

MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL
HELD AT COUNTY BUILDINGS, WHITEGATES, WICKLOW TOWN
AND VIA TEAMS

ON MONDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 2:00PM

STENOGRAPHER: Niamh Kelly-Leahy, RMR, MBIVR

Transcript provided by
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PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED ON MONDAY, 1ST SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 2:00
PM AS FOLLOWS:

CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon, members. Hope you all had a lovely summer break. Great to see you all back again, and everyone who is here and everyone in the audience. First thing is to start off with any expressions of sympathies. Sorry, the roll call first of all.

MS PURCELL: Good afternoon. I would like to welcome everybody back after the summer recess which went very, very quickly. Welcome to those members of the public who are present in the chamber and also online. I would ask any members of the public online to ensure your camera and your microphone is off. And for the Elected Members online, please ensure your camera is on and your microphone obviously when you need to speak.

Now for the roll call. Councillor Danny Alvey?

COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry?

COUNCILLOR BARRY: Here.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Joe Behan?

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Sylvester Bourke?

COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Melanie Corrigan?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Avril Cronin?

COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Erika Doyle?

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Here.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Malachai Duddy?

COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Anseo.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gail Dunne?

COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin?

COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN: Present.

- 1 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Orla Finn?
- 2 COUNCILLOR FINN: Present.
- 3 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Pat Fitzgerald?
- 4 COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Present.
- 5 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Tom Fortune?
- 6 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Present.
- 7 MS PURCELL: Councillor Patsy Glennon?
- 8 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Present.
- 9 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Pat Kennedy?
- 10 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Present.
- 11 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Shane Langrell?
- 12 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: Present.
- 13 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Peir Leonard?
- 14 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Present.
- 15 MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Mahon?
- 16 COUNCILLOR MAHON: Present.
- 17 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Jason Mulhall?
- 18 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: Present.
- 19 Present. Councillor Miriam Murphy hasn't joined us yet. Councillor Ian Neary?
- 20 COUNCILLOR NEARY: Present.
- 21 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Dermot O'Brien?
- 22 COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN: Anseo.
- 23 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Paul O'Brien?
- 24 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Present.
- 25 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Gerry O'Neill? Councillor Warren O'Toole?
- 26 COUNCILLOR O'TOOLE: Present.
- 27 MS PURCELL: Councillor Graham Richmond?
- 28 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: Present.
- 29 MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott?
- 30 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Present.
- 31 MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell? Councillor Peter Stapleton?
- 32 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: Present.
- 33 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Stephen Stokes?
- 34 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Present.

1 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Ned Whelan?

2 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: Present.

3 MS PURCELL: And Councillor Caroline Winstanley?

4 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Present.

5 MS PURCELL: Thank you.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Helen. Now we will go to any expressions of
7 sympathy. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

8 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Cathaoirleach, I
9 just have a number here. Unfortunately Wicklow Town has been hit badly in the last
10 number of weeks and unfortunately I have four here. I won't go through all their
11 family details. I want to express my sincere sympathies to the family of Jimmy
12 Kavanagh who passed away on the 31st July; I want to offer my condolences of
13 Michael (Mick) McInerney of Wicklow Town who suddenly passed away; Charlie
14 Byrne who suddenly passed away as well; and Tom (Chopper) Vickers after a short
15 illness. I know they will be missed by not just their families but the entire
16 community as they were well entrenched into Wicklow Town and my sincere
17 condolences to all of them. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin.

19 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to
20 express my sympathy to the family of the late Pat Killelea in Greystones. Pat was a
21 great man involved in the twinning committee there for Würzburg, went on all the
22 trips and all for many a year and everything, and I'd like to give them sincere
23 sympathy. Thank you.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Shane Langrell.

25 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to express
26 my sympathies to the family of Jack Murtagh. Jack Murtagh passed away this day
27 two weeks ago. A gentleman, worked in the forestry all his life and a character to be
28 around if you're having a whiskey with him. I would like to offer my sympathy to
29 his daughters, Noelle, Pauline, and sons Declan and Liam. Thank you.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Graham Richmond.

31 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to pass on
32 my sympathy to the families of the man who unfortunately perished in a tragic
33 accident in Wicklow Harbour last week but also send our thoughts out to both the
34 life guards on duty and members of the RNLI. Thank you.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Peir Leonard.

2 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: I would like to express my condolences to all of those
3 people but also just two of my own family members: To my aunt Maureen (Briggs)
4 Leonard who passed away there last week; and then very sadly my young cousin, he
5 was only 18 years of age in the UK passed away with a sudden illness a couple of
6 days after. Just to wish Chris Leonard in the UK, part of the Leonard family in
7 Arklow, my condolences. Thank you.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Orla Finn.

9 COUNCILLOR FINN: I would like to express my sincere condolences to the family
10 of Mary Carey. Mary was the former school secretary in St Brigid's National School
11 in Greystones school for many, many years, and she was also an active member of
12 the ICA in Delgany. So I would like to express my sympathies to her family. Thank
13 you.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Silvester Bourke.

15 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Cathaoirleach, I'd like to express my sympathies to the
16 family of Liam Lott. Liam was our overseer in the Arklow area for a number of
17 years and very sadly passed away after a long illness. He wore it really well, and we
18 are very upset that Liam after all the hard work and his dedication to the job that is
19 gone. So to his wife, Niamh, we send our sympathies.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Malachai Duddy.

21 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat. I'd like to join in the vote of
22 sympathy for Pat Killelea. I know he was a former member of this chamber and very
23 active in a lot of organisations, including political parties, like Fianna Fáil. He was
24 also active in the Credit Union in Greystones and gave a tremendous amount of time.
25 If I could also mention Father Brendan Scully OFM who died at the weekend, a
26 former PP of Ballywaltrim. If I could extend my sympathies to his family and his
27 brother friars. He was somebody who gave a tremendous amount to the
28 Ballywaltrim area and to Bray. He was someone who was often invited back, his
29 relationship was so good, with the people of Ballywaltrim, to undertake Christenings
30 and weddings. I believe he did a huge amount of good which was only really known
31 to people who he helped. Go raibh maith agat.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Caroline Winstanley.

33 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to
34 express my condolences to the family of Thomas Manley. Thomas Manley worked

1 for Ark Housing. This is actually a really hard one for me to speak about. Thomas
2 showed me, my son and friends the absolute kindness. We had a situation where we
3 were being harassed by a group of people who were quite extreme and Thomas not
4 knowing us got us out of that situation and I will just never forget his kindness.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

6 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Thank you.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Pat Mahon.

8 COUNCILLOR MAHON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I'd like to express my
9 sympathy, and to local councillors in our area at home there, to Peter Byrne who was
10 a great Ballymount GAA man, buried this morning. Peter was a great character, a
11 good man, absolute gentleman. He played football and hurling with Ballymount,
12 which I had the great pleasure of playing with him on many an occasion. I would
13 like to offer my sincere condolences to his family. Thank you.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Patsy Glennon.

15 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Yeah. I'd like to join with Pat Mahon there in offering
16 my condolences to the Byrne family on the death of Peter. And as Pat said, he is
17 being buried this morning in Ballymount. As he were coming here the congregation
18 were gathering. I would like to be associated with Pat Killelea's recent death. Pat
19 was a prominent member of Fianna Fáil for many years. Thank you.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Avril Cronin.

21 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thanks very much. I would like to express deepest
22 sympathy to the family of Nigel Willis. He died suddenly in Dunlavin a few weeks
23 ago and it was an absolute shock to the whole community. He was only 34 years of
24 age and I would just like to express our deepest sympathy to his family. They would
25 be very well-known around the locality and we're thinking of them all. Thank you.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. And, Helen, have you any for staff?

27 MS PURCELL: We extend our sympathies to the families of our former colleague
28 and friend Liam Lott who has been mentioned previously; Madeleine Casey, mother
29 of Senator Pat Casey and mother-in-law of Councillor Pat Kennedy; Lola Kavanagh,
30 sister of our colleagues Eddy Murphy and Ger Murphy; Nancy O'Brien, mother of
31 our colleague Declan O'Brien; and Jack Murtagh who was mentioned, father of our
32 colleague Noelle Murtagh.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: If we stand for a moment's silence, please.

34

1 (Moment of silence.)

2

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

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Stokes.

6 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. Could I propose a
7 vote of congratulations to 16-year-old Kavin Venkatesa from Greystones who won
8 the Irish Chess Championships in August 2025. The championships took place over
9 nine days in Ennis, County Clare, and I was fortunate to be present for the play off
10 final in which he showed remarkable skill and composure. To the best of my
11 knowledge, this is the first time somebody has won the Irish Chess Championships
12 from Wicklow. The spelling on that is K-a-v-i-n V-e-n-k-a-t-e-s-a i. And just to say
13 that Kavin now automatically qualifies for the Irish Olympic Team and I am sure we
14 would wish him the very best of continued success. Go raibh maith agat,
15 Cathaoirleach.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Stokes, and I am sure your
17 encouragement and tutoring has gone long way to securing that. Congratulations.
18 And I am sure we can send out a letter of congratulations to Kavin. Thank you.

19

20 We have received a request for a suspension of standing orders which I am
21 proposing to have at half four, 4.30. I am going to read it out: "That this Council is
22 deeply concerned about the impact of the current industrial action by school
23 secretaries and caretakers in our schools across the county. Furthermore, this
24 Council wishes to express its total support for the secretaries and caretakers in their
25 legitimate request for parity with other similar school employees regarding pension
26 entitlement, critical illness and bereavement leave. The Council agrees to write to
27 the wrote to the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Minister for Education, and the Minister for
28 Public Expenditure requesting that this issue be resolved by the Government as a
29 matter of urgency." And this is being proposed by Councillor Joe Behan and
30 seconded by Councillor Peir Leonard. So if there's any dissent on that we will have a
31 suspension at half four. Okay. That's agreed, thank you.

32

33 The first item on the agenda then is: To confirm and sign minutes of ordinary
34 meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday, 7th July 2025 (copy

1 attached). Can I have a proposer and a seconder please? Proposed by Councillor
2 Avril Cronin, seconded by Councillor Shane Langrell. Were there any matters
3 arising out of the minutes? Okay. So we will move on to disposal.

4
5 The first disposal is: To consider the disposal of 49 square metres or thereabouts in
6 the townland of Newrath, Rathnew, County Wicklow situated at Clermont House,
7 Wicklow County Campus, originally acquired from Kathleen Bourne, Mary Kate
8 Shannon, Rosemary Alexander, Elizabeth McCormack and Rosemary Magnier by
9 way of a five-year lease commencing 1st October 2025 to Clermont Enterprise Hub
10 CLG (as per notice previously circulated). Can I have a proposer and a seconder for
11 this, please? Councillor Graham Richmond, Councillor Shane Langrell. All agreed?
12 (Agreed.)

13
14 Next disposal: To consider the disposal of 0.0127 hectares or thereabouts in the
15 townland of Kilcoole Td being the property known as land at rear of Silversprings,
16 New Road, Kilcoole to Mr Anthony Foley (as per notice previously circulated). Can
17 I have a proposer and seconder please? Proposed by Councillor Finn and seconded
18 by Councillor Tom Fortune. All agreed? (Agreed.)

19
20 To consider the disposal of 0.01645 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of
21 Knockanrahan Lower Td being the property known as 43 Liam Mellows Avenue,
22 Arklow to Ms Elizabeth McDonald (as per notice previously circulated). Can I have
23 a proposer and seconder, please? Councillor Pat Kennedy and seconded by
24 Councillor Pat Fitzgerald. All agreed? (Agreed.)

25
26 To consider the disposal of 0.0106 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of
27 Corporation Murrough Td being the property known as 1A Bond Street, Wicklow
28 Town, County Wicklow to The Wire Ropes Ltd (as per notice previously circulated).
29 Proposed by Councillor O'Brien and seconded by Councillor Gail Dunne. Thank
30 you.

31
32 To consider the disposal of 0.0214 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of
33 Merrymeeting Td being the property known as 12 Seaview Heights, Rathnew,
34 County Wicklow to Audrey Doherty and Siobhán Teevan as personal representatives

1 of Peter Doherty deceased (as per notice previously circulated). Can I have a
2 proposer and seconder, please?

3 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Proposed.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by John Snell and seconded by Graham Richmond.
5 All agreed? (Agreed.)

6

7 Number 7 is not proceeding, so we will move on to number 8: To consider the
8 disposal of 0.0171 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Kilcoole Td being the
9 property known as 19 Sylvan Lawns, Kilcoole, County Wicklow to Mr Stephen
10 Belton (as per notice previously circulated). A proposer and seconder, please.
11 Proposed by Tom Fortune, seconded by Orla Finn. All agreed? (Agreed.)

12

13 To consider the disposal of 0.0509 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of
14 Ballynerrin Lower Td being the property known as 29 St. Laurence's Park, Wicklow
15 Town, County Wicklow to Michael Duffy and Ann Boyce (as per notice previously
16 circulated). Can I have a proposer and seconder, please? Proposed by Paul O'Brien
17 and seconded by Gail Dunne. All agreed? (Agreed.)

18

19 To consider the disposal of 0.0124 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of
20 Kilmartin Td, Ashford, County Wicklow being the property known as Kilmartin,
21 Ashford, County Wicklow to Dermot Hickey as executor in the estate of Thomas
22 McHugh deceased (as per notice previously circulated). Can I have a proposer and
23 seconder, please?

24 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Proposed.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by John Snell, seconded by Shane Langrell. All
26 agreed? (Agreed.)

27

28 The next item is: To consider passing a resolution that Wicklow County Council
29 sanction the borrowing of the sum of €17.72 million in respect of Local Authority
30 Mortgage Lending Schemes in accordance with Section 106 of the Local
31 Government Act, 2001, as amended (copy attached). I am going to hand this over to
32 director Brian Gleeson. Thank you.

33 MR GLEESON: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. This is basically a housekeeping exercise
34 that we are asking the members to do. We borrow money from the Housing Finance

1 Agency in order allocate home loans to members of the public who are unable to
2 access a mortgage from commercial lenders. In order to do this we require a
3 resolution from the Elected Members. The last resolution was approved back in
4 October 2019 for an amount of 20.1 million. This amount has now been exhausted
5 so we do require a new resolution. So based on the 2024 and 2015 allocations
6 received from the Department it is now requested that the Elected Members approve
7 by resolution that Wicklow County Council sanction the borrowing of the sum of
8 17.72 million in respect of local authority mortgage lending schemes. So I just
9 require a proposer and seconder for that please, members.

10 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: I propose that.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: I think we have some people that want to speak on it first.
12 Councillor Behan.

13 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yeah, I have no problem proposing it, Cathaoirleach, but
14 I just have a question. It seems a very small amount of money since, whatever, for
15 the last six years that we have actually allocated for these home loan schemes. My
16 experience of dealing with a couple of people who applied for it is that it is
17 extremely cumbersome and very difficult to get through the Council to get a loan
18 application successfully achieved. Could the Finance Director tell us exactly how
19 many loans have been approved since the last approval was given in the last Council,
20 and how many does he anticipate will be approved this particular loan given the
21 rising cost of housing? Because many people are finding it difficult to get loans
22 through the finance, through the normal outlets, and to me this was always a very
23 good route for people who did find particular other routes difficult but it doesn't
24 appear to be very ambitious given the housing crisis, giving the rising price of
25 houses. Should we not be looking for a hell of a lot more? But how have we done
26 on this since the last time it was approved? That's my main question. Thank you.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. Are there any other questions
28 for Brian? Councillor O'Neill.

29 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Yeah, I just see on the home loan scheme, and I have
30 been asked by quite a few people about the rise in rent and I think there'd be a lot of
31 people heading for home loan schemes by the looks of it. I think there's a €200 limit
32 now on -- maybe we could get some explanation on this. There's a lot of concern
33 about the rent increase in the county, you know. Maybe could we get some sort of
34 briefing on it today. I am not quite clear on it, but I do know we're getting a lot of

1 calls about the increase on the limit there of, is it €200 now is the cut-off point? So it
2 looks as if we have serious increases in the rent for a lot of people. John beside me
3 might know a lot more than I know, he has his light on.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor John Snell.

5 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Yeah, thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yeah, I'd like to support our
6 head of finance in regards to seeking the support of the Elected Members for this
7 17.2 million today. On average I suppose it'll be the mortgage for approximately 50
8 people based on €350,000 home loan. It is a scheme that is available to home who
9 unfortunately can't achieve that through the local normal, I suppose, lending stream,
10 through their local banks. So while it will appease 50 families, the sooner 50
11 families get an opportunity to draw down their mortgage, get on the property ladder,
12 the sooner we can go back and seek more funding. So I think I would like to know
13 the figures that's been asked over the last six years, but as we know there was
14 problems at a national level in regards to that scheme, but certainly locally I know
15 it's been handled very well and I want to support this wholeheartedly. Thank you.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

17 MR GLEESON: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I don't have the figures in front of me,
18 councillor. We can get them emailed out to everyone if that suits. If you use
19 300,000 for a mortgage, that's 67 into the 20.1. The 17.7 million, it's not a case of
20 not looking for more, whatever, that's based on, we have to make an allocation or a
21 request based on information that's based on the 2024/2025 allocation that was
22 provided to us from the Department. That's the logic behind it. If we exhaust that
23 funding in two years' time we can come back to the members here again to look for
24 more, another resolution. This is just a housekeeping exercise; that the HFA will not
25 sanction money to us unless we have a resolution in place from the Elected
26 Members. So it is a box-ticking exercise to be blunt about it. As I said, if I allocate
27 out a huge amount of home loans over the next couple of years and exhaust that 17.7
28 million we'll be back here again looking for additional sanction from yourselves.
29 That's the position, councillor.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Behan, you're happy to propose it?
31 Can I have a seconder? Councillor Snell. Thank you. And then Councillor O'Neill,
32 the Chief Executive is going to respond to your query about the rent.

33 MS O'GORMAN: Yeah. So as you know, members, there's a rent review being
34 undertaken at the moment and the staff in rents under Caroline Fox and Michael's

1 guidance have had two briefing sessions with the Elected Members to date, happy to
2 have another one if needed and go through the scheme again members. We are
3 happy to organise that if you want to let Michael's team know, we'll do that. It is a
4 rent review. We haven't had one in a long period of time. Some people's rents will
5 go up and some will go down. As you know the rent scheme is based on the income
6 in the household. That's what it is based on. So it is adjusted accordingly to that.
7 But if anybody needs more information the housing team are happy to provide that.
8 Thank you.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Chief Executive. Councillor Behan.

10 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yes, I just want to pay tribute to Caroline Fox and
11 members of the team because I did attend one of the meetings, and I know it was
12 during holiday time and people have been away but it was very informative. But I
13 think I said when we were discussing whether it should be us who are adopting the
14 scheme or the officials coming up with the scheme, and we saw what happened on
15 that occasion, the officials basically got the -- the legal advice was that they're
16 entitled to do it over our heads. But I would just say to members, particularly those
17 of you who have a lot of constituents who are in local authority accommodation, be
18 prepared for an awful lot of queries and a lot of complaints and a lot of concerns,
19 because many people I think will be quite shocked at their new rent bills when they
20 get them. There will be savings for people at some levels, both in the Bray area and
21 also in the county area, but there will be kind of fairly significant increases for some
22 people in Bray and some people in the county area. I have to say I found the staff
23 very, if you like, informative and very willing to deal with queries from us as public
24 reps, but it is important that people give -- the one message I got from it was that
25 people are asked to give their up-to-date financial income and expenditure
26 information I think within the next week or so, week or ten days, I'm not sure of the
27 cut-off date, because that is going to obviously decide what rent people are going to
28 pay. And I do want to welcome one -- and I think it was an intervention, it may have
29 been an intervention by Mr Nicholson or by the Chief Executive, I'm not sure which,
30 that if there is going to be an increase in rent or a change in the rent that while people
31 may be notified by the end of the year roughly I think, that's my understanding, that
32 any new charges won't be levied until sometime maybe around February or March, if
33 I am not mistaken. I want to welcome the fact that there's sensitivity around the fact
34 at that time of the year, Christmas, it is going to be a difficult time for families

1 financially, and at least people have a little bit of a breather before they are asked.
2 The other thing I will say is that there will be hardship cases and I would ask the
3 Chief Executive, and I'm sure the staff will do this, to consider hardship cases on the
4 basis of their merits and to give sympathetic consideration where sympathy is
5 required. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. Councillor Leonard.

7 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yeah, sorry, I actually missed, I wasn't able to attend
8 the two workshops with Caroline. I just want to clarify one question: Just in relation
9 to housing bodies, will the rents be adjusted on all the social housing or the housing
10 bodies rentals as well?

11 MS O'GORMAN: The housing bodies have their own rent schemes but they are
12 required to consider the Wicklow scheme. It doesn't automatically follow through
13 that when our scheme adjusts and people's rents go up or down that the housing
14 bodies will take the exact same approach. I think we have deviated a little bit from
15 the agenda. I am happy to come back to this under the Chief Executive's Report,
16 members, if you want because I know there's items we need to get through a number
17 of items first. But if you have queries, talk to Michael or Caroline we will certainly
18 deal with them on a case-by-case basis. We are very sensitive to people's needs, and
19 that point that Councillor Behan made around implementation date, we are very
20 happy to have that into the new year because it is too much of a burden for people at
21 Christmastime.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Mahon, can I just ask, is yours in relation to a rent
23 query?

24 COUNCILLOR MAHON: It is.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Would you be happy to bring it under the Chief Executive's
26 Report?

27 COUNCILLOR MAHON: Yes.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: If there is a need for another briefing that can be provided.
29 That's very important, as the queries are coming in, but we will go back to your
30 query during the Chief Executive's Report. Thank you.

31

32 So the next item then is: To consider the nomination of one Elected Member to the
33 Dublin and Midlands Regional Health Forum (copy attached). So I am going to go
34 to Helen to explain more about this.

1 MS PURCELL: Very basically, Wicklow were part of the Dublin move to the
2 Leinster region, and we had four members on that regional health forum. That was
3 Councillor Joe Behan, Councillor Patsy Glennon, Councillor Gerry O'Neill and
4 Councillor Caroline Winstanley. The Regional Health Forums are now going to be
5 increased from four to six reflecting the health region geographies, and the region we
6 were in has been split. Item number 12 on the agenda is to consider the nomination
7 of one Elected Member to the Dublin and Midlands Regional Health Forum. And
8 then the next item on the agenda, number 13, is three Elected Members onto the
9 Dublin and South East Regional Health Forum. So item number 12 deals with
10 geographically that's West Wicklow will be included in that particular area, and as I
11 say we're going down from four to one member, so we're just looking for the
12 members to propose and second who that one member will be, suggesting that it
13 would be from the four members who are there currently.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: So, Councillor O'Neill, you're happy to stay on as the Elected
15 Members for this side?

16 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Yeah.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Great. Can I have a proposer and a seconder for that?
18 Proposed by Councillor Behan and seconded by Councillor Patsy Glennon. Thank
19 you.

20 MS PURCELL: Just to say to you, Councillor O'Neill, the first meeting is Tuesday,
21 6th September at 2 o'clock in Tullamore. They'll write out to you. We will you
22 details on tomorrow, to the forum.

23 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Sorry, through the Chair.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Murphy, yes, go ahead.

25 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Yeah. Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I'm not querying the
26 positions at all. I am wondering what kind of representations from Wicklow are on
27 that board, and what is the report on? Because I think being the health forum, I think
28 we as the committee could be linking into some of the issues regarding that, but I
29 have never seen a report on it. How successful is it for members sitting on that board
30 and, you know, what's the feedback from it?

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I think the members that are on it might answer
32 that for us. But first, Councillor Cronin.

33 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Yeah. Thanks very much. I just want to come in on
34 this. I haven't been a member of the health forum but I know that my two colleagues

1 in West Wicklow, Councillor O'Neill and Councillor Glennon, have both been on it
2 for a number of years and in fairness to them they have worked well together. I just
3 want to express our disappointment that we're down to one member now from West
4 Wicklow. I spoke to Councillor Glennon about this earlier, and I raised it with the
5 Minister for Health, I just think it is very unfair that we're losing a councillor on it.
6 And I think even for support among the region I think it's very important that we are
7 well represented and while it is good to have at least one member from the west I do
8 think it would be very important that that member also has support in the role. So I
9 just want to convey our disappointment that we are losing a councillor. It is a really
10 important forum and there has been a number of good outcomes from the queries
11 that were raised by the members on it so I just want to express our disappointment
12 that we're now losing a member. Thank you.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Cronin. I know the Council did write
14 to see could they keep the two members on and unfortunately it wasn't allowed.
15 Councillor Behan, I am going to bring you in. You might be able to answer that
16 query from Councillor Murphy.

17 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yeah, thanks, Cathaoirleach. And I just want to echo first
18 of all what Councillor Cronin said there, and in fact we put up a very strong fight at
19 the particular health forum with regard to the fact that Wicklow was being isolated
20 into just one member on that particular geographical forum and we agreed as a forum
21 to write, all of the members from all of the counties agreed to support Wicklow in
22 that particular incident, but unfortunately to date we haven't been successful. Maybe
23 there still might be a rethink, but at the moment could I just say to Councillor
24 Murphy that every three months we submit a report which goes to Helen and to
25 Teresa which indicates basically the items that are discussed at each of the meetings.
26 The format normally is that there is a presentation on some aspect of the health
27 service ran by the HSE. It could be to do with hospital cover, various vaccination
28 programme, medical cards, all of the relevant things relevant to us. Members have
29 the opportunity to submit questions and motions which we have done over the time
30 that I have been a member and it happened before I became a member as well.
31 There's always a vigorous discussion and it's an opportunity for us as councillors to
32 convey the opinions of our constituents and also of people generally in the county on
33 matters to do with health. Now, however, a bit like here, we have been very
34 restricted in the powers that we have been given. We're a forum. We're basically a

1 talk shop. We can question HSE officials, and we do, but we don't have any real
2 decision-making power. Everything goes back to officialdom at the HSE and back
3 to the Department of Health. Perhaps the new regime might see that being a little bit
4 differently handled but I can honestly say that of my colleagues there, the two
5 colleagues from the west, of whom I have most experience of being members,
6 Councillor O'Neill and Councillor Glennon, they have made a huge impact on the
7 forum in their time as members. And I can think of one particular item, which would
8 be Crooksling, the disgraceful closure of that hospital which was a public hospital on
9 land donated to the public for public use which the HSE commandeered and
10 effectively then moved all the patients from there into nursing homes under the
11 pretext of Covid at the time. We spent a lot of time at meetings talking about that
12 issue and in particular I compliment Councillor O'Neill for the fantastic amount of
13 research work he did and the work he did with the local campaign group on that
14 issue. We fought as a team on all of those issues to ensure that the voice of Wicklow
15 was heard at that forum, and we certainly made an impact. And I do think it is
16 regretful that the two councillors who represented this Council so well on that forum
17 from the west can't be on it together on this occasion. Again I don't think it is too
18 late for us to write a letter to the Minister for Health from today's meeting asking for
19 a rethink on that. But I can certainly say honestly to Councillor Murphy that the
20 councillors in my experience have had a good, strong impact on the forum. Thank
21 you.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. Councillor Winstanley.

23 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I just wanted to
24 reassure Councillor Murphy, I do actually sit on the DISG with her, so the motions
25 that I have raised so far have been related to disability. One thing I would say in
26 defence of the Regional Health Forum of having experience of putting questions
27 through Parliamentary question and through the forum is that you do actually get
28 way more detailed responses through the Regional Health Forum. So, like, any of
29 you can come to us with questions and we can raise them and give you the
30 information back. So it's not -- like, you can come to us if you have something that
31 you want raised because the quality of the responses is way more detailed.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Winstanley. So the next item then
33 is -- proposer and seconder for Councillor O'Neill then to sit? Sorry, we do have
34 that. Councillor O'Neill, sorry, did you want to come back in?

1 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Just to reassure Councillor Murphy that there are reports
2 going back to Helen there and in actual fact, you know, issues that one of the
3 councillors have asked me to raise at the forum level, I have done that, and there's a
4 huge -- in actual fact we can learn from the forum, because maybe it's no harm to
5 bring issues back to the floor here. Like, I raised an issue on the TB, on the spread
6 of TB in our regional area, which is a huge increase in TB and people being infected
7 with it. So they're issues maybe we could learn and bring back to full Council
8 meeting and have a full discussion to inform our full county exactly of issues, like
9 the outbreak of TB, which is absolutely huge at the moment.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Neill.

11 MS PURCELL: I'll make sure those reports are circulated. We will go back a few
12 months and circulate a few.

13

14 Then on to item number 13, which is the other side of this: To consider the
15 nomination of three Elected Members to the Dublin and South East Regional Health
16 Forum. So this is the other geographic area which basically covers the east of the
17 county. And if we were to follow-through, if Councillor O'Neill is going to go to
18 Dublin and Midlands, well then it would be Councillor Behan, Councillor Glennon
19 and Councillor Winstanley, if the Council are in agreement to propose and second
20 that.

21 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Agreed.

22 MS PURCELL: Thanks.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Councillor Snell and seconded by Councillor
24 Langrell.

25

26 So the next item then is: To consider the procedure for Presidential Election 2025
27 (copy attached). So Helen is going to update us on the procedures at the moment.

28 MS PURCELL: So we haven't actually received the Presidential Order yet. We had
29 anticipated that we would receive it last week. We haven't. But we are expecting the
30 election to be held, it has to be before the 10th November and rumours are that it will
31 be the 23rd or 24th October. In advance of that I have circulated the procedure for
32 Presidential Elections. We have received 11 requests for nomination by Wicklow
33 County Council from people who wish to run for the role of President. I have set out
34 there the procedures I am suggesting: That all candidates be invited into a meeting,

1 that they are allowed to present for five minutes with a question-and-answer session
2 for ten minutes; that they have to actually attend the meeting in person; in advance of
3 the meeting I will request a copy of their passport and also a declaration saying they
4 are eligible to run for the office and that they consent to being nominated. I suggest
5 then that you'd have maybe a recess and decide whether or not you want to nominate
6 a member, or a candidate from Wicklow County Council. That would require a
7 proposer and a seconder for each candidate. And then there would be a voting
8 process if more than one candidate is put forward. And then there may or may not
9 be a nomination from Wicklow County Council. I would suggest that the
10 Cathaoirleach might consider a date for a special meeting. The last time the meeting
11 was held on the 10th September in 2018 and the closing date for receipt of
12 nominations was the 26th September. I would imagine that the timeline is going to
13 be very similar when we receive it this time. And that's basically just to put a
14 process in place as we haven't had one previously.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Helen. And as we're tight on the timelines, and
16 we have provisionally put it in the diary for the 15th for a meeting about the
17 Greystones LAP which we won't be having now, and there is already a Wicklow MD
18 and an SPC meeting scheduled on that day, so I am proposing that we have our
19 special meeting for the Presidential Election on the 16th September. So I am putting
20 it out to the members if that suits and would it be preferable to be morning or
21 afternoon. We would hope to have as many of you here in person but if you're not
22 able to, to at least be on Zoom to be able to contribute to the meeting because it is
23 very important. I am going to put that out to anyone, if they have anything they
24 would like to say on it. Thank you. Councillor Orla Finn.

25 COUNCILLOR FINN: Just to say that the Wicklow Heritage Forum meeting is on
26 that morning. I don't know if any of the Council staff, if it affects any of yourselves,
27 but I know I'm at it. Now, it's in the morning at 10 o'clock I think at the moment it's
28 been confirmed for.

29 MS O'GORMAN: I think, members, just to clarify, given the short space of time
30 that we have, whatever date or time we choose is not going to suit all members in the
31 room. We're trying to be as facilitative as possible. The Monday was too jam
32 packed with MDs and SPCs, so the suggestion was the 16th. So we're happy to work
33 with you, it'll have to be that week. Any later than that we won't have enough time
34 to turn around and get a nomination to the Dáil or to the Oireachtas if there is one to

1 be made by this elected body, but it is completely up to yourselves. The facility will
2 be there for members to come in online but we would like the candidates to present
3 in person.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: I know there's a few members on the Heritage Forum, so if
5 we went for the Tuesday afternoon.

6 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Yeah.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: So two o'clock on Tuesday the 16th. Thank you, members.

8 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Cathaoirleach, can I ask, do we have a list of who has
9 contacted the Council, or will that be circulated? I assume we have to know who is
10 coming in before the meeting.

11 MS PURCELL: Absolutely, it'll be circulated, and the names will be on the agenda.
12 We are proposing to put them on alphabetically by surname, once they submit the
13 information to me in relation to their eligibility. Yeah.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: And as the Chief Executive has said, they have to be here in
15 person themselves. As I say, if we can have as many members here in person, but if
16 not, at least come in on Zoom which would be great. Thank you. So that's that date
17 set.

18

19 So the next item is the Chief Executive's Monthly Report. But as we are breaking at
20 half four for suspension of standing orders I am proposing that we bring our two
21 presentations forward and then if we find we're running out of time for the Chief
22 Executive's we can put in for a time extension. So I just need someone to propose
23 and second it. Councillor Langrell, Councillor Stokes. Is everybody happy then that
24 we defer the Chief Executive's Report and we bring in our two mentions first?
25 (Agreed.) Great. Thank you.

26

27 So then that leads me to, we will be receiving the presentation from the East Coast
28 Railway Infrastructure Report Public Consultation No. 2, and I'd like to welcome
29 Cian Lynch from Iarnród Eireann and Damien Keneghan from Jacobs Consultants.
30 Thank you very much.

31 MR LYNCH: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, Councillors and Senior Management. My
32 name is Cian Lynch. I am the programme manager for ECRIPP for Irish Rail. With
33 me today is Damien Keneghan from Jacobs Engineers; they are consultants on the
34 project. On behalf of Irish Rail I would like to express our thanks for the opportunity

1 to come and speak to you today and to review what we have been doing since we last
2 met in November last year. We'll advise you of that and we will also advise of what
3 it is we will be taking to public consultation in the coming weeks. I'll hand over to
4 Damien to get into the detail on that but initially I will provide a brief background on
5 the projects for anybody who may have missed it the last time.

6
7 So the East Coast Railway Infrastructure Projects are a suite of five projects being
8 delivered by Irish Rail to provide improved coastal protection to the rail line between
9 Dublin and Wicklow. There's five distinct -- if you go to the next slide, please. So
10 we have five distinct projects within the ECRIPP, each relating to a particular
11 location. The three projects that are relevant to Wicklow are the Bray to Greystones
12 North Beach project, the Kilcoole to Newcastle project and the Newcastle to
13 Wicklow Murrough project. In recent years Irish Rail have seen more and more
14 occurrences of wave overtopping and coastal erosion on this section of the line. This
15 has led to increased disruption to services. It has necessitated more and more
16 maintenance to the line. We took the decision a number of years ago to look to
17 provide a more strategic level of protection that could safeguard this line and these
18 services into the future for the users between Dublin and Wicklow.

19
20 So the objectives of ECRIPP at a very high level is, as I said, to provide this
21 improved coastal protection. There's also a series of sub-objectives which align with
22 Irish Rail's other policies to protect and maintain the rail corridor, to ensure safe
23 operation of the railway and supports low carbon connectivity and transport into the
24 future.

25
26 The next slide, please. So the benefits of the project that we are hoping to deliver.
27 Obviously the first is to protect this rail line and this rail infrastructure. Secondly, by
28 doing that it will allow us to facilitate other plans and projects we have to expand the
29 service on this line; namely, the DART+ Coastal South Programme of Works. This
30 approach that we're taking, and Damien will speak about, we believe is an adaptable
31 approach to climate change and coastal erosional and coastal management. It means
32 we are doing the works now that we feel we need to do now. We are recording
33 works where possible into the future but anything we do build now will be adaptable
34 and we can come back in without having to rebuild it in 25, 30, 50 years plus. We

1 also feel that the solutions we have identified are the solutions that have the minimal
2 impact on the environment and the amenity areas into which they are to be placed.

3
4 Next slide, please. So I will pass over to Damien now who will talk you through the
5 detail on each of the three projects and what it is we will be delivering.

6 MR KENEGHAN: Thank, Cian, Cathaoirleach, Councillors. The first project we're
7 going to talk about is the Bray to Greystones North Beach, which we call CCA5.

8 Next slide, please. So as you can see here, we have Bray Head here. So we've a
9 number of structures. So Irish Rail over the past number of years have put in
10 structures to protect the rail line from coastal erosion and from flooding, so our
11 project is to further protect those structures by putting rock revetments along the
12 coast. So as you can see here, the magenta colour shows where we are doing the
13 works on Bray Head. Again, that is bringing in 6- to 1-tonne rock and placing it in
14 front of those masonry structures.

15
16 Next slide, please. So this is Greystones North Beach, and in this location we've
17 evolved the design since Phase 2. So we now have rock revetments at the toe of the
18 cliffs. So as you can see, the blue areas show two rock revetments and as you go on
19 to the next slide you will see an artistic impressions of these schemes. This is at
20 Naylor's Cove. As you can see in the background there, you can see some rockwork.
21 So this shows that the works that we have have a minimal impact on amenity at that
22 location. The structures further south are less accessible. Again we will have to go
23 in and place rock in front of those structures.

24
25 Next slide please. So this is Greystones North Beach. As you can see, I suppose in
26 the image there it is quite hard but there are rock structures at the toe of those cliffs
27 in the foreground and in the background, so that will protect where we have
28 identified coastal erosion over the next 50 years. In the centre there you will see
29 areas that will naturally erode and get an equilibrium and a little abatement will
30 form.

31
32 Next slide, please. So we can Kilcoole to Newcastle. This is CCA6.1. When we
33 were here last year that is what we called it. Next slide, please. The biggest issue we
34 have along CCA6.1 is coastal erosion and wave overtopping. So there's a number of

1 implementations here. Just south of Kilcoole we have some revetment which is the
2 magenta colour and then at the breaches what we have is some concrete revetments
3 and some rock revetments. And the reason why it is concrete revetments at the
4 breaches is, from engagement with the NPWS and from ecologists that the concrete
5 revetments reduce the amount of predation they might have on the some of the bird
6 species in the area. Further south of that we have quite a long section of a concrete
7 upstand wall, and then further south than that again we have upstand walls with some
8 rock revetment.

9
10 The next slide, please. Again this is an artistic impression of the breaches. The rock
11 revetments there are currently in place but splaying off that you can see the concrete
12 revetments that are protecting the structure there. We are not proposing any works to
13 the breaches itself, we are just projecting works north and south of those structures.

14
15 Next slide, please. Again this is just an artistic impression of the transition between
16 the concrete upstand wall and the rock revetments. As you can see access will be
17 provided while protection is given to the rail line.

18
19 Next slide, please. Again we're on to CCA6.2. This is the Newcastle to Wicklow
20 Murrough part of the scheme. Next slide, please. Again similar to CCA6.1, we're
21 providing rock revetments to the north at Six Mile Point and as you work further
22 south from Clonmellon down we don't identify any works there because our
23 modelling shows that there is enough of a buffer there between the coast and the rail
24 line. Further south of that again we have over 700 metres of rock revetment for the
25 Murrough, and that's providing protection to the rail line in three discrete locations.

26
27 Next slide, please. Again an artistic impression of the rockworks. In CCA6.2 we are
28 providing steps over the revetments. So every 600 metres there will be a way to get
29 over the revetments. That means no one will be more than 300 metres away from an
30 access point to the beach and over the revetment.

31
32 Next slide. Again, programme. As I said, we were here last November presenting
33 on the option selection. We're currently going to start Public Consultation 2 on the
34 15th September. That will run until the 13th October. Off the back of that we hope

1 to close out public consultation with a public consultation report, and then we'll start
2 what's called the reference design. The reference design is what we use to go to
3 planning with, and our aim is to have the EIAR, which is the Environmental Impact
4 Assessment Report, complete by next summer, and with a planning submission to an
5 An Coimisiún Pleanála in September. Off the back of a successful planning
6 application we hope to go to detailed design with a contractor appointed in autumn
7 2028, with construction starting January 2029.

8
9 Next slide, please. Thank you. Open for questions.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks great. Thank you very much, Cian and Damien. I am
11 going to open it up to the floor now for questions. Councillor Stephen Stokes.

12 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. And thank you very
13 much for the positive presentation today. It's great to see progress happening. I am
14 just wondering just about the timeline, how certain are we of that? Because, you
15 know, a lot of things -- I'm not saying about ye in particular, but a lot of things have
16 been announced in the past and they seem to get pushed out. So if we could get a
17 little bit more insight on the timelines. And I would like to know a little bit more
18 about the measures for the North Beach in Greystones. Do you propose, like, rock
19 armour? It was quite quick, the slide there.

20 MR KENEGHAN: Apologies.

21 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Oh, no, no, it is fine. So if I could just get a little bit
22 more information because there is severe coastal erosion on the North Breach in
23 Greystones. And I am wondering, how will this tie in with the DART+ Coastal
24 South Programme that I believe is being proposed but it is still to go out to public
25 consultation? Are you working with those folks? And crucially will this help with
26 supporting the Bray to Greystones Cliff Walk? You know if you are doing
27 stabilisation work and you're securing the cliff face, will this help? And are you
28 speaking with those stakeholders, including Wicklow County Council about the Cliff
29 Walk? It was a very positive presentation, a bit of a quick bullet point presentation,
30 and I am just wondering, I chair the Transport Infrastructure Delivery and
31 Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee and I am wondering if you would
32 be willing to commit to meeting with that Transport SPC in the future? Just if we
33 have more questions and more stakeholders it'll be very beneficial if we get a
34 commitment to that in the future. Thank you very much.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to take three questions at a time if that's okay
2 because there's quite a few people, and then I'll let you answer them then. Councillor
3 Paul O'Brien.

4 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thank you to
5 Cian and Damien for their presentation. I remember it well here last November. I
6 still have the same concerns to be quite honest with you. You know, as I said before,
7 this is kind of special to me in the sense my family come from the Murrough. So I
8 don't know if you have been down to the Murrough since you were here last
9 November but it has decreased again, and with the weather even over the weekend,
10 you know, it's decreased even again. And again I have to express my fear, and I'm
11 not pointing fingers here, but if I heard you correctly, autumn to January
12 2029 -- sorry, autumn you hope to have the plans and work starting in January 2029.
13 If on average we have two storms a year, which we're having, and plus, by the time
14 January 2029 rolls around to be quite honest with you we won't have a Murrough.
15 And it's not just special for myself, if you speak to any of the Elected Members, and
16 I'm sure they'll come in after me here, from the Wicklow Municipal District we all
17 have affinity with the Murrough. Because it's been said at our MD meetings, well,
18 what are you doing about the Murrough, and we have tried to explain to the people
19 we haven't got the capabilities in the Wicklow Municipal District or indeed the
20 County Council to deal with this issue; it's going to cost many hundreds of millions
21 of euros. The one thing that keeps getting thrown back at me is, well, the longer
22 you leave it the more it is going to cost. We understand it is an area of special
23 conservation, the Murrough is, but again I re-emphasise that if we don't do anything
24 about it there won't be an area of special conservation to protect. And we can talk
25 about the DART coming to Wicklow Town, which we all want, but, you know, there
26 is a fear out there and there is suspicion that only for the railway line there wouldn't
27 be this conversation happening, the Murrough would fall into the sea. But there is a
28 suspicion out there that it's leave it as long as we can and we will move the track
29 more inland, which is a shame to see it, because again the reason that will happen is
30 because there will be more coastal erosion. I am sure there's other speakers who
31 want to come in here but I am just sad today I suppose would be the best way of
32 putting it, because I have given up being angry at this stage, that it's going to take
33 until January 2029 at the best to get the works started. I just fear by the time that
34 rolls around, as I said to you, we're not going to have the Murrough let alone the

1 DART coming to Wicklow. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Tom Fortune.

3 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Yeah. Thanks, Cathaoirleach. My question is just
4 generally obviously the project you have laid out is very, very impressive but again
5 2029 is years away and lots of things are going to happen between now and then.
6 But what I am interested in is: Is what you're doing, and what you're doing, are you
7 part of the Cliff Walk solution? In other words, are ye part of that discussion that's
8 going on to get the Cliff Walk reopened? Because I don't know whether you are or
9 you aren't, but I mean it would make more sense if you were. I am curious. Because
10 if you're doing this and then there's another entity, and I think your organisation is
11 involved as well, I am not sure whether it is yourselves or somebody else, but I think
12 it is relevant and I think there needs to be clarity on it because if not there's a whole
13 load of stuff going on and it is only leading to confusion I would think.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I'll let the Chief Executive come in on the Cliff
15 Walk and then let you answer those two questions before we go to the next round.

16 MS O'GORMAN: Just to confirm, we have been in constant discussions and
17 consultation with our colleagues in Iarnród Eireann. As you know we have RPS
18 engaged doing a study and a survey, and a lot of the drone footage came from
19 Iarnród Eireann, so we are working in partnership with them. And the updates that
20 you get mentions IE, so that is Iarnród Eireann, so they are working with us on it. As
21 you say, members, it wouldn't make any sense to do anything with the Cliff Walk
22 without being in consultation with Iarnród Eireann. So just to confirm that is
23 happening and will continue to happen. So thank you, members.

24 MR KENEGHAN: Thank you very much. To come back to Councillor Stokes on
25 timeline and certainty. As with all projects that goes into planning, it goes in and
26 you hope it comes out quickly. We are in a special area of conservation, special
27 protections areas; we have to take those things into consideration through the
28 planning process. We are being very proactive about this. We have met the NPWS
29 on numerous occasions to try work through some of the concerns. But in regards to
30 2029, that's our programme. So we're submitting planning next September. We're
31 hoping it'll come out of the planning system fairly quickly and then it is detailed
32 design and then appointing a contractor. In June we had a consultation with
33 contractors, so we're engaging with industry. So we're making them aware of the
34 project so when it does come through the planning system we'll have engaged

1 contractors that can hit the ground running.

2

3 Greystones North Beach. Again we're looking at a 50-year design with climate
4 change added on to that. So with regards to the structures that we are putting in,
5 they're pretty bulky structures, there's 6 to 10 tonnes of rock that will hopefully
6 reduce the erosion, reduce the overtopping, protect those structures behind it and
7 protect the rail line. I think I have answered the -- in regards to the Bray to
8 Greystones Cliff Walk, I think the CEO answered that question. And yes,
9 absolutely, we would be happy to engage with the group you just mentioned.

10

11 Councillor Paul O'Brien, yes, I remember it being last year talking to you when you
12 were there. We're going as quickly as we possibly can to try to deliver the project.
13 As I just outlined, the planning process, getting into the planning process is key for
14 us but then getting through the planning process is obviously a big objective for the
15 project. I will say this, that we have successfully submitted the marine area consents
16 for all five projects in July of this year so we are hoping to get those consents in the
17 next 12 months, when they come in through then the door will be open to submit
18 planning. So we are doing everything in our power to get in the planning.

19

20 Then, Councillor Tom Fortune. Again 2029, again we will try improve on it but
21 that's the date we have the moment. I think the question on the Cliff Walk has been
22 answered.

23 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: If I can ask for clarification on it though?

24 MR KENEGHAN: Yeah.

25 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I am still not clear in what I have heard that your
26 particular project is an integral part.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Put your mic on, Councillor Fortune.

28 MS O'GORMAN: Absolutely.

29 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: It isn't separate?

30 MS O'GORMAN: No, no. They're intertwined and interlinked. Absolutely.

31 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: That's my question.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. We have some more questions. Councillor Lourda
33 Scott.

34 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Yeah, thank you. Thank you for the presentation. I think

1 a lot of my questions have probably been touched on in terms of the Cliff Walk. I
2 am also a Greystones councillor so it is very pertinent to us. A quick comment: It's
3 very welcome that you're prioritising a sort of a lack of effect of the amenity value of
4 the beaches, and certainly that's something I would have raised at this meeting the
5 last time you were here. So that's welcome to hear, that there will be every 600
6 metres steps over the revetments. It may be a bit early for this sort of detail but I
7 would add in a reminder that access to the beach and the foreshore for people with
8 disability and mobility issues is a key issue. It is something that comes up quite a lot
9 in my area and something I have worked on quite a lot with people. So if there's
10 steps that there is also a ramp. I know it is a bit early but it is worth saying it now. I
11 would share my colleagues' concerns around the timeframe and I suppose the worry
12 of slippage of that timeframe which we always see in considerable projects that take
13 sort of planning and, you know, a lot of effort and work and money to go into them.
14 I suppose my question is: Is there money ring-fenced from the Government for this
15 project? Is that set in place for the construction?

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor John Snell.

17 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Yeah, thanks, Cathaoirleach. Thanks to the two
18 gentlemen for their presentation. If I could ask that perhaps the presentation could
19 be forwarded out to all Elected Members that we could go through it in our own time
20 as well. Again just in regards to Newcastle to Wicklow CCA6.2. You did go
21 through the presentation there but you're saying from north of the Murrough, heading
22 towards Newcastle, so if I take it from the maps, it is Killoughter/Clonmellon
23 direction, that there was no revetments being put in, no rock armour being put in.
24 You said there's a buffer zone, a significant buffer zone, that will alleviate pressure
25 on the rail line. So obviously a lot of this is -- I would imagine a hundred percent of
26 this is to deal with Iarnród Eireann, their concerns in regards to the rail line, and yet
27 we've had so many Elected Members at a national level, various Ministers commit to
28 saving the Murrough, saving the coastline, funding must be put forward, and yet the
29 only thing that hasn't been discussed here today is how much is this going to cost?
30 Do you have an itemised breakdown on the cost of this? Bearing in mind that we're
31 in 2025 now, you're talking about 2029 before it would have any protection of the
32 Murrough. So while we talk about, you know, all our marine assessments, our
33 planning permissions, none of that is protecting the rail line as we speak, so it's going
34 to be four years' time before there's actually works put in place to protect the

1 coastline. I want to know who is sitting around the table in regards to, is it
2 exclusively Iarnród Eireann with you as a consultancy firm bringing this to the likes
3 of us, the Elected Members? But is the Department, is the Government sitting at the
4 table here to say they will commit to funding this? Is there any other commitment
5 from any other State agency to support this? Because the reality is that four years
6 from now I'd imagine any figures that you can give me now will be irrelevant in four
7 years' time, because as we know just like the cost of living everything is going up, so
8 therefore prices that you will get in 2025 may not hold fruit in 2029.

9
10 In regards to, you say you'll never be more than 300 metres away from steps to get
11 you out over the rock armour to the beach, which will be welcome, but again I'd have
12 an awful lot more questions in regards to the presentation was good but it was quick,
13 and that's why I want it sent out so that we can scrutinise and have a look at it, but
14 for me I think it is just a stopgap. I think wherever the rail line is under the most
15 pressure obviously is where you're putting your focus on. And as we know from
16 previous experience in regards to the Murrough in particular wherever rock armour
17 went in in the past it moved the problem further north. From what you're showing on
18 your maps, particularly in the section from Newcastle to the Wicklow Town there's
19 only two areas that you're focusing on and therefore I believe we're going to move
20 the issue further on, and while it may not threaten the rail line for a significant
21 number of years there will be coastal erosion. There's always been coastal erosion.
22 Sure as night follows day there's coastal erosion, but it can be solved. There's other
23 parts of this country alone, we don't have to look beyond Ireland to see that people
24 have slowed down coastal erosion, and I don't expect Iarnród Eireann to front the bill
25 for all of this. So I would like to know costs and who else is sitting at the table and
26 any commitments that's been given from Central Government. Thank you.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Danny Alvey.

28 COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. And thank you, Cian and
29 Damien, for the presentation. I won't go back over some of the stuff that we raised
30 last enough and indeed some of my colleagues here in the Wicklow Municipal
31 District have gone over again, but just to echo the concerns around rock revetments
32 first of all to begin with because our experience with them in Wicklow Town has not
33 been good over the years. Every time the revetments have gone in the pressures
34 have moved right to the edge of those revetments, and we have seen accelerated

1 erosion, then we come back and put more rock revetments in, and I would be
2 concerned if there's gaps in the revetments we would only be doing the same further
3 on up and down the coast. But one of the biggest things I have concern around is
4 how revetments in general would necessarily meet the objectives of the Murrough
5 SAC and SPA. I understand you have liaised with the NPWS, which is positive, but
6 might not necessarily mean that the planning when it goes in will meet those
7 objectives, and is there any plan B if this is rejected by An Coimisiún Pleanála? And
8 is there any look at nature-based solutions instead of all the hard engineering all the
9 way up the coast and all the issues that may present for species like the little tern and
10 all the different waders there at the Cooldross breeding site? And finally, could we
11 see a copy of the last or indeed next public consultation? Could that be circulated to
12 us as councillors? I would be very eager to see inputs from organisations like
13 BirdWatch Ireland and others along the coast close to that. Thank you.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'll let you come back on those three queries.

15 MR KENEGHAN: Thank you very much. Councillor Scott I think it was the first
16 question that we had. In regards to the 600-metre beach access and disability access
17 ramps, it is part of our scope -- and I suppose it is of little interest to you, but it is
18 part of our scope to be cognisant of those requirements. So with all the CCAs we're
19 trying to maintain access and if possible improve the access to those points. Is there
20 money ring-fenced? Cian will probably touch on it in a few minutes with regards to
21 the costs, but we are preparing a business case for the projects. The same with all
22 projects in Ireland, we go for funding, we submit business cases, we make our case.
23 This project is being delivered under a cost-effectiveness analysis. So in regards to
24 what is the cost to deliver the project and maintain the access to the rail line. With
25 regard to Councillor Snell's comments, again on the -- share the presentation, I can't
26 read my own handwriting, sorry. The rock armour to the Murrough. As I said,
27 we've done coastal modelling for the project. We have identified where the erosion
28 hotspots will be from the Murrough going north, from Clonmellon down south
29 there's a bit more of buffer there. I take your point; erosion will always happen in
30 those areas. The way we design these structures is that we try to minimise the
31 amount of cutback, and that's probably the term you would call when the waves hit
32 the revetments and then come around to the top. So we designed the structure so we
33 tried to minimise the cutback effect further north and further south of those
34 structures. So that's been taken into consideration in prelim design, it'll go through in

1 the reference design and then on into detailed design. So whatever we can do to
2 minimise that return cutback we will do that for the project.

3
4 With regards to the business costs, Cian, do you want to come in on that?

5 MR LYNCH: Yes. So ECRIPP is funded by the Department of Transport through
6 the NTA. We get a yearly allocation of funding to deliver the project as far as the
7 construction contract award, at which point then the NTA will fund -- will assess
8 obviously, but if they agree will fund then the full suite of the construction works. It
9 is also worth noting that we recently got awarded some EU CEF funding, grant
10 funding, planning and also assist with some monitoring we are going to do in these
11 areas just to help to feed into our ongoing design and revisions and updates as
12 Damien mentioned. I will touch briefly as well on the presentations and the slides.
13 Councillors Snell and Alvey, yes, of course we will share the documentation.
14 There's a full suite of documentation coming for PC2 and that will be shared in
15 advance of the launch on the 15th, and it shows a lot more detail than what we can
16 show here today, so hopefully that will answer those questions. Lastly, I wanted to
17 go back to a query there regarding DART+ coastal works and their projects. So yes,
18 we did engage with the DART+ team on a regular basis internally to see where they
19 are at and what they are doing, and as I alluded to, our project, one of the benefits is
20 that we will support the improvements that they're hoping to deliver.

21 MR KENEGHAN: In regards to who is engaged in the project, there is a monthly
22 forum with Irish Rail, the local authorities and the OPW. We have a separate forum
23 with the NPWS as well, so we are engaging with a number of parties to deliver the
24 best project we can. Councillor Alvey's comment on the revetments. Again I
25 suppose in Phase 2 we went through a robust multi-criteria analysis to try find the
26 best solutions. So nature-based solutions were part of that, but I suppose it is
27 national significant infrastructure. It is quite a dynamic environment and trying to
28 implement nature-based solutions is quite difficult on this coast. We had
29 opportunities potentially to do beach nourishment in the past but when it was put
30 through the multi-criteria analysis it just didn't float to the top in regards to the best
31 solutions. I know rock revetments look a bit simple and can there be something
32 better, but rock is probably the most valuable resource we have in the world for this
33 area. It is a natural resource that holds value into the millennia so it is probably the
34 best solution we have for protecting the rail line in this location.

1
2 Your point about meeting the objectives. That's the reason why we're meeting with
3 the NPWS. We understand that any works -- and I know Irish Rail have tried to do
4 works in the recent past, to put in additional rock revetments to try and protect the
5 tracks. Any works that we do will have an impact. There's no denying that. There
6 will be an impact on the beach, on the habitats and on the species. Hence we are
7 meeting with the NPWS to try to work through those issues and try identify ways we
8 can mitigate either through construction, through the construction programming so
9 we are working outside wintering bird seasons or even working outside tides. Some
10 of the projects that I have been working on in the past we have been restricted to
11 working within two or three hours of high tide to try avoid impacting on birds. In
12 regards to the actual permanent works, through the engagement with MARA, the
13 NPWS and an An Coimisiún Pleanála we are hoping to minimise those impacts. If
14 we do find that there is an impact that is bond mitigation then there is a process
15 where we would go through what is called an imperative reasons of overriding public
16 interests and that would then go to the EU to determine. But we will be and have
17 been working with the NPWS and an An Coimisiún Pleanála

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

19 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: Most of my questions have been answered,
20 particularly the questions from Councillors Snell, Alvey and O'Brien, but just in
21 relation to the timeline. And I must share, like the 2029 is said -- we're on the back
22 of what has been a very good summer. So, like, if this followed up for the next four
23 years and we get a handy autumn and winter, is there any plans if there is an
24 emergency of such where the coastal erosion has been sped up? Because I think
25 that's one area where people believe that that is -- in relation to Iarnród Éireann that's
26 what seems to be waiting -- that's what they're lying in wait for. Thank you.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Peir Leonard.

28 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Thank you. Thanks for the report. I know at the
29 previous consultation and the ones before that, the parallel, the offshore, you know
30 the parallel structures offshore were considered and I know due to, I suppose, the
31 emergency situation that that's not a possibility, but in Arklow we have a lot of rock
32 revetment, so we are very experienced with the pros and cons of it, and I am just
33 wondering from the presentations there it looks like the parallel coastal -- you know,
34 the rock armour along the coast, will there be any lateral ones on that or is it all just

1 parallel? In relation to the proposed structures for access over the rock armour, what
2 kind of design is that going to be? Like, what is the proposed design for the access
3 over it and the steps? I don't know whether you want to maybe go down to Arklow
4 and have a look where they tried to put access onto the beach and disability access,
5 but that was a victim of coastal erosion as well and, like, there was concrete ramps
6 put down and they've all broken off and they're in the sea now basically. But one of
7 the issues we have down there that we can't -- we have a walkway on top of the rock
8 armour but we're constantly refilling it, and the Council are trying do their best, but
9 there's actually no engineering solution to the soil and the infill being washed out of
10 the rock armour all the time. So I think when you're planning ahead and for future
11 planning it might be a good idea to look at some, I don't know, sort of covering for
12 the rock armour to maybe encourage, you know, growing grass and stuff like that.
13 There was a good project down in Arklow, a longer term project, to cover over some
14 of the rock armour and it was sectioning off pieces of the rock armour, and it was a
15 marram grass project. So a lot of rock armour is actually covered over so you
16 wouldn't even know it is there. But it can be very harsh aesthetically. But the main
17 concern I would have is the access over it and the steps over it, how is that going to
18 be constructed, and just, you know, future planning that you're not going to be back
19 at square one. And if you do find a solution maybe that can be rolled out further
20 down the coast as well. Thanks.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. And we have members online. Councillor Gail
22 Dunne.

23 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thanks for the
24 presentation. I have to say my heart sank when I heard January 2029. My family
25 come from the Murrough with a fishing background, and I have spent many a day on
26 the Murrough ...(inaudible)... in the eighties and nineties compared to what is down
27 there, it is not comparable. I am seriously concerned, every time we go to meetings
28 on climate, what we are doing at the moment, by 2029 the goalposts will have
29 changed here, that really you are predicting that this will happen and that will
30 happen, but who knows because we don't know the strength of what could happen.
31 But that if there's a threat to the railway would the timeline be shortened? Because
32 you want to keep the train line open. There was a load of studies done on Wicklow
33 to Greystones Greenway, and I think in my head there was 650,000 spent on climate
34 action and special areas of conservation. Could any of them studies be used to try

1 and speed things up? I'm worried, like other councillors, that by the time you are
2 ready to go, press the 'go' button, that there'll be nothing there at all. The other thing
3 I'm concerned about is going for planning permission. If this goes to An Bord
4 Pleanála and even into Europe this could take absolutely years. It could be well after
5 2029. So I am not encouraged by what I have listened to today. The Murrough is in
6 a bad way. It's falling apart. It's a special amenity area for Wicklow Town,
7 Glenealy, and people walk the Murrough and less than ten, 15 years ago, now it's
8 very difficult. But I am very worried about the timeframe and whether that will be
9 relevant going forward, because nobody can control how the weather is going to
10 react and everybody can agree the weather is getting worse and worse and worse. So
11 I am a bit unhappy about what I heard here today. Thank you.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Dunne. I will come back to you to
13 respond to those queries.

14 MR LYNCH: Just a comment on the timelines and the backup plans that Councillor
15 Richmond raised. Firstly, I would like to say that we share your concerns about the
16 risks to the coast. We are very aware of this and of the urgency, and I suppose the
17 uncertainty that every storm brings, what will happen and what will be left. That's
18 why we're here today and that's why we have been trying to push ECRIPP through as
19 quickly as we can. In terms of a backup plan, we have no statutory powers to carry
20 out emergency works in an SAC or an SPA. We have been advised that if something
21 was to happen and we had to go in in those circumstances we would need a
22 ministerial order, is the only avenue for us. Now, I suppose to help push or obtain a
23 ministerial order we need to show that we have been proactive in the meantime and
24 we are taking a strategic look to it which is what ECRIPP is seeking to do. That is
25 our only option, a ministerial order, if there was an issue this winter or next winter.

26 MR KENEGHAN: Just in regards to Councillor Leonard's comments on the
27 structures, yeah, they are parallel. There's no lateral structures. So they would be
28 structures that would go out into the water. No, it is all parallel to the shore. In
29 regards to access and design, yeah, we are very aware of this. I suppose a lot of the
30 projects we have done in the past; we put in a structure, a storm happens or erosion
31 happens and the bottom of that step is now 3 or 4 foot away from the beach and it is
32 impossible to get access. We are designing the steps to be buried. So we will put in
33 what is called buried rock under the ground and then we will run the steps into the
34 beach. So as time goes on and as the beach erodes and recharges -- so the beach

1 does recharge over time. I appreciate it does erode a lot quicker sometimes. So we
2 will bury the toe of the steps, so we will try and maintain that access even after storm
3 events.

4 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Just to come in on that. You need to go look at
5 Arklow because they haven't just disappeared at the end, actually the whole
6 structures have broken up.

7 MR KENEGHAN: Yeah. I appreciate that. Thank you. Councillor Dunne, the
8 modelling that we have done has shown the effect of coastal erosion from, like,
9 today into the future, so we have taken that into account in our design. We have
10 assumed a number of storm events happening as well. So when we design these
11 schemes we are cognisant that it is a changing environment and that we have to put
12 in robust structures. If you look at the rock that is down there at present, we are
13 looking at the upgrade that rock to 3- to 6- and to 6- to 10-tonne rock. This is pretty
14 heavy duty rock that will hopefully protect the coast into the future up until the
15 design period. As Cian said, we share the concerns about timeline. Submitting the
16 marine area consents in July we brought the activity forward. So MARA is a
17 relatively new organisation, they are developing new guidelines, new procedures on
18 how to do things. So we have brought that activity forward in order to get the
19 marine area consents in place to allow us to submit planning next year. We are
20 doing everything we possibly can to meet that programme and to get the works
21 started in 2029.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. That's great thank you. Two more speakers.
23 Councillor Stokes, you wanted to come back in here.

24 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach, and, Damien, thank
25 you very much for all of the answers, you have been very insightful. I just wanted to
26 check -- and also thank you for the commitments to come and visit with the
27 Transport SPC. I just have one question to follow up on, I didn't seem to get an
28 answer on. I was just wondering, how will this tie in with the DART+ Coastal South
29 Programme which again is still to go out to public consultation, if at all? If you just
30 give me a little bit of insight into that. Thank you.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Online we have Councillor Miriam Murphy.

32 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Yes, thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just two questions.
33 Where is the guidelines on the accessibility and do you consult with people with
34 disabilities or in what way is that coordinated? Thank you.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Murphy. Councillor John Snell.

2 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just two quick things. First, to
3 acknowledge Teresa Byrne sending out the email so quickly there in regards to the
4 presentation. I was just thinking here quietly to myself, if we had that urgency in
5 regards to protecting the Murrough, you know, if you are ever looking for a job I
6 think Teresa you can go in and look after that project. So to have the presentation in
7 front of the Elected Members is great and thanks a million for your urgency in
8 getting that out. And then finally just in regards to, I did ask in regards to an overall
9 cost on the project, a ball point figure, I didn't get a ball point figure, I didn't get any
10 figure in regards to the cost of this. So you mentioned in the presentation that, you
11 know, the cost analysis of the importance of doing the project now, how much that
12 will cost in comparison to if they didn't do it as opposed to the disaster that would
13 happen in regards to the rail line. And so, you have cost figures obviously and you
14 have engaged with contractors so therefore there's a figure somewhere within your
15 report that hasn't been given and I am just wondering is it possible to give that. I
16 suspect it's nothing to do with confidentiality because you've already gone out to
17 contractors, you have a costings. I suppose I'm not asking for an itemised break
18 down in regards to each identifiable part of this project. I'm just looking for a
19 ballpoint figure on how much you're going to the Department and all the discussions
20 that you have had. So I don't need to know how much the consultancy firm have
21 got for this so far, I don't need to know how much you're going to spend on each part
22 or section of this. An overall ball point figure if you have it, thanks.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I will go back to those queries.

24 MR LYNCH: Councillor Stokes, regards DART+ Coastal South, ECRIPP is going
25 to project the current rail corridor from coastal erosion, wave overtopping. It is
26 currently DART+ Coastal South's objective looking to expand the services within
27 that rail corridor. At the moment that is the interface but obviously if they change
28 and step outside we will keep you updated. Does that answer your query?

29 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Yeah.

30 MR LYNCH: I might just comment quickly on Councillor Snell's query on the
31 costings, what has been done. Yes, we did meet with industry a number of months
32 ago, as Damien alluded to. That was more around the process, the structures
33 themselves, how they could be built, to seek advice and guidance that we could feed
34 back into our own work. We have done a costing exercise ourselves based on

1 similar projects from around the world and similar rates for materials, that
2 information goes into the business case which goes to the NTA and ultimately the
3 Department of Transport. It is up to them on whether or not they wish to share that.
4 There is a degree of -- I suppose our figures now have a high degree of risk
5 contingency in them, as they should. If we let the figure circulate it is a target for
6 people obviously to price towards as opposed to bringing that down. But I am happy
7 to have that conversation again after the NTA have reviewed the business cases and
8 see what they say. Thanks.

9 COUNCILLOR SNELL: That's fair enough. Thanks a million.

10 MR KENEGHAN: Councillor Murphy's questions on guidelines for disability.
11 Following the most recent guidelines on that -- and we are consulting with all parties
12 with regard to access to the beach, most importantly with the local authorities, Dun
13 Laoghaire, Dublin City County and Wicklow. As we go through to our planning
14 solution we will have what is called a Reference Design Report, and in that report we
15 will set out the guidelines that we work to, how that has fed into the project and
16 where we have been able to make improvements or provide additional access and
17 safety points for people. So that will be set out in the Reference Design Report as
18 per the planning application. That's all the questions.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thank you very much. I think that's all the
20 questions. It's great to see engagement and thank you for responding. Thank you
21 very much, Cian and Damien.

22 MR LYNCH: Thank you very much. I would just like to say, if possible, if all
23 councillors could share the consultation information. So we go live on the 15th
24 September until the 13th October. We're in Dun Laoghaire, we're in Wicklow, we're
25 in Bray and we're Greystones, so we're spread across the three local authorities. It
26 would be great to see you come down. Thank you very much.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Absolutely, we will certainly share that. Thank you.

28
29 So the next item on the agenda then is to receive a presentation on the Fire Service. I
30 would like to welcome Aidan Dempsey, Chief Fire Officer, to give a presentation.
31 Thank you, Aidan

32 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER DEMPSEY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, members. I will
33 just wait for the slides to load. Thanks. I am presenting for the next ten minutes on
34 an overview of Wicklow Fire Service. So the first slide shows the types of incidents

1 that we attend, the two main figures being 1,230, which is the number of incidents
2 we attended in 2024 across the county, and the figure of 1,563, which was the
3 number of times stations were mobilised. The larger number represents the
4 highlighted incident types at the top of the table where we mobilised more than one
5 station and in particular two stations to more serious incident types as a
6 predetermined attendance. So for domestic house fires, road traffic accidents, large
7 vehicle fires on motorways, hazardous materials, industrial and other buildings.

8
9 On the next slide you'll see that represented as a pie chart, both as numbers and some
10 percentages. So you can see that 40% of our activity is around quite serious
11 incidents, those I've mentioned just moments ago. That's 20% of our incidents. 8%
12 of incidents require two stations for domestic house fires. 22% of our activity is
13 around road traffic collisions and then 4% for vehicle, large vehicle fires, 3% for
14 industrial and 1% for fires in buildings in rural areas. And then the less serious
15 incidents, 14% of our incidents are where we mobilise crew to an alarm activation,
16 which in 2024 were all false alarms. 14% represents small urban fires started as a
17 result of antisocial activity. That would be 14% across the county. On the eastern
18 side of the county that would be a far larger figure for most of the stations because
19 that's where the activity takes place. And the other figure that I highlighted among
20 all of them is 7%, which is where we support the ambulance service, where they
21 have insufficient resources and they ask us to attend to support them at an incident
22 either to assist in moving a casualty or other activities for which we are trained.

23
24 2024 was the first year of the Fire Service post WRC agreement where new
25 structures, new procedures are in place. And the next slide shows a table which
26 outlines the fact that now following the implementation of the WRC
27 agreement -- and Wicklow has been first and quickest in the first counties across the
28 country to implement all of the various aspects of the WRC agreement. So last year,
29 or since September 2023 we have taken on 29 additional fire fighters across the
30 country; a 30% increase. And eight of our ten stations are there or thereabouts at
31 their new staffing levels of 12 where it was previously nine or ten. Two have
32 been -- it has been slow on the uptake to get new applicants, but that is changing and
33 at a recent open day in Blessington Fire Station we had an unprecedented number of
34 14 applications from that event. So we're starting to see that picking up for those last

1 two stations. Now fire fighters only need to attend every second week. They can
2 attend on their second week if they wish but they're only required for the week that
3 they're rostered. Fortnightly pay has been introduced so they no longer have to wait
4 months to be paid, and all of that is updated with back payments and other increases
5 made. We've appointed the 18 new driver mechanics that were part of the WRC
6 agreement, and we've increased the retirement age to 62.

7
8 The next slide shows how the increase in pay on the fixed elements mainly has
9 reflected for the average pay in those stations. So we're projecting this year that
10 over -- the stations will receive between 18 -- each individual, average, will receive
11 between 18,000 and 22,000 more than they were receiving in 2022. For the busier
12 stations that represents a 40% to 50% pay increase, for the medium-busy stations that
13 could be a 60% increase and for the quieter stations that represents a 70% to 80%
14 pay increase overall. The downside is, for the Council the budget in 2023 was 5 and
15 a half million and it's now projected this year to be in the region of 8 million, and all
16 of that increase is pay-related. There's no other increases in non-pay-related items.

17
18 So on the next slide we see the current headquarters staff. Myself and two admin
19 staff supporting, a Senior Assistant Chief Operations, a Senior Assistant Chief in
20 Prevention, and the Senior Building Control Officer. So we have two officers in
21 Building Control: one in fire prevention and two working in operations and shared
22 duties to support the ten stations. We have three vacancies, two of those have only
23 arisen very recently and HR are very proactive in filling those. And for the senior
24 appointment the notification has gone to the Public Appointments Commission, and
25 for the Assistant Chief, that's being advertised locally. So we're short staffed for the
26 moment but we're blessed with very committed people.

27
28 The next slide will show some of their statutory fire safety activities. So the two
29 Building Control Officers are solely involved above the blue line in -- the main part
30 is driven by the inspections of the 1,834 new units that were notified by 650
31 Commencement Notices in 2024. They are between them inspecting 18%, which is
32 above the national standard, and they're hugely committed. It's not just the
33 inspections, it's the paperwork that goes with it, the Commencement Notices, the
34 Completion Notices and all of the technical documentation that has to be assessed.

1 Then below the blue line is Fire Service statutory activity. So in 2024 we processed
2 130 Fire Safety Certificates and 117 Disability Access Certificates. One Fire Officer
3 managed to complete a hundred fire certs and a hundred disability access certs. The
4 remainder were done by other officers who also carried out 90 inspections of
5 licensed premises, 18 inspections of petroleum-licensed premium, there was 12 other
6 inspections, and five large crowd events that were licensed, that's over 5,000 people,
7 generally considerably more than the 5,000, and then many other under the threshold
8 events. And then we've reported on 250 planning applications at the request of the
9 planning department. So you can see there that just our statutory activity takes up a
10 lot of time for most of our staff.

11
12 On the next slide you will see where we have been putting all of our additional
13 resources recently into community fire safety. Internationally and nationally this is
14 where lives can best be saved. There are international studies that say that sadly
15 80% of people who die in fire are dead before the 999 call is made. So getting into
16 areas to get smoke alarms into people's homes and to educate and advise is very
17 important.

18
19 So the WRC Agreement gave each fire fighter 40 hours for their work as
20 ambassadors on fire safety in their local community and their daily lives, and an
21 additional 40 hours that they can avail of in planned activities. And in 2024, which
22 was a partial year, the first time we've had those resources available to us, we visited
23 77 different schools, we fitted smoke alarms in 42 domestic properties, we had 11
24 fire station open days to educate the community, we went out to a further 11
25 community fire safety talks, we gave two fire road traffic collision demonstrations at
26 secondary schools, we visited 60 units, a smaller number of sites for the travelling
27 community, familiarisation visits and CPR events to teach and demonstrate for the
28 public. And so, we hope in time to increase that activity, but a lot of that would be
29 budget-restrained.

30
31 On the next slide you see at the top an artist's impression of one of the two
32 new -- they're both the same, the two new fire stations for Baltinglass and Dunlavin.
33 We're now ready to go to tender. I am just waiting for permission from the national
34 directorate. We have the tender documents, and the estimated cost is €3 million per

1 fire station.

2

3 Priority then for our own building work within the Fire Service is to bring the
4 facilities in all fire stations to the highest possible level, particularly showers and
5 toilets now that we've increased the numbers and we're seeing a better gender
6 balance in each fire station.

7

8 Then on the bottom of the slide you can see one of the two new water tankers, one
9 going to Rathdrum and one going to Greystones to support our response. They came
10 in, they have been funded by the Department at 190,000 each, and they've given us
11 an additional 100,000 for the fire ground radios, the hand-held radios that we use at
12 incidents. And those tankers will be going into service shortly following operational
13 training and familiarisation, and health and safety training for the staff in question.

14

15 Then one of our major events is on the next slide. We undertook the first EU
16 exercise in Ireland in March of this year. We were asked by the EU to host an
17 exercise and our partners were the Romanian Civil Defence Department, the Italian
18 Civil Defence Department and the Civil Defence of Tenerife. There were 250
19 participants that week. Most of our activities took place on the Wednesday where
20 we had eight different exercises across the county. 250 participants, 28 Irish
21 organisations, which included eight fire services from around the country and four
22 different Civil Defence units, and we had 24 nationalities from the EU and their
23 representatives making up 75 of the 250 participants.

24

25 The next slide shows the Wicklow Gap, just one of the exercise locations. Each
26 vehicle, except for the tour bus, is part of the exercise. The initial reports from the
27 EU are very complimentary. You can get more details at that YouTube address there
28 by going into YouTube and putting Ireland plus MODEX, and you get a ten-minute
29 very laudatory and complimentary email made by the EU about Ireland and
30 particularly Wicklow's contribution to the wildfire response across Europe.

31

32 Then on the next slide we have the other achievements during the year. We have
33 developed an external emergency plan for the Zoetis plant in Rathdrum, we updated
34 the Wicklow County Council Major Emergency Plan, and we developed national

1 guidelines within Wicklow for high rise or tall buildings and for alternatively fuelled
2 vehicles. We will roll them out and they will be rolled out across the country.

3

4 The future work. We hope to achieve in the next 12 months ISO 45001 Certification
5 for Health and Safety Management, which is the highest standard nationally. We
6 will prepare for and act on the outputs of an External National Validation Group visit
7 due to take place in 2026, and we're running an International Trauma Course with
8 St Vincent's Hospital in 2026 also.

9

10 That's it. Thank you for your attention.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Aidan, for a great presentation. It is
12 always great to see all the work that is being done and thank you to you and to the
13 Fire Service for all the service you give to us in the county. I will open it up to
14 questions now. Councillor Avril Cronin.

15 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thank you very much, and thank you much, Aidan, for
16 that presentation. I note that you said in it that Dunlavin and Baltinglass, you're just
17 waiting on approval. Do you have any idea of a timeline of when that approval will
18 come or is it you're just waiting to hear? Do we have any idea? Will it be this side
19 of Christmas? Will it be next year? Have you any idea at all? Thank you.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Again, we will go to three questions at a time. Thank you.
21 So Councillor Paul O'Brien.

22 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I will keep it very
23 brief and simple. Aidan, I just want to, on behalf of myself and my colleagues,
24 express our sincere thanks for your dedicated services. It is not something many of
25 us could do, and I know it is a vocation. Councillor Glennon and myself spent some
26 time with the services up in the Gap that time with the EU and the training exercise,
27 and I know we're in safe hands. I just want to commend you and your colleagues for
28 your hard work and your efforts throughout the year. Thank you.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Danny Alvey.

30 COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Like Councillor O'Brien I will
31 make it brief. I just wanted to commend you and all your colleagues for a very
32 effective Fire Service in this county. It's something that has always been very close
33 to my own family: My cousin has been a member of the Fire Service here in
34 Wicklow Town for many years and his father before him, and my partner's there

1 cousin in Greystones. So we know very well about the dangers that fire fighters face
2 on a weekly basis, and we always hear such positive feedback from the community
3 on the speed of response. And specifically I just wanted to thank the Fire Service for
4 their engagement at community events all throughout the summer around the county.
5 I know I requested them to Newtownmountkennedy to a community fun day, and
6 they came along, and I also think it is great to engage with young people around fire
7 safety issues. So it is fantastic to hear that fire fighters get paid for that community
8 service. I think that is a welcome and positive thing. Thank you for the presentation.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I will let you respond to Councillor Avril Cronin
10 there.

11 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER DEMPSEY: The hope is that it would be this year that we
12 would get permission to go to tender.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Great. Thank you. There's some more questions. Councillor
14 Dermot O'Brien.

15 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks to the
16 Chief for the presentation. Again we see this broad spectrum of activity and plans
17 and there's a mixture of data and information. I know that this is a request that I had,
18 to have a presentation, and I found myself wondering about why do I have certain
19 types of questions about the Fire Service and the future of the Fire Service, and as we
20 have heard the importance of planning for the future of the Fire Service. I guess one
21 of the challenges that I see is that in the absence of a section 26 plan we find
22 ourselves in a space where we're potentially missing some of the detail that could be
23 in a plan for the future. And again I don't just throw that out, Cathaoirleach, because
24 I think -- well, we know I guess that the section 26 is a statutory obligation, that each
25 fire authority shall prepare and revise, if they have one, a fire and emergency
26 operations plan, and that each plan is furnished to the Minister and each plan is
27 adopted by the Elected Members as a reserved function, I have been here for seven
28 years at this stage and I haven't seen a section 26 in the chamber. Again I think that's
29 something that -- we could dwell on it being something that's missing and therefore
30 maybe a threat, and we could dwell on the questions about why we are missing an
31 opportunity to have a five-year outlook, to do a strategy, to have a plan, think about
32 resource allocation, think about public consultations and the collective ownership of
33 the future of the Fire Service. But there's also an accountability piece in there that I
34 think is really critical, and if there's mandatory statutory obligation to have a section

1 26 plan then there's a democratic oversight in there for Elected Members that isn't
2 being honoured and I think that's something we really have to consider. And I say
3 that because there's opportunities in a section 26 plan and the opportunities are to
4 look at the profiles, the organisation of the Fire Service, the station, the appliances,
5 the equipment, training, development, procedures, fire prevention, community
6 safety, all the stuff that we talk about, health and safety, welfare of the fire fighters,
7 strategic objectives. I think all of that is a collective responsibility. And certainly as
8 an Elected Member who has a mandate from the community I am comfortable and
9 willing to get involved in fulfilling that mandate and that obligation to prepare a
10 section 26. So I'd love to hear when was the last time you had one or is there one
11 hovering around that we revise or is there a plan to start a process of developing a
12 section 26? Thanks.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Shane Langrell.

14 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I suppose we're probably
15 going around in circles here, but, Aidan, I would like to thank you and your team for
16 the amazing work that you carried out. You guys are jumping into your fire engine
17 there and you do not know what is ahead of you. It is an amazing job. It wouldn't be
18 for me. I just want to thank you and your team. One question: Regarding retirement
19 age 62, surely that's something that could be looked at? A fit, healthy 62- or
20 63-year-old lady or man obviously should have to go through a medical, what have
21 you, but it is something that should be looked at in my opinion and if you could
22 come back with something on that. Thank you.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Patsy Glennon.

24 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Yeah, no, I would like to
25 be associated with the comments of Councillor O'Brien and to thank Aidan and his
26 staff for how we were treated on the day of the exercise. It was very impressive.
27 There were many different nationalities involved and it was very impressive, and I
28 thought you sold Wicklow well during it and that we were very efficient throughout
29 it. I would also like to thank you for help during the year with other issues where I
30 had to contact you and some of your officers. And I am pleased to hear that the
31 Baltinglass station will be commencing soon. I brought it to the Council two months
32 ago where there was concerns about the delay and I am looking forward to it being
33 built, along with the one in Dunlavin. Thank you very much.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. There's just one more councillor looking to come

1 in. Go ahead with that. Councillor Snell.

2 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks, Aidan, for your
3 comprehensive report. Obviously it goes without saying that we all support you and
4 your colleagues, and indeed I have spoken before at length with regards to Civil
5 Defence and I know they back you up a hundred percent as well. Obviously it is a
6 very vital resource that we have within the county. In regards to the 40 hours,
7 community hours, each individual member of your firefighting team have, and while
8 you say it's not enough but I suppose it's better than nothing, but I do think that it
9 could be used in regards to going out to look at the infrastructure within the likes of
10 sporting organisations, community voluntary groups, community centres, where a
11 large amount of people will congregate even one hour or half an hour to engage with
12 the people who are overseeing those facilities just to see if the facilities need
13 anything to be added or are on a sound footing. Also in regards to -- Director
14 Michael Nicholson might be able to help me out in regards to, we have an official
15 within the Council here who goes out and engages with elderly people within the
16 county, and I think it'd be a well worthwhile exercise if we could have the expertise
17 of some of your officials at some stage down the line to assist in that project. It is a
18 really, really good thing that is happening throughout County Wicklow and other
19 counties, but certainly I think to have one of your members to assist that lady, I know
20 they can't be with her all the time but it certainly would be worthwhile.

21
22 Then finally, Aidan, I suppose I have a couple of questions in regards to is there a
23 relaxation at a national level in regards to fire safety for IPAS centres? And I
24 suppose the reason I ask the question, at the height of the Grand Hotel in Wicklow
25 Town the most amount of people we had in it was just under 400 people, individual
26 people, seeking international asylum protection. Video footage would have been
27 circulating showing what was the old ballroom, the bar, lines and lines of beds, bunk
28 beds lined up, and in layman's terms it didn't seem very safe. Now, I know there
29 would have been a fire safety audit carried out at the time, which brings me back to
30 why the specific details of the fire safety checks are not public in that case. I know I
31 did ask in here many years ago in regards to that fire safety audit, and I did have
32 concerns myself, but it seems that when it comes to IPAS centres in general, and we
33 know the Government were under pressure in regards to finding accommodation, but
34 at the same time you can't jeopardise the safety of people who are coming to Ireland

1 for international protection and then we relax, if that is the case, the safety and fire
2 safety compliance. And just in regards to the Grand Hotel we had the HIQA
3 inspection, which was carried out, and they said that there was the need for an urgent
4 compliance plan to be put in place because it was identified that there was problems
5 with the hotel's ability to handle emergencies, which would include fire safety plans
6 and procedures. And again, the reason for bringing them up is God forbid something
7 should happen. And I did identify it to the Chief Executive in regards to the great
8 work that was carried out after the tragedy of Carrickmines when a number of
9 travelling families were affected, indeed there was ten fatalities in that, and the
10 whole state actually got their act together with regards to dealing with, you know, the
11 effect around halting sites. I think the easiest thing to do is sit back and do nothing,
12 and say, Aidan, it is your responsibility as Chief Fire Officer to deal with these
13 things, but it is my job as a public representative when things are identified to ask the
14 questions, whether they be hard or not, and I understand that you're probably
15 restricted in what you can say but I am asking the question: Does central
16 Government relax the fire safety checks in regards to IPAS centres? Thank you.
17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I will go back to you, Aidan, to answer those
18 queries. Thank you.

19 MR DEVEREUX: Aidan, you might come in on the fire safety in IPAS centres. I
20 don't believe there is a relaxation.

21 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER DEMPSEY:

22 MR DEVEREUX: I am certainly not aware of any. On the section 26, we're
23 awaiting guidance from the NDFEM. The WRC Agreement has led to changes, I
24 think very good changes, in the Fire Service with increased numbers and a different
25 way of payment too, which makes it easier for us. As you can see, we have a
26 number of additional fire fighters we have recruited; it is much easier to recruit
27 because they now get paid fortnightly, which makes it easier as well. All of those
28 things have led to changes and we are awaiting guidance from the NDFEM how that
29 would affect a section 26 plan. Now, we have operational plans, Aidan has
30 day-to-day operational plans, so there's no concerns that we're not managing the Fire
31 Service, it's been operating well, but there is a question we have at the moment
32 which we're waiting an answer from the NDFEM on how to go about a section 26
33 plan now that there is a new pay agreement and a new staffing agreement in place

34 MS O'GORMAN: Just, I will come in on that as well, members and Councillor

1 O'Brien. Just to reiterate that the Council is committed to preparing a section 26 plan
2 in conjunction with the members through the statutory process as is outlined in
3 legislation. We've had discussions before about the changes potentially in that
4 five-year plan to full-time fire services in some of our areas, and that's what a section
5 26 allows us to prepare for. And I do think with the growth of Bray, the growth of
6 Fassaroe and that surrounding area, we are moving more and more likely to a
7 full-time service in that area. Not to pre-empt a plan or funding from NDFEM, but I
8 am committed -- I am going to put it on record here, we are committed to preparing
9 the plan. The changes, as Marc and Aidan have outlined in the presentation, to the
10 structures within the fire services has probably skewed the conversation a little bit
11 about it but we are absolutely committed to it and as soon as we have the guidance
12 we will engage with members on it. Thanks.

13 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER DEMPSEY: Then in relation to the question from
14 Councillor Langrell, the retirement age was only recently increased to 62, it had
15 previously been at 55, then 58, but it's now aligned with An Garda Síochána, the
16 Defence Forces and other emergency services. So that was what allowed it to go up
17 to 62 and that alignment I think is going to continue into the future. So any future
18 reviews will -- the Fire Service will get the support of those agencies, that grouping.

19
20 In terms of the key question from Councillor Snell, there's no relaxation of fire safety
21 regulations. There is a relaxation in planning permission. So they don't need
22 planning permission to do what they wish to do. And the Grand Hotel was the first
23 and largest building that we had to deal with. We went there with the building
24 control people, we went there with ourselves and the Fire Service and myself, and it
25 was -- there were a lot of people in the building, but we worked with the various
26 Government departments that were dealing with it and we checked the number of
27 beds, the spacings, against the hospital regulations which is what they were allowed
28 to use at the time, and it complied. And consultants were brought in to confirm and
29 to provide the figures. We checked them. And then the numbers started to drop
30 steadily over time. Every single IPAS centre within the county has been referred to
31 the Fire Service Building Control and Planning Department for a report, and we have
32 pointed out issues with a number of locations and they were not taken -- they were
33 not used by IPAS as a result. So we're noticing now a reduction in the number of
34 IPAS centres and a centre reduction in the number of residents in each and therefore

1 an increase in the level of fire safety. But the onus is on the owner or the operator of
2 the building. We carry out checks as required and where we identify problems we'd
3 bring it to the attention of the responsible person, and, as I said, mainly that has
4 meant improvements in existing and the non-acceptance by IPAS of centres where
5 we said there was no Fire Safety Certificate for the building, it was the prime
6 example. I'll pass on what you said about using inspections and interactions with
7 sporting and community organisations, we'll try to expand that and I'll talk to you
8 bilaterally on that. And in terms of the community, we choose the locations to fit the
9 smoke alarms based on the advice of our colleagues in the community. They visit
10 properties and anywhere where they find a house without smoke alarms they inform
11 us and we will within the following two months get it fitted. We also deal with
12 alarms for blind people and deaf people if that's required as well.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thank you very much, Aidan, and thank you for
14 the presentation again. And again, thank you to you and all your fire officers on all
15 the work that you do to keep our community in Wicklow safe. Thank you.

16

17 So the next item, we're going to go back now to consider the Chief Executive's
18 Monthly Management Report. Again, I will take the question three at a time and as
19 per standing orders I will ask you to keep to three minutes, because I know we
20 haven't had a meeting for two months, to make sure we get everyone's queries
21 answered. The Chief Executive wants to come in first.

22 MS O'GORMAN: Just to be very, very brief, members. I just want to record my
23 own personal thanks to Fergal Keogh, senior engineer, who retired during the break.
24 I think it would be remiss of us not to put that on record. He was an excellent
25 servant of Wicklow County Council and continues to do so from his retirement
26 emailing in advices.

27

28 I also want to thank very sincerely Helen Purcell and Marc Devereux who are
29 stepping back from their roles as temporary directors as of tomorrow. We have two
30 members of staff joining us. So I think they have carried out their duties with great
31 diligence and effectiveness, and I just want to put on record my personal thanks to
32 them. So over to you, members. Thank you.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. And again, we pass on our thanks to those you
34 have mentioned as well, Chief Executive. I am going to go first to Councillor Pat

1 Mahon because I cut him off early and then we will start on the roll.

2 COUNCILLOR MAHON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Yeah, just going back to the
3 rental thing on housing there. I have had a lot of enquiries from people getting their
4 rent increased. I know Councillor Behan said earlier that these rents are not coming
5 into effect until February, but people have got figures in some cases going up by
6 50%. I just want to know are people -- if this increase comes and it's implemented in
7 February will those people be liable for back rent and will they have to pay arrears
8 on that rental? That's number one. Number two: I was wondering could the vacant
9 house figures, could they be brought up to date? It appears that the August ones are
10 the same as the June ones exactly, so if they could be brought up to date. My third
11 item then is on the Baltinglass RRDF which sees another summer gone by without
12 any more progress and I would like to know an update on that at the moment. Okay.
13 Thank you.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

15 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I will be as brief as
16 possible. I will be interested to hear -- I'm not going to go into the rent review, I'd be
17 interested to hear some of the answers there, but can I commend the housing team at
18 the moment because it is a large bulk of work having to be taken on by them and I
19 just want to make sure that they have been resourced properly. You know, even
20 yesterday we were getting emails about SPC. Can I commend the housing team for
21 all their hard work?

22

23 Councillor Dunne raised this before but again it is becoming a major issue and it is
24 Irish Water again down on the Murrough and the odour that's emanating from the
25 pump house. We're after having a fantastic summer yet the residents of Urban Villas
26 and the surrounding areas couldn't even bring visitors down to visit the order our was
27 that bad. They had to keep their windows shut and it has got to a stage now where
28 they are just getting very, very frustrated. I believe one of them was on the radio this
29 morning. We keep getting fobbed off by Irish Water. We have our public reps. I
30 know Councillor Dunne and myself have made representations on behalf of the
31 residents, but I suppose what I am looking for is some support here from the Council
32 in relation to it because at this stage the residents have had enough and there are
33 rumours nothing is going to be done now until next year. I am not going to engage
34 with the rumours. I would rather deal with the facts, and the facts are that it has got

1 that bad the residents can't put up with it anymore.

2

3 Just something I have raised before in terms of road safety. As we all know, there's
4 houses going up left, right and centre which we welcome to a certain degree. We
5 will be discussing later in terms of the secretaries and the caretakers of schools, and
6 up until last week we had 109 children without places. So I just want that noted in
7 schools. In Wicklow and Rathnew. But in terms of road safety, you know, I think
8 there's an obligation on the county council because we haven't got the funding at
9 municipal level in terms of road safety. I bring two very quick examples: Usher
10 Glen where there's I think 118 social units went into Ballinalea, you know, give and
11 take every household has at least one if not two cars now, that's hundreds of car
12 journeys going through Ballinalea which was already a built-up area but not one
13 extra ramp or nothing going in. So I am really looking for road safety in terms of
14 extra ramps going in. I know it is relevant coming after what we are after hearing in
15 terms of the emergency services. You know, we always say the emergency services
16 don't like ramps. The Greenhill Road, loads of houses going up there as well. We
17 have an extra footpath but again unfortunately I am talking about driver behaviour
18 and there's nothing we can do about that in terms of education being with the guards,
19 but in terms of ramps I do think it is time we looked at them more seriously.

20

21 Just a point of noting more so than looking for clarification or note, I raised it at our
22 MD meeting in terms of Ashford Garda Station, and I was disappointed to learn from
23 my colleagues that are sitting on it that planning permission came in before the
24 public consultation. I voted on this on 8/1/2024 after Councillor Shane Cullen raised
25 issues about the disposal notice. And the reason I voted for it on the 8/1/2024 is
26 because we were told there would be a public consultation. Now, I have been
27 inundated with people from Ashford wondering why there wasn't a public
28 consultation. I believe there was one after the planning permission came in and no
29 submissions were made, but the general feeling in Ashford is there should have been
30 a public consultation before any planning permission came in. I have also learned
31 off my colleagues that they weren't even consulted; that the planning permission
32 came in before they even sat down with my two colleagues. The only thing that's
33 given me confidence at the moment is that my colleagues, Councillor Snell and
34 Councillor Langrell, are men of integrity; they have nothing but the best interests of

1 Ashford and Rathnew and the surrounding areas at heart. But it'd be remiss of me
2 not to bring this up here today. It's more for noting. I want to add that I have spoken
3 to the local reporter here, that I was accused of using the word 'dishonest' which I did
4 not. I want to put that on record. I did not call people dishonest. But I have serious
5 reservations and I just want them to be allayed, and just for noting more so than
6 anything. Thank you for your time. Thank you for the report

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Stephen Stokes.

8 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. And could I also go
9 on record to thank our outgoing District Manager Marc Devereux who did an
10 awesome job. I know we all spoke glowingly about Marc and his work at
11 Greystones Municipal District. I just wanted to share that. Can I also concur with
12 my colleague Councillor Paul O'Brien about some concerns with Uisce Eireann. We
13 have, you know, foul smells from the wastewater treatment plan in Greystones for
14 several days and we never got detailed information about what the issues were. So
15 could I propose that we invite Uisce Eireann to a future meeting to discuss these
16 issues and also get an oversight about their operations. I am sure some of their work
17 is very positive, so it would be good to get an oversight on that.

18
19 Could I ask about the Farrankelly Estate in the Greystones district? I appreciate that
20 a letter was sent from Caroline Fox to the Greystones Municipal District councillors
21 on August 29th and a meeting is planned for late September. It's also good to see
22 that detailed survey work is underway on the houses. My concern is around the
23 funding. If I understand it correctly the policy is that Wicklow County Council will
24 sell derelict houses to carry out remedial works. I acknowledge that this is a
25 Housing SPC policy since November 2024 but I just have a couple of questions. I
26 saw -- if I saw correctly, as of June 2025 2.7% of our housing stock is derelict. So I
27 am wondering how many houses does that equate to? My question is: Do we have
28 many derelict houses up for sale at the moment? And my third question on that is:
29 Are there other funding options, for example asking the Department of Housing for
30 remedial funding? There seems to be plenty of money from Government to purchase
31 new houses but we cannot forget about current tenants nationally and locally. You
32 know, the reason that I am asking these questions is that the funding needed is likely
33 to be substantial and there may be other estates or houses around County Wicklow
34 that also need remedial works.

1

2 And then just my final topic I would like to raise, Cathaoirleach, is in relation to the
3 Burnaby Park in Greystones and the recent installations. Since then we have had a
4 challenge from some local residents via the Planning Commission and I appreciate
5 that our outgoing District Manager Marc Devereux wrote to the councillors recently
6 with some information. And in my opinion I believe that the Burnaby Park has
7 never looked better. You know, the two extra chess tables were warmly welcomed,
8 for example, by the chess community. We had large turnouts every Saturday for
9 chess which was well attended. And on one Saturday we even had a visit from our
10 new Irish champion, Kevin Venkatesa, and also in fact I asked for more benches
11 over a number of years, so I don't want to lose these facilities. However, as I said at
12 the time, I do believe that Wicklow County Council should have consulted. I
13 understand that Wicklow County Council may have thought it was an exempted
14 development but maybe they still intend to fight this point but I just think that it's
15 good practice to consult widely. And, for example, I don't even recall the Greystones
16 District Councillors even being advised that the work was about to commence in the
17 Burnaby Park. So I want to ask what is the current status of the new Burnaby Park
18 installations? What happens next? I would urge Wicklow County Council to keep
19 the facilities in the Burnaby Park, Greystones. Thank you.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Chief Executive, I will go to you with those
21 queries.

22 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, members. Councillor Mahon, Joe will come in with
23 more detail on the rent review just in general for everybody just to give -- not Joe,
24 sorry, Michael -- to give an overview on the rent review. Nothing -- no rents have
25 been set as yet. And just to clarify, it'll be from a point in time forward. It's not
26 going forward. So when the rent is set, it's from that point onwards, not
27 retrospectively. Okay. So there'll be no built up arrears on an income change on
28 that. Michael will go into more detail on that for you. The vacant house home
29 figures as well we will get an update on that. Leonora might come in on the
30 Baltinglass RRDF. The housing team, Councillor O'Brien, yes, they're working
31 absolutely flat out on the rent review. We have different sections within housing
32 working on different areas. It's something that we have to get right and it is really,
33 really important that we engage with our tenants on that matter. The points on Uisce
34 Eireann, I don't know if we have any specific details on the Murrough. Mary might

1 have details. I welcome the suggestion from Councillor Stokes that we write to
2 Uisce Eireann and we request a meeting with them to come and present to us. We
3 will ask. They may or may not come. Because I do think the level of response to the
4 Elected Members is not satisfactory. In relation to road safety and speed ramps, Joe
5 might take that, just looking at that from that point of view.

6
7 On Farrankelly just broadly, and I know we have had an issue with a number of
8 housing estates; the condition surveys have been completed bar I think two units
9 within the state. We're trying to arrange access to those two units. The funding then
10 is the next question. The Department of Housing tell us routinely that we're
11 supposed to fund from our own resources for housing maintenance, but this isn't
12 housing maintenance, this is housing refurbishment. So no more than case of
13 Hillview we will prepare a business case to talk to them about it. Yes, there is a
14 policy around looking at our vacant and derelict housing stock to see can we move
15 those to create additional income streams for the Council, and we will progress that.
16 Michael might go into a little bit more detail on that.

17
18 In relation to the Burnaby Park installations, yes, I would agree with you, the park
19 has never looked better. It was a matter of process that An Coimisiún Pleanála I
20 suppose identified with the local authority. The local authority deemed it to be
21 exempt. The commission are asking that we have an expert say that it is exempt. I
22 fully agree with you, there should be public consultation or at the very minimum
23 consultation with the Elected Members, so that will be going forward. We can't
24 undo what has been done in the past but we can move forward from there. It is our
25 intention to seek that expert opinion, to determine whether it is exempt and if it is
26 exempt then the installations can remain in place, and that would be our hope as I
27 think it is an asset to Greystones. I will hand over to Michael first of all on the rents.
28 MR NICHOLSON: I will give a comprehensive reply on the rent scheme that might
29 avoid any other further questions. We haven't had a rent review for many, many
30 years. We are having one now. We sent out seven and a half thousands forms, they
31 all have to come back and all be calculated, so that is going to take an awful long
32 time. Even if I put every member of housing staff on it, which I won't, but even if I
33 did it will take many months. So we will keep an eye on it. If it gets close to
34 Christmas we won't do it until after Christmas. At a guess, if you put a gun to my

1 head, I would say probably February, March, it looks like because there's probably at
2 least six months' work in it. All the rents have to be calculated manually; they can't
3 be done on a computer. It is not a rent increase. It is a rent review. It is important
4 people pay the correct rent. Some people may be paying the right rent, some people
5 may be paying too much rent and some people may be paying rent that is too low.
6 So it is a review of all the rent. Tenants are obliged to tell us when they change, they
7 often don't, this is our chance to review. We haven't done it for a while. Bear with
8 us, it is going to take a long time. No rents have been calculated. We will calculate
9 all the rents when they come in but we will not implement them until we have them
10 all done. So we won't be doing it piecemeal. So nobody's rent has changed. Just to
11 reiterate what the Chief Executive said, we don't backdate. So whatever the rent is
12 it'll be effective from a particular date. We won't go back. If someone has got away
13 with it, they got away it. It is not our intention to penalise people. Our intention is
14 going forward. So it will be in the new year I imagine.

15
16 In relation to the Ashford Garda Station, under the Buildings Acquisition Measures
17 Scheme announced some years back we bought two buildings: the Ashford Garda
18 Station and the Bank of Ireland in Carnew. Two hundred grand each, funded by the
19 Department. There is an expectation from the Department that we will submit a
20 town and village application or some other application to supplement the funding of
21 the purchase of them, because obviously they both need work. We needed a
22 planning permission to make any application, so the first process was planning
23 permission. We engaged a locally based CLG group, they took it on board to
24 progress this. They progressed it to planning stage. The plans to be fair are a bit
25 more ambitious than we have would thought. We were looking at maybe a
26 community centre, but the architect said there's more potential here to do something
27 bigger, and the plans submitted for planning were slightly more ambitious but in
28 fairness nobody is going to criticise someone for too much ambition. A planning
29 application was lodged. It has come back now for further information. As you know
30 all, it wasn't refused, so there's hopefully an intent to grant once we deal with the FI.
31 As promised by a recent meeting we set up a committee. There's two councillors on
32 it, two local reps, two members of the CLG and two officials, myself and Moira
33 Halvey. So Wicklow County Council is well represented having four of the eight
34 reps on it. And I can assure you from our first meeting you're well served by

1 Councillor Ann Grehan and Council John Snell, who were very productive and
2 vocal at the meeting. We then agreed to write out and seek public consultation on
3 what people thought on the plans. We did a severe amount of public consultations
4 and we received no submissions. So I find it strange that people are being inundated
5 from residents and nobody is submitting any submissions on the application. So
6 what we are now going to do is focus on getting the planning permission and then
7 seek funding from whatever available source we can to fund the project.

8
9 In relation to Farrankelly, as the Chief Executive says, we have done the conditions
10 survey, we're waiting on two final houses. We will make a submission to the
11 Department for funding because it is capital works. We will be supplementing this if
12 we can by selling -- and just to make a point with selling Council houses, in case
13 people think we're selling off the family jewels. These are houses that are in such a
14 bad state that they cannot be made reasonably fit at reasonable expense. So we're
15 talking about the worst of the worst. It won't be wholesale selling of Council
16 properties, because obviously I'm losing rent in one side and gaining money in terms
17 of the capital receipts. I have to be very mindful of that. It will be houses that are in
18 very, very, very poor condition and they will not make big money but we will be
19 selling. It also gives a chance to people who might not be able to afford to buy a
20 house on the market to buy a fixer-upper house and to avail of the grants that we
21 can't avail of it, the Vacant Homes Grant, and also people currently in social housing
22 who may be tempted to move to the public sector and return a council house to us.
23 There are a lot of pros in doing that, but they will be small in number. We are
24 looking at a couple at the moment that are very, very bad. There's one in Greystones
25 that may be used to supplement the funding for Farrankelly if we get a good price for
26 it, which we think we might. That's all from me, thanks

27 MS EARLS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Councillor Mahon, you know that the
28 Town Regeneration Officer wrote out to the Baltinglass members in June. At that
29 stage the design for the RRDF was completed. The Department had asked to see
30 sight of the tender documents, which we submitted to them for their review. They
31 came back more recently and asked us to complete another form which we have now
32 done and sent back into them. So we will now be looking to kind of chase the
33 Department. So if they can sign off on the tender documents we can move the
34 project on. In the meantime we're continuing to work with the consultants to tidy up

1 with some issues. We have another meeting this Friday.

2 MR LANE: Just on the ramps in Greenhill, yeah, we will look at that Councillor
3 O'Brien. However, the first step is to survey the traffic speeds. There might be a
4 range of measures. Ramps are invariably the least desirable options. There will be
5 options. We will look at it. We just don't have resources in the short-term to do it.
6 We will undertake a certain traffic surveys in those two locations.

7 MS CAHILL: In relation to the odours from the wastewater treatment plants, I don't
8 have details of the recent issue in Greystones or over the summer from the Murrough
9 pumping station, but I just want to say that for a number of years during the
10 transition over to Uisce Eireann we were receiving operational reports. We no
11 longer receive those reports, so we feel like we are being kept in the dark also. And
12 if it is okay with the Chief Executive I propose that we write to Uisce Eireann and
13 we express these concerns. The same last winter with overflows from pumping
14 stations, et cetera, into rivers and that. So we will address that. Thanks.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Lourda Scott.

16 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks, Chief Executive. I am
17 going to touch on stuff that has been brought up but I do have new questions to
18 make. Just thanks, Michael, for the comprehensive update on Farrankelly. And I
19 just wanted to request that the final survey report and costings will be made
20 available, if possible, to the members before our meeting with Caroline at the end of
21 this month. I am sure you'd do that anyway but we would be very eager to see that.
22 Just a question on, again I was going to raise the issue with the odours but in relation
23 to that as well I was going to raise, after the overflow issues and the restriction
24 of -- bathing restrictions in Greystones last winter I did raise it at this forum that
25 consideration be given to actually testing the bathing waters after an overflow
26 incident during the winter months. At the moment testing is only carried out during
27 the bathing season. I know Teresa at the time said to take that away and look it. I
28 am raising it again as again pertinent issues with odours and obviously we're coming
29 into the winter season and coming out of the bathing season again. If that could be
30 considered or looked at in case we have similar incidents this winter.

31

32 Finally, I know it has been raised but I think it is important to put on the record my
33 thanks to the Council for the work that has been done with the Community
34 Recognition Fund in Burnaby Park in Greystones. It's been a massive benefit to the

1 community. It's been really well used all over the summer. I have had nothing but
2 positive comments from the wider community about the additional seating which
3 have been full there whenever you see people, the bowls court is being widely used
4 by people of all ages all times of the day and evening, and also the chess tables as
5 you know. We are very short on green space in our district and we have a very small
6 town park, and I think the money and improvements the Council have put in there
7 have really benefited the community as a whole and shows the need for these free
8 outdoor community facilities. I personally was very disappointed in the ABP ruling.
9 As I said, the feedback I am getting from my constituents is that people are very,
10 very concerned that they're going to lose these improvements to the park and they
11 don't want to see them going. I said I would raise it here to urge the Council to do
12 what they can within the bounds of that decision to keep those facilities and those
13 improvements there, that we do want them and thank you for the work that's gone
14 into them.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Joe Behan.

16 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Cathaoirleach, I just note the time is coming up to half
17 four, you don't want to do the suspension first, do you?

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes.

19 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Can we do that and then I will come back to the Chief
20 Executive's Report?

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: I will read it out one more time for everybody: "That this
22 Council is deeply concerned about the impact of the current industrial action by
23 school secretaries and caretakers in our schools across the county. Furthermore, this
24 Council wishes to express its total support for the secretaries and caretakers in their
25 legitimate request for parity with other similar school employees regarding pension
26 entitlement, critical illness and bereavement leave. The Council agrees to write to
27 the wrote to the Taoiseach, Tánaiste, Minister for Education, and the Minister for
28 Public Expenditure requesting that this issue be resolved by the Government as a
29 matter of urgency."

30 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: I want to thank Councillor Leonard for seconding that
31 proposal. I will be brief. We are all aware of the fact that there is currently an
32 industrial dispute happening in many of our schools in the county. Any school that
33 is not part of the old VEC network can be implicated or could be involved in this
34 particular scheme, or this particular, if you like, industrial action. And for those of

1 us who have a lot of experience, both teaching and managing schools, and so on, it is
2 fair to say that the secretary and the secretary's office is the beating heart of the
3 school. So many parents and children approach the school through the secretaries'
4 office and through the good offices of the work of the secretaries. And while many
5 of them, their employment protections are in place, for those who had been paid in
6 the past by boards of management from Department of Education grants they have
7 been moved now to being paid by the Department of Education directly, which was a
8 very important first step. But they do not have critical protections such as any type
9 of pension scheme, they don't have critical illness cover and they don't have
10 bereavement leave. Basics that I think in any employment nowadays people are
11 entitled to expect. Now, while we're only a few days into the school term I can
12 honestly say that I think schools in this county and around this country will not be
13 able to remain open for much longer without the services of their secretaries and
14 indeed their caretakers. There has been a huge burden put on principals and teaching
15 staff and non-teaching staff as well as boards of management because of a
16 completely incomprehensible attitude by the Government that they are not going to
17 negotiate these particular improvements that the unions have looked for. And I
18 heard a union representative last week saying they only want to have a discussion
19 about this, they're not saying they want it today or tomorrow, they want to have
20 meaningful negotiations about it, and that has been refused by the Government.

21
22 So I suppose Councillor Leonard and myself are putting it to all of us here today, to
23 all of you, if you support those secretaries and caretakers, if you think they're making
24 a just case that you might support this motion and that we write to the powers that
25 be, which are effectively the Government, the Taoiseach, the Tánaiste, obviously a
26 TD in this constituency, the Minister for Education, and the Minister for Public
27 Expenditure who seems to be the one who is playing hardball in this whole issue,
28 that it will be resolved as a matter of urgency. On that basis I want to make the
29 proposal, Cathaoirleach.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. Do you want to come in,
31 Councillor Leonard, as seconder on that?

32 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yeah, I can't.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to knock Councillor Cronin off and then you can
34 come straight in after.

1 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Yeah.

2 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Thank you. Yeah, I won't go into -- Councillor Behan
3 has explained the situation perfectly there. I think anybody that is a parent knows
4 the value of the secretaries and the caretakers in the schools. They're not only a
5 support for the children and parents; they're also a support for the teachers in the
6 school. They really are the backbone of our society. When things are done right we
7 don't notice but when they're missing there's going to be chaos. I think this needs to
8 be resolved urgently, and it's opening up discussions and showing that we all value
9 these important roles in our schools. Thank you.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I think we can right -- is everybody in
11 agreement? Agreed? (Agreed.) I think it is a very worthwhile thing to have brought
12 and thank you Councillor Behan and thank you Councillor Leonard. We all support
13 our secretaries and caretakers. So if we are all agreed then we will go ahead.

14

15 Now, I have to go back to Councillor Behan first. So, Councillor Paul O'Brien, can I
16 ask you to knock your light off and then Councillor Cronin after that. Councillor
17 Langrell.

18 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Carry on, I'll go back in the queue again.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: I have to go back to Avril then first. Councillor Langrell, can
20 I ask you to knock yours off and then I have it on the list here. Now, Avril, if you
21 want to put your light on.

22 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Does Joe not come in before me?

23 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: No.

24 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thanks, Joe. You're a gent. Just two issues that I would
25 like to bring up. One I have brought it up time and time again, I think actually
26 people are probably sick of me talking about it but anyway it still hasn't been
27 resolved, is the 132 bus route. As I have stated numerous times before we were
28 promised that we would get the increase in bus service back in October when the
29 NTA were in before the Council. I have asked for updates on this in these Council
30 meetings and I have yet to receive a response to my questions that I had put to the
31 NTA. The 132 is a lifeline for residents in West Wicklow. It's our only bus route
32 south of Blessington that goes along the N81 serving all the communities along the
33 way. It serves Tallaght Hospital, which is vital for people in our area, as well as for
34 students commuting. The last bus leaving Dublin is at 5.30. I have asked the NTA

1 to extend this to allow for a later return from Dublin because if you miss that 5.30
2 bus you're stuck in Dublin, you've no other way to get to West Wicklow. As I stated
3 before, we don't have the luxury of a train line, we don't have a motorway. We have
4 a very poorly serviced 65 Dublin Bus route that goes as far as Blessington, but that's
5 it. So we really are very far behind when it comes to public transport. Last week
6 there was talks that this bus service, the extension to the service has been scrapped
7 but that's actually in conflict with the response that I received to an email I sent last
8 week where I was told from the NTA that "we are in the advanced stage of planning
9 the enhancement of the 132 bus service which includes the doubling of service and
10 extension of service hours. We are preparing for commencement shortly." So that's
11 in complete contrast to what has been sent out in the media and the public domain.
12 So if we could get some clarity from the NTA it would be greatly appreciated. And
13 also I have raised numerous times the extension of the local link bus services for
14 towns and villages currently left out and again I haven't received a response to those
15 queries. And my second issue is in relation to the health centre in Donard. I
16 contacted the Minister for Health, the last Minister for Health, numerous times on
17 this and I was told that the health centre -- it was closed just prior to Covid and it
18 hasn't reopened. It's a derelict building in the heart of the village. I was told that it
19 was going to be included in the Minor Capital Works Programme with the
20 Department of Health to at least get the building up to standard that it could be used.
21 Unfortunately now it seems that that's not going to happen. The building is still
22 there. It's derelict. I contacted the Minister's office again this morning to see what
23 the status was of the building and if it was going to be vacant and not be used by the
24 HSE would it be a possibility that it could be used for community use. If that is the
25 case I would hope that the Council could row in behind it and maybe we could look
26 at it and see how we can use it to benefit the community as it is a fine building in the
27 centre of the village that I think we could put to good use. Thank you.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Sorry, Councillor Behan, if you want to press
29 your light there. Then we're back on form again.

30 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Okay. Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just to a few quick points
31 if I could. First of all, I want to join with the Chief Executive in complementing
32 Fergal Keogh on his service to the Council. I think he was working here in excess of
33 30 years, first in the roads section and then laterally in planning. He was a fine
34 public servant, as you said yourself, Chief Executive. Very hard-working. Always

1 returned calls to councillors. Didn't always return with the right answer, and I have
2 had plenty of vigorous discussions with him over the years, but I have to say I have
3 great respect for him and he made a huge contribution to the development of this
4 county. Similarly, also I would like to thank Marc and Helen for their courtesy to all
5 of us in their roles as acting directors and the work that they continue to do for the
6 Council.

7
8 A couple of quick points if I could. No surprise that I am raising the Kilmacanogue
9 parallel road and the fact that the noise mitigation measures which have been
10 promised for so long now still have not begun, and there is no indication of a starting
11 date. I am extremely disappointed at this. I raised it at the July meeting, two months
12 later I am still talking about it. This is down to the TII, the famous TII that is trying
13 to strangle us in Bray as well. I really think it is unacceptable that they would treat
14 those local people with such contempt, and I am asking, Chief Executive, can you
15 please try and ensure that this work is done as a matter of urgency for those residents
16 who continue to suffer the nose from that parallel road right beside them?

17
18 Moving on to the wider issue of the Herbert Road and the bus corridor and so on.
19 People might be afraid I'm going to make a long people, I'm not, but what I want to
20 say is that I welcomed and do welcome the statement by the Chief Executive last
21 week that at a minimum the Herbert Road will remain open on the in entrance on the
22 southbound direction, and I welcome that is a first step, but really, Chief Executive,
23 it is only a step. And I think most -- the vast majority of people who were involved
24 in the campaign, who were involved in any way as councillors, as public reps, see it
25 as being the opening of the door, but the story is not finished yet by any means. And
26 while other alternatives are being mentioned and are going to be looked at and so on,
27 you know, I really would ask the Chief Executive again, given that she has now for
28 the first time -- and this has been the first time that a representative of the
29 Council -- and when the Chief Executive is speaking she's also representing TII,
30 NTA, Dun Laoghaire, Kildare Roads Office, because this is all an amalgamation of a
31 whole load of groups. This is the first time when the public opposition has been
32 acknowledged as being worthy of a change of plan. Because what we now have is
33 the beginnings of a change of plan with regard to this particular proposal. So I know
34 what the local people are going to do; they're going to push on, they're going to look

1 for a full resolution of it. And I think it's timely at the moment, and I will just say
2 this, the Government are currently reviewing the National Development Plan which
3 is going to set the expenditure on capital projects in this country probably for the
4 next five years, certainly for the lifetime of the Government. In a previous
5 Development Plan that road was to be widened to three lanes in both directions, from
6 Loughlinstown to Ashford, the turn off to Ashford, and the last Government
7 suspended the funding for that project. There is an onus on the present Government
8 to restore the funding for that entire project, because if that happened the road would
9 then be three lanes in each direction; it would allow for a bus lane and two lanes of
10 traffic and it would allow the Herbert Road to be kept open as it is. It would also
11 crucially -- and I see Councillor Duddy very well expressed this in the local paper
12 this morning. It would also be crucial to protect the facilities of the Church of
13 Ireland Kilbride Church at the end of the Herbert Road, which is an extremely
14 important local and national treasure as far as I am concerned and as far as all of us
15 are concerned.

16
17 So I don't know whether you want to react to that, Chief Executive, or not but I think
18 there is an opportunity now for us to get this thing sorted once and for all by ensuring
19 that the funding is provided in the new Development Plan for the three-lane both side
20 of the carriage ways. In that regard, can I move onto the rest of the county and the
21 fact that what is proposed at the moment is that the hard shoulder will be removed
22 from that road and people driving on to Kilmac, to south -- anywhere, Wicklow
23 Town, Greystones, it doesn't matter, once they go south of Bray, all those people
24 who are passing by that section will not have a refuge if they break down. The hard
25 shoulder will be a traffic lane for buses and taxis and other vehicles that are
26 considered to be transport vehicles, public transport vehicles. So this is an issue that
27 will cause dangers for people further south in the county as well, and I think it is
28 very important that we continue to keep the pressure on as I will and I know all of
29 the other public reps will as well.

30
31 Could I also finally finish on this, I had other things but I won't take up any more
32 time, I want to congratulate Councillor Peir Leonard. She doesn't get congratulated
33 here very often and she is one of the most hard-working councillors in this county.
34 She's one of the most positive councillors in this county as well. And I was lucky

1 enough to be invited, and I know a lot of people were invited, to attend the opening
2 of the Arklow Arts Centre about three weeks ago, which was absolutely packed with
3 local artists and their families and their supporters to witness the magnificent work
4 that was done by Peir and her colleagues who were on that committee. They done a
5 magnificent job in converting an old, what was a wool shop, into a thriving arts
6 centre, going from the street back to the river. I don't know how much -- I'm not sure
7 there was a huge amount of investment from this Council into that project, but I can
8 tell you, we should as a body be getting on board with that project because it is
9 already a huge success. It was magnificent to see the buzz, the enthusiasm of the
10 people there that night. And this would not have happened without Peir Leonard.
11 She will never say it herself but I am going to say it, it is a credit to her and I want to
12 congratulate her. I would ask, Chief Executive, you have a look at it and see what
13 can be done by voluntary people in the artistic community in Arklow. Thank you.
14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. I am going to ask for a
15 response to those queries.

16 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, members. Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Going back to
17 Councillor Scott, Michael will come in on the reporting costs of Farrankelly, and
18 Mary might update on the water sampling. I do remember you raising it before, the
19 season sampling, and I know there's probably reasons why it hasn't come back to you
20 on that. In relation to Burnaby Park, it is our intention and our hope that we will be
21 able to retain everything that is there. I just want to give that commitment to the
22 members. As I said, the report that we got back from an An Coimisiún Pleanála is a
23 little bit obscure but the key point that we abstracted from it is, it is a matter of
24 process, as I said earlier, that we need to engage an expert to designate it as exempt
25 development and then we should be okay in terms of what is there. But, look, we
26 will work with the members on that. But it is our intention to retain the investment
27 that has gone into Burnaby Park. It would be a crying shame to remove any of that
28 from the park.

29
30 Councillor Cronin, the bus routes that you mentioned. We will certainly raise that
31 with the NTA. I share your frustration; we don't get answers either unfortunately.
32 But we will raise it again on the two; the local link and the 132. On Donard Health
33 Centre, we have had no engagement either but again we can certainly ask the
34 question of the HSE. And if it was I suppose surplus to their requirements we will

1 certainly look at it, but it will be dependent on funding being available no more than
2 any of the other community facilities that we brought in in the last little while.

3
4 Councillor Behan, on the Kilmac and parallel road noise mitigation measures, I will
5 take that up personally with the TII. I know Joe might have more detail for you on
6 it. The Herbert Road, yes, look, when we were here discussing it a number of
7 months ago it was part of a route option. That is all. You know, the impression I
8 suppose maybe was that it was going to close immediately, and that was never our
9 intention. Route options are that. They're to be ruled in, looked at, examined. But I
10 felt I suppose given the swathe of opposition and having discussed it with my
11 colleagues in the road departments and John Bowes, in particular, the senior
12 engineer, that as a minimum we could maintain that left in. Obviously our safety is
13 of huge concern to us and that is the greatest concern with the Herbert Road
14 Junction, both entering the Herbert Road and exiting the Herbert Road. And you're
15 quite correct, it is time to revisit the full scheme in terms of getting it on Government
16 papers. Our intention was always to do the full scheme because that makes the most
17 sense, and in the absence of the full scheme we are where we are right now, but I
18 would love for us to be back in a situation where we're in a three-lane both direction
19 scenario. I don't know whether that is feasible or not. We will certainly push that
20 from our point of view.

21
22 I might just hand over to Mary then on the bathing water, please.

23 MS CAHILL: Yeah. So in relation to testing of bathing water outside of the bathing
24 season, this is one of the issues that is kind of be careful what you wish for. You're
25 going to get failures more regularly in the winter months. You've got a lot more
26 rainfall. You've a lack of sunlight and sunlight has an effect in killing bacteria
27 during the summer months. So you're going to get failures. Failures will lead to
28 prohibition of swimming. And then that takes a number of days before that can be
29 cleared before you get a clear sample. We actually don't have resources to do it
30 either but even if we did, you know, I think -- not that I think, you will get a lot more
31 failures. We do have a system in place that if there is an overflow like there was in
32 Greystones last year that we would put a prohibition notice up. It's again in
33 consultation with the HSE after a number of tidal changes you know, we would be
34 informed that it would be cleared. We wouldn't be testing. We just don't have the

1 resources.

2 MR LANE: On the noise barrier, we're still awaiting confirmation of the start date
3 from TII, and they are the contractor. However, we were hoping for that in early
4 September and, look, today is only the 1st. But I do understand that there is a final
5 design agreed so we will have more information in the next couple of weeks, and I
6 will go through the Chief Executive on that one.

7 MR NICHOLSON: With Farrankelly, I can assure you that it is our intention to
8 work with the members on Farrankelly. So we will send out the report as soon as it
9 is finished before the meeting.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. We have time for a few more. I unfortunately
11 knocked off the lights accidentally but the next I had on the list was Councillor
12 O'Neill. I know it is Dermot O'Brien, but Gerry was actually -- sorry, that is my
13 fault.

14 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, yeah. Just two issues there I
15 wanted to raise today, Cathaoirleach, if I could. Going back over the years, you
16 know, our parts in the Wicklow, the Blessington area, as regards planning
17 permissions, one-off housing has been a huge issue over the years. And it's due
18 mainly to Dublin City Council and TII and Irish Water who keep a good eye on and
19 can object to one-off planning. It's no reflection on our planners here, because they
20 have to work in those conditions where these people are looking over their shoulder.
21 And throughout the years, you know, I think that West Wicklow, we're taken for
22 granted and we're easily done by as such, because if you look at our water, the water
23 in Wicklow, the water in Dublin, 75% of the water comes from the Blessington
24 Lakes, the sand and gravel, we're fighting hard for a roadway to Blessington which
25 we're left at the end of the queue as well. But just, there's another issue there that's
26 alarming and frightening. As I say, these groups have contributed greatly to people
27 who went in to build one-off houses and cannot and were denied their planning. On
28 the N81 you can't apply -- or there's no way you will get permission to build a house
29 on the N81. If you live off the N81 by 10 yards you probably will get planning. So
30 you turn out your gate, turn left and you're on the N81. A lot of codology I think in
31 my book. But there's a new one on the horizon with the Heritage Council, and I
32 would be very concerned about it. And I have been on a planning application in the
33 Hollywood area, and they're being told that they're inside the Newtown Marshes.
34 And the Newtown marshes is a huge area of land which is, it is proposed as a

1 national heritage site. It's to look after the honey bees and the butterflies and the
2 whole lot, you know insects or whatever. And what people are now being told is that
3 they won't get planning on these areas, that the habitats are more important than a
4 young farmer's daughter that wants to build a house on her own land. But if she's
5 within the Newtown Marshes or any of the other proposed marshes, I think West
6 Wicklow is getting a hammering as regards marshes in our Development
7 Plan -- which by the way is a directive from our good friends in Europe as well. We
8 have to toe the line to these people. I would be very concerned about this new
9 obstacle for building one-off housing.

10
11 The second thing, I just wanted to touch on the school buses and that. And I have
12 been contacted by people from Donard, Stratford, Kilbride. There was 20 kids left
13 behind in Kilbride last week. I made a proposal at our municipal district meeting
14 earlier on in the year that we meet Dublin Bus and get this thing sorted out once and
15 for all. Which we did. We believed it was sorted out once and for all, but it's as bad
16 as ever. There's one case I want to mention in the chamber here, and that being a
17 very sad case where a single parent, a mother in Stratford, she has a child who
18 unfortunately misses school today because of no transport. I just want to
19 compliment as well; Councillor Fortune is gone but I worked hard with him there for
20 the last two weeks trying to get this organised. We were thrown from Billy to Jack,
21 with the HSI to the KWETB or whatever. But it is a particularly sad case. A young
22 woman there, she has been diagnosed with motor neurons and she has a disabled
23 child who can be brought to school just over the border in Carlow but is being
24 refused the funding for that. Now I know people in the Council might say that's
25 other HSI funding, it is still public money. And I want to put it on record here today
26 that it is absolutely horrific that in our county we have a down syndrome child who
27 is refused a way, a transport to school. In this day and age and how sad it is that
28 she's deprived. The principal, the CEO of the school just over the border in Carlow
29 is prepared to bring the bus to the Wicklow border, and it would only mean an extra
30 8 mile a day. I can't understand for the life of me when you have a weekend gone by
31 there with the Stradbally festival, whatever it is called, and there's actually -- the
32 HSE have put up three separate tents in Stradbally for people who are on drugs, and
33 you go and get your drugs tested to see are they okay to take. The thousands of
34 money that's there, public money, our money, and there's plenty of people in the

1 chamber here, members of political parties in Government, and they're sitting around
2 there doing nothing about this. I think it is a shame. The cheek of it that there's three
3 tents sitting there in Stradbally and you queue up there with your drugs and to make
4 sure that before you inject them or whatever you go in and get it checked out

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Neill, sorry, I want to try and get the last three
6 through.

7 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: This whole thing is costing a fortune. And a child in our
8 county is being denied transport of an extra 8 mile a day. I'd ask -- I'd plead with
9 people to get on board here and get a little bit of sense and a little bit of humanity
10 into our thinking and take on the powers that be. I absolutely object completely to
11 the likes of the cowboys down in Stradbally, our Government putting money in so
12 people can check out drugs -- which are illegal, by the way. They're illegal. And
13 they're queuing up there to see if they're all right to take them. Ambulances there to
14 look after them when they go overboard and we can't get transport for a child in this
15 county. A miserable 16 mile a day for that person. That kid is out of school today.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: I want to try and get another two queries in before we finish.
17 Could I ask you to put that into an email to the Chief Executive and possibly --

18 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: There's emails -- go raibh maith agat. There's emails
19 going left, right and centre for the last two weeks and in fairness to you, thanks for
20 that and we will be contacting every department we could, and Councillor Fortune
21 has been very good to us in the last two weeks doing our very best on this but we're
22 going nowhere.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: I knocked you off by accident, sorry, Councillor O'Neill. I
24 am going to go to Councillor Miriam Murphy there now online.

25 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I just want to bring up the issue
26 of the Arklow-Shillelagh Greenway, another topic that always comes up. The main
27 issue is that the emerging preferred route that has been shown in October '23 is
28 proposed to go through, right through Aughrim Village from the GAA ground via
29 the river bridge and the old station, past Fogarty's Cottage and St Gordon's Drive.
30 We have never received any information about the update infrastructure involving
31 that, such as car and bike parking, traffic management, et cetera, everything that goes
32 with that. I think the residents are very worried that the freeway will be lost in the
33 village of Aughrim if there isn't any consideration of the planning. Now I mean it's
34 been a while I know since we were told here, probably a year ago, October, the time

1 it was CPOed and we need a definite line of report and a concrete progress here. I
2 know some councillors here who did sit on the committee here but I'd like to know
3 what active involvement -- is there a formal committee and where going forward is
4 that at the moment?

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. And the next one on the list was Councillor
6 Louise Fenelon Gaskin.

7 COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I won't keep you
8 because some of the issues have come up. First of all, thank you to the CEO for the
9 report. It is always great to get it beforehand, always very informative. I would like
10 to thank Marc Devereux in Greystones. If I had the choice I would stand here with a
11 placard telling you leave him with us, would be my choice anyway. He has been
12 great and he will be very much missed in the Greystones Municipal District. Please
13 send him back any day. I know you have great staff but Marc was brilliant. Thank
14 you to Helen also. I am still a new councillor, but she has been very good to us.

15

16 I am not going to rant on about Farrankelly, as you know it's my bugbear, I have
17 been going on about it for months here, but I am going to address two points in my
18 opinion. That when we do see the report, at that stage I don't think we should have
19 to wait to sell properties because that's going to take too long legally and everything
20 before the money comes to us. I think we should be calling on a meeting with the
21 Minister urgently to meet us about that property, and also I know you have the
22 Hillview estate in Wicklow, so I think we should be just moving forward very quick
23 on this now. It's not fair. And also I think after what was on Prime Time I got
24 numerous phone calls from the residents who were very concerned and very upset
25 when they seen that programme because they felt they were nearly in the same
26 position and that they were going to be left. So I think it would do no harm, if it was
27 possible, to write to the residents just to reassure them that Wicklow County Council
28 are, you know, doing what you are doing, you've done the surveys and that things are
29 moving along. It may not be what you do but I think it would be good for the
30 residents. They're ringing us. They're ringing me and I'm telling them, look it, we
31 are working away, but it would be nice to come from the senior authorities on it.
32 That's my position on it. But I'll keep working with them as much as I can.

33

34 I will touch on Uisce Eireann as well. Like, I dealt with them an awful lot. I even

1 put on my social media a copy of the letter that I got back at the weekend. They
2 don't deal with public representatives, so you're going through the normal number.
3 But if you seen the trail I have from Uisce Eireann, the letters from them, it's just
4 recalling what they're given. So definitely get them down and that they're prepared
5 to be interrogated, because I have a ream of paperwork from them anyway. I won't
6 bore you with the rest of them. Thank you.

7 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, members. Councillor O'Neill, in relation to I suppose
8 the national heritage sites that are proposed in the Habitats Directive, it's a difficult
9 one to manage. I suppose the Development Plan sets out where land is developable
10 and where it is not. And that is a matter, as you know, for the members. We do look
11 for consideration on planning applications for one-off housing when they meet the
12 criteria as you know and will continue to do that. In relation to that case or that child
13 as you mentioned, we'll certainly raise it. You know, it's not within my gift to fix
14 that problem but I will certainly raise it with the powers that be. That's not a
15 problem at all.

16
17 Councillor Murphy on the Arklow-Shillelagh Greenway, I might get Joe to give an
18 update on that and where we are at with it. I know it's with TII at the moment but
19 again just to allay the concerns that the people of Aughrim have Joe might be able to
20 give a bit on that.

21
22 Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin, look, yeah, certainly we can request to meet the
23 Minister and housing officials, the Department on this. It is not an easy fix,
24 Farrankelly. And to be fair we have engaged he extensively with the residents there.
25 I have no problem with us writing out to them and saying where we are at with it.
26 It's not going to be a quick fix; no more than Hillview is not a quick fix. And the
27 minimum that the Department require is that we do condition surveys, which we
28 have done, and cost, and look at all of that and progress it that way. And I will add
29 your name to the list on Uisce Eireann and the letter we will send to them.

30
31 Joe, you might come in Arklow-Shillelagh.

32 MR LANE: Yeah, so the Arklow-Shillelagh, as the Chief Executive said, it is
33 currently being reviewed. The route selection is currently being reviewed. What
34 Councillor Murphy is referring to is the route selection. There will be more detail.

1 Once we have got approval for that there will be a more detail design which will
2 involve the consultation phase for this specific design and location. This is only the
3 route because. It is a broad line of where the route is. So there is further
4 consultation and there's a further routes -- not route selection, but more detailed
5 design at specific locations, at a number of locations.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Unfortunately we have run out of time. Just to
7 clarify, thank you for all bearing with me, I did knock off twice, but I do keep a note
8 of you as you come in and when the members apply online to come in, so I am trying
9 to work off that, so apologies and thank you for bearing with me.

10

11 There's one more thing I want to say. I want to congratulate Councillor Pat Kennedy
12 and his team out in Glenmalure on a really, really successful weekend for the
13 Michael Dwyer. It was absolutely fantastic. Pat, I am going to ask you to say a few
14 words there, I know you wanted to. Thank you everybody. If you didn't get a
15 chance, like other months, if you can email it into the Chief Executive and she will
16 have a response for you on your queries. Pat, again well done.

17 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And I will be very brief. As
18 members know on Saturday the 23rd and Sunday the 24th October we held a
19 celebration in Glenmalure to remember the 1798 rebel leader Michael Dwyer who
20 died on the 23rd August 200 years ago. There were attendees from the local
21 community, from all over Ireland, there was attendees from America and Australia,
22 and we had four excellent speakers on the day, and they were covering topics
23 including Dwyer's role within the international context of the Society of United
24 Irishmen, his associations here in Wicklow, and the legacy that he left in Australia,
25 and the enduring significance I suppose for the diaspora which is most important
26 today, and I suppose that we all know that he is buried in Waverley Cemetery. But I
27 wanted to thank you, Cathaoirleach, and the Chief Executive for taking the time to
28 come up to unveil a very beautiful piece of sculpture by Bianca Divito, a piece of
29 sculpture that I suppose brings the past to the present, and when you at it in the
30 present you can't help but having to go back and enquire and read about the past. We
31 also had the Australian Embassy represented by the Chargé d'Affaires, James Hazell,
32 who remarked that events like this are important to recognise, remembering and
33 reinforcing strong cultural links between Ireland and Australia. But what I wasn't
34 expecting, Cathaoirleach, what came kind of Monday and Tuesday, and most of it

1 came from our international visitors to be fair. And the compliments that came were
2 for the Council and the Council staff for running the event and the way they
3 managed it. I suppose for the cultural links that we have between Australia and
4 America. I wasn't expecting the amount of emails and messages that I got. And they
5 were for our manager, Leonora Earls, our district administrator, Alvina Brehony, and
6 our heritage officer, and our archivist, that put the programme together and helped
7 and worked with the team. But, Chief Executive, I suppose the point I am trying to
8 make is these were compliments for the Council. These were compliments for our
9 staff in our municipal district and not forgetting my own Elected Members in Arklow
10 who put their shoulders to the wheel when they were asked to make this event
11 possible. But we don't often get recognition from international historians for the
12 event that was put on in Glenmalure, so I want to thank all the Elected Members who
13 could make it and who couldn't make it, but the staff especially for the work that they
14 did in making this a wonderful event. I was lucky enough, I grew up on the stories
15 of Michael Dwyer, and I suppose many more did as well, but also not forgetting our
16 colleagues in West Wicklow in the historical societies in West Wicklow who helped
17 make this event a success. I personally would know 25 young people who left the
18 geographic area of Knockananna, Rathdangan and Glenmalure last January to go to
19 Australia. And that's the link that the rural Wicklow has with Australia. So I just
20 want to thank the staff for the work they put in and the committee as well, not
21 forgetting the local representatives of Pat Dunne, Carmel O'Toole and Anne Byrne as
22 well. Thank you, Chief Executive, and you, Cathaoirleach, for your attendance and
23 your input on the day. Thank you. (Applause.)

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. And all those compliments were well
25 deserved to everybody. So thank you, members. Again if you can email in any other
26 queries to Teresa that would be great. Thank you. See you again shortly.

27
28 (Meeting concluded at 5:07 pm)
29

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