HELD AT COUNTY BUILDINGS, WHITEGATES, WICKLOW TOWN

ON

ON MONDAY, 8 APRIL 2024 AT 2:00 PM

STENOGRAPHER: Niamh Kelly-Leahy, RMR, MBIVR

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MEETING COMMENCED ON MONDAY, 8TH APRIL 2024, AT 2:00 PM, AS FOLLOWS:

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, members. I think we will get started.

You are all very welcome here today, and to those in the galley as well, you are extremely welcome. Helen I will hand it to yourself for a roll call.

MS PURCELL: Thanks very much. It is lovely to see everybody in the chamber.
We will go very quickly to a roll call. Councillor Tommy Annesley.
COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry.
COUNCILLOR BARRY: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Joe Behan.
COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Vincent Blake.
COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Silvester Bourke.
COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Melanie Corrigan.
COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin.
COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen.
COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Erika Doyle. (No answer.) Councillor Gail Dunne. COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Anne Ferris.
COUNCILLOR FERRIS: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald.
COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Tom Fortune.
COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Patsy Glennon. COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Present. MS PURCELL: Councillor Mary Kavanagh. COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Present. MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Kennedy. COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Present.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard.
COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Here.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell.
COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Here.
MS PURCELL: 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: Councillor Paul O'Brien.
COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Rory O'Connor.
COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Anseo.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry O'Neill.
COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Anseo.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Mick Ryan.
COUNCILLOR RYAN: Anseo.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott.
COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Here.
MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell.
COUNCILLOR SNELL: Anseo.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Stephen Stokes.
COUNCILLOR STOKES: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Edward Timmins.
COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Present.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry Walsh sends his apologies. Councillor Irene Winters.

COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Present.
MS PURCELL: Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much, Helen. Do we have any votes of sympathy? Councillor Shay Cullen.
COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I want to propose a vote of sympathy to the family of Kathy Kenna. The Kenna family are very involved in Moneystown and Roundwood and Laragh communities. To Kathy's husband Noel, her sons Liam, Conor, Denis and Tom, and their daughter, Susie, our thoughts and prayers are with them.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
Councillor Avril Cronin.
COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thanks very much. I would like to propose a vote of sympathy to the family of Úna Deering. Úna was a well-known member of the community in Dunlavin. She was married to Pascal who was a former councillor here in Wicklow County Council. And the Deering family would be very active members of our community. I would like to express our sympathy to son Mark and her daughter Miriam. Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Gail Dunne. COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to do a vote of sympathy for Captain John Barlow. John was harbour master in Wicklow for a number of years and he also had a connection with the RNLI and as a young man he played senior football for St. Pat's winning championships until he went away to sea. Just a vote of sympathy for Captain John Barlow.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
Councillor Edward Timmins.
COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Yes, I would like to be associated with the vote of sympathy for the death of Úna Deering. As Avril said, Úna's husband Pascal served this Council in 1970s and 1980s with great distinction. Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Patsy Glennon. COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to be associated with those previous votes of sympathy in respect of the Kenna family and the Deering family. And I would like to include Abe Jacob who was a brother of Joe Jacob who was TD for this county for many years and Noel who is a councillor here as well. Abe would be a brother of Joe's and an uncle of Noel's. He is being
buried this morning.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
Councillor Vincent Blake.
COUNCILLOR BLAKE: I too would like to be associated with the sympathy to the Jacob family and the Deering family as well on the death of their beloved members of their family. Equally so, the tragic accident we had down near Carnew, to Niall Keane's family. A young man in his early 20s who lost his life on the weekend. I know they are in County Wexford, but the accident happened in County Wicklow. Our sympathies to the Keane family on the death of Niall.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
Councillor Gerry O'Neill.
COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Again I would like to be associated with the deaths of the Jacobs in Knockananna and also Úna Deering in Dunlavin. I have known Úna as a Blessington native for a long time and her husband Pascal, as was pointed out, a previous councillor here. I would like to be associated with both, please. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cathaoirleach.
MS PURCELL: We extend our sympathies to the families of Elizabeth (Betty) Kavanagh, mother of our colleague Eddie Kavanagh, and Michael Fitzgerald, father of our colleague Lauren Fitzgerald.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Helen. We will stand for a moment's silence. MS PURCELL: May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen.
COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Cathaoirleach, just if I could --
CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Councillor O'Neill. I am going to bring you in there, hold on.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Just on a point of order, if I could. We facilitated the farmers here a few weeks ago when they had a place to picket outside the offices here and I propose that if we could move up on the agenda the motion on the Palestinian issue. There are a lot of people outside, and instead of having them to hang around in the rain for the day, that we could move these motions forward, if we could, please.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Tom Fortune. COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Yes, would I second what Councillor O'Neill is
saying.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Let me just check with the officials first. Councillor Winters, did you want to come in?

COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Cathaoirleach, yes, I just wanted, if possible, to quickly extend our congratulations to Minister Simon Harris.

CATHAOIRLEACH: My apologies.
COUNCILLOR WINTERS: I just want to know if we could have a minute just to extend our congratulations.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Absolutely, Councillor.
COUNCILLOR WINTERS: On behalf of the Fine Gael group, I would like to extend our warmest congratulations to Minister Simon Harris. He is a proud Wicklow man and I want to congratulate him on his remarkable journey to becoming the leader of the Fine Gael party on this, which is the eve of his nomination as Taoiseach of Ireland.

For such a young man, Simon has had a long political career, but then he did start early. So he grew up in Greystones with his parents, his brother and his sister and he was a community activist from his early years. He first stood for election for Wicklow County Council in 2009 and he was -- well, he had a poll-topping vote and then he served his community and county as a councillor until 2011. During that time he was actually chair of the joint Policing Committee. He was the youngest TD in the 31st Dáil. He served as a junior minister in Finance with special responsibility for the OPW from 2014 to 2016. Then he went on to have what many considered the unenviable task of Minister for Health for four years. He currently serves as the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Science and Innovation. Simon is a workhorse. He is intelligent. He is solution driven and he has an empathetic and listening ear. He will be an excellent leader of our country and I know he is determined to address the many challenges that are impacting on all of our citizens.

It is sometimes forgotten that politicians actually have a personal life, but Simon has a wife, two beautiful children and an extended family that is both supportive and proud of him. It is a great honour to have shared this chamber with him for the two years we were here together and as the first Wicklow Taoiseach, I would ask that we all in the county, don our county colours and wish him his family and his government well. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Stephen Stokes.

COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. Just to follow on from that; as Cathaoirleach of the Greystones Municipal District should Minister Harris most likely become Taoiseach, it is our intention for the Greystones Municipal District to write to him to wish him congratulations. It is quite possible that I have known Simon the longest in the room. We were both in primary school together in Saint Kevin's National School in Greystones. I think he was two years behind me and we used to be in the speech and drama class together after school. We go back quite a way.

Simon has always been somebody who is very courteous to me personally and he has a reputation for being excellent at his casework. So I do wish him the very best of success. His success will be Wicklow and Ireland's success and, you know, hopefully this will also mean that, you know, there'll be additional investment in County Wicklow because it is definitely badly needed. So go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Pat Kennedy. COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yes, just on behalf of the Fianna Fáil group we would like to congratulate and wish deputy Harris every success in his new position as leader of Fine Gael. It is proud day for Fine Gael party throughout the country, but it is also a proud day for all Wicklow people to see that we will have the Taoiseach now living in the county and we want to wish him every success in the future.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
Councillor Paul O'Brien.
COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. On behalf of Councillor Ferris and myself, we also want to extend our kind wishes and best regards to Minister Harris soon to be Taoiseach. Councillor Winters has put it very well, that we should be donning the Wicklow jersey here today in colours and wishing him well. I am sure it is going to be a great day for not just him tomorrow, but his family, his supporters and indeed the Fine Gael party. I want to wish him every best and I look forward to working with him in the future for the betterment of Wicklow. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.

Councillor Tom Fortune.
COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. On behalf of the Independent group, would like to be associated with Councillor Winters' remarks. I think it is a tremendous honour for Wicklow. It is a great honour, obviously, for the district we operate as councillors as well. I know Simon a long number of years. We would have competed politically at different stages as well, but I also know him as an individual. I think he has a lot of character, a lot of characteristics that are very, very good. We all differ on all kinds of different things, but I just think he's very, very capable. He has an absolutely tremendous communication command. He can discuss and debate anything. I think you have to be really, really intelligent to do that. I think he will do a good job. Politics is very difficult nowadays and life is kind of tough and hard and we all tend to be -- find it easier to criticise than to praise. And I would like to take the occasion today, I am speaking for the group but I am speaking for myself as well, obviously, in case any of my group don't totally agree with what I am saying. I just think that, as I said, it's great and I think he will do a good job. And I must say, he kicked off with a very impressive presentation over the weekend. So let's hope it works well. Because if it works well it's good for us all.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.

## Councillor Lourda Scott.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Yes, I just want to extend my congratulations. As a fellow Greystones resident, I sort of got to know Simon a small bit through lobbying, really, on schools issues and I hope that his new-found position will help us progress those as well. Wishing him and his family all the best.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Gerry O'Neill.
COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I want to wish Simon Harris the best of luck as Taoiseach. I hope he does have a little more success as Taoiseach for West Wicklow than he has Minister. We have been promised the sun, moon and stars by Simon Harris and we have had nothing of it. The N81 is a major issue which we have had promises about. We were to have a swimming pool out there I think ten years ago, we were to have schools, we were to have this, that and the other, but we didn't. So hopefully -- I think he did a bit there in Hollywood for Patsy Glennon, off the tot I don't know, built an aould footpath or something. So he
says. I don't know who -- I don't know who is responsible for it anyway. But anyway, and I would wish him, on a human level anyway, and his family, the best of luck. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Thank you Councillor for those contributions.

We have a proposal and a seconder. So what we actually need is a proposal for suspension of Standing Orders. Councillor O'Neill. Seconded by Councillor Tom Fortune. So I am presuming that that's the proposal; is to call for suspension of Standing Orders to hear motions number 2 and 6 which both relate to Palestine, heard next. Is that okay, Ger? Are you happy to propose that?

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: It is. (Inaudible)
CATHAOIRLEACH: No, I know. You're proposing they are heard, yes.
Absolutely. And Councillor Fortune you are happy to second that proposal? We do have to take a vote -- no. If two-thirds are in agreement, we can proceed. Do I have any dissent in the room?

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: No.
CATHAOIRLEACH: No. Okay. That is great, then, we will move to motion number 2.

So, members, we have two motions that relate to the challenges in Palestine at the moment. We also have some proposed amendments to those motions as well. Motion number 2 relates primarily to do with procurement issues. It is proposed by Councillor O'Brien and seconded by Councillor Ryan. And then we have a proposed amendment to that motion from Councillor Ferris, seconded by Councillor Paul O'Brien. And the second motion then relates to other issues.

What I am going to ask is that for the first motion we hear, if members could stick to the issues related to that motion and allow then, when we move to the second motion, which is submitted by Councillor Fortune, we discuss those items there, just to provide a bit of clarity to everyone, particularly in terms of recording the meeting and also for those in the gallery that are hearing the motion that is being discussed.

So motion number 2, notice of motion in the name of Councillor Dermot O'Brien who is proposer, and seconded by Councillor Mick Ryan 1st March 2024.

The Council acknowledges the harm done by corporations that profit from protracted armed conflict and systematic violations of human rights, particularly in the context of Israel's continuing brutal assault on the people of Gaza and escalating settler terrorism in the West Bank, Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, and other conflicts around the world. With this motion, the Council encourages companies to meet their obligations to avoid contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities, and to prevent or mitigate human rights abuses linked to their operations.

The Council is aware of the crucial role of local authorities and the public procurement procedures in ensuring respect for human rights by companies, as well as their obligations under widely accepted business and human rights norms - as laid down in the UN guiding principles on business and human rights, OECD guidelines for multinational enterprises, and the global Sullivan principles 1999 - to promote respect for human rights by companies with which they do business.

The Council affirms that every endeavour is made to ensure that councils tender processes are consistent with the above principles, including under the Fourth Geneva convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and under customary international humanitarian law, prohibiting the importation or sale of goods or services originating in occupied territories.

This Council resolves to adopt a rights-based Ethical Procurement Policy (EPP) that takes fully into account existing obligations and standards. The EPP will incorporate widely accepted and precisely formulated international standards and explain clearly how the policy will be implemented. The primary aim of the EPP is to ensure that human rights obligations are properly acknowledged, observed and respected at all stages of the procurement process.

I will now invite Helen to give the Council's response and then I am going to invite the proposer and seconder to speak and then I will bring Councillor Ferris in in terms of the amendment.

So Helen.
MS PURCELL: Responsibility for procurement is an executive function and the Chief Executive is obliged to comply with statutory procurement legislation. The Department of Enterprise and Trade advise that neither Ireland nor the EU have restrictive measures in place in respect of Israel. Ireland has given undertakings as part of it WTO membership to grant non-discriminatory access to its markets in goods and services and has joined the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) expanding its commitment with regard to market access. Under the current Irish and EU procurement regime, suppliers in a country outside of the EU that has signed up to the World Trade Organization's Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) are eligible to submit tenders for Irish public sector agreements and contracts. A full list of GPA members are available on its website. The department has previously indicated that any move by a public authority to act outside of any agreement may be seen to breach our international trade commitments and also may be seen as discriminatory in relation to goods and services otherwise legally saleable within the union. The law agent has advised that it would not be appropriate to interfere with contract law in the way proposed by the motion and this would leave Wicklow County Council open to a specific performance court action and costs. Political assertations are not grounds to alter criteria in the procurement process, unless grounded in existing regulations. Furthermore, it is arguable that subjective consideration alluding to a form of trade sanction regarding another country's actions are outside the remit and powers of the members and would be an unsubstantiated criteria that does not exist under procurement law.

Based on the above advice, it is determined that it is not possible to adopt the policy relating to Israel as set out in the motion.

In respect of Russia, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022, the European Council adopted an amendment regulations, EU regulation 2022/576 of the 8th of April 2022, which amends the 2014 regulation to include a prohibition on the award and continued execution of public contracts and concessions with Russian nationals and entities or bodies established in Russia. The regulation applies restrictions to public procurement falling within the scope of the Public Procurement Directives 2009/81/EU relating to defence and security; 2014/23/EU concession
contracts; 2014/24EU public contracts; and 2014/25EU utilities, as provided for in Article 5 K of the regulations. Hence, it applies to any procurement above EU threshold values. It also applies to certain contracts which are outside the scope of the public procurement directives such as lotteries, real estate transactions, financial instruments, loans and some Central Bank services.

The regulation mandates in effect from 9th April 2022, a Russian national or any natural or legal person, entity or body established in Russia is not allowed to participate in public procurement in Ireland or any other Member State of the union. Where more than $50 \%$ of the ownership of an economic operator, either directly or indirectly, is owned by a Russian national or a legal person, entity or body established in Russia, or a natural or legal person, entity or body acting on behalf or at the direction of such an entity, that economic operator is not allowed to participate in a national public procurement.

It is also prohibited to award contract to an economic operator who is relying on a subcontractor or supplier or entity which accounts for more than $10 \%$ of the contract value where that subcontractor, supplier or entity falls within the category of prohibited entities outlined above. This extends to all subcontractors relied on through the supply chain.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thanks, Helen. So now I am going to invite Councillor Dermot O'Brien, the proposer, to say a few words.

COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thanks Cathaoirleach.
I was going to say, would you mind reading that out again, Helen.

Because there's a lot there and it is interesting to hear -- it alluded to that this motion is proposing to change procurement law, but it isn't. So I will start with that. And before I kick on, Cathaoirleach, just to acknowledge that people went out of their way to come here today, the Wicklow branch of the Ireland Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, the North Wicklow Against Genocide group and the Arklow Against Zionism group to give recognition to them for the work that they're doing ongoing.

The reason for this motion I looked at, we prepared documents. There's the Supplier Information Booklet, there's the Corporate Procurement Plan 22 to 24, there's the Procurement Supplier Charter. So there's documents there prepared by this county council and none of them have the word "ethical" in them, none of them have "human rights" in them. And this motion is inviting us as a Council to acknowledge the importance of including those elements within our policy when it comes to procurement, so that we are not associated by being passive or by not paying attention so that we are not associated with those who are profiting from some of the activities that are happening across the world.

So I think this motion is important and I think it is really important that this Council sends a message around how we do business, because if we are standing idly by while the world is watching activities happen whereby human beings, like we can see now that if we shine a light on Israel and if we zoom in on Gaza, we can see that the -- I think the figures at the moment are equivalent to the whole population of my town, Bray, dead. Murdered. Every woman, child, doctor, nurse, teacher, journalist, carer, first responder, have been murdered by a state, and that state and its allies are profiting from ethnic cleansing. They are profiting from genocide. I think what this motion is inviting this Council to do is scrutinise, to sit with the document. It's 2024. The procurement plan I presume is up for renewal, and that we scrutinise it. That we zoom in on it. That we do a full analysis of every possible connection that we might have to human rights atrocities that are happening anywhere in the world and that we take ownership of our ethical procurement policy and place ourselves firmly and unequivocally on the side of international law, on the side of ethics, on the side of those who will not endorse or be passive around systematic violations of human rights, and especially to those who are the most vulnerable people in the world.

So this motion, as it says, is the primary aim of the ethical procurement policy is to ensure that human rights obligations are properly acknowledged, observed and respected at all stages of the procurement process. And to me, we can do that. And I think we can do it honourably. And I would be interested to hear what the members think. Thanks, Cathaoirleach

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Ryan, do you
want to speak at all?
COUNCILLOR RYAN: Yes.
CATHAOIRLEACH: I will get you to press your button there I will turn it on. COUNCILLOR RYAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I will just add a slight bit there. That this Council must take a principal stance by developing the policy as a rights-based ethical procurement policy. 2.3 million civilians are under siege in Gaza. The world is watching as lifesaving humanitarian aid is being blocked, including water, food, fuel and medicine. Israel is able to do this without fear of consequence because major corporations, countries and some individuals are able to profit off the genocide. This policy will ensure that we are not supporting any entity that is in the business of profiting off human rights, violations and atrocities. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor Ryan. So that is the proposed and seconded by Councillor O'Brien and Councillor Ryan. So an amendment on that motion has been received, proposed by Councillor Anne Ferris and seconded by Councillor Paul O'Brien. The amendment is that Wicklow County Council actively supports the Boycott, Divestments and Sanctions (BDS) Movement that targets business profiteering from the oppression of the Palestine people, and will exclude such business from Council procurement of goods and services.

I am now going to invite Councillor Ferris and Councillor O'Brien to speak and then I'll open it up to the floor.
Councillor Ferris.
COUNCILLOR FERRIS: Thanks very much, Cathaoirleach. I am not actually sure whether the amendment should have gone on this particular notice of motion or on the notice of motion number 6 .

CATHAOIRLEACH: Do you want me to hold it off? If you can let me know which one you want -- if you want to hold it off until motion number 6, I can do that. COUNCILLOR FERRIS: Yes I think I will. It is more in line with what Councillor Fortune has put in.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That's perfect. Thanks, Councillor Ferris. Okay, members, I am going to open it up to the floor. This relates to motion number 2. Again, I would just remind members with your contributions, and I would ask members that if you have a contribution that relates to the other motion that's being submitted, you
might hold off until then to make a contribution. So opening it up to the floor on this which relates to the procurement practices.

Councillor Mary Kavanagh.
COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yes, to me the key point of this motion is that the Council resolves to adopt a rights-based ethical procurement policy that takes in to account existing obligations and standards, and that the primary aim is to ensure that human rights obligations are properly acknowledged. I don't see how, by adopting this policy, we could really be in breach of anything with regard to procurement policy. I would actually like to have that challenged, because some things are just bigger than rules. And the murder of children and women and people who are not legitimate targets of war has to have a much -- has to be much higher up the scale of importance than, you know, whether or not we tick this box or that box. We have to send out a message. The world is revolted by what's going on in Gaza. Six months have passed since this particular conflict kicked off and in that time, as Councillor O'Brien said, the population of Bray has been wiped out. Most of them were not legitimate targets.

I got a little stone from somebody outside, one of the north Wicklow supporters of Gaza. It says, "Think of this child" and on the back is written "Qazim Salwar was a five-year-old victim of genocide. He didn't stand a chance. He didn't get a chance at life." I think we have got to start taking this really seriously and sending out a message that we are not going to tolerate this and I would take a chance with what the law agent says. Thank you

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Joe Behan. COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And, you know, I have the height of respect for the proposer and seconder and for Councillor Kavanagh, but I also have to have and we should have the height of respect for the law of the land and, as has been read out by the meeting administrator, there are difficulties with us adopting that motion from a legal standpoint, and I would propose or would suggest that it be deferred and be referred to the Department of An Taoiseach, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Enterprise and Employment, and the Department of Environment and Local Government. The specific wording, to get their advice on what they see is the implications of us passing this motion. Because this is bigger than us, as has already been said.

But in passing, and I know we will get to the more substantive issue now in a minute, I am quite disappointed that none of the three speakers mentioned the absolutely horrific events of the 7th October last, and what happened with the murder of innocent children from the Israeli side as well. Nothing has been said about that here in this first debate, and it certainly is going to have to be discussed and we have the second motion to discuss, Cathaoirleach. We need to be balanced in our consideration of these tragic events, Cathaoirleach. I think in terms of the first motion, it should be referred to the Government departments to get their advice on what they feel the implications are.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor.
Councillor Irene Winters.
COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I agree with Councillor Behan. I think that we have to be mindful of the law of this land as well. I actually agree that all procurement should be ethical and Councillor Kavanagh said that the world is repulsed and revulsed by what's happening, and I would say that the majority of the world is. But if everybody was repulsed and revulsed as much as we would like them to be we wouldn't be sending them the arms that are doing the damage.

I am very surprised to hear in all of our procurement that Councillor O'Brien mentioned that there is no mention of ethics or anything, and I would like when we are reviewing all of those documents that that would also be considered and maybe brought to the protocol committee and to the SPC that would deal with that. Thank you

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Winters, can I just confirm that you are seconding Councillor Behan's proposal?
COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Yes.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Behan, can I clarify are you putting forward your wording there as an amendment to the motion?
COUNCILLOR BEHAN: The wording to refer it to the department?
MS PURCELL: Yes, to refer to the department.
COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yes.

MS PURCELL: And that was seconded by Councillor Winters; is that correct? CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes. Sorry, just getting that clarity.

Councillor Lourda Scott.
COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I just wanted to lend my support to this motion. And I suppose when reading it, and I thank the proposer for putting such detail in to it because procurement is complicated, it's a complicated process. I suppose my initial thought was: Are we not already -- surely we're doing this already? And I was dismayed to think we are not. Helen's answer was very complex. I think it would have been beneficial maybe to have had that sent in writing to us beforehand so we could have just done a bit of background reading on that. So I do find it hard just sitting here listening to the response from the Executive to tease out what exactly is being said. Yes, certainly, maybe there needs to be further interrogation around the legal piece, but having said that, I fully support the motion and I think, as elected members in this Council, we can decide whether or not we certainly support the spirit of this motion and try and put it to whatever channels is possible to try and make something practical come of this. So yes, that is just what I want to say there.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Gerry O'Neill.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Yes, thanks, Cathaoirleach. I want to endorse this motion absolutely. I tried a suspension to Standing Orders here last November and with the exception of Councillor O'Brien, Dermot O'Brien that being, and John Snell, I was refused even a discussion on expulsion of this woman, the Israeli Ambassador. So I am absolutely delighted that it is back here on the agenda. And with all due respect to Helen and her reply there, that she must inform us of, there's a lot of codology. We're picking and choosing. We're talking about slaughter. We're talking about slaughter of innocent people every day of the week. And we're part of the act in the use of Shannon Airport. Where do we comply there with the regulations that are in place that every American airline going through there must be inspected? There's none of them inspected. They could be carrying anything. And they're out to Gaza to drop 2,000-pound bombs on children. And we're here, humming and hawing about regulations and about procurement. I didn't hear any of this with the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Not a whisper about it. Not one whisper. Put a stop to them and that'll be the end of it, and that's exactly what
happened.

We had Putin and the illegal occupation of Ukraine, before I think he put his foot in to the country he was accused of war crimes. He still hasn't been -- Netanyahu hasn't been accused of that by this government here, and he slaughtering 32,000 . Some of them little kids, and not only children, but women and men, by the way, are buried under rock. I've seen the scene there a few weeks ago where even the old JCB they had, an aould JCB to take the rubble off the dying bodies. Some of them no doubt would have taken two or three weeks to die under the rubble. The first thing the cowards, the murders did was blow the aould JCB apart, that they couldn't even take their dead out. And we're here humming and hawing about -- like, I can't understand it. I can't get my head around this at all. Honest to God, this should be a black and white, closed -- and you know, the procurement we're talking about is within the EU. And the German -- our leader, our German leader, Ursula von der Leyen, immediately, after the 8th of October she lit up Brussels with, EU support Israel. Well, she doesn't speak for me and I think there's plenty of decent Irish people she does not speak for. She's supporting a murderer of the highest degree. A murderer. And the sooner the better Netanyahu is brought into some country or other and brought before some court of some description, and that he may linger there for a long time.

There's other people beating around the bush here, talking about the Hamas issue. I don't know, I am no great historian but I know Hamas are only on the road a while, maybe 20 years. There are people being slaughtered. There were armed groups resisted Israeli occupation of Gaza for many years.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Neill, I am going to bring -COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Six million Jews killed, Gerry. COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Sorry? COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Six million in concentration camps. CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Neill, I am going to bring you back in on the second motion, if that's okay. And I don't want to cut you off at all, but I am very conscious that there is another motion that you may want to contribute to.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: I would urge all this stuff to be put to one side -COUNCILLOR BEHAN: If we have a proper history lesson, we will have to have
a proper history lesson, Cathaoirleach.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Neill, can I ask you to finish up there, please. COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: There was always armed resistance to terrorism in the West Bank.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Neill, for your contribution. COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: There always was and always will be. So this is only pure codology. It is the biggest open prison in the world and we do have that. So I would urge, for God's sake, just stop and think --
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Neill.
COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: -- and support the motion here today.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Neill. Okay. We have no other speakers indicating. We do have a proposed amendment. The amendment actually gets heard first. My colleague, Councillor O'Brien, I did indicate earlier on. The amendment gets heard first. If the amendment passes, then we don't actually take a vote on the motion. Just so that people are aware that that is how it works.

So we will take a vote on the proposed amendment proposed by Councillor Joe Behan, seconded by Councillor Irene Winters that this motion is referred to the various departments to be heard. Sorry?

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Sorry, Cathaoirleach, can you clarify that: All someone has to do is make an amendment to defeat a motion?

CATHAOIRLEACH: No. Sorry. The proposed amendment gets voted on first.
So if that amendment passes, then it actually is succeeded and we don't end up taking a vote on the motion.

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: So the motion succeeds if the amendment passes?
CATHAOIRLEACH: No, no, if the amendment passes, the amended motion passes.
COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: The motion plus --
CATHAOIRLEACH: Just for clarity: If Councillor Behan and Councillor Winters' proposed amendment, if you look at that like a separate motion, to take what your wording is here and send it to the various departments for their feedback, if that gets passed, then this motion hasn't passed because they're looking for a deferral of it. So a decision doesn't get taken on this motion until those feedback
and all comes back. So I suppose what I am trying to let people know is that if they support the deferral, we won't be taking a decision on this here today. Just so that everybody is very clear before we take a vote. Is everyone very clear?

SPEAKERS: Yes.
COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Can we not have the motion first?
CATHAOIRLEACH: We can't. We have to have the amendment first, unfortunately, Councillor O'Neill.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: My god.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Do you want to go ahead, Helen?
MS PURCELL: The Standing Orders statute requires that the first amendment is taken first and it is only if that falls that you would then move on if you had a second amendment, and so on and so forth. So we are now voting on the original motion with the amendment from Councillor Joe Behan, seconded by Councillor Irene Winters that this motion be referred to Government, to the Department of the Taoiseach, Foreign Affairs, Enterprise and Employment, Environment and Local Government for their advice on the legality of the motion.

So if you are in favour of that referral, you're voting for; and if you're against that referral you're voting against.

Councillor Tommy Annesley.
COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry.
COUNCILLOR BARRY: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Joe Behan.
COUNCILLOR BEHAN: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Vincent Blake.
COUNCILLOR BLAKE: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Silvester Bourke.
COUNCILLOR BOURKE: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Melanie Corrigan.
COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin.
COUNCILLOR CRONIN: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen. COUNCILLOR CULLEN: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Erika Doyle is not present. Councillor Gail Dunne. COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Anne Ferris.
COUNCILLOR FERRIS: Against
MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald. COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Aoife Flynn Kennedy.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Tom Fortune.
COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Patsy Glennon.
COUNCILLOR GLENNON: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Mary Kavanagh. COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Kennedy. COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard.
COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell.
COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor John Mullen.
COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Miriam Murphy.
COUNCILLOR MURPHY: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Dermot O'Brien.
COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Paul O'Brien.
COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Rory O'Connor.
COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry O'Neill.
COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mick Ryan. COUNCILLOR RYAN: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott. COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Against. MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell. COUNCILLOR SNELL: Against.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Stephen Stokes. COUNCILLOR STOKES: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Edward Timmins. COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry Walsh not present. And Councillor Irene Winters.

COUNCILLOR WINTERS: For.
MS PURCELL: There are 14 for, 16 against, and two not present. So the amendment is defeated.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, members. We're now going to take a vote on the actual motion itself. So if you are voting for, you are in favour of the motion; if you are voting against, you're against the motion.

MR GLEESON: Sorry, Cathaoirleach, before we vote can I come in? Cathaoirleach, it's Brian here.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Brian. I was looking for the light, I couldn't see a light. I am so sorry, go ahead.

MR GLEESON: Just before you take the vote on that, just as Director of Finance with responsibility for procurement, there was a lot of information that Helen read out, so just to kind of summarise it so people are clear before they do take a vote on it.

Regardless of our personal feelings on what's happening in Gaza, we must comply with national and EU procurement laws. The Department of Enterprise, Trade \& Employment has advised that neither Ireland nor the EU have restrictive measures in place in respect of Israel. As such, its motion is unenforceable as it would be in breach of procurement laws and it does expose the Council to possible legal action.

In relation to Russia, there's already existing EU regulations in place prohibiting
awards of contracts to Russian nationals. So that issue is already covered. Thank you, Cathaoirleach

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Brian. Councillor Fortune, is this a point of clarity on this just before we take a vote?

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I am just interested, is what is being defined by the legal end of it something beyond procurement? Because in my understanding, and I can be corrected, is procurement not a system of purchase based on economic principles? In other words, you decide you are going to buy from one source rather than 50 sources because it's economically more viable and saves money. Is that not the fundamental basis of procurement?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Well...
COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I am just thinking --
CATHAOIRLEACH: I don't know how I would respond to that, Councillor Fortune, because there's obviously a lot of legislation around it as well.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Fair enough. I am just thinking, we are being quoted a legal opinion and, as Councillor Scott very correctly said, we are being hit with it at the meeting here today and supposed to be inspired to interpret it and make a decision. A lot of us are not barristers or solicitors, no more than most of the people I am sure at the top table. I just think it is not fair what we are doing right now. CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Well I think the previous amendment to defer it was probably trying to look at that. Now we have to take a decision on the motion that's there in front of us. Brian, do you want to come in on clarity about that?
MR GLEESON: Yes, just like what Councillor Fortune said, obviously procurement, to give an example here: If the most economically advantageous tender was submitted by a company from Israel, it would have to be accepted under current EU and national procurement laws, otherwise you'd be in breach of those laws. You'd be discriminating against that particular company. Until such time as the agreement on government procurement by the World Trade Organization is changed, we're restricted and we have to comply with those particular procurement laws. Otherwise, we're in breach and then we're leaving ourselves open to legal action.

It is like any procurement competition. You have a set of criteria that you must adhere to. Can you not put into a criteria for procurement competition Israel is not
included.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much for that, Brian.
So just for members to know, like, motions are a call for action. If a motion passes or is defeated it is afterwards that we look at how that call for action can be adhered to or not adhered to. So from my own point of view that is where I am.

So we will take a vote on this. Helen.
MS PURCELL: So we're now voting on the original notice of motion number 2 as submitted proposed by Councillor Dermot O'Brien and seconded by Councillor Mick Ryan.

Councillor Tommy Annesley.
COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: For.
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 Silvester Bourke.
COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Melanie Corrigan.
COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin.
COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen.
COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Erika Doyle is not present. Councillor Gail Dunne. COUNCILLOR DUNNE: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Anne Ferris.
COUNCILLOR FERRIS: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald.
COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: For.
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: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard. COUNCILLOR LEONARD: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell. COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Against. MS PURCELL: Councillor John Mullen. COUNCILLOR MULLEN: For.

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: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mick Ryan.
COUNCILLOR RYAN: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott.
COUNCILLOR SCOTT: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell.
COUNCILLOR SNELL: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Stephen Stokes.
COUNCILLOR STOKES: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Edward Timmins.
COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry Walsh is not present. And Councillor Irene

Winters.
COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Against.
MS PURCELL: 18 in favour, 12 against and two not present. So the motion is passed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you, members. Members we are now going to move to motion number 6. This Notice of Motion is in the name of Councillor Tom Fortune as proposer and seconded by Councillor Lourda Scott.

Many, many people are struggling with the situation taking place in Palestine. We are constantly watching the sad videos of children, women and male civilians in Palestine suffering under the constant bombing by the IDF.

Their homes, possessions and their family members have been destroyed, maimed or murdered by the brutality of the IDF. Children are denied their education and dying from malnutrition. In less than five months over 100,000 people have been maimed or are dead. The majority of these are children and women. People are fully aware and disgusted at the atrocities that took place on October 7th, 2023. This was barbaric in every sense. All loss of lives are sad. People are shocked and saddened as they watch daily the suffering and of the conditions the Palestinian people are living through. A group of people (non-political) have come together; North Wicklow Against Genocide.

A number of meetings have taken place. Mean people from different perspectives, persuasions and political backgrounds have joined together in their disgust of what the IDF are doing. A request has been made that Wicklow County Council support the suffering people in Palestine in following manner. 1. Display the Palestine flag at all Council buildings; and 2. Seek across party political support to end the suffering of the Palestinian people by calling an immediate ceasefire and to end the genocide that is taking place in Gaza.

Again, as per the previous motion, I am going to ask Helen to respond to this. Then I am going to invite the proposer and seconder to comment. Then I am going to invite yourself, Anne and Paul, in on that amendment. So my apologies thinking that was a different stage. So, Helen, I will hand over to yourself

MS PURCELL: Requests to fly a flag are normally brought to the Protocol Committee for consideration in advance. For example, the pride flag flies for the month of June following the approval of Protocol Committee. It would be normal that a flag is flown for a defined period, e.g., one day or one month. If a decision is made to fly the Palestinian flag, it should be reviewed on a monthly basis by the Protocol Committee and should be until such time as another flag approved by protocol is to be flown. Thanks.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Councillor Fortune.
COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yes. You will recall, Cathaoirleach, at our meeting in April this particular motion is a matter of record already in the minutes of that meeting, and we said that it would have to come as a motion.

I listened very carefully to Councillor O'Brien's motion and discussion around it and really and truly I think my approach is that the time for discussions is over. I am asking with this motion, and I know some of the people in the group, in the genocide group felt my motion should have been stronger, but I felt I had to put it in a sense way to make sure we would discuss it deal with it. Because really what must happen, what must happen is that the genocide that's going on stops. That there's a permanent ceasefire put in place immediately. And that is what we as a group of people, I am suggesting, should be asking for. I mean, that is what we all are about. I mean, to see the problem that everyone has -- not the problem, the reality and the facts that everyone has, is that everything that is being happening is beamed into your front room. So you can see it. So there's no debate. There's no question. I mean, what did happen on the 7th of October was horrendous, but it is all part of some game that's going on with certain people. And then 30,000-plus people killed. Children. I mean, personally speaking, I just couldn't sit back and say that we shouldn't be doing something about that. It's got to stop. And what we've got to do as a local authority, there's already 14 other councils have passed the motion that I have put before ye, but also they've included in it the trading and everything else that goes with it. It's stronger than the one I have put forward. That's happened in 14 councils. In Dublin, in Cork, in Sligo. So why the hell would we be spending so much time talking about it? It is just a no-brainer as far as I am concerned. And I would strongly ask every member here in the chamber to support what we put
forward. I have already raised the issue, obviously with Brian on the procurement and I hear what he says. I don't totally buy that, but I hear it. The Israeli Ambassador was on RTÉ in the last week and a half or so, basically threatening Ireland in a -- I think it was in an economic way. So it is okay for someone who is in our country as a guest to do that?

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Absolutely disgusting.
COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: That shouldn't happen. And we shouldn't tolerate it. And because of that, I am saying she should be questioned and called on, and if she doesn't withdraw what she is saying she should be asked to leave. You can't operate in an embassy in our country and start telling us and threatening us about should happen and what might happen if you behave in a certain way. At long last everybody is saying this has got to stop.

So really, Cathaoirleach, I would say, I would ask the members to absolutely endorse what I am saying and I know putting a flag out there doesn't kind of cure anything and I hear the comments about flags and other kinds of flags, but this is so unique. This isn't just an ordinary situation. I mean, people daily -- I mean there was seven support workers killed in the last seven days. I mean we have just got to say stop. And I am asking as a public representative to say this is genocide, it's murder, it should be stopped. There should be a ceasefire immediately, permanently put in place and a system put in place to do it. We should word it on all that basis and ask for that being done. At least then we're standing up and saying hang on, we're not accepting this any more. And to have Israeli government people, you know, coming on and trying to justify what they're doing, that is absolutely to me, it is just sickening. I just can't accept it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Scott, would you like to come in?

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I think my colleague, Councillor Fortune, really said it all there. I just want to read in to the Council records the name of Rosa Kadir. I was handed this stone by our colleagues in the gallery who were outside and it just says, "Rosa Kadir was just a little one-year-old girl". I actually feel quite emotional reading that because it is a very similar name to one of my daughters.

Really this is what this is all about. Like, I have despair in my heart about what is going on in Gaza. To be honest with you, talking about raising a flag, it is all we can do, but like I feel so powerless thinking that that is the best we can do, to raise a flag, in terms of what is going on there at the moment. And because I have despair in my heart at what is going on in Gaza, it doesn't mean I can't also have despair in my heart for what happened during The Holocaust years ago, or that I can't have despair in my heart for what happened in the atrocities on October the 7th, or other atrocities that are occurring across the world that perhaps aren't so much in our consciousness.

So all I want to say is that I fully support the motion as I did at the meeting in April. I am glad to lend my name to second it. I would ask that we keep our discussions around this respectful, without shouting across each other in the chamber. There are bigger issues going on outside of this chamber. And I would just as well want to say that I do support the amendment brought forward which I think strengthens this motion by Councillor Ferris and Councillor O'Brien. Thank you, Cathaoirleach CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor Scott. Okay that brings me to the amendment and I will just read it out again for people. So this is the amendment to be added to this motion. Councillor Ferris will confirm that for me.

Wicklow County Council actively supports the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement that targets business profiteering from the oppression of the Palestine people, and will exclude such business from Council procurement of goods and services.

I am now going to invite Councillor Ferris followed by Councillor O'Brien to speak and then I will open up to the floor.

COUNCILLOR FERRIS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just, first of all, I want to say that I am totally in support of the motion that Councillor Fortune proposed and which was seconded by Councillor Scott. However, I submitted my amendment because I didn't think the motion went far enough. The North Wicklow Against Genocide group, they had included the part about BDS in their -- in what they were asking us as councillors to do. There's an awful lot that can be said about this.

I think that the important part is the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign, and I hear what Brian tells us about not being able to do that legally or whatever. And if it is a symbolic motion, you know, that, okay, we can't go any further on it, so be it. But I think what we should be saying is that we stand with the people in Gaza. We stand with Palestine. It is not good enough -- I know a couple of people mentioned about the Hamas attack on Israel on the 7th of October, but, Cathaoirleach, that was one day. Now I absolutely condemn it myself. But that happened on one day. What we are looking at now is genocide in Gaza for the past six months. Now that's a hell of a lot longer than one day.

Just on the item, on the motion itself in relation to the flag. I totally agree that the flag should be flown and perhaps it has to go to the Protocol Committee, but I would say that any flag, including the Palestinian flag, should not supersede the Irish flag in itself and, you know, it should be -- because that is, you know, our flag, and it should be slightly lower than the Irish flag. But, you know, the idea of -- sorry, I wanted the amendment to strengthen the motion by Councillor Fortune and Councillor Scott. I don't want it as a separate motion.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes, added on to it. Thank you for that clarification. COUNCILLOR FERRIS: And I do hope that the members would support it. I would like, again, to commend Councillor Fortune. He tried to raise it last month. I was ready to jump in to support it, and a decision was taken that we couldn't take it because it wasn't in writing, hence my sending in to Helen the amendment in writing for today's meeting.

I mean, I know some people have supported the North Wicklow Against Genocide and I know other people, including myself, who have stood at protests in Bray about it and indeed in Dublin. You know, so I think a number of people, Councillor Walsh said, you know, we shouldn't be just going on about it, we should do it. And, you know, if we were to have accepted Councillor Behan's motion, you know, how long more would it be held up? And how many more people in Gaza would be killed before we got a response? So the action has to be taken now. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Paul O'Brien. COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Can I start by
commending Councillor Fortune and Councillor Scott for their proposal, and to offer my support to Councillor Ferris here on seconding her amendment.

Little did we know, Cathaoirleach, five years ago when we all stood for local politics that we would be sitting in a world that we are living in today where we have Putin and Netanyahu, war criminals, and the tragic deaths that are happening. And it has been mentioned a few times about it stone we were given outside. Mine says, "Hamsa Asher was just a little baby boy". I think that you would need to have a heart of stone not to have sympathy for those that were killed in October and those that have been murdered since then.

I am a proud European. I stand in solidarity with the EU, but not on this occasion. And because I live in a republic, I have that right; to condemn the atrocities that are happening in Gaza and speak out against President von der Leyen. The reason I do so is because I live in Ireland and not Russia and not Palestine.

So I want to commend the speakers that have gone before me. I wholeheartedly support them. But my heart does go out to those in Gaza and Israel and Ukraine. It is a sad situation we find ourselves in and as local politicians there's very little we can do about it but offer symbolism, because that is all we have in our power, and I will endorse Councillor Ferris's amendment and Councillor Fortune and Councillor Scott's. Because sometimes we have to stand up and be counted and tear up the rule book now and again to show our solidarity. Thank you again.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. I am now going to invite Helen just to comment on the adding of that amendment to the original motion. Helen.

MS PURCELL: I just want to clarify that Standing Orders under section 18 Motions and Amendments, Part D, states: "Every amendment shall be relevant to the motion on which it is moved and shall be either (a) to leave out words; (b) to leave out words and insert or add others; and (c) to insert or add words. An amendment shall not be in order if it is equivalent to a direct negative or if it is not in fact an amendment of the motion it purports to amend."

Just to make that very clear as to what an amendment actually is.

Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. I am going to open this up to the floor for discussion. Yes, I am going to bring him now a minute. I am going to open this up to the floor. We do have one -- when we do come to vote, it will be to voting on the amendment first and then on the motion, because that's the procedure. Just so people are aware. Okay. Councillor Behan.
COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I am going to propose another amendment and I am going to follow the instructions as given by the meeting's administrator. I am going to propose that most of the proposal is deleted and I am going to propose a new wording which I think is a more balanced wording given the entire situation at which we are all horrified.

So what I am proposing is that the first sentence of Councillor Fortune's motion which is that many, many people are struggling with the situation taking place in Palestine; that is correct, and I fully enforce that. I am proposing removing everything else, the remaining wording and adding the following instead, in replacement, "In the light of our common humanity and having witnessed from afar the horrific events in Israel and Gaza over the past six months, we, the members of Wicklow County Council condemn the murders of innocent Israeli and Palestinian human beings, whether by Hamas or the Israeli Defence Force. We join the worldwide calls for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza and the immediate release of all hostages, and we strongly support the position of the Irish Government in favour of the establishment of two states living in peace, side-by-side."

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: We are running away from it, Joe.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor Behan. Okay.
MS PURCELL: Can I come in there and say that in my opinion as meeting's administrator, that is new motion. That isn't an amendment to the motion. So it could be submitted as a motion, but it needs to be in accordance with Standing Orders and a month's notice has to be given so it would appear on the agenda for May. I don't accept that it is an amendment to the motion.

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: With respect, now, it is relevant to the wording of the motion and that's one of the points that is mentioned. It is relevant. What I am trying to do is ensure that we have a balanced proposal, that we can all agree to. CATHAOIRLEACH: I am going to --

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: So I dispute that, with respect.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Councillor John Mullen.
COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. And, again, I would like to thank Councillors Fortune, Scott, O'Brien and Ferris for their motions and amended motions for which I am supporting, even though I recognise the ultra vires nature of what we are asking in certain cases with the previous motion and with this one as well.

However, just in relation to the some of the comments made and just for clarity and to have it on the record, the Irish Government has been quite strong on this matter. The South Africans have initiated a case to the International Court of Justice. Only five cases have been taken to the International Court of Justice on the Genocide Conventions since 1948 which just shows you how significant that measure is. Ireland has intervened in one of those cases which is obviously the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia and its dictator, and now it has signalled its intention to intervene again on behalf of or in support of the South African case that supports the enforcement of the Genocide Convention against --
CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Neill, please don't interrupt.
COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Councillor O'Neill, we live in a democracy. So if you can please listen for a change rather than talking.

I do respect Councillor Joe Behan's attempt to introduce a balanced motion, but I do disagree with him on a point of principle on this and I accept that he's acting in good faith and according to his conscience, as are every single member of this chamber, one or the other. Because I think people in both parties, all parties and none have different views and can you see that reflected in the vote. But there comes a time, six months of a conflict after horrific Hamas atrocity, that six months of conflict with 30,000 people in a 14-kilometre area where over a million live, have been murdered and we have to say stop. And any way or method we can use to say stop should be used. The Irish Government is using its legal measures to do by joining the case. I understand and I accept the management point of view that we might be acting ultra vires, but I think we are stating how seriously we are taking the matter that we are proposing to act ultra vires in relation to the procurement policy of the Council, which is subject to European law.

But, again, I'd like to thank the Councillors for their motion, for their genuine attempt to try and convey the feelings of the people in Wicklow. I was in Baltinglass too yesterday, along with another Councillor on this matter, and I do accept that Joe Behan and other Councillors who are voting in a different matter have also sincere views on this and also do not defend what is happening in Gaza, but maybe see a different point of view. Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Silvester Bourke.

COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. If I had a chance I would second Joe Behan's motion there because I do feel that this is a bit of a faulty motion. It is not sending a message to Hamas that they have wronged society as well. And who is to say that if they had means, that they wouldn't have killed 30 or 50,000 people on October 7th. So I would like to support the motion. I am totally against what the Israelis are doing, but we should get a bit of balance into it. You know, if the shoe was on the other foot, basically, I think we should definitely be giving some cognisance to the fact that both sides have wronged society here and that they are both at fault. But I will probably support the motion, because as John Mullen has said there, it has to stop now. Sanity must prevail. Both sides have to pull back and give the Gaza people a chance to -- the Palestinian people a chance to rebuild their lives because it is just horrendous.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Edward Timmins.
COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Just briefly, Chairman. Thanks for that. It is clearly a really, really sensitive subject and I think we all unanimously agree that what Israel is doing now is wrong and Netanyahu in particular who is driving this, is wrong. I would like to put an overall, kind of sit back and overall view of this and ask the people who are making these proposals to think about this.

Ten years ago in Syria, Assad's regime killed 200,000 of his own people. No one in here shouted stop. No one said anything, RTÉ gave it a little bit of coverage, but not wall to wall, night after night. He used chemical weapons on his own people. Syria isn't any further away than Israel. It's a couple of hundred miles north on the Mediterranean on the same landmass. And I just -- what's going on in Israel is dreadful and let's do everything we can to stop it. But ask ourselves why, why when
something happens in Israel or the West Bank or the Gaza Strip, when something happens there our antennas go up 20 times more than they do down below in Sudan and Darfur south of Egypt, or Syria, as I say, a neighbouring country that borders just north of Lebanon. Just ask ourselves that, why we don't give the same -- those lives, those Syrian lives are every bit as important as the Palestinian lives. 300,000 were killed fully in the war and, as I said, chemical weapons. 200,000, 30,000, one life is too many. Whatever, 1200 that were killed on the 7th October is too many. 30,000 , roughly, we don't know, of that order certainly. 200,000 in Syria. We didn't bat an eyelid. No one said anything in here. No one shouted stop CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Think, why is that? Is Israel different? Same lives. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. We have four more speakers to speak. I will ask the speakers if everybody could keep it brief if they could. There's a lot being said but there's also a number of votes that need to be taken I am conscious that the people in the chamber I am sure are interested to hear what those vote results would be.
Councillor Stephen Stokes.
COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. I would be very close to Councillor Behan and Councillor Silvester Bourke on this. Myself and Councillor O'Connor brought a motion before this chamber a year after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The wording was very kept simple. It thanked the people of Wicklow for hosting Ukrainian people and it called on Russia to withdraw from Ukraine. Even though my views are much, much stronger against Russia, I did that to try and bring as many people on board and I do appreciate Councillor Fortune's efforts to bridge that gap, and I will be supporting Councillor Fortune's motion. But I do want, you know, as other Councillors have outlined, I want this -- I want a ceasefire, a permanent ceasefire. But that goes both ways. Not just for, you know, Israel bombing Gaza; but Hamas are not some sort of nice people. They remind me of 1930s Germany because they have elections once, they get in and then that's the end of it. There's no more elections as far as they are concerned. You know, they're not nice people. And so, the people in Palestine are suffering every day from the bombing from Israel but also from a very bad government. I mean, look at their record on LGBTQ rights. It is not good. So, you know, they're getting caught from both angles, but I accept it's far worse, you know, from bombing that's happening
every day. And we have men, women and children who are totally innocent on both sides, that are being caught up in this and there's been some mention of this. There are hostages. There are UN reports saying that there is torture and sexual abuse still going on, Israelis in Palestine. So all hostages whether they are Israeli or Palestinian need to be released, and I feel very strongly about that. But first and foremost, we have to stop the bombs and we have to make sure that the Palestinian people have humanitarian aid and access because there too many innocent people being caught up in this. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Again, I will just remind people to try and keep their contributions as brief as possible, if they can. Councillor, Dermot O'Brien. COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I just want to share a couple of things. Two things. One around the challenge of balance. And balance is a difficult thing to put out there when you listen to the Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council who describes that Gaza has world records that no one really wants to talk about because they're so morbid. World records in number of children killed. World record in number of women killed. World record in killed teachers, killed nurses, killed doctors, killed journalists. And this is 170 UN staff have been murdered in the last six months. 170. Is it because their skin colour is different that it is okay for Palestinian origin UN staff to die? 30 Red Crescent staff. Do we know people who work in that field, and if we imagined one of them being killed. So that's why balance is quite difficult for me. And I would consider myself a humanitarian.

But I will draw, and never would I know or imagine that I would quote the Pope in Wicklow County Council, but this is what the Pope says: "This is not war. This is terrorism." So I will take his word. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor John Snell. COUNCILLOR SNELL: Yes. Thanks, Cathaoirleach. It is not often I am sort of shocked in the chambers here but, again, look it, this is democracy, we have to take on board everyone's viewpoint. But, you know, I go back to 7th of March 2022 in this chamber when we had a discussion around the Russian Ambassador. At the time I said I would support the expulsion of the Russian Ambassador in accordance with my colleagues in the chambers but I also wanted to attach, to expel the Israeli

Ambassador at that time. That was March 2022. Two years ago. Long before this current campaign of destruction. There was no appetite in the chamber for the support at the time.

We then had a discussion on the 9th of May 2022. There was a motion, similar to the first motion here today. And at that I read out a couple of facts that was on the ground in the West Bank and in Gaza at the time where $80 \%$ of the population was under the poverty line, where there was 50,000 properties damaged, 331 educational facilities which was schools damaged, ten hospitals - at that time. None of the current circumstances was at play at that time. Again, no appetite to listen to what was being said in the chambers here.

14th of November 2023, proposal for suspension of Standing Orders here by my colleague Councillor Gerry O'Neill, supported by myself and Councillor Dermot O'Brien. Twenty-four Councillors voted against having a discussion - a discussion - on what was happening in Gaza.

Since October the 7th, and it has been mentioned by one or two members here in the chambers, 33,137 people killed, 75,886 injured, of which 13,800 are Palestinian children. That's on average a hundred children a day dying in Gaza, and we didn't see fit to discuss it in November. I was on East Coast Radio in November 2023 and I said basically what was happening and what was being played out in front of our eyes was that this was genocide. Nobody would believe it at the time. We now hear the word "famine" being used. Something that everyone in this chambers should be familiar with. Anyone who has any knowledge of our history will know that it's not something that you would wish on any country, and yet we have a chambers which is almost split down the middle. A debate about putting up a Palestinian flag. A debate about calling for the immediate ceasefire of a genocide. It's ludicrous what you're talking about. Ludicrous what yous are talking about. The reality is, irrespective of your political parties, and I take no sort of talk from political parties saying that we took no interest in Syria or other places, your political parties was in government in this country for the last 15 years.

COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Hear hear.
COUNCILLOR SNELL: What did yous do? What did you do about Syria? What
did you do? Nothing. So don't put it back on the councillors here in this chambers.

The reality is that the Irish people will carry the Palestinian flag irrespective of what you do or what you say. And they continue to do it, because that's where the Irish people, our hearts and our desires are; behind the downtrodden. How anyone can justify the slaughter of a hundred children per day and sit here and say that we don't have the right to debate it unless we look at the other side. I'll always look at the other side as well. Since 1947 we have been looking at the other side to see what's happening. And it's disgraceful that we end up in a situation where we have to come here to take potshots at one another. Potshots that really will not have a shred of difference to people across Gaza today, tomorrow and the following day. Why don't you go to your ministers, go to your Taoiseach, your Tánaiste and tell them that you will resign from the party if they don't support the people of Gaza? Why don't you grow a backbone and say that we're only the small people, but we represent the people on the street who are saying enough is enough?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor.
COUNCILLOR SNELL: Cathaoirleach, when you see international charities having to pull out of Gaza because they are being targeted by a so-called civilised army, so-called civilised army who are slaughtering people who are trying to help the innocent on the ground and then they say that's a mistake. That's a mistake. And people here think that we should justify it. Well, I won't justify it. I will stand alongside the Palestinian people who are being slaughtered as we speak and waste time here talking nonsense, absolute nonsense. Yous didn't want to discuss it in March 2022, May 2022, November 2023, and it took the decent people who bombarded yous with emails to bring something here to the chambers. COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Hear hear. COUNCILLOR SNELL: That's the only here it is here. Thank you Cathaoirleach. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. We have two final speakers and then we are going to take it to a vote. I will ask those two speakers if they could keep their contributions short. Councillor Tom Fortune.

COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I just want to clarify a couple of things. That's all.

My input in April and currently before you, does take into account everything both
sides. It's black and white to me. Okay. The second point that I welcome Councillor Ferris's amendment. She says very clearly that she's not trying to change the amendment; she wants to add it on to it and it's the one amendment. So I welcome that. I think that strengthens it up the way it should be strengthened up. I will repeat what I said just quickly. Fourteen local authorities in this country have approved such a motion.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Patsy Glennon. COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. And I can see that this is a very emotive issue for lots of people. Firstly, I out-rightly condemn violence. I condemn what Hamas did and I condemn what the Israeli army have done on many occasions since.

I want to support Councillor Fortune's amendment but I have difficulty with us establishing that genocide has been committed when in fact the international court hasn't yet done that. I would ask him to insert the word either "alleged", "suspected" or "apparent" and then I would fully support his motion. But I condemn violence. I abhor it at every level. I had a very close friend and colleague killed in 1984 by so-called freedom fighters in this country and I find it difficult to take lectures on peace from people who supported those actions. So will say no more than that. Other than to ask my colleague, I could support it if the word "apparent" genocide was in it because that would be our own finding of it as distinct from the international court's findings.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Okay, colleagues, we're going to go to vote. Before we do I would like to make a comment myself.

Just for clarity: We're not operating under any party whip here. People are from different parties. So the accusations that certain parties are being told to vote certain ways is unfair. I have not been told as a Fine Gael councillor that I have to vote any way. I have been given the respect to make the decisions that I want to make personally. So I just want that noted.

I also want it noted that this is a very complex issue and I got into politics because I love my community and I found it quite difficult to understand everything, and I did take the opportunity to write to the Palestinian Ambassador to Ireland on these
motions having had the opportunity to visit her as well, and got her feedback on them and her support for them. And it is on that basis that I am supporting it.

So we have a motion that's been made by Councillor Tom fortune and Councillor Lourda Scott with an amendment or an addition from Councillor Anne Ferris and Councillor Paul O'Brien. Councillor Fortune, my understanding is that you are in agreement with that amendment being added to your original motion. So then we have the opportunity, if there is no dissent we can accept the motion as it stands with that addition. If there is any dissent, then we will go to a vote. So do we have any dissent?

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yes.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry. Councillor Joe Behan.
COUNCILLOR BEHAN: I am still asking that my motion be put to the floor.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. So you have dissent against it. Have you got a seconder for your motion?

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: I don't know. COUNCILLOR BOURKE: I second it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Silvester Bourke.
COUNCILLOR SNELL: It is not a motion. Cathaoirleach, it is not a motion. It is a new motion.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Just hold for one second there. Hold one second.
COUNCILLOR BEHAN: It is exactly in accordance with what the meeting's administrator laid out as the requirements for the amendments. You can delete some of what is said in the motion, you can add words. I have done both through the chair.

MS GALLAGHER: No, you're deleting paragraphs. You're deleting paragraphs. COUNCILLOR BEHAN: I am speaking, please, if I could through the chair. I am following exactly the guidance that was given by the meeting's administrator. CATHAOIRLEACH: Lorraine, do you want to come in there for a point of clarity? MS PURCELL: I just want to clarify the order in which amendments go to the floor. The Standing Orders state: "Where an amendment on an original motion has been moved and seconded, no second or subsequent amendment should be moved until the first amendment shall have been disposed of, but notice any second or subsequent amendment shall first have been given." So what we are proposing now
is to take the original motion with the first amendment which is in accordance with Standing Orders and should be voted on first.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Then we will take that and then we will deal, Councillor Behan, with your query. What you are voting on now is the first amendment that was made, so the original motion with the additional wording that was added. So if you are voting for, you are voting in favour of the original motion with that additional couple of lines that was submitted by Anne Ferris; and if you are voting against, you are voting against that amendment. Okay. Let's take a vote.

MS PURCELL: Okay. This is notice of motion number 6 including amendment number 1 which was proposed by Councillor Ferris and seconded by Councillor Paul O'Brien.

Councillor Tommy Annesley.
COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: For.
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 Silvester Bourke.
COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Melanie Corrigan.
COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin.
COUNCILLOR CRONIN: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen.
COUNCILLOR CULLEN: Against.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Erika Doyle is not present. Councillor Gail Dunne. COUNCILLOR DUNNE: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Anne Ferris.
COUNCILLOR FERRIS: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald.
COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Aoife Flynn-Kennedy.

CATHAOIRLEACH: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Tom Fortune. COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Patsy Glennon. COUNCILLOR GLENNON: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Mary Kavanagh. COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Kennedy. COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard. COUNCILLOR LEONARD: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell. COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Against. MS PURCELL: Councillor John Mullen. COUNCILLOR MULLEN: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Miriam Murphy. COUNCILLOR MURPHY: For. 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: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Mick Ryan. COUNCILLOR RYAN: For. 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 is not present. And Councillor Irene Winters.

COUNCILLOR WINTERS: Against.
MS PURCELL: There are 23 in favour, seven against and two not present, so the motion is passed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: As that amendment has been passed, there will be no further votes taken. I want to thank everybody for their contribution and thank those in the gallery for listening to that debate.

Okay. We're moving to item number 1 on the Council Agenda, to confirm and sign the meetings of the Ordinary Meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday, 4th March 2024. Can I have a proposer and a seconder. Proposed by Councillor John Snell. Seconded by Councillor Paul O'Brien. Are we all in agreement? (Agreed.)

Thank you.

Item number 2 to consider the proposal of property measuring 0.331 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Arklow, County Wicklow comprised in folio number WW2593L, being the property know as 24 Fernhill, Arklow, County Wicklow, by transfer order to Elizabeth Whyte (as LPR of Elizabeth Byrne deceased) the person entitled to the freehold interest in the property (as per the notice previously circulated.) Councillor Pat Fitzgerald.

COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Proposed.
CATHAOIRLEACH: And Councillor Pat Kennedy.
COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Seconded.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Is that agreed by all? (Agreed.)
Okay.
Item number 3: To consider disposal of the property measuring 0.0905 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Tomcoyle, Co. Wicklow, comprised in folio number WW2812 County Wicklow by Deed of Rectification to Martin Fitzgerald (as LPR to Theresa Fitzgerald) the entitled to it, being the property known as Tomcoyle, Tinahely, County Wicklow (as per the notice previously circulated). Councillor Pat Kennedy.

COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: For. I am proposing this.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor John Mullen.
COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Seconded, yes.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Are we all in agreement? (Agreed.)
Agreed, thank you.

Item number 4: To consider material contravention report as circulated in accordance with section 34(6) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) in respect of PRR23/689 Cairn Homes Property Limited, lands within the townlands of Blessington Demesne, Newpaddocks and Santryhill, Blessington, County Wicklow. Just for clarity in terms of this item and vote on it, Helen, you might confirm, it is 24 ?

MS PURCELL: Yes. The legislation, the Planning and Development Act 2000 states: "It shall be necessary for the passing of the resolution referred to in paragraph A that the number of members of the planning authority voting in favour of the resolution is not less than three-quarters of the total number of the members of the planning authority. So that is three-quarters of 32 is 24 .
CATHAOIRLEACH: So 24 will be required to vote in favour of this for it to pass. Emer or Leonora, do you want to -- Leonora. Thank you.

MS EARLS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Members, the Chief Executive submitted her report requesting your approval of the proposal to grant permission subject to the conditions that were attached in the report for this proposed development. The proposal, if passed, would deliver 329 residential units, the northern end of the Blessington inner relief road and a town park. It is considered that the proposal is substantially in compliance with the County Development Plan, acceptable in terms of environmental and traffic safety, not prejudicial to public health and is in accordance with proper planning and sustainable development for the area. On this basis the proposal is being recommended to the members for your consideration. Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Edward Timmins. COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Thanks, Chairman. I am happy to propose this material contravention. I believe it has the support of all the local members.

Just very briefly, there's a few very good reasons why we should support this. First
of all, it is bringing over 300 houses to Blessington which has a real shortage of houses at this point in time. This scheme also involves affordable houses and social houses. At the moment there's no affordable houses for sale in Blessington and this is the first step towards bringing affordable houses to a really rapidly growing town and a large number of people who are excluded from the housing list because they are above the limit for the threshold for social housing and they can't afford to buy the houses because they are quite expensive in Blessington. It does offer affordable houses, I think approximately 30 , which would be a good start for people in Blessington.

Secondly, this development will facilitate the extension, or put in place the northern section of the ring road of Blessington and alleviate traffic in the town. This, again, is badly needed for a rapidly growing town. And the developers, is my understand is that they will be putting in this extension to the ring road.

And, thirdly, they will also be providing I think of the order of 27 acres in parkland for playing pitches and other facilities for the local population. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Councillor Patsy Glennon.
COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Yes, Cathaoirleach, I am seconding this motion. I am not going to repeat everything that Councillor Timmins has said, but it is vital that it gets the support of the chamber insofar as there is necessary infrastructure attached to it also, i.e., the completion of the northern end of the inner relief road and as Councillor Timmins has said, housing is badly needed in the Blessington area, of all descriptions. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Vincent Blake.

COUNCILLOR BLAKE: Just to say I support my colleagues in this particular project. As the councillors have said already, they are going to get houses, getting facilities for sports, pitches and so forth. So I would like to support the proposal. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Avril Cronin. COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Thanks very much, Cathaoirleach. I also just want to express my support for this. We are in dire need for more houses in the West Wicklow area. This is going to provide a huge amount of housing in Blessington. Not only will it provide private housing as my colleague said, but it will also have
affordable and local authority housing which I think is really, really important.

We have been inundated with requests from sports clubs from the area looking for land. There's a huge amount of public amenity space needed in the area, so this will also provide this. And also the necessary infrastructure with the ring road really is essential for further development of Blessington. So I think this is a great development to happen in the area and I strongly support it. Thank you. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Gerry O'Neill. COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Yes, thanks, Cathaoirleach. Can I just say that I am disappointed, bitterly disappointed that this was not on our municipal district agenda whatsoever. There was no discussion in West Wicklow as regards this project. There's 329 proposed houses. This is an extra 329 on top of the 73 that Cairn Homes have already built. There's other issues. For Councillors here that wouldn't know the town, there's a northern end of the relief road to be completed which is about 700 yards or metres and there's the southern end. Now, if you are driving from Dublin you're asked now to use this new relief road, but when you go onto the relief road it's a dead end as such, because it goes onto the Naas Road, not the completion of the road which would be the Baltinglass side. So there's a lot of concern about the congestion that will happen in the town because really what I have been looking for here is both sides of the relief road completed, that you can bypass the town as such. But, however, with this in mind it's not going to happen, you know.

Then there are other issues there, and this is up to our planners here in Wicklow, you know. Incidentally, this is coming at the worst time, this material contravention, because we're in the process of putting our local area plan together. So, you know, this clashes with all that. But I think the planners have to really look at this and educate the Councillors as to exactly what is happening.

I have heard other Councillors saying there, there's 30 affordable houses there. There's no conditions at all at the moment bar the statutory $20 \%$ for social needs. But there's no agreements whatsoever. But I have talked to officials within the Council in the last couple of days and I talked to the developer and really, you know, what we have here in West Wicklow, you have it everywhere, being that the crash of

12 years ago, whatever, a lot of people lost out on their homes and they lost them through, you know, maybe they had the mortgage only a month or two before the big crash, and they ended up losing their homes. So I think where we have to be more active with affordable homes, is that the people who are caught there, they're outside the 42,000 for social housing but they're not -- they don't have a great enough income to get the mortgage. So there's a huge opening here for affordable homes and there's a huge need for them. I am fairly convinced that there will be affordable homes going into this new project. I am not going to vote against housing, so I am going to support this but I really would love to get a more hands on from the county council. I mean, there's 32 acres of land there on this site which will be a park area, but I mean we have a soccer club there locally, they have to go to another county to play their games. We need these open spaces for what we have in the area, our sports and recreation zone.

Really these things have to be seriously considered. It's no good in just putting houses in, houses and more houses in if you don't have the infrastructure. And we need infrastructure in Blessington. We need the roads and we need the playing areas. We need the schools. You know, there's proposals for the upgrading of the school, but we're going to make a disaster of Blessington if we don't move in the right direction.

I feel, you know, we all have to face elections now in a month's time or whatever, I don't know, but I would love to see the day coming that there would be more hands on with elective representatives in the area and that we can move forward together. So raibh maith agat.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor John Mullen. COUNCILLOR MULLEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and as the last of the councillors in the Baltinglass Municipal District to speak on the matter, I want to commend the planners for putting together a material contravention. A material contravention of the development plan is quite a serious matter. It is not taken lightly. And as you know from the Planning Department in Wicklow County Council, there's an extra due diligence from their side on this. And, therefore, even though I think what we would like to say is the perfect shouldn't be the enemy of the good. And on this one, even though there's a lot of detail there, and I accept there
are social infrastructure and educational infrastructure requirements on top of the existing housing that's proposed here, the existing housing is badly, badly needed. And, you know, housing is the number one issue and has been since the last local elections. I support my colleagues. I thank the planners for doing this. I understand how seriously they take it, but housing is badly needed so I support it. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Joe Behan. COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Could I just ask, first of all, why is it a material contravention? What is the reason that is coming before us? But also just to ask that, you know, Gerry O'Neill has more intimate knowledge of Blessington than anybody else around this table and when he talks about the fact that we're not getting what the strategy or the policy of the Council was initially, which was to have an effective bypass of Blessington, we're getting a half a bypass. And as I understand it, the southern section is going to come out back onto the main street in Blessington, or probably more likely heading towards Naas, because it comes out at the Naas Road there. And part of the Kildare County Council administrative area is actually right in Blessington itself. And I am concerned that while this may work and, you know, as Councillor Mullen said it's to be welcomed as the first element, is there any sense of urgency at the top table as to how the second part of that particular road project is going to be delivered? I'd certainly be interested in an answer to that question.

The next question I have is in relation to the social and affordable 20\%. Has that been already negotiated? It may be in the report, I just haven't read it. It's a very long report. Has it been negotiated and is it going to be a $10 \%$ and $10 \%$ split between social and affordable?

And the final point I would make is, a welcome but a guarded welcome on condition number 2 that the first occupation of any dwelling or residential unit shall be for individual purchasers rather than corporate concerns, corporate entities. And that is something that we as a Council actually adopted in our development plan in relation to apartments. It is already government policy and I am glad to see it reflected. But cost rental has been added in as an acceptable option in this condition. My understanding was the policy was sale or social housing to individual purchasers. Now if we get into a cost rental situation there, does that mean that Cairn Homes
could decide that they're going to hold on to a hundred of these units and offer them on a cost rental basis rather than allowing them to be for sale? Because everybody knows the group that is crying out for housing and being able to buy their own housing are the people who don't qualify for social housing and very often don't qualify for cost rental.

So I am just wondering why is that condition about cost rental put in? Can somebody explain how that is not going to militate against first-time buyers.

Having said all that, I will be supporting it. It is a high bar actually to get 24 and I think we barely have 27 here at the moment. So it is going to be important that people, I suppose, look at all the merits of it. But I would appreciate answers to the various queries I made. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor Behan. Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just quickly. First of all I appreciate the detail, the amount of detail that was in the report, because for someone who is not informed, I very much was looking forward to coming to this meeting and being guided by colleagues from the west and, in particular, colleagues who have proximity to this location, because I think the decision should primarily be coming from and guided by them. So I appreciate that as well. But the detail in the report and the conditions is also a high bar, I would say, and I think are critical in how they are enforced or, again, in what way we ensure that the
conditions -- because there is some concerns that were in submissions. So I think the conditions are strong but there's a big challenge there in ensuring that they are complied with. But I look forward to -- hopefully there's a positive response to this. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. And, finally, Councillor Lourda Scott.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Yes, thank, Cathaoirleach. Councillor O'Brien said I was coming here very much sort of waiting to hear from my colleagues in the west who obviously are very familiar with the details and the needs of their area. I suppose, just a few general comments. In terms of, I am aware that Cairn Homes have brought judicial review about the County Development Plan after it was passed
and $I$ am just wondering is there any update on that, or is there any consequence, $I$ suppose, of approving this material contravention on the outcome of that?

I suppose in relation to that as well, my mind goes to our -- you know, if we're passing this material contravention today, are we to expect similar and more material contraventions from developers who still want the large scale developments and that this is a way around the County Development Plan? These are just questions that come into my mind as I am living in a very different scenario towards my colleagues in Blessington, insofar as we have had a lot of development and a lot of houses being built and we are currently struggling with our infrastructure and particularly in secondary school places. So these are just questions. I would be interested to hear the Executive's response. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: No problem. Thank you, Councillor. Okay. We will get some responses to the queries raised and then we will take the vote. Leonora, can I hand over to yourself.
MS EARLS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Okay, Councillor O'Neill, a live planning application can't go before a municipal district for discussion, so that is why it wouldn't have been directly brought to the municipal district on that. The northern part of the road is part of this planning application. The southern part is being actively pursued with the landowners on that side and with Kildare County Council. So we would be hopeful to see movement on that as well and that would complete the road on both ends.

The Blessington local area plan. That is going through its process at the moment the. As part of that there will be discussions and workshops with the elected members on all matters as they relate to Blessington.

The affordable social housing. So we put in the condition and we don't make an agreement until such time a decision is actually made on a live planning application. So if the members decide to pass the proposal today and permission is granted, discussions would then commence with the Housing Department in relation to it. There are recreational facilities provided for within the application.

Councillor Behan, it is a material contravention because it materially contravenes the
core strategy and the implementation of it and around complex growth. The southern section, again, there's ongoing discussions with the landowners and Kildare County Council and ourselves.

The social and affordable is included as a condition. The cost rental, that condition has to be included because it forms part of the Act, but it is generally not what happens; they are sold to individuals.

Councillor Scott, the JR is a completely separate matter. So this material contravention application has to be considered on its own merits as it's before the members. With regard to any similar material contraventions, again each application will be considered on its own members and it will be entirely a matter for the members whether or not they pass any future material contraventions if they were to come before you. Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: I will let the Chief Executive in.
MS O'GORMAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just, I suppose, on the notion that we'll be inundated now with material contraventions. As one of the other members said, it's a very serious matter and a very high bar for the officials of the Council to bring a material contravention to you for, you know, your considered opinion and views on it. So it is not the case that every large scale planning application is going to come before you as a material contravention. Each one is assessed on its merits individually, having regard to the area plan that's in place, the development plan and the objectives of that local area and very specific to the area in question. So just to set that there for you, members. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Chief Executive. We will go to a vote.

MS PURCELL: Just to read you out the wording of what it is that you are voting on. "Having considered the Chief Executive's report of the 2nd of April '24 prepared in relation to the proposed large scale residential development of 329 residential units and all other works at Blessington, County Wicklow, wherein the Chief Executive requested the members approve her recommendation to grant permission subject to conditions for the proposed development, and having regard to documentation and details relating to the proposed development and the appropriate assessment and environmental impact assessment carried out by the Chief Executive,
in accordance with section 34(6)(a)(iv) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, the members approve by resolution the Chief Executive's proposal to grant permission for the proposed development subject to the conditions set out in the Chief Executive's report."

Councillor Tommy Annesley.
COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: For.
MS PURCELL: It's proposed by Councillor Timmins, seconded by Councillor
Glennon. Councillor Tommy Annesley, sorry, for?
COUNCILLOR ANNESLEY: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Mark Barry.
COUNCILLOR BARRY: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Joe Behan.
COUNCILLOR BEHAN: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Vincent Blake.
COUNCILLOR BLAKE: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Silvester Bourke.
COUNCILLOR BOURKE: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Melanie Corrigan.
COUNCILLOR CORRIGAN: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Avril Cronin.
COUNCILLOR CRONIN: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Shay Cullen.
COUNCILLOR CULLEN: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Erika Doyle is not present. Councillor Gail Dunne. COUNCILLOR DUNNE: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Anne Ferris.
COUNCILLOR FERRIS: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Fitzgerald. (No answer.) Councillor Aoife Flynn-Kennedy.

CATHAOIRLEACH: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Tom Fortune.
COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Patsy Glennon.
COUNCILLOR GLENNON: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mary Kavanagh. COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Pat Kennedy. COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Peir Leonard. COUNCILLOR LEONARD: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Derek Mitchell. COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor John Mullen. COUNCILLOR MULLEN: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor Miriam Murphy. COUNCILLOR MURPHY: For. 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: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Mick Ryan. COUNCILLOR RYAN: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Lourda Scott. COUNCILLOR SCOTT: For. MS PURCELL: Councillor John Snell. COUNCILLOR SNELL: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Stephen Stokes. (No answer.) Councillor Edward Timmins.

COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: For.
MS PURCELL: Councillor Gerry Walsh is not present. Councillor Irene Winters. COUNCILLOR WINTERS: For.

MS PURCELL: Councillor Fitzgerald is back. Councillor Fitzgerald, we're voting. COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: For.

MS PURCELL: Thank you. Twenty-nine in favour and four not present. Thank
you. Carried.
CATHAOIRLEACH: That's perfect. Thank you very much, members. Item number 5 to note the Wicklow County Council capital investment programme 2024 to 2026. This is for noting and no vote will be taken on it. Brian, I'll hand over to yourself.

MR GLEESON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I will give a quick summary of it. The Local Government Act 2001 requires a report to be presented to the elected members indicating the programme of capital projects to be undertaken over the forthcoming three-year period. The Wicklow County Council Capital Investment Programme 2024-2026 details ongoing and potential future projects with their associated estimated costs for each of the three years. In addition, it identifies the potential sources of funding for these projects. This capital programme details a maximum potential investment of 649 million, funded by a combination of grant aid, 519 million; development levies, 49 million; loans, 37 million; and other income 44 million, which may include funding from disposal of assets, revenue budget provisions, capital account funds and private sector investment.

The capital plan is a three-year rolling programme and the status and viability of all potential projects is reviewed annually. It provides an indication of the investment Wicklow County Council would like to undertake over these three years. However, it is not a guarantee of the commencement or completion of these projects. The implementation of these proposed investment programmes depends on a number of factors, including continued Government approval of project, timely delivery of proposed grant aid, availability of cash flow, ability to secure and finance borrowings, staff recourses to manage and deliver projects, contractor availability to deliver projects, and other external factors such as delays in planning consents or legal challenges.

The plan presented to the members here today is broken down by expenditure programme group. The vast majority, as you'd expect, is under housing and building which relates to $58 \%, 19 \%$ of the programme is for roads infrastructure and the balance is across the other programme -- other expenditure programmes.

So as the Cathaoirleach said, this is just for noting by the members not approval. So
if anyone has any questions, I am happy to take them. Thank you. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Brian. I will open up to the floor. Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Just a small one, Cathaoirleach, and I am sure there's good reason, but I notice that the Bray Library wasn't included. Is that because of where it is on its journey towards getting funding? Because we saw the plans and we are very excited about that as a future project. But I was wondering is it because of where it is on its own journey of acquiring funds. Just clarity on that. Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Is there are any other queries? Councillor Peir Leonard.

COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yes. I would just like to ask, how is this Capital Investment Plan linked into the LECP plan? And, you know, sort of with Pobal's index of statistics on each town in the county and some are disadvantaged and, you know is it, I suppose, proofed, like, you know, to invest in the towns that are the disadvantaged ones and prioritise them?

And also just going forward, I think it would be a really useful exercise, I know we don't have a vote here on this today, but I think it would be really great if this could be brought to the municipal districts and, you know, do a workshop on it for planning ahead. Because it links in to everything. It links into the local area plan, the LECP and I think it would give members and public a greater understanding of how money is spent and how those decisions come about. Thanks.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Edward Timmins. COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Just briefly I brought it up here before, just the fire stations in the west, Baltinglass and Dunlavin. They have been on this list for four or five years now at this stage. If they could be brought to fruitions as soon as possible.

Also, the industrial development end as well in the west, if some movement could be made to move on those lands that are zoned. Council-owned lands. Thank you. CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. No other questions. Brian, can I hand back to you. MR GLEESON: Okay. Under the libraries there is the Ballywaltrim library is included in there. You'll notice it is under the section for libraries there. There's an
amount of 4.5 million over the next three years.

Councillor Leonard, there wouldn't be a link in with the local -- sorry, was it the LECP?

COUNCILLOR LEONARD: LECP.
MR GLEESON: I suppose it depends on the individual government schemes and what projects would fit into that, you know, and I suppose that's the way it works. But in relation to doing a presentation at the municipal districts, I have no problem going out and doing a presentation if that would be of benefit to the members. COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Yes.

MR GLEESON: No problem. Councillor Timmins, in relation to the fire stations, yes, they are all included. Obviously the costs have gone up from our previous plan based on revised estimates that we have got. We are in discussion with the department in relation to that matter. Obviously, the industrial development areas, they are included. While some mightn't have specific plans at the moment, the line is kept in the plan as opportunities arise so we can take advantage of it. Thank you. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, members. Thank you, Brian. Okay. Item number 6 is to consider and adopt the draft Wicklow County Council Annual Service Plan 2024 in accordance with section 50 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Helen, I will hand over to you.
MS PURCELL: Just before I start on the Annual Service Delivery Plan, for the record, I just want to correct myself in relation to the vote on item number 4, the material contravention. I said there were four not present and there were three not present. So it is as I said, 29 for, but it was three not present bring it to 32 .

So the Annual Service Delivery Plan, the adoption of the plan is a reserve function under the Local Government Reform Act, and we will bring this before the members every year. The plan sets out the objectives and the performance standards for the Council's service delivery areas in 2024 having regard to the high level goals contained within the Corporate Plan and also the budget landscape as adopted in the Council's budget in November last year.

Appendix 1 sets out the annual performance indicators which are monitored by NOAC. We are currently working on those at the moment for 2023 and they will be submitted in April. And appendix 2 sets out the key baseline data targets for 2024
and 2023's output there as well. If there are any questions on it?
CATHAOIRLEACH: I open it up to the floor for questions. Do you need a proposer and a seconder for this? Yes. Councillor Rory O'Connor.

COUNCILLOR O'CONNOR: Yes, it's just a few things I noticed while reading. I know it is a bit late now since we are getting to the point where we are going to be doing it.

I think I did mention this when we briefly talked about it a while ago. I think as a Council we are missing an opportunity here within the objective for around organisational development and financial matters to get young people involved knowing about the Council as a career. Because if you talk to any young person now and you ask them what does the Council do, they would say fix roads and make houses and we all know it is a lot more than that. I think if we go to schools, primary schools and secondary schools, and we promote the wide range of things the Council do. That will pay off in the far future for us as a council, we would get all the talent across Wicklow coming to get jobs.

Just another comment about the information services. I think something important for that section which wasn't really included was a kind of just transition, when it comes to the digitalisation of our services. One example which I think we did very, very well, is E-Planning. If you see the Chief Executive's report it is very, very successful and lots of people are using it. But what we did is, we kept the option of the traditional way of doing planning and the E-Planning. And I think within that section it is very, very important that we say that whenever we do digitalisation within the Council that we don't leave anyone behind. Those are my two major points. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Councillor Joe Behan.
COUNCILLOR BEHAN: I fully echo what Councillor O'Connor said there about not leaving people behind and I think that was one of the wiser decisions that was made to keep the two, if you like, types of planning together, to enable people who still wanted to apply in the traditional manner that option.

I don't have a problem directly with the programme or voting for the delivery plan, but I want to focus for a minute on the word "delivery". I don't know what the
experience is of other municipal districts, but the story in Bray is that projects that were approved maybe two or three years ago, funding was put in place for them, they haven't been delivered. I think myself the reason is there aren't enough engineering staff resources to get these things done. And new Chief Executive, you've changed the make up, if you like, of departments but are you happy that projects that have been funded are beings delivered on time and on budget or do you think there's room for improvement? Because I, for one, certainly there is a lot of room for improvement. And these plans are meaningless unless we actually do deliver the projects that people have supported. Thanks, Cathaoirleach
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Councillor Dermot O'Brien. COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Again, just a really quick one,
Cathaoirleach. I like reading these documents because I think they set a standard, they give us the guiding lights for how we will make progress. I would love to have seen trauma informed in our service delivery plan. I know, I think it was 2021 when a motion was passed here about us becoming a trauma informed organisation. And even in some of the areas around healthy and safe working environments, it could be in there, but I just that that is an area that this Council should pursue because I think it adds another layer of how we operate and support the most vulnerable and leave no one behind, as has been said by both colleagues. Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Okay, we have a number of questions there. So in terms of Rory O'Connor's questions around just transition from IT services, who wants to...

MS O'GORMAN: I suppose we are on that whole point, digital transformation piece and moving us forward in to a more e-literate community. But also bearing in mind that we have a very mixed ability in terms of the constituents that we try to reach, so the piece of running E-Planning in tandem with regular planning services is hugely, hugely important. We do aim to digitise more and more of our services as we go forward, obviously underpinned by good IT infrastructure and plain English and making all of our services accessible online. It is going to take some time. At this point we can take any of the actions and the feedback that you have and make them actionable through the Service Delivery Plan.

Councillor Behan, your comment about are we doing enough, or am I satisfied: I would have to say we have an exceptionally -- we have exceptionally strong, good
staff on the ground in each of our municipal districts. We are working within the resources that we have. We could certainly do with more, as in, more humans. And part of the restructuring that we are going through as an organisation is to try and focus work on where we have drawn down funds, by the central government or European funds or wherever it may be, and to make sure that money gets spent and work is done. There's always room for improvement. The ambition is to keep moving forward and keep working. But I would commend the staff we have on the ground. They do an exceptionally good job with the resources that they have. If I could have another hundred engineers, I would be really, really happy but that's not going to happen. That's reality. We have to do the best with what we have. We are putting together our programmes in a way that maximise the human resource that we have to get more work done on the ground. Thank you, Cathaoirleach CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Lorraine.

MS GALLAGHER: Just in relation to the recruitment piece, yes, Councillor O'Connor, I meet every new member of staff as they come in the door to find out, you know, what's the demographic. I like to see young people come in the door as well. We do advertise our campaigns on social media and other areas and we can participate in career days with schools, if that is something we can do, we certainly will do that. As just in relation to the other comments, as the Chief Executive said, we will be starting off with the new Council now, pleased God, in June or July. We will be reviewing our Corporate Plan and all of the areas that the likes of Councillor Dermot O'Brien has brought up in relation to trauma informed, et cetera, et cetera, we can incorporate at that stage. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. So I am looking for a proposer and a seconder. Proposed by Councillor Dermot O'Brien. Seconded by Councillor Paul O'Brien. Are we all in agreement? (Agreed.)

Thank you, members.

Item number 7 is to consider and adopt the Mid-East Homeless Action Plan 2024-2026 in accordance with section 37(1) of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, as amended. Copy attached. Michael, I will hand over to yourself.

MR NICHOLSON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. This is the Mid-East Regional Homeless Action Plan, so it has already been adopted by your colleagues in Meath
and Kildare. It has been adopted or been recommended for adoption by the tree housing SPCs including our own. It replaces the existing plan and this will last until 2026. It's a three-year plan.

There was widespread consultation with all the adjoining housing authorities. As I mentioned earlier, the housing SPCs, the three counties, the Mid-East Region Homeless Consultative Forum who is on that forum, in case you're interested. Obviously the three director of services in the three local authorities. Officers from Kildare who are the lead, they are the lead authority, and HSE. And the Mid-East Regional Homeless Forum which is a much wider group, again has the three local authorities, HSE, Prison Services, Probation Services, Education and Training Board, a member of Kildare County Council, the Department of Social Protection, Regional Drugs Task Force, Tusla, Dublin Simon, Focus Ireland, Peter McVerry, Bray Area Partnership, Meath Women's Refuge, Tiglin and Teach Tearmainn. So we have widespread consultation across the forum and also across the management group.

Just some of the highlights. I am not going to give a long presentation. This is our action plan for the next three years. So in the political context, there's increased presentations of homelessness. We are still coming out of the Covid measures. There was a ban on the notice to quits and subsequent lifting in March 2023, that had been effect. The war in Ukraine was mentioned earlier. In particular, the effect on private emergency accommodation. There is less available for traditional homelessness because there is so much being used to accommodate refugees from the Ukraine. Family reunifications is putting pressure on placements. And of course the national homeless figures which is now 13,500 which won't have escaped the members either.

So what we are looking at really is housing first. Provisional housing for the most complex and long-term cases of homelessness. Often with regards to homelessness, and members you will know this more than I do, providing a home is only part of the problem. A lot of the presentations would have other services. So we need to provide wraparound services including mental health, addiction support, education, training and employment. It is not just providing a house. The main objective is to
help people live independently in their own home and integrate into their respective communities. We want to build homes, not houses.

National tender for the continuation of services is expected in the coming weeks. And the Housing First national office is now in place, and this region holds bimonthly meetings to monitor progress. We have a very good relationship with our colleagues in Meath and Kildare. We meet on a monthly basis and we make sure we are all singing off the same hymn sheet.

Key findings: The need to ensure sufficient provision of emergency accommodation. Continued implementation of the Housing First initiative. Increase in single adult presentations is an issue across the three regions. This is something we have to address. It's been there for a long time and it is something we need to tackle. Tenancy sustainable supports, and we have tenancy sustainable officers in the local authority. A requirement for increased outreach services, as I mentioned, because it is not just about providing a house.

Just some of the highlights in the last plan, because obviously when you adopt a new plan the question is asked, what did you do in the last plan. So a family hub is now in operation in Wicklow town. We have the tenancy sustainable services established. We have homeless HAP finally in operation. We have a 20 -bed supported temporary accommodation facility provided in Bray, which includes cold-weather beds with Dublin Simon. We have exits from emergency accommodation ongoing. We have seven Covid-19 isolation units provided, 1,474 active HAP tenancies and 298 homeless HAP tenancies in place.

I would like to recommend the plan for the adoption by the members and would appreciate your support. Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Michael. I will open it up to the floor. Councillor John Snell.
COUNCILLOR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just to thank Michael for -- he's gone in to a lot of detail in regards to this. This has been discussed, as he outlined, a number of times through the housing SPC. We have delved down through the facts and figures. I just want to put it on record that I want to thank the officials of the
housing section for the amount of work they have put in to this.

I am sure as all public representatives know, that throughout the county there was a lot of concern in regards to the lifting of the eviction ban on the 31st of March 2023. And thankfully Wicklow County Council really have put their shoulder to the wheel and engaged with the public in general to such a degree that between families and individuals, there was up to 300 people affected but were all accommodated by this local authority in one shape or another. None of them actually ended up in a homeless situation because of the early interaction.

I want to thank the members of the County Council who engaged with the citizens of the county by bringing them to the attention of the Council very early when they get their notice to quit. Long gone is the day when people would present themselves on the last day of their notice to quit, and I think it gives our staff ample opportunity to engage with them. And that's where the personal interaction between public representatives, the community and also the officials, has been to the forefront.

Homelessness is a very difficult situation, because it's very easy to put a roof over somebody's head in a lot of situations and unfortunately, you know, if you don't engage and look at the health and welfare of the individuals affected, and that's where the multiagency approach kicks in, whether it be money management, addiction issues, you know, there's loads and loads of -- domestic violence, yous have all had experience of dealing with dreadful situations like this. But I think that Wicklow has led the path to a certain degree on this. You know, the support of the emergency accommodation has been to the forefront, private emergency accommodation, or the various hubs throughout the county. And, indeed, if there's any member there that is aware of a shortcoming in certain parts of the county, if they want to engage with the housing section. But we all know that it is very difficult. We are in a very lucky position in County Wicklow where we're providing an awful lot of houses, whether it be through the HAP, the RAS, or social, our commitment to our citizens has been very good. You will of course come across desperate situation from time to time and that is where it is important, rather than seeking out a cheap headline, it is more important to put the family first or the individual and make sure that their needs is met rather than your own ego.

So I wanted to encourage everybody to keep engaging with the Council and to support this. The SPC has endorsed it, as the Director has said. It's something that we would want to implement as quickly as possible. Thanks, Cathaoirleach CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor, you're proposing the adoption?

COUNCILLOR SNELL: I am.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes, perfect. Thank you. Councillor Dermot O'Brien. COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I am more than happy to second the proposal, and just two things to say.

Knowing that this was on the agenda today and having a read of the content, and there's lots of action plans in play and some of them come from up above, some of them are generated in the lived reality and there's always that tension between what we know, what we experience and what is right for our areas. And then I was thinking earlier on today, oh, the candidates were invited to come down and sign the protocol. And I wondered do candidates know the volume of work that is involved in this part of what it means to be an elected representative. As Councillor Snell said, there's very sensitive, vulnerable people behind every single story and for them to come to us, I think, is an honour but also a huge responsibility.

One other thing I would say, Cathaoirleach, for whoever might make up the SPC next time round, there's that added element there around youth homelessness and the youth homelessness strategy. I think that is another attempt to try and intervene as early as possible, because the longer someone experiences housing distress as a young person, the more it will affect their whole life. So I would urge whoever might sit in that SPC next time around to, again, amongst all the things find a slot for putting a value and importance on that one. But happy to second. Thanks, Cathaoirleach

CATHAOIRLEACH: That's great. Thank you very much. We have proposer and seconder. Is everybody in agreement? (Yes.)

Agreed. Thank you very much, members.

Members, I am going to propose two things. One is an extension of the meeting until half five. We have a packed agenda, I am not sure that will do it, but half five. Thank you very much, Councillor John Snell. Can I have a seconder? Councillor Rory O'Connor.

Are we in agreement? (Agreed.)

The second item I would like to propose is to move items $9,10,11$ and 12 in advance of the Chief Executive's report. There are a number of items there that are required legally to be done and we are running out of meetings in this term. So if I can get a proposer and a seconder on that. Paul O'Brien and John Mullen. Is that agreed? (Agreed.)

Thank you very much, members.

So we are going to move to item number 9 and that is to note the Draft Wicklow County Council Annual Report 2023 in accordance with section 221 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended). Helen, I am going to hand over to you.

MS PURCELL: Very briefly to say this is the draft report that is before you in accordance with section 221 of the Local Government Act. The AFS is due to be listed as an agenda item for your consideration on the 13th of May and, as I say, the performance indicators will be submitted by the 19th of April, and that will be included as an appendix to the plan.

As we don't have a June meeting, the finalised Annual Report 2023 will be listed as an agenda item on the first meeting of the 1st July rather than the June meeting. CATHAOIRLEACH: Anybody any queries in relation to that item? No. Okay. That's great.

The next item is item number 10 is the review of the Corporate Plan 2019-2024 and I know the directors are going to speak very, very briefly. I will hand over to Emer to start, yes.

MS O'GORMAN: Just very briefly, members, again, as part of good corporate governance we're obliged to review our Corporate Plan and our objectives and what
we have achieved during your five-year term. This is a backward look, I suppose, at the past five years of the term of this Council and the work that has been achieved by the executive and the members.

So each of the directors is going to speak to their previous directorate. I know it is confusing, but just because they would have been responsible for the actions over the last five years. We're going to start with Michael and then move along accordingly. We'll try and be as brief as possible. I know it is getting late in the evening, folks, I appreciate your attention. Thank you.
MR NICHOLSON: Cathaoirleach thank you. The last five years have gone by very quick. In our directorate we launched three strategies: Wicklow Recreation Strategy, currently we have the Sports and Recreation Strategic Strategy and the Expenditure strategy. Covid-19 seems like a lifetime ago, but it actually wasn't that long ago. We set up a community call helpline in March 2020. We established a community response forum for the Ukrainian crisis in 2022. We formed the Disability Inclusive Steering Committee (DISC) and we re-established the social inclusion network, we're calling it Sing this year.

Beyond the Trees Avondale, a tourist destination. We purchased buildings for community use in Carnew, Ashford and Kiltegan. We carried out sports and recreational audits in all the MDs. We unveiled the Ronnie Delany statue in Arklow in 2021. We have huge progress made in investing in the greenway. We launched the LECP plan. A new leader rural development programme has just been launched. We have secured leader funding of 6.3 million. We got a lot of funding under the large scale sport infrastructure fund for Wicklow Swimming Pool and Charlesland Athletics Track.

Town and Village, we completed 24 projects, totalling 3.15 million. CLÁR funding, 16 projects, half a million. Outdoor recreation infrastructure scheme in the last five years, 5.2 million. Community Recognition Fund, 1.6 million for seven projects and just recently got more, 1.6 million for new projects. Pride of place we had great success, Kiltegan won, Hollywood won gold, Avoca silver, Greystones Tidy Towns, Century Gardens won sliver and ReWild Wicklow won gold.

I won't go through all the local sport partnerships. You will all aware of the huge work being done in sports partnerships and also in health Ireland. And a huge amount of work done in the Arts office.

In terms of libraries, we opened the new library in Wicklow and we opened the new library in Rathdrum, and we are currently working on a library in Aughrim and also improvements in Bray. And there's loads of staff, loads of awards won across the various Chamber of Commerce awards. We launched the new mobile library. We have done a lot of work in those in Greystones MD. I won't mention the cliff walk; we're still work on that. We have seen a significant improvement in the coastline from Greystones to Newcastle. South Beach Greystones is becoming a Blue Flag amenity. We installed the boardwalk in Greystones last year. We had a huge work done. We now have three dog parks in the county, including one Greystones as well. Kilcoole Mass Path completed. And we have a lot of work planned this year in Burnaby under the Community Recognition Fund. So that is just a whistle-stop tour of CCSD for the last five years. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Michael. That's great. We are going to hand over to Lorraine.

MS GALLAGHER: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. The directorate relevant was the enterprise and corporate services for the last five years. So the Economic Development Unit has a number of strands through it. Of course the LEO (the Local Enterprise Office), tourism, URDF, projects and place making, film, emerging opportunities most notably in the wind sector and then food in the emerging opportunities in the craft sector.

So the goals, objectives and actions are all set out in the five year local economic community plan. And as Michael rightly mentioned, which has just been reviewed. A huge amount has been achieved and I would like to commend all of the team involved. So just in terms of Wicklow County Campus, over 2,500 third level students have graduated from the SETU Lifelong Learning Centre over the last five years. A master plan has been prepared which will perform how the campus will develop over the coming five years and extensive conservation works have been completed with the installations of biofuel heating system, et cetera.

I suppose the major development was the construction of the Claremont Screen Hub which was officially opened earlier this year and this project was led and overseen by Vibeke Delahunt, the Head of Enterprise. If you recall, we were all catapulted into the space of Covid-19 back in 2020. So not only did it slow down the works, but it also added an entire layer of complications. So I am delighted to see that project come to fruition.

The LEO, the Local Enterprise Office, assisted in the creation of 225 net full-time jobs over the last five years, approved 173 grant applications, 730 trading online grants, up to $€ 2,500$ each. 8,845 participants took part in a business skills and IT skills training programme. 442 participants in Start Your Own Business programme. And over 3,620 clients availed of free business advice and mentoring. So the LEO is a machine in itself. A great productive team out there. Another first point of call for local businesses who are seeking assistance.

Notable awards: Kate Dempsey, the Aqualicense, overall 2022 National Enterprise Award and the 2023 National Enterprise Award for innovation went to Tony O'Kane of WHC Labs and, of course, their recent accolade that we are all very proud, Wicklow County Council being nominated Council of the year at the LAMA Awards.

Economic development generally, the Greystones Enterprise Centre has been constructed and we have taken that over and it will come to the market very, very shortly. Similar, Carnew. Skills Strategy has been developed for County Wicklow and a food and beverage strategy. Also, you will be familiar with the work of the Wicklow Naturally Tourism. It speaks for itself. You're all familiar with the work that Fred and his team does. The EcoTrail, the Wicklow Passport and of course the Glendalough partnership and the County Wicklow Tourism and Marketing Plan.

Town regeneration: Town regeneration office is in place. URDF project complete. Arklow Historic Core Wicklow Town Library in Fitzwilliam Square, four town teams have been established and other projects are progressing.

So just then touching on human resources. You know it is a core service, a core
function of the organisation and we are very, very proud of the staff and what they achieve. There are 421 new employees that have joined us and we have lost similar in retirement. I suppose, notably, will be the introduction of the whole blended working policy which was introduced in September 2022 and a total number of employees availing of blended working now is 223 . That very much helps when we go out to our recruitment campaign in terms of being a place of choice to work.

We progress the development of e-interviews on all recruitment interviews online through Microsoft Teams and I suppose the impetus to that was Covid-19. We're sitting in the Council Chamber, the members' room, the Wurzburg Room which was refurbished during Covid and we are very -- as I know you are, elected members, very, very proud of this civic space. And just to say that we now have a new communications team in place, customers services, care innovation hub and we have moved forward with the services we provide there. Thank you, Cathaoirleach. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cathaoirleach. Members, there's a lot of -- it's a little bit difficult to hear. There's a lot of chatting going on. Sorry, I hate to say it, but it is making it difficult up here to speak and just for people to be able to listen. Maybe the members could step outside that, would be great.

Leonora.
MS EARLS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Under goal 2 of Corporate Plan and Community, I am taking the transportation and emergency services and water. Civil Defence fall in under community and it is a hugely successful unit that we have there and they currently have a waiting list for members. They are really imbedded in the community. They were certainly to the fore when it came to Covid-19 response and were very involved in assisting in the Arklow Residential Centre and provided 24-hours-a-day cover.

We also have a new -- they also purchased a new boat and sonar operations. They are hugely involved in supporting the search for missing people and have not only done that within County Wicklow but also have been outside the county assisting other Civil Defences in other counties.

They have purchased a number of new items of equipment over the last five years, including a new ambulance, new boat, a new sonar support vehicles. So it is a very
successful Civil Defence operation over the last five years.

We within Arklow have then done the upgrades of playgrounds. We have our community CCD that was introduced in 2019. The Arklow parade grounds and courthouse was completed during this period also. So that is the public realm of the Arklow parade grounds where it is a really liveable welcoming space there now. The courthouse is now a hub for businesses to use being run by ABEC.

The Roundabout Enhancement Scheme was also carried out and if you go into Arklow North, you are greeted by the very formidable lighthouses on the first roundabout there. That really enhances the area as you are coming into the town, very welcoming.

There's a hugely successful community effort each year. It started back in 2019 and it is between the elected members, Tidy Towns, the Town Team, and the staff of the Arklow Municipal District and this is where there is a huge litter pick done as part of National Spring Week, from Arklow out towards The Woodenbridge. And to complement that then there is also, you know, to join the communities of the meetings at Woodenbridge, the footpath was completed in 2020.

Under goal 3 which is infrastructure, so there was a large number of active travel projects completed during this period. Notably the Seafront Plaza in Bray; the Cullmullen Junction in Blessington, the Arklow North Cycling and Pedestrian Scheme. The new footpath that runs up to all the new housing developments in Ashford and the new footpath in Kilcoole, and the Savills Cross in Rathdrum.

A number of schools also availed of the Safe Route to School Programme. That is where we have created a really welcoming and safe space outside of the schools, in conjunction with the schools who made the application through the An Taisce programme. So the schools in Arklow and Greystones are the ones that have been completed to date and other ones are ongoing.

I mention there the URDF funding that was received for Arklow playground and the courthouse.

On the infrastructure point from roads, the N81, the Knockroe Bend Realignment Scheme was completed in December 2020 and was officially opened by our incoming Taoiseach, Simon Harris. The N11's parallel service road was completed in 2021 and I think you will all agree that this is a hugely successful scheme and has certainly improved the safety around Kilmac which was a very major concern because of the way the traffic was interacting with each other.

The speed limits. The elected members adopted speed limits last year. The first in the country to adopt 30 K periodic speed limits in front of the schools. They're all operational now. You will see they are in place and that was welcomed by the schools and the principals.

Within the fire service, so we are progressing to get the new fire stations a Baltinglass and Dunlavin. We also took ownership of a new tender which has been located in the Bray station.

Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: That is great. Thanks, Leonora. Joe.
MR LANE: Okay. That period is sort of kick-starting the local authority supply of houses for the number of years when that scheme had faltered. In general, in excess with that scheme we, the local authority has provided in excess of a thousand new units across a variety of supply, including the local authority own builds, PPE approved housing body acquisitions under part 5 .

In addition, there was targeted housing provided across the TAP and older disability units. We have also started to recommence the affordable housing units with our own on Greenhill Road and a number have been published since.

Notwithstanding this larger supply of units well in excess of the national schemes and national targets, homelessness still remains a challenge and as detailed in the last strategy, this is the second homeless strategy in the period of the Corporate Plan. A number of actions there.

The whole supply is sufficient robust and has been required in the Corporate Plan to deal with a number of unforeseen challenges, including, that we didn't envisaged when we were doing the plan, including the notice to quits, the Ukrainian challenge and the Covid. In each of those, the housing function and the staff were able to deal with those within the resources of the challenges. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe. Brian.
MR GLEESON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I will just start off with finance achievements first. The annual revenue budget has increased by 64 million over the lifetime of the plan. It's gone up from 96 million up to 160 million. The revenue account deficit has reduced by 1.8 million from 2.4 million down to 600,000 and we hope to eliminate that over the next two years.

Commercial rates. The collection rate has increased from $85 \%$ up to $91 \%$. In monetary terms that is 24.1 million versus 29.6 million. It represents an increase of 5.5 in actual income collected.

Housing loans collection rate has also seen a significant increase from $76 \%$ up to $90 \%$ and in monetary terms that equates to 1.3 million up to 2.5 million.

We have also seen the introduction of a new risk management system to deliver better decision-making, more efficient use of resources and strengthening of accountability. Risk registers are in place at corporate level and directorate level and are reviewed on a quarterly basis. The corporate risk register it also presented to the Audit Committee on a regular basis.

During this period we have also seen the introduction of commercial rates incentive scheme for new businesses moving into vacant premises. This scheme provides for a $50 \%$ rates reduction liability in year one and $25 \%$ reduction in year two.

I have also seen the provision of annual discretionary funding of over 1 million across the five municipal districts to support local public ground projects and local voluntary groups. The source of funding for this was our annual Local Property Tax allocation.

In relation to information system achievements, we have continued support maintenance and enhancements of the Council's ICC infrastructure, business applications and security environment. Basically our day-to-day work. Continued ICT support of the Council's blended working environment. As you know, temporary remote working facilities were put in place for Covid and subsequent to that, a Government policy was introduced to promote blended working across the public sector. As Lorraine mentioned earlier, Wicklow County Council introduced a blended working policy that allows staff to work up to two days a week from home and the necessary hardware and software security requirements to make this happen have been implemented.

We have also seen the enhancement of our services through the provision of new IT system, such as national E-Planning system, parking fine system and legal case management system. And we will also include upgrades of core systems throughout the period, such as housing and finance systems.

We have also seen the provision of enhanced data analysis software on the geographical information systems across the organisation to assist with spatial statistics, suitability modelling and terrain analysis for such things as transport studies and urban planning.

We have also developed online consultation hubs to support the creation of the County Development Plan and the local area plans, and Wicklow County Council has been nominated for a national award this week for this piece of work.

Creation of mobile applications has been brought in on phones and tablets to support the work of our outdoor workers. For example, with historical graveyard surveys, barn owl surveys, residential zone, land tax data collection, housing maintenance, road maintenance and environmental complaints.

Finally, the provision of broadband connection points, we have nine throughout the county and supporting the work of DEC and National Broadband Ireland on the rollout of broadband throughout the county. Thank you, Cathaoirleach. CATHAOIRLEACH: That is great, Brian. Thank you.

Jackie.
MS CARROLL: I am going to report on the Planning Development and Environment Directorate. Goal PD 1 was to provide a professional planning and development management structure and processes. We certainly streamlined processes with the introduction of E-Planning as we discussed earlier. It has improved efficiencies and reduced the potential for invalid applications and, obviously, also as mentioned earlier as well, it goes towards digitalisation of all our processes. But we are keeping the manual system going at the same time. Over $50 \%$ of all applications are submitted online now.

A huge body of work was undertaken on development management during the period. Over 5,000 planning applications were received and determined during the time, with grants of 4,284 which represents $85 \%$ of all applications.

Under forward planning the members adopted Wicklow County Development Plan 2022. That represents the culmination of a significant body of consultation and work by the team and the members over the intervening years. Work obviously commenced also on the local area plans for Bray MD, Wicklow Town to Rathnew, Greystones to Delgany and Kilcoole, Arklow and environs and Blessington. And a key action of housing for all, the RZLT, Residential Zoned Land Tax, was introduced to activate vacant land for residential purposes.

Work continued on the implementation of the Derelict Sites Act and the Vacant Site Levy to tackle vacancy and dereliction in town centres.

Under heritage, built and natural, our goal was to conserve the natural, built and cultural heritage in County Wicklow. And just a great compliment to the heritage officer who drew down funding of 190,000 under the County Heritage Plan and Community Monument Funding of 420,000 . So a significant body of work there also. And the Biodiversity Action Fund assisted with projects such as the county hedge row survey and the woodland monitoring project, which is the bat survey.

Under EV1 to EV8 there are climate action and environmental goals. As you know, Wicklow County Council is a key player leading on climate action at a local
community base level, and planning for the effects of climate change has become a key challenge. Wicklow certainly has been ahead of the game. The Climate Charter was signed by County Council in 2019 and significant progress is made in this area. We were the first Council to establish a climate and biodiversity action SPC. A large number of climate initiatives and projects were developed. Obviously, the climate action plan being the main one, but we also had the glyphosate policy, the tree management policy and the sustainable development goals map for County Wicklow.

The climate action plan was developed following intensive public consultation with all our stakeholders and obviously sent for adoption in 2024. 135 actions were identified for implementation and we have commenced 89 of these. The climate action team and the energy unit were finally fully resourced by the end of 2023 and a new post was sanctioned and filled for the biodiversity officer. The community climate action programme was launched with a fund of 646,000 available to Wicklow.

So also then under coastal erosion for climate change, the effects can be seen in the damage caused by erosion to our coast and the Council is working with the OPW and Irish Rail to advance projects to deal with the issue. They will be presenting at a future meeting to update the members on this.

As you know, we are mandated to achieve $51 \%$ reduction in energy related greenhouse emissions and a $50 \%$ improvement in energy efficiency by 2030. So the Mid-East Energy Unit was an innovative measure established to support the two local authorities of Kildare, Wicklow and Meath to meet the energy efficiency targets and the carbon emission targets. We have an exemplary leadership role in that respect.

Under waste management we had great success pursuing illegal dumpers through the courts and we have been sending a clear message out to the public that illegal dumping won't be tolerated.

Environment general, we continue to maintain our 35 burial grounds in the County

Council and successfully provided two Columbarium walls in Bray and the next one most recently in Arklow. We are liaising with the other districts now to discuss the potential for further Columbarium walls around the county. We are proud to retain our three Blue Flags over the last five years. We sadly lost Bray during the period but are hopeful to regain same in the coming years. We continued our exemplary role in leading on pollution control. We have the second-highest water quality status in the country and a consistently high standard of bathing water in the county.

The lab team carry out consistent monitoring licensing of waste water discharges and farm surveys and catchment investigations where quality is below standards, that work continued throughout the five years.

Harbours and ports: We delivered many projects in harbours and ports in Arklow and Wicklow, and we utilise Brexit funding to do so. One of the projects that received the most attention from the media was the refurbishment of the East Peer Lighthouse in Wicklow. We are currently working on the fishers' huts in Arklow. They are going to be advertised shortly by the way. Wicklow harbour dredging, a draft licence was issued to carry out bed levelling in Wicklow port and this will ensure appropriate depths are available for shipping over the next two years. And a review of CCTV and access control in the harbours was undertaken.

Under the environmental major projects, Arklow Flood Relief Scheme, significant progress was made on the project with the planning application CPO approved during the period by An Bord Pleanála. And 2023 ended with the appointment of IESA Limited to progress to detailed design and tender stage.

So as the members can see, it has been a very product five years with many important milestones being reached and projects delivered. Just to pay tribute to Breege who is absence today and all the staff on the decorate for the work they have carried out. We have delivered above and beyond our directives and just to thank the members for your continued support.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Jackie. And to all the directors and the Chief Executive on behalf of the members here, just a thank you from us for all for the work you have done over the last five years. I know from having worked in
the local authority system previously, it is not a nine to five job and I know when you're out and about yourselves you are always looking at opportunities to increase stuff in the county here, and it is very much appreciated. I think the feedback that we have heard here today shows the volume of work that has been done under this term.

Thank you also for your cooperation and engagement with the members over this term and for listening to our many queries and helping us learn our role as well and finding information. It is very much appreciated.

So I am going to open this up to the floor. Councillor Gail Dunne.
COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. It is just when you hear it there you realise the amount of work that the Directorate services do and their staff. So it is very welcome and thanks for all your help over the last five years and all the queries that yous have answered.

Could I just maybe make a suggestion that maybe each one of the directors' reports is sent out to the members? Because it is very interesting and it could be used in the next eight weeks. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: For what, Gail? Absolutely. COUNCILLOR DUNNE: For knowledge.

MS PURCELL: Just to clarify, that was actually circulated and it went out with the agenda.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That little information could be handy in the next eight weeks as well, Gail.

COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Must have missed that.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, members. Councillor Miriam
Murphy.
COUNCILLOR MURPHY: I would like to thank all the directors, but I especially would like to thank the Director Michael Nicholson who has actually just brought, I suppose, the disability world in to the chamber. I know we're a long time slogging at and fighting, or whatever. We have a good relationship, Michael and myself, and I have got lots of money out of him. But I just think to bring the awareness of the disability issues to all of the members, to all our constituency and to see the strategy, the tool kit being printed was a very proud day for myself personally, but also for the
people of Wicklow who face barriers every day and to know that all of the four -- I don't know how many Councillors we have, is now aware of what is faced, and I really appreciate the work done by the staff and by everyone here today. So I really appreciate that. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Well said, Councillor. Thank you. Okay. We are going to -- no, we're not. Sorry. Councillor Edward Timmins.
COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Just briefly, I would just like to acknowledge Breege's work as Director of Services in covering the Baltinglass Municipal District. I also see she's out of action now for a couple of weeks, until 22nd April. I just wish her a speedy recovery. Also, it has been brought to our attention as well, she rang us around, very kindly, that she is retiring in a couple of months' time or maybe sooner. I would just like to wish her all the best on behalf of the Baltinglass Municipal District and, I presume, every councillor here. Thank you.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. We will have an opportunity closer to the time to acknowledge that. But thank you, Councillor.

Okay. Item number 11 is to receive a presentation, a briefing in advance of the non-statutory public consultation on the emerging preferred route corridor for the Wicklow to Greystones Greenway. We have our own Patrick O'Connor and then Chris Fay is going to come up afterwards. Patrick, I will hand over to you. MR O'CONNOR: Yes, no problem. Today we are going to deliver a briefing in advance of the non-statutory public consultation for the emerging preferred route corridors for the Wicklow to Greystones Greenway. The presentation will be delivered by Chris Fay who is an associate director with AtkinsRéalis who are the appointed consultants for this project and AtkinsRéalis were appointed to this phase of the project in January 2023. I will hand over to Chris now.

MR FAY: Thanks very much, Paddy. And thank you all for facilitating me in delivering this update on the Wicklow to Greystones Greenway.

The greenway is a national greenway and it will be over 20 kilometres long, extending from Greystones in the north down to Wicklow in the south.

And I suppose just in terms of what I am going to go over today, I will give you a quick overview of the project. I will go through the auctioneering process that we
have gone through in identifying the emerging preferred route corridors; I will outline what those corridors are; I will give some information on the public consultation process that we are about to embark on, I think it is going live tomorrow; and then I will just outline a couple of next steps that will follow on after that for this year and beyond.

So on the right-hand side there is the study area for the proposed greenway. As I mentioned, it extends from Greystones all the way down to Wicklow, it comes to Kilcoole, Newcastle and Rathnew. That study area there, it is quite defined by the east coast on the east, obviously, and the regional road network on the west. We are looking at options within that entire study area which is quite a large and extensive study area.

In terms of where we are on the project. So we are working in line with TII's Project Appraisal Guidelines, that is Transport Infrastructure Ireland Project Appraisal Guidelines. There are seven phases within that. AtkinsRéalis are engaged to deliver through to phase two, option selection; phrase three design and environmental evaluation; and phase four, statutory processes. The previous phases have been undertaken by Wicklow County Council and the subsequent phases will be under a further contract when that time comes.

An outline there are of some of the key deliverables. I won't go through every one of them, but for phase two which is the phase that we are in now, the key deliverables that we will deliver to Transport Infrastructure Ireland in order to get approval through phase two and into phase three, will be the constraints report, the option selection report. So we're at stage one of that and that is the public consultation number 2 that we are embarking on tomorrow. There will be the full options selection, which will go beyond the route corridors and on to identify an actual route options within those corridors. And then just a business case and gateway reports where you have to deliver to get that approval from TII.

The auctioneering process. So in working with TII's Project Appraisal Guidance and best practice there's kind of five steps to go through. We're at the third step there. The first step is identify study area. The second step is the route corridors
within that study area, to try and focus on more specific routes through there. The third is to select the preferred route corridor. As I said, that's the stage we're at now. Fourth is to develop options and evaluate them within those route corridors that we have identified as our preferred. And the fifth then is ultimately to select the emerging preferred route corridor.

So for Wicklow to Greystones we have identified three route corridors and we have divided them up in to three different sections then in a linear point of view. So the three route corridors that we have assessed are a coastal one, and these route corridors, they're 600 meter buffers, so in themselves cover a wide area. So the first one is a route corridor 600 metres wide along the coast. The second is an inland field boundary route corridor. And then the third is along the regional road network on the western side. And as I say, we have broken that in to three kind of distinct segments for ease of assessment and that's from Greystones to Kilcoole, Kilcoole to Five Mile Point and then from Five Mile Point down to Wicklow, down to Wicklow Town.

Just to note there, obviously a project that's intrinsically linked to particularly the coastal route option would be the east coast rail infrastructure protection projects being delivered by Irish Rail. Obviously it is enhanced coastal protection between Wicklow and Greystones. We have been working quite closely with the project team on that. There's been ongoing and continues to be ongoing information and discussions with Irish Rail, Wicklow and both of the design teams. So all that decision-making to date has been with that information, kind of, forthcoming between us all.

The route corridor assessment, not to go into too much detail here. But again it is in line with TII's project appraisal guidelines. The key criteria are obviously going to be environmental issues, economic issues and constraints and then engineering issues and constraints. We have also included there, just to tie it in with the National Greenway Strategy, the five Ss. You know scenic, see and do, sustainability, that the route is segregated and shared use. That has all been in the melting pot, so to speak, in assessing our route corridors.

So the emerging preferred route corridor then, and we have gone through our assessment, I suppose initially we identified it being as the coastal route corridor. A lot of that is to do with, you know, fulfilling those five Ss in the National Greenway Strategy and strategic aligning with that, and with, you know, Wicklow County Council's own policies. And I suppose from other aspects, from agronomy and archaeology, it had benefits from that point of view as well. That route is not without its challenges, particularly environmental challenges. It is one of the reasons why we have identified such a large and wide study area and three distinct corridors within that. And also the ECRIPP project in itself, it poses opportunities but also has challenges as well. So for that purpose and to ensure that, you know, once we go through the next stage of assessment that we're not going backwards, we have decided to bring through both the inland field boundary option along with the coastal, kind of, railway line option forward to the next stage of assessment. And as I say, that just allows us to develop numerous options within both of those. If there's any challenges that we find we're not able to overcome, we have got flexibility there to avail of other options more inland.

That's just a few extracts from of the emerging preferred route corridor. I will give you some information on where you can avail of them over the next four-week period.

So as I mentioned the public consultation process, so we're about to kick off tomorrow on the 9th April. That is going to run for a four-week period until 7th of May. That is kind of online. And there's maps in there. There's leaflets. There's frequently asked questions. A lot of material there that will help the general public try to understand, and landowners and other stakeholders and yourselves, information there that will help you understand the project and the decisions being made to date.

It is not only online. We have also got a couple of in-person events coming up. So there's one Thursday-week in Greystones Library on the 18th, and that will run from 4 pm to 8 pm . The following Thursday there's also another information evening on the 25th in Wicklow Library, again it will run from 4 to 8 pm .

Letters have gone out last week to registered landowners who own land within the emerging preferred route. I suppose one of the key things of the public consultation period is, it'll allow us to identify any landowners that we haven't been able to pick up within those letters. So there's an online questionnaire which allows any landowners that we haven't been able to -- you know that may be unregistered that they can provide information there and that will be on the project website which is www.wicklowgreenways.ie.

Then in terms of submissions, they have to be in by the 7th of May and there are three ways that the public and elected representatives and stakeholders can make their submissions. They can make it by post to the address that follows there. They can also email in to wicklowgreenway@wicklowcoco.ie. Also we have the consultation portal and there will be a section up on that from tomorrow that will allow anyone to make an online submission that way.

Next steps. So after this stage one, public consultation, we will collate and gather all the submission that is have been received. We will prepare a summary report of that and we will take on board anything that we feel is justified to update our assessment with and our option for selection report. We will produce that and we will forward that obviously to Transport Infrastructure Ireland and they will give us approval to proceed to our stage two assessment, which will be to identify route options within those two route corridors that we have identified.

And we will go through that process, developing options and evaluating them against criteria as outlined in the Transport Appraisal Framework and then we will have another further public consultation, I have a diagram on the next page that gives a timeline for this. And we will do the same process again, taking on board comments and identifying our emerging preferred route. We will do all our project appraisals and our final documents to be sent to TII for approval of that emerging preferred route.

That will move us into phase three where we will do our design and do our environmental evaluation and that will be all in preparation to prepare and, I suppose, submit our planning application in the phase four statutory process which
will more than likely be to An Bord Pleanála

Just to close out there the project programme. So ideally, by the middle of quarter two, which will be May/June we will have summarised and undertaken our summary report, taken on board any feedback and comments we have got from that and move into the detailed route options assessment process. That will bring us up to the start of quarter four around September/October time and at that stage we will start engaging with affected landowners and that consultation process that I mentioned there on the emerging preferred route. Hopefully all through next year, 2025, we will undertake our design, close out our kind of targeted ecological surveys and any other environmental surveys we need to undertake and really towards the end of next year, undertake our assessment and documentation for potential EIA which will be submitted to An Bord Pleanála, all going well, early in 2026.

So that's kind of the indicative programme. Obviously there's always challenges that crop up that can hinder that timeframe. So that is what we are aiming for at the moment.

Just to point out that the slides I've just gone through there, Paddy will be able to make them available to anybody who requests them.

So I hope in a gives a good update and, yes, I suppose if there's any questions I can do my best to answer them. I will leave it there. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. That's brilliant. Thank you very much, Chris. I will get you to stay there, if that is okay. Patrick, you might circulate the slides to everybody just to make it easier. Chris, we normally take a couple of speakers at the time. They will raise a few questions, and then you get an opportunity to respond back to them. So I am not sure if you have a pen and paper, or a very good memory, but you might want -- you may not need it. I am pre-empting that you might need it. You mightn't need it.
Okay, Councillor Paul O'Brien.
COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you to Chris and Patrick for that presentation. It is something that a lot of us have been
waiting for. You won't need a pen here because mine is more an observation more so than a question. But can I just say that I want to welcome this, because we have spoke about Covid there a few minutes ago and what it really brought home in Wicklow was that we had such a great amenity in the Murrough. My family actually hail from the Murrough so I have a very special connection to it. My only worry is that no matter who sits here after the 7th of June, is that we are not coming back to face another presentation where the route has to be moved. So I am delighted to hear that you are liaising with Wicklow County Council and Irish Rail in terms of protecting the Murrough, because it is something that a few of us have been harbouring on here for a number of months and years. So look, just bear in mind there will be a public consultation, and you're going to get some of the naysayers saying protect the environment, which is very important, but unless we act soon there won't be an environment to protect down there. The latest storms have wreaked havoc. I got sent a picture over the weekend of another seat that has been washed away and is lying on the beach, and to me it like a headstone saying 'Here once lay the Murrough'. So I wish you well in your endeavours. Just keep us in the loop because it is up to us then to go back to our constituents and sell it. I am delighted to support you in any way I can. So thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Tom Fortune. COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Thanks for the presentation. I have got a different tact to Councillor O'Brien on this. I am quite shocked actually to hear what I have heard today, because I have certainly been very, very involved in my area, Kilcoole-Greystones, kind of for a long number of years with all kind of challenges and issues. And I don't mean this in a bad way now so don't take it the wrong way but what I am hearing from the presentation is an awful lot of project speak.

And to try and put that in context, the OPW, the Uplands, Wicklow County Council and Irish Rail, they're the four -- I am thinking along the coast, along Kilcoole, from Greystones, that area there, that experiences flooding threats whenever we get bad weather. So one question would be: What timeline is on this? Because I don't see this happening. I see what you have outlined, what you are going do with phases, and it reminds me of the phases that were set out for the N11 many years ago, and, you know, it was going to take forever as well. So I would like to understand what
the timeline on this is.

There isn't -- I think to be ploughing ahead with this without consulting the public, because there was a public meeting held some time ago and it was inconclusive. And I am intrigued with the sketches you have, because obviously you're not -- as I understand it, you're not actually addressing coastal erosion; you're looking at a greenway project. And the coast along there is under threat. I am sure Irish Rail would have concerns. So, therefore, to me, if you are going to put a greenway in there you're going to have to come inland, and that has, I am not sure, maybe it has got easier challenges from Wicklow Town upwards a little bit, but from Greystones down to, say, Five Mile Point, the Breaches, and that area, I would think that is one massive engineering challenge, and I would imagine the cost associated with it is pretty much off the scale.

So I suppose the corollary of what I am going on about is: How real is what we are talking about? What is the timeline on it? And have we any idea at all what the cost of this is going to be?
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor. Councillor Dermot O'Brien.

COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I haven't heard the word "optioneering" before, though I imagine that is what the electorate are going to be doing for the next eight weeks.

One question around the public consultation, like, because it is an area I am very interested in. I am just wondering, what is the invitation -- and maybe it is 'Wait and see, Dermot, because it is going live tomorrow'. But, yes, I am fascinated about what is the invitation to the public in terms of the consultation?

I know in our work in Comhairle na nÓg we have a principle around the -- we have space, voice, influence and audience. So we think about -- the invitation matters. Because is it just to have a look and state a view or can people get a sense of how their contribution might impact on something? Because that world, you could have a thousand people saying that's amazing and one person having a really insightful critique of it that could transform the piece of work or the direction that it is going.

So just a little about the public consultation. That is all, Cathaoirleach.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Chris, I might give you a chance to respond to some of them.

MR FAY: Thanks. Yes, just Councillor Fortune's question. Yes, I mean, like, the project on any route along the coast will be intrinsically linked with the ECRIPP project. So we are developing an option there. We need to know what exactly they are going to be proposing there. If it ends up that we can't develop a route along there, be it, you know, because of space constraints or other constraints, we will look at going inland. And we are -- I mean, the corridor along the coast, it is not just between the rail line and the coast; it is the landward side of the rail line as well. So, you know, by including that it allows us to not only be, you know, adjacent the coast, but when we do get opportunities, maybe when there's a bit more space, when the coastal erosion is a bit further out we have got space to get in there. But regardless, you know, the coastal erosion for any route that will be on the coast, you know, it will be intrinsically linked to ECRIPP and will depend on ECRIPP providing that coastal erosion protection.

And, timeline. So yes, I mean the timeline that we're working to is aligned with what I have outlined, but, you know, there is ongoing discussions with Irish Rail. And in terms of the progress they are making I think they are looking to submit an application by the end of the year, so it would appear they're ahead of us in terms of making an application. So that's kind of, you know, more favourable to us, that we will know exactly what they're going to propose.

I hope that answers your question.

In terms of Councillor O'Brien there, the invitation. What is the invitation? We're looking at route corridors. So, for the general public, it is getting their views not only on the greenway and maybe what they might envisage for the greenway, but also, you know, collating any local knowledge on any particular area that maybe we wouldn't be able to deduce from our desktop and our onsite investigations. And also, look, it's to engage with the landowners as well and to kind of get in front of them and speak with them. You know, I suppose we've outlined route corridors, so there's nothing set in stone in terms of impact, but the earlier we engage with them
the better, so that we do understand what their needs are, and we can have them in the back of our mind as we go forward and identify route options.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you. Councillor Lourda Scott. COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks for the presentation. I think the results of public consultation would be really interesting to read on this because I know the idea of this greenway has been knocking around for quite a few years and people have been kind of talking about it in the ether, and certainly I have been hearing people's opinions about it without having any concrete routes or anything in front of them obviously. And I suppose one question that keeps coming up to me from people that I talk to is: What is the underlying purpose of the greenway or where did this idea generate from to start with? Was there a call from some of the communities, you know, at one of the ends of the routes or was it coming from the Council? I would just be interested to hear. I presume its primary purpose is tourism.

And that kind of links me on to as well, I am wondering, is there any plans in either of the routes to link in with our towns and villages? Particularly, I am based in Greystones, so one of the things that gets brought up to me quite a lot is ease of access and lack of ease of access at the moment of being able to easily move between Greystones, Kilcoole and Newcastle in particular. So when you're on the greenway will you be able to access those villages? Is there going to be a way of, you know, connecting, transporting, leaving the car at home between those villages?

The other sort of comment or question that I have - and I hope my colleague, Councillor O'Brien, doesn't consider me an environmental naysayer when I say this, but - certainly at the northern end of the route, again certain environmental concerns or I suppose considerations is one of the first things that always gets brought up to me when they hear about the greenway, and I suppose the photo montages of the big wide cement path running sort of in a pristine way along our coast is very far -- maybe that is very far from what will ultimately be delivered but also it is very far from what is there at the moment. And while I hear the concerns around erosion, we have an issue up in the northern end of the coast as well but not as dramatic as the Murrough, and I understand that, you know, I have to question how does building a sort of tarmac path or cement path or whatever, work in line with our coastal
environment?

So the consideration of that sort of, minding the environment, whilst also bringing many more visitors to it would be something very much to the fore of my mind, and particularly I am sure you are already aware of the sensitive natures up around our little conservation piece up around Kilcoole and Newcastle as well.

And on that point, I was wondering should there not be more sort of investigations into the environmental piece earlier on? And I understand you have to somehow figure out your preferred routes but it does just seem that the environmental piece is tacked on very near the end. So what if you find something of particular importance there or that would sort of affect the ultimate delivery? That is just a query I would have as well.

But yes, other than those sort of general questions I think the public consultation is really important. And I always say it here when public consultation comes up. I think people can be public consultated out. So trying to get engagement and get people involved, I know it is starting tomorrow up with us but I think that would be really critical and I really hope that people do get involved.

The other thing again, chatting to people recently, is there's a bit of an irony at the moment that we're talking about this new tourist route when our own Bray to Greystones path is closed and it is a real sore point for people in my district. So I don't know if that will affect the comments that come in on this. Thank you. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Peir Leonard. COUNCILLOR LEONARD: Thanks, and thanks for your presentation. I know this is probably not -- well, it is connected to it. But I imagine the greenway is so that people can walk beside the seashore and see the beautiful coastal line of Wicklow, but I have huge concerns over the investment into something that, what I can see happening before my eyes, is the land falling into the sea and the coast disappearing before our eyes at a rate that is unprecedented in my life, from Clogga Strand up to the Murrough. And I don't know if we are capturing this at the moment. Because I think by the time this ever gets the go ahead the whole coast will be protected with rock armour to protect it. There will be nothing nice to look
at at all. So I have huge concerns over it. And I just think that, you know, if we are going to wait another five years, or those of us who are sitting here in the next five years, I think that we won't have a coastline left and I think we really need to -- as a Council, I think our priorities need to lie with the beaches and the coast that we have there and be putting and investing our money into preserving them, and pushing Irish Rail and the OPW to put the detached barriers rather than revetments against the coastal, or else we won't have anything nice to look at all. We won't have any beaches to access. And I just think that it is not being taken seriously enough and I think that we really need to put the pressure on. It's gone beyond a joke at the moment.

We have lost all access to Clogga beach over the last few days. There's ten feet of drops from the access down onto it. The Murrough, we have all seen pictures of the Murrough. I think we need to be capturing that. I think we need to get drone footage and surveys out in realtime throughout the year and capturing it, and measuring it. And I don't know whether that is something that is happening at the moment but I think until that starts happening greenways are great but we are not going to have any coast left. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Members, I am just reminding everyone it is 17:14 now, and we are ending the meeting at 17:30. I have to end discussions at 17:25 because there's a number of items of correspondence that I have to share. So what I would ask is if people want to raise a matter that they try and be brief. If we can't respond, Chris, if we could get a response, Patrick, back out to all members on any issues raised, and then an opportunity for members to email in additional queries if they don't get an opportunity to speak would be great as well.

Then just in relation to the sea report, I am not sure we're going to get an opportunity to hear that is well. So if members want to email any queries in relation to the sea report, if I could ask, Chief Executive, that the same practice is that the response is issued to everybody.

So, Councillor John Snell.
COUNCILLOR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yes, look it, this is something that has been discussed for many, many years. Indeed, I know there was a
subcommittee set up in Wicklow, likewise in Kilcoole and Greystones, which Councillor Fortune chaired, down that way; through Wicklow Town team money was sought for a consultancy report. And I suppose people automatically roll their eyes when they hear about consultancy report, but nothing can happen nowadays without a comprehensive report being done, and I suppose it is just part of the process.

I just feel that we have missed a few hurdles to get to this stage, and I know it is in its infancy, but this should have been before each municipal district that is affected by this. So it should have been in the municipal district of Greystones, which takes in Kilcoole and Newcastle, and it should have been in front of the Wicklow MD because obviously it affects us as well because it comes right down in to Wicklow Town up along Broad Lough, the Murrough.

I just think that to bring it here, and we have -- Chris, thanks for your presentation. You've gone into a lot of detail about nothing to be fair. Like, we have identified really nothing. Personally we're going to talk to landowners probably in September. The reality is that landowners should be the first to be talked to. I do agree that you have to have two alternatives inland and the coast, but the reality is that the natural ravine that people would have used all down through the centuries is the coastline, the outer, near the beach. And that is what they will continue to use. Even with coastal erosion, people still walk the Murrough, they still navigate around where the coastline is damaged.

And the reality is that, you know, nobody has mentioned Silver Strand or Brittas Bay where it has been affected by coastal erosion, as well as Arklow and Wicklow, to a lesser extent down to Greystones, but the truth is that there's no detail in this at all. It's like we're just justifying that we're looking at it. But I can guarantee you in five, ten years' time there'll be people in here, and it won't be use but there will be people here who will be looking at it in that time as well.

Unless the train service is moved inland, and then what they will do is what happened all over Ireland where they hand over the old rail service for a pathway from Wicklow Town to Greystones, other than that it is not going to happen.

I do believe that we need to have closer collaboration, not just with elected members but also the public. Four hours public display in Wicklow library for groups or individuals is not sufficient. I know you're putting it out there on public display from tomorrow or whatever, but the reality is, I am sure there's walking groups, there's environmentalist groups that need to have an opportunity to have a look at this, and work closely with you on it. Like, we're talking about a special area of conservation all the way from Wicklow to Newcastle and beyond, and we're coming up with alternatives; let's draw a line on the map on the outer line to the beach or the inner line.

And as Councillor Fortune has outlined, I know from the area in regards to where he's talking about, further up than Newcastle, going inland will cause bigger problems than even the coastal erosion protection works that need to happen. And they need to happen in conjunction with what you are providing here. There's no figure in regards to how much would it cost to bring this to fruition. We have been told MEPs, TDs, they're all going to get money to save the Murrough for God knows how long. It hasn't materialised. We were told it would cost a significant amount of money, then it was tens of millions, then hundreds of millions. All the time it's loads of talk about nothing and nothing is happening.

I wish you well with it. I would say that you need to come back down and work with the municipal districts because there's no way I can go back to the public and say we had a recommendation in the chambers, and 'What, happened John?' 'I couldn't tell you.' Because it was just, we've identified issues that might arise. We didn't hear what the issues are. We know what the issues are. I know what they are. But it wasn't discussed here.

So look it, I am not coming down on you, Chris. I thank you for coming in here. I know it is at an early stage but unfortunately, it's not been sold to me unfortunately. CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Mary Kavanagh. COUNCILLOR KAVANAGH: Thanks for the presentation. I was on the greenway committee since its conception, probably about six years ago, and one of the reasons I went onto it was because I believed that we wouldn't be able to build a
greenway without saving the Murrough because there wouldn't be any point in investing that kind of money in it. And I have to say I am really, really disappointed at the pace of progress on this whole thing. The seat that has fallen onto the beach was actually the very first project that I as a newly co-opted Councillor eight years ago requested as part of the discretionary funding. I asked for two seats up the Murrough. I went up with the engineer and I picked out the two locations. One the near side of the monkey pole and the other one was the far side of the monkey pole, because I believe people needed to be able to rest when they went up the Murrough. Even I didn't think eight years ago that I would see the seat fall into the sea. That shows you the progress of coastal erosion. Those seats were placed very, very far back. There was no way at the time anybody could have seen that coming.

The bottom line is that the ECRIPP project is taking far too long. A ten-year project. Ten years in coastal erosion is beyond comprehension. It's unimaginable how much erosion can take place over a ten-year period. The way things are going you can't actually see the greenway progressing as a coastal route unless somebody can do something to try and save the land from the sea. And it can be done, it has been done, it's been done in the USA. It's been done -- we have a young local man who works in the USA, and that's part of his job. It's also been done very successfully all over the Netherlands, which had an awful lot more land under water. There are ways to reclaim land from the sea. But nobody seems to be thinking along those lines. It is just kind of put up defences, defences, but eventually the sea will find a way through those.

I agree with Councillor Scott; if we ever get to having a greenway the surface has to be eco friendly. Not tarmac. Not cement. It has to be something like hard core. Something that is in keeping with the special area of conservation.

There is the little tern issue. It is a very rare little bird. That needs to be looked at.

That's really all I want to say on it. I just think that it is a lot of talk about something that has taken too long to date and to be honest with you, anybody who gets re-elected here, I don't even know if there'll be any movement on it within the next term of the Council. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor. Councillor Derek Mitchell. COUNCILLOR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just briefly. I mean I also would be concerned about the time of this has taken and the amount of public consultation we have had in the past. I mean people are going to think, oh, yet more consultation and we haven't actually got anything to show them, I don't think. I would probably walk this about once a year, and the attraction for me about doing that is the walk beside the sea, and I think that to move it inland would significantly reduce the attractiveness of it, and I also think there would be many extra problems found. It does sound simple to move it in but when you actually look at bringing it in you will find all sorts of people don't want it next to their houses and a whole load of other things like that. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Councillor Cronin, I know you yours is related to the report. Councillor Stokes is your item related to this item of the CE report? This, okay. Do you just want to come in quickly there?

COUNCILLOR STOKES: Yes. I just wanted to make the point that I hope that with the greenway that it happens sooner rather than later but I'd like to see a surface that is cycle friendly if possible. That's it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That is great. Thank you, Councillor Stokes,

Chris, I am not going to ask you to respond to those items because we don't have the time but, Patrick, perhaps if the items raised could be responded back to all of the Councillors as opposed to the ones that raised them.

Councillor Cronin, do you want to come in there quickly? COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Yes, thanks very much. I just want to express my frustration, and I know it is a frustration of a number of my colleagues here today, and it is not the first day it happened. Last week -- or last month I came in to ask questions on the CE report and again I was told I will get an email back. I never got any replies. Now today -- or the Chief Executive's report is the only way we have to get replies from the Council and again we're not getting to it today. There seems to be no timekeeping happening at these meetings and it really is very, very frustrating. We are all trying to do our jobs as Councillors but it really is becoming impossible to get any feedback from Councillors or have our say on anything.

A number of us here do stick to time. We don't go on rants or we don't do anything like that. We just want to ask the question. But unfortunately it is getting increasingly difficult to get any replies or to even have our say at Council meetings, and I just want that noted. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Edward Timmins.
COUNCILLOR TIMMINS: Chairman, yes, I would just like to add to that. Several members here today have way exceeded the three minutes. Five, six minutes, you know. I think we have to rein that in. It's not fair on the other members and it is not fair we're not getting to the Chief Executive's report. CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, members, I take on board what you say. Obviously today was an exceptional meeting with two very difficult items to be discussed. I have tried my utmost to keep to the agenda and to keep to times, but when people are passionately expressing themselves about very serious issues it is quite challenging to cut across them. On a number of occasions I did ask members to be as brief as they could. What I will ask is if the Chief Executive and the staff here could look back at any issue sent in and not responded to, if that could be followed up that would be much appreciated.

Okay, Helen, you have a number of items under correspondence. MS PURCELL: Just very briefly. Just to note circular LGO4/2024 regarding arrangements for elected members training has been circulated to you all.

Also LGPO3/2024 which relates to the eligibility of grades of local authority employment holders who can contest elections, and there's quite a turnaround in relation to that. The basic salary on the latest date for receipt of nominations can now not exceed the maximum basic salary from the posted clerical officer but that now excludes overtime, call out, incident payments and/or allowances. So that circular is there and again has been sent out to all of the members.

In relation to the nomination papers for the local elections, Lorraine Gallagher, as you know, is our returning officer and the nomination papers will be sent out to the existing elected members this week and you can make appointments to come in during the nomination period to myself. I manage the diary for Lorraine. The polling day has been signed now. The polling day order has been signed. So the

Local European and Referendum will be held on Friday the 7th of June. And in that regard, the closing date for receipt of postal and special votes is Saturday the 12th of May, and the closing date for receipt of voter register applications is Monday the 20th of May. And again, we have sent that detail out to you in email, and you can get your F1 forms from us if you want when are you out canvassing. Thank you very much.
CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Helen.

Does anybody have any queries relating to those items? No. Okay.

Members, that concludes the meeting. For those who are part of the Protocol Committee, if you could stay behind for the protocol meeting. Thank you.
(Time noted: 17:28 pm)

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