

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

ON MONDAY, 7 JULY 2025 AT 2:00PM

STENOGRAPHER: Niamh Kelly-Leahy, RMR, MBIVR

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PROCEEDINGS COMMENCED ON MONDAY, 7TH JULY 2025 AT 2:00 PM,
AS FOLLOWS:

CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon, members, and welcome to today's meeting. I am going to hand over to Helen first to do the ethics and the roll call. Thank you.

MS PURCELL: Good afternoon. I'd like to welcome everybody to the chamber, to the members of the public, the press and those who have joined us online. I would like to remind the members to keep their cameras on when they're online and any staff and members of the public to keep their microphones and cameras off, please.

Any technical issues please contact me. I will now do the roll call. Councillor Danny Alvey?

COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry is present online. Councillor Joe Behan?

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Present.

MS PURCELL: 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: Councillor Erika Doyle?

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Malachai Duddy? Councillor Gail Dunne?

COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin?

COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present Councillor Orla Finn?

COUNCILLOR FINN: Present. Apologies from Councillor Pat Fitzgerald. Councillor Tom Fortune?

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Patsy Glennon?

CO+UNCILLOR GLENNON: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Kennedy..

COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Yeah. He asked me to say that he will be joining us

1 online.

2 MS PURCELL: Thank you. Councillor Shane Langrell?

3 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: Present.

4 MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard?

5 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Present.

6 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Pat Mahon?

7 COUNCILLOR MAHON: Present.

8 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Jason Mulhall?

9 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: Present.

10 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Miriam Murphy? Councillor Ian Neary?

11 COUNCILLOR NEARY: Present.

12 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Dermot O'Brien?

13 COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN: Anseo.

14 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Paul O'Brien?

15 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Present.

16 MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry O'Neill?

17 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Anseo.

18 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Warren O'Toole?

19 COUNCILLOR O'TOOLE: Anseo.

20 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Graham Richmond?

21 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: Present.

22 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Lourda Scott? Councillor John Snell?

23 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Present.

24 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Peter Stapleton?

25 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: Present.

26 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Stephen Stokes?

27 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Present.

28 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Ned Whelan?

29 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: Present.

30 MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Caroline Winstanley?

31 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Present.

32 MS PURCELL: Thank you.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Helen. Do we have any expressions of

34 sympathies from the floor? No. Okay. Helen, were there any staff?

1 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Cathaoirleach, it is Gail Dunne here. I am present here.

2 MS PURCELL: That's perfect. I have you marked you as present. Thank you,
3 Councillor Dunne.

4

5 We extend our sympathies to the families of Alice Josephine (Josie) Dagge, mother
6 of our friend and colleagues Anne Marie Roberts and Liam Dagge; and also Brigid
7 (Dooley) O'Keeffe, mother of our friend and colleague, Hazel Clinton.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'm sorry, Councillor Cronin.

9 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thank you very much. I just want to express sympathies
10 to the family of Michael Delmer. He was a Dunlavin lad who had years of service
11 with Kildare County Council, and he died suddenly a few weeks ago and I would
12 like to extend sympathy to Michael's family, to his wife Marian, his son Shane and
13 his daughter Laura. May he rest in peace.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. We will stand for a moment's silence please.

15

16 (Moment of silence.)

17

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

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, members. I will just ask you to bear with me
21 today as it's the first meeting and just until I get the hang of the system here. And try
22 and keep your contributions, if possible, as in the standing orders, to three minutes. I
23 want to try and make sure that everybody who wishes gets their chance to speak and
24 makes contribution. Bear with me today until I get the hang of things here.

25

26 So the first item on the agenda then is: To confirm and sign minutes of ordinary
27 meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday, 9th June 2025 (Copy
28 attached). Can I have a proposer and a seconder, please? Proposed by Councillor
29 O'Brien. Seconded by Councillor Cronin. Were there any matters arising out of the
30 minutes? No. Okay. Thank you.

31

32 And the second item then is: To confirm and sign minutes of special meeting of
33 Wicklow County Council held on Monday, 16th June 2025 (Copy attached). Can I
34 have a proposer and seconder for those?

1 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Propose.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Snell and Councillor Langrell. Thank you. Were
3 there any matters arising out of the minutes of the special meeting?

4 COUNCILLOR SNELL: No.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. The third item is: To confirm and sign minutes of the
6 annual meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday, 16th June 2025 (Copy
7 attached). A proposer and a seconder, please?

8 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Proposed.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Stokes and Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin.
10 Were there any matters arising out of the minutes of the special meeting? No. Okay.

11

12 The next item is: To consider the disposal of 0.0989 hectares or thereabouts in the
13 townland of Brockagh Td. Comprised in Folio WW829F being land situated at
14 Brockagh, Laragh, Co. Wicklow to Mr William McCoy (as per notice previously
15 circulated). Can I have a proposer and a seconder, please?

16 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Proposed.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Langrell and Councillor Snell. Thank you. All
18 agreed? (Agreed.)

19

20 Number 5 on the agenda then: To consider the disposal of 0.0142 hectares, 0.01260
21 hectares and 0.062 hectares (0.0330 hectares) or thereabouts in the townland of
22 Blessington being the property known as 31 Rockypool Crescent Place to Michael
23 and Christopher Reid (as per notice previously circulated). A proposer and a
24 seconder, please? Councillor Glennon and Councillor Mulhall. Thank you. All
25 agreed. Agreed? (Agreed.)

26

27 Item number 6: To consider the disposal of 0.180 hectares or thereabouts in the
28 townland of Kilquade Td. being the property known as Woodstock Road, Kilquade,
29 Newtownmountkennedy, Co. Wicklow to Peter Woodgates (as per notice previously
30 circulated). A proposer and a seconder, please? Councillor Langrell and Councillor
31 Louise Fenelon Gaskin. All agreed? (Agreed.)

32

33 Number 7: To consider the disposal of 0.134 hectares or thereabouts in the townland
34 of Corporation Lands Td being the property known as 8 Dunbur Terrace, Wicklow

1 Town, Co. Wicklow to Desmond Olohan as Legal Personal Representative in the
2 estate of Adeline Adela Olohan deceased (as per notice previously circulated). Can I
3 have a proposer and a seconder? Councillor O'Brien and Councillor Danny Alvey.

4

5 Danny, you wanted to come in on that, sorry.

6 COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just very briefly. The
7 property 8 Dunbur Terrace has been lying derelict for quite a number of years, and I
8 have been working with the young family next door to them in 9 Dunbur Terrace, so
9 I welcome this disposal, and I wonder if the director could make any comments in
10 regards to that, hoping that the disposal is going to lead now to some action for the
11 person who is currently in ownership of the building or if not if you can come back
12 to me at a separate time. I wanted to flag that.

13 MR NICHOLSON: My understanding is that this has been rectified because they
14 wanted to sell it. I think that resolves the issue, but I will speak to you privately after
15 about that, Danny.

16 COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Thank you.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. So we have a proposer and a seconder. Is everyone
18 agreed? (Agreed.) Thank you.

19

20 So the next item is: To consider the vacancy to the County Wicklow Heritage Forum
21 arising from the resignation of Councillor Peir Leonard. So are there any
22 nominations for anyone wanting to take that place on the Heritage Forum?

23

24 Councillor Leonard, do you want to come in?

25 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yeah. I want to say it is for personal reasons that I
26 have to step down off a couple of economies, and that I really enjoyed my time and it
27 is a lovely committee to sit on, but I think it usually goes back to the Arklow MD,
28 and it can be decided at the municipal district meeting, if that's okay.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

30 MS O'GORMAN: Yeah, if there's no nominations forthcoming today we will send it
31 back to the district and it will come back to this meeting for formal adoption in
32 September.

33 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Okay.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Snell, as chair of that do you want to come in?

1 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Yeah, thanks, Cathaoirleach. I just want to thank
2 Councillor Peir Leonard for her contribution over a long period of time on this
3 committee. It is an honour to have served with her on the committee. And I know
4 on behalf of all the members, including the people make who make up from the
5 various sectors of the society you were heavily involved with an awful lot of
6 community groups, and I know on behalf of Deirdre and all her team we will miss
7 you on that Heritage forum, and indeed the Elected Members around the table that
8 are still there, each and every one of them were a bit shocked that you were stepping
9 away but you've explained it is for personal reasons. I just want to wish you well in
10 whatever other committees you are on, and I know you give it a hundred percent, and
11 we look forward to the nomination coming forward. Thank you.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Snell. And again, thank you for the
13 work you put into that. I was at the launch there of the strategy last week and it was
14 a fantastic piece of work, so well done on that. So if there's no nominations then it
15 will go back to the MD, and we will probably have it at the September meeting.
16 Thank you.

17
18 So the next item then is: To ratify the appointment of Councillor Ned Whelan to the
19 Board of Mermaid County Wicklow Arts Centre CLG. Could I have a proposer and
20 a seconder for that, please? Councillor Langrell proposing. And a seconder?
21 Councillor Cronin. That's great. Thank you.

22

23 Then the next item is: To ratify the appointment of Councillor Ned Whelan to Bray
24 Area Partnership. A proposer and a seconder, please? Councillor Louise Fenelon
25 Gaskin and Councillor John Snell. Thank you.

26

27 And then, number 11: To ratify the appointment of Councillor Ned Whelan to the
28 Greystones/Bray Cliff Walk Management Plan sub-committee. A proposer and a
29 seconder, please? Councillor Orla Finn and Councillor Malachai Duddy. Okay.

30

31 The next item then is: To consider the variation of the basic rate of Local Property
32 Tax and the setting of the Local Adjustment Factor in accordance with the Finance
33 (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) to apply for the period as specified
34 from the next local property tax liability date 1st November 2025 (copy attached).

1 We were all circulated with the information on that, so I am going to hand over to
2 Director Brian Gleeson to give a presentation on it. Thank you, Brian.

3 MR GLEESON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and good afternoon, members. Just
4 bear with us, folks. Okay. Good afternoon, all. We're here to discuss the Local
5 Property Tax this afternoon, and I will just a leave outline of the areas that I'll discuss
6 in my presentation. First of all, I will outline the budgetary process for local
7 authorities; and I will go through the LPT revaluation and the new legislation that's
8 been brought in; the 2026 LPT allocation and the recommendation from the
9 Executive; I'll also detail the estimated income and expenditure, the financial
10 position of Wicklow County Council and the financial effect on a liable person of
11 any decision taken; and we will also review the financial impact on the local
12 authority and also outline the public consultation process before finishing off with a
13 summary of the proposal.

14
15 Just briefly to go through the budget process. You're well aware, under legislation
16 we must make the LPT decision before the 31st August 2025. Normally this would
17 be October 15th, but as this is a revaluation year this must be done early to allow
18 revenue to make system changes. After that, we will have the normal draft
19 budgetary plan and general municipal allocations in October and November and have
20 the adoption of the annual budget on the 24th November before the Schedule of
21 Municipal District Works being issued in quarter 1/2026. So this is the first stage of
22 the budget process for 2026.

23

24 So just to go through the Local Property Tax and the impact of the new legislation
25 passed by the Dáil and the Seanad last week. All valuation bands would be widened
26 by 20% first and foremost. In tandem with that, the basic rate of LPT, which is the
27 multiplier, will be decreased from 0.1029% to 0.906%. I suppose the context of this
28 is property prices have increased by 23% since the last revaluation in November
29 2021 and if the Government didn't change the system and widen the bands 70% of
30 the households would go up by at least one valuation band, however by updating the
31 LPT system it prevents this happening for the majority of households.

32

33 So widening of the bands, an increase of the midpoint values, means that the LPT
34 charges will increase by a modest amount of about 5% for properties valued under

1 1.26 million. This will be the case for an estimated of 96% of the properties
2 nationwide. Over 91% of Wicklow households are in Bands 1 to 6. That will mean
3 an increase ranging from €5 for Band 1 up to €33 per annum for Band 6. Just to note
4 as well that inflation since last revaluation date in November 2021 is 16.7%. So the
5 5% increase we're talking about is a modest increase compared to the inflation rate
6 over the same period.

7
8 Another change to the legislation that will come into effect not next year but in 2027
9 is that the maximum limit for the LPT rate variation will be increased to 25% from
10 the 15% currently. This is a clear message from Government to local authorities that
11 we need to generate extra income ourselves and here is the mechanism to do it.

12
13 Next slide, please. This table, which is in your main report as well, shows the 2022
14 allocation for Wicklow. The gross allocation to Wicklow has increased by 2.5
15 million from 2.9 million in 2025 up to 23.4 million in 2026. That 2.5 is made up of,
16 1.9 million is through the revaluation and 600,000 is from normal new properties
17 being brought into the LPT net which happens on an annual basis. So we're getting
18 the gross buoyancy of 2.5 million. As you know, there's no equalisation fund
19 anymore so that's retained locally by Wicklow County Council.

20 The Government have allowed the local authorities to retain the full value of the
21 revaluation buoyancy. So that 1.9 million, the baseline has been increased to ensure
22 that we keep hold of that. That leaves a surplus, if you take the baseline from the 23
23 million that leaves a surplus of 10.3 million.

24
25 Another change to the legislation is that previously the amount of LPT surplus that
26 we could keep was 22.5% of the gross income. So if you look at the figure there for
27 2025 it was 4.7, that was basically 22.5% of the total amount of 20.9 million. Now
28 we have that change, it's 31% of the 23.4 million, which comes to 7.272 million. So
29 it's an increase of over 2.5 million. The corresponding impact of this is the
30 self-funding amount that is put towards housing and road services has decreased by
31 about 2 million, and I know that's good news because I know we've always had an
32 issue about the self-funding element within this model and it's always been a
33 frustration to the members and the Executive and the like, so it's positive to see that
34 figure go down.

1
2 So the overall position means that we have increased our net provision from 15.9 up
3 to 20.4. That's an increase of just over 4.4 million. Just to be aware, of that 4.4
4 million 2 million has been ring-fenced by the Department for urban regeneration
5 programmes. So it's not totally discretionary for us to decide what to spend it on.
6 Two million is for urban regeneration programmes, and that would include such
7 things as public realm works, streetscape enhancements and possibly co-funding for
8 URDF projects, but we do hope to get more clarity on that over the coming weeks.
9

10 Next slide, please. So the decisions that the members have to make today. Members
11 can vary the LPT rate plus or minus by 15%, and they can set the rate for more than
12 one year and up to four years, which represents the remaining lifetime of the
13 Council, out to 2029. It is the recommendation of the Executive to increase the rate
14 from 6% up to 15%. The proposal will include that the current 6% remains for
15 discretionary funding for the municipal districts of 1.4 million and the incremental
16 increase of 9% to go up to 15% generates an extra 2.1 million which will be
17 ring-fenced for staff recruitment. I suppose this is based on feedback that we
18 received from the members over the last 12 months that the MDs need more staff and
19 that's why this proposal has been put forward. This will see 25 new outdoor staff
20 across the five municipal districts, that'll be five in each district, and the
21 recommendation is also to set this decision for a four-year period, covering 2026 to
22 2029.
23

24 Under legislation there's a number of factors that the members need to consider
25 before making a decision: The local authority's estimation of income and
26 expenditure; the financial position of the local authority; the financial effect of the
27 LPT on the individual; and the Wicklow County Council budget; and also look at the
28 feedback that was received through the public consultation process.
29

30 First of all, we will look at the income and expenditure. And I suppose to provide
31 some context to this I am just going to outline some known budgetary adjustments.
32 While it's early in the year there's obviously areas that we know there will be an
33 increase or an adjustment. So just to go through these. You can see at the top
34 obviously the LPT increase of 4.4 million. However, we have an IPB insurance

1 adjustment of over 400,000. As outlined in the budget in November, last year, we
2 got a one-off special dividend from IPB of 400,000. That will not be repeated in
3 2026. So we do have to fund that gap ourselves.

4
5 Additional pay costs. As you know, we only get compensation for 85% of pay
6 agreements, the increases under the national pay agreements and also we have to
7 cover incremental increases to our existing staff. That's about half a million.

8
9 Additional pay and pension and gratuity costs. Obviously the more people retire, we
10 get retirements every year, we have to pay the one-off gratuity payment from the
11 budget and also there are additional pensioners that have to be paid each year.

12
13 We also need to upgrade and modernise our existing software which is at end of life.
14 So we're looking at Microsoft 365 rollout next year and that will impact by having
15 approximately 400,000 on additional licences costs.

16
17 The NPPR, as you are well aware, ceased in the 1st October -- or 1st April this year,
18 so the income from that 50,000 is gone. And also I suppose inflation costs are just
19 under a million euro. Inflation over the last 12 months is 1.7 million. So basing that
20 on non-grant funded and non-pay expenditure it comes in at 900,000. So we need
21 that money just to standstill, to do exactly what we're doing with the same level of
22 services that we're currently providing.

23
24 On top of that our service directorates have additional requests for new services,
25 whether it's additional money for housing repairs, pre-letting, road maintenance,
26 climate action initiatives, our energy protects in order to reach our targets for 2030,
27 and also new staffing requirements under the Strategic Workforce Plan. So a modest
28 provision I think is 5 million in that regard.

29
30 So you can see with the buoyancy of 4.4 million we still end up with all the
31 commitments that we have on non-discretionally expenditure with a current deficit of
32 3.5 million. That will have to be addressed and pulled back before the budget in
33 November.

34

1 Next slide. Thank you. So the estimate of income and expenditure. The first
2 column shows 2025 and the budget, which is balanced. The second one shows 2026,
3 which shows the current funding deficit of 3.5, as outlined. And then as a request is
4 to set the rate for a four-year period up to 2029 I've also included figures to include
5 this particular figure in the last column.

6
7 So moving on to the financial position of Wicklow County Council. The revenue
8 surplus, as you know, we eliminated the deficit that we had, so the surplus is very
9 small, just under 3 grand at the 31st December 2024. Our ratio of current assets to
10 current liabilities is positive 1.3. 3:1. The ratio of loans payable to revenue on
11 income is 35%, which is also positive. But we also have to factor in ongoing impact
12 of inflationary cost increases and our pay and pension commitments which I
13 mentioned. But overall we are in a stable financial position.

14
15 Next slide, please. The next thing we need to look at is the financial effect on a
16 liable person. So there's a few scenarios that we looked at. No change scenario: If
17 we retain the existing 6% rate then there's no increase to payments made by
18 householders in 2026. However, if the 6% variation is not retained the saving per
19 household would only be €5.70 in Band 1 up to €37.10 for Band 6. And that's an
20 annual saving. So it's a very, very minimal. And that would be the case for 91% of
21 households in Wicklow. But whatever, it would result in the loss of 1.4 million to
22 Wicklow County Council and basically that would mean the elimination of the
23 discretionary fund that is allocated out to the municipal districts at the moment.

24
25 Next slide. There's a number of tables in the main report, but I just wanted to
26 concentrate on one that shows the incremental increase of 9% which shows the
27 actual financial impact of an increase to 15%. As I said already, 91% of the
28 properties in Wicklow are valued in Band 1 to Band 6, as you can see there, so a 9%
29 variation across the six bands would range from €8.55 in Band 1 to €55.65 of an
30 increase in Band 6. And that is per annum. So it is a limited increase. Only 1.4% of
31 households would pay more than an €100 extra per annum if it was increased and
32 that would cover bands 12 upwards. So anything over nearly 1.3 million. Also to
33 note, members, that Wicklow County Council and the approved housing bodies pay
34 the LPT charges in respect of their social housing tenants. So the most vulnerable

1 part of society is being covered by the Council and the approved housing bodies.

2
3 Next slide please. We next want to look at the impact on the Wicklow County
4 Council revenue budget, the services delivery for 2026. So a 15% variation provides
5 3.5 million to the budget. The existing rate of 6% is being proposed to continue to
6 support the municipal districts' discretionary funding scheme, and that would provide
7 1.4 million. How it would be broke down is as normal by the elected members in
8 each district. So Bray would 352,000, and the other four MDs would get 264,000
9 each. A 9% incremental increase generates 2.1 million of new funding, and I
10 suppose in recognition of ongoing requests made by the Elected Members over the
11 past year we are proposing that this amendment is ring-fenced for staff recruitment.
12 This would mean 25 new outdoor workers, five per MD. And the impact of that
13 would be the visual impact on our towns and villages throughout the county. Getting
14 people on the street to deal with street cleaning, grass cutting, public realm works,
15 footpath repairs, et cetera. So the impact of that, as you well know, will be very
16 visual to your constituents.

17
18 Next slide, please. I also want to mention a public consultation process that per
19 legislation we must run. So this ran from the 28th May to the 27th June this year. A
20 total of only three submissions were received: two via the consultation hub and one
21 by email. One requested an increase to the LPT rate with the extra income
22 ring-fenced for housing services and two requested a decrease to the LPT rate.

23
24 So to conclude and summarise the recommendation for LPT 2026. The LPT reval
25 buoyancy is 4.5 million. As I've said, 2 million of that is ring-fenced for urban
26 regeneration programmes, and that leaves us with 2.5 million to cover annual
27 non-discretionary cost increases, like pay and pension costs. The proposal being put
28 forward here today is to increase the existing rate from 6% to 15% and that the
29 current rate of 6% would be maintained for the discretionary funding scheme within
30 the municipal districts and that the 9% incremental increase would be ring-fenced for
31 staff recruitment. This would also see a limited increase to householder LPT bills,
32 but we will receive 25 new outdoor workers, five extra in each municipal district.
33 An alternative option would be to only increase it to 10% rather than the full 15%.
34 This would be an incremental increase of 4% and that would allow us to recruit 15

1 new outdoor workers, three extra in each municipal district. And the
2 recommendation to the members is to set the rate for the remainder lifetime of the
3 Council, four years, up to 2029. And just to note that this can be altered at any stage
4 subject to the wishes of the members.

5
6 So I suppose in conclusion, the Government have given a clear message to local
7 authorities that we need to generate additional funding ourselves and this proposal
8 addresses the key ask made by members over the last 12 months to have more
9 outdoor staff. Thank you very much.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thank you, Brian. We have two speakers
11 already that want to come in. So the first one is Councillor Silvester Bourke.

12 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. First of all, I would like to
13 congratulate Brian on the report that he has given us. It is very detailed and very
14 well put together. And considering when Brian came into the job there was an
15 annual deficit of running over 2 million he has brought that down to a surplus now of
16 2,782 which is a great achievement in financial management given that there's a huge
17 amount of money going through this Council year-on-year. So I know he has
18 challenges as well with arrears figures climbing but I believe efforts are being made
19 to get on top of that situation as well.

20
21 Cathaoirleach, I have had a look over these figures and discussed them with my
22 colleagues in the Fine Gael group, and given that we have a revaluation taking place
23 which will see a 5% average increase on LPT payable by the majority of our citizens,
24 and given the high cost of living we are enduring at the moment and daily reports of
25 families facing difficulties in feeding families and paying for education, I would like
26 to make a proposal that the LPT rate would be kept at the local adjustment rate of 6%
27 which is the rate we have set for the last number of years. And it will be a challenge
28 for Brian to actually frame the budget later in the year but it is quite early yet and
29 there are possibilities of raising that extra couple of million that he'd love to have but
30 unfortunately I think I can't support today based on the feeling that I have that I think
31 there could be possibilities -- there was talk last week about councils who are
32 investing and delivering on social housing, for example, would get extra funding
33 from the Government, from DEPR, to spend on discretionary items. So if that was
34 the case Wicklow would surely get very good marks; as we know, we're one of the

1 best in the country at delivering our social housing. So I would like to see more
2 information on that reported. It was in The Irish Independent during the week. So I
3 will formally propose then that for the moment anyway we would -- this year we
4 would hold the rate at 6%. Thank you very much, Cathaoirleach.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Silvester Bourke. And the next speaker is
6 Councillor Danny Alvey.

7 COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Yeah, I would like to echo the
8 comments of Councillor Bourke and second his motion around maintaining the
9 adjustment rate for this year at 6%. I think these revaluations are welcome in terms
10 of extra income for the Council. However, it does mean there are going to be
11 increasing on people's Local Property Tax at a time when cost of living is quite high.
12 I understand the pressures we're all under here in terms of the Council and the great
13 desire for more outdoor workers, but I don't think right now giving these revaluations
14 is the time for another 10% or 15% increase. However, that being said I started
15 paying property tax for the first time last year when we got our own home, and I
16 currently pay 35.75 a month and under these revaluation charges that'll be going up
17 to 37.80 a month. So that's a €2 difference. So given that it's just a €2 difference I
18 can't see how we could otherwise argue to go in another direction than 6%. If we
19 were to consider reducing it whatsoever it would be mean wiping out up to 1.4
20 million in discretionary funding for each of the districts. And in my district that
21 funding is extremely important; it is used to support the festival Wicklow Pride
22 Festival, the Wicklow Regatta Day, St. Patrick's Day Parade, our several Tidy Towns
23 groups, our footpaths, new pedestrian crossings, new ramps, new speed signs and
24 new bins, and many worthy projects that if we were to reduce it we would be missing
25 out on. So I think it is important that we keep it at a minimum of 6%. I am happy to
26 second the proposal of Councillor Bourke. Thank you.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Alvey. I am going to go online to
28 Councillor Miriam Murphy. Are you there, Miriam? Okay, we will come back to
29 Councillor Murphy. Councillor O'Brien.

30 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And thanks to Brian
31 for the presentation and the documents in advance of today. Every year,
32 Cathaoirleach, you know I do a little reflection on LPT, and you know we see and
33 hear about all the justifications and the rationale and people may or may not believe
34 it, but I do sit down and wonder about my position on LPT, and then I consume all

1 the documents, and I talk to people, and I mean I have a good bit to say but I will try
2 and streamline it I suppose. First and foremost, I think three responses to a
3 consultation is atrocious, and I think again that has to be a reflection of something; it
4 is a reflection of not doing consultation good enough, not getting the word out there
5 or not engaging. And I think that's a really poor response. I know I put a post on
6 social media and got over 200 responses in one way or another. But I have a couple
7 of things to say.

8
9 I read the report. I nearly had to go away and do a meditation after the introduction
10 page, Cathaoirleach. And I hope it is a copy and paste from a Government
11 department because when you see a line that says "LPT is a significant transfer of
12 power to the members of this Council from Central Government." To me the LPT is
13 more like a bailout for Central Government than a bonus fund because we're doing
14 their work. So when they decide -- you know we hear the word "modest" a lot today,
15 and "only" and "minimal" and "limited," but there's a context here that I think is
16 really critical if we're thinking about the LPT and tapping up the homeowners of
17 Wicklow to cover all the costs that have been outlined. So when you think about
18 modest, there's a context here, Cathaoirleach, that I think is really, really critical.
19 We're talking about a context within which the same homeowners have an increase
20 in their electricity bills, increase in food costs, increase in insurance costs, increase in
21 home insurance, repairs and maintenance, forget about it, childcare costs,
22 astronomical, health insurance, up, up, up. So every aspect of the lives of the
23 homeowners of Wicklow includes an adjustment upwards in a cost that is out of their
24 control, and we swoop in and we're doing the exact same thing. We're imposing
25 what is 11%, because 6% plus 5% is 11%, we're imposing that increase in the
26 context where people are already struggling. So we own that. In whatever way the
27 vote might go that's something to be owned. And I really this is convenient. And
28 when we first looked at LPT when it first came out people didn't pay so then revenue
29 got in the mix and they said we'll make sure they do, we'll hold their arm behind their
30 back and make sure everyone pays. So that is convenient for Central Government.
31 Very, very handy altogether.

32
33 But again, when we scan across, when we think about the context, we're also in a
34 context where 24 million was given to a media campus in Greystones. Game over.

1 Nothing happened there. Whitestown 40, we'll cough up for that. Children's
2 Hospital, 1.5 billion. There's a bit of money floating around. The OPW have thrown
3 1.5 million, bike shed, security hut. The HSE ransom ware attack, 63 million. We're
4 sitting on a Government surplus of somewhere between 8 and 16 billion. So that's
5 sitting there, and I don't know what type of rainy day they're looking for or what the
6 ideas are around that. We won't even talk about RTÉ and again the mismanagement
7 of how money is used. So there is a context.

8
9 And let me add maybe into the mix the vulture funds. So when we look at a policy
10 position, the LPT is a policy position decided at national Government level imposed
11 on local authorities and we're going out then tapping up people for money whereby
12 parallel to that there's a policy position that says vulture funds who own tens of
13 billions of euros worth of Irish property and pay little or no tax. And if they were
14 coughing up and --

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Councillor O'Brien, I just have to hurry you up there --

16 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Sure there's no one else looking to get in.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: No. There are others. I want to give people the opportunity.
18 Keep going.

19 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: I might say as well, usually this is a meeting
20 exclusively for LPT, Cathaoirleach, so I would hope that we would get the time to
21 discuss such an important decision. But I will put a bit of pace into it. As you can
22 see I did a lot of work, I did a lot of prep, so I am hoping to put it out there.

23
24 Who benefits from LPT as well? And you wonder how do you explain that to
25 people. And I had this thought that imagine a group of people come together, they
26 are chipping for holiday and they're paying into the pot for a holiday and then the
27 holiday comes up and what happens is maybe you don't get to go, or you know what,
28 you're only covered for the trip to the airport. And that's how people see an LPT.
29 They don't see a benefit outside their front door. My housing estate I think offers up,
30 what is it, it's 74,000 a year but can't get the drains cleared. So we have to listen to
31 people when they say that the LPT is not landing for them, it's not benefiting them.

32
33 And in my mini consultation, I'll finish on this, Cathaoirleach, I did have loads to say
34 but I will finish on this one and maybe I will sneak back in if there's space, but the

1 language used by the people that I consulted with is extortion, it's a joke.
2 Councillors should wise up and give constituents a break. It is unfair. It is crippling.
3 It is sickening. It is stressful. It is a failure of fiscal responsibility. More money to
4 waste. Bray doesn't get what it deserves. We're being taxed out of existence.
5 Exactly what do we get? We're being ripped off. We see nothing for it. "It is
6 immoral to tax people's homes," is a quote that I shared, which is a quote from a
7 former leader of FG I think.

8
9 And then people fundamentally think that they're paying extra tax on something they
10 already pay tax on. So I propose that maybe we take the responsibility for a change
11 instead of offloading it or outsourcing. And I really, really have to say,
12 Cathaoirleach, and maybe it won't come as a proposal but if we're saying that the
13 homeowners of Wicklow are now funding public sector pay I think that's absolutely
14 out of this world. Are we going to get a seat up there then for the public if they're
15 going to be funding the cost of staff to run their local authority? And funding not by
16 choice, funding by duress.

17
18 So I would propose that we reduce the LPT variation by 15% and take the
19 responsibility ourselves for how we serve the people of Wicklow. Thanks very
20 much.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Brien. Councillor Miriam Murphy,
22 are you online? Councillor O'Brien, do you have a seconder for your proposal?

23 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Put it out there and see.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Joe Behan. Grand. And, Councillor Miriam
25 Murphy, do you want to come in there? Can you hear us Miriam? Okay. We'll go
26 to Councillor John Snell then. Hopefully Miriam will come in then.

27 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Yeah. Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I will be as brief as I can,
28 but I agree with all the sentiments that's been shared already in regards to colleagues
29 behind me, what they said in regards to the high cost of living, and also to Councillor
30 O'Brien, and I think he has a fair point when he says that this was a standalone
31 meeting and always was because it was given the airtime it needed for all the
32 members to express their feelings. And I understand that we're under pressure today
33 because it's a packed agenda, but this is an item that's very, very important, that
34 affects every single one of our constituents. Irrespective of what way we vote every

1 constituent will be affected by this.

2

3 The head of finance mentioned in regards to people in local authority homes don't
4 pay this, and that's true. The most vulnerable. And I would call into question that
5 because I deal with an awful lot of people who I term are the most vulnerable and
6 they're not in local authority homes. They're called the middle squeezed. People
7 who are employed, the people who are out there having to pay for their mortgages,
8 keep the roof over their head. They're not getting what would be termed as handouts.
9 These are people who are getting up every single day to go out and work, to keep the
10 roof over their family's heads. Some of them are in houses that are quite old, 60, 70,
11 80 years old they're having to go out and do all the necessary works themselves.
12 They're not getting the grant through the SEAI for the wraparound, the windows, the
13 doors, the ventilation, insulation. And then we think it is acceptable to talk here that,
14 you know, it's only a 5% increase, it'll only be an extra €37 per week. Nobody ever
15 tells you that they're paying €680 plus €37 on top. Nobody mentions that. Nobody
16 mentions about the pensioners out there who are out there who their families they've
17 inherited the land that they live on, old houses, houses that the market value would
18 be quite high. We see the figures that's come out this week in regards to the average
19 house price in County Wicklow. Astronomical. We talk about young people getting
20 on the property ladder. And I know, Councillor Alvey, you mentioned in regards to
21 you paying the property tax now and I welcome you getting on the property ladder,
22 but I know an awful lot of people in Newtownmountkennedy where you live who
23 didn't pay the Local Property Tax for 12 or 13 years because the Government didn't
24 have the scheme in place where people who went into new houses they were exempt
25 from the property tax. You had people like your parents and my parents, and
26 everyone else's parents and grandparents who are living in older houses, they paid
27 the Local Property Tax since it was set up in 2012. And it is very hard to sit in here
28 over all them years to justify that and say all these people in the new houses got
29 away with a decade or more of paying nothing, absolutely nothing, contributed
30 nothing in regards to Local Property Tax. And here we are again saying ignore the
31 5%.

32

33 You know, this is the greatest slight of land that you'll ever see, the words that's
34 being used in here. And that's what's happening. It happens every year. As we sit

1 here today the property tax is set at the base rate. So forget about the 6% last year,
2 forget about the 6% the year before, there was a time here when all 32 councillors
3 kept it at the base rate. That wasn't too long ago. And that was all political parties.
4 We know that people out there are suffering, they're suffering, and we don't need to
5 go and harp on and make it harder for them.

6
7 I'm also a realist, and I said it here last year, I understand the difficulty of trying to
8 balance the books, but the reality is that we can balance the books. And my proposal
9 is that we should keep it at the base rate. Keep it at the base rate. No increase of
10 6%, because there's already an increase of 5% what the Government is putting on
11 this. Indeed, the Government is going to make I believe 744 million. 744 million.
12 It's unreal like. And then we have to go and tell people, you know, you need to hand
13 up your 5% --

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Councillor Snell --

15 COUNCILLOR SNELL: -- you need to put your 6% on top of that.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: -- I am going to hurry you up.

17 COUNCILLOR SNELL: And the head of finance -- Cathaoirleach, the head of
18 finance mentioned 9%. He's not being real when he's saying that. So everyone goes
19 away, and thinks isn't that great? Silvester Bourke proposed to reduce it to 6%
20 because the head of finance wanted 9% knowing in his heart and soul that it is never
21 going to happen. There's no winners here. Stop playing stupid games with people.
22 There should be no increase. The people are going to have increase it by 5% as it is.
23 So my recommendation, Cathaoirleach, and I will leave it on this is: It remains at
24 the base rate as it is today. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Councillor Snell. Have you a seconder for your
26 proposal? Councillor Leonard. Thank you. I am going to go back now see if we
27 can get Councillor Miriam Murphy in online? Miriam, are you there? Councillor
28 Murphy? We can't hear you at all, Councillor Murphy. So I am going to go to -- we
29 still can't hear you. Councillor Murphy, if you want to ring or text one of the other
30 councillors they can make your representation on your behalf if you like because we
31 can't hear you. I am going to go to the next speaker then. Councillor Joe Behan.

32 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks, Brian, for the report.
33 And certainly I would agree with one thing, I think Brian stewards the finance of this
34 Council exceptionally well and I have no complaints about how he manages the

1 money that the people pay into this Council. However, that's where my praise for
2 him will stop. And I mean really, you know, every year we get to this point where
3 the Executive put forward a figure that they know will not be accepted by the
4 members and then we end up with a compromise figure. But I think it is important
5 to go back and look at the fact that before 2014 the entire financing in Wicklow
6 County Council that has now been taken up with property tax was paid for directly
7 for the Exchequer in what was called a Rates Support Grant. So your system of
8 financing was commercial rates effectively and rent, and parking fines, et cetera, and
9 a Rates Support Grant. So the property tax basically was the Government shoving a
10 burden onto the people of this country to replace what they were already paying in
11 tax. So it is an outrageous kind of form of double taxation, but it is what we are
12 faced with.

13
14 What's also outrageous is that the Fine Gael party here in Wicklow are following
15 along from the leader of Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael and Independents in Government
16 by actually suggesting that not that there be a 6% increase but that there be an 11%
17 increase here. And in fact if listening to the director of finance what you are actually
18 hearing is the Government are encouraging councils to go to a 25% increase, they're
19 lifting the ceiling, that in future councillors can actually up it by another percentage
20 to 25%, and in fact when we used to have the facility to reduce it by 15%. You can't
21 reduce it by any more than 15% either. So it is amazing to me that Councillor
22 Bourke, who is a very honourable person and someone who has a lot of experience
23 in this Council, started off by remarking about the revaluation leading to a 5%
24 increase on people's bills, so that's an imposition by the Government, and he then
25 justifies an additional 6% bringing it to 11%. And Councillor Alvey and the Social
26 Democrats are obviously in support of that.

27
28 So what we are talking about here is a minimal increase insofar as the powers that be
29 in this chamber is an 11% increase on the people. And I have no doubt that there is
30 plenty of fat in the budget in Wicklow County Council to sustain what Councillor
31 O'Brien has proposed, which was a reduction of 15%. And, for example, one of the
32 figures that's mentioned there, one of the issues that's mentioned in Brian's report is
33 the fact that there's a once-off payment from Irish Public Bodies for insurance and so
34 on, and we're getting money back, et cetera, et cetera, and you know we can't rely on

1 ever getting that again. I think we've got it every year for the last five or six years.
2 So I really don't buy that.

3
4 However, it appears the decision has already been made. The speed at which the
5 proposal was made, the speed at which it was seconded by the Social Democrats, the
6 fact that there's been very little other contributions from the powers that be in this
7 chamber indicates to me that the deal is done, that it's an 11% increase. And what's
8 even more outrageous from the chief executive and the director of finance, and I
9 most certainly hope it is not being proposed by Fine Gael here today, is that we won't
10 even come back to discuss this again for another four years, that we will continue to
11 have this increase of 6% on top of a 5% revaluation. I think people really want to
12 think -- should think carefully about this. As Councillor O'Brien mentioned, the
13 national finance are probably in a better state than they have ever been, the people
14 are being double taxed with this particular property tax, we know there's a cost of
15 living crisis, and yet we are saying as a body -- or sorry, a majority appear to be
16 saying we're going to put another burden of 11% on people. It's wrong, it's unfair,
17 and I certainly wouldn't be supporting it.

18
19 And I would appeal to members to remember one thing: This is not the budget we're
20 talking about here today, these are all indicative figures and no matter what Brian
21 might say, if we decided in the morning, today to reduce it by 15% I am quite sure
22 the Council would survive, and we would be able to manage going forward.

23 However, it looks like the dye is cast, it looks like the majority of members are going
24 to put an 11% on the people of the county and I think that's quite incredible. Thank
25 you.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. I am going to ask you to bear
27 with me for a minute. We are having a few technical issues up here. Sorry, the chief
28 executive is going to come in and clarify a few issues while we're sorting this out.
29 Thank you.

30 MS O'GORMAN: Just a few matters that were raised, members. Firstly, public
31 consultation. It is a statutory process as you know, Councillor O'Brien, and there's
32 certain ways that it can be amplified. And obviously the feedback that you got in
33 your own consultation is very welcome, but it doesn't make a formal submission, so I
34 would encourage you to encourage your constituents to make a formal submission

1 because it has to be in a particular way. A comment on Facebook or on YouTube or
2 whatever will not do it in terms of the statutory consultation process. That has to
3 change because that's the medium that people use to communicate and articulate and
4 have their voices heard but it is not how, through legislation how a consultation is
5 conducted unfortunately.

6
7 Just in relation to public sector pay that has been mentioned. We do self-fund an
8 element of our public sector pay through property tax and commercial rates. Since
9 the changes in 2014 when it moved from the Exchequer any uplift in salaries through
10 National Wage Agreement 15% of that burden is asked to be funded directly by the
11 local authority. So, for example, in the recent changes to the fire fighters and the
12 general national wage agreements a large proportion of those costs had to be
13 accounted for through our own resources, so through the LPT discretionary fund and
14 not directly from Central Government. And that remains the case. So there are pay
15 increases due in August and October, we have to meet 15% of those costs directly.

16
17 I would encourage all of you to engage with your representatives on the AILG and
18 LAMA. There is at this very moment in time a task force on local government
19 sitting. So there's reps from the two representative bodies, AILG and LAMA on that,
20 reps from CCMA, which is the Chief Executives and Government officials, and they
21 are looking at the future of local government. I don't see there being major reform. I
22 think the journey started 11 plus years ago and I don't think that is going to change.
23 Call me a cynic, but I think that's where we are at. But I would encourage you all to
24 engage with your representatives on those groups because that's where the
25 opportunity to have your voices heard on these matters -- obviously if you are a
26 non-Government party in particular, to be heard on that.

27
28 I will ask Brian to comment on the IPB dividend. And yeah. Thanks.

29 MR GLEESON: Thanks, chief executive. Yeah. Just to answer a few of the
30 comments that were made by the members. Obviously, as the chief executive said,
31 the consultation process is a statutory process but there was extensive advertisement
32 of that via newspapers, website and social media. It was mentioned by a couple of
33 members regarding the Government surplus. Just to be aware that Government
34 surplus would be used and has been publicised in relation to that for one-off capital

1 funding as opposed to the day-to-day operational costs. So that wouldn't impact on
2 this.

3

4 Just to be aware, Councillor O'Brien, you have proposed to reduce the LPT by 15%,
5 so the members are aware that would remove 5 million from the Wicklow County
6 Council budget for next year. I know Councillor Behan said I'll find a way,
7 obviously I would; I would have to cut significant services that are currently
8 provided by the local authority in order to balance the budget.

9

10 Councillor Snell is proposing to reduce the base rate back to zero. That will reduce it
11 by 1.4 million which will eliminate --

12 MS O'GORMAN: Just to clarify, you mean to maintain the base rate.

13 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Maintain.

14 MR GLEESON: I know, but we had the last five years at 6% --

15 COUNCILLOR SNELL: No. It's at the base rate.

16 MR GLEESON: Yeah. Technically what I'm saying, for people's pocket they will
17 see a reduction.

18 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Thanks, chief executive.

19 MR GLEESON: But regardless of the technicalities of your proposal it would take
20 1.4 million out of the budget and that would mean the removal of the discretionary
21 funding which provides for key public realm works and also supports a lot of
22 important community groups.

23

24 In relation to Councillor Behan's comments regarding the dividend from IPB, this
25 was a special dividend. It was in addition to the annual dividend that we get from
26 IPB. It was as a result of the positive impact of the personal injury guidelines and
27 reduction in some claims last year. It was clearly stated from IPB it was a one-off,
28 and in the budget documents that were issued last November it clearly stated in those
29 that funding would have to be identified for this expenditure commitment from 2026
30 onwards. So that was flagged a long time ago. So I think that's all the issues. Thank
31 you, Cathaoirleach.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Brian. We have a few more speakers looking to
33 come in. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

34 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I'll be as brief as I

1 can. First of all, I want to commend Brian not just for his report but for his
2 clarifications there a few moments, and the chief executive as well. But I want to
3 commend Councillor Bourke and Councillor Alvey because the easy thing to do is to
4 come in here today and propose reductions in the LPT, to get the headline, to be able
5 to go on social media later and, you know, be a man or woman of the people, get the
6 praise, and then maybe secretly hope if I come in here to vote against to secretly
7 hope that the majority of councillors would vote to maintain the 6% and we have our
8 discretionary money, so I could toddle on up to my MD meeting at the end of the
9 year and hopefully any colleagues would have selective amnesia and forget that I
10 voted not to have the money while at the same time putting in my list of projects, and
11 then when they remind me that I didn't vote for the money I can come out with
12 statements like you are undemocratic for giving me exactly what I voted for, you're
13 getting on top of me her, and all that, and I feel threatened. But that's the easy way
14 out. And that's not what we are elected to do.

15
16 There's been statements made here that the dye is cast. Let's be honest about this, it
17 comes as no surprise that we do talk in this chamber. There is a make-up of different
18 parties here and independents that actually get on and we're here for the betterment
19 of the county, and I am willing to talk to anybody which I think I have shown in the
20 past. But, you know, this thing the dye has cast, of course we talked about it. Let's
21 not try and fool anybody. But as Councillor Alvey has quite rightly said, the
22 discretionary money goes a long way.

23
24 Two weeks ago the oldest festival, one of the oldest regattas actually in the county
25 had to submit a request, the Wicklow Regatta, for more funding. I was only too
26 happy to second that proposal for the simple reason that I can't let the people of this
27 town and surrounding areas lose a valuable regatta and festival that we cherish so
28 much. The Christmas lights here in the town draw in thousands every year and they
29 are in bad need of funding. You know, we can go about Government should be
30 funding this and that, they're not and we're here today to make one decision and one
31 decision only: To increase or reduce or maintain it. That's the reality of it. So all
32 this other talk is nonsense. It's absolutely nonsense.

33
34 I am here to support the 6% based on what we've agreed on here as a grouping

1 because at the end of the day had we not we would have had to tell Wicklow Regatta
2 to go take a hike two weeks ago, find the money elsewhere, we would have had to
3 tell the chamber go take a hike when you come looking for money for Christmas
4 lights. We went out and presented a new AED to Ashford community first
5 responders. I said it here before and I will say it again, if my vote here saves one life
6 by being able to provide AEDs it is worth it. Sadly one of the Ashford members
7 passed away shortly before we gave the AED, I'm not saying that would have saved
8 him, the poor man died of a heart attack, but if it saved him it would be worth the
9 vote today.

10
11 Can we stop this nonsense about Government funding and all that? We can't decide
12 that here today. We're here to decide one thing and one thing only, so can we stick
13 to the facts?

14
15 The last thing I would say is, Brian, you didn't clarify one thing, that a statement was
16 made here that it's €37 a week we're imposing on people. If I read the figures right
17 here, if we reduce it by 6% we're saving people €37 a year and not a week, and that's
18 a big difference so it is. We pay one of the lowest property taxes in Europe. And I
19 am proud to come from a left wing property that supports Local Property Tax
20 because it is a tax on the wealthy. That's the reality of it.

21 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: What?

22 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: It is a tax on the wealthy. And the last thing I
23 will say is: Dublin City Council who have kept their base rate below 15% are now
24 going to increase theirs by 15% because they see the benefits of it. If Dublin badly
25 needs it Wicklow badly needs it. I commend my colleagues for what they are doing
26 here today and taking the brave decision, the correct decision and not going after the
27 populist. Thank you.

28 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Is that Labour Party policy?

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Councillor O'Neill, we're going to stick to who has
30 requested. So if you want to put your light on, go ahead.

31
32 Brian, do you want to clarify that, the 37 a week or a month? Just to clarify it for the
33 members.

34 MR GLEESON: That was for, is it the reduction of the 6%, is it?

1 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Yes. Reduced by 6%, how much are we saving?

2 MR GLEESON: Reduce by 6%, it would range from Band 1, €5.70 up to Band 7
3 would be €37.10.

4 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: A year.

5 MR GLEESON: A year.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Brian, for clarifying that. Councillor Fortune.

7 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. God, where do I start? My
8 position on taxing the family home is very clear, and I have been consistent since it
9 was brought in back in 2012: I don't agree with taxing the family home. Property
10 tax is property tax. Taxing the family home fundamentally is against what I believe
11 in. I don't agree with it. And, chief executive, you said something very important,
12 and I think it's very genuine and means a lot. You said that this journey started 11
13 years ago and it's not going to change, and I fully agree with you. This did start 11
14 years ago. So it isn't appropriate in my opinion for any member to try and infer this
15 is all recent. This has been a gradual growth and process since we destroyed the
16 local government setup. And that's been continued to be done for a long, long time.
17 And I'll say two other things in tandem with not being in favour of taxing the family
18 home. I understand, and I said this earlier this morning, I understand fully that the
19 Executive have a job to do and have to basically do what they are told. I believe
20 councillors are being used as we speak, and I think Councillor Snell made a good
21 point about the 11%. I'm not going to go over everything everyone said. I agree
22 with quite a lot of what the first Councillor O'Brien --

23 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: I knew it wasn't me.

24 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I am a little bit disappointed with the second
25 Councillor O'Brien with the approach because we shouldn't be knocking anybody.
26 Everyone in here is democratically elected and is entitled to have a view.

27

28 The reality is that the whole model of local government and the whole model we are
29 dealing with has changed dramatically. If you go back to the boom and the crash and
30 then what has happened since, we used to be funded as Councillor Behan referred
31 earlier to the Local Government Fund, that was cut through all those three processes
32 and not replaced. The property tax was brought in, it was going to do the devil and
33 all, but it never did the devil and all because it was awash, because the money that
34 came in from the Local Property Tax was taken out of the Local Government Fund.

1 So we got no benefit from it.

2

3 In what Brian had to say -- and, Brian, thanks for your presentation, and as far as I
4 am concerned you're a real professional and do you a super job, but you have to deal
5 with what is presented to you and I understand you fully. What is happening here as
6 well is that we are being told from the Department, I presume from Government, that
7 we need to generate income ourselves. I say fantastic. Let us do it. But how are we
8 going to do it? Why aren't we being facilitated to manage our business properly?
9 Instead of telling us that it's going to be done through Local Property Tax and
10 commercial rates. I mean, come on, that is just not sustainable, that we would
11 fundraise our necessary funding through Local Property Tax and through
12 commercial rates. Local Property Tax that where we were told when it was
13 introduced it was going to do footpaths and road markings and cut hedges. It done
14 none of that. And some of the stuff that is being tossed out here about things being
15 done is not being done in that way. At the moment all of our Local Government
16 spending in our various districts is controlled and dictated by the National Transport
17 Authority. You can't scratch your head without them saying okay and this is how
18 you do it. So I just don't buy that.

19

20 Then talking about bumping it up from the 6%, I think that is a red herring because if
21 you look at the figures real it is actually 11% if you use that equation. And then,
22 Brian, you were saying about going 15% and then the 9% would be ring-fenced for
23 basically outdoor staff. In the district I live in we're down about 20 outdoor staff as
24 we speak and we have been like that for years. And I'd ask if we were to get five
25 staff would they be allocated to Kilcoole and Newcastle or would they just be in
26 Greystones?

27

28 Then looking at the figures that you gave us about the LPT, the Irish Public Bodies
29 and all the various costings, at best we're standing still. The recommendation of the
30 4.5 million is that 2 million of it is going to be ring-fenced for urban generation
31 programmes that I assume will be controlled by the NTA which we won't have any
32 input into by and large, and we still don't have clarity on that. So we are being asked
33 to put a programme or a plan in place, and this is an issue I have with the overall
34 budgeting as well, we're asked to put these things in place with no clarity coming

1 from the Department. And that's not the fault of the Executive and this Council. It is
2 just a stupid and silly way to do business, and it is absolutely crazy. And then it
3 leaves then 2.5 million to cover what is called non-discretionary cost increases,
4 whatever exactly that means.

5

6 So really, you know, I would have to say that Councillor O'Brien talked about taxes,
7 I mean Ireland's probably one of the highest tax countries in Europe --

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Fortune, can I just ask you --

9 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Yeah, no, I think like earlier speakers, I have to finish
10 what I want to say. We're the highest taxed country in Europe if not in the globe.
11 Even in the United States the overall tax rate is lower than what it is here. So I mean
12 I just think what's going on here is crazy. And what is happening here, getting back
13 to a point I made at the start, the chickens are coming home to roost. What kicked
14 off 11 years and what has been going on for the last four or five years, undermining
15 local democracy, undermining the councillors' role with all the stuff that's been
16 added in around us, it is all coming home to roost now.

17

18 I said this morning also - and I will finish with this, chair, and I respect what you are
19 asking me - if I was to get into my car and drive around the district, we've hedges all
20 over the place, we have no road markings, we have footpaths that are in a deplorable
21 state, and someone is trying to tell me that this property tax is going to change all
22 that. Come on. It isn't. And we all know it isn't, so I don't know why we play these
23 silly games. And here we are all today arm wrestling with the Executive and we're
24 both in the same pot, albeit we're obviously on different sides but we're basically in
25 the same situation. And it is a game being played with us. And councillors, I just
26 don't understand how councillors can't see it, we're just being used when it suits and
27 then when it doesn't suit they tell us we're actually going to pass all your powers on
28 to unelected bodies all over the place, you don't matter anymore. Come on. It's
29 about time now we all got sense.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Fortune. Councillor Bourke, you're
31 going to come in with Councillor Murphy's queries.

32 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Councillor Murphy texted me there.

33 MS O'GORMAN: Don't touch it.

34 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Councillor Murphy texted me and I went outside there

1 and took a phone call from her, and she asked me just to make these points here so I
2 did it as quickly as I could, so excuse me if it is a bit disjointed. The first item
3 Miriam wanted to raise is how disappointed she was only that three submissions
4 were received, and this is a problem that happens every year, very few people seem
5 to make a submission on it, and something needs to be done about that. Number
6 two: Each district is looking for more staff and she's disappointed that members are
7 rejecting the opportunity to actually solve a problem by rejecting what the manager
8 is seeking in its entirety. Number three: She wants to question the management,
9 why are outdoor staff moved around so much? They start a job, and they don't even
10 get to finish it and then they're moved on to another job which creates frustration
11 with the public then who complain to councillors that jobs aren't being finished, and
12 why is this happening? It shouldn't be happening. She's also concerned about the IT
13 service which needs an upgrade will improve services for the public. It is a directive
14 apparently as well, she said, from the European Union that the IT systems need to be
15 brought up to full spec. What effect will this have on the housing budget, if any?
16 Where is the housing repair budget and refits? Are they going to get anything extra
17 in this budgeting process as well? Those are the main points that Councillor Murphy
18 raised with me.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Bourke. I'm going to take one more
20 and then I will go to Brian and the chief executive just to clarify those. So
21 Councillor Stapleton.

22 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: Thank you very much, Cathaoirleach. Just a few
23 points. And there have been a lot of great points made around the chamber today,
24 some of which I agree with, some of which I don't agree with. But to start off, I do
25 agree with Councillor Behan and Councillor Fortune that setting a rate won't fix
26 anything. It is about ultimately what we do with the taxes or the money that we take
27 in. And so, while I welcome the management team listening to us about wanting to
28 see increased spend on ground staff around our municipal districts I'd hope that
29 irrespective of whatever rate is set today that we pay really close attention come
30 budget time to ensure that that spend is going to be there and that we do put money
31 into the places that matter most to our constituents. And just kind of following on
32 that point and what matters to our constituents I think there's two sides to every story
33 and there's two sides to every tax: What it raised and what it costs your constituents;
34 and then the second side, what they get out of it. And Councillor O'Brien here

1 beside me, I would be interested to know in your post that received just vitriol
2 against increases did you outline what those increases would be used for and what
3 people would see for the modest word that's been put out there for the increase in
4 what they would spend? Because I think that does make a big difference, how you
5 frame it. And walking out of this chamber we could frame it as people voting for a
6 6% increase or an 11% increase, or we could frame it as councillors voting for an
7 increase of 2 million to the Council's budget to look after the projects that are most
8 important to our constituents.

9
10 And I think, just following that, on the idea that there's waste of money throughout
11 the country, whether there is, whether there isn't, we all know there are in certain
12 areas, this money, additional money we raised will be the most publicly scrutinised
13 money in the country in terms of that the directly elected representatives have direct
14 oversight of what's being spent on it. So I think putting that to constituents again has
15 to push for them to be a lot more comfortable in that little bit of an extra spend and it
16 is why I am happy to support the increase proposed by Councillor Bourke and
17 seconded by Councillor Alvey. Thank you.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Stapleton. There's a few queries. Do
19 you want to address them?

20 MS O'GORMAN: Yes, Councillor Murphy, hopefully you can hear us,
21 unfortunately we haven't been able to hear you but thank you for sending in your
22 queries through Councillor Bourke. Yeah, staff movement is a challenge and
23 sometimes it is time sensitive matters in moving staff from one on the ground works
24 to another, more often than not it is staff get promoted or they leave the organisation,
25 or they are moving somewhere else. We do try to offer staff an opportunity to
26 broaden their horizons, but we also try ensure that we have consistency of our staff
27 particularly in the municipal districts because local knowledge is invaluable. We've
28 seen that time and time again, in Arklow in particular with floods.

29
30 The IT upgrade is essential. We have participated in audits from, I can't think of the
31 organisation now, but they look at how transparent and how easy to read our
32 websites are to make our public information as accessible to all as it can be, and they
33 are as a result directives from the EU. So we do need to spend money on those areas
34 as well as the basic software upgrades that Brian did mention.

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I suppose this isn't the budget meeting. The housing repair and refit programme is separate I suppose to the LPT process. We are constrained in what we are allocated from Central Government. We get 11,000 per unit that we refit and refurb and anybody can tell you that's not sufficient. We had a gap last year in what we spent on relets and repairs compared to what we were funded. That might go back to the point you were making, Councillor Bourke, about those housing authorities that perform well might get additional funding in that area. And I imagine if we do get additional funding it will be specifically to spent in the housing area, so that refurb and refit area.

MR GLEESON: Yeah, that is correct. And I suppose further to that, you're correct in saying the 4.5 million mentioned here today for the LPT extra it won't be going towards housing but I suppose apart from the Government funding if there's any increase in rental income for next year that will be ring-fenced as we always do to keep within the housing budget, and like we do for the budget this year we put that towards repairs and maintenance and pre-letting costs for the housing division, and that'll be the case for 2026. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, chief executive, and thank you, Brian. The next speaker then. Councillor O'Neill.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, yeah. No, just briefly. Thanks, Brian, again for your programme but I wondered here, looking through it there's no mention of anything where we can save money and there's no mention of that at all. And just off the top of my head, you know, I think we can put a better effort into how we can save money in the county, you know. And no matter where the money comes from, despite what Councillor Stapleton says, it is public money no matter where it comes from so we should do what we can to save this and be responsible for spending. Just looking at the consultation fees, in our area, in West Wicklow there, it's absolutely mad, crazy stuff, where you spend €60,000 on a consultation study of a footpath which will be about 500 yards long. It'll cost 130 to build it but we have to spend 60,000 on a consultation. Millions has been spent on the greenways in Wicklow, including the one in Blessington, which was a waste of time from the word go. There was no consultation process whatsoever, even with Council officials in West Wicklow. So I suggest maybe we could look at ways of saving money.

1 Also this thing of the amount of perks involved there as regards money being spent,
2 a waste of money in my book. I see it in my own area West Wicklow where four or
3 five councillors have been travelling abroad to a so-called twinning process. This is
4 costing the public money. And I know from this Council in here there's a lot of
5 money being spent on getting to Germany every so often. I wonder is a lot of that
6 really necessary, you know. And I also would, finally, look again at the monies
7 that's being spent here and the race, and what's happening in Bray and Wicklow, in
8 Baltinglass elected area of getting the chain around the neck and how people will
9 walk on one another to get that chain and 6,000. €6,000 a municipal district chair is
10 paid which I think is a scandal. I think you know the chair in here on 44,000 a year.
11 You know the race to the bottom to get these dollars and the backstabbing that goes
12 on. I am absolutely clear on this, that this vote here will be over and done with fairly
13 soon because I say it's again a type of vote that's probably set up anyway. Go raibh
14 maith agat.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Neill. I have one other speaker and
16 then we will go back to Brian to clarify a few things there. Councillor Peir Leonard.

17 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Thanks. And thanks, Brian, for all the work you've
18 put into the Local Property Tax document there. Look, I suppose, and I just want to
19 say it is not easy to vote against Local Property Tax. It would be way easier if you
20 didn't have a conscience to vote for it and get the money and spend it, I would love
21 that. And it is difficult I think no matter what side of the fence you're sitting on as a
22 councillor, a local councillor, and I do respect all of the local councillors here and I
23 respect everybody's individual decision to vote whatever way they want. I think that
24 we are going to an all new low when we start to personalise it and I genuinely vote
25 the way I do because I am voting on behalf of the people that I represent, and it is not
26 for votes. I don't need the Local Property Tax to get in. I get in on the basis of hard
27 work.

28
29 I suppose a couple of points in relation to the property tax and why I have for the last
30 few years the same as Councillor Snell voted on the baseline. Because I appreciate
31 the money that the Council needs to operate stuff and I know things don't come out
32 of thin air, we need money to operate, but also I appreciate the vulnerable people and
33 the people that are really struggling out there. And people are really struggling at the
34 moment. You know, the cost of living has gone through the roof. And while they

1 might be getting by on a week-to-week basis there's not enough money there as a
2 buffer when anything goes wrong. So if something goes wrong in the house, their
3 washing machine goes, their roof starts leaking, you know, it's the little day-to-day
4 things and keeping their home to a basic standard, and not everybody-- you know,
5 there's a lot of people out there who are too proud to go ask for people. So I really
6 do believe there are, and I don't think anybody would disagree with me here, we all
7 know people struggling out there and some are struggling in silence.

8
9 The property tax, it punishes ownership of somebody's own home. It is not like
10 taxing somebody on something they can buy or something they can afford, or it is
11 not based on somebody's ability to pay. So a lot of the people are affected negatively
12 by increasing it, and even the message we are sending out there by increasing is it is
13 that we don't really care, and we don't understand, and we can't relate to the people
14 that are most vulnerable that are really struggling out there. And most of those
15 people are older people and people that are not working any longer, they're retired,
16 some of them might be carers or ill, and they own homes that are valued probably
17 much more than the home should be valued.

18
19 I suppose the tax going forward, how sustainable is this tax with housing markets?
20 And you know going forward, our housing market, surely it's not going to stay the
21 same for the next year. I know in particular in Arklow it is inflatable because of a
22 lack of housing stock down there. You can't even get a rental at the moment, so
23 houses are at a high level, even a basic two-bedroom and three-bedroom houses are
24 going for way above what they should be, for the fabric of the building. A lot of
25 them are in really bad disrepair. So it is an unreliable tax going forward to fund
26 services.

27
28 And I just thought it was really interesting, and I actually welcome the
29 acknowledgment that our districts are underfunded with ground staff because you
30 know one of the basic things that most people that I represent want to see are just
31 maintenance of our towns. Like it is your environment where you live. It makes
32 people feel good when they see the most basic things being done and maintained. At
33 the moment that's not happening because there's not enough ground staff. And I
34 think that regardless of what the outcome here today is that we should put a task

1 force together to look at, maybe it can be a combination of sort using the CE scheme
2 or something like that, or enhancing the Tidy Town Scheme, but we definitely do
3 need those workers in combination with a scheme to go with it and I think we should
4 have a task force before budget made up of some councillors as well because I think
5 they bring invaluable insight into what way the town could be maintained.

6
7 I don't know what our municipal district actually cuts because we don't have a list of
8 green spaces that's maintained. It seems to be, the whole lot needs to be looked at
9 and the Main Street and what's in the remit of the Tidy Towns, I think we need to
10 look at the whole lot together with the -- I suppose the basis of that would become
11 the basis, and a feasibility study, to create some sort of provisional park team in the
12 county and then maybe do a feasibility study to go with it to look for funding from
13 Government for that. Thanks

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Councillor Leonard. I have one more speaker and
15 then we will address those questions. Councillor O'Brien, Dermot O'Brien.

16 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just the ten other
17 things that I didn't say first time round. Just a couple of follow-ups. There was a
18 really interesting -- the Parliamentary Budget Office and Commission for Taxation,
19 again this has been talked about in terms of the right tax or how to tax. And the
20 Parliamentary Budget Office and Commission on Taxation very recently said that if
21 "we're looking at fairness then we should tax ability to pay not place of residence."
22 And I think again that is really important consideration. Obviously the Government
23 aren't there yet in terms of that's a consideration.

24
25 Also when we talk about Local Government autonomy we rank 27th out of 27 in the
26 EU for autonomy at Local Government level. So, as Councillor Fortune said, what
27 are you giving us? What means are you giving us to do this? Very clearly we have a
28 long, long way to go before we have the appropriate means to really make a
29 difference.

30
31 And then the last point, or a couple, and again when we think about it, and
32 Councillor O'Neill said about again how else can we do it? We also have a wind
33 farm community benefit fund coming down the line is 16, 17 million per year for a
34 decade I think. So I think if we do scan and if we look at the unpaid rates, the unpaid

1 derelict site charges, the unpaid levies, all of that amounts to something but instead
2 we're going taking money off the people.

3

4 And the last point I'd say is that, yeah, we're inviting the people of Wicklow to be
5 shareholders essentially in Wicklow County Council but we're not promising a
6 dividend because it may or may not land. And as Councillor Stapleton, and a
7 brilliant question about, you know, in a consultation or a conversation I asked people
8 to give me their impression of their experience of LPT, and maybe it is a failure of
9 storytelling but their impressions and their experience was negative, and they had
10 nothing to balance that with.

11

12 And last point I'll make, and as other Councillor O'Brien talked about, when people
13 are struggling and groups have needs, and there is something about how we come
14 together, I think we are number one in Europe in the global giving index, so to be
15 able to respond is a powerful thing but I think people will come together if they need
16 to. Yeah, that's all. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Brien. Before I bring Councillor
18 Glennon in I am just going to get Brian to answer some of the queries that came in
19 on that, and the chief executive as well.

20 MS O'GORMAN: I will go first, Brian, sorry. Just in broad sense, Councillor
21 Stapleton and Councillor O'Neill talked about value for money and scrutiny of the
22 public purse, and I couldn't agree more. It is essential that money that is used in this
23 local authority is used wisely and appropriately. There are several mechanisms in
24 which that is done, and you've all mentioned how diligent and how good Brian is at
25 his job and that I suppose is an echo of how the whole finance management team
26 operate within this local authority. To say that every cent is managed you know is
27 not an understatement and to have achieved writing off our deficit over the last
28 number of years has been a phenomenal achievement, but the work doesn't stop
29 there. There is room to improve everywhere. And we are not awash with money in
30 comparison to other local authorities of a similar size. We have on average 300 less
31 staff than local authorities of a similar size. And I suppose the system of local
32 government that operates in Ireland, Councillor O'Brien mentioned how we ranked
33 in Europe from a subsidiarity point of view, Malta are below us, but Malta is tiny.
34 The model of local government that operates here does not empower local

1 government reps in the same way as it does in France, for example, if there's a
2 hundred citizens in a town they have a directly elected mayor, and all the power goes
3 with that. Small, it is proportionate to the size of the town. We are nowhere near
4 that in Ireland. The model we have is the model we have.

5
6 We manage our finances exceptionally well. As I said, to be in a situation where
7 we're balanced and facing into the next financial year not really knowing where we
8 are going at a national level but knowing that we manage our finances well. We
9 have our Audit Committee that has our elected members on it that scrutinise and put
10 the director of services through their paces on what they are delivering. We have the
11 Local Government Audit Service as well who are currently in the building at the
12 moment auditing our last financial year. So to say we are under public scrutiny is an
13 understatement. And obviously the public judge us on our performance and that's
14 the point I want to make. If you were to survey anybody on Local Property Tax in
15 this jurisdiction in Wicklow, in Fingal where I live, in South Dublin and Kildare,
16 people associate the Council with works on the ground; it is the hi vis vest, it is the
17 man cutting the grass, it is the woman cleaning the weeds, it is the streetlights
18 working, it is the roads not having potholes in them. If you ask anybody what does
19 your local authority do they are generally the first things that get mentioned. Unless
20 you're directly engaged in the housing or planning service as a citizen that's what
21 people see. And I and the team are very conscious of that and that is why we came
22 to the rationale where we're at in terms of more outdoor staff.

23
24 To Councillor Leonard's point, more outdoor staff are badly needed. Helen
25 circulated to you earlier on during this meeting our plans and what we have
26 submitted to the Department on our districts on our workforce plan. Each local
27 authority is asked to develop a Strategic Workforce Plan on staffing to mirror the
28 objectives of the Corporate Plan, and for that to be mapped out over five years. So
29 for Wicklow we have been quite ambitious in that, and we sent you the details of
30 what we are looking for on the district side of things. It is all subject to funding. We
31 need a significant revenue envelope to pay for all those staff. The Department have
32 not signed off on it yet. Again they are likely to sign off on it, but it will be subject
33 to funding. So we have to find the funding either through savings and services or
34 commercial rates, property tax, whatever the funding mechanism is to have those

1 additional staff. And that's the reality of what myself and the team are trying to deal
2 with. So to your point, Councillor Leonard, about the task force, we have already
3 done that work, submitted it. Happy to engage with anybody on it. But our cup isn't
4 overflowing in terms of, number one, trying to recruit staff and, number two, having
5 the money to pay for them. Each district has gaps and vacancies at the moment and
6 if we get back to full employment in what we currently have we will be doing really
7 well. As you know, our pay levels are nowhere near the private sector, so it is far
8 more lucrative for somebody to work on a housing construction site for six months
9 and not have security of work but do that for six months rather than committing to
10 the local authority for six or seven years or whatever it may be. That's the reality of
11 the situation.

12
13 Brian, if you want to clarify on the more technical details.

14 MR GLEESON: Thanks, Emer. Yeah, just in relation to Councillor O'Neill's
15 comments. Rest assured, as the chief executive said, every year as part of the budget
16 process we go down through it line-by-line looking for savings, but it should be
17 noted that there is very little scope within the local government funding model to
18 find a huge amount of savings. We are restricted in that of our budget of 170
19 million, 84 million relates to Government grants. So it is basically you get money in
20 for what you spend. So it is ring-fenced in that regard. Also, payroll is 61 million.
21 So that's non-discretionary straight away. We can't touch that. So there is very little.
22 I think every year as part of the budget process I show discretionary funding and
23 non-discretionary funding, and we say there's about 10% that we would call
24 discretionary funding. But having said that, is repairs and maintenance
25 discretionary? Is public lighting discretionary? So it is a very little, small element
26 for scope for savings, but rest assured we do our fully best to find savings where
27 possible.

28
29 Just a point there in relation to the Blessington greenway, that is actually a capital
30 expenditure item so it wouldn't impact on the revenue budget here, and also that was
31 fully funded, so any spend that took place on that project was funded by the State.

32
33 As the chief executive said, Councillor Leonard, your suggestion in relation to a task
34 force we'll look at that as part of the budget process.

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In relation to Councillor O'Brien's further comments, obviously Government autonomy. I suppose this is one of the few decision-making powers that are actually ironically given to the members. So I suppose the onus is on the members and it is a case of, you know, we're trying to help me help you approach towards this to address some of the issues that are being raised and in particular as has been mentioned that there is a need, and there's universal acceptance from the Executive and the Councillors that we do need more outdoor staff but we have to be able to fund it and that's the key here.

Just a point in relation to the community development fund. Obviously that funding through the wind farms will only be available for voluntary, and community local groups as opposed to county councils is my understanding, and it would be for capital projects as opposed to any running costs. In relation to rates for wind farms, the only rates that we get would be for the operational basis that are on land as opposed to the wind farms that are offshore, there wouldn't be any commercial rates in relation to that. So it won't be a massive windfall for the local authority unfortunately. I would prefer if that wasn't the case but unfortunately it is the operational case.

I think that's it. I think in relation to the Cathaoirleach's allowance, I don't have it exactly to hand, but I think it is about 30,000. I think someone was asking. Okay. I think that's all the questions. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you, Brian. The next speaker, Councillor Glennon.

COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you, Brian, for your presentation. I listened with interest to the various contributions here today and I suppose having listened to everyone it has to be accepted that the proposal of Councillor Bourke, and seconded by Councillor Alvey, is the 5% additional that's proposed by Government coupled with the 6% that was there. Now, in the documents that we received we were told by Mr Gleeson that if the 15% was adopted that we would get five extra workers in each municipal district and if the 10% increase was adopted we would get 15 new outdoor workers, three in each municipal district. If the proposal as now stands, 6% on top of the Government's 5%, i.e. a net

1 increase of 5%, what commitment are you giving to additional outdoor staff should
2 that succeed in going through here today, in respect of places that are in dire need?
3 We have two new parks out our way, one in Baltinglass and one in Blessington, no
4 one appointed to look after them. It seems crazy spending large amounts of money
5 and then just leaving it to the man above to look down and protect it as such. So I
6 would ask you to see what you can give out of the 6%, bearing in mind that it is a net
7 increase of 5%.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to bring in another three. Councillor Orla Finn.

9 COUNCILLOR FINN: Thank you. And I would like to thank Brian and everybody
10 else for all the information that we received today. I suppose the real problem I feel
11 in financing of county councils is the highly centralised nature of the funding. We
12 get more or less what Central Government decides. Now, I know, Councillor Paul
13 O'Brien, I think I have this right when I say you mentioned that today isn't the day to
14 be talking about that, we should be looking at what is in front of you, but actually I
15 would say if we don't talk about it today when are we going to be talking about it?
16 Yeah, the budget.

17

18 A Citizens' Assembly Report in December 2022 said that Irish councils receive just
19 3% of the local tax revenue collected locally whereas the European average is around
20 15%. Overall local tax spending in Ireland stands at 8% compared to 23% across the
21 EU. In Denmark, believe it or not, that number reaches 64%. Property tax follows a
22 similar pattern, with a 2% local spend in Ireland versus a 7% EU average
23 comparison. So Irish property tax is centralised and doesn't consistently or fairly
24 return to local areas, only local commercial property rates remain allocated locally.
25 Councillors, as has been mentioned here a few times today, lack the power and
26 funding to meet the needs of our rapidly evolving and more diverse society with all
27 the challenges that these changes present at local level. Local government in Ireland
28 is widely regarded as among the weakest in Europe. Asking us to tinker with
29 funding by adjusting the basic allocation serves only to give the impression that we
30 are responsible for this mess when in actual fact the problem, it's a problem of
31 Central Government's consideration. We should be working to acquire far greater
32 revenues in the first instance and not agreeing to a highly centralised and inadequate
33 form of funding. That to me is the fundamental problem.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Finn. I am going to go -- just two

1 more speakers, so I think I will finish them off and Brian can address. Councillor
2 Gail Dunne is online, and he wants to speak first before I bring in Councillor
3 Fortune.

4 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Hello, thank you, Cathaoirleach. Hopefully you can hear
5 me.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah, we can hear you.

7 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Yeah. The first thing I would just like to say, I looked at
8 this, as you know I have had plenty of time to look at things over the few weeks and
9 to me 6% I believe we get (inaudible). There's a lot of things done in our district that
10 wouldn't go on unless we voted for the 6%. The regatta, like we had a proposal I
11 think recently for the regatta that we increase funding. Again, St Patrick's Day
12 parade. Jobs around the municipal district, a lot of work has been carried out on
13 footpaths and lighting and numerous things around there that wouldn't have been
14 done unless we had the 6%. In my opinion every member of the Council, whether
15 you voted for this or not, are coming in with their projects, and you know sporting
16 clubs and things like that, and you know I am very much for it. You know, I know I
17 was one of the people that called for more outdoor staff and I am uncomfortable that
18 they would be financed by the property tax, and I know the director was only giving
19 (inaudible) that he could see. I would like to see this being funded by Central
20 Government not by the Local Property Tax. I think the Local Property Tax, you
21 know, like, okay, people don't mind paying something but when it starts getting up to
22 a lot they're a bit worried.

23

24 Just finally, as a former president of the AILG I am a bit disappointed about the
25 comment about people going away on different twinnings in the AILG. Conferences
26 are important for all members because there's things that you learn in conferences
27 that you certainly wouldn't learn in Council chambers, like planning at the moment.
28 And all these things are important. And Wicklow County Council has kept a tight
29 rein on this. I think it's 2,000 per member, I would be surprised if 70% didn't go.
30 That deal was struck in 2004, 21 years ago. But the likes of the AILG and LAMA,
31 the training days are worth going to, and the conferences are worth going to; if you
32 are prepared to listen to what is going on you will learn. This hasn't been looked at
33 since 2021. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Dunne. And I think I speak on behalf

1 of everybody, it is lovely to hear from you, and we all hope you're continuing to
2 recover well. There's just two more speakers.

3 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Can I just say, hopefully I'm
4 on the mend, and can I just thank the members in the room and not in the room. The
5 amount of text messages I've, from all parties, all political persuasions, wishing me
6 well and if there's anything they can do. I do appreciate it. Thank you.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Dunne. There's just two more
8 speakers I think possibly are just clarifying things. So, Councillor Fortune, do you
9 want to come in there?

10 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Yeah. I just want to make more an observation but
11 just a comment I wasn't going to make when I put on my light. The property tax
12 doesn't actually deliver all the stuff that we sometimes in here when we're debating
13 and arguing the toss on both sides doesn't deliver a lot of stuff that's thrown out. If
14 you look at what Brian has put before us today it clarifies that as well. The thing I
15 wanted to say was, that the Councillors or the Executive are not the elephant in the
16 room here. The elephant in the room -- the elephant that should be in the room is not
17 here. The Department are obviously dictating through the Minister or through some
18 Government department of how local government should be run and managed and
19 financed. And we're here having a kind of arm wrestle that we don't really have -- as
20 I observed, we don't have proper control over. In fact, I'll say it openly, I wasn't
21 going to come here today at all for that reason, because I deemed it and I was
22 considering it an absolute waste of my time. So I wasn't going to bother coming at
23 all and then I said no, that's not the way I am, I prefer to come and say what I think.

24
25 So there is a big elephant that's not in the room today that's really creating -- the way
26 local government -- and I said this earlier, and I will shut up again when I have said
27 it. The way local government is being managed and being currently run is absolutely
28 disgraceful and we're not giving a service to our constituents. And all of us here in
29 this chamber went out a year ago and knocked on doors and listened to people on all
30 kinds of stuff, and to be fair the chief executive highlighted some of it in her own
31 comments, and really we're not delivering. And people ring us up and ask us things
32 and what can we say to them? And anyone that tries to tell me that the property tax
33 is doing all, delivering this and delivering that and the other, that is not the case, and
34 I'd argue that with anybody.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Fortune. Thank you. Councillor Paul
2 O'Brien.

3 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. And I'll be brief. I
4 have to break the bad news to you that it is not 44 grand a year for you. I'm sorry
5 about that. It is quite substantially less. But just a couple of facts have been thrown
6 out there and I think if we allow the alternative facts to become a reality we go down
7 a slippery slope. Ireland are ranked 36 out of 38 of the OECD countries in terms of
8 tax to GDP. So we are not a high tax -- and that is fact. You can say it is not true. It
9 is fact.

10 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: That's your fact.

11 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Cathaoirleach, it can't be a fact just because you
12 don't agree or disagree with it.

13 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: That's what you're saying, councillor.

14 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Look it up, Tom, you will find it. I actually agree
15 with Councillor Fortune and Councillor Finn, and everyone else that said we don't
16 get enough of a stake here, we don't get the powers. Like Councillor O'Brien said,
17 27 out of 27, we know that and it's a joke. Let's call a spade a spade. It is a joke.
18 But the reality is, only Malta and Lichtenstein are the only two other European
19 countries that don't pay Local Property Tax. And Ireland is ranked well, well below
20 the tops like UK and so forth. They get more services because they pay obviously
21 more. But is Wicklow County Council perfect? And no one is claiming today that
22 they are perfect. Every council has their issues. We would all love to see the roads
23 tarred, the road markings and the ditches cut back but we're not going to do that with
24 less money. That is a simple fact. And the reality is, whether we like Government
25 policy or not, if we reduce our property tax by 15%, which is being proposed, and
26 then we have a deficit and we have to cut the services, or we go to Government and
27 say, by the way, we've just cut a stream of our funding would you mind topping us
28 up, let's be honest we know what the answer will be. You know, we don't cut our
29 own throats and then go and look for money and help off elsewhere. That's the
30 reality, okay.

31

32 And I'll finish by saying, there's a quote: "Taxation is a price which civilised
33 communities pay for the opportunity of remaining civilised." And I am glad we have
34 a civilised debate here. I didn't personalise it. I don't agree with some of what you

1 are saying, you don't agree with what I say, but I certainly wouldn't appreciate -- and
2 when I was up there with you, Cathaoirleach, I respected everybody, we have a
3 mandate, all 32 of us, I never mentioned anyone's name except to applaud them, the
4 first two to propose and second it. So I just think thank you to the members for
5 keeping a civilised debate and we can still walk out of here talking. We mightn't
6 agree but we can still talk, and we can still be friends. We just have to move on. I
7 would like to call for a vote sooner rather than later so we can move on to what we
8 are also supposed to be here for. Thank you.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Brien. There's one other speaker
10 and debate is always good. Councillor Behan, do you want to come in there?

11 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yeah, Cathaoirleach, it's just on the point that the chief
12 executive made, and I fully agree with her and reiterate her point. The importance of
13 this new local government task force to all of us in how we are going to do our work
14 as public representatives into the future. And as Councillor Cronin will testify and
15 Councillor Pat Kennedy, we attended a matter of AILG last week and obviously that
16 task force was the main subject of discussion. We took the opportunity of having
17 two items added to the list of issues that we want to see addressed. One was the
18 decision by the Executive here to remove our right to decide on the differential rent
19 scheme, and the other was -- what was the other one? There was another issue then.
20 I just can't recall what it was now. Oh, the Development Plan. We will be coming to
21 this now in a minute. The fact that the Minister for Housing has ordered us to
22 change our Development Plan having made a democratic decision with regard to the
23 Wicklow Municipal District. And it was very clear from all of the councillors across
24 the country they want this task force to work for local democracy. And the chief
25 executive actually circulated the membership there in the last few minutes. If you
26 look at the membership of it, only five out of the 13 members are councillors, and
27 they're equally matched if not overmatched by the number of chief executives and
28 civil servants from the Department of Local Government. So we're already going to
29 be struggling in terms of having our voices heard on this task force. However, there
30 are a number of independent academics on it and hopefully they will also influence
31 things to the benefit of local democracy. I want to accept the fact that the
32 Government seems to have the right intentions with regard to this and I certainly
33 welcome what the chief executive -- it is quite refreshing actually to hear the chief
34 executive arguing the case for better local democracy and more substantial powers

1 being devolved to local councillors right across the country. And if that is the
2 attitude that is being taken by the other chief executives that is something to be
3 welcomed. But I am sure Councillor Cronin and Councillor Kennedy would also
4 agree with me in saying that if members have any particular issues they want us to
5 bring forward during this process we are happy to do so. We resolved on the day of
6 the AILG meeting last week that we would get monthly reports from the members
7 who are representing us on this task force so that we can then update the members of
8 this Council as to what is actually happening, and that is something we will commit
9 to doing on an ongoing basis. I want to thank the chief executive for bringing that to
10 our attention.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan, and thanks for that update as
12 well. I will bring the chief executive in and then Brian.

13 MS O'GORMAN: Just very briefly, members. I know we spent a long time
14 discussing it and rightly so, and just to point out the reason it's at this meeting today
15 rather than a standalone meeting is because of the revaluation. It has to be notified
16 back to the Department by the end of the month to go into the legislative changes in
17 August. It's been truncated, the whole process, and it is not satisfactory. Normally
18 we would have had briefing documents out to you weeks in advance. We had
19 indications from the Department that we would have them by the end of May, but the
20 legislation only went through the Dáil on Tuesday night. So I apologise for the
21 situation we're in. It's not by any of our design and I know you all appreciate that.

22
23 Councillor Glennon I think asked about the parks department or somebody else,
24 Councillor Leonard did as well. As part of Workforce Planning Programme we have
25 included staffing for some technical assistance and otherwise in the parks department
26 to sit under Teresa O'Brien's directorate in climate, environment, recreation and
27 amenity. It is included. But again, you know I don't want to sell you a pup, it's
28 subject to funding, you know. I would love to have a parks department. I think
29 Wicklow deserves a parks department. The Garden of Ireland deserves a parks
30 department. And we will look at how we can reshape what we currently have to try
31 and give more emphasis there because you're right, we cannot accept contributions
32 from developers and what they're obliged to give us under the Development Plan and
33 then leave it to fall into disrepair and be unkempt. It is just not satisfactory. If I was
34 living in Wicklow I would be very, very unhappy with a lot of my surroundings to be

1 very honest with you.

2

3 And thank you, Councillor Behan, for I suppose the update on the AILG. It's great to
4 hear. And I suppose I would encourage you all to engage with either or both
5 organisations in this process because I do feel, as you rightly pointed out, it's quite a
6 weighty group. One other I suppose bonus to ourselves is that one of the
7 independents, Dr Philip Byrne, is the chair of our Audit Committee here so he knows
8 what is going on in Wicklow and I would encourage you to talk to him as well and
9 his role on that is separate to your own representation. I might hand back over to
10 Brian then.

11 MR GLEESON: Okay. I'll be quick on the last couple of queries. Councillor
12 Glennon, I think you asked if we retained the 6% how much would go towards staff.
13 Unfortunately nothing would go towards staff. The 6% will generate 1.4 million and
14 it's been proposed that that will stay with the municipal districts' discretionary
15 expenditure. The 5% revaluation buoyancy of 2 million is going to be offset by the
16 non-discretionary costs that are outlined on page 6 of the LPT report, such as, as I
17 mentioned earlier, the insurance dividend loss, the pay increases, pension cost
18 increases and additional licences costs with ICT upgrades on top of our normal
19 inflation costs. So unfortunately the proposal is that if we want extra staff in our
20 municipal districts we have to increase it to 15% for 9% incremental increase which
21 would generate or allow us to recruit 25 new staff. If it was increased to 10% a 4%
22 incremental increase would allow us to recruit 15 members of staff, but unfortunately
23 if we retain it at 6% that amount of funding will remain with the discretionary
24 funding pot for municipal districts.

25

26 Councillor Dunne mentioned about using the LPT for staffing and it should be
27 centrally funded. I suppose we do get central funding for a number of positions, but
28 they would be mainly administration staff or technical staff. You know, such as
29 housing staff or active travel staff we'd get funding for, or when there's new
30 programmes being brought in by different Government departments such as climate
31 action officers, biodiversity officers, energy officers, that sort of thing, when it is a
32 new expenditure programme and we need staff to actually implement that
33 programme we will get funding in particular cases like that. But in relation to
34 outdoor staff, unfortunately the onus is on the local authority to generate its own

1 funding in order to increase that element of payroll. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.
2 That's it I think.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Brian. And I was aware that this is normally a
4 meeting on its own and I wanted to make sure that we did get plenty of time and I
5 wasn't trying to cut anybody short, but I wanted to make sure everybody got a chance
6 to speak that wanted to speak. So thank you for bearing with me on that and thank
7 you to Brian and Emer, chief executive, for clarifying the different questions. We
8 will go to a vote now. I think the first proposal that has come in and Helen will do
9 the vote.

10 MS PURCELL: Right. Just to be clear we have three motions that have been put
11 forward. The first one proposed by Councillor Silvester Bourke, seconded by
12 Councillor Danny Alvey, is that in accordance with the provisions of section 20 of
13 the Finance Local Property Tax Act 2012, as amended, that the base rate of Local
14 Property Tax shall stand varied upwards by 6% for one year, 2026, in respect of the
15 relevant residential properties situated in Wicklow County Council. That was
16 received first. The second is to vary the rate downwards, to reduce it by 15%. That
17 was proposed by Councillor Dermot O'Brien and seconded by Councillor Joe Behan.
18 And the third motion is to keep the rate at the base rate which would be a reduction
19 of 6% in where we are now --

20 COUNCILLOR SNELL: No. Maintain it.

21 MS PURCELL: Maintained at the base rate.

22 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Correct.

23 MS PURCELL: And that is proposed by Councillor John Snell and seconded by
24 Councillor Peir Leonard. The motions are taken in the order in which they are
25 received so we will vote on the first motion first. If that motion is passed then there
26 won't be a vote on the second or the third motion. If it falls we then proceed to the
27 second motion and take it from there. So the first motion is that the property tax
28 should stand varied upwards by 6% for one year, 2026, in respect of the relevant
29 residential properties situated in the administrative area of Wicklow County Council.
30 If you are in favour please vote for, if you are against please vote against.

31

32 Councillor Danny Alvey?

33 COUNCILLOR ALVEY: For.

34 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Mark Barry?

- 1 COUNCILLOR BARRY: For.
- 2 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Joe Behan?
- 3 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Against.
- 4 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Sylvester Bourke?
- 5 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: For.
- 6 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Melanie Corrigan?
- 7 CATHAOIRLEACH: For.
- 8 MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin?
- 9 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: For.
- 10 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Erika Doyle?
- 11 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: For.
- 12 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Malacháí Duddy?
- 13 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Against.
- 14 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Gail Dunne?
- 15 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: For.
- 16 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin?
- 17 COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN: For.
- 18 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Orla Finn?
- 19 COUNCILLOR FINN: Against.
- 20 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Pat Fitzgerald is not present. Councillor Tom
- 21 Fortune?
- 22 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Against.
- 23 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Patsy Glennon?
- 24 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: For.
- 25 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Pat Kennedy is not present. Councillor Shane
- 26 Langrell?
- 27 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: For.
- 28 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Peir Leonard?
- 29 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Against.
- 30 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Pat Mahon?
- 31 COUNCILLOR MAHON: For.
- 32 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Jason Mulhall?
- 33 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: For.
- 34 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Miriam Murphy? I will ring Councillor Murphy

1 when we have gone through the rest of the roll call and come back to her. Councillor
2 Ian Neary?

3 COUNCILLOR NEARY: Against.

4 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Dermot O'Brien?

5 COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN: Against.

6 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Paul O'Brien?

7 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: For.

8 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Gerry O'Neill?

9 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Against.

10 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Warren O'Toole?

11 COUNCILLOR O'TOOLE: Against.

12 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Graham Richmond?

13 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: For.

14 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Lourda Scott? She was online. Councillor John
15 Snell?

16 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Against.

17 MS PURCELL: Against. Councillor Peter Stapleton?

18 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: For.

19 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Stephen Stokes?

20 COUNCILLOR STOKES: For.

21 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Ned Whelan?

22 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: For.

23 MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Caroline Winstanley?

24 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: For.

25 MS PURCELL: For. I am going to ring Councillor Murphy, and I am going to put
26 her on speaker so she can vote. I will put you on speaker first. You could hear the
27 motion. Okay. Thank you. Councillor Murphy? Say it one more time, sorry.

28 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: For, Helen.

29 MS PURCELL: Right. So that was a for. And Councillor Scott is not present. 19
30 for, 10 against and 3 not present. So the motion is carried. Thank you.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you members. So we go on to the next item on
32 the agenda which is: To adopt the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2025-2029
33 in accordance with the provisions of the Traveller Accommodation Act, 1998 (Copy
34 attached). So I am going to hand over to Director Michael Nicholson on this.

1 MR NICHOLSON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I will be brief. This has been going
2 around for quite some time now. There has been lots of consultation. It is
3 2025-2029. We're obliged to do it every five years. The last one expired in June last
4 year so we're a little bit late but we did a lot of consultation. We went out and did
5 several counts, which we are obliged to do. This has gone through the LTACC
6 chaired with his usual passion by Councillor Joe Behan, and also it has gone through
7 the Housing SPC chaired with equal passion by Councillor Graham Richmond.

8

9 We have a very good record of providing traveller accommodation. As the members
10 will know, there has been a significant shift to standard social housing as opposed to
11 traveller-specific accommodation, notwithstanding the fact we do also provide
12 traveller-specific accommodation for those who still require it but that is getting less
13 and less. Under this plan we provide 48 units. In this five-year plan 45 of them will
14 be standard which again reflects the desire of the travelling community to live in
15 standard housing and only three traveller-specific accommodation. We are also
16 going to spend a lot of time and energy on improving fire safety.

17

18 We had submissions from the Irish Traveller Movement and often from CAA, and
19 we had a lot of public consultation as well. It has been to the MDs, and I
20 recommend its adoption if the members feel okay to do so. Thank you,
21 Cathaoirleach.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

23 MR NICHOLSON: Sorry, we did get a late submission from Councillor Dermot
24 O'Brien, and I know we spoke with Councillor Dermot O'Brien to bring that back to
25 the LTACC and ask them to address it. And there will be a midterm review of this
26 and maybe as part of the midterm review we can have more focus on the youth
27 consultation in the midterm review. Thank you.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Michael. There's a few speakers. So, Councillor
29 Behan, do you want to come in first?

30 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yeah, thanks, Cathaoirleach. If it's in order I would like
31 to propose its adoption. If not, maybe someone else could propose it. I just want to
32 pay tribute to Director Nicholson and all of the staff, a number of whom are here
33 today, for the fantastic work they have done in the preparation of this traveller
34 accommodation programme but also the entire membership made up of members of

1 this Council but also traveller representatives and travellers themselves. There's a
2 great spirit of cooperation on the committee. All decisions are made by consensus.
3 There's a very good track record of working together, I think instituted originally by
4 Theresa O'Brien up there when she was housing officer as well, and that has
5 continued into this particular LTACC, as we call it.

6
7 I do take on board and I read carefully what Councillor O'Brien said in his
8 submission for the meeting today and I think he raises valid points and in fact we
9 have another meeting of the committee next week and I did say to him that the issues
10 that he raised we can discuss and then incorporate hopefully if we are doing a review
11 at some stage. But there is a necessity for us to get the plan passed today and to get
12 it sent on to the Department and on that basis I am quite happy to propose it if that is
13 possible. Thank you.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. Councillor John Snell.

15 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Yeah, thanks, Cathaoirleach. First and foremost I want to
16 commend the work that's been ongoing both in LTACC and the Housing SPC
17 through the current SPC and the current LTACC but also the previous committees.
18 If I could I want to give a special mention to Theresa O'Brien who has moved on, but
19 Theresa laid a solid foundation there for the implementation of this report that is here
20 to be adapted here today.

21
22 I would like to commend Councillor Joe Behan who has been an ever present in
23 regards to the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. He has
24 been a champion really for the people who say they have the least voice out there,
25 least representative of having their voices heard, the members of the travelling
26 community. And I know that Joe and all the members have been to the forefront in
27 making sure that nobody is left behind. If I could just highlight just in regards to
28 that, we know the tragedy that happened in regards to Carrickmines and the fire that
29 happened and that dreadful incident, and I think a lot of local authorities at the time,
30 certainly a report went out from the Department and all local authorities upped their
31 game, but we in Wicklow didn't have to up our game because to be honest we have
32 been punching above our weight for many, many years in regards to meeting the
33 obligations of the minority grouping that is the traveller community.

34

1 In regards to this report I'd like to support it, and I have no problem in seconding
2 Councillor Behan's proposal. We know that there's a crisis out there in regards to
3 rental accommodation and long gone is the day when the traveller community were
4 the only ones that struggled to find rental accommodation. They would refer to
5 everyone else as country people. Irish people. Country people. The reality is now
6 that rental crisis affects everybody, whether you're a traveller or a country person,
7 whether you're non-national or otherwise.

8
9 And just one thing to note going forward for the LTACC, and I hope the
10 Cathaoirleach will take it on board: We have a situation now through the housing
11 crisis, and like the figures stack up and they will show that Wicklow have been very,
12 very good in regards to housing members of the travelling community. You know,
13 the travellers themselves have sat on the committee for many, many years and they're
14 really happy with how they're being looked after with regards to the housing
15 allocations, but there is a thing that's creeping in, in regards to not just you know my
16 municipal district but throughout the county, and it's where we have caravans now
17 being pulled up to close proximity to residential houses. And I fear for the fact that
18 if we're going to, you know, not address that that it could potentially lead to a
19 disaster happening again where we have cables being ran out of residential properties
20 to bring electricity into caravans. And I honestly believe that at this moment in time
21 it could be a backward step for we, as a local authority, don't address it. We have
22 produced an awful lot of residential properties for people who have been waiting on
23 the housing list, and I do believe that you know this is sending out the wrong
24 message, if we certainly don't get in and deal with it unfortunately

25 MR NICHOLSON: Just on that, Cathaoirleach, if any member is aware of any
26 instance where a caravan is being placed beside a house and cables running to the
27 house please let us know immediately because that is something we certainly will act
28 upon.

29
30 I just want to thank Mary Rose Walker, social worker, for her work on this and also
31 Caroline Fox who led this from the start to finish. Thank you.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Michael. And just to reiterate all the thanks to
33 everybody for all their hard work on it. We have a proposer and a seconder. Is
34 everybody else in agreement to adopt the plan? Nobody else wants to speak agreed?

1 (Agreed.) Great. Thank you. So the next item then -- actually, sorry, there's still
2 quite a few things to get through, so I am proposing that we extend the meeting to
3 5.30. Just for a proposer and seconder on that? Proposed by Peir Leonard and
4 seconded by Councillor Behan. Now, there is still quite a bit. So just I want to
5 consider if we skip the Chief Executive's Report and you email in your queries, that's
6 just a suggestion and then we can clear the rest. I don't know how you all feel about
7 that?

8 COUNCILLOR SNELL: It's fair enough.

9 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: I'd rather not.

10 COUNCILLOR STOKES: I'd like to have the Chief Executive's Report.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: That is fine. I was putting it out there. We will keep going as
12 we are so. Thank you. The next item then is: To adopt the Wicklow County
13 Council Annual Report 2024 in accordance with Section 221 of the Local
14 Government Act 2001, as amended (Copy attached).

15 MS PURCELL: So the members received the Draft Annual Report in April, and
16 they considered it at the April meeting. A number of items have been added relating
17 to the public sector duty, the financial statements and the NOAC performance
18 indicators. The page numbers are a little bit askew, but they will be corrected when
19 it is sent to print and when it's actually designed. So if there are any questions and if
20 not, I would be obliged to receive a proposer and seconder, please.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Any questions?

22 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Propose.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Councillor Paul O'Brien.

24 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Seconded.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Seconded by John Snell. Nobody has indicated to come in.
26 So we will go on then to the next item: The chief executive's monthly management
27 report. I will take three questions at a time and if you can just keep them to the three
28 minutes and we will try and get through that. I want to make sure that everybody
29 gets a chance to speak. Thank you. So Councillor Joe Behan.

30 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Okay. Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just a couple of quick
31 ones. I have to say I am very disappointed on behalf of the residents of
32 Kilmacanogue who have been waiting for the noise mitigation measures to be put in
33 place at the parallel road there. I see the latest chief executive report is stating that
34 TII have directly appointed the contractor, but the contractor hasn't begun the work

1 yet. I would like to remind the chief executive and members; the people made a
2 submission on the planning for this particular road probably five years ago at this
3 stage. They were promised in the planning report in the Part 8 consultation that
4 these noise mitigation measures would take place. It is very, very disappointing that
5 we haven't got to the point where this work can be done. I don't expect the chief
6 executive -- maybe Mr Lane might have more information, but the report seems to
7 indicate it is between TII and the contractor, but honestly I would ask that TII, or the
8 contractor are contacted tomorrow and asked to get on with this work. It's long past
9 overdue. That's the first point.

10
11 I referred there in the previous discussion to this letter we got from Minister Browne
12 directing us to change our Development Plan or telling us to put an ad in the paper
13 saying that he's going to order us to remove three elements of the Wicklow
14 Municipal District Plan which were made twice, on two different occasions, by
15 members of this Council. And in the context of talking about local democracy, to
16 have such an insulting letter being sent by that Minister, who is the Minister for
17 Housing, and certainly in two of the three cases housing would have been improved
18 if they had been allowed to be passed. So I just want to ask the chief executive or
19 the acting director, you know, what is the next step in this process? Are we going to
20 be discussing this before September or will it be back on the agenda in September?
21 What is the situation?

22
23 And on that note can I also ask, because I am watching very, very carefully for
24 another direction which I hope doesn't come from the same Minister, with regard to
25 the very courageous decision the last Council made to put a stipulation in our
26 Development Plan preventing the bulk sale of apartment developments to a vulture
27 funds, to investment funds. As far as I know, we are the only council in the country
28 who have that provision in our Development Plan and effectively it means that
29 people who want to try and get on the property ladder have the opportunity to buy a
30 place of their own without competition from an investment fund which moves in to
31 buy everything. I compliment the staff of the Council here, led by the chief
32 executive and Fergal Keogh, who is also I know very instrumental in this, in
33 following that policy to the letter. But you know the mood music from the
34 Government at the moment is, oh, we need to get private investment in to building,

1 we need to support apartment developments. I am quite concerned that a letter will
2 land on the chief executive's desk telling us that we have to take that element of the
3 Development Plan out. So again, could I ask the chief executive, or the acting
4 planning director is there a danger that might happen or has there been any talk about
5 that or has there been any instruction from the Minister for Housing in that regard?
6

7 And my last question is with regards to the Cliff Walk. We had a task force set up
8 with great fan fair before the General Election by the then Taoiseach. I think it has
9 met once. I don't think it has ever met since. We didn't get minutes of it. I think the
10 chief executive attended but I don't think anyone else from this Council attended at
11 the time. Maybe I am wrong. I appreciate the updates we've got from Marc
12 Devereux and from the chief executive and another engineer in Greystones. Is the
13 task force dead and gone now? Are we basically back to managing this as Wicklow
14 County Council? And I don't have a problem if that is the case once we get the
15 money to do the work that's going to be needed to be done. And I see that is the
16 point that the chief executive has consistently made which I agree with her. If work
17 is going to be done to make the Cliff Walk safe and accessible, well, we need the
18 money and we need it to come from national funds. So perhaps the chief executive
19 or Marc, or whoever is responsible at this point in time, could indicate is the task
20 force now a thing of the past and are we back to managing this ourselves? Thank
21 you

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. Councillor Avril Cronin.

23 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thank you very much. I just want to bring up a few
24 issues. Firstly again I still have not received any update from the NTA in relation to
25 queries I put in in October. We're now in July I'm still none the wiser. We were
26 promised this time last year that the 132 would be extended, that we would have
27 greater service in the West Wicklow area. There has been no sign of the extension
28 and no response from the NTA in relation to this. Also there are still a number of
29 villages in West Wicklow that are left out of the local link programme, and I have
30 also put those questions to the NTA but again I have not received any response. As
31 you are aware, the 132 is the only bus route that we have to service the people of
32 West Wicklow along the N81. So any update you could provide would be greatly
33 appreciated.
34

1 Secondly, an update on the Baltinglass RRDF. I know this is something again that
2 comes up time and time again but we're still waiting on progress on the ground and
3 to say people are getting frustrated certainly is an understatement. So you might be
4 able to provide me with an update on that.

5
6 Thirdly, would the management consider a scheme for aged living housing in the
7 Baltinglass Municipal District? I know a proposal has been put forward to the
8 Council and I am just wondering has that been given any consideration? It's in
9 relation to a development in Dunlavin and it would be for older people, and I think
10 there really is a huge need for it. As we are all aware in this chamber, we have a
11 number of people that want to remain independently living but their current housing
12 situation is not suitable for them so I think that there's a huge need for it across the
13 entire county, not just in Wicklow, in West Wicklow, but I am just wondering if you
14 would consider that proposal that was put forward.

15
16 And finally, as you're all aware there has been a review of the National Development
17 Plan. It's ongoing. Submissions, it was open to submissions from the public to the
18 end of June. I along with Councillor Glennon are a member of the Mideastern
19 Regional Assembly and we put forward a submission to try and get the N81 back on
20 the agenda. It's something that the six councillors in the Baltinglass Municipal
21 District raised time and time again and I would hope that Wicklow County Council
22 have made a submission themselves to fight the corner of the people in West
23 Wicklow and ensure that the N81 gets back on the agenda. Sometimes it feels like
24 we are fighting a losing battle here and I would hope that we have the support of
25 management and that a submission has also been made in relation to that very
26 review. Thank you.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Cronin. Councillor Stephen Stokes.

28 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. Just to pick up on
29 something Councillor Cronin asked in her first question, the Transport SPC has
30 written to the NTA to make a number of questions, one of which is we are asking
31 through our senior executive officer if they'd be willing to come to a full meeting of
32 Wicklow County Council so we can all ask questions and hopefully submit questions
33 in advance and get answers. I thought I would mention that briefly.

34

1 Firstly, just on my own queries, can I congratulate Wicklow County Council on their
2 social housing results. I believe that between 2022 and 2024 we met 142% of our
3 target, meaning that we are the third best in Ireland. And could I particularly
4 commend Joe Lane and Michael Nicholson and their teams on this delivery. Of
5 course no sooner are these people housed there are many more people also seeking
6 housing. So my question is: Do we believe that Wicklow County Council can
7 continue to match or exceed our targets and are there any future challenges that we
8 should be aware of from an infrastructure or delivery viewpoint?

9
10 Just the second item I would like to raise is just a question: How many dog wardens
11 do we have for County Wicklow? Last I heard there are two for County Wicklow. I
12 would just like to get an update on that. And one reason that I am asking is that I
13 have received complaints about dogs regularly on the South Beach in Greystones in
14 the blue flag beach area. Of course dogs are not allowed on blue flag beaches
15 between June 1st and September 15th because of dog waste issues. You know, that
16 can put the blue flag status at risk. So therefore can I request that all blue flag
17 beaches be prioritised for dog warden patrols during the bathing season?

18
19 Just my final query is in relation to road markings. I have seen some positive actions
20 lately and there was a crossing repainted near the South Beach in Greystones, you
21 know the Kilcoole Road got resurfacing and got some road markings, so those are
22 some positive things that have happened. I had previously suggested that we should
23 have an audit of all roads across County Wicklow for road markings, and I just want
24 to ask where are we at on delivering on road markings as standalone projects? This
25 is different to road schemes that have gone out to tender, such as the Chapel Road
26 Scheme in Delgany. And I suppose finally when ad hoc road markings are done, you
27 know, just little projects that have been requested by ourselves or residents, are they
28 carried out by district staff or are they carried out by contractors or a mix? I would
29 be interested in finding out a little bit more about that. Go raibh maith agat,
30 Cathaoirleach.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. So I will let you address though three queries.

32 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you, members. Firstly,
33 Councillor Behan. Well, I share your frustration on the noise mitigation measures in
34 Kilmacanogue. We have impressed on TII the commitment that was given five years

1 ago. Joe might give you a bit more detail on that. With regard to the ministerial
2 direction, the next step on it will be for it to be considered by -- if the Minister has
3 made a direction, the legislation says that we have to comply with that direction once
4 it's gone through, it is published, and it will go through the iterative process. Fergal
5 will comment on that. In relation to the bulk buying, there's been no indication as
6 yet whether there's any likely direction to come on that. We know there has been
7 discussion about re-opening development plans given the requirement for housing to
8 be delivered nationally. Wicklow, contrary to kind of the national position, is
9 probably viewed to be over-zoned for residential development and hence the
10 directions that we've just received on the Wicklow plan. I don't anticipate, and
11 Fergal and the planning team will correct me here if I am wrong, that we will have to
12 do major revisions to our Development Plan to add additional zonings. As the
13 Minister would know and colleagues in the Department would know that the
14 members here are very open to sensible zoning of land for housing and have been
15 very supportive of the Executive in that. You know, we had the decision in
16 Blessington last year, or earlier on this year, we have had a couple of decisions
17 where the members have taken that opportunity to create more land for housing. We
18 I said, I haven't heard anything about the bulk buying provision. You are right, we
19 are the only local authority that has that. We are keen to keep it. But I haven't heard
20 any soundings about that changing at the moment.

21
22 In relation to the Cliff Walk. Yes, there was a task force established by the Tánaiste.
23 There has been one meeting which I attended. I was invited to attend. It was myself,
24 and a senior member of staff from the National Parks and Wildlife Services, two
25 colleagues from Irish Rail, and a colleague from Fáilte Ireland along with the
26 Tánaiste and his advisers. It was a very brief meeting. They heard from me. I sent
27 you all a briefing note on it afterwards. I told them what our position was. I told
28 them how whatever the solution would be it required multiple zeros that Wicklow
29 would not be able to fund itself directly. As you know, we have recently appointed
30 consultants to a site condition survey piece of work. They have been interacting with
31 the various different groups. I am very, very aware that there is already in
32 establishment a local group between Wicklow MD and Bray MD made up of
33 representatives of both municipal districts, and all information has been fed back
34 through that group as well. I would anticipate that when we have the report from

1 RPS finalised the task force will reconvene at that point because that will be a next
2 steps piece.

3

4 Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin did ask me would there be consultation.

5 Absolutely. If there are any new routes to be developed or alternatives to what is
6 currently there it is imperative that the local Elected Members in both districts are
7 fully consulted along with the public because a lot of people are watching this very
8 carefully.

9

10 So, in short, we haven't met since then. There is a commitment to give an update
11 every fortnight to yourselves and to the Tánaiste's office which we have been doing,
12 and I suppose as the work of the consultants progresses hopefully there will be more
13 weighty information provided to you all.

14

15 Councillor Cronin, in relation to the NTA. We're as frustrated as are you in relation
16 to the lack of response. I know, as Councillor Stokes said, as chair of the SPC they
17 have written to them again, and we did receive some sort of response from them on
18 that. Joe might have a bit more detail on it. Age-friendly homes. Certainly I know
19 the Housing SPC considered it and were able to look at it for Dunlavin. We're very
20 open for right-sized housing and housing for life for people and if there are
21 opportunities to create bespoke specific housing for people that need age-appropriate
22 housing we're happy to do that. Baltinglass RRDF, I don't know if Fergal might
23 have an update on that or a position on that for you. Councillor Stokes, yes, thank
24 you for -- sorry, Councillor Cronin, yes, N81. Apologies. So as the consultations
25 work, EMRA, the regional assembly, are the voice and they carry far more weight
26 than Wicklow Local Authority does at that consultation process. So we have
27 consulted with the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly. We are very happy to
28 support the submission and delighted to have it included and we will push for that
29 inclusion as well ourselves. It is important. The N81 is a national primary route on
30 paper and on paper alone so changes need to happen to it.

31 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Did Wicklow County Council make a submission then
32 themselves, or no?

33 MS O'GORMAN: Not directly. No. So, we consulted with EMRA, but we can do
34 so. Normally what would happen is once the regional assemblies make their

1 submissions the local authorities are asked then to make submissions as well. So we
2 haven't made a submission on any area in Wicklow for the National Development
3 Plan so it is not unique to Baltinglass or the N81 should I say.

4
5 Councillor Stokes, thank you for the comment on social housing. Yes, the local
6 authority did achieve 142% of what we are expected to do. I take absolutely no
7 credit for that. It was all the housing and Joe Lane as director primarily with
8 Michael and my predecessors being Brian Gleeson and Frank Curran beforehand. It
9 is a great achievement, but it puts us under undue pressure to keep delivering at pace.
10 As I mentioned, the members here have been very proactive in zoning land for
11 housing. Our difficulty is despite what it maybe looks like on paper we don't have
12 large swathes of land in public ownership for us to build out and develop on
13 ourselves. We are reliant in large parts on partnerships with developers and
14 otherwise Part 5 or just other I suppose negotiations that we enter into. So it is going
15 to be difficult for us. We haven't received our housing targets for the next period of
16 time. We do expect them to be forthcoming shortly. And we will work our hardest
17 on them as we always do.

18
19 In relation to dog wardens. We have two dog wardens at the moment. We did
20 receive funding as you will be aware last year for additional dog warden service. It
21 is quite loose in how it is phrased. Theresa might give a bit more detail on that. But
22 to employ a dog warden you also need a van and everything else that goes with it and
23 that wasn't funded, so there's a bit of to-ing and fro-ing on that. I take your point on
24 the beaches; it is a problem. I don't know whether our beach bye-laws cover that and
25 whether there might be more visibility needed there. Theresa might come in on that.

26
27 On road markings, Joe, I might ask you to come in on that. Joe, I might start with
28 you on Kilmacanogue and road markings
29 MR LANE: No, I have no update. However, we will contact whoever is responsible
30 to see what the delay is and progress it as quickly as possible.

31
32 Just to cover two areas. We are currently waiting for circulars, and we dealt with
33 this at the SPC, for a new housing delivery plan and that will deal with some of the
34 queries there regarding the new projects and what are the emphasis of the projects

1 and also we expect there will be something, guidelines on older people there for aged
2 living on that too. Road markings is invariably covered under, in the district staff,
3 however the economies of scale, it depends on economies of scale. So it is not
4 one-off applicable jobs, they try to put a whole lot together because it is quite
5 expensive to get the groups together.

6
7 Going back to Councillor Cronin and Councillor Stokes. Councillor Stokes as the
8 chairperson in the SPC has placed a personal interest in the NTA and some of the
9 correspondence, and some of the stuff they had said previously regarding some of
10 the queries from the Wicklow Town area had been -- because he persevered we have
11 got replies now. So if people send their queries to me or to Councillor Stokes we
12 will endeavour to get answers for them. Councillor Stokes and Councillor Cronin.
13 Okay. Okay.

14 MS O'BRIEN: Yes. I concur. There are two dog wardens in the county at present,
15 and we did get funding for a third, but the funding doesn't meet the requirements that
16 we would need to have a dog warden, so we are looking at that. It is covered in the
17 bye-laws that dogs are not permitted on blue flag beaches, but obviously you know
18 that has to be monitored. We can talk to the dog wardens but if they go on the
19 beaches then they're not in the estates, so it is a matter of balancing all the needs. I
20 will have a chat with them about it.

21 COUNCILLOR STOKES: It is just being flagrantly disobeyed, and I think there
22 needs to be presence of the dog wardens to create that awareness.

23 MS O'BRIEN: Okay. I will take that on board.

24 MR KEOGH: Thanks, chair. Councillor Behan, the next steps in relation to the
25 draft direction. So a public notice has been noticed inviting written submissions
26 from the 3rd July to the 16th July. It is important that the members make a
27 submission. The members can make it direct in response to the public notice to the
28 chief executive or can also do so to the OPR and the Minister at the same time. The
29 next step after that then is the chief executive will prepare a report to send to the
30 Minister and will furnish it to the members. That report will summarise any
31 submissions that have been received from the members, the regional assembly and
32 the public, and the chief executive then can make recommendations on the best
33 manner how to effect the draft direction of the Minister but obviously won't be
34 commenting on the actual content or reasons for it.

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In relation to the institutional investor condition. Yes, that thankfully has been upheld consistently by the board at this stage. And we had made a submission previously to them in relation to that and they have acknowledged the objective that is contained in our County Development Plan.

In relation to the Baltinglass URDF, I have no update on this one since the update was sent to you on the 26th June in relation to the current status. We're hoping to go to tender once we receive Department approval. The tender documentation was sent to the Department a couple of weeks ago and once they approve that we will be going to tender. That overall process, probably anticipating about 16 weeks to go through the tender and procurement process. And once the contractor is employed we're estimating about 48 weeks for all the works to be fully completed. I think that's it.

Oh, in terms of the zonings, yeah, similar confirmation that we wouldn't anticipate an increase in the amount of land being required to be zoned. We'd be seeing new population figures. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you for that. The next speaker is Councillor Stapleton.

COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I was just wondering, in relation to the Arklow and Shillelagh Greenway would the chief executive be able to arrange a meeting of sorts between the team and the Council responsible for it and any councillors that wish to attend, just to get an update on kind of, for new councillors, the history, where we're at now and where we're going, just so that we can try and see some progress on it? I note just in the Chief Executive's Report there has been a slight update to talk about the meeting that happened in April but apart from that there's no update on the progress report that was listed in the Chief Executive's Report when I joined the Council a year ago. So just everything we can do to drive that along. I hate the word task force, I think the public is basically allergic to it at this point, but maybe some of regular meeting between your team and elected reps would be great.

Then just following on on Councillor Stoke's point around housing targets. Just if it was possible to have some sort of a break down the way you have the pipeline sites

1 and projects listed in the Chief Executive's Report so we could see kind of targeted
2 years for delivery and the targeted totals.

3
4 And then just a query around private development in the county. If that's something
5 you track as well on a numbers basis to understand how many houses are being built
6 or expected to be built in any given year. If we could see that as well it would be
7 absolutely brilliant just because I think it is important that the Council has a role in
8 facilitating the private development of housing as well.

9
10 And slightly just on that, on the CPO of vacant properties or homes, I see there's a
11 list in the Chief Executive's Report which lists the properties that are CPO'd and
12 beside it it has the work that's going on to upgrade the homes. Does the Council ever
13 CPO homes just to sell them on straight away? I know this is something that other
14 councils are doing, and it is working quite effectively, where people will purchase
15 the home and do it up and live in it. So if that's something that needs to be
16 considered at SPC or otherwise, or if it is something that we are doing already great,
17 but to get an update on it would be brilliant. And that's it from me. Thank you.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Stapleton. Councillor Peir Leonard.

19 COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Thank you. Thanks. I just have a couple. It's mostly
20 to do with Arklow Harbour. So I suppose I am just looking for an update on the
21 harbour master's assistant position down there. The harbour is getting quite busy and
22 there was a gentleman there working in the harbour with, helping Paul Ivory there,
23 and it is important to have somebody down there to liaise with the -- and just keep
24 the place in order. Just an update on that.

25
26 And then in relation to the harbour as well, just clarification on whether the harbour
27 and the surrounding buildings around the harbour are actually connected with the
28 Arklow Sewage Treatment Plant. I sent in reports, the Sea Scouts and some of the
29 community groups as well as all the other fishermen and the other users of the
30 harbour, there's been an outlet going into the harbour there and the tests, the water
31 tests from the Arklow Sea Scouts are showing quite significant pollution still in the
32 harbour. And then when I spoke to one of the environmental engineers from
33 Wicklow County Council he said that that part of the town isn't actually connected
34 into the sewage treatment plant. So maybe just to find out, to clarify if it is or not

1 and if it isn't why wasn't it and what is the proposed plan for it, can some of it be
2 done as part of the Arklow Flood Relief Scheme.

3

4 And then just an update on the refrigeration unit down on the fish dock. I know we
5 had -- I had looked at -- I had put a motion in to get a new one, one of the wind farms
6 was going to part-fund it but then a tender went out to repair the one that was there.
7 So just an update on that.

8

9 Just in relation to the OPW Flood Relief Scheme. At what stage is it now? And can
10 it come back before the councillors before it goes out to tender, if it hasn't already,
11 just to have a last look at it before it goes out to tender for design stage?

12

13 And then just very lastly, just the Arklow Transport Study. I know we had a
14 workshop recently with the planners about the Local Area Plan. I haven't seen any
15 form of the draft of the Arklow Transport Study, and I just think it is important
16 before it goes out to the public to come back to the members and for the councillors
17 to get to see the Arklow Transport Study and what the proposed outcomes are from
18 it. It would be really valuable to have our insight. Thank you.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Leonard. Councillor Louise Fenelon
20 Gaskin.

21 COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Really I just
22 want to thank the chief executive and Michael Nicholson for progressing the surveys
23 in Farrankelly estate. That's just been fantastic. There was, one of the residents was
24 practically in tears and I think she followed the man around the house and wouldn't
25 let him out of her sight in case he missed a corner. So it really meant a lot to them
26 even to have them down. But I would be grateful if you could just keep me updated
27 on where we go. I don't want just the surveys to happen and then to fall by the
28 wayside again, just for us to keep the pressure on. So I'd be grateful if you could
29 keep us updated on the progress from the surveys, please. But thanks again for
30 getting those done. Thank you.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Just take those three questions then.

32 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you, members. Councillor
33 Stapleton, it's no problem at all in getting the teams to meet with whatever members
34 want to meet on the Arklow-Shillelagh Greenway. We can organise that. Obviously

1 it is coming into holiday periods so it might be difficult to get a date that suits
2 everybody, but we will do our best.

3

4 In relation to I suppose CPOs, primarily we buy them to refurb them and use them
5 ourselves or sell them on, but, as you said, there's no reason why we can't buy them.
6 I know we did it maybe ten years ago in Dundalk, we were probably the first local
7 authority that started to do them. Often you can refurb and sell them for a much
8 higher price than you CPO them for, but it is something we can look at. It would
9 help with dereliction and just the visual amenity of some of our towns and villages.
10 And in fairness to Michael's team they have been actively looking at areas where it
11 would benefit those. So if you have any properties that you have seen, or any other
12 member that you have seen, let us know and we will certainly consider them.

13

14 Councillor Leonard, unfortunately a lot of what you are asking about is specific
15 about Arklow and, as you know, Leonora has been unwell, so she is not here today.
16 So I don't know that Fergal is able to answer a lot of the specifics about Arklow. She
17 is back this week. So if we can't answer you today we will get back to you certainly.
18 On the sewerage treatment plant and the commissioning of that, I'm not sure, I don't
19 know if you could answer that Theresa on that.

20

21 Just on the transport study then as well. Yeah, certainly we will talk to the members
22 about it. Again, it will come back through the district. That's not a problem.

23

24 And, Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin, thank you for your comments on
25 Farrankelly. Yeah, it's the first step. It'll be a long process. There's not going to be
26 any easy fixes, and it won't be immediate either, but we will keep you updated on
27 that, and Michael's team will do that.

28

29 So, I will pass over to Theresa for a moment.

30 MS O'BRIEN: Councillor Leonard, in regards to the staffing in Arklow Harbour,
31 that is with recruitment. So we are looking at the team and levels of responsibility
32 there, but I know that's somebody who retired I think in May, so that is being looked
33 at. Regarding the buildings being connected, as far as I know they're not connected
34 but the reasons why and what is going to happen I am not sure, but I will find out

1 and come back to you. The Flood Protection Scheme has its permission, so it won't
2 be coming back before the Council. Full permission is received for that. And the
3 refrigeration unit, we did advertise for somebody to do the work that's needed and to
4 use it, as far as I know we got two submissions. But I'm not sure, I'll have to check
5 where they're at at the moment as well.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. So next, Councillor O'Neill.

7 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks to the CEO. I just
8 want to -- at the last meeting here I requested and got the support of the Council that
9 we write to the Minister as regards the IPAS centre, the proposed IPAS centre or
10 extension to the IPAS centre at Avon Ri, and I was just looking for if there was a full
11 report back. There's 98 Ukrainians being moved out of there in two or three weeks'
12 time. Now, up to now there's over a hundred houses being evicted there. And that's
13 putting huge pressure on our housing section here in Wicklow where they have been
14 evicted and this is simply to make room for the direct provision people, the refugees,
15 because they make more money out of that. And this is constant here in West
16 Wicklow. I was at an SPC meeting the other day, last Wednesday, Housing SPC,
17 and following that I got the information that in Wicklow itself the IPAS centres and
18 the amount of people seeking direct provision, refugees or whatever, you know is
19 alarming. You know you have 3% of those in Wicklow -- you have 28% in -- 28%
20 in Wicklow rather, 3% in Arklow, 16% in Bray and you have 50% in West Wicklow.
21 Fifty percent. And that's causing huge pressure on our infrastructure, our schools,
22 our medical facilities, the whole lot. You know, 50% is a lot. And then you
23 compare that down to Greystones. For whatever reason, probably because Simon
24 Harris is the chief down there, but there's not one, not one refugee in the Greystones
25 municipal area. And in actual fact if you have a look at it again the figures, the gold
26 star for -- the only municipal area in the country that don't have any refugees, you
27 know while we all do what we can in the conditions that are there, you know it's very
28 suspicious that Simon Harris's area doesn't have one. So if I can just --

29 MS O'GORMAN: Can I just correct a matter of fact there, Councillor O'Neill? Can
30 I just correct a matter of fact there? There might not necessarily be IPAS residents in
31 that municipal district but there certainly are Ukrainian residents, and when you look
32 at it in the round across districts --

33 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: There are 94 Ukrainians in --

34 MS O'GORMAN: But it is not correct to say that there are no refugees in the

1 Greystones Municipal District.

2 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Can I point out there, we have the figures from the
3 Council.

4 MS O'GORMAN: Yes.

5 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: From you. I have them.

6 MS O'GORMAN: Yes.

7 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: And there's 94 Ukrainians in Greystones. I'm talking
8 about direct provision. Refugees. We have a lot more than 94 in West Wicklow,
9 Ukrainians, so let's not confuse things. Really what I am looking for is: When we
10 asked, a letter went from Wicklow County Council to the Department asking that the
11 Avon would be refused a license for any further refugees, because I don't know,
12 other councillors in West Wicklow are probably as much -- sitting here today I have
13 five emails from people. It's all related to housing, emails and things. There's huge
14 pressure in West Wicklow with housing. And we're disappointed that there's 106
15 houses the Minister has shelved in Burgage, it is no longer going ahead, and we have
16 to wait for decisions from here on in on that. There is huge pressure in West
17 Wicklow for housing. I think we should be a little bit fairer that you know the likes
18 of Greystones won't take one in the door and we take 50% is wrong.

19

20 Could I also point out too that just getting back to Councillor Cronin, she mentioned
21 about the local link. You know, I support her fully on this here you know, because
22 we look at the local links tearing around West Wicklow they're empty near all the
23 time. And I brought this up on several occasions. And the problem with designated
24 stops is a big issue there. You know, if you're living outside Ballymount, two miles
25 outside Ballymount, an elderly couple and they want to use the local link to
26 Blessington they have to make their way two or three miles to Ballymount for the
27 designated stop. We have a huge tourism attraction there in West Wicklow like
28 Russborough House, and the local link won't stop there, it just passes by. So I mean
29 people who could avail of that from all over Wicklow can't get that service. Thanks
30 for that, Cathaoirleach.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Neill. Councillor Patsy Glennon.

32 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. And thank you, chief
33 executive. A number of the items I was going to mention I'm not going to go over
34 them again like some of my colleagues other than to welcome the chief executive's

1 comments around the N81 and I would hope that you and your executive team will
2 get behind it and get something moving on it. We get tired of listening to the N11. I
3 know it is a big fact for lots of our colleagues here, but we don't seem to get fair
4 traction for our problems out our side. Councillor Cronin asked about the RRDF and
5 Fergal has answered it very comprehensively, so I welcome that. The Avon, Gerry
6 has mentioned. And again just to follow up on last term in the council chamber here,
7 I don't want to get into personalities or anything like that, but Mr Devereux gave us
8 the number, and we have more than half of what's in the entire county. That just is
9 not sustainable and is most unfair and needs to be addressed and brought to the
10 department's attention. Finally again just to echo what Gerry and Avril have said,
11 the local link service out our way could be improved. There's no local link service in
12 either Donard or Hollywood. They're not included at all. Your senior executive
13 engineer, Michael Flynn, was trying to get something done on one of them so I
14 would ask you to follow that up, if you would. And again, the houses in Burgage, an
15 up to date on where it is. I asked you last term and you said the Council would be
16 progressing themselves; I am just wondering what progress has been made to date?
17 Thank you.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Joe Behan.

19 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: It's only just, Cathaoirleach, I know I have been in
20 already, it's just a comment in relation to what the chief executive and the director of
21 planning have said about the ministerial direction. My understanding is we're not
22 going to have -- we're not being provided with an opportunity to discuss these orders
23 from the Minister to change our Development Plan. We have to write in ourselves to
24 the Minister and beg him to reconsider whatever. Now, at the very least I think the
25 Wicklow Municipal District members should have an opportunity to discuss that as a
26 council, but I also think we as Wicklow County Councillors should be discussing the
27 implications of these directions because we have decisions made already with regard
28 to West Wicklow, it's quite possible directions will come back about West Wicklow,
29 and the Greystones Municipal District Plan is ongoing, it's quite possible we'll get
30 directions there. And we I think need to take a stand on this as a body. I don't intend
31 writing to the chief executive to ask her to put in my comments in her report. We
32 should be making a submission, or we should be making a report or making our
33 stance known to the Minister. Now, because it is coming into the summer holiday
34 period I am asking the chief executive if it's possible for her to stall any report going

1 into the Minister until we have discussed this as one of the items on our agenda in
2 September. I think that's a reasonable request to make; it gives people an
3 opportunity to prepare and to then have a proper submission coming in from the
4 elected councillors, and I want to propose that that be done.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. There's just one other light on,
6 so I will bring Councillor Dermot O'Brien in.

7 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I am happy to second
8 Councillor Behan's proposal to put the brakes on that process until we have -- and if
9 ever we wondered why we are 27th out of 27 when it comes to local government
10 autonomy ministerial directions are a good example. Just a couple of items,
11 Cathaoirleach. And again thanks to the chief executive for the report. I don't want to
12 bring -- I don't want to be bleak, but you know we can celebrate targets being
13 achieved but at the same time halfway through the year there have been a hundred
14 children presenting as homeless in County Wicklow. I think we should always
15 temper our celebrations and acknowledgments while they matter with also the
16 challenges that we face which again are ongoing and really, really present us with a
17 picture that is unacceptable, a picture that has lots of elements to it, but ultimately
18 every child that has to live in emergency accommodation, or overcrowding is
19 experiencing adversity and potentially trauma that they carry with them for their
20 lives. So just be mindful of that.

21
22 Also, to be honest, Cathaoirleach, that when -- it's happened before, these scenarios
23 where a Government Minister or Tánaiste indeed can make an announcement about
24 the success of organisations applying for funding which was applied for through
25 Wicklow County Council which was, the process of which was managed by
26 Wicklow County Council, the callouts and follow-ups with groups who made
27 submissions done by Wicklow County Council, but then some groups find out that
28 they weren't successful in a tweet or a social media post by the Tánaiste. So I think
29 there should be better cohesion around announcements and again maybe the
30 recognition, about the recognition fund going where it should. That, yes, claiming
31 credit or getting the headlines when the work has been done is a little bit cheeky.
32 Just two more, Cathaoirleach. I know I asked a good few times at this stage about
33 the chief fire officer coming in to present to the Council and I know the CPG were
34 going to discuss it, so just a reminder again about that.

1

2 Two more then. Just wondering about a traffic study for Bray. And I know that in
3 Bray obviously, as everyone knows, there are lots of issues around traffic and
4 transport and we have convened, set up a committee to try and bring people together
5 to really work at that in a sincere way, and I think the weaving together of all the
6 pieces really can make a difference in trying to actually resolve some issues or
7 actually make progress. So I think a traffic study for Bray, I'd love to hear about
8 where we might be at with a traffic study for Bray.

9

10 And one more, Cathaoirleach. Just that, again when we talk about announcements,
11 at the start of the Chief Executive's Report there was an announcement about an
12 outdoor performance area that Bray got €250,000 for and that never manifested. So
13 just in my deliberations about LPT I was wondering where the money for that might
14 have gone. If we didn't go ahead with the project did that 250,000 go back into the
15 Department or is it sitting somewhere maybe in the Wicklow County Council
16 coffers? Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Brien. And Councillor Pat Kennedy
18 wants to come in online. Pat, go ahead.

19 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Can you hear me, Cathaoirleach?

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: We can hear you, yes. Go head.

21 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and apologies to you,
22 Cathaoirleach, for being late as you know (inaudible) a good friend of mine,
23 (inaudible) --

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Councillor Kennedy, it is very hard to hear you there.
25 You are breaking up.

26 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Can you hear me now, Cathaoirleach?

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah, that's better. We can hear you now.

28 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Cathaoirleach, I think I asked the chief executive
29 about carrying out the safety survey on houses in Rathdrum. I asked for it to be --

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: I think we've lost you again, Councillor Kennedy.

31 MS O'GORMAN: Just to clarify, Councillor Kennedy, are you asking that you want
32 clarification that you didn't ask for Rathdrum House to be knocked down?

33 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Correct, chief executive. Hello?

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Go ahead, Councillor Kennedy.

1 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: At last month's meeting I asked the chief executive's if
2 she would see if she could make funding available for a survey to be carried out on
3 Ardavon House, and I note (inaudible) say that I looked for it to be knocked down. I
4 didn't ask for it to be knocked down. I asked for a safety survey on the building to be
5 carried out with a view to extending the car park to other parcels of land adjacent to
6 the Ardavon House. That's what I asked for. I suppose my question today is: Chief
7 executive, you've had a chance to look at that, and if you haven't, that's fine, but I
8 just want to put it on the record I didn't ask for it to be knocked down, I asked for a
9 safety survey on the building. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Kennedy. We just have one other:
11 Councillor Winstanley.

12 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Mine's actually not a
13 question, it is just a point in relation to the transport study for Bray. I have already
14 spoken to the SPC chair, and he's agreed to talk to officials and have that put on the
15 Transport SPC for the September meeting, to have a discussion around the transport
16 plan for Bray.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

18 MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you, members. I might go
19 in reverse; it might be easier. Councillor Winstanley, yeah, transport study. So for
20 every Local Area Plan that we have to do a transport study is required, so I have
21 spoken to the incoming director of services for Bray Municipal District and one of
22 the kind of items on the agenda there will be the transport study, how important it is
23 for the movement of people and vehicles in the Bray area. We had recently
24 correspondence from an inspector, inspector garda, over a movement issue last week.
25 There was chaos on a street outside the hotel where a heavy-loader was unloading
26 things. It just brings home how important that transport study is for the urban town
27 centre for Bray, so it is high on our agenda, and I would thank Councillor Stokes for
28 taking it to the SPC as well.

29

30 Councillor Kennedy, just to confirm that, yeah, you're correct. You didn't ask for the
31 building to be knocked. You looked for a safety study to be conducted on it and for
32 resources to be made available. As you know, the director of services has been
33 unwell for a last period of time, I haven't had a chance to discuss it with her so I will
34 do on her return. It is there.

1
2 Councillor O'Brien, you're absolutely right on housing. We're never going to get to
3 where we need to be, and while I think it is important to recognise that Wicklow
4 County Council is punching well above its weight on it there's an awful lot more to
5 do, and children in homelessness is just not acceptable. So our teams are working
6 exceptionally hard to address that, both the homeless team, so that people have
7 long-term own-door accommodation, and housing construction side of things as
8 well. So I think it is important I suppose to recognise the work that we have done
9 but to equally recognise there's an awful lot more to do in that space.

10
11 Councillor Glennon -- I'll come back to you, Councillor Behan, on the process of the
12 ministerial direction. Councillor Glennon, yes, on the N81, fully understand and
13 accept where are you coming from. We will be talking with our colleagues on the
14 National Development Plan side of things. I think it is hugely important that the N81
15 is upgraded and brought to a standard that is reasonable, you know the same standard
16 as the other national routes in the county.

17
18 On the Burgage, yes, we have had some progress on it since our last meeting. I just
19 have it here. So tenders are for Phase 3 and 4 are due in -- oh, that's not that. Sorry.
20 Apologies. Wrong thing.

21 MR LANE: I'll take the Burgage.

22 MS O'GORMAN: Joe will take the Burgage. I'm answering a different question.
23 Apologies.

24
25 Councillor O'Neill, we did write about Avon Ri. We have had no response as yet. I
26 will just remind members; I do fully take on board what you are saying about the
27 distribution of both international protection persons and Ukrainian persons that are in
28 the county. As you know, the local authority doesn't allocate the spaces. We don't
29 get a say in where these persons are allocated. We make representations certainly on
30 your behalf, which we have done on the Avon to the Department, but they make
31 decisions themselves based on what accommodation is available and entering into
32 contracts. You will know, Councillor O'Neill, from the other site in West Wicklow
33 where there is High Court litigation ongoing that despite us making the Department
34 aware of the planning irregularities with that site they still continue to use the site.

1 So we make our representations, but we don't directly provide that accommodation
2 for those individuals.

3
4 Councillor Behan, just on the ministerial direction that we received. The statutory
5 process is that written submissions have to be made. We're more than happy to
6 facilitate a meeting, more than happy to facilitate workshops, whatever the members
7 want on that, no problem, I would just caveat that by saying I am going to leave this
8 evening, I won't be back within the consultation period, but I have been talking to
9 Leonora offline here and she is happy to facilitate whatever you want. But having a
10 meeting, you still need written submissions because that's the format the legislation
11 has. We can't pause the process. We have to adhere to the timelines that are in that
12 consultation process. But we will work with you. Very, very happy, as I said, if you
13 want workshops to help frame submissions or a meeting, a full meeting of the
14 Council, again given that a lot of people will be on leave, I haven't spoken to the
15 Cathaoirleach about that either, but we will work with ye to make sure that the
16 voices of the members here are heard on that.

17
18 Joe will come back to you, and Fergal, sorry.

19 MR LANE: Yes. The reason why is, we're currently still liaising with the NTMA
20 and Dublin City to see can we salvage doing something with the tendering process as
21 is and build the big scheme as there's a significant amount of work gone into that. In
22 the absence of same, that can't progress, we will develop it ourselves and we have no
23 issue with that. The problem is it was a large development of 106 and we'd probably
24 phase it so it would affected the supply going forward. There is another thing of
25 course: While if the NTMA or Dublin City were doing that, or they were doing a
26 tendering process, it would allow our resources as we have seen work through other
27 things whereas if we are spending our time doing that we're not doing something
28 else. That's why our first choice would be to keep it together and see can we work
29 with the others. And there was a tender process entered into and that maybe parts of
30 it may be salvageable in the absence of saying we will go back to (inaudible). I
31 didn't say I wouldn't do it, I said it was one of the options we could do. But it would
32 mean, for 106, we would have to phase it. You probably wouldn't be comfortable
33 with that either. I will come back once I know what I am doing to the area. And it
34 was dealt with, with the Elected Members at the SPC also. But we will keep you

1 informed of that one. It is on our agenda. We are not stopping it. We have the Part
2 8. We will be progressing it. It's just what we are progressing and what phases. The
3 other option is, if we are phasing, we might be looking for affordable rather than
4 social. So there's a few options if it doesn't progress the way it was designed to in
5 that tender process. The ideal thing would be of course to get the 106 delivered as
6 quickly as possible.

7 MS O'GORMAN: Thanks, Joe. And sorry, Councillor O'Brien, on the chief fire
8 officer, yeah, absolutely, we did commit to having a discussion about that and it
9 possibly would be October before there's room on the agenda, but certainly yes. And
10 on the outdoor performance space piece, Michael might just comment a little further
11 and come in on the planning and next steps.

12 MR NICHOLSON: That fell under my previous directorate. We received
13 notification of a grant allocation for outdoor performance space. We ran a
14 competition. The best submission was received from Bray MD. That never
15 proceeded with for various reasons through no fault of anybody. We managed to
16 salvage the grant for a project in Bray which also didn't proceed. A lot of it was to
17 do with matching funding. We never got the money, so the money never went
18 anywhere. It was never allocated because neither project proceeded.

19 MR KEOGH: Sorry, just to come back in, Councillor Behan, in terms of having a
20 meeting and so forth, the deadline for the written submissions is the 16th July, which
21 is Wednesday week, so if you want to have a meeting before people get the
22 opportunity to make their written submissions then it would have to happen in a
23 matter of days. Once the submission date has gone by, any meeting that's held
24 afterwards won't be relevant to the Chief Executive's Report that she submits to the
25 OPR and the Minister. So it is absolutely crucial that the members, if they feel
26 strongly about it, make their written submissions, and given that the Minister has set
27 out the reasons in relation to the three sites I suppose their written submissions
28 should target those reasons. Thank you.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor O'Neill, do you want to come back in
30 there?

31 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just briefly. And thanks, Emer,
32 for your reply. I know how frustrating it can be for everyone when they don't even
33 bother replying to councillors and yet they won't reply to Wicklow County Council.
34 I think that's absolutely disgraceful. It's disgusting you know that the powers that be

1 don't bother even to inform. They talk about liaising with people, but they have
2 plans now we know for another, up to 300 of these unfortunate people from West
3 Wicklow without any consultation with you, me or no one. They are just doing what
4 they like. And that is absolutely dreadful. I think every councillor in here should
5 pay attention to what our CEO has informed us there and take it from there. I am
6 really disgusted that we are doing it the right way, and they don't have the manners
7 or courtesy to even reply.

8
9 Just briefly on another issue there, Cathaoirleach. I know there are people below
10 here and there was a motion on the agenda from Councillor Winstanley on the plight
11 of the people in Gaza, and I was just wondering is that going to be held today or
12 what? I know there are people interested in this that are waiting around all day.

13 MS O'GORMAN: Yes.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah, we're hoping -- that's why I am trying to speed things
15 up.

16 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: We will get to it?

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yeah, we will get to it. Thank you, Councillor O'Neill. So on
18 that, I am going to come to the next item, which is the update on local community
19 safety partnerships, and to welcome Patricia Carmody who is going to give us an
20 update on that. Thank you.

21 MS CARMODY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, Elected Members. My name is
22 Patricia Carmody. I have recently been recruited as the Community Safety
23 Coordinator for Wicklow County Council. We're here today to kick start the
24 formation of the partnership. Before we get to that there's a little bit of background
25 and information I have to go through.

26
27 So to start off, the Policing Security and Community Safety Act 2024 commenced on
28 the 2nd April 2025, and sections 114-116 of the Act makes provision for the
29 establishment of a local community safety partnership in each local authority. There
30 will be two in Fingal, five in Dublin City. So 36 in total.

31
32 Minister Jim O'Callaghan signed the regulations on the 26th June 2025. And on the
33 coming into operation of these regulations on the 30th June, John Gleeson
34 committees are now officially dissolved. We are currently waiting on the finalised

1 guidance document which along with these regulations will provide framework for
2 establishment and operations of the LCSPs. So, our bible.

3
4 Draft guidelines were received on the 3rd June for our review and comment. There's
5 a meeting on the 16th July to discuss the final guidance document. So we hope to
6 have them in the coming weeks.

7
8 Just to give you an idea of what the structure will be like. There will be a Cabinet
9 Committee, a National Community Safety Steering Group, a National Office for
10 Community Safety and then the LCSPs. Therefore, the LCSPs will be reporting
11 directly to the National Office, and they won't be a substructure of the Council.

12
13 Partnership will be supported by a local community safety coordinator, which is me,
14 and an administrator at assistant staff officer level. These two positions will be local
15 authority staff, but they will be, salaries and travel will be funded by the Department
16 of Justice via the National Office. And, as per the draft guidelines, no other funding
17 has been allocated to the LCSPs. However, we along with every other local
18 authority I am sure have queried the lack of funding and this is with the LGMA for
19 consideration.

20
21 Just to go to the rationale for the LCSPs. The Department of Justice developed the
22 new Community Safety Policy based on a key principle identified in the 2018 report
23 by the Commission on the Future Policing in Ireland. The report identified that
24 policing is not the responsibility of An Garda Síochána alone and that a strategic
25 partnership approach, which brings together a range of service providers and the
26 community, will have a significant impact on helping people be and feel more secure
27 in their communities. So this new community safety approach goes far beyond the
28 traditional policing response and requires all relevant state bodies and voluntary
29 organisations to work together in. This new partnership approach is being
30 introduced to encourage greater community participation and empowerment.

31
32 Can you hear me okay? Yes.

33
34 So there are nine guiding principles for the LCSPs. Number one: A

1 whole-of-Government approach to focus all involved services on community safety,
2 particularly on prevention and early interventions. Collaboration and partnership:
3 Community organisations and Government agents should work together in
4 partnership with the local community to prioritise and address issues in their own
5 area. Harm prevention: Address the root causes of crime and address the key
6 underlying issues. Number 4, targeted support for disadvantaged communities: A
7 primary goal of the LCSPs should be to provide more targeted and effective support
8 to the most disadvantaged communities. A participative approach: LCSPs should
9 develop processes and mechanisms to support meaningful consultation, inclusion
10 and participation of the community in all its diversity. Social inclusion:
11 Marginalised and disadvantaged communities should have a strong voice in this
12 partnership and should be reflected in the membership.
13 Accountability: The service providers should be accountable to the community for
14 fulfilling the agreed upon-actions within the community safety plan. LCSPs must
15 hold themselves as a collective, member organisations and other stakeholders
16 accountable for the delivery of these actions. Section 118 of the Act sets out the
17 statutory duties required of the public service bodies in relation to the community
18 safety elements. It should be an evidence-based approach to ensure that all decisions
19 and actions are guided by evidence as well as input of community members. Respect
20 and recognition and experience of contribution of all members.

21
22 Next slide, please. So this, it's a bit hard to read, that gives you the overall structure
23 of what our LCSP will look like. If you move on to the next slide please. So this
24 breaks it down further. So there will be a maximum of 30 members. The pilot
25 schemes had 32, I think they are reforming now to have 30 members each.

26 Twenty-one of these 30 members are mandated as follows: 4 residents, 4 local
27 community representatives, both business and an educational representative, and
28 public service providers, which would be including the HSE, Tusla and An Garda
29 Síochána. These members will be nominated by those service providers to the
30 National Office, and those nominated will be high-ranking at decision-making level.
31 I think the National Office has already called on those service providers to make
32 their nominations directly to them and hopefully we will be hearing in the coming
33 months who will be allocated to our partnership.

34 MR NICHOLSON: Sorry, Patricia, can I just jump in there? Sorry, we're under

1 fierce pressure to get the agenda finished by half because we can't get a second time
2 extension. Can I skip to the most important slide? We need seven elected members
3 to sit on this new partnership. Now, the Act makes reference to a geographical
4 spread across the county. The suggestion we're going to come to - and it is only our
5 discussion, it's your decision - is one member per each MD, a second member from
6 Bray to reflect the two wards, and a second member from the west for the sheer size
7 of the area in the west. Our suggestion would be seven: One per MD, a second one
8 from Bray and a second one from the west because it is roughly half the county. So
9 that is what we would like the members to agree today, and we will put it on your
10 MD agendas in September and come back here then in October for allocation. That
11 is if you agree. It is entirely up to yourselves but that's what we would propose, if
12 you agree with that. And then we will post out the presentation to you so you can
13 more carefully come back with any queries. I am getting funny looks here from the,
14 Cathaoirleach.

15 MS CARMODY: That is okay. I am happy with that. Does that have to be
16 proposed and seconded?

17 MR NICHOLSON: If you agree with that, a proposer and seconder --

18 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Just on a point of clarification.

19 MR NICHOLSON: Yes.

20 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I am just curious.

21 MS O'GORMAN: Yeah, I know what you are going to ask.

22 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I am kind of a curious person. There was, an interview
23 process took place with great rí rá, roola boola, so I am just reading stuff in the
24 script, what's going on?

25 MS O'GORMAN: Okay. Look, not the issue of Catherine or any of the team here.
26 So at a national level a decision was taken to have a recruitment process for chairs of
27 these, and then it transpired that there was no provision in legislation to gift the
28 Minister that opportunity, so we're gone back to basics on it.

29 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: What does that mean?

30 MS O'GORMAN: The torture that you went through, Tom, was unnecessary.

31 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: No, I quite enjoyed it.

32 MS O'GORMAN: But it was unnecessary. The nomination, the group itself will
33 nominate a chair.

34 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I didn't have any high expectations because of my

1 reputation and my habit of speaking up.

2 MR NICHOLSON: What happened is, when the 30 members are formed,
3 councillor, they will elect a chair, a vice chair from amongst the floor.

4 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: So it is a whole different ball game?

5 MR NICHOLSON: Yes. Absolutely.

6 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: So I went through a --

7 MR NICHOLSON: Well, as you know, councillor, legislation often changes, it goes
8 through the various houses, and this changed.

9 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Yeah.

10 MS O'GORMAN: You can sue for personal distress, Councillor Fortune!

11 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Anyway, looking at the structure, yeah, I wish them
12 luck.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: And by no means was I trying to rush that on. If you could
14 email that out to everybody.

15 MS CARMODY: Yeah. There's additional information on there that I will email
16 tomorrow.

17 MR NICHOLSON: Can you agree, are you happy with our approach?

18 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: I propose it.

19 MR NICHOLSON: Thank you.

20 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: You might ask the Minister or somebody in authority
21 to have the manners to come back to the people they interviewed in some kind of
22 cordial way.

23 MS O'GORMAN: I apologise for that. They undertook to write to all the
24 councillors because I said I wasn't doing it because it wasn't my service.

25 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: It sounds already Mickey Mouse I have to say, the way
26 they're gone about it.

27 MS CARMODY: Hopefully not. Thank you.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Patricia. If anyone when they get the presentation
29 then in email, if they have any queries to then come back. We have it.

30 MS CARMODY: There is additional information. And I have it in red what has
31 been added to it. Thank you.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. So the next item on the agenda then is the
33 consideration of the re-establishment of the Protocol Committee. So Helen has
34 prepared some work on this.

1 MS PURCELL: Yes. So, at the last meeting the members will recollect we were
2 asked to consider the re-establishment of the Protocol Committee, and we undertook
3 to list it as an agenda item. I am very conscious that some of the members may not
4 be familiar with the Protocol Committee, what it was and what its role was, so I have
5 put together just some basic detail there that went out to you with the agenda telling
6 you how the membership was made up, when the meetings took place, how long
7 they took, who was present, and then some previous agenda items. So basically,
8 very basically, the role of the Protocol Committee was to deal with civic receptions,
9 award ceremonies, training, new circulars, members' expenses, attendance on
10 twinning and foreign trips, applications to put up the flag and to light up our Council
11 Buildings in different colours. There were 15 members. We met in theory at 5
12 o'clock. As you can see, this meeting has been extended, so it was often half past 5
13 or 6 o'clock when we'd meet. And I would be in attendance as the meetings
14 administrator but none of the rest of the management team would be. There is no
15 legislative requirement to have a Protocol Committee, and the duties of the Protocol
16 Committee have been brought into the CPG and they're dealing with those issues
17 now. I did a quick poll of the country with other meetings administrators. Very few
18 that replied. Cavan and Tipperary being the exception have protocol committees,
19 and they deal with civic receptions, award ceremonies and official openings. But it
20 is entirely up to the members, if they wish to have a Protocol Committee absolutely
21 no problem and we can do that. So it is a matter for yourselves to decide.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Behan, you wanted to come in on this.

23 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yeah. Look, because of the pressure of time,
24 Cathaoirleach, I don't think we should have a long discussion on it. I think we
25 should just defer it; maybe give people time to consider what Helen has produced. I
26 am conscious of the fact that at this hour of the day for members, and in fairness for
27 Helen or whatever official is in her place, it is quite a burden to be having to attend a
28 further meeting at that time. So I am quite happy to defer it for now anyway and
29 maybe we can look at that again in the future.

30 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: I second is that.

31 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Because I am conscious of the fact that people are waiting
32 for the motion to be discussed as well.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Absolutely. Yeah. I was going to suggest that. And quite a
34 few members have left. So if we can defer it and have a proper discussion in

1 September. So you're proposing it, and Councillor O'Brien is seconding it. I am
2 very aware of the patience of the people in the gallery waiting on the motion. The
3 next item was correspondence. Is there any correspondence, Helen?

4 MS PURCELL: Just to say to the members that the Guidelines for Interaction with
5 Tobacco Industry 2025 were circulated to all the members by email by Teresa.
6 That's all.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Great. Thank you. So a leads us on to the notice of motion.
8 And again, I just want to thank the people in the gallery for their patience in waiting
9 for this. So the notice of motion in the name of Councillor Caroline Winstanley,
10 proposer, seconded by Councillor Tom Fortune and supported by Councillors Danny
11 Alvey and Mark Barry. So Helen is going to read out the motion now.

12 MS PURCELL: "It has now been a year since Ireland officially recognised the State
13 of Palestine, and nearly two years since the beginning of Israel's ongoing military
14 campaign in Gaza. In light of this, Elected Members of Wicklow County Council
15 call upon the Chief Executive of the Council to write to the Government on our
16 behalf, urging immediate and decisive action. We request that the Government act to
17 end the facilitation and sale of Israel Bonds under its authority, and that the Central
18 Bank of Ireland cease all regulatory oversight of these financial instruments, which
19 currently supports continued violence and destruction. Continued regulation and
20 facilitation of these bonds represents not only a moral failure but also a clear
21 violation of Ireland's legal obligations under the UN Convention on the Prevention
22 and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, International Human Rights Law, and
23 Countering the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) legislation. As a nation that upholds a
24 position of military neutrality, Ireland must not be complicit in enabling financial
25 mechanisms that fund or support potential war crimes. Unless there is an immediate
26 and verifiable ceasefire, the sale and regulation of Israel Bonds must end. We urge
27 the Irish Government to take a stand and to ensure that our country plays no role in
28 facilitating further violence or injustice in the region."

29

30 That is a matter for the members to decide. There is no response from the chief
31 executive. Thank you.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Winstanley. Councillor Gerry O'Neill was first.
33 Councillor Winstanley speaks as it's her motion, so then I will bring you in after that
34 if that is okay, Gerry. I will bring you in after this.

1 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Sorry?

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Winstanley as it is her motion speaks.

3 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: I am not going to hog the floor because I think
4 that is a very comprehensive description in the motion and I want other people to
5 have the opportunity to speak.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Councillor O'Neill.

7 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I just want to fully support
8 Councillor Winstanley's motion. I did propose something similar myself there last
9 month. But in November 2023, a month into this crisis in Gaza, I did propose that
10 the Israeli ambassador should be removed from Ireland, and I didn't get the support
11 of the chamber, including Social Democrats. However, better late than never. I
12 support this. The raising of 2 billion through our Central Bank in the last two years
13 to finance Israel and the slaughter of the people in Gaza is revolting. So I would
14 fully support the motion. Thank you.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Neill. Councillor Fortune.

16 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yeah, I second the motion.
17 Like Councillor Winstanley, the motion speaks for itself. I fully support what's gone
18 forward.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Fortune. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

20 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. And I want to
21 commend the councillors involved in submitting this very important motion. The
22 devastation over in Palestine is unbelievable and probably harks back to World War
23 Two with the buildings being absolutely demolished and these poor people out in the
24 elements. And I know that this country will step up to the mark in terms of
25 humanitarian aid. And I just hope that -- we already have, and we are expected to
26 take more Palestinians in, male and female children, and I just hope that the usual
27 rhetoric doesn't start; unvetted. That we take them in and look after them and we do
28 what we have always done, and that is have a big heart and an open mind. I
29 wholeheartedly welcome this motion and support it and condemn the actions of
30 Israel. Thank you.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Brien. Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

32 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks again to
33 the proposer and seconder of the motion. I think it is really important that we
34 understand what it means when our Central Bank facilitates the approval of Israeli

1 bombs, and what it really means is that we are complicit. And if we had to -- if I had
2 to explain complicity to somebody in terms of the most brutal and indiscriminate
3 ethnic cleansing of our generation, the only way I can explain it in layman's terms is,
4 it is almost like giving the car keys to someone who's drunk and then saying it's
5 nothing to do with you when they kill someone on the way home. And I think we
6 have to unpack the significance of what some people might say, well, it's the rules,
7 it's the regulations, we've got to do what we're told. Because quite literally, if we're
8 facilitating the sale of bombs does that mean that we facilitated the purchase of the
9 Merkava tanks, of the 335 bullets that riddled the Hyundai Picanto when a family
10 was trying to get out of an area that's unsafe, or the bullets that destroyed the Red
11 Crescent ambulance that tried to go and save a five-year-old girl who's stuck in a car
12 with all her dead relatives around her? Are we complicit in -- and that's what's at
13 stake as far as I am concerned, Cathaoirleach. And obviously our Government and
14 those in those positions in the Dáil didn't have the moral courage to support the
15 motions in that arena and I really hope we do here. Thanks very much.

16 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Hear-hear.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Brien. Councillor Snell.

18 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Yeah, thanks, Cathaoirleach. I suppose having said on the
19 East Coast Radio show three weeks into this bombardment and I described it as all
20 the hallmarks of genocide, that people that was on the show with me seemed to
21 dispute that at the time, and I'd ask them to reconsider their stance at that time now.
22 The reality is that the world is watching, and we can do very little other than use our
23 voices. And I certainly wouldn't be doing the dirty bidding of Netanyahu. Yes,
24 Ireland is very welcoming, we are a welcoming nation, but the Palestinian people
25 shouldn't have to leave their homeland to come to Ireland to seek refuge. They
26 should be left well enough alone in their own land and have the protection of the
27 world. And unfortunately we have the USA backing up Israel in everything that they
28 are doing. And it is an absolute utter disgrace that men, women and children are
29 being blown to smithereens in front of the world and yet there's people in authority,
30 people in power, who refuse to back a simple call. Twice we called for the expulsion
31 of the Israeli ambassador from Ireland, and it wasn't supported within this Council
32 chambers at that time. Twice.

33 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Hear-hear.

34 COUNCILLOR SNELL: I'm glad people now have finally found a backbone and

1 are waking up to what unfortunately is a genocide in front of our eyes. It is utterly
2 disgraceful. And I want to support this fully. And I want to say that this has been
3 pushed through many councils. This is not just happening in Wicklow; this motion
4 has gone through many councils throughout Ireland. And I have no doubt that the
5 Irish nation will do what they always do, and they will rise up as they have been and
6 support this motion but support the people, more importantly support the people in
7 any which way you can. And I call on the people in this chambers who are in
8 Government parties to go and ask them to do more. We're not doing enough. Do
9 more. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Snell. Councillor Danny Alvey.

11 COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I will be just really brief because
12 I'm conscious it is 5.33; we've gone over time. I just wanted to welcome the support
13 from everybody for this motion here today. Look, I have always looked back on
14 history and wondered how the people of the day let such war crime tragedies happen
15 right in front of them, but here we are in 2025 and we're all watching it on the
16 television in front of us every single day. So we just have to keep speaking out on
17 this in every single form that we have, and we have to take every step we can to
18 show the world this is not acceptable. So Ireland refusing to be a facilitator for
19 Israeli war bombs is just another opportunity for us to take that act of defiance and
20 we would call on the Government to hear this message. And I would appreciate
21 everybody's support for the motion. Thank you.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Alvey. There's no other speakers and
23 I don't think there's any dissent, so I think the motion is carried then. Thank you. Is
24 everyone agreed? (Agreed.) Thank you. Thank you to the councillor for bringing it.
25 (Applause.)

26
27 So that brings us to the end of our meeting. Thank you all for your patience. There
28 was a lot covered. I hope you all have a lovely summer, you all have a chance to
29 have a break, and I look forward to seeing you in September. Thank you.

30
31 (Meeting concluded at 5.34 pm)
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