have housing in all parts of the county that need it.

32  
33 I was just a bit concerned this morning when I listened to morning Ireland as well, a columnist  
34 from daft speaking about the cost of building in the greater Dublin area and mentioned many

1 building firms are shying away from developments in the greater Dublin area because of  
2 building costs and going off to other places like Belfast and UK. If that's the truth I think the  
3 manager and director of economic development and planning should be investigating to see  
4 could that be a delay in any of our proposals into the future, because it might be an important  
5 consideration to see what we can do to ensure that as a Council that developers and construction  
6 companies are unafraid to come here to do business and get stuck in. Thank you Cathaoirleach.  
7 Cllr VANCE: Chairman I recognised this a number of years ago and brought it up four years  
8 ago that we were going to have something like this. This announcement is the greatest con job  
9 that I have ever heard of, for the simple reason the same Minister announced it numerous times,  
10 even if he was successful, which I doubt very much in getting the units, it's only a drop in the  
11 ocean compare to people on the list.

12  
13 There's a gross manipulation of the figures here of people on the housing list. In Wicklow alone  
14 we're talking about a little over 2,000, it's actually 4,000. You look at the amount of people  
15 taken off the list that are living with their parents and various things like that, and I believe with  
16 the pilot schemes operating throughout the country, this list will go down dramatically, because  
17 there will only be three categories of people that will be able to apply for social housing from the  
18 Council, people are disability, travellers and over crowding, everyone else will be moved off the  
19 list. So it's a gross manipulation of the actual figures that are out there, the people who need it.

20  
21 Also in regard to the RAS schemes people know anyone representing the northern area will  
22 know RAS schemes aren't available in Bray/Greystones because of the increasing rents in those  
23 areas and secondly because a lot of people because of the price they are getting for those houses  
24 are going up, people are under pressure to put them on the market and sell them because houses  
25 are a lot better than they are now.

26  
27 It's absolutely, this is not going to do the job at all, yet I never heard anyone here say what about  
28 repossessions? There seems to be thousands of repossessions coming down the line, if we have  
29 a situation like in Dublin where they're talking about giving 50% of the allocation to people who  
30 are homeless, what about then the people who are ten years on our housing list waiting for a  
31 house? They are all going to be moved off, so it will be nearly the advantage to be homeless  
32 because you have a 50% chance of getting it -- the whole strategy I believe has been totally  
33 wrong and I cannot understand, the Council were very good at building houses with our own  
34 group here. All the problems we have had with regard to houses being built and troubles we

1 have had over the years throughout the county have been brought in by other people other than  
2 our own housing unit here.

3  
4 I cannot understand for the life of me, the Council have been very good at building roads,  
5 sewerage facilities and providing social housing over the years, our units are going now, now the  
6 whole responsibility for providing this, not the whole responsibility but a lot of responsibility is  
7 going on to units, voluntary units out there, that the provision will fall to them. I wonder, it's  
8 another way of cutting the Councils out of this.

9  
10 In Bray alone there's enough land in Bray that the Council have under their ownership for 85  
11 units at the moment. They would be ready to go in a very short period of time, like Cllr Brady  
12 said, 6 million was paid under compulsory purchase order for one bit of land and the government  
13 are letting it sit there, the biggest area in the county and biggest need in the county. I disagree  
14 with Cllr Fitzgerald on that, the biggest need in the county is in the northern area, and nothing  
15 has happened there. Absolutely nothing. If you go and try and buy a house in Bray now, you  
16 won't get too much for your 31 million I can tell you, thank you.

17 Cllr LAWLESS: Thank you Margaret and Brid on that presentation. I won't go back over what  
18 other councillors have said, just two brief points. There's a section of society that don't fit into  
19 the social housing bracket that I have come across. To be on social housing if you're a couple  
20 you have to have an income less than 38,500 I believe for Wicklow, there's a lot of families just  
21 a little over that, they are trying to get their life back on track and renting privately, but don't fit  
22 into the category of rent supplement, RAS scheme and are not entitled to social housing. My  
23 concern is these are the people that are actually more at risk I think at becoming homeless,  
24 because there is nothing there for them, what happens to those people if they present in  
25 Wicklow, technically they can present here as homeless, but they are over the income, they are  
26 not allowed be on social housing, what do we do with this part of social? People out working  
27 and trying to better themselves and they are finding themselves like that back living at home,  
28 maybe a married couple with kids in one room back in their parents' house, this is a difficulty.

29  
30 The other thing is I've noticed there's a lot of private development and there is houses starting to  
31 be built again, I'm just wondering in regards to Wicklow with part 5 which is up to 20% is  
32 entitled for social housing or affordable housing, I do believe this is going to be reduced down to  
33 10%, which I don't agree with. Can Wicklow enforce that a little bit more? You might only get  
34 one or two units in a new development, you could get ten in a new development, but in my eyes

1 that's still an extra couple of units to add on to what we have already received. I do welcome the  
2 50 units we have, but as other councillors said it's not enough. So that's my question, around the  
3 part 5, I would like to see Wicklow enforce that a little bit more with developers to try and  
4 encourage them to maybe built one or two units of social housing to help alleviate just a small  
5 fraction of what's going on.

6 Cllr WHITMORE: Thanks chair, thanks very much for the presentations, there was a lot of  
7 information there, would you be able to send it out? I'm not going to go over what everybody  
8 said, we are all in agreement that 50 houses is a joke at this stage, and it's not going to be  
9 enough, not even the tip of the iceberg, but I would just, I'm assuming that we don't have 2  
10 million for the voids, that budget hasn't been allocated yet?

11  
12 In the absence of that I was wondering whether the Council could fund it and then we would be  
13 able to fast track the upgrade of those 40 houses, which would give us essentially as much as the  
14 government will give in new houses, but at least we'll have 40 homes relatively quickly, not  
15 reliant on an architect in order to get them online, so I was wondering if that's an option?

16 Cllr KENNEDY: Thank you Cathaoirleach. Again I'd like to thank Margaret and Brid for the  
17 presentation if they could be circulated because there is a lot of information, but I'd like to thank  
18 all the staff in the Housing Department for the work they do, I would like to welcome the  
19 allocation of 50 houses and especially 20 for Rathdrum, but it is disappointing another 2.4  
20 million would finish that site completely.

21  
22 But my question is, do we have to wait for the new architect to come on board in the Council  
23 before -- is there going to be a new design put in place? My understanding there is a design in  
24 place for that site? That's my question.

25 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Chairman I want to welcome the investment of new houses particularly  
26 in west Wicklow, it's much welcomed and long overdue. Chairman I do think that one of the  
27 roles the Council should be looking at is helping people provide new houses for themselves. We  
28 had a scheme previously back in the 90s where people were given, were sold at a reasonable cost  
29 serviced site it is worked very well and I imagine with loans from local authority at reasonable  
30 interest rates for families on low income, it gave an opportunity for many families to provide  
31 their own housing with some assistance, so I think given the huge land bank that the Council has  
32 out there, now there is a great opportunity to provide socially affordable sites to families on the  
33 local authority waiting list, who wish to house themselves, that would relieve more houses for  
34 other families who are not in that position. Because there is a section of people out there on the

1 waiting list who if they got assistance could afford to build their own house if they got a  
2 reasonably priced site from local authorities, these sites are in virtually every town and many  
3 villages throughout the county.

4  
5 I think if we made a target of providing 200 of those sites as an initial step to sell to people at a  
6 reasonable price, socially affordable price, and also facilitate those people with mortgages to  
7 build their own houses, many of these people would provide themselves with their own house.  
8 That's something we should consider that that opportunity for the people to help themselves,  
9 because I always believed that people, if you give them a bit of opportunity will look to provide  
10 their own home, that's a natural instinct in every person.

11  
12 I would like to see a continuation like that. But I do think there is changing times, there seems to  
13 be more money now available for housing and we should all welcome that and I can remember  
14 back in 1987 there was something like 3,500 social houses built in this county between 1982 and  
15 1987 and in 1987 there was no-one on the waiting list for more than two weeks, in fact the  
16 Council had a surplus of houses.

17  
18 So anyone who says -- that was nearly 4,000 families housed in that period. So this is not a  
19 situation that we can't resolve, the money is there, we should get ahead with planning and other  
20 aspects of infrastructure and get these social houses, the whole demographics have changed since  
21 then, family make-ups are different than they were then. Notwithstanding all that there is great  
22 opportunity for the local authority to repeat what we did in the 1980s and bring full housing  
23 allocation.

24  
25 There is no point in anybody saying different, with escalation in house prices now there will be a  
26 category of people, I mean people, many people on the lower middle income bracket, no matter  
27 with the best will in the world, they no longer will be able to afford to buy private houses, simple  
28 as that. But if the Council give them a little bit of assistance with a reasonably priced site then  
29 that's an opportunity for people to help themselves. Thank you Chairman.

30 Cllr O'NEILL: Just a few brief points, I would be alarmed -- Cllr Ruttle's concern over water in  
31 Dunlavin, as Cllr Snell said it's only 50 units, I think that's a problem for Irish Water, I wouldn't  
32 necessarily go out of my way to start telling them there is a problem in the area and they can't  
33 build. We should grab it by the scruff of the neck and get on with it.

1 The other issue I would be concerned, the type of house that is intended to be built in Dunlavin  
2 and elsewhere, do we have a chance of looking at these drawings? Because I would be very  
3 concerned that they would be of a standard, I remember I spoke at the first meeting when I was  
4 elected, reminded people that we were in the garden of Ireland, I think the standard of houses  
5 should be second to none. So I would be concern at the type of houses that we do build would  
6 be of proper standard. Maybe of a semi-detached house, not just a quick fix job.

7  
8 I do agree with Cllr Vance that 50 that we have, okay, now it's pittance because day in day out  
9 the country is in a total mess, people are being evicted and losing their house day in day out is  
10 absolutely wrong, and I am just looking back on the motion passed at the last meeting of the  
11 Council, it's sad to see that there was only two replies to all the letters that Lorraine sent out to  
12 different individuals, condemning the banks for evicting policy. There was only two out of 7  
13 letters replied to.

14 Cllr MURPHY: I'd like to congratulate Brid and Margaret for their excellent presentations, it's  
15 frightening to sit here and see it in reality. We've heard the figures every time we're in housing  
16 or whatever, but to see it in front of you it's quite sad.

17  
18 I just, going back to what Cllr Vance touched on was people with disabilities there, and I'm  
19 around the Council working for the last six years, I know there was four, I don't like using the  
20 word special needs houses, they are actually homes for people with disabilities who have been  
21 waiting on approval to get four built. And that's six years ago. And I know I have been involved  
22 with the steering group here in Wicklow County Council for the national strategy for people with  
23 disabilities and I know that will probably be presented in a few months time when it's completed.

24  
25 At the moment the strategy is that to get people who are wrongly placed in nursing homes and in  
26 congregated settings, onto the housing list, so I would have a real concern for people with a  
27 disability on the housing list at present, and in the future, of being accommodated by the local  
28 authority. And I think it would be their only hope, because I think private letting or private  
29 renting is just a non-runner, so I think there's another section that's going to come on board as  
30 well, that will be another problem for Wicklow County Council.

31  
32 But I'd just like to know what is the list in the other units -- of the groups of people on a list with  
33 disability who are requiring housing?

34 Cllr BLAKE: Thank you for the presentation, just two points, I didn't hear any mention about

1 the tenants purchase schemes that have been around for quite some time now, we've been  
2 informed numerous occasions of the past few years of a new tenant purchase scheme coming  
3 into place, certainly it would generate a level of income for the local authority. It can be spent  
4 on purchase and building of new houses.

5  
6 I know the issue of Dunlavin has been brought up, certainly I welcome the 20 houses in  
7 Rathdrum and 30 for Dunlavin, but I wonder if the 30 houses could be spread over a bigger area?  
8 Because certainly there is a greater need in Blessington and in Baltinglass, Donard as well, I just  
9 wonder 30 houses for Dunlavin could be actually spread over a bigger area, we'll end up moving  
10 people from Baltinglass or Blessington to Dunlavin rather than accommodate them in their own  
11 town. Thanks very much.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you councillors, I know there was a lot of general statements and  
13 points made. Just on the actual specific questions Brid?

14 MS KILKENNY: Okay Cllr Ruttle's question in relation to water supply in Dunlavin, I just got  
15 this from the environment section saying a brief has been submitted to Irish Water to upgrade the  
16 water supply in Dunlavin. A recent audit was carried out by Irish Water in Dunlavin and it's on  
17 the road for provision. Works have also just begun and been completed on waste water in that  
18 area, so in summary that the issue of water supply in Dunlavin will be dealt with during the  
19 planning phase of the housing project.

20  
21 Just in terms again of our allocation, I said in the presentation we were just told it was those two  
22 schemes, we submitted a total of ten, we tried to target the areas of great need, which is north  
23 Wicklow, Greystones, Bray, Newtown area, Wicklow and Arklow, and out of that we got the  
24 two. Now as I said we haven't had our meeting with the Department, we'll bring up these issues,  
25 over the last couple of days we have been on the phone constantly trying to get some rationale as  
26 to how they came up with the decision.

27  
28 On the face of it, it looks like Dunlavin has a part 8, again we have to look at it in terms of need,  
29 as shown in the presentation 50% of the people, single persons are presenting, so a lot of the  
30 units were two and three-bedroom, so the part 8 may have to be re-looked at.

31  
32 With regard to Rathdrum, the councillor is correct there was an in-house design done on that, we  
33 don't think there is much need to move that scheme forward for those 20 units, the wider area is  
34 for additional 20 affordable units, that's something that somebody explored through the housing



1 body, that's an incorrect answer.

2  
3 Just to say we'll explore every single avenue, at the moment it's quite obvious local authorities  
4 can't produce the units on their own, the approved housing bodies can't produce on their own.  
5 We need to look at all the vehicles that will be presented to us and we are open for all of that.

6  
7 The question in relation to contractors and procurement, we follow the public procurement  
8 process and there are a number of checks and balances associated with that in recent years,  
9 because they're trying to bring in SMEs for the pre-qualifications on a set of declarations, but the  
10 process I'm currently going through in looking for architect teams, we get down into -- we have  
11 to present the information to us at that particular point in time, so things like (inaudible), that's  
12 all I can say to you, we'll follow the public procurement process.

13  
14 With regard to standards, yes we are aware of some of our stock is not quite up to date, as I said  
15 we've tried to tap into as much available funding to us to try and improve our existing stock,  
16 that's through the fabric upgrade schemes and trying to get things through SEAI, the Council  
17 cannot afford to upgrade stock all in one go, and a lot of it -- people heard some of the stock has  
18 been there for a long time, but I will add that to get back on to another question by Cllr O'Neill,  
19 he and I both know the state of some of our estates that was brought in in recent years, so when  
20 it comes down to that, with regard to standards of house type, I'm on record of saying I want no  
21 more flat roofs, no more wood cladding finishes, no more stupid looking windows, on my watch  
22 the houses will be pretty standard houses, almost boring design, but they are as another  
23 councillor said, most of the local authority housing ever built in this county we did not have  
24 problems with. On a daily basis the original first phase in Rathdrum we don't get issues with  
25 regards to standards, but I do get it from Glending, Farrankelly, Ballinahinch. So as I say  
26 designs will be going out now, very straightforward, straight lines, no curves and no silly  
27 looking roofs.

28  
29 That's that. I'll leave Margaret to address the issue on people with disability. Oh, yes just the  
30 question of voids. That is how we are proceeding. We are addressing the voids ongoing, and we  
31 are paying for them upfront, at the end of the year we submit and draw down the money, that is  
32 how we're addressing that. As I said earlier apart from Bray Town Council and some of the  
33 Wicklow Town Council and some in Bray we really don't have many long-term voids at the  
34 moment, but we're using that funding stream to fund the re-lets. So that's what we're saying the

1 40 units, I just multiply that out by the figure they are giving to us for voids, 1.3 million, but we  
2 haven't been given it as an allocation. I think that's all the questions, unless somebody feels I  
3 haven't answered one.

4 MARGARET: Just a few quick observations, the issue of affordable housing, that is something  
5 that we're grappling with ourselves in the section, that we are increasingly seeing a divide  
6 between those who can afford high cost housing and those who rely on social housing, that  
7 middle income, middle Ireland so to speak, where are they going to actually find and locate  
8 housing that's affordable to their needs? I'm not sure, that is a national issue and something that  
9 we've all become so polarised in the debate around the need for social housing, maybe the need  
10 for affordable housing got lost in the process a little bit, but certainly we are seeing an increasing  
11 number of people who don't qualify for social housing and are only over the limit by a very  
12 small amount, now seriously struggling out there and there is very little support that we can give  
13 to them.

14  
15 In terms of part 5 and going after the 20%, we are still continuing to look for 20% until we get a  
16 directive otherwise, but it's currently 20% we're seeking in terms of units. Serviced sites, we  
17 have actually have some serviced sites for sale to first-time buyers, but the people haven't been  
18 able to get mortgages over the last few years, maybe that will change with more credit available,  
19 and it's something we can look at, but we do have sites available, people can come and talk to us.

20  
21 In terms of the new strategy for housing people with disabilities, that is a work in progress and  
22 taking on board Cllr Murphy's points there about actually trying to have a better handle on  
23 numbers of people across the county and at Municipal District level, that's an exercise we are  
24 working on at the moment, we'll have more information on that, just not at this moment.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

26 Cllr BLAKE: The tenant purchase scheme, anything on that?

27 MARGARET: Not yet.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Not coming back in. We're done. Because Comhairle na nÓg are waiting  
29 to come up, they have been very patient. So Dermot I invite you up, sorry for the delay, but --  
30 just by way of background, they were established in 2002 by city and county development board  
31 as part of the national children's strategy of 2000, and they provide a forum for children and  
32 young people to discuss local and national issues of relevance to them and delegates are elected  
33 at the annual Dáil na nÓg, Dermot O'Brien national coordinator and members of the committee,  
34 I think members of the committee will give the presentation. So over to you Dermot.

1 MR O'BRIEN: Thanks a million, I have the privilege of being the coordinator for County  
2 Wicklow, we have our meetings here, on Saturdays, it's usually quiet, they are a little bit  
3 different to how yours go, but these young guys are interested in being involved in how their  
4 county is and how their county can be. They are interested and passionate about representing the  
5 voice of young people in County Wicklow, not just about their voice, they are really committed  
6 to capturing the voice of young people in Wicklow and representing that as best they can.

7  
8 They really want to build, we have had positive connections in the last couple of years in  
9 particular with the County Council, the staff and councillors and we want to build on that. I'm  
10 delighted to introduce Helen, Luke and Murray, who will give you a snapshot of where  
11 Comhairle is and some really interesting stuff about where they want to go. So I'll hand it over.

12 MS RYAN: So good afternoon everyone. And we're delighted to be here, so my name is Helen  
13 Ryan and I'm the chairperson of the Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg. What is it? There's a  
14 Comhairle na nÓg in every single county, in some cases such as Galway, Cork, Waterford and  
15 Dublin there are several more.

16  
17 So it is designed to enable young people to have a voice on the services, policies and issues that  
18 affect them in their local area. The slogan "young voices local issues", this is what we live by.  
19 Because it's young voices, being heard and working together to solve local issues.

20  
21 So each year we have an AGM, which usually takes place in October, at this AGM delegates can  
22 elect themselves to join the Comhairle and commit to working on behalf of young people in the  
23 county.

24  
25 So who are we? We are young people from across the county, working for young people across  
26 the county. This picture is taken at the Comhairle showcase on the 24th of October 2014.

27  
28 So the connection, so Comhairle na nÓg means Youth Council. We are the Youth Council. And  
29 you are the adult council. It is our aim to continue to enhance the voice of young people across  
30 the whole county. We ourselves -- we see ourselves as a positive link between the Council and  
31 the youth of Wicklow. We want to support the work of the Council and in doing so hope that we  
32 would instil the drive for councillors like you to therefore help and support Wicklow Comhairle.  
33 We are here and we want to make a difference.

1 So our work so far. So the bottom three pictures are displaying speaking to the Oireachtas,  
2 national youth strategy and celebrating the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. As you  
3 may or may not know on the 24th of October 2014 people from all across the world celebrated  
4 the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, which was the 25th anniversary. And Comhairle  
5 na nÓg saw this as an opportunity to use the showcase, which was in 2014 and joined together  
6 and make a better awareness of the UN Convention of the rights of the child. And as you may or  
7 may not know, Wicklow was represented on the steering team, seen on the bottom left.

8  
9 This involved meetings in the department of children and youth affairs and also speaking to the  
10 Oireachtas and presenting to them the work that we do. And in the middle in the national youth  
11 strategy, Comhairle also wants to get their point across to other youth organisations as well as --  
12 other youth organisations such as Foroige, getting their point across to Comhairle.

13  
14 So in these meetings such as national youth strategy consultation we broke up in discussion --  
15 into groups and discussed topical issues that affect young people from all over the country such  
16 as transport, education and social life of young people. So on that I'll hand you over to Luke.

17 LUKE: I'm going to talk briefly about the summer event. During the summer we held an event,  
18 a Comhairle camp if you will, where we invited young people from across the county and youth  
19 groups, to come in and have a week as a Comhairle member. At the moment unfortunately not  
20 as many people as we would like know about us and what we can do to help young people.

21  
22 So during the course of the of the week people got to experience what we do and what we're  
23 about, one of the main things about this was they helped plan a youth survey that we're doing at  
24 the moment and they were integral in giving us advice as to what we should ask and the kind of  
25 questions and things like that. As well as promoting Comhairle is something we're continuously  
26 doing through Facebook and Twitter pages, as I said not a huge amount of people know about  
27 Comhairle and we're trying to boost that up by doing things like a survey, the summer event  
28 which we'll probably do this summer as well and again just more and more events to get us out  
29 into the public eye about Comhairle. Now I'll pass you over to Murray to talk about the national  
30 executive.

31 MURRAY: Good afternoon everyone I'm Murray, I am the County Wicklow representative on  
32 the national executive. The national showcase, as Helen mentioned, is just an event which  
33 gather all the different Comhairles from Ireland, bring them together an showcase what they  
34 have done that year, and it's a chance for the other Comhairles to see and learn from each other

1 basically.

2

3 It happens every two years, and this year was in Dublin. The national executive, this is what I'm  
4 a member of, there is a member from each county Comhairle and what our job is, is to represent  
5 all the different counties and have meetings, national meetings held usually in the Department of  
6 Health, we can discuss different things, the topic that we're doing a project on this year is mental  
7 health, this was the biggest issue for young people in Ireland, this is what we're focusing on at  
8 the moment.

9

10 As you can see it says "Let's Go Mental" this is the project we're working on.

11

12 "Let's Go Mental", this is the project which is going to take up a lot of time for us. It will be  
13 happening all across Ireland in each county, there will be a national launch in Dublin, Brian  
14 O'Driscoll will be an ambassador for that, we'll have more ambassadors too. But basically the  
15 event is a way to promote mental health for young people and maintain good positive mental  
16 health. There will be an event focused on mental health and with musical acts.

17

18 It's structured on five key topics, give, take notice, get involved, get moving and be aware. And  
19 all these different topics were chosen by us as the most important for young people to maintain  
20 positive mental health.

21

22 "Let's Go Mental" will be happening during the summer and as a national executive we are  
23 hoping everybody can get involved as much as possible. Thank you.

24 LUKE: I'm just going to talk about the survey a little more, while I talk about it, we'll give out a  
25 sample of the survey which will go out to schools tomorrow.

26

27 It was designed by Comhairle with the members of the youth who took part in the camp, it was  
28 piloted successfully online before Christmas, we used Survey Monkey and had a number of  
29 responses to it and it was very easy to answer and understand and didn't take long to do at all.  
30 There are 2,000 copies going out to secondary schools across the county as we speak. Surveys  
31 will begin to be filled out tomorrow morning and we hope to get that done as soon as possible,  
32 and then to get all the information together and make charts and graphs and see what we can do  
33 from there.

34

1 The value of the survey, really the survey will be invaluable if you provide all information we  
2 need to know as to what we are going to do in the future, all future projects we'll we're going to  
3 do, data from all over the county, we're hitting as many schools as we can, data will be available  
4 for municipal districts so we can get problems in Wicklow or Greystones etcetera. It will be an  
5 indicator as to what the most important issues are for young people in County Wicklow, and not  
6 only that we'll be able to see the most important issues for 12 to 14 year olds and 16 to 18 year  
7 olds in all the different areas as well. So it will be very valuable in deciding future projects and  
8 it will be a challenge for the Comhairle and County Council to respond to as to what the next  
9 step will be and we'll look for your advice and help on that. As well it's an opportunity to  
10 recognise and value the voice of the young people in the county, as well we'll promote  
11 Comhairle and young people will realise there is a platform for them, they can speak and have  
12 their voice heard and something positive to be done about it.

13  
14 So what next? We would like to share the results of the survey with you once all of that is  
15 completed, we would like to explore how the youth Council and the County Council could  
16 collaborate more, this is essential for us progressing to do as much as we possibly can during our  
17 time on the Council and for future members of the Council. We would like your support for the  
18 let's go mental initiative over the summer, it's a big undertaking that we'll be doing and it's going  
19 to need a lot of time and effort into making sure it's as positive as it can be and the most help.  
20 And also we'd like to invite the County Council to nominate a councillor to join our steering  
21 group, we meet three times a year, we feel it will be beneficial, we'll be able to do a lot more  
22 work and have helpful advice and experience from the councillors, I'd like to thank you very  
23 much for giving us the opportunity to present our work to you. We hope to see you with the  
24 results as soon as possible.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Luke, Murray and Helen. I think it is very worthwhile to have  
26 Comhairle na nÓg come in and know there will be interaction between what goes on in this  
27 chamber and the actual issues for the youth and particularly the "Let's Go Mental" campaign  
28 project, a very worthwhile campaign that they have embarked upon, and we all know how  
29 suicide in particular has affected a lot of people around the county and I think they are to be  
30 commended for that project.

31 Cllr TIMMINS: Thank you Chairman, just briefly I'd like to commend the children on their  
32 presentation, it's really worthwhile, very sobering to see it, in some ways it's a wake-up call to all  
33 of us what we do around this Council, as an example, and has an effect on the future generation  
34 of this county and country indeed.

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I'd like to say to them if you have any ideas that they have, they're welcome, we'll certainly welcome to send them to us and communicate with us and we'll be interested in listening to them, and finally on a lighter note, I think their presence in the chamber actually can have a positive affect on the behaviour of a lot of councillors here. So as far as I'm concerned they are always welcome.

Cllr LAWLESS: Thanks Cathaoirleach. Thank you Helen, Luke and Murray that was a very good presentation and thank you to the rest of the group and Dermot for coming in today. I work in around youth myself, it's great, absolutely fantastic to see young people taking an interest in the area that they live in, I think it's only right that us as a Council support you in the work that you are going to plan ahead for the future. And I'm very looking forward to your let's go mental, I will be very much the type of person that would stand up on a rooftop and shout about mental health, it shouldn't be shielded. And I'm going to disclose that now somebody who suffered with depression, I would be very, very much vocal about how important mental health is, how important it is for young people as well, because I've dealt with young people with mental health as well.

Your survey looking through it is fantastic, I really hope when you get the figures and analysis together that we as a Council can work with you and work on the figures. So overall, it's lovely to see you here today, I was actually looking forward to your presentation more than any of the other stuff today, apologise to anybody else. And hopefully we'll see you again in the Council chamber thank you very much for coming in.

Cllr McLOUGHLIN: What a joy it was to see young people in the chamber you are the future leaders of this county, no doubt maybe six out of six will be around this table eventually and you will talk to the young Council and you will be the adult Council as such, I think you are more adult like than a lot of the people around here at times!

I wish you so well in the future, I have been at your AGM before, it is just an astonishing day to watch all of you working together and the amount of things that you actually do. Do come back with the results of your survey, it's very important that we know how you're thinking. Lots of times us adults think we know what you're thinking, so come back and inform us, decide what you need, what is the next step. And tell us what you need, because we don't want to take your survey and decide what we think you need, you come back, your views are important to us, and it's been absolutely delightful to have you here today, we hope it's not another year before we see

1 you again. Thank you.

2 Cllr SNELL: Again I'd like to join with the other members and congratulate all the group for  
3 coming in here today, I thought it was brilliant, I think if you want to understand issues that  
4 affect young people we have to talk to young people. Nobody can identify it more so than the  
5 youth themselves.

6  
7 In regards to contact with Wicklow County Council I see Deirdre Whitfield ties in, in regards to  
8 this local authority you wouldn't find better, I'm delighted to see she ties in with you. I would  
9 like to see stronger ties between your organisation and the full chamber here, I think that's  
10 important. And I would just wish you well for the future, don't leave it so long to come back,  
11 don't be shy. As some members said it certainly quietened down a lot of us here, you have to be  
12 congratulated on that.

13 Cllr MURPHY: Anyone that can quieten the chamber here fair dues to you!

14  
15 I'd like to say congratulations and echo what Cllr McLoughlin said, I was sitting looking at the  
16 three young people thinking one of them will be sitting here and having the headaches that they  
17 have got for the last year and I hope they deal with them better than we can at times!

18  
19 Their survey is just so clear, it's so to the point and it's visual, that's exactly what young people  
20 and ourselves see, there's no complications, just very simple straightforward and I also hope that  
21 you do include and maybe do some workshops on people with disability. As I have always said  
22 my disability you can see, but there's other people who have hidden disabilities and they also  
23 need to be brought into the loop, and to be included and inclusive, and I know that your group is  
24 inclusive, but not to forget those people that maybe are outside looking in and need to be brought  
25 into the loop. I think it's fantastic. I think in our -- in my youth we were a bit more different, we  
26 probably label young people, which is very wrong, but I think here today the label is off, I'd just  
27 like to say congratulations.

28 Cllr RUTTLE: Yeah I too would like to congratulate the participants here today from Comhairle  
29 thank you for the presentation, through my work with the KWETB I'm well aware of all they do  
30 and certainly it augers very well when you see people willing to participate and do so much.  
31 Apropos of what Cllr McLoughlin said when I look at Cllr Nolan you mightn't have to wait that  
32 long, young lads do get in here! So come along quicker than you think, but certainly you're  
33 demonstrating, concern, confidence and ability, vocal ability to communicate what you are  
34 doing.



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Your survey is hugely interesting as was said by Cllr Murphy, to the point, direct and relevant, we certainly would be interested in seeing that, we're well aware -- we don't control all the schools but most of them are under our remit and certainly anything I can do to advance it as vice-chairman of the body I will certainly do. Congratulations and well done. It's great to see confidence and involvement, it's very easy to do the other, withdraw and stay back, but to come forward and participate, and you are the people of the future. Thank you.

Cllr BRADY: Like all the other members there, just to welcome the whole team in the chamber here this afternoon it's certainly very enlightening to listen to the excellent work under the stewardship of Dermot, so congratulations to everyone.

A few years ago my oldest daughter was in your shoes she was part of Comhairle here in Wicklow, she would have informed me as to the excellent work that goes on there throughout the entire county, I think a couple of members spoke about the needs of young people, only the young people know the real needs of young people, so engaging with yourselves is critical and to hear that you come in here on a Saturday, I'd like you in here maybe just ahead of our Council meeting, so that if there is any real issues that can be fed into this chamber as well, because there needs to be more co-ordination between the two Councils.

As part of that, and the excellent survey, 2,000 questionnaires going out to real people, real young people with real issues, I think maybe when that process is finalised maybe you can come back to this Council and maybe you set the agenda for a Council meeting here of the issues that you think are relevant coming out of this survey and maybe you as a committee can sit in, maybe your chairperson Helen can sit up there jointly with whoever our chairperson is at that stage and jointly discuss the issues on the agenda that you set coming out of this survey, so maybe we can take that on board as well. And just one of the points Luke quoted in terms of a member of this Council sitting on the steering committee that meets three times a year, maybe I propose that the sitting chairperson at the time, so they would tie in to those steering meetings, they only happen three times a year, so currently it's Cllr Fox, and whoever his replacement is, if that's accepted by all members they can tie into the steering committee meetings at that stage.

I think there has to be a bigger role for younger people in society, I am going to flag this now, I welcome the fact they are going to lower the Presidential age for candidates to 21, I think it reflects the reality out there, we need young people to drive things forwards so I welcome the

1 fact, it's up for discussion and going to be voted upon on the 22nd. Just, I'll finish off on this, I  
2 commend the project that you are doing there. Let's Go Mental, I think it follows on from other  
3 excellent work that's gone on around promoting positive mental health and for young people to  
4 be out there talking about the issue, that in itself is breaking down the taboo that is out there in  
5 society, because you are the very people, again that know the issues, and by talking to each  
6 other, getting broader society, getting Council Chambers like this talking about issues around  
7 pushing forward positive mental health and all the issues that go around with it, it's phenomenal,  
8 you only had to look at over the weekend we had darkness into light organised in Bray and  
9 Arklow, and you can see the many thousands upon thousands of people directly affected here in  
10 Wicklow with the issue of self harm and suicide, any discussion around it has to be welcomed,  
11 so I commend new all your work. I look forward hopefully to having you back in here where  
12 you set the agenda for the council meeting, maybe we can organise a special meeting to  
13 accommodate that Cathaoirleach, I look forward to that. Again well done to you all.

14 Cllr O'BRIEN: Just to say Comhgairdecheas.

15  
16 I think we might get rid of the big table here, I was looking at some of the projects you are  
17 saying and it seems to be based on action and getting things done quickly, your survey, to me  
18 that's a document, there is a plan in that, it's a plan, straightforward there. I think we as  
19 councillors know what the youth need, I know they have no place to socialised. The issue with  
20 youth and Dermot worked, he knows what I'm talking about, the issues, the youth need money  
21 put into different events and stuff like that, they do need it, it's refreshing to see you here. You're  
22 speaking honestly, no bag age, no hidden agenda and you always speak about issues and don't  
23 mention economics, you speak about mental health, people working well together, it's a credit to  
24 you and I hope you get all the help you need, no more than you deserve. Congratulations.

25 Cllr WINTERS: Just to thank the members of the group for their presentation and to thank them  
26 and say we would look forward to their survey and I smiled when they said one of their issues is  
27 perhaps getting the work that they do known and getting people involved and particularly when  
28 it's a good news story it is sometimes difficult to get that word out there. And I wish them the  
29 very best of luck and look forward to hearing the results of the survey, thank you.

30 Cllr THORNHILL: (Congratulates them in Irish).

31  
32 This work by these young people involved with Comhairle is wonderful and it's a great sign for  
33 the future of this country that at long last the youth are getting their say  
34

1 For too long the youth of this country haven't been listened to and I think as a country we can  
2 learn, there is an awful lot of issues that are cropping up now at the moment, mental health,  
3 physical health, and I just finish off by mentioning one issue which is really come to fore and we  
4 should really be thinking about, is obesity. And it's issues like this, suicide awareness and other  
5 issues, we should be thinking about, but it's with the youth and listening to them, and I wish  
6 them the best for the future.

7 Cllr BEHAN: Cathaoirleach I'd just add my words of congratulation to the young women and  
8 gentlemen from Comhairle and say I was thrilled with the presentation and amount of work you  
9 have done, yourselves and your colleagues who are with you and I'm sure couldn't be here today  
10 and I just think it's a magnificent presentation you made and magnificent project you'll  
11 undertake.

12  
13 I'd also like to welcome as well Dermot O'Brien as the coordinator, those of us who come from  
14 Bray know Dermot's track record on working with young people over the last 20 years Dermot at  
15 this stage. He is a magnificent person to be involved in encouraging and facilitating youth and  
16 to help them achieve their full potential, I think Comhairle are in safe hands with Dermot as  
17 coordinator.

18  
19 The final point is we also have a network of older people in the county, which again the Council  
20 has involvement with, at some stage it might be interesting to have presentations from the older  
21 generation and younger generation here in this chamber, because quite a lot of the issues in your  
22 survey are issues for older people and the previous report, the information we got on  
23 homelessness is pointing out that in fact homelessness is now becoming a problem for older  
24 people as well as what we might consider which is for younger people, so there are a lot of  
25 issues in common, at some stage in the future, obviously over the next year, when your survey is  
26 done and we get a chance to see what older people think we might have a general discussion.  
27 But for now I congratulate all of you and well done.

28 Cllr FORTUNE: You're very welcome today and well done on your presentation, your survey is  
29 excellent and maybe it's a good idea when you have it done you can come back and present the  
30 results to the Council. Well done, you all done very, very well. I remember back in 2010 I  
31 attended one of the meetings, you talk about publicity, what you have given us today is  
32 excellent. I think you do need to get your face out there and organisation out there more, so try  
33 and get onto the local papers and radio, that's how you get your profile out there, well done.

34 Cllr CULLEN: Thanks Chairman, just to echo sentiments of other speakers, congratulations to

1 the full team and Dermot, it's not easy to get up and give a presentation with the style and being  
2 so articulate and confident as you guys are. And I just want to wish you continued success in the  
3 future and I've no doubt that our future is in very, very safe hands with the quality of  
4 presentation and quality of person that you are, so well done and continued success.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thank you. So thanks again Dermot and all the team. Don't let all  
6 the praise go to your head! Thanks again. We'll nominate somebody to interact at Council. We  
7 might go through the SPC just to formally get somebody who will interact with your group,  
8 okay? Thanks a lot.

9  
10 Okay we'll move on. Item 4, note the monthly management reports of March and April.

11 MS GALLAGHER: Cathaoirleach to say elected members have been circulated with the  
12 management report for March and April and copies of the local community development  
13 committee update and Local Enterprise Office Wicklow monthly management report to  
14 Wicklow County Council are attached to both reports.

15 ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE: I mentioned at the end of the last meeting, the LEO is a new  
16 arm really of local government, its involvement in enterprise, and just I pointed out the last day  
17 that in 2014 there was a net increase of 106 jobs in the companies supported by the LEO, and I  
18 think it's just a sign of progress and a sign of where the local authority can influence things going  
19 forward in the enterprise area and it's important to note that.

20  
21 And secondly I would say the management reports and Cllr Timmins has always been on about  
22 management reports having regard to the operational plan that was adopted at the last meeting,  
23 as we get the various reports and the detail of where we're meeting targets they will be coming  
24 back on agenda for interaction with members to give a picture of what we're doing well and  
25 areas where we need to do a little better.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. So that's noted. We'll move on. Item 6 to confirm appointment of  
27 Cllrs Mitchell and Walsh to act as directors on the board of the special purpose vehicle company  
28 for Greystones Harbour.

29 Cllr RUTTLE: What's that Cathaoirleach, special vehicle?

30 MS GALLAGHER: Can I just say the elected members were circulated with a report from  
31 director of roads on the 7th of May in relation to this matter.

32 Cllr VANCE: I will propose that Chairman.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed? Cllr Vance, seconded Cllr McLoughlin. That's agreed. Okay  
34 correspondence?

1 MS GALLAGHER: Cathaoirleach if I could just get a proposer and seconder for the protocol  
2 minutes circulated on the 2nd -- of the meeting of the 2nd of March and the 13th of April please?

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed Cllr Ruttle and seconded Cllr Lawless.

4 MS GALLAGHER: Just to mention that an invitation issued to the Chinese ambassador to  
5 Ireland on foot of request of the elected members at our last meeting, so the Chinese ambassador  
6 kindly accepted the invitation and will come to our meeting on the 8th of June. And our annual  
7 meeting just to let elected members know, Ordinary Meeting, is the 8th of June and the annual  
8 meeting is scheduled for the 15th of June. Elected members have been circulated with  
9 correspondence.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's all the correspondence. Okay we'll move on to Notice of Motions.  
11 It was agreed at the protocol that Municipal District motions would take precedence, is that  
12 agreed? So we'll start with Notice of Motion number 3 coming from Wicklow Municipal  
13 District.

14 MS GALLAGHER: This is a Notice of Motion by Wicklow district members, "That this  
15 Council, recognising the need for safety for children at play..." (Quoted).

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Will we consider your motion as well, Cllr Matthews, in tandem with  
17 that?

18 Cllr MATTHEWS: Mine is on residential areas.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay I'll get the response to the Wicklow motion first.

20 MS GALLAGHER: The response is, "New guidelines for setting speed limits in Ireland were  
21 issued by the Department of Transport..." (Quoted).

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay that will go out on public display, so there will be an opportunity to  
23 make a submission on that. Okay we'll take the next municipal motion which is 4, again it's the  
24 Wicklow Municipal District.

25 MS GALLAGHER: "That Wicklow County Council reviews the roadside..." (Quoted). And the  
26 response, "Under the Wildlife Acts hedge cutting is forbidden between March 1st and August  
27 31st..." (Quoted).

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay Cllr Shay Cullen?

29 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Just to follow up on that. The problem we have with our current  
30 situation with roadside hedge cutting is there seems to be a lack of interest with certain parties to  
31 basically cut the roadside hedges and ditches. Our policy seems to be send out a letter of  
32 warning at some point through the cutting season, but from what I can gather it is never followed  
33 up. And in turn through several means, we're trying to cut out accidents, just for example  
34 vehicles and pedestrians, cyclists all have to move out towards the centre of the road where

1 roadside hedges are not trimmed back. Obviously making roads narrower, leading to increased  
2 amount of accidents, it also decreases visibility on roads and junctions. The stability of  
3 hedgerows planted with trees are leading to storm damage and trees falling on roads. We are  
4 currently trying to improve our whole tourism area for Wicklow as a county, and one of the  
5 simple things we should ensure is that our roadside hedges are kept in trim, we currently have  
6 bus tour operators complaining about our main thoroughfares, with overhanging trees and  
7 ditches not being cut back and it is causing them difficulties.

8  
9 We have persistent offenders, some of them very large landowners, some ordinary landowners  
10 farmers and so on. I don't believe the message is getting through, I think we are going to have to  
11 obviously look at the whole area in more detail. Section 70 of the Roads Act states, "Reasonable  
12 steps should be taken to ensure hazards or potential hazards to be removed and not obstructive to  
13 the public safety, a person found not to comply is liable for a fine up to €1,270". To my mind  
14 we're turning a blind eye to repeat offenders, therefore no fines are being issued, no real  
15 warnings are being adhered to, and I think we have to look at this seriously, I think it's a major  
16 issue.

17  
18 By the way it's not a case where some people might think this is a rural situation, it is to a point,  
19 but there's more and more urban areas being affected now, where you have with hedgerows of  
20 gardens growing out on footpaths, people can't walk on footpaths, can't push buggies due to  
21 overhanging bushes and trees, so it's a County Wicklow wide problem, not just a rural problem.  
22 And I think we as a Council have to take this serious and try and do something to improve the  
23 situation.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I make a suggestion, instead of having a full discussion on it here, it's  
25 a policy matter. Can we let the SPC examine the policy that's there, there's obviously difficulties  
26 as outlined by Cllr Cullen. I personally think that the national policy not allowing roadside  
27 hedges to be cut during the growing season has to be looked at, in the interests of road safety.  
28 So with the indulgence of all the members who want to speak, can we put this out to the SPC?  
29 And let them have a look at the policy, is that agreeable? Okay. The environment SPC is most  
30 appropriate.

31 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Before we move on, can we just have an answer back, cutting season  
32 starts on the 1st of September, so we want an answer well in advance of that.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah, okay. We'll move on then to Arklow Municipal District motion in,  
34 number 6.

1 MS GALLAGHER: "That a submission be made to the department of the environment..."  
2 (Quoted). Response is, "A scheme has been submitted..." (Quoted).

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay Cllr Fitzgerald?

4 Cllr FITZGERALD: That scheme was first announced in 2007 by a previous Minister for the  
5 Environment, it's been announced about four times since. And we don't seem to have funding in  
6 place for it. I'm quite disappointed to say that it didn't get through, not through any fault of the  
7 councillors, it seems schemes elsewhere were more important and certainly there needs to be  
8 some decision positive for the Arklow area with regard to more housing. Despite what my  
9 esteemed colleague over here says his area is worse, I'm dealing with people every week that are  
10 homeless, I just went out to take a call for someone who is, so I think the situation is so  
11 important that we have a Minister here in the county, we have a load of deputies, we need some  
12 priority for the area, we are getting an influx from other areas as well and we can not buy houses,  
13 because people are coming from areas where housing costs are more expensive and coming to  
14 live in Arklow, the fact of the matter is there is a scheme starting in Arklow shortly where 39  
15 houses are being built, there is a waiting list for houses mostly from outside the area. It is a  
16 difficulty, it's disappointing it didn't get through.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you. I think earlier the announcement that two areas that  
18 did get allocated were as much as a surprise by the staff here as anything, that Dunlavin and  
19 Rathdrum did get that. Okay we'll move on to number 9 which is the Greystones Municipal  
20 District motion. "We call upon Wicklow County Council to provide a dog park..." (Quoted).  
21 Okay that has only come in, in the last week or ten days so we haven't got a response.

22 MS GALLAGHER: It's not that we haven't got a response but it entails land and planning. So if  
23 one of the elected members wants to...

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: This came from Greystones area.

25 Cllr FORTUNE: There was proposals put forward by the people who presented to us, it was a  
26 question.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: You received a presentation did you?

28 Cllr FORTUNE: They came to the last meeting and made a presentation and had obviously  
29 done a look around the area and had come forward with four or five locations and they were all  
30 submitted as part of the presentation.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: They were Council land?

32 Cllr FORTUNE: Some was yeah.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Would it be possible to get a copy of the presentation?

34 Cllr FORTUNE: You'll get it from the local office in Greystones, I'm surprised you haven't got

1 it.

2 Cllr WHITMORE: There's been a group lobbying for this for quite a while in Greystones, it's  
3 something that I think is needed for Wicklow in general, I think there is five in South County  
4 Dublin, we don't have any in the county at all. There is a huge dog ownership within the county.  
5 And there is a lot of issues with that, dog fouling, I see another motion about keeping dogs under  
6 effective control, but dogs do actually need to be able to be socialised and a dog park would  
7 enable that, give them running space, they can meet and greet other dogs, do what they need to  
8 do. And something as a Council I think we should look at, it's very important and it hasn't really  
9 been a priority to date. So one of the areas that, the locations was IDA land near Shoreline, so I  
10 think the Council could write and request that potentially that that land might be set aside,  
11 because it's a small tranche of land really, of no benefit to IDA, they wouldn't be able to build  
12 anything there.

13 Cllr FORTUNE: Just Chair, if it turns out Lorraine can't get the back up, let us know, we'll get  
14 it.

15 MS GALLAGHER: I'm sure I will, I just wasn't aware of the...

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: We are not aware of the presentation, this is a one liner, we have no meat  
17 on the bone so to speak! It's very hard to make a judgment call or a call on this based on what  
18 has been submitted. Maybe Municipal District could forward on the presentation.

19 Cllr VANCE: Chairman will the dogs be allowed eat burgers in this dog park?

20 Cllr WHITMORE: Only if they're 400 metres from the school!

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'd always worry about dogs meeting and greeting now.

22 Cllr LAWLESS: Just all the councillors support it and the presentation was very good, they only  
23 need a small bit of land, the IDA, that's the one that was suggested, but they also suggested some  
24 of the park land up where the cliff walk is, which I believe would be part of the -- when Sisk  
25 eventually finish the harbour, was another area which would be ideal as well, maybe that could  
26 be looked at, I don't know what way negotiations would go for a piece. I think that would be  
27 ideal to have the whole lot in one.

28  
29 On a countywide basis ideally dog parks, we should look at them anyway, they seem to be quite  
30 popular, I am not a dog owner, but it would be nice to think dogs are in their own little area,  
31 socialising together, behaving themselves and it will cut down on the dog fouling, it would be  
32 amazing, but that's down to education as well. Just backing up that we all did support it and it  
33 was a very good presentation.

34 Cllr BRADY: I fully support this motion, you may recall we discussed this in Bray a good few



1 months ago, because certainly I as a member of the Council in Bray was being lobbied by dog  
2 owners in the area, looking for a park like this as well, so it might not be the height of everyone's  
3 interest or whatever, but certainly for dog owners it's something that they see as important. They  
4 are in a number of different local authorities, there is one in Shankill in Dublin, one in  
5 Cabinteely park as well, there's others in the locally and they are very successful. Unfortunately  
6 now in Bray, we have a number of playing pitches, one being the Fergal Óg's pitch in Bray,  
7 which effectively is a large park, you have dog owners going in and letting dogs off the leash,  
8 there's been near misses with children, if we move away from a situation like that where it's  
9 putting safety of children at risk, to have dedicated areas for people to let the dogs off the leash,  
10 to protect children. But to use a terrible pun, I don't think Greystones should be the ones being  
11 the tail wagging the dog, I think we as a county need to devise a policy, because I spoke to Joe  
12 Lane when he was in the role around community and that, he said we as a local authority need to  
13 devise a policy before we start implementing them, not to kick to touch but we need some work  
14 done on it and maybe the SPC should take it on board to devise a countywide policy with regard  
15 to implementation of these, because I think theory essential and I know there is plenty of sites in  
16 and around Bray that could be used for the purpose, I'm sure the same as other areas and they are  
17 not very, very costly either.

18 Cllr KAVANAGH: I have been looking for a dog park for Wicklow, especially in the Murrough  
19 area where we have new facilities for children, outdoor gym, skate park and we have a terrible  
20 problem with dog fouling, but again the issue of how are the dog parks maintained, what sort of  
21 surfaces do they have, how is the dog excrement dealt with, so I would ask that we look to our  
22 neighbours in Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown to ask them how do they deal with it, how do they set  
23 them up, what surfaces they use, how do they clean and maintain them? Maybe if that could be  
24 circulated to the Municipal Districts we might get an idea of how to go about setting them up, I  
25 agree we need a countywide policy.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: I believe in Dublin they are more successful where there are apartment  
27 blocks, people have limited access to ground.

28 Cllr KAVANAGH: We may as well deal with the problem...

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay is the proposal the SPC will look at it? It's going to be a busy SPC!

30  
31 Okay I think we'll move onto the suspension or will we squeeze in one more? We'll take number  
32 1.

33 MS GALLAGHER: "Wicklow County Council welcomes the changes to the film tax credit  
34 schemes..." (Quoted). The response is that, "Wicklow County Council has long recognised the

1 importance of the film industry to the county..." (Quoted).

2 Cllr BRADY: Firstly can I just welcome the response there, obviously when it comes to film,  
3 TV, Wicklow is synonymous with it, the national film studio was established here in Wicklow,  
4 Ardmore, now thankfully we have two film studios in the county. I know a number of members  
5 here would have availed of the opportunity to get into both studios, but more particularly more  
6 recently Ardmore studios, certainly anyone that was there would have seen the set of penny  
7 dreadful which was fantastic it has to be said, but it was highlighted that point that unfortunately  
8 they are now currently turning away work because of the lack of space within the county here.  
9 That has to set off alarm bells that we can not entertain the major productions coming here  
10 because of lack of space. They have asked for the creation of 15 million infrastructural funds to  
11 try progress that, because they show clear, every euro invested in the film industry multiplies, so  
12 I think we need to push this forward.

13  
14 There is the commission now established to have a look at this and it has to be welcomed but I  
15 do have some concerns that other local authorities, namely in county Limerick, the County  
16 Council now have identified the whole issue of film production and I believe the Council down  
17 there have invested millions in terms of trying to attract Ardmore down there, they are talking  
18 about redeveloping one of the old Dell facilities down there for film space and that, so we need  
19 to drive forward as a local authority. I hear what the answer there, that we have made  
20 submissions but I think there is more we should be doing as well, when you hear of Limerick,  
21 sees the huge potential here and is willing to invest millions in terms of development space  
22 themselves, we need to look at that and ensure not just Ardmore studios but any film production  
23 stays in this county, we're not exploiting it as much as we should and we have to do a whole lot  
24 more. I welcome the response and I can't allow it fall off the agenda because it's so serious and  
25 important in terms of job creation, in terms of tourist potential as well for the county.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: I would say it is morally wrong for taxpayers' money to be spent trying to  
27 entice an industry from one part of Ireland to another. So far Limerick to be spending volumes  
28 of money that they are spending trying to displace an industry that's in County Wicklow, to go to  
29 another area of our jurisdiction, is not, whatever about trying to attract foreign investment, and  
30 industry from overseas, but to attract it from another part of Ireland is something very morally  
31 wrong about that.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay I have a lot of speakers, very brief please.

33 Cllr KAVANAGH: I e-mailed you on the 16th March in relation to this, maybe you didn't see  
34 the e-mail but I did ask at that time that we have a Special Meeting just in relation to the film

1 industry and forward because at that stage it had been announced we were going to lose these  
2 thousand jobs which is very significant and you've just said yourself somewhat immoral to, for  
3 Limerick to go after them. But a crying shame on us as well to let them go without picking up a  
4 fight.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: They're not gone.

6 Cllr KAVANAGH: I know but we can't be complacent, I sent the e-mail back in March.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: If you want a Special Meeting there is a facility there. I met with the  
8 owners of Ardmore Studios and they assured me that they have actually plans to expand in Bray,  
9 County Wicklow. If you want to have a Special Meeting there's a facility there.

10 Cllr KAVANAGH: That's what I asked back in March.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: You don't have to request it, there's a procedure that you can instigate if  
12 you want a Special Meeting.

13 Cllr KAVANAGH: Right I think we then need to have a Special Meeting because this is so  
14 important for Wicklow and we can sit here month after month and nothing happens for three  
15 months and it's back on the agenda or it has to come up as a motion, that's not good enough, our  
16 LEO should work on this, we all should work on this.

17 Cllr CASEY: They are working.

18 Cllr KAVANAGH: Well if there is a threat of them being lost there is a threat of them being  
19 lost, we can't be complacent about this and I think we need to be on top it have to make sure not  
20 only are the jobs not lost but provision is increased and we're top of the game here.

21 ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE: We have to live in the real world what we can do, the reply  
22 indicated what we can do and where we're taking action. The fact that Cllr Brady was right they  
23 have a shell of a building down below, they said it will be nice, we'll try and make a puppet for  
24 this, so that's a problem. So they're making a play for it, we have contact, you have contacted  
25 Ardmore, we have contact with Joe O'Connell out the road constantly, two very big players in  
26 that activity, and I don't know will we add anything by having a discussion here for it? I think  
27 the onus is on us as we've talked about the management reports before, to bring back information  
28 to the members in a timely fashion, we are discussing this and I give an undertaking to the  
29 members here today that we'll keep the members involved in the process as we make ground  
30 with discussions that we're having on an ongoing basis.

31  
32 We met last week with the IDA, myself and Lorraine, it was one of the areas that we raised and  
33 they confirmed the same as you have confirmed Cathaoirleach, that that wasn't anyway, hadn't  
34 moved anywhere, it got a bit of traction in the press but hadn't moved. So we are meeting and

1 are discussing, both Tom Murphy and Christine flood as part of the economic think tank with the  
2 members on that think tank from here are constantly talking about those areas, it's a high profile  
3 area, high monetary area and certainly has our attention.

4 Cllr VANCE: I would support this, I think it gives a huge amount of employment to the county,  
5 huge amount of local people employed and there's a very significant amount of money that's  
6 expended in the area. But we are not on top of this job, two months ago I was approached by an  
7 have had that worked in Ardmore and told me about negotiation that is went on in Limerick, I  
8 approached an official of the Council who knew nothing about it, a month later an article  
9 appeared in the paper in the times and then suddenly all hell breaks loose in regard to this. I'm  
10 just saying there is no, there may be now, but there wasn't in depth communication between the  
11 studio in Ashford and the one in way. The previous Bray Town Council done everything  
12 possible in regard to facilitate the development of Ardmore and I think we'll do so in future as  
13 well because we know the type of finance and everything that it provides to the local  
14 community. So it's very important and it's very important that we have these facilities down in  
15 Ashford as well, that it's kept in the county and people in the county are employed locally as  
16 well. But we as an organisation need to be much more on top of the job than I feel we have been  
17 over the last while, and keep in contact with those people on a fairly regular basis, to allow us  
18 the opportunity of dealing with any particular problems or competition that may arise within our  
19 own country.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: It's ten to now, I want to get onto the suspension. Cllr Casey.

21 Cllr CASEY: I'll be fairly brief. I've dealt with a good bit of this in relation to being Chairman  
22 of the economic SPC, I want to acknowledge the work that has been done in relation to the  
23 Council and film industry and also congratulate Christine flood on the work she has done in  
24 relation to the export group, I sat on two meeting, both Ashford and Ardmore gave clear  
25 indication it is not their intention to move to Limerick it's their intention to expand in Wicklow.

26  
27 Can I say it's a bit remiss of Wicklow County Council and indeed Limerick to try and put a play  
28 in for the film industry on a Dell site without making the film producers aware that the site is not  
29 suitable in any shape, form or manner to take a staged facility it would need almost a complete  
30 demolition of the Dell site to build a site suitable for acoustic film making that's one of the key  
31 components we have, we have acoustic studios in the county. We have the skill sets that no  
32 other county has in relation to the film industry. An we have done our best to make a detailed  
33 submission for this action plan for jobs to the government, I think if we are serious, as a local  
34 authority, and we as public representatives believe in the film industry, is a unique product to

1 Wicklow, I think we should be looking at what we can do as a Council to help support that film  
2 industry, and one of the one things we can do and should look at honestly is a development  
3 levies on the staged facilities in further development of the film industry. The staged facility is a  
4 strategic piece of infrastructure for the film industry and I'm just referred to the stage facilities.  
5 Maybe we can look in the very near future about maybe sub venting that levy in relation to the  
6 stage facility and the stage facility only, not the services around it, just the stage facility only.

7  
8 The second thing we need to do is we need to campaign that this county is designated as a film  
9 cluster in Ireland, that Wicklow is the film cluster in Ireland we need to lobby our TDs to ensure  
10 that we do not lose that status, we get that status and we hang on to it. We have the  
11 infrastructure more than any other county, we have the skill sets we need to work on that, we  
12 need to stick our head on the block and say we are supportive of this industry and we'll look at  
13 the development contributions in the strategic stage facilities and see what we can do to assist  
14 and then we need get this government to designate Wicklow as a cluster for the film industry in  
15 this country.

16 Cllr BRADY: Can I make a proposal? We had the CEO from Ballyhenry in, Joe O'Connell,  
17 could I suggest we have the CEO from Ardmore in at some point, I think our input is generated a  
18 lot of discussion at the national level around this investment fund of 15 million, some members  
19 did avail of the opportunity to get in and meet with them, I think it would be good to have her in  
20 at some point over the next couple of months just to hear from the perspective of Ardmore. I she  
21 has generated a lot of discussion at the national level. Single-handedly a catalyst for setting up  
22 the steering committee or group to look at the issue.

23 Cllr VANCE: Can I second the proposal by Cllr Casey with regard to Wicklow been the capital  
24 of film industry in the country.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Two proposals are we agreed to lobby the TDs to designate Wicklow as a  
26 cluster for film industry? And then to invite Siun in to give us an update on how the film  
27 industry is going in Ardmore studios.

28 ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE: And we'll aye give an update of the various units in the county.

29 Cllr WHITMORE: Do we want to have that as a Special Meeting that can form part of it where  
30 we're at as well, make it a longer and more inclusive thing, maybe bring Joe back in, bring  
31 Ardmore in, and then we're covering Pat's suggestion as well about having a Special Meeting.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: I don't think there's enough in it for a Special Meeting. They may not  
33 want to be here together.

34 Cllr WHITMORE: The presentation from Joe O'Connell was one of the first things we had here,

1 and everyone was on board with it, I know the economic think tank is looking at it as well, but I  
2 think there is no -- we need more of a sense of urgency about it, talking about having a meeting  
3 in two months or three months time, we're looking at suggestions such a thing and such a  
4 committee, the opportunity will be lost.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: It does form part of the economic plan that's going into the County  
6 Development Plan.

7 Cllr VANCE: Chairman we have two meetings scheduled for June, it can certainly be fitted into  
8 them, we don't need a Special Meeting but there will be plenty of time to fit it into one of those  
9 meetings to facilitate this.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: We'll have to see their available.

11 Cllr CASEY: Just in relation to Mr O'Connell and Ardmore Studios, what Joe O'Connell was  
12 looking for on the day was an exemption from planning development fee which we've tried to  
13 work on and got indication from national level, it's national legislation and we can not do that.  
14 Christine work with Mr O'Connell to make one master plan application to be in with us shortly  
15 to reduce the fee then it would max out at 30 something thousand, that would reduce the fee.  
16 The second thing he asked is commercial rates, and we give him a vehicle where he can get a  
17 rebate on commercial rates if the building is not occupied apart from that we can't change,  
18 national legislation needs to change. But the third thing was in relation to development  
19 contribution which we as a local authority can assist him if that's the will of the local authority.  
20 Maybe if Mr O'Brien can give us a rough cost of what the development contribution scheme  
21 would be in relation to the proposed master plan it would give us an indication of how we'd  
22 support the film industry, that's in relation to the strategic stage space.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay I'm moving on to suspension of standing orders. We'll extend that  
24 invitation. Send correspondence to TDs. Okay. Cllr Fortune?

25 Cllr FORTUNE: I asked to suspend standing orders to discuss the -- it ties very well into the  
26 discussion we had earlier with Brid and Margaret, because I believe it's a big issue, it's another  
27 chunk or step on austerity policy, a continuation on the attack of the social fabric of the country  
28 and goal posts keep moving all the time. I think it's very serious a lot of our tenants and people  
29 who are struggling in private housing now who are out of work are in collecting their various  
30 allowances they get for having that terrible situation upon themselves and paying a bit on this  
31 and that, here we are now saying that they are going to have to basically have an attachment  
32 order put on any income they have. I think it's immoral, that's a strong personal view I have.

33  
34 I think we need to examine tenant's rights, in other words in our tenant hand book I stand

1 corrected in case I have interpret it had wrongly, I'm pretty certain the tenants are entitled to a  
2 supply of water. I think we need to have a serious look at that. We have discussed the whole  
3 area of data protection and I think we need to look in light of all of this and the big area of rent  
4 allowance, a lot of people who are looking for social housing are forced onto the rent allowance  
5 situation, it begs the question what steps are in place so we don't have the growing  
6 homelessness? Because the frustration that's out there is really, really very serious, I'm sure  
7 there's loads of members in the chamber -- as I said earlier it has an impact on the question is  
8 directed to social housing but seriously has an impact on people living in private housing in the  
9 situation where their houses will be taken off them. And we're saying we'll put an attachment  
10 orders on whatever little you have coming in, what the hell is going on?

11  
12 So I think that it's very rushed now at the moment because we are running out of time in the  
13 meeting, I think it's something that merits a proper discussion, proper investigation, proper  
14 feedback from the officials, it's very important we do it on that basis.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'm happy to put it on the next agenda as an item for discussion, I'm  
16 conscious of the fact, I think it does justify a discussion.

17 Cllr FORTUNE: Because I think, I will ask also Chair that we try and avoid as best we can that  
18 it doesn't become a talking shop, just to make my point, at a meeting back in early April, there  
19 was a motion passed that Wicklow County Council condemn the banks for its present policy of  
20 pressing families who are in mortgage distress, and Ms Gallagher wrote to all the relevant people  
21 and nothing is happening with this kind of stuff, it's not our fault here or your fault, but you get  
22 responses back saying thank you for your letter, I forwarded your letter to the Minister for  
23 Finance and will be in touch with you again when I receive a response. We're now into the 11th  
24 of May -- I just think what's going on here is absolutely bananas, we need to have a real  
25 conversation. I smirked when I heard Brid talking earlier about style of housing, and her frank  
26 talk, we need frank talking in here and we need to put more emphasis lesson talking shop and  
27 more what are we going to do and our TDs are not doing it for us, no point sending a letter to the  
28 Minister of Finance and saying I'll come back to you when he comes back to me, he will come  
29 back with a standard answer. We want him to do something. And bringing it back to the  
30 attachment order, we have to do something. People are seriously hurting and we can't ignore it.  
31 I would appreciate if you put it on the agenda for a full proper discussion.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'll put it on the next agenda, not a future agenda, next agenda.

33 ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE: There is two elements, Department of Justice and Equality and  
34 also the Minister for the Environment, and we have received no detail of what's contained, just

1 the general outline that you all would be aware of in the press release.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you members. Protocol.

3

4 Meeting concluded at 5pm

5



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