

ORDINARY MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

HELD AT

COUNTY BUILDINGS, WHITEGATES, WICKLOW TOWN  
AND VIA TEAMS

ON

ON MONDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 2:00 PM

STENOGRAPHER: Niamh Kelly-Leahy, RMR, CRR, MBIVR

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CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay everybody. I think we will get started. You are all very welcome here to our meeting. I will hand it over to Helen now to do the roll call.

MS PURCELL: Thanks. I would just like to welcome everybody to the meeting, the people who are remote and people who are present, to the Cathaoirleach and our presenters. If anybody has any issues with their sound or with their connectivity, please contact myself or Teresa and we will make sure you get back into the meeting as soon as possible, particularly when it comes to the votes, if there are any votes.

I will now do a roll call. Councillor Tommy Annesley.

COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry.

COUNCILLOR BARRY: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Joe Behan.

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Vincent Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Sylvester Bourke.

COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Present.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Present. Councillor Melanie Corrigan. Sends her apologies, sorry. Councillor Avril Cronin.

COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Shay Cullen.

COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Erika Doyle.

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gail Dunne.

COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Anne Ferris. Councillor Pat Fitzgerald.

COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy.

COUNCILLOR FLYNN KENNEDY: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Tom Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Patsy Glennon.

COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mary Kavanagh.

COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Here.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Kennedy.

COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard.

COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Grace McManus.

COUNCILLOR: Here.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell.

COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Here.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor John Mullen.

COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Miriam Murphy.

COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Anseo.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Rory O'Connor.

COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry O'Neill. Councillor Lourda Scott.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell. Councillor Stephen Stokes.  
Councillor Edward Timmins.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Here.

MS PURCELL: Present. Councillor Gerry Walsh.

COUNCILLOR WALSH: Present.

MS PURCELL: And Irene Winters.

COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Present.

MS PURCELL: Present. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. So I will now open it up to the floor for votes of sympathy. Councillor Erika Doyle.

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to propose a vote of sympathy for the late Sinéad O'Connor. I think there's probably not much to be said that hasn't been said in the last couple of months about Sinéad's contribution, immense contribution, not just to the Arts but just to the progression of Irish society. A lot of things have happened in the last 20 or 30 years due to Sinéad's bravery that I think probably wouldn't have happened or would have taken a lot longer. We know that Sinéad's house in Bray, obviously, has been featured in the media in recent months, but we know that Sinéad of course had associations and homes elsewhere in the county as well, and still has family.

Cathaoirleach, you kindly responded very quickly to calls to open a book of condolence and that has been given to Sinéad's family, but I would like it here on the record that we offer our sympathies to Sinéad's family, to her father, John, to her sister and her brothers, to her children, Jake, Róisín and Yeshua, and her blended and extended family, friends and everybody who loved her. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

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

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I just want to offer my condolences on the sad passing of Jimmy Balbontin, a native of Chile but has lived in Wicklow Town all of my lifetime anyway. And although he has no family here in the immediate vicinity, he certainly has a wider family in his charitable works with the RNLi and the Wicklow Lions Club and I know they sadly miss him and my condolences to all of them and his family back in Chile. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Edwards Timmins.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Briefly I would like to propose a vote of sympathy for Mary Barrett from Lathaleere, Baltinglass. She passed away after a short illness there on Friday. She has relations who worked with the Council, her father was a previous employee with the County Council.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Pat Kennedy.

COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to pass a vote of sympathy to the Nicholl family, a young man who was killed beside me in Rathdrum only two weeks ago. A young man of 26. And also to the family of a Polish man who was killed in Rathnew about four weeks back. I would also like to acknowledge the support and the work of the emergency services in this county, not only the Council staff who were out, but also the fire staff and all the senior staff who was involved and was at the end of a phone to help out for both of those accidents. I would like to acknowledge all of them. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor, and well said.

Councillor Patsy Glennon.

COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would just like

to include Rosanna Byrne who died and was buried during the week. Rosanna was a great community activist in the Hollywood area. She raised funds for the nation school and it was extended many years ago. She would have been one of the principal people involved in that. She was a great community person. She ran Rosanna's Guesthouse on the N81, I am sure most of you know it. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. I just want to offer sympathies to Superintendent Pat Collins on the passing of his mother. I will hand it over now, Helen.

MS PURCELL: We also extend our sympathies to the families of Charles Scales, father of our colleague Ricky Scales; Frank Murphy, brother of our colleague Christine Flood; and Joe Lennon our former colleague in the Coolboy area.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We will just stand up now.

MS PURCELL: May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed to the mercy of God, rest in peace.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Members, I am just going to draw people's attention to the Cathaoirleach's reception that we have this evening for Christina Fitzpatrick and the members of the Dolphin Club and others arriving, that is at half five. We also have the protocol committee. We have a packed agenda and some members coming to speak as well. So I am just advising people that it would be unlikely that we can extend the meeting because of that Cathaoirleach reception. I hope people will understand that I don't want to delay that group at all.

So we will get started then on item number 1. To confirm and sign the minutes of the ordinary meeting that Wicklow County Council held on Monday 3rd July 2023. Proposed by Councillor Irene Winters, seconded by Councillor Pat Kennedy. Thank you. All

agreed? (Agreed)

Item number 2, to consider disposal of 0.08494 hectares or thereabouts, in the townland of Baltinglass East, comprised of Folio No. ww9332 County Wicklow, being the land adjacent to 5 Parkmore, Baltinglass, County Wicklow by deed of transfer to Pascal and Ellen O'Neill as per the notes previously circulated. Do I have a proposer and seconder? Councillor Edward Timmins.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Proposed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Do I have a seconder?

COUNCILLOR: I second it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Vincent Blake. Is that agreed? (Agreed).

Item number 3, to consider the disposal of 0.0141 hectares or 0.0349 acres or thereabouts, in the townland of Kilcoole adjacent to Kilcoole Playground, Kilcoole, County Wicklow comprised on Folio No ww42413 to G.M.R. & S. Clements as per notice previously circulated. Do I have a proposer and a seconder? Proposed by Councillor Tom Fortune and seconded by Councillor Lourda Scott. Is that agreed? (Agreed.) Thank you.

Item number 4, to consider the disposal of 0.0266 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Abbeylands, County Wicklow comprised in Folio No. ww4065 County Wicklow being the property known as 3 O'Connell Terrace, Arklow, County Wicklow by transfer order to Ms Lisa Ryan, executrix of 3 O'Connell Terrace, Arklow, County Wicklow, the person entitled to the freehold interest in the property as per notice previously circulated.

Do I have a proposer and a seconder? Proposed by Councillor Pat Fitzgerald and seconded by Councillor Tommy Annesley. Is that agreed? (Agreed)

Item number 5, to consider the disposal of 511.87 m<sup>2</sup>, 0.051187 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Rathdown Lower, Greystones Harbour adjacent to the slipway to Office of Public works for development of Coast Guard Station, as per the notice previously circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Gerry Walsh. Seconded by Councillor Derek Mitchell. Is that agreed? (Agreed) Agreed thank you.

Item number 6, to consider the disposal of 0.082 hectares or thereabouts, in the townland of Dunlavin Upper, Wicklow, comprised in part of Folio WW115F and part of Folio No. WW45433F County Wicklow, being part of the land known as Chapel Manor, Dunlavin County Wicklow to DL Residential Properties Limited at Chapel Manor, Dunlavin, County Wicklow as per the notice previously circulated. Do I have a proposer? Councillor Avril Cronin. And seconder, Councillor Patsy Glennon. Is that agreed? (Agreed)

Item number 7, to consider the disposal of 1.82 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Lathaleere, Baltinglass, County Wicklow, comprised in Folio No. 5663 County Wicklow, being the property known as Lathaleere, Baltinglass, County Wicklow, by lease for a term not exceeding three years. The lease commencement date will be the date of the lease agreement by ending no later than the 31st of March 2027 to the Minister for Children, Equality Disability, Integration and Youth, as per notice previously circulated.

Do I have a proposal and a seconder? Councillor Paul O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: I am looking for a clarification before I say anything more, to be quite honest with you. I understand there is contention over this and I want to know before I say anything more that in order to facilitate a conversation about this debate, does it need to be proposed?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes. In order for us to -- what we would do is, we would look for a proposer and a seconder, then see if there is any dissent and if there is dissent then we open it up to the floor for wider discussion on it.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: In order to facilitate a debate and conversation I propose it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Brien. Councillor O'Connor -- he is proposing it, yes. Councillor O'Connor, are you looking to second this?

COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Yes, as long as this is opening up the debate because I have a few questions as well. I'm not sure if I will be dissenting or not, it depends on the answers to the questions really.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. So are you seconding it?

Councillor O'Connor, just to confirm, you are seconding the proposal? Yes.

COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Yes.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Perfect. Okay. We have a proposer and a seconder. I suspect there is some dissent in the room. Is that correct? Can I now open it up to the floor for discussion. So Councillor Edward Timmins.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Yes. There's dissent and deep opposition to this all over the place. I just want to make a proposal that we put this back to the Municipal District for their recommendation

and we are guided by a recommendation coming from the MD.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

MS PURCELL: Can I just clarify that there isn't the option in the legislation to defer the motion once it is on the agenda today. So a decision must be taken either for or against. The legislation is very clear on it. The local authority resolves by virtue of (b) that the disposal shall not be carried out, it shall not be carried, or 183(d) if the local authority does not pass a resolution pursuant to paragraph (b), the disposal may be carried out. So it is either in favour or against. The legislation is silent on deferral. It can't be deferred.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks for that clarity, Helen. Councillor Irene Winters.

COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. We had said here every time we have this, there is a breakdown in communication, chat, and people don't feel that they're getting all of the full facts and everything, that things will improve. Well, this is another example of where things didn't improve. My understanding is that this was discussed at the Municipal District level in July. There were a lot of questions asked. There was great dissent and none of the questions that were asked by the six members at the time have been answered, and we're in September. So it is very hard to sit here and vote for something today when we know that the six members from the Municipal District have raised valid questions that the officials have chosen not to respond to. It puts everybody in a terrible situation. It's probably stuff that's needed. But if we can't have full and frank and open discussion and information in relation to things, it's very hard to support them. Because why, why is there no -- why was the information not forthcoming? Why were the questions that

the councillors from the Municipal District asked not answered prior to today's meeting when the vote is to be taken? So for that reason I am going to have to vote against it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. I am going to let you back in Councillor Timmins, I just have Councillor Doyle in front of you if that is okay. Councillor Erika Doyle.

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. So just for the benefit of all of us who are maybe, you know, quite far removed from that district, could we have maybe somebody on the Executive explain exactly what is being proposed here? As I understand it, it is family hubs for Ukrainian families. So it is essentially shelter, basic accommodation for families who are fleeing from war. And I suppose what I would like to know as well is, if this doesn't go ahead and if we do decide as a local authority collectively to refuse to provide this accommodation for Ukrainian families fleeing from war, what is the benefit to the community in West Wicklow? You know, is it a case of either/or? Is it a case that if we do refuse to give basic shelter to people who are fleeing war, does the community get something else instead or does nothing happen? I suppose I am just looking to weigh up what exactly happens when we make that decision to refuse basic shelter to people who are fleeing war. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Doyle. I am going to let Councillor Timmins in first and then I will ask the officials to answer some of the questions that have been raised.

Councillor Timmins.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Thanks. Thanks, Chairman. Just a few fundamental points here. I have made this at our local district meeting several times, I made them publicly. I made them down here with the current CEO started back in March. There's a couple

of really fundamental flaws in how this whole process was conducted. The first we knew about these possible sites was when we spotted diggers on the site last December. Apparently the previous April 2022, the officials received some correspondence from the Department looking for sites to be identified. We had no knowledge of this by the way. The officials apparently wrote back to say they picked out two particular sites. They also told us that they had identified five sites in the county and these were sites that were not zoned for housing. That was the criteria; that the sites would be built on Council land that is not zoned for housing. The sites that were initially considered by the Council were Blessington Dunlavin, Baltinglass, Carnew, Barndarrig, four in our district. I then asked the question were other sites considered or other possible Council sites, and I was told, and I'll say this very specifically, I was told there was no other sites available that weren't zoned for housing. I then did a bit of mini research and I discovered that the Council own sites that are not zoned for housing all over the county, and I brought this back, that information, and it was dismissed. I then did something I never did before in my 19 years in the Council, I put in a Freedom of Information request and I asked what sites do Wicklow County Council own. I got back a massive big list, a big spreadsheet of all the sites the Council own up to 2020, or whatever. And I sorted it by size, just on an Excel spreadsheet, and I came up with 137 sites that were greater than 4.5 acres. And the reason I pick 4.5 acres was because that was the size of the site at Baltinglass and that was about 4 acres, and for sure a lot of them are not suitable. By god, 10, 20, 30 certainly could have been considered. So the whole process was immediately flawed. And we were misled. We were told these were the only

possible sites. So I felt I was treated with contempt and fellow councillors treated with contempt. The second point -- and that is so fundamental in how business is done here today. If we vote for this, we are voting for a continuation of that carry on and that business.

The second really fundamental point: Early in 2022 I made a proposal at the county development planning stage to zone that 4.5 acres for consideration for a sports centre, because there is a lot of demand around the town for a sports centre. A really successful basketball club, kids coming from Carnew, from Blessing to play, other sports clubs in the town with no sports facilities. A group of them approached me and I then contacted the planners and agreed the wording with the senior planners in relation to the development plan as to what would be appropriate for the site. We came up with the wording, came before the full Council and it was agreed unanimously, by all members, to put this zoning in for a possible sports centre. This was early 2022, before the Council received the letter. Obviously it wasn't ratified under the Council Development Plan that was finalised in October 2022, but it was there. It was flagged. Now, when I looked at the colour zoning of the map it didn't show, the colour wasn't correct. So my guess is the Council didn't realise that this had been zoned for sports at the time of the submission, but it was clearly there in the matrix that it was up for consideration to be a sports centre. So to submit that as a possible site for modular homes was totally inappropriate given there's no sports centres in the town. The only clubs that have places is the GAA has a few pitches and the soccer clubs leases some lands from the Council. This was a badly needed facility not just for Baltinglass, but for

the wider wicklow area.

In relation then to the site at Dunlavin, anyone who knows Dunlavin, Dunlavin has no public transport. None. There's a little connect bus that goes to Newbridge once a week for shopping. No public transport. Really poorly served infrastructure.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Councillor Timmins, I am going to get you to stick to the Baltinglass, because we are going to come to Dunlavin separately, if that is okay.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Okay.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Okay, just to finish: My two fundamental points, the process for picking this site was so wrong, so flawed. Secondly, to pick one that was zoned, that we all agreed was zoned for a sports centre. The other side is, this is not about refugees or opposing refugees. Baltinglass, you will see on the manager's report, it has the second highest number of Ukrainians in the district. Baltinglass Town, I know it well, it has quite a large number who have integrated into the town, really well. No problems, they help with the Tidy Towns. No issues whatsoever. We'd 17 asylum seekers put into the town a year ago, many Syrian families in the town. The Baltinglass people, easy-going, ordinary people, don't object and are not militant at all. They fitted in, things have gone really well and things have carried on fine. No serious objection. And Baltinglass has taken quite a large number. So to say that we are -- you know, I don't want this to be painted at all that we are anti refugees, anti Ukrainians. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Baltinglass was one of the first towns in Ireland to take refugees

back in 1999 when the Kosovars came and stayed in the old convent which is now owned by a housing body, and a lot of those Kosovars are still in the town. I am friends with some of them, they stayed there. There is no anti-immigration feeling whatsoever in the town. They were all welcomed, integrated and happily so far, and please God that will continue for evermore. But actions like this by the Council feeds into the narrative of saying why is this happening and can lead to resentment. The way this is done is just so, so wrong and I don't know, I have spoken on many things here over my 19 years but this is really up there, probably at the top with what I think is a decision made so wrong, so unfairly and councillors treated with contempt.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I am going to allow Councillor O'Connor in there because he has been waiting.

COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Thank you very much, Chair. I have been reading over documents we got. I have slight confusion over them because within the email it said, also the email we got, it said that it would be solely for Ukrainian, this accommodation. I am curious that if the war ends within the three years, are those going to stay empty then since within the terms it's only for Ukrainians, we won't be able to put people on the social housing list in those houses? Because I'd hate to see buildings be put to waste. From my understanding, these houses after the three years, during a housing crisis would be potentially ripped down, which I find it hard to fathom during a housing crisis to think about building houses and ripping them down so quickly. There is just some confusion over it altogether really. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. So I am just going to -- I know Breege is going to cover about zoning but, Chief Executive, if you want to come in here.

MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thank you, Members. Just I suppose in terms of the broader heads of terms of the proposed disposal to the Department. It is a three-year lease and during the lifetime of that lease it is solely for the purpose of the Ukrainian population. The sites will be serviced. If the proposal goes ahead, the sites will be serviced, the units, the modular homes will be on site. At the end of the term of the lease an agreement has to be reached between the Council and the Department as to what is to be done with those modular units. So if the Council were decide that a site was suitable for housing and it was beneficial for housing to remain there, then the Council could make that decision. But for the purpose of this disposal, the proposed disposal and the terms of the lease it is solely for the Ukrainian population. I think Councillor Doyle asked a question what's the community benefit, plus or minus, if this goes ahead or doesn't go ahead. There is an objective and Breege will clarify that in the development plan about the potential of the site for Baltinglass to be used for a sports facility, and you will have seen in my correspondence to all the members that I committed putting that into the capital plan. It isn't currently in the capital plan so regardless of any decision that is made here today, that commitment will stand. It will go into the Council plan for the consideration for the development of a site there.

I am going to ask both, I will start with Joe around the discussion around site selection and then Breege will clarify on zoning and on the MD meeting that was held in July.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Use the mic there Joe, thanks.

MR LANE: Just to go back to April 2022, we had just completed the housing delivery plan. We got a letter, we received the

correspondence on 1st April 2022 it was part of the humanitarian response for people arriving from the Ukraine. At the time there was a lot of issues and there was a lot of urgency involved. The correspondence dated 1st April required the identification of a suitable site for the development of housing. It was part of a coordinated multifaceted approach which involved short, medium and long-term solutions. So people can go back and remember where we were. The short-term solution, as people will remember, Arklow with the emergency accommodation; we had medium-term solutions which was adaption of buildings, institution buildings and they were in both Wicklow and throughout the place; and then the long-term solution was to attempt to put modulars in place and to identify sites.

One of the clear criteria that was marked on it was that it should not be in any housing scheme, in fact any land that was on the housing delivery plan. And going back to one of the lands that were mentioned there, Barndarrig, at the time which was in April, March/April, the Barndarrig site wasn't on our housing development plan. The minute it did we removed it. That is why the Barndarrig one was the one that wasn't in the Baltinglass area. It was removed. Because once it came on the housing delivery plan, it didn't stay on this scheme.

So we had a timeframe of the 1st April to, I think, the 14th or 17th of April. So the 14th, because of the amount of urgency involved, when we were requested, we the housing sectioned it and that is why a trawl, in that period a trawl of the whole, which the Council did under FoI, wasn't done of the whole building; it was what was on our radar, what ones we had looked at, not looked

at in the context of the housing construction. So, yes, there were economic, there were other developments in all areas that could have been included. But at the time we had 14 days, it was what we had basically on our radar and they were the sites at the time that we had. Again, there's no conspiracy. They satisfied the criteria.

Again on the other issue of the next sites available, we gave a view. Like I said, the Barndarrig was removed. I reviewed the Blessington one myself after the PPP because we had been asked do a master plan, and at this stage it wasn't in line with what the members wanted to have as master plan and then put it into this, so we just gave it space. We sent them in. The Department whittled them down and then they asked to do site investigation. So that was the situation there.

As regards the small thing, the letter was quite clear, it was because the urgency, it included zoned lands, on lands that weren't zoned that were available. They were the criteria that we used. Thank you

MS KILKENNY: Okay. Good afternoon members. Just to provide clarity in relation to the planning and both sites, just to confirm for you that the Dunlavin site was zoned residential and that's currently still the state. In terms of the Baltinglass site at Lathaleere, it is zoned employment. And I think Councillor Timmins has acknowledged that even the employment zone allows development on what's called E zoned lands for open space, sport and community places, there was no objective within the County Development Plan to reserve these lands for that use insofar as there was no specific objective in relation to that. But what we would say is that employment zoned lands can allow for

sporting facilities. And just in relation to the proposal that is before you at the moment, it is for three years to allow for the emergency for the Ukrainian accommodation. After that, any proposal coming in, in relation to the development of that site for sporting, or other, is absolutely on the cards. It's not that it's gone. And, you know, there would be provision there. And I think one of the items that Joe has actually secured in relation to the proposal before people today is that this is three years only. There's no extension beyond that. Joe might clarify that as well. There's no extension. It's three years for the Ukrainian emergency situation.

With regard to Councillor Winters' query there in terms of the questions, just in terms of my own efforts as far as being the Baltinglass District Manager, on both occasions I had requested from the Department of Children and they did come down and they specifically spoke to the members and insofar as possible could try and address all the questions that were being asked. I think following the last meeting there was a few more questions that needed further clarification and I think those questions, my recollection is they're now included in that leaflet that's with the disposal notice today in terms of both the number of units and the correspondence with outside departments, which included the Department of Education and the Department of Health, the HSE in terms of those services. That's all I can just say in relation to that. But I would say that the Department of Children did engage with the Municipal District on two separate occasions. And I just want to acknowledge the fact that they did that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you for that, Breege. We have a couple more speakers. Can I just remind the officials and just the members as

well to just try and keep these discussions specific to item number 7, because we do have item number 8 as well which I know is very similar, but just for the purpose of people trying to vote and stuff. Brian.

MR GLEESON: Cathaoirleach, if I might come in on the FoI request and the reference to 138 sites. Just to clarify, that FoI request, the information provided by our GIS unit provided for all sites larger than 4.5 acres throughout the county. It is important to note that these included all developed and undeveloped sites. It wasn't undeveloped sites only. So just to give an example, that includes all roads that are developed, all playgrounds that are developed, all car parks that are in the county and in fact 50% of that 138 sites range to the N11 road itself. So I suppose it is not accurate to say that there was a load of free land available throughout the county and that the west was specifically picked.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: I did not say that.

MR GLEESON: I am just clarifying --

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: I did not say that. I said the vast majority would not have been suitable. So what you said is incorrect there.

MR GLEESON: Well I am just clarifying so people can understand what that list relates to. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Councillor Gerry O'Neill.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I attended a meeting this morning on Zoom. At that meeting there was a presentation by the housing section, it was regarding the tenancy and what is expected and how we intend to improve things. I just want to read one line of the bullet point, our aim, Wicklow County Council's aim, "is supporting residents associations, identifying funding

initiatives to improve social housing estates, utilising community centres, spaces within social housing estates to improve social outcomes for their tenants and children". Now, that is a big contradiction to this proposal.

Just to brief today where I am coming from is, I was contacted by a group of residents in Baltinglass some time ago, maybe three years ago actually, where the Covid situation and the open spaces in the community school were taken up by the new regulators and conditions within the school and spaces used, so they were without their basketball facilities. At that time I went to Billy Timmins and Edward, and talked about maybe getting an area of land rezoned, or whatever, in the area they would be more familiar with Baltinglass, more than I was. In fairness to Councillor Edwards, he worked on this, I supported all along. This area of land in Baltinglass where we have one hundred houses, we have part of the land zoned for the new fire station, and I again was contacted some months ago by the residents of the one hundred houses there and we tried to get a -- they tried to organise a meeting in the town and when no one was willing to facilitate a meeting room for this meeting, understandably people were anxious about what it was about, we ended up having it in a chip shop. There was about 30 people at the meeting, included in that group of people were people from the area and quite a few non-nationals who I helped and other councillors helped house. So really what I am talking about here is that we have an estate, an open space, and like that, it's been -- the rezoning is proposed to be lifted. We have a promise of three years and I can understand where management is coming from here and I know there's big pressure on, but I don't think anyone would believe that the three-year was ever -- I mean

who is going to move people out of their home in three years' time without alternative accommodation? I don't believe that. And I wouldn't have any hand, act or part in vacating people from their home of three years to put them in tents. I don't believe any of that for a minute. No matter what sort of goodwill is behind it, that won't happen. I honestly think that there is another way out of this. There's a compromise. And if we spread the load a little bit within the county, I mean we're talking about 30 housing units in Baltinglass and 38 in Dunlavin. Well, I'd favour completely you know on Council lands throughout the whole county that we put special emphasis on the people of Ukraine and people in direct provision. There are people in direct provision living in dreadful situations in the country. And to maybe get them onto the housing list rapidly and get them in there. Say, for example, there could be 20 houses built in the morning in Blessington or Baltinglass or wherever, you know that there would be a percentage, like 30% of those would be for these people that we are talking about. It would be good socially as well. It's wrong -- I'm involved in the area with refugees from Ukrainian and direct provision people, and in the boxing club and in other things around, and I don't think we should segregate them. I don't think it's going to work from a social aspect that there's 30 houses there with so-and-so people in them or 30 houses, that's wrong. I think we need it. There are plenty of local people there on the housing list, 10, 20, 15 years and why not go about building estates which would, you know, take some of the people who are on the housing list for 10 or 15 years off and house these people at the same time. I think that would be a more sensible approach than the sigma -- the same would be in Dunlavin there, you know. I don't think any councillor in the room here is

against housing people. If they need housing, they need housing. But I don't think by putting them in the one room is the way forward.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor John Mullen.

COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Again, I welcome the fact you are allowing us have a debate on this because, again, as you can see from the district councillors how seriously we are taking this since it was brought to our attention that it was almost a done deal. And how it was a communication exercise for the Department, not a consultation exercise. That has been made clear on two occasions we met the Department. And they have gone back with our questions and the last meeting, our pleadings not to do this. Because it is a system designed to undermine what has been an excellent response by both the staff in this building, the members of this Council, and more importantly, the communities of the people of Wicklow and West Wicklow, in welcoming and accommodating and integrating as best we can Ukrainian families, as Councillor Doyle said, fleeing from war. And this, what we are being asked to do today undermines that effort in my view. And I have worked since the start on this. We are the most rural district and we have the second highest accommodation in the county. That says a lot I think about the people of West Wicklow's commitment to this. But I talked to the staff at a meeting, as in staff that are hired to work with Ukrainian residents when they arrive and try and integrate them into the education system, the school system, work out language difficulties, and I asked them about this proposal that was coming from Government on housing, more permanent housing, and they were

the last to be consulted, even though they are the first people working on the ground with Ukrainian people, and they said what they told them was to avoid rural towns and villages with poor social transport and community infrastructure. I will say that again: They told them to avoid rural towns and villages with poor social transport and community infrastructure. There is no community sports hall in Baltinglass currently for a town of that size. It is true that for the three years of the County Development Plan, the three years of the County Development Plan, on several occasions we asked for land to be made available of which there is limited amount of land, publicly owned land at Baltinglass as it so happens, to be made for a community sports centre. We identified this piece of land where the new fire station is going to go. It is quite near both the primary and secondary school. It is quite near the childcare facilities, the pre-school aftercare facilities that are there. It is near the town park. It is near the playgrounds. It is the ideal location for a community sports centre.

The family hub, and I know people can get confused sometimes saying -- there's a difference between accommodation and own door accommodation which is obviously needed for the Ukrainian response, and there is also a need for family hubs, one of which we have in Arklow and Wicklow. We have no room for a family hub in west Wicklow because we can't find a site, and yet that community sports hall would be the ideal location for a family hub as part of a community sports centre in my view. We have a very dispersed rural community in west Wicklow. And like I said the response has been amazing. The Baltinglass Bulldogs were kind of leading this on the ground campaign for a community sports hall,

have actually Ukrainian members there training, but they are using the secondary school premises when the secondary school premises is available. They have nowhere else to go.

So I do think is badly thought out. We have been ignored at every stage. We have issued on several occasions our deep reservations about this, and I have to say and I am deeply conflicted about this, because I understand what elements out there will twist this to be, but that is why we asked for this not to be brought here today. It is why we ask for this to be reconsidered. It is why we ask for common sense to prevail. But unfortunately it hasn't. So I cannot support this at the moment. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Avril Cronin.

COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thanks very much. I welcome this discussion today because I think it is very important that we can finally state some facts and inform councillors from other districts about this disposal. It is very important that we remember that it is actually the disposal that we are here to talk about today.

The first I heard about any site being allocated for this type of development was when I got a call from a resident concerned as to why there was a digger in a site outside her house. From day one this process has been completely flawed. In April '22 the Council were asked for a list of sites yet we weren't told anything about this until we got calls from the public. In April '22 the Council were approached looking to identify sites. Out of all the Council owned land in Wicklow, the Council seemed to be only able identify five sites, four of which were in the Baltinglass Municipal District, the most rural MD in Wicklow and we just found out today that it took them 14 days to identify five sites. Eight months

later in December 2022 diggers were on Council land and local residents called their elected reps asking what was going on and we couldn't give them the answers because we didn't know. That same week we had a Council meeting on the Monday here. Every one of the councillors from our district were sitting in this meeting. We all spoke to the executive here and nobody came to us and told us what the plans were for these sites. But yet on the following Wednesday we were at a Baltinglass forum meeting and the issue was raised because the diggers were seen on the land. Again, we didn't know anything about it. We found out on the Thursday what was going on. So the Council had that Monday to tell us all and nobody bothered to tell us.

Since then I have contacted numerous TDs. I have contacted ministers. I have contacted the Department, and nine months on I still have not received a response. I am still waiting for replies to my emails. The chosen site in Baltinglass was zoned for a sports complex as has been outlined here today. Councillors have worked tirelessly on the County Development Plan to identify lands that they could own for such sports process. This would question the folks at the County Development Plan, the role of the councillor in the process, and the respect that Wicklow County Council have in the councillors' input on the plan. We are trying to do our job, we are representing the people that elected us, and we are doing what they wanted us to do. We have a 72-kilometre district in West Wicklow and we don't have a sports hub and now this is becoming an issue and we are under threat of losing it because of this. Thank you

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Can I start

by saying that I commend all the councillors from the west. I got to know all of them over the last number of years and they are people of integrity. I want to put it on the record here, my sincere apologies to Councillor Timmins. I missed your calls on Friday, and I did try to ring you back once. It wasn't to avoid you by the way, I want to make that clear here. I want to commend people from the west. It is obvious listening to councillors that they really have put their shoulders to the wheel when it comes to taking in refugees and Ukrainians.

Unfortunately, Cathaoirleach, we live in what can only be described as a horrible time, and we have the rise of the far right which Councillor Mullens alluded to a short time ago. I myself was verbally attacked back here at Christmas over what we went through in the Grand Hotel. I know it's different. I was told to go back to where I came from, and I am being diplomatic the way I say it. My home town. We seen the Lord Mayor of Cork attacked last week by the far right. I say again, we live in horrible times. I am not here to defend anyone. What I am hearing here today is that there has been a breakdown in communications from the executive and the councillors in the west. And I feel sorry for them. I genuinely do. It is not the right way. Councillor Cullen has stated here, when he was departing the Chair, that communication needs to improve. But what I am here today is, I am going to vote with my conscience and I will be voting and supporting these modular homes not because I want to fall out with my colleagues from the west, I have nothing but respect for them, but we are where we are here today and delaying these modular homes is not going to help the people that are going to go into them.

I was looking at RTÉ News there a short few weeks ago to see a young lady crying from the Ukraine, where her -- and I could be wrong here, but I will say a relation of hers, a new-born baby had been killed during the bombings, and I certainly don't want that on my conscience. And if we can help the Ukrainians for three years --

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Cathaoirleach, I would object to that type of language. I think that's disgusting --

CATHAOIRLEACH: I think we should let -- Councillor O'Neill, Paul O'Brien has the floor.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: I' object to that tone.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: I think I am entitled to my opinion and I am entitled to express my opinion. As I said to you, I am voting with my conscience here today. I think I am entitled to express my views on how I will be voting today. If the councillors vote against this, I am not saying they will have blood on their hands or anything like that. They are principled people that have been let down here.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Cathaoirleach, that is dreadful.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: It is not dreadful. It is the truth.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: who is the extreme right here?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Neill, he is not calling anyone extreme right.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: No I am not.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We have other speakers looking to come in, please. Councillor Walsh.

COUNCILLOR WALSH: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would express some reservation around the overall site selection process around this.

I know Councillor Timmins in with 137 sites, I know that information, that figure is in dispute. But looking at the documentation that accompanied our disposal notice here from the Department and, you know, they referred to the rapid build units, there's 38 proposed for this site, 152 people, four-person family units. We have a serviced site. Roads, footpaths, street lighting, community facilities, green spaces fully in line with national guidance, energy efficient and everything else. Look, it is wonderful. But the other reservation I would have, the information says here: "The rapid build homes have maximum lifespan of 60 years." Then they look into the possible future of these units, would it be possible to use for social housing, student accommodation, et cetera, down the road. I think overall, the commitment and plan to restore this site, having spent and invested so much money into you know the units, and restoring the units in the first place and making them such a fine facility where families will, you know, have what they require in the town. And then in three years, what do you do with these units? Where do they go? So, you know, the overall expense involved in that. So that is my query. I would say, you know, surely there's a more suitable site that where the units will be left and be it hopefully the war will not -- you know, will end and we can use. We have a housing situation, they can be put to other uses. So that is the query I would have in relation to the site selection.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Rory O'Connor.

COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Thank you for letting me back in. This is just a quick question because, in theory if the war ended next year and the Ukrainians in Wicklow returned back to the Ukraine, would the housing be empty for two years then? Because it says only for Ukrainians. And I don't know if that would be a colossal

waste of money in that sense, if that does happen, and they go back to Ukraine. It would be just a total waste. If we could get clarity on that, that would be great. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Joe Behan.

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: I will be as quick as I can. Here we go again, another example councillors kept out of the loop until the very last minute. They find out from the local community something has been done by Council. They haven't got a clue. They sit at meetings. The Chief Executive doesn't bother to tell them what's happening, over and over and over again we have this experience right across the county. I would appeal to all members to listen so carefully so what Edward and Avril have said here today because they are not people who would normally be criticising Council officials. They generally tend to be people who would see both sides of the argument. Perhaps people might say I never see the other side of the argument. I do sometimes. But I honestly feel what they have said here has been extremely eloquent and important.

Now, what I also really want to stress here is the double standards that is being applied by central government. I understand that the officials here, the Chief Executive and the directors are put under enormous pressure by central government to get something done to have some kind of semipermanent accommodation for Ukrainians because that is government policy. Officials are being basically pressurised to implement those policies. It is the very same government, the same Department of Housing that sends down regulations to us in County Wicklow that forbid local applicants in rural areas across this county to get planning permission when they need it for their own sons and

daughters.

So we have the double standard of saying, listen, we will put these developments here where there isn't even a housing zoning, no worries about whether we are going to be able to make it suitable for planning. No. Just bypass all of that. Whereas we as councillors, when we draw up our development plans and we look to have rural housing in our areas we are told no you can't do it. So there is a complete double standard from the top. I don't blame the officials they are doing their job, but we have an opportunity here to send a message back to central government to say we are not accepting being rolled over yet again for government policy that dictates to us when it suits them, to do something they want to see done because it suits some other agenda that they have. The last point and it is relevant to both, currently on our chief executive's report today, 4,500 people on our housing list at the moment of Wicklow residents, on our housing list. You never saw and we never heard any kind of emergency action being taken to ensure that the people who are homeless in our county, residents of this county are going to be fixed up with modular homes even for a year or two years or three years. And while other councillors talk about people crying in their offices and so on, I get that and I understand that, the situation in Ukraine is tragic. But I also experience young mothers particularly, distressed because of their housing situation and they seem to have no hope going forward. On that basis, Cathaoirleach, I won't be supporting either of these proposals. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Joe, do you want to come in there?

MR LANE: Yes, just three things that came up here. First of all,

answering Gerry O'Neill's question but Councillor Behan also brought up the same question regarding conflict or housing in general. And the whole process of this, one of the processes in this, and I would say one of the criteria was that it wasn't conflicted or none of the land that was included in this was to be included in -- the lands that are for housing in the housing delivery plan were not included in these schemes. And they weren't. Barndarrig was removed once we started looking at it.

From the word go we have been very careful to prevent conflict between different people who are under their own pressure, and the LCT, ACC and SPC members recently were at the centre where they saw that it was an extension. We weren't going to a situation wherein any of the people in the housing needs or the housing needs assessment or around the housing need, it was extra. This is also extra. This is not the housing section delivering this. This is the Department delivering it. We have people in Baltinglass, in particular we know the schemes we have in Baltinglass and we are delivering there. That is the first one I just wanted to say there.

The second one is something Breege said, we were very careful here and it goes back to the executive versus -- there is no room for an extension here. It is three years, section 183. That is what it is. And it is to prevent any extension or any uncertainty regarding whether there is an extension or not. If there is an extension we will be back in three years' time -- sorry, if there is a new section 183. Other than that, it is for Ukrainians only, for three years only, up to March 2027. We were just preventing

those uncertainties in assisting members in that regard. So we weren't coming in with any other motives. That clarified two of the three points.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Joe. Could you just provide clarity, Joe, in relation to Councillor O'Connor's point: If somebody was to move out of these homes just say in two years' time, would it have to be brought back to chamber again to consider the last year?

MR LANE: If we were giving it to another body. So if it was to the local authority it isn't a section 183, but it would be to us. So technically I could take for homeless but the Baltinglass one particularly, the Dunlavin is zoned -- I would have to go back. But Baltinglass at the moment we probably wouldn't be developing there anyhow because it is not zoned for housing. So that is why we were quite careful with the reinstatement. The Dunlavin ones -- sorry, we'll talk about that in the...

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes. Don't talk about Dunlavin. Just in terms of Baltinglass.

MR LANE: Baltinglass, no. We would have to zone it actually. It wouldn't be available but the pipe underneath, we might be interested in those.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Perfect. Thanks, Joe. Then the Chief Executive just on the value of money piece.

MS O'GORMAN: Yes. Just further on what Mr Lane said. The units are owned by the Department. They are for the beneficiary of temporary protection to the Ukrainian population.

Councillor O'Neill asked could we do some sort of a hybrid scheme. As it stands beneficiaries of temporary protection are not entitled to social housing under the Housing Acts. Those that are in international protection and then progress to become citizens go onto our housing list like any citizens. The units are owned

by the Department. If after two or three years there is no need for those units on the site, it is a matter for the Department how they are used again. There is, as you know, a need for student accommodation. They may well be used for social housing in the future, but at this point in time they are solely for the beneficiary of temporary protection for the Ukrainian population. They are family units. If the war ended in a year and a half and there is no need for them, that is a discussion we have with the Department about terminating their use on our land and repatriating those units if need be. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Chief Executive. I am going to take the last -- there are five speakers left, I'll take the last five speakers. Councillor Patsy Glennon.

COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I have delayed my decision on how I was going to vote on the current proposal until I heard all sides of the various argument. I thank our Chief Executive for the views and clarity she offered in recent emails and her accompanying phone call. I have no doubt that these efforts by her were well intentioned and done in the utmost good faith. Unfortunately, I am not persuaded by the chief executive's arguments. I don't believe that a fundamentally wrong process can somehow be righted or corrected in three year's time, and for us to abdicate this difficult decision today would be wrong. And it is a difficult decision, but we must make it today. Let's be honest, if these units are established and serviced on these sites I, and I suspect no one else in the chamber seriously believes that they would be decanted or vacated in three years' time. As difficult as our decision is to make here today, can you imagine the Chamber being asked in three years' time to endorse a motion to vacate or decant these two sites, as Councillor O'Neill said,

after people have made it their homes for the previous three years. I told our Chief Executive in our most recent phone call that the selection process was flawed from the outset and we have heard a good bit about that, of the five sites that were selected four of them were in our Municipal District. And in fact Mr Lane has qualified that here today in saying that he took Barndarrig and Blessington out of it. So all of them are in our Municipal District. Is it any wonder that the two sites were picked in this one Municipal District in West Wicklow? And as Councillor Cronin has said already, probably the least serviced Municipal District within it.

I am not going to repeat everything that has already been said about the process and what Councillor Edward Timmins' Freedom of Information revealed about other lands owned by Wicklow County Council other than to say this in public: If one of these two sites were in another municipal district and the allocation of sites done fairly throughout the entire county, I would have found it impossible to advocate a rejection of the two current proposals. I will go further and state this, that if these two resolutions are withdrawn today and one of the sites allocated in another municipal district, perhaps a more prosperous area like Greystones, then would I have no difficulty in West Wicklow carrying its fair share of responsibility regarding this difficult issue. No one wants to be against accommodation for displaced people but it must be done fairly throughout the county. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Miriam Murphy.

COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. A lot of things

have been said I was, you know, wanting to say. I will just say I really came back in September where I thought we had a few months there previous about lack of communication or whatever. And as Councillor Behan has just highlighted, here we start again. And to sit and look at the young people who are going to make a presentation to us very shortly, wow, isn't that an opening of what politics is all about? A sad day for us to think that our partners, our colleagues in West Wicklow again has been stepped over. How do we entice people into politics when we sit here with six councillors very well respected in their areas and the public coming up and the politicians, councillors saying I don't know anything about that? What? I don't know anything about that? That is what we are dealing with now every day in each district, not just in West Wicklow. It is in each of our districts. And we are sitting here again with lack of communication, as Councillor Winters opened up the discussion on. But can I just say, I am not -- my heart goes out to the Ukrainians, and anyone who is in this position, but let's strip it back for a minute, we have a housing crisis. We have people in all our districts who are ringing us councillors, 32 of us, who are in dire need, in real dire need. I was coming out of a shop last Saturday week, a grandmother stopped me in tears, and I mean in tears, about a grandson who has got cerebral palsy, their mother and father are carrying that child, that teenage boy up and down the stairs, every night, coming down every morning and they cannot get help from the Council. We have people who are living in dire need as well. And please, I know it is awful to make a comparison, but we have to stick up for the people who are on our housing lists.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Shay Cullen.

COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I suppose first of

all, I have listened intently to five out of six of my west colleagues councillors. I suppose I want to start off by saying I support housing and always have supported housing development but I also want to support my colleagues. I am sure other councillors feel the same way here, that this is a very, very difficult decision to make. And I have to be honest, listening to the debate, there's been a huge amount of mistakes made. There's been a lack of communication that I am not going to go into. There has been, I suppose the land in Baltinglass has been zoned for a sporting facility that doesn't seem to have been taken into consideration. There needs to be a realism around the fact that a three-year lease term doesn't make any sense. To any lay person it makes no sense. You are basically telling me that we build the houses now and in three years they're knocked down. Because I think someone of the directors there said there is no extension to this three years. But the reality is, you are not going to just take down houses after three years. Once this facility is built, if it is built, that is the end of it. It remains an estate or a Council -- maybe not Council-run estate, but it remains a housing estate for the future and anybody that thinks it isn't, is deluded. So therefore there is going to be no sporting facility on this land. It's as simple as that.

I have to ask the question of the management: why is this on the agenda today? Because it's very clear to me that my fellow colleagues in the west are totally opposed to this, not pre-empting any vote, but are totally opposed to what is being proposed, but yet the rest of us are put in a very, very difficult position to make a decision on something that our colleagues are totally opposed to and I just don't think that is right to be put

in that position.

A couple of other points I want to make is I don't necessarily agree with that it should be -- this particular housing estate should be purely or solely for Ukrainian people. I had a person recently, last week, call me that is nine years on our social housing list. And what you are doing here is creating division amongst Irish people against Ukrainian people. This should be -- the model is flawed. It should be a hybrid type scenario where you have Ukrainian people living with Irish people in the same type of estates. It shouldn't be them and us. I feel strongly on that. I think that is a point that needs to be made to the Department.

I also want to agree with Councillor Behan's point earlier about the planning system. And I represent a lot of people in rural Wicklow who really are desperate to build homes for themselves and the planning system is so difficult to navigate in terms of cost and getting planning permission. And, you know, there seems to be no concern here. We have land that is not zoned for housing but yet there's no issue in terms of water or sewerage or building houses. I find that very difficult. And again, the lay person in this county who cannot get planning permission on a rural site would be absolutely furious to see what is going on here. So to my mind the system that is being used is flawed. I have no doubt -- I agree with Councillor Timmins on this. But I also want to say to you, I want to support housing, I want to support housing right across the county but this should not have come to this meeting. It shouldn't be on the agenda in the way that it has been presented to us. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Vincent Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Look it, night after night we are very well aware of the trauma the Ukrainian people are going through, we see it on a daily basis. So anything we can do should be done to facilitate the Ukrainian people. A couple of points made earlier on there: with regard to communications, the one big issue that we have a problem with in the Council here, communications. Councillor O'Brien mentioned it on a couple of occasions over there. That is the one thing we have a problem with, communications. It leads onto what Councillor Behan as well as Councillor Cullen has said here, we want to look after the Ukrainians, but we are being asked by the general public, what are you doing for us. We come in here and make representation on behalf of some of our local people who want to build a house for themselves and are going through hoops to get a refusal after spending thousands of euro. This is where the whole aspect is manifesting itself into us and them. As much as we want to do whatever we can for Ukrainians, we also want to do it for our own people here. It has been mentioned here numerous times here as well.

As Councillor Timmins said at the outset, maybe Baltinglass was the ideal place. Why was it? I have looked after people for many years, since 1999. The first ones probably ever came in here was the Croatian people, Syrian people, Ukrainians as well.

Baltinglass has done more than its fair share over the last number of years, since 1999. Maybe that is why they were picked, they are too generous. They are too accommodating in that regard. But, look it, it is a very broad church here in terms of the problems in this Council. Communication is one of them. Looking

after our own people is the second one as well. And we do want to look after Ukrainians as well. Thank you, Chair.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Lourda Scott.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: I'll keep it brief because I know you're probably running out of time. I just have a couple of questions which I would like clarified. Just the piece on three years, Joe has been very clear in saying there is no extension to the three years allowable under this disposal notice. But if I understand correctly, though, we could be presented with a new section 183 to extend that in three years' time if need be.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes. What we are going on now is just the three years.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Yes, that is fine. But I think that needs to be clarified because we are hearing a certain message coming from the executive and there is a reality which we all understand in the room as well which is likely to happen.

My other question is: If the resolution isn't passed past, the disposal notice isn't passed today, what happens next? Does it get discussed back at municipal level? Can it be discussed back at municipal level? Will it come back to us again when there is further assurances discussed at MD? Basically, what happens? If that does happen, do we know what situation happens then in terms of Ukrainian families which would have been ring-fenced, if that is the correct word, for those modular homes in the west? My last question is, and I have absolute sympathy with the councillors, in particular the absolute dire communication that I think is evident, that has come to the west Wicklow councillors from the executive, from central government. I am not sure where the breakdown was over this, it is very clear that there has been a

break down of communication listening today, but I would like some information, one of the bones of contention seems to be, and I completely understand why, as to why land that has been identified for a sports site is being used? And I am just wondering has there been any commitment from the Council to work with west wicklow councillors and constituents to identify an alternative piece of land to rezone? Is there any workable solution around that? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. The last speaker on this matter. Councillor Mary Kavanagh.

COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: Thanks, Chair. Most points that I had have already been covered, lack of communication, lack of transparency, lack of discussion with the municipal district councils in the Baltinglass area. What I want to know is, why did the Council select a site that had been zoned for a very important community amenity? For over 20 years now, or in or around that, I'd say, west wicklow has been looking for a pool and has never had success. They got a temporary pool and all the rest of it, but they really need amenities. And to tie up that site which had been zoned for a sports community or a sports complex --

CATHAOIRLEACH: Basketball court.

COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: -- means that effectively they have lost the possibility of an amenity very close to all surrounding districts which would have serviced that whole area. So did the Council even look to an alternative before they decided to tie up this for what they say is going to be three years but which I think we all accept in reality won't be three years, it will probably just roll over to another three years, and then ad infinitum. If this is rejected today, are there options for some of the other sites that were mentioned, Council-owned sites that aren't already zoned for

development throughout the county? I mean, do we have to have 38-house and 30-house sites? Would it not be better for integrating within communities if we had smaller little developments so it wouldn't look a hived-off area for a certain section of the community, which I don't imagine is helpful or useful for anybody. So basically I am asking if this is rejected here today, are there other options going forward? And then finally, I just want to say, is it not discriminatory to build houses for a particular nationality to the exclusion of all others, including the Irish? That just doesn't sit well with me. Why exclude everybody else and have a specific nationality looked after in this housing crisis? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. I know we have discussed this topic for quite a while. We have two more members looking to speak. So I would ask you to keep it brief, if you can.

Councillor Tom Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. We really shouldn't be in this situation at this moment in time. I think the Executive of the Council are a disgrace to put the public reps in this position. The big problem is, there's several issues going on here. One is the lack of communication is disgraceful and it has to be deemed now that you don't care whether you communicate with people, with the councillors or not. It has gone beyond a crazy joke at this stage. It is just crazy what has gone on here today. And you will have people obviously coming from different groupings and different parties under pressure from what is going on nationally and everything else. The whole thing is just grossly, grossly unfair.

Now it is very simple what is going on here, as Councillor Behan I

think said to you, we all understand how the world works and we all understand that basically the local authority is an administration body, and you're being told by the Department we want this. So basically what's happening here is the Department is going to lease land from local authorities and that's what they are doing, so you identify the sites, they take it on. Now you're telling us here today that in three years' time, this is strictly three years, in three years' time the world changes, all done and dusted, gone. No one believes that for several reasons. There will be a different government in place then. Most of ye will be gone or in different positions. There will be new people there saying, oh, I don't know, I wasn't here. So there is a lot of disingenuous things going on here as we do this. But the bottom line for me is, and I am like a broken record now at this stage, I mean it is not something I say lightly, but the way councillors have been treated for the last number of years. I was the first one to put my head up and say come on folks, what you are doing here is crazy and wrong. It is just more of it going on here today. And what is going to happen here now, you quote, as Helen did, under rule X and rule Y you can't do this and you can't do that. This should go back to the district council based on the discussion here today and there should be a proper discussion at the district council and a recommendation should come from the district council back to this chamber. If need be, do it and call a emergency meeting in ten days' time and let's do it. But stop this game playing and putting councillors behind the cue ball and then we go to a vote. Then you call on people's conscience, oh God, what will I do? If I do this or if I do that will one of my colleagues slag me off in the press, or whatever the case may be, because there is an election coming down the line. What is going

on here is sick. It really is

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I am going to let the last two members in and then I will absolutely let you in, if that is okay.

Councillor Sylvester Bourke.

COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I really hate being put into this situation here today, it's a pity really because it looks like the executive are banjaxing in relationship between councillors and officials, which is a very sad thing to happen. I think everybody wants to support the Ukrainian people and yet the process by which it is being implemented seems to be untransparent and under the table which is not really in the spirit of a good relationship between management and elected reps. So it is a very difficult one to call, but it surprises me though that the management that didn't advertise their predicament with the private sector. I know some people in the private area who have sites that they may be prepared to make available under similar terms for humanitarian reasons if they were asked. Perhaps the Executive should consider another approach if this fails today.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. And the last speaker on this matter, Councillor Derek Mitchell.

COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Yes, it is certainly a difficult decision. I suppose my concern is, we are essentially being told or instructed by central government that we should put these modular homes in these two places for a significant number of people in the context of the size of the communities there. And we were told by central government a year ago that we weren't to have more houses in Baltinglass and certainly in Dunlavin. And it seems to me that if we weren't supposed to have private housing in these places, it is just mad

to be told that we are now to have these modular homes for people who won't be as easy to deal with. And if the reasons were valid -- as far as I remember, the Office of the Planning Regulator sent specific instructions to do with these towns and possibly these sites that they were not to be zoned for housing because of over-targets. I just have a concern that on the one hand we are being told we shouldn't have more people in these settlements, and on the other hand we are now being told that we should have sometime after the five-year development plan process is over. So I think that is wrong.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Chief Executive.

MS O'GORMAN: Cathaoirleach, I just want to absolutely rebut any suggestion that the Executive are a disgrace. I think that's an awful comment to make to hardworking staff here in the organisation. To say that we behaved disingenuously is wrong. We have been asked by the Minister and by the Government to seek sites and provide sites for an emergency situation. There is specific legislation dealing with this emergency situation that allows for housing in areas which wouldn't ordinarily be considered for housing. We don't have an option to create social housing in those spaces. Some of the points made about housing and social housing, yes we have a very significant social housing need in Wicklow. The people of Ukraine are fleeing a war situation. We have been asked by the Minister to bring this today to a vote. We have been back and forward with officials in the Department, back and forward trying to agree heads of terms on the proposed draft disposal to secure the land that it would return to the people of Wicklow in three years' time. Fine that you won't believe that it will be returned to us in three years' time, that is your decision to make. What we have before you today was the

best we could make of the situation of the two sites that were selected by the OPW. The sites, I think mention was made by private owned land and private ownership, plenty of private land in Wicklow has been given over to house Ukrainians and it is welcome and it's appreciated but it is not enough. That is why each local authority in the country was asked to put forward sites. I have to say I absolutely reject any suggestion that staff are disgraceful or disingenuous and I would like you to withdraw your comments, Councillor Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Can I just say, Chair?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes, very quickly, Councillor Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Chief Executive, when I made my comment, I was talking about, when I mentioned the word 'disgrace', it is a disgrace the way the Executive are communicating with councillors separate from the point on the agenda, that was my point. And it is a disgrace the way you're not communicating with us.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Councillor Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: That is my point. That's what my point about disgrace is. It is not a slur on the ability of people to work or not work.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: It is the communication. And we have been talking about it, Chief Executive, for months.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Fortune, with due respect -- and Councillor O'Neill, I would prefer not to let you in because we've actually had a really, really long discussion about this --

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I take back the word 'disgrace'.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I appreciate that.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I want to explain to the Chief Executive, I want to put it in context. That's what I'm talking about, Chief

Executive, and you have got to look at it. You've really got to look at it, the crazy lack of communication with councillors is not right.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Councillor Fortune.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Can I have one split second?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Very, very quickly, Councillor O'Neill.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Just to point out again what I said at the very outset, I do not point the finger and I don't agree with anyone that would point a finger at the top table there. It's nothing to do -- we're talking about EU money. This is an EU project that has been pushed down our throat. So I mean the people who are pro Europe, there's a lot more to Europe than what meets the eye.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: There's no way -- I can't see the issue here, any councillor here, I heard it from a few pointing the finger at the Executive, that is totally wrong.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Okay, Members, just before we take it to a vote --

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Cathaoirleach, I am waiting for answers to my question.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, go ahead.

MS PURCELL: I can just clarify the legislation. Firstly, to say section 183 disposals are a function of the plenary council and not the municipal districts. They are not delegated functions. Section 183(1)(b) states: "At the first meeting of the local authority held after the expiration of ten days after the day on which such notices are sent or delivered, the local authority may resolve that the disposal shall not be carried out, or that it shall be out in accordance with the terms specified in the

resolution". So it's very clear, there's two options: You either carry it out or you don't. There isn't an option to modify.

Another question was, if it is rejected here today, when can it be listed on the agenda again, and that would be in six months' time in accordance withstanding orders.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Is that okay, Councillor Scott?

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Cathaoirleach, thanks Helen for that. I had also asked, do we know what will happen to the families from Ukraine who would be listed as to possibly going to the site if this disposal is voted against. I also asked, has there been a commitment from the Executive to work with west Wicklow councillors in terms of identifying alternative land for a sport site or rezoning or any piece around that. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. I'll just pass to the Chief Executive.

MS O'GORMAN: In relation to the site, it is zoned for employment use and one of the listed use is support sports facilities. To be very clear, it is not ring-fenced for sports facility, this site. I have committed to putting funding in the capital programme to work with the Municipal District to provide a sports facility in the district. I thought that was clear in my email. It doesn't necessarily have to be on this site. There is a commitment to do that with the members. Regardless of whether this disposal goes ahead or not. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: And just sorry, Chief Executive, in terms of families that are proposed for this site, I assume they haven't been identified yet? No.

MS O'GORMAN: No. No. Obviously if the site -- if the disposal was to go ahead we have some families in the county that are in hotel accommodation, families in a room. We would like to think

they would get own-door accommodation but we have no sight on what families might go into this modular accommodation.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Chief Executive. Okay. We are going to shortly go for a vote but just before do this. This is a difficult decision for everybody and each of us here will make our own decision and I know that everybody will respect that decision that people make and I think that is really crucial. Very, very quickly now because this is your third time in.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: This is really only my second time. The first time was just a clarification that was pushed back. Secondly, some of the top table have been in several times and there was a point made there, and I am more familiar with the site than anyone else here. That is the only possible site for a sports centre. There is no other site involved in that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Everybody here will make their own decision in terms of the vote and other people will respect each other in terms of it. Just from my own perspective and for my own comments, I am being asked to side here on something that is a three-year commitment. None of us know in three years what may or may not happen, but that's the ask here in relation to a three-year commitment. There are obviously communications issues and from my own personal perspective there's been calls to use this decision to send a message about those communication issues or messages to the Government and the like. I personally won't be using my vote to send any message to anybody. My vote will be based on what is here in front of us. So I am going to ask Helen to call a vote now.

MS PURCELL: So the wording for consideration is to consider the disposal of 1.82 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Lathaleere, Baltinglass, County Wicklow, comprised in Folio

No. 5663 County Wicklow, being the property known as Lathaleere, Baltinglass, County Wicklow, by lease for a term not exceeding three years. The lease commencement date will be the date of the lease agreement but ending no later than 31st of March 2027 to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth as per the notice previously circulated. It is proposed by Councillor Paul O'Brien, seconded by Councillor Rory O'Connor. If you are in favour of the wording as I have read out, please vote for; and if you opposed to it please vote against. There is also an option to abstain. Councillor Tommy Annesley.

COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry.

COUNCILLOR BARRY: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Joe Behan.

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Against.

MS PURCELL: Against Vincent Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Sylvester Bourke

COUNCILLOR BOURKE: For.

MS PURCELL: For. Councillor Melanie Corrigan sends apologies. Councillor Avril Cronin.

COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen.

COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Erika Doyle.

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gail Dunne.

COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Anne Ferris -- is not present. Councillor Pat Fitzgerald.

COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy.

CATHAOIRLEACH: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Tom Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Patsy Glennon.

COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mary Kavanagh.

COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Kennedy.

COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard.

COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Grace McManus.

COUNCILLOR MCMANUS: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell.

COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor John Mullen.

COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Miriam Murphy.

COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Paul O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Rory O'Connor.

COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry O'Neill.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell.

COUNCILLOR SNELL: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Stephen Stokes -- he's not present.  
Councillor Edward Timmins.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry Walsh.

COUNCILLOR WALSH: Against.

MS PURCELL: And Councillor Irene Winters -- is not present. We have nine for, 19 against and four not present.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. The motion is not passed. Okay. Item number 8, to consider disposal of 1.37 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Dunlavin Lower, Dunlavin, County Wicklow comprised of Folio No. 24613F County Wicklow being the property known as Dunlavin Lower, Dunlavin, County Wicklow by lease for a term not exceeding three years. The lease commencement date will be the date of the lease agreement but ending no later than 31st March 2027, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth as per the notice previously circulated. Do I have a proposer and a seconder?

COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: I will propose it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Councillor Mary Kavanagh. Do I have someone to second? Seconded by Councillor Lourda Scott. Do I have anyone not in agreement?

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Not in agreement? We are having a vote?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, yes, or anyone who has abstained or isn't agreed? Okay, Councillor Avril Cronin, I will open up the floor.

COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thanks very much. I am not too sure if too many of you are familiar with Dunlavin. It is an area I have been born and bred. The site that is zoned that we are speaking about

today is zoned for industrial use with plans for a fire station, a petrol station, much needed employment. There is also hope that the Council yard will eventually move down there to allow an expansion for our two schools for the future growth as the current Council yard is allocated between our two schools. The site in question is located between a wastewater treatment facility and a meat rendering factory and the current water supply is at full capacity which has hindered development in the past for the area. There is no public transport in the village. No daily bus service. No train. Even if you are lucky enough to own a car, we don't have a petrol station. The site is in a small rural area with no footpaths, no lighting. Our schools are at full capacity with waiting lists for both primary and secondary school. Our health centre is in desperate need of an upgrade that we do not even have a disabled toilet for people who attend their doctor for wheelchair access, and the current doctors cannot take any more patients as they do not have the capacity for them.

I could go into the process again, but I think we have talked about that at length, but again I will just say that I have tried to engage with both the Department, our TDs and ministers on this. Again, since January I have yet to receive a response. I began to question this whole process when I got a call, as I said earlier I got a call from an elderly lady that's living in the area. She asked me what was going on behind our house, again I couldn't answer her. I actually called out to see what was going on and I spoke to a guy, he was contracted by the OPW. He told me that he had hopped the gate to access the site. I then contacted the Council and the Council weren't aware of what was going on either. So again from the whole process, the beginning of this

whole process there have been issues.

Just finally, one last thing that I want to say is that I am born, as I said at the start, I am born and reared in Dunlavin. I have lived there -- I am 37 years of age and I have lived there for the past 37 years. Since I became a councillor I have always fought to do the best thing for the people of my area and I am constantly fighting to get proper services in my area. As I said, we don't have a bus service. We're fighting to upgrade the N81 we don't have schools that are at capacity. We don't have a proper water supply. Most of my friends that I was reared with in the area have had to move out of Dunlavin because we don't have housing for them. We don't have enough social housing and we don't have enough private development.

During the County Development Plan most of the housing in Dunlavin was de-zoned. When I spoke to the Council about this, they agreed to give me half a field, that's all that I was allowed to keep for a housing in Dunlavin. Half a field. And yet we're able to zone this area now, this is able to be used for Ukrainian families. We are all trying to do the right thing here but we have to remember what we do need for people. People are coming from a war torn country, they do need wraparound services, we do have to look at the bigger picture. We do have to look at basic infrastructure that we have in the area, look at public transport. Even something as small as a family resource centre, we don't have for our entire district. When we are looking to house people from a war torn country we need to look at the bigger picture, we need to look at wraparound services and that is something that we cannot provide in rural West Wicklow thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Edward Timmins.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Thanks, Chairman. I am not going to go on. 90% of what I said in my first talk an hour ago applies again, so I'm not going to repeat that. Just to distinguish slightly between Dunlavin and Baltinglass: Baltinglass, one of the additional items was the sports centre in Dunlavin, it is about infrastructure. Dunlavin is really, really poorly served infrastructure wise. There is no CIE bus goes through Dunlavin. CIE don't know where Dunlavin is. There is a little bus link that goes once a week to Newbridge for shopping. Dunlavin is completely off the beaten track. It is one of the most poorly served from a public infrastructure point of view villages in the whole of the county. How it was selected is beyond me.

Secondly, Avril referred to the County Development Plan. When we got the draft County Development Plan from the planners, all the yellow in Dunlavin. The maps would have a lot of yellow zoning for housing. All the yellow was wiped out. There was no yellow on the map. Yellow, by the way sorry, is a housing zone. The Council officials deemed Dunlavin not worthy to have any housing zoning at all, obviously apart from the town centre, as in the main street in Dunlavin. So the whole yellow was wiped off. That was the view of Dunlavin. We don't want any housing zoned whatsoever in Dunlavin. Avril got a little bit in. I put in a little bit as well myself and those zonings went through with full support from our fellow councillors. Equally, like the whole process, the way Dunlavin and Baltinglass as I alluded to before were identified, exactly the same issue with Dunlavin. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Erika Doyle.

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I think to hear some of

the councillors from the west talking, I actually agree with a lot of what they are saying. There are issues in terms of infrastructural supports. The process sounds like it was far from ideal and those things are true. However, we are where we are, as they say, and I would question how many of those things get fixed by voting against this. The losers here will be the people who are due to be housed. There would be a reduction in the offering. It doesn't fix or solve any of those problems by refusing housing for these people. The same problems will still exist once this vote has taking place. And so, I am not sure what actually changes or what gets fixed by voting against it. I think it is possible to occupy two positions at the same time. It is possible to occupy a position where you can say that in my district, whatever that district may be, there are shortages of this and we need that, but also, to extend that need to people who are fleeing war and seeking shelter.

And I am deeply uncomfortable with some of the couched language that is being used here today, one step away from Ireland for the Irish and, you know, a brief look at social media or the papers today will show us where that goes. And I think that there is a little bit of finger pointing to cover people's votes and actually not from the councillors in the west but from several others. I am voting as Councillor Flynn Kennedy, Cathaoirleach said, on what is before me. I accept that this is far from ideal. I also accept that if we are waiting for the perfect position and the perfect circumstances we won't house anybody, and those people are in urgent need. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

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

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just very quickly, just some of the things, I think this is a unique

scenario and the minds of all of us is -- partly this is unique in terms of the mindset that we bring to this. When I scan the document, the language "matter of extreme urgency" is sitting there. "Unprecedented numbers", is sitting there. "Humanitarian response", "displaced persons", "violent conflict", "armed conflict", "vulnerable minors", and then "temporary protection but immediate protection". And I think there is an unprecedented and almost unimaginable trauma that is being carried by these people and I think that has to inform decision-making around this. They are the things that stand out to me. I know all the other issues are live and real and relevant, but if we look at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, safety and shelter first and foremost and everything comes from that. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Peir Leonard.

COUNCILLOR LEONARD: I don't really feel comfortable talking about the west. It is not my MD and stuff like that. But I can bring my perspective in from living in Arklow. We have a whole main street of derelict buildings. Some of them aren't derelict, they're quite usable. If the government up above gave incentives to regenerate our town centres there would be plenty of room. We wouldn't be in this situation. I think this isn't our decision. We are being pitched against each other here. It is becoming very divisive. The language is, sort of, it makes everybody uncomfortable. I have never seen Edward Timmins as upset as I saw him today. That is not Edward's nature. He is usually very proactive in working with the Council. This is from above, the top-down again, instead of bottom-up. This is the way this Government is kind of -- it's always from the top-down, not listening to the communities on the ground. We have derelict streets. We have towns that need regeneration. We have Deirdre

sitting over there, our town regeneration officer. It's the incentive, that's the message we need to send back to Government. They could be renovated very easily and we could have the Ukrainians in our town centre where there are services and where they can fit in with the community and community wrap around them like we have in most of our towns.

Isolating people and segregating people -- I have been up to Kippure and people are very well looked after there, but they are segregated. They don't have transport for schools, and even when they are getting work and stuff like that, there is a huge gap there. Segregations I don't believe in. I think we should be immersing them and spreading it around all our communities and regenerating our main streets at the same time. That is why I voted against the last one and I have to vote against this as well because it is not the right way. And it is the procedure, it is not about providing homes. We need to send a message back and they need to come up with the solutions and we'll accommodate them but in consultation with the local councillors and the local communities. Because you need to trust us, they need to trust us and we need to trust each other to find the best solutions going forward.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor, Mary Murphy.

COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Again we have been two hours on a similar discussion and I sit on the board of the County Wicklow Partnership and they have employed through, again, the Government and the resources put into Ukrainians and other non-nationals in rural Wicklow and in Wicklow town as well, but there is not enough resources. Can you just imagine any of us, ourselves coming from a war zone. And I can you understand the

scenario, yes, coming into safety but they are being put in a field basically with no resources, no public transport, no communication, no networking, and there might be a support organisation like County Wicklow Partnership with one resource worker that might be only allowed 20 hours a week. You know, and as Councillor Leonard said, you know, we all need to regenerate our towns and villages. Even our own town and villages like Avoca, Rathdrum, Aughrim, maybe have one or two public train services, if they are lucky, maybe one or two bus times a day or maybe once a week if they are lucky. We have rural Ireland in our own county and our own people can't even have participation in social outings, going back to school, going back to night class, because of lack of transport. And it is going to be the same for these people who are trying to come out and build their lives in a total different country, in a total different area. Each town and village in Wicklow, and I am sure it is around the county, have a waiting list, a waiting list for doctors alone, GPs, alone. I know somebody today who was in dire pain with a toothache. They rang every town and village in Wicklow, there is a three-week waiting list. Like, I'm sorry, but it's mind-boggling. Again, does the Council -- my question is: what resources will be there to help Ukrainians be placed in these areas? What support organisations? Will they have schooling? Will they have transport? Will they be able to participate in work? What support organisation will have more resources put into assisting these people? Thanks.

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

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I just want to agree with Councillor Erika Doyle and Councillor Dermot O'Brien. To me they spoke from the heart. I feel like I am on a

roundabout here. I think we all agree. I don't feel it is against any of my colleagues here, by the way, today. I think we all agree that of course there should be better facilities in Wicklow, Rathnew, Ashford, Baltinglass, Blessington, everywhere. No one is going to dispute that fact today. That is not what we are here to decide. We are here to decide on modular homes for Ukrainian families that are fleeing a war. I personally think it is a sad day for Wicklow County Council because we all know the truth and we all know the lack of facilities in these areas. We all accept the break down in communication. But the sad reality is, there is a certain set out there that I don't agree with that are going to jump on this and they are going to use it against us. We won't agree with them and we know the truth, but unfortunately they are going to jump on this and say Wicklow County Council is against Ukrainian refugees. They don't accept and they won't hear what the truth is and why the lack of facilities and the lack of everything else and communication. I think it is a very sad day for Wicklow County Council. We are going to be up in lights by the far right and just, thank God there's no one in here -- I got cut off the last time before I got to finish. I wasn't accusing anyone of being from the far right in here. But it is a sad day for Wicklow County Council when this mob are going to put us up in lights as being against Ukrainian refugees when they don't know the facts or the reality of this debate in here today. So thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. I am going to invite Chief Executive, if you could just confirm in terms of supports that may be available to people living in Dunlavin should these go ahead.

MS O'GORMAN: I suppose, I think it is fair to say and the members

of west wicklow Baltinglass MD have articulated to me on more than one occasion about what needs to be done in that part of the county. We have capital plan. We have plans, programmes, we have town centre first. We have regeneration programmes going on in the county and a lot of that is going on in west wicklow. I met with the chief officer of HSE Friday week ago that looks after west wicklow and Kildare and, you know, just to see kind of what additional services from the health services point of view they can offer. I can't commit to what the HSE would do, but they are aware of the acute need for additional services in west wicklow. It comes up regularly at our Age Friendly Forum and the Older Person's Council about the need for better public transport, the need for accessibility to our hospitals. That is all a given. But it is separate to this discussion. And I understand what the members are saying, that the site isn't suitable for that reason.

I can't, I don't have a magic wand, I can't introduce services tomorrow that I don't have control of. What I can do and what I have been doing is trying to work with the other agencies through my colleagues, through the various forums and stakeholders to see what other services we can get in west wicklow and the entirety of the county because I am not satisfied that the service level is great for entire of the county. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Mary Kavanagh.

COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: I suppose I propose this mainly to open discussion on it; and, secondly, I saw them as two distinct entities. One of them I could not have supported because I could not support anything that might cost Baltinglass that much needed community facility. I understand that while Dunlavin doesn't have a lot of facilities, I think this might be an opportunity to get

those facilities in the area because you cannot bring 30 families in, leave them in an area that's unsupported by any kind of resources such as medical, education, childcare, jobs, whatever, transport, whatever you want to call it. I do think that sometimes the old saying, 'build it and they will come' comes to mind here. And I actually think Dunlavin could benefit long-term. Because if a situation arises and the Ukrainian war ends and the 30 families decide to go back, then there will be 30 modular homes there which will facilitate people. So I see them, as I said, as two different entities and two separate entities. I would be far more inclined to support this than I was the previous one. Thank you

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Gerry O'Neill.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks am I on.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes, you are on.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just while I was waiting there my phone was ringing and I have a number saved in there, a girl from the Ukraine, just to let you know how I feel, and she is living -- she is here this six years, and she is living with her kid and her husband in a one-bed. It's nothing to do with the war or anything else. So this issue of looking over your shoulder at what the extreme left or right, it wouldn't worry me, any of that. I know that I am doing my best the people of West Wicklow, no matter what they are. I have been involved in housing or making representations on behalf of people from all over the world and thankfully been successful with a lot of them. So this codology about the left and the right, that is nothing to do with what I am here to talk about today anyway. I feel the same again on the issue with Dunlavin as I have with Baltinglass. And I don't think it's working out fair. But again, I want to go down

on record, I want to make it very clear to the left or the right wingers, whoever they are, whoever is peeping in the windows, that I do not blame the Executive of Wicklow County Council. You know, if anyone is bothering their neck reading into it, it is an EU issue, you know, that most people in here actually support. And my former party there who opposed the five different treaties over the years, they're now embracing them, you know. So it's all to do with EU directive. And we have to jump how high for those people. And that is what this is. This is a directive of over 12 months ago from the EU now. So I just want to make it very clear that I don't believe in the segregation. If there was 20 houses going into Baltinglass in the morning and, say, ten of those were for Ukrainian, you know to take people, I would be there to support it. But I don't support -- I would never support these segregation that some people are proposing here today. So again it is a sad one. It is a tough one. As I said to the CEO the other day, you're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't on this one. It is a tough one. But you know we have to be fair to everyone and I honest to God think that what I spoke about earlier on -- by the way, we haven't even seen, we haven't seen a visual of these houses, we don't know what's coming down the line, we don't know what sort of foundations are going in, whether they're -- they must be permanent. I know little or nothing about this. Absolutely nothing.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: But that is beside the point anyway. It is the segregation that I am totally against from the word go. I am totally against our masters in Europe snapping fingers telling the Paddy here what to do.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you Councillor. Okay. So we are

going to go to a vote. Before we do that, my own thoughts: Again, it's a difficult decision for people and I hope we all respect each other's decision. It is extraordinary times. I am absolutely going to be voting on what is required and what is put in front of me, not again sending any message to officials or to Government or anyone like that. That is not what we are being asked to do here and there are people involved in it. Helen, if you want to go ahead.

MS PURCELL: Okay. So the proposal is to consider the disposal of 1.37 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Dunlavin Lower, Dunlavin, County Wicklow comprised in Folio No. 24613F, County Wicklow, being the property known as Dunlavin Lower, Dunlavin, County Wicklow, by lease for a term not exceeding three years. The lease commencement date will be the date of the lease agreement but ending no later than 31st of March 2027 to the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth as per notice previously circulated. If you are in favour please vote for; and if you are against, please vote against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Tommy Annesley.

COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry.

COUNCILLOR BARRY: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Joe Behan.

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Vincent Blake

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Sylvester Bourke -- he's not present. Councillor Melanie Corrigan is not present. Councillor Avril Cronin.

COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen.

COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Erika Doyle.

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gail Dunne.

COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Anne Ferris -- is not present. Councillor Pat Fitzgerald.

COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy.

CATHAOIRLEACH: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Tom Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Patsy Glennon.

COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mary Kavanagh.

COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Kennedy.

COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard.

COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Grace McManus.

COUNCILLOR MCMANUS: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell.

COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor John Mullen.

COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Miriam Murphy.

COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Paul O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Rory O'Connor.

COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry O'Neill.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell.

COUNCILLOR SNELL: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Stephen Stokes.

COUNCILLOR STOKES: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Edward Timmins.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry Walsh -- he's not present.

Councillor Irene Winters -- not present. 12 for; 15 against and five not present.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, so that is not passed. Thank you members.

Okay, the next item is number 9 to consider Chief Executive's report. The Chief Executive has kindly agreed to allow Comhairle na nÓg to go ahead if that is okay with the members. I believe in the chamber we have Katie, Óisín, Oscar and Emily and you are all extremely welcome. We are delighted to have you here. I don't know who is coming up. Dermot, maybe you want to guide people, no.

You are all extremely welcome and thank you for waiting and listening to all those discussions. So I will hand the floor over

to you.

KATIE: Hi everyone, my name is Kate and I think we should probably start with going through with what is Comhairle na nÓg. So Comhairle na nÓg are youth councils in the 31 local authorities of the country which give young people the opportunity to be involved in contributing to their community. Anyone between the ages of 13 and 18 is able to join. So Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg has a steering group and they support our work and they have members drawn from all over the county such as KWETB and Councillor Grace McManus and Councillor Tom Fortune.

So Wicklow Comhairle has been up to a lot of different things. We have meetings in this chamber. We have had zoom meetings. We have gone to national events such as the Show Case 2023, gone to things such as the National Youth Assembly of Ireland and we have contributed to food poverty research. Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg is bringing young voices to decision-maker spaces such as the County Council Chamber, DCEDIY and national consultations with government requirements.

ÓISÍN: Hi, I am Óisín and I am going to be talking about our Annual Youth Summit. So for the last two years we have had our youth summits that we hold to kind of get the opinions and like the views of young people in Ireland to see what the biggest issues with them is and, obviously, us being Wicklow Comhairle na nÓg we like to see what issues the young people of Wicklow like to raise. And the last two years, 2022 and 2021, we have had very similar answers. We have had mental health as the biggest issue being raised. Covid was the biggest one in 2021 which obviously

we have mainly managed now. We have drugs, discrimination, public transport. That is all going to have to be covered at some point.

So we have this, it's kind of like a table map thing we use to, like, display the topics and then as you can see why the topic is important, what needs to be done about it and then who needs to be involved to manage the -- we have an example here. Now I am not accountable for anything that is on this page. But mental health is the topic on this one. So as you can see we have the outer thing that is just why the topic of mental health is important to young people. In the middle part of the circle it's all just what needs to be done to manage how mental health is approached, how it's handled and then who needs to be, you know, contacted, who needs to be involved, who needs to be facilitating how it is changed.

So the nine topics, the nine main topics that we got from 2022 were: Mental health was the top one, vaping was the second one, drugs, discrimination, public transport, pollution, peer pressure, bullying and cost of living were the top, like the highest topics that were discussed and chosen to be the most important things that young people care about in Wicklow. This is the drugs here then.

KATIE: So we decided as a Comhairle a couple of years ago, to do a youths attitude towards drugs survey. Every councillor present here today has been given a snapshot report on it and any councillors online, you have been posted one. We selected a wide variety of different information and asked young people, about 550, on their opinions towards drugs. So it might be interesting to draw your attention towards a question that we asked about the

use of cannabis should not be against the law. It was our most divided question with 25% of people not knowing what to think. So I think it highlights the importance of we need some education as young people towards to drugs in our county, as one in four people did not know what to think about this question.

OSCAR: I am going to be talking about what is coming up for Comhairle na nÓg. First of all, we are planning doing local youth gathering and school visits where Comhairle representatives will basically go around the schools across the country and probably stretch our points on different issues that affect us and try and recruit members. We will also -- we are going to try and make a website and a podcast. These are basically to address people our own age about mental health issues because as, like, that little thing there shows mental health is a really big problem especially or Junior Cert and Leaving Cert students. Schools will tell you don't worry, you'll be fine, it is just another exam. It is not. The Junior Cert and the Leaving Cert are stressful exams. I know for anyone who did theirs, it is stressing them. We don't want to do it but we have to. Yes. So we are going to make a podcast and a website basically where we can basically say, okay, mental health, yes. The Youths Summit in the Park View Hotel in November 10th. The Youth Summit is where we show about Comhairle, we get people to do things like the table map thing to get new members to join as well. Such as myself, I joined this year. They're all welcome to come as well.

National events, we always have opportunities to send basically our own representatives to national events to meet and greet in Government department and stuff like that, yes. We basically hold our own meetings in Wicklow County Council. We will talk about

whatever -- so we will talk about getting ready for stuff like this, like why we are here today and other small things like the drug survey and also people who want to go into politics it is like a really great place to say, oh, wow, I am actually here and it is almost inspiring because you can see so much great people are here. So many great people are here and it is, honestly, just a really great environment to be in, even if the County Council is not in session just to be here is really awe inspiring.

There's also the climate and biodiversity thing. We will be continuing our representation with Wicklow County Council, we are going to keep on doing that. There is not really a lot to say. The County Council and the other stakeholders contribute to strategies, research and conservation and we keep bringing youth voices basically, we are going to keep on doing what we are doing and we are going to get young people the voices they deserve, because young people leaving schools in their local area are shockingly underrepresented. It is more or less in households, I am older than you, I am in charge.

The European connections: We have ambition to host and visit other youth councils which are connected to Wicklow through basically twinning. And one last thing because I know you all can't wait to get out of here, if you notice the first two points about students and people our own ages trying to get their voice out there, trying to be heard and trying to take the initiative, basically these two points are so young people prefer listening to younger people. I know any of you when you were in school, if you had an issue you're not going to go to your parents or staff, you want to talk to someone like a friend or someone your own age. We

have the same thinking and we know a lot of people have the same thinking. That is basically it. If anyone here could take one thing from what we said, it's that young people prefer listening to young people. It doesn't matter how hard you try to relate to young people and without any offence, people trying to relate to young people don't really work well. So it's a lot easier to hear from someone and talk to some as a young person. I know that through social media which you know there are a lot of negatives; one of the positives, you are basically anonymous if you are talking to someone the other side of the world about an issue that kind of only relates to you and them and some other people, having that sense of comfort that someone shares an issue you are going through means so much. And I know even if you are not a young person, you are an adult and you share that feeling it means so much. If you got one thing away, it's young people listen from young people, and it is best if they hear from each other.

And we are very grateful for letting you use this Council chamber for our meetings. (Applause)

CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to ask you all to stay up there if that is okay for a minute and we might open it up to the floor because I know some of the members will have some questions. So what we normally do is, I let a couple of people ask their questions and then you guys get a chance to respond, if that is okay. So I am going to open up, the first person is Councillor Tom Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Well done. That was excellent. My question would be, obviously you're in Comhairle na nÓg now for some time, so what is the one thing that at this moment, having been in it for a while, what is the one thing on

reflection that keeps you motivated to stay in it?

KATIE: I think definitely for me it's just that like you're able to make a change kind of more diplomatically, let's say, than other youth organisations out there. I think definitely I like being able to use the Council Chamber every month, it makes you feel like your voice is actually being heard. So just being motivated to keep making that change kind of at a county level, because a lot of other youth organisations would be limited to a much smaller area like your town. So Comhairle na nÓg allows you to do it through your county and then nationally as well.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Very good. Just a comment if I may, can I just pay particular compliment to Councillor Dermot O'Brien. Dermot is the driving force behind Comhairle na nÓg and he does an absolutely fantastic job he probably doesn't get the credit he should get for it. On the occasion of the three good speakers here today, I would like to compliment Dermot on the great work that you do.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Absolutely. Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Lourda Scott.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I absolutely second what Councillor Fortune said about Dermot here for sure. And, look, thanks a million for your presentation. I wish we could have you in every month to present to us, to be honest with you. Particularly I think we could take some learnings ourselves here on the wee circle thing. I love that area of working out our problems and who to communicate with. Perhaps we might all take that slide home and do a study of it tonight. I just wanted to say, when you get your podcast and website up and going, please make sure to circulate to all the elected reps here. I for one have got -- one of my kids is in secondary school, I have two in

primary school, I definitely would be very interested in interacting with that for sure.

I just wanted to say, I am the chair of the Climate Biodiversity SPC and I am just thrilled to have a member of the Comhairle on that Policy Committee. To be honest with you, I would love to see Comhairle reps maybe on the other policy committees in the Council as well. But, again, I mean there's probably learnings about how we can better involve the Comhairle reps. Again, if there is anything that you want to bring to me or to that SPC, please engage with us. Hopefully I will be re-elected next year. If not, I will still make sure that we will maintain that Comhairle seat on that specific SPC. I think it's really, really important for us to hear the youth voice, particularly around climate and biodiversity.

The last thing there, you were saying it is inspiring to be here at the Council meeting which I personally find quite humbling to hear. I want to say to you, I guarantee you if we were privy enough to attend one of the Comhairle meetings in the chamber I can guarantee you we would be equally awe inspired by ye for sure. Keep on doing what you are doing. Keep on being engaged. Keep on wanting to make things change. That's the sort of voice we need in politics if you decide to go that route, so keep on doing what you are doing and thanks for coming here today.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Erika Doyle.

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And thank you to you, members of Comhairle na nÓg, for coming here today. Your time in the chamber has obviously paid off because your confidence in speaking was really, really something else and it is not an easy

thing to do even as an adult, even when it is your job it is not an easy thing to do so well done on that. I would love to ask you to stay in touch with us more. I just had a quick check through my emails there and I don't think I have ever received an invitation, or maybe it is just me, I don't know, maybe I have fallen between the cracks. But I would love to be kept informed more as to what you are doing, I would love to go along and see some of the things that we are welcome to see, that would be fantastic. I think flicking through the report here, I think what is interesting is that what as adults we think young people think isn't necessarily what young people think. We always tend to think of young people as being maybe a bit more in the anything goes sense, and actually a lot of critical thinking goes on with young people. You're dead right, you know you have your thoughts, you need to tell us what you're thinking. And when I say us, I mean not only members of the local authority, but adults. It is not up to us to decide or have a notion as to the way young people think. We need to ask you and we need to be informed by. I think your work with Comhairle na nÓg is really, really valuable for that reason and I hope you keep it up and I would love to hear from you. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor John Mullen.

COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Again, I just want to say congratulations and thanks for the data. On the data that you have given us, while I respect the fact that you pointed out that 25% of young people on the drugs issue, which was the use of cannabis should not be against the law. 75% of 550 young people in the county did have an opinion of which 34% were, you know, by and large in favour of legalisation, but 40% by and large against it. Which is a very nuanced and deliberative thought and something that, you know,

would genuinely be from a generation point of view would be kind of given to be the opposite view. It just shows the value of these conversations. Because as a present of a young person growing up, I am going to be conscious now that there are far more different viewing out there than I thought of. Again, to your facilitators in presenting the data the way you do as well and being upfront with it, that is hugely important for us when we're dealing with it on the ground. Again, like other commentary said, from a rural perspective I presume the 550 are very well spread. There is a couple of events which we have in Wicklow now established on the calendar such as the county show, it would be great to see Comhairle na nÓg have a presence at the Best of Wicklow where you could talk to young people from across the rural areas and get their opinions on what matters. Fair play to you. Keep it up and keep us on our toes. Thanks

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Grace McManus.

COUNCILLOR MCMANUS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thank you to the three of you for coming down and speaking to us and cracking jokes as well. I always appreciate when people crack jokes in this chamber. I think the depth you go into on issues is so important and it gives me such hope, because I am a firm believer in vote at 16. I know some of the Comhairle folk are 16, and you are showing us that you are well able to engage in social issues and engage in politics and that we should be trusting you when we it comes to a vote. If you're able to work, why aren't you able to vote? So I think you are shining examples of that, so well done to you guys. Just a little tip as well, it is not just the county councillors but this top table of executives here from the Council I'm sure are listening intently and they are always there as well to hear your ideas and your perspectives. Because like what the

councillors have said, I was surprised, I thought I knew what young people might think about issues but I was wrong and that is a lesson that I have learned and that leads me to my question I wanted to ask you: what have you learned about being a part of Comhairle? I think that is really important to take a minute to reflect on, if you can. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks, Councillor. Do you want to make that question?

KATIE: Yes. I think, to be honest, I have learned loads from being on Comhairle. Definitely I have learned that everyone has different opinions, like everyone here, because you think, like, it has just been great to sit down with people from different backgrounds with different opinions and just talk about it in a way that doesn't have to be, like, really aggressive or arguing or anything, but learning together and building off each other, instead of trying to -- yes. Just learning from other people and learning everyone has different opinions

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor John Snell.

COUNCILLOR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. It is a word of encouragement just to say well done to the three of you on your presentation but also to your wider membership. I have been around here long enough to have seen presentations in the past and some of the people that come in and presented like you young people today are actually working in this building, some have gone on to have great careers in their chosen -- whether they want to get politics or actually get into planning, or housing, or whatever their issues are. But you are identifying the issues very young. If I could just say to you and to Dermot in particular, if this could be circulated to East Coast Regional Drugs & Alcohol Task Force of which I'm a member, I will bring it

to them. But I would love that it would come from you as maybe a presentation, you know the importance of that, Cathaoirleach, yourself. A lot of the information in it, it's worth noting here today that 58% of young people disagree that experimenting with drugs is a part of growing up. You know, the common consensus is that young people will participate in drug taking and I think that's worth noting here.

Also in regards to bigger issues out there, like drug debt and intimidation, while young people are trying to get on with education and make their way in life, we have one in two people believe this is a big deal. So if we have a thousand-pupil school we have 500 pupils who do believe this is an issue. It is something that our JPC should be made aware of. I think the data here collated by the members should be given to the Joint Policing Committee. Also I find fascinating that over 70% of your members believe that drugs education should start in primary school. And I think that is worth noting, because I see it myself on the ground in regards to young people at primary school are being dragged into, unfortunately, the events around drug dealing in particular because of their young age. And I think that drug education, while we see that it comes from the KWETB or through the Department of Education, I think that all of these organisations need to be targeted now with this information. I think it is a tremendous piece of work that you have been working on and that is just on the drugs issue. You have nine other topics. And I want to encourage you, sincerely encourage you and thank you for coming into the chamber today. Very enlightening. And I thank Dermot and Tom and Grace who have been working with you closely and wish you the very, very best.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. If you just bear with us, we have a few more people looking to come in. Councillor Rory O'Connor.

COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Thanks, Chair. I just wanted to say I thought the presentation was absolutely brilliant and if you guys ever want to reach out to us as councillors and how we can improve accessibility of the Council, if you want any of us to go in and give a presentation to you guys about what we are up to or anything like that, I would be totally up for that. I think it is great to see. Hopefully we might see a few of you involved in politics in the future which would be great too. Yes. Absolutely brilliant presentation. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Miriam Murphy.

COUNCILLOR MURPHY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach and thank you to the youth and Comhairle members. I think it is just a breath of fresh air to see three beautiful, confident people standing up there and not afraid to express how the youth is working together and also, as one of the councillors said earlier, this information is not from the top-down, it is up from the bottom-up. And I think come from the members' heart and their soul and I think that is where the passion comes from the work that you have presented here today. And I was actually surprised at some of the points on the list, and that the bullying was down on the bottom, it was a surprise to me. And, again, each issue is very individually valued on the information given.

I am probably going to wear another hat now when I say about inclusion of disability, of people with disability and the youth with disability of all various disability, and I would like to see maybe somewhere down the line on your programme of events, maybe

to organise an event with youth with disability in all areas, and I think it would be very interesting. But I think your confidence has just given me hope for the chamber, even though sometimes we are not a good example. But you have brought us back to where examples are good and really well done. And well done to your steering group, and to your management to Dermot. Just keep on rocking, girls and boys. Thanks a million.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Gerry Walsh.

COUNCILLOR WALSH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach and thanks guys for the presentation and for your snapshot survey report. You said yourself young people need their voices to be heard and they are important, and I think Comhairle na nÓg gives young people that voice. As chair of the Joint Policing Committee for Wicklow and a former garda, we actually mentioned your work this morning during our meeting, and Councillor O'Brien is on that meeting. So we propose to invite you into one of our meetings in the not too distant future to make a presentation to the Joint Policing Committee. I am sure the members of that committee will find that interesting.

Look, you mentioned mental health and particularly during Covid, and I know young people have been impacted with Covid and exam pressures, et cetera, et cetera, on mental health, and it is so important to identify that and to be there for each other to support each other.

The drug survey, I note there the fact of the drug availability, 64% agree that drugs are easily available, only 13 disagree. And then the issue all around cannabis and the use of cannabis and legalisation around cannabis. And I know from my own experience

around the years I would have seen people that would have used cannabis over a long period of time and I would have seen the effects that had on their overall health, and, you know, it wasn't very nice to see. Also my experience was that the use of cannabis, long-term use of cannabis does lead to the use of other harder drugs unfortunately. But that is for another day.

But, look, well done again on all your work on the survey and continue to engage with your peers and we will have you come to the next -- if not the next one, the one after, but you will be with the Joint Policing Committee to make a presentation. We all look forward to that. Thanks again.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor. Councillor Pat Kennedy.

COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. First of all, thank you for the presentation and thank you to the three of you; you are a breath of fresh air in here, to be honest with you. So well done on that. And to give a presentation like that, just open and honest that is what we need.

When I was Cathaoirleach of the Council a couple of years ago I had the opportunity to meet with Comhairle and the first meeting I had with you was during Covid so I did it from the car, and I want to thank Councillor Dermot for organising that for me. And I suppose I learned a lot from you during those days and if there is one thing that jumped out to me from your brochure was three words: Attitudes, perceptions and opinions. And I think when I read that I started to read the brochure and it actually captured everything that was in the brochure. And well done, because the amount of information that you have given us in a very simple to read brochure is unbelievable. So well done on that. I would

like to see the brochure circulated to the doctors, the TDs and the Ministers, if you could do that. And I know there's a number of members in here who work with Ministers and they would facilitate that for you.

Drugs, mental health and environment, three of the top things that are affecting our society today and you have identified them and you have given us some data around them. The one thing I would ask you to do, if you could, and maybe Councillors Dermot, Tom and Grace would help you with it, would be if you could mix with rural schools and rural kids, because drugs is no longer an urban problem, mental health is no longer an urban problem, and the environment is no longer an urban problem. It is all our problem. And ye have brought it to the forefront here today and I want to thank you for that.

I also want to acknowledge, and I know I don't know the volume of work that Councillor Fortune and Councillor Grace have been doing with you, I am sure it is huge, but I do know and I want to echo what Councillor Fortune said about Councillor Dermot, the work he has done with you, because on all occasions Councillor Dermot has been praising ye and always looking to promote ye and the work you do in the community. And I want to acknowledge that Councillor Dermot, and just put on the record we do appreciate what you do for the Comhairle. But again, thank you and thank you for highlighting the three of those. But if you could mix with the rural kids and the rural schools I would appreciate it, and I think it would be great for them as well. So thank you for the presentation.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor Councillor Peir Leonard.

COUNCILLOR LEONARD: I just want to thank you for coming in. And I know you have got the coolest councillor in the county at the helm of it, in the middle of everything. Ah no, he's great. I was just wondering what the geographical spread of everyone in the Comhairle is? Like, how do you meet in each Municipal District? You know, I am down in Arklow, so do you have a group that meets down there, and where do you meet and stuff like that? I have already passed Dermot when he gave me the thing to pass onto the East Coast Drugs Task Force, so it's been incorporated into their new strategy. So you are already in there doing work without even knowing that you are but it would be great as John says, to come and do a presentation for it. But I would just be interested in the geographical spread and how we can help you recruit new numbers on the ground in each area.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Do you want to answer that?

KATIE: Yes. So it is the geographical spread of Comhairle. So Wicklow Comhairle, we are quite a small Comhairle so we would try to meet in here every month. So anyone from -- so we have got a couple of people, like, from Carnew and Kiltegan area, we have a couple of people from Bray, Greystones and then a couple of people from Arklow and Wicklow. So we are almost evenly spread out between the different areas which is kind of different to how it was before. There was a lot more people from East Wicklow, but it is kind of spreading out more into West Wicklow as well. But we only meet -- like, there's no subgroups for specific towns. It is just the one Wicklow Comhairle that meets here every month. But we are trying to work on growing our numbers and spreading it out even further. The main way we would do that is through Youth Summit which is normally in Newtownmountkennedy at the Parkview Hotel. So we invite different schools from each area of Wicklow

and try and get people to join through that. So that is our main way of growing.

COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Great. Sounds like you are doing a great job. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Paul O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Well done, guys. You were here for the debate earlier. And as Councillor Kennedy say, you are like a breath of fresh air. I will be honest with you, I was going to leave here a little bit despondent until you got up and start talking and you have given me a bit of hope again. Hope in the future. Because as we all know politics at the moment is probably down in the gutter and people are anti politics but to me, I'm pro democracy and that's the way it should be. I think -- I don't think we have seen the last of you in here. Not just as Comhairle na nÓg but I think we have three future politicians in front of us here today. I remember debating in here when I was your age and I lost my script so I went off on one, shock horror some people might say, and I was told that there's a future politician here, and here I am sitting here, thank god. So I definitely see three politicians in here and to me that signals that the future is bright. So thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor Chief Executive.

MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach and thank you, members. I met a couple of you at the showcase there in Croke Park and I have say when I went into that event, I didn't know who was there, I didn't know that Dermot worked with Comhairle na nÓg because I was only maybe a couple of weeks in the job, but I was blown away by your composure, how well you knew your topic, how clearly you could articulate the needs and the views of the young people of

wicklow. And, you know, I had spoke to Dermot afterwards and said we absolutely have to get these guys in the Council chamber and probably on a regular -- you know, maybe once a year or every few months or whatever suits you, because I know you are all busy with school and everything else. But your views are hugely, hugely important. And I suppose as a parent as a pre-teen I am only starting to appreciate the level of pressure that is on kids now. It is a completely different world to when I was in school. There was no social media, there was no nothing. And they are all bombarded with all of this noise. And as one of you said, to be able to have a conversation with somebody, maybe on the other side of the world, who is having similar issues, is hugely, hugely important. And you're right, we don't get it. I don't get it. I don't get why my 11-year-old is getting all upset about something that happened in class. I just don't understand the pressure that he is feeling at that very young age. And I know it gets considerably greater as he moves into secondary school and beyond. So I have to commend you for the amazing work that you are doing. I think you really are an inspiration to us all. And I think one of the councillors here said, it has cheered us up all to no end having you here this afternoon. The positivity on really difficult issues that you are bringing to the fore, you know you are highlighting them, you are discussing them and coming up with solutions and opinions. And if we can facilitate those conversations with whatever fora, the Drugs Task Force, the JPC, whatever fora it might be, we are more than happy to do that and we would like to see you more involved in what we do here in the Council. So again, thank you very much and well done.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Chief Executive. I am going to let Councillor Dermot O'Brien in here.

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I notice they didn't mention me in their... But anyway. Which is again a credit to them because it is not about me. But it would be remiss of us to talk about Comhairle and not reference - I did the meta stuff so it is my honour to be the coordinator and I have been coordinator of Comhairle long before I came into this chamber - but this council, the CCSD, Director Nicholson, and his team, Clodagh up there who is our link into the Council, if the doors weren't opened by Director Nicholson and his team then Comhairle wouldn't be contributing to strategies, research and conversation. So I think this council -- the LECP, a hundred young people contributed to the LECP because of how we navigate ourselves at that level, which, I don't expect the guys to be managing the meta stuff, but I think that again is testament to how this Council operates and invites the voice of young people in. The LCDC, Councillor Kennedy chairs that. The voices of young people they might not be present but they are channelling in and I think that is again credit to the Council. Thanks

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor. And just from myself. Thank you to all of you for coming in here today. It is really, really appreciated and thanks for all the work you do for the county. So I will let you sit down now. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

Members, it is 16:33. We are going to move onto the Chief Executive's Monthly Management Report. I am going to conclude meeting at 5 o'clock to allow for protocol. So any items that aren't caught before then, we will ask the Chief Executive or the officials to respond to any issues raised.

So, Chief Executive, I will hand it over to yourself.

MS O'GORMAN: Just very, very briefly, members, I will take the report as read and obviously we are all here to answer any questions you might have arising from the report.

Just to note that the 30km speed limits outside our schools has come back in again since August. The 102 schools in the county. Obviously, those of us that were at JPC earlier on, we talked about today is National Slowdown Day and the importance of being careful on our roads. There's been an awful lot of fatalities this year. So protecting those very vulnerable users of public roads as they get to and from schools is hugely, hugely important. We are obviously working as well through the Safer Routes to School piece through Leonora's team. There's eight schools identified for that and that will work through.

Just to mention as well, we had the launch of the Creative Places Programme in Baltinglass a couple of weeks ago in the beautiful Rathcoran Estate, which is the former convent building restored and the Respond Housing Scheme there. A really, really innovative collaboration between ourselves, Respond and Trinity College, just looking at how we best can integrate our communities and work in a creative way together.

And also just to note, I know Deirdre is here to do a presentation on town and village, which we mightn't get to it, so what I will ask her to do is maybe circulate the presentation to you all and we can follow-up with questions. Just to note that that is now open for applications with a closing date in November as far as I

can remember, but the scheme has changed very slightly, it does tend to change with every iteration, so if members have any questions on it if they direct them back through Deirdre.

Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That is great. Thanks, Chief Executive. Before I open up to the floor I just want to update the members in relation to a meeting held with TII. You may recall a delegation met TII, a delegation of councillors. So myself, Councillor Behan, Councillor Patsy Glennon, Councillor Pat Fitzgerald - thank you, Leonora - Leonora and Tom. There you go. So just in relation to that, it was a challenging meeting at times and we challenged TII and there was a number of agreed statements that TII have allowed us to issue from that, so I will circulate these in writing to everybody so that you have them. But just for the record: "TII confirm that the N11/M11 Junction 4 to Junction 14 Major Scheme was not included in the Section 24 Allocations Letter which confirmed the funding allocations available for the National Roads Project in 2023. TII stated their support to continue to engage with Wicklow County Council to find a safe solution to the N81 Park and Ride and bus stop."

I would just like to thank the members over there as well on the day: All members equally advocated for the N11 as well as the N81 which was great to see and I think was really important for discussions.

And that: "Wicklow County Council confirmed that it would require --" So just in relation to this statement, we did ask the question as to how much would it take to continue the level of N11

works, to progress it further. So: "Wicklow County Council confirmed that it would require an estimated funding of 2.5 million to facilitate progressing the N11/M11 Junction 4 to Junction 14 Major Scheme Through the next phases; namely, phases 3 and 4. And currently these phases are not being progressed due to a lack of funding being allocated."

I know that is a lot of information to just read out. I will circulate that in email to everybody, but just to give people some feedback. So I am going to open up the floor. Councillor Joe Behan.

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. First of all, thank you for leading the deputation so professionally and so well, and obviously to Leonora, the Director of Services, for the work she did in setting the meeting up. As has been said by yourself, Cathaoirleach, it appears certainly to me, TII didn't take minutes, they don't take minutes. We had to agree a number of points and they were quite careful in what they would say but my impression, and it has always been my impression, is the decision has come from the Department of Transport as to what funding goes to Wicklow County Council for the N11/M11 and TII basically allocate that funding as best they can. So it is back to the Minister and it is back to the political representatives of this constituency. That is my opinion. But I would agree with you, Cathaoirleach, that there was a lot of unity among all the public reps at the meeting. The TII staff were very accommodating and very professional. We had a very good discussion, there is no doubt about that, and they are very clear about our views on that. So that is all I would say on that, but I have a couple of other points if I could while I have the floor.

I want to single out Michael Nicholson and Breege Kilkenny -- this won't happen very often, I assure you, but I want to single them out for praise on this occasion for a very momentous decision that may or may not have been -- it might have passed by our attention but it was made in the last week and it is a decision to refuse a retention application for a commercial medical centre on the Southern Cross Road in Bray. There is an organisation, I think they're Centrica Health, who are running a doctors surgery in a particular part of that development and they applied for retention of planning permission but the site on which that particular medical centre or certainly part of it is contained was put in by councillors in the previous development plan to be part of a community -- non-commercial community facility. And I really want to praise the stance, the strong stance that was taken by the Planning Section and Community Services Section - so Michael Nicholson and Breege Kilkenny - for insisting, even though there is going to be pressure, and this is a very big issue now because there are many people who signed up as patients in that particular medical facility, but there is a huge number of extra people living, a lot of them are our tenants, going to be living in that location and there is absolutely a need for non-commercial neighbourhood facilities as well. So I want to say thank you to the two directors and their staffs for holding the line on something that the councillors had already agreed to in a previous development plan. But I would also take the opportunity to say that perhaps we need some kind of consultation or discussion to see if there is a creative solution that can be found to ensuring that we continue to have medical facilities, albeit that they are commercial, but that the community does not lose out as a result

of what might happen in future. So I just wanted to get that point across. Thank you for that.

The other point I have to ask for clarification, I saw an email that was sent by the Chief Executive or I heard about an email -- sorry, I never saw it, because we didn't get it. An email sent to the Wicklow Municipal District about the Greenhill Road Scheme, the Affordable Housing Scheme. I would like to point out to the Chief Executive, we all have a representation in that scheme. I certainly made representations for a number of people on it. But only the Wicklow Municipal District members apparently got an email about a week or two ago saying that all the matters that regarding the Greenhill Road were solved and the people who were waiting to close the deal, everything was sorted out. There was some issue about HomeBond. I went back to the two families that I was dealing with, they checked with their solicitors and up to last Thursday or Friday they are saying to me, no, they're not settled. So we have gone through this first Affordable Housing Scheme, we had a lot of discussion about it and it just does not seem to be resolved yet. So could I ask the Chief Executive what is the problem here or how is it going to be resolved?

And the last point I will make is this: Dublin Transportation Office, or what are they called, the NTA now, have issued compulsory purchase notices on a number of businesses in the Castle Street area which are effectively going to close most of those businesses. We're talking about the shops and businesses across the road from the old Superquinn in Castle Street. With the potential loss of 50 plus jobs. Because the entire parking area in front of those businesses is going to be taken away. Now

having done a bit of investigation what I discovered, and it is appropriate, relevant to what we were already talking about earlier on, at some stage in the past the chief executive - not our current one, our previous one - signed away the roads authority from Wicklow County Council to the NTA, I think possibly under some kind of legislation. So instead of having the normal public consultation with a roads project that we would have to do a Part 8, you would have to have a decision about it, the NTA are making those decisions and the people are getting their CPO notices and there's no discussion. Now, we will hopefully get a chance to discuss this in Bray tomorrow night but it is of crucial importance to those businesses that this matter is taken on by Wicklow County Council as well. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor. Councillor Peir Leonard.

COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yes. I have two transport-related ones as well. Thanks for the Chief Executive's report, but with all our conversations today about transport and safety on roads and stuff like that, this is the only opportunity I have to raise this issue.

There's four buses not functioning with Bus Eireann at the moment for over a hundred children attending East Glendalough School and Educate Together. I am a new parent of a -- I live in the town but my son is attending East Glendalough School, so it is my first time as a bus parent witnessing the lack of communication, the lack of information for parents and now no buses for the children going from Rathdrum up to East Glendalough. But there's four buses off and there is absolutely zero communication from Bus Eireann or the School Transport with the parents. So the parents are on the road trying to scramble together and communicate with

each other and come up with plans. And according to any communications there is no plan for replacing the bus, so this is going to be the situation for the next week or two. And in the meantime these kids, some of them are in first year starting, it is very important for them to have a non-stressful transition into first year. So if the Chief Executive or if anybody in the Directorate has any contacts at all they could put the pressure on Bus Eireann and the School Transport to communicate with the parents and put a solution in place as soon as possible I would be really grateful.

Then the second one is on the back of Joe's, talking about the NTA. I know we have got a lot of funding around the county, but it is the whole planning. Like, I noticed a wall being built on the southern exit of Arklow. Does the NTA have the power to build stuff without any planning permission as part of the schemes to mitigate, you know, people's boundaries that have come into it? I am not sure whether the wall has been built privately or through the NTA scheme. So maybe just some clarification on that, because it is a substantial build of a wall and it actually impacts the whole entrance into the town and a couple of people raised it with me. But it is just to clarify, do the NTA not have to go through a planning process if that is part of the scheme? Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, councillor. I will take one more and then I will invite the Chief Executive in.

Councillor Mary Kavanagh.

COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Thanks, Chair. There is only one issue that is exercising most of the people of Wicklow at the moment, and that is the disappearing path on the Murrough. I wrote three weeks ago to find out what was being done as a plan B, I didn't

receive a response from three people and I received an unsatisfactory response from the fourth. And I am aware that there is a ten-year ECRIP plan in place with Iarnród Éireann. I am aware that we are at year three of that plan. If it is a ten-year plan, so the works won't even commence for about another five to six years, the coastal protection works. In the meantime one more storm will decimate what is left of the path and there will be no access from the pedestrian side, or from the promenade side of the Murrough. And I don't think crossing railway lines is in anybody's interests given that there was a fatality a couple of months ago along the railway track. I want to know what the Council is doing because as custodians of council land the Council has a responsibility to ensure that council land which is public land remains available to the public and that there is a plan in place. I would like to know what the plan is. Call it plan B, call it whatever you want. I am aware it is an ecologically sensitive area, but I am also aware that people have been using this area for hundreds of years. It is one of the most beloved amenities in the whole town. Everybody uses it or has used it, and I know that they want this to continue for the foreseeable future. So I just want to know what the plans are for an alternative path when the existing path goes very soon. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor. Chief Executive I will let you come in there.

MS O'GORMAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thank you members. Councillor Behan, first of all, apologies on the communication on Greenhills. I sent it to the Wicklow MD, I should have probably sent it to the full Council and I will do that after this meeting. In relation to HomeBond, as you know the Greenhills Road Scheme

was originally for social housing and it flipped to affordable housing which was absolutely the right thing to do but as a consequence of that we had to retrofit the HomeBond solution into it. And to be fair to Joe's team there was extensive back and forth with HomeBond on it to get them to agree to ensure, for want of a better term, the properties. Some of the major banks would only close on the basis that this HomeBond would be secured. One of the banks was happy to go ahead on one of the guarantees. We got prices and commitment from HomeBond two days before I sent that email to the members that they would cover these properties at an agreed price and that was the basis on which we proceeded. Since then we have had absolute silence from HomeBond despite our best efforts. I have contacted them directly myself, the managing director, to no avail. I have contacted the Department and asked them to intervene on our behalf because this has national issues as well. It is not just -- it is our scheme now, it will affect other schemes in other jurisdictions as well. So we are working to resolve it. It is, I'm not going to abdicate responsibility for it and say it is not within my gift to deliver HomeBond, but we are putting as much pressure as we can on them. They have committed to it. They have given us a price. We have agreed to the price. That is all done but then nothing done since. We are trying to get it solved as soon as possible. We are hugely aware of the pressure that these home purchasers are under; they have agreed mortgages with their banks, those have finite terms in them and we do not want to see anybody lose out on the interest rate that they have with their mortgage provider. I will keep the members updated. Apologies for not circulating that email to all.

Councillor Leonard, in relation to the Bus Eireann issue we can

certainly make a call. I don't know to what avail it'll be. But we will certainly make a call in relation to the NTA, I will get Leonora to clarify that, but my understanding is that when a scheme is agreed it includes all works on the scheme. But she might have to take your details on that.

Councillor Kavanagh, on the Murrough. Yes, yes, ten-year plan, three years in. I met with the CEO of Iarnród Eireann a week ago on the ECRIP plan generally speaking and we set up a steering group with ourselves and the other counties that are affected with the Iarnród Eireann. Because Leonora was with me at it and we reiterated, I suppose, the importance of the amenity of the Murrough to the residents of Wicklow Town and the path and how important that path is to that amenity. So we expect Iarnród Eireann to be in the area in September doing works. And we have asked them to really, really look at the path. Now bearing in mind it is an SAC. We can only do limited works in the area that manage the eco system. We cannot put hard landscaping or anything like that. I know you're not asking for that. But we are doing everything in our power with Iarnród Eireann to carry out some works on the site. They are acutely aware of the storm damage and acutely aware of the need to reinforce that part of the Murrough.

COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Can I just ask if the temporary path could be extended?

MS O'GORMAN: I know it is a temporary path. That's what we asked them. In order for them to access the site they are going to have to increase the pathway. We are working with them very closely to get it done.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Chief Executive. Leonora.

MS GALLAGHER: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Yes, Councillor Behan,

so there is a transportation strategy for the Great Dublin Area and under that is the BusConnects which is to provide a programme of improvements to bus services across the country. The most recent scheme now is from the City Centre out to Bray and that is the core bus corridor. It is being managed and run by the NTA. There is a public consultation period now open at the moment. And Wicklow County Council Roads Department is engaging with the district engineer in Bray in the preparation of a submission. Now tomorrow night's meeting I think will be an opportunity for the elected members to also make their comments. I would encourage members if they also wished to make a separate submission, they can do so. The closing date now is the 10th of October of this year.

So then just in relation to Councillor Leonard's query. So we work with the landowners in relation to works we may do outside their properties. So that would have been works that would have been agreed with the landowner as part of the scheme for the Arklow South cycle track, footpath and pedestrian crossings. So that would have been agreed accommodation works with that landowner as part of the scheme

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Leonora. Councillor Tom Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thanks to the Chief Executive for your report. I have just a couple of things. The Local Area Plans, what is the status on that or what is happening? Has there been some recent announcement? I am just conscious that the Greystones-Kilcoole, that the plan is either being looked at, but I think we are sitting on it waiting to see what the Department are going to do. There is some talk of ten years. So could we get some clarification on that if we could?

Getting back to what we were debating earlier, that particular list that was put together of the sites, could all the members get -- could we get a copy of that list of land? Yes. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much. Councillor Lourda Scott.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I will just be brief. We're running out of time a little bit. Just regarding the new speed limits and particularly the school zones, I have been in contact with a few people around our district where the new signs haven't gone up yet. And I was just wondering -- I have raised it a couple of times in our district, and I know the signs, there was a bit of a delay in them being delivered, but just people are very anxious, schools are back now, just to see them up because it is welcome.

And just on the related thing, and I know you had a press release out, but again I have been asked by a good few members of the community, there's a little bit of concern, like, that there is going to be the new speed limits up overnight and the guards will be out with the speed cameras and that people won't realise. They were just wondering is there going to be more of a publicity campaign or awareness campaign that there is going to be quite a lot of changes happening and if the Council can facilitate that. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor. Councillor Gail Dunne.

COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. First of all, I would just to thank the Chief Executive for a meeting that myself and Councillor O'Brien had with her about the Morrough last week. It was very interesting. She outlined exactly what was going to go on over the next few months, years and in fairness, she is well

on top of her game here. She really wants to see the Murrough sorted out. The coastal erosion, you know, it has affected the town. I think going forward hopefully we will be able to sort out the problems.

Just further on down as well, or further back should I say, Brittas Bay. I have had a good few correspondence from people in Brittas Bay over the sand dunes where they seem to be falling into the sea basically with the bad weather and the tides and things like that. I am just after been talking to Mark and hopefully we are able to get a meeting there, Mark Devereux, with the community involved, but it is something we need to keep an eye on. It is a protected area as well and it needs to be looked after. So I am delighted with that.

Just on the HomeBond issue. In fairness, again from talking to you I know you thought you had sorted it out and these things do have a habit of going slow, but, as you know, I have been on to you about it and it is really, really important that we sort this out. Because people get to have their mortgages for a certain amount of time, that a lot of them are afraid that they are going to lose their mortgages and things like that. So maybe you could keep everybody up to speed on it, because we have all phone calls to make when that is sorted. And thanks very much, Chief Executive.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, councillor. Councillor Gerry Walsh.

COUNCILLOR WALSH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach and thanks to the Chief Executive for the report. Just on the housing piece there. On the Local Authority Home Loans Application, I think we have 34

received to date and approved in principle, 12. The difference, the other 22, is that still ongoing, those applications, or is it a thing they're going to be refused or didn't meet the criteria? Just a bit of clarification around that. And as the homeless presentations rise, in particular the Notice to Quit, I see 73 there in the August report as against 64 in the July report, so that situation is obviously a concern. On the option of the Council to make the offer to buy these homes from the landlords, I wonder is there much of a take-up or much of a interest from landlords with regards to that? And just on the staffing levels, in particular to Greystones I know we had three engineers two years ago and now we have one, and I know there has been interviews for various positions, in-house positions, but is there any progress, because I am sure, as Michael Nicholson I am sure will confirm, we have one engineer who is under huge, huge pressure in the district there with the amount of work he has to contend with. And then, if there is any update on the Cliff walk closure there. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor. Councillor Paul O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I will be as brief as possible. Like Councillor Dunne, I would like to thank the Chief Executive for agreeing to our request last week for a briefing on the Murrough. Both Councillor Dunne and myself have very strong connections with the Murrough; both our families actually hail and were born on the Murrough. So it is great to see that works will be commencing this month.

I also want to echo Councillor Dunne's concerns about Brittas Bay and the dunes. It is actually something that I have brought up here before, and I would like to echo that.

Just my main point is that there is an awful lot of construction going on at the moment and I could spend all the day talking about lack of infrastructure but I think we have dealt with that enough today. My concern is some of the older estates, as in, maybe five, ten years old. And I will give you one quick example, Wicklow Hills. Because of the urgency to build new houses some of the older estates have been left with what is supposed to be temporary fencing, with landscapes not complete and they feel they have been left behind and that because of the new-builds going on the developers are rushing onto finish the next development while also forgetting them. So while parts of Wicklow Hills, for example in Newtownmountkennedy, looks well, there is other parts that have been neglected by the developers. They have been dealing with Wicklow County Council. And just to give you one quick sample, the creche in phase one of Wicklow Hills has been lying idle for four years, up for sale. There is literally a wall 20 metres away and what is on the next phase two? Another creche up for sale, lying idle, probably fit four houses into it. But I just think before we keep rushing ahead and building new houses, which we badly need, we need to make sure that the existing people that have bought the houses in the last five to ten years are looked after and the estates are finished. So thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor. Councillor Pat Kennedy.

COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I will be very brief. I have a few things I want to bring up to the Chief Executive. First of all, Chief Executive, I am just wondering is there any update from Irish Water or can it be pushed ahead for the waste water treatment plant in Aughrim? As you know, there's almost 50

families waiting for housing in Aughrim and three or four families are design-specific. So that is one thing, Chair.

The second thing is the rural roads, and I don't need an answer to this today because I know our own director is doing as much as she can to try and secure extra funding but just to keep it on the list going forward.

And the third thing would be, we did have the presentation here from the Cheviot Sheep Owners Association a number of months ago. Since then a number of things have happened. One landowner has been assaulted on his land with the walkway being closed and again another sheep attack in the uplands this week in Roundwood. So what I would hope to see, we did get funding for additional dog wardens was announced back a number of weeks ago, and I wonder did Wicklow get some of that, and if so, have we had a chance to put that into practice? And the thing I would like to propose is that we bring in the Cheviot Sheep Owners next April, in the lambing season again, to freshen it up, if that is all right with you, Chair and the Management, to bring them in and give a presentation again on what is happening in the last year. If that could be facilitated. I want to put that down as a proposal.

The final thing is I want to thank is to acknowledge the Council, you, Chair, and the Chief Executive and the Management Team for the Best of Wicklow Tent in Tinahely Show. I think it went down really, really well and I want to acknowledge you, Chair, for your part you played in that. That is it. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, councillor.

Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just one thing relating to the fire service emergency section. And maybe this is something that requires a follow-up, so I appreciate that. But just a question around the concept, whether it is a concept or a procedure around call vetting when it comes to fire service. And I will give you an example just to frame where I am coming from. So let's say during a storm a tree is down on a road in Bray and somebody calls the 999 and they request a response, and then we might discover that the fire service are not called to deal with it even though they are equipped and the closest and probably the best option there. So what I am wondering is, is that the journey of that call goes through, I presume, senior management or somebody in the system that says no, that is not a fire service call, that should go elsewhere, and my question is whether that is something that is recorded and just a curiosity around the transparency around that. If call vetting is in place as a procedure, which means that calls are not going through to the fire service, yes, I would love to know the why around that, the rationale behind that. And I know, because we get the data that says the numbers are down on calls but then if the calls are being vetted then there's a reason why numbers are down. And I am not saying that it is right or wrong to do call vetting but I would love to know if there is a transparency around it and a rationale. Because if there is an emergency scenario and the fire service aren't getting the call and then something transpires whereby they might have been the best option maybe that's questions we would have to answer. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, councillor. Councillor Behan.

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: I want to second --

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes, and I also want you to come in on something else, so if you just keep your light there, Joe, if that is okay for one second. You are going to second Councillor Pat Kennedy's motion in relation to the Cheviot Sheep Owners? Absolutely. That is perfect.

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Just the other point, I would appeal to members to consider attending the AILG conference.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That is what I was going to ask you to come in to say, yes. Go ahead.

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: To attend the AILG conference. It's in Sligo on Wednesday and Thursday, not of this week, of next week.

Because the topic is the topic that we discuss here regularly: The powers that are being taken away from us as local councillors and what the political party is going to contest at the next election, plan for local government. So all the parties' spokesperson are being invited and there will be people like Séan O'Rourke and other academic experts on local government. I think myself it would be well worth attending if members were able to attend even for some of the sessions, particularly on the Thursday. I think it would be something that would set us all up in advance of the local elections. I want to ask the people to consider those.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Thanks, councillor. Looking at the time now, so the Chief Executive is not going to get an opportunity to respond to those queries so what I am going to ask is that the responses are issued but that they are issued to everybody so that everybody gets the information, if that is okay.

MS O'GORMAN: Yes.

CATHAOIRLEACH: And then, we will conclude this meeting now and start the Protocol Committee Meeting if that is okay. Just to

remind members, there's the Cathaoirleach reception for Christina Fitzpatrick at half five. Thank you very much, members.

(Meeting Concluded)

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