

ORDINARY MEETING OF
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

ON

MONDAY, 09TH JANUARY 2023 AT 2:00 P.M.

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Tara Meyer

Catherine Kollhof

CATHAOIRLEACH: Members, thank you very much for joining us at our first meeting of 2023. I hope you all have had a nice break and heads back down, we will get a bit of work done. I will hand you over to Helen now.

HELEN: Just to wish everyone a happy new year, those joining from us online and those present. Those who are remote, if you have any issues with connectivity, let us know and we will get you back in. Keep your phones on silent and cameras on. Thank you very much. I will just commence with the roll call.

(Roll call)

Thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Helen.

HELEN: A number of votes of sympathy. We think of wife of our colleague Verna Oslo, Bill Walsh, and Kathleen Falkner.

>> I would like to propose a vote of sympathy for Father Kevin Lyon, he was our Parish priest for some time, but spent time in Rathnew and Avoca and others, and he was a character and a unique human being. He had a great interest in the history of Wicklow, although a Dub, he loved Wicklow and he spent his 90 years, almost 90 years of his life in Wicklow, and he was a lovely character, well versed man, could speak a few languages, but he had the interests of the history and the culture of Wicklow to his heart and he sadly died only just last week. Can I also offer a vote of sympathy for the brother, the twin brother of Gerard Kelly, Gerard would be well-known within the council here, he's an architect in Ballyknockan, his twin brother buried here this morning.

>> I would like to be associated with the vote of sympathy for Kathleen Falkner. Thank you Chairman.

COUNCILLORLEONARD: I would like to add to that, a close friend and neighbour and great help to me on the council, Nicole Kenny's mother.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Could we stand for a minute's silence, please.

(Silence)

HELEN: We received two suspensions of standing orders. The first one was submitted by Cllr Paul O'Brien. Standing orders to discuss the evolving situation in direct provision for the Grand Hotel Wicklow Town. This has been deemed necessary because of the failure of the minister and his department to engage with the public representatives in the municipal district and the dangerous living conditions the residents find themselves in.

>> I would like to support the suspension in standing orders, we have previously asked for the Chief Fire Officer's report. It hasn't been made available to us and it is a worrying situation. I can't believe it's not a fire hazard and I want to hear what the Chief Fire Officer says about that. Helen. Can I draw the attention to the fact it's normal for the suspensions of standing orders to be

dealt with at 4.30 if two- thirds of the members present are happy to discuss it. We will only be looking at whether we have two- thirds in favour to deal with the matter at 4.30.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Have we got two in favour, anyone not in favour? Okay, that's fair enough. Thank you.

HELEN: The second was submitted by Cllr Gerry O'Neill, to discuss the provision of housing in the (Inaudible) area.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We need two- thirds for this as well. Gerry, I wasn't aware that the Municipal Council had a meeting this morning when you asked me to put this on the agenda. I was happy to do that for you, but I have been led to believe there was a meeting this morning about it, and now Chief Executive and other members don't really feel that this is appropriate to read suspension standing orders now after the meeting this morning. Would you be happy to withdraw this Gerry?

GERRY: Am I on there? There was a meeting at 12.00 here today that I came out, it was for an update on what we had been informed about modular homes going on to council land in a couple of sites in west Wicklow, but there was no update, and so...

CATHAOIRLEACH: It's for the suspension standing orders, if you want to proceed we will have to go to a vote. I do apologise, but that's the way it works, you know. I believe Municipal members know about this, so they have a chance to vote for suspension standing orders as well. I will put it to a vote if that's okay or does anyone have dissension to standing orders. I will bring in the Chief Executive here.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Just to inform people, the meeting this morning was a meeting that officials attended, including myself, with the members, it was under request the members of the municipal district to discuss the matter. It wasn't for an update, it was to discuss the matter and raise any issues that they had and there was a previous meeting that was held in the municipal district last year in December, and a couple of information notes have issued to the members over the last few weeks on the matter.

HELEN: We are voting as to whether or not to discuss this suspension of standing orders at 4.30, a two- thirds majority is required to discuss it. We are voting on whether or not you wish to discuss it.

CLLR BEHAN: I have no idea what happened at the meeting this morning. I have no idea about what this proposal, as a member of Wicklow County Council, it doesn't matter where I'm from, it would be important for the rest of us to be brought up- to- date with the proposal to establish (Inaudible) we should get the information, we saw what happened in west Wicklow last year when councillors were denied information. People in the area were very angry about the fact that councillors did not have full facts in relation to another project. I would appeal to members to let us have this discussion here today.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I will open it for discussion now, but Roy O'Connor's light is on.

CLLR O'CONNOR: I want to come in quickly and show my support for Cllr O'Neill's motion. It's about the issue I raised about the modular homes. I think this was about two meetings ago, it would be appropriate we do talk about it because it was said that we all were kept in the loop. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: The last person to speak on this and then we will go to a vote.

>> I wish to support the suspension of standing orders. I think it is a matter of concern for local people, particularly where this is centred, it's important from the point of view of members of the

public that we were transparent and these things are discussed as openly as possible.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Timmons.

(Vote taken)

Thank you, members. We will take them two motions, suspension of standing orders at 4.30.

Helen, would you read out the agenda.

HELEN: Just to give the results of the vote: 26 for, 3 against and three not present. So there is more than a two-thirds that majority. There is a launch also at 5.30.

The first item on the agenda is to confirm and sign minutes of annual budget meeting of Wicklow County Council held on 28th November 2022 as circulated.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

HELEN: The second item is to confirm and sign minutes of ordinary meeting of Wicklow County Council held on Monday 5th December 2022 as circulated.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

HELEN: Item number 3, to consider the disposal of 0.0483ha in the town land of Rathballylong, folio 4484 County Wicklow being the property known as lands located in the townland of Rathballylong in the Barony of Talbotstown Lower County Wicklow by transfer order to Ms Margaret Brown and Ms Catherine Egan, LPRs in the estate of Ms Agnes Browne deceased, the persons entitled to the freehold interest as per notice previously circulated.

All agreed.

Item 4, to consider the dispose 0.0478 hectares in the townland of Ballybeg County Wicklow, comprised in folio number WW2627, adjoining 26 Ballybeg, Rathnew, Co Wicklow by transfer order to Mr Alan Duffy, Me Alan Duffy Newsome, Mr Philip Sayer and Ms Margaret Doyle (as LPR of Margaret Duffy deceased) the persons entitled to the freehold interest in the property at 26 Ballybeg, Rathnew, Co Wicklow.

All agreed.

Item 5, to consider the disposal of 0.0339 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Knockenrahan comprised folio WW2290 Co Wicklow, being the property known as 5 Fernhill Arklow, by transfer order to Ms Grainne Dunn of Ballycooleen, Avoca, Co Wicklow, the person entitled to the freehold interest in the property (as per notice previously circulated).

All agreed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I am very rusty up here, to bear with me please, thank you. It is amazing when you stop doing something how quickly it goes out of your mind. But anyway, Helen you are doing a great job.

HELEN: Item 6, to consider the disposal of 0.171 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, comprised in folio number WW10203 Co Wicklow being the property known as 9 Hazlewood Crescent, Kilcoole, Co Wicklow by transfer order to Ms Laurie Linton of 9 Hazlewood Crescent, Kilcoole, Co Wicklow, the person entitled to the freehold interest in the property (as per notice previously circulated).

CATHAOIRLEACH: All agreed.

HELEN: Item 7, to consider the disposal of property in the town land of Knockenrahan Lower, Arklow, Co Wicklow being the property known as 41 Knockenrahan, Arklow, Co Wicklow by transfer order to Ms Christine O'Leary of 41 Knockenrahan, Arklow, Co Wicklow the person entitled to the freehold interest in the property (as per notice previous circulated).

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. All agreed.

HELEN: Item 8, to consider disposal of 0.0383 hectares or thereabouts in the town land of, I can't say this, Baltinanima, Co Wicklow, being the property known as lands located in the townland of Baltinanima in the Barony of Ballinacor North, Co Wicklow by transfer order to Mr William Murphy and Ms Mary Murphy of Baltinanima, Roundwood, Co Wicklow, the persons entitled to the freehold interest in the property (as per notice previously circulated).

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Helen, well done on the pronouncement.

HELEN: Are we all agreed? Item 9, to consider the disposal of 0.0254 hectares or thereabouts in the townland of Sheepphouse, Co Wicklow, comprised in folio number WW4065 Co Wicklow, being the property known as lands located at 3 Parnell Terrace, Arklow, Co Wicklow, by transfer order to Ms Hilda Arfield of 3 Parnell Terrace, Arklow, Co Wicklow, the person entitled to the freehold interest in the property (as per notice previously circulated).

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, all agreed.

HELEN: 10, to consider the disposal of 5.72 square metres in the town land of... Rathdown County Wicklow, comprised in folio number WW15685F being land situated in Jameson Heights, by transfer order to ESV of 2 Gateway East Walk road, city of Dublin (as per notice previously circulated).

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

HELEN: All agreed. Item 11, to note the local Government statutory audit report to the elected members for the year ended 31st December 2021, copy circulated.

BREEDA: Happy new year to you. Statutory audit report for the year end 31st December should be read in conjunction with the annual statement 2021. The independent audited opinion in those statement is unqualified and there's no adjustment to the audit annual financial statement 2021 to the draft annual statement presented to you and approved by you on 9th May last year, members. The statutory audit report is presented to the audit committee on 15th December and they have gone through it with the local government auditor. In his opinion he acknowledged the council had made great efforts to reduce the accumulated revenue deficit over the last number of years which resulted in the deficit currently standing at 1.3 million. And he acknowledged those efforts. The council had maintained its strong financial position during 2021, ensuring that the services of the council were not impacted by financial uncertainty with the Remnants of COVID- 19 in the initial part of the year. Government support for the assistance scheme and quarter one waiver is acknowledged. The installation of the car park... as an innovative initiative by the council. And also noted we had implemented a number of recommendations during 2021 from the previous year audit which included a new system for recording development contribution income to improve accountability and control and the completion of the corporate risk register. In addition as committed to in the audit report, the council engaged with Irish Water and this resulted in the balancing statement with Irish Water as at 31st December 2021 being finally agreed just prior to year- end. So hopefully, in all cases a positivity report this year running into next year. Thank you members and if you have any questions.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

CLLR TIMMONS: Just briefly, I would like to acknowledge Breeda's work in dealing with these matters. The report is there for all of us to read and some of the issues have gone for a couple of years. By the nature of them they are long- term issues, the vast majority of them, but I would like to commend Breeda and the audit team and the internal audit team for the work they're doing on progressing these matters, thank you S

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, everyone happy, members? Thank you. Thank you very much again, Breeda. Job well done.

HELEN: Item 12 is to consider fill the vacancy so the Wicklow County partnership arising from the resignation of council Cronin from the committee by way of background I wish to advise the local authority pillar on the partnership comprises of a maximum of five members, one executive member and four councillors. Currently we have two elected members councillor Joe Behan and Cllr Miriam Murphy, at the AGM the seats on the partnership were decided by groupings and also having consideration to geographical and particularly gender balance. We're now looking for a replacement for Cllr Cronin and we are allowed to have four seats, we currently have two people there, I would also remind the members that at the AGM Cllr Mullin was proposed and seconded to sit on the partnership, but couldn't do so as the maximum time on the partnership had been met. There are two seats available for consideration today.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Cronin.

CLLR CRONIN: Thank you very much, I would like to nominate Cllr Melanie Corrigan please.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Are you happy to take that position? Do we need a seconder, I will second you, no problem. Well done Melanie, best of luck in the role. All agreed? Thank you. Paul O'Brien.

CLLR O'BRIEN: I would like to nominate Cllr John Mullin.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. John Mullin are you happy to take that position? All agreed? Well done, John, also the best of luck in that position. Thank you.

HELEN: We are all happy, there's two seats. Cllr Melanie Corrigan and John Mullin. Thank you very much. Item 13 is to note the County Wicklow Age Friendly Strategy 2023- 2027 as circulated.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Michael Nicholson.

CLLR NICHOLSON: Thank you, this is to be noted by the members, the full strategy was posted out to members with a Power Point presentation. Following a full year of consultation and discussion with all interested parties. I won't take up much of your time, I will give you a brief background to what this is about, I know you have a packed agenda. The programme has been operating since 2008. This one covers up to 2027. The programme is affiliated to the World Health Organisation and every county has an agency friendly programme, an Age Friendly Strategy and age friendly coordinator. Ours is Cleo da Whelan who you probably know. The key to the success is active involvement of all key stakeholders, including the age friendly programme manager, local authority interdepartmental group, local age friendly alliances is a high level cross sector group chaired by the Chief Executive of the local authority. We have age friendly parking, age friendly libraries, age friendly housing specialists, age friendly benches. We have age friendly considerations, walkability surveys, age friendly talent initiatives, bus shelters, age friendly housing units, a blooming dementia garden, radio on a weekly basis, cafes in libraries and we have a guardian liaison officer. We have a Wicklow age friendly ambassador who in this case is Senator Pat Casey. And just to finalise this new plan has 72 actions over eight thematic groups dealing with outdoor spaces and buildings, transportation,

housing, social participation, respect of social inclusion, civic participation, employment, community information and community support and health services. On the next item on the agenda, actually, we came to the minute, we have agreed, we haven't got currently an elected member on the alliance but the recommendation is that there should be an elected member on the alliance and the recommendation is that a rep from the transportation and emergency services SPC should be a nominee to sit on the alliance. I discussed this with the Cathaoirleach. The presentation in absentia - because of time constraints today we didn't give the presentation but I would like it if maybe in a few months' time, if maybe things quieten down, if I could make that presentation because it is very worthwhile. I would like to thank the manager, the Age Friendly Strategy ambassador, and all members of the alliance for all of their work in this programme and of course all in the direction of chief executive brine Gleeson. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Vincent Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: Thank you, just to compliment the director and the work he has been doing in association with this. Just two points I would raise in terms of he did mention the fact of the housing and a lot of work had been done on the housing aspect as well, but just to know that we should give a greater concentration to the bungalows in the centre of our towns and villages that would give those people with a disability or with any kind of impairment at all - and age, obviously, brings on a number of conditions and problems - it gives them the chance of being able to access the shops and the medical facilities if they're in close proximity to the centre of our towns and villages. So I would like to see that we do concentrate on trying to build those types of accommodation for them. The second point is something that has been going on for a long, long time and that is the bus - bus transport is probably - the rural bus transport was initially launched primarily by a member of the council here and a minister probably about 16 or 17 years ago, and it was generally concentrated on people, elderly people, living in the country. It has been a great success and in the recent couple of years it has probably even taken on a greater [inaudible - background noise on the call]. The service has been expanded, and I'm led to believe there's probably in excess of 1,000 usage per week on that bus service at the moment and I think another one has been rolled out from Arklow, as well, to West Wicklow. So there's great work being done there in that aspect of it and certainly it's quite a magnificent service and I compliment the director and the staff on what that is been done. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor Blake. Councillor Pat Kennedy?

CLLR KENNEDY: I wanted to be associated with the comments of the councillor there and I want to commend the amount of work that has been done here in the interests of the elderly. It's important we do as much as we can to support the elderly in our communities. One of the things I was about to say just in relation to housing and Cllr Blake has covered most of it, a lot of our housing nowadays doesn't have any downstairs bedroom and I think that might be a problem in 30 or 40 years' time because there are small gardens and there won't be room in those gardens when people get old to put in a bedroom and disabled access shower room in the future, and I think it is something we need to look at going forward. Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and congratulations to everybody involved in what they're doing for the elderly. As I said, it's important that we support the elderly in our community.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Pat Kennedy. Cllr O'Brien?

CLLR O'BRIEN: Thanks, yes I want to pay credit to the work. Something that strikes me is that there isn't just a high level of visibility within that field, there's a high level of engagement, so sitting on the LCDC, even the stuff that happens there, and the presence of the older people's council and the presence of that council and their work is very exciting. I think two things that are important is the consultation is really important because we need to be talking to and listening to and working with the people in that cohort. But also I think paying attention to the changing data, the statistics, around the numbers - that if there's an increasing population of elders in our county, then we should

be paying attention to that and I suppose adapting accordingly. And the last thing I'd say is, I think there's a really fascinating space in terms of the intergenerational solidarity between the younger people and the older population in the county as well. So I look forward to exploring that, thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Councillor O'Brien. May I just extend my congratulations as well to the whole team because they are doing great work around the county, and keep it up, because there's one sure thing - everyone in this chamber is guaranteed to get a bit older. That's if we make it to the end of the meeting! But thank you very much, Michael. Sorry, Michael, yes?

MICHAEL: I just wanted to address some of the points. Actually on page 32 of the strategy under the thematic option three, there are five actions in relation to housing and one of them in particular, "Create more housing population options for older people implementing universal design, accessibility and diverse practice," it is something that comes up all the time at our meetings, a wider range of houses for elderly people and the point that you make, councillor, in regards to location in central towns is well noted and we are striving to get our colleagues in housing to have more and more of that. In relation to public transport that's the reason why, in fact, we're looking for a nominee from the transportation and emergency services SPC because that's one of the big issues that keeps coming up is bus stops, rural transport, public transport, accessibility, particularly to the links of primary care centres as when people get older they need more access to these facilities. So that is why we look for that. I think any other questions that any members at any stage want to ask, send them to me and Claud and we will answer them. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Michael. Helen?

HELEN: Item number 14 on the agenda is to nominate a member to the Wicklow Age Friendly Alliance.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I believe it has got to come from the transport committee, is that right?

MICHAEL: The recommendation is that the nominee should come from the transport and emergency services directorate because that is where most of the issues in relation to the Age Friendly come from. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Blake?

CLLR BLAKE: I nominate Cllr Fitzgerald as a member of the emergency services SPC.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fitzgerald would you be happy to take that?

CLLR FITZGERALD: Yes.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Pat Kennedy.

CLLR KENNEDY: I second that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Experience, councillor, I would call it, nothing else! So thank you very much for that. Are we all agreed with that? OK, thank you.

HELEN: Item number 15 is to receive a presentation on affordable housing from the director of service and the Land Development Agency.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe.

JOE: OK, I'm going to give a lead into that. OK, there's two presentations, we'll run the two together. The second is from the LDA and the first one is just an overview. Affordable housing, in general people remember the presentation from last December when I detailed the four pathways in Housing for All, particularly pathway one, which was affordable housing. OK, the actions required were that the implementation of the Affordable Housing Act and at the same time the Affordable Housing Fund was launched and as part of the Act a local authorities reporting scheme was introduced and establishment of the first home schemes, cost rental, launch the Project Tosaigh, and expand Part V to 20% and include affordable homes in the local government scheme. I can skip the next one. Since then Wicklow Council were given targets for affordable purchase. These ones for the local authority can be operated either by the local authority or in conjunction with a private

developer as a turnkey development. The main part of that was that those targets were for affordable housing funded schemes. So the Housing Affordability Scheme fund was - originally the social housing fund, sorry, I can't remember what the previous one was, but basically the bigger changes was it increased funds from 50,000 up to 100,000 depending on density and it introduced the situation that we must achieve 15% discount to market value and the third one which was the big one at the time from the previous ones were that local authority land could also be included at the top of just infrastructure costs, so they were the main increases. So progress to date on affordability in general is local authority purchase, today we launched Greenhill Road with 36 units, and that was launched at 9:00 this morning and it is already well oversubscribed on that one. We have two applications, as I detailed earlier. We took on advertising seeking partners who were in a position to develop schemes in the short-term. Wicklow County Council, two schemes - we received approval for two schemes in late December. One is in Baltinglass and the other one is for Rathnew and we would be working with the developers in the area to ensure they are developed. Again, in both cases, there were 50,000 that were provided to get the discount down. We are working with another developer in - to provide units also. The Part V changes will take a while to progress, because they're depending on when the land was purchased. So we have a number of planned commissions and pre-planned commission applications where the 20% will apply.

The next one is the first home that was launched in July 2022. That is a private arrangement with a separate company where, when people apply for mortgages, to purchase private houses, they also sell or buys into a shared equity scheme. The example was given in Housing for All detail there. [Inaudible] it is just important to note the affordable purchase scheme, as I mentioned earlier, shared equity applies there so there is a percentage that remains payable, and again we'll deal with that if there's any queries.

OK, next one. That's all about affordable purchase. There was in Housing For All, there was also an issue of cost rental. So if you look at the market in general, the blue area is the social housing and that's the rental compartment where the local authority rents to traditional social housing rental processes. In that case, rent is based on [inaudible]. There was a scheme which is a lot more - there is a scheme which is a cross-rental model which is used in a lot of European countries and it is where the rental provider - the units are provided but provided at a discount to market, rather than linked to income. The LDA will introduce that model now and it is from that model that they will be working on. So it is a new model, it is a cost rental model, and rather than me confusing everybody, I'll let the LDA explain their approach.

DECLAN: Good afternoon, councillors, thank you very much for your time, my name is Declan and I look after stakeholder engagement within the LDA and I'm joined today by my colleagues, who will speak to you on Project Tosaigh and cost rental in particular. And John White, head of delivery and Ian McLennan who is a planning manager. I want to take you through a brief overview of the LDA and where we are in 2023 and then I will introduce to the focused part of the cost rental. So this is the introduction. The Land Development Agency were established in September 2018. It is a key governmental land management initiative to develop public land for housing delivery. It's overseen by an independent board of directors and the government have committed to providing equity of up to 1.25 billion. We aim to improve the way the housing market functions by, one, working with state bodies and local authorities like yourselves to make more effective use of state lands, to provide a stable, sustainable supply of land for housing, to work in improving the planning system to facilitate state lands being used for housing, to acquire and develop land in a selected targeted way that boosts housing supply, to deliver affordable and cost rental market initiatives, which Enda will be speaking about, we're also investing in research and innovation to identify new and better ways to identify new homes and also providing high-level expertise underpinned by robust governance. So the next slide will bring you to structure and statistics. We're supported by three major pillars, a

permanent capitalisation. As I said the government has committed to long-term funding of the LDA. Access to land, urban and rural sites across the country will be assessed for the purpose of investment and we're supported by a dedicated team of industry experts who will ensure the viability of sites around Ireland and support innovation in this area.

A number of key numbers there. We have ten sites in designer [inaudible - background noise] with a number of offices planned across the country. We have 862 homes in the first two LDA projects commenced construction this year. We will be aiming to look at 5,000 homes capacity of state land where the LDA is advancing development, 5,000 homes targeted through Project Tosaigh which we will hear about, and 20,000 homes after Housing for All land commitments. Just to bring you through a little map of where we are at present on the current site portfolio. We are across the country, but we are active at the moment under construction at St Kevin's Hospital in Cork and Shanganagh, we have major projects planned for the likes of Colbert Station in Limerick, in Dyke Road and Sandy Road over in Galway, working on Cork Docklands as well, and also just - also in and around Leinster. We have planning just received for Devoy Barracks and Columb Barracks, too. In Dublin itself I mentioned Shanganagh, but we have planning in lodged for plans in Central Mental Hospital and Dundrum Central and Donore gardens in Dublin 8, Castlelands, Balbriggan, Hacketstown, with work starting in Cherry Orchard, Cromcastle and other master plans being developed for the Digital Hub. Just the next slide will bring you through the main projects we have at present. We're at delivery stage in Shanganagh in Shankill up the road here, St Kevin's and Cork and Devoy Barracks, and there's planning for Central Mental Hospital in Dundrum, Castlelands, Balbriggan, Donore Project, Hacketstown, that is in process. We have strategic planning and that will get us to look at the major projects across the entire country and there's over 250 hectares of state land identified to transfer to the LDA. Seven sites in Dublin, one site in Galway, four sites in Cork and two sites in Limerick. 80% of this land is comprised of brownfield sites within existing urban footprints and it has a capacity to deliver approximately 15,000 homes. It will support delivery of 88% of the anticipated yield. So these are longer term strategic generation processes, so the likes of Colbert Station in Limerick, the Digital Hub in Dublin, and as I say there are a number of websites if you want to check out those types of plans. Certainly in the Digital Hub we have Pear Tree Crossing and at Colbert Station, which we will see plans developing on. There's also key Housing for All sites at the major sites looking at Tivoli Court, Cunningham Road in Dublin and other areas, which we hope to be progressing this year. Just to bring it into affordable homes and Project Tosaigh, I will introduce my colleague to take you through this and will take you more through Delgany and cost rental.

>> Good afternoon, everybody, thank you for your time. As Declan said, Project Tosaigh was introduced approximately 15 months ago. Obviously the first part of our presentation outlined the direction of travel and the volume of sites that would come over the next number of years. Tosaigh is designed to make more immediate impact. It covers two tranches. One is affordable housing, which in this instance obviously - as the director of services highlighted - this body and the executive have launched a product here today and best of luck with that. From the LDA perspective, we've been involved in other projects in both Cork, Waterford and potentially one in the Meath area as well.

From a cost rental perspective, under Project Tosaigh the object here is to produce units rented below market rents. For us the challenge in doing that is about trying to pull the costs of the unit, the costs of operating the unit and deliver a product that is affordable relative to the market that's out there at the moment. As you will know, there is a huge issue at the moment in terms of rental accommodation nationwide and not just in the Wicklow area.

So cost rental. A brief overview of it. Sorry, I don't have my glasses I should have brought with me. It is produced under the Affordable Housing Act 2021, and that outlined how we allocate units how people are selected and the criteria involved. It is an attempt to bridge the gap between social

housing and the private rental market as per the slide put up there by the director of services. It is distinct and separate from social housing and distinct and separate from the private rental market. Having said that, tenancies under the cost rental model are registered with the Residential Tenancies Board. They are tenancies after four months of indefinite duration, as in that rental is secure out into perpetuity. Cost rental designation on units applies for 40 years. Under the Residential Tenancies Board, there are also a number of variations in regard to cost rental. For example, the ability to evict tenants has been restricted to the basis that tenants will either (a) have a breach of covenant, they are not paying their rent or have breached the rules, or (b) the unit is no longer suitable for their use, for example family size or circumstances has changed. Other than that, none of the others will apply to cost rental. The rent on the units is based on the cost of building, managing and maintaining the homes into perpetuity and considerable work has been done from a financial perspective in putting together models that allow us to try and operate these units as effectively as possible and by "operate" I mean manage them - keep the quality of the units and the infrastructure up and ensure they are good, habitable homes into the future, and that we can ensure that the rents remain below market.

The last point to highlight here on this is that the use of an independent lottery process is what is mandated by the legislation in terms of selecting of tenants for this. So where the purpose would work, we would advertise on our website, applicants would come through on to our website and when that application process has closed an independent lottery is run using a software system that has been designed for the purpose. It then lists tenants and we then move to the eligibility criteria. Obviously the Affordable Housing Act also defined eligibility listed up there on the screen. I will go through them because it's important. The first thing is the net household income. The maximum income for the house is only allowed to be €50,000 per annum. Anyone applying and to be eligible for cost rental they must not be in receipt of social housing supports including rent supplement or HAP. That is designed to emphasise this product sits between social housing and the private rental market. A household size much match the size of the property and tenants must be able to afford the rent, being 35% of net income being spent on rent, that is being deemed what is affordable. A household can only enter one application at one moment in time. So to illustrate the point, if I go to the next slide, please, this was our first product launched in Greystones. We had 24 one-bed and 24 two-bed duplex units. Later this year we will have 37, five-, three- and four-bed apartments coming on stream and we will run a separate lottery for those. In terms of the duplex units launched and which we have applications for, we received 96 applications for the two-beds, 54 for the three-beds and the rents as you can see there on the screen, that is the calendar month rents for those units. Our research in the area would have indicated that these are in the region of 30% below the market rent in the area for that product. We are currently in the process of filling these units. We have applicants beginning to start moving into the units as of next week, Monday 15, and we'll fill the remaining numbers. Duplex units over the next coming weeks. Moving on from cost rental and just to finalise and the last aspects of the LDA, one of the other elements of the longer-term projects is the Public Lands Register of Relevant Lands. This is an important piece of work undertaken by the LDA because it is the first time it will be attempted to put together a list of state lands to allow us to make an effectively utilisation of those lands and that means building homes and making affordable houses for people within the state. There are a number of elements to this. The first thing is recording where the lands are and then it's endeavouring to put together land banks and the first time people will be able to get an overview of all the land sitting in the state. So I'm conscious we have ten minutes to do that, so I will hand back to the director of services. But thank you for your time.

>> OK, that's fine. This is additionally on top of our own programme, it is not in any way competition. We are working quite well with the LDA on a couple of other issues. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK, members, first of all, thank you, Declan and Aiden and Joe. Members, Dereck Mitchell, a question there?

CLLR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to welcome the cost rental development in Delgany. I think there's 140 units which will be let at 30% less than the market rate and the fact there have been quite a lot of applications for them clearly means it's popular. I think this will help those people if they wish to, for instance, save for a deposit on a house because the rent is more reasonable than if they were doing it on the open market where there is a huge shortage, and I think that this is a very good idea. Somewhat of a surprise, in fact, that this has come through but nevertheless a welcome one. So I'd like to welcome this and I think it's a good idea for the squeezed middle who are finding it very difficult to afford the rents when there aren't many available.

I did ask maybe at a previous meeting that there are various rumours in Greystones about other sites - Hawkins Wood, for instance - that there were other social houses there which were not originally built as social houses and homes, and I'd like - I haven't heard anything whether that's the case or not and people come to me and say that this is a fact and that's a fact, but I haven't heard any official facts, and I would certainly like to know what's going on. The buildings are certainly built, they are certainly empty and I would just like to know what's happening, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, councillor Mitchell. Councillor Gerry Walsh?

CLLR WALSH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thanks for the presentation. Like councillor Mitchell, just a query on the Delgany site talked about there, at Archers Wood and I'm surprised it was at such an advanced state because I don't think as public representatives we've received too much notice on this whole scheme but having said that, it's welcome. My question is just the presentation outlined 24 one-beds and 24 two-beds in that particular development and that there would be a further announcement in relation to further units - I just didn't catch that part of it. How many units are coming on stream in the future? And is there a timeframe around that and how is that going to play out? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Walsh. Cllr Rory O'Connor.

CLLR O'CONNOR: Thanks, chair, those presentations were very good. Before I begin, I have a question about affordable housing and also a question for the LDA. I just want to say that the LDA - have they been looking at Bray at all because we need cost rental units in Bray and affordable housing and people are scream out for it so if they have anything - go they could acknowledge if there are any sites they are looking at that would be great to hear.

So my question about affordable housing, which I think I've asked before but never was answered - does the affordable housing only work for one generation, as in after once you get your affordable housing and you want to sell it, can they sell it for an absolutely mad amount of money or is there a limit on the amount of money they can sell it for because my worry there is look, it will be affordable for one generation which is wonderful and all that, but for my generation, especially, when we go to buy a house, that those houses might be way more afterwards when people want to sell them. Then my question for the LDA about cost rental - am I right in saying that after 30 years or so, the cost rental rents will actually go down? Because you were saying there that the building and all that goes on to account and once you pay off the building technically won't the rent go down? So eventually these rents will go down even further locally if that's my understanding on it? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr O'Connor. Cllr Scott?

CLLR SCOTT: Yes, thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thank you for the presentation. Just echoing what my fellow municipal councillors have said, the cost rental in Delgany is really welcome but I think I only heard about this very much at the last minute, a week or so before the applications were due to close. So for any kind of further schemes coming along it would be very welcome for the public reps to be sort of informed and to know about it that we could inform constituents, because getting a house either to rent or buy in our area is extremely difficult at the moment. Just a couple of specific

questions on the costs rental and I very much welcome that cost rental properties are starting to get rolled out. Just a question - after the 40 years, and I know that's a minimum point - if the sort of tenant chooses to leave the property at that point, I'm just wondering who actually owns the property at the end? Is that in the ownership of the local authority? My second question was, if there's a change of circumstance throughout the tenancy, so, for example, if the income of the people renting the property has gone down, if they've lost a job or even if there is a death in the property in the ownership of the property, you know, how does that work basically? Because I know these are designed as long-term tenancy options so it's very different to the sort of normal rental tenancy that we might all be used to looking at.

My third question was a query to the LDA website but I didn't get a response, and I noted on the application process, on the eligibility criteria, people were not allowed to apply if they were pet owners. I was just wondering why that was specified. It may seem a minor thing, but one of the issues with rentals is the fact that tenants cannot treat those properties as their own home. They are restricted from putting up paintings and changing anything. For cost rental properties which are designed to be long-term homes for people, I was wondering why pet ownership was excluded. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Leonard.

CLLR LEONARD: I would like to ask a few questions just on the more rural land parcels, are all the units apartment blocks, or will there be housing? And what percentage, are there options to purchase, maybe I missed that, what percentage are purchase and what percentage are rental. In my experience most people want to purchase their own home eventually and have that security. I have a lot of older people now nearing retirement age in rentals with eviction notices to quit. They are not homes, they are rental and I think even no matter what way you phrase it, renting a property is never somebody's home and the same security of owning a home isn't there, and I would worry about the amenities as well. What amenities are going with these apartment blocks, maybe you could clarify that, will there be community centres or are there hundreds of apartments all in one building and nothing else. Cllr O'Brien: I want to welcome this scheme. I was delighted to see the launch of the affordable housing scheme from Wicklow this morning. I am happy to hear it's oversubscribed. I hope the people I have been working with are successful in it. In terms of the represents and cost of rents, obviously as supply increases, rents will start coming down and these are going to be 30% below the market. Will those rents come down as well and this is long-term I suppose more so, when the rents start coming down, will these start coming down as well, because people will be tied into them. That is the only question I have, but I do welcome it.

CLLR MCMANUS: Thank you, just to comment on a question, for the affordable purchase targets we saw there, I know it's not on the director, I think it was 151 by 2026, correct me if I am wrong, but that's far, far too low for the level of demand that I am even getting in my inbox for affordable purchase. I wanted to make the comment that I really a lot more is needed both in terms of affordable purchase, but also I will say the cost rental is very welcome. I know that renting is not the same as owning your own home, but the change in tenancy agreement where you have a long-term tenancy that is secure and somebody is not going to kick you out in order to make a profit, is really welcome. Particularly, I know the latest figures said there was a 16% increase in rents in Wicklow over the last year and now the average rent is 1846 for the county, so anything we can do to look after people looking to rent is welcome. My question is, in terms of the eligibility for the cost rental, will people from bray be eligible to apply for is it restricted to county applicants?

CLLR BEHAN: Thank you Chairman and thanks to the people who presented. Can I go back and ask when he says the system has been well, or the affordable housing scheme that was offered for sale

this morning is well oversubscribed, can he give us any further detail and the origin of the applicants, the number of applicants to date by whatever time it is, 3.00, and when the cut-off point will be. I think people would be very interested to get that information. There's a lot of interest in what's happening here from around the country. Because we are one of the first to have this scheme and when other parts of the country realised that we effectively have only control over 30% for our own residents and the rest is first come first served and we have no guarantee that people from outside the county will not be ahead of our particular constituents, which I think is wrong and unfair, and again, I want to say here today, we should be looking to the minister to change that provision. Absolutely change it. For any future scheme that we might be involved with. I'm deeply concerned about one word that was used by the last speaker there from the LDA, and it puts the finger on exactly what the problem is in this country about provision of housing. Because housing and the right to shelter is a right, a human right, and what the gentleman spoke about was a product. That the LDA were offering products of different prices and his definition of an affordable rent, cost rental of 1500 euros for someone on a salary of just over 50,000 net income, I don't think is realistic at all. As councillor Leonard has said, you have no security when you are in a rental situation, and ultimately, the money you have spent on renting goes down the drain. You have no equity left and particularly when you become an older age, and this is something as a country we need to face up to. This constant reliance on subsidising landlords to provide private rented accommodation, instead of building enough housing, both for social housing and affordable housing is wrong and we need to do something to try and get the mindset in this country changed on this. The LDA, as far as I can see, is a bureaucratic organisation. It seems to have quite a lot of staff, but there are very, very few homes as of delivered as of now, very, very few. And I actually think the whole process needs to be completely changed. This is a political forum, and I think we as politicians should be making the point that there needs to be a completely different attitude taken by government to the provision of housing in this country. I would also say that in terms of the people who have applied today, I certainly hope that the vast majority of them are our constituents. I have no doubt that the council officials will administer the scheme absolutely fairly and Brian Wilds has been excellent in terms of his management of this project, but I think the officials are bound by government decisions and we need to really stress to the Government that this type of scheme needs to change.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Snell.

CLLR SNELL: I want to thank everyone for the presentation, in particular the Director of Services for Housing. As opposed in County Wicklow where we are breaking new ground and it's not something new, we have tried every scheme that's available to any local authority and in a lot of cases I suppose we're the ones that are leading the way for the stake in regard to providing units. We were given a figure last year which we doubled to provide social and affordable units. The scheme today is most welcome and I do share some of the concern but the reality is that's what the minister has put in place. So we will have and be guaranteed 30%, which in all fairness should be 100% of people from the locality, ie from County Wicklow, but until such time as the minister changes that, whether you are in County Wicklow, Clare or Donegal, that is the scheme that's in place, so I would hope that party members here will go and talk to the minister in that regard. And I just want to clarify that we could end up in a situation here where 100% of the people who have applied here over the next number of days will all be from County Wicklow, and that will be most welcome, of course. In regard to the cost rentals, just the figures that's been displayed there, particularly for the public representatives from the Greystones municipal district and I am sure they will concur, there is no available units to rent in Greystones for 1500 euros for three bedroom. They just don't exist. They're not there. Grey stones has always been the highest preference area for people on the social waiting housing list. It's a huge demand in Dalgeny Greystones area, I welcome this scheme. I want to commend the director and his staff for having the vision to push this out there and give people who

don't avail, who are not in a position to avail of any support in regards of paying their rents and unfortunately don't earn enough to secure their own mortgage, so therefore they are in a position to be able to avail of the cost rentals, and I think that's brilliant. I look forward to more schemes in regard to the affordable and until such time as the minister changes his criteria, there's nothing we can do. But I'm sure there is people in this room who know the ministers personally and they can have a word I'm sure. Could I just say in regard to the land development agency, for units to be really genuinely affordable it is worrying that an internal report 18 months ago discovered that in Ireland we're paying up to 138 thousand euros more than a comparable unit in another EU country. When they looked at that report and wept through it they discovered it's not because of the cost of the labour and it's not because of the cost of taxes. And yet it didn't really illustrate why a unit being built in our state would be almost 138,000 euros more than one built in Belgium or Holland or Germany. I'm just asking the gentleman here today if they could elaborate on that. That was an internal report the business post reported on, which did apartment of housing and had never seen that report and was not aware of, and I am just wondering if over that 18- month period they have reduced the cost now, and if they have could they shine a bit of light on the subject here for us as public representatives. Because the reality is every Euro saved should reduce the price for people, particularly in affordable units and make them truly affordable. That's my two pence worth.

CLLR FORTUNE: Can I thank the presenters for their presentation and the Director of Housing. There's been a number of very good points made on this. I think the concept that this in my view has a lot of potential, but I'm really concerned about the lack of, what is the word I'm looking for, the lack of ambition in it. Like we've had this SHD rolled out to us years ago, that was going to be the answer to everything and now the LDA are going to be the answer. But what I don't really accept is that if you take the sale of the houses this morning and it's after getting attention in all medias, including national media today, I can't understand why if I reflect on what the presenters have outlined about the structure of the LDA and what they are setting up and they're going to have offices everywhere, why this project wouldn't be rolled out at every county be involved in it and you wouldn't have this Lottery, you wouldn't have this kind of artificialdom going on, every county would have a project, rather than 36 houses happening in Wicklow and it becoming like, you go back to the crash, where I live in Kilcoole, there was a hut down at the sea gate as you go into beach, and there was a big article in the Irish Times it was valued at 300,000. There's an element of that in this whole thing. So I think our function is to answer the LDA people, the Director of Housing here in the council and his team are doing everything they possibly can to provide housing and they are depending on government support and LDA we are discussing today. I think there's a big flaw in the ambition of this thing. There's a lot of publicity and PR, but I would challenge the drive behind the amount. When you move on to cost rental, it sounds fantastic, but 15 0 Euro for a three bed rent, I think a cap of 53,000 is disgraceful. I think it's much too low. You have people living in our district who are professional people, both parties working, they can't afford to buy houses, they can't afford to rent houses. And to have a salary restriction, 53,000 in that environment is not going to achieve a whole lot. It's going to make it totally out of the reach to a massive amount of people. So I think I would say to the LDA people here today, you need to go back to the minister and seriously look at that. It's great to present things this way, but the reality of it, I'm not particularly happy with. You mentioned also in your presentation the use of independent Lottery. I would like to get an explanation on that. I really have a problem with this whole Lottery system, and I will repeat one of the things I said at the start of my comments - I can't for the life of me understand why there isn't a project rolled out in every single county and I wouldn't accept any excuses for that not being the case. Then you wouldn't have this artificial game going on. It's like a game show. Get in there quick, if you are good at IT, if you are smart with a computer, get in there and beat somebody. I think that's grossly unfair to people. I think it's disgusting really in lots of ways. While the concept of the project is very, very

good, but it lacks proper strategic intent. It lacks drive. It lacks deliverability across the counties. It leaves a lot to be desired.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I have two more speakers, so we will keep it brief because we still have a good bit on the agenda here. Cllr Flynn Kennedy.

CLLR FLYNN-KENNEDY Thank you I will try to be brief on this. Just to thank the presenters for presenting, it was much appreciated and I think it's great to see a suite of housing options being made available, because people in our constituencies and in our county are coming from different places and I think that's potentially what we have been lacking, not a focus on one area, affordable more than social or private more than affordable. We need a mix of all housing options. Just to respond to a couple of points that have been made. I think it's really important that we remember that our communities are not defined by the border of a county. Our communities are defined by where people have their circle of supports and where they engage in the local area. In the Bray area, we have a lot of members of our communities that actually live in county Dublin. And I would ask all the members here to be careful about the concept of you must be from Wicklow to avail of these schemes. What we are ultimately going to do is exclude members of our communities because they happen to not live in a postal address that is in the right area. I speak of this from a personal experience. My first home was bought under the shared ownership scheme and it was bought in county Dublin, which is the area of Bray that actually sits on county Dublin and I was lucky enough that Dun Laoghaire, did not exclude me from accessing that home or I would not have got on the property ladder. This will be experienced by towns right across the county, where they border the other county. We need to be really, really careful and councillor McManus asked about the scheme in Shanganagh. So are we going to turned around now and say just because their postal address is in a different area, if I get a job in a different county, am I going to be excluded from applying for accommodation there because I don't have the right postal address. It's very easy to say all homes for Wicklow have to be from Wicklow, but the practicalities of that are totally different. So I would encourage people to be careful and think of that sense of community and where you are your community supports are which is very different to the postal address. Just in relation to another point that was raised about renting and having cost rental. Cost rental from the LDA is a new concept here. Cost rental is in practice in a lot of other counties and is becoming more common and it's probably reflective of other European countries where renting and long-term secure renting is a way of life and people use it and it allows people to be much more fluid in terms of availing of job opportunities. Also just to be very aware that as much as we have people at the moment who are struggling to rent, a lot of that is being caused by unintentional landlords that are fleeing the market, because as a landlord even if you own one property, you are seen as this big ogre of a landlord doing X, Y and Z and that's why they are leaving. They never wanted to be landlords. We need to have a fair and open discussion about stuff and look at it from every side. Thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Winters.

CLLR WINTERS: Thank you to the presenters. I agree with Cllr Flynn Kennedy, it is great to see a full suite of measures of housing. I am concerned at the remarks of Cllr Behan and Fortune in relation to what makes a person eligible for affordable housing. I would like to see the scheme changed. You have to be born here, you have to be currently living here. I know people who have applied for those houses who work here, but rent in Gory because they can't afford to rent in Wicklow, do we exclude them because they don't live in the county. I know people who have applied from Cork who have transferable jobs, who want to be back up here near their families but can't afford to move back up near their families here, unless they were to come under an affordable housing scheme. I know people who have applied today who were born outside of Ireland, but actually have been living in

County Wicklow for the past 15 years and would consider themselves from the area. So it's very dangerous to say only Wicklow people. We have no idea what qualifies, what makes a person a Wicklow person or a local person. You can be born here, you can have family living here, you can have reasons to want to move to this area. In who wants to come to County Wicklow, and buy a house and live in our community, is welcome as far as I'm concerned. I think we should have that attitude towards all of our housing measures. Everybody who wants to come here and contribute to our community should be welcome.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr Mary Kavanagh.

CLLR KAVANNAGH: I have one question, I don't have a problem with renting property per se. It's very popular throughout Europe, Ireland would be very unusual in that it would have quite a high property ownership as opposed to other countries. There's one massive difference and that is that throughout Germany, France and other countries when you get a place to rent, you have security of tenure for your life and when you reach a stage in your life, when your income has gone down considerably, such as a state pension, or we'll say somebody who becomes injured and ends up on occupational illness, benefit for the rest of their lives, or somebody who loses a job and is long-term unemployed until they get another job, these people are protected. But what I want to know is are there any protections in place for people here in Ireland under the same rental schemes, but who suffer a massive loss in income for either long-term or short-term periods of time. I'm talking in particular of people who are retiring at the age of 66 and may potentially have 20, 25, 30 years left to live, but on a much reduced income. What is the position in this case for those people. Are they suddenly going to find themselves looking for somewhere to stay, or have we any built in securities for them? That's all I want to know.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Gail Dunne.

CLLR DUNNE: Staff should be given great credit for the work they put into this. In fairness, it's a difficult scheme to get off the ground, and they have done brilliantly. Just the members of the SPC who brought to our attention as municipal districts as well, all the councillors were informed. We met on a number of occasions and were kept up to speed on it. And people have different ideas about how it should be distributed and that's fair enough but I want to thank the staff, direct [oi](#) Joe Lane and staff for all the work they have put in for delivering this scheme, one of the first in the country, I hope there's many more, because it's the way to do, people should be able to buy affordable houses, and that's the way forward in this country. No other way. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Ferris.

CLLR FERRIS: I want to congratulate Cllr Flynn Kennedy and Cllr Winters for speaking out, I agree with every word that they said, there are many reasons why people may be from Wicklow who are not able to live in Wicklow, or at the end of the day it doesn't really matter where you come from, where you live. The opportunity should be equal to everyone and I believe if we were to try [la](#) stop it and say only people from Wicklow can apply, I think that would be in breach of somebody's human rights, but I just want to say thank you for saying what you did, both of you in particular, and I agree we cannot go down the road of Wicklow first. We know what happened in the United States with the America first and how that ended up. So really, I just want to congratulate them, thank you. Cllr Walsh, I will bring you in now.

CLLR WALSH: Two questions around the long-term proposals and I think the example given for the three bed was approximately 1500 per month and I am wondering if there is an example around the one bed apartments thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, members. Enda and Declan, there's a few questions there if you want to do your best, thank you very much.

>> Thank you for the engagement, we really appreciate it. I'm going to try as much as possible, I kept notes of all the questions and comments, to try and address as many as possible. So I will endeavour to pull together. It's more appropriate there was a number of different topics. First off, there are no particular order, bar my own notes here. The designation under cost rentals, the LDA's role is to provide cost rentals in perpetuity in terms of their ownership of the properties with the LDA. That's the plans at this point in time, the LDA is a commercial semi- state, the deals are available on our website. In terms of the rents to be clear on the rents, the rents are based on the cost of owning and operating the property to perpetuity and the last speaker there, what's the plans for long- term management, the LDA would be operating to manage these properties into perpetuity. There is an owners management company on site, there are private residential tenants on the site.

In addition to that, we will manage our own units, with the internal and external aspects as well as working with the management company. In terms of the rent changes, there was a comment made, income changes sorry, the income is assessed at the point of entry to cost rental. We don't reassess over periods of time. Post six months, under the residential tenancies board, if situations change after six months, for example someone's income drops and they apply for HAP we are obliged to engage them in the normal matter.

If someone's income goes up and they win the Lottery we don't go back, that's the legislation, once the tenants are in, the rents are fixed and they move forward in the normal manner. Rental changes don't impact in terms of that. In terms of, there was another query in relation to pets. I will go back to the point I mentioned. We endeavour to answer that on the website. We have to work with the owners management company, it has house rules and is comprised of all the owners. They set the house rules every year and we are obliged to abide by those. We are very conscious of terms of pets and we are endeavouring to look at these on site by site basis to make sure we are trying to make these properties, and I used word product and the councillor was correct to pick me up, because that's what they are at this point, they become homes when people move in to them. We endeavour to fit them out to a high standard. Once people move in, people put their own stamp on it. In three weeks' time they won't look like that. They will have the normal things we have in our homes and that is the difference. With pets and other aspect of life. In terms of amenities, there's a playground on site, a 5- a- side Astro pitch, full size GA pitch has been completed on site and various others. Car charging facility. But they are the amenities on one site. For long- term provision of cost rental product, it's very, very important to us that all the schemes we get involved with, all the sites we get involved with have an ability for people to live and grow in those sites. It's about providing homes. I go back to the 40- year designation point.

In terms then of the security. The security under the tenants' situation - we are obliged to provide residential accommodation as per the Residential Tenancy Board. The Affordable Housing Act amended aspects of the rental legislation to ensure that tenants - the normal eviction protocols that may apply in the private residential sector do not apply in this situation. So I will reiterate - only if circumstances change - either there is a dramatic breach of covenant - can then a situation be developed by which a tenant may be looked at to be evicted from a property. I'm talking about a covenant breach - antisocial behaviour, or there are multiple families living on sites. Multiple people living side-by-side. So it's those sort of things and it's done through the fair, transparent process overseen by the Residential Tenancies Board, mediation and other appropriate steps in that regard.

There were two comments in terms of both the thresholds and the lottery. The 53,000 net threshold is provided by the Affordable Housing Act, that is not something that we had a role in developing. I'm sure obviously it's something that as we gain knowledge and experience of moving through this process we will be looking to feed back to the Department of Housing. Similarly with the lottery process. The lottery process is not a fastest finger on the button, I have to emphasise. There is an application process that is opened, opened for a specific period of time, all the applicants are received through the website. When the process closes, a lottery is run, and that lottery then ranks all those applicants from 1-100 or 1-1,000 or whatever the numbers may be. It is not about speed or disenfranchising anybody who is not good on computer systems but it is designed to try and give a transparent and open and fair process. It is something that we've had to procure, that system, and it is something used by all other approved housing bodies providing cost rental in the state, and it is something provided for in the Affordable Housing Act and the regulations, we are obliged to go through that process.

I think protections I mentioned in terms of the RTB and the last queries, if I could cover off, were in terms of the rents. To reiterate, the three-beds cost - the duplexes were 1,550. The two-beds were 1,455, two-bed units. In terms of the apartments which will be launching in six weeks' time approximately, we haven't yet taken on ownership of those, but broadly speaking they will be within the 1,200-1,300 range for a one-bed unit at this point in time, but that is to be confirmed, I need to emphasise that point very strongly. Again those units will be put up on the website and an application process will be conducted for those apartment units. Is there anything else? OK. Thank you.

JOE: I know there was a small bit of confusion and I won't prevent confusion, but I'm answering affordable purchase questions now. He dealt with, or they dealt with cost rental and the other queries. As of about an hour ago, 45 minutes ago, there was 100 applications in. The closing date is three weeks' time but there's already 100 applications in and 68% of those are Wicklow addresses. Regarding slide number three or four regarding the targets, and the 151, well, as people know and as Cllr Snell has said, we always view the targets as the minimum we produce and we produce in excess of the targets we achieve - we endeavour to achieve a lot more, we don't view it as a restriction. The shared equity question on affordable purchase. Again this is in relation to affordable purchase. The whole idea of affordable purchase or the affordability gap is that the state takes out through the affordable housing funding in the affordable purchase says there is a shared equity between the maximum amount an applicant applies for and - sorry, a maximum amount of the mortgage they pay for versus the market value. That's shared equity. The state holds on to that percentage and subsequently when the house is sold within a particular period, that's payable back. There is a provision - and again, as we move on with more affordable housing that can be transferred later to other houses. So let's say in two years' time, if we have another affordable purchase and one of the two-beds today want to move to a three-bed, they can move the shared equity and they don't have to pay that back.

OK, this is specifically Hawkins Wood regarding the social element and not affordable. The apartments in Archers were purchased through the LDA through cost rental. All the apartments in Hawkins have been purchased by an approved housing body. The local authority has two approvals, one is for a CAF for 90 and there's also one for 84. Both of those will be dealt with through an approved housing body allocated from the local authority social housing list. There's also 18 Part Vs in addition to that. Thank you, chairperson. There is a CAS application for 90, a CAF application for 84 and in addition to that there is 18 Part Vs. All off our list which are all through an approved housing

body. The units will be delivered through an approved housing body but as people know the nominations are off our list.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe. I would like to bring in the Chief Executive, please.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would just like to thank John, Declan and Enda for coming down here this afternoon, we really appreciate your time. I think it was a very informative presentation and it's great to see the LDA rollout commencing in County Wicklow and we look forward to working with the LDA over the coming years on future developments, so thanks again for coming down.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Brian. Cllr Snell.

CLLR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I didn't get any answer to the question in regards of the internal report carried out by the Land Development Agency which showed that it was spending over 138,000 more than our EU partners for a comparative-of-size unit. That was their own report. It came out in the Sunday Business Post. It wasn't shared with the Department of Housing and I asked the question, has that been reduced? Because to be fair, it was an internal confidential report they carried out 18 months ago. I believe since then the department have looked at the figures themselves, unaware that the Land Development Agency had these figures, and I did ask where are we at now, today, in regards to the cost of a unit in Ireland, which would replicate throughout the EU states such as Belgium, Holland, Germany, and if there is a reduction - or are we still paying exorbitant prices to deliver units which are of supposedly affordable, which then obviously the price is incorporated on to the people who are successful in trying to get on to the property ladder. I'm asking that - 138,000 is a significant amount of money, as you can appreciate, Cathaoirleach, and I'm asking, where do we stand now? That report was 18 months ago. Surely to God they have an answer to that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK, I'll ask Declan if he can answer. Just one more speaker - Cllr McManus?

CLLR MCMANUS: Yes, my question is about the availability of the Shanganagh properties for the reference much Bray wasn't answered, I don't think, so if you can absence that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much. My apologies, there were a lot of questions thrown at you and it was hard to remember them all, so if you could try and answer those two last questions, please, thank you?

DECLAN: Yes, apologies, my mistake, I was trying to keep notes. In terms of Shanganagh, as I said, the lottery process is open to anyone who can apply and there will be no restrictions on geographic boundaries on anyone applying for units in Shanganagh. That is on our website. In terms of the costings, I suppose what I would say in terms of costings, I'm in the LDA for four months and I'm also the Vice-President of the Chartered Surveyors of Ireland. We produced a number of reports at the Chartered Surveyors on tender prices and costs and they've gone up in the last months 80% in terms of construction. It is an ongoing issue across the entire construction industry. It affects approved housing bodies, it affects the LDA, it affects everybody who is involved in constructing and delivering units. It is something being worked on by us and those bodies and also the state. There is a tender price inflation document coming out very soon showing the tender prices have stabilised and that the increases that we saw in the last 12 months in particular - because the report the gentleman is referring to I think was two years ago. We've seen Covid, the impact of it fully, we've seen also the issues that have happened in the last six months in terms of fuel price inflation, which obviously everybody in this room is well aware of. That has had a huge impact on the likes of insulation, on steel prices, and at one point six months ago, when reports were given for steel on building sites,

they were only holding it for two weeks, so I suppose there is an ongoing body of work being undertaken by every entity in terms of driving down prices. It is something of focus for ourselves because cost rental, to go back to that point, is based on the cost of producing and operating the units. It is something that a huge focus is placed internally in the LDA but also on the bodies buying units and the local authorities purchasing units and everyone involved in the situation. So it's something that everybody is endeavouring to work on and it is to drive down prices across every element, both materials, labour and anything else that can be controlled.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Declan. Thank you very much, members, and for the presentation and the officials as well. I'm going to move on. Sorry, Cllr Tom Fortune?

CLLR FORTUNE: We've just had a very important conversation and discussion and members asked all kinds of questions and I can't accept being criticised by any other councillor because I ask questions. I ask questions in the interests of the constituents I represent. So people coming in and then having - make their points if they want and make suggestions and make all kinds of strategic points, but I'm not going to accept someone coming in and particularly someone coming in and quoting me on things I didn't say.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK, thank you very much for making that point, Cllr Fortune, point well made, point taken. Members, with your indulgence, I have two more presentations and I've been assured they are going to be very quick, and if possible then we could go on to the manager's report. Would that be OK with everybody? I will take that as a yes then, thank you.

So we have a presentation on Music Generation.

MICHAEL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Just by way of introduction, some of you will be aware that Ann Catherine Nolan was the previous music development officer. Music development is a partnership between Music Generation and the County Council, and Anne-Marie Beaumont is the new Music Generation Wicklow Development Officer. We thought it would be timely if we gave you a very quick presentation on what Music Generation does. I'm sure you all know what it does, but just to remind you what it does. Anne-Marie will give a presentation and any questions she will take then. Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you for your indulgence in bringing the item forward.

ANNE-MARIE: Thank you, I'm very grateful to be here today and I promise to keep this brief so you can all move on with far more pressing business. If I could have the first slide, please. Thank you, Michael, for the generous introduction. My name is Anne-Marie Beaumont and I'm the music development officer for Wicklow County. We were established just over ten years ago now with a generous donation and we also have annual support from Wicklow County Council, so I thought it was a good idea to come and give you an update as to where we are ten years later. We are growing apace. We are slightly static now, and unable to grow further, because, very sadly, our income and the monies raised and donated to us have not changed at all in ten years. Now it's interesting, listening to your previous discussion about the cost of housing, as you can imagine, the cost of education has also gone up significantly and we have really very little ability to generate further income.

We currently are running two orchestras within the county. We have the Wicklow County Youth Orchestra and we also have Rhythm with is our traditional Irish music orchestra. We have a community choir, we have music hubs happening and we have a huge presence in the schools throughout the county. If I could have the next slide, please. So I've just done you a quick Google Map pointing to the 44 schools, the two music hubs, our presence in libraries with our instrumental loan scheme that we operate there, we're in Blessington. We need to be doing more. Although

we're in 44 schools and we're reaching almost 5,000 children and young people in the county at the moment with our services, we have a significantly large waiting list of more schools wanting to join us from September 2023 and at the moment we're not really in a position to bring any more schools on board. What we do is we provide access to affordable music education for children and young people in the county. What this means is that children who have a desire to play an instrument will never be held back if they can access one of our programmes. We offer a discretionary fund for families and children who simply can't afford even to pay the very small fee that we charge for our services. We often provide musical instruments to those children and young people who have need of them and no way of accessing them. So our heart and soul is about making music performance accessible to the children and young people of County Wicklow. We do this by having a number of registered programmes delivered largely through our schools offering. So most of our presence is in primary schools, where of course we have a number of non-specialist music teachers working. In secondary schools our presence is a little bit more limited because most post-primaries do have specialist music teachers. So we try and start music education from the youngest possible opportunities. We encourage them to sing, we encourage them to march, to stamp, to make noise, and to generally celebrate being creative. We know that this has huge benefits for children and young people. I don't know if - like you, I have two young children myself who are absolutely glued to screens most of the time so I'm really passionate about giving them another hobby that takes them away from the iPad, that takes them off YouTube and actually gets them to make their own content instead. So we run programmes like our recording and our mentorship programme which gives young songwriters, mostly teenagers, the opportunity to work with professional musicians and songwriters to develop their own material and to record it in a professional studio.

We believe very much in the wider social benefits that music education brings. Not every child will be Mozart, but equally not every child will be mathematically gifted or will go into STEM or engineering and what we're trying to show them is that the world is a very varied, colourful place and that they have a role within that. So we're using music in our community choir setting and also in our orchestras as a way of bringing young people from different communities together with the shared purpose of making music. So we target our community choir at children between the age of 8-12 years of age and they come from a variety of schools to rehearse every week in Greystones. Similarly, our youth orchestra runs in Ashford. We have a number of new Ukrainian members having joined our orchestra and rehearsing there on a fortnightly basis. What we see and what science and research shows us is that children and young people who engage in music have more positive outcomes in their social, intellectual and physical development as a result. So it might seem sometimes like a nice-to-have when we know that there are very pressing needs culturally and socially right now, but actually it does have a much more serious gift that it can give to children and young people.

So our future plans. What we would love to do is expand our provision even further. As I said, I have a growing waiting list of schools desperate to join our programme and we simply cannot continue funding those programmes to the extent that we've been doing for the last ten years without any more financial input. We're not reaching our littlest ones. Our remit, as Music Generation is to provide accessible music education from 0 to 18. At the moment we're really only targeting children and young people when they get to school and only then if their primary school is lucky enough to get a place on our provision. So that is something else that we need to explore. Again, thinking of the expanding Ukrainian population that we have, developing an early years offer for parents and toddlers to access together alongside members of our existing Wicklow community will really help to reinforce language development and to embed those families within the social structures of the county. We're engaged in participating in a youth music festival which will happen in Dublin in June.

We have a number of public performances for our orchestras, for our choirs, coming up throughout the year and I'm delighted to announce that we've recently appointed John Doyle, an extremely eminent conductor, to be the artistic director and conductor of our youth orchestra, so we envision great things happening with the youth orchestra in the next 12 months or so.

Finally - have we missed a slide? Sorry. If we go back. There's one with some success stories. There we are! Just a bit of good news on a day when everything can feel a little bit bleak at this point in January. These are three young Wicklow performers. The first group there is Florence Road, they are a Bray band. They've formed during Covid and started rehearsing online under the directorship of one of our Music Generation tutors. They've recently been supporting Paddy Casey. On the other end we have Joseph Ryder, who has been interviewed by the Ray D'Arcy Show, he has had a feature in the Art Independent and he wrote a fantastic song called Saturday. I urge you all to go and Google it. It's about loss and the death of his grandfather and, again, he was supported to do that through participation in the Music Generation Wicklow programmes. So there is an element of social action that can arise from some of the work that these young people are doing and we certainly hope to continue to develop that side of our community offering to the young people of Wicklow. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Anne-Marie. Cllr Mary Murphy has a question for you or maybe to compliment, I would imagine. Cllr Miriam Murphy?

CLLR MURPHY: Thank you, sorry for being late, I had IT problems. Thank you for your presentation and I actually I just love to hear about your programme because I think we all say that education is a tool of life and that is not just with books but it is with music. We know what music does - it's therapy, it's social involvement. I think if you can sing or play an instrument, I think you're wanted at every party. But I think the development of it is - the said development and interaction brings so much to an individual who might not have the opportunity from their home or from their environment of where they live or even, you know, rural Ireland, they might not have the chance to have that aspect of going to music lessons or music teachers or whatever - whatever musical instrument or singing or whatever. I'm very disappointed to know about your funding. Is that around the country, or what is the problem there? Where is your funding coming from? And also would you have programmes for people with disabilities and special needs? Because I think that also is a very valid aspect - therapy with music as well. But I so love to hear of your programme and congratulations on it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cllr Murphy. Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy.

CLLR KENNEDY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you for that presentation. A bit similar to Cllr Miriam Murphy in Bray, and in Kilmacanogue where I represent, we have people coming from different backgrounds and opportunities, based on access to services or just financially and I think a lot of the programmes you do which I think is beneficial is you are removing that inequality from a lot of the supports. I've definitely seen within the area - schools particularly in the Bray area benefit from some of the work that you've done, a particular school benefitting from ukuleles which they got to then all try out. And I just wanted to point out as well the impact that this is having around people's mental health in the area and the opportunities to be creative. So just to commend you for that and I suppose one of the questions I just had coming from the presentation was, what is the ask of us as councillors in terms of the future of the programme and what is it that I suppose you're seeking from us or from the officials in terms of moving it forward? Thanks very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Kennedy. Cllr Peir Leonard.

CLLR LEONARD: Thank you, and I want to acknowledge the work that Ann Catherine Nolan has done in the past three years sitting on the Music Generation committee. It is one of the committees you go on to and feel completely uplifted because there's so much going on and so much great work being done without any micromanagement of councillors being involved. Like I always come away from it just feeling really happy and, you know, encouraged that there's so much going on. But as Anne-Marie has said there, the council contributes some of the funding to the committee and director Nicholson is on the committee as well and he has done his best to try and increase the amount, but I think when it comes to the next budget we all really need to look at maybe having a review of it and looking and trying to put as much money into this, because I went for a walk earlier on today, I was kind of feeling particularly sad and beaten down by all the negative news and stuff like that and I put my earphones in to listen to some music and I thought to myself, "Thank God for music" and what we're doing is we're nourishing the future creation of music by funding it. So without the money to fund it, we won't have it, so I think it's really important. Thanks, Anne-Marie.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Peir Leonard. Cllr O'Brien?

CLLR O'BRIEN: Thank you and I will be brief. I want to welcome this, I think it's fantastic. I had the pleasure and privilege of sitting on a music panel last year for Kildare Music Generation and the talent out there is phenomenal. Not everyone is sporty and I think growing up in school, if you didn't go to GA or soccer you were kind of excluded, so it's great to see my own cousin is doing her degree now in music which wouldn't have happened years ago so I very much want to welcome it. Unfortunately I haven't got on note in my head! I wish I had, because like Cllr Leonard, I love music, I was at the National Concert Hall last night with the Irish Three Tenors; fantastic. Ireland is the land of saints and scholars and musicians so I welcome it and I hope you have all the support you require and please come knocking if you don't. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr O'Brien. Anne-Marie, would you like to respond?

ANNE-MARIE: Yes, thank you, the big ask is funding, we need additional funds. We're putting together a very detailed budget for the year ahead and we're making cuts as and where we can but the majority of the monies that we have goes straight into the provision of lessons and instruments. We are operating as leanly as we possibly can. So the big ask would be that when the time comes to decide on the council's budgets for next year, that you would remember that we exist. We're only a very small part of what you're doing and I'm very aware of that, but every little bit that you can contribute towards us will go a very long way.

In response to the question about working with children and young people with disabilities, we employ a music therapist, so one of the schools we work in, we're putting a music therapist in there 12 hours a week to work with very small groups - two or three children only at a time. So they're getting really focused music therapy from a qualified clinical musical therapist that we are paying for. We also offer training and CPD to our staff members working with children and young people with disabilities, and we think about creative ways of making instruments more accessible for them and there are lots and lots of exciting developments in new musical instruments now, so that you can get lighter trumpets, for example, for someone perhaps who has issues with mobility or carrying things with their upper body. So we're very conscious of that and doing our best to engage with children and young people. Access is at the heart of what we're trying to deliver. And yes, just to acknowledge Pia's comment about Ann Nolan, she did some incredible work in the last nine years as Music Generation Development Officer and I only hope I can do her proud and keep the traditions going across the county. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Anne-Marie. I would like to share one little thing with everyone. As you know, I had Ukrainians move into my house in May and two little girls came down the first night - they had nightmares. And like Cllr O'Brien, I haven't got a note in my head but I sang a song and the song was, "I'm H-A-P-P-Y, I'm H-A-P-P-Y", and that put a smile on their face, and I don't sing well but that song always brings a smile to their face. We can't promise you anything, Anne-Marie, but keep up the good work and you are at the forefront at the moment and when the budget comes we will be reminded. Thanks very much for your presentation.

ANNE-MARIE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, once again. Thanks.

HELEN: The next item on the agenda is receive a presentation and to note the gender pay gap report.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Gemma Whitty is going to address us now, so thank you very much.

GEMMA: Thank you very much and thank you to all the elected members. I'm Gemma Whitty, the HR officer for Wicklow County Council. I have a very brief presentation to you all this afternoon on the County Council gender pay gap report which was issued to you all there. The presentation I have really is a summary of the key points in the report but, as I said, you have the report to go through in more finer detail. So in 2017 an adoption was taken aimed to reduce the gender pay gap in society. Directives were also in place to...

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>> The presentation I have is a just a small introduction to the gender pay gap. In 2017 an action plan was adopted by the EU commission aimed to tackle gender pay gap in society. Directives were in place to address equal pay and the focus of publication of data and to reduce the gap in gender pay and the pension gap as well throughout Europe. Then in 2019, the Government approved a range of measures including legislation. In 2021 then the gender pay gap information act was defined into law. In May regulations were introduced for all organisations who had employees of over 250, that the registration was to report on your gender pay gap by the end of this year, sorry the end of 2022, which we have done as an organisation just there in December. So what all organisations did across the public sector, we took a snapshot of what particular date, so the snapshot date was 30th June, so the figures and the details in the report reflect that particular date. Just to make it very clear, just before we go on. It is the difference in gender pay gap in Wicklow County Council. It doesn't reflect equal way. In the public sector, all public servants have equal pay, so if you are doing the same grade, you are on the same circular, or you might be on an equivalent point of scale. We all have equal pay for the same job we're doing. So I will just briefly go through what the regulations stated, what we had to include in our report. The regulation said we must report on the difference between the mean and median hourly pay between male and female employees in three categories. All employees, part-time employees and temporary employees. The proportion of male and female employees in lower, lower medium, upper medium and upper quartile pay bands, we had to also report on the proportion of male and female employees in receipt of benefit in kind and also report on the proportion of male and female employees who were in receipt of bonuses. So just moving on to the next slide, in the public sector there was a national public sector approach taken in Ireland. So this was in coordination with the LGMA. It was also in coordination with core, core houses all our main employee data, and also a company called

Makodata, a sub section of Core and they created a reporting tool for us. A significant project team was developed and they developed powerful strategic HR analysis dashboard which included a workforce profile dashboard and also built into this was the gender pay gap dashboard as well, and that all sat in our Makodata reporting system. That was developed by Makodata in coordination with Core and LGMA and over the summer it was piloted in three of our local authorities, Cork, Kerry and Meath. Just moving on to the next slide, this just breaks down what was included whilst they were trying to produce the report.

So first of all they had to identify all the employees, and then they had to calculate everyone's ordinary pay, and then they had to calculate all the employees' hours they worked because it depends on the category of employee, depending on your hours you work. They put in a calculation at the back of the reporting system. Which calculated the hourly rate of pay. They did this on an average over all sections in all local authorities. And that in return calculated the gender pay gap metrics. They sent it on to us and we were part of the project team. We reviewed and validated the figures and the data, made any amendments that were necessary and finally we produced and published our report. So overall, in all the local authorities in the public sector we did take a common design solution, a common approach across LAs and reviewed and validated the figures and the figures were pulled out of Core and into the Makodata to create the report and stats. The data is the extract from Makodata and it is used to populate standard worksheets. The graphs were pulled into the report that you have there from the meeting.

Moving on then, just how to interpret the figures. So as I said, you have the mean, or the median figure, so it just states if the mean or median is positive, it does not mean females are being paid less, it just means the average may occupy a higher level in the category or they might hold a higher pay grade in that category. The same with if it's negative, it can be that the females or males might have an average less higher grade role in that section, or there might be a higher or lower average of males or females in that category. For example, just to simplify it for you, with our outdoor workers, we have a higher male percentage emergency services, 94% male who work there, but with the indoor staff, for example our planning department, there's over 90% female. It depends on the categories and the different sections in the local authority. Also they have the quarterly pay bands as well and that shows a distribution of male and females across all pay bands across the organisation. As I said, this was done on a snapshot date, as it had to be and all local authorities took it from the same date. So it was taken from the 30th June last year, so just on that particular date, you can see the breakdown of our figures in Wicklow. On that date we had 42% was female employees, on the 30th June and 58% male. And the breakdown for full- time and part- time employees on the 30th June was 29% were part- time and 71% were full- time. And then we have further breakdown for category. The category there on the 30th June, 39% was general services, which mainly are our outdoor workforce. 37% are administrative or managerial. 14% professional or technical and 10% fire service. That's a breakdown of the different categories.

Then moving on to the gender pay. This is the mean gender pay and the median gender pay. It states there that minus 1.88%, that's actually issued in the report. I have given you a further break down to say what that means. It means on 30th June, so the males and females, females were paid 44% higher than males. So as I said, the mean is the amount of females in the organisation on average and the amount of males in the organisation on average. The median on the other side was minus 4.62, which meant the females were paid 1.1 Euro more than the males, so the median, if you have all the males of the organisation lined up and all the females lined up, the average of the two, that's the difference between those two particular averages.

Moving on is the quarterly figures, the quarterly bands. So that just shows the different bands of pay, so the lower pay band there, there's the lower middle, upper middle and upper band. It shows

the difference, the male is in the blue below and then the female is in the green above. You can see the lower, middle, particularly there's more males in that category than females and a lot of our outdoor workforce and even our fire service would sit in those bands, that's why there's a higher percentage of males in that category. Moving on to the next section, similar to all employees, there is a breakdown of our part-time employees, 29% worked part-time and you can see the difference in male and female pay for part-time workers on that date was minus 4.63. So that equates to about 99 cents, nearly a Euro. For the median, was minus 2.88, which equates to about 63 cents. So that's the part-time workers on the 30th June. Bearing in mind that it is the middle of the summer season, the part-time workers would include a lot of seasonal workers, lifeguards etc. Further breakdown on the next slide is our temporary employees. We had 9% on the 30th June which equated to our temporary employees on that date. And the difference there for our mean, the difference between male and female, 5.26%, which equates to about 88 cents, males were paid higher in that category and then in the median, it was 1.18, which equates to 18 cents, where the males were paid slightly higher than the females. Further on to the report, as I said earlier, what we had to report on was benefit in kind. And bonuses. Bonuses are not subject to any public sector worker so we didn't have to report on that because they don't exist. But they do exist in the private sector. So a lot of the private organisations would have to report on that.

Our benefit in kind for Wicklow County Council on the 30th June showed that 1.68% of male employees were in receipt of benefit in kind, where only 0.59% of females were in receipt of benefit in kind. There is a section on women in leadership, which is promoted throughout all local authorities and for Wicklow County Council women in leadership our statistics showed our senior leadership, 37% male and 63% female, which is quite good in comparisons with other organisations and other local authorities. We do a lot of work and development on our women in leadership programmes there. So just coming to the end of the presentation, this is the first year we had to report on it. So our aim going forward is we have to try and support and reduce the gap in our gender equality in our organisation. In line with that, the methods and the ways to promote the reduction in the gap and to increase and to support equality, diversity and inclusion, we have many different ranges of programmes we do in Wicklow County Council. Some of them are listed there. For example, fair and transparent recruitment processes where everyone is treated equally. We have work-life balance. We have introduced a new blended working scheme which helps for a nice family friendly policies and better quality of life for employees. We have a huge learning and development section, health and well-being is very important. We have our dignity at work policy, equality, diversity and inclusion. We promote that throughout Wicklow County Council, public sector duty as well. Our women in leadership programme and we try and promote apprenticeship programmes. They are some ways we will increase and continue to tackle our gender pay division in Wicklow County Council. That's just a brief summary on my presentation and it just outlines some of the key points in the report. But the report has a little bit more detail, so if you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them as best I can. Thank you for your time.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Any questions, members? CLLR Burke: Thank you for the report, it is very encouraging to see the gender pay differences are very small between male and female employees, which is encouraging, because from reading national headlines, many organisations have huge disparities, which is disgraceful. There was a mention of RTE, Ryanair and others where there was 20% general headlines of differences and disparities. I'm all in favour of at least closing that gap to equal pay or even giving the ladies more because the responsibility they take on are greater than what men get away with generally. When I go this evening my dinner will be ready for me! The kids will have been picked up from school.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I'm surrounded by ladies here! So thank you very much for your contribution. Cllr Ferris.

CLLR Ferris: It's appropriate to call women rather than ladies, there's a big difference.

CATHAOIRLEACH: You are all ladies. We like being called gentlemen. Sorry for interrupting you.

CLLR FERRIS: You are a gentleman. I don't have a question, but I want to thank Gemma on behalf of all the women here in particular, but on behalf of all the members for all the work that has been done on this particular issue. I only had time to skim through the report but I will read it in detail because I'm have interested in this. And obviously Wicklow as you said there on the percentage of men and women Wicklow is way ahead of many other counties around the country, and that is to be welcomed. I would like to see more women in the chamber and that is something that we're working on. And we will continue to work on. But it is great to see, as the Cathaoirleach said, so many women on his right- hand side, it is great to see and it is hugely different than it was years ago when I first came into this chamber. So I want to thank you and just to say to you keep up the good work.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Scott.

CLLR SCOTT: Thank you, thank you Gemma for the presentation there and there was a really positive report and I wanted to congratulate the council really. It is great to see that strong percentage of women in the senior management positions as well. That's just really good to see and we physically see it when we are in the chamber and dealing with the senior management team but it's good to see the numbers on that. And also just to hear from a practical perspective of rolling out blended working going forward as well. It's great to know the learnings from COVID have been taken on board and that's been rolled out for the workforce. That makes an absolutely massive difference, particularly for women whom, as Cllr Burke was saying, are doing all the work at home, in conjunction with their paid work in the office. So thank you for that and thank you for the report. It's really, really positive.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I think that's all the members now. Okay, Gemma, thank you very much for your presentation and the very best of luck, as we said, keep up the good work. Definitely, I won't say you ladies, women, girls, work double than most men. I was reared with three sisters and two brothers and the ladies, my sisters ruled the roost. But thank you very much, Gemma. I'm going to shut up before I dig a bigger hole! Turn off my mic. My assistant is telling me to turn off my mic.

HELEN: Item 15 is to consider the Chief Executive's monthly management report for December 2022 as circulated.

CLLR TIMMONS: Thank you, just two things. I bring it up here every month and it's really, really frustrating, the RDF still nothing happening. I wonder is there some way we can start spending the 3.5 million that's been allocated. I understand there's a request for the 2 million increase in the funding, which won't actually achieve the full project and it's with the department or the minister, but I really think we just have to treat this with real urgency to try and get something done. I keep saying this every month. I have been saying it since October 19, three years and three months ago we got the announcement. Not a shovel touched the ground, that's consultant fees clocked up. But it's just so frustrating and people in the town and surrounding areas are really frustrated. Please, please, please can we see some action on the ground. Second point, housing is crucial here. The numbers of vacant houses, I don't believe they appear in the manager's report. Could we ask the number of vacant houses appear on the manager's report as a norm, and split by district and split by, listed by how long they are vacant and ageing of the vacant houses. If we don't monitor it or measure it we won't be able to manage it. I know we did it in the west district a number of years ago, we did focus on getting vacant houses back into stock, back into use. Could we have in the manager's report and I take it this will be accepted unless I am given a reason otherwise for future management reports, number of vacant houses listed on the report and split by district and ageing.

CLLR WALSH: Thank you for the report. Once again it's disappointing to look at the rental arrears figure continuing to increase and we had the local Government audit report earlier in the meeting

and if one read that you would have seen the concern raised by the auditor, that was back in 2021. We spoke about the rent increase during COVID and there was a 48% increase in 2020. But the concern was that has not been reversed and a number of accounts over 10,000 in arrears has doubled to 53 even though the bad debt provision is only 829 or rental arrears, we are getting close to three million. I know there's a rent appears policy document recently published, I wonder what that entails or what we're doing to address this issue, because it's going on now for over three years or up to three years. Secondly, just on the sustainable energy committee. I would like to know more about those. There's reference to a solar panel project being in the Greystones SEC, to enable householders to install solar panels. I wonder how we would find out more about that scheme. And on the building control staff, just looking at that report there, their work seems to be, I don't know if they are getting busier and busier with all the new developments, staffing levels there, are they adequate or is it something that needs to be looked at and just under something that came up at our joint policing committee before Christmas on dogs and control of dogs act in general and there was a reference to an attack there that was highlighted in Wexford around that time, and with the increase in restricted dog breeds etc and the list of complaints, I wonder about the role of the dock warden, have we got details about fines being issued and the daily independent did a report on it about the various local authorities. Wondering what figures have we got around that.

CLLR O'BRIEN: Thank you for the report. I want to agree with Cllr Timmons, the amount of complaints we are receiving about the length of time it's taking to get them back out. We are in the middle of a housing crisis but what I wanted to talk about is the, our outsourcing of trades people to fix our social tenants housing issues like plumbing and heating. There was an incident where an 86- year- old was out heating for nearly a week. I feel it's taken far too long for us to get people out to them. I understand that there is a shortage of trades people in the country. But can we engage with more, because having an 86- year- old without heating at this time of the year is unacceptable. He's up- to- date with his rent, done nothing wrong and I think we are letting ourselves down in small things like that. I would appeal to the council to seek the help of more trades people. Thank you.

CLLR LEONARD: Two things, I had considered one of them on the suspension of standing orders, because it's so important and we are at crisis stage now, but I said I would wait for the report and put it in this way. The escalating energy costs for small businesses in our communities. I suppose what I want to put forward as a proposal that we do some sort of help audit on the businesses to assess what are we looking at throughout the county. I know I can only speak for the local businesses I am dealing with in Arklow but some say they are not going to last the year because their energy costs and costs have escalated so much now that they just can't see their business being viable any more. These aren't business that is are set up in the last few years, these businesses that are there for the last 20 years, that are struggling. A lot of them are mostly service industry and calf eyes, restaurants, energy reliant businesses, but I think that maybe we need to start off with an audit on all of these businesses and again, a lot of these businesses aren't in Chamber of Commerce, there seems to be a gap there. And I know it's probably up to them to come together and form some sort of a union. But until that happens the council has a role to play in this and assessing it and I don't know whether it can be done through the economic SPC or something like that, but I think we need to find out a realistic view of how much the energy costs have gone up for each individual business and maybe do a survey to find out and see where we are and maybe use that to negotiate better prices for energy for the county for small businesses. And the other thing is the escalating notices to quit rental properties. I'm sure every other councillor here, the same as myself, in the last six months, it's gone, I don't know how the housing department are actually coping with it. It must be very stressful on the people working there. And it's not in the Chief Executive's report. Do we have a number on how many notices of quit we have coming into the council and how are we

dealing with that and what was the solution to it? I know a lot of people are selling, thanks.

CLLR FERRIS: I want to raise an issue here and I have a number of questions on it, it is in relation to the proposed sustainable bridge in Bray. You may be aware that a letter came out from Wicklow County Council on the 12th December advising of the on board decision that was made on 5th December in relation to the fact that an impact statement would have to be sent in by Wicklow County Council in relation to this. This was as a result of the judicial review that was brought up. I hadn't heard anything about it and I sent a request to the Bray municipal district to try and get an up-to-date report on this as to whether an impact statement has been prepared or what the situation was, and the reply I received from Wicklow County Council and I would like to state it, it says in light of the on board decision, Wicklow County Council will engage with the URDF funders to confirm their commitment to progressing this project. The project was funded under category A scheme eligibility, that is shovel ready, several years ago. If the scheme is to progress, Wicklow County Council will now need to make an application directly to An Bord Pleanala and decisions in relation to planning matters will then rest with An Bord Pleanala. This is a matter I raised, probably middle of last year, about An Bord Pleanala making the final decision about this scheme. So when I received the Chief Executive report out I had to look because it's normally under the RRDF or URDF, in this case it would be URDF funding. I just felt it was conspicuous by its absence. I'm very, very concerned about this. And what I want to ask is when was it intended to advise the members of this council and particularly the members of the Bray municipal district who are mostly affected by this project? Also, does the council intend notifying all those people who took the time and paid for their objections to be noted by the planning authority? Has the URDF funders been contacted yet and if so, what was their reply? Does Wicklow County Council intend to make a new application to An Bord Pleanala and when will the application be ready to submit. Will all the members be briefed before the application is submitted and their views also submitted to An Bord Pleanala and finally will the new application go out for public consultation? I'm sure I'm not the only one here that is surprised about this. Unless something was mentioned and I didn't hear it, but certainly this was the first I knew when I got the e-mail back with the report from the senior engineer on Friday, and I just find, I understand the procedure and how procedure works, but I'm just shocked that the members were notified as far as I know and that certainly there hasn't been anything in the local papers advising the members of the public and everybody knows the amount of submissions that were received from individual members of the community from various groups, who are concerned as we know about the swans, about the road traffic on sea point road, Galtram road, and just to have it hanging out there, I'm just astonished and I would probably bet that the people who made the submissions haven't a clue as to what the situation is at the moment and I just think the lack of information from the council to the members and the wider community is absolutely atrocious in this instance. And I just felt I had to raise it here today. Hopefully, that it will, the news will trickle out to members of our community. Thank you. I would like some answers to those question.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Ferris. I am nearly at 4.30 and I have to go to suspension of standing orders. I have only got one minute. I'm not going to ask the officials to respond to them here and now, and I don't know if I am going to get through to suspensions of standing orders before 5.00 so they can come back in. Can I have the officials, I'm going to ask for a promise, you will contact the speakers here and I apologise the members that I won't get to your questions unless I get to suspension of standing orders. Cllr Ferris, I am so upset because it is the first time you have in the chamber in a long time and I want to welcome you here in person but I'm not going to get the time to get the questions answered for you, please forgive me on that one. I have to go to suspension of standing orders. Cllr Paul O'Brien and Cllr Gail Dunne.

CLLR O'BRIEN: Thank you. I'm reluctant bringing this to the chamber today, because I accept that Wicklow County Council have no influence over this really, but I'm here because I've run out of road,

to be quite honest with you, and I'm frustrated by the minister and his officials. I also want to say here that I'm not here to stoke fear or division, a "Them and us" situation - that's not what I do, that is not my quest here today. But when you have the municipal district administrator writing into the minister and his officials - as Cathaoirleach of the district I also wrote in requesting a meeting and answers and I'm sure my fellow councillors in the municipal districts have all sent in their correspondence and we've all received the same standard reply acknowledging it.

Now, we had an incident here before Christmas where there was a fight on the main street here and of course it was used and abused by the far-right and we had them visiting Wicklow and I don't want them people in this town again. Wicklow is a loving, caring town and we certainly don't want them taking advantage of any situation. But the reason again I want to bring this up is because videos and pictures have emerged over the Christmas period and a lot of people have been in touch with myself and Cllr Dunn and I'm sure the rest of the councillors in the municipal district as well about the overcrowding in the Grand Hotel direct provisions centre. We are supposed to be the land of a thousand welcomes, but I never thought underneath that there would be terms and conditions applied to that and some of the conditions that, excuse me, these people are allegedly living in are absolutely diabolical and there are also concerns about health.

What I'm requesting here today is that the members back me up on a letter to go to the Minister and his officials, not to stoke hate and division, but to work in a constructive and positive manner, because what's happening is not right. As I say, we had an incident down here before Christmas, I know over the Christmas we had incidents around the country, and unfortunately because of these isolated incidents, everyone gets tarred with the one brush and that's not acceptable. What I don't want here today is for people to jump on any bandwagon and appease the far-right or the right. We've enough of those people and to be quite honest with you, my personal opinion is, they're not welcome in Wicklow.

But we need constructive dialogue here. We've requested it, I think Cllr Joe Behan did at the JCP last year, we've done it on numerous occasions and we're getting blanked. What happens is the silence only feeds the conspiracy and it is just not good enough because I've worked with my fellow councillors, not just in Wicklow, but throughout the county and the vast majority are common-sense people. We don't want a "Them and us," so we don't, but what I'm asking for today is support in contacting the Minister, at least to meet the six councillors in the Wicklow municipal area, but anyone that wants to come, because it's an important conversation that has to be had. The government are overseeing a failed policy and in my opinion have lost control of the situation. There will be a debate later on about modular homes and I'm sure if we had them in Wicklow Town here I wouldn't have had to raise this issue. But I'm here today appealing to every councillor here to support me on this, and Cllr Dunne in relation to contacting the minister and his officials and to stop this disregard for local democracy, because we are the elected people representing our constituents and to be ignored and treated like second-class citizens is unbelievable, when all we're trying to do is work in a constructive and positive manner. So I look forward to what Cllr Dunne has to say and other councillors around, but we need to stop this, we need to have a serious grown-up conversation. But I'm appealing, if anyone comes in later that wants to speak, I'm asking them not to stoke the hate and division and fear - we don't need it, we don't want it and there's enough of it out there to be quite honest with you. So I would appeal to you to support me and as I say I look forward to what Cllr Dunne has to say now.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Gail Dunne?

CLLR DUNNE: Thank you, and I think Cllr O'Brien has put it very well. I suppose over the last few months a lot of people in Wicklow Town have seen the situation in the Grand Hotel getting worse. The video that emerged over the last few weeks is frightening. I think to see people basically boxed in together, you know what I mean, it's terrible in the horror down there. There's rumours there's 180 people in one room in bunk beds and God forbid if there is a fire it'll be something like the Grenville Tower thing in London because there's no way they would be able to get out. I've heard people say, oh, you can hold discos and dances - completely different situation. Completely different situation down there. We're worried about allowing people to live like that. We don't think it's fair. But we're so disappointed, the fact that we've raised this at a number of different stages, different places, and we've been ignored. That's the disappointment part of all of this - we're elected representatives of this council from the Wicklow municipal district and Wicklow Town, we're asked to represent Wicklow Town and we try to do it to our best but when nobody's speaking to us, it's just very disappointing. To the fact where only last week I was talking to a member of the town here and they told me that they had a meeting with Roderic O'Gorman and Wicklow Welcomes on Zoom about the hotel yet the minister never contacted any elected members in our area, which in my opinion is absolutely terrible. We're elected by the people to represent the people. And if we're not to be even included in that meeting, it leaves a lot to be desired. So we're asking for support to see can we get any minister down to talk to us, to find out what's the situation in the Grand Hotel. I'd also ask the council to have a serious look at what's going on there because God forbid if there's a fire down there what'll be the circumstances - the fire officer - I don't think anybody in this room wants anything like that on their record and I certainly don't anyway, I certainly do not want these people to talk about the refugees coming in and whatever - I'm not getting involved in this, but the living accommodation notice Grand Hotel is not right and something has to be done about it. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Gail Dunne. Cllr John Snell, sorry?

CLLR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yes, look, it is a very unfortunate situation we find ourselves in but not unexpected to be honest. On 24 October at a municipal district meeting in the town hall in Wicklow Town, I asked an administrator to write to the minister to get an update on what was happening in the Grand Hotel. It was blatantly obvious that there was people being bussed in in the early hours of the morning. At that stage there was no trouble, but less than a week after, we had a melee on the main road, an unfortunate melee between residents of the Grand Hotel. It gained national - unfortunately, national attention and Wicklow was under the spotlight. The reality is, Cathaoirleach, we sat in this chamber in 2018 when we were fed a pup, really, by the Department of Justice when they came in here and we had a meeting with them in these very chambers and at the end of the meeting, which went on for an hour and a half, and there must have been a couple of hundred people standing outside the door here, we were told that this was a done deal. It was a done deal. Well, the contract hadn't been signed, but it was a done deal in 2018. And to be fair to the people of Wicklow Town and surrounding areas, they rallied in around the families who have been living in the Grand Hotel for a number of years. A number of committees were set up to assist and help them. They were integrated into our local schools, our sporting organisations and, indeed, some of our voluntary organisations such as the Tidy Towns and they made a positive impact on life in and around Wicklow Town. Unfortunately, what we see now cannot be described the same as what happened in 2018. There is not one person in the Grand Hotel in Wicklow Town from Ukraine - not one. I'm dealing with families up there who have been there for a number of years and unfortunately some of them were moved out at very short notice to the four corners of Ireland, with their small children, and we now have a situation where the figures that I have is over 274 individual males are in the Grand Hotel. There is a couple of families still up there, and when there was talk of

protests and people raising their voice to find out what is going on, there was a vacuum there and there was a void which, unfortunately, is happening all over the country. Where organisations are trying to make hay in regards to getting a foothold and spouting out - whether it be far-right or far-left. But the reality is that I attended a protest that was held by locals - local people, grandparents, parents, small children, people who have given a lifetime of voluntary service to this community and they went out and they arranged the protest as much for the people in the Grand Hotel as for what's happening in regards to the failed policy that this government is implementing and they raised concerns on behalf of the people who are in the Grand Hotel to such a degree that some people tried to twist it and say that everyone who attended was totally opposed to having anyone coming in from a war-torn country and seeking refuge in Ireland, which couldn't be further from the truth. Ireland is a very welcoming country, as we know, and I do believe that Wicklow County Council have played more than their part in regards to what they've been doing in addressing the trouble that's going on in Ukraine. We see it here in this town, we've seen it in Arklow, we see it in the west of the hills and north of the county and they have been looked after to the very, very best and I want to see that continue. But the reality is there are a lot of people who are seeking refuge in Ireland who are coming from countries who are not in any shape or form in the middle of a war and that's what's causing the trouble. We've seen it in Killarney, unfortunately, which is a great tourism town, and also a great tourism county in Kerry, and their own public representatives can get no answers down there either. It's happening in the west, in Galway, Mayo. You have to ask yourself, what's going on here? Because the truth is, the finger is being pointed at us as public representatives, it's being pointed at the officials of Wicklow County Council. When we inquired in regards to the Chief Fire Officer going in and conducting a report, it was relayed to me at a meeting before Christmas that he is not obliged to give that information to us as public representatives, which I find startling. Yet we found that very position that he holds.

So I'm asking the Chief Executive to please look into this and we all know that you'll be spun a yarn, that you'll get the run-around, because at the end of the day, I don't believe they know what to do. They don't know what they're doing. But the truth is that if you bring in hundreds of single men from multiple nationalities - at the last count I was dealing with a lady who was up there who was volunteering her time in the Grand Hotel, helping them for the last four years, and because she raised concerns in how they're living she was expelled from the Grand Hotel and told never to come back by the owner of the Grand Hotel. There was eight different nationalities at that stage and I'm on record as saying to the superintendent here in Wicklow Town that if you put eight people or eight different groups from the locality, such as Rathnew, Wicklow, Ashford, and asked them to live in the confines of the Grand Hotel for one week, I can guarantee you they would be out under oath throwing fisticuffs, it's as simple as that. The truth is that this country, the people who are making decisions don't know what they're doing. The lasting legacy that we're going to have from this is going to be horrendous, because we can't cope with the people that are on the social housing waiting list, the homeless list, we're trying to deal with the Ukrainians, which I 1 million, hundred per cent agree that we should be. But if you're seeking asylum in Ireland, you can be here for over ten years and still not get an answer. We've seen that, we've seen the people in Mosney and beyond. So the reality is that I don't think we get answers here today and I don't think the Chief Executive will get the answers, I don't think people from the Green Party who are members of this chambers will get the answers either.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr, I just have to move you on there, but thank you very much, because I have another couple of speakers wanting to come in but thank you for that.

>> Just before I finish, what is the aim and objective from this? Is the Chief Executive going to go and sit down with the Department of Justice and seek answers? Because my belief is that when the residents of the Grand Hotel took to the street here a little over a week and a half ago to protest about the conditions in the Grand Hotel, that a number of them were packed off within two days and sent to County Clare and Limerick. So if they raise their voice and say, "This is not good enough," they're being shipped out. And that's coming from the owner of the Grand Hotel. So what power does he have that we don't have? And I would ask the Chief Executive to get to the bottom of that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr. Cllr Lourda Scott?

CLLR SCOTT: Yes, thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thanks to Cllr O'Brien and Cllr Dunne for raising this. Obviously I don't live down in Wicklow. I did become aware of the video that circulated before Christmas, and was quite shocked at what it showed. I'm shocked because the people they showed living in those overcrowded conditions in the Grand Hotel are vulnerable people, probably escaping from place of trauma, and my heart went out to them. I'm sure, as, you know, that was echoed by many people in our community. I think in Wicklow we pride ourselves on being very welcoming people and we certainly have shown that through the past of how we welcome in people fleeing from war in Ukraine, how we welcomed in other residents that have been living in the Grand Hotel and in other places in Wicklow that have sought asylum in our country. It's a very, very difficult situation. What I would certainly support - you know, anything that I could do as a public rep in the north of the county to support my fellow colleagues in Wicklow Town to help address the situation, I will happily do so. I suppose perhaps if Cllr O'Brien or Cllr Dunne could maybe just clarify for me a little bit as to what they want to specifically ask for in the meeting with the minister, you know - is it that better conditions are found or, you know, is there a specific, or is it just to connect with officials from that department so that the community is in a better position to support the people that are living in the Grand at the moment? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Dermot O'Brien?

CLLR O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and again I want to pay tribute to the colleagues who brought this issue up. I think for me the subject matter of the meeting is really important and what I hear now it is framed in a way that says we are looking for accountability and people have talked about the change in circumstances in the Grand Hotel and again, my numbers tell me that from 2018 to 2021 there was 111 beds available for individuals, for people, and then it went from 121 to 122 it went up to 244 so that is a change in an operating model and for me what's really important at that meeting with the minister if it happens - a group of people got together, Cathaoirleach, and they produced an 83-page national standards document in how we do this stuff. So that's sitting there. That's a terms of reference. There's 39 standards in it. There's over 300 indicators about how someone runs a service like this and who runs a service like this is a service provider who is making plenty of profit, let's be fair. But I think in the national report there's 23 items of legislation that are referenced in that 83-page document. So that's all sitting there, Cathaoirleach, and to me anyone who - we as public representatives have an absolute right to say, "Let's check how you're doing with your standards" and just very, very briefly, standard number one in that document says, "The service provider performs its functions as outlined in relevant legislation, regulations, national policies and standards to protect residents living in the accommodation centre in a manner that promotes their welfare and respects their dignity". Standard one they've failed as far as I'm concerned and it's already articulated here today how much they've failed. For me, when we zoom out, we also have to wonder about, as a nation, our human rights obligations. We're also failing on that level. So I think there's very clear questions to be asked and there's a serious accountability question there in terms of who is running the centre, are they complying? I invite all members to have a look at that

document because it's a horror shop when you read through all those standards and all those indicators and how much of them are not present in that centre and other centres across the county. So I fully support the call for the meeting and more than happy to be there if possible. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr. Cllr Paul O'Brien, I will bring you back in, because I have to go through - I know but I have a second suspension of standing orders to go to and I don't have enough time to bring everybody in. OK. OK. Cllr Paul O'Brien.

>> Can I make a clarification? I'm not going to delay it because I want people to come in and talk right away, so I do. So it is not me by the time, I was asked to come back in. Just in relation to what my proposal is. I want to be clear so you know what I'm talking about. I want the minister here because I want to see the proposed plans for the Grand Hotel. I want to see a reduction in numbers. I want to see accountability. But I also have been very careful in my language here today. I haven't mentioned Ukraine. Ireland, thank God, has been a peaceful nation for the last 100 years and we emigrated, we had people emigrate from this country for economic needs and I want to be careful on this because the language needs to be appropriate here today. I have three great uncles living in the UK because of economic, not because of war-torn and we have to be careful with our language here today. I specifically said, I don't want them and us. That's all of us by the way, we are all human beings and we deserve dignity here and I'm sorry for coming back in, but I want to clarify - I don't expect answers here from the Chief Executive, that's not what I'm looking for. I'm looking for a meeting with the people who make these decisions and hold them accountable for the mess that they've landed us in. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK, thank you, Cllr Paul O'Brien. Cllr Winters?

CLLR WINTERS: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I suppose I don't believe we'll get answers from the minister, but I do want to know about the Chief Fire Officer's report. I want to know why it's not available to be viewed by elected members. I'm wondering what happens, then, if it's not actually available for our use or to be seen by us - we requested it in September. Four months on, it's a 30-bedroomed hotel, and most 30-bedroomed hotels or 33-bedroom hotel, most 33-bedroom hotels would have a licence for 100 to 110 people to occupy it. This is close to 300. I want to know what happens - he works for us, what happens to that report, where does it get lodged, who has sight of it? If there are serious concerns about safety, which I believe there must be, where does it go? Or does it just hope that the awfulness of what could happen doesn't happen so we can pretend it all away?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Winters. Cllr Mary Kavanagh?

CLLR KAVANAGH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yes, the word I would use in trying to deal with this particular matter is completely and utter frustration. I'm sure we were all contacted over Christmas about the latest video doing the rounds. I know I spent the 28th and 29th of December contacting IPAS and going backwards and forwards with them because they suggested that it wasn't really up to - that they weren't the place for me to go, that that was purely for people who were residents of the Grand Hotel and to contact the minister, and when I said that I had previously contacted the minister's office twice, and received nothing more than an acknowledgement, that somebody has to be responsible for what's going on there. There's overcrowding, lack of toilets, lack of showers, a leaking roof - these were all in the video - and then there was the most serious part of all, apart from the fact that it's potentially, probably a fire hazard, was the fact that there was allegedly suggestions of a notifiable - an outbreak of a notifiable illness. Now, apart from the residents themselves, they leave the Grand Hotel, there are people from the area going into the Grand Hotel to work. We have a health service in crisis at the moment. If there is an outbreak of something as serious as what has

been alleged, then there's no capacity there to deal with it and the whole thing has me frightened beyond my wits, because it's just - it's appalling.

So I would certainly recommend that we write to the minister. In actual fact, the way he has been carrying on is just staggeringly not good enough. It's not good enough to not get back to elected public representatives who are concerned about the welfare and the wellbeing of people, and the video that I saw in comparison to one that I saw about six weeks previous to that - to my mind, there's more beds in it, not less. So if there has been any kind of a fire audit, you know, what's going on that more and more people are being brought into the place, instead of thinning out the numbers being crowded together? It's just appalling. So yes, I'd certainly agree with writing to the minister and seeking proper answers - not evasion.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr, thank you. Councillor Shay Cullen.

CLLR CULLEN: Thank you, chair, I'm going to be brief and not go on for ten minutes. I want to ask a couple of questions - very straightforward questions. Is the Grand Hotel safe for 260 residents to live in when it is a 30-bedroom hotel? Very straightforward question. Who is in charge of the Grand Hotel? Who is overseeing the whole project there? From where I'm sitting it is certainly not safe and Cllr Winters made a very valid point about the fire officer. Why can't we have that information? We're sitting on a time bomb and, you know, that's not an exaggeration of the situation here, where we have so many people congregated into one small building. It's just absolutely nonsensical, the position that we find ourselves. And as has been quite rightly said, as public representatives, nobody is willing to engage with us, so I suppose I'm just asking the CEO to organise a meeting through Wicklow County Council with the minister or whatever relevant officials will come and meet us as six municipal councillors and, indeed, the staff of Wicklow County Council as a matter of urgency. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Chief Executive, would you like to come in on this one?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Yes, thank you, members, and thank you, Cathaoirleach. Look, as you are aware, this is a direct arrangement between the Grand Hotel and IPAS. It's a different process from the Ukrainian response. However, Wicklow Fire Service did carry out an inspection of the hotel in mid-November of last year. Following this inspection, the Fire Service wrote to the property seeking a detailed fire report on the current accommodation arrangements. The hotel's fire safety consultant has replied to that request and we received that on November 23. That's currently being reviewed in detail by the Fire Service. Without pre-empting the outcome of that review, I can confirm that the certification for the fire alarm system, emergency and exit lighting and fire extinguishers have all been provided to the Fire Service. In addition, the hotel has indicated that it carries out monthly fire evacuation drills and the Chief Fire Officer has advised that the timing and arrangements of such drills should ensure now that maximum participations by residents are included. Wicklow Fire Service will continue to engage with the owner of the premises on this matter and, look, on conclusion of it, we will inform the members, we will inform IPAS of that conclusion. It wouldn't be standard practice to send out a full report. We will let you know what the outcome is. I think that's only fair. But the members should be aware that the only input Wicklow County Council can have in relation to this is in relation to fire regulations - nothing else. Matters in relation to facilities, conditions, health issues - that's a matter for IPAS, 100%. So I've absolutely no problem writing to IPAS, writing to the minister, seeking a meeting in that regard, absolutely, and I'd be happy to collate questions that need to be asked because I think it's important that we know what do we want to come out of this. Look, we're very much aware that there is a huge crisis in relation to not only the numbers coming in from Ukraine, but also other countries. There has been a huge increase and it's

not just in Wicklow, it's every county in the country is being pushed to the limit in relation to providing emergency accommodation and I suppose just to make the point that was mentioned about a 30-bedroom facility - this has been categorised as emergency accommodation, so that kind of changes the picture in relation to that. It's not just looking at it in relation to a hotel premises, it's an emergency accommodation premises now. So there's a bit of a difference there. So, look, as I say, chief fire officer is in consultation, back and forward, with the fire safety consultant of the hotel on the matter and as I say there been a huge increase, every county in the country has been pushed to the limit in relation to providing emergency accommodation and just to make the point that was mentioned about a 30 bedroom facility, this has been categorised as emergency accommodation, so that changes the picture in relation to that. It's not just looking at it in relation to a hotel premises. It's an emergency accommodation premises. There's a difference there. Chief Fire Officer is in consultation back and forward with the fire safety consultant of the hotel on the matter, and as I say, hopefully that communication process will be completed shortly enough and we will let you know the outcome of that. In the meantime I have no problem contacting the minister or department or whoever the members wish me to contact in that regard to set up some sort of meeting or seek whatever answers to the questions that you do have. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr O'Brien and Dunne, I presume you are happy. So our next suspension standing orders is Cllr Jerry O'Neill, seconded by Joe Behan.

>> I would like to reiterate there that my concerns here, it must be very clear that for all my life I have been involved with our interests here in (Inaudible) I have been very on the side of the down trodden and I don't want anyone to think I have a view to the left here or to the right. It's straight up serious concern. I don't want to have to repeat that. I want to make that very clear that my views are honest. I honestly have a view here a couple of years ago, you might remember, on a flag, where I objected to the removal of the tricolour from council buildings and the replacement of it by the Russian flag and I was informed later on that it wasn't a Russian flag, but it was a transgender flag, and I didn't know that the transgender flag was the same colour as the Russian flag, but the abuse that councillor O'Neill got on social media being anti- this and anti- that, all over my concern, that I thought the Irish flag should remain.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I don't want you to run out of time.

>> What I tried to do there is come across that my agenda here is very honest. My concern here is the issue in the west and the land that Whitehall, there's a site there, a new site with new local authority housing, a green patch in front of it, and there was works being carried out there, and the people in the area were understandably concerned about what was going on. Anyway, we were informed a couple of weeks ago that they are being carried out for modular homes for people from Ukraine and also in Dunlavin. My concern here is that both sets of land are zoned and there were zones through the council, through councillors, there was provision of a fire station and open space there and a community centre, so I think we had to be very, very careful here. The CEO has said a moment ago we are being pushed to the limit as regards space for refugees and whatever and I don't want to create another episode that you have in the west in Wicklow town here with the Grand Hotel. What I am trying to do here is warn us that the road we are taking here in squeezing these - the minister has said he needs 14,000 modular homes in the country before the end of March. The whole plan here is to use public land to build these, but I think we need to be more informed. At the moment OPW are looking at these two sites in west Wicklow and if they are deemed suitable, it's only then that the people will, the local people will be notified. That's far too late. These sites, it's absolutely wrong to build 60 odd houses leaving open face for the people which we need and then to come along a few months later and say there's a directive, not only from the minister, but as he says on the 23rd June last year, it's a directive from the EU. So I think we are all coding ourselves by getting ourselves excited. If this is the E U Directive on EU, we can ask all the

questions in the world to the CEO here or the ministers, if this is just direct legislation, that's it. So that's where my concern is.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I have to bring in Cllr Timmons.

>> I thought we would get the same amount of time as the previous...

HELEN: The meeting should have ended at 5.00, we can't make any decisions after 5.00.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I bring in Cllr Timmons

CLLR TIMMONS: Thank you, Chairman and it's a pity we have such little time to discuss it because it's important that these matters are discussed. The worst thing is when people don't know what the facts are on the ground and it's all rumour and Facebook and innuendo and so many rumours going around, people don't know what's happened. It's important it's public, people can find out, journalists whatever can report what is actually happening and what's factually happening. It's important we have these interactions because the worst you can do is not give us full information. That just breeds suspicion. People just really want to know what's gone on, then they can give an informed opinion on it. At the moment that is not the case. The council were asked last April for a list of sites in County Wicklow that would be suitable for modular homes to house Ukrainians. The council, as far as I know, submitted five different sites around the county, and I just questioned a whole logic of how those sites were chosen. Four of the sites, first of all the criteria was the sites would have to be chosen on land that is not sold for housing. In other words council owned land, but yet four of the sites selected were in the Baltinglass municipal district and one in east Wicklow, but that was excluded. I just find it statistically extraordinary, I want to see how this process worked and was it done correctly and I am getting on to the question. I found it extraordinary there was no council owned land anywhere else in the county that could be identified. I don't believe that. I know it's not the case, because I have knowledge of various council land all round the county. I can't for the life of me understand how that selection process was conducted. I think it was conducted wrongly. That's my honest opinion from what I know so far. The other thing is the land in question in Baltinglass which has been tested by the OPW, the digger was on site before I found out anything about this, that wasn't really very satisfactory, but the site in question was zoned, I proposed the zoning of the development plan a year ago before the council submitted this list of sites. That did happen, that got unanimous support of the councillors here. I also suspected the council officials who chose this site didn't realise it was owned for the sports centre. The colour on the map showed employment. That's also a possible flaw in the process to how that particular site was selected. But there's lots of other things I can talk about in terms of the practicalities of this. We don't have time here this evening. Just those two key points about sites being selected very, very, literally selective, rather than selecting all council lands on zone for housing, I think that was done wrong. I know it was done wrong.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I'm going to ask the Chief Executive to come in here now, because I don't have time for any other speakers to come in and I do apologise again. Chief Executive: It's important to make a statement rather than leave it hanging. As Cllr Timmons said, a list of possible sites were submitted to the department for consideration last April. This was the same as every local authority, every public body was asked to do that in response to correspondence from the minister of housing local government. Sites selected were based on technical criteria as well as key requirements. The government has appointed OPW as the contracting authority with responsibility for managing the construction and installation of modular units on a range of state-owned properties around the country. Two sites remain under active consideration on the list, to date OPW has only requested to access to carry out survey for Baltinglass, some initial surveys were done in December, environmental surveys and we expect a full site investigation to be done in January. We also expect a request shortly to have for a site access for the Dunlavin land, we haven't received that yet but expect it shortly and we have committed at the meeting this morning we will notify the

members in Baltinglass. The sites in question, especially the one we are talking about in Baltinglass that's the only one surveyed at the moment. It's under consideration, it's been surveyed for suitability. No decision has been made as of yet what weather that's going to go ahead. That will be decided based on the results of the actual investigation. However, if the site is deemed suitable, the OPW will revert to the local authority in relation to proceeding with the developmental works. Department of children will arrange for presentations to the relevant council members in the district supported by the OPW technical team as part of our communications process. Around the emergency accommodation programme and they will arrange a community information meeting and a leaflet drop in the relevant area. So that's the current position. As I said today, we will keep the members informed as things develop, there will be a site investigation in Baltinglass in January, following that a decision will be made as regards to go forward or whether it's not suitable. As I said, Dunlavin is slightly behind. We are expecting a request for a site survey at some stage this month. That hasn't been received yet.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Chief Executive. I totally appreciate that, okay, okay, go ahead Cllr Cronin.

CLLR CRONIN: I am not going to delay, I do have issues in the process that has taken place to date. I think we have issues with transparency on what's happened so far. There's a lot of misinformation been given and I want to ensure everything that we're told to date is correct and that the correct information has been given to the public as well. There's a lot of questions being asked over the weekend as to what's happening and unfortunately, we don't seem to have the answers yet. I find it very hard to believe the two sites in question are within 15kms of each other, given the size of Wicklow County Council. The size of the county, two sites we've picked at the moment are within 15kms, both in the Baltinglass municipal district. I have questions with regard to the process of what will happen next. Has services in the area been considered. I don't want people to be landed in west Wicklow without consideration being given to healthcare, given to transport, school capacity. There's no point bringing people into communities when we don't have the services to provide them. At the moment we are struggling to provide services for people that are already living there. So I am just wondering if these will be taken into consideration in the process too. Lastly, I just want to again express the need for important transparency and communication on this. The local communities will need to be informed as to what's happening in the area and I hope the council will consider keeping everybody up- to- date in the process. Thank you. Cllr Mullin: I want to speak briefly, and just to avoid confusion I would like to thank the Chief Executive and the senior members of the staff who have kept us up- to- date. We had a meeting in December on this, and we requested a meeting today. That meeting was provided. The process hasn't moved on because it's a site investigation, so it's important to clarify that. It's only a potential site investigation, so with all the rumours and innuendo going on, I know some colleagues are concerned about that, but that's where we're at and you are providing the information as soon as you get it and as soon as we get it, we will have discussion on it. But I do think that in all this we have to remember the context of what we're talking about here. We are talking about the biggest refugee crisis since the Second World War. We need to reflect on that. I think we need to realise the response of the Irish people and of the people of Wicklow has been magnificent since the deliberate tactic to create a refugee crisis. That's what they are trying to do here, the enemies of democracy. They are trying to provoke and destabilise democratic societies by creating refugee crisis, by having us looking over our shoulder and to create the type of dissent we can see on social media. So I think when colleagues have ledge mat queries, they should be taken in the concept that they are ledge mat queries only but the welcome to the Ukrainian people, if I was Ukrainian and I had to put my wife and child on a train not knowing where they would end up, I would hope they would end up in Wicklow, because I know the welcome they've got from the communities here and to the senior members of the staff and to the people on

the ground. I think that should be taken into context when we are discussing these matters. We might have issues to do with process and zonings, but the welcome to the Ukrainian refugees fleeing should never be underestimated or forgotten about when we have legitimate queries. Thank you to the staff.

>> Helen, you have a small bit of correspondence.

HELEN: Just to remind members, anybody in the chamber has received their ethics declarations and declaration on donations. Donations must be returned by the 31st January and the ethics forms by 28th February. They will be posted out to anyone not in the chamber today. Just to remind councillors they have received circumstance Lars, the local representation allowance and LGO9, maternity leave for elected members and temporary substitutes and other measures. Because of that circular in relation to the end of year payments for councillors, councillors will be receiving a flat payment of travel for the month of January because we are not able to put the LRA on to it if we comply with the circular. Thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you members. We have a quick protocol meeting after this. Members on that, can you stay in the chamber please or online.

HELEN: We're going to start with attendance call.

(Roll call)

Can I ask everybody else to leave the chamber, please. The first item on the agenda is the confirmation of minutes of meeting held on Monday 5th December. Circulated. Item number 2 matters arising from the minutes.

CATHAOIRLEACH: No matters arising. Sorry Tom, I will bring you in. Cllr

LEONARD: I was looking for an update on the terms of reference of one of the things in the minutes, the end of the minutes of a set up committees, I don't know if you have an update on that Helen. I thought I did bring up about the CRM, the customer services system, you were going to check out that, will the councillors have a portal to go in and check their reps?

HELEN: In relation to the terms of reference, it's a matter for the committees themselves. The terms of the reference for the SPCs JPC & GPG are set and there are guidelines in relation to that, for more casual committees it is more casual.

>> In the termination of a committee, there was never any formal termination of those two committees I was on.

HELEN: That is a matter for the directorates that the committees come under. With the CRM, I haven't got an answer on whether councillors will have their own portal. I have don't have a time line as to when that will come about. I will find out and come back to you.

Cllr fortune: Maybe, I'm not sure whether I had to leave the meeting for a while earlier, an issue has come up about this complaint against councillors and I have been asked by a number of councillors about it and I wasn't really in a position to respond to them in a coherent manner. I thought we were going to discuss that. I wasn't sure if it was at today's meeting, I had to leave the meeting earlier. But it is an item that needs to be visited properly.

HELEN: Just to say the policy can be circulated. The form will be put up on the website. It was agreed with the AILG at a national level. The actual poll at this self. But the whole idea is protect the councillors. The background to it is that if a complaint is made in relation to a councillor, an elected member, that there is now an actual standard form for the person making the complaint to fill out. That will be made available to the elected member. They have a voice and they have a right to reply. That hasn't actually been specified. It's all there under the Local Government Act, it is you will under the legislation and this is just further details. But it's really to give the elected members an opportunity to respond to any complaint that's made against them.

>> Am I wrong, I was led to understand this came from the CCA, the county managers association, they were the ones that instituted this.

HELEN: They circulated it and they circulated the document to all of the councils, so we would all be working off a standard document. But it comes under Local Government Act.

>> Is there one for them? Is there a corresponding piece of paper.

HELEN: I don't know, there is for the council.

>> Maybe before we push ahead with this one we would find that out.

HELEN: This is agreed and in place. I can circulate it to you.

>> There are members that are not happy about it, we need to have some discussion on it I think.

HELEN: No problem.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Tom. Cllr

BLAKE: Briefly on an issue Tom raised there, I do know that AILG and LAMA have been discussing the issue and there are concerns there among them as well and they are engaging with the department and maybe with the managers association as well. But there is concern there about the whole aspect Tom has raised there. It is giving concern to the two organisations who represent the members. I know that expenses were brought up and bank statements and the circular sent around, John asks as well in terms of the council expenses and bank statements and so forth and then about a contradiction down the line in terms of freedom of information, again, there is a bit of concern about the freedom of information and bank statements and so forth. So there is a little bit tidying up to be done in relation to the aspect of expenses and the bank statements and whatever else as well. I don't know if you have had any details or any correspondence from the department to try and iron out the difficulties that still are arising in different councils. Some councils are finding some difficulties. That's a contradiction John that we have there in relation to - that is as much as I can say in terms of what Tom has brought up. It is a concern and the things about bank statements and so forth, and the GDPR is still a concern for our members as well and remains to be an issue.

>>

HELEN: There was in addition to the circular I mentioned, the LG08 and 9 there was clarification document issued before Christmas and it dealt with if your utility bills were in your partner's name you had to issue a statement saying you lived in that property. They did say the bank statements should only be requested where absolutely necessary and that's what we do. But that has issued to all the elected members and has been circulated. Cllr fortune: Around this whole situation, it's a God damn joke. I think as a protocol, I would certainly suggest that we express in the minutes of this meeting our absolute disgust at the way we're being treated. It's as if we don't exist. It's as if don't have an address. As if we don't do the job we do. It's bloody well ridiculous. I'm protesting in the strongest terms about it. It's treating us like non-entities, it's crazy stuff. Cllr O'Brien: I agree with Cllr Fortune. To me it boils down to they don't trust it us, that we provide receipts but because we haven't got our name and address on it, the insinuation is you are trying to con them for what you bought. I have bought equipment in Ikea, but they don't provide your name on the invoice or receipt. I have actually had to change invoices to say receipt, because invoice is not accepted. Helen, this is not a criticism of you, you know that. I brought it up about the bank statements trying to redact the rest of your private information, but there seems to be, they come out with a great fanfare about increasing the wage and they cut our expenses and they put this system in that's making your life hell and Teresa's life hell because we are trying to do our best, but there's a breakdown in trust and to be treated like children, is the way I would put it, it is diabolical and I will finish off, you said at the end Helen, I barely caught it, we've got correspondence in relation to our expenses for this month from Teresa to say that our expenses will be paid out towards the end of the month. But it will come in two lots.

HELEN: It was just to clarify it. We find this circular every bit as frustrating as you and we are dealing

with 32 of you. Some of you are better than others and I do completely understand your frustrations with it, because you are not accountants. Neither are we. It's very, very difficult. We apply it because we are obliged to and we will be audited on it. But it's very, very difficult. The new circular that has come out LG08 of 2022 says in it that anybody who said this is a sin op sis, anybody who said they were going to claim a certain amount and didn't submit receipts to that amount cannot be paid a penny of the LRA until they have submitted receipts to the amount that they said they would spend in 2022. So we can't actually - we can only pay the LRA element to the elected members who spent every penny that they say they would spend, have given receipts to that amount and told us how much they're going to spend in 2023. There's five of those elected members. For the rest of the elected members, you have until the end of January to submit your receipts. So we don't know how much anybody has actually spent at this stage. But the circular is saying we can't pay you any LRA until both figures match. So rather than not pay any expenses in January, we're going to pay the travel and subsistence element because we can legally do that but the LRA element we can only pay to about five of you. They will get it. But the ones who haven't actually submitted receipts to the amount that they said they would spend in 2022 can't receive the LRA amount. There's also a requirement in that new circular for you to sign a declaration to detail all the receipts that you gave us in 2022 and to say they are all legitimate. We don't expect you to do that either. We're working through that at the moment, where we will do a spreadsheet of what you have submitted to us. And send it back to you. But you are supposed to have it back by 31st January. There is a lot of contradiction in relation to you have until 31st January to submit your receipts but you have until 31st January to sign and say that's everything you have submitted. Also tell us how much you want for 2023. It is difficult. [inaudible question] Yes, there's a blank form there at the back of the circular but we're going to have a look at that and see if we can complete it for each one of you. You'll have to sign it yourselves but rather than you having to go back over all your receipts for the whole year again we will do that for you. It's the form at the back. [inaudible question] Yeah, well, it was emailed out before Christmas and it has the categories of eligible expenditure and the four quarters and the total. So you're supposed to go back over all of your seats under all of your categories for the four quarters, say how much you spent and what the total of it is. [inaudible question] Yes. Yes, sorry.

>> Just in terms of those who let's say were going to claim the full amount, and I don't fall into this category, but if they've claimed the full amount, they've done everything right, but I thought the idea was that they would be deducted the money then. Let's say someone fell €100 less than what they'd spent but they would have to get that deducted from this month but that will go ahead.

HELEN: No because they have until the end of January to send us the receipts.

>> Let's say they send us the receipts for 2022 but they are €100 shy of what they said they had spent. How can the €100 deducted?

HELEN: It will be deducted from the January. But they will get a flat rate in January and we won't know until the end of January. In order to pay you for the end of January we need to put the payment on next week. So the timelines are complex.

>> It isn't easy knowing what to do with the senators, and this is nothing to do with you, but they gave us the whole amount in one lump sum at the beginning of the year and you work it down then but at least there's no confusion then over who has to get what. The senators get, I don't know, ten grand a year and they give it to them upfront. They give it to them upfront and it is up to them to receipt then - because there's times you might go over your monthly allowance. So you have to wait

until the second month to work it back. So they've overcomplicated what could be a very...
[inaudible question]

>> They had a system that was working really well which was that you either opted for a vouched system or an unvouched system and you got the same amount every month if you opted for the unvouched, but obviously if it was vouched you could claim more, but people made that choice and it was completely without any hassle, as far as I'm aware. Never heard anybody complain about it. This is completely - you know, it's mind-boggling stuff in its detail.

>> I have to agree with you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Gerry Walsh coming in there?

>> Could you just put your mic on, sorry?

CLLR WALSH: References to the address, I mean our addresses are out there in the public domain, I don't see why we need to provide proof of address, everybody knows where we live, that is the reality. This whole process is unsatisfactory and unwieldy for everyone concerned. As Cllr O'Brien said there is a lack of trust not coming from the staff here but with everything we're supposed to provide, you know, receipts for stamps with addresses and stuff. Who of the poor staffers are going to give you a receipt for a few stamps? Anyway, it is what it is.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Vincent Blake.

>> Briefly this is the form we're talking about, all right, it must be submitted by 1 February, right?

>> Right.

>> So we have sent in all the documentation. This is duplication.

>> Absolutely.

>> It's duplication for us and you as well.

>> Yep.

>> But I would have to go back and talk to Teresa before... [Inaudible]. That's giving her extra work as well and time and everything else. I don't know whether we have to come back to verify what I've done if I don't fill out this form incorrectly at the end of the day.

>> It's our intention - I mean, Teresa is going to try and fill those forms out for each elected member which is a huge amount of work for her to do. It's 32 elected members and all of their receipts for the full year and broken down under 14 different categories.

>> Thanks, Teresa. Thanks.

>> So there is an awful lot. It is a huge amount. That is a full-time job.

>> It is, it's unreal.

>> Delegations, you know, from various topics, I think we should send a delegation from the protocol committee to meet this genius who put this thing together and sort it out.

>> Can I just make one last comment on it? We are stuck with the same system as the centres of the GDs because we are under a salary now same as whatever grade it is we're in the civil service as well.

>> Grade four.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr McManus?

>> Sorry, just a quick point. In terms of addresses being on receipts, and if then our receipts are - like I'm sure I missed something about if someone FOIs them. So I don't own the property that is my address, is my family home, and I would be - just there's a concern there, especially of late, and safety issues of public reps' houses. It's just something to consider that not everybody owns their property, it's not theirs. So for things to be sent - I use an office address. So if my family public address is going to become public I would need to have a chat with someone about that, so. Just a point to make.

>> Just to give some comfort, if we receive a freedom of information request we would never, ever, in any area, declare or release any personal information. So an elected member's address is the address that we have printed for them, it's on our website, that you have declared to us that's out there. If we get an invoice in with a different address on it that doesn't match up, we would consider that to be personal information to the elected member so we wouldn't release it.

>> Thanks very much, Helen, I appreciate that.

HELEN: Next on the agenda is the education and training. So January is as it was, and March is as it was as well. So February has just been added in. Modular housing in Ireland, which might be very interesting for everybody to attend at the Four Seasons in Carlingford and regions of focus is listed there for February and then protecting mental health as a public representative is on 3, 4 and 5 March. So if I could have a proposer and seconder? Yes, sorry, January had already been approved. I'm just looking at January, there's one on the 20th and 22nd but that was also approved at the last one. [Inaudible] just turn your mic on, sorry, for those remote?

>> Under the Association of Our Regions, the suggestion from EMRA was that training seminar comes out of your training budget. Do you have that or not?

HELEN: We haven't got that. I can have a look for it. Oh, that it comes out of the training budget instead of... OK, sure, I can have a look at that, yep. Can I have a proposer and seconder for the training? Cllr O'Brien.

>> Seconder, yep.

HELEN: Thanks. We've already talked about circular LG082022 so I think we've probably had enough discussion on that, unless there's any other specific questions? No. LG 09 of 2022 is good in that they're introducing maternity leave for councillors, the right to have a substitute in your place, administrative support and it also introduces sick leave for members which is long overdue as well. If I could just very quickly, under any other business, we would always come to the protocol committee to seek approval for the attendance of the Cathaoirleach or a representative at the St Patrick's Day Parade and in Bray it will be in Dublin, California, and Wicklow County Council will be attending New York. So if anybody is willing to propose and second the Cathaoirleach or the Cathaoirleach's representatives at both of those? Cllr Fortune, thank you. Seconder? John Mullet, thank you very much. Any other business? Everybody has lost the will! [inaudible question] No, there is an official launch outside of 5:30 so I'm sure they are waiting for you as well.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That is why I had to rush the meeting today members, I do apologise again, but I've done my best. So if anyone got frustrated with me, you were working with me and not against me and I appreciate that. I'll see you outside. Thank you very much. Thanks, Helen.

HELEN: Thank you.

>> Thanks.

(Meeting concluded)