

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTAIN

**MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY BUILDINGS, WICKLOW ON MONDAY,
27TH NOVEMBER, 2017 AT 10.00 A.M.**

PRESENT:

COUNCILLOR E.TIMMINS, CATHAOIRLEACH, COUNCILLORS T. ANNESLEY, J. BEHAN, V. BLAKE, S. BOURKE, T. CULLEN, S. CULLEN, P. DORAN, G. DUNNE, P. FITZGERALD, T. FORTUNE, C. FOX, M. KAVANAGH P. KENNEDY, N. LAWLESS, S. MATTHEWS, M. MCDONALD, G. MCLOUGHLIN, D.MITCHELL, M. MURPHY, D. NOLAN, O. O'BRIEN, M. O'CONNOR, J. RUTTLE, J. RYAN, J. SNELL, B. THORNHILL, E. TIMMINS, P. VANCE, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.

APOLOGIES:

CLLR. G. O'NEILL

IN ATTENDANCE:

**MR. F. CURRAN, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
MR. S. QUIRKE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. M. NICHOLSON, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. D. O'BRIEN, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. J. LANE, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. T. MURPHY, DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. M. GEANEY, A/DIRECTOR OF SERVICES
MR. B. GLEESON, HEAD OF FINANCE
MS. B. McCARTHY, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT
MS. D. CROMIE, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT
MR. D. KEYES, ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
MS. L. GALLAGHER, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER/MEETINGS
ADMINISTRATOR
MS. B. KILKENNY, SENIOR ENGINEER
MR. L. FITZPATRICK, HEAD OF IS
MR. D. MARNANE, A/SENIOR ENGINEER
MR. M. FLYNN, SENIOR ENGINEER
MS. H. DENNEHY, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. J. CARROLL, SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER
MS. A. MINNION, ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
MS. L. EARLS, ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
MR. T. HUGHES, I.T. SUPPORT**

Local Authority Budget, 2018

Elected members were circulated with the Wicklow County Council Local Authority Budget 2018 with report of the Chief Executive dated 17 November, 2017 set out as follows:-

17 November 2017

TO: CATHAOIRLEACH AND MEMBERS OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Report of Chief Executive on the Draft Budget for Wicklow County Council for the local financial year ending 31st December, 2018

Dear Councillors,

The Draft Annual Budget and Chief Executive's Report for the financial year ended 31st December 2018 has been prepared in the statutory format, in accordance with S102 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended). The Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government has determined that the prescribed period for the holding of the Annual Budget Meeting for 2018 is 1st November to 30th November 2017. Accordingly the statutory Annual Budget Meeting is scheduled for 10am Monday November 27th. The Budget must be adopted within a 14 day period commencing on that date.

As you are aware, there are four main stages to the Local Authority budgetary process.

1. Agree the Budget Strategy and Local Property Tax variation.
2. Develop Draft Budgetary plans for the Municipal Districts.
3. Draft and Adopt the Statutory Annual Budget.
4. Prepare the Schedule of Municipal District Works and Service Delivery Plan.

The attached Draft Budget has been prepared in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group taking account of known financial parameters. This includes the decision of the Members to retain the LPT basic rate for 2018. This provides approximately €2.6m towards budgetary requirements which were identified in the report to the LPT Meeting of 25th September, 2017.

Local Property Tax

The Government agreed the Local Property Tax (LPT) Allocations for 2018 with 80% of LPT retained locally to fund vital public services. Wicklow is one of the twelve counties to be a net beneficiary under the national equalisation model, with the balance of 20% to be paid into an equalisation fund. This is to ensure no local authority is worse off when compared to the 2014 General Purpose Grants allocations.

Wicklow County Council's provisional LPT allocation (80%) for 2018 is €13,697,550. Wicklow will receive greater levels of LPT funding in 2018 compared to the level of funding we received from General Purpose Grants for 2014. Consequently the Council has been notified that part of this surplus will be used to fund services in the Housing area thereby replacing central government funding for these areas.

Details on this are provided in Table 1 below and also in Appendix 2 of the Draft Budget Tables.

TABLE 1 – 2018 Local Property Tax Allocation

	2018 (Fin 05 2017)
100% of LPT Income Allocations for Wicklow	17,121,937
20% to National Equalisation Fund	3,424,387

80% of LPT to be retained locally	13,697,550
Amount of surplus to self fund housing	1,725,915
Discretionary LPT Funding for Budget 2018	11,971,635

Municipal Districts

- *Municipal District Budget Process*

The General Municipal Allocations (GMA) were considered and adopted by the members at the recently held Municipal District budget meetings and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members for their valued input and feedback during these meetings, which I attended along with the Head of Finance. I have incorporated the adopted allocations of €214,500 into the overall Draft Budget. Moreover, an additional provision of €3,000 has been made to the Baltinglass Municipal District in respect of the recent friendship agreement between Carnew and Smiths Falls, Ontario, Canada. The total funding provided under the GMA for 2018 represents a 9% increase on 2017. However, this allocation forms only a part of the overall budget for the Municipal Districts and the Draft Annual Budget also includes significant funding streams under the Schedule of Municipal District Works.

Furthermore, an additional €300,000 is being provided in the 2018 budget for footpath improvements and it is also my intention to release extra funding to the Districts following the distribution by IPB of retained earnings, confirmation of which is expected shortly. I will communicate further details on this matter upon official notification of the amount due from IPB.

- *Schedule of Municipal Works*

Following the adoption of the annual budget, a schedule of proposed works of maintenance and repairs to be carried out in each municipal district shall be prepared for adoption by the members in early 2018. To this end, it is appropriate that each Municipal District review their 2017 operations to assess how they have delivered on the Service Plan with a view to agreeing the 2018 works early next year. In addition, it is my intention to introduce new procedures to allow for the members to have greater input into the decision making process for the local Roads Programme. The Director of Roads will issue further information on this development in the coming weeks.

Commercial Rates

Commercial Rates Income

Commercial Rate income is estimated at €27.6m for 2018.

Rates Harmonisation

Pre-unification there were four rating authorities in County Wicklow with four separate Annual Rates on Valuation (ARV). The Local Government Reform Act 2014 (S29) provides for the harmonisation of the ARVs. This means rate payers within the County transition to a single county rate.

The harmonised ARV of €72.04 was adopted by the Members in 2015. This rate has a materially neutral impact on the finances of Wicklow County Council. The rate means that over 55% of the rate base will see a reduction in their rates bill.

The Base Year Adjustment (BYA) provides for the phasing of increases and decreases on the annual rates. It is proposed to transition to the rate of €72.04 over 5 years. 2015 was Year 1 and in 2015 the BYA applied meant rate payers were charged the same in 2015 as in 2014. The first year of changes to the rate demands was 2016. The timeframe can be revisited and agreed each year at the Annual Budget Meeting.

The base year adjustment for the former four rating authorities is shown in Table C of the budgetary tables. The impact of this for ratepayers is:

- 19% will see an increase of 3% (Former Arklow and Wicklow TC)
- 26% will see an increase of 2% (Former Bray TC)
- 55% will see a decrease of 2% (Former Wicklow CC).

The Draft Budget also provides for the continuation of the Rates Incentive Scheme. The aim of the Scheme is to ease the burden on local ratepayers and address their concerns about the impact of commercial rates. It also helps mitigate the effect of the ARV harmonisation. To this end, a grant of 5%, of the current year bill up to a maximum of €250, will continue to be paid in 2018 as a financial support to occupiers of commercial properties with total annual commercial rates bills of up to and including €10,000, subject to certain terms and conditions.

In fact, approximately 90% of ratepayers currently operating in County Wicklow are small and medium businesses who are deemed eligible to apply under the incentive scheme (see Table 2).

Table 2 Wicklow Rate Base

Annual Rates Billing Band	No. of Properties	Rates Base Value	Commercial Rates Value	% of Rate properties	Average Annual Rate Demand per property
€			€	%	€
> to 1,000	949	7,914	569,387	2.05	600
1,000 – 2,000	954	19,571	1,396,228	5.03	1,464
2,000 – 3,000	641	22,085	1,577,411	5.69	2,461
3,000 – 5,000	672	36,626	2,624,641	9.46	3,906
5,000 – 10,000	509	49,783	3,548,286	12.79	6,971
10,000 – 15,000	142	24,483	1,748,386	6.30	12,313
15,000 – 20,000	75	18,241	1,296,951	4.67	17,293
20,000 – 30,000	67	22,924	1,642,636	5.92	24,517
30,000 – 50,000	60	31,323	2,252,451	8.12	37,541
50,000 – 100,000	38	36,924	2,625,536	9.46	69,093
100,000 – 500,000	24	64,900	4,692,590	16.91	195,525
> 500,000	3	50,684	3,771,396	13.59	1,257,132

Total	4,134	385,459	27,745,902	100	

Revaluation 2019

Revaluation 2019 is part of a national programme to modernise the rateable valuation of all commercial and industrial property in Ireland. The programme has already been completed in a number of Local Authorities and commenced in Wicklow in October 2017. As a first step the Valuation Office has written to all owners/occupiers of rated properties who will now be required to complete and return a Revaluation Information Form. The purpose of revaluation is to bring increased transparency and more equity to the local authority rating system. Following revaluation, there will be a much closer and uniform relationship between the current annual rental values of commercial properties and their commercial rates liability. The new valuations will be published in September 2019 will come into effect for rating purposes from 1st January 2020 onwards.

Rates on Vacant Premises

The LG Reform Act 2014 provides for a change to rating law in relation to the refund of rates on vacant properties. The elected members may by way of reserved function vary the levels of rates refund applicable to vacant property in individual local electoral areas. The Act does not make any change to the eligibility criteria for refunds.

The decision to alter the rate of refund should be taken at the Annual Budget Meeting. It is decided in respect of the entire local electoral area and will apply only for the year to which the budget relates. Each local electoral area can have a different rate of refund. In the absence of any decision the existing provisions re the rate of refund apply. The current rate of refund that applies in Wicklow is 100%.

In weighing the decision to reduce the rate of refund the following issues should be considered:

- Limited localised recovery of commercial sectors in Wicklow
- Additional cost-burden to landlords which may hinder tentative recovery
- Majority of property owners are actively engaged in seeking a tenant and it is not in their interest to leave property vacant
- Challenge and cost to the rates collection process.

Furthermore, new legislation is currently being drafted by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government regarding the governance of commercial rates. This legislation will provide for the introduction of a maximum level of vacancy to be determined by the Minister. The provision for the elected members to further reduce the level of refunds will continue, with any proceeds from further reductions added to the General Municipal Allocation.

In light of these factors, it is recommended that the rate of refund for eligible vacant properties remains at 100% for 2018.

Staffing

There is an ongoing need to recruit staff (indoor/outdoor) to maintain services and the increase in the pay provision for Budget 2018 should go some way to alleviate the pressure divisions/sections are currently operating under.

Budget 2018 provides for additional staff to support Wicklow County Council's Housing Capital Construction Programme. It also provides for the filling of vacancies that have developed over the last few years due to the public sector embargo and for additional staff that are required for the Fire Services, IT section and Libraries.

The additional cost of the Lansdowne Road Agreement to the budget in 2018 equates to approximately €1.1m of which we will receive only 80% compensation from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. As such, the balance of circa €0.2m will have to be met from our own resources.

2018 Draft Budget Overview

The Draft Budget presented to you provides for expenditure of €95,548,436 in 2018. However, as the Council is statutorily required to prepare a balanced budget, expenditure provisions must be matched by income.

The Draft Budget has therefore been prepared with the following income projections:

Divisional Income	€56.1M
Local Property Tax	€12.0M
Rates	€27.6M

Budget 2018 is set at a comparable level to last year so there is limited scope for any significant expenditure increases across divisions/services. In fact we are facing considerable challenges in 2018 due to increasing pension commitments arising from an ageing workforce in Wicklow County Council. . The issue of retirements is a serious concern as up to 248 council staff will be eligible to retire over the next 5 years. This is an area that will have to be addressed by Central Government in the future as it is neither feasible nor sustainable for Local Authorities to continue to cover these increasing costs from existing resources.

In addition, our main sources of income are restricted in that the Local Property Tax allocation remains at a similar level to 2017 as new properties cannot be added to the LPT allocation until the end of 2019. We are also in the middle of our rates harmonisation process which also runs until the end of 2019 and until its completion we cannot alter the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV).

Nevertheless, the identification of savings under certain expenditure lines has allowed for modest increases under a number of divisions/services including such items as:

- Increased funding of towards housing of the homeless.
- Budget provision for the commencement of a Housing Conditional Survey.
- Additional funding for central heating installation of our housing stock.
- Funding for Creative Ireland initiatives.
- Additional staffing provision for Libraries throughout the county.
- Implementation of a new car parking management contract throughout the county.
- Funding provision for new energy saving measures in order to meet our targets for public sector energy consumption.
- Commencement of works required to upgrade Wicklow and Arklow swimming pools to industry standard.
- Retention of the €900,000 Discretionary fund for Municipal Districts in respect of Public Realm works.

- Provision of a €300,000 allocation for local footpath upgrades/maintenance at Municipal District level.
- Increased funding for Arklow, Wicklow and Bray Harbours.
- Additional funding for Burial Ground Extensions.

This increased expenditure has been achieved despite the significant constraints imposed on us in 2018 arising from the impact of the Lansdowne Road Agreement, a decrease in our annual insurance dividend payment by circa 50%, and additional superannuation commitments as a result of an increase in the numbers eligible to retire in 2018.

Key changes in the Draft Annual Budget are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3 - Summary of Major Changes to Budget 2018		Cost / (Saving) €000s
Housing	Conditional Survey	43
	Central Heating Provision	25
	Land Loans	(203)
	Homeless Funding	160
	Homeless Income Recoupment Increase	(239)
Roads	Local Road Footpath Renewal	± 300
	Regional Road Winter Maintenance	(50)
	Public Lighting Allocation	(130)
Water	Irish Water reduction in income & expenditure	± 203
	Irish Water secondees	120
Planning,	Planning Income budget increased	37
	Enforcement Legal Fees	(25)
Community & Social Development Economic Development	Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)	(40)
	Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)	(90)
	Rates Incentive Scheme	100
Environment	Hazardous Waste Collection	(35)
	Tinahely Recycling Centre	(30)
	Recycling Mobile Collection	(48)
Recreation & Amenity	Creative Ireland	34
	TUS Ambassadors	20
	Library running costs/payroll increase	178
	Playground maintenance	15
	Library Book Fund	(50)
Ag, Ed, H&W	OPW Flood Relief Schemes Match Funding	50

	Wicklow, Arklow and Bray Harbour Net Cost increase	130
Miscellaneous	Lansdowne Road Agreement Compensation	(875)
	Rates Write off decrease	(500)
	NPPR increase	(50)
	IPB Dividend decrease	337
Other	Pension & lump sum /gratuity increase & superannuation income reduction	557
	Rates Income decrease	346

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In Conclusion

I prepared the 2018 Draft Annual Budget in consultation with the Corporate Policy Group and in accordance with the Local Government Act, 2001 (Section 133). This consultation with the Corporate Policy Group has been a key aspect of the budget preparation. At these meetings significant factors within the Budget were raised and discussed and I am grateful to the Members of the Corporate Policy Group and the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Edward Timmins for their constructive engagement with the budgetary process.

As I have stated in the LPT Report in September, Wicklow's income from the general purpose grant did not compare favourably to other comparable local authorities. Our general purpose grant allocation for 2014 is now been used as our LPT baseline going forward. Comparing the 2017 annual budget figures, Wicklow spends less per person than the national average across all services. We have previously made submissions to central government to address this under-resourcing and I intend to raise the matter again with Department officials in the near future. However, we need to continually pursue this issue at both official level and also through our elected representatives.

The 2018 Draft Budget before you today is a plan of action to best deal with the reformed environment of local government. It allows the Council to build on the continued process of recovery and to work to deliver growth in our community and economy. While significant challenges remain in dealing with the economic realities facing the Council, we can cautiously look to build on the emerging economic growth nationally and translate this to increased growth across the County. The delivery of social and affordable housing continues to be a priority. Moreover we will continue to seek out alternative sources of funding and work in collaboration with the relevant State Agencies, Local Government, Business Community and the Community and Voluntary Sector to maximise all available opportunities to address the local needs and support the economic and social development of County Wicklow.

The draft budget has been prepared in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions, and this report, with the accompanying detailed financial tables, sets out the position for consideration by the Council.

There is considerable detail contained in the Draft Budget Report to assist the Members in their deliberations. Please take the opportunity to discuss aspects of the Draft Budget with each of the Heads of Function.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of the Council for their support and look forward to continuing to work with the Elected Members to deliver high quality services for the people of Wicklow.

The Draft Budget preparation required significant input from staff across the Council's Divisions. I thank all the Directors and their staff who have contributed to and supported that process. Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the Head of Finance, Brian Gleeson and the staff in the Finance Section for their hard work in preparing and framing this Budget.

I recommend the Budget to you for adoption.

FRANK CURRAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

At the outset of the meeting the Chief Executive outlined the four stages to the budget process i.e. (1) The LPT process, (2) The General MD Allocation, (3) The Annual Budget and (4) The Municipal District Works. He advised that the LPT having not being reduced provides €2.568m, the revenue budget for 2018 is €95,548, 436 an increase of €336,000 on 2017. He advised in relation to the budgetary challenges for 2018, the difficult task in identifying funding and providing a balanced budget and the additional funding provided for Libraries, The creative Ireland Programme, Arklow and Wicklow Swimming Pool, footpath upgrades and Wicklow and Bray Harbour, among others. He outlined the discretionary funding available for Municipal Districts, €2.1m and an additional spend of €20m each year on housing repairs and maintenance, local roads programme, maintenance of parks and playgrounds.

Brian Gleeson, Head of Finance made a presentation to the elected members covering the following areas:-

- 2018 Budgetary Process
- 2018 Budget meeting decisions
- Planned Expenditure 2018
- 2018 Income sources
- 2018 Local Property Tax Allocation
- LPT Impact on 2018 budget
- Budget Challenges for 2018
- New/Additional Expenditure in 2018
- Expenditure/Income Changes to 2018 budget
- Funding to the Municipal Districts in 2018
- Budget review by division
- Commercial Rates – BYA for 2018
- Commercial Rates – Vacancy Relief Rate

Mr. B. Gleeson, Head of Finance outlined the decisions to be made at the meeting:-

- (1) To Adopt Statutory Annual Budget 2018, with or without amendment
- (2) Determination of Base Year Adjustments – Commercial Rates
- (3) Rates Relief on Vacant premises – Commercial rates

The Head of finance advised that they would proceed through the budget by division commencing with Housing and Building, and Road Transportation and safety. He outlined the draft expenditure and income for both divisions as follows:

Housing and Building Division A- Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2018 of €20,701,027 and a total draft income of €22,250,380 which is detailed on pages 73, and 81-83 in the draft budget book.

Road Transport and Safety Division B – Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2018 of €21,439,714 and a total draft income of €10,980,341 which is detailed on pages 73, and 84-86 in the draft budget book.

The following matters were raised:-

- Proposed cutback in the environmental area will have a significant effect on the rural areas, particular in West Wicklow. Reference made to hazardous waste and the farming community
- Reference made to the status of the Tinahely Recycling Centre and the view expressed that the matter can be rectified and an alternative location found
- The mobile collection service in the Blessington area must be retained.
- Query as to why the members need to agree the general municipal allocations prior to agreeing the budget?
- What areas can the IPB finance of €700,000 be used for
- Proposed centralisation of the hazardous waste collection to Bray considered unfair to the rest of the County
- 2017 spend on the Library Book Fund and proposed capitalisation of expenditure to 2018
- View expressed that Council employees should be engaged to carry out the duties of the traffic wardens throughout the county

Mr. J. Lane, Director of Services, Housing and Corporate Estate responded to issues raised by Elected Members around the areas of:

- The acquisition of land prior to zoning, for the provision of Social Housing
- Changes to the Tenant purchase scheme
- Number of houses without central heating
- Estate management and estate maintenance
- Mobility grants and DPGs

Mr. S. Quirke, Director of Services, Transportation and Infrastructure Department presented to the members as follows:-

- There is €21.5m in the roads budget largely unchanged from the previous year
- Winter maintenance is reduced by €50,000 based on the estimated out-turn for the current year

- New procedure for the elected members input into the roads programme for 2018 relating to the restoration improvement works undertaken and the restoration maintenance.
- Grant aid of €310,000 received under the Local Improvement Scheme
- Proposal to go to tender for new parking regime. Traffic wardens employed by the Local Authority to be retained in Bray, no proposals to have employee traffic wardens in the rest of the county

Elected members made the following contributions, expressed the following views which were responded to.

- Reference made to Valentine's Lane, Blackmoor Donard and request that this lane be included in the Local Improvements Scheme
- View expressed that the traffic warden service be undertaken inhouse throughout the county.
- Update requested on the traffic study to be carried out by TII in relation to the N11/M11 Bray.
- Concern expressed in relation to the suspension status of the N81 Tallaght to Hollywood Crossroad Improvements scheme and clarity sought in relation to this issue.
- Query in relation to the €300,000 from the development contributions scheme in relation to footpaths, does it have to be new footpaths or can the money be used to upgrade existing footpaths.
- Request for funding to be provide to prepare a design statement for the junction at Avoca-Rathdrum road described as dangerous
- Request for a breakdown of the finance provided to fund school wardens of €176,000
- Update requested on the status of the road realignment on the R755 at Calary.
- The importance of footpath accessibility highlighted.

The Head of finance outlined the draft income and expenditure in relation to Division C Water Services and Division E Environmental Services as follows:-

Water Services Division C– Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2018 of €7,422,226 and a total draft income of €6,794,424 which is detailed on pages 73 and 87-88 in the draft budget book.

Environmental Services Division E– Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2018 of €12,339,928 and a total draft income of €2,049,735 which is detailed on pages 75 and 92-94 in the draft budget book.

Elected members raised the following issues which were responded to by Mr. M. Geaney, A/Director of Services:-

- Explanation requested as to why the hazardous waste collection is being discontinued throughout the County with the exception of Bray
- What is the current position in relation to the decision made last year to accept Dublin waste into Ballynagran.
- Call for the issue of the mobile collection service in Blessington to be resolved as well as the continuation of a recycling facility for Tinahely.
- What is the current position in relation to Whitestown and when is the programme of works expected to commence

- It is important to keep recycling centres open in rural areas to prevent illegal dumping and flytipping.
- Explanation requested on the income received from Irish Water in 2017 and the money expended on water quality management.
- Breakdown requested in relation to the €200,000 increase in expenditure for the Fire Service
- Update on the status of the proposed new fire station for Blessington.
- Update on the proposal to set up a working group to deal with the remediation of the Whitestown site.

Having regard to the issues raised in relation to proposed cutbacks to recycling service and mobile collection services proposed in the budget the Cathaoirleach proposed that the meeting be adjourned for lunch at 12.30 p.m., and that the CPG meet at 1.30 p.m. to discuss the issues raised, and that the meeting convene at 2.00 p.m. This was unanimously agreed.

The Chief Executive in response to the queries raised in relation to the remediation of Whitestown advised that the first stage of the process will be to engage a consultant to prepare a remediation plan and the Council will be advertising for consultants in the coming weeks. The Council has been in communication with the Department and the EPA but the full impact will not be known until the remediation plan is complete. An Environmental Impact Statement will also be prepared and when all of the information is clear, including cost implications and plans, the Council will revert to the elected members.

The meeting reconvened at 2.00 p.m. The Cathaoirleach advised that the CPG met briefly to deal with the issues of the proposed cuts to recycling services and that consensus has been reached to retain the three services, i.e. a recycling service for Tinahely, the mobile unit in Blessington and the hazardous waste collection for the County. The budget of €100,000 required would be taken from the road budget and hopefully through mitigated plans and through different mechanisms there will be little or no cuts to the road budget. This was noted and welcomed by the members.

The Head of finance outlined the draft income and expenditure in relation to Division D, Development Management as follows in respect there were no issues raised.

Development Management Division D – Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2018 of €11,234,651 and a total draft income of €5,037,822 which is detailed on pages 74 and 89-91 in the draft budget book.

The Head of finance outlined the draft income and expenditure in relation to Divisions F, G and H as follows:-

Division F Recreational and Amenity – Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2018 is €7,908,775 and a total income of €628,572 which is detailed on pages 75 and 95-96 in the draft budget book’

Agriculture, Education Health and Welfare Division G – Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2018 of €1,731,897 and a total income of €763,237 which is detailed on pages 76 and 97-99 in the draft budget book.

Miscellaneous services Division H– Total Draft Expenditure estimate for 2018 of €12,770,216 and a total draft income of €7,591,856 which is detailed on pages 76 and 100-102 of the draft budget book.

In response to a query in relation to the budget being provided for Wicklow County Tourism Ltd, the Head of Finance advised that the budget of €80,000 provided in 2017 was being retained for 2018. Mr. T. Murphy further clarified that representatives of Wicklow County Tourism Ltd. had attended a meeting of Wicklow County Council in October, outlining the work undertaken as part of Ireland's Ancient East and seeking an increase of €20,000 on the 2017 budget but that the Head of Finance had indicated that it was only possible to retain the 2017 budget without increase. In response to the query in relation to monies due to Wicklow County Council by Starwood, Mr. Murphy advised that the sum of €778,000 has been paid to the Council and arrangements are being made to have the deed of variation executed. It was noted that this money has not been included in the budget as it was agreed that the money be directed to Bray Municipal District

Mr. Michael Nicholson, DOS, Community Cultural and Social Development responded to queries raised in relation to the suggestion that the allocation of community grants be dealt with at municipal district level and the underspend in the library book fund which was primarily as a result of the requirement for the 31 local authorities to purchase books from the one supplier. He advised that the underspend in 2017 has been capitalised and will be available in 2018. In relation to the underspend on LCDC and LECF projects Mr. Nicholson advised that this was primarily a staffing resource issue and that the Department in recognising this has allocated each County Council two additional staff members.

Cllr. Shay Cullen proposed that the Council allocate €10,000 to the Garden County GAA Football academy referring to the Leinster Initiative underway where local authorities are supporting these academies for the benefit of children's coaching throughout the County. He proposed that this be financed by a contribution of €2,000 from each municipal district. This was seconded by Cllr. T. Fortune. Cllr. J. Snell in supporting the initiative proposed that the Head of Finance identify the €10,000 from within the recreation and amenity funding such as the community grants scheme which was seconded by Cllr. G. McLoughlin. Mr. B. Gleeson explained how the community grants scheme allocation was made up and that his preferred option would be to spread it across the county by MD budget as proposed by Cllr. S. Cullen. Cllr. J. Snell then proposed that it be sourced from F0301, Parks Pitches and open spaces a budget of €1.2m which was seconded by Cllr. M. Kavanagh.

Following the discussion Mr. M. Nicholson, DOS, advised that the €10,000 could be sourced from the 2017 CCSD Budget. The DOS also responded a query raised in relation to the Council's activity in 2018 Chinese celebration and that it would involve lighting and flagging certain buildings in the County.

Discussion on the draft budget as circulated concluded.

TO ADOPT STATUTORY ANNUAL BUDGET 2018, WITH OR WITHOUT AMENDMENT

It was proposed by Cllr. E. Timmins, seconded by Cllr. P. Fitzgerald and following a roll call the statutory annual budget as circulated with the amendment agreed at CPG meeting in relation to the recycling service Tinahely, hazardous waste collection and

mobile collection service, was put to a vote and following a roll call was passed by a margin of 24 votes for, 3 against and 5 not present viz

FOR (24)	CLLRS. T. ANNESLEY, V. BLAKE, S. BOURKE, S. CULLEN, G. DUNNE, P. FITZGERALD, C. FOX, M. KAVANAGH, P. KENNEDY, N. LAWLESS, S. MATTHEWS, M. MCDONALD, G. MCLOUGHLIN, D. MITCHELL, M. MURPHY, D. NOLAN, M. O'CONNOR, J. RYAN, B. THORNHILL, E. TIMMINS, P. VANCE, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.
AGAINST (3)	CLLRS. J. BEHAN, T. FORTUNE AND O. O'BRIEN.
NOT PRESENT (5)	CLLRS. T. CULLEN, P. DORAN, G. O'NEILL, J. RYAN AND J. SNELL.

TO ADOPT THE DETERMINATION FOR BASE YEAR ADJUSTMENT – HARMONISATION

Mr. B. Gleeson, Head of Finance advised that the harmonised ARV of €72.04 was adopted in 2015, that the base year adjustment provides for the phasing in of increases and decreases on the annual rates and that 2018 is the fourth year of the 5 year harmonisation process. He referred to the table presented to the elected members.

It was proposed by Cllr. C. Fox, seconded by Cllr. P. Vance and following a roll call it was agreed by a margin of 23 votes for, 4 against and 5 not present to adopt the harmonisation rate for 2018 as set out by the head of finance viz:-

FOR 23	CLLRS. T. ANNESLEY, V. BLAKE, S BOURKE, S. CULLEN, G. DUNNE, P. FITZGERALD, T. FORTUNE, C. FOX, P. KENNEDY, N. LAWLESS, S. MATTHEWS, M. MCDONALD, G. MCLOUGHLIN, D. MITCHELL, M. MURPHY, D. NOLAN, M. O'CONNOR, J. RYAN, E. TIMMINS, P. VANCE, G. WALSH, J. WHITMORE AND I. WINTERS.
AGAINST 4	CLLRS. J. BEHAN, M. KAVANAGH, O. O'BRIEN AND B. THORNHILL.
NOT PRESENT 5	CLLRS. T. CULLEN, P. DORAN, G. O'NEILL, J. RYAN AND J. SNELL.

TO ADOPT A VACANCY RATE FOR COUNTY WICKLOW

It was proposed by Cllr. S. Bourke, seconded by Cllr. C. Fox and agreed to adopt a vacancy relief rate of 100% for the year 2018.

In conclusion the Cathaoirleach thanked the elected members for engaging in the process and to Mr. Brian Gleeson and the finance team and all the staff for facilitating the various meetings leading up to the budget.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING.

**Cathaoirleach,
Wicklow County Council**

**Senior Executive Officer,
Enterprise & Corporate Services**