

ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

HELD AT COUNTY BUILDINGS, WHITEGATES, WICKLOW TOWN
AND VIA TEAMS

ON

ON MONDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2023, AT 2:30PM

STENOGRAPHER: Niamh Kelly-Leahy, RMR, MBIVR

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1 PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED ON MONDAY, 27TH NOVEMBER 2023 AT
2 2:30PM AS FOLLOWS:

3

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, members, it is just half, so we might get started.

5 MS PURCELL: So we adjourned the meeting this morning, and we're now
6 recommencing the meeting, and I will start with the roll call.

7 Councillor Tommy Annesley? (No response.) Councillor Mark Barry? (No
8 response.) Councillor Joe Behan?

9 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Present.

10 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Vincent Blake?

11 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Present.

12 MS PURCELL: Present.

13 Councillor Sylvester Bourke?

14 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Present.

15 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Melanie Corrigan?

16 (No response.)

17 MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin?

18 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Present.

19 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Shay Cullen?

20 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Present.

21 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Erika Doyle?

22 (No response.) Councillor Gail Dunne? (No response.) Councillor Anne Ferris?

23 (No response.) Councillor Pat Fitzgerald?

24 (No response.) Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy?

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Present.

26 MS PURCELL: Councillor Tom Fortune?

27 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Present.

28 MS PURCELL: Councillor Patsy Glennon? (No response.) Councillor Mary
29 Kavanagh?

30 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Present.

31 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Pat Kennedy?

32 (No response.) Councillor Peir Leonard? (No response.) Councillor Derek
33 Mitchell?

34 COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Present.

1 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor John Mullen?
2 COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Present.
3 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Miriam Murphy?
4 (No response.) Councillor Dermot O'Brien?
5 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Anseo.
6 MS PURCELL: Councillor Paul O'Brien?
7 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Present.
8 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Rory O'Connor?
9 COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Anseo.
10 MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry O'Neill?
11 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Anseo.
12 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Lourda Scott?
13 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Here.
14 MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell? (No response.)
15 Councillor Stephen Stokes?
16 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Present.
17 MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry Walsh?
18 COUNCILLOR WALSH: Present.
19 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Irene Winters?
20 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Present.
21 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Pat Kennedy?
22 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Present.
23 Councillor Tommy Annesley?
24 COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: Present.
25 MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry?
26 COUNCILLOR BARRY: Present.
27 MS PURCELL: Councillor Melanie Corrigan? (No response.)
28 Councillor Erika Doyle?
29 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Here.
30 MS PURCELL: Councillor Gail Dunne?
31 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Here.
32 MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald? (No response.)
33 Councillor Corrigan has just joined us.
34 Councillor Patsy Glennon?

1 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Here.

2 MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard? I see you there, Councillor Leonard. Can
3 you hear us? Councillor Leonard, can you hear us? I can see you are present.

4 Councillor Murphy? And Councillor John Snell. No?

5 Thank you very much.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Helen.

7 Members, before we commence, I just want to thank everybody for facilitating the
8 deferral of the meeting this afternoon. It is much appreciated. I am just going to
9 open up the floor for votes of sympathy.

10 Councillor Pat Fitzgerald.

11 COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: I want to offer my condolence to the family of
12 Noel McDonald; beloved wife, Tracey, father of Niall, and son of the late Kathleen
13 and John McDonald. Noelle, obviously, was an outstanding sportsman, and he is
14 going to be greatly missed in the Arklow area. He had been sick for some time. He
15 worked with the Council here, worked in the Arklow Municipal District for some
16 time. So I want to offer my condolence to his family.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.

18 Councillor Irene Winters?

19 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I just want to offer our
20 sympathy to the family of the late Nora Timmins. Timmins would have a great
21 political history within this county. Nora was the wife of Godfrey Timmins, and the
22 mother of Billy and Edward, along with her six other children. And we wish them
23 every sympathy at this sad time.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor.

25 Councillor Gerry O'Neill?

26 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Again, yes, I'd like to offer my
27 sympathies to Councillor Edward Timmins and Billy and the family on the death of
28 their ma. She was a lovely woman, and a proud Galway woman. And she just
29 buried her own sister, Sister Una there, who was a nun in Dublin, only a couple of
30 months ago. And just to offer the Timmins family my condolences.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.

32 Councillor Stephen Stokes?

33 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Good morning, Cathaoirleach. If I can offer my
34 condolences to the family of Vincent Kelly, who was very well-known in

1 Greystones, in the golf circles, but also as a local shopkeeper. I was fortunate
2 enough to have grown up only two doors down from Vincent. An absolute
3 gentleman in the community. And he will be very sadly missed.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
5 Councillor Vincent Blake?

6 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I, too, would like to join with the
7 other members in a vote of sympathy for Nora Timmins, who passed away during
8 the weekend, and she was just laid to rest today, and to Godfrey, who served here as
9 Cathaoirleach of the Council here for quite a number of years, and Billy who served
10 the county as a TD, and to Edward, who has been here as well for quite a number of
11 years as well. So my deepest sympathy to the entire Timmins family and wider
12 community of Baltinglass as well.

13 So could I also add to that, that of Tom Kehoe from Knockananna, who served here
14 as an employee of Wicklow County Council for a number of years as well, who was
15 laid to rest last week in Knockananna as well. Thank you.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor.
17 Councillor Patsy Glennon?

18 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Yes. Vincent has already mentioned it there. Tom
19 Kehoe, who was a rate collector for Wicklow County Council in West Wicklow. He
20 passed away. He had a big funeral during the week. I'd like to offer my
21 condolences.

22 And of course, I would like to be associated with the condolences in respect of Nora
23 Timmins, Edward's mother. Edward is a good colleague. And the Timminses, as
24 Irene has said, is steeped in Fine Gael politics within the county. So, decent people.
25 Thank you.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
27 Councillor Gail Dunne?

28 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would also like to be
29 associated with the remarks to the Timmins family, to Tom Kehoe. I'd just like to
30 offer my condolences also to Noelie McDonald's family. I would have known him
31 all my life. I would have played soccer with him, and against him, from about under
32 12 all the way up to senior. And he was an outstanding sportsman. As we all know,
33 he worked for the Council as well. I used to see him on a regular basis. He won an
34 Oscar Traynor in the '80s, which is the biggest soccer for junior football in the

1 country. And Noelle was on that team. So it was a sad day when I heard that Noelle
2 had passed away. Thank you.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
4 Councillor John Mullen?

5 COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I would like to be associated
6 with the previous commiserations, but also to the memory of Mark Pierce, who died
7 quite tragically since the last meeting; a member of one of our crews, and a young
8 man, and sadly missed by the community in Kiltegan.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
10 Councillor Tom Fortune?

11 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I'd like to be associated with
12 the remarks for the Timmins family, and also the Kehoe family, on the death of Tom.
13 Tom also, for many, many years did trojan work for the GAA, in Wicklow, and
14 particularly at an underage level. He spent many, many years of his life organising
15 and looking after young people. So I would just like to be associated with that as
16 well.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
18 Helen, do you want to come in?

19 MS PURCELL: Yes. We extend our sympathies to the families of our colleagues,
20 as already mentioned, Mark Pierce and Noel McDonald. We also extend our
21 sympathies to the family of Annie Curran, mother of our colleague, John Curran.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: We will stand for a minute's silence.
23 (Minute's silence undertaken.)

24 MS PURCELL: May their souls, and the souls of all the faithfully departed, through
25 the mercy of God, rest in peace.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Helen.

27 Members, before we commence and start our meeting, I just want to acknowledge
28 our age-friendly team here in the Council, as well as our library services. We
29 attended the Chamber of Ireland Excellence in Local Governance Awards during the
30 week, and they were successful and worthy winners of the age-friendly category, for
31 an initiative that's run in the library supporting younger people and older people to
32 work together around technology.

33 So I just want to acknowledge that massive achievement. The library services are
34 definitely leading the way in lots of initiatives, particularly initiatives around

1 inclusion and accessibility. So just to acknowledge that win.
2 And also just to acknowledge the win of Councillor Mark Barry, who participated in
3 the Strictly Come Dancing in Greystones, and also succeeded in winning that. So
4 just to acknowledge that achievement as well.
5 So on that note, now, I will hand over to Brian, and we will commence the budget
6 discussions. Thank you.

7 MR GLEESON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Good afternoon, members. I will just
8 wait until Teresa has the presentation up on the screen.

9 MS PURCELL: Councillor Leonard, just to take the opportunity, can you hear us?

10 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yes. Sorry, I was having technical problems. I am
11 here now.

12 MR GLEESON: The first slide there, we'll just summarise the areas that I want to
13 discuss this afternoon. I'll firstly outline the budget process for 2024, go through the
14 planned expenditure and income as part of the budget, speak about the budgetary
15 challenges that we are facing next year, detail the expenditure, income and
16 expenditure adjustments made to the budget, review the proposed commercial rates,
17 ARV and rates vacancy relief, undertake budget review by service division, and then
18 we will finish off with the adoption of the budget for 2024.

19 Before we get into the detail, just to remind the elected members of the decisions that
20 we must take today and the sequence of those decisions. The first one there is to
21 agree the annual rate of variation for the commercial rates for next year. That
22 currently stands at 0.217. Then we have to agree the rates relief on vacant premises.
23 That currently stands at 60%. And then, finally, we will adopt the statutory budget
24 for 2024.

25 Just to outline again the budgetary process that you will be well aware of. The first
26 stage is the local property tax variation decision. That was taken back in October,
27 and the decision was to retain the 6% variation rate.

28 Then we have the draft budgetary plans, including the general municipal allocation,
29 which were issued out to all the Municipal Districts, and have been approved in late
30 October and early November at the district meetings. Today we have our annual
31 budget meeting. And then, in the first quarter of next year, the schedule of
32 Municipal District works will issue, and that is following receipt of the roads
33 allocations we receive from the Department.

34 Just to mention local property tax. As you are aware, the recent baseline review and

1 the introduction of a new funding model provided for an increase in the baseline for
2 Wicklow County Council. It's gone up from 8 and a half million, up to 11.2 million.
3 That's an increase of 2.7 million. In addition, we have had new properties and
4 valuations which generated an additional 300,000. So that brings the total extra
5 funding provision for next year of just over 3 million. So our LPT allocation has
6 increased from 13.8 million up to 16.9 million for next year.

7 Included in that 16.9 million is a figure of 1.2 million, which relates to the 6%
8 variation rate. And as you are aware, 100% of this money has been ring-fenced for
9 discretionary spend in the Municipal Districts. It is split out by councillor; Bray get
10 an allocation of 297,000, and the other four districts 223,000; bringing a total of 1.2
11 million.

12 As we said, the next stage of the process was draft budgetary plan, and the approval
13 of the general municipal allocation for the Municipal Districts. This allocation
14 includes town twinning of 34,000; economic development and promotion, 63 and a
15 half thousand; festival funding of 142,000; civic receptions, 10,000, and over 1.2
16 million for discretionary expenditure.

17 So in relation to budget 2024, for this budget, we have put a strong focus on housing
18 and climate action, and you can see from the table there that there's increases of 25%
19 for housing proposed and 14% under environmental services, which covers climate
20 action. You will also notice a decrease under division C water services, and that is
21 part of the continued transition of water services to Uisce Eireann, and that will be
22 ongoing up until the end of 2026.

23 So how do we fund this 160 million? We have four main sources of funding: Grants
24 and subsidiaries, 74.3 million, which is 46% of the budget; goods and services, 37.9,
25 which is 24%; commercial rates, 31 million, 19%; and then local property tax, 16.9
26 million, which equates to 11% of the budget.

27 We have a number of challenges we have to take into consideration when preparing
28 the budget. There's the ongoing conflict in the Ukraine. Heretofore, the provision of
29 accommodation was the main service provision. This will be expanded next year
30 into integration support, and a new team has been put in place for that particular
31 service.

32 Inflationary costs: Obviously, inflation is reducing, but it is a concern, and an issue
33 we have had to look at. Increased pay and pension costs, every year it has an impact
34 on our budget. Climate action commitments and energy targets. As you are well

1 aware, the climate action plan is near completion. It will be presented to the
2 members next year. And the actions out of that need implementation. In addition,
3 we have our energy targets up to 2030, and we have a number of initiatives that need
4 to be supported and funded in order to achieve our relevant targets.

5 There's always increased demand for housing expenditure, and also continued
6 demand for road improvements throughout the county. There's also match funding
7 capital commitments for projects under various schemes, such as URDF, or RDF
8 town and village, ORAS et cetera. However, notwithstanding all these challenges,
9 we must approve a balanced budget, as per the legislation.

10 When preparing the budget, we also must take into account a number of restrictions
11 that we have in relation to what we can and cannot do in relation to the budget and
12 areas that we need to look at. We would consider that approximately 90% of our
13 budget is non-discretionary.

14 To explain that, a few examples there: Payroll costs, over 57 million relate to paying
15 pensions, salaries and wages. Obviously, we can't touch that. There's a number of
16 contra items, grant-funded items, where the expenditure matches the income.

17 Examples of that would include HAP and RAS, DPGs, homeless funding, SICAP,
18 LEO, Sports Partnership, Irish Water and Machinery Yard. Other non-discretionary
19 costs would include light and heat, which we have to pay, and insurance, we have to
20 pay, loan interest, statutory contributions and rates write-offs.

21 So, as I said, taking those in account, it's approximately 90% of our budget.

22 So, of the 10% discretionary costs, examples of that would be our own resources in
23 relation to regional and local roads, public lighting, housing repairs and maintenance,
24 community grants, environmental initiatives, arts and festivals, library book
25 purchases, economic and tourist supports, match funding for capital programmes,
26 and the discretionary funding for the Municipal Districts.

27 However, I am sure you'd agree, there's a lot on that list that a lot of members here in
28 the chamber would say, while they might be discretionary, they are essential
29 services, so we do have to take that into consideration, and it doesn't leave us with a
30 huge amount of scope when we are trying to balance the budget.

31 Just in relation to, I suppose, the input of the members and the legislation for that.

32 The Local Government Act provides the basis for the budget process. The adoption
33 is a reserve function of the members here today, and, under the legislation and the
34 regulations the, corporate policy group assists with setting the overall parameters and

1 the identification of issues and approaches that should be taken as part of the process.
2 And the corporate policy group met twice in November, in advance of today, on the
3 6th and the 20th of November for their input.
4 I will just move on now. I am just going to go through detail adjustments.
5 Okay. We will move on.
6 Just the detail adjustments per area that I will go through next. As a result, I
7 suppose, of our good performance on housing delivery and the resulting additional
8 units that are provided, we have extra rental income of 1.1 million. That brings us up
9 to 18.6 million in total for next year. Pre-letting will see an increase of 800,000, and
10 the total amount will be 4.9 million for next year. We are also estimating income of
11 1.1 million from the Department. So it will be 3.8 million of our own resources will
12 go towards that particular area.
13 Housing repairs and maintenance, another important area, will see an increase of
14 250,000, up to 2.6 million. And there's also a new funded planned maintenance
15 programme being put forward in the amount of 250,000.
16 We provided additional funding of 400,000 in respect of boiler, central heating, heat
17 pump, and alarm servicing and maintenance, and that brings up the total allocation to
18 1.27 for that area of expenditure.
19 Disabled persons' grants has increased by 630,000, up to 2.4 million. And housing
20 of the homeless is also up 300,000, to 2.2 million. And there's approximately 80% of
21 that expenditure is funded from the Department.
22 Also, in housing, a big increase which we have seen over the last couple of years for
23 the payment and availability in the long-term leasing, expenditure and income
24 through the approved housing body schemes. So this year will see an increase of 5
25 million.
26 Also, the Croí Cónaithe vacant property grant scheme. A new provision has been
27 put in for an amount of 3.3 million, which is fully funded from the Department. And
28 that is based on the number of applications we have received to date under that
29 particular scheme.
30 Under roads, transportation and safety. The overall roads allocation has gone up by
31 1.3 million. It is matching, more or less, outturn for this year. We won't know our
32 final figures for roads until Quarter 1, when we get the allocations from the
33 Department. However, on the basis of the 1.3 million, the main increases would see
34 105,000 increase in national roads maintenance, 386,000 in regional road

1 maintenance, and 710,000 in local road maintenance.

2 In the area of development management, town regeneration sees an increase of
3 142,000 to support our towns and villages and prepare master plans. Skill strategy
4 will be completed in 2024, and we'll have a provision of 30,000 for that. An increase
5 for tourist promotion initiatives of 43,000. Strategic land development will see
6 30,000 of an increase. This will assist with bringing a number of sites to the market
7 next year. And the Ukraine support has an allocation of 1.8 million in the budget for
8 2024. This is fully funded, and it is an increase of 664,000 on 2023. Wanting to
9 note, our matched funding will see a decrease of 200,000. It will go from 500,000
10 down to 300,000. For the last about five years, we have used money from our
11 retained earnings payment from IPB. I suppose this was a limited source of funding.
12 It was a particular fixed amount, which was paid over five years. Our last payment
13 is in 2024. So just, I suppose, to put the members on notice, for 2025 onwards, we
14 will have to identify a new source of funding to meet this commitment.

15 In relation to community and recreation, we have retained a community grant
16 scheme of 120,000. As you are aware, the disability strategy was recently launched,
17 and we've made a new provision of 25,000 towards the implementation of that
18 important strategy. We have a number of community buildings in our ownership
19 now, which require ongoing maintenance, and we have made a provision of 30,000
20 in that regard.

21 And also, the outdoor recreation strategies. Trying to meet our objectives within our
22 own strategy and those within the national outdoor strategies, we have put forward a
23 provision of 40,000.

24 We have also tried to provide for a number of small increases to voluntary and
25 community groups throughout the county that carry out vital services. This would
26 include County Wicklow Volunteer Bureau, PPN, Wicklow Uplands, Wicklow Way,
27 the Tinahely Show, and, between those bodies, we have provided 24,000 of an
28 increase.

29 One of our other focus areas is environment and, in particular, climate action. The
30 climate action plan provision has seen an increase of 100,000, and the full funding
31 will be 230,000. As I said earlier, that plan aims to be completed at the end of the
32 year and presented to the members in the new year for approval.

33 Energy initiatives, 440,000, sees an increase of 170,000. So that provision will
34 include support for projects under the SEAI pathfinder programme, as part of the

1 work done by the Mideast Energy Bureau.

2 Also, that will -- these two areas supplement an existing provision that we already
3 have in place for the last couple of years, in respect of climate action and
4 biodiversity, of 180,000.

5 Our public lighting energy efficiency project is due to commence in the second half
6 of next year, and we will continue a capital transfer provision, building up a fund in
7 the amount of 200,000.

8 Very important work, the Wicklow harbour dredging programme sees an increase of
9 100,000, up to 250,000. There is a foreshore licence application in with the
10 Department at the moment for emergency works at Wicklow harbour, and it has just
11 gone through the public consultation phase. So, fingers crossed, when there's
12 approved for that, we need a fund in order to carry out those particular works.

13 Conservation grant scheme sees an increase of 140,000. And you will have noticed
14 that there was a recent press release in relation to the schemes for the historic
15 structure of funds and the built heritage improvement scheme. That's now open for
16 applications going forward.

17 And then we have recycling operations, an increase of 78,000, and that includes
18 12,000 of an increase for Tinahely Recycling Centre to meet increased costs.

19 Then we have, under miscellaneous, NPPR is reduced by 100,000, our income. The
20 expiry of the 2012 charge takes place on the 1st of April 2024, and the full charge
21 will be gone entirely from April 2025. So that's been a fantastic source of funding
22 over the last number of years. Unfortunately, that will be gone in its entirety in April
23 2025.

24 I suppose, based on market performance, our annual dividend from IPB has been
25 reduced by 179,000. It has gone from 397,000 down to 218,000. However, on the
26 flip side, our premium has decreased from IPB by 96,000. So that's a saving on our
27 costs.

28 Energy/inflation compensation of nearly 1.7 that we got from the Department this
29 year will not be repeated for 2024. So that impacts significantly on our income for
30 next year. However, we have taken into account the fact that there has been a drop
31 in energy prices, and we have reduced our own energy costs by over half a million.
32 Due to the higher interest rates, our investment income is projected to increase by
33 285,000, and now stands at up to half a million.

34 And then we have pay and pensions. As I said already, it's 57.4% of our budget.

1 Quite a considerable portion amounts to the pay and pension costs of the budget. We
2 have included increases of approximately 2 million in respect of the national pay
3 agreement increases. This takes into account the October increase of 1.5% and the
4 full year application of that, but also you will be aware that the national pay talks
5 commenced today with the unions. So I suppose, providing for, I suppose,
6 responsible budgeting, we know there will be agreement at some stage. So we have
7 made an estimated 2% included in the budget for next year. And we have applied
8 85% funding against that, which is our normal compensation level from the
9 Department.

10 There is also a provisional funding allocation included in the budget of 1.4 million
11 for the retained firefighters agreement. We got a letter from that about a week or two
12 ago from the Department in relation to that, and that's been factored in.

13 And also, there's a number of new positions in areas of housing, planning, climate
14 action, law, and we have also applied for a number of positions under a new graduate
15 programme run by the LGMA. I suppose, taking into account a lot of those positions
16 are funded and looking at the recruitment timing, we have estimated that the actual
17 net cost to the budget and to Wicklow County Council will be approximately
18 300,000 next year.

19 I mentioned about the integration support in relation to Ukraine. There will be
20 actually a local authority integration team set up, at a cost of 300,000, fully funded
21 by the Department, and that will relate to ongoing integration support for
22 international protection applicants and refugees.

23 And the old chestnut, the pension costs increased by half a million, and that goes up
24 to 8.1 million for 2024.

25 Next, I want to touch on commercial rates. The total amount for commercial rates
26 next year comes to approximately 31 million. This is a slight decrease of 360,000 on
27 our budget last year. That's due to a number of reasons. Valuation tribunal appeals,
28 global revaluations decreases, and some revisions and delistings that have taken
29 place. We have had 181,000 of new build additions included in that as well.

30 I should also point out that, just recent information we've got from the valuation
31 office, we expect to receive valuation certificates for new buildings shortly, which
32 are estimated at approximately 400,000. So that's included in the budget. It can't be
33 included in the actual commercial rates up figure, because we haven't got the certs
34 yet, but we have factored it into the overall budget anyway.

1 Just to note as well that, of that 31 million, it includes a G factor provision of
2 600,000 that we transfer into our capital account every year to cover ourselves for
3 future valuation tribunal appeals, where, if there is a reduction, we have to pay out
4 that money in relation to the reduction to the said businesses.

5 In relation to the commercial rates ARV for next year, I suppose, we're conscious of
6 the impact of energy inflation costs that have had on local businesses over the last
7 couple of years, and also taking into account that some businesses are still recovering
8 from the impact of Covid, so the recommendation for next year is to leave the ARV
9 unchanged at 0.217.

10 In relation to vacancy relief rate, the recommendation for that is to retain it at 60%.
11 Sorry, if we can push that on, Teresa. Yes. That's to retain at 60% for 2024, as it
12 complements the Council's rates incentive scheme for new business that reoccupy
13 vacant properties, and it is also in line with the national average, which currently
14 stands at 57%. Also to note that any increase to bring it back up would generate an
15 additional cost to the budget.

16 So to conclude, an overall summary of the budget for next year, we see 160 million
17 for Wicklow County Council. That's an increase of 17.3 million, 12% increase on
18 last year. It avoids any reductions to existing services. It focuses on the key issues
19 of housing and climate action, and it provides for increases across most services to
20 address pay, cost inflation and increase demands. And also included in it is
21 provision of 1.2 million of discretionary funding for the Municipal Districts.

22 So I think, overall, it is a very positive budget, and that will benefit a lot of groups
23 and citizens in 2024.

24 Okay. So, that's the presentation part. We will now do a review of each division.
25 What we plan to do is, like we have done in previous years, we will group them
26 together. So the first grouping is division A, housing and building, and division B,
27 roads.

28 So in relation to your booklet, housing, you can find the figures on pages 61 and 72
29 to 74. And for roads, it's on page 62, 75 to 77. So if we can have questions just
30 relating to those two areas, and we will obviously cover the other areas after that.

31 Thank you.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Brian, for that. And thanks, also, for the
33 presentation at the CBG meeting on the 20th and for the offer to meet with
34 individuals as well. It is much appreciated.

1 So I am opening this up for questions in relation to those areas only first, if that is
2 okay. So if anybody has any specific questions relating to those areas they
3 want to -- if they could indicate they want to come in?

4 Councillor Miriam Murphy?

5 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: I am usually last; I can't believe I am first. Thanks,
6 Brian, for a very intense and very well explained budget.

7 Just on the housing. The housing for people with disabilities is one thing, and, as I
8 said, specific on a one-to-one, like, is there provision in that? I know that there has
9 been and could be in the future more cases of very individualised housing need for
10 family. And is there a provision on building that cost into that? And, you know, as
11 well with the DPG grants for housing, I know that is probably not coming under that,
12 is there a waiting list or is there is an uptake on that as well? Thanks, Brian.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Councillor.

14 Councillor Rory O'Connor?

15 COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Thank you for your presentation, Brian. Just one
16 question I have around housing, because I understand it gets mentioned in the budget
17 about the residential zoned land tax.

18 And it just kind of got me thinking about: Is the income from that going to be going
19 to the Council or is it going to be going to, like, a national pot, if there's been any
20 indications? Because I just think going forward that could become a new income
21 stream for us as a council. Yes, I would be very interested to hear some more
22 information about that.

23 Thank you.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.

25 Councillor Joe Behan?

26 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I have a number of questions for
27 each programme. So will I do them together or will I just take housing first?

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes, if you could just keep them grouped to each area, that
29 would be --

30 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yes, but what about transport? Because that's the
31 second --

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes, housing and transport, yes. Housing and transport now.

33 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Together? Okay. Thanks, Brian, for the professional
34 presentation, as always.

1 The first thing I would query is your picture. Greenhills Road affordable housing
2 scheme. First in the country. And according to the email from the Chief Executive
3 on Friday, and I want to thank sincerely the Chief Executive on her work on this,
4 only 14 of the 36 houses have completed their sale. And I don't know about the rest
5 of you, but I am certainly getting very deeply concerned, on behalf of the people who
6 had signed up, who expected to now be in their house, and who are being held up by
7 this disgraceful situation with HomeBond/Bank of Ireland. Because I think there's
8 two players in this.

9 Now, you might say, what's this got to do with the estimates? Well, in fact, the Chief
10 Executive very kindly informed us on Friday that Wicklow County Council, in the
11 last few weeks, has spent €121,014 to -- given to HomeBond a month ago. And then
12 a couple of days after they received the money, they introduced a new condition,
13 which effectively seems not to be possible to fulfil.

14 Now, I feel really, really, really sorry for the people that I know who are waiting for
15 good news from this meeting about this issue, because, despite the fact that the Chief
16 Executive has already spoken to the Minister, twice I think, we still have this
17 impasse.

18 On checking the details on HomeBond, and this is relevant for all of us, HomeBond
19 seem to be the ones that are, you know, causing this impasse. In fact, I discovered
20 HomeBond is regulated by the Prudential Regulation Authority, and regulated by the
21 Financial Conduct Authority in Britain. It is only registered in this country by the
22 Central Bank as a third country.

23 So in effect, the management of HomeBond is actually, I think, emanating from
24 Germany. So we have a major problem here. We have a housing development that
25 was a landmark development. We had issues about how they were going to be
26 allocated. Fine. We got over that. Here, we have those houses sitting, and only 14
27 of them are occupied before Christmas. So I'm really at the stage now where I feel
28 we need to ask a couple of questions about this.

29 First of all, do we have any banking dealings with Bank of Ireland? Because Bank
30 of Ireland seem to be the people who are insisting on this HomeBond registration.
31 AIB are not insisting on it. So the people who are in there at the moment are not
32 being held up by their bank. Is Bank of Ireland one of our bankers? And if it is, is
33 there anything we can do to talk to Bank of Ireland about that aspect of it?

34 But secondly, the entire management of the HomeBond scheme, I think, has to be

1 questioned. And I want to propose an emergency resolution here today that this
2 Council has no confidence in the operation of the HomeBond scheme and how it is
3 being managed, given that we have spent €120,000 of taxpayers' money, in a very
4 stretched budget, for something, and then we're getting conditions added in at the last
5 minute.

6 I don't know who can answer it from the top table. I would be happy, whoever does.
7 But it is just one of my questions, Cathaoirleach. I will move on quickly to the
8 others.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes. No problem.

10 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: On the question of the relets, this is a major issue for us in
11 Bray, where we have a large number of vacant houses. And I want to congratulate
12 Teresa and Director Joe, and everybody else in the Housing Department for their
13 magnificent work done in getting relets up to scratch, and relet.

14 But in fact, every year, around October, the work has to stop because we run out of
15 money. And yet, we have pontificating statements from the Minister for Housing
16 saying that the Government will provide the money to put all these vacant houses
17 back into use, and, in fact, we are getting a miserly 800,000 extra next year, which,
18 with the cost of construction, is probably going to fix, what, ten, 20 houses to
19 standard? It is nothing. It is a drop in the ocean.

20 And again, I think -- and I would like Brian, maybe, to comment on this, if possible.
21 Why are we holding this up every year in October? Is it that we, Wicklow County
22 Council, have decided we're not spending any more money on this scheme, or is it
23 that the Government turned off the tap on us? Because, again, look at the number of
24 people we could house if we actually could get ahead with that.

25 And the third point is, again, for those individuals who are relying on being able to
26 buy their house under the tenant purchase scheme, you know, I am tearing my hair
27 out at this stage, the bit I have left, about the delays that are going on between the
28 housing section and the legal section in this Council, about who is actually
29 responsible for ensuring that mapping is completed and that work is done to ensure
30 that those people, who will be paying money to this Council, so this is a budget
31 meeting, they have their mortgages lined up, but, in fact, they're being delayed
32 because of whatever is happening here within this building.

33 And I would appeal to the Chief Executive to address this issue. Is there a staffing
34 problem, either in housing or in the law section, that is leading to these delays?

1 Because it does have a financial knock-on effect for us.
2 Now, moving on to transport, Cathaoirleach. And again, I will be as quick as I can.
3 Is there any update from the transport director on the noise mitigation measures?
4 Residents in Kilmacanogue have been waiting for a very, very long time for noise
5 mitigation. Money has been allocated by the TI for this. Can we expect that that
6 will be done?
7 Secondly, there is mention in the manager's statement about a parking contract being
8 issued in Bray, a new parking contract. That was news to me, because we have our
9 own traffic wardens in Bray, and I hope that's not being changed, and perhaps
10 somebody can comment on that.
11 Second last point. Public lighting. I saw there was a huge problem in Arklow
12 recently, and we are now having a major problem in Bray in terms of getting answers
13 to when public lights are going to be switched back on. And in some cases, when the
14 ESB are responsible for doing repairs, getting answers from the ESB.
15 Could I ask the director if she can tell me, or if the finance director can tell me, how
16 much are we paying these bodies, ESB and whatever the other company is who
17 maintain our lights; how much are we paying, and do you actually think we're getting
18 value for money? Because I certainly find the system very, very hard to manage at
19 the moment, and I think many people, in this time of the year, are very annoyed
20 about it.
21 And finally, again, to the last question and to the transport director. We all know
22 about the controversy about these bus lanes, this crazy plan to put bus lanes on the
23 hard shoulders of both sides of the road coming to and from Bray through
24 Kilmacanogue. A video appeared -- there was a non-statutory public consultation,
25 and I think an unprecedented number of people made submissions to that.
26 A video appeared on the Council website three or four days before the consultation
27 period ended. A very, very slick, professional, very well done video, which hadn't
28 been available earlier, and obviously cost a lot of money.
29 Now, I query, why did a video appear towards the end of the public consultation?
30 But, more importantly for this meeting, how much did that video cost? And how
31 much has been given to consultants to design a plan that the people of north
32 Wicklow have already rejected out of hand? Because I would be very concerned
33 about the waste of public money on a crazy scheme, considering that the present
34 Minister for Transport has already wasted 5 million on previous consultants'

1 contracts on that.

2 Thank you.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.

4 Councillor Irene Winters?

5 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And thanks, Brian, for your
6 presentation. Just in relation to housing and building. In maintenance and
7 improvement of local authority housing units, last year we adopted, for assessment
8 of housing needs, 463,000, and we expected outturn as 503,000, and, yet, we're only
9 allocating 385,000 for this year. I am just wondering, it's the only cost that seems to
10 have gone down, and I am wondering why would we think that our cost of
11 assessment of housing need allocations, et cetera, would go down?

12 And two, in relation to what Councillor Behan has said, yes, there's a cost to us as a
13 Council for what's happening, but I would have great sympathy for the borrowers,
14 because the longer it is delayed, then the longer it takes for them to draw down their
15 loan, and, with each 1% increase in interest rates, and since the houses have been
16 ready, and there's probably been 1 and a half to 2%, but it adds roughly between 28
17 and 34,000 to their loan over the lifetime of an average 25-year loan. And that was
18 expenditure that really they shouldn't have had to incur.

19 Thank you.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. We are just going to let
21 Brian and Emer come in now. Maybe, Emer, you might come in on the HomeBond
22 issue. And just for clarity, it is not just Bank of Ireland. Permanent TSB and a few
23 others are requesting it as well. So Emer, you might cover that?

24 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Look, members, I am as frustrated as
25 you all are with the HomeBond situation. It is simply not good enough. We know it
26 is not good enough. So the email that I sent to you on Friday was just to keep you
27 fully informed of where we are at with it.

28 I met with the Chief Executive of the Banking and Payments Federation on the 9th of
29 November, because it's his membership that are having -- you know, that are causing
30 these issues. And he has undertaken to meet with Bank of Ireland, in particular,
31 because they have the majority of the issues here, and it's their underwriting
32 department, is my understanding, that have the issue with HomeBond, or the -- you
33 know, are insisting on HomeBond as part of the underwriting of the mortgages there.
34 I will keep you informed. I am keeping as much pressure on as I can. As I said, if I

1 behaved, and didn't respond in the way that another agency is responding, another
2 company is responding, I wouldn't be in a job. And that's being very blunt about it.
3 So I am keeping the pressure on. I am keeping our colleagues in the Department of
4 Housing informed as well. Because I am led to believe that, while our situation is
5 the most acute, it is not unique in the country. There are our issues around the
6 country with the provision of HomeBond.

7 I suppose the level of frustration really is in the lack of engagement by HomeBond
8 with the staff in the Housing Department and, indeed, with myself. You get an email
9 with a demand looking for something, and then nothing, no response to any queries
10 we have had on it. You know, it is just simply not good enough, members. So I
11 mean, you have my commitment that I will continue to push on this. Those people
12 deserve to be in their homes as quickly as possible, and I am acutely aware of the
13 financial implications of every day that they are not in their homes.

14 Just very briefly on the relet situation. I made an additional submission to the
15 Department on the 16th of November, looking for additional funding for relets. I
16 have been told, unofficially, that we will get that. It is very positive sounding, but
17 I'm waiting -- I didn't -- it is not included in the budget figures because I haven't been
18 formally told what that might be as well. But I looked for in the region of an
19 additional million euro. So as soon as I get notification of that, I will certainly let all
20 the members know.

21 I'll hand you over to Brian. Thank you.

22 MR GLEESON: Thanks, Emer. Just in relation to Councillor Murphy's question
23 about the DPGs and the uptake. There is an uptake. We are probably expecting
24 nearly up to 2 million of a spend by the end of this year. And as I said, we have
25 provided for additional provision for next year, to bring the total allocation to 2.4.
26 Councillor O'Connor, in relation to residential zoned tax, that's actually been
27 deferred now until 2025. So in any event, that's collected by Revenue as opposed to
28 Wicklow County Council. So there's no benefit to us. But it has been deferred until
29 2025.

30 Councillor Behan, in relation to pre-letting, in Bray in particular, we're putting in
31 substantial funding in relation to that area. There's an increase in the allocation this
32 year to 1.15 million for Bray, alone. That is an increase of 270,000. What we're
33 expecting, we could spend up to 1.3 million this year in Bray. So we're not actually
34 holding back. We are actually expending money on the basis that we hope to, as the

1 Chief Executive said, get some funding at the end of the year. It's not ideal that this
2 happened so late, but that's the way it works in relation to the Department. The
3 Government departments work on a cash accounting basis, so we won't know until
4 later on in the year if there is spare cash in another particular area, that they'll
5 allocate it out.

6 So as I say, there is a huge amount of funding that goes into this area. I know, to a
7 certain degree, it's like a bottomless pit. And one house can take, you know, 15,000
8 to spend, and another could be 60,000. I think in the NOAC report, I think our
9 average was around 37,000. So it is -- look, it is a substantial area. But we have
10 really prioritised. I know from talking to the Director of Housing, like, that was the
11 area that he really wanted to prioritise for the coming year, and that's why we made
12 such a substantial increase of nearly a million. As I said, 3.8 million of the allocation
13 next year is from our own resources. So it just shows the commitment that we are
14 placing on pre-letting. But, like that, we will continue to try and, I suppose, secure
15 as much Government funding in that particular area, and it sounds like, as I said,
16 unofficially at the moment, but it's good news in that area in relation to the costs we
17 have incurred this year.

18 I might pass on the tenant purchase scheme question to Teresa, and the noise
19 mitigation question to Leonora.

20 Just in relation to the public lighting, our annual budget for the operations of our
21 public lighting is 2.3 million. As regards whether or not that is value for money, I
22 don't know. It is what it is. And I suppose it's demand-led and it is based on callouts
23 from the company, as the lights break down and need updating.

24 I think -- I think that's it.

25 Oh, yes, Councillor Winters, in relation to that small decrease in relation to the
26 allocations, that's basically -- it's just a combination of staffing, whereby we wouldn't
27 take account of maybe the overtime that occurred this year. It would just be normal
28 pay. And also, our central management charges, when they're allocated, it can
29 actually result in a decrease on the previous year's central management cost. So that
30 is the main difference. It is very minimal, but it doesn't impact on the service that is
31 being provided.

32 Okay. Thank you.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Brian.

34 Teresa, do you want to come in?

1 TERESA: Yes. Okay. First, Councillor Murphy had a question about individual
2 needs of families. And just to say, we kind of try and flag that at application stage,
3 and we kind of wrap around a team, social worker included, with the families at that
4 stage, to try and identify, maybe, brownfield sites where we can build specifically
5 designed houses to meet the needs of those particular families. We don't always
6 capture it, but we do endeavour to.

7 With regard to delays in tenant purchases, yes, I acknowledge there are delays.
8 Unfortunately, sometimes the applications can be complicated. There's legal issues,
9 there can be mapping issues, there can be CPO issues. So it is kind of trying to pull
10 all those together. But we are doing our best. And I know there's a couple of
11 individual cases that we are working on, that people have been in the system for a
12 while.

13 So that's kind of where we are with that one.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Teresa.

15 Leonora.

16 MS EARLS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Councillor Behan, yes, just relating to the
17 noise mitigation. So the ground investigation had been done. There was a bit of a
18 delay, because it took a bit longer to do the slip trenches. They're now done. The
19 design is complete. Our engineers were out with the residents in the last kind of ten
20 to 15 days, and there was kind of good engagement. So it is finally moving on. But
21 I do acknowledge it has gone on longer than we would have liked. But it is moving
22 along now.

23 I suppose just in relation to public lighting, there's just over 15,300 lights in the
24 county, and at any given time, in and around 2% of those lights are out. And I do
25 fully appreciate that, when the light is gone from outside a person's house, it does
26 have a particular impact on them. But the team here are constantly in contact with
27 the contractor and with the ESB.

28 Now, it is complicated in Wicklow, because we fall into three different ESB areas,
29 and there's not one dedicated team dedicated to the county, so it means ourselves and
30 the contractor are trying to constantly send requests, on a weekly basis, and hold
31 meetings with ESB to try and get the work done.

32 Now, that's a portion of what the faults are. But I can assure you that we do try and
33 battle with them as best we can. We do -- we are constantly engaging with the
34 contractor, also.

1 Just then in relation to kind of, I suppose, reporting the faults, there is an online
2 system, but there is also a dedicated phone line on our website, so people can either
3 use the dedicated phone line or use the online reporting system.

4 In relation to the N11 interim bus scheme. So we started the public consultation
5 piece, and it kind of became a bit apparent early on from the feedback that we were
6 getting that there was a bit of confusion, so we thought we would get the flyover
7 video for the entirety of the scheme, just to try and give some clarity on that. There
8 wasn't any additional cost -- there was no additional cost to us to get that done. The
9 contractor -- the consultants did that, and really it was just to try and give a better
10 visual impact.

11 The initial consultation period was extended from 13th October to the -- into
12 November. And as you say, there has been a lot of consultation and feedback from
13 us, which the consultants are going through at the moment. We have kind of been
14 pushing them, and we hope that we will have a report before Christmas as to what
15 the feedback is on those reports.

16 The parking contract is looked after by Bray, so I will bass that off, if that's okay?

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks.

18 MS GALLAGHER: Thanks, Leonora. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

19 Yes, so Councillor Behan, the car parking contract was genuinely up for renewal, so
20 it went out to procurement, and it is in four lots: Machines, cash collection, wardens,
21 and back office software.

22 So there is the contract to provide two wardens in Greystones, two in Wicklow, two
23 in Arklow. But the Bray wardens are our employees, so that hasn't changed.

24 Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Lorraine, for that.

26 Okay. Councillor Paul O'Brien?

27 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. And thank you to
28 Brian and his team for the budget. Can I also thank the Chief Executive for her
29 response to Councillor Behan in relation to Greenhills Road? This is something we
30 are all involved in, and it is an absolute disgrace the way some of the potential
31 purchasers -- because they're not even guaranteed at this stage.

32 You know, I had the flip side of it at the weekend. I actually spoke to a couple that
33 got their house, got their keys, absolutely made up. But like Councillor Behan and
34 so many others, I have also received the emails and phone calls from very worried

1 people now. And for the life of me, I can't understand how some banks seem to be
2 getting away with blue murder, while other banks don't. Look it, you know, there's
3 no consistency here whatsoever.

4 But it's absolutely heart-breaking, in the run-up to Christmas -- I know it's never a
5 good time -- but especially in the run-up to Christmas, where we have people, what
6 should have been a dream come true for them, turning into an absolute and utter
7 nightmare by the banks that were bailed out by these people as well.

8 So I just -- I cannot, for the life of me -- but I know the Chief Executive, we have
9 been in touch, we have spoken about it, and I -- we appreciate her responses, and I
10 know she's doing everything she can, and I just hope, for the sake of these people,
11 that it's a resolution is found sooner rather than later.

12 My question then in relation to transport is, and it is something that I called for
13 myself back in -- when we were meeting in Greystones during those dark days
14 during the pandemic: As we all know, Wicklow town here has been -- it's been built
15 up, and around Rathnew, and anyone trying to get into Wicklow town during the
16 evening times, you know, it's long enough days on them, working in Dublin, trying
17 to get back into the town is taking 20 minutes, half an hour.

18 So I am delighted to see, on page 57, that, under the Wicklow Municipal District
19 objectives and proposals for 2024, that we are going to progress the Rocky Road as
20 an alternative route to Wicklow through a specific improvement scheme.

21 I have only two questions, to be honest with you. In terms of the scheme, will it go
22 all the way to the N11? Because there's a road there crying out for maintenance,
23 crying out for attention, and the space is there to widen it and make it an artery into
24 town, which I think would take a lot of the pressure off coming in through Rathnew.

25 It will open up Marlton Road. And has there been funding allocated to it?

26 So first question: Is it going all the way to the N11? And has there been funding
27 allocated for this? Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Councillor.

29 Councillor Lourda Scott?

30 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thanks, Brian, for the very
31 comprehensive report.

32 I have just a very quick question under road, and I was just wondering does the
33 figure for maintenance include maintenance of bicycle lanes? We are investing an
34 awful lot and getting an awful lot of funding, which is very welcome, from the NTA

1 and developing our pedestrian and cycling facilities, but one of the issues that gets
2 raised to me at specific times of the year, notably in the autumn when there's lots of
3 leaves falling on bike lanes and particularly in the winter when there is frost, is that
4 the additional maintenance isn't really being carried out. And I have raised this
5 before, last winter, and I didn't really get a satisfactory answer, and I am just
6 wondering is there a specific budget provision for this in our budget or does that
7 come under the kind of general roads maintenance programme?

8 Thank you.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
10 Councillor Gerry Walsh?

11 COUNCILLOR WALSH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And thanks to Brian for the
12 presentation. Just two quick questions. First one on housing, on page 15 of the
13 document there, in relation to social housing on Council lands, and the expressions
14 of interest from approved housing bodies. I note that the development of a number
15 of sites has been agreed with approved housing bodies, and further sites are being
16 considered at present.

17 So I am just wondering if your housing section -- or will the housing section be in a
18 position to outline some detail on that to the members, you know, maybe at the next
19 meeting or going forward, just to give an idea of what sites are being considered and,
20 you know, what locations.

21 And on the road transport piece, similar to Councillor Scott's question there, I am
22 looking at maintenance there for non-national road maintenance. I am wondering
23 about an item that has been discussed here in the past, is footpath maintenance,
24 ongoing footpath maintenance. I think that doesn't seem to be provided for in this
25 document, but is it something that will be included in the Municipal District schedule
26 of works or something going forward? Or where will that be dealt with?

27 Thank you.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
29 Councillor Gail Dunne?

30 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would just like to thank
31 Councillor Behan for raising the Greenhill Road. I suppose, I thought this was
32 sorted and I -- well, I hoped it was sorted. But I know our Chief Executive has been
33 working really hard on it, and I note with disappointment last week the email she
34 sent.

1 I think, going forward, what can we do? I am -- I have a meeting in the Dáil next
2 week, and personally, I am going to try and meet with Minister O'Brien, because I
3 think we need to bring some political work on this, because this needs to be sorted
4 out. Like, it's unbelievable. And, like, Councillor Behan mentioned that Bank of
5 Ireland, have we got accounts with them and things like that. I am sure if there's a
6 few saying, maybe we might move our accounts as such, it might concentrate their
7 mind on things.

8 The Rocky Road, Councillor O'Brien raised it as well. It is an artery into the town,
9 but the road is not great, and if funding was available, it would definitely make life
10 easier. It would take the purchase off coming into Rathnew. It would take the
11 pressure off there. So that would be really important, if we managed to get some
12 funding there.

13 Thank you.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Councillor.
15 Councillor Mary Kavanagh?

16 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Yes. Just on the Greenhill Road houses, Murrough
17 View. One of the things that might be a result for the applicants is that -- one of the
18 outcomes is that some of them may now be refused mortgages on the grounds that,
19 since they first applied, it's not only the extra cost that's involved, as
20 Councillor Winters pointed out, in all the increases that we have had during the year,
21 and I think we have had around five, but it is the fact that some of them would have
22 probably been very close to the cut-off point when they applied to qualify, the
23 qualification cut-off point, and some of them actually could now not meet that, in
24 terms of the repayment schedules.

25 So this is even more serious than just having to pay extra money. This is potentially
26 losing a house that they may just have about qualified for. So I think that the fact
27 that some banks accepted AIB aren't looking for extra conditions, PTSB and Bank of
28 Ireland are. We have to find out why are those banks essentially different? Because,
29 at the end of the day, they're banks. If one bank doesn't require extra conditions, and
30 it is one of the biggest banks in the country, why do other banks require it?

31 We just need to have a meeting with some representatives from those banks to see
32 what is going on, because, potentially, people here could lose the one and only
33 opportunity they have to buy their home. Thank you.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.

1 Is there anybody else that wants to raise any items on just these two, housing and
2 transport? Or will I get a response from them before we move on.

3 Councillor Gerry O'Neill?

4 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And thanks, Brian. Just briefly,
5 we have 44 houses on the Bray Road, The Rectory there, and they are lying finished
6 for the last seven months, and no one seems to know what is happening, whether it is
7 housing agency and the developer, or what, what the issue is.

8 But I mean, Christmas is coming. We're only a few weeks down the road. And day
9 in, day out, I am getting calls on this, and people were looking forward to their new
10 homes for a long, long time; and now it looks like as if Christmas is going to come
11 and go, and the people will be without them.

12 These are completely finished new, 44 new houses, and a six-bed apartment there in
13 the middle of it. But they completely finished the tarmacadam, there's trees planted,
14 lawns are there. It's only a matter of turning the key. And it is just going on and on
15 and on, and I am just asking if there could be anything done about that? Thanks,
16 Cathaoirleach.

17 Oh, could I just say, too, on the budget for public lighting: I don't think there should
18 be any increase at all, because there's no lights fixed anyway. It's impossible to get
19 lights fixed in West Wicklow. So I think we're only throwing away money in
20 increasing any moneys towards public lighting, when we can't get the lights that we
21 have actually fixed up and running.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Thank you.

23 Okay. Brian, I will hand it back to yourself.

24 MR GLEESON: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just in relation to the cycling lanes
25 maintenance, that would be part of our general maintenance. Usually, local roads
26 maintenance would look after that. But I suppose, to be aware as well, when we are
27 doing our surface dressing, any cycle lanes would obviously be upgraded as well as
28 part of that type of work.

29 In relation to the footpath scheme, look, I have spoken to the Chief Executive and the
30 Director of Roads in relation to this. There had been a request went out to the
31 districts to look at all the elements in relation to footpaths in the district, and try and
32 to put together a costing. That, I suppose, has proved to be a bit problematic and
33 time-consuming.

34 So we have made a decision that we are going to allocate out -- and this is from the

1 capital budget, it's not from the revenue budget that we are approving here today, but
2 it is from development levies in the capital budget, we're going to allocate out
3 100,000 to each Municipal District for the enhancement of existing footpaths within
4 each district.

5 So hopefully, we will look at maybe providing a rolling fund. But this is an initial
6 allocation, I suppose, just to start the works off and, I suppose, to take into account
7 that there are capacity issues in relation to works that are already taking place within
8 each district and, obviously, in relation to contractors out there as well.

9 But as I know, look, every district will come back and say, look, we need twice as
10 much as that, but I think it is important that we just get the money out there, and
11 we'll let each district prioritise the works in relation to that 100,000.

12 With regard to approved housing bodies, I think that was the only other question. I
13 might pass it on to Teresa.

14 TERESA: Yes. Okay. As discussed, I think, at our recent SPC, there's a kind of
15 long and complicated discussions that go on before we actually reach agreement with
16 AHBs, and there is a discussion on about when we notify. But we do keep our Chief
17 Executive's report updated every month with what's going on and where we are with
18 each of the schemes that are upcoming.

19 I can answer Councillor O'Neill's question on the rectory as well. Just to say that,
20 yes, we are as frustrated as you are. And we -- obviously, Wicklow County Council
21 have done all our nominations for that scheme. So we are hopeful. We have kind of
22 got some good news in the last day or two, and we are hopeful that that should be all
23 done and dusted before Christmas. Fingers crossed.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Teresa.

25 Leonora?

26 MS EARLS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just in relation to the Rocky Road. So we
27 have made an application for a specific grant to the Department of Transport in
28 respect of 2024. So if that is successful, then we move towards preparing a Part 8.
29 The final design hasn't been done, but where we are roughly talking about is from
30 where you come off the N11, and you have the roundabout. So from there down to
31 the junction with the relief road.

32 Thank you.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Leonora.

34 Brian?

1 MR GLEESON: Just one more thing I might just say. Councillor O'Neill mentioned
2 about the public lighting. We actually aren't increasing our public lighting
3 allocation. We are keeping it consistent with the 2003 provision.

4 Thank you.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Brian. Okay, Teresa is just going to bring
6 up the next slide for the next division areas.

7 Brian, you might want to cover that?

8 MR GLEESON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. We are now going to group division C:
9 Water services. And that's on your booklet on pages 63 and 78 to 79, and it covers
10 expenditure of 6.6 million and income of 5.9.

11 Also, division D, development management, on pages 64, 80 to 82, and that covers
12 expenditure of 19.7 million, with income of just over 10 million.

13 And then, finally, division E, environmental services, in your booklet on page 65 and
14 83 to 85, and it covers expenditure of 18.2 million, and income of 4.2 million.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Brian. So that's divisions C, D and E. I
16 am just going to get Teresa to take that off the screen in a second, because it just
17 allows us to see the members that are online, if that is okay with everybody.
18 So we will open that up to everyone, if anyone has queries in relation to divisions C,
19 D or E, if you could indicate, please.

20 Councillor Derek Mitchell?

21 COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just in relation to, where
22 it mentions on page 21 that an objective for 2024 is to deliver an enterprise centre for
23 Greystones.

24 This essentially was part of a planning condition laid down almost 15 years ago in
25 the zoning, and, at the moment, there is a building earmarked for this, and it is quite
26 small, quite a small building, in comparison to other enterprise centres, and there is
27 another building right next to it which is vacant, and possibly available for purchase,
28 but would clearly cost a significant amount of money.

29 But if combined with the one which is there, it would still be smaller than the other
30 enterprise centres in towns, but it would enable, I think, a manager to be appointed
31 who would be not too much of an overhead on something of that scale; whereas, on
32 half the scale, it would be too much of an overhead.

33 So I think, for the future running of this, I would like -- very much like to see this
34 enterprise other building purchased by the Council. I would like the Council to pull

1 out the stops. Greystones does have the least amount of local jobs of any settlement
2 in Wicklow, according to the national development plan, and I think this is
3 important, to try and get something going to Greystones.

4 We have had 30 years of people showing us pictures of the IDA site and what was
5 going to happen on it, and all we see at the moment is grass. So I am concerned
6 about that.

7 Thank you.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.

9 Councillor Stephen Stokes?

10 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thank you very much for the
11 presentation, Brian. This is something that, obviously, I raised at the pre-budget
12 meeting, and I know we had quite extensive discussion on it, but something that I do
13 believe we need to be planning for in the future is a recycling centre in the
14 Greystones district.

15 So again, I am just using this opportunity, as part of the budget meeting, to express
16 that fact. I believe that, you know, it is badly needed in the Greystones Municipal
17 District to have a recycling centre going forward. We definitely need more waste
18 management services in that area. And just to highlight once again that the
19 Greystones District is the only district without a recycling centre.

20 So thank you very much, Cathaoirleach.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor.

22 Cathaoirleach Gerry Walsh?

23 COUNCILLOR WALSH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just a general question in relation
24 to staffing, and I note, and I welcome the budget providing for additional personnel,
25 and much-needed personnel in the areas of housing, planning, communications,
26 community development, climate, law, et cetera, et cetera, and my question is just
27 around outdoor staffing levels.

28 And again, an issue that's been brought to this chamber on numerous occasions by
29 our members from Greystones is the outdoor staffing levels numbers in Greystones
30 is disproportionate by comparison to other districts.

31 And I just note on page 18, then, in the water, in waste water services section, the
32 master cooperation agreement, which is replacing the existing service level
33 agreement with Irish Water, remains until 31st December. You have a water
34 services forum established now, which will look at staff, existing staff, who will be

1 reassigned to alternative suitable roles within the Council over a period of time.
2 I'm just wondering, will that have an impact on our outdoor staffing levels across the
3 districts, and how will that work in terms of timeframes around that? Is it an
4 ongoing fluid situation or is it something that won't be addressed until December
5 26th? Just want to get my head around the timeframes around that, and how it will
6 impact on our outdoor staffing levels, particularly in the Greystones Municipal
7 District.

8 Thank you.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
10 Councillor Peir Leonard?

11 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. And thanks, Brian, for all
12 your great work.

13 I am just going to concentrate on one thing, and I am not sure if I am bringing it up
14 under the right section. So you can stop me if I am not. But it is just in relation to
15 regeneration. And I know you mentioned earlier that we only have -- there's only
16 10% of the budget that we have discretion on, but this is something that I am very
17 passionate about, and something that I think we really need to set the ball rolling, and
18 it is to do with the regeneration of our town centres.

19 So I have been doing some research lately on the rates incentive schemes in other
20 counties, and I would like to -- I suppose our town centres have been dying slowly
21 for the last 20, 30 years. I know there was a recent article in the Wicklow People,
22 giving the percentages of vacant uses on the main streets; at a time when our
23 population is actually growing, our vacant units are actually growing as well, which
24 is, in theory, shouldn't be the case.

25 So I will just read it out: "Greystones have the lowest vacancy rate in Leinster as the
26 rate is 6.8%. Wicklow town has a vacancy rate of 12.8% and Arklow's vacancy rate
27 stands at 14.7%."

28 So in an effort to be proactive, I am suggesting that we -- I have been looking up
29 some of the other county councils, and Laois have a great incentive at the moment.
30 Currently, Wicklow offer, as part of a business rate incentive scheme for a new
31 business to take on a vacant unit on the main street, that they give them 50% rates
32 exemption for the first year, and 25% exemption for the second year, and then zero
33 in the third year.

34 But Laois have a scheme where they actually -- and this is what I would like to

1 propose today -- that Wicklow change these rates incentive schemes to 75% rate
2 exemption in year 1, 50% rate exemption in year 2, and 25% rate exemption in year
3 3, and, along with that, to reduce the amount of the -- the criteria for the vacant units
4 from one year, which is currently Wicklow's rates, to a unit has to be vacant for over
5 one year to get the incentive, to six months.

6 Because I think we're at a crisis now, where we are actually losing businesses on our
7 main street at a rate of knots, and that means we are losing footfall, and we can't
8 afford to lose any more footfall. So I think we are in a crisis situation, and I think we
9 have a new regeneration officer and I think the time is now to put a whole package
10 together similar to what they have done in Laois, and this needs to form part of it,
11 and I think it needs to happen now rather than wait for another year and bring this
12 incentive in.

13 I would like it to be part of another package, I am sure, Leo, you are working on a
14 package to go with it, that it should be partnered with things like public area
15 enhancement scheme, pilot painting schemes, pop-up shop schemes, new shop front
16 schemes, and creative use of shop windows for arts, as we have been doing in
17 Arklow here.

18 We have started using some units, vacant units. And we have Wicklow Craft
19 Foundation on the verge of launching their craft trail for the county, so I think there
20 is a prime opportunity there to link community groups with the vacant units as well.
21 So I would like to propose today, and I can send it in writing, and I would like to ask
22 the members for their support. I think Councillor Mary Kavanagh is going to second
23 this proposal. I think it is essential. We have a lot of vacant units on our main
24 streets and we just have start putting really strong incentives out now.

25 Arklow is the same length of street as Gorey and in theory they have a 9% -- or, you
26 know, vacant units, whereas we have 14% in Arklow. So the time is nigh. I think
27 we need to act now and package it with the great work that our regeneration and
28 town teams are trying to do on the ground.

29 Thank you.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Okay, there's two areas
31 there. I am going to get Brian to come back to the initial queries. Just in relation to
32 your proposal, Councillor Leonard. I think there's some additional work that's
33 required there, so I am just going to let Helen come in on that first, and then, Brian, I
34 will bring you in in responding to the others.

1 Thank you.

2 MS PURCELL: In relation to your proposal, Councillor Leonard, I would ask that
3 you submit it in writing with all of the detail, and with a seconder, so that it can be
4 circulated to all of the members, and also to put with it the proposal as to how it
5 would actually be funded, please.

6 Thanks.

7 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Thank you.

8 MR GLEESON: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just to follow on from that. I suppose, the
9 background to the current rates incentive scheme, of why we have 50% in year 1 and
10 25% in year 2, that was actually brought to the Economic & Development SPC, and
11 agreed with the members of that, and got input from businesspeople who are on the
12 SPC, chamber representatives, and other external business representatives, who felt
13 that three years was enough.

14 In this case, you're paying your full rates in three years, and it was felt that a
15 business -- on the flip side, it can't be good if you are supporting a business for too
16 long. It felt that, by the third year, they should be on their feet at that stage.

17 There's also other areas. We had to kind of take account of the fact that they're in
18 competition with existing ratepayers; so that was another reason why it was felt that
19 50% was the appropriate level.

20 So as I said, this wasn't a kind of a figure that was picked without any thought. It
21 went to the SPC, and I think any consideration of changing that should go through
22 the SPC rather than here on the budget day, because, as I said, it needs to be costed
23 fully. I would say that 90% of our ratepayers pay rates of under 10,000. So I don't
24 believe moving from 50% to 75% is going to make a massive amount of difference
25 in relation to whether a business starts off or not. If they are actually depending on
26 1,500 or €1,000 in order to do that, I don't think a business is viable in that case.

27 But that's just -- I suppose, that's just the background to it.

28 In relation to town regeneration in general, as I outlined in my presentation, that was
29 increased by 141,000, and the allocation for town regeneration for next year is
30 260,000. That obviously includes provision for a town regeneration officer.

31 In relation to Councillor Mitchell's point in relation to the enterprise centre, the
32 Weaver building, well, as you are aware, the first one, we are committed to that, and
33 we are expecting the closure of that agreement today.

34 In relation to the second building, that would be fully dependent on funding,

1 Councillor. We have discussed it with Enterprise Ireland. There is no funding
2 available at the moment, but we'll keep it under consideration.

3 Councillor Stokes, recycling centre, obviously, in relation to that, we would need a
4 source of funding in order to consider that. And that would be from our capital fund.
5 So there is no source of funding, I suppose, within the revenue budget that we have
6 here today, but your comments are noted.

7 In relation to staffing, Councillor Walsh, I would mention that in relation to
8 Greystones, they did receive two additional GOs in the last 12 months, but the
9 outdoor staffing will be linked to, I suppose, the Irish Water transition. I don't know
10 does Lorraine or Leonora want to come in on that for more detail.

11 But as I say, as the transition goes until the end of 2026, some members who are
12 working on the water services will decide to stay with Wicklow County Council and
13 will be looking at reallocating them to positions within the Council that they would
14 be suited towards.

15 I think that's all the other questions. So I don't know does...

16 MS O'GORMAN: Just to clarify on Councillor Leonard's proposal as she's presented
17 it there. In order -- like, the budget we're obliged to prepare and put before you a
18 balanced budget, which the team here, the whole of the management team have
19 done, and that's as presented to you. Any change to that budget, be it to increase or
20 decrease funding, you know, so the scheme as outlined by Councillor Leonard, the
21 specific area in the budget book has to be identified where you want to reduce to
22 fund your proposal.

23 So you have to still present a balanced budget. So just to take that into consideration
24 if you are going to submit a formal proposal on that, Councillor Leonard. You have
25 to balance it. So if it is going to cost the Council X amount, you have to reduce
26 spending in another area, and you have to identify that in the budget book.

27 So I think Brian's suggestion, you know, that, you know, this has been discussed at
28 the SPC, and any changes to that scheme are probably more appropriate for the
29 economic SPC rather than a change to the budget as presented to you today.

30 So thanks, members.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Chief Executive.
32 Leonora and Lorraine, do you want to come in on the staffing?

33 MS GALLAGHER: Yes. There is a water services forum in place for the
34 reassignment of staff. It is represented -- I chair it myself. Leonora, as the director

1 of operations, is on it, as well as the union representatives, SIPTU, SIPTU LAPO
2 and Impact.

3 So for those staff who wish to remain as local authority employees, but working
4 outside water services, we will work to reassign those staff in this period, to the
5 period end of December 2026, and that process has commenced in terms of, we have
6 sought expressions of interest from staff. It doesn't affect general operatives. It is
7 more -- it's different grades. So that's in place, Councillor.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thanks very much, Lorraine.

9 Okay, Councillor Shay Cullen?

10 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I just want to follow up on one
11 point on the roads there, the last point that Leonora made in terms of the Rocky Road
12 and the relief road. And I think it was suggested that a Part 8 wouldn't proceed until
13 we were sure of funding. I would obviously differ with that, in that I think we need
14 to work with the Wicklow Municipal councillors to bring forward a Part 8 and be
15 ready for when the funding will come to the Council. I think it is such an important
16 project for Wicklow town, and the areas, that it needs to be ready to go in terms of
17 when we get the funding. So I just want to follow up on that point.

18 The second point is, division D, enterprise and employment uses. On page 21, we
19 outline sites for enterprise and employment uses, and it clearly speaks about
20 Avondale Business Park in Rathdrum.

21 I suppose, I just really want to follow on in terms of opportunities and employment
22 areas right across our districts. And in the second paragraph, it clearly outlines that
23 we have land, a land bank in Dunlavin, Baltinglass, Greystones, Arklow, Blessington
24 and Ashford. And I think we need to be proactive in terms of our employment
25 opportunities for the people of Wicklow. I think it's something that we're not very
26 strong on and I think we can do better on.

27 So I am asking, I suppose, the Council in general to have a look at what type of
28 schemes we can bring forward to ensure that jobs are created right across the county.
29 I think that is important going forward.

30 I also just want to follow on in environmental section. The first thing -- it has said in
31 the booklet here that we have 1,207 complaints received through our environmental
32 section. I am curious to know what the nature of those complaints are and how have
33 they been dealt with. That's number one.

34 The second point I want to make is, there's an increase of 4.4 million, in terms of our

1 pay increases through the national pay agreement and recruitment of staff. How
2 many staff? What areas will benefit in terms of the new staff?

3 I am sure the members will remember recently we had a powerful presentation in
4 terms of dog control. And I just want a commitment from the Chief Executive that
5 two new dog wardens will be included in that staff provision that has been outlined.
6 I think that is imperative. I think we did give a commitment we would look at that.
7 So I just want a commitment that that is going to be adhered to.

8 Thank you.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Councillor.
10 Councillor Gail Dunne?

11 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I won't hold you up. It's just,
12 I am delighted to see extra money going to Wicklow harbour for dredging.
13 Hopefully, we are nearly there with this project. And just very quickly, well done to
14 Brian and all the staff for getting the extra money.
15 Thank you.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor.
17 Councillor Lourda Scott?

18 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. A very quick question just on the
19 provision of 20,000 for litter bins improvement and provision, and I was just
20 wondering if you could elaborate a little bit on that? Because it doesn't sound an
21 awful lot when you divide it between and across all the districts. And I know, in our
22 own districts, we have a very rapidly growing population, as everybody knows, and
23 it puts increased pressure on all of our facilities, but the need for extra litter bins is
24 one of them, and I know trying to get extra litter bins put in is next to impossible at
25 the moment and it is something that I am constantly being contacted about, and I was
26 just wondering if you could just elaborate a little bit on that budget line, please,
27 because it doesn't seem like an awful lot. Thank you.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Councillor.
29 Councillor Mary Kavanagh?

30 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Thanks, Chair. Just to get back to
31 Councillor Leonard's motion there. I just wanted to clarify something.
32 Obviously, you know, today is the budget day, so there wouldn't be the time to go
33 through to see exactly where the savings could be made. The other thing is, we don't
34 exactly know how much it would cost, so we don't know how much we would have

1 to save.

2 So can I take it that, if we were to defer it to the SPC, that, given that the budget will
3 be passed today, that it is able to be implemented from the economic development
4 SPC? Otherwise, there's no point deferring it.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: I think, Councillor, that would be up to the SPC, and I think
6 that's one -- so, the budget, if it passed today, the budget is passed as it is and as it's
7 presented and balanced. But I think the suggestion of bringing it to the SPC is so
8 that the other partners and the other stakeholders, such as the business and others, are
9 brought into the mix to have a look at the discussion and to see how -- ideally, what
10 would it cost, what would be the savings that would have to be got from elsewhere,
11 but also, I suppose, what are the views of the other stakeholders that aren't present in
12 this room here today, but that would have been present when the previous proposal
13 was looked at.

14 So I think that's the suggestion. So there couldn't be a guarantee that -- it obviously
15 would not impact today's budget decision if today's budget was passed. But at the
16 same time, if yourself and Councillor Leonard wanted to present that proposal, you
17 would have to present where you are going to make the savings from, in order to do
18 that.

19 My own personal view is that bringing it to the SPC would probably be the more
20 inclusive way to do it, but that obviously is up to yourself and Councillor Leonard.

21 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: What I think we need to look at is, before we even
22 bring it to the SPC, is, across the board, throughout the other 32 councils, or
23 whatever number there are, what is the general -- you know, where are we in relation
24 to everybody else? Are we above them, below them? Are we -- you know, are more
25 at 75% than at 50%? It would be nice to know where we are in the table, because it's
26 very hard to know. So, you know...

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: I totally agree with you, Councillor. And I totally agree with
28 Councillor Leonard. I think that is the advantage, in some ways, of bringing these
29 items through the SPCs, you have that opportunity then to look at it. Because there
30 could be a reason specific to our area why we are at a certain place. I don't know.
31 You know, it is just having all those stakeholders.

32 But just in answer to your specific question, I suppose. If the budget is decided here
33 today, and the proposal is brought to the SPC, and the SPC make a decision, that will
34 have to be looked at at next year's budget, not this year's budget, and, at the same

1 time, if we are going to vote on it here today, we would have to have the costings
2 and the impact of what area, I suppose, we're going to take money from to cover the
3 cost of it.

4 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Okay.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am just going to let Lorraine in, Councillor, because she
6 might be able to answer it better.

7 MS GALLAGHER: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just in terms, I think it would be good
8 to put it on the programme of work for the economic development and enterprise
9 support SPC for next year. Like, we have a town regeneration officer in place. Her
10 role, Deirdre Whitfield, is to work with the two teams that are in place, draw up town
11 centre first plans, you know, speak to stakeholders, et cetera, and collaboratively
12 draw up plans in place. So I think it would be a good body of work for us to
13 collectively look at as an SPC in the next year.

14 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Okay. Thank you, Director Gallagher.

15 Could I ask that -- could Deirdre Whitfield, as part of her -- if we bring this to the
16 SPC, would she be able to find out across the board what the rates are, so that we
17 will know where we are?

18 MS GALLAGHER: Well, I think it is a big body of work. Now, I was speaking to
19 Deirdre this morning, and I know that Councillor Leonard had reached out to her in
20 relation to some proposals that she had for Arklow, and we talked about it and the
21 district manager, and said, you know, that maybe Councillor Leonard would sit down
22 and talk to the district manager and the district engineer and the administrator.

23 Like, if there are -- Councillor Leonard, if you do have, you know, suggestions or
24 concepts, or whatever, that involve the whole area of town regeneration, it would be
25 an excellent idea to sit down with the team in Arklow as well. Yes.

26 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: I was just talking specifically about the rates, what
27 rates incentives there are?

28 MS GALLAGHER: Well, I will deflect that one to the head of finance, if that is
29 okay.

30 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Throughout the rest of the country. Because I don't
31 know where we are in relation to everybody else.

32 MR GLEESON: Just in relation to that. When we actually introduced the scheme in
33 the first place, we did consult with other local authorities, we did have a look around
34 to see what schemes they had in place and what rates they provided, and we actually

1 followed up with a number of them to see what was working, what wasn't working;
2 and that obviously influenced our decision to go with the 50% year 1, and 25% year
3 2, based on the experience.

4 So some local authorities, there is no scheme. Others might have a one-year scheme.
5 So I don't think one -- one size doesn't fit all. And it wouldn't be a case of, just
6 because three councils are doing it this way, that we should do it. It's based on, I
7 suppose, what works for Wicklow and based on what's the views of the businesses as
8 well, and what they think would work in this particular county.

9 But as I said, getting the information from other counties isn't an issue. We already,
10 as I say, sourced that at the outset, and that influenced the decision that we came up
11 with.

12 But, look, as I said, we can bring that to the SPC and relook at it, and if a decision is
13 taken in relation to change it, we can implement that, but then, obviously, we have to
14 look at the knock-on effect of the money that it would generate -- or, sorry, cost.

15 Okay. Thank you.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Brian, I might just invite you to respond to the other queries
17 that are being raised, if that's okay?

18 MR GLEESON: Yes. In relation to Councillor Cullen, the Avondale Business Park,
19 look, I think we recognise that we need to maybe improve issues in relation to the
20 strategic land development, and we have increased the budget by 30,000 in that
21 regard, in order to try and, I suppose, take advantage of situations that may arise.
22 In relation to the litter bins, I think that's just a basic provision that we put in every
23 year to cover all Municipal Districts, 20,000. But it will be dependent on funding
24 that's provided from the Department throughout the year. So there could be more
25 funding provided, or, if there is additional -- if there's funding available under a
26 different, I suppose, climate action, or funding area, that we could supplement it
27 with. But that's kind of is just a standard provision that's put in to keep that line open
28 every year.

29 Breege, do you want to add to that?

30 MS KILKENNY: Yes. Just to say that that provision is mainly for replace and
31 repair of bins, because, throughout the year, they get destroyed as well. We are
32 actually trying to encourage people to bring their waste home, so we wouldn't be that
33 keen on adding additional bins in any other areas. But that provision is mainly for
34 repair and replace.

1 Oh, yes, in relation to the complaints, the 1,200 complaints. A lot of them,
2 Councillor Cullen, come from litter, litter complaints we get in, but a huge number
3 would come under the Waste Management Act, in terms of illegal dumping, and then
4 we also have complaints in terms of water pollution, you know, that kind of thing.
5 So that -- it's made up of all of those.

6 MR GLEESON: Okay. Just in relation to Councillor Cullen's question about the
7 dog warden. We have included provision for an extra dog warden in the budget this
8 year. In relation to making it a second one, that would be dependent on funding
9 from the relevant department, I think it's the Department of Agriculture, is it? So
10 obviously, we will seek additional funding. But that is part of a -- I think it is a
11 national programme, is it, Breege, in relation to that? So as I said, we have one in,
12 and the second one will be depending on any future funding.

13 Thank you.

14 MS KILKENNY: I will just come back in on that one as well. In terms of dog
15 wardens, I think we made the application for one, because that's what they said the
16 funding is for.

17 And as Brian said, we will seek another one if the funding is there.

18 Just on the other query that you, Councillor Cullen, in terms of staffing.

19 Just within the environment section, particularly in climate action, there were a
20 number of positions fully funded through the Government; the biodiversity officer,
21 the community climate action officer, and the climate action coordinator, and the
22 climate action officer. So those positions are fully funded.

23 And in addition, the provision under planning, where we are getting three additional
24 staff, again, they are fully funded.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Breege.

26 Lorraine, did you want to come in there?

27 MS GALLAGHER: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. It's just in relation to
28 Councillor Cullen, the strategic land banks. I see the paragraph you're referring to
29 there on page 21.

30 So yes, we do have plans to bring the Ashford lands to market. We are just getting
31 some prices on that currently, our 6.7 acres in Ashford. And then there are
32 other -- so in terms of Rathdrum and Avondale Business Park, we are actively
33 marketing that, and so much so that, as Susan Nichols, the SEO there in economic
34 development has had discussions this morning with a prospective person or business

1 who wants to purchase it.

2 But I suppose we do -- we have had lengthy discussions, and we have gone through
3 various processes, and sometimes the end result, it just -- you know, it's a matter of a
4 decision from a commercial person whether they want to proceed or not.

5 And then, in relation to the other land banks, Dunlavin, Baltinglass, Greystones and
6 Arklow, there are issues with -- you know, there are issues with some parts of those
7 lands, and I think the best thing to do is look at, as it says in the budget book, is to
8 look at some sort of master plan for those. We will look at them and maybe try and
9 prioritise them. And maybe that is another work plan that we could bring to the SPC
10 in the new year.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Lorraine.

12 Councillor Peir Leonard?

13 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yes. Sorry, just to come in on the -- I hadn't actually
14 realised until I was studying the budget over the weekend that we had discretion on
15 changing it. So I know it probably seemed a bit rushed but I have been working on it
16 and doing research with an architect. So I would be happy to bring it as a
17 presentation to the SPC, if that is possible, and to work with them, with a lot of our
18 ideas.

19 Because I think there's an optic out there that not enough is being done, there's a lot
20 of talking going on, and we are, one year is drifting into another year into another
21 year, while our town centres die. Like, I mean, I think we are all aware that we have
22 been looking at our vacant units for a very, very long time now. And I suppose I am
23 eager just to get stuck in on the ground to kind of try and regenerate and put the
24 effort in myself, but I would love to do it with the support of the economic SPC, and
25 I would be happy to bring it as a presentation and open up discussion, so if that is
26 okay.

27 Thank you.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: I know you probably can't see here, but a lot of nodding heads
29 here, so I think there's an agreement on that.

30 MS PURCELL: Just to clarify. Councillor Leonard, you're withdrawing the motion
31 that it's going to go through the SPC; is that correct?

32 Thanks.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thanks, Councillor Leonard.

34 Okay. Is there any other items on C, D and E, before we move on? Oh, sorry, Joe.

1 Sorry. Okay. That is grand.

2 We might bring up the next slide, Teresa, if that is okay, for the next grouping.

3 MR GLEESON: Okay. The final grouping we have is division F, recreation and
4 amenity, which you will find on pages 66, 86 to 87, that's the figures. That covers
5 expenditure of 12.3 million and income of 1.2 million.

6 Also, division G, agriculture, education, health and welfare, pages 67, 88 to 89.

7 Expenditure 2.6, income 1.1.

8 And then, finally, division H, which is miscellaneous services on page 68, and the
9 detail on 90 to 92, and that covers expenditure of 12.2 million and income of 13.3
10 million.

11 Thank you.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Brian.

13 So opening that up to the floor, then, for those division areas. So that's division F, G
14 and H. Okay, I am not seeing any indication for any member wanting to come in.

15 Sorry, Shay. Councillor Shay Cullen.

16 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just a quick point. Division F,
17 recreation and amenity. I suppose back over the last couple of years, there has been
18 promises of two master plans for, I suppose, recreation and sporting facilities. One
19 at Brides Head in Wicklow, and the other at Rathdrum.

20 And it seems to me that things have gone extremely slow on them, but they should
21 be prioritised as a matter of urgency, because I think two areas -- I suppose I am
22 speaking more on the Wicklow one, in that the amount of community groups,
23 sporting organisations that don't have facilities, and we have very -- a very
24 substantial amount of land at Brides Head that needs to be, in my opinion, used for
25 sporting and recreational purposes, and it is something I would like to see prioritised.
26 And I know it had been given the green light, but, for some reason, there has been no
27 movement on it. So I would like maybe an update on that, please.

28 Thank you.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Councillor.

30 Councillor Pat Kennedy?

31 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And I concur with what
32 Councillor Cullen has just said, but I know I have been dealing with my own
33 manager and the Chief Executive, and Director Nicholson on the one in Rathdrum,
34 and I am very happy to think that -- or what I have been told is that that will move

1 ahead in the very near future, that there has been genuine reasons why it didn't move
2 forward. And I accepted the reasons I was given on that. But I do know from
3 speaking to the Chief Executive and Director Nicholson that it will move ahead very,
4 very soon.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Okay.

6 Who wants to come in on response? Michael? Thank you.

7 MR NICHOLSON: Yes. We did appoint consultants to do -- it was the same
8 consultants. We packaged up Brides Head in Rathdrum in order to get a better bang
9 for our buck, and those consultants are working on those two. Part of the work
10 they're doing is widespread public consultation, because obviously we don't know
11 what all the clubs need; it's only the clubs themselves will know that.

12 So that has slowed down the process. They're doing an in-depth study -- I'm not sure
13 if they have actually gone out yet with questionnaires, but they were planning that.
14 So I can assure you that our local sports partnership people are on this on a weekly
15 basis. They want those two plans published, because we do know that there is a lot
16 of clubs, particularly in Wicklow, and I am sure in other parts of the county as well,
17 in dire need of more space, and the plan for both of these would be to use these two
18 facilities to provide more space for these clubs.

19 So I can assure the members we are working on it. I hope to bring report back. We
20 have an SPC meeting ourselves the week after next, and I was half hoping we'd have
21 an update report at the SPC. So if I do get that report, I will circulate it to the rest of
22 the members as well.

23 Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Michael.

25 Councillor Lourda Scott?

26 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just two questions there - I am
27 just trying to pull the pages up - under the recreational amenities. It was really just
28 noting that the listed objective is to maintain designated parks and open spaces and
29 to promote blue flag beaches within the county. Just to make the comment that it is a
30 shame not to see, I suppose, the development of green flag beaches within the county
31 mentioned there as well, as I do believe we have discussed that, you know, Wicklow
32 is one of the few counties, coastal counties, that has no green flag beaches, and I
33 know that it was discussed and positively encouraged as a commitment for the Chief
34 Executive previously. So just noting that that objective seems to be missing under

1 recreation and amenity section.

2 My other brief question then was, this is just under the leisure facilities operations,
3 and it is just regarding Charlesland sports facility in Greystones which Shoreline
4 operate. I was just wondering if you could specify what the annual contribution to
5 Shoreline is from the Council to help support the running costs there? It is a very
6 well used and badly needed facility in the area, but I was just wondering if there is
7 some clarity on that or if there is a line in the budget that I just haven't noticed.

8 Thank you.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
10 Councillor Miriam Murphy?

11 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Yes. Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just two things. I see
12 director Nicholson sitting in the hot seat. I hope I am speaking in the right order.
13 First of all, I would like to thank sincerely to see the disability strategy get funding
14 here today. I think it is just fantastic. And I know, you know, we have to start
15 somewhere, and it is to see that we can actually put something in place after the
16 fantastic work of the strategy for the last year or two. So, you know, I really
17 appreciate the members hopefully approve that.

18 And secondly, on the recreation, I am just wondering -- I know over a few months
19 ago we talked about the upgrading of the leisure centres in Arklow, and I am just
20 wondering is that still on the cards and what funding is there? Thanks.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Councillor.
22 Councillor Vincent Blake?

23 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thanks, Chair. Just on page 90, under miscellaneous
24 services, on the H 2102, plant and machinery. We have often had a lot of
25 discussions over the years about the cost there. Maybe you might give me some
26 indication of what we have been spending the money on and what we might be
27 spending it on in the coming years. And I just see that we didn't spend anything near
28 what we had estimated for last year as well.

29 Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.

31 Members, just before I get Brian to come in, I am just going to look for an extension
32 of the meeting, just till we are finished. If that's okay. Proposed by Joe Behan.

33 Seconded by John Mullen.

34 Is that agreed?

1 (Agreed).

2 Great. Thank you.

3 Brian, I will invite you to come back in on those.

4 MR GLEESON: Yes, just very quickly on the plant and machinery. That's a kind of
5 a -- it's a contra item in and out. So what we spend, we take the income in. It's
6 basically -- it's a charging mechanism in that, when we purchase vehicles for use,
7 they are charged against the districts to claw-back the money. So that's the way it
8 works. So it's -- as I said, it doesn't impact the bottom line of the budget each year.
9 As I said, it's an in-and-out contra process. I think it is about 3 million that we
10 usually spend every year.

11 In relation to the Charlesland, I think it's about 90,000 is the -- is it 100 now,
12 Michael? Yes, 100,000 for Charlesland. As I said at the recent meeting with the
13 Greystones member, Shoreline itself is a CLG, so it is not part of the Council budget,
14 but we do pay a contribution towards the running. That's not the full costs of
15 Charlesland, but obviously that's our contribution towards them taking that on on our
16 behalf.

17 In relation to...

18 MR NICHOLSON: Just in relation to leisure centre funding, we have secured
19 funding for the upgrade of Wicklow leisure centre under the LSSIF, that's large scale
20 infrastructure scheme, and that should be going to tender very shortly.

21 In relation to Arklow, we have applied for funding under the sports capital. No
22 decision yet. We were hoping to get a decision by the end of the year. And if not, it
23 will be obviously in the new year. And that will do urgent repairs on that as well.
24 So we don't have funding ourselves to do up those. We will be depending on capital
25 grants. But hopefully we will get those.

26 In relation to parks and open spaces, it's a problem we have with parks and open
27 spaces. We benefit greatly from getting parcels of land off developers as part of
28 housing construction and their community gain requirements, but of course these all
29 have to be maintained, and I know that is becoming an issue for all MDs, having to
30 maintain what we get from developers in particular, and we do try and provide as
31 much as we possibly can.

32 But it is becoming an issue. It is great to get these facilities, but of course the
33 problem is we have to maintain them when we get them, and that's becoming a
34 problem we are trying to resolve ourselves in here.

1 Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, members. I don't think there is any other questions
3 on those items.

4 So we have three distinct decisions that we need to make. We need to agree the
5 annual rate of variation -- valuation, we need to agree the rate on vacant properties,
6 and the adoption of the budget.

7 So we will just take each one separately, if that's okay.

8 So Helen, could you read out the first decision?

9 MS PURCELL: The first is to retain the annual rate of valuation for 2024, set at
10 0.217.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: So I'm looking for a proposer and a seconder for that.
12 Proposed by Councillor Irene Winters. Seconded by Councillor Patsy Glennon.
13 Is that agreed?
14 (Agreed).

15 MS PURCELL: We do a vote?

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Do a vote?

17 MS PURCELL: Yes.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Yes. Okay. We are going to vote.

19 MS PURCELL: Councillor Tommy Annesley?

20 COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: For.

21 MS PURCELL: For.
22 Councillor Mark Barry?

23 COUNCILLOR BARRY: For.

24 MS PURCELL: Councillor Joe Behan?

25 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: For.

26 MS PURCELL: For.
27 Councillor Vincent Blake?

28 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: For.

29 MS PURCELL: For.
30 Councillor Sylvester Bourke?

31 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: For.

32 MS PURCELL: For.
33 Councillor Melanie Corrigan?

34 COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: For.

1 MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin?
2 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: For.
3 MS PURCELL: For.
4 Councillor Shay Cullen?
5 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: For.
6 MS PURCELL: For.
7 Councillor Erika Doyle?
8 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: For.
9 MS PURCELL: Councillor Gail Dunne?
10 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: For.
11 MS PURCELL: For.
12 Councillor Anne Ferris?
13 COUNCILLOR FERRIS: For.
14 MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald?
15 COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: For.
16 MS PURCELL: For.
17 Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy?
18 CATHAOIRLEACH: For.
19 MS PURCELL: For.
20 Councillor Tom Fortune is not present.
21 Councillor Patsy Glennon?
22 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: For.
23 MS PURCELL: For.
24 Councillor Mary Kavanagh?
25 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: For.
26 MS PURCELL: For.
27 Councillor Pat Kennedy?
28 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: For.
29 MS PURCELL: For.
30 Councillor Peir Leonard?
31 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: For.
32 MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell?
33 COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: For.
34 MS PURCELL: For.

1 Councillor John Mullen?
2 COUNCILLOR MULLEN: For.
3 MS PURCELL: For.
4 Councillor Miriam Murphy?
5 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: For.
6 MS PURCELL: For.
7 Councillor Dermot O'Brien?
8 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: For.
9 MS PURCELL: Councillor Paul O'Brien?
10 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: For.
11 MS PURCELL: Councillor Rory O'Connor?
12 COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: For.
13 MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry O'Neill?
14 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: For.
15 MS PURCELL: For.
16 Councillor Lourda Scott?
17 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: For.
18 MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell is not present. Councillor Stephen Stokes?
19 COUNCILLOR STOKES: For.
20 MS PURCELL: We have apologies from Councillor Timmins.
21 Councillor Gerry Walsh?
22 COUNCILLOR WALSH: For.
23 MS PURCELL: For.
24 And Councillor Irene Winter.
25 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: For.
26 MS PURCELL: 28 for, and three not present. So that's carried. Thank you.
27 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thank you, Helen. Thank you, members.
28 Okay, Helen, item number 2?
29 MS PURCELL: Is to adopt a vacancy rate for County Wicklow to retain the 60%
30 commercial rate relief percent on vacant properties.
31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed, Councillor Vincent Blake. Seconded,
32 Councillor Pat Fitzgerald. We will take a vote?
33 MS PURCELL: Yes.
34 Councillor Tommy Annesley?

1 COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: For.
2 MS PURCELL: For.
3 Councillor Mark Barry?
4 COUNCILLOR BARRY: For.
5 MS PURCELL: Councillor Joe Behan?
6 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: For.
7 MS PURCELL: For.
8 Councillor Vincent Blake?
9 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: For.
10 MS PURCELL: For.
11 Councillor Sylvester Bourke?
12 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: For.
13 MS PURCELL: For.
14 Councillor Melanie Corrigan?
15 COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: For.
16 MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin?
17 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: For.
18 MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen?
19 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: For.
20 MS PURCELL: For.
21 Councillor Erika Doyle?
22 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: For.
23 MS PURCELL: Councillor Gail Dunne?
24 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: For.
25 MS PURCELL: For.
26 Councillor Anne Ferris?
27 COUNCILLOR FERRIS: For.
28 MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald?
29 COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: For.
30 MS PURCELL: For.
31 Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy?
32 CATHAOIRLEACH: For.
33 MS PURCELL: For.
34 Councillor Tom Fortune. Not present.

1 Councillor Patsy Glennon?
2 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: For.
3 MS PURCELL: For.
4 Councillor Mary Kavanagh?
5 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: For.
6 MS PURCELL: For.
7 Councillor Pat Kennedy?
8 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: For.
9 MS PURCELL: For.
10 Councillor Peir Leonard?
11 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: For.
12 MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell?
13 COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: For.
14 MS PURCELL: For.
15 Councillor John Mullen?
16 COUNCILLOR MULLEN: For.
17 MS PURCELL: For.
18 Councillor Miriam Murphy?
19 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: For.
20 MS PURCELL: For.
21 Councillor Dermot O'Brien?
22 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: For.
23 MS PURCELL: Councillor Paul O'Brien?
24 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: For.
25 MS PURCELL: Councillor Rory O'Connor?
26 COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: For.
27 MS PURCELL: For.
28 Councillor Gerry O'Neill?
29 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: For.
30 MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott?
31 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: More.
32 MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell is not present.
33 Councillor Stephen Stokes?
34 COUNCILLOR STOKES: For.

1 MS PURCELL: Apologies from Councillor Timmins.
2 Councillor Gerry Walsh?
3 COUNCILLOR WALSH: For.
4 MS PURCELL: Councillor Irene Winters?
5 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: For.
6 MS PURCELL: 28 in favour, and three not present. So that motion is also carried.
7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, members. Thank you, Helen.
8 Do you want to go for the final item?
9 MS PURCELL: The last one is to adopt the statutory annual budget for 2024, as
10 presented.
11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Councillor Vincent Blake. Seconded by
12 Councillor Gail Dunne. Go for a vote.
13 MS PURCELL: Go for a vote.
14 Councillor Tommy Annesley?
15 COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: For.
16 MS PURCELL: For.
17 Councillor Mark Barry?
18 COUNCILLOR BARRY: For.
19 MS PURCELL: Councillor Joe Behan?
20 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: For.
21 MS PURCELL: For.
22 Councillor Vincent Blake?
23 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: For.
24 MS PURCELL: For.
25 Councillor Sylvester Bourke?
26 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: For.
27 MS PURCELL: For.
28 Councillor Melanie Corrigan?
29 COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: For.
30 MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin?
31 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: For.
32 MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen?
33 COUNCILLOR CULLEN: For.
34 MS PURCELL: Councillor Erika Doyle?

1 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: For.
2 MS PURCELL: Councillor Gail Dunne?
3 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: For.
4 MS PURCELL: Councillor Anne Ferris?
5 COUNCILLOR FERRIS: For.
6 MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald?
7 COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: For.
8 MS PURCELL: Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy?
9 CATHAOIRLEACH: For.
10 MS PURCELL: For.
11 Councillor Tom Fortune? Is not present.
12 Councillor Patsy Glennon?
13 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: For.
14 MS PURCELL: For.
15 Councillor Mary Kavanagh?
16 COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: For.
17 MS PURCELL: For.
18 Councillor Pat Kennedy?
19 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: For.
20 MS PURCELL: For.
21 Councillor Peir Leonard?
22 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: For.
23 MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell?
24 COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: For.
25 MS PURCELL: For.
26 Councillor John Mullen?
27 COUNCILLOR MULLEN: For.
28 MS PURCELL: For.
29 Councillor Miriam Murphy?
30 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: For.
31 MS PURCELL: Councillor Dermot O'Brien?
32 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Abstain
33 MS PURCELL: Councillor Paul O'Brien?
34 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: For.

1 MS PURCELL: Councillor Rory O'Connor?
2 COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: For.
3 MS PURCELL: For.
4 Councillor Gerry O'Neill?
5 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: For.
6 MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott?
7 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: For.
8 MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell. Not present.
9 Councillor Stephen Stokes?
10 COUNCILLOR STOKES: For.
11 MS PURCELL: We have apologies from Councillor Timmins. Councillor Gerry
12 Walsh?
13 COUNCILLOR WALSH: For.
14 MS PURCELL: And Councillor Irene Winters.
15 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: For.
16 MS PURCELL: 27 for, three not present, one abstaining. The budget is passed.
17 Thank you.
18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, members. I am just going to let the
19 Chief Executive in now.
20 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach.
21 I just wanted to thank the management team, all the staff that were involved in the
22 preparation of the budget, and in particular just to pay special tribute to the finance
23 team, led by Brian, who have done an awful lot of work.
24 As you know, it is a tight process, and I really do appreciate the members' support
25 here today. We will do our very best with every euro that has been approved today
26 for the good of the people of Wicklow.
27 So thank you all again, members.
28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Chief Executive. Councillor Vincent
29 Blake?
30 COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Just briefly, on behalf of -- with Edwards Timmins not
31 being here today in the circumstances, can I thank the staff and the members and
32 yourself, Chair, as well for postponing the meeting here today to accommodate us
33 being able to attend the funeral arrangements this morning. So thanks very much to
34 the staff. I know it is a difficult thing. And to the members as well, changing their

1 time and everything else in terms of being here. So very much appreciated. And
2 again, thanks.

3 And it is great to see a budget -- we have been here for so many years, cutting back
4 on community grants, cutting back on book funds and everything else, to see an
5 additional 17 million plus here today that we could actually spend into the future.
6 So thanks to everybody associated with it.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Councillor.
8 Councillor Irene Winters?

9 COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Just to thank the Chief Executive, head of finance,
10 Brian Gleeson, and all of his team, for all of the work that has been done. I think this
11 is actually the quickest budget we have put through, in my 20 years, so it shows the
12 amount of work and fine -- the fine tuning that has been going on over those 20 years
13 so it becomes a much smoother process.

14 And well done to everybody.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Councillor.
16 And on that note, I will conclude --

17 MR GLEESON: Sorry, Cathaoirleach.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: No, Brian, no. [Laughter].

19 MR GLEESON: I have talked enough, I know.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Absolutely. Go ahead.

21 MR GLEESON: I just want to put on record my thanks to my own team in finance.
22 A huge amount of work, Trojan work taken place over the last few months. I know
23 we produced a presentation and the book on the day, but there is a massive amount
24 of work that goes on beforehand. In particular, I would like to thank Denise Kinsella
25 here in front of me, and Breda McCarthy over there in the wings, who put in a
26 massive amount of time and effort in relation to that.

27 I also want to thank the members for your support and input in relation to the budget.
28 Look, it is a budget that can only be passed when we work together, and I think it is a
29 great example here today of how we work well together. So thank you to all the
30 members in that regard. And I think maybe the secret is of a -- of a short budget
31 meeting is, feed the members beforehand rather than afterwards. So I think we
32 might take that into account for future meetings.

33 Thank you.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Well said. Okay. That concludes the meeting. Thank you

1 very much, members. Safe home.

2

3 (Time noted 4:32pm)

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