

# WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



**Wicklow County Council**  
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTAIN

## **Transcript of the County Council Meeting Held on 4 April 2016 In the County Council Chamber, Wicklow**



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7 Wicklow County Council Meeting, Monday, 4th April 2016.

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9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Members, apologies for the delayed start of the meeting. We will just  
10 start with sympathies first please.

11 MS GALLAGHER: Cathaoirleach, today we remember the victims and families of the  
12 Buncrana tragedy and the Brussels attacks. And also Sile Mulhall Tinahely, mother of Michael  
13 Mulhall. Roisin Boland, sister of Michael Boland and Jackie McCluskey, father-in-law of David  
14 Collard.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Blake.

16 Cllr BLAKE: Can I second that vote of sympathy to Sile Mulhall to Michael on behalf of the  
17 group here. Sile was a very Trojan local community worker and Michael himself as well in  
18 terms of the first responders, the main organiser of the first responders the area. So just to  
19 second that sympathy.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. No other members, any sympathies? No, okay, let's stand.

21  
22 (A minute's silence was held)

23  
24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Thornhill.

25 Cllr THORNHILL: Cathaoirleach, thank you. I would be asking the Chamber for -- I wish to  
26 propose a suspension of standing orders in relation to something that I would like to see brought  
27 up later on in the meeting.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: What is the nature of it?

29 Cllr THORNHILL: This is in relation to a proposal where I'll be asking the Council to write to  
30 the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, re a programme that was on RTÉ subsequent to the 1916  
31 celebrations. The programme in my mind was there was language and in-appropriate language  
32 used in the programme and I think it should be given a little bit of thought, and I have a proposal  
33 made out here and it's going to be seconded by - should I read out the motion?

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: No, I am just, it's open to the members now as to whether we suspend

1 standing orders, we have a busy agenda, but do members feel they have enough information to  
2 make a decision as to whether to suspend standing orders or do they want more information?

3 Cllr WINTERS: I have no idea why we are being asked to suspend standing orders.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Mitchell.

5 Cllr MITCHELL: I am concerned item 14, a submission about getting a community benefit for  
6 supplying Dublin with water, I think we need to discuss this, we have had it on three agendas  
7 and I certainly think it should be taken ahead of any suspension and it should definitely be taken  
8 this week. The Government programme is being negotiated at the moment maybe. So I think  
9 we need to have this in there.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Cullen.

11 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: I support Cllr Mitchell, it's something I have been arguing for since  
12 1993 in this Council chamber, that Wicklow should get some benefit from the fact that Dublin,  
13 or that Irish Water is now extracting somewhere in the region, I think the latest figures is €724  
14 million worth of water.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Just in terms of the agenda...

16 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: I have done three reports for the Council over the past 20 years arguing  
17 this point and I am glad Cllr Mitchell has come to my viewpoint...

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Do you want to move that up the agenda, are you proposing that Cllr  
19 Mitchell?

20 Cllr MITCHELL: I am -- yes I would like it up the agenda so we definitely get to it today. At  
21 this time when a Programme For Government is or may be, or possibly negotiated with, we  
22 should be lobbying ourselves to get this.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

24 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: I think Chairman, we have five Dáil deputies here from Wicklow  
25 representing Wicklow here today...

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: We are going to get to that okay.

27 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: I just think it's important that the Dáil deputies are aware that the  
28 amount of finance being extracted from Wicklow's two reservoirs of Poulaphouca and  
29 Roundwood is now earning Irish Water €724 million a year and Wicklow...

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Could I suggest there will be an opportunity to talk more about it, but  
31 could I suggest it goes in at item number eight where we were going to discuss the National  
32 Ports Policy and we move it up to that. Would members be in agreement with that?

33 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Just to finish the point Chairman, we are paying Dublin...

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Cullen, you will have your opportunity to talk to and make anything

1 you want...

2 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: While the TDs are here...

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Councillor, Councillor! Sorry, Councillor, you don't seem to be  
4 recognising the Chair! If you could, I would appreciate that. Cllr Annesley please.

5 Cllr ANNESLEY: I would like to second Cllr Thornhill's proposal. But unfortunately I don't  
6 think the Council chamber members have actually seen this programme, and I am sure if Cllr  
7 Winters had seen this, she would be outraged at this programme. So I think Cllr Thornhill, if we  
8 put this at the next meeting and let people watch this programme, if you would like to tell them  
9 the name of the programme. I did watch it with my wife and I was disgusted, I turned the  
10 programme off. I am sorry Cllr Thornhill, I didn't watch it all, I tried to get it last night on the  
11 player, but I just couldn't. I think if the Councillors could watch this, I don't think you will  
12 stomach the whole programme, but I do definitely support your motion for writing to RTÉ  
13 broadcasting.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fox.

15 Cllr FOX: I would support Cllr Thornhill's suspension. I think the language used in the  
16 programme was totally inappropriate.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: To have it today?

18 Cllr FOX: To have it today.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Cllr Walsh.

20 Cllr WALSH: I would be inclined to support Cllr Annesley's suggestion there. I didn't see the  
21 programme in question, I saw it advertised and I purposely didn't watch it, because I thought it  
22 was in very poor taste considering the occasion we remembered...

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. John Snell.

24 Cllr SNELL: I would also support this. I have been talking to Cllr Thornhill about it. I did see  
25 the programme and I think it was just out of - to say it was bad taste was an understatement. So I  
26 think it probably should be heard today, because I am sure Cllr Thornhill could elaborate a little  
27 bit on the content.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay Cllr Winters.

29 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks. As Cllr Annesley said I haven't seen the programme, I don't know  
30 what programme you are talking about so I don't know whether I have seen it or not, I am just  
31 saying I don't have enough information. What programme are we talking about?

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Thornhill do you want to clarify what programme?

33 Cllr THORNHILL: I am delighted to do so. The name of the programme, Irish Pictorial  
34 Weekly, and it would be similar to what used to be there years ago Hall's Pictorial Weekly, way

1 more offensive and very distasteful. And I'll give evidence later --

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: We won't get into it now, I just wanted you to clarify that. We will go to  
3 Cllr Ruttle please.

4 Cllr RUTTLE: I would support the suspension today.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Lawless.

6 Cllr LAWLESS: I would be in the same mind as the other Councillors, I would like to support  
7 Cllr Thornhill on this as well and get some more information on it.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: At a quarter to five, suspension to discuss it, is that agreed? Agreed,  
9 okay, great. Thanks members. Okay. So it seems like forever since we had the election. But  
10 we still don't have a Government, but what we do have is five TDs from Wicklow, three returned  
11 and two brand new. And I think it's nice to see the two coming from this Council Chamber too,  
12 which is good to see. I would like to invite the five present TDs up to here please, and maybe if  
13 they'd like to say a few words and address the Chamber, that would be great, please come on up.  
14 So first and foremost, each of you are very, very welcome here to the Chamber today. And  
15 obviously I'll give the members a chance to come in. But maybe you would like to say a few  
16 words yourself. So Deputy Brady, maybe we would like to start with you. Just click your  
17 microphone there.

18 DEPUTY BRADY: First of all, thank you Cathaoirleach, and thank you for organising the  
19 events here this morning. I am deeply honoured to have been presented with -- I am not sure  
20 whether we have officially done it yet or what, but to be asked back to the Council Chamber  
21 here. I have worked with all Councillors in this Chamber, and many others over a 12-year  
22 period. So I am deeply honoured to have been given the honour of representing this county  
23 within Leinster House, the 32nd Dáil. Obviously I thank everyone that supported me during the  
24 elections, and just to thank everyone here, all the Councillors for their support and work, I know  
25 we have crossed swords on many occasions, but that's what makes democracy healthy. And  
26 having said that, I think any differences, we left them in the Council Chamber, and at all times it  
27 was for the betterment of Wicklow and the people that we represent.

28  
29 Indeed I also want to thank all the staff here in Wicklow County Council, Bray Town Council,  
30 and local authorities right across the entire county. I have worked well with all staff members  
31 over the last 12 years, and to thank them for the tremendous work they do in very, very difficult  
32 and trying circumstances, particularly over the last number of years with recruitment embargoes,  
33 etcetera, so just to acknowledge the hard work that all members of staff do, and to thank them for  
34 their support over the last 12 years also. I fully intend after receiving the mandate I have got to

1 continue to work with all members in this Chamber here, all 32. I think it's imperative now,  
2 there is five TDs representing this county in Leinster House now, so I think it's important that we  
3 all put on the county colours, get in there and work very, very closely with this Council Chamber  
4 in ensuring that the issues that affect the people that we all represent are heard and dealt with at  
5 the highest level.

6  
7 Of course we are in a bit of a twilight zone at the moment with the formation of Government,  
8 etcetera. I heard a comment outside that Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael aren't in coalition yet, I don't  
9 know, Pat might touch on that. But there is serious issues there obviously that need to be dealt  
10 with at a national level, and I think it's imperative that a Government is put in place as soon as  
11 possible. And the issues we have debated them here around this Chamber at length, housing,  
12 housing is obviously an issue that affects many, many people right across this constituency. So  
13 whilst all of this shadow boxing is going on at a national level, indeed I have had phone calls this  
14 morning and I am sure as Councillors you have all had phone calls over the weekend and this  
15 morning, from families presenting as homeless. And all of that will continue to be the case until  
16 a Government is put in place. But it needs to be a Government obviously that will deal seriously  
17 with that issue.

18  
19 I note that on the agenda, we have the IDA coming into the Council Chamber in the afternoon. I  
20 welcome that, and whoever managed to get the IDA here, hats off to them, congratulations,  
21 because I know it's something that as a Councillor for 12 years, I had been pushing, as had  
22 others, to try get the IDA in here to deal with the issue of employment and investment here  
23 within the county. And I have, as have others, been very critical of the IDA in the past and  
24 continue to do so if you have a look at last year, the IDA only paid seven site visits to County  
25 Wicklow and I am sure the members here will have a lot of difficult questions for the IDA and  
26 constructive criticisms and proposals for the IDA. So I intend to use my position now, within  
27 Leinster House, to push that.

28  
29 The housing issue, all of the issues affecting people, the health crisis that is in existence here  
30 within the county, here in Wicklow Town for example, we have Wicklow district hospital closed  
31 down, the loss of the A&E in Loughlinstown, and many, many other issues out there affecting  
32 people. But I fully intend to putting on the county colours here, the county jersey, working  
33 along with my four colleagues, to promote this county at the highest of levels, work in tandem  
34 with them on issues and I am sure we will cross swords on many issues in the future, but I think

1 it's important that we unite on issues of importance and relevance to this county. So again thank  
2 you all very much for having me in here this morning. Again it is a real honour to be  
3 representing this county at the highest of levels. Thank you very much.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you John. Pat.

5 DEPUTY CASEY: Thank you Chairman, and I would equally thank the members and the  
6 management and staff for their invitation here this morning. And I do notice from the last  
7 meeting there is a change in speaking time, we have now gone from five minutes to three  
8 minutes, so I congratulate you on getting that across the line.

9  
10 Equally during the week, I got my termination letter from Derek Keys which indicated I had  
11 served 11.7123 years on the Council, so it's going to be hard to summarise that in three minutes.  
12 So with a bit of latitude I might take a little longer today, which is unlike me.

13  
14 Can I first of all express my thanks to the members of Wicklow County Council that I have  
15 worked with over that period. And as a newbie in the higher chamber at the moment, can I wish  
16 the newbies to this Chamber, Michael, Mary and Gail, the very best of luck as they endeavour to  
17 represent the people of Wicklow. Equally I remember some of our old colleagues like this great  
18 county of ours, Cllr O'Shaughnessy, and Chairman I'll be a minute, as Nicky Kelly hits the  
19 microphone. At that stage I could exit and have a fag in peace and quiet and come back in and  
20 Nicky would still be talking. And then you had the wise heads I suppose when the debate got  
21 out of line and you had Councillor John Byrne and Councillor George Jones coming in at the end  
22 and bringing things back into order. It's been a huge positive experience for me to work with all  
23 the members of Wicklow County Council. And I think I have been open to all the members and  
24 I have never used the political system against that.

25  
26 But I think sadly, as my term evolved, the Council Chamber started to change as well. And it  
27 became more a political stunt than dealing with the core issues and the core message that needed  
28 to be dealt with at the time. And I think we are seeing that at national level now as well and I  
29 think sadly that's a negative move. I suppose I have mixed emotions today. You know, I had the  
30 huge honour and success of serving Wicklow as Cathaoirleach. I see the huge work done by the  
31 community and voluntary sector out there, and all the fantastic work they're doing on our behalf.  
32 And I suppose one of the most, one of the greatest success stories, but yet turned out to be one of  
33 the negatives, was the year that we won the most liveable community in the world. It was a huge  
34 honour for this county, and we did absolutely nothing with it from a PR point of view. And I

1 know the current Cathaoirleach has very high on his agenda PR, and the PR of the Council. The  
2 Council here does a huge amount of positive work, but doesn't sell itself. And it is something  
3 that does need to be issued and I know the Cathaoirleach is doing it.

4  
5 There is a - I have left a lot of unfinished business I suppose too in my role here. I see today  
6 there is a number of issues that I was heavily involved in on the agenda, CWETT, the LECP  
7 were both under my watch as both Chairman of the LCDC and Chairman of the Economic SPC.  
8 And equally I see in the second half of today, whether you ever get to it or not, is the report from  
9 the Audit Committee. Can I say out of all the committees I have served on over that period, this  
10 is probably one of the most important committees that this Council has. And it performs a huge  
11 role in the background and does a huge amount of good work in protecting this Council moving  
12 forward, identifying weaknesses, and can I say whoever gets my position on that look forward to  
13 it, it's a very exciting committee to be on and gives you a great insight into how the Council is  
14 exposed on certain issues.

15  
16 I do leave with an unchallenged thing that I have probably left and haven't said anything about it,  
17 and I think it's having a very negative effect on the public representatives and that would be the  
18 whole issue of data protection. I honestly believe that it has been -- I can't find the exact words,  
19 but you feel as if you are guilty now trying to make representations on people's behalves. And I  
20 think we do need to do something about it. It's very hard from a planning point of view, you go  
21 in there and if your name hadn't been on, you don't have that data protection file, that file is  
22 sterilised before you get it, it's like that we have done something wrong. And most of the public  
23 representatives here today are here for the good of people. And it's wrong that a blunt  
24 instrument like data protection has been brought in to deal with the few who have broken that.  
25 And I would think that are we a lesser people than the public servants who equally have access  
26 to all that data? But they sign maybe a contract of confidentiality. So I think we need to address  
27 that on a long-term basis.

28  
29 I arrived here in 2004 in and the buzzwords was Better Local Government and how Better Local  
30 Government, I think we were one term into Better Local Government and how that had a  
31 negative effect on the operation of the Council. And about four years ago, maybe three and a  
32 half years ago, we heard it Putting People First. And I was at the launch of Putting People First  
33 in Dublin Castle, and initially, I looked at it as a positive. And I did do that on the basis that for  
34 once, for the first time ever, we were in control of our funding source. And we could decide

1 where our funding would be spent. And that was the Local Property Tax. But sadly, that's not  
2 the way it has turned out.

3  
4 First of all 20% of the property tax is taken to a rate equalisation nationally. And about another  
5 25% is spent on housing, which is normally funded direct from Central Government. Which  
6 leaves us basically with what we have, which is the bare minimum to operate Wicklow County  
7 Council. And it's left us no room to do what we want to do, and it's not Putting People First.  
8 And it has not served a purpose it was intended. Equally, Irish Water and people would know  
9 my views on Irish Water, and I have spoken about Irish Water since its inception, but today I am  
10 not going into the reels of payment or non-payment. But it's a democratic process that was taken  
11 away from us by the creation of this utility company. And you will be dealing shortly with the  
12 County Development Plan and planning where your population will grow. But in theory, we no  
13 longer can decide that because we do not control the infrastructure.

14  
15 It is Irish Water that will now determine where the infrastructure goes into this county and  
16 therefore will determine where the population will grow. Two years later I think it's been proven  
17 that the abolition of the Town Councils has been a bad move, and the towns who did have Town  
18 Council representation now are feeling the effects of this. But I suppose coming from a rural  
19 background, the big and the significant loss to me was the Section 140. And I have to say I  
20 would have used the Section 140 on a number of occasions in my tenure, and I did it for genuine  
21 cases, people who qualified to live on their own land in their own area. And I believe today with  
22 the loss of this, it has made an already very difficult process even harder. I put my hand on my  
23 heart and say there is probably six files out there today that I would have no problem in moving  
24 a Section 140 because they are genuine people wishing to live on their own land and the system  
25 is stopping them.

26  
27 I am not going to say much more, I have a huge energy for Local Government. I am sad to see  
28 the way it is going. I hope I can maintain that passion for Local Government at a national level  
29 and try and restore some of the powers that have been taken away from you, back to you.

30  
31 But finally, there is one group of people I haven't thanked and they have been the staff of  
32 Wicklow County Council. And I have to say in that 12 years, I have never had a bad experience  
33 with any member of management or staff, of Wicklow County Council. So can I express finally  
34 my sincere thanks to all the staff and management of Wicklow County Council. Thank you

1 Chairman.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Pat.

3 DEPUTY DONNELLY: Three minutes, piece of cake. Morning all, Cathaoirleach, thank you.  
4 I want to thank the members for having us in this morning, it is a great honour and privilege and  
5 something I haven't done before as a TD, is come in and get the opportunity to address the  
6 Council, so I would like to thank all of you and the Wicklow County Council staff for having us  
7 here and for the beautiful presents. I don't know if they need to go down on the official lobbying  
8 lists, but we got some beautiful photographs of Wicklow, so thank you very much.

9  
10 The last Dáil, the five TDs worked very well together. We met regularly. We met with groups  
11 from all over the county on a regular basis, sometimes every week, sometimes even twice a  
12 week. It worked well. Now that was my first Dáil term. I was told by people in there that it was  
13 unique, that actually there was no other constituency where all of the politicians from across the  
14 political spectrum were coming together, left the party or independent jerseys outside the door  
15 and came in and worked with an awful lot of different groups. A lot of groups from the social  
16 sector, voluntary sector, representations from the Council actually on several occasions, and it's  
17 my hope that we can continue to do that.

18  
19 We haven't actually sat down together, the five of us, yet, but certainly it worked well for the  
20 county, so it's my hope that the five of us can continue to do that. It certainly was a useful thing  
21 for the members here to be able to access, for voluntary groups from all over the county to be  
22 able to access.

23  
24 So for the next while, for us for the next Dáil term, for all of you for another three years, I  
25 imagine our term is going to be shorter! There is a lot of need and there is a lot of opportunity in  
26 Wicklow. Housing obviously is something that's on everybody's agenda on a daily basis.  
27 Transport is the same. And then local jobs I think is one that everybody is trying to deal with.  
28 Local jobs I think is a great example of where there is a lot of things can be done nationally,  
29 legislation can be changed, funding can be found and so forth but actually the vote by the  
30 members of this Council last year on the film industry was ground breaking. No other Council  
31 had done it. I think Wicklow, at the time, potentially was at risk of losing some momentum of  
32 being Ireland's film hub to one or two other parts of the country. And I think it's a great example  
33 of where the national and local can work together in the interests of the county and of the  
34 country.

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So certainly I want to do whatever I can as a legislator at a national level, and locally to help. But I do think there is huge opportunity and I think this Council should be commended, the members of this Council should be commended for some of the actions that have already been taken, including the vote on the film industry, absolutely ground breaking and re-established Wicklow in the national narrative as to where creative industries would locate and where studios would be built. I think that was very useful.

For my part, as a member of the social democrats, we are going to be focusing hard on political reform. We are taking part - there is a cross party committee has been set up already. In fact it was meeting all last week on national political reform, that's looking at Dáil reform. It's something I'll be spending and we will be spending quite a lot of time looking at over the next while is Local Government reform. Catherine Murphy will be leading up that work. So for any members here, can I offer an open invite, Pat is already talked about some of the challenges that the members here face. If there are any ideas, please feel free to get in touch with myself and Catherine Murphy as we try and build it up. We want it to be wide as - as wide as possible, as cross party as possible. It's obviously the best way to get things done.

And I'll just finish up on a similar point which is I think the challenge, the political challenge for Wicklow is that this Dáil is likely to be a short Dáil. Maybe it will run five years, but it's unlikely. I think some form of agreement will be reached. But whatever form of agreement will be reached, I think most people would say it's fairly short and so the challenge for the members here, and the challenge for the TDs and the future Senators is how can you get meaningful change, how can we seize some of the opportunities, deal with some of the challenges in what will probably be a relatively short space of time? And my sense is the closer we can work together, be it the five TDs, the members, and indeed all of us on behalf of the county, there are some big things I think can be pushed through. There are some big opportunities there, and there are some that really do require co-operation between the TDs and Councillors to push them through. So certainly over the next while, I think the closer we can work together, the better chance we have of - really of seizing some of the opportunities for Wicklow and there are several there. So I'll finish on that and just say thank you again, it's an extraordinary honour as we all have, we all serve the public and I am delighted to be continuing in that for now anyway, depending on how short this Dáil is. Thank you all very much again for the opportunity to speak today.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Stephen. Andrew.

2 DEPUTY DOYLE: Thank you Cathaoirleach. Thank you and I thank all the members and staff  
3 for inviting us here this morning for the presentation. I actually got the - my picture is where I  
4 made my communion, Clara Vale, where one of my children was christened and my two sisters  
5 were married, and I cycle by it most Sundays. It's actually nice to know that it's actually a  
6 Roundwood man, Fran Byrne who actually prepared them.

7  
8 It's ten years ago since I sat up here as Cathaoirleach, 2005, 2006, and so that and being  
9 Chairman of the health board made me fool-hardy enough to have a go at becoming the Cean  
10 Comhairle, because I figured - I think wrongly, that after having managed reasonably well to  
11 Chair Wicklow County Council meetings, and the health board, that I would be able to manage  
12 the Dáil. But my wife was looking at the monitor after and she says I think you might be lucky  
13 you didn't get it when she saw what went on later that day!

14  
15 Nonetheless, we have talked just a couple of quick things - we have talked about political reform  
16 and Dáil reform and reform of this, that and the other for ages. And I know certainly two  
17 colleagues of mine I could single out for quite a long time, David Staunton, and more recently  
18 Eoin Murphy, have championed Dáil reform, and frustratingly so, regardless of who is in  
19 Government, I think the numbers, whether this is a long, short or medium term Dáil, the  
20 numbers and the configuration of this Dáil has meant that Dáil reform has to take place and on a  
21 serious note the reason I actually felt we should - I would like to - the challenge of the job of  
22 Cean Comhairle, was that this time, whoever, whatever arrangement is finally arrived at to  
23 govern for a Programme For Government, that Government, that cabinet will have to be  
24 answerable to the house, the houses. But for now, the Dáil. Rather than the Dáil being a servant  
25 of it, which it has been through - since probably since the multi party Government of the late 40s  
26 is the only other time when maybe it wasn't as much, I am too young to remember. But there is  
27 an opportunity to govern in a different way, and I think it's - it behoves all of us, regardless of  
28 political party, political persuasion, to actually get engaged in that. I think it is important that  
29 when we are talking about Dáil reform and reform of the political system, that we bear that in  
30 mind.

31  
32 Just on the Wicklow aspect, I think it is true, I actually have gone from being with Joe in '07  
33 from being the new kids on the block to being the senior, longest serving and oldest I might add  
34 TD. I was the youngest in '07, now I am the oldest! Time moves on. It has been the case in the

1 30th and the 31st Dáil that the five TDs from Wicklow on both terms tried to work together.  
2 Wicklow faces a lot of challenges by virtue of the fact it's so close to Dublin, if you look at the  
3 employment statistics, unemployment has fell in Wicklow, but employment within the county  
4 has not risen to correspond, so there is a lot of people getting work but not in Wicklow. It is  
5 welcome that the IDA, actually the IDA were down in Arklow not that long ago with Enterprise  
6 Ireland and the Local Enterprise Office trying to inform, link with the Chamber down there how  
7 the new regional aid map guidelines would help, would enhance support for that particular area.  
8 It's been added to the zone, the area covered. So it is important that we work as a team, I have  
9 always held that philosophy that if we work as a team together and we can influence whether it's  
10 the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, or the Local Enterprise Office, and I know we are talking of the Mid  
11 East action plan for jobs strategy which does have a specific reference to the film industry,  
12 which is something we can claim. It's not the only thing but it's very important. It's a major  
13 employer, major industry that can only - if it evolves and we are at the cutting edge of it in  
14 Wicklow, it can only create more work, more employment, and build around a whole hub and  
15 for that reason, I think the fact that there is a presentation later in Clermont which can actually  
16 act to complement what's happening in the film industry at the two companies that are broadly  
17 based in Wicklow, I think it can be very beneficial.

18  
19 Pat touched on a lot of local things. I would agree, I would have to say about the Section 140, I  
20 think it was useful when used responsibly and in eight years of the Council I think I moved eight  
21 of them. Mind you one wasn't built after for personal reasons. But that - it is - if used  
22 responsibly, like everything else, like the data protection, if everybody signs up to a code of  
23 conduct, I don't think it's necessary to have the rigmarole that goes on at the moment but that's  
24 for another day.

25  
26 Just finally, could I say in the eight years I was a member and the nine years since I have been a  
27 member of the Oireachtas, I would like to say that the staff of Wicklow County Council at times  
28 are maligned both from management down to at the coalface. I think it's unwarranted. I always  
29 held the philosophy if you have something to say you are better to go into an office, close the  
30 door and have it out, rather than air your grievance on the airwaves or in the public domain, I  
31 think that's the way to make progress and show mutual respect to everybody. I would hope that -  
32 I hope to have continued the relationship I have had with the members and the staff here in the  
33 Council for the foreseeable future. And will commit finally to actually working with my  
34 colleagues in any way we can for as long as the Dáil may last this term, for the betterment of the

1 county and the constituency, which still includes Carlow, though people - East Carlow, though  
2 people are speculating already that if there is a review, that it's not going to be with us anymore.  
3 But nonetheless, it's part of our constituency, which we have to represent as well. So thank you.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Andrew. Simon.

5 DEPUTY HARRIS: I am delighted as well to be with my four fellow Wicklow TDs and I want  
6 to thank you Cathaoirleach and the Chief Executive and the members of Wicklow County  
7 Council for inviting us to be here.

8  
9 It is a great honour to have been re-elected to Dáil Éireann representing the people of Wicklow  
10 and East Carlow and I want to express my gratitude to my family, to my Fine Gael colleagues,  
11 particularly members of Wicklow County Council, and most importantly to the people of  
12 Wicklow for the trust that they've given to me and indeed to my four colleagues in doing our  
13 very best to represent them at a national level.

14  
15 I won't go through all of the issues that dominated the general election because I think it's true to  
16 say people have passed their judgment and given their views on a wide range of policies. It's  
17 now up to those of us in the Dáil to get on with the job of doing what we are paid to do which is  
18 governing and running this country. I certainly would hope that we can put in place some sort of  
19 arrangement that can last a number years. Certainly the message that I have received through  
20 my in-box and through my constituency clinics and through walking around the streets of  
21 County Wicklow from the people of Wicklow is get on with it, stop faffing about, don't put party  
22 considerations first, put the interests of the country first and try and form some sort of  
23 Government. That's what a range of parties, Independents and the overwhelming majority of  
24 members of Dáil Éireann I believe are determined to try and do and there may be a few more  
25 weeks in it. If it results in a good Government at the end of it, that's time well spent. There is  
26 certainly no time to waste.

27  
28 I think collaboration is going to be absolutely key and colleagues have spoken about it this  
29 morning, collaboration between the Council, collaboration with TDs, and I certainly want to  
30 pledge this morning to continue to be willing to work with each and every member of Wicklow  
31 County Council, regardless of political affiliations, where we can work together for the mutual  
32 benefit and interests of the people of Wicklow. I do want to welcome the chief executive, your  
33 own leadership in relation to ensuring that the TDs are kept up-to-date with the issues on which  
34 we can help and work with. We are there to work for the county and to work with the Council in

1 if the interests of the county and I want to welcome what I would say is a marked improvement  
2 in that culture of desired co-operation transparency and openness in Wicklow County Council. I  
3 think it's very welcome.

4  
5 I want to also pay heartfelt tribute to the staff of Wicklow County Council. Like previous  
6 speakers, I don't think it's something that we say enough, and I certainly over the last five years  
7 as a TD, and the previous two years as a County Councillor have had umpteen times where I  
8 have been interacting with members of Wicklow County Council who have done, members of  
9 staff of Wicklow County Council, who are doing tremendous work in extraordinary difficult  
10 situations and if staff members don't mind me particularly singling out people working in  
11 housing, because I think we are facing a housing crisis here in this county and indeed in this  
12 country and the extraordinarily difficult circumstances which people in the Housing Department  
13 encounter on a daily basis, several times a day, and the absolute compassion that they treat  
14 people with, the decency they bring to their jobs, often they don't have an easy answer or even a  
15 nice answer, but the way they deal with people, the way they do everything they can to help and  
16 the way they're very helpful to us TDs in trying to advance cases is something that I really  
17 appreciate and I know it's been an extreme struggle and a great difficulty and a great personal  
18 cost to them I am sure over the last number of years, and I want to acknowledge that.

19  
20 There is a number of areas where Wicklow can look to with great hope over the next couple of  
21 years and our job here in this Council and in the Dáil is to make sure that we are ready to exploit  
22 any possible gain or potential gain for our county. The two areas I would flag this morning is  
23 the new regional action plan for jobs. The idea that Wicklow is a dormitory Council, you go to  
24 sleep here and work somewhere else is something we need to work to dispel. By being included  
25 in a new regional action plan for jobs, backed up by funding presents significant opportunities  
26 for this Council. I think it's an area Cathaoirleach you are very interested in, and I would suggest  
27 it's an area as your TDs and Councillors should really try and build up a very concrete  
28 relationship on.

29  
30 The second is the whole area of tourism in relation to Ireland's Ancient East. We are included in  
31 what is meant to be the East coast equivalent of the Wild Atlantic Way and there is huge  
32 potential for Wicklow to exploit the benefits of that new tourism strategy. I welcome the  
33 leadership shown by Councillors in relation to the film industry, it was a gutsy move and I think  
34 it clearly reestablishes Wicklow as the film hub for Ireland, and there is more we need to do at a

1 national level to complement what you have done at a local level.

2  
3 In relation to roads, our rural roads in this county particularly after the bad weather are in urgent  
4 need of investment. We have seen roads budgets in general decimated over the last number of  
5 years. We need to see them back to the pre-crisis levels. There is a plan in place in the  
6 Department of Transport to do that and there is an onus on us here in Wicklow to make sure we  
7 get our fair share of that.

8  
9 Finally three more points: In relation to housing, regardless of what Government emerges, I  
10 think this is going to have to be a priority for the Government, for the Dáil and I am quite sure  
11 for Councillors here, you are dealing with it on a daily basis. I think we can, we have shown that  
12 when we work together, we can make progress in relation to housing. We saw that when  
13 Councillors came together and met with TDs and we got a couple of projects moving, there is so  
14 much more we need to do, but that's an area we need to focus on.

15  
16 I want to pick up the comment on the Local Property Tax. I'll defend to the death the reason  
17 why we need to have direct funding for Local Government, but I would share Pat's view in some  
18 areas, I don't want people to read too much into that, but in some areas in relation to the need to  
19 tweak it, certainly when you call to certain houses in Greystones and you could find somebody  
20 living in a three-bed semi-detached house in Greystones or in Bray or other parts of this county,  
21 you could be living in a much larger home in another part of the country and yet the person in  
22 Wicklow is paying significantly more. So there is the Thornhill report done which looks at how  
23 can the system be improved. That's going to be something that as TDs and as Government we  
24 are going to have a grapple with.

25  
26 I think Cathaoirleach we should agree at this meeting if possible to have regular meetings  
27 between TDs and a group of Councillors, whatever way you think is most appropriate to do that,  
28 because I think it would be extraordinarily helpful for us and I hope extraordinarily helpful for  
29 you if we could identify a couple of priority areas we could work on collectively.

30  
31 Finally I want to wish Michael, Mary and Gail all the very best in their appointments to  
32 Wicklow County Council. I wish you all the very best, I look forward to working with you all,  
33 thank you.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much each and every one of you for your considered

1 contributions. I am going to open it to the floor. The three-minute rule didn't apply here, if I  
2 could ask, because we are under time pressure, we might implement a 60-second rule for the  
3 purpose of this. Good luck with that. Cllr Winters.

4 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks, I'll do my best to keep to the time. To welcome the five TDs and  
5 congratulate them all and I suppose in particular to congratulate Deputy Brady and Deputy  
6 Casey on their first time and to wish them well in the five years, or the length of the Government  
7 or the Dáil ahead.

8  
9 And I suppose as a Councillor, I have worked with four of the TDs at Council level, Stephen  
10 went straight in to Dáil Éireann, but I am sure Jennifer keeps him abreast of what's happening at  
11 a local level and how it moves and moves so slowly at times. And I suppose in reference to what  
12 Councillor -- or what Deputy Harris said and a conversation I had had earlier with the  
13 Cathaoirleach, I think rather than just us meeting here today, and us saying all the nice things  
14 that we are going to say about one another and say how great we all are, it would be fantastic if  
15 we could actually have a meeting where we could sit down maybe with the senior management  
16 of the Council, and maybe the head of the five SPCs and the head of each of the groupings  
17 within the Council Chamber, and actually decide on what our priorities for Wicklow are, and  
18 how we, together, manage to achieve those and to pick two or three things that are most  
19 important to us and that can be achieved. I would welcome an opportunity with the five TDs to  
20 be able to do that. And I am sure the Councillors and the management here would welcome the  
21 same.

22  
23 And just in relation to a couple of the points that were made, the data protection is treated  
24 differently in this Local Authority than it is in other local authorities. At the LAMA conference  
25 at the weekend, it was something that came up, and I have had occasion where people have  
26 asked me to make reps on a file because they are making observations on a file. I can't actually  
27 do that unless the applicant signs a letter to allow me to make reps on a file, when the applicant  
28 knows that I am possibly making reps on behalf of the people who are making the observation,  
29 so I am excluded from looking at the file by virtue of the fact that the applicant decides who can  
30 and can't. So as a public rep, that has to change and it doesn't happen in other counties so, I don't  
31 know why we as a Local Authority are looking at the Data Protection Act in a different way to  
32 all of the other local authorities.

33  
34 I know both, all five of our TDs, but particularly John and Pat, they're both capable, both able

1 speakers, they have a unique knowledge of the system that we are coming from and I would ask  
2 them to go back and in their term of this Dáil, to look at Local Government and see how can we  
3 amend it. At the moment we are administrators of Central Government and we need to be  
4 decision makers within our own area. And legislation needs to be changed to enable that to  
5 happen. And I would ask the five of you to work to do that. And I would say not just to wear  
6 your county colours, but also to wear your country colours, and Stephen asked of one, or how we  
7 would engage in a meaningful change. I would say one of the ways is not to exclude yourself  
8 from playing the game and we have no Government, we are five weeks into it, and already two  
9 of our five TDs have said look I am going to sit on the other side and wait for all this to happen.  
10 Please, think about the country. It is not about your own political careers. It is about getting  
11 everybody in this country back to work. And to provide housing, and the health system and all  
12 of the things that we want.

13  
14 The people have spoken, the five of you are in there. It's up to the five of you who represent all  
15 and every point of view to actually make that work. Thank you.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fox.

17 Cllr FOX: Thank you Chairman, just very quickly, just to congratulate all five on getting elected  
18 to the Dáil. I know Simon, Stephen and Andrew were very - they had an open door policy for  
19 myself when I was Chairman last year, and we availed of that, and John Snell and others came  
20 with me on occasion. I thank them for that. I wish the two new deputies, John and Pat, the very  
21 best of luck. We know they are both very, very capable people. I won't get into the issues, but  
22 the equalisation is a major bug bear taking three and a half million out of Wicklow, paid by  
23 Wicklow residents for Wicklow services and it's taken and given to another Local Authority.  
24 That's morally wrong.

25  
26 But can I also just spare a thought for outgoing Deputy Ferris and Deputy Timmins. They were  
27 two very, very good representatives for Wicklow. Sorry to see them go, but that's democracy I  
28 am afraid. I wish them well in their future endeavours, that they served the people of Wicklow  
29 extremely well and finally just to wish the five deputies the very best of luck. Thank you  
30 Chairman.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Lawless.

32 Cllr LAWLESS: Firstly I would like to congratulate my colleague, John Brady, for getting  
33 elected to the Dáil. It's been a great moment for Sinn Fein here in Wicklow to get a TD after 94  
34 years. John will be missed here in the Council, and I feel all his hard work for over the years has

1 paid off and people of Wicklow/East Carlow have clearly wanted change. I know John will  
2 carry on his good work ethic to Leinster House and continue to be a good strong voice for the  
3 people. On that note, I would like to wish my friend and colleague well.

4  
5 I would also like to wish deputy Donnelly, Deputy Harris, Deputy Doyle and of course Deputy  
6 Casey, who we are also losing here in Wicklow, I want to wish him very well for the future in  
7 Leinster House. I hope all five TDs will work for Wicklow/East Carlow and that they don't fail  
8 us or forget us here and remember why the people voted them in, in the first place.

9  
10 We don't know what lies ahead, which we have discussed here earlier on with our Government,  
11 who knows, but I would like to see that there is good cohesive thinking among the five TDs here  
12 for Wicklow, and that they put Wicklow on the map, and on that note, just good luck to you all,  
13 thank you very much.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune.

15 Cllr FORTUNE: Thanks Cathaoirleach. On behalf of myself and the independent group, who  
16 also can speak for themselves, I would like to wish particularly John and Pat the very best in  
17 your new roles. You have been very active members here of the Chamber over the last number  
18 of years, and if you carry that on in the Dáil, I think you will do well for the county. I would  
19 also like to wish Stephen, Andrew and Simon all the best on your re-election to the Dáil, and  
20 again I am encouraged to hear that you are talking in terms of working as a unit. Let's see will  
21 the test of time prove that, but if that could be achieved, I think it would be superb.

22  
23 I think also, just on a general point, we don't have a Government at the moment, I think all TDs  
24 that have been elected have been given a mandate and I think all TDs have the responsibility to  
25 form a Government, so I think everyone needs to get on with that. I would also like to wish  
26 former deputies Timmins and Ferris all the very best, with whatever they decide to do in the  
27 future. I suppose looking at the way the world is, I think changing, there is an awful lot of talk  
28 goes on about reform, reforming the Senate and doing all kinds of things, Local Government  
29 reform, there actually has been very little of it in my opinion. It's been kind of - to a great extent  
30 lip service. There is no hard facts on the ground to show there has.

31  
32 I would say today to you all, today is your honeymoon, and you have all made very eloquent  
33 speeches and you are all very impressive people and I have no doubt you will work very hard.  
34 But I don't think there is enough interaction. It's fine to have say a delegation from the Council

1 to go to the Dáil and talk about housing or talk about whatever, education, autism, everything,  
2 that's very, very important. But I don't think that's enough at all, and I think there is a lot of talk  
3 about things happening differently.

4  
5 We had - in our last meeting here, we had a very interesting presentation that was different and  
6 knew and we all made comments, it's on record, about that. And I think today the fact that the  
7 five of you are here in the format you are here, I think that's very healthy and I think maybe  
8 moving forward if we could have a bit more of this, where you would come like this and sit  
9 where you are this morning and we would all come into the Chamber and have a discussion on  
10 issues that affect Wicklow. At the end of the day, when you look at the standing, the order, we  
11 are local reps, you are the senior reps in the Dáil and we could have that kind of interaction and  
12 maybe deal with issues that would be of benefit to Wicklow and a number of you have talked  
13 about wearing the Wicklow jersey, I think that's a very important terminology. People talk about  
14 wearing the Wicklow jersey in terms of representing the county in sports, but I think we could  
15 do that here.

16  
17 I would ask that while you are all here, I mightn't get this opportunity again, I would ask that  
18 perhaps there would be a commitment made today, you know, that you would do this, that if you  
19 did it once a quarter where we come in like this, have a fairly open agenda, we could put certain  
20 topics on it and have a frank and open discussion that would be of benefit to the people of  
21 Wicklow. I think that would be very good.

22  
23 The other point I would make as well and again I would ask for your support on this, because we  
24 as local public reps need your support. There is a tendency right now, despite all the so-called  
25 talk of reform, but there is a tendency for barriers to be starting to be put in place to restrict  
26 Councillors in how they represent their constituents. It's becoming more difficult and made  
27 harder. I think that is not democratic. I think it's wrong and I would ask the five of you to make  
28 that an issue and let's get it sorted. Because in fact, what needs to happen is the work that we  
29 need to do on behalf of our constituents needs to be expanded, not restricted. So they're just a  
30 few points. I could talk to you forever! The bottom line is that I genuinely wish the five of you  
31 the very, very best and I do hope that we have some more of these kind of meetings in less of  
32 honeymoon kind of atmosphere.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thanks. Councillor Shay Cullen.

34 Cllr Shay CULLEN: Thanks Chairman, first of all I would like to congratulate all five TDs on

1 their election. Stephen, Andrew and Simon their re-election and in particular Pat and John on  
2 their first election to Dáil Éireann, and I would obviously like to wish you both the very best,  
3 very, very capable when you were in Wicklow County Council and I worked well with both of  
4 you so congratulations and I wish you well in the future.

5  
6 I suppose two points I would like to make is particular emphasis on jobs for our county. Whilst  
7 we have seen a reduction in the live register figures for jobs, unfortunately we have had too  
8 many occasions where companies have exited Wicklow with regards to jobs, and in particular in  
9 South Wicklow, where I think it was referenced earlier where we have a particular need for to  
10 create more and more jobs. So I would ask all five of you to promote Wicklow for jobs. I think  
11 it's crucial that we continue with the IDA and other bodies to make sure that as many jobs as  
12 possible are created in Wicklow. And secondly tourism, I have said this on numerous occasions  
13 in this Chamber, that we are selling ourselves very, very short with regards to tourism in  
14 Wicklow. We have a similar landscape to Kerry, and Kerry take every opportunity they get with  
15 regards to tourism. We have some fantastic locations within our county, to name a few  
16 Glendalough, Brittas Bay, Russborough, Blessington, Greenway, Vartry walks, a lot of other  
17 prominent features within our county, and I would ask the TDs again to provide as much support  
18 and funding for these areas and new projects within the county. Because we live so close to  
19 whatever million, million and a half people within the Dublin region, and unfortunately I feel we  
20 are a day trip for a lot of people. Where we need to try and promote Wicklow as a destination to  
21 come for longer periods. And it's something I think we should be focusing a lot more on.

22  
23 Finally, the last point I would like to make is the lack of powers for County Councillors, I know  
24 it has been suggested here on issues with regard to data protection, and others, but again I would  
25 ask our TDs to address the Local Government issues that clearly exist, and unfortunately we  
26 would like to have more powers within this Chamber, but we are curtailed in a lot of areas, so  
27 finally I would just like to wish you all the best in the future and thank you.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Pat Vance.

29 Cllr VANCE: Like all the other Councillors, I would like to congratulate the five deputies that  
30 have been elected. There is an absolute great honour, not too many people from Wicklow get an  
31 opportunity of representing the county in the Dáil, and I am sure that they do appreciate the type  
32 of honour that has been bestowed on them. So effectively, I mean they have a major  
33 responsibility now in the Dáil, in regard to electing a Government. And like a number of people  
34 that have suggested here as well, that the responsibility isn't alone with Fianna Fáil and Fine

1 Gael to - the responsibility is on all members, and a lot of people said before the election that  
2 they wanted to go into Government, that that was their idea going into Government and then  
3 when they get an opportunity to even talk about it, they opt out of it. So the responsibility is for  
4 all the people that are in the Dáil, not on to the two major political parties in regard to that.  
5

6 The people up there at the top know exactly what the problems are in Wicklow and I mean the  
7 housing section, could I just remind people up there, and I am sure they're well aware of it as  
8 well, as well as social housing, there is a major problem in Wicklow with affordable house.  
9 There is plenty of people on the housing list that actually can afford to buy an affordable house,  
10 and just need the encouragement. And the problem is there is no affordable houses being built in  
11 Wicklow in the last number of years. And there is a number of people out there that actually you  
12 could get down the list quite considerably if that was happening as well.  
13

14 There is also problems, as we all know in education and health, in justice as well. The storm  
15 that's coming down the road as far as I am concerned for any incoming Government is in  
16 industrial relations and I think this is going to be one of the major problems, because when  
17 expectation levels go up, if the economy is improving a bit and people then want to get back  
18 what they've lost over the years and people can't blame them for that.  
19

20 Obviously in regard to Wicklow and the tourism section as well, which is important to us. The  
21 key area for me as a Councillor and I am sure other Councillors have said it as well, is in the area  
22 of Local Government reform. Phil Hogan got a promotion to Europe on putting through the  
23 worst piece of legislation in Local Government reform in the history of the State, as far as I am  
24 concerned. It is absolutely scandalous what's happened to local authorities in Wicklow. I  
25 represent and have since 1985, Bray, one of the largest local authorities in the country with over  
26 30,000 people on it and now we have less than half the staff than what we had. We are not  
27 providing any services like we had previously to this. It's absolutely scandalous what's  
28 happening that we have a retrenched system, and a centralised system, we're the most centralised  
29 country in Europe now and whereas every other country is bringing the services closer to the  
30 people, we are centralising them. In a small country like this, it's absolutely scandalous that  
31 large towns, and there is no case to be made for a lot of other councils who tended to be like  
32 community councils, but when you have large towns that are not providing the services, and the  
33 municipal authorities that have replaced them and not providing those services either, everything  
34 is referred to the county town here in Wicklow. In regard to Bray, I had a budget of something

1 like 17 million a year, now the budget is 69,000. How could you do anything with that type of  
2 money as well? That's a major, major, concern in regard to local authorities.

3  
4 And just one last point is that, and this is something that I am reading in the paper, of all the  
5 papers that have been swished around between everyone that's looking to try and form a  
6 Government and all I hear about is rural area, and rural issues and all along the West coast of  
7 Ireland and nothing about the East coast, nothing about Wicklow, nothing about the likes of  
8 Louth, all the areas around Dublin that are suffering from the fact that they're very close to  
9 Dublin. Not a thing in any of those programmes for Government. All I am hearing about is  
10 rural issues and everything else.

11  
12 With regard to employment, whereas people were always knocking Dublin and taking water  
13 from us and everything else, if we didn't have Dublin beside us, we wouldn't have the type of  
14 employment situation that we have in Wicklow as well, but we are not getting any employment  
15 in Wicklow, and haven't done for the last few years and that's a major factor as well. Could I  
16 wish all the deputies well. I hope that something crops up in the next few weeks that will give us  
17 certainly a little bit of stability for a number of years. And I wish you well in the future. Thank  
18 you.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Blake.

20 Cllr BLAKE: Thanks Cathaoirleach and thanks for organising the meeting here this morning.  
21 Thanks to the five deputies for attending here and congratulations to all five of you for being  
22 elected and particularly the two new ex Councillors, congratulations on your election.

23  
24 And to the two outgoing members as well, Ann and Billy who served this county very well over  
25 the last number of years and to all the candidates who stood in the elections.

26  
27 You have outlined to a great extent a lot of the problems that we are facing in the county. I  
28 understood we were going to talk about them to you, but you have outlined them in the last few  
29 minutes. 3.5 million in property tax is a major bone of contention with myself and a lot of  
30 members brought it up here today and you yourselves alluded to it as well. And not alone that,  
31 the 3 million we are losing because of the fact that we are seen as a wealthy county in terms of  
32 property and housing, certainly we are no different to any other county in the West of Ireland, or  
33 anywhere else, the rural parts of County Wicklow are every bit as remote as any parts of the  
34 West of Ireland in that regard. We are losing three million, as Deputy Casey has said there in

1 terms of housing that could be put into County Wicklow in that regard. And the three and a half  
2 million we are losing there in the property tax as well.

3  
4 A lot of other issues, the Health Service in Wicklow, we have built and we do want to build  
5 more primary care centres, we have a fantastic primary care centre in Wicklow Town, only open  
6 recently, another one near Carnew opening hopefully in the next few weeks as well, but those  
7 centres need to be used to a far, far greater extent into the future.

8  
9 The people out there travelling to Dublin and elsewhere down to Waterford and South Wicklow  
10 and Wexford, we don't need to be doing that, we need to use, make a greater use of those  
11 particular centres, having built them, they're there now, built in a public/private partnership and  
12 it's important that you people up there, who are now elected on behalf of the people of Wicklow  
13 and East Carlow, to ensure all those facilities are used to the greatest extent possible.

14  
15 Equally we have problems with schools in the county, Coláiste Bhríde in Carnew needs a new  
16 school, or an extension, Blessington is expanding rapidly at the moment and an awful lot of  
17 students are having to travel to Dublin or Naas in Kildare because of the capacity of the school  
18 there. Housing has been mentioned here. We all know a major issue regards housing in County  
19 Wicklow. We shouldn't forget there was a policy adopted a number of years ago that Wicklow  
20 County Council, the same as all the other councils, discontinued building houses for our own  
21 people. It was a policy that was fostered upon us in that regard and we shouldn't forget that as  
22 well.

23  
24 Regional planning guidelines, we are talking about no housing in Wicklow, no jobs in Wicklow,  
25 no roads, you talk about the roads system, you experienced it yourselves throughout the county  
26 in travelling in the last election there. Roads is always the one area that seems to be hit when we  
27 are short of money in any respects, roads is the one area that's hit. If you haven't got roads, you  
28 haven't got good infrastructure, people can't travel to open industry, to encourage industry to  
29 come into the county in that regard. So there is authorities up there that are hampering this  
30 county to develop in creation of jobs in that regard. We are doing our own County Development  
31 Plan at the moment and over the next number of months, and certainly weeks, that we will be  
32 looking at various different aspects and presentations being made to us, it's hampering us  
33 developing this county in that regard.

1 Just one last comment that I would like to make as well: That is we talk about Local  
2 Government and the problems that have been created with the reform of Local Government. The  
3 unfortunate part about it was that from Phil Hogan's point of view was he probably dusted  
4 down -- Noel Dempsey, a former Minister for the Environment, he probably dusted down his  
5 cabinet and found these particular forms in it and unfortunately maybe implemented too many of  
6 them in that regard, thanks Chairman.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Tommy Cullen.

8 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: I would like to congratulate all five Dáil deputies for their election and I  
9 would like to pay particular tribute to Cllr John Brady -- Deputy John Brady for his election and  
10 Pat Casey for his election and certainly I think you have a big job of work to do. I would agree  
11 with some of the comments made about the removal of the Section 140 from planning because  
12 since that's been removed, planning has become very much more difficult for rural one-off  
13 houses, because there is no safety net now for the public who feel that, like Deputy Doyle has  
14 said, who are being - they would feel unfairly treated, there is no recourse back to the democratic  
15 chamber for a vote of the Council. And that's is making planning much more difficult for a lot  
16 of families in this county and it's becoming a major issue.

17  
18 The other thing is Chairman, about Irish Water, and I have said this before and I have done my  
19 first report in this Council in 1993 about the extraction of water from the two reservoirs. The  
20 Blessington reservoir is the largest reservoir in western Europe, man-made, and it's - at the time  
21 when I raised it and I was on a regular debate with John Cardle from Dublin Corporation at the  
22 time, Dublin Corporation at that time were prepared to negotiate some kind of an environmental  
23 payment to Wicklow and that wasn't followed through. I brought a similar report back in 2002  
24 and here back in 2014 as well. I point out for instance, I am not looking to make the wheel, the  
25 1867 Act which we were governed under up to the foundation of Irish Water was amended in  
26 Britain in 1969, where the Welsh source counties, as they were called, were allowed to negotiate  
27 annually with the city corporations of the Midlands in Britain and were agreed a remuneration  
28 scheme annually, so therefore the legislation was already on the statute books in the UK, that we  
29 are governed by, that Welsh source counties, as they're called, receive payments from specific  
30 corporations from extraction of water. The same as in New York, where Winchester and Putman  
31 county, who supply water to New York City corporation, they get an annual payment, around  
32 100 million dollars a year, for environmental issues to protect the reservoirs and protect the  
33 county. So there is already legislation in both the United States and Europe and UK, just 50  
34 miles across the border here for that. I think if that could happen, it would transform the public

1 services in Wicklow, because you know, we are going - we are closely going to come to  
2 extracting a billion euro of water a year out of this county, we are getting virtually nothing for it  
3 and the water that we do get back in, we do have to pay for it. So they're actually charging us for  
4 our own water that's coming back, I know they have to treat it and there is costs involved. But in  
5 Britain it's transformed the Welsh counties to be able to build swimming pools, funding for roads  
6 and infrastructure in smaller areas. It's the biggest asset we have at the moment, is Wicklow  
7 Water. And we are now supplying something in the region of 1.4 million people, are now  
8 getting almost a third of the whole country is getting their drinking water, plus the huge  
9 commercial base of North Kildare, parts of - all of South Dublin, all the industrial and  
10 commercial interests in Dublin, the commercial rates has run into hundreds of millions all being  
11 supplied. We are supplying O'Connell Street with water, we are supplying RTÉ with water,  
12 North Kildare, parts of Meath and now Wicklow Water, we are not getting one cent back. And  
13 maybe the five TDs will come together and maybe bring a motion for an amendment to that.

14  
15 The other thing is Chairman, some of the Councillors have said that maybe we should have these  
16 meetings, I think that's very good and I would might perhaps call it integrated public  
17 representation for the county of Wicklow. That's what it's about, it's integrating the public  
18 representation of County Wicklow. I think that should work for everybody. I would ask the five  
19 TDs not to forget West Wicklow and I know they won't, I think they work very hard. It's an  
20 important area and I would certainly work with any of the TDs who would require assistance as  
21 a local Councillor, I would be only too willing to help there.

22  
23 The other thing is Chairman, the housing crisis, that definitely is a major item. And but what's -  
24 I feel is happening is that we abandoned the building of social houses from the decade of 2000 to  
25 2010. I think at the time the Government had a policy, people are earning a bit more money,  
26 high employment and we will push people into the housing, private housing sector. For a time  
27 that worked because the banks were lending out money. But once that happened, there was no  
28 houses available. Now, so that ten years of deficit, but that combined then...

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Could I just ask...

30 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Just to finish Chairman, what's not being given sufficient credit to local  
31 authorities is the population in Ireland in the last 14 years has rose from just under four million  
32 to 4.9 million. And the capitation grants, whether it's to the health board or to the local  
33 authorities for housing is not reflected in that extra 20% increase in population. No other  
34 country in Europe has had that population increased. And so therefore we had a huge

1 demographic increase in the population of the State, but the local authorities or the health  
2 services are not being funded accordingly. I think we are still getting capitation grants from  
3 about 4.2 million. Look at Chairman, I just want to wish you all the very best and I am sure you  
4 will all work very hard for the county.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: We have five people remaining, could I ask you to be tight, I know the  
6 guys have other things they need to attend to too. Cllr Snell.

7 Cllr SNELL: Thanks Cathaoirleach. Again last month here, I said some nice things about the  
8 five of you, and I won't repeat them here today! Just to wish you the very best going forward. I  
9 disagree in regards it's the honeymoon period. I believe it's over. Unfortunately I have to break  
10 that news to you!

11  
12 If I could ask that the Cathaoirleach, we issue each of the TDs with a copy of this Local  
13 Economic and Community Plan that we are going to be discussing later. There is a lot of  
14 information in it and startling information to be honest in regards to this county and the make-up  
15 of where we are going.

16  
17 I just want to discuss one issue and one issue only: I have worked with the five of you at this  
18 Municipal District level, at the Council level, I have availed of the services of our TDs in the last  
19 term of the Dáil, and in fairness, each and every one of you I know will roll your sleeves up and  
20 get stuck in. Now that I know to get the five of you together, all we have to do is produce a  
21 painting, I'll start painting this evening! The members of the housing Strategic Policy  
22 Committee will be looking to avail of your services. We won't be looking for one meeting or  
23 two meetings, we will be knocking on your door quite consistently through the services of the  
24 Cathaoirleach, the current Cathaoirleach and the incoming Cathaoirleach and as Cllr Fox  
25 outlined we have done that in the past under his leadership.

26  
27 Just to point out that in Wicklow, as you already know, we are the third most expensive county  
28 to purchase houses on the private market. In regards to the private rented market, we all know  
29 that we are amongst the highest in the country, and the private sector is killing our citizens at this  
30 moment and time and I would appreciate if the five of you could get into Dáil Éireann and start  
31 fighting in regards to our citizens and the people on our housing list, because they're crippled in  
32 the private rented sector.

33  
34 Obviously we will be looking for more money, and as you know, we have a historical hangover

1 from a lot of your time in here in the Council, there was projects and we - such as Hillview,  
2 Glending, Park Sillogue, and Farrankelly, and it's tying up our staff in regards to trying to rectify  
3 problems with the past. So money would be gratefully accepted by Wicklow County Council for  
4 fabric upgrade works.

5  
6 We will be discussing later on in regards to the incremental purchase scheme for 2016, but just  
7 to point out that a lot of people will be depending on the house purchase loan and only two  
8 applicants were successful last year. So it's a little bit of a myth in trying to get people to  
9 achieve the funding, when we as a Local Authority are not actually meeting our own objectives,  
10 and only two people were able to achieve that loan.

11  
12 To point out that we do have a housing crisis, like every other county, but we are landlords to  
13 4,334 families. And that brings in a huge revenue for this Local Authority, which in turn is not  
14 going back into housing as you know, only about 20% of it goes back into housing, and it's used  
15 to fund other areas within this Local Authority. We have 3,771 applicants on the list. And that's  
16 not including the 679 that are already on the RAS scheme. Last year we had 146 families  
17 present as homeless, and out of them families, there was 240 children. We had had success  
18 through the help of everybody in regards to achieving more funding, to bring along our projects,  
19 our Part 8s in regards to Murphy's land, Brewery Bend, to speak of, and Emaclew Road in  
20 Arklow. They're important and hopefully they'll come to fruition quite soon.

21  
22 But when you analyse and look at the waste of money in regards of people who own their own  
23 homes, and we have a scheme within Wicklow County Council where people can avail of a  
24 housing adoption grants, mobility grants and housing aid for older people's grants, and I want  
25 you to go back to your offices and check are we getting our fair share in County Wicklow.  
26 Because it actually saves the State an awful lot of money if we can keep people within their own  
27 homes by giving them a small grant to adapt their house to their needs.

28  
29 I won't hold you up any further because I know you have a busy agenda, but just to say and a  
30 parting shot that we will be in touch quite soon, thanks.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Councillor Gerry Walsh.

32 Cllr WALSH: I'll be brief, just to congratulate all our five TDs on your great success in the  
33 general election last May. Most of what I wanted to say has already been said, so just on the  
34 Local Property Tax which Cllr Fox referred to as a major bug bear, as we know replacing our

1 central funding Government. Last September we had our budget workshop here and the 20%  
2 equalisation fund, it was explained to us how there was 3.5 million taken out of our budget to be  
3 spread out across other counties, disadvantaged counties as we were told. One Councillor  
4 compared us with Tipperary, they were getting some of our money, so I don't understand how  
5 that came about. Then we had our LPT adjustment meeting in the same month and when we  
6 looked at the base rate, we were faced with a choice of if we reduced it by 15%, we were taking  
7 2.5 million out of our core services, it was an enviable choice we had to make. We left the base  
8 rate as it was and then we had to explain to our people why we couldn't reduce the tax and  
9 people in the North of the county in particular who are paying top, top LPT rates in places like  
10 Bray and Greystones and others. That was very difficult to explain.

11  
12 Our employment challenges, I think was already referred to. 62% of our workforce are leaving  
13 our county every day to work in Dublin and elsewhere, and we all see the impact that has on our  
14 local roads, so we need the IDA involved, we need Enterprise Ireland and to get involved and  
15 address that situation. Cllr Cullen referred to our tourism industry, we welcome the Ireland  
16 Ancient East initiative, I hope we will do well out of that, but we have huge potential here,  
17 which would have a knock on effect on employment, etcetera, so any funding that we can, that  
18 you can provide for our tourism industry would be most welcome, thank you Cathaoirleach.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Joe Behan.

20 Cllr BEHAN: Cathaoirleach, I just want to join with yourself and all of the members in  
21 congratulating the five deputies on their election, it is no doubt an absolute honour to represent  
22 the people of this country and the constituency, and I want to join with everybody in wishing  
23 them every success in their endeavours on behalf of all of the people of County Wicklow.

24 Thanks.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Mitchell.

26 Cllr MITCHELL: Thank you Cathaoirleach. Just to congratulate everybody on getting elected,  
27 it's no easy task, as I am sure everybody is just about recovering from now. Just a couple of  
28 points of what's been mentioned, I won't repeat what's been said before, but certainly on the  
29 Local Property Tax, not only is there a 20% taken and given to the poorer counties essentially in  
30 Ireland, but there is also a very significant amount of money which goes on some self funding in  
31 nine counties, mostly including Dublin and Cork, but also Clare and others. We lose something  
32 like two or three million on this as well. This is in addition to the 20%, which is taken. And this  
33 means that not enough of the Local Property Tax is going to fund the revenue items of this  
34 county.

1  
2 Secondly on transport, this is very much a commuter county in the North, and we have been  
3 treated very badly by the National Roads Authority who have extremely arrogantly dealt with  
4 this county over the traffic jams in the North of the county on the N11, over the last seven years,  
5 where they have just essentially walked away, even when the Minister of Transport said on two  
6 occasions, asked them to do a study and they agreed to do a study, they didn't actually produce a  
7 study and haven't produced anything. Neither would they allow the Council's officials to be part  
8 of this study. Now this Council is the road authority for these roads, and the arrogance of the  
9 National Roads Authority is startling in not even allowing the officials, never mind the public  
10 representatives to be involved in this. And it's very important that they are given a proper kick  
11 and get going on this study, and get something out, because nothing can be funded until we have  
12 a study saying what is to be done.

13  
14 Secondly, also on transport, being a commuter county, the national -- draft national transport  
15 strategy to 2035, while it does produce a plan to bring the Luas to Bray, which is very welcome,  
16 South of Bray there is not a single extra train or any public transport. The report was  
17 incompetently prepared and in fact if you read it, the proposals for the bus services which many  
18 people rely on to commute actually provide less bus services in 2035 than they provide now,  
19 because they forgot to include lots of the bus services in the report. I think we certainly need a  
20 gigantic kick at Transport Ireland by the five TDs, no matter what happens in Government.

21  
22 Lastly, there is an opportunity I believe to try and get some money for community gain out of  
23 supplying Dublin with its water. Since 1861, the county has actually benefited from a  
24 community gain until the end of 2014, and 2015 was the first year in which it didn't benefit and I  
25 think we are hoping to discuss a paper later and I would hope that the TDs will pursue this.  
26 Obviously from what we hear in the papers, the issue of Irish Water is very much up in the air.  
27 This actually predates Irish Water, but it's very relevant to this county and I would like the  
28 support of the TDs to try and get some extra money to fund the services of the Council this way.  
29 Thank you.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Ollie O'Brien.

31 Cllr O'BRIEN: (SPEAKS IN IRISH)

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Annesley.

33 Cllr ANNESLEY: I'll translate that for you! Thanks very much Cathaoirleach. I just want to  
34 also be associated with the kind words to our five TDs. Well done lads, it was a hard task. The

1 only thing we are missing up there is a blue-eyed lady, but how and ever that's the gender  
2 balance out of the way. I would like to thank the ladies and the gentlemen that stood alongside  
3 you and put out their good efforts. It was a very tough election on a lot of people, my colleague  
4 Stephen Matthews and Joe Behan, it wasn't easy for these lads putting themselves forward too.  
5 Lads you got there, it's up to you to keep these seats because a lot of people in this Chamber are  
6 looking for them, never mind outside! I would just also like to say that Wicklow doesn't stop at  
7 the Beehive. Now Arklow has serious problems and no-one has mentioned Arklow in this  
8 Chamber, so I felt I should say something very, very quickly.

9  
10 We have no treatment plant in Arklow. Unlike other towns, can cannot build a house privately,  
11 we are building 17 up in Meadow Vale, Council houses, but we can't build a private house in  
12 Arklow because of the lack of a treatment plant. That's one serious problem. And the others is  
13 jobs. We have a great infrastructure in Arklow now, to get out of Arklow on the roads, but we  
14 have to keep people in Arklow. Lads thank you very much for coming to the meeting today and  
15 I certainly look forward to working with you. Thank you very much and the best of luck in the  
16 future.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: And the last one, Cllr Thornhill.

18 Cllr THORNHILL: Cathaoirleach, thank you. (SPEAKS IN IRISH)

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Thornhill. I was just moving into position here to get  
20 these beautiful paintings, just from my own point of view, if I could just number one thank you  
21 very much for - you want to come in too - for coming here today. I know you don't have an  
22 awful lot of time and I think just one of the things that we had actually said was that what  
23 worked really well for us last time dealing with housing was being able to actually go in and  
24 meet with the five TDs and have a real conversation with you as to how the decisions actually  
25 are made. And then you also helped us get in front of the Department, where we went in and we  
26 had real conversations about every single site in Wicklow. And we were able to take down some  
27 of the misconceptions that were there, deal with some of the barriers and get action, and then you  
28 see obviously an ongoing release of funds to Wicklow to deal with our housing issues. So that  
29 was a real case of saying this works, that the Councillors and the TDs together can actually really  
30 work as an effective grouping. And that's why I think absolutely every quarter, we should meet,  
31 in whatever format we choose is the most effective one, but I think what's really important is  
32 going around the table today is everybody has been really clear about the priorities that are  
33 important in County Wicklow. We are not just getting up and making long speeches about  
34 things that don't actually matter, or aren't relevant or trying to do too much. We are very, very

1 clear, we have a strategic plan and I think it's really important that we prioritise the issues that  
2 are most important that you guys can help. One of the key ones is that there is a sense that  
3 Wicklow has been left behind, and fairness hasn't prevailed and particularly around how the  
4 finances work, not just the 20%, but in general the baseline that was used for this Council and I  
5 think the finance department will want to make a presentation to you so that you can really put  
6 that forward; that we want to see that change and get fair play for Wicklow.

7  
8 Looking at the formation of the next Government, the idea of the Healy-Raes coming in and  
9 doing a deal for Kerry, I think if a deal is done for Kerry, it means somewhere else is losing out  
10 and we don't want it to be Wicklow. We would like you all to be in there trying to get what's  
11 right for Wicklow, what's fair for Wicklow and really prioritise the development of this county.  
12 So we will collaborate with you, we will communicate with you, we will work with you. We are  
13 strategic, we are clear about what it is we want and we want your help. We want pressure from  
14 you to us, to make sure we perform and we will certainly be giving a little bit of pressure back to  
15 you to make sure you perform on our behalf. So...

16 CE: I wish to confirm that I have had an excellent working relationship with all the TDs right  
17 across the board. I would expect that both myself and the staff of the Council will continue to  
18 work with the TDs over a range of issues. My commiserations to Ann Ferris and Billy Timmins,  
19 I also worked very closely with them. I think the core issues have been referenced by the  
20 members. The action plan for jobs which we will give a presentation on this afternoon, how  
21 important that will be with regard to realising work in this county. It provides for interaction  
22 with the IDA and Enterprise Ireland and with businesses within the county, and I think we can  
23 see a very strong role for the Local Authority going forward.

24  
25 We have referenced the housing programme, the Department have approved extra staff to ensure  
26 that will be delivered on time. We are looking also at some other areas, Ireland's Ancient East,  
27 we have identified the area projects involved in that, but we have work to do on Avoca Mines,  
28 Avondale with regard to what we can improve on our product here in the county. They're the  
29 issues and we mustn't forget, even though there is a lot of political noise about Irish Water,  
30 without a capital programme, it was mentioned here earlier from water services, we are going to  
31 have difficulty developing in the county. Add that to Broadband and our roads programme. We  
32 know what we want to do. We want to improve our maritime opportunities, and so we talk  
33 about - we all experienced after Christmas, we go back into the flooding, it's a constant worry.  
34 With regard to Bray and Arklow, your help has been much appreciated.

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I would hope Cathaoirleach we would arrange a meeting when the dust has settled in Leinster House with the TDs to update them across the board on what we are planning on doing over the next short while.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Brian and again from my perspective to the former TDs who didn't make it back, obviously it was good working with them and sad to see them go. We do have just these presentations here, this is - they're from Fran Byrne, who resides in Roundwood, and this is Black Castle and this is for Simon.

(APPLAUSE)

This is the Clara Vale, so Andrew.

(APPLAUSE)

This is Lough Teigh. Fantastic.

(APPLAUSE)

It's not Glendalough for some reason, Powerscourt House.

(APPLAUSE)

Upper lake in Glendalough.

(APPLAUSE)

So thank you very much gentlemen, and we will see you out. Cheers. Take care.

(The deputies left the Chamber)

CATHAOIRLEACH: Members, we are a little bit behind in time, if it's okay with you, we are going to notify upstairs, as in the canteen, that we won't be there until 1 o'clock, so we will move on with the agenda. Thank you. So a lot of what we talked about there are economic issues, and the agenda has a real focus on the economy of County Wicklow and jobs in County Wicklow.

We, as you heard, have the IDA coming into us at 2 o'clock and giving us a presentation. I think it's really important that - I have been here before when bodies like that have come to the Council and sometimes because maybe members haven't had the opportunity to say what they think, they use that opportunity to kind of have a go as such. I just would be a little bit concerned if we take that approach, because that could be quite a negative approach, I have no problem with members asking the specific questions that are there very clearly. And asking for responsibility to be taken by different agencies. I think it's important that we set a tone that we are here to try and figure out how we can get the best from County Wicklow from these agencies, and that's I believe by working with them and figuring out what we have to do to put that in place, so that we can actually make sure that everything we are doing is the best possible

1 and I think that's what many of these presentations are about.

2  
3 Just in terms of the start, can I call on Bryan Doyle to talk about the vision that we actually are  
4 starting off with.

5 CE: I'll just pare it back a bit, I want to utilise the time for the presentations. It's a good  
6 opportunity to update the members on the progress being made on the economic front and where  
7 the energies of the staff and the members will focus in this important role for the next short  
8 while. I think the whole issue around strategies to advance economic growth are premised on  
9 our vision statement and also the need to promote and develop Wicklow's unique identity and  
10 location on the eastern seaboard. We have talked about it here and with the TDs. It's something  
11 that we need - really need to make an imprint as to what it is we are about here on the county.  
12 Putting People First, the latest kind of change for Local Government, and there was difficulties  
13 with it and members have talked about Town Councils being abolished, but the one thing that it  
14 did put clearly in focus for Local Government was that it was the unit at local level to drive  
15 economic and community development. Not only do we have this update on economic  
16 development, but later on the members will be considering the economic and community plan,  
17 two very important pieces of work to be discussed by the members.

18  
19 Over the last year, we have had proactive engagement with the IDA. And with Enterprise  
20 Ireland. We have also sought to broaden our links with IT Carlow. The Local Enterprise Office,  
21 Louise will give us a presentation on the work of the office, has been embedded within the  
22 development unit of Wicklow County Council. I think in discussion on the action plan for jobs,  
23 it's important that the County Council communicate the message that we are here to secure  
24 increased industry, business and enterprise in the county, and to generate engagement to look at  
25 new ideas and actions that this Council can bring to the table in that area.

26  
27 I think we will get a presentation and an update on the County Wicklow Economic Think Tank,  
28 which was an initiative shown here by the members of the County Council in advance of Putting  
29 People First. So I think it's important that the findings and work flows emerging from the  
30 County Wicklow Economic Think Tank are now merging and being taken on board for the  
31 Council's Local Economic and Community Plan.

32  
33 I think it's important, and Cllr Vance is the Chair of the East Midlands assembly, that we engage  
34 meaningfully with them to ensure balanced regional spatial and economic development. We are

1 grouped with very strong commercial counties in Kildare and Meath in particular. And we are  
2 vying with them for a share of the 25,000 jobs that are to be created in the region. I mentioned  
3 briefly at the end of the discussion with the members -- the TDs rather, that we want to look at  
4 our maritime strategy for the county, we have four ports, an extensive coastline and we have  
5 Brittas Bay. So we need to look at how we can develop that to the greatest extent possible.  
6

7 Just as a reminder where we have been to date, I want to reference the meeting with the IDA on  
8 a number of occasions, in particular with their property to vision. And we discussed with them  
9 the IDA lands in Greystones. We talked about all the sites that they had in the county in that  
10 particular meeting. But with regard to the IDA lands, they confirmed that they were not in  
11 Greystones -- they were not up for sale at the moment, and that they were kind of reviewing the  
12 situation. So with that, we indicated that we own -- the County Council owns lands adjacent to  
13 that property. We have an action plan for those lands and that we would be interested in  
14 engaging with them to bring forward a composite plan for the consideration of the members to  
15 bring this property on to the situation whereby it could create a planning application, that it could  
16 create maybe units for letting in partnership with the IDA. So during the summer, we would  
17 hope to advance that further, and be back in to talk to the members about that.  
18

19 We have also engaged with Enterprise Ireland, and especially in a number of instances, I am not  
20 going to reference names, we have discussed with a number of firms that they're supporting how  
21 they will sustain the number of jobs they have in the county and create jobs. I think we are  
22 seeing some movement in that particular area.  
23

24 You will also get -- Christine will outline where we are moving along with regard to Wicklow  
25 County Campus. It's a major asset and we are looking at options for the development of that  
26 area, including film. The members - the TDs referenced it as well, in that the members changed  
27 the development contribution scheme to support industry, and it is acknowledged in the broader  
28 scheme of things that it's a signal from the Local Authority, from Wicklow County Council to  
29 say that we are open for business. The members have adopted a rates incentive scheme. We  
30 haven't increased the commercial rate for quite a number of years. We are embracing Ireland's  
31 Ancient East programme. We have provided funding for economic initiatives and the members  
32 have put that money to one side. And as part of the discussion today, we will hear an update on  
33 the Florentine centre, on proposals that are there to develop the public realm and the business  
34 and retail element of that area.

1  
2 And ultimately, there is, as part of the action plan for jobs, we would see a Wicklow business  
3 forum being set up. And it is hoped in the next, within the next month, that the development unit  
4 will meet with all the major employers in the county to discuss with them the work that we are  
5 doing, and to generate the collaboration that's envisaged in the action plan for jobs with that  
6 sector to drive sustainable employment in the county. So we have three short presentations  
7 Cathaoirleach, and just to give a flavour - I think the reason why we want to give a flavour to the  
8 meeting before the members meet with the IDA is just from the point that we have been meeting  
9 with the Enterprise Ireland and the IDA and that we are anxious to ensure that the members are  
10 aware of that, and fully cognisant of the opportunities that are there for that collaboration.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: We will hand over to Tom Murphy to take us through the action plan for  
12 jobs.

13 DIRECTOR MURPHY: Thank you Cathaoirleach, we are delighted to be given the opportunity  
14 here today to address the Council. The Chief Executive has just set out the vision and the  
15 strategic context for the various projects and programmes that have been initiated by the  
16 Enterprise Unit. So this is an opportune time to give the members a brief update on the work of  
17 the Enterprise Unit and to highlight some of the various projects that are currently in train.

18  
19 Before I begin, may I just briefly remind you of the running order. Sile Daly, the head of  
20 enterprise sends her apologies but we have a very able deputy in, Louise Fleming, the senior  
21 enterprise development officer. Louise has got out of her sick bed today to be with us, and she  
22 will give us a brief update on the work of the LOE. Louise will be followed immediately by  
23 Miss Christine Flood who will provide an update on the status of the roll-out of the various  
24 actions contained in the County Wicklow Economic Think Tank action plan, and she will go  
25 through the proposals for film infrastructure at Wicklow County Campus.

26  
27 The first point I just want to mention is that the - we have - the Wicklow County Council  
28 Enterprise Unit comprises Sheelagh Daly and her term from LEO, Lorraine Gallagher, Christine  
29 Flood, Vibeke Delahunt and myself. The key objective of which is to proactively promote and  
30 market Wicklow as a great place for business and enterprise; and to seek to identify actions that  
31 will support economic development and job creation in the county.

32  
33 A further objective of the Enterprise Unit is to develop Wicklow County Campus as a centre of  
34 excellence in innovation, enterprise and education.

1  
2 Some of the ongoing activities include supporting the work of the economic development and  
3 enterprise support SPC, which was established after the 2014 local elections. One of our core  
4 activities involves the provision of advice and support to businesses and companies and  
5 entrepreneurs who may wish to invest in or establish commercial ventures in the county.

6  
7 The LEO is obviously a key part of this activity and as I have already mentioned, Louise will  
8 give you a flavour of some of the business supports that her office is involved in.

9  
10 We collaborate on an ongoing basis with local and national development agencies, including the  
11 local chambers, Enterprise Ireland, Fáilte Ireland and IDA and as the Chief Executive has  
12 already mentioned, we have a very good relationship with the IDA and as you know Mr Andrew  
13 Vogelaar who is the head of regions from the IDA will be addressing the Council in the  
14 afternoon.

15  
16 The Enterprise Unit is also involved in other areas, including its collaboration with the Wicklow  
17 Film Commission, which is - carries out very important work and we will get into more detail on  
18 that when Christine takes the floor.

19  
20 We also work very closely with tourism interests in the county and indeed Wicklow County  
21 Council makes substantial financial contribution to Wicklow County Tourism limited each year  
22 and again we will cover some of the tourism initiatives that we are involved in later on.

23  
24 Some of the projects undertaken to date, and some of the projects that the Enterprise Unit is  
25 involved in includes the roll out of the actions contained in the County Wicklow Economic  
26 Think Tank for the county. The ongoing development of Wicklow County Campus. The  
27 development of sites at Avondale Business Park in Rathdrum. The production of promotional  
28 DVDs and other promotional material, the regional action plan for jobs which I'll shortly come  
29 to and the Enterprise Unit is very much involved in the LECP.

30  
31 I don't intend to refer to the Local Economic and Community Plan at this time as this has been  
32 listed as a separate item on the agenda for later in the afternoon. Just on Wicklow County  
33 Campus, we are currently reviewing the strategic plan for the campus. We had a meeting with  
34 IT Carlow last week as part of the review process and we now intend to consult with

1 stakeholders on the matter and hope to bring back a draft document to the full Council in the  
2 near future.

3  
4 Sheelagh Daly was going to cover the regional action plan for jobs, but unfortunately she can't  
5 make it today, so I'll give you an executive summary of this particular slide. The members have  
6 previously been circulated with a copy of the link to the Mid East regional action plan for jobs.  
7 And I suppose the background to it is in with 2012 the Government launched the national action  
8 plan for jobs which has become the key policy tool to support enterprise growth and job creation  
9 in the country. However, while the various regions have seen an increase in jobs since 2012, the  
10 unemployment rate in some of the regions is still above the national average, and consequently is  
11 series of regional action plans for jobs had been prepared. Wicklow is included in the Mid East  
12 regional action plan along with Kildare and Meath. The Mid East plan includes a series of  
13 practical actions to support enterprise growth and job creation in the region, and it seeks to  
14 capitalise on the particular strengths and opportunities of the region.

15  
16 The action plan has been developed by the department of jobs, enterprise and innovation, with  
17 the support of Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and also in close consultation with regional  
18 stakeholders from public and private sectors. The central aim of the regional action plan is to  
19 champion the concept of regional collaboration and that has already been alluded to in earlier  
20 contributions this morning.

21  
22 As you can see from this slide, the strategic areas identified in the plan include driving  
23 entrepreneurship, supporting business to grow and scale; fostering innovation; attracting and  
24 embedding foreign direct investment; building sectorial opportunities; skills enhancement and  
25 labour market activation; building business networks; marketing the region as an attractive place  
26 to work and live; and maximising the potential strategic areas for further job creation. The Mid  
27 East plan covers a two-year period, 2016 and 2017 and its success will very much depend on the  
28 delivery of the many different actions and there are over 150 actions in the plan.

29  
30 A regional implementation committee has been established to monitor the delivery of the various  
31 actions and I understand that that committee is due to meet in the coming days. That's it from  
32 me Cathaoirleach, I'll now hand over to Miss Louise Fleming, the senior enterprise development  
33 officer for the LEO.

34 Ms FLEMING: Okay. Morning everybody. Can you hear me? My voice is going, so I'll be

1 mercifully short. My name is Louise Fleming, I am the senior enterprise development officer  
2 with the Local Enterprise Office in Wicklow. Thank you very much for this opportunity. My  
3 main purpose today is to refresh your understanding of the services offered by the Local  
4 Enterprise Office in Wicklow. So that you can act as ambassadors and help us by telling your  
5 clients about the services that we offer. The relevant clients that is.

6  
7 So I'll give you a quick refresher on what we do. Some of you may remember us as the County  
8 Enterprise Board previously. Many of you served on that board, voluntarily and put in  
9 tremendous work over a long period of time. On the 15th April in 2014, that board was  
10 disbanded and we became an integral part of this Enterprise Unit at the Wicklow County  
11 Council. So we are a full and active part of Wicklow County Council, although we are based out  
12 in Wicklow County Campus in Clermont House in Rathnew. Just to clarify that.

13  
14 It would help us a lot with our clients also if from a branding point of view when you are  
15 speaking to clients you could refer to us as the Local Enterprise Office Wicklow. We still do get  
16 clients calling us and asking to be put through to the County Enterprise Board which is fine but it  
17 would help clients to find us on the internet and that kind of thing if we can keep the branding  
18 consistent.

19  
20 So we are designed, just to clarify, to support SME businesses in County Wicklow. So our remit  
21 is businesses that have less than ten employees. If you just want to keep that in the back of your  
22 minds. There is a little bit of flexibility around that, but really that is our core customer. And  
23 within that, it's actually quite diverse, so we deal with businesses that have - somebody who has  
24 an idea, somebody who is at the pre-start stage, the concept development stage, somebody who  
25 might be working part-time from home as a self-employed individual and then right up to  
26 established businesses that may or may not have their own premises, and with up to ten  
27 employees, okay.

28  
29 So it is a very diverse range of clients and we offer a bespoke service to each individual client  
30 really.

31  
32 The best way to put it - there are seven staff in the office. We have traditionally been stretched  
33 in terms of resources in that regard. But it is true to say that in Wicklow, Wicklow LEO does  
34 punch above its weight, when you compare it in terms of the stats to the other 30 Local

1 Enterprise Offices in the country.

2  
3 So we do our very best. I suppose a main message to put out there today, strategic objectives  
4 were listed in the previous slide, but the most important one is the third one down there, for your  
5 constituents, our clients, we are a first stop shop. When we were re-branded in 2014, that was  
6 the big message coming out. In the past, we may have given advice about our own services.  
7 Then it changed and we have signed memorandums of understanding with almost a dozen  
8 protocol partners, which are other Government agencies, and essentially we signpost to clients  
9 and offer the service of telling them well if we don't offer a service that a small business needs,  
10 there will be another agency that would be able to help them. And we do that ideally and in a  
11 best practice way in terms of a named referral. That's what we like to do. And to the best of our  
12 ability, we follow that up, so we have a lot of information, there is a mine of information within  
13 the seven heads in the office, so clients should avail of that and it's obviously all free of charge.

14  
15 This slide here shows a kind of a graphic of how we might interact with clients in terms of stage  
16 of business development. That's a nice way of doing it really, because from left to right here, if  
17 you are at concept development stage, you may be attending one of our investigating your  
18 business idea programmes, highly subsidised workshops on Saturdays, or one of our start your  
19 own business courses. Everybody all along the line will be availing of the green and the yellow  
20 supports, which is information and signposting, including our protocol partners' information and  
21 the one-to-one business advice clinics. This is a huge area. There are - if you are not aware,  
22 there are at least 12 opportunities per week for any of your constituents who wish to do it from  
23 any stage of pre-start-up to existing business to meet with staff or some of our outsourced  
24 business advisors in one-to-one business advice clinics and they're hugely popular and generally  
25 full every week. We get about 1,000 new inquiries every year. We have five and a half or 6,000  
26 clients on our database through clients, in addition to other enablers and organisations that help  
27 us out. We are engaging with clients from the past and we are dealing with new inquiries every  
28 year.

29  
30 We are meeting about - we get requests for and we meet about half of those new inquiries,  
31 one-to-one, for an hour, for business advice. And they can do that on a repeat basis if they want  
32 to. Mentoring is there, that's the pale pink graphic there that's for certain clients.

33  
34 Just to move on to our grants, you will see feasibility study grants, priming grants and business

1 expansion grants mentioned. A note of caution. They should engage with us first and have a  
2 one-to-one meeting to discuss their own business and its eligibility for grants before they get too  
3 far down the line because they are specific, the eligibility criteria for the grants. Everything else  
4 we can assist virtually any type of business, but with grants we are mainly talking about  
5 manufacturing type businesses, software development is a huge part of that, nearly 50%, a lot of  
6 activity in tech, in clients that we see in LEO Wicklow for some reason.

7  
8 But with the grants, it's quite a process. There is quite a lot of due diligence done on each  
9 application. Funnel is quite tight. So it's a smaller number of clients and we deal with them  
10 much more intensively. Those clients tend to progress then to - you can't see it there, but the  
11 orange graphic there, tend to progress to be Enterprise Ireland clients if they're eligible and that's  
12 where we deal very closely with Enterprise Ireland. Those clients will grow, will export and will  
13 be internationally traded. That's the idea.

14  
15 Two important little boxes there that we are seeing an awful lot of activity in as well are the  
16 trading online vouchers. These are vouchers that allow a business that's been trading for one  
17 year, an established business as opposed to a prestart-up in this case to avail of €2,500 to  
18 e-commerce enable its website, we are talking about online trading here, ostensibly exporting,  
19 and it's to encourage that activity. It's a partnership we have with the Department of  
20 Communications Energy and Natural Resources. It's not our own funding and there is quite a lot  
21 of it. So do please spread the word on the Trading Online Vouchers. This is a real area where  
22 LEO Wicklow have punched above their weight. If you exclude Dublin, the highest number of  
23 vouchers assigned to small businesses under this programme were in County Wicklow last year.  
24 That was 86. Other counties launched this scheme with much aplomb and it took them a long  
25 time to get even one application, so for some reason, there is a huge appetite for training, for  
26 vouchers and for seminars in tech related areas in our businesses, clients that we see.

27  
28 And then the final pale purple slide, is Microfinance Ireland, another official partnership that we  
29 have. We are agents for Microfinance Ireland funding. Any business that is not eligible for our  
30 grant scheme, as indeed those that are eligible can apply also. And there is a one-off opportunity  
31 to apply for up to 25,000 euro in terms of a loan. It is a loan in fairness okay. And at quite a  
32 high rate, because there is a risk element there to these types of business, the profile that would  
33 apply. But I would be the person to contact in LEO in relation to Microfinance Ireland funding  
34 for clients, we take them right through the process, mentor them free of charge, prepare the

1 application and write a report, send it in to MFI and many businesses are accessing cash quite  
2 quickly via this method. That's really it, I don't want to - there is a huge amount of other stuff  
3 that we do in terms of schools enterprise and national enterprise award and trade show supports  
4 for the craft sector. There is a lot of things we do offer clients, but the one message today is if  
5 clients email us at enterprise@LeoWicklow.ie or at Leo.Wicklowcoco.ie. With a small sentence  
6 or two about their business, that's the best way to be dealt with by the right person or Google us  
7 and look at our website and see what we have to offer. We will meet any client. Any time. We  
8 also do have an out of office showers service to meet clients who may be working nine to five or  
9 unavailable out of those hours. Thank you.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Christine next is going to take us through the Wicklow Economic Think  
11 Tank.

12 MS FLOOD: Thank you Cathaoirleach. I feel bad coming between the members and their  
13 lunch, so I'll try and move as quickly as I can through this presentation.

14  
15 Members will be aware that the County Wicklow Economic Think Tank which was established  
16 in late 2013, early 2014, was a collaboration between Wicklow County Council, local business  
17 and what is now LEO Wicklow. And throughout 2014, the strategy was formulated. There were  
18 a lot of workshops and meetings. An action plan was devised and this was aimed at driving and  
19 maintaining economic activity in the county and creating jobs and this was adopted by Wicklow  
20 County Council in January of 2015. The action plan consisted of the big idea which is around  
21 branding of County Wicklow, and six objectives, ranging from Wicklow is open for business,  
22 supporting the retail sector, maximising our status as the Garden County; of course the film  
23 industry and availing of the immediate economic opportunities presented by the film industry;  
24 growing traditional sectors. That's the bit you can't see on the slide. And being alert to new  
25 economic opportunities.

26  
27 And then we have six work areas at the moment: Brand, I am not going to say too much about  
28 brand or branding because we have actually a workshop for members at 6 o'clock in Clermont  
29 House this evening. Communications and marketing; film; retail; industry and infrastructure and  
30 of course tourism which is a new group. Tourism had originally been in with retail, but we  
31 separated them out for practical purposes.

32  
33 The big idea as mentioned is around branding and it's really, it encapsulates what has Wicklow  
34 got to offer to businesses, potential investors, our local residents, tourists and our diaspora, and it

1 really is about what is our USP, what is our Unique Selling Point and how do we communicate  
2 that to the world?

3  
4 Communications and marketing, one of the main areas under communications and marketing  
5 was the development of Wicklow.ie as the new web portal. And as part of the branding exercise,  
6 we had the agency that are working on the ground redesign the portal to see what it will look like  
7 and feel like under the new Wicklow.ie. We are also creating a new area within Wicklow.ie  
8 which will support business. It's aimed at attracting foreign direct investment, and supporting  
9 existing business.

10  
11 Another area which will be newly part of Wicklow.ie is the whole area of Film Wicklow. We do  
12 have a Wicklow Film Commission website, but as part of our significant commitment to film,  
13 the Wicklow.ie will contain the new Film Wicklow website, which again is there to support the  
14 film industry, and it's also - it also will have links to tourism. Again Wicklow.ie, the web portal  
15 will link in to visit Wicklow and indeed it will also contain all the information that's held within  
16 the County Council website, which is currently Wicklow.ie.

17  
18 So again under communications and marketing, there is - what emerged during the Think Tank  
19 process is the need to communicate with our business customers. One new initiative which will  
20 be happening shortly is that we will have a text service for our business customers, they can sign  
21 up the same way as many people have signed up for the text alert system launched by Wicklow  
22 County Council recently.

23  
24 As the Chief Executive mentioned, it's proposed to meet, mainly employers, twice per year. We  
25 are building up our contacts database and developing promotional material. We have already  
26 produced a connect Wicklow video, and shortly we will be working on a video promoting the  
27 Arklow Municipal District; but these will all form part of a suite of material aimed at promoting  
28 the county online and on paper.

29  
30 So moving on to film, this sentence about developing a film industry cluster is straight from the  
31 County Wicklow Economic Think Tank action plan. And as it says there, if managed  
32 effectively, the county could leverage up to one billion in inward investment and up to 5,000  
33 jobs from this opportunity. Now that seems very ambitious, but if you look at these figures here,  
34 globally you will see that the market is 1.7 trillion dollars. Nationally, it's worth roughly around

1 500 million euro. And with 5,000 people employed. Locally, at present, and very  
2 conservatively, our film industry is worth 70 million annually. That's just based on the two  
3 productions, the television productions, Vikings in Ashford and Penny Dreadful in Ardmore.  
4 Don't forget there are various other films which I am sure my colleague Vibeke Delahunt who  
5 has had a lot of input into this piece of work and indeed Sheelagh Daly could tell you this, there  
6 is a lot more going on in the whole area of film in the county, but conservatively we estimate  
7 that it's worth 70 million.

8  
9 The Northern Ireland film industry is worth 120 million sterling and interestingly, County  
10 Wicklow has roughly around the same amount of studio space as Northern Ireland does, and  
11 they're reaping the benefits of the success of Game of Thrones. One of the most interesting  
12 things we relied on some of the UK research in terms of the gross value added in relation to film,  
13 for every pound sterling of tax relief, there is almost 12.50 in additional gross value added. And  
14 this translates into something like 350 back into the exchequer after that. So that is very  
15 significant.

16  
17 I believe under the national action plan for jobs, 2016, the Department of Arts are committed to  
18 doing some figures on the film industry, you know to find out exactly how many jobs are in  
19 there, exactly how much is being generated in recent years, what is the return on the section 481.  
20 So it will be very interesting when those figures become available.

21  
22 So the members have, as the TDs have complimented them, have taken a very proactive role in  
23 relation to film and the 100% reduction in development contributions for film studio space has  
24 really nailed our colours to the mast and putting Wicklow firmly on the map as the premier film  
25 making county in Ireland.

26  
27 We also have the increased section 481 which was increased to 70 million euro per production,  
28 which is very significant. And hopefully that will be further increased. We have in the film  
29 working group under the Think Tank, have had meetings with various bodies from the IDA to  
30 Enterprise Ireland, Irish Film Board and Screen Training Ireland. So we are progressing and  
31 talking to as many people as we can.

32  
33 We are also talking to people involved in the industry, and experts advising the industry.  
34

1 We have had some involvement in film education, Screen Training Ireland held a course in  
2 county - in Wicklow County Campus last year and there is a further course scheduled to be held  
3 in May.

4  
5 Now this, we refer this in the action plan for jobs in the Mid East and this refers to the  
6 development of Wicklow as an internationally recognised audio visual hub. And this entails and  
7 this is actually in the action plan for jobs for the Mid East, this is entails development of studio  
8 space, an incubation hub, cluster networks, the talent pool, development of innovation in the  
9 sector, film education, hopefully becoming internationally traded and of course development of  
10 film tourism in line with Ireland's Ancient East. And I am sure everyone around here has seen  
11 the success, or what Fáilte Ireland were able to do with some of the videos of Star Wars and  
12 Skellig Michael and I think there are similar opportunities for us to promote the film industry in  
13 Wicklow.

14  
15 So what does the development of a film industry cluster or hub entail and how can we do it?  
16 Well as you see there in front of you what it involves. And we can do it. We have identified a  
17 site at Wicklow County Campus, Clermont. Which would be suitable for the development of a  
18 hub. And it is proposed to publicly advertise seeking expressions of interest from industry  
19 partners to develop this film industry hub, and there are also further opportunities for the  
20 development of Clermont House for example, and some of the courtyard buildings and offices  
21 for use by the film industry.

22  
23 These are just some of the publicity, you will have seen this in the papers arising out of the  
24 Council's decision to agree to zero development contributions for the film industry. That's a  
25 further one of our TDs and our Cathaoirleach there, with - that's Lagurta from the Vikings.

26  
27 So moving on then to retail and recreation. The idea is to overall enhance the effectiveness of  
28 retail and the attractiveness of our public realm or space in the towns to develop retail in the  
29 county. And I suppose some of the key actions coming out of retail were the establishment of  
30 town teams, and incentive schemes, such as the rates incentives, we will be looking further at  
31 shop front grants and other grants for the development of retail.

32  
33 The first town team has been established in Bray and hopefully the Bray town team is fortunate  
34 enough to have funding allocated to it that had been provided for by the former Bray Town

1 Council. So we are hoping for some very early wins and based on the success and the outcomes  
2 of the town team in Bray, we are hoping to replicate this and have one further town team  
3 established in the county this year, and then three further town teams set up in 2017. Also as  
4 part of the retail area, we have mentioned the Florentine centre, and plans are well advanced for  
5 the Florentine centre. We have consultants working on the environment impact study. We will  
6 shortly be going to engage with the public as part of that process. There will be an open day in  
7 Bray, and obviously there will be involvement for the elected members.

8  
9 The proposal for the development of the Florentine centre, which will be developed like a street,  
10 it will be a new street just off the Main Street in Bray. And there will be two anchor stores, one  
11 of 3,000 square feet and another of 900 square feet and then four further retail stores and four  
12 restaurants. And a six screen cinema. That's the broad brush strokes. It could change, but that's  
13 broadly it.

14  
15 Moving on to tourism and recreation. The whole idea is to develop a strategy for tourism and  
16 building on Ireland's Ancient East and to derive the economic benefit from the huge marketing  
17 strategy that's going into Ireland's Ancient East.

18  
19 The idea is to develop two significant projects in tourism. This might be something like building  
20 on the Wicklow Way, developing the Wicklow Way, so that it will replicate the Camino maybe,  
21 and also developing Glendalough, maximising the potential there. And of course maximising all  
22 of our natural assets and developing greenways and blue ways, and there is various other  
23 opportunities to develop walks and, again to build on our unique selling point as having some of  
24 the best and most popular walks in the country.

25  
26 Finally moving on to industry and infrastructure, and I have to say maritime is a number of  
27 facets of the industry and infrastructure group, with the whole area of maritime and the  
28 opportunities arising out of our coastal assets, our maritime assets and the fact that we have four  
29 harbours is hugely significant to the county. We have recently engaged a consultant and he has  
30 prepared a study on our harbours, a baseline study and has outlined a number of major  
31 opportunities for the development of the harbours and indeed our coast in general, including  
32 particular emphasis on things like coastal tourism, agriculture, and also the Maritime Business  
33 Development Group, which I have to say is a very, very active committee of the Think Tank, has  
34 divided into sub groups and the Wicklow sub group have advanced plans for the development of

1 Wicklow Port. Now that's - it's a very long way off, but at least it's included within the action  
2 plan for jobs for the Mid East.

3  
4 Now the key message we are getting from our consultant is we need to develop our ports  
5 together, so we need to develop Wicklow Port and Arklow port together.

6  
7 And these are just some of our ports.

8  
9 And these are just some of the opportunities that have been flagged, not exclusive, but arising  
10 out of our port baseline study into the harbours. That's logistics, offshore wind, near ports is a  
11 very interesting one, it's also called short sea shipping. And it provides our - the idea is that to  
12 transport goods by sea, uses a sixth or emits a sixth of the carbon that transporting the same  
13 goods by road would entail. And then as mentioned, there is the whole area of aquaculture and  
14 tourism and leisure.

15  
16 Finally, and this is the last slide, you will be glad to know, one of the areas that I was astonished  
17 by how complicated it is, is we need fibre Broadband in certain parts of the county. We need  
18 high speed Broadband. Obviously there is a Broadband strategy which aims to bring 30  
19 megabytes per second to households but we definitely need a high speed Broadband fibre for our  
20 industries, in particularly the likes of Wicklow County Campus. And then there is the whole  
21 idea of commuter survey needs to be progressed. We have a significant number of our working  
22 population working outside the county. And we need - this is a highly educated workforce, it's  
23 an asset that we are exporting every day, and for all sorts of reasons, including the whole idea of  
24 sustainability, we would be better off if we could attract some of those jobs back into the county.

25  
26 So that's it really, there is a huge amount - I think there is over 45 people involved in the various  
27 committees of the Think Tank, so I would like to thank each and every one of them and thank  
28 you members.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Christine. We look forward to tonight in Clermont at 6  
30 o'clock and we will get our first look at the proposed brand.

31 MS FLOOD: Yes.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, members, it's just coming up on ten minutes past one, so can I  
33 suggest that we take lunch now and that we come back here for the IDA presentation at ten  
34 minutes past two.

1 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Can I just say something very briefly, I think our presentation, this  
2 presentation is probably one of the most important presentations that's been given to the Council  
3 and the fact that we are all going to lunch now and we haven't got time to have any conversation  
4 with the people up there, I have quite a lot of questions I would like to ask and I just think  
5 sometimes we spend an awful lot of time talking about things we can do nothing about and then  
6 this is something that's so important, I would nearly think that this should be brought back to the  
7 Council at the next meeting, same people up there and we are given an opportunity to ask  
8 questions, I think it's too important.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am not sure about Louise, but I know Christine and Tom and the like  
10 are staying on for the discussion with the IDA, so if you want to ask questions after that.

11 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: I am asking, will we be able to ask, referring to this presentation?

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Absolutely, yeah. Back here at ten minutes past two.

13  
14 Luncheon adjournment

15  
16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay members, if we could get ready to go. All right everybody,  
17 members, thanks a million for coming back. As promised, we will give you, after the  
18 presentation from the IDA, we will give you an opportunity to ask questions on the three  
19 presentations that happened before lunch. Okay. But we are delighted obviously to - is anybody  
20 listening? It's on, it's on! We are delighted to have the IDA with us today. Obviously I think a  
21 number of members have been asking for this for quite sometime and I think we are in a good  
22 position to do it on the basis of the work that's been done with the strategic Think Tank, and now  
23 with the action plan for jobs, and the like. So Andrew Vogelaar is head of regions with the IDA  
24 and I better declare it that we used to go to UCD together and we used to pal around and that's  
25 the closest he got to Wicklow colours for his tie. And Conor Simpson has just joined and he is  
26 going to be head of this area, what's the title? The Mid East, yeah. He is only in IDA two  
27 weeks, so - is it two weeks or how long are you in there?

28 MR SIMPSON: A little longer than that, about three months.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's slightly different. Three months! So we are interested to see what  
30 you guys have to say. Obviously people will have a lot of questions I am sure after your  
31 presentation, so we will do a round Robin after that. Over to you Andrew.

32 MR VOGELAAR: Good afternoon, Cathaoirleach, members, it's pleasure to be here. I  
33 understand it's been quite some while since you have had an address by IDA. So briefly just  
34 some very brief background before we start. Both Conor and myself, we are both in IDA quite

1 some time, I am 25 years in IDA, I took over this job 12 months ago and Conor has just started  
2 as regional manager for the Mid East in Dublin, just three months back. So what I thought we  
3 would do today is we have about 16 slides, I'll go through them fairly quickly just about what we  
4 do. We will talk about our new strategy and how it affects regions and our regional targets and  
5 then talk a bit about Wicklow and then we can open it up to the members for questions, so if  
6 that's okay. Can everybody hear me at the back? Okay.

7  
8 Just briefly to recap, I think most of you know what IDA Ireland does, but just to re-emphasise,  
9 IDA the brand has been around quite sometime. And back in 1994, IDA and Enterprise Ireland  
10 did split up. So we are primarily responsible for delivering multinational investment into  
11 Ireland, and Enterprise Ireland, our sister agency, delivers, works with indigenous companies  
12 and tries to get those companies to expand. So we are just about 300 staff, and about 75 of those  
13 staff are overseas. We are part of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Employment, and we  
14 do report to a board that's appointed by the Government also.

15  
16 Just to give you some kind of idea on the impact of FDI, now these figures are slightly dated.  
17 The good thing is they've all gone up since, so for example the total employment in IDA  
18 companies is now 187,000. Exports, these companies, while employing that many people are  
19 also exporting 124 billion. There is about 1,200 companies now, the majority of which are from  
20 the US. So like Ireland is small by international standards, okay, so we have to pick and we try  
21 and excel in certain target areas. We are very, very good at our life sciences, so for example  
22 medical technologies and bio-pharmaceuticals, the whole content industry has been a good win  
23 for Ireland as well. And then the technology piece as well, like the Intels and the HPs of the  
24 world.

25  
26 So the year just gone, and you will see this in our end of year statement, so employment in IDA  
27 assisted companies is now at a record high after taking a severe dip in the recession, as did  
28 indigenous industry as well. In the last year, there has been some very, very good  
29 announcements and some of these have gone into regional locations, or non-Dublin locations as  
30 well. Facebook put in the new data-centre into Meath. Uber has gone into Limerick. Northern  
31 Trust into Limerick. Prumerica up in Letterkenny, Zimmer in Galway. It's been a pretty good  
32 year for regional wins.

33  
34 There is a global trend for foreign direct investment, and it's something that we wish it wasn't

1 there, but it is there, and we will explain how we are trying to deal with that later on in the  
2 presentation as well. But companies outside Dublin do account for nearly 60% of employment,  
3 and last year, just over half of the jobs created last year were outside Dublin, and that's up  
4 slightly from 49% the previous year.

5  
6 Now we haven't - I haven't got the exact split of the 2015 figures, but it's pretty much the same if  
7 you look at where the jobs are coming from. So you have the whole content area, which is the  
8 Facebooks of the world, you have the technology, which is a lot of software companies; life  
9 sciences and financial services. Those four sectors are really the primary drivers of net and gross  
10 IDA gains in employment.

11  
12 We launched a new strategy, it was actually about 12 months ago, and what we are doing is - our  
13 targets have all gone up, so we have an increase in investment, we are trying to get a 40% jump  
14 in investment between 2015 and 2019. The previous strategy was 2010 to 2014. We are looking  
15 for an increase of 40% in net jobs, we want companies to spend at least 20% more in -- on R&D.  
16 And then also the money they're spending in the local economy, we want that to go up as well.  
17 So they are pretty ambitious targets.

18  
19 So what are we selling overseas? We call it the three Ts, the three Es and the three Cs. It's  
20 basically - and this - there is a kind of a constant if you like, if you look at all these factors there,  
21 they don't go away. Sometimes they do increase in importance, like the security and the safety  
22 thing with recent events in Europe is a really, really important point now companies if they're  
23 going away from the mother ship, want to be safe and secure in any location that they do  
24 establish. Ireland would have a good reputation as being a safe and secure location. It's just one  
25 of the things.

26  
27 What do we do? How does it work with IDA? Typically, we target growing companies all the  
28 time, and our overseas offices, we have about 70 people overseas, and they - it's great if you go  
29 in, and I spent three stints overseas with IDA. Typically when you get to meet a company, it's  
30 fantastic if you go in and meet them and they have a particular project in play, but that's - quite a  
31 lot of the time that's not the case. So what you are doing is you are trying to build a good  
32 relationship with the company, so when they get to the stage that they are ready to say expand  
33 into Europe or look at a second site outside the US, that they say almost give that guy or the  
34 person from the IDA a call and you get them over on site visits. What's down there in investor

1 evaluation, if they do have a particular project in mind, we invite them over to meet peer  
2 companies to meet law firms, so meet tax advisors and what have you, universities, to come in  
3 and site visit. And effectively vet Ireland, as a location for their new business. Typically  
4 companies would be looking at two or three locations as well as Ireland.

5  
6 Then they will narrow it down, we do have the ability to give financial incentives as well and  
7 they're still there and they're still attractive, they're not anywhere near as attractive, the cash  
8 grants and capital grants that there would have been in the 80s and 90s because of EU  
9 regulations. But once a company does set up, we continuously work with the company and what  
10 we find, especially in a lot of rural locations in Ireland, if a company has been around 30 or 40  
11 years, they have to keep evolving, and they have to keep winning new mandates, if they don't do  
12 that, if it's say for example a manufacturing type company, they'll end up in Asia. We do a huge  
13 amount on aftercare and we get a huge amount of our projects from companies that have already  
14 established in Ireland and they're looking to put in a new mandate or a second site or what have  
15 you. When that happens, of course, if we hear there is another project in play, or new band eight  
16 in play, the cycle starts again.

17  
18 So what I have observed, now I am just a year into the role and from working with our planning  
19 division, and we are looking internationally, we are looking globally all the time as well and  
20 these are just some observations that I think it's important to share: We have got to remember  
21 when we talk about regionalisation in Ireland, most companies that come into Ireland, they view  
22 Ireland in its entirety as a region. Like Ireland has less than 1% of Europe's population, so for  
23 them Ireland is a region in itself. They don't typically tend to think about the South West, or the  
24 South East or the Mid East or what have you. They just see Ireland as a region in its entirety.  
25 We do have a small population okay, there is pluses and minuses to that. The US is still our  
26 dominant market. We get a lot of projects from the US and despite having less than 1% of  
27 Europe's population, Ireland does win 20% of inward investment into Europe. So that's a pretty  
28 good stat. For US companies coming into Europe, we are overachieving probably by a factor of  
29 about 20 to one. That's not our figure. That's come from the US Chamber of Commerce.

30  
31 The competition is always there, and it's getting more and more difficult. When IDA set up and  
32 became - and it grew in the 60s and 70s, it was one of the few agencies. Practically every  
33 company in the world has a foreign direct investment agency and they're getting more and more  
34 aggressive.

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While we would like to change this, it's just one of those things, a company decides on the location that they come into. The ultimate decision resides with the company. We can encourage them to view locations and we can offer a higher incentive for certain locations, but at the end of the day, we are trying to supply a service to a company and if they want to set up in a particular region, they will set up there.

The key markets remain the US, but also Europe and Asia. Europe actually still accounts for 25% of our business and Asia is obviously less than that, but it is growing. As discussed earlier, the main jobs are coming from the content, technology, life sciences areas. Now one thing that's changed in the last 20 years is we used to get about two thirds of our projects from manufacturing type companies, okay. Now in recent years, it's actually two thirds of projects are coming from services type projects. And that's a kind of a - as what's happening is manufacturing, so for high end manufacturing, Ireland is still a very, very good location. A lot of the lower end manufacturing has gone to Asia and other locations as well. That's a trend that's there, but we are still winning significant manufacturing.

Now the services projects prefer larger urban centres. The services companies when they tend to -- the first thing they ask to do is be beside a university or an airport. That's just a trend that's there. More manufacturing companies go to regional locations, but the reality is there is lesser of them. And so there is not as many projects to be won as there would have been twenty years ago from manufacturing, okay. There is a trend to reward cities over a million people for foreign direct investment as well. So in Ireland we have one city of a million people and that's Dublin. Now we are competing with I think it's 35 cities in Europe over a million people. I think there is 58 in the States and 190 in China and every one of them is competing for foreign direct investment as well. So it is very much a global business at present.

What we are noticing for projects to be won, like IDA cannot succeed alone, for projects to come in, it's a part of - it's all the stakeholders pulling together to win any project. So some of the factors that the companies ask us, they ask us for - they want to be in a location where they have a critical mass. As discussed earlier, the whole security thing, and ease of doing business and having a stable environment is really, really important to them. Generally companies for foreign direct investment and the guys, the people that are making the decisions, they don't like change, okay, unless it's positive change. Talent is by far and away the key driver for all foreign direct

1 investment. Companies come in and they're chasing talent. If they feel they can get talent in  
2 their particular location, they'll establish there.

3  
4 The regional and infrastructure, infrastructure is very, very important. It's more and more  
5 difficult to get - well I suppose it's just a factor as if there is - the Americans would look at it if  
6 there is a one-lane highway there, it's not as attractive as having a three-lane highway and being  
7 beside an airport and what have you. The availability of appropriate property solutions as well.  
8 This can accelerate things, this is both for manufacturing and for light manufacturing and for  
9 services as well. If you are viewing a location and meeting a few other companies in the  
10 location, it really helps if you can show them an office or something that's kitted out, ready to go.  
11 It's just it's tangible, they can feel it and what have you. Whereas if an office has to be built or if  
12 a facility has to be built, you are probably talking six to 12 months at least before that can go  
13 through. That's an important factor as well. Clearly access to markets being in the EU and what  
14 have you is important.

15  
16 Sometimes for food manufacturing and things like that, companies will go to the source of the  
17 product they're trying to make, so you have - Abbot have a facility up in Cavan where they can  
18 get lots and lots of milk, Glanbia have a facility in Bellview down in Waterford. That can be a  
19 factor on occasion as well.

20  
21 Financial supports, while they're still good and attractive and the mix has kind of changed, we  
22 used to be able to give 30, 40% capital and employment grants. We are now bound under EU  
23 law, it's a 10% max on that. There has been I suppose positive changes though as well, things  
24 like the 25% research and development tax credit and things like that, are very important for us  
25 when we are trying to win innovation products.

26  
27 Costs, if a company can get talent and they feel in a safe and secure location and they've found a  
28 place to put their business, cost still is a factor, everywhere. So it's really important, I suppose,  
29 that for every Government, everywhere, if you are trying to attract FDI, wage inflation is  
30 certainly something the company will look at.

31  
32 Winning in the regions, a key part of the new strategy that we did launch last year and it's a  
33 five-year strategy, so for the first time, like IDA has kind of concrete targets in every particular  
34 region, okay. So what we are trying for example in the Mid East, we want to get an uplift of

1 between 30 -- a minimum of 30% uplift on projects approved from the previous five year  
2 strategy. So what we are doing is - so we have got some funds from the Government. So we  
3 have built advance facilities in IT towns so, for example there is one complete in Athlone, there  
4 is one complete in Waterford and we are rolling out more of these into other IT towns. If we can  
5 move those facilities, then we will start looking at other locations as well. There is a limited  
6 budget on it. So if we move one, that should free up the cash to build the second one and what  
7 have you.

8  
9 Okay, what we are trying to do is if you take certain sectors, certain sectors are a better fit for  
10 certain locations than others. A very good example is medical technologies in Galway, there is a  
11 real global hub for medical technologies after building up in Galway. What we are doing as well  
12 is we are hiring staff in the regions, again like other agencies we weren't able to hire people for  
13 quite sometime and it was important to IDA that we had to keep the overseas offices, we had to  
14 keep staff in them, so other parts of the organisation suffered, including the regions. So like  
15 Conor's recent appointment is full-time for the Mid East, and Dublin is a critical part of that,  
16 because it's a real focus and Conor's primary, I suppose - and he will talk about this in a minute,  
17 but his primary focus will be on the Mid East. Dublin is important but it's kind of self sustaining  
18 at this point so the focus will be on Wicklow, Meath and Kildare.

19  
20 And then what we are really trying to do as well and the regional action plans, there is good  
21 visibility of this. It's like what we were saying, IDA can't do things on its own. We are doing a  
22 lot of collaborations, a lot of work with Brian and his team here in the Council as well, because  
23 the more people we have involved trying to win FDI, the easier it gets and the more people  
24 behind it, the better.

25  
26 What we are doing is okay we are working with the public bodies but also the private sector and  
27 the regional action plans, the regional action plans and I think you had a talk about it this  
28 morning, these are all being chaired by people working in industry.

29  
30 Another really, really key thing that's important as well, working with the existing companies;  
31 companies have to transform, so the first point is you keep what you have got. So there will  
32 always be companies coming in and companies leaving. But once you have the company in  
33 there, and once they're established, to try and get them to try and evolve their business and  
34 strengthen their business and the more bows they have to the string, it makes it a more secure

1 business then as well. Clearly if a company is for sale or it's on the block for whatever reason as  
2 well, we will work with the local management and the overseas management of that entity to try  
3 and secure a purchaser for it, and try and get in a good buyer for that company as well.

4 Sometimes, if you take the pharmaceutical business or what have you as well, that can be quite  
5 an attractive proposition.

6  
7 We partner with EI as well, so if a company comes in, the more products and sources they can  
8 source indigenously is a real plus as well. That's only an attractor. We have regular meetings  
9 with EI. If a company comes in on a site visit, especially, so you might have a large  
10 multinational may just have a manufacturing mandate in Ireland. But if you get a mid sized  
11 company to come in from the States or Europe or what have you, it's often more interesting for  
12 them to meet an Irish company, because if it's a family owned company for example, you are  
13 talking peer-to-peer, not just maybe a company that may have 50 subs worldwide and the local  
14 manager may just have one or two particular mandates. So Irish companies in onsite visits,  
15 introducing them is a really, really important piece of what we do as well.

16  
17 Okay, I have talked about the property solutions and the new regional managers as well.

18  
19 The collaborative thing, like IDA is only one part of regional development and we can get  
20 investments to establish in the urban centres okay. It is extremely difficult and challenging  
21 outside the urban centres. And what - the best way I suppose to look at that is if the people that  
22 come over here and they make the decisions, they're sent over with a particular job to do so if  
23 they go back to HQ then and come back with their decision and the boss is saying to them well  
24 where is this place and they'll be asked, is there a university nearby? Is there an airport nearby?  
25 So they have certain boxes they have to tick as well. But just going back to the IDA piece, so  
26 FDI employment is only less than 10% nationally. It is high another the urban centres and lower  
27 in the regional locations, okay.

28  
29 So that's something that we struggle with, and the globe struggles with. It's just - it's a global  
30 phenomenon. We are doing some work comparing us with other countries at the moment, so the  
31 smallest region, so for example Holland, or the smallest city that Holland markets is Eindhoven  
32 which is 300,000 people. They don't go below that. So despite - and I think some of it goes  
33 back to IDA's brand if you go back 20 or 30 years ago. EI and the LEOs deliver more to the  
34 regional locations than FDI. We have a part to play, but there is a limit to - regional

1 development is about tourism and indigenous industry, it's not only FDI and I suppose all the  
2 pieces should play together as well.

3  
4 Regional initiatives can really, really help us as well. There was a project that went into  
5 Limerick recently and it was kind of brought together by the Chambers of Commerce, and the -  
6 what they did was they worked with the educational institutes on making Limerick a more  
7 attractive location for IT investments. So one or two IT companies went in there and they met  
8 the group that the Chamber set up and it was quite effective and they won the project in it as  
9 well. We had a project for Waterford about 18 months ago as well, where again it was the  
10 County Council, it was IDA, it was EI, it was the educational institutes all pulling together as  
11 well. So that collaborative approach is really, really important. I spoke a bit about global  
12 sourcing already.

13  
14 Collaborating with the councils for us is really, really important as well, because IDA doesn't  
15 have a lot of staff and you know in a regional offices as well, we don't have a lot of staff, so it's  
16 really important the collaborative work that's ongoing between Brian and Conor and Wicklow  
17 County Council, just things like profiles, if buildings become available, that we hear about them;  
18 profiles on existing companies and things as well. So like we need the stakeholders here, as well  
19 as we are trying to get FDI into the county.

20  
21 Just one thing to - it's important as well is the Google test. If any of us goes on holidays and if  
22 you are going on holidays abroad, before you make a decision, you might Google the location  
23 that you are going to go to. So it's important to watch what goes up on to Google and what's  
24 reported in the press and what have you. Because if it's positive, it's really, really good thing.  
25 But if it's negative, it can be damaging as well. Every person before they come over on site visit  
26 and there will be recommendations on where they visit by IDA, they'll Google it. So you want  
27 positive stories coming up. If it's negative stories, it's like if you go on vacation or something, or  
28 on holidays, if it's negative, that's not an attractor, okay, so to be aware of that. That's not only  
29 on IDA websites, it's across all departments and agencies.

30  
31 So look, the outlook for 2016, I would say is good. There has been some good progress in some  
32 of the regions. We have had a few approvals as well in the Mid East this year. Some are a work  
33 in progress, some regions are more challenging than others. All investments are hard won, okay.  
34 I talked about the international competition. Dublin is not our competition for FDI, okay. The

1 real competition, it's like Singapore, it's London, it's the global cities. Ultimately if a project  
2 comes into Dublin, it does benefit Wicklow, or if it goes into Wexford, it will benefit Wicklow  
3 as well. Dublin is not the competition, the competition is internationally.

4  
5 The cost competitive thing, I think especially in these times, it's important that that's maintained.

6  
7 Talent is the key. We do need better properties in certain locations as well. It makes it hard to  
8 sell a location if you haven't got a property.

9  
10 The external environment is always with us, okay, it would be better if Europe as an economy  
11 was performing stronger, because it makes it more attractive then for companies that are coming  
12 in to supply into Europe. And turmoil as well like in Greece and in China and the Ukraine and  
13 all that, that's not a good thing. That's a deterrent. Okay. And look there is always things going  
14 on as well, the security and safety as I said is a must as well. But there is always things as well  
15 that you just cannot foresee. There was a volcano went off in Greenland or Iceland a few years  
16 ago, and FDI just stopped for three or four months. That's not something you can legislate for.

17  
18 Just coming back a bit to the Mid East and to Wicklow. Conor's been recently appointed, our  
19 job is to try and get that 30 to 40% uplift into the Mid East and into Wicklow. It's going to take  
20 some time, it won't happen overnight. Typically by the time a site visit comes in and they  
21 actually set up anything in a location, it's typically between one and two years and it can be  
22 longer if it's a very heavy industry like bio pharmaceuticals or something. So the site visit, the  
23 trend is up. Last year, we had I think seven is that correct? The previous year it was four and  
24 the previous year was two. So the trend is in the right - it's going the right way. Now typically if  
25 your site visits are going up, you should get more projects following on from that. Typically a  
26 lag of a year or two after it as well.

27  
28 We also, when companies are struggling, we do work with them to try and get takeovers as I was  
29 talking earlier on as well. That's relevant for some of the companies in the Mid East okay.  
30 There has been good collaborative work done with the Council and the stakeholders. Your  
31 Cathaoirleach has been in with our CEO, we have met Brian on many occasions as well, so you  
32 are being well represented at the very highest levels in IDA as well.

33  
34 So look I think we are here to take questions as well, so thanks for being patient and we will try

1 and answer whatever questions you have.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Great, thanks a million Andrew. Okay, so Cllr Timmins.

3 Cllr TIMMINS: Just briefly, thanks very much Andrew and Conor for coming here today.

4 Thank you for taking the time to visit us, it's a very welcome move and I hope it will be the  
5 beginning of an improved and more structured relationship between this Council and the IDA. I  
6 know you have said the contacts are happening but I am interested in your ideas in how we could  
7 structure this relationship to continue on an ongoing basis and it's not done on a random sort of  
8 basis okay. I would say - again we don't have statistics in front of us, but I would say that you  
9 gave the number of site visits but I would say Wicklow has been relative to other parts of the  
10 country, been neglected and I use that word carefully by the IDA over the years. And in  
11 particular, I'll be a little bit parochial here, the West and the South West of Wicklow is probably  
12 not on the IDA's map at all. The biggest IDA employer is a company in Blessington, they  
13 employ 250. They only set up there, they're a German company, they only set up by accident,  
14 they were being brought down to Wexford by the IDA and decided to come back to the N81 and  
15 saw a place for rent in Blessington and that's how they ended up there. I would ask just to have  
16 Wicklow on your radar, we are near the city, universities, the airports, we are not just a  
17 commuter county, we have a lot more to offer than that, and I would ask that this isn't a one-off  
18 visit. While it's really, really welcome and I really appreciate your time and interest in the place,  
19 that we build up a relationship and that you, when you are looking at the Mid East, that you look  
20 at it county by county. Kildare does a lot better than us obviously. That you look at increasing  
21 the visits from the IDA to Wicklow, increasing it every year, and maybe something then will  
22 happen. Thank you.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Winters.

24 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathaoirleach, and many thanks to both of you for attending today. I  
25 suppose I welcome you here and I thank you for your presentation. And I could talk about the  
26 past, but talking about the past is a bit like worrying, it's all consuming and mostly completely  
27 unproductive. So I'll just let it go. I liked your - part of your presentation that spoke about  
28 collaboration. We here in Wicklow had the Economic Think Tank last year and as a result of  
29 that we are going to have our portal which will show all our sites, be they green, brown or ready  
30 to roll and the capacity that we have in each site, the services that are there, whether they be  
31 water, sewage, IT, whatever. And I suppose we want to make that available to you, so that if  
32 somebody does come looking that you can say yes, we have a suitable site or there is a suitable,  
33 and it can be one of the options that people look at.

34

1 You said the foreign direct investment companies like cities of a million people. What I would  
2 say is that we are so close to Dublin, we are almost that million, we are part of that million  
3 people that's available, a lot of our people here leave Wicklow and go to work, leave  
4 Blessington, leave the county of Wicklow to go to work. And I would say that an awful lot of  
5 people living in South Co Dublin instead of driving into town would really like to drive out of  
6 town, it would be against the traffic morning and evening, still close to the ports, close to the  
7 airport, and we have an awful lot to offer as a county, and I am delighted that the IDA are now  
8 actually - I know to you once foreign direct investment comes to Ireland it's fantastic, but the  
9 fact that you even have regions within there now that are going to be actively looking for stuff in  
10 each region, anything that we can do as a Council to help you bring that direct investment into  
11 Wicklow, we would be thrilled to do it. Thank you very much.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Whitmore.

13 Cllr WHITMORE: Thank you very much Chair. Thank you very much for your presentation,  
14 it's very nice to meet you and congratulations on your new appointment Conor. I think you are  
15 very lucky to have been tasked with the region you were tasked with, because I think you will be  
16 pushing an open door trying to get investment into Wicklow. I represent the Greystones  
17 Municipal District, and as you are probably aware, we have 80 acres of fabulous prime land  
18 there that's owned by the IDA, that is really begging out for investment, and for some hi-tech,  
19 high value industries to be located there. I lived in Sydney for ten years and when I moved to  
20 Greystones, it was - I was very, very surprised that that land had not been developed. I think  
21 there is a huge opportunity - when you talk about ticking the boxes for investors or people who  
22 want to live in Ireland or work in Ireland, Greystones, North County Wicklow in particular, we  
23 are so close to the universities, we are close to the airport, close to Dublin City; but it has the  
24 lifestyle that families of the executives want. They want to be able to hop up into the mountains  
25 to do their bike riding, they want somewhere secure and safe for their children to go to school.  
26 So I think the IDA land in Greystones provides all that, those characters that executives and  
27 companies would actually want in their move.

28  
29 Now myself and Stephen Donnelly have worked very closely together on this and we have been  
30 pushing and trying to get some movement on that land for a number of years now. And one of  
31 the things that we did is we spoke to a number of CEOs and when we brought them to  
32 Greystones and showed them the site and explained what was available, they were all very, very  
33 interested in it. In fact we even had the former mayor of Paolo Alto come to visit and he is keen  
34 to work with us to develop the area.

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A number of the CEOs of the companies, and one in particular, did want to move and wanted to bring 30 staff into Greystones. But there wasn't the infrastructure there. We did not have the buildings for them to move to and it was a very difficult day the day I found out that that company had found a location in Dublin, and they weren't actually going to come to Greystones after engaging with them for a year on that.

So I suppose in relation to that land, there is a couple of issues, because I know that it seems sometimes that the gap between the IDA and Enterprise Ireland can cause a bit of a stumbling block. That land is sitting there. It may not necessarily be FDI coming in, it might be companies from elsewhere in the country and how do we actually work together to make sure that it's an attractive site, not just for indigenous companies but also bringing the FDI in and how we can work with yourselves and enterprise Ireland to broach that gap.

I would love to see the IDA prioritise Greystones and that site. I think it - I understand that finding regional companies to go to regional areas in Ireland can be difficult, but as Cllr Winters said, really Greystones and North Wicklow is part of the greater Dublin area, and the 20-minute commute from the university or 30, 40 minute commute from the city centre is nothing to someone. I used to commute an hour and a half in Sydney and that was standard. So that would not be an issue in attracting people there.

There is two ways, either the IDA can prioritise that site for FDI or we can actually work with the Council and perhaps come up with some way of funding and building the - just even a starter hub to just kick-start that entire - even if there was an acre or two set aside and it was used as a seed hub to kick-start it, because once we get one industry in, the industry that wanted to move to Greystones and has gone elsewhere in Dublin, that was actually a seed, that would have brought other similar type companies into that area, so it's unfortunate that that didn't happen.

So I suppose I have just a couple of specific questions, I know you have previously met with Stephen Donnelly, our TD, and I was just wondering is there an update on the IDA land? Developers have approached us and said that land is now no longer for sale. I would be interested to know if that's the case and if it is still on the market, is there the potential to sub - to put into smaller sub lots, so it's on an acre or two-acre basis, so we could try and get that starter approach to the site. I know there is also a building fund for the IDA. So in some instances you

1 are doing some infrastructure works. Is there a possibility that Wicklow and in particular that  
2 this site could be included in the next round of funding for that. I think it would be a very, very  
3 valuable way of spending some of the IDA funding.

4  
5 There was also mention of a 30 to 40% target for the Mid Eastern region. Can you specify what  
6 the target for Wicklow is? One of my concerns when I have had a look through the --

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Jennifer, just you are coming over.

8 Cllr WHITMORE: I'll be quick, the action plan for jobs that for Wicklow there was very little  
9 focus, actually there was no focus on the innovation side of jobs. It was all Maynooth and  
10 essentially Maynooth was focused on. Wicklow the focus seemed to be more on tourism and the  
11 film industry and I think that's a big gap in the action area for plans and I would be concerned if  
12 that gap from this plan actually crossed and influenced the IDA and it meant the IDA was not  
13 looking at innovation jobs in the Wicklow area because of how it's been outlined in the action  
14 plan for jobs. That would be a concern of mine and if you could address that.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: We have just lost the system for a couple of minutes, but Grainne, you  
16 were next.

17 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Thank you very much Andrew for your presentation and to Conor,  
18 welcome to our area, and we look forward to working with you going forward and I have no  
19 doubt you have the full support of Wicklow. Again, no more than Jennifer, I am from the  
20 Greystones Municipal District and I hate being too parochial because at the end of the day we  
21 are all Wicklow County Councillors, but we have a site in Greystones that's over 30 years old  
22 and I remember in the very early days when we were going to get a digital company, they ended  
23 up in Galway and then it was and wasn't happening and there was great excitement. And over  
24 the years the land is just sitting there and going nowhere. Nothing seems to be happening.  
25 Recently no more than Jennifer said, there is word that the land is no longer for sale. It was up  
26 for sale. There is two things in that. Is it because you are waiting for Wicklow County Council  
27 to move on their land? Or is it because you don't want to sell the land anymore and you have  
28 plans for the land in question?

29  
30 You mentioned the 41% plan up to 2019, it's 41% overall, Ireland as a region. I am not sure if I  
31 am picking up, I don't think it's 41% just for Wicklow, it doesn't really say that or for the mid  
32 region. Taking it that it is 41% that you want to increase, and just saying that the - you are  
33 saying the majority of FDI has to go into cities over one million, how do you expect the increase  
34 to happen outside of the Dublin area? Now I am - maybe I am wrong, but I am liking to think

1 that Greystones and Bray are part of the greater Dublin area. If they're part of the greater Dublin  
2 area in the main strategy in the country, I presume the IDA are including it as well or if they're  
3 not, I think they certainly should be.

4  
5 So taking that you have, that you would be coming into Greystones and when the IDA did  
6 decide not to go any further with Greystones a number of years ago, it was because we didn't  
7 have the right infrastructure into the town, we didn't have the right transport, we didn't have the  
8 right facilities, we didn't have the proper sewage. We have now got all of that. So we are as  
9 such ready to go. I would like to know what your definition is nearby when it comes to  
10 universities and the airport. I would certainly think that our airport and universities are certainly  
11 close to Greystones, particularly now that you have a dual carriageway off your own land, which  
12 is quite extraordinary that it's actually built, you don't even have to build that, you have a dual  
13 carriageway all the way into Dublin airport without having to really turn off at all. It's possibly  
14 the best location. I know myself, I work in Sandyford, and going that direction into work every  
15 morning, and I know the bottlenecks that occurs. You are an ideal location. We have a fantastic  
16 workforce in Wicklow, they're hugely educated. In the last census if I am not mistaken, 88% of  
17 the people in the Greystones area, that North Wicklow area had the third level education. I mean  
18 they're there for the taking. They don't want to work in Dublin. People like me don't want to be  
19 driving into Dublin, we want to stay locally and it comes from all sectors. So I think we are  
20 ideally suited.

21  
22 I really do welcome you here. I do think you should come, talk to us more and I would like to  
23 see Wicklow putting together a complete plan for you, a bit like what Cllr Winters was saying, it  
24 wasn't just for Wicklow, something for the whole of - Wicklow Town, something for the whole  
25 of the county of Wicklow, so that we are all working cohesively, rather than everybody just  
26 trying to get a bit. I know I sound parochial, you own it, you don't have to negotiate with anyone  
27 to buy it, you own the best piece of property in the county and it happens to be in Greystones and  
28 I just am imploring you to get people to look at it, or if you are not interested, let it go to the  
29 likes of Enterprise Ireland so they can develop it. Because it's no point sitting there and just as a  
30 Greenfield site, albeit a very nice one, but it is a Greenfield site.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Bourke.

32 Cllr BOURKE: I would like to welcome Andrew and Conor, and say that as the Cathaoirleach  
33 of the Arklow Municipal District, there is often a frustration amongst Councillors in my area that  
34 we tend to be forgotten about in Arklow, but I would like to remind you that we have a brand

1 new water treatment plant in Arklow which treats over a million gallons of very high quality  
2 drinking water per day, capable of supporting a great variety of businesses into the future. The  
3 final piece of the jigsaw for Arklow will be the sewage treatment plant which is currently being -  
4 the environmental impact statement is currently being prepared by Irish Water for the site on the  
5 North quay, North pier. At that stage Arklow will be ripe for quite a lot of development and if  
6 you could please keep it in mind that it's been traditionally a very good industrial area in the  
7 county, and hopefully with your assistance, will become so again in the near future.

8  
9 One suggestion I have to make to you both gentlemen, coming from the experience of the  
10 frustration borne out of listening to Councillors complaining about the fact that we feel elected  
11 and - neglected and forgotten about, and I know that you men do work hard and do promote the  
12 entire region and places like Arklow, but we don't know about it often enough. We see or hear  
13 once a year if we are lucky, often only every second year. I would suggest if you could  
14 communicate with the Municipal Districts on a six monthly basis as to the type of work you have  
15 been doing and the number of people who have had visits to the county that you have helped, or  
16 brought out for a look around or brought out for dinner to promote, with a view of promoting the  
17 county, it would be very helpful to us as Councillors that know that we haven't been forgotten  
18 about and would avoid negative press as well.

19  
20 You mentioned that Google picks up negative press very quickly, some of that could be your  
21 own fault because if Councillors start venting frustration at meetings that we are forgotten about  
22 by the IDA, that's the first thing that the media pick up and the headline in the local paper and  
23 hence Google. If you could keep in more regular contact with us, I think it would be more  
24 helpful.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune.

26 Cllr FORTUNE: I am not going to repeat what Jennifer and Grainne said about Greystones, but  
27 everything they said is accurate. Andrew thanks for your presentation. But there is a perception  
28 with us within the Chamber, or a lot of us anyway, that you come, you IDA come to visit us and  
29 we have these presentations and we have these conversations, and then basically nothing  
30 happens. So there is obviously something that's stopping - we hear job announcements in the  
31 various parts of the country and Wicklow never seems to be in that mention and we start then  
32 complaining about our TDs, what are they doing and everything else. There is obviously  
33 something causing that. A question I would have is from your perspective, what are the gaps in  
34 Wicklow that need to be filled if there are gaps? And then how can we fill them. We can't keep

1 having these conversations every so often, and I would agree we don't actually get enough visits  
2 from you. My own view and I know the view of a lot of people in Wicklow would be that  
3 Wicklow has a fantastic infrastructure, comparable to most counties in Ireland and better than  
4 most. We have roads, we have lifestyle and if you even look at tourism approaches and  
5 everything else, we say on a regular basis that Wicklow has everything any county in Ireland has  
6 to offer. That includes living, lifestyle, everything. There is something fundamentally wrong  
7 why we don't get that.

8  
9 You made the point earlier about one of your current focuses is on Wicklow - I think you said  
10 Meath and Kildare. It would appear - there was a question actually asked in the Dáil at the end  
11 of 2015 in regards to IDA sponsored visits, and it was very interesting to look at the answer.  
12 Over the last five years from 2010 to 2015, Wicklow had 21 and you say that your target or  
13 objective is to grow that by 30%. That still only brings us up to 27. Louth in the same period,  
14 82. Sligo had 42. Waterford had 83. Westmeath had 75. Clare, 52. Limerick 162 and Galway  
15 136. And then some other counties were similar numbers to Wicklow or maybe slightly lower.  
16 So there is a real, real, apart from the detail we can go into like for example in Greystones and  
17 other parts of the county, Arklow and other parts of the county, there is fundamental questions  
18 that has to be asked, because if they're not, if the questions are not dealt with, are not answered,  
19 then the perception unfortunately is reality, that you come here, you sit down with us, we have  
20 these nice conversations, we all ask questions, the media print something about it and suddenly  
21 then the months and months and months later we are saying we haven't heard from the IDA,  
22 what's going to happen. That's the reality as far as I am concerned.

23  
24 I would today, having sat through probably already four or five similar type visits in here in the  
25 chamber, and basically nothing has happened. And I would like to know if you have a plan,  
26 what is the timeline on it, how is it going to happen? If there is gaps in Wicklow that we don't  
27 know about, we don't think there are that many gaps, but you obviously may do, if you do tell us  
28 what they are and tell us how us and yourselves are going to address it. You have been told by  
29 the Chair earlier on that we have a strategic plan, a Think Tank going, all sorts of stuff going on,  
30 we have a meeting at 6 o'clock this evening to look at aspects of that. But it's all fundamentally a  
31 waste of time unless you people are in supporting us and as I say, your biggest support right now  
32 as far as I would be concerned is to tell us why it's not happening and then tell us how it can be  
33 revolved and how it can be made happen.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Mitchell.

1 Cllr MITCHELL: Thank you very much for coming along. Just really I suppose my questions  
2 are to do with the Greystones site, which I won't go into at all. But you have owned it for 30  
3 years, and it is - we were told at various stages that if we fixed various bits of infrastructure that  
4 would sort out the issue. We fixed the infrastructure, which wasn't easy over a long time. And I  
5 would just like to know what's happening. I also feel that the town badly needs a hotel, which it  
6 hasn't got. And I think that on that site and on the adjacent Council land there should be a hotel,  
7 and certainly if nothing else is going to happen, we should get on with that and try and get a  
8 hotel for the town. Basically we have had 30 or maybe more years actually of various plans, but  
9 unfortunately it didn't come to something. Thank you.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Matthews.

11 Cllr MATTHEWS: Thanks Chairman, thank you for the presentation. Just a couple of questions  
12 on it, the 60% outside Dublin, that's Dublin county or does that include the - any parts of the  
13 greater Dublin area?

14  
15 I hear this perception of neglect of the county by the IDA, but just looking at the presentation we  
16 were given earlier on, there is 19 IDA client companies in Wicklow, with 2,300 employees.  
17 How does that compare with other Mid East counties which I presume is Kildare, Meath, and  
18 Louth?

19  
20 Where we have a number of greenfield and brownfield sites that would be very attractive to my  
21 mind for investment, I seem to hear that a lot of companies who were coming in would like a  
22 turn-key facility, or a turn-key - that they can come straight into. How do we bridge that gap  
23 between having a good site, with good public transport links with all the boxes that you need  
24 ticked, we have them there, but we have a brownfield site, so how do we bridge that gap between  
25 the turn-key facility? Cllr Winters referred to the online mapping service that we are looking at  
26 providing of service sites or properties that are available. Do you actually have a facility like  
27 that, are we doubling up on the work or is that something you would get the benefit of from  
28 Wicklow if we were to put the work into that?

29  
30 You referred to - there was something in your slide there and I have heard it mentioned a couple  
31 of times called place making, a lot of US FDIs seem to put a lot of emphasis on this. But it's  
32 something that gets brushed over. I think it probably does have merit and that's something we  
33 can be directly involved in setting out our public and amenity spaces for companies, it doesn't  
34 matter how good the site is, if the place isn't nice for the employees to live or their children to

1 grow up in, they're not going to be attracted to it. I think a lot of the US companies put a lot of  
2 stock on that. And lastly can we communicate directly to you where we are trying to push ideas  
3 and opportunities for our district or ideas that we may have for the county?

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Connor.

5 Cllr O'CONNOR: Thanks Cathaoirleach, thank you very much Andrew and Conor for coming  
6 here today and giving us a very interesting presentation. I live in Bray and just off the Boghall  
7 Road. And on that road, there used to be a number of big employers, AO Smith, Schering  
8 Plough and Dell. None of those employers are there anymore. AO Smith closed in 2005, 140  
9 jobs went. Where have the IDA been since then to try and replace these jobs? Wherever they've  
10 been, they've not been in Wicklow as often as they should have, and I think the figures are  
11 revealing. According to the figures provided to me by John Brady TD, the following are the  
12 number of site visits carried out by the IDA in Wicklow: 2011, there was three. 2012 there was  
13 six. 2013, there was one. 2014 there was four. 2015 there was seven.

14  
15 Now I think you said, Andrew, that there was a direct correlation between the number of site  
16 visits and the actual businesses that get brought up as a result. If you take those figures and then  
17 compare them with some of the others that were around the country in different areas, 2015, for  
18 example, Sligo received 15 site visits compared to our seven. Tipperary got 12, Waterford got  
19 31, Westmeath got 28. If there is a direct correlation between the site visit and the actual  
20 business that gets started up in the area, then Wicklow certainly is not getting enough site visit  
21 and I think that has to be remedied. As has been pointed out by a lot of my colleagues today,  
22 this county has everything that you could possibly need in terms of infrastructure. We have  
23 certainly excellent transportation links. We have the airport up the road. A whole rake of  
24 universities just up the road from us. It's not a long drive into Dublin from here. And this area  
25 certainly should be treated as part of the greater Dublin area, I would have thought. And I think  
26 if the North of the county is in receipt of jobs, that shouldn't be to the debt meant of the South of  
27 the county. We have good transportation links between the North and the South of the county,  
28 especially by road also.

29  
30 We need jobs in Wicklow. There is poverty in this county. This poverty can be addressed  
31 seriously by the provision of jobs. The IDA does very good work. I think that has to be  
32 acknowledged, I would like to see more of this work being done in Wicklow. Thanks.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Snell.

34 Cllr SNELL: Thanks Cathaoirleach. Again thanks to the officials for actually getting the IDA

1 down here to give a presentation. It's very welcome indeed. If I could just say Cathaoirleach in  
2 regards to - there seems to be a breakdown in communication in regards to - we have the County  
3 Wicklow Economic Think Tank and I would like to see the IDA working closely with that  
4 committee who are doing Trojan work. Because prior to getting this presentation this morning,  
5 just like Cllr Matthews and others, I wasn't aware that the IDA actually were involved in 19  
6 companies up to 2014. Anyone bringing in 2,300 jobs obviously is to be welcomed within this  
7 county. And whether it's in North, East, South or West of Wicklow, I think it's imperative on  
8 each and every one of us to help and bring in more employment into County Wicklow. At the  
9 moment, we have startling figures in regards to your own electoral area. Sorry, it's not, I am  
10 mixing you up with the Greystones Councillors! But 88% of the working public in that area  
11 have to travel outside of County Wicklow. And if you take Blessington for example in West  
12 Wicklow, 84% of the population have to travel outside of Wicklow for employment. And we all  
13 know that we have a roads network that has improved greatly, to such a degree that you can get  
14 from North to South quite easily, now from Bray to Arklow. Now we have a situation where the  
15 people of Arklow, they're the least amount of the workforce travelling outside the county. I  
16 believe, that's not because there is a vast amount of employment in Arklow. I believe it's  
17 because there is not enough employment in that area, there is not enough employment in the  
18 whole county. I would just like to point out to our gentleman here from the IDA that less than a  
19 mile and a half away from here is the jewel in the crown in Wicklow in my opinion, which is the  
20 County Wicklow campus based in Rathnew, Clermont. I would love to see the IDA having  
21 serious conversations with the Chief Executive and his staff here in regards to expanding what's  
22 already out there. We have the Local Enterprise Office based there, and we will be out there six  
23 o'clock this evening for a presentation. I think an awful lot of positives have come out from  
24 what I have heard before lunch and certainly after lunch. I would like to see more expansion on  
25 the maritime business as well in regards of County Wicklow if at all possible. Thanks  
26 Cathaoirleach.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Two to go. Cllr Behan.

28 Cllr BEHAN: Cathaoirleach, welcome to the two visitors and just to say they started off by  
29 talking about the national context and Ireland being considered as a region. Well if we just take  
30 a reality check here, in this country alone in the last five years, 500,000 people emigrated,  
31 because they couldn't get work. Half a million people. We have lost half a million of our best  
32 and brightest, highly educated, and people who wanted to make a living here but couldn't, were  
33 forced out. So I think we have to look in the context of your figures nationally at how many  
34 people are having to work abroad still, and how many families have been split up probably

1 permanently because of the fact that their children are working in Australia, in Canada, in the  
2 US, and so on. And I think we all have to look at that and whatever Government eventually  
3 takes shape in this country will have to do all it can to try and ensure that we do all we can to  
4 welcome those young people back to this country, and give them profitable and gainful  
5 employment back in their own native land. I think that's a priority, should be, for the whole  
6 country.

7  
8 Just coming back then to the more local level of this county, a number of points have been made  
9 and I would agree with them. But - I haven't heard a figure from you yet and I would like the  
10 figure: How many new jobs, new FDI jobs, actual jobs, have been created in this county in the  
11 last five years? As distinct from visits. How many positions have you actually managed to  
12 encourage to be set up here in this county?

13  
14 The next question would be in terms of the visits that you talk about, I don't imagine that a  
15 possible investor suddenly decides where they want to visit themselves. They must be presented  
16 with a list of options, I imagine. So I would like to know a little bit more about how is that list  
17 compiled? How does Wicklow either get on that list or how is Wicklow excluded from that list.  
18 As many members have said here very eloquently, we have an awful lot going for us as a county.  
19 To me it's very difficult to understand why we are not on a hell of a lot more lists and we don't  
20 have an awful lot more visits than we seem to have had up to now. I would be very interested to  
21 see the mechanics of how those lists are created and how those companies are finally given  
22 options from which to choose.

23  
24 And the final point, mention has been made about IDA land in Greystones, you also own land in  
25 Bray on the Killarney Road as far as I know and I am just wonder what your plans are for that  
26 particular site?

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Kennedy.

28 Cllr KENNEDY: Thank you Cathaoirleach. I want to thank Andrew for his presentation and  
29 congratulate Conor on his new position as Mid East regional development manager. It is to be  
30 welcomed. I look forward to working with you for the county and for the Arklow Municipal  
31 District. Arklow was known one time as the employment zone for South Wicklow but sadly that  
32 is no longer so. But my own town is suffering where we are going to lose 300 jobs in Rathdrum  
33 from MSD which is due to close down at the end of this year. I think around 15th December.  
34 There is huge worry and concern among the families that are left there. And what I was - I

1 suppose what I would be looking for is assurance from you that you are doing everything that's  
2 possible that can be done to secure a purchaser for that site, because it's a huge employer in the  
3 town of Rathdrum. And the wider county. And it will be a huge loss to the local economy and  
4 the county if it was not saved at the last minute. So I do - I am looking for assurances from you  
5 that you are doing everything possible, within your power to secure a purchaser for that site.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: And Pat Fitzgerald.

7 Cllr FITZGERALD: I better say something about Arklow. The Chairman has, or the  
8 Cathaoirleach of Arklow Municipal District has probably reflected my views, but since the year  
9 2000, we have been haemorrhaging jobs in the Arklow area. Arklow was the hub for North  
10 Wexford and South Wicklow, and back in 2000 or 2002 IFI closed, Allergen moved across to  
11 Puerto Rico and then back to Westport. Qualceram closed, and certainly from the statistics, we  
12 have the lowest number of people commuting as Cllr Snell said, the lowest number of residents  
13 leaving the local area to work elsewhere. We have the highest number of vacant premises in the  
14 county as the figures are quoted here. Certainly there is a huge problem in the area. Cllr Behan  
15 has said that many people have left the country and I know my own daughter left it six years ago  
16 and she doesn't maybe want to be in Canada but that's where she is. And we have lost huge  
17 numbers of well educated people. Now I read an article recently where things are going to  
18 improve in the smaller towns. The way to improve in the smaller towns is get let's say industrial  
19 parks and whatever. We have a very successful industrial park in the Croghan industrial estate  
20 there and there is 165 people working in the units there, and that's the way forward, by whatever  
21 way, if we have spare ground, whoever has it we should look at maybe encouraging small  
22 businesses to set up, because three jobs, four jobs, maybe 40, 50 jobs. Being realistic about it, it  
23 was pointed out to me recently from an executive in another company, we are not going to get  
24 500 jobs in Arklow or 600 jobs. As you said, many will go to the bigger towns, go to the cities.  
25 But we have - people are talking about connectivity, we have a great supply of public transport,  
26 we have 15 buses a day to Dublin, 15 the other side. We have trains, we are between Rosslare  
27 and Dublin. We are - the site out at Elevon is one minute from the N11. There is no issues there  
28 with connectivity. We have a hugely educated population, and it's quite rightly said Arklow, the  
29 number of shops vacant is because of the economic - reflects the economic conditions of recent  
30 years. And what I am asking, the question I am asking is while gains are expanding and we have  
31 got a small company there recently from Gorey in Wexford, which was great to see because it  
32 was usually going the other way, what plans are there for the Arklow Municipal District, what  
33 are in the plans to increase employment in the area? The way things are going, we have more  
34 and more people walking the streets. We have other issues coming up, people on the gateway

1 project, that looks like it's going to cease. So where are we going with regard to providing  
2 employment in the Arklow Municipal District.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Just before bringing Andrew back in, I would like to bring Brian in to talk  
4 about the Greystones land again please.

5 CE: I don't want to cut across anything that the lads might say, I don't know whether I went  
6 through it too quickly this morning, the economic unit met with the property division of the IDA  
7 in February to discuss the issue, in particular, of what proposals there might be there for the IDA  
8 land in Greystones. On the day in question, we talked about the sites in Arklow, and the sites in  
9 Bray.

10  
11 With regard to the Greystones site, it was confirmed that it's no longer on the market, and we had  
12 made this approach ourselves, on the basis that quite a number of people were approaching the  
13 County Council with regard to the availability of the town centre site that we own in Greystones,  
14 and the availability of that to build hotels, to build nursing homes, to build anything. We sent  
15 them all off on the basis that we were hopeful, following our meeting with the IDA, that there  
16 would be a joint approach, a collaborative approach is the terminology we have used all  
17 morning, with the IDA with regard to developing both sites simultaneously. Whether we are  
18 going to look at a joint venture or how we will go out to market as a partnership. Following that,  
19 it was agreed that the planning part of Wicklow County Council would liaise with the planning  
20 consultants at the IDA to look at how we can get the full value for that site. That would take into  
21 account that Procap are on the southern point of that site which was developed by the IDA. I  
22 mentioned that we would be bringing those proposals to the members of the Council. At this  
23 stage I would say it will be late summer. To look at what was needed to bring that forward. I  
24 can confirm that the IDA property division did say that they have a genuine interest in getting  
25 this forward. It has lain there for a while and I have to say that the development unit left them in  
26 no way uncertain that we were ready to deliver on this in as best way as we can to deliver money  
27 and jobs into the county. I am not anticipating that there won't be issues with regards to the  
28 members when we come to discuss it, but I always have felt that there is a vibe from the  
29 members that they would be supportive of any good idea that comes to developing those lands  
30 particularly in partnership with the IDA.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Great. Andrew, if you want to just, you have heard obviously the  
32 questions from the members so, maybe if you could just bunch them up a little bit.

33 Mr VOGELAAR: Sure, okay, look, there is quite a few questions there, so we will try and  
34 answer as many of them as we can. We have data on some of them but not on all of them and if

1 I am missing stuff, Conor will jump in as well.

2  
3 I think we kicked off with Cllr Timmins, and there was how do we structure this. I mean and I  
4 am sure it's good with the County Council as well, that Conor and Brian should meet up once a  
5 quarter for a quarterly meeting, I think that's fine. It's probably happening anyway, it's just not  
6 regularised. I think we can put that in place.

7 CE: Conor was only a wet week in the place, we met in October.

8 Mr VOGELAAR: So on just some of the geographys I think, West and South West Wicklow  
9 was mentioned. I actually worked with Rupp & Hubrach, I am aware of the company and  
10 they're part of Essilor now, I am glad to hear they have that many people up and running and  
11 they've still be successful there. I think another company, a smallish company I was working  
12 down with in Carnew I think, Rehad, that's probably 20 years or so ago as well. Being realistic  
13 about it, I think if companies come in, they're likely, if they come into Wicklow, they're likely to  
14 go to the more populated cities. That's just the way things go. Okay. There was a lot of talk  
15 about site visits as well. Okay, so there was seven, somebody asked to compare it with Kildare,  
16 and Meath, and there was actually seven site visits in the three counties, in previous years I think  
17 you are right, Wicklow lagged behind. Just about the number of companies in each county, and  
18 one thing I just emphasise is like your competition is not the other counties, your competition is  
19 the other cities globally, with you just so you have the stats, and I think there is something like  
20 22 companies in Kildare. They clearly employ a lot more because you have Intel and HP there,  
21 Intel is the largest employer in the country. And in Meath, I think there are 17 companies with  
22 1500 people. Just on site visits as well, I think the population of County Wicklow, now forgive  
23 me on my stats, I think it's 136,000 or so, and that's the 15th, Wicklow ranked either 13th or 14th  
24 on site visits, so it's kind of where it's at relative to population. Just going through a few other  
25 things as well, the close to Dublin thing, look we are in total agreement with you. Conor and  
26 myself, our job is to try and sell Wicklow. So what we do is when we are talking to the  
27 companies, if you take that most - if you take most people, they're sleeping eight hours a day,  
28 working eight hours a day and they have eight hours free time. They don't want to spend two  
29 and a half hours that have free time in a car every day, so we are in total agreement with you, so  
30 the reverse commute is a powerful selling tool and we are doing a lot of work on it and trying to  
31 get companies what we call second sites. Now that's something that everybody in the Chamber  
32 can help us with, because a lot of the time in second sites, they'll go to a location if there is a  
33 senior executive pushing a location. So if you know somebody that's living in Greystones and  
34 they're a senior person and working in a facility in Dublin that's jam packed, we would love to

1 talk to them about relocating some of them to Greystones or Arklow, it makes total sense, okay.  
2 What you are seeing is on the second sites, you will see companies like going into the other  
3 larger urban centres, such as Galway, with Fidelity and SAP and things like that. But sometimes  
4 on financial services the likes of Wexford, I think it's IFS, Statestreet in Kilkenny, they've had  
5 success in that. But that typically, a second site can typically be developed or driven by the  
6 existing executive, so that's - we are working with the companies all over the time, but  
7 sometimes it can boil down to that as well. So just to be aware of that.

8  
9 The Greystones land is an attractive proposition, okay, and I know it's attractive not only for  
10 FDI, it's attractive for housing and a whole bunch of other stuff as well. The two biggest sites  
11 we have are in Greystones and in Arklow and they are being actively marketed, okay. There is  
12 not, being Frank about it, a huge amount of companies that come in and they want 60 or 80 acres  
13 immediately. But it is an asset to have it rather than not have it is what I would say.

14  
15 And the lifestyle thing, I mean it's really important point because more and more companies as  
16 we discussed are services companies. It's something at IDA we are struggling with, I don't want  
17 to say we are struggling with, but if you look at our land holdings from 30, 40, 50 years ago,  
18 they tend to be outside of towns. So we are always looking for facilities that are in the middle of  
19 towns. If you look at a lot of the newer type companies, the reality is the people working in the  
20 companies, they do want to come to work in their flip flops and sit in a bean bag and be right in  
21 the middle of town. They don't want to be in a business park. That's a national trend and it's  
22 happening in the States as well. You are getting people from the valley moving back to San  
23 Fran. If you do have buildings available and stuff does become available in the middle of town,  
24 that's an attractive proposition as well.

25  
26 Just in IDA investing more land and more money in buildings and sites, we kind of got out of the  
27 property business, and last year, or two years ago, we started investing in it again. That's  
28 dependant on us moving the stock that we are building at the moment. There is, as I mentioned,  
29 a unit gone into Waterford and one at Athlone as well. And there has been other IT towns  
30 identified. When they get filled, and you know we are taking a bit of a risk in that as well, we  
31 can't build ten of them in one go. We just haven't got the resources or the budget. So the idea is  
32 that they would be - that money will be re-invested as the facilities are either purchased or  
33 rented.

1 So the targets, it's a 30 - it's quite simple right, and again if you look at the regional action plans,  
2 like IDA has targets, there is a lot of other organisations in there that they don't have targets.  
3 And IDA has put its head up and we said we will deliver 30 to 40% in each region. There is a  
4 lot of organisations that haven't done that. So we are putting our head on the line. We are  
5 saying we think we can do this. But it will take time, it will take five years, it's not going to  
6 happen overnight.

7  
8 I wasn't, I didn't quite get the 41% question, I don't know did you...

9 MR SIMPSON: The 41% uplift refers to the total number of investments over the period of the  
10 strategy, the 30 to 40% refers to the uplift in the regional targets. So I am not too sure what the  
11 question was either.

12 Mr VOGELAAR: Something came up on the Municipal District as well. I think as a way of  
13 managing that, we still are tight on resources and we can do a limited amount of recruitment as  
14 well. I think when Conor and myself are liaising through the County Council, it's a good way of  
15 doing that, and we will also meet the Council as a group once a quarter through Brian and Conor  
16 is a good way to start that.

17  
18 And just when it comes to land, and when it comes to projects and buildings, like ultimately, we  
19 spent a lot of money, if you take Bellview down in South Kilkenny and Glanbia went in there. If  
20 an EI company comes in and they have a good project and they want to put it in IDA lands,  
21 fantastic, we don't discriminate whether it's FDI or an Irish company. What we would say to let  
22 a big site go that a lot of investment has gone into, that you want a project of scale. Okay.

23 MR SIMPSON: It's also worth adding that that what our clients look for, are business parks are  
24 the standard, presented in a certain way, and similar types of activities. This idea of business  
25 parks that have mixed use, where you could have a fellow washing cars one side and another  
26 fella selling tyres. That's not what our clients are looking for. We find the approach to ensure  
27 we maintain a standard but EI companies would very much fall into that.

28  
29 Can I just - I know it came up a couple of times about how we - just a couple of items came up  
30 about how we engage with our clients, Andrew touched on it there in the presentation, where the  
31 various bubbles that he showed, and the engagement process that can take place. And it can vary  
32 from project to project in that it can take up to 18 months from the time we have our first  
33 engagement with the client to the time that they actually make a decision to invest. And what I  
34 see as an important part of my role, particularly working with Brian and his team here, is that I

1 want to provide as much information as possible to our overseas team, who effectively have the  
2 first point of contact with our client companies. Particularly our new name client companies.  
3 And in that event, what we are looking to do is to educate them about locations such as  
4 Wicklow, and to ensure that my colleagues in the overseas offices are aware of the skill sets that  
5 are available, the quality of life opportunities available and the client companies most  
6 importantly that are here. That's not just the IDA client companies that are here, it's also the  
7 companies that are being borne out of the LEO, but also Enterprise Ireland as well. Those  
8 companies are doing activities and again I tend to look on this - it's not just sectorial, we are  
9 talking to a company maybe in the financial services base, but we don't have too many financial  
10 services companies. But if the activity is similar, if it's a shared services centre, whatever it  
11 might be from an activity point of view, we should be going cross-sectoral, and identify the  
12 flagship companies in the county and use them to sell the county. Because companies like to  
13 hear what other companies are doing and how successful they are at doing that. So I am working  
14 with Brian and working with a number of our stakeholders in pushing that information out.  
15 From there, what we are doing is as that conversation - as the conversations develop, the  
16 opportunity, we extend an invitation to companies then to visit Ireland, to come and have a look,  
17 meet some of these companies and so on. It's at that point that they maybe start to look for a bit  
18 more information as to what the locations are like, what they have to offer, and from there we  
19 would provide additional information, statistics around people that commute from the county,  
20 skill level, so on and so forth. We use some of the service companies to help us with that, the  
21 likes of recruitment companies in the county who can talk to how they're able to fill certain  
22 positions and so on. But it reaches a point where we put that to the client and then the client  
23 decides in the day they're going to give us or possibly the day and a half they're going to give us,  
24 what locations do they want to visit and we have to work with that. So there is a chance - to a  
25 point, we can certainly influence and provide and push that information and I see it as my role  
26 from the point of view of the Mid East, but equally each of the counties is to push what they  
27 have to offer, looking at what the company is doing, perhaps maybe looking where the company  
28 is currently located, not only in its home market for example, possibly the US. But also if it is  
29 located elsewhere in Europe, what type of locations has it got? If they're coming to us saying we  
30 would love to be in Dublin, we could say you are not in the capital city in the other countries and  
31 this is what these locations have to offer you. Similar to a strategy you have already taken. I  
32 think it's important to outline that and that's the role that I plan to work on and work through  
33 with the team here.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Andrew?

1 Mr VOGELAAR: Just a couple of other things. At the end of the day, we are very pragmatic  
2 about how we get an FDI in. There is been a lot of talk about land. Ultimately if there is a good  
3 site that is available and it's well serviced, and it doesn't matter whether IDA owns it or the  
4 Council owns it or if it's in private ownership, it's on the block, if it's attractive, we will show  
5 that. That's another thing we work with the Council on. There is an inquiry, be it a data centre,  
6 or heavy industry, it's not just restricted to IDA sites as well.

7  
8 There was a bit of talk as well then about, or a few questions about the amount of  
9 announcements and we work with companies all the time and that can be anything from lean  
10 programmes to training programmes to out and out expansions and helping companies transe - I  
11 mean the best example of transformation is probably Nipro in Bray which was an electronic  
12 company, now it's totally medical devices. We have done a lot of work with them over the last  
13 three or four years helping them make that transformation. We like it but it doesn't always  
14 happen as well, there are companies in Wicklow that are growing that for their own reasons have  
15 not made a public announcement. Okay some companies like to keep it very low key and keep  
16 the business to themselves, and so they are expanding and they would have received funding  
17 from us, but unfortunately, and again it is the company's choice, they will not make an  
18 announcement on occasion. But we try, but ultimately what you want to do is that the company  
19 is safe and secure and then they'll get new mandates.

20 Cllr FORTUNE: Chair, can I just mention one thing.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: The guys are under pressure to go. There is three people, really quick.

22 Cllr FORTUNE: I brought up the sponsored visits, which I don't think you really addressed. For  
23 example, Wicklow 136,000, 21 visits in five years. Louth has 121,000 people and 82 visits.  
24 Surely it's as easy for people to come from Dublin to Wicklow as it is for the same people to go  
25 to Leixlip or Citywest. I do appreciate you being here, but I think there is a serious disconnect  
26 between what our expectations are and what's going on and what you are telling us. I don't feel  
27 any better today with your visit than I did when you visited a long time ago.

28 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: I just want something confirmed. Brian alluded there to the fact that there  
29 was a decision made that Wicklow County Council land and the IDA land would work together.  
30 Now it's taken 30 years for the IDA land and I don't know how many times with the Wicklow  
31 County Council land. Are you saying you don't develop either without both together? What I  
32 am saying is - I need an answer to that.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's fine. And Cllr Kennedy.

34 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Did he understand what I said.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Kennedy.

2 Cllr KENNEDY: I won't hold you up too long, I would like some kind of clarification because  
3 there are 300 jobs being lost in my own town in MSD in Rathdrum. I asked for some  
4 reassurances there and I didn't get it. If you could address that.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: If you could come back there.

6 Mr VOGELAAR: On MSD in Rathdrum, I think I touched on it but I didn't want to name any  
7 particular company, that company, it's well known, is on the block, otherwise it will close. We  
8 will be optimistic of getting or certainly assisting MSD in finding someone to purchase that  
9 facility either as a going concern, or in a similar type of activity. There is no sure things, but it is  
10 an attractive facility. That particular business they're in, there is overcapacity globally, but  
11 having said that, facilities have come on stream in recent years and they have been taken over,  
12 like Hovione down in Cork was one I was working on two years. We get a lot of business  
13 through takeovers and what have you. If you take the county south from you, so for example  
14 down in Wexford, they took a company called CR Bard took over a company called Clear  
15 Stream and they've grown quite quickly from 90 people up to over 400 people. But that's an  
16 attractive facility. It's been heavily marketed at present and they don't want to make any more  
17 comment than that.

18  
19 And sorry, yeah the IDA land piece --

20 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: I just want clarification that you would be prepared to get FDI for  
21 Greystones without the Council land being sold as part of it? Brian referred to the fact that he  
22 has sent people off to say that the IDA land and Wicklow County Council land is going to be a  
23 co-operative approach as opposed to just the IDA land. I would be worried about that, I would  
24 be well dead before anything happens if it's going to be a joint venture.

25 MR SIMPSON: Was that conditional or it was that the two sites were going to be used...

26 Mr VOGELAAR: Is there a particular question?

27 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Brian said that the IDA land and the Wicklow County Council land were  
28 going to be put together as one.

29 CE: I never said that.

30 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: You said you sent people off.

31 CE: We were preparing a plan on how both sites could be developed to the optimum value from  
32 employment purpose for Wicklow.

33 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Both together as one?

34 CE: What I did confirm was that the what the IDA said it's not on the market at present, it was

1 on the market heretofore and they were looking to see what could be done with it into the future.  
2 The suggestion from our good selves is that this is a way that we can bring it, the future now and  
3 asking the members to come with us. If someone comes along and decides, I am sure the IDA  
4 will move along as they do, but at the moment it was an option for us to generate some activity  
5 on the site.

6 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Which site?

7 CE: Both sites.

8 Mr VOGELAAR: If two sites, anywhere in the country, if you have two sites adjoining each  
9 other, it doesn't matter whether it's County Council or IDA, if there is a solution there for an FDI  
10 client, we work with County Councils around the country. If - like in an ideal situation, if you  
11 had somebody in looking for 100 acres and it was IDA land and County Council land, great.

12 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: But it's not conditional?

13 Mr VOGELAAR: No.

14 Cllr FORTUNE: Can I have my questions answered?

15 Mr VOGELAAR: On site visits, yeah? I am taking last year.

16 Cllr FORTUNE: Very simple question, very quick, Wicklow has a population of 136, 21 visits  
17 in five years, Louth has 122,000, 82 visits in five years, why?

18 Mr VOGELAAR: I think I answered that question. Last year, population wise, the county of  
19 Wicklow, if you take the population, I think it's 14th, and for site visits last year it was joint 13th.  
20 I can't comment on the previous years, but I am saying it's going in the right direction.

21 Cllr FORTUNE: For the last five years, we would have had a bigger population than now over  
22 those five years, and why can't people come from Dublin to Wicklow as distinct from going to  
23 Dublin to Citywest.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Joe, it was your question.

25 Cllr BEHAN: I asked a specific question and I didn't really hear the answer, how many FDI jobs  
26 have been created in Wicklow in the last five years?

27 Mr VOGELAAR: I haven't got that Joe, we can dig that out and email it on to you.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Andrew and Conor thanks a million. To me this is the start of a really  
29 close relationship that we are going to have, the Economic Think Tank is positioning everything  
30 so that you will be able to sell this county backwards. Thanks a million for your time. Both of  
31 you. Members as you can see we have a huge agenda, so maybe we will just pick up the pace a  
32 little bit here.

33  
34 Item number four is to confirm and sign the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Wicklow

1 County Council held on 1st of February. Proposed by Cllr Winters, seconded by Cllr Mitchell.

2  
3 The fifth item to confirm and signs the minutes of the meeting held on Monday 7th March.  
4 Proposed by Irene, seconded by Pat Fitzgerald.

5  
6 Item number six to receive the end of year report from the Wicklow County Council Audit  
7 Committee. So we are going to be joined by Mary savage.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Who is going to start? Tom. Okay, Tom Gregan is going to kick us off.

9 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Chair, could we get, could we have questions from this morning at the  
10 next meeting if they're not going to be facilitated. We were told before lunch they would be  
11 facilitated. I just think it's too important just to fob off.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sure, absolutely.

13 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: Can that be definitely...

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Absolutely, I'll facilitate that, no problem. Tom.

15 MR GREGAN: Cathaoirleach, Chief Executive, Mr Doyle, representatives of the Wicklow  
16 County Council, management and staff, and members of the public and press, thank you for the  
17 opportunity to address the Council here today on the work of the Wicklow County Council Audit  
18 Committee for a 12 month period up to the 31st December, 2015.

19  
20 As local authorities are involved in a wide range of complex and diverse activities, it is vitally  
21 important to continually monitor and review the effectiveness of the Council's internal financial  
22 and operating controls. This is also necessary from a transparency and accountability  
23 perspective.

24  
25 The Wicklow County Council Audit Committee was initially established in 2007 under the  
26 Local Government (Business Improvement Districts) Act 2005, and was re-established after the  
27 May 2014 local elections. The membership of the Committee comprises: Mr Noel Geraghty on  
28 my right here is Vice-Chair and unfortunately we have lost one very, very, valid member and  
29 that was Deputy Pat Casey and I am delighted to see Deputy Casey here in the audience today to  
30 give us moral support. Thank you very much Pat. We appreciate your good work to us over the  
31 past number of years and we wish you well for the future. We also have Ms Mary Savage on my  
32 left and Councillor Edward Timmins and myself T Gregan.

33  
34 The Committee is supported and assisted by Miss Lower rain Lynch, Mr Derek quays and Mr

1 Tom Murphy and meets on a formal basis five to six times per annum. In addition to formal  
2 meetings, the Committee members provide an ongoing advice and support to the Internal Audit  
3 Unit and we are available at short notice to attend local meetings in relation to internal audit  
4 matters etcetera.

5  
6 Furthermore, during 2015, the Audit Committee arranged to meet with individual members of  
7 the management team. The purpose of these meetings was to provide the Committee with an  
8 opportunity to discuss the challenges facing each directorate and to inform the annual audit  
9 planning process. We felt that this was a worthwhile exercise. We hope it will be repeated and I  
10 hope that the management team felt likewise.

11  
12 The role of the Audit Committee is to advise the Council on financial reporting processes,  
13 internal controls, risk management and audit matters.

14  
15 The function of the Audit Committee includes: To foster the development and best practices in  
16 performance by the Local Authority of its internal audit function.

17  
18 To review the financial and budgetary reporting practices and procedures within the Local  
19 Authority.

20  
21 To review any audited financial statements, auditors reports or auditors special reports in relation  
22 to Local Authority and assess any actions taken within that authority by its Chief Executive in  
23 response to such a statement or report and report its findings to the authority.

24  
25 To review systems that are operated by the Local Authority for the management of risk.

26  
27 To assess and promote efficiency and value for money with respect to the Local Authority's  
28 performance of its functions.

29  
30 To review the findings and recommendations of the national oversight and audit commission and  
31 the response of the Chief Executive to those and to take further action as appropriate.

32  
33 Internal audit assignments for the previous 12 months and the assignments completed are: Road  
34 opening licenses, the objective of this review was to examine the process around the issuing of

1 road opening licenses. The scope of the review included the policies, procedures, and practices.  
2 The overall assessment of this review was satisfactory. A number of recommendations in  
3 relation to the application process, the maintenance of registers and the accounting treatment  
4 were made. These are being followed up with management.

5  
6 Ongoing assignments: The pre-letting repair cost. The aim of this review was to examine the  
7 process and costs associated with re-letting vacant properties. This review is currently ongoing  
8 and a report will be presented to the Committee at a forthcoming meeting.

9  
10 The review of compliance with the financial procedures manual: The purpose of this audit was  
11 to review the accounts payable and procurement manuals and to test operation non-compliance  
12 with the principles outlined therein. To test procedural compliance amongst a statistically  
13 significant and representative sample of recent invoices and report the findings. To recommend  
14 appropriate future actions to control and ensure compliance. The overall assessment of this  
15 review was satisfactory. In essence, this means that overall there is an adequate and effective  
16 system of governance, risk management and control. While there is some residual risk  
17 identified, this should not significantly impact on the achievement of objectives. Some  
18 improvements are required to enhance the adequacy or effectiveness of governance, risk  
19 management and control. This matter will be listed for further consideration at the forthcoming  
20 meeting at the annual Audit Committee.

21  
22 Review of VAT, this audit was concerned with the assessment of the procedures and practices  
23 employed in complying with statutory obligations for the collection and payment of VAT.  
24 Specifically to test the accuracy of the returns made and their timing. The record keeping,  
25 compliance with the law and to recommend improvements where appropriate. The principal  
26 objective of the review is to ensure that the process and procedures is in place in accordance with  
27 Revenue requirements and would be sufficiently robust to pass scrutiny at a Revenue VAT audit.  
28 Again the overall assessment on this review was again satisfactory. This matter will be listed for  
29 further consideration at a forthcoming meeting of the annual Audit Committee.

30  
31 Review of fixed assets: The objective of this review was to sample test the valuations reported  
32 in the Annual Financial Statement, having regard to the accounting code of practices and the  
33 regulatory framework applicable to local authorities. To review the depreciation policy and the  
34 accuracy of its implementation and to assess the requirement for or otherwise of a revaluation

1 reserve. The audit included a review of the processes and procedures in recording acquisitions  
2 and disposals while having regard to statutory requirements and best practice. To review the  
3 current procedure for registering legal title and to recommend improvements where appropriate.  
4

5 A number of issues have been identified and raised with management. Management responses  
6 to these issues will be considered by the Audit Committee at a forthcoming meeting.  
7

8 Work in progress: Work on a report on debt management is currently ongoing and it is  
9 anticipated that this will be completed by mid April. Low value purchase cards have recently  
10 been introduced. A report on the operation of low value purchase cards with particular emphasis  
11 on the controls in place, their operation and effectiveness is planned when sufficient data is  
12 available.  
13

14 Public spending code, the public spending code requires public bodies to establish an internal,  
15 independent, quality assurance procedure involving Annual Reporting on how organisations are  
16 meeting their public spending code obligations. The procurement and internal audit units  
17 collaborate in the preparation of Wicklow County Council's quality assurance report as part of its  
18 compliance the public spending code.  
19

20 Annual audit plan, work on the preparation of the annual audit plan is at an advanced stage. The  
21 plan will cover the period from March 2015 to February 2016. The plan will be finalised  
22 following consultation with the Chief Executive, Director of Services, heads of functions and the  
23 agreed assignments will reflect the need to achieve greater efficiencies and savings, etcetera.  
24 The list of assignments completed will be included in future reports to the Council.  
25

26 Another important heading is the procurement, this committee has on an ongoing basis,  
27 highlighted the importance of good procurement practices. Miss Fiona Flynn, procurement  
28 officer, has made a number of presentations to the Audit Committee on this issue and we note  
29 and welcome the significant progress made by the Council in this area. We will continue of  
30 course to highlight the importance of good procurement practices. I would like at this stage to  
31 congratulate Miss Flynn on her great work to date, a very important item.  
32

33 Meeting with the Local Government Auditor: The Audit Committee was provided with a copy  
34 of the 2014 audited financial statements. The auditor's report, by the Chief Executive. The

1 Audit Committee considered the statement, and the auditor's report, and deliberated on key  
2 issues outlined at a meeting on 17th December 2015.

3  
4 The auditor's opinion is that the Annual Financial Statement presents fairly, in accordance with  
5 the code of practice at this stage and accounting regulations, the financial position of the Council  
6 at 31st December 2014, and its income and expenditure for the year then ended.

7  
8 Mr Eamon Daly, Local Government Auditor who conducted the audit attended and provided  
9 further clarifications on the report findings and the overall audit opinion. The Committee's  
10 deliberations included a review of management, responses to audit findings and related matters.  
11 In addition, the Committee deliberations included discussions with the Chief Executive and the  
12 members of the management team and internal audit.

13  
14 The Committee wish to confirm that the report contents, management responses and follow up  
15 angsts outlined will inform the Audit Committee's work programme and specific audit reviews,  
16 which may be undertaken in the future.

17  
18 Support for Internal Audit Unit: The members will be aware that the organisation has suffered a  
19 greater than 20% reduction in staffing levels over recent years. It is recognised that the  
20 non-replacement of staff is due to public sector recruitment embargo. Therefore, and in order to  
21 maintain an effective level of services, it has been agreed to engage the services of a professional  
22 audit firm for a trial period. The firm will collaborate with the Internal Audit Unit, combining  
23 the in-house knowledge and the experience with the external objectiveness and professional  
24 standards. The Audit Committee strongly urges management to review overall staffing levels of  
25 the organisation and in particular to the Internal Audit Unit. And I would like to say  
26 Cathaoirleach, that the internal audit unit are doing a magnificent work, particularly under  
27 pressure from personnel. And I would appeal to the management to look at the staffing of that  
28 unit, very important unit.

29  
30 And in conclusion, we would like to place on record our thanks to the Internal Audit Unit for  
31 their support and assistance over the last 12 months. It's clear that Central Government is  
32 placing an even greater emphasis on the internal audit function in local authorities.

33  
34 We would like to assure the Council that the Committee will continue to play an active role in

1 improving the focus on value for money, promoting good accounting practices and ensuring  
2 better and more informed decision-making. We would like to place on record our appreciation  
3 to the members of the County Council, to the former Chief Executive Mr Eddie Sheedy and to  
4 the current Chief Executive Mr Bryan Doyle, as well as all the staff of the Internal Audit Unit.  
5 We would like to thank Mr Eamon Daly, our Local Government Auditor for his support and  
6 assistance. Cathaoirleach I am tempted to say a lot done, but more to do.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am glad you resisted that temptation. May I place on record my thanks  
8 to the committee members, every single one of you for your efforts and particularly the elected  
9 members that represented us during that period, which was obviously Councillor Pat Casey at  
10 the time, Deputy Casey now and Councillor Edward Timmins. Lots of people don't hear about  
11 the work that they actually do, but they do a huge amount of work in the background and as Pat  
12 Casey clearly stated this morning, it's really, really important work, done well, it has a huge  
13 impact, done badly, obviously it leaves us exposed as an organisation. So thank you very much  
14 Pat for your time on that, and Edward, your continued time on that.

15  
16 I don't know if we have a long list of people that will need an election for to choose your  
17 replacement Pat, but it would be lovely if everybody would come forward with proposals as to  
18 who will actually fulfil that position. Cllr Behan.

19 Cllr BEHAN: First of all I want to join with you in thanking the members of the Audit  
20 Committee, in particular those who are outside the Council framework as well as the two  
21 Councillors, or former Councillor in Deputy Casey's case. I am interested in a number of the  
22 jobs that you did during the year, was in part five, a review of fixed assets. And just to quote  
23 from what you have said there, "The audit included a view of the processes and procedures in  
24 recording acquisitions and disposals whilst having regards to statutory requirements and best  
25 practice and to review the current procedure for registering legal title and to recommend  
26 improvements where appropriate. A number of issues have been identified and raised with  
27 management. And management responses will be considered by the Committee at a  
28 forthcoming meeting", can we get more detail about what the issues were and maybe Mr Doyle  
29 might be able to indicate what his response was to the issues that were raised?

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Winters.

31 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathaoirleach, I also would like to thank each and every one of the  
32 members of the Audit Committee for the work they do. Just one thing in your letter that I didn't  
33 fully understand. What is the low value purchase card or what does it do? And last year, we had  
34 what were described as downward adjustments during the course of the year and I am just

1 wondering did we have any downward adjustments this year?

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Bourke.

3 Cllr BOURKE: Cathaoirleach, I would like to commend the Audit Committee again for their  
4 work this year. I think it's tremendous that we have such people of integrity on the Audit  
5 Committee keeping an eye on everything that's going on for us, and making sure that the  
6 management do the job that they're supposed to be doing and do it well.

7

8 Seeing Cathaoirleach as you have asked for proposals for nominations...

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Not quite yet.

10 Cllr BOURKE: I was going to nominate Irene Winters.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Were you going to propose yourself?

12 Cllr BOURKE: I was going to propose Irene Winters.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: I don't know who would like to take those questions. Lorraine.

14 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Of the fixed assets, the review was looking at how we manage our fixed  
15 assets both from the point of view of financial accounting for them, but also from the point of  
16 view of recording them and managing them. It looked through our policies and procedures for  
17 recording acquisitions and disposals, and evaluations and our policy for doing - not quite a stock  
18 take, but an analysis of where our assets were. There were a few recommendations, one was  
19 while we would be okay in how we account for our assets and value them and our depreciations  
20 in line of our code of practice, we need to record our assets, the more obvious one would be how  
21 we record our land and the appropriate title to everything. That would be something that would  
22 form part of a work programme started a number of years back where we set up a property  
23 registered committee, recording the properties that we do have, that work is ongoing. It fell by  
24 the wayside a little bit because we lost a couple of key members of staff and in addition we have  
25 lost another one or two in the last 12 months as well. That's been addressed by management in  
26 terms of we are now looking to recruit, to fill those positions and the Committee and the  
27 registration and the recording of property is beginning to get going again in 2016. There is still a  
28 lot of work to do on it and particularly with the Town Councils and bringing that in, we have to  
29 amalgamate it all in and get our protocols correct.

30

31 The other side is in terms of I suppose fairly standard in terms of bar-coding the smaller assets  
32 and making sure we have them accounted for, that we can do a test or an audit at any stage. We  
33 have a list of assets, be it machinery, that we can account for them all and reconcile on that  
34 part. The audit was very thorough and has identified a number of issues, but they're issues that

1 we are putting into our work programme for 2016 to address the deficiencies that are in it.

2 Cllr BEHAN: That gives me a little bit of information. But what deficiencies are we talking  
3 about? We have had a lot of controversy in the last year or two particularly about disposals of  
4 land, right now what I am taking from the finance officer is that we are not quite sure that we  
5 have proper title on a significant amount of property at the moment, maybe I am  
6 misunderstanding, but if I understand what Lorraine was saying is a lot of work was to be done,  
7 but it couldn't be done because staff were lost and that work is starting again now in 2016. That  
8 suggests to me that we are not sure about the title on some of the property that we have on our  
9 books, maybe I am wrong on that.

10 DIRECTOR LYNCH: Just to clarify that, we have processes and procedures in for registering  
11 title and for registering property. Because of a lot of legacy issues, we started a process, I think  
12 it was probably 2009, 2010 on clearing up any legacy issues and there has been a substantial  
13 amount of work done in that. That has been ongoing, but not to the same extent as we would  
14 like it to be for a couple of years due to the loss of staff, I think it was 2011.

15  
16 Do we have 100% title to all our property? No and that's why we are undertaking this process.  
17 But it is a long process in terms of - for some of the older legacy sites, but we are clearing it and  
18 making significant progress in it. That progress has been ramped up again in 2016 when we  
19 have the additional staff and they'll be assigned to it. But it's something that we are working on  
20 and addressing. It's not going to be solved in the next two months. It's just something we have  
21 identified as an issue. It has been identified and looked at by the auditors and we have identified  
22 it as something we are putting resources into as management in terms of trying to address the  
23 issue.

24 Cllr BEHAN: Finally Cathaoirleach, specifically it was mentioned acquisitions and disposals.  
25 What particularly were you talking about there?

26 DIRECTOR LYNCH: That more so is more so to do with how the information from the  
27 different service areas comes back into finance to record the acquisitions and disposals. It's not  
28 to do with land because the disposals come through the Council, but it's more the acquisitions  
29 and disposals of God; a ride on mower, or purchase of new vans and that, and that is something  
30 that we do, and have been doing on an annual basis up to now. It is a very manual process. We  
31 need to - and labour intensive process and we have - arising out of this audit, we are going  
32 putting in new procedures that we do it on a monthly or quarterly basis and improve the way we  
33 get that information from the sections and record it accurately. It's smaller items, but just to  
34 record it and make sure our fixed asset register has the proper information on it.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, and Irene's question.

2 DIRECTOR LYNCH: The low value purchase cards, they're like a credit card, but what it is, is  
3 they're not a credit card. There is a limit set on how much can be purchased on one transaction.  
4 They're confined to particular suppliers. The supplier has to sign up to it. The advantage of it is  
5 that for the likes of a lot of suppliers we would use, we are not getting invoices in now for 20  
6 euro or 30 euro, you are getting a monthly, and the suppliers are getting paid more promptly  
7 because they're getting paid on that basis.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Two other people showed. Edward, as you are a member of the  
9 committee.

10 Cllr TIMMINS: Briefly, I would thank the members for meeting with me, we met more times in  
11 the last year than we ever have. The brief of the Audit Committee is really, really broad. We  
12 meet six or seven times a year, then we meet the directors and find out what their issues are. We  
13 are doing a lot of good work, but like anything in any area of a public service or whatever, our  
14 resources are limited. At the moment it's Derek working on the internal audit and we have  
15 funding for external people to come in and do audits. I feel that's enough, we need a second  
16 person internally to cover more work.

17  
18 Secondly, within the Council itself, there are certain areas which there are weaknesses, which we  
19 have identified, which we have listed here, including what Cllr Behan refers to. We need more  
20 resources within the Council to focus on those areas, get those areas tidied up and unfortunately  
21 at this point and time, we don't have the full level of people needed to cover all the areas. We  
22 meet six or seven or eight times this year. We are not going to capture everything. We have  
23 limited resources, we capture a lot and we do a lot of work, but we are not all encompassing, we  
24 are not going to find everything, but we need a little bit more resources to do our work properly.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune.

26 Cllr FORTUNE: Again thanks to Noel and Tom and Mary for input into the overall committee.  
27 My comment is more an observation. I just think that we need to circulate this to members  
28 before the meeting. I think it's a bit discourteous to members to come in and listen to a report  
29 and then be expected maybe to ask questions, consider the questions which I can't do. So I just  
30 think that we need to think about how we treat the members. I think basically if when you look  
31 at something like this, I am not throwing any disparities, I am just saying we are being asked to  
32 rubber stamp something we haven't had a chance to think about.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much and thank you very much Derek Keys for your  
34 work on supporting that committee. Thank you. Next up is item number seven, to consider the

1 Wicklow Local Economic Community Plan, the LECP 2016 to 2022. Michael Nicholson joins  
2 us for that.

3 Director NICHOLSON: Thank you Cathaoirleach. Just before I go through the slide,  
4 presentation, just a couple of brief comments about the LECP and what it is. I am sure most of  
5 the members know by now, or at least you should know by now what it is. It's the Local  
6 Economic and Community Plan. The Chief Executive mentioned earlier this morning about  
7 Putting People First and the reform of Local Government and one of the changes was the  
8 abolition of the county development boards and replacing them by LCDCs. Local Community  
9 Development Committees. One of the task of the LCDC is to produce a Local Economic and  
10 Community Plan, which will last for six years. And really it's to facilitate the emerging local  
11 development role of Local Government. Which is getting, which is getting increasingly  
12 important every year. And to better align the work of local development companies with that of  
13 the Local Authority. It's a very important plan, and it's going to be probably the most important  
14 plan we will adopt in manys a year. A lot of the funding streams that come from the Department  
15 in the future will be linked to the LECP. If we haven't got an objective, we may not be able to  
16 apply for funding under a particular stream. So it's very, very, very important.

17  
18 So the first slide there is just where we are now. And we are now at the implementation stage.  
19 Hopefully the plan will be adopted this afternoon by yourselves. It's a reserve function of the  
20 Council to adopt the plan. It's been well over a year in its preparation. We have had wide scale  
21 public consultation. We have had hundreds of submissions. We have had stakeholder  
22 consultations. So a lot of work has gone into where we are today. It's basically as I said there,  
23 it's a new approach to community development, and a challenge for us, and in particular a  
24 challenge for the LCDC.

25  
26 I am not sure if you can read that, I have given you hand-outs, but we are at stage four, the  
27 middle box of stage four, which is the adoption of the LECP by the members of the Council,  
28 which is today hopefully. The next stage after today is to send the plan to the Minister for the  
29 Environment, or temporary Minister for the Environment, and then to get it printed and  
30 distributed and then stage five begins and stage five is the review and monitoring of the plan.  
31 And that's a very important part as well.

32  
33 Unlike other plans, this plan won't be done and put on the shelf. It has to be implemented,  
34 reviewed and monitored. It's going to be a very fluid document. It will be changing as other

1 reports come out that might affect it. For example, when the County Development Plan is  
2 adopted later in the year, it may cause us to review the LECP. The regional jobs action plan may  
3 cause us to review it. And any other national documents that come out may cause a review. The  
4 census that's taking place at the end of this month when the figures are announced, probably at  
5 this time next year, we will probably have to review the LECP to reflect the new census figures.  
6 These figures in this plan are based on the last census, which is 2011. It's already out of date  
7 until the new census is done, so that will have to be reviewed next year.

8  
9 The plan was carried out in two distinct elements. There was a local economic element and a  
10 community development element. The local economic element was to be prepared by the Local  
11 Authority through its SPC for economic development. And the community development  
12 element was done through the LCDC, and the CCSD directorate. And then to make sure that  
13 both elements were being done together and that we were both singing off the same hymn sheet,  
14 there was an advisory group with members from both groups to oversee that we were doing the  
15 same thing as we were required to do.

16  
17 That's I suppose a mission statement. This plan will position Wicklow as a county prepared to  
18 harness its many unique physical natural and human resources in order to improve the quality of  
19 life for all who live, work and visit the county as the county moves into the future with  
20 confidence. It ties in with a lot of what we have heard already this morning, when you look at  
21 the LEO presentation, and the Economic Think Tank, it's all tied in nicely and all comes in as  
22 part of the LECP. In the plan itself, we have a vision, which I'll come to later. We have ten high  
23 level goals. Five on the economic side and five on the community side. We have 20 objectives.  
24 13 on the economic and 7 on the community development and then 130 objectives or actions,  
25 108 on the economic side and 424 on the community development side. That's just a pictogram  
26 of where we are. High level goals and then there is economic elements and specific objectives,  
27 also the community element and some in the middle are shared objectives. And that just gives  
28 you a picture of what I have said earlier about the different goals.

29  
30 We referred to an awful lot of documentation when we were doing the plan. There was an EU  
31 policy context, national policy and the county level policy. As I mentioned, we had numerous  
32 public meetings, we had hundreds of written submissions and we had a large number of  
33 stakeholder workshops. And all of this is based on evidence. We commissioned various reports,  
34 in particular there was two very large reports commissioned by us. The Wicklow

1 socio-economic baseline report of 2015 was carried out by AIRO, the All Ireland Research  
2 Observatory in Maynooth University. We also did another big report carried out by Future  
3 Analytics. I have some facts and figures in later slides which show you what came, but they're  
4 two very big reports which I'll circulate to the members when I have the plan printed. I'll give  
5 you those reports as well. We also looked at the County Development Plan, because that was  
6 also in the process of being changed. And we also consulted 52 separate policy and strategy  
7 documents listed under appendix two in the programme.

8  
9 We also did a SWOT analysis which you will see on pages 15 and 16 of the plan which again  
10 showed up some very, very interesting ... (he trailed off here)

11  
12 Just a quick snapshot of some of the facts and figures and I'll have these in more detail. But  
13 21,050 people work outside the county. 18,500 of those are driving from Wicklow to various  
14 parts of Dublin. That was mentioned earlier at an earlier presentation. 27% of people living in  
15 rural areas. And they're just some of the stats that again I'll have more of them later.

16  
17 Now some highlights that we picked up from the various reports that we had done, these are just  
18 again based on 2011 census, so there is a Government health warning. These probably have  
19 changed since then and will definitely change when the results come out next year for the 2016  
20 census. 8.3% of the population increase between 2016 and 2011. No doubt that's gone up since  
21 then. 35% of the population under 35 years of age. 11% over 56 years of age. 27% of the  
22 population live in rural areas. 22% of the population live in Bray. 10% of the population are  
23 non Irish nationals. Most of those are British, a large portion are Polish and the next highest  
24 would be Lithuanian. The highest proportion of non-Irish national residents are in Arklow and  
25 Blessington.

26  
27 We recorded 721 traveller persons resident in the county. 20% of the households in the county  
28 are one person households. That may have some bearing on for example our future housing  
29 policy. 12% of households are lone parents. Average number of children per family in Wicklow  
30 is 1.4. That used to be two and a half, so there is less children per family now. You won't be  
31 surprised to see Wicklow is the third most expensive area in which to buy or rent a house. We  
32 have a very high rate of people getting rent supplement, almost 2,000, higher than most counties.  
33 13% of residents claim to have a disability of some sort, that could be mental or physical.

1 Interestingly enough 5,131 people provide regular unpaid personal help to a friend or family  
2 member, caring.

3  
4 The county's employment to population ratio is 42%. Over 21,000 Wicklow residents are  
5 commuting out of the county to work. 88% travelling to Dublin. The highest rates of  
6 commuting are Greystones, Delgany and Blessington. The lowest rates not surprisingly would  
7 be from Arklow.

8  
9 Some of the economic profile highlights. Of those who are working, 31% in the non-manual  
10 sector. 21% describe themselves as employers or managers. 16% are farmers and 8% as higher  
11 professionals. We have an awful lot of micro enterprises, less than ten people. 5,300 operating  
12 in the county. And 75% of these trade in Ireland only. We have a low number of IDA client  
13 companies, only 19, but they employ 2,342 employees. Arklow has the highest retail vacancy  
14 rate at almost 14%. Wicklow has the 11th highest rate of Gardaí in the country, but very low  
15 numbers of Garda Stations. County Wicklow has the fifth highest rate of the recorded crime of  
16 the 21 national Garda divisions. There may be a correlation between those last two figures.

17  
18 We developed a vision for the county. This is our vision, a county which provides a high quality  
19 of life and well-being for all; values of socially inclusive urban and rural communities; is driven  
20 by a dynamic and innovative economy; promotes and prioritises sustainable development and  
21 protects and enhances the county's .. (Reading)" We have ten high level goals. I won't read  
22 through the ten of them. They're there on the presentation and are contained in the document.  
23 You won't be surprised to see most of these goals set out there.

24  
25 We have 20 objectives, again I won't go through them Cathaoirleach. People can read them and  
26 any questions I'll deal with them after. Again they're contained in the document and contained  
27 across three slides I think. Yeah. And we have 132 actions which follow on from the objectives.

28  
29 As I mentioned earlier, we have to implement and monitor and review this plan. And section  
30 five of the plan in particular sets out how we are going to do this. It sets targets, timescales,  
31 performance indicators and progress milestones. The document is very fluid, and will be  
32 reviewed as often as required. There is no set time, we can literally review this every month if  
33 you wish. The regional spatial and economic strategies, for example, are all due later in the year.  
34 They'll probably lead us to review the LECP. The County Development Plan may require the

1 LECP plan to be reviewed. And I mentioned earlier the census figures will definitely require us  
2 to review it at least next year when those figures come out. I don't think they'll be out this year.

3  
4 We don't actually implement any of the actions. Each lead responsible agency identified and  
5 they're identified in section four, they'll undertake all the actions. So we set out the actions. And  
6 then they're carried out by the individual agencies. The LCDC oversees the implementation of  
7 it. On the community side and then the SPC for economic development oversee the economic  
8 issues. The advisory group will continue to meet, to make sure that the overall implementation  
9 of the LECP is carried out and we also monitor progress on the actions. And we do an annual  
10 plan. We are currently working on this year's plan. There will be a plan done each year for the  
11 six years, and they'll set out various targets for each of the years.

12  
13 And we set out details of each action, the basis, why we are doing it, the targets and timelines.  
14 The plan must comply with and be consistent with the County Development Plan, the core  
15 strategy, any regional planning guidelines, the regional spatial and economic strategy and any  
16 local area plans. It's not operational, it won't identify specific actions, but it will be up to those  
17 agencies responsible for their respective implementation to do each action. We will just identify  
18 the areas and expect each of the agencies on the LCDC and the agencies we have consulted to  
19 carry out the actions. For example if we identify a problem in the Health Service, the HSE will  
20 take the lead on that and the HSE rep on the LCDC will be charged with the responsibility of  
21 delivering that particular action.

22  
23 So at today's meeting Cathaoirleach, I would ask for the members to adopt the LECP with or  
24 without amendments and the amendments are restricted to those required to make it consistent  
25 with the regional economic and spatial strategy and the core strategy and objectives of the  
26 County Development Plan. I would ask the members if they would approve the LECP.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay thanks Michael and to everybody on the committee, I know a huge  
28 amount of work has been put in over the last year on that. Just before you do that, is it okay  
29 members, there is a number of items that I really want to get to, like the incremental purchase  
30 scheme and the like. Can we go for a 15 minute extension to 5.15, is that okay? Tom do you  
31 want to press your button.

32 DIRECTOR MURPHY: Thank you Cathaoirleach, I know that Cllr Mitchell is anxious to speak  
33 on item number 14, so I am not going to proceed with my slide presentation on this item, so I'll  
34 just make a few short comments. As Michael has said, there has been a huge amount of work

1 put into the preparation of this document. We started off with the socio-economic statement.  
2 We commissioned the preparation of a socio-economic profile. We held a number of public  
3 meetings around the county. We had many, many submissions. We consulted with many  
4 different parties and many different stakeholders. We also consulted with the Municipal  
5 Districts and the regional authority. Both the LCDC and the Economic Development and  
6 Enterprise Support SPC met on many occasions to discuss the development of the document.  
7 The advisory group, which was charged with merging the LEP, the Local Economic Plan and the  
8 Local Community Plan met on many occasions to oversee the process and I suppose a special  
9 mention to Deputy Casey for all his hard work in progressing this document.

10  
11 The final document from an economic perspective incorporates many of the actions contained in  
12 the County Wicklow Economic Think Tank action plan and in effect gives it statutory  
13 recognition. We are very happy to commend this document to you and recommend that it be  
14 adopted by the Council.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Snell.

16 Cllr SNELL: Thanks Cathaoirleach. I would like to start off by acknowledging the hard work  
17 that's gone into this, a huge amount of work, and the vision for Wicklow going forward is there  
18 for all to see. What I like about this document more so is the aims and objectives are there, but  
19 also an acknowledgment of the weaknesses have been identified. And this is not a document  
20 that's going to sit on a shelf for the next ten years, because of the implementation of this, and as  
21 the Director said, it's on a timescale. But when we actually look at some of the startling facts  
22 from this, it's - it doesn't make good reading and that's why I welcome that it's actually been  
23 highlighted in this and it shows that there is a willingness on behalf of everyone who had an  
24 input to face up to the facts. We all know there is disadvantaged areas within County Wicklow.  
25 There is marginalised communities out there. And while I did find it strange that they said we  
26 are the second most affluent Local Authority in the Mid East region, and then it was a little bit of  
27 a contradiction because out of the 82 Local Authority areas within our own county, 43 of them  
28 were below what they classed as deprivation and to me, I just feel that I wouldn't like to see us  
29 powering ahead with all the positive stuff. We must address the negative as well. And in that  
30 regard, I do believe that going forward, we have acknowledged that there is an action plan there  
31 in regards to jobs, but on the other side, we are acknowledging that youth unemployment is very  
32 high.

33  
34 We are acknowledging in this document that over 5,131 citizens are caring for loved ones within

1 their own homes without any financial reward. And I think that's - needs to be taken on board by  
2 the HSE in particular. Because it's a thankless job. And if they weren't there, for example, who  
3 would pick up the shortfall? The mind boggles. But as I say, I must acknowledge here today the  
4 hard work of everybody. And I can see Michael that it wasn't just the SPC, it wasn't just the  
5 Local Economic Community Plan committee putting in place; citizens within County Wicklow,  
6 business organisations, everyone had an input into this, and I would like to say in regards to Tom  
7 and your role with the County Campus, I believe that - and I welcome the section on this in  
8 regards to the Clermont and going forward, but I would love to see a situation where sometime  
9 we will end up with daytime courses, I think it will be a game changer for County Wicklow, and  
10 I welcome it in the report here and he acknowledges it's something we need to challenge.

11 Thanks Cathaoirleach.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Lawless.

13 Cllr LAWLESS: Michael, just thank you very much for that presentation, and I just kind of echo  
14 what Cllr Snell has said as well. It's a massive piece of work, and it is very welcomed here. And  
15 there is so much detail and again I am very pleased to see that we have listed our weaknesses and  
16 hopefully these are achievable to improve. But we also have so many positives within County  
17 Wicklow here and I am just so pleased to see that. And I am glad as well to hear, Michael, it's  
18 not going to sit on the shelf. We get so many documents passed through our nose here and work  
19 never seems to progress from it, so I am all about doing, which is great to see.

20  
21 Just in regard to the outcomes and measures as well, there is timescales, certain things being  
22 done on the first, second quarter, depending on the years as well. Just as a Council here, I am  
23 hoping that - I know working on different strategic work plans myself, it's not always achievable  
24 to get stuff done within a certain timeframe, but it would be great if we could achieve it in what  
25 we have put down here, but also that us as Councillors here would actually get updates on the  
26 progress, on the positives of this report. That's what we need to be highlighting is the positives  
27 of this report that, we can say we had 50 weaknesses, but we have now eliminated half of that in  
28 say 2017.

29  
30 And as - the other thing as well which a little alarm bell went off when you kind of said we won't  
31 be carrying them out, you said it's up to the other agencies, I went ah, what way are we going to  
32 monitor this? It's very hard when you have a massive plan like that to rely on other agencies. I  
33 would hope that Wicklow County Council would have some kind of regulation over this, and  
34 even in your outcomes and aims and objectives, Wicklow County Council is actually some of

1 the lead partnerships. So I presume Wicklow County Council is going to be doing some of the  
2 work as well. But overall, I think the report is excellent. It's very in-depth. And I welcome it.  
3 So thank you very much.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr McLoughlin.

5 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: I'll be very brief I promise. I just want to say first of all a huge thank you  
6 to everybody involved. I suppose we have to acknowledge the amount of public input that went  
7 into this, which normally doesn't happen so much, but it really was a tremendous piece of work  
8 and is going forward. I would like, sort of like what Cllr Lawless is saying, I would like to see  
9 some input back into the Council with regards to how we are doing on these quarterly  
10 timescales. So if that was possible, every quarter that we would have an update as to where we  
11 are in every one of these objectives, if that was possible. I am not so sure. But I am absolutely  
12 happy to endorse this. I do think there is a big body of work to do on the tourism section with  
13 regards to Co Wicklow Tourism and I think we need to look at, are we marketing ourselves as a  
14 tourist body properly? Should we be all the one entity? Is two entities working going forward?  
15 It's a big body of work. Not here to talk about it now. I would be happy to propose this and I  
16 think it's a fantastic piece of work and congratulations to all involved.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr McDonald.

18 Cllr McDONALD: I have a specific question for Michael, it's on page 29 and number five, it  
19 relates to Irish Water and the continued work of the County Council with Irish Water and  
20 bringing the treatment plant to completion in Arklow. I just notice that the timescale is given as  
21 the fourth quarter of 2018 and I was hoping that you might know something we don't, I know it's  
22 parochial, but I feel in a lot of the presentations we were given today, they're all positive from  
23 the five TDs, to the IDA, but it's a big game player in a lot of things that are either going to  
24 happen or not going to happen in the South of the county. When Irish Water came to give their  
25 presentation to us in Arklow, the earliest completion date we were given was optimistically  
26 2019. When I read this report today, I was sort of hoping that you might know something that  
27 we don't. And just the fact that it is such a big game player and everything else, building houses,  
28 businesses, work, IDA, that I think it's something that, it's great that it's happening, it's ongoing,  
29 but I think it's something we need to keep at the top of the agenda or we won't be able to fulfill a  
30 lot of those other agendas that we have had put before us today.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Annesley.

32 Cllr ANNESLEY: Thank you Cathaoirleach. Michael, I commend you on this great  
33 documentation. But it's very hurtful to see Arklow is the poor relation of Wicklow County  
34 Council again, especially when it's in black and white. So I look forward to reading through

1 your objectives and what we can do to help it move forward. And it is hurtful here, like I am on  
2 the Council now for the last two years and I am on the Town Council for the last five years and  
3 there is nothing I can do to prevent the shops on the main street closing, there is nothing I can do  
4 to prevent people travelling out of Arklow, and the statistics on the amount of people living in  
5 houses in Arklow is just, it's surreal to see it in front of you. Hopefully we can do something in  
6 the next two or three years that I am on the Council. Thank you.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Ruttle.

8 Cllr RUTTLE: Thank you Cathaoirleach, certainly as Chairman of the SPC, I compliment  
9 Michael and his staff. The head title on the front page is very aptly put together, from evidence  
10 to implementation. Without one you certainly won't get the other and a great deal of work has  
11 gone into this and leaving aside any other objectives, it's highly informative for any Councillor  
12 what is brought before us here with statistics and what exists within the county. We have a lot  
13 going for us, there are obviously as Cllr Annesley, my colleague, said problems in areas like the  
14 South and the South West as well. But there is a lot of good things going in Wicklow and we  
15 must identify those, maximise those and make every effort that all those other agencies that take  
16 on implementation do take them on and hopefully we can develop a monitoring system for that.  
17 Congratulations to everybody all round. It's good document. There is a lot there, and I have  
18 pleasure in seconding the proposal to adopt that. Thank you.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Walsh.

20 Cllr WALSH: I would like to thank Michael for the presentation, acknowledge all the hard work  
21 that went into the preparation of the document. It's a complete precise document and evidence  
22 based obviously. The good thing is it's a fluid document as the CEO pointed out and it can be  
23 reviewed and is subject to be reviewed. Again I want to acknowledge the role of the Advisory  
24 Committee there, the group that oversaw it and the fact that we held all these public meetings  
25 and consultation meetings with all the stakeholders and also the fact that the actions that came up  
26 through the CWETT have been taken on board and have fed into this document, which is very  
27 important.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Mary Kavanagh.

29 Cllr KAVANAGH: First of all I would just like to congratulate Michael and the LCDC for the  
30 very comprehensive plan, that is going to bring us to 2022. I read through it yesterday and I was  
31 very impressed with all the plans. It's a very positive document. If we can achieve anything like  
32 the objectives of the plans that are outlined in the County Development Plan, then we can  
33 improve the lot for all the stakeholders, and that has to have a very positive impact on all the  
34 citizens of the county. It should also lead to much more vibrant communities and this in turn

1 will improve the tourism in the area, the employment prospects, and especially in the small to  
2 medium enterprise sector. So congratulations on a very comprehensive document.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Michael, back to you if you could just hit your microphone  
4 there.

5 Director NICHOLSON: Just a couple, it is a very concise document Cathaoirleach, we kept it  
6 deliberately as short as we could on the basis that you wouldn't read it if it was any longer. So  
7 we kept it short. What we will be doing is we will be producing all the appendices and the  
8 submissions as separate documents, so you won't have to read all those unless you really want to  
9 read them. It's a relatively short document on that basis. It is action based and subject to  
10 change.

11  
12 We produced warts and all in the document. We didn't hold back. We found a problem, we  
13 listed it. For example Arklow, the Council is doing its best there, we have opened a five million  
14 euro library which will hopefully give a lift to the area. We have investigated in a water  
15 treatment plant, spent a lot of money on the bridge works and more roadworks in the area.  
16 Hopefully all that will give a lift to Arklow. We identify the problems and hopefully all the  
17 agencies will play their part. We are the lead agency in quite a lot of the actions, so we have to  
18 step up to the mark as well, and that's what we are doing with the investments we are doing in  
19 the various places.

20  
21 I don't have any inside information in regard to the water treatment plant. I wish I had. We put  
22 quarter 4, 2018, maybe that was optimistic. You are probably right, it's probably more 2019, but  
23 look it, we will see. Maybe things will move quicker than we hope, but I don't have any more  
24 information unfortunately. I have no problem bringing you back a regular report. I am not sure  
25 how often we can do it, but certainly we will have to report back through the LCDC to the full  
26 Council on progress, we can't just leave it sit. If we can manage it quarterly, we will certainly  
27 look at that.

28  
29 Strength and weaknesses, again warts and all, we listed our strengths, we also listed our  
30 weaknesses. We can turn our weaknesses into strengths by working on them. Hopefully as this  
31 document goes through the next six years, we will have an awful lot more strengths and an awful  
32 lot less weaknesses and that's the aim of the plan. We have set out very tight timescales and we  
33 will monitor ourselves on those and hopefully get those achieved. Yeah, I think, unless Tom  
34 wants to...

1 Director MURPHY: Just in relation to Cllr McDonald's query on the waste water treatment  
2 plant for Arklow, that was taken from the Irish Water website at the time, but that may have  
3 changed.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, members, is that agreed? Great. Okay, thank you. Okay, so we  
5 agreed at the start of the meeting to move item number 14 up to this point. So Cllr Mitchell  
6 would you like to talk into this.

7 Cllr MITCHELL: Thank you very much. This was referred to a couple of times at earlier  
8 meetings, and so at various stages, the Council has discussed whether we should get a benefit,  
9 we supply 89% of Dublin's water, and surprisingly to me, about 75% of Kildare's water also  
10 comes from Wicklow. And this - we discussed various benefits that should be in the past. But  
11 what probably wasn't obvious to most people was we were actually getting a benefit for actually  
12 153 years from the 1861 Dublin Waterworks Act, which specified that when the Vartry reservoir  
13 was put in that Bray and Greystones were to get free water, so the treated water was to be free,  
14 and in Greystones' case, the water, the distribution, the pipes, was to be paid for, and maintained  
15 by Dublin City Council in return for getting Wicklow's water. Now this saved this Council a  
16 substantial amount of money during that period. In - I remember certainly in the 1970s, it was  
17 Dublin City Council which somewhat reluctantly maintained the pipes in Greystones. So this  
18 legislation was repealed in 2007, because the EU said there was to be no free water, and as  
19 detailed in a daily reply by the Minister for Environment to Andrew Doyle, he detailed the  
20 history of this, he detailed the fact that there were negotiations ongoing with the management of  
21 this Council about how to make up for the fact that we weren't going to get free water. So the  
22 Local Government grant from 2008 was increased by 585,000 a year, and we were to pay Dublin  
23 City for the wholesale water, Wicklow's water which was treated at the expense of Dublin  
24 Corporation. And this Council also agreed to take over the water supply for Greystones as well,  
25 which was an extra cost. So roughly speaking since that time, every year, Dublin Council has  
26 charged this Council 910,000 for the water, depending on the amount of water that's used. This  
27 water is used in Bray and Greystones. I think Enniskerry now, some is used in Wicklow. And  
28 there may be other schemes being used. So in other words, the 2008 change roughly gave us  
29 about 40% of the benefit, which we were due under the 1861 Act, and it had been getting for  
30 over 100 years.

31  
32 I remember as a member this Council that the management told us they had negotiated this and I  
33 certainly got the impression that we were getting the whole benefit, but it actually was only  
34 about 40%. So however the Local Government fund subvention ended at the end of 2014. And

1 was replaced in 2015 by the Local Property Tax. And users now pay Irish Water directly for  
2 domestic and non-domestic water. So the community benefit which we had been getting is no  
3 longer coming to Wicklow County Council. And we don't get any benefit for supplying the  
4 water.

5  
6 Slightly surprisingly to me, nobody actually noticed this when the change occurred in 2015.  
7 And I know we have spoken about it a good bit at the Council. I have to say I would expect  
8 some Councillors, or the management to notice really that the benefit for supplying Dublin with  
9 the water had ended, but that - there were so many changes I think in Local Government finance  
10 that that wasn't the case.

11  
12 So that's the history. What about the future? And why should we get water? It's all very easy to  
13 say we should get money for the water, but in order to change a system, and to go back on the  
14 system, one has to justify it. Originally this money was paid by Dublin City Council and later  
15 then by the Dublin City Council's local fund grant was reduced and ours was increased by the  
16 amount I mentioned. So why should we get money?

17  
18 Well the mountains collect the water and they also inhibit development. Towns in Kildare have  
19 been able to expand a lot. If you think of towns like Kilcock or Kildare, etcetera, they have  
20 expanded a huge amount in that time, whereas West Wicklow has been restricted by water purity  
21 issues, Blessington in particular which came after the original Vartry scheme. The settlements  
22 around there, for example Ballymount, Lacken, Manor Kilbride and Hollywood are all restricted  
23 in expanding. Blessington is hemmed in by what is the largest artificial lake in Europe for  
24 Dublin's water supply and there are similar issues of a lesser scale in the Vartry area. So - and  
25 there are significant planning restrictions on people building houses, and certainly the disruption  
26 which was inherent in building the Blessington reservoir during the emergency wouldn't be  
27 acceptable in any way, even about 10% of it I think in the modern world.

28  
29 So the result of this water is that Dublin has 23 times more rates for nine times the population.  
30 Kildare has twice the amount of rates for a bit more population. And all this is obtained, this  
31 industry can only be there because there is Wicklow Water. So we have a higher costs of  
32 maintaining the sparsely populated mountain area. The roads, the fire services, Civil Defence,  
33 litter collection, all these items and a large number of them significant extra expense in  
34 maintaining the locally populated areas which have little industry.

1  
2 The commercial water rates on the Vartry water plant, which are worth about 100,000 a year,  
3 they were abolished last year, so we don't get the benefit of that. So Dublin and Kildare have  
4 both been able to get substantial rate income based on Wicklow's water. Also Dublin people  
5 benefit from the lakes and the mountains, which they're very welcome to do in my view, but we  
6 have the cost of supplying those services and they tend to spend much being day visitors. So  
7 there is a substantial amount of which costs this Council.

8  
9 In addition to that, and probably very relevant, at the moment now the Dublin area is short of  
10 water and if there is to be another industry, another large industry is to come here, such as Intel  
11 or a big pharma plant, which uses a lot of water, they'll have to get the Shannon water and there  
12 are major moves at the moment to get the water from the Shannon.

13  
14 However in that, Irish Water has offered on an outlying basis one cent per cubic metre of water  
15 supplied from the Shannon as a community benefit. And to my mind this opens up the  
16 possibility of getting what we have been excluded from and if we for instance were to get that  
17 amount, we would get an extra 1.7 million approximately a year in work. They also have a  
18 scheme whereby a certain percentage of the capital cost of a project goes to community benefit.  
19 So both of those things, we need to now make sure that this Council maintains the benefit, which  
20 we have had for 153 years and increases it in line with what they're proposing for the Shannon  
21 area. And I suppose we can all read the papers, and Irish Water is a subject very much up for  
22 debate at the moment. And it's absolutely essential that we get our oar in, in terms of the  
23 decision-making bodies in relation to this. This paper was submitted as required by 3rd  
24 February, but it needs to go to the senior political level. As it wasn't discussed at the last Council  
25 meeting, I asked Simon Harris, who was the most senior politician as a Junior Minister, would  
26 he send it to the Minister for Environment, which he has done. But I think that we as a Council  
27 need to send this to the Department, Minister for Environment, and also the Chief Executive of  
28 Irish Water. And maybe try and get some negotiations or something going between the  
29 management here and Irish Water, with political input.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's your proposal yes. Is there a seconder for that? The first one is  
31 always Irene, is that agreed? Agreed, great, thank you very much and well done Derek for doing  
32 that. Could I just move on to item number nine if that's okay with you, to consider the filling of  
33 the vacancy on the housing and corporate SPC arising from the election of former Cllr John  
34 Brady, is there a proposal?

1 Cllr LAWLESS: Thanks Cathaoirleach, we would like to propose Councillor Michael O'Connor  
2 for that position on the SPC.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Do we have a seconder for that? Mary McDonald, great. Any other  
4 nominations for that? No. Okay, is that agreed? Agreed, yeah.

5  
6 Ten, to consider the filling of the vacancies on the following committees arising from the  
7 election of the former Councillor Pat Casey, number one is the Chair of the economic  
8 development and enterprise support SPC. Cllr Vance.

9 Cllr VANCE: Could I propose Councillor Gerry Walsh, Chairman.

10 Cllr KENNEDY: I would second that.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Are there any other nominations for that role? Is that agreed? Agreed,  
12 yeah, congratulations Gerry. Next one up is the same replacement, Pat Casey, for the Local  
13 Community Development Committee.

14 Cllr VANCE: Could I propose Councillor Pat Kennedy please?

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Lawless.

16 Cllr LAWLESS: We would like to propose Michael O'Connor please for that.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Walsh.

18 Cllr WALSH: I'll second Cllr Vance's proposal.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: And do you have a seconder for that. Mary McDonald is seconding that.  
20 Any other nominations for that position? No. Okay, we have an election.

21 MS GALLAGHER: We have Pat Kennedy and Councillor Michael O'Connor. I am going to  
22 call the elected member's name out and if you would indicate whether you are voting for  
23 Councillor Pat Kennedy or Councillor Michael O'Connor. Okay.

24  
25 (A vote was taken)

26  
27 MS GALLAGHER: Okay that's 18 for Cllr Kennedy, 7 for Councillor O'Connor and seven not  
28 present.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, congratulations Cllr Kennedy. Eleven, to consider the nomination  
30 of an elected member in the Wicklow Local Sports Partnership in replacement for Councillor  
31 Daire Nolan. Do we have anyone?

32 SPEAKER: I propose Cllr Cullen.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Which Cullen? So Councillor Shay Cullen is proposed by Gerry Walsh  
34 and seconded by Cllr Vance.

1 Cllr VANCE: I'll second that.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Is there anybody else wishing to contest that? No? Is that agreed? Item  
3 number 12 to consider nominations to form a committee to review the process in which land  
4 disposals are conducted. Should we leave that off until the next day so we can get to the  
5 incremental purchase scheme. Is that agreed? I just want to, item number 15 there to note the  
6 Wicklow Joint Policing Committee Annual Report, is that noted and agreed, we have to send  
7 that forward. Thank you for that. Let's go for the incremental purchase scheme and then after  
8 that come to Brendan Thornhill's suspension. Okay.

9 DIRECTOR LANE: We circulated the incremental purchase scheme and a little bit of  
10 documentation on it. If there is any observations?

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Timmins.

12 Cllr TIMMINS: Just briefly, two questions, one is on the loan. You give conditions for  
13 someone qualifying for a loan to purchase the house. As you know there has been a loan  
14 scheme, I should put it in inverted commas in Wicklow for the past few years where people  
15 could buy houses, but in fact I think there might have been one or two take-ups per year.  
16 Because the criteria have been used as the same, if someone is refused by a bank then they go to  
17 the Council, the Council effectively use the same criteria as a bank and therefore refuse the  
18 application.

19  
20 Now here there are fairly defined conditions laid down as to who would qualify for a loan as in  
21 there is various bullet points and also income limits and there is also how long they've been  
22 employed and that, two years employment and stuff like that. So I would just like to ask first of  
23 all if someone adheres to those conditions, are they guaranteed to get a loan, because the  
24 problem for a lot of people is they're not actually capable of getting a loan from the bank and  
25 when they try from the Council they are refused as well. If I am reading it correctly, it seems to  
26 be well laid out and a good sort of guideline as regards qualification. So if you satisfy those  
27 criteria that are laid down in the document for qualifying, are you guaranteed to get a loan?  
28 That's the first question. Second question...

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Joe is just going to come in on this one.

30 DIRECTOR LANE: There is two different schemes, you have a situation where you can buy a  
31 house, but they may not get a loan, two separate things totally. They may not get a loan  
32 afterwards, what we are saying is under the scheme there may be conditions to buy the house,  
33 you may be in a situation where they may need a loan or a loan percentage. It's a totally  
34 different process.

1 Cllr TIMMINS: If they adhere to the points laid out there, will they be guaranteed to get a loan?

2 DIRECTOR LANE: No, there are two different things totally, I have answered your question,  
3 two different things totally, what this is, is that they can apply to purchase their house. They  
4 then have to apply for a loan, it may be that they have a totally different situation.

5 Cllr TIMMINS: They may be refused the loan subsequently?

6 DIRECTOR LANE: Correct.

7 Cllr TIMMINS: The second question then is if someone buys the house and let's say within the  
8 20 years or 25 years, let's say after ten years they pass away, will there be a claw back on their  
9 estate in line with -- is that deemed a disposal in other words?

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: We will come back to you on that. Pat Fitzgerald.

11 Cllr FITZGERALD: Just a few points, we were all contacted by the family in the Bray area  
12 there and there seems to be a situation there that it was being considered that tenants in  
13 four-bedroomed houses might have difficulty purchasing the house. So I would think in certain  
14 circumstances that there should be a condition there that if the numbers in the house warranted  
15 the sale of the house to the family, it should be agreed. Because I think it's quite unfair that if a  
16 family have five children, their need is a four-bedroom house, that they should be - that any  
17 scheme should preclude them from purchasing the house.

18  
19 The other one is Cllr Timmins has asked it there, has been raised by, that if there is one adult in  
20 the house with three children under 18 and unfortunately the adult passes away, does the  
21 outstanding charge remain on the house, because it would be quite substantial?

22  
23 The third issue is in this scheme, it's not like previous schemes where a person 25 years in a  
24 house, there was a scheme where you would get so many per cent off for every year you lived in  
25 the house, this scheme is if you are 25 years in the house, you have an income of 20,000, you  
26 pay the same, you get the house for the same as a person that's two years in the house, even  
27 though you have looked after the house for 25 years. I think that's an anomaly in the system.  
28 Previously they got the house. Now they weren't debarred from selling the houses either. But I  
29 think really it has to be looked at. And now it's part of the scheme. I think that's the  
30 Government's requirement. The one with the four-bedroom house is a different situation. That's  
31 to the individual councils can have their own policy on that one if I am correct.

32  
33 Just the other one, why are houses that are handed over to the Council by the developer, why are  
34 they being precluded from the scheme. We have a fair few of them in the Arklow area where

1 they were handed over as part of an agreement with the developer, they're social housing and the  
2 people are not being allowed to buy them. And we would have probably about maybe, probably  
3 between ten and 20 of them in Arklow Town. They're not going to get an opportunity because  
4 they were part of an agreement with the developer of a private housing scheme that they can't  
5 buy the houses. That's okay.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Behan.

7 Cllr BEHAN: Well Chairman I am happy to propose the scheme, but minus the three additions  
8 that Mr Lane has taken it on himself to add in. Because he has actually added in three policy  
9 matters himself. It was brought up at the SPC, I specifically questioned were these policy  
10 matters, I didn't get a straight answer. But it quite obviously is the case that policy issues and  
11 officials of this Council do not decide policy. The members decide it.

12  
13 In relation to each of them, there are issues that could well be argued that are very discriminatory  
14 against people in current Local Authority accommodation. The Government have seen fit to put  
15 a scheme there. Mr Lane has decided to add in three, he says he has good, whatever good estate  
16 management. There isn't even an effort to explain what the estate management -- how it's going  
17 to be improved. That's the level that we are expected to accept, that we just rubber stamp this,  
18 without even having the courtesy of an explanation as to why we should even consider it.

19  
20 Now I am not prepared to consider any of those amendments, but in particular the one on the  
21 four-bedrooms is completely a disgrace as far as I am concerned, because it's quite obvious  
22 discrimination against a family that actually is in a four bed house that was allocated by this  
23 Council for a particular reason, probably because of the size of the family and if a person is in a  
24 position to buy that house, it's completely wrong to say that we arbitrarily, or in fact the Director  
25 of Housing, to be more specific, has decided no, they can't buy it, that's not acceptable. I am  
26 prepared to propose the scheme Cathaoirleach, minus those three extra provisions put in by the  
27 officials.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Ruttle, Cllr Ruttle. Thank you. Cllr Lawless.

29 Cllr LAWLESS: Thanks Cathaoirleach. I mean I do welcome the scheme somewhat, and I  
30 know the response from the public just to actually have that information, people are quite excited  
31 that they can actually buy their own home. But again, like Cllr Behan and some of the other  
32 Councillors here, I do have some concerns about some of the conditions that are in it. I mean for  
33 example the water charges is a big issue. The feedback from the public was I want to buy my  
34 house, but why should I have to pay the water charges? I am the tenant, I am not the owner of

1 the house, I am not the seller. The attitude is do I have to pay my Sky bill and ESB bill before I  
2 can actually buy a house. To me this is completely wrong and I would like to get clarification on  
3 whether the Council can actually do that and put that in as part of a condition that people cannot  
4 buy a house if they haven't paid the water charges on a house that they don't own. Technically  
5 once that house is bought, the Council doesn't own it anymore, so therefore it's up to that person  
6 who buys that house whether they choose to pay their water charges or not. And we all know  
7 the water charges is a huge issue.

8  
9 I also have concerns about the conditions again on page 7 of the document in regards to that  
10 people are maybe being discriminated against and that's in the house in the private development  
11 transfer and house reserve by the Local Authority for particular reasons, and again like the other  
12 Councillors here, we were all contacted from that family with the four-bedroomed house, and to  
13 me that is discrimination and I would like a logical answer and reason why these conditions were  
14 actually put in place.

15  
16 Also again in - we are in the middle of a housing crisis, and we are actually selling off our  
17 Council stock. And are we going to replacing what we are selling off? Most people are tenants,  
18 you are in a rented home for life, unless you do something that upsets us. So most of these  
19 people are not going to be leaving their homes. But at the same time we are selling off stock, we  
20 are trying to buy stock because we have a housing crisis, but yet we are selling off stock. I  
21 would have concerns about that as well. I don't know whether I could actually really support this  
22 at the moment as it stands. I support the idea that tenants would actually have the opportunity to  
23 buy their homes, but there are conditions in this that I would not be happy with. Thank you.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Connor.

25 Cllr O'CONNOR: Thanks Cathaoirleach. I agree with most of Cllr Lawless' proposals.  
26 Especially in regard to the four-bedroom house that the lady was talking about in Bray. Also the  
27 provisions about houses in group schemes for travellers and houses in a private development  
28 transferred to the Local Authority by the developer. I think legal advice should be sought in  
29 regard to those, and to see in those provisions fall foul of the law. The houses are reserved for  
30 particular reasons, we would need to know what the reasons are that the Local Authority has in  
31 mind, they'd need to be spelt out.

32  
33 Finally, will an undertaking be given by the Council that if any funds are realised from this  
34 scheme that those funds be ring-fenced for the purpose of spending on housing in the future,

1 because clearly we have a dire housing situation in this county, something needs to be done  
2 about it and the position of this party is that housing stock should not be sold off while we have  
3 such a situation, though we do understand that people would like to buy their houses and stay in  
4 those local areas.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Snell.

6 Cllr SNELL: Thanks Cathaoirleach. Again thanks to Joe for bringing this to the members here  
7 today. It is something that may be needs to go back in front of the SPC as Cllr Behan has  
8 alluded to. Just to pick up on a number of points: In regards to the selling off of various housing  
9 types, such as the group housing scheme for travellers: Last year Wicklow County Council  
10 received €63,000 towards the traveller accommodation scheme. So if for example a number of  
11 houses were sold off, what would they replace them houses with on €63,000? It wouldn't buy a  
12 whole lot to be quite honest.

13  
14 In regards to the new housing development in private estates, again I believe they shouldn't be  
15 sold off. I believe they should be kept in the housing stock for Wicklow County Council. The  
16 issue around the four bedroom, I think it should be taken on a case-by-case basis. People are  
17 alluding to the email we all received last week, and it was quite comprehensive and it outlined a  
18 number of children and that. But we are all aware of situations where houses are under utilised  
19 and we know in particular in Bray for example, that the Local Authority couldn't purchase  
20 four-bedroom houses when they were trying to deal with the situation around Brighton Terrace.  
21 And the market value of four-bedroom houses in Bray is quite significant in comparison to the  
22 rest of the county. Now I do agree with that lady being allowed to purchase that house, based on  
23 her circumstances. And I think the Director and officials with the SPC would all agree with that.

24  
25 But there is a situation where there is four-bedroom houses and five-bedroom houses for that  
26 matter where children have grown up and moved off and I don't believe they should be sold off  
27 where they're under utilised, where we have a housing waiting list of 3,771 families waiting for  
28 housing. And a lot of them are waiting for bigger accommodation. And we are talking about  
29 selling them off to people who don't actually need a house of that type. If we take the model in  
30 other jurisdictions, they don't sell off housing at all. But this is what the Department and we  
31 must be quite clear here, we must be very honest with each other, that the Department has sent  
32 this document down here in regards to the Irish Water scenario. It wasn't implemented by  
33 Wicklow County Council or any member of this Local Authority. It was the Department  
34 included that. How legally binding that is, someone will have to test the water, excuse the pun!

1 But to say that it's implemented here by the Director or anyone else is just a nonsense. It's out  
2 there for the members. It's out there for them to have a look at, and if it needs to be referred  
3 back to the Housing SPC, well and good.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: To go on this very quickly. Cllr Bourke.

5 Cllr BOURKE: I don't agree with the previous speakers. I really think that we shouldn't delay  
6 with this scheme, because I have a number of people who have been anxiously waiting for three  
7 years now to make their house purchase from the Council. I believe we should go ahead and  
8 adopt this scheme and immediately set about a review of it to address the anomalies that some of  
9 the members are uncertain about. I think some people have waited long enough. To be fair to  
10 them, we should get this scheme out there and get the ball rolling on it so that applications can  
11 be accepted. I have people screaming at me why can't their applications be accepted and I think  
12 it's unfair to them.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Winters.

14 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathaoirleach. Just I actually would like to agree with Cllr Snell. I  
15 think that maybe the four-bedroomed houses could be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. But if  
16 somebody who is living in a four-bedroomed house say did want to purchase a house and they  
17 actually want to become homeowners, will we facilitate them with a transfer to a smaller house  
18 to allow that to happen if we deem them unsuitable to buy the four-bedroomed house that they're  
19 in? I just want to know if we can make provision for that.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Back to you Joe.

21 DIRECTOR LANE: First of all the regulations, there is a difference between the regulations and  
22 the last three things that Joe Behan said. The first ones, the first, from the document you are  
23 working off, the first five or six are specifically named in the regulations, we can sell and the  
24 part five, mobile homes are coming up there, they're all specifically named in the Act, I have no  
25 discretion there. So that answers some of the questions.

26  
27 We had in Bray last year, we had a particular difficulty, we were looking for four-beds. On top  
28 of that, we don't have that many four-beds in stock. They can produce a solution for a number of  
29 specific problems. This included larger families, families with specific requirements, medical  
30 needs requirements. Some of the four-beds we have started life as three-beds and have an  
31 extension downstairs and I think every member here has had dealings where that may provide  
32 solutions to specific problems, accessibility issues. Some of those houses are worth their weight  
33 in gold to us. We have also refused a few houses where we weren't able to extend, or we didn't  
34 extend and again the four-beds would provide a solution.

1  
2 However, if people are happy with the Director reviewing on a case-by-case basis between now  
3 and the end of the year subject to the following situations not occurring, okay, I have no problem  
4 looking at these on a case-by-case basis and understanding the views of the members. That  
5 would be - no identified need for a house type in the immediate location, not looking for to  
6 purchase in the immediate location, a residual number of similar houses. So if I have only one in  
7 Avoca and we are selling one in Avoca, I am in trouble. If I have 14 in Fassaroe, I have no  
8 trouble selling two or three of them. And no under occupancy. I would have no trouble in the  
9 meantime to get back to the SPC. I would be anxious to move this ahead as quickly as possible.  
10 We have 50 applications, I would like to go ahead with them as soon as possible.

11  
12 Water charges, it's in the Act or in the regulations, it's in it, there is no discretion there. There is  
13 a circular similar to one there, it's here somewhere, I'll just have to circulate it, but it has been  
14 circulated already. Again I'll circulate the Act regarding the other excluded ones. Part five was  
15 specifically mentioned. Has been transferred to a planning authority in accordance with  
16 agreement under Section 96 of the Planning and Development Act, that's part five, including a  
17 house provided on land. They're saying they were effectively provided for social housing and  
18 they should remain as social housing.

19  
20 If it's okay with everybody in the short-term, we move ahead, those particular ones, I'll review  
21 and I understand people are saying I'll review on an individual basis with the view that unless I  
22 really have to, I'll move them ahead. I'll approve them. But the scheme remains...

23 Cllr BEHAN: Look Cathaoirleach, that's not acceptable to me. We decide the policy here.  
24 Handing it over to the Director is more or less saying it will be up to the Director to decide, so  
25 we might as well pack up and go home. We have an opportunity to say - we are not including  
26 four-beds, it's completely flawed logic to say by the way we have a shortage of four-bedroomed  
27 houses in Bray, we have a family at the moment who are tenants in Bray in a four-bedroomed  
28 house. What the Director is saying we can't let that person buy that house back because we need  
29 a four-bedroom house for someone else. But sure they're going to stay in the house anyway,  
30 they have nowhere else to go. They want to live in the estate they're living in. It's completely  
31 false to suggest that by not allowing them to buy back their house, we are going to suddenly get  
32 another four-bedroomed house next door or down the road. It completely is nonsense with  
33 respect Joe.

1 Cathaoirleach, I want to see scheme progress as well, that's why I propose we proceed without  
2 these three additions. The Director hasn't mentioned the other two, he hasn't justified the other  
3 two points at all as to why he would exclude them and again that's a policy matter. Now if we  
4 can work out some way of allowing the scheme to proceed, but at the very minimum on the basis  
5 of four-bedroomed properties being included, I would be happy to go along with that  
6 Cathaoirleach, but anything else is effectively saying we are opting out of this process and I don't  
7 think that's good enough.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Lawless.

9 Cllr LAWLESS: Just something that my colleague Councillor O'Connor mentioned, just the sale  
10 of the actual houses, I am just wondering will that money be reallocated back into housing here?

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: And Cllr Fitzgerald.

12 Cllr FITZGERALD: I don't know when the next meeting of the SPC is there. Is it in May? I  
13 suggest we put that back to the SPC there to be quite honest with you. Maybe the Director is  
14 anxious to get it through at this stage.

15 DIRECTOR LANE: I would be anxious to get this through.

16 Cllr BEHAN: So am I.

17 DIRECTOR LANE: Can we just that I'll review in the short-term, it goes back to SPC. I  
18 undertake to review all four-beds that there is an appeal on short-term.

19 Cllr FITZGERALD: That's not a guarantee though...

20 DIRECTOR LANE: You don't seem to realise how much effort was put in in Bray last year to  
21 purchase houses where all the four-beds bar one. We can take out the four-beds, but the amount  
22 of effort that was put in by Anthony Franey and the staff there to purchase houses and now I am  
23 turning around and selling them again. It's the same with the three-beds. We are going up  
24 buying houses.

25 Cllr BEHAN: You are selling to your own tenants.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Vance.

27 Cllr VANCE: Maybe if we could adopt the scheme, as it is with the recommendation from the  
28 Director, but that we would review the scheme in January of next year.

29 DIRECTOR LANE: On top of that.

30 Cllr VANCE: Councillor just wait there a second. It can be reviewed and if it needs to be  
31 changed, I am a bit troubled by it as well, but there are other instances over the years that not  
32 every house in every Local Authority estate has been allowed to be bought, purchased over the  
33 years and most people that are on the Council are well aware of that. There has often been cases  
34 for older people and everything else, they couldn't buy them out for various reasons and other

1 people as well. All I am saying is to try and get movement on this, because I have people on to  
2 me that want to actually buy the houses, and I am just saying to try and expedite it, I am not  
3 saying this is perfect, but I am just saying give it a go until the end of the year, and allow the  
4 Director on a case-by-case basis, if there is not going to be too many four-bedroomed houses.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's a proposal to take it as is and review it at the end of the year. Is  
6 there a seconder for that?

7 Cllr BOURKE: That's my proposal.

8 Cllr SNELL: I would like it to come back a bit sooner before the end of the year.

9 Cllr VANCE: In six months.

10 Cllr BEHAN: I made a proposal from the very start. I am proposing that we adopt the scheme,  
11 take out the four-bed.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's an amendment to it as is. But Cllr Vance you are actually saying...

13 Cllr VANCE: I am proposing we come back in six months, accept it as it is, come back in six  
14 months and review it and if it needs to be changed...

15 Cllr BEHAN: That's very unfair on people in four-bedroomed houses that want to buy at the  
16 moment.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I just clarify...

18 Cllr SNELL: I am seconding that but just to clarify for Cllr Behan, that lady in the  
19 four-bedroom house, the Director has said that she can purchase that house.

20 Cllr BEHAN: He hasn't said it.

21 DIRECTOR LANE: I haven't looked at the circumstances of that one. But, look, that particular  
22 one I'll look at.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, seconded by John Snell, is that right John?

24 Cllr SNELL: That's correct Cathaoirleach.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: He seconded Cllr Vance's.

26 MS GALLAGHER: Cllr Bourke did that.

27 Cllr BOURKE: I don't mind. He is the Chairman of the SPC, let him do it.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Behan has an alternative proposal which is to take out the three items  
29 and you propose that. Is there a seconder for that? Okay. Cllr Lawless, you want to come in?

30 Director LANE: They're called internal capital receipts. Up to about eight years ago, they used  
31 to be percentage 60/40, one went to review, the other went to capital. It remains with the Local  
32 Authority but the Department of Environment who originally bought the houses sanction what  
33 we spend it on; so a couple of years ago, the big payment for all the Bray lands -- was Bray, the  
34 Old Court, the 40 per cent, 50% that was due to the Local Authority came out of the ICRS. So it

1 is for housing, but you would have to send a specific department for improving housing. You  
2 would get a 25% cut, the 25% comes out of ICRS. So it will be housing, but you mightn't have  
3 the full say on it.

4 Cllr LAWLESS: Actually Cathaoirleach that wasn't what I was coming back in on. As much as  
5 I welcome it to the tenants, I just can't support it today. I really can't on the principle because of  
6 the water charges, and on principle of other inconsistencies in it and I am sorry Joe, I know it's a  
7 massive piece of work.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune.

9 Cllr FORTUNE: I think it's a shame that we are having - I think fundamentally there is a - total  
10 agreement on the overall picture, but there are details need to be ironed out and I would get a feel  
11 from the meeting is that this should not be decided on today, it should be referred back to the  
12 SPC. Thrash out the couple of points and then bring it forward. Fundamentally everyone is in  
13 agreement with the principle of it, but there are issues here that if we push them through it is  
14 unfair.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Annesley.

16 Cllr ANNESLEY: Thank you Cathaoirleach, if this proposal goes through today, can this lady  
17 in Bray apply to buy this four-bedroomed house and will she be given an answer within the  
18 six-month period?

19 DIRECTOR LANE: I'll undertake to do that.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. So let's have a vote on it. Oh sorry, I take -- Councillor Pat  
21 Fitzgerald, did you make a proposal, or...

22 Cllr FITZGERALD: I'll leave it to Cllr Fortune first.

23 MS GALLAGHER: Is anybody seconding that?

24 Cllr LAWLESS: I'll second that.

25 MS GALLAGHER: And then we have another proposal from Councillor Pat Vance to adopt  
26 and review in six months if it needs to be changed. That was seconded by Cllr Bourke.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: That was the one that came first.

28 MS GALLAGHER: "As this is a new national scheme under the 2004 act, there is no  
29 requirement ...(Reading)... to give effect to the scheme or give concept for individual house sales  
30 under the scheme."

31 DIRECTOR LANE: Technically we can go ahead with it, I am getting your views, I can hear it  
32 quite clearly other than taking out all four-beds Joe, all I can do is say I'll review it on a  
33 case-by-case basis the houses that are there and I have undertaken to do that.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, but there is two proposals out there and I would like to take them

- 1 both. Can we take Cllr Vance's proposal first.
- 2 MS GALLAGHER: That we'll adopt the scheme but review it in six months if it needs to be  
3 changed.
- 4 Cllr FITZGERALD: Is six months not a long period of time?
- 5 Cllr VANCE: Ah no, I think it's reasonable.
- 6 Cllr FITZGERALD: How long will it take a person who makes an application to get a decision?
- 7 MS GALLAGHER: We are out of time if you don't vote quickly.
- 8 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's the one we have.
- 9
- 10 (A vote was taken)
- 11
- 12 MS GALLAGHER: That's 17 for, seven against.
- 13 CATHAOIRLEACH: And as that's gone through, I don't think the other vote makes sense, sure  
14 it doesn't.
- 15 DIRECTOR LANE: No. Can I just say I'll - because there are difficulties with it, we will  
16 advertise it, we will do some form of a launch. I won't circulate to the tenants because it will just  
17 cause confusion. We will have information on the website and I'll circulate it to elected  
18 members also just to circulate it out there with the forms.
- 19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Brendan Thornhill are, I said I would give you the opportunity to speak.
- 20 Cllr THORNHILL: Cathaoirleach, thank you. I made a proposal and the proposal is that this  
21 Council agrees to write to the Broadcasting Authority requesting the organisation to review the  
22 content of the Irish Pictorial Weekly programme, first broadcasted on RTÉ 1 on 30th of March  
23 2016. And rebroadcast on 2nd of April 2016. Given that part of the contents of the programme  
24 caused serious offence and against the spirit and principles of a true republic. And that's my  
25 proposal there.
- 26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Do you have a seconder for that? Seconded by Gerry O'Neill.
- 27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Does anybody want to talk into it?
- 28 Cllr THORNHILL: Okay Cathaoirleach. Cathaoirleach, and I know we are tight on time, I'll go  
29 into it quickly. Before I get into the motion, I would first of all outline the background. On  
30 Easter Sunday and Monday at least one million people populated Dublin to commemorate the  
31 Easter Rising and as everyone will agree, it was a seminal moment in Irish history, whether you  
32 agreed or disagreed with what happened. It was a great occasion bringing everyone together,  
33 promoting history, culture, etcetera. This was reflected in the great parade on Easter Sunday,  
34 where Ireland was able to showcase its peacekeeping forces to the world amongst other things.

1 And Easter Monday brought people together and also commemorated the history and culture of  
2 the country. To everyone RTÉ surpassed themselves with great concerts and documentaries.  
3 They were outstanding. But for me a lot of this good work was spoiled on March 30th and April  
4 2nd, the programme by the title of Irish Pictorial Weekly was broadcasted. This was advertised  
5 as a 1916 special. This was a satirical programme and to say the least I was not impressed. It set  
6 out to lampoon the leaders of 1916. Now I'll agree that satirical programmes and comedy can be  
7 subjective, but in this case, I think that it was needless, because we were doing something  
8 especially for people that had died on behalf of our country.  
9

10 Now for all this lampooning, I must say that one million people from wide and far were in  
11 Dublin to commemorate the event. Well for me, the worst was to come. Making a mockery of  
12 the 1916 leaders might be considered satirical comedy. Some people can accept it. But for me,  
13 it was the offensive language which came later. It was very distasteful. During the second half  
14 of the show, an elderly person acting in the course of a sketch came out with a phrase, "fuck the  
15 Brits murdering bastards." Later there was a mock parade and an actor came out with the phrase,  
16 "black pudding made from the blood of English pigs." I later heard another phrase from elderly  
17 actor, "bastarding fucks every last one of them". Later I saw and heard "murderers, murderers,  
18 fuck off." Next I heard another phrase "fuck Easter and up the IRA." To me the above language  
19 and phrases are inciteful, racist, provocative and unwarranted. I am mindful of the fact that  
20 some people had not seen the show. But I took notes and I have seen the show three times.  
21

22 Now that RTÉ is to have a new Director General, Miss Forbes, I wish her the best of luck in her  
23 new job but as RTÉ is maintained by the taxpayer, I believe programmes such as this should be  
24 monitored for content and especially when you think about the Peace Process, and in the future  
25 we are going to have a referendum over in England in relation to Brexit, I think we should be  
26 mindful of our neighbours. So that's my case. Thank you Cathaoirleach.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Grainne McLoughlin.

28 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: To be fair to Brendan, I actually saw the programme as well and I am of  
29 the age where I remember Hall's Pictorial Weekly, I don't admit that to many, but it's true. And  
30 the satire was absolutely brilliant and they took off the Councils absolutely brilliantly and it has  
31 to be said they haven't changed much either. I do agree with Brendan, the language in that show  
32 was absolutely, just not needed. It was just so stupid. The likes of Callan's Kicks can do it really  
33 well. You don't need that sort of language to be good as what you are doing. It just didn't do  
34 anything for the whole theme. Yeah, I think he has a point. I don't think we need to have that on

1 the national airwaves and as a Council we wouldn't be doing any harm by just saying it's not  
2 acceptable.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr O'Neill.

4 Cllr O'NEILL: Just a second - to second the motion there, I looked at ten minutes of it, and it  
5 was pathetic garbage. And overall, over the Easter period there was some great stuff there from  
6 RTÉ, but unfortunately that thing - there was no place for it at all. I also thought that TG4 did  
7 some great documentaries over the last 12 months actually, but this thing let us down in a big  
8 way. There was no need for it, with the amount of people in the country visiting, to see the carry  
9 on of that show was just pathetic and I have no problem in seconding the motion. I think it  
10 should come out from this Chamber and every other Chamber in the county that we condemn  
11 this type of stuff.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Ruttle.

13 Cllr RUTTLE: Yes Cathaoirleach, I only got to see a bit of this show, I had cows calving and I  
14 had help in the shed. Maybe I was lucky, but certainly it was the height of vulgarity. I have no  
15 time for this kind of carry on. As Cllr Thornhill says it was divisive, racist, attacking other  
16 people, where will it end up next? Didn't fit in at all with the event that was being  
17 commemorated. Very undignified. I have no problem at all in supporting the reporting of that  
18 kind of programme.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Tommy Annesley.

20 Cllr ANNESLEY: Yes I would like to commend Cllr Thornhill for his passion on this. As I said  
21 earlier on I did watch this and I just got up and I turned it off. Brendan, fair play to you for  
22 sitting through what I had to sit through for ten minutes and just Cllr McLoughlin, I don't believe  
23 you are old enough to remember that programme, but -

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Oh you charmer!

25 Cllr ANNESLEY: But well done Cllr Thornhill and thank you very much Cathaoirleach.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr O'Brien.

27 Cllr O'BRIEN: I well remember that time, that section 31 was well in vogue at that time, there  
28 would have been no danger of anybody saying anything about 1916 in that time because they  
29 weren't even permitted to speak. The second thing I would like to say is we are talking about  
30 homeless and stuff like that, I wonder how much that programme cost to make, I consider it a  
31 terrible waste of taxpayers' money, an insult, even in this Chamber today, we have the five TDs  
32 sat up there today, where there is a new spirit and movement I feel about this country. I feel a lot  
33 of the old politics and party stuff is going by the wayside and we have a lot of intelligent people  
34 sitting here prepared to work together in the interest of Ireland and I felt this was a cheap dig by

1 RTÉ after all the good work they'd done. It was Paddywhackery, the Irish came out worse than  
2 anything else. The old lady, an insult, in the wheelchair, she was an embassy. Then we had this  
3 greyhound race like that, as if we as a people had gone to the dogs and they named all the  
4 signatories, they were all partaking in this greyhound race. I am saying it's time the national  
5 broadcaster started behaving properly and spending the money that - I think sometimes the  
6 problem with lots of people in RTÉ, they've never experienced poverty there. There is some of  
7 them on massive salaries, big enough that you could nearly whack out the homeless problem in  
8 Bray and the county.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: I think we might be going off the point a bit. Cllr Behan.

10 Cllr BEHAN: Cathaoirleach, this obviously is the day for me to be in a minority of one. But I  
11 actually don't agree at all with writing to RTÉ, I think RTÉ first of all did a magnificent job on  
12 the nation's celebration of 1916. This was satire, it was a comedy programme. It was meant to  
13 be funny. Everybody's taste is different. If I could just finish. Everybody's taste is different  
14 when it comes to comedy. Okay. There are elements of it, using bad language to get laughs I  
15 think is the cheapest form of comedy and I think I would not have respect for any comedian who  
16 uses bad language to get laughs. But I have to say overall I think that programme and it's not the  
17 first programme, they've made programmes consistently for the last two or three years, have  
18 been excellent, in my view excellent comedy as well. Okay they're lampooning us, they're  
19 lampooning politicians, they're lampooning people in history. If anything after 100 years, we  
20 should be grown up and mature enough to be able to accept satire as part of life and  
21 entertainment. We don't all have to like it but I certainly wouldn't like to go back to the days of  
22 censorship. It was on at 9.30, after the cut-off for children to be looking at the television. There  
23 is a hell of a lot worse on the television before 9 o'clock, never mind after 9 o'clock or 9.30. I  
24 fundamentally disagree with sending a letter to anywhere except to congratulate RTÉ on the  
25 coverage they've given to the 1916 celebrations.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Winters.

27 Cllr WINTERS: I'll be very brief, I just want to congratulate Cllr Annesley on his clairvoyance,  
28 he is right I didn't watch that programme.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Vance.

30 Cllr VANCE: Briefly, I didn't see the programme, so I am not going to comment, but like what  
31 Cllr Behan was saying there, I have been very critical of RTÉ lots of times, but I have to say the  
32 coverage of the celebration of 1916 was absolutely outstanding. It was absolutely brilliant. And  
33 it was a credit to all the people that got involved in it as well. And other than that, I say nothing  
34 else because I didn't see that particular programme, but I thought the coverage was absolutely

1 brilliant, and I think we should recognise that and get a bit of balance into this as well.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Walsh.

3 Cllr WALSH: Just to finish up, I didn't see the programme purposely, I saw it advertised. I  
4 didn't watch it. I thought it was ill timed, in bad taste, considering the events that were covered  
5 so adequately and well by RTÉ on Easter Sunday morning and the days that followed, just a pity,  
6 but again I would agree with the previous speakers in relation to the correspondence from this  
7 Council through to RTÉ.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Snell.

9 Cllr SNELL: Thanks Cathaoirleach, unfortunately I did it see it because RTÉ thought it was so  
10 good that they played it twice. And having heard about the furore about it in the first place, I  
11 said you know, out of duty I better watch this and see what it's all about. I'll have a laugh the  
12 same as the next person and I do take on board what some Councillors have said that you know  
13 differences of opinion in regards to what you find as funny and not, but on this occasion, having  
14 watched through the whole programme, it was distasteful. And I think a letter would be no  
15 harm. Because if they feel that that's appropriate, at a time when the nation had so many visitors  
16 from all over the world, and if any of them were looking at that, it was just totally out of sync  
17 with what was going on around the country. I commend Brendan on his motion.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Kavanagh.

19 Cllr KAVANAGH: Thanks Cathaoirleach, just very quickly, I think we should probably write  
20 to RTÉ to congratulate them on the wonderful programming they did all week but just to  
21 mention that one programme let the station down very badly, and I think that would reflect  
22 everybody's views.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr McLoughlin.

24 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: I think we need to be very careful, the programmes we were all talking  
25 about that were so fantastic were run by RTÉ. This is an outside production company. Really  
26 what we need to put into the letter is the name of the company that produced the programme. It's  
27 not the same as the productions done by RTÉ. It was a programme that was on RTÉ. There is a  
28 difference.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Final word back to Brendan.

30 Cllr THORNHILL: Thank you Cathaoirleach. Here in this country, we have a Broadcasting Act  
31 and when things are being broadcast, it's supposed to be fair and balanced broadcast. And some  
32 of the previous people spoke and mentioned about comedy. Now I have no problem with satire  
33 either. I know politicians can be - can be, there can be comedy about people, Councillors and  
34 politicians, but when it comes to a situation where language is used and you have a situation

1 where I have mentioned it already, "fuck the Brits, murdering bastards."

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: It's okay Brendan, we got it first time around. I think you are enjoying  
3 that. Do you know that.

4 Cllr THORNHILL: This went out on the national airwaves and that's not comedy. I believe -  
5 and I think the Broadcasting Authority should be notified about it, and we as a Council should  
6 make a complaint about it to the Broadcasting Authority. Full stop. At the end of the day, we  
7 are the taxpayers. We are funding RTÉ and we deserve proper broadcast, and I feel  
8 committed...

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Brendan would you take on Mary's proposal there that we write and say  
10 congratulations on RTÉ's general coverage, but on this one incident would we think it was ill  
11 taste.

12 Cllr O'NEILL: First, you remember the first programme they did as well, that was an absolute  
13 disgrace.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Is this another programme?

15 MS GALLAGHER: I have a proposer and a seconder for a motion here, so first of all proposed  
16 by Cllr Thornhill. Seconded by Councillor Gerry O'Neill. And we are out of time since a  
17 quarter past five.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Do we top it by saying brilliant coverage RTÉ as Cllr Kavanagh as said  
19 and just add that in. Would that be agreed by everybody?

20 Cllr BEHAN: It's not agreed by anybody. I want a vote on this.

21 MS GALLAGHER: We are out of time. We started discussing the topic after a quarter past  
22 five. We are out of time.

23 Cllr THORNHILL: We were discussing the matter. All I can say is if this is the attitude of  
24 people around the table, I mean in 2016, one million people went into O'Connell Street,  
25 commemorating a great event and all of a sudden something happens, whatever, I mean as far as  
26 I am concerned it's disgraceful.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: We will put it on the agenda for the next meeting.

28 MS GALLAGHER: It's a Notice of Motion.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Members, protocol is on now, then it's Clermont at 6 o'clock.

30

31 The meeting concluded at 5.40pm

32

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