

BUDGET MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY
COUNCIL HELD AT SHORELINE LEISURE
CENTRE, GREYSTONES,
CO WICKLOW

ON

MONDAY 23rd NOVEMBER, 2020 AT 2:00pm.

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Elaine McCarthy

Welcome to Wicklow County Council's annual budget meeting on 23rd November 2020.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon members, can you hear me? Yeah.

Good afternoon members and welcome to our meeting here today, our budget meeting. Before I start, I'd, like to call for votes of sympathy if you will, any vote of sympathy?

MS GALLAGHER: For Mary O'Riordan, mother of Louise Fleming in the Leo office, and for our friend and colleague Professor Ernest Berksmith.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Has anybody else any? No, we'll stand for a minute.

Item number one on our agenda, and that is to consider the disposal of 0.43 acres of land in the townland of Rathdrum, Co Wicklow, by way of an 18 month lease for the period 9th January, 2020 to 8th July 2021 and the right to pass and repass thereto, to Mr Noel Jacob and Ms Helen Jacob, Jacob's Well, Rathdrum Co Wicklow (as per notice previously circulated).

Do we have a proposer, Cllr Gail Dunne and Cllr Sylvester Bourke seconded.

MS GALLAGHER: Agreed?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah.

Item number two, To consider the disposal of 7m by 13m and 2.3m an 19.5 metres, approximately 0.0149 hectares in total of land situated at Oak Drive, Blessington, Co. Wicklow to Gas Networks Ireland T/A Aurora Telecom, Gasworks, Cork, T12 RX96 (as per notice previously circulated).

MS GALLAGHER: Propose and seconded by Cllr Timmins.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Number three: To consider the disposal of 0.0078 hectares comprised in Folio WW3873 Co. Wicklow, being a strip of land to the rear of Springfield Heights, Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow to Oisin Developement Co. Ltd., c/o Philip Flood, Los Arcos, Rocky Road, Co. Wicklow (as per notice previously circulated).

MS GALLAGHER: Proposed by Cllr Paul O'Brien and seconded by Cllr Shay Cullen.

Is that agreed?

Thank you, members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Number four is to consider the disposal of 0.0265 hectares comprised in Folio WW4484 Co. Wicklow being land situated in the townland of Hollywood Lower, Hollywood, Co. Wicklow to Mr. Lorcan Kelly and Ms. Una Kelly, of The Grove, Hollywood Lower, Hollywood, Co. Wicklow (as per notice previously circulated).

Cllr Patsy Glennon and Cllr Gerry O'Neill is that agreed. Thank you.

And number five, is to consider the disposal of 0.0580 hectares comprised in Folio WW4484 Co. Wicklow being land situated in the townland of Hollywood Lower, Hollywood, Co. Wicklow to Mr. Thomas Tutty and Ms. Marle Tutty of Watery Lane Cottage, Hollywood, Co Wicklow (as per notice previously circulated).

MS GALLAGHER: Is that agreed? Thank you, members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Number six is to consider the disposal of the property comprised in Folio WW3074L being the property known as 29 Kindlestown Park, Greystones, Co. Wicklow to Mr. John Whiston and Ms. Bridget Whiston, 29 Kindlestown Park, Greystones,

Co. Wicklow (as per notice previously circulated).

Proposed by Cllr Gerry Walsh.

MS GALLAGHER: Seconded by Cllr Tom Fortune. Is that agreed? Thank you, members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Item number seven.

Is not going ahead today for disposal.

MS GALLAGHER: With the members permission we withdraw for further discussion on the lease term. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Number eight is to consider the disposal of 0.226 hectares (0.559 Acres) or thereabouts of land known as the Courtyard and Farmyard at Clermont House, Wicklow County Campus, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow by a way of a 99 year lease commencing 23rd November, 2020, to Clermont Enterprise Hub Company, Rathnew, Co. Wicklow (as per notice previously circulated).

Have a proposal for that?

Cllr John Snell seconded by Cllr Shay Cullen.

MS GALLAGHER: Is that agreed? Thank you, members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Number nine is to, To consider the disposal of 0.0590 hectares (0.1457 Acres) or thereabouts of land situated in the townland of Glencap Commons North, Kilmacanoge, Co Wicklow to Mr. Kevin Cahill and Ms. Mary Cahill, Riverside, Kilmacanogue, Co. Wicklow (as per notice previously circulated).

MS GALLAGHER: Proposes by Cllr Anne Ferris, seconded by Cllr Melanie Corrigan. Is that agreed? Thank you, members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That concludes the disposal notices so we're into our draft budget now, so I'll call on director of finance Brian Gleeson.

BRIAN: Thank you Cathaoirleach.

I'll just summarise the areas that I'll be going through with the presentation now this afternoon. I'll be starting off with the outlining the budgetary process and planned expenditure of income for 2021 and highlight the budget challenges we face for next year and review the budget policy decisions that have taken place in order to balance the budget, discuss the Municipal District funding

in 2021, and review the expenditure and income variation changes to the 2021, budget versus last year. And then also discuss the two decisions we require to make under commercial rates the ARV, for next year and rates vacancy relief.

The budget process as you're well aware is four maintaining, Local Property Tax variation decision which took place in September, Municipal District budgetary plan in October including the general municipal allocations, adoption of the statutory budget today, and then the schedule of Municipal District works next February/mesh when he get the roads allocations.

In relation to today's meeting, the budgets that need to be made today by the members, including adoption of the statutory annual budget for 2021, and also two decisions in relation to commercial rates for 2021, we have to agree the annual rate of valuation and the percentage of relief to be applied to vacant premises for the coming year. Just outlined the planned expenditure this year, we have estimated approximately 118 million.6 for next year, increase of over two million on last year. This is attributed to mainly increases in

paying pensions, and also the proposed pre-letting increases of approximately a million in the area of housing.

The main sources of income that are used to balance the budget, and match the expenditure are as follows: Local Property Tax is 12 million, that's down from 13.7 million last year. Commercial rates nearly 32.1 million, there's a slight increase of about 70,000 on this year's rates, due to the fact that there was a few global utility re-evaluations that took place this year, goods and services, 36.7 million that's up from 35.2 million this year, and mainly due to IPB paying out a dividend next year and we have increase in MPPR, estimated and also Pell property entry level that we expect next year. The grants and subsidies have increased and 37.9 million, versus 35.4 this year. That's mainly as a result of additional homeless funding that we're expecting and also P and A funding from housing and pay agreement compensation that we get every year from the department.

Now moving on to the budget challenges we face for the coming year, these from outlined at the LPT

meeting and workshop we have the impact of Covid-19, and between additional expenditure on budgeted expenditure with he had this year up to a million and loss of income in relation to parking, planning, fees, road opening licenses, due to the lockdown, that's over 2 million of impact this year. Obviously, we can't foresee into the future but there obviously will be significant impact next year as well.

Year-on-year we have the situation of increased pay and pension costs, as you're well aware the department cover 80% of the pay agreement costs but we also have to pony up 20% ourselves, there's new staff costs and extra retirements that have to be factored into the budget..

The reduction of LPT income from 13.7 this year down to 12 million, increased demand on housing pre-letting expenditure, that provision is increasing from 2 million per annum-to-up to 3 million to meet our existing demand. We also have climate action commitments and energy targets we must meet. We have a number of recommendations under the climate action adaptation plan and also there's national targets we must aspire to meet.

The match funding commitments under the different National Development Plan schemes such as the RD , that's on going, we have been successful over the past few years in securing funding under these particular schemes and we want to continue this into the future. Over all the challenges must be met within the legislation requirement to approve a balanced budget.

Just on the next slide, I just want to suppose give a bit of background into the rationale into the decisions we've made this year - in relation to the local port tax as outlined the decision made back in September, resulted in reduction of 1.7 from the revenue budget for 2021.

The decision that was made to increase the LPT in 2020, resulted in specific funding lines being ring-fenced for the coming year, they were match funding community grant scheme, the discretionary fund for Municipal District, climate action, energy initiatives that came to 1.7 million so created a major challenge to us, in relation to the budget this year, when we didn't have that 1.7 million, I suppose as a council and we did flag this

with the CPG with he identified two areas that needed to be prioritised the match funding, element in order to draw down those significant capital funding, that's been provided for local project. And also, the climate action and energy initiatives due to the national targets and the commitments we've made under these particular areas.

I suppose this slide, it just addresses at the budget workshop that we had earlier this year, one of the questions was that well why did we need increase in LPT to pay our discretionary funding in 2020, we never had to do it before.

That was due to the additional costs that came in, in 2020, so the baseline had changed, we weren't comparing like with like. We needed to fund these new items in 2020, and most of them were nondiscretionary so we didn't have a choice. The housing maintenance costs went up by 1.6 million, included pre-letting of 1.1 million and half a million then on repairs and maintenance, boiling maintenance central heating so this was brought into this year's budget, we had pension increase of 400,000, the rating of Irish Water, you would be well aware that, that generated a loss of

600,000, to the revenue budget. And we also had the new items of expenditure coming in, such as the match funding and also the climate action.

On top of this, we had the library service, had a number of new staff as part of the workforce plan that were brought in, and that was nearly half a million, so those items came to 3.8 million so that's why, we need today increase the Local Property Tax last year and also, we said at the time it was unique year, because there was restricted sources of funding in 2020, that were not expected to be repeated again in 2021.

Unfortunately that hasn't transpired the legislation required to allow for additional new builds to be added to the LPT allocation, we have 3,500 new builds to apply as you're well aware it has been outlined already, that, that legislation wasn't brought in, so, there's to additional funding there. And the rates limitation order that was in place last year, in relation to the increase in commercial rates which prevented us from increasing rates a year after re-evaluation, that has gone for 2021, so technically we can increase our rates, as part of this budget but due

to the impact Covid-19 has had on local businesses, that is strongly not recommended for obvious reasons..

So that just gives a background, so people understand I suppose the rationale why we increased the LP last year and the fact that we reduced it back down for 2021, the impact that, that has.

Just in relation to the overall revenue budget, the majority or vast majority of the budget is covered by nondiscretionary costs as we payroll costs, salary wages, pensions, equate to approximately 4 a% of the budget. Then we also have - 45%, contra ins and outs as we like to refer them funding line such as RAS, and HAP, DPGs, Leo sports partnership, Irish Water and machinery yard, and homeless funding rote grants, which is 25% of the revenue budget. We have nondiscretionary costs such as our utilities light and heat, insurance, costs loan interest, capital transfers, salutary contributions and victory rates write-offs so all those added together come to 90% of the budget so we're left to 10% what would be discretionary costs, within that, we have local roads maintenance, the owned resources element rather

than grant funded element. Public light, which is demand led, housing repairs and maintenance, demand led, a lot of people would say those three items are not discretionary. But I suppose, we have a choice to cut back on those areas, if we wish but obviously there would be serious detrimental implications of doing that. Community Grants scheme is discretionary item, environmental initiatives but we've already referred to national commitments we have, arts and festivals, our book fund for the library, economic supports, such as the GMA provision or rates incentive schemes. Match funding for capital programmes and discretionary spend in the Municipal Districts. So, they're the main items of discretionary expenditure that we have within the budget. So, there's not a lot of scope and we have to try and find savings, there's not a huge amount of scope within the overall budget that we can take from. In relation to the legislation and the input of the members on this, the Government reform act, 2014, allows for the adoption of the budget, it states as a reserve function of the members of the local authority, and it also states the CPG should assist

with the setting of the overall parameters and identification of issues and approaches to be taken in relation to the budget and as a result of this, the CPG met twice to agree budget proposals, on the 2nd and 9th of November, and in between the two meetings, we did have a budget workshop for all the members of which the decisions that were taken were outlined and people were allowed to give feedback in relation to that.

I'll just go through this would have been emailed out in advance after the meetings but to go through again and remind people of the decisions that were taken with the corporate policy group - the pre-letting capital transfer of one million in order to meet current demand the average costs between 30,000 and 40,000 per unit. So, we hope to have about a hundred per year completed.

Transfer of LED public lighting replacement cost to a newly established capital account, resulted-in-saving of half a million, that capital account deficit that will be generated will be cleared by the 8 million loan taken out, for when the national replacement programme commences which will be hopefully the end of this year.

The retention of the climate action funding increase of 260,000, that was allocated within the budget of 2020, we want to retain that. And that covered two new positions to climate action officer and biodiversity support officer, and also allowed for 180,000 for climate reaction initiatives, rent bad debt provision, due to impact of Covid-19, 200,000, it has seen rent arrears increase significantly, recently, door-to-door collections have now commenced and we should see a redirection in our arrears, but we still need to take a prudent approach to no in relation to this area. And we have increased this by 200,000.

The additional provision we need we require for extra vacant premises in relation to commercial rates we believe this will be covered within our existing budget provision of 2.8 million, we had to do a detailed review of all rate payers as part of a rents waiver scheme in eligibility for that particular scheme so we believe that the extra provision of approximately half a million will be catered for within the existing budget.

Commercial rates to stay on that - we are proposing that there's no increase to the existing ARV rate

of 0.217 to support businesses during this tough time.

We also propose to retain the vacancy refund rate of 60% for 2021, and also, the two existing rates incentive schemes, small business scheme which is equates to 5% of the rates budget up to a maximum of 250 Euro and new business incentive scheme for say can't premises.

Unfortunately, we have had to find savings in some areas and the proposal is there's no community grant scheme funding for 2021.

This is based on the need to fund our nondiscretionary costs, first and foremost and the prioritisation as we said already of the match funding and climate action initiatives, so unfortunately, we've had to remove that from the proposed budget.

We, intend to retain the mobile recycling funding of approximately 50 now thousand for the coming year and it was agreed that additional funding would be made available to the Coral leisure sisters in Wicklow and Arklow to continue their continuation, it has been badly hit by Covid-19 and the Government restriction so we need to provide

additional support to get through the difficult period and stay open as is they are considered an important community facility.

The Mermaid centre in Bray, no proposed reduction in relation to the 320,000 allocation they get each year. Similar to the gyms, art centres, they are suffering and increasingly dependent on our support with no box office income coming in this year.

The library book fund, we are estimating an underspend this year of approximately 100,000, it has been difficult to source books this year with one national supplier. So, there will be an underspend, we intend to capitalise and carry forward the underspend of 100,000 and reduce, 2021 budget by that same amount. So, while we're making savings in the 2021, budget of 100,000, the amount of funding available for the book scheme will be unchanged.

We also, got a Covid-19 credit in relation to our insurance from IPB and that is applied to our 2021 insurance premium to bring it down by over 200,000. We've also proposed and agreed removal of the annual capital transfer of 100,000 in respect of

the playground capital reserve and this is I suppose for 2021, only.

We believe there's sufficient reserves funds within the capital reserve to cover any immediate demands, but this is one for one year only and needs to be reversed as part of budget 2022.

I'm just I suppose in relation to the overall budget and the balancing of it, we have made an assumption the Government economic recovery contingency fund that was announced as part of the overall national budget will cover any reduction or majority of any reduction in income that we have next year and additional Covid-19 costs in 2021. The minister has written to all local authorities recently confirming there will be support for the coming year, obviously at this stage there's no actual figures but, there has been a commitment to support local authorities as best we can.

Just I suppose next part is in relation to the GMA, based on feedback we did receive from the budget workshop, we have reintroduced the general municipal allocation, which specifically covers the area of Tidy Towns, and festivals and economic development, so that's 208,500, that will be

allocated to the Municipal Districts across the board as you can see from the table. Outlined on the screen. The time of the draft budgetary plans when they were issued we couldn't commit to the 200,000 due to the fact we had to concentrate on our nondiscretionary expenditure and make sure we had enough funding for those first and foremost but we did say at the advertisement we would re-examine this whole area as part of the overall budget process and based on the feedback the importance the members placed on this area, especially in relation to the Tidy Towns and the work they do locally it is hugely important. We brought that back in. You will note the civic representation there's a small reduction, there was 2,000 per Municipal District each year, that has been reduced slightly down to 1,000, given the impact of Covid-19, hopefully towards the latter half of the year. We might be in a position to spend some of that. Just in relation to the Municipal District discretionary expenditure, as we've said unfortunately due to the reduction in LPT we've had to remove this for 2021, and Municipal Districts do have the option however like Bray Municipal

District did, to increase parking charges for area and retain the net increase for their discretionary expenditure so all MDs have the option of doing that, if they should wish.

In addition the discretionary funding balances at the end of 2020, will be carried over into 2021, at the end of October we have 1.7 million across all five Municipal Districts so that will be, the funding will be available into 2021, there's a large balance to carry over, because as you're aware the concentration over the last few months in each district was to carry out and implement the NTA mobility schemes and works in relation to those as there was a deadline for draw down funding so there's a significant overspend but that will be available to Municipal Districts next year.

And while we speak about the NTA schemes, this whole line of new funding we do expect that to continue into 2021, and we believe this will act as a substitute for the discretionary funding in the Municipal Districts. Today date 4.8 million has been allocated as you can see, Arklow got 1.4, battle glass nearly 1.5 million, Bray over 500,000, Greystones over 800,000 and Wicklow half a million

to that equates to 4.8 million, a huge amount of money, all the works have been completed or will be over the coming weeks, and as I said, while this is a capital funding scheme, we believe this will continue into 2021, so there will be plenty of works especially in the area of footpaths across the Municipal Districts.

Also in relation to the decisions taken by the CPG, it was decided that the IPP funding of half a million that was used to for footpath repairs would be ring-fenced for capital projects, we believed the bank for your buck you get from your RD and ORD

and subsequent schemes was hugely important, and we had to prioritise that whole area.

Obviously failure to make provision for match funding means Wicklow County Council cannot do projects where development levies cannot be used, like the Blessington and Greystones CCCT schemes, both require 60,000 of match funding for those particular schemes, we can't use development levies for that, so, that's an area we need to provide the funding for.

Of the 36 million, worth of projects that are been

proved to date under the various schemes, we do require match funding of 2.3 million from sources other than developing levies. Of planned project we've made applications for we could require up to 9.7 million, obviously that will be depending on the outcome of the applications, we won't obviously get all of the applications will be successful but there will still be hopefully a large element of that. So, there is ongoing requirement for that match funding provision.

Just to go through the main expenditure variances in budget 2021.

Under the area of housing, we have the pre-letting repairs provision, increase of one million, fabric upgrade works we've reduced that by 270,000, that's based on planned work and additional funding that has been provided in this area.

So, we've been able to reduce our own resources element.

Housing of the homeless, nearly 800,000 of additional expenditure, that's based on additional funding that we'll receive. RAS, that is reduced a national trend whereby it is replaced by HAP. Payment and availability agreements, 1.1 million,

1.2 million, that's based on a trend as well, and we'll be funding by the department.

In roads, the IPB footpath repair scheme has been removed so 500,000 has been taken out of that particular area and moved to development, and economic development for the match funding.

Local road improvements, over 600,000 of additional grant aid is expected and that's based on I suppose additional funding we got in 2020, over and above the budget.

Under development, the town twinning for obvious reasons, we're eliminating that expenditure for this year, new business rates incentive scheme for say can't premises, that was set at 150,000, reducing that by 50,000 as we expect less of a take-up due to the obvious impact Covid-19 has had on businesses. Capital project match funding, we had half a million in there for that, retaining that, and we're increasing about 200,000 to cover the Clare month content relation hub, there's a match funding requirement of 2 million, to cover our grant of approximately 1.5 million so we want to have that paid off over ten years. Fire service operations up by 159,000, that's mainly payroll

costs across all the stations. The area of recreation and amenity, the leisure centres 200,000 we referred to that already in relation to Coral. Library service operations, 346,000, that's the last part of the workforce plan being implemented and also, we have additional costs in relation to new library in Wicklow Town.

Library book fund as I said underspend of 100,000 which we'll capitalise and carry forward and reduce the budget for next year. And playground cap it will reserve, we've mentioned already.

Community grant scheme we're reducing for this year, and we're increasing IT operations, that is in relation to additional licenses, implementation of a digital strategy and digital staff costs. The discretionary expenditure, budget line reduces by 1.264 million, 964 million, 964,000 of that is the public works and one-off allocation in relation to the Irish Water rating we got last year on Budget Day, that was a one-off item, it is no longer available that funding so the two combined gives 1.264. Payment Gratuity, 421 and IPB premium reduced by approximately 100,000 which is God news. The income variances, we have in housing, these are

Contra items, grant aid has gone up in relation to homeless grants and will be spending that as well. RAS, obviously that's on interest as well, we've seen the expenditure going down so income will be also going down and P and A agreements. Local roads improvement grants which we mentioned we expect increase on that, and IPP footpath scheme that's been reduced also.

Creative Ireland we expect additional funding, next year of 80,000, and under environment, burial grounds, the income from there, we expect to increase by 38,000 based on our turn in 2020, similar to that the fire safety certificates we expect a small increase.

Arts Council grants 2

,000 of small increase is expected. And the Irish Water as I've mentioned, that 300,000 was a one-off item in budget 20. So, we'll no longer reoccur, in subsequent budgets. MPPR, we've increased that by 150,000, the budget of reduced, there was a national trend whereby the MPPR was reducing year-on-year, and reduced it from 700,000 down to 350,000, at 300,000 in 2020, based on income to date we have increased that again now up to 450,000.

The IPP dividend we got no dividend in 20, so it's been confirmed by PBB we will have a dividend of 487,000 and the Local Property Tax the 1.7, and also, there's an increase provision of property entry levy, that is where there's new builds, for businesses, and the valuations won't be finalised we expect until December, so, once it is passed our budget date it can't be included in our rates book for 2021 but it can be property entry levy and expect 200,000 to come in in relation to that.

I suppose, ordinarily, when we're trying to balance a budget and we're looking at the ARV, for commercial rates for the coming year, we look at proposed expenditure for the year and calculate our income for the coming year and take one from the other, if there's a gap we look at possibly increasing the ARV to close that gap because the expenditure must equal the total income.

However, as I've stated already, for obvious reasons, and the impact that Covid-19 has had on businesses this year, we are proposing that we retain the ARV for 2021, at the 0.217 rate.

This is to support local businesses, and also to compliment the rates waiver scheme and restart

grant scheme introduced this year and administered by Wicklow County Council to support the local businesses.

The other decision that has to be made by the members today is vacancy relief rate and recommendation is that the rate of refund for eligible vacant properties would be retained at the 60%, this compliments the rates incentive scheme for new businesses reoccupying say can't premises, it's in line with the average relief that is applied across all our local authorities and also the new rates bill, there's a maximum level of vacancy relief and that's expected introduced in any event this year. It is tough to balance the budget this year to the challenges and any increase to the vacancy rate would have cost to budget so if we did adjust that, we would have to find money elsewhere to pay for it.

So, I suppose, to summarise budget 2021, I suppose, given the difficult circumstances we faced I think overall this has been a positive budget as it avoids cuts to front line services, and provides no additional charges to local businesses and actually increases funding to the housing area, and

it allows us to continued support for the funding of capital project across all the Municipal Districts.

So, Cathaoirleach that concludes our presentation and I review the budget across the various divisions.

To assist the members, I'll leave that last page up, as a reference, as you can refer to during the discussion.

So, thank you Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Brian and first of all Brian can I thank yourself and breed the financial team for the work you've put in preparing this budget. It wasn't an easy budget; it was a very difficult budget this year. I also want to thank the members for their participation in the budget, as Brian outlined, we had two CPGs and workshop and I want to thank the members for their participation in that. Also, for e-mailing in any concerns or questions they had or for contacting Brian by phone. So, rather than bring up each director to go through their teams, because of Covid-19 I asked Brian to cover all the different sections in his

presentation, so I'm going to open it up to the floor for questions.

So, I'm going to throw it out there now, it is a detailed budget, and we all know the work that Brian had to put into this, so I want to thank you and all the team for everything awe he done on a budget, it is a difficult budget and year, but we know where we are, and so, I'm going to open up the floor.

Cllr Gerry Walsh, table number two.

CLLR WALSH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach and thanks to the director for the presentation.

You know, logging at the draft budget document presented to us all during the week and reading through it, it certainly gives a clear illustration of the works of the council, the services that the council deliver, the supports, the operations and the projects this for community facilities et cetera. And you know, also illustrates the new implementations that have been developed in areas around climate action, environmental protection, IT, et cetera. But by extension then when you read the sect portion of the document, green section, it also, you know, gives illustration of the vast

of the costs involved and the budget expenditure figure of 118.7 million and the difficulty in bridging the funding gaps, the LPT, we've discussed, that's been well ventilated but again, looking at page two of the document, from 17.3 million we're down with net figure of 12 million so that's a funding gap straightaway that has to be addressed. So, I sincerely hope without going into detail on this issue, that the relevant departments address this outstanding issue once and for all this year and we're not in the same situation again this time next year. Just on three specific items I'd like to refer to, refer from the presentation: The which is one is CCTV, and I'm glad that there's been a references to match funding, there's provision made for that for Blessington and the Greystones schemes due to be approved shortly. There will be an issue of maintenance of these schemes going forward that possibly an issue for next year, but I would like that to be considered also. The issue around public conveniences, it is there on page 19 and 67 of the document I want to make references to Greystones in particular, we have a toilet facility

three at the harbour that has been out of use for ten years now and the members have looking to get this back into use, this year, we invested some of our discretionary funding to invest in that, it is ready to reopen now and I'm just wondering going forward is there a provision for maintenance costs in relation to this facility?

The other issue I want to raise with the director and you did refer to it when you referred to the workforce plan in relation to the library services, and it is the issue around outdoor staffing levels particularly in the Greystones district, we looked at this during the year and we saw that there was a clear disparity between the numbers operating from the Greystones district and other districts, I understand that the workforce plan was to accommodate additional two members outdoor staffing for Greystones, which haven't yet materialised and I'm aware that is yet another member due to retire in January. So, I'd like to get some comment in relation to that because, as I said earlier with the vast amount of services, and supports delivered by the council, the outdoor staffing levels need to be maintained, that need

to be given priority. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Paul O'Brien.

CLLR O'BRIEN: We all sit here today in extraordinary times, even given the social distancing we're having to observe today and it would be easy for us to sit here today and be negative about a budget, but I believe we should be constructive about this budget in the terms of the times we're living in. Families up and down the county have had to tighten their belts as incomes decreased and I believe the council have also had to manage their budget and balance it. We all made the decision back in September about the LPT and as councillors acknowledged it is a done deal at this stage and it is the past. But we did step up and do our bit for the people of Wicklow in September and now it is time for us to be positive and be constructive about this budget.

I want to welcome the commercial rates being maintained; I believe any increase would be detrimental to the already fragile economy around the county. I also want to welcome the match funding that's been secured or will be secured

because of the difficult decisions that have been made. I also want to welcome the extra 100,000 for Wicklow and Arklow Coral Leisure Centres, this has been a difficult year for the entire country and entire world, we need something to look forward to and I'm delighted that 20,000 has been set aside for festivals next year. And what might sound like a trivial matter in terms of festivals I honestly believe people need something to look forward to. Without trying to sound negative though if the festivals don't go ahead, where will the money end up, there's 208,000 and while I hope the festivals go ahead, what will happen the 208,000 if they don't, but I sincerely hope they do, thank you very much Cathaoirleach.

CLLR WINTERS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I want to thank Brian and all his team and in fact all of the department heads for the work that has gone into producing this budget. It is very difficult with rising costs, reduced income, and very little leeway in terms of what you can, and can't do to actually get a balanced budget and tremendous work has gone into it.

I suppose there are huge difficulties facing all of the businesses within the county. With many of our residents as well, have reduced income and I think people have to I suppose expect that we are impacted in much the same way in that we have reduced income and trying to produce the same level of services with reduced income is very challenging.

There are some elements of the budget in a I would like to see reinstated if possible and we can look at proposals for that. That would be in terms of Community Grants. I think for very shawl money we get a significant input from members of the community and their means of fundraising et cetera have been vastly reduced again because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

And as we go through each of the categories, maybe that's something we can look at. Overall, I want to say to Brian well done. And we welcome this, and I think he's done an exceptional job given the circumstances that we face, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Brian do you want to take any questions in those three, most of them were

in support, but there was a couple of questions here and there, so maybe you deal with those three please.

BRIAN: In relation to CCTV maintenance, as far as I'm aware the annual maintenance kicks in in year two, so for Blessington and Greystones that is the year after we'll make provision, we have a provision we put in this year for Arklow, we've put in CCTV, in year two, so we'll do the same for Blessington and Greystones in the following year's budget. Public conveniences, there's a I suppose a budget for Greystones, for the ongoing maintenance of public conveniences in the district. In relation to outdoor staff, I think there's provision within the budget for increases across all of the Municipal Districts. Also, councillor O'Brien questioned the 208,000, if it isn't spent, well of the 208,000, and 80,000, is in respect of the Christmas lights so we'll assume that will be OK. The Tidy Towns and economic development are 67,000, so that should be fine. There's another 560,000, within that allocation that goes towards other festivals that include Patrick's Day and other summer festivals. If it

isn't spent, I suppose, just like all the other deregulatory expenditure, we will allow that to be retained in the district and carried forward in the following year as we always do in relation to any underspends in discretionary expenditure within the district.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Brian. Chief Executive would you like to come in.? Chief Executive: On the outdoor staff all the posts in the workplace force will be filled. In addition we'll take on further six outdoor staff and three engineers because of the funding going in NTA, there's over 5 million came in last year, which between active travel, intermobility and climb change we've been asked to submit funding proposals for further schemes this week and looks like it will continue next year, so we will be recruiting more in the workforce plan to get through the work.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Lourda Scott.

Table three.

CLLR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach and I just want to echo thanks to Brian and his team for working

so hard and producing I think overall is a welcomed budget despite the difficult circumstances we're in. I want to make a brief comment as Co-Chair of climate and biodiversity, I particular welcome the ring-fencing of the money, it is important for the wider community to safeguard funds here and very strong indicator of Wicklow County Council's commitment to delivering climate and biodiversity action and hitting targets going forward so I want to welcome that, and say that is very much appreciated, by the members of the SPC, and look forward with the climate action team going forward over the next year.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Erika Doyle. No OK. Cllr Joe Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: Thank you. Just three questions please: First of all. if I'm not mistaken the finance officer said there's reduction of a quarter of a million Euros next year on the energy efficiency fabric upgrade scheme. Which I find to be incredible really given everything else we're talking about efficiency and energy efficiency and every other programme and as far as I'm aware, that is also a programme that is jointly funded with the

Department of Housing.

I'm very concerned that the slowdown of that particular work. I mean it started in Bray, two years ago, but, as far as I can see, nothing has been happening in that regard in Bray for at least a year.

So, I'd like to know, what is happening the fabric upgrade scheme in the areas in Bray where it was begun?

And are we seriously going to pass up on money from the Department of Housing for energy efficiency work that is long past overdue, in all of our housing estates throughout the county? Second question, is in relation to the N11, M11 and route selection process, we have been promised that the route, the preferred route would be given to us certainly in this part of the year, in the last quarter of the year, there's no mention of it at all in the statement, I accept it maybe doesn't have impact on the budget, but I would welcome if there is information that the officials have with regard to the final route or preferred route, if that information could be shared with us as councillors and the public of County Wicklow today, if it is

available.

And thirdly, we all received letters, a letter from solicitor's firm in Arklow at the end of September, regarding the practice by Wicklow County Council of demanding or looking for utility bills that maybe ten, eleven years old in order to provide exemption certificates for the non, NPPR tax, this is causing great difficulties for people who want to sell their house, who have genuinely been living this their house, and some local authorities, including Fingal and others, have now developed a system where a sworn affidavit will be accepted. This is money the council is not going to be able to keep.

And it is causing a lot of difficulty for individual clients of solicitors, right across the county. Now the Finance Director did undertake to have more consideration of this particular issue and I was hoping that we would have heard a bit more about it by now so I want to ask you Brian, what is the position with regard, can we please change the policy, to ensure that people who have waiting for the certificate can get it as soon as possible? Thank you.

CLLR LEONARD: I just like to thank Brian and Breda and the whole team there, for all the work put into it, and I suppose we all know it was a great challenge to balance the budget this year. But, I just there's a few questions, I would like to ask is there a provision in there, I know I'm harping all this for harbour attest taint officer, for the 21 and why we don't have provision for conservation in Wicklow and also, as part of the committee of the climate action APC, I think one of our greatest challenges, going forward, even though I'm appreciative of the work allocated towards climate change but we're falling short on what we can't achieve, including some of the kind of alternatives to using chemicals for weeds and stuff like that in our municipals so I'm wondering can we look at maybe going forward, next year any access funding Google towards one of the greatest challenge, I know we've had a tough year with Covid-19, loss of income and economy, but none look important if we don't have a man net to have all these things on. Flooding, coastal erosion, loss of biodiversity, they're all such important things for your future

generation, and I think that we need to keep that in mind with all of the budget at every meeting we have going forward, thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, go back to Brian now, if you take those three if there's questions.

BRIAN: Cllr Peir Leonard in relation to the chemicals, the climate officer is looking at that area at the moment, alternative chemicals so that's a positive, the harbour position that's factored into the budget. The conservation, I'm not sure, exactly what the proposal was there?

I don't think there's anything specific in the budget in relation to that.

But the harbour position is included.

Regarding Cllr Joe Behan's questions, the fabric upgrade, it is follow actually a reduction in expenditure, it is, that is, it is a capital transfer, all the money on the fabric upgrade is expended from the capital account, that's a capital transfer we make every year. So sort of our own funding element our resources are sources, based on the funding amounts we're getting from the department, it has been calculated that our provision will be less, so it doesn't mean we're

going to be losing out on funding, it just means our element that we have to provide will be less. So, that's the way that works.

The N11, that would be included in the capital plan. So, it wouldn't be in the revenue account, I don't know whether the Colm wants to come in on progress on that, and NPPR, yes, we are looking at that, at the moment, unfortunately the area that looks at that is also trying to deal with the rates waiver scheme and restart grants, but, we've had an initial look on that and when the waiver scheme is out of the way we'll concentrate on that, and get back to you with an answer on that. Thank you.

Chief Executive: On the retrofitting there's a scheme for 8

Unit with the department that our proposal waiting on approval. But next year, the department have got very significant extra funding now for energy retrofitting, and 65 million for the entire country so they're looking at rolling this out and allowing for 45,000 per household, which will allow for external insulation, internal, windows and heat pumps so it is a significant move by the department, canning all local authorities so we can gear out

to scary out the surveys and implement this, that is 100% funded. On the N11 and M11, we haven't got a date yet for the final report, but they have set up a workshop and we are expecting it very shortly, possibly towards the end of the year. And climate change - there's is a list of actions in there that are ongoing, the electric vehicle charging points in Greystones will go ahead, tree policy is going ahead, community woodlands is going ahead, submission has been head for research project by UCD and Trinity in relation to flood protection at the upper Avoca catchment, alternatives to phosphate we've been through that with the districts and they have come up with a form, products that can be used as alternative to that. In addition, we have the energy reduction work going on in terms of our own buildings, and libraries, et cetera, and indeed our public houses and we have the solar planning project coming through for the County Buildings.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Edward Timmins.

Table six.

CLLR TIMMINS: Thanks. Brian for your presentation. Just a couple of points I brought these up before, during the workshop, I mean, I'm happy to support this budget today, but, I would qualify it by making a couple of points - firstly to this regulatory fund, ours has been wiped out 100%, I know there's project done around the county but they're different to discretionary funding, I know when I was Chairman and also former Chairman and member councillor advance, did a lot of work to make sure that the councillors had sufficient discretionary funding to be able to do things in their local area and I really think you know, and I hope this is purely a blip and this discretionary funding returns to the level it was last year in the 2022, budget. I appreciate there's funding unspent. And you know, also, I welcome the commitment of that funding will be allowed to be spent in 2021, so we can bring it up-to-date. But that's something we as councillors have to fight for, and we will fight for. Second thing, disappointing about the Community Grants, you talk about match funding, that's probably the best match funding of all, the what you get back from what is

paid in in the communities, and it means so much to communities and it is such an important part of county and the council works very well with communities so it is not something we should let slip away, we should commission and maintain. On the NPPR, could I ask Brian a question, is the NPPR, going to, is that going to lapse at any stage? Remember at the beginning there was talk about maybe ten years after 2013, when it finished that it would fall away?

Just wonder do have you have clarification.

CLLR BLAKE: I'd like to thank CPG and staff on the work they've done. Budgets are never easy and even good times and certainly bad times they are difficult for anybody to adopt and one question is in regard to housing.

We've had a difficulty over the last couple of years and this is seventh year now we have been talking about the equalisation, of the grants for housing repairs, between the districts, I know the Baltinglass district through the years we've had a small grant in terms of being able to improve our housing stock. Maybe 150 Euro in comparison to

some of the towns up to 800 Euro, there was a policy brought in there would be a equalisation of that money and have we reached that equalisation at this particular point in time.

CLLR KAVANAGH. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

And thanks to Brian and the CPG for the amount of work they've done on the budget to date.

Yeah, it isn't easy to balance figures, but I just went through the figures just to look for any notable discrepancies or we'll say huge differences between estimated outturn for last year and estimates for 2021, and just to see if there was anything that I was missing.

For example, page 95, there's a huge increase of half a million on machinery and maintenance of machinery service from last year to next year, just wondering what the what is the cause of that.

By the same token, the plant and machinery operations have gone down by half a million, and I'm just wondering if it is to do with revamping our upgrading machines, should that not been capitalised and not appear in a revenue budget in the first place?

When we go down to purchase of materials for the stores, there's nothing in for 2021. Yet there was 120, nearly 125,000 last year, that seems to be a big discrepancy, and not purchasing anything for the material stores.

This was one that it is not a massive amount of money, but it is on page 96, expenses for local authority members. Now it has been pushed up by about 50,000 over the previous year, but given that there's far less travel with Covid-19 restrictions, that a lot of our meetings are now going to be held via zoom, there will be to conferences being held, I just don't understand why that figure has been increased by 50,000 for next year?

With regard to the NPPR, I'm assuming that the 616,000 from last year, was as a result of interest and penalties, when people went to sell their houses, they obviously had a lean on their house and couldn't dispose of it, until they discharged their NPPR.

So, there's been an estimate of 4 automatic,000 put

in for next year.

The tax itself was removed in 2013, it was only 200 euros per property so what's is coming in, has to be old charges that have materialised as I said when people are trying to dispose of properties. I'm wondering, given there's a substantial difference between what materialised for last year, or 2020, we'll deal with and the estimate for 2021, could any difference over and above that 450,000, be ring-fenced for something like the Community Grants?

Because we're only putting in 450,000, therefore anything over that figure is a bonus and it could be, certainly used to build up the community grant fund again. And I would also ask again could these 50,000 increases on the expenses for local authority members be put to the Community Grants fund as well?

I don't see why it has increased at all. And can I say the 1.5 million difference between rent from last year and this year, was queried long before Covid-19 I remember even a year ago, councillors were bringing this up at council meetings, where suddenly were the rents, was there such a

difference between the rent due and the rent collected?

So, I think that if there was some kind of an effort made as in allowing people to pay at the Post Office or some kind of a facility like that, we really could see that figure come up. Because it isn't just Covid-19 related and it is wrong to say that it is. It was happening long before Covid-19.

Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I'll hand back to you with Brian.

BRIAN: I'll take that rents question, first of all, while there was arrears and the end of 2019 there might be 1.19 million that gone up to 2.8 million, so it has been impacted by Covid-19 without question. When there was arrears, every local authority has rent arrears and I suppose in comparison to other local authorities we were above the national average, when you look at the NOAC performance indicators, so on the face of it, we look like we have arrears, in comparison to the national average we are doing better than most local authorities but there has been impact without question by Covid-19, our collection team

door-to-door, were stood down for a period of time, they're back open now and back operating with standard operation guidelines in place. , so we're addressing that, and we have written out the housing section have written out to those particular customers, tenants who are availing of the door-to-door, giving them additional options to pay electronically and one of the main options we're trying to push is the household budget scheme paid through the Post Office for people who are availing of social welfare.

Just in relation to the NPPR, and I'll I suppose I'll take the question that Cllr Edward Timmins did, and Cllr Mary Kavanagh together - the NPPR, it is expected to lapse on the 31st of March, 20205 the acts will be repealed on that date. The actual fees, as was pointed out was for a period, 200 per annum from 2009 to 2013, however as was pointed out correctly by Cllr Mary Kavanagh, anyone who looks to sell their house now, and they hadn't paid that 200 Euro fee at the time, has to pay penalties, so, if they didn't pay anything, across that five-year period, they could have up to £7,230 of penalties to pay. So that is where the income is coming in.

The estimate or I suppose the outcome this year was greater than the estimate or income has dropped down and has been a trend nationally in relation to NPPR, 2018 we had 1.5 million receipts, 2019, 229,000, so now we reduced it to 300 thousand, so it is a staying consistent this year, everyone would be aware the housing market has picked up considerably over the last few months, so, we have seen an increase of our NPPR this year. But, as I say, that will run until 2025.

In relation to some of the variances, that were highlighted and paid, 95, machine yard, that was to do with direct labour team that was kind of moved between though two areas, H101, and H102, so shifting of expenditure between the two, so the bottom line, there's not a huge amount of change within the machinery yard, it is just correcting where people are being charged too, so that's all that sex in relation to the stores, 120,000, we have closed the stores, so, that provision is no longer required.

And also, the members strange, the increase there is there was a provision made of 2,000 per member for training for the coming year, I think that was

agreed with the members, so, that hence the reason of the increase there.

In relation to putting money into money grant scheme from NNNPPR and training, it is up to the members to put forward proposals in relation to this, as I said, we can listen to any proposals put forward. And Cllr Vincent Blake regarding the housing, yeah, the budget is done, based on a cost per unit, so the average cost per unit and units within the district. So that's the way the budget for the repairs and maintenance is calculated.

So, in that case, yeah, that would be as far as I'm aware the equalisation that would have been implemented in that regard.

Well it is the budget for the Municipal Districts for the repairs and maintenance individual budget is based on a cost per unit.

So, it equal then, the cost per unit is applied across all Municipal Districts.

So, it would be the same for each.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Brian. Cllr Rory O'Connor.

CLLR O'CONNOR: I'm delighted to see that the

climate SPC funding has been retained, because as a young SPC, it is important our budget isn't decreased at all. I want to thank Brian excellent communication skills with me in answering any calls thank you very much.

CLLR FORTUNE: Thanks chair. First of all, Brian, thanks for your report and thank the CEO as well, it can't have been easy because the circumstances we're all operating in.

I'll have a couple of points and ask because obviously the budget at this stage has been by and large approved by the CPG.

We were told in 2020, that it was a unique year and what we did for example with the LPT, was a once-off. And but I would put it to do you that this particular year is probably way beyond unique. So, I think there's certain costs in there that really should be coming from national Government in my view, but I've expressed that before so I won't repeat t can I ask that the half a million that has been taken from the IPP footpath repair scheme, can that be got somewhere else?

Can that be sourced from the NTA, or is there a way of doing that, so is that we can have a win-win in

the situation there? And when you look at table two on the intro part of the report, the 1.7 million, that we're losing out on, and then, you said in your presentation Brian that there was 1.7 million also being carried over from 20, to 21, so I'm wondering is that awash are am I misreading it? And the paragraph on the area it talks about the minimum match funding element of 25% was provided I wonder could that be explained a little bit better just so that we get a broader understanding of how that really works.

And the other ask I would make is that I wrote to you in July, in connection with the LPT knowing the kind of ritual we have to go through every year. And then, subsequently I took part in the members workshop and I don't think what I asked for in July really happened from my perspective anyway. So, what I would ask is the big problem we're having here every year is the baseline of our Local Property Tax is so low, so Wicklow is treated unfairly, and, it is becoming for me, anyway like a record every year, so I would ask from now that we work and get that baseline sorted. Because the baseline of 8.5 million and ending up with a surplus

of 5.2 million that we have to give most of it away for me is crazy and the request I would ask is going forward where starting in January, if we can have that as an agenda item, so that it is getting attention from the full membership on a monthly basis. Because I think, it is essential we have to sort that out. Because, I think the attitude towards our LPT this year, has not been fair as I said, we were told last year was unique, therefore, it should have been back to normal this year as it was A and still we're losing out seriously because of it.

But I do understand, and I do appreciate that the job you have to do is nearly impossible and it is not our fault, you're basically have to do what comes down from the department. But it is just grossly unfair on the residents of Wicklow, I would suggest.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Cllr Anne Ferris.

fer thank you. I will be supporting the budget today. I'd like to thank Brian and Breda, and all of the team and indeed the directors of services, and everyone else who had to put a lot of work in

it. I know Brian thought that you know, after the LPT meeting that it was going to be difficult, but I had every faith in you Brian that you would balance the budget.

I want to put on record though that my appreciation that the budget to the Mermaid Arts Centre has not been cut. I know that you had to look through all of the areas while doing the budget and there was a fear that the budget might be targeted. I think it is very important like my colleague clear O'Brien said earlier about the festivals, that, things like the arts has to be protected.

And more particularly during the Covid-19 period. It is not just the performances that take place in the Mermaid itself but it is all the Outreach work they've continue doing down the years and for all of the community in County Wicklow so I just want to say thank you for that, and I'm delighted to support the budget.

Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Brian is there any questions in those three you want to take?

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BRIAN: OK I'll answer Cllr Tom Fortune's comments in relation to the half million that's been moved from IPB, towards the match funding and you were saying can the footpath scheme be replaced by the NTA. I suppose, mobility scheme, NTA mobility schemes covers footpaths, so, that will cover a good chunk of that. Without question, it won't cover all of it but actually given the amount of funding as I said, 4.8 million already, we could end up getting more than half a million to address footpaths through the mobility scheme. So, as I said already, we hope that that fund, we expect thank that fund to continue well into 2021. And we will be doing our utmost across all the Municipal Districts to have funding from the NTA and eye know Col m's section is dealing with the NTA very much so. And in close contact with them and we're doing our utmost to secure as much funding as possible in the area. The match-funding I suppose explain how it works, both different schemes whether TRD or RD, Bord Failte, town and village et cetera, usually on average it is about 25% of our own funding we have to put forward in order to drawn

down the grant. So, if it's 100,000 of, or 100,000 of a project and we get 75,000 of a grant, we have to provide 25,000 and that's how it works, a lot of works, if it is road-related area, or say in relation to Wicklow library, we have just those two examples in my own town, Wicklow library and Fitzwilliam Square, match-funding element for those projects can be provided by development levies because within the scheme, those types of projects are listed, however there are a number of projects that wouldn't be listed within the development Levy scheme so we have to provide funding from our own resources for that, the revenue account. I know other local authorities, that wouldn't have as positive I suppose cash flow as Wicklow, there have had to go out and take out loans to provide that match-funding. We're in the fortunate position that I suppose our cash flow is quite positive, and we don't need to take out bank loans but we do need to make a provision each year within the revenue budget to provide that 25%, otherwise we can't draw down the funding. So, as I say we do feel this whole area is hugely important, to get 75% of a project is a huge allocation so I think that's why

we feel we have to prioritise this particular area and make provision for it over the next few years, while these schemes are available.

In relation to the baseline, 100% agree with Cllr Tom Fortune for this this matter it is a frustration for me as well, I have contacted the department, it was parked for a while, they planned to look at it earlier this year, but the impact of Covid-19 and response that they've had to look at that whole area, it was keen of parked but I've been told they will be looking at this, this area again and obviously the minister of finance as well in relation to I pose, the legislation that needs to be brought in for the new bills that goes hand-in-hand with the issue of the equalisation and increased baseline, all those elements, mixed up together, has an impact on our funding, the minister for finance has stated he hopes to commence the introduction of that legislation next year.

So, without doubt, our self and the Chief Executive will be pushing that topic continuously throughout 2021.

>>: Thank you, Brian, and CPG, I know this year has been an extremely difficult year and we've had tough decision to make. I want to acknowledge the work of Brian and thank him for the workshop that he'd done recently with us. I know one of the issues I raised myself was the local roads budget, so, I'm glad to see that that's untouched. Just one more thing I'd like to mention is the Community Grants, in the grand scheme of things Community Grants may seem a small amount in the grand scheme of the budget but for the small community groups that benefit from them, they're huge. Especially in our rural areas, there's many towns and villages across my own Municipal District of west Wicklow in the Baltinglass Municipal District that benefit hugely from the Community Grants and it is amazing how far their money will go, and the time and effort they put into maintaining our local area and the effort that is put in to ensure that they have the best possible communities to live in.

So, look, thanks very much.

A I just want to mention those two issues thank you.

CLLR FITZGERALD: Just want to thank Brian and the staff for the budget. It is difficult to do a

budget in good times, as far as, and far more difficult to do it in times like we have.

The budget, to have a spend of 118.7 million, is absolutely great. 2.3% increase in last year.

I'm very aware of the difficulties that we haven't got Community Grants in the budget this year.

And I'm well aware as well that there has been substantial funding come into the county for sports grants and whatever.

But still, I think it is eluded there to maybe some of the councillors from the west there are groups that get small funding and I will be supporting the budget but with two changes that we NPPR take that we increase that by 50,000. And the other one was that we, there was a funding there for the new business rates incentive scheme and I understand the take on that as being negligible.

So, I really think we should take 50,000 out of that fund, it won't cause any issues, accordingly, I'm saying then we should provide 100,000 for the community grant scheme with a limit of 500 on the grants, which will be through the help over 200 clubs and organisations, so that's what I'm proposing for the budgets.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK. Do you have a seconder for that Cllr Pat Fitzgerald. Cllr Irene Winters?
Seconded by Cllr Irene Winters.

OK. Do you want to hand that up Pat, that proposal.

>>: My writing is very poor.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Lorraine already has it. OK.
So, we have a proposal for, and we have a seconder.
Are there any other proposals for the budget? OK.
Cllr John Snell, table 28.

CLLR SNELL: Thanks, it is not actually a proposal, I agree what is being proposed, it is just to a little bit of clarification, just in regard to the budget I want to thank Breda and Frank. I think it's unusual to sit through because all the work is done before that and I commend the officials on that. I just want to clarification around a few things. See the playgrounds, there's a reduction of 100,000 at a time when we have provided extra playgrounds throughout the county. And indeed, in your own district we opened two recently in Roundwood and Lara. I just wondering is that maintenance, the

budget now is 100,000 on maintenance. In regard to school wardens, it seems the Department of Education have a policy going forward where, they like to for their vision for the future seems to be they like to have educational hubs where they couple together a couple of schools on the one site, from different denominations, which is well and good, if you're in an urban area and restrict by the capacity for ground space. But, in rural areas it is certainly in my opinion isn't a good policy. And an example of that is and my own community, on a kilometre stretch of roadway, we have in the next year or two we will be reaching over 2,000 pupils, 2,000 pupils on this small stretch of road without a school warden to get the children into the schools is a disaster waiting to happen. This regard to housing, I want to commend the officials and particularly our housing officials, who have been really working hard, not just this year, but year in year out, providing what the constituents of County Wicklow need. I don't think there's a public representative here that wouldn't have housing front and centre of their daily workload. To see a budget produced with maintenance and

improvements increasing on the homeless services, traveller accommodation, and certainly at a time when re-lets are more and more common-place, because we're now in a position where local authority homes are being provided, north-east, south and west of County Wicklow and indeed we couldn't always say that. But we managed 4,500 properties and where a budget where maintenance and the indeed previous speakers have eluded to it in relation to fabric upgrade works are essential going forward.

I really wanted clarification around legal expenses.

And I don't see anywhere in this referenced to the law section.

And again, something that would have been in the past, many moons ago would be discussed with enforcement costs, legal proceedings, and I'm a firm believer that mediation and dialogue is the way forward in anything.

And to see that, from enforcement, a hundred cases of enforcement that only 13 went to proceedings, is to be commended to our planning section.

That comes from mediation and dialogue. In the

past I suppose will would be unlocked unfairly in my opinion, but I think that stands there and is testament to the great work going on behind the scenes.

But I would like to see where in the budget to shows legal expenses, and the law section. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, I have a proposer and seconder, so I'm going to move ahead with that. So, just on first I have to deal with the ARV, Brian do you want to say a word on that. I'll call that vote now. Do you want to explain to the members.

BRIAN: We'll retain it at the existing rate of 0.217, which means there's no increase in rates bills for rate payers in Wicklow next year.

CLLR CORRIGAN: Proposer and seconder. Cllr Pat Fitzgerald Cllr Vincent Blake.

Lorraine: That's 34 and two not present.
It is passed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Vacancy relief, Brian can you recap on that for the members.? BRIAN: Proposal would be to retain the vacancy relief rate at 60%,

that unchanged from 2020.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed and seconder, Cllr Gerry Walsh, and Cllr Pat Fitzgerald.

LORRAINE: Again, that's 34 and two not present.

Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: And the third vote is a vote and proposal for Cllr Pat Fitzgerald and Cllr Irene Winters for the budget to put 100,000 in two.

Lorraine: 50,000 to reduce NPP and to reduce the new business rates incentive scheme to 50,000 to allocate community grant stream to assist 200 clubs across the county.

>>: That's to increase the NPPR. And reduce the...

LORRAINE: Again, that's 34, and two not present.

Motion carried.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Lorraine, that concludes our budget meeting, members can I just thank each and every one of you, it was a difficult budget. It was a difficult year. And it come to you in a second. Difficult budget and difficult year. And I want to thank Brian and Breda and management team and chief executive, because this cut has been across the board for everybody, so I

want to thank everybody, and I want to thank the members because this hasn't been an easy budget on you either because we have to go back to the members of public and explain all the decisions we take and make so thank you each and ever I one of you for doing that. Cllr Peir Leonard you wanted to come in.

CLLR LEONARD: I'm probably doing this all wrong, but I'd like to make a pro-efficiently if it is not too late and I have written it down here, can I read it out.

CATHAOIRLEACH: What's it on?

CLLR LEONARD: In relation to the budget.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Budget has passed now. We can't take it now. Sorry, thank you. That concludes our meeting everybody, thank you very much.