

Wicklow County Council Meeting

03.04.23

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CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much for attending this afternoon's meeting I will and over to Helen to do roll call and ethics.

HELEN PURCELL: Good afternoon, I welcome the press and members of the public present with us and elected members who are remote. I ask elected members to keep cameras on, to keep phones and everything muted. If you have issues with connectivity, contact myself or Teresa to get you back into the meeting. We start with the Register Roll Call ...

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Helen for that.

HELEN PURCELL: We extend sympathies to the families of Joe Vickers, former colleague. Dudley Ainsley, brother of Tommy Ainsley. John McDonald, father of colleague, Noel McDonald.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

Counsellor Gayle Dunne, please?

CLLR GAYLE DUNN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, to give sympathy for Joe Vickers, knowing him for a long number of years in the council. A lovely man. Great, great family. It is very sad we lost Joe. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

Members, can we stand for a minute's silence, please.

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

CATHAOIRLEACH: First to confirm and sign the minutes of the order of the meeting, sorry, suspension of standing orders.

HELEN PURCELL: One suspension of standing orders. Submitted by Cllr Dermot O'Brien, seconded by Grace. Writing to propose suspension of standing orders to discuss and receive dates of the Chief Executive and the direct traits about the lifting of eviction ban and state of readiness of Wicklow County Council to respond to NTQs. There are a number of questions posed to deal with when we come to the suspension of standing orders.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Members, are we happy to take that at 4.30pm? OK. Thank you.

Now, item 1, to confirm and sign minutes of OM of Wicklow County Council held on March 6th, 2023.

Proposer Paul O'Brien, seconder, Cllr Aoife Flynn-Kennedy.

Item 2. To consider disposal of 1.223 acres in the townland of Tinakilly, Aughrim, Co Wicklow by way of 3yr lease 6th March 23 - 5th March 26 to Woodfab Timber Ltd. Proposed by Cllr Pat Kennedy, seconded by Cllr Pat Fitzgerald. Agreed. Thank you.

Item 3, to consider the disposal of 0.0281H in townland of Yardland, Co Wicklow comprised of Folio No WW4065 Co Wicklow, 6 Saint Columbas Terrace, Cool Greaney Rd, Arklow by Transfer Order to Brian McDonald and Marian McDonald, also known as Van Der Akker, of 6 Saint Columbas Terrace, Arklow, the persons entitled to freehold interest in the property.

Do I have a proposer? Cllr Pat Kennedy, seconded by Cllr Pat Fitzgerald. Thank you.

Item 4, to consider the disposal of 82 sq. m of property of Strand Road, Bray by way of 35yr sporting lease to Trustee of Bray Rowing Club, Strand Rd, Co Wicklow. Cllr Aoife Flynn-Kennedy proposed, seconded by Cllr Rory...

ERIKA DOYLE: Cathaoirleach. Can you hear me?

CATHAOIRLEACH: I can.

ERIKA DOYLE: A point of information on that. Can I just have a clarification on the nature of the lease there that it would not allow any situation in the future such as that with the Barracuda Building in Bray, to clarify that sporting lease will not allow any low-price purchase to take place in future years?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I will hand you over to Lorraine Gallaher now.

>> Clarity on this, normally we would not look for a new lease when looking for extension of time, only extension of time to the existing lease. The Bray Rowing Club has a 20-year lease, granted in May 2014 for 20 years, they need a longer-term lease in order to apply for

funding capital funding. There is a clause within the lease, Councillor Erika Doyle, to say within the existing lease, that will be within the sporting lease as well. That the premises can only be used for the purposes for which it is leased, which is for the facilities associated with the rowing club, the storing of boats, et cetera, all in the current lease. It is a sporting lease that premises, if they move or happen to use it for another reason, the premise reverts back to the Local Authority.

So, the Barracuda ...

ERIKA DOYLE: Thank you, Lorraine.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Erika Doyle happy with that clarification.

ERIKA DOYLE: I am, thank you, Chair.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Anyone else with questions or happy to go ahead? Thank you very much.

Item 5 is to consider the disposal of 0.2448Ha in Ballinameesda, Kilbride, Co Wicklow to legal representative of the late Jennifer Grogan deceased named as Alice Krabbe. Do I have a proposer for that, please? Cllr Pat Kennedy and Cllr Aoife Flynn-Kennedy. All agreed.

Thank you very much, members.

Item 6 on the agenda to consider the Wicklow County Council Capital Investment Programme 2023-2025. Brian, please?

CLLR O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. The plan covers as three-year period, 2023 to 2025, the projected expenditure across the plan is £624 million. The planned expenditure, over 75%, or £482 million is across housing and roads. The plan put forward has been funded by £45 million of development contribution, loans of £37 million. Grant aid, £534 million and other, funded through capital camp revisions and capital transfers from the revenue Budget, including funding from the generation of sales of lands and from public/private sector investment. The plan is an aspirational programme, dependent on Government approval for projects, allocation of grant aid, ability to secure and finance borrowings and the staff resources to manage and to deliver projects and the availability of contractors. It is a rolling programme, updated on a continuing basis. So, it is not really set in stone. What is presented here is a plan at a particular point in time. If a new funding scheme is announced tomorrow by the Government that could be added to the programme, an example would be the community recognition fund allowed in February, 1.7 million, obviously at the start of the year is not a part of the capital plan but now is include sod a rolling programme updated on the reasons. And for those reasons it is to note by the

members, it is not for approval as would be the case for the Revenue Budget. So that is a brief overview of the Capital Plan you have question, I am happy to take them.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Brian. Cllr Edward Timmins?

CLLR TIMMINS: A quick comments on the Capital Plan. I wonder if the figures with regards to the parks of £1 a,000 and 300,000 and nothing done in the parks so is it realistic to put in the figures. (Sound drop) ... and in the case of Dunlavin, people who operate in the area, are subject to enforcement proceedings as there is nowhere that they can operate anything in relation to industry, so I would like to see how realistic the figure is. Are there plans to do something in the locations? Secondly, the fire station, we were told four years ago that the million was allocated for a fire station in two quarks again, nothing has happened, they are still green field sites, are they going to happen this year, I see that they are in for this year and last year. There is 500 K for a swimming pool in Blessington, what is that to be sent on, do you know?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Derek Mitchell?

CLLR MITCHELL: Just to say that this year as in other years, I have. analysed it by the different Municipal Districts in which the capital is spent in, in previous years none was spent in Greystones district, expanding at a fast reality but I know at this time about 16% is to be spent there, which is a little less than the percentage but more even compared to other areas, in particular with the allowance there to build the Black Lion's Cycle Way and road and the enterprise centre so glad that the council is getting on with this and proposing to do something to try to help with the expansion of Greystones.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Joe Behan?

CLLR BEHAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

First of all, can I just ask in relation to a figure that is put in for Bray Municipal District, for the provision of a skate park ... there is a figure put in you can bear with me a second now, the figure is ... 250,000 euro.

Now, I would like to know how that figure came to be entered? Because there has been no party process with the regards to the proposed siting of the skate park, no agreement by the councillors and there is a lot of opposition to a site proposed by a number of members but not by the entire council. So, how is this project appearing in the Capital Plan, before either the public have been officially consulted or the members have made a decision on it? Is this, Cathaoirleach, another example of council officials making decisions and weight, or more or

less putting the councillors in the position but to have no option but to proceed with it? Somehow this figure ending up in the programme? That is the first question. Secondly, there is a figure mentioned for capital levy contribution, I think that Brian said 45 million. Can I ask how much money are we holding at the moment in terms of capital contribution, capital levies across the county? Is it possible for us to know, today, how much money we have gathered in as a result of all of the planning applications that have been approved by us and by An Bord Pleanála, up to dead? And what proportion of that spend is reflected in this particular expenditure plan? The next point is, it is amazing to me, that we never, ever seem to see a programme of footpath renewal works in this county.

Like, we talk a lot about people walking and getting out of cars and so on. I see new footpaths being built in all Municipal District, other than Bray. But, in Bray and in the town centres of all of the town, most footpaths are in a dreadful condition and need to be renewed.

What I have been told over the years, is that either the Roads Directorate or the Senior Management or maybe the Government have no interest in providing the funding for a complete renewal of footpaths but surely the time is for us in a Capital Programme to look at a renewal of the busiest footpaths in the county, which are the ones in the town centre, perhaps that is something that we can look at or is there a reason why it is never included in the programmes?

The last one is, perhaps I can bring it up under the Chief Executive's report, the figures for the M11/N11, which has been effectively stopped by the Minister for Transport and for Discover, and 5 million euro has been wasted ... on that particular project.

Why are there figures in the plan for that when we know it has been stopped by the minister? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Joe Behan, Cllr Gerry Walsh?

CLLR WALSH: Thank you, in relation to the plan, I welcome a lot of the projects highlighted in it, but it is unsatisfactory, really, that we are reliant on TII funding which is announced on a yearly basis with NTA funding and relying on staff resources. With a lot of the NTA schemes they depend on staffing and in the district that I represent in Greystones we are understaffed in terms of outdoor and engineering staff in particular but on Cllr Joe Behan's point to raise the same issue on the M11/N11 with the improvement scheme which we know is paused by TII another example of TII interference with the capital investment

programme. And on the road section, there is a chapel road Greystones and chapel road cycle project, two separate figures we need explanation, is it one and the same or is it two separate projects? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Dermot O'Brien? Cllr D O'Brien in the environmental services section, one query, it is amazing to see the volume and the scale, and the scope and I appreciate that they are talking of the ambition of this as a plan but in the recycling centres, line, 2.5 million for others, I wonder is the "other" is that charges? Is that where that other fund is coming from? That's all, Cathaoirleach. Thank you.

Thank you very much. Cllr Miriam Murphy?

CLLR MURPHY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

Yeah, I just want to echo the comment that Cllr Joe Behan has said about the footpaths, every Municipal District is literally scraping, and I mean scraping coins, nearly, to do all footpaths that have sank, broken up, whatever. In my mind, it is a huge health and safety issue. Some of these footpaths have not been done in the last 13, 14 years, and maybe longer in the older estates. For me it is a health and a safety aspect. I am wearing my wheelchair friendly hat when I say this, I am informed from my experience, I have to get off the road in some parts and in the main strips coming into Arklow, where it should be looking nice, that the footpaths are broken up. I am sure it is no different elsewhere. We are scraping money, and we have a Budget on hold until next year, this is not good enough. It is just not good enough. I would like to know, is there claims or have there been ever claims of, you know, health and safety, liability, through the faults of the footpaths. It is a serious problem, saying we skip over it and get it done next year but it is a problem for everybody. Everybody. You know, not just people with disabilities but the elderly, toddlers, children and parents with small children. It is really, really dangerous. Really dangerous. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Miriam Murphy. councillor Rory O'Conner.

>> I notice that the former housing scheme has its own section and great to see a breakdown of how much we may be spending over the next few years but where exactly is the cost rental break down for the next few years? If it is in the new schemes section it seems very small to me, considering it is one of the biggest things in Housing for All. And a question about the decreasing amount of money from the approved housing bodies. Approved housing bodies and the purchases of part five's are both those that are going

down after 2023. I just wanted to figure out why that is happening as they seem the only two sections which are going down quite a lot.

That's all. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. That is all of the questions. Brian, would you like to take them? Sorry, one more councillor, Councillor Peir Leonard? Pierre so, just, I suppose that it is just, I'm four years on, still not 100% sure on how a lot of these investments schemes and I know it is probably decided by the directors, I suppose that the question I ask is, how do councillors as representatives of the public voice input into where do these projects come out of is what I am asking? How can the councillors input more into where this money is invested into our own local communities, I see lots of gaps in this now, for projects that are needed in my local community that are not on the list. I wonder how can we be a part of this process. Thank you.

Thank you, Councillor Peir Leonard. Brian?

>> I will answer that, a project of a particular nature you feed to the relevant directorate. If it is a roads project you look to fund, it is notified to Leonora and then it is considered. Many road projects are funded by TII so applications are made to the particular bodies for funding, this is an element under roads where we fund our own projects through our own development contribution, so could be looked at in relation to that.

Councillor Mitchell would have had experience and notified and with regards to Chapel Road, a number of projects on the road sections from Greystones, I would have brought to the attention of the relevant directors, that is the process going forward. But the likes of housing, it would be obviously, you have a fixed grant allocation for a scheme, so no, I suppose, wriggle room there but for areas such as roads or community development, et cetera there will be that you can make a submission or a communication with the relevant director of that particular area.

If I can take the questions, Cllr Edward Timmins, and Dunlavin, no plans there but keeping the line of expenditure open. In the future, in the future there is interest shown in the areas with a line of expenditure for servicing, or roads and works so forth for the works done in the areas. The lines have always been included in the capital plan. Over the previous years, there is no immediate expenditure planned for this year. I think we just have not a provision of, 150,000 or 50,000, in the future years, just to, in cakes I suppose, any demands come up in the particular areas.

Regarding the -- in case, I inspectors demands come up in the particular areas. Regards the Fire Service, there are timelines at the moment, I know that the Chief Fire Officer is happy with the timelines that are in place. Blessington swimming pool, this is an example, I will cross over to Cllr Joe Behan's point, about the figures being put in, decisions have not been made, it is an aspirational plan, in the example of the bless tonne swimming pool. It is a high-agenda item, talked about, with plans and discussions in relation to it but no final decision has been made. A provision has been made of about 500,000 possibly in the first year, that will be for the consultancy work to do a feasibility study, no decision is made in relation to that, but we have put in an amount. Obviously grant funding is forthcoming from the relevant department in order to progress that. So, given that it is, I suppose, it is an item on the agenda for a considerable amount of time, that is why it is in the capital plan. I suppose it is the same in relation to the skate park, no part 8, no decision is made but the issue is on the agenda so it is flagged for the members it will be coming up in due course. That's the rational for including these items, they are aspirational figures.

In relation to other areas, the development contributions, at the end of this year, we will probably have 72 million of development contribution, 45 million is included in the plan. Of that 72 not all is collected there is always an element that depending on when a development has been completed, and finalised, that the payments are made and collected in stage but, what has been invoiced is 72 million, so that is the figure we are working off.

The issue of footpaths, this is an issue that is raised in the chamber before. I know previously we have had funding from IPB, which was directed to footpath path repair, by the Director of Roads. But there is no specific footpath allocation coming from the department or the TII or NTA, so something that we have to fund ourselves. We discussed with the Management Team to put together a scheme ourselves probably from our own resource, so arranging a meeting in that over the coming weeks, identify something. Obviously, as I said before, any decision made in relation to that, that can be added into the Capital Plan as it is a rolling programme. So, it is something that we will have to fund ourselves going forward.

The N11, there is a small amount of funding in there for payments to the residual payments to the consultants. And also, I suppose we want to keep that line of expenditure open. As we have said, the project is paused, it is not cancelled, we are still in discussions with the department, with TII, so, as far as we are concerned it is still on the agenda, we are going to push for that particular project. In relation to Cllr Gerry Walsh and Chapel Road, they are

two separate projects. The smaller amount is in relation to residual payments in relation to works done by Durkin's around a housing development a while ago. The larger project is identified there, I think it is 15 or 16 million.

Cllr O'Brien in relation to environmental services, the recycling centres, we have 500,000, I think, in a Capital Account, to cover probably works to be done to Bray recycling Centre, which is getting to a stage that is urgent. We have a provision and further works to our recycling centres will be subject to identifying a source of funding. If that is fees or if it is a capital transfer provision within the revenue account, that will have to be decided but at the moment we have only 500,000, enough to do Bray but, as I say, further funding will have to be identified in order to roll out that capital investment programme.

In relation to the housing questions, I may pass on to Joe, if he does not mind to cost rental and the housing body.

>> The improved housing bodies is to affect the schemes in Greystones this year. The rest of the calculation of the other two years which is Greystones or high, and will be based of 150 units a year, 30 periods, in the revenue count ... the two schemes in Greystones with 2,000 bodies. What is in there is affordable housing purchase. If we have cost rental, or we have any changes, that will change next year, but at the moment, the schemes are linked to PPP, and there will be 25 or 26 if there is changing in the cost rental rather than the LDL doing a cost rental change next year. It's a rolling programme. The drop in purchases again, this year, it is high because the purchases, no particular scheme that is dealing Greystones home at the moment reflects the 30 target which may answer later on, we have a target of 30 this year, so that is in it for this year and that scheme is high relative to the next two years. The next two years will reflect a standard programme. It's not their job starting from a high base.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. I have two more speakers. Cllr Avril Cronin.

>> Thanks very much. A quick question following on from the reply in Cllr Timmins in relation to the land in Dunlavin. You said it will depend on demand. I know the council have been approached numerous times in relation to the council yard. The council yard is between the two schools and the development of the school. The whole purpose over the next two years will be a big dealt in the secondary school, and I know part of the council yard is going to go into that school, but the long-term plan is to move the council yard down to those lands in Milltown, and the council cannot hand over that land until the council yard

has been moved down to Milltown. There is a demand for it, and I'm just wondering is there any plans to develop that for the council yard in order to progress with the school? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Joe Behan.

>> I want to respond to what Brian said there about the footpaths programme. So am I to understand then that there are a group of people at the top table are going to decide whether we have such a scheme or not. Surely we as the elected representatives who pass the capital levies scheme should have an input into that decision. From what I've heard so far, the number of people who said they would be in favour of a foot path renewal scheme in the town centres. So can I clarify who — is this a decision going to be made by people at the top rather than the members who are elected? Cathaoirleach, can I have clarification on that, please.

>> We need to identify the source of funding across each municipal district. If we have a plan that comes forward, we present it to the members. As I said, this is a collective decision-making process here. In fairness, there is an issue as we said. We got funding which is no longer available and we have to identify another source of funding, and that is what we are going to do. If there is a planned programme of works to be done, we can do it that way. Now I am aware in Bray, you use party or discretionary funding for repair recently. That's an option as well. We might look at a combination of developed levies and discretionary fund as well. As I said, the initial, if you let me finish, Councillor, the initial stage of the process would be to discuss it with the roads section, discuss it with the municipal districts, identify what the requirements are in each of the districts, identify the sources of funding, and put together a programme. We can bring it to the members. That is no problem.

>> There is a crying need to update, upgrade the footpaths in the town centres in all of the municipal districts. If the director could stop talking about identifying sources of funding be with we have it here. 72 million is sitting in our accounts. Sorry, if I could finish. We need this work done. As far as I'm concerned, it should be done. We should not be waiting around saying where else are we going to get the money. We already know we are getting it anywhere else. When you talk about Bray, that was hard-earned money we to her the from other roads and discretionary projects. A lot of money has come into this council from Bray on capital levies and not spent in the municipal district. This is a golden opportunity for us to upgrade the footpaths in all of the towns and villages in our county, and we should take that

opportunity, and we should not be waiting around any more to do it, Cathaoirleach. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr J Walsh.

>> Just to make the point in relation to the suggestion that discretionary funds will be used for, the municipal meeting last week, and the members would not support such a measure, and I mean I just want to make the point as well that the discretionary fund comes our LPT increase, and not all members in the chamber are on the district supported that increase. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Miriam Murphy.

>> Yes, this topic is quite hot. Can I say from the districts, and from sitting in Arklow, like I mean how much of a research will be put into repairs and how long will that take? We can't wait another two years. We can't wait another year for some of the footpaths to be repaired. And properly repaired. Like, you know, I mean, it is not a long shot, it's going to be left on the table, you know, I think you can see from the mood in the chamber, you don't need to be in the chamber to feel it, that this is quite a serious area. We are stopping and staying, oh, you know, we are paying our taxes, and we are paying this, and whatever. We are not even getting the footpaths repaired. This needs to be prompt, but, I mean, a lot of or classical winter research of where ... and there should not be a priority of one less over the other, either. That's the way things work. But that should not be the case in this area. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

>> Thank you, Cathaoirleach, it's an issue I've raised on a number of occasions. Cllr Behan is going on about town centres but my problem in my area is that a lot of the housing estates now, especially the older housing estates, the foot faggots now are in a state of disrepair, and we go looking for money saying — there's no way it should come out of discretionary money in my opinion. We need a fund for foot path repairs in the county. It's really important that we have it. On the other side of things, with these footpaths, when they are in a state of disrepair, the problem we have is we are going to have claims against us, so it is really important that we do an audit of footpaths within the county, get the money to fund them and do the job.

>> A couple of years ago, I asked that we, and this is a mammoth task, that the development levies that we collect every year that we get sight of what those development levies are spent on, and I know that that is a huge task, but I think from the point of view of

accountability and us understanding where all this money is going, it is a task that we should commence, and it will reveal a lot. It is obviously a very, very difficult task to track all that money, and where it's gone, but we have no sight of what, how much development levies are collected each year and what it is spent on, and where it is sitting. I would ask that we look at the planning SPCs of a couple of years ago, ask that we look at accounting for all the development levy money that was collected over the years. Some of it may be payable back to people, people often got special levies for parking outside their premises, and parking spots were never put, you know, money back in that. I think it is a task we should look at to try to get a handle on where all the development levy money has gone.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Brian, do you want to come back in here?

>> Members, I'm not disagreeing with you on this proposal. I've just suggested that is the plan of action. But we do have to actually put a figure on it. We have to talk to the road section, we have to talk to the municipal districts to actually identify how much works are required in each of the municipal districts and then we can put forward a proposal in relation to what we are going to spend on development levies. I will point out that the development levy use is for enhancement and upgrade work as opposed to basic repairs. That's why you might have to look at another area of funding for basics repairs versus upgrade or a place of work on footpaths, so hence the reason why we have to sit down and discuss it. But we will bring that back to the members with our questioning, because I think there's agreement across the board between the executive and the members that something has to be done in the future, and, in the year future, so definitely this year we will look at bringing in a scheme to the satisfaction of all the municipal districts in this area.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Brian. Number 7 on the any ... sorry. Oh.

Apologies.

>> The question I asked in relation to the ...

>> I'm not overly familiar with the Council Yard in Dunlavin, councillor, so unless Lorraine, or ... we can get back to it on that. That there is a provision in the capital plan anyway. That will cover any proposed works in that area. I'm just saying we can come back to you on that, but we could say there is an expenditure line in the capital plan anyway, so that would cover any potential works that are required in that site, okay? Yes. Yes.

>> Can I add to that, Cathaoirleach, Councillor, any works to do with the strategic land bank would start a massive planning process, so we haven't commenced any master planning process in relation to those two sites.

>> I understand that, but if you do have funding in here, as part of Europe plan, and there is a demand for land in the area, surely that can be looked at and that is something that you can look at. The land is there. It is a matter of transferring the council yard from where it is now to the new site. I know that you do obviously need services for the workers that work in the council yard, and I'm very conscious of that. But I do think it will be a huge benefit to the community if we could look into that, and then it would free up the lands that is currently there, but the council is, and it would make that one whole education campus between the primary school and the secondary school, and I know that the secondary school have approached the council on numerous times, and they've met with our engineer, and I know that I've raised, I know a number of our councillors have raised it as well. If you could look into it and get back to me, that would be brilliant.

>> We will discuss that with the municipal district and get back to you. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Number 7: to consider filling the vacancy to the County Wicklow tourism board arising from the resignation of Cllr Murphy from this district.

>> Every other municipal district is represented on the tourism committee. If the proposal could come from the Arklow MD area, please?

>> Cllr Fitzgerald, do you have a proposal? No.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

>> Cllr Kennedy, can you take your seat, please? No, that's

>> ... last community meeting, and Mr Councillor Kennedy received that nomination.

>> He forgot to tell us, but he was nominated.

CATHAOIRLEACH: He told me but I was equivalent the cue ...

>> You proposed Cllr ... nomination.

>> Can I just clarify who is proposing and seconding.

>> Cllr Fitzgerald is proposing and Cllr Murphy. Are you happy to second your colleague?

>> Yes.

>> Are you happy to accept Cllr Kennedy?

>> If he can be on the desk here.

>> Thank you very much, Cllr Kennedy. Moving swiftly on, number 8: to consider and adopt — that's all right, Helen? Yes. To consider and adopt all the draft Wicklow county council annual service delivery plan.

>> The plan has been circulated to the members. There's an awful lot of detail in it. Just want to point out one typo, two typos, actually, on page 61. The number of safety measures to schools is three in the final column and the number of low-cost safety improvements is ten. The adoption of the annual service delivery plan is reserved function under the local governmental format of 2014, and each local authority is obliged to prepare and adopt a plan. The plan sets out the objectives and performance standards for the council service delivery areas for 2023. In appendix 2, you can see the baseline data, the 2022 outputs, and the 2023 targets, so there's an awful lot of useful information in it. Appendix one refers to the performance indicate I began to realise of the National Oversight and Audit Committee. I need a proposer and if there are any seconders on it?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Paul O'Brien proposed, Cllr Pat Fitzgerald seconded. All agreed, yes?
Sorry, Cllr Behan.

>> I want to make an observation, I printed it off and read it, believe it or not. It is a very, very lengthy detailed document, and I really think it is a pity that we are just proposing and seconding, and that's it, because it is one of our reserve functions. And there is a huge amount of detail in it, including targets and whether we are meeting the targets, in our opinion. You know, and like you could look at the housing targets for instance, and what we are hoping to achieve when it comes to housing, and H4 "Provide a comprehensive response to homelessness in County Wicklow in line with government policy in partnership with our relevant agencies and stakeholders." Like are we providing comprehensive response? I have no doubt that the director and all of the staff that are currently in housing are doing everything they possibly can to provide a comprehensive service. That is not the point. The point is do we have the resources? Have we the people, the personnel? Have we got the ability to say what we are saying we are going to do here? And I know we are going to have the suspension of the standing order, so I don't want to trespass on that discussion. But I would say in my experience, of dealing with people who are homeless or about to be made homeless, we have serious gaps to fill. Particularly in terms of short staffing. We have to face if we as an organisation is fit for purpose to deliver the housing we proposed to deliver. If we agree with this, that's it, we've just accepted it. We were not really looking

into the detail of are we capable, and what do we need to change this? There are so many different areas. There is one on housing. I don't have it with the idea of being passed, Cathaoirleach, but at some point we should drop anchor on this particular report. I think it should be printed and given to all members rather than just trying to race through it on a laptop, or whatever in five minutes, because it is quite weighty. It should have a — and perhaps at a different council meeting every month for the next few months, each there are will go through what their targets are, and how they feel they're meeting them. ...

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Grace McManus.

>> I would concur with Cllr Behan has said there. Because what jumped out at me when I read the report was, and it is just an example in terms of the fire service, and the increase of output that has been delivered but also the increased targets, and I would be concerned particularly from the perspective about the additional resource that is are needed for that output, and the pressure on the staff that we have there, and we have had many discussions about the issues with the retained fire service in Bray, so I think Cllr Behan's right, if it is not for us today to dig into the detail of this, it is for us — I'm sure every councillor here could point to each section and give positive feedback or helpful feedback to yourselves, about this plan. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Colour rain, please?

>> Cathaoirleach, just to say that this annual service plan is part of the elected members' oversight function. It flows from the high-level objectives by the COP plan which can be reviewed by the elected members at any time. We will have a new plan, preparing a new plan in 2024. Just to say that the council will also subject to 44 no-act performance indicators and we are monitored as a sector under various elements, one of them being housing, so just to mention that to you, to the members.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Is that okay, Cllr Behan? Every councillor agrees with your theory behind it, and I would support the presentation from each director to read through it. But thank you very much. Cllr Edward Timmins.

>> This document is probably more important in the budget, and we give a full day to the budget, and, you know, this would give more to the substance of what is going on in Wicklow County Council. This document is more relevant to our — to us here than even the budget is.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Lorraine?

>> We can take that on board. I'm assuming it's agreed, and we will take the collective members — set back to the management team and discuss it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Okay. Number 10 to consider the ...

>> Missed number nine.

>> Getting ahead of myself. To note the county council annual report 2022. Copy attached.

>> This is the draft report. It is brought to the members under section 221 of Local Government Act. It will be changed when the annual financial statement is adopted, and that is consideration of the meeting of 8th May, and the performance indicators, Lorraine mentioned, are due to be submitted to NOAC by Friday 21st April this year, so again they will feed into an appendix in the annual report as well. This is purely a draft bringing it to the attention of the members, and the finalised annual report will be listed as an agenda item for your adoption at the meeting of the 12th June.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Dermot O'Brien?

>> Thanks, Cathaoirleach, just to point out maybe an he had equipment for Helen, or I don't know whether to congratulate Cllr O'Neill and Snell for coming back into the fold or apologise they are still associated with my party in the annual report.

>> Those apologies are ...

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, councillors. Not much I can say about that. Well spotted Cllr O'Brien, okay? Number 10, now: to consider the Chief Executive's monthly management report. Thank you.

>> Thank you, I will take the report as read by the members. There are 80-plus pages in it. To draw your attention I suppose to the built heritage fund for Wicklow, and the announcement of 101,000 for funding for buildings in Wicklow, and there are 19 projects which can be considered there. I suppose as well we had one of the first events as Chief Executive to attend the Long Service awards for staff, important occasions for service, staff with service of 20, 35 and 40 years respectively, and your first official event post-surgery, great to see you there, with all the staff. I suppose just to go back to a couple of points raised before I hand over to the directors or yourselves for questions, on the budgetary process on the capital programme I'm keen to engage with you all on that in future — about how we go about forming the plan for the future. It's my intention to meet with each group a couple of times during the year, so that if there is anything arising in your party area, or in

your municipal area that you want to bring to my attention, that we can look at future-proofing for future capital plans. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Chief Executive. This is like an airport all these lights on the screen. But at least I can see them, it's great. Cllr Edward Timmins, please.

>> I will be brief. As I bring up every month, the RDF ... glass we met with officials here this morning. We just ask that this be given priority and we see some I would like to urge that that continues, because words no longer cut it, it is action that we have to see. The other thing is I brought up about the vacant homes being listed on the reports which, thankfully, has been done now since January, but just a stand-out figure in March was, it went up to 143 from 116 in February, an increase of 27 houses, which seems a pig number. Is there any particular explanation for that? Bray went up 21 and Wicklow by nine. Wondering why the vacant home total has gone from 11 from the end of February, to 143 end of March. The tenant purchase scheme, only quarter is successful of loan approvals, I wondered why any reason why that is so low? Do vacant homes, certainly, it's a big thing. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr Walsh?

>> Thank you to the Chief Executive for the report. Firstly on the housing section, looking at the figures of the housing list, I take it that is a typo, the February 2023 figure of 2720. I take it that should be four. There is no figure there for... either. Then moving on to the arrears figure again, this is with great disappointment, I see that figure moving northwards rather than the opposite direction. I thought measures were being put in place to address that. Wondering what are the issues here, and how come it's continuing to get to higher and higher on a monthly basis? Again, and also the 60% accession rate to the boiler maintenance, I know raised at the last meeting, and the potential environmental damage and worse associated with this, and again would like an explanation as to why is this is happening. And just CCTV, community CCTV in Greystones, another matched funding and everything has been approved. What is the situation with that application? It is, sought answers for this on a number of quarters and can't find out where it stands because it's been in the system for a number of years now. Blessington I see are up and running, and they would have started behind us. So just an explanation on that. And finally, the short-term letting files I see under investigation to 53. I know it's a responsibility of the enforcement, it's the responsibility of the RTB, just wondering: the responsibility of the local authority around this and the staffing, have we enough staff to monitor this? What exactly

is our role? I see the files are under investigation, but that is obviously everything that is happening around housing, this is an important area. Finally, the long-service awards, I attended the ceremony in Arklow, and again well done to all of the staff members who received awards on the night, at in particular to our own John in the Greystones municipal district of 50 years. Phenomenal achievement. Well done. 40 years, should I say. 50, sorry! 25, 40, 50 were the three award categories. John was the 50. The only one. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Paul O'Brien.

>> Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and to the Chief Executive for the report. On page 35 in terms of tourism, I think we all agree in the county town we have a beautiful little seaside down with huge potential that we are starting to tap into. There's been great work done here in terms of the market square, Fitzwilliam Square, and we now have the Abbey grounds which we are getting under way. But the problem for a county town is again no hotel. Now, I'm aware that the council can't build hotels and I'm not here looking today for the council to build a hotel, but part of the key priorities on your report is the development of new accommodation. So I'm looking for maybe a commitment here today that you'll sit down with myself and colleagues in the Wicklow municipal area which are planners to see if we can identify a site, have a hotel in our county town. I know I was working with your predecessor, prion, there before, about an ... park in Wicklow and it is progressing. That is something we can do and do quite rapidly. The one complaint I have from people is they want to visit Wicklow town but they have nowhere to stay. I'm looking for that commitment here today if possible.

>> Cllr Derek Mitchell.

>> Thank you, yes, it's about offshore windfarms, and I notice it lists the offshore windfarms in the county, or off the county's coast. But it doesn't mention Dublin or Wray which is of Bray and Greystones which has been in consultation for a long time. I think it should. All of them need to be assessed. I twice asked at this point in the meeting for, about an issue to do the offshore windfarms but haven't got a reply, and all these windfarms are being allowed very close to the, to be allowed very close to the shore, and there is no combined assessment of the visual impact of these. They are essentially along the complete coast of County Wicklow, and much closer than would be allowed in other jurisdictions. Now, we do need to get on with windfarms, and, if these are refused, it will put back an essential

national programme by years, but my view is that there needs to be a substantial visual gap left between these windfarms so they don't merge,

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: distinct the council has to take charge of this as no other body seems to do so. I note in the land or the county development plan there is a section on wind farms that I think that the council is obliged to have that indicates that certain areas are favourable and less favourable, and various categories but the visual impact, where they merge and are not assessed by anyone competing to build these things needs to be assessed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cllr Derek Mitchell. Cllr Cronin?

CLLR CRONIN:

Thank you very much, three points to raise in relation to public lighting, it has been raised at many times and I raised it at the Municipal District meeting as well. There is a huge problem across the county trying to get public lighting fixed, I don't know if it is a problem with the contractors or what is the delay but there are important lights out of action and we wait months for them to get fixed. We are getting calls constantly and it looks as if Wicklow County Council, us as the councillors are not doing our job. At the end of the day we cannot change the lights ourselves but is there anything that the council can do to rectify the issue? As I said it has been brought up time and time again, it is about time we do something as a council with regards this supplier we are using and the issues we are having. If we are paying for a product or a service, we should be getting it. And in this case, we are paying for a service and we are certainly not getting it. Another issue, to bring up, is that we previously had a scheme, a Streetscape Scheme that was successful in the towns and the villages, I wonder if there are schemes coming up along the lines to help towns and villages to improve the outside of the buildings? A lot of the Tidy Towns community groups are trying their best to improve the aesthetics of towns and villages but wonder if this is a scheme coming up like the Streetscape Scheme? Or if it is expanded to other towns and villages, I know the last time it was limited to areas where it would apply and the last point is in relation to vacant properties. We have a number of them my district, this are 26 there. And some of the properties vacant for almost two years, it is frustrating for people on the housing list looking at these properties boarded up and surely there should be some urgency as to get the properties back in a liveable state to get families in them. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cllr Avril Cronin. Chief Executive, can you contribute to the questions?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: To come in on the overall firstly, in relation to the RDF in Baltinglass, yes, we have had a focused couple of sessions internally amongst the executive. And my approach to the likes of the RDF projects or projects of scale is to have an interdepartmental team to work closely inside to ensure we don't drop the ball, I hope you will see progress on the ground soon on that project, this have been redoubled efforts under the post of Leonora and there should be a benefit to the council on that. Vacant homes is an issue, certainly. I am in discussions with the department of housing to see if we can release funding to allow us to accelerate the repair programme, you are right, the housing situation we are in at the moment, it is not great to see the numbers going up on vacancy, we should be driving the numbers down to get families into homes as quickly as possible. Cllr D O'Brien on the hotel conversation, no problem, we will arrange a meeting with you and whoever else from the MD on that, and off-shore wind, Cllr Derek Mitchell, yep, it comes under the Marine Planning side of things but I will talk to the colleagues within the department to look at the visual amenity piece, I understand what you say about the gap of the segregation of the wind farms, you are right, the whole of the Irish Sea could be full of wind farms, I will hand over for the community funding and the street scape schemes.

>> Thank you. Two questions concerning me, is the Streetscape fund it was a one off scheme, not extended, it was popular but not extended and no indication we will have it extended there is a list of schemes but that was not on the list. So assuming it will not be run this year. If it changes I will keep you informed. With regards to the CTPP [inaudible] it has been a long time ... there were issues with the regards to the GDPR with control perspective, trying to resolve it, we are close to resolving it, we have had meetings and I believe movement has been found so I hope to get it back on track shortly. It has been hanging around a few years, it was ready to go, we were waiting for a signature but expecting that signature shortly.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, to bring in Lorraine for a second.

LORRAINE GALLAGHER: To a follow on to the Dublin Array, the Bray Municipal District are having a presentation with the consent manager and the community liaison officer for Dublin Array, so we will circulate that after the meeting.

>> In relation to the public lighting, and it is an ongoing challenge, there has been improvement from February to March with lights being repaired. There is a presentation coming in to the senior staff at the Wicklow County Council, and we are using that opportunity to explain frustrations with the period of time it is taking to make repairs and engaging with the contractors but if there is a particular area ongoing a long time, let me know, I will look into it myself.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Leonora. Joe Lane?

JOE LANE: Two questions with regards cake ant homes we are conscious of the numbers. The Bray numbers in particular will go up, so will Greystones will expect more as the two bigger schemes kick in. There will be relets ... [sic] we attempted to right size in Bray of last year, and that did create and will create a problem in their Budget. We are conscious of that.

Some of them, we have asked for a particular specific allocation for 4-5 units with the areas [sic] in the absence of that, with a drop off of houses, if we continue with a few of the particularly bad units it will skew the Budget and four units will be taken out of the 20% of the Budget. So it is challenging but partly because of the sheer volume of new units we are creating and attempting to right size and Bray, in particular, good news but it creates its own difficulties afterwards [sic] the representatives, I noted that February would be the accruing was high, so if we wait for March we will have a better report but the March should improve. But there is a timing with February. That is not favourable to the arrears. We are looking at it and will have a better feel in March. The [inaudible] they are conscious that we make efforts, it is in nobody's interest to have access to our properties. And I will look at the social housing support list with the wording included there, and bear in mind there are new regulations so although we are improving housing, there are no regulation regarding to the bands so that may account for that but I will come back to you with regards to the wording included.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Joe. Can I bring in councillor Rory O'Conner.

>> It is believed by the statistics office that one in 25 homes are vacant and reading an article that not a single council in the country has looked into having extra stuff for that funding even though it is available. So why is that the case? I read it in the Irish Examiner, if you wish to check it out, so what is happening there.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Joe Behan?

CLLR BEHAN: A few query, firstly my monthly query with regards to the M11/N11 as the Chief Executive, is there news from the Department of Transport, /TI and the attitude from the minister of transport on the works to develop and to improve the N11/N11. It bears repeating in every meeting, 5 million worth of taxpayer's money has been wasted as this minister decided to put that project on hold ... now, we have asked before, I proposed, it was agreed that the Chief Executive of TII be invited to a meeting here. The acting Chief Executive said he was meeting him, we met the minister, fine, the minister more or less ignored our comments. I would like the Chief Executive of TII to this meeting. So that we can go into this in a little more detail to give the Chief Executive time to brief herself on it. It is scandalous. If you look last week at the traffic jams on the way northwards in the morning, southwards in the evening in the Bray, in Kilmacanic [sic], it is scandalous, thousands of people stuck in cars, up and down the M/N11 and Government told us to throw out 5 million Euros of taxpayers money as a Green Party minister refused to acknowledge [inaudible] so something that we have to keep a strong focus on and I would like to see the next step that TII are coming here we discuss it with hem. With regards to the N11, have we decided on the noise abatement measures are to be for the residents that live besides the parallel road? With regards housing, I know we will be discussing this but things that must be highlighted with regards to our housing delivery programme and the housing provision. Former councillor Vince [sic] is here, elected in 1991 and 1995 as a member of the last council in Bray Municipal District we passed a programme to develop housing for older people on the parallel road in Bray, so that was in the last council. Was handed over to one of the approved housing body and we have zilch. Nothing happened. There were two projects to be passed, 2019, if not 2020, handed over to approved housing bodies and nothing has happened. So, these were processes a passed but have not moved. We have to get to grips with the delivery issues if we are serious to tackle the housing problem and I appreciate an update from the housing Director as to what is happening to the schemes and finally, is there someone in this council who goes after contractors to get the contract to development schemes to leave deficient work after them and after the year is up, like for example a particular scheme when a boiler burst, a person's floor destroyed and I have tried and spoken to a number of housing officials in the council about the issue, the family left completely without help and I still cannot get an answer on how it is to be dealt with, two years later! Do we have someone I can go to ask about this? I am fed up of going back to this

unfortunate family, with flooring sitting at the side of their sitting room as no-one can help them? Now, it is just not good enough. I would like an answer on those. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Joe Behan, Counsellor Gayle Dunne?

CLLR GAYLE DUNN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, the one issue, probably not directed to the Director Nicholson, it is great we got an email late last week to say that the situation in Ashford, the playground in Ashford is not resolved. And I am wondering is there an update. I see he is calling for maybe an alternative site, is it a case now that news the Municipal District maybe have to go looking for another site in Ashford? It is very disappointing what has happened. This playground is very much a community-based playground, beside the schools, a lot of children have used it. Over the last number of months as it is closed they are unable to use it. I'm sure that myself and many other councillors in the area will have received the emails about this, wondering when it will be open. Unfortunately it looks like it will not open. So we need an up-to-date on what is going on, how we can as a Municipal District look on it, and what can we do? Ashford deserve as playground, needs a playground and the kids have been really let down on the issue. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Counsellor Gayle Dunne. Cllr Grace McManus. ... sorry, Cllr Shay McMullen?

CLLR MCMULLEN: We have been doing our best to resolve the problems on the playground. We are on to plan B hopefully the officials take it serious in trying to find another location, I know that they will do that. Staying with Ashford, chairman, I really look for a clarification on a concerning point that has come to me, that a site known as Clan Mannon Village in Ashford has been suggested and I want clarification on this, to be used to house refugees ...? This has not come to our district, there has been no communication. I suppose that I want to know from the directors, and from the Chief Executive, are there plans to develop this site for refugees? If so, what are the plans? This is a very, very remote location. In terms of the councillors, and the communication, we had a meeting recently with IPAZ in terms of the Grand Hotel site. We clearly told them that we were less than happy with the lack of engagement with the elected members on the Grand Hotel site. The, basically, ignored our pleas for meeting, and I'm very fearful that this could be another situation where IPAZ maybe together with the council are planning something without letting us know what exactly is going on. I'm all for developing housing, I have never voted against housing at all but this situation is far from straightforward. As I said, there has been

absolutely no communication. I don't know if this is to house Ukrainian refugees or asylum seekers, I have no idea but I would urge that we get clarification on the issue as a matter of urgency if it is the case of what I am saying.

I will leave it at that for the moment.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Shay Cullen. Cllr Grace McManus?

CLLR MCMANUS: A question around the home improvement adaptation grants for older people or people with disabilities. It seem there is are 142 open application, some carried out from 2021, which seems like if they are open applications and people are waiting over, what, two years, to now, I think it is maybe is there an issue there? 142, how long will it take for them to be dealt with and decided on? If there is a plan there is a backlog, what is the plan to move it forward quickly? We have had the launch of the strategy to look after our older people in the county, so I think it is something that I would like clarity on, to Zoom in on a little bit as 142 open applications seems there is an issue there. But I would like to hear a comment on. It.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Chief Executive? On Clan Mannon Village ... or did you want to take this, Michael?

>> I take the playground. Members of the council know we have a very poor record in opening play grounds, we have 35, 36 play grounds open, it is the first time in a history that a playground has ever closed. We didn't close it. Despite the best efforts, the resolution of that is not happening quickly enough for us.

The community have been without a playground now since September, October. We can't, we just can't keep continuing to wait and wait. So we are looking at alternatives. I appreciate it if a member of the Wicklow County Council area, knows of a site in the Ashford area that may be suitable, to talk to us, to let us know. We can't keep talking about this, we have to make a decision. To be frank, if we were to get that playground open tomorrow, it would not be safe. As you know, we have to inspect that equipment every week, there has been no inspection since last October. If it were open tomorrow, we would have to replace all of the equipment so we may as well look for a new site. So, any assistance we will prioritise it, we are not happy about the situation but it is what it is, we have to move on. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: To the Chief Executive?

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: In relation to Clan Mannon, we have no approach from IPAZ or any other inquiries. I will be concern fundamental there were plans made about talking to a member of the council or elected member so I will pursue that. The M/N11 there is a meeting with the department this week with the officials here. If the members want, we will write to the Chief Executive of TII to invite them to the meeting if that is in agreement of the members. I will then pass you over to Leonora and then Joe.

>> Cllr Joe Behan at the moment we have no indication that the department that the money for the M/N11 is reinstated. We have a meeting Monday week, perhaps we can discuss a delegation to TII to agree of the elected members who can attend and the items that they would raise with TII, so happy to put it on to the agenda for the SPC. With regards noise, the consultants are working on the measures to be put in place to, in relation to the noise mitigation. The senior engineer for Wicklow County Council met with the residents. He plans to meet again with them shortly to discuss progress on the measures that have been made but it is happening at the moment and funding is made available by TII first.

Thank you.

JOE LANE: So, there is not correct information from the newspapers, we have been given allocation, received a couple of weeks ago that somebody is dealing with this job. Prior we help to look to the CPOs and those who are active in the area. On tomorrow we are looking at service sites and refurbishment grants, so I will not put the Local Authorities ... I think that I saw an article of 30 Local Authority vacancy, so if it is a particular timing or with regards to information it is not with regards to our county council in the last 6 or 7 weeks [sic] ... I think we have to move on from where we are going at the moment.

[sic] we get technical back up from our staff on top of one full-time employee, I have not seen a position where we are trying for another, bear in mind the workload that is ahead us of, with the homeless and the tenancy, just give me the article and I will look at where to go to on this one. But we have a vacancy officer. With regards to Bray, with the sites in Bray, given it was a shared load. At the time there were some pieces of land in Greystones and Bray, since then, the Wicklow County Council is part of a partnership where we delivered in certain areas, and the idea was that at the time that the bodies would take on some of the sites, some are more challenging, some are about papers, so we have also other sites as you are well aware. We indicated to one of the bodies that we are now after, sorry, I missed that [inaudible] after the [inaudible] we are in a position to develop apartments and blocks if

they can't move with this we are in a position to take it over, however there is an application in the department to progress with that we should have information on in two a couple of weeks. With regards to the Cranny Road villas with we could not produce the land [inaudible] in the approves housing body and that case indicated that there will be in a position to progress.

Sorry, Kilbride [inaudible] Kilbride House, that is particularly, that site was a certain site it was not as local, it was more difficult, it is taking one of them off [inaudible] so we trying to progress that one. Both of those we should have information on in a couple of weeks.

Regards the Kilbride in particular in the report, this are liability issues and the date, however, we will be in contact with yourself, or the tenant in a couple of weeks to finalise that.

[sic] I think that is it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr Lourda Scott? Cllr Scott thank you for the report. Update on the free posts advertised on the climate action team. Where are we with those? The second question in relation to the vacant home scheme ... I suppose, I am looking at it, looking at the same sort of figures every month. It is hard to know there. Is progress being made but it is hard to figure out of the 17 CPOs to ascertain how quickly things are moving. There is a comment here at the end to say there are further long-term sake and properties being identified for batches of CPOs if we can elaborate on that scheme in future supports, is there another 50 waiting to progress or should we wait for the 17 that seem to be going slowly through the system so a better report as to the time frame as to when the process started for the 17 listed and some sort of idea as to what sort of vacant homes are in the pipeline. I find it difficult to get my head around the process, to ascertain is it working properly. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Lourda Scott, Councillor Peir Leonard? On planning, do housing have plans to acquire buildings in the town centres as part of regeneration to turn into flats and apartments? Do they I suppose funding available for that? And the other thing is the ports and the harbours under the Chief Executive's report, it seems there is not a lot about anything, in the port or the harbour section at the moment? We have a substantial funding in Arklow, Brexit funding for fishermen's huts, can we get an update on that and the other work, the pontine and the timeline and when it is to be commenced. And the other thing is, the coastal erosion, does not seem to be included in the report. It is very

important. I know that Irish Rail and OBD are working on a scheme, I have spoken to Breege before on it but Arklow is misting off that, the south of Wicklow, I know there were plans in place to look for funding to do a starting of a pilot in Arklow, so an update on that.

>> Thanks for the report. One of the things that I would like to bring up is the allocation of funding that we got for our roads this year. And I was surprised to see some of our members talking about the amount of money we got, and with the council's own resources, going to have great roads everywhere. The rural roads are in a shocking state there. The announcement was about 14 million. And a few days later, then there was 8.4 million for walking and cycle tracks. Earlier on, talking about footpaths. Rural Wicklow is left behind. It's not getting left behind, it's left behind. Our roads are in a shocking state out there. I'm delighted to hear somebody saying that we are going, that the SPC will be meeting next week or the week after, and then there will be a discussion with the T, and I would actually like for rural roads and the allocation of funding that this council has been given to deal with rural roads is totally inadequate, and perhaps that could be put on the agenda. I don't know of any our councillor dealing with rural roads. I haven't heard it mentioned in here. We have had a discussion discussion in Arklow about rural roads, and maybe they will go to other parts of the county, but in my parts, they're shocking. Rural people deserve at least a bit of tar on the road, and we are not getting it because we're not getting the money to do it. I would like to see that being on the agenda for the TII. Thanks, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Mary Kavanagh.

>> I concur with the other Wicklow municipal District Councillors regarding the Ashford park. Obviously the sooner we can move on from the extremely disappointing situation, the better, and hopefully a site will be identified and treated as a priority. Ashford is expanding at a huge rate, every year, and there are more and more children, and the facilities there are just practically non-existent. The other thing, just a couple of things first of all, thanks to the council for engaging with Irish Rail regarding the coastal erosion and the rock armour that went in there didn't go in a day too soon because the day after, it was put in there, the path went. But there was a new path created which is fantastic. Now, the problem is we had some very rough weather a couple of weeks ago, very bad storms, and very high spring tides, and between them, they have now actually continued to erode the path beyond where the works have stopped. Now, I contacted the council to note would they engage with Irish Rail ASAP to get the new path extended as far as the monkey pole. The reason I

said that is because we have in places about two feet of ground before it goes, and it's so delegate, it's literally just falling away every day. There's a section of gorse which runs between the old path and the new path which would act as a barrier, it's tightly knitted and would protect that area. When you reach the monkey pole, there is a huge amount of land beyond that, so it will be a long time before there would be that kind of erosion that would make it inaccessible to walkers, plus the coastal erosion strategies will have been installed by that stage, the grounds, and things like that. It is about double the length of the — it is about doubling the length of what has been done already. I know it is a big ask, but I just think if it is done, it will be hugely important to the people of Wicklow and tourists and everybody. The other thing I wanted to follow up on, I've been looking for this for the last couple of years, I thought we were progressing, but it doesn't seem to have gone anywhere. Communication boards in at least one playground in every district in every town and village, they're not expensive, they're for children who are non-verbal, I was told two years ago that they were order, they would be installed. They didn't happen. Then I was told again they had to go back to the printers for this, that, and the other. There are generic boards out there, ready to buy off the peg. The same language on them that is used throughout the country. So if Wexford County Council can have these boards, I don't see why Wicklow County Council hasn't been able to acquire them in two years. I don't think it's reasonable.

>> Thank you. In relation to the posts, the climate action posts, those jobs have been advertised and the recruitment process candidates were identified, so we are undergoing the recruitment process at the moment so we will have officers in-situ in a matter of weeks, so we had a successful campaign there. In relation to the acquisition of buildings, derelict on vacant buildings in our town centres, the current call under URDF is specifically for that purpose for acquiring derelict builds in town centres so looking to make applications on that basis. We will talk to the municipal districts about that. I will ask ... to come in first on the environmental issues and then Michael will come on subsequently.

>> Thank you, Chief Executive and Cathaoirleach. In relation to the ports and the hoar bores, and this is councillor Leonard's query, yes, we are very successful under the Brexit funding. There is about a million that needs to be spent by the end of this year, so all those works are looked at, the ones being done, we are under pressure to spend the money, including the items you mentioned. In terms of Arklow's progression, yes, you will probably note in the report there by the head of finance, we've already made provision within the capital funding

for that, and as you were aware, like part of our issues with the environment is retaining staff, but in the section, and just in terms of priorities, et cetera, of getting to things in time, so for instance like we have had to move staff around, to work at Brexit money because it will be gone, but bearing in mind we are really aware of the exposure of the coastline south of Wicklow to Arklow, and as soon as we can get to that, we will. In terms of councillor Kavanagh's query, in relation to the works that Irish rail are doing, the most that we could do on that Cllr Kavanagh, we can talk about Irish rail improving the pedestrian access which I think is what you're talking about. There is only a very small bit left after they've done those works. That is as much as we can do on that. Has that captured everybody's questions and made notes as I was going along? Is that it? Thank you.

>> Regarding the communication board. We didn't use the generic ones because we wanted to put more information on. The boards have arrived, they're waiting to be installed. That's all.

>> There are 17. I'm not going to go through, but I will if you want to give the details before the full CPO process, they're going through every stage, so they're slower. The answer is all of them are going to social housing. It is linked to bosses. I will give a quick overview of the CPO process at some stage but while having successes and on that have, sometimes they need refurbishments. The last time I didn't answer one question, we've re-allocated a number of the tasks, some of the DPGs, we will have particularly the priority ones done within the next, targeting the priority ones which is the particular question, and they will be done within the next four to five months.

>> In relation to rural roads. Yes, we acknowledge that the roads have had a difficulty few months. We had the rain followed by frost pre-Christmas and then a lot of rainfall in the last number of weeks. We have had impacted on the condition of the roads. We received just over 14 million of an allocation from the Department of Transport this year which is slightly higher on the 2022 amount. But as we always say, you will never have enough money to do all the roads. The district at the moment are all looking at their improvement and their maintenance programmes with a view to going out to tender. We have had numerous discussions how we can make the money go further, and that will include using, you know, a recycling of materials and processes. We will continue to engage with the Department of Transport in relation to seeing if additional funding can be made available. Most recently we did have conversations with the department inspector. I agree with you it certainly is a

challenge, and as I said at the moment, each district is trial to see how that's correct make best use of the money they've received. Any money we get we will definitely spend if we can get more. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you Chief Executive for your report. A lot of items have already been covered, but I'm disappointed to see that the green way information in Blessington hasn't been updated. I know it's relatively recent. I urge the councils to address all the issues raised and urge them to address the issues that are of concern to the natives up in that part of the world. I believe that both can be done within a relatively short time frame. I would like to see this major spend on infrastructure in that part of Wicklow that has been largely forgotten. And not left unspent, and I certainly don't want to lose it. As regards Cllr Behan's items, issues about the N11, again, the N81 should not be forgotten about, and at the TII meeting which Chief Executive O'Connor mentioned last week, the N81 should be included in the same. It's nice to see that some works are happening south of Hollywood Cross where the new road was intended to run as far. There's been a significant spend on planning that road, and the design of that road, and like as has been said by Cllr Behan, it seems to be money wasted on less than advanced and moved on. The third item I would like to mention is the Blessington inner relief road, and I notice that CPO documentations have been mentioned on page 62. And I would like to compliment director Kilkenny for her efforts in that project to date, but it would be nice to see it coming to fruition and moving on again further. Cllr Tim mens has mentioned the urgency to see some work on the ground in respect of RDF. That can't be over emphasised because people are really annoyed and getting quite impatient about it dragging on and on. Finally, in respect of our engineering staff having conceded some ground to St Kevin's Post Primary School, I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to the staff for facilitating the same. I'm the Chair of the Board of Management there and it's an important design feature for the school going forward. Of course I concur that the long-term plans perhaps the whole yard will become available to the school. I would like to acknowledge the sacrifice meant by the engineering staff to date. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Vincent Blake.

>> Thank you for the report as well. I — a lot of talk about the regards of the state of the roads in the county. I would like to concur with that, and we've got an answer on it. We are aware that an awful lot of our funding is central funding from central government, and we

are continuously harping on the fact that we have to go out there and folk the for money in that regard. One of the areas that I see recently, another great pot of money announced as well, is the... programme. I've been harping about the programme for years, the fact that I think there are only three counties in that are not part of the programme, Kildare, Dublin, and Wexford. It is a very small part of County Wicklow which is involved in it as well. I look at my next door neighbour in Carlow. We've looked on it as an agricultural, prosperous county, but one third or quarter of it anyway that is in the programme. Most of the counties, Galway, Donegal, the vast majority of those counties are in the programme. One small part of west Wicklow is actually in the programme. Brought up here on numerous occasions about trying to extend it, and it comes to naught on each occasion. I bring it up today that we should go after it. There is money there, a huge pot of money announced again, and I think we as — it is imperative for us to seek what money we can get out there. I know some of the resumes have changed where clubs can apply for money for it, but I think it's important that we go after the department and seek to have an awful lot more of Wicklow, particularly west Wicklow anyway, and the whole mountains in Wicklow should be part of the programme. Up on Lara, up to In comparison to County Carlow or some of the counties of west of Ireland, nearly all of Wicklow would be in the programme in getting a fair play in that regard. I ask again that we make an effort to have an extension to the programme for a bigger part of County Wicklow, and that we go after that pot of money that has been announced recently as well. Thanks, Chairman.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Electric Pat Fitzgerald.

>> I wanted to support the comments there about rural Wicklow. We went out there recently both of us and I would say 50 kilometres, there are huge problems there. And I'm on the council a long time. I've never seen the roads as bad as they are in rural areas. I wouldn't like to be driving a car around it for too long. Really, we need a lot of money, up in the Okram and ... and I don't know how the people get around up there when you're off main roads. I think it is a disaster. We are not getting enough money, obviously, but we need to press for more money, and obviously there must be plenty of money in the government the way they're gives it out. On the ... there is a slight change in that, I think, with regard to one change, but regard to football or clubs that we are ... getting some funding but there are only two in South Wicklow. Pardon? I think but there is more funding for sports facilities and that is not going to help your driving on the roads. But the roads are

in a desperate condition. I have to say it. It's an embarrassment if you have someone in the car who hasn't travelled the road as I have recently there.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Gerry O'Neill, please.

>> Thanks, Cathaoirleach. There is just a couple of small issues there. The greenway in Blessington, the proposed greenway, this was application — this application went from the council directly to ... last January, 12 months, and we got a report back there from Bord ... a couple of weeks ago, or they are looking for further information on it. I want to know will the elected reps this time — I know we were ignored completely the last time with the initial application — but I wonder even at this late point will the councillors, the local democratically elected councillors will have an input into the further information that Bord ... are seeking. I think it's very important and it is important to see what we have back from them. It may be an issue of the three bridges which is a lifeline from the people in rural Wicklow into the towns. The proposal to put lights on these bridges seems to be a runner, by the look of it. There has been a petition signed by over 2,000 people objecting to this, but Bord haven't addressed this in their further information which is very disappointing, and very alarming for the people of West Wicklow, who won't be hemmed in in this fashion with no consultation. This was a crazy idea from the word go. I've asked now that he at least, at least the local elected representatives will be included in the addressing this further information. And I would also like to know if there's been any contact with Wicklow County Council since the application 14 months ago. The issue on producing in Blessington, 44 houses on the directory, which is a beautiful new estate outside the town on the Kilbride road, and it is sitting there now for some time. I looking for an update from the Director of Services there. On when the people of the area will avail of the opportunity to get their new home. And the last one is, the last one has gone out of my head. I'm sorry about that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: That happens to me. That's okay. Now, I've another councillor that wants to come in but has already been in so keep it brief, Cllr Walsh.

>> I didn't get a response of one of my questions earlier, in relation to the regulatory controls around short-term lets and the council's role in that. I see there are a number of reports, files there under investigation. Just general response in relation to the council roles in the regulation of short-term lets, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr O'Neill? Yes.

>> Welcoming the news that the works have more or less started in Dunlavin as regards to the school. That indicators for a lot, a huge amount of people from outside the county of Wicklow in the Dunlavin primary school. In Blessington, we are in dire straits for long, long school of 1,000-pupil school. I think to mention it here that and it should not be forgotten by any councillor that we are in a bad way for this primary school in Blessington.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Chief Executive?

>> Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I will make a comment on the Blessington greenway, and then I will hand over to Michael and in general Lee Nora to come in. We got an onboard from ... to look for further information. So the working group is working to address those queries, and I think a lot of what they've asked for will allay the local residents' concerns so hopefully by addressing that, we will do that. It is a tight timeline to turn turn the information around but we will have that back to the board so that hopefully the project will progress once it goes back into them. Thank you.

>> Chairman, in relation to the programme, the original town list ed on the programmes were towns that had experienced depopulation. At the time, when it was seven towns in Wicklow had experienced depopulation. Those were included. Most were in the ... area, two in the Arklow MD area. That was based on the old census figure. The 2022 census figures, they haven't delved down yet into town areas. At the moment, the current programme is still based on the previous creps were, so those seven towns haven't changed. It is worth remembering that it is limited what you can apply. You can't apply for general maintenance stuff, it's specific little projects, so it is not a huge issue for Wicklow. You're right, in some the counties, the entire counties suffered from depopulation, but Wicklow isn't one of those counties. In fact some counties like Kildare have no programme at all because there is no depopulation in those counties. We've asked the department to review and they said that when the 2022 census figures delves down, there may be some more in the county that have suffered. But at the moment, it's the existence of ... and no more than that. The question from ... it would be completely against the rules for us to contact ... with regard to any planning application, so the answer is there's been no contact until now. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

>> Cllr Glenanne, in relation to the ... we haven't forgotten about it, and we continue to get allocations from the T in relation to it, and particularly we are engaged with them in relation to Hollywood, but also the traffic management issues around there. And in relation to the

Blessington inner relief road, so we are continuing to moving along to compare the final documents for what is the best way for statutory approval on that road, so it is ongoing, woo we are anxious to get it done as well because it is an opener for a lot of other projects in the area. Thank you.

>> Thank you. Director of housing.

>> Just on the Blessington-Kilbride road, that was a contract issue between CHI and the contractor. Last time we were informed, it was a substation issue, a non-delivery of what we asked for help in that. There has been a request for new care funding and it has been agreed with the department, and we are currently waiting for the completed contract Tate. It has to be compliant. We are waiting for that date.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

>> Cllr Walsh, I'm sorry, I missed your question just in terms of short-term letting, but just basically to say that we are still responsibility to it until it is taken over by Failte Ireland so we have that in place, and I don't know, was that the nature of your question?

>> Just wondering the overall process there, and have you the staffing levels to deal with it, or the responsibilities, the local authority responsibilities around short-term resident and the regulatory controls around that? I know a lot of it is with the RTB, is it confirmed up? What are the local authority roles in monitoring the short-term lets?

>> There is a dedicated team. Unfortunately, again, it's based on short-term, like temporary contracts, so some of the staff, like let's say temporary technicians, we just haven't been able to retain them. However, on the administrative side, it's progressing but it would be progressing slowly, and you can see I think is that there is about 53 where we are following through on. But again unfortunately, these are just the, let's say, this is the — they constitute mainly just individual houses, that kind of thing who are registered with Airbnb. It is not targeted for a lot of units for letting. What happens at the end of it is that we have to close down, because we are in a high pressure rent zone been people who have been using their houses for short-term lettings have to stop. We have to progress with it in accordance with the law until we will be taking over. To say we are progressing with it, but it would be slower than we would have liked, but maybe that is to the advantage of these single houses that are attached to people's properties. Thank you.

>> Thank you, director. That's everybody shown, and if anybody feels they haven't had — not a proper answer, but their question sufficiently answered, please email in the particular

director. So moving on, then, to number 11, it is to receive a presentation on the implementation of ePlanning. Jackie, please?

>> Thanks, Cathaoirleach. If you wouldn't mind? Computer says no! I can go ahead without the slides if you want? The members were issued with a copy of the slides. I will give you a whistle-stop tour where we are at the moment with ePlanning. As the members will be aware, we've kept you updated monthly on the ePlanning process, a new system we are implementing under the guidance of the LGMA. And at present, it's not present for members of the public to make planning applications online. You have to make physical applications which is quite paper and resource-intensive, and the receiving — it is intensive for us. Why ePlanning? It will improve efficiency, and deliver on the national strategy to move for public services online. That benefits both the applicant and the local authority as you can imagine. I say the current system is hard copy documents, maps, drawings, newspaper notices, et cetera. It has to be delivered to the office with six copies of maps and drawings, additional copies might have to be submitted and each application form has to be printed and designed. It's not environmentally friendly as regards the use of paper. Within the planning authority, we have to manually complete the register, fee must be manually entered, there is no provision for online payment. The physical files are located on shelves to be retrieved, et cetera. It's very time-consuming and resource-intensive. E-planning application process as the applicant is making the application, they can save it as they go along. The drawings and maps can be saved into the portal. There is no need to print. And once the applicant clicks submit details, they get an automatic email notification. We have an online payment system comes in as well, and as regards the planning authority, and the planning register is prefilled and the fee is prefilled. The documents then are automatically imported into the development, and the document management system, and become available for public viewing once they're validated automatically. So I was going to say here's a look at the planning application dashboard, but unfortunately, I can't show it to you. It is a simple user-friendly dashboard. There are three different areas on it. Super. I'm on slide 5, I think, Teresa. There you go. That is how the dashboard would appear to an agent or applicant logging on. Simple and using-friendly, and efficient and there you have making and managing planning applications, making a submission, and perhaps making a submission on the ... that's basically it in a nutshell. If you go to the last slide, those are visuals of the actual dashboards. It's very user-friendly. Keep going to the last one. Slide 9.

Yes, we have date for go live. We've been doing user-acceptance testing and dummy process at the moment. We are shutting that down tomorrow, I think, and we are going live with the system on the 17th April. So just to say that it has been partnership approach to get this system implemented between planning IT, and finance, and just to thank the people who worked on that. Work shops for training and ... user training is undertaken and we provided an information webinar from the LGMA, writing to the agents a couple of weeks ago and cc'd the members on that prior to going live. There is on Wicklow.ie, you will find a copy of the webinar there. The social media campaign is launching this week, and that's basically where we are at the moment.

Fingers crossed all will go live.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Jackie. Cllr Rory O'Connor?

CLLR O'CONNOR: A quick one on this, I think it is brilliant. If you have seen lately with the passport system how it got upgraded to apply for the passport online it was fast, efficient. Hopefully this will be nice to use. A question, does that mean that the normal planning is going or it will be only be ePlanning or is it both at the same time or is the normal planning going or will they stay at the same time? I am wondering for those who don't know how to use computers as well and when it comes to applying for planning to keep it open for all.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Grace McManus?

CLLR MCMANUS: Thank you, Jackie for your presentation. Once the clarification is made, does the email confirmation include what has been submitted or is there a way for the applicant to see what they signed in, if they want to know what they submitted, can they do that after? Or when you submit it, it is gone?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Gerry Walsh?

CLLR WALSH: I note there are training webinars for agent there involved in the clarifications, has that taken place or is it ongoing?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Joe Behan?

CLLR BEHAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, thank you, Jackie for the presentation and the work everybody has done on this. It looks great there on the screen and on the paper here and so on.

I would have to say a question that Cllr Rory O'Connor had, is there an option to have the paper system as well? Or is this just a complete cut in the paper system? Across a whole range of public services, there is this move to put stuff online, which suits maybe a majority of people but there is a minority of people, particularly the elderly who are not comfortable with IT and they are excluded from a lot of public service processes.

That is unless they get assistance from someone else. For example, if something happens in the local area, and a person wants to make an objection, let's say they are not happy about a certain aspect of planning application, will they be able to write in as they have been for example and to express their

concern? I can see, particularly in the period between the system changing, or, you know, a certain number of applications that have been obviously accepted on paper or will be up to the middle of April, what happens to those? There obviously has to be a grey area between? But I get the savings that may well come about this in terms of staff time and the physical thing of putting files away and taking files out, pushing paper and so on ... does it mean, therefore, that the staffing in Planning will be reduced? Does it also mean that the fees will come down? Because if it is a more efficient system, less time, or whatever you want to call it, if it is less time greedy and more efficient, presumably those paying to run the system will not have to pay as much writhe? So is there a corresponding in the reduction of planning fees. Finally in terms of checking the status of applications as a member of the public if they made a submission or not, does it change what we currently have in terms of inspection of a file for example? Will you be coming to the office to loaning a file? Will it have to be done online? Those issues? Is there a proposal anywhere in it for the councillors to get the opportunity to talk to planners about planning applications when they have concerns about them? Because in the good old day, Cathaoirleach, and you may remember, maybe you don't, we had planning meetings every month where the planners for the local areas attended and along with the Chief Planner, the Senior Planner, we had the opportunity to request files, we could have a mature discussion across the table about the ifs and the buts and the advantages or the disadvantages and so on, that system is completely wiped away, taken away from us as public representatives. I believe myself, one of the things that happened when that system happened, that the communication we had as public reps could help on areas that may be area areas giving input was a help and should have been seen as a help. So it is a wider question, and perhaps Breege may answer it? Like, what kind of access will we have to the planners the future if it comes to discussing the merits or the demerits of a particular application? It is a very important question for all of the people who we represent as well. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

Cllr Pat Kennedy. Cllr Joe Behan?

CLLR BEHAN: Jackie has covered a few things, and thank you, Jackie for the presentation. It is welcomed initially. But I suppose that my question is more for the Director.

I'm wondering some counties offer incentives depending on the BER of a house, if I dig deep enough, I can find somewhere in Wicklow but some counts offer up to 50% for an NZ house or a 30% for A2 [sic] do we offer anything? It is that it should be easy to find as it is very hard. I have looked hard for this in County Wicklow but maybe the director can take that question.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Peir Leonard? Receive a presentation on the Implementation of ePlanning Joe covered my questions. In relation to the accessibility then, the archiving of the applications and I know it is probably E planning is there and it exists but what is the time line of planning? Will it be changed to them being held online and the cost implications of anyone accessing historic planning? Thank you.

Thank you, receive a presentation on the Implementation of ePlanning, Cllr Lourda Scott? Cllr Scott thank you, Jackie for the presentation. I think it is great. Something that is probably something badly needed by the staff in the planning office. Wondering basically, when we are going in or the members of the public go to look at files will the interface be the same as it is at the moment. Or improved? I find it tricky to navigate and go through the files. The other question is when the planning per submission granted, if there are inquiries in terms of adherence to planning conditions or if someone is, a member of the public is in touch with a concern to say that planning was breached is there a facility under E planning to put inquiries in through that? Or is it going through

the usual system? I think there needs to be a degree of transparency but how complaints about enforcement are responded to within time lines et cetera. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Scott, Cllr Irene Winters?

CLLR WINTERS: Thank you for the presentation, Jackie. I will not go over the points of questions covered. In relation to people coming in to look at files, obviously old paper files are there for people to look at. But on the new files do we put in terminals in the lobby? How will people actually look at a file and request a file? If they want copies, can they get a paper copy if they pay for it? Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Shay Cullen?

CLLR CULLEN: I will be brief. Most questions have been asked. I suppose we would have gotten this brought forward at the SPC recently, so I sort of have a reasonable knowledge of what is coming. But two points to make, one is the engagement with the planners.

Particularly on rural planning. And I know it has been said already but I feel there is a nervousness on behalf of the planners to actually engage with the couplers in terms of files and rural planning.

Each planner would have a different, maybe, a way of dealing with the councillors but I think it is something that needs to be addressed. I know it is a slightly wider issue than the ePlanning but that it is something that must be looked at going forward in how the engagement with the councillors is conducted and that there is, I suppose, a very good working relationship on particular files and how the discussions can be addressed in terms of issues on files. That is my first point. The second point mentioned in terms of the levies charged on rural houses ... very, very often, you know, I would be asked a question: Why am I paying 5 or 6 or 8 or 10,000 euro for levies on a house when I don't get anything for that? And the planners will say that look, the local village gets lighting or a footpath or whatever the case may be but it is so expensive to build a rural house in a rural area. So to hand over, 5, 6, 7, 8,000 in levies to get little something for it is something that I have a problem with. It is a wider issue in the planning but I think it must be addressed and that we need engagement on this.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Shay Cullen, thank you. Jackie, thanks a million, you have a few questions, do your best.

>> We are keeping a dual system to facilitate the members of the public or those who cannot make an online application, a couple of the councillors asked that. Reviewing what is admitted? Applicant can review at any stage what they submitted to the portal. The training of agents we didn't train the agents but provided them with a webinar to give them a step-by-step process through the stem system. With good feedback to say that they are looking forward to using the system.

Councillor Behan, absolutely, no staffing is reduced, absolutely under no heading is the staffing reduced. It would reduce the intensity of the application process. It is important to remember this is an application process, nothing to do with anything outside of the application process, it is the application process first and foremost. There were a couple of questions ... are the fees to come down? The fees are set nationally, they will not come down, it is not a part of this process. It is not on the table at the moment.

I think that is the main, sorry, Cllr Lourda Scott the interface, I should have mentioned from the beginning we provide terminals in the foyer, where people can access ePlanning. What the public see at the moment, when they look at ePlanning will not change, it is own the process that is changing, everything else stays the same.

Enforcement ... there was a question on enforcement down to compliance, from Cllr Lourda Scott sub missions may be made by the members of the public on to the system. But that system is there, and Cllr Irene Winters asked if they can get paper copies, obviously that is OK but we prefer not to print out hundreds of realms of paper. A question for the director on ... the overall ... piece ...

>> I will try to answer a question, the Planning Act is there, we must apply the statutory process. When a planning application is made it is clear in the law what the process is, if I can leave it at that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Is everybody happy with that? Thank you very much. Sorry, Cllr Pat Kennedy?

CLLR KENNEDY: Can I come back to ask the Director in relation to the incentives in relation to a VER on a house, some councils offer schemes in relation to houses, do we operate? Do we have plans in the future to implement it?

>> Apologies, Cllr Pat Kennedy, I would think that the first place for this for a discussion in relation to that is at our planning and SPC in relation to this. At the moment we have a system of levies and where there are expenditure but, I would suggest that is one of the first places we can talk about it. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Edward Timmins?

CLLR TIMMINS: Briefly, one point, Jackie, I welcome this, it is obviously a welcome development. But one point, in the odd case on a planning someone submitted what may be a highly confident shall personal information, that is kept separate and not scanned online, I'm assuming that availability is available under the new system?

>> We will have folders, private folders on the drive. Obviously, the validation state, anything confidential is removed or redacted. It is the same process as is now that will continue.

U.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Avril Cronin?

CLLR CRONIN: One thing came to mind. At the moment when the applications are sent in, if for any reason there is something that is incorrect, an error on the form, the application is deemed invalid and the file is sent back and the applicant and agent must go through for a whole new set of maps and forms and files sent in. If it happens in this case, will they have to get a whole new set? Or can they put in the information that is missing or will they have to re-apply all again? All of the documents again? Resubmit the documents?

>> It is all saved on the system so. It is a matter of (somebody interrupting) ... [inaudible]

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, can I ask you to come up to a microphone as the people at home cannot hear you.

>> This is Carol on the project. Thank you.

>> Sorry, when they submit an application, if it is invalid it is sent back. They can resubmit a new application, to say that a notice was incorrect and the newspaper notice is fine, and they upload, they clone the original application, upload awful the new documentation with a site notice and resubmit and go through that process again.

CLLR CRONIN: But they will not have to submit a whole new ...

>> It is a new application but uploading everything.

CLLR CRONIN: They can use the documents that are there. They don't have to get a second set of maps.

>> Carol explained it better than I

CATHAOIRLEACH: It was a great presentation, Jackie, hopefully it works out well and it benefits the people of Wicklow applying for planning permission. That is all of the questions there. Jackie, you can stay where you are, we are to receive a presentation on the control of dogs next. Jackie, that is you.

>> That is me again. The members requested a presentation on the control of dogs and the council's operational functional in context with the legislation. Teresa if you can upload the presentation. Hopefully this time it will work.

>> Thank you, Teresa.

So, as I said, the members requested a presentation be made. So if you would like to move on to the next slide. An example of view of the legislative context, there is a statutory piece. control of dogs' act is the primary legislation, and then amendment acts and the dog breeding establishment act where we register and regulate the dog breeding establishment. Obviously, there is a problem in the country with lots of illegal establishments. Currently there are four dog breeding establishments registered with the legislation we have the power to appoint dog wardens, provide dog shelters seize dogs, impose dog fines. And how we do that, we have annual service level agreement with the ISPCA, in which we enter an arrangement with the ISPCA or another animal regulation. We built up the relationship with them for a long number of years, the ISPCA appoints dog wardens and a kennel keeper and we have a partnership approach with the Wicklow ISPCA and focus on the animal welfare piece. We have met with the Wicklow ISPCA and they have sought to join the ISPCA to make it more cohesive on the site. And the ISPCA appoints dog wardens and kennel keep, the focus on the animal welfare, enforcement, education, and promoting of responsible dog ownership.

There was discussion around the controlled breeds, following the awful incident with the young child in Wexford. The control of dogs regulations 1998 lists controls on the specific breeds, they are not banned but if you own the dog, you must muzzle them in a public place, on a short leash and no-one under the age of 16 should in control of them. They should be on a strong, short lead, no more than 2 metres. Recently they were to add another dog to that list, there which is under way. The next slide, statistics: Things are quiet during COVID as most people at home with dogs and huge uptake of puppies and people buying dog, last year was a different story going from stray dogs of 90, the year before was 29. A huge upsurge in dogs with the numbers increasing. Reclaimed by other than, 33, which is the beauty of micro-chipping. We developed a great relationship with the animal welfare groups and the first focus is to get a dog rehomed which we have been successful. One was put to sleep, possibly a livestock worrying dog and one died of natural cause, he had to have an operation and he died at the vets to let you know. 3 775 dog licenses issued that is low, it is being chased up with the dog wardens, during COVID we were not allowed to enter houses to check for dog licenses but ramped up on that, there is a campaign with ads in the local papers to say that dog wardens will be more visible. We have on the spot fines issued that were 3, reports of aggressive behaviour by dogs was 16 and 7 of reports of livestock worrying. We were saying with the sheep owners to encourage the reporting of livestock worrying as we are not hearing the full extent of what is happening on the ground and sometimes farmers don't think there is a point in reporting it but it is important for us for the statistics. obligations of dog owners there was a discussion on effect actual control. To keep your dog under control at all times so the dog is not a nuisance to others. It does not mean being on a lead but that if your dog is called it comes back to you, that you can control

your dog effectively, leashed or not. The microchipping regulations are in, we are very much promoting that, dogs with a collar identification, and under the pollution act we have formed a working group on the dog fouling it is a huge issue in public areas, we work on that and obviously to buy a yearly license for your dog.

The responsible dog ownership, there is a proactive ... the subsidised microchipping and neutering campaigns have been looked at together with the ISPCA with a voucher to microchip for those who may not have the means to spend on that and to encourage the dog to be microchipped which is a legal requirement and neutering which is responsible to do. We are part of a partnership with campaign with 11 other Local Authorities on dog fouling which is proving successful, even though this dog seems a little overweight, the next slide is just to mention and we did mention, for our yearly campaign on social media, on all social media platforms with regards to the lambing season and protection of uplands working with Wicklow uplands and working with the IFA, a collaborative approach to get the holistic approach to awareness and behaviour change campaigns.

So, things have been happening in the sector. There have been a number of views and consultations in 2 years. This is a national consultation on control of dogs in 2022, in April. One of the guiding principles of the review is that any policy developed must balance the different stakeholder needs so the safety concerns and members of the public to be balanced with the benefits that the other members of the public perceive to dog ownership. A huge amount of consultation was undertaken.

The outcome of the public consultation ... again, the aim was to look at responsible dog ownership in Ireland. To implement this with regards to responsible dog ownership and to explore the possibility of amending the control of dogs act to share powers with the other entities, for example, wildlife ranger, staff and others responsible for the overseeing of public lands.

And considerations to duty of care requirement and dog owners, to protect the public and the livestock. No change to this, perhaps an I decision, to look at effectual control which is being looked at as well.

As requested by members, we agreed to commence work on the development of by-laws on control of dogs in the county to meet the needs of all parties, specifying areas in parts of the Local Authority, where we have to focus in on where we have remit within our own areas, in which the person in charge of the dog is required to keep the dog on a leash and where the dog should be allowed and inviting submissions to be able to look at the by-laws. And agree. There is a lot of interest in the area at the moment. On the animal welfare and health side as well.

lot of interest in this at the moment on the animal welfare. No, previous one, sorry. So the joint committee on agriculture took a review of this in 2022. It's all about animal welfare, and how to maybe improve things in that area. The next slide. It is more recent. The National Cross Agency Working Group set up by the Taoiseach's office. It has representation from Dafam, the Local Veterinary Association, and others, so it is very comprehensive committee that sat, and they — the terms of reference include examining the current legislation and the gaps in the current legislation, looking at enforcing, increasing fines to provide additional resources, promotion of responsible dog ownership again and the knew neutering and microchip programme. The report was published last Tuesday, and they have in 1515 recommendations, recruitment of more dog wardens welcome. So we would hope to get at least one. Increasing the fine which will hopefully have an effect. And approving dog traceability and welfare to the single database of dog microchips. There is a lot happening in the sector, and I suppose we will keep you updated as things progress. So any questions?

>> I'm going to have to hold the questions because I have to go to suspension of standing orders. If the members wouldn't mind. Keep your questions in your mind, okay? Cllr O'Brien. Is that okay with you, Jackie? I did say half-four, I will bring the suspension of standing orders in. Yes?

>> Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just want to frame this a bit and hopefully there will be, we will get some contributions from the leadership of the council, and maybe also some insight from fellow councillors, just to frame this. So, while we are sitting here today, the RGB released their Q4 figures for 2022, at again it's bleak reading. 4,329 notice to quits were issued in Q4, and 100 of them relate to Wicklow. Again, the picture as it's emerging is bleak enough. Why did we want to put this on the agenda today is to give us an opportunity, again, as a collective, we have collective responsibility for this county, we have people in real extreme distress who are facing eviction, we have staff who are probably working under extreme stress because of the volume and the complexity of what they're trying to deal with, and they have councillors who are in the middle often because we are meeting people at the coal face, and we are holding that space with them as they struggle, so for our viewers, frustrated, angry, et cetera, so what we want to do with this suspension was to really try and find and get a sense of what state of readiness are we as a county council, when us as councillors meeting people who contact us today, tomorrow, the day after, and asking what do I do and where do I go? We rely on this institution to be a place of support, and all we can do is work within the conditions that are set for us. And when I see this institution, I'm wondering, when we look at the Tait for notice to quits, and we look at our resources, and what we have available, and what conditions we are operating in, is it enough to respond to the needs as they are emerging? If it is not enough, what can we do and what are we going to do? Collectively, what are we going to do and what can we do? My biggest fear is that we have a housing and homelessness crisis that also alongside it has a hopelessness crisis, Cathaoirleach. If we as councillors, every single one of us can't offer hope to the constituents that we meet, who are very distressed and traumatised and wondering, and worrying, that's what we do. We offer a little bit of hope, and that might be channelling them into the housing section, the homeless section, and that is part of the operating model of this council, so what we are wondering, and we said a series of questions, but in particular like what do we, where are we at with the data of the notice to quit? How do we see our emergency accommodation provision in response to that? And it is not the response, if we don't have enough emergency accommodation provision to offer someone who arrives and presents themselves, then what else? And what are we going to do in that situation? And again, because for us as councillors, if we can't tell someone here's what will happen, I believe, Cathaoirleach, and I finish on this, and let other people come in, and maybe we will get some extra info, the business as usual approach to this I don't believe will serve us or the people who are struggling unless someone can tell me today, don't worry about it, it is grand, this is not a big issue as you imagine it, and I would be more delighted to hear that if it is true. I think we are leaving people vulnerable in our staff, if we are expecting them to take the extra onboard here that comes with this lifting of the eviction ban. I would love to hear, and I know there is a lot of questions in our submission there, but I love to hear where we are at, and then to maybe collectively decide, it is similar to what we talked about in terms of the service delivery plan that we have to collectively work through this and support each other in that regard, hopefully.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Grace McManus?

>> Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I won't add to what Dermot said. I've been watching the debate closely nationally, and something I picked up on, and maybe I'm wrong, it seems the government's response is put pressure on your local authorities. I don't like that approach because it is supposed to be a collective approach, and you can only do what you are resourced to do. It's on us then because we

wear political hats, if that is needed, if a political argument is needed, we need to know where we are at. That was maybe another part of our intention of the questions, and other colleagues might know the questions that we put down. We are looking for information on the notice to quit data, like do we know what is coming to us in April and in May? Where are we at in terms of emergency accommodation? I know the Chief Executive support had I think 20 households in B&Bs, two of which for over a year. Does that mean we were at capacity or how is that looking? And the cost of tenant in-situ scheme, where are we at with them? The staffing in terms of our homeless team. I know there was a retirement recently, has that post been filled? And then of course there is bigger issues that we could talk about like the relets funding. We are pushing as hard as we can but all the pieces are connected and we know that. But I'm really interested to hear back from the executive of where we are at, Cathaoirleach, and to see where other colleagues think we need maybe to focus on and put pressure because it will be in iron boxes as well that people will be coming to and rightly so, and it will be the young people and children in particular for me that are in my mind suffering and struggling through this and we have an obligation and responsibility to be ready to respond even though we didn't make this decision to lift that eviction ban. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Paul O'Brien?

>> Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I thought someone else was flashing before me been I wanted to support what is after being said, in the sense that I just want to start, sorry, by thanking Jo and Teresa, and her team, because I've been dealing with them on a daily basis. No-one has a monopoly over housing. I'm glad to hear Dermot and Grace say it is a collective issue because it is a collective issue. We all have to deal with it, but I think the work that Teresa and Joe and the other team are doing is fantastic. I don't say that lightly or for the sake of it. I genuinely mean it. I've been consistent here over the last four years asking that the department be fully resourced, and because at the end of the day, there are houses out there that are ready to go, but the staff are just under that much pressure, it's getting the houses out there, and it was discussed earlier on about relets and houses lying idle there. It is hard to say and explain to people about why those houses have been left idle. In terms of — and I spoke to Cllr Ferris about this — our detractors, the Labour Party, do nothing, think we formed in 2011 and formed in 2016. We are sitting at the home of Liam Kavanaugh who eradicated the housing list along with other ministers we have had over the years. Myself and Cllr Ferris are proud of our own record here in this chamber, voted for every ... that has been put before us. We were not ashamed to say it. Sometimes we get against our own constituent wishes. But we voted for it because it was the right thing to do. The one thing Cllr Ferris and myself will do is not play politics with housing because this is a collective issue. What I urge everyone to engage, I do have some sympathy for my friends and colleagues in the government parties because I think they've been let down by their ministerial colleagues, because we are the ones on the coal face. We are the ones that have to deal with it, day in, day out. We don't have staff. But we have to be honest with ourselves too. There was never going to be a good time to end this, so there wasn't. It was going to have to come to an end sometime. I wish there had been a better safety net country, died, because I'm sure Joe will be able to give us figures that Wicklow County Council are ready, and we've been progressing social housing, and we've been progressing the affordable housing scheme. Again, I didn't play politics with the affordable housing scheme up the Greenhill Road. We now have 36 families delighted to be going in. I'm dealing with housing day in, day out, since I started this job. I will not play politics with it, and I will work with anybody that wants to work with me on it. I would ask that all of us come together on this because it is a collective issue for all of us, not just a certain few. And there 15 lot of good news stories out there, and I will finish on this. There is a lot of good news stories out there. There are some heart breaking ones as well. Let's not play politics with it. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Joe Behan.

>> I would agree with what has been said about the director and the staff in the housing section there, second to none. They are the most hard-working section in my opinion in the council, and have been for the last three or four years since money started to come back into housing. No-one could criticise their commitment in any way, shape or form, and I'm very grateful for the engagement I have with them on a regular basis as well as other councillors too. But the decision that was made to end the eviction ban last Saturday I think myself is one of the most reprehensible decisions any elected government has ever made in this country, because it knows, the government knows it is effectively adding people to the homeless list. Hopefully we will find out in a few minutes how many people in Wicklow people are going to be added to the housing list. From a human level, there is a hierarchy of human need, established by a very eminent psychologist, Maslow. And your hierarchy of your most basic needs are your need to breed, your need to eat, your need to drink, and your need for shelter. They are the basis of human existence. And what this eviction ban or the ending of the eviction ban has done is threaten the shelter of many thousands, if not tens of thousands of people, in this country. And what I have seen in my work as a public representative is that the vast majority of people who suffer in this situation are mothers and children. The vast majority of people who come to me in this situation are highly stressed, anxious young mothers with school-going children or infants. Who seem to carry a greater burden than the man, if you like, in the family. That just, that's my observation. And it is cruel beyond belief that any elected government would put those young mothers and their children through the stress that they're putting them through at the moment. And the hypocrisy that is coming from the government about the fact that we are doing this because it will make it better in the long run, that is complete rubbish. Because they know, they know that the situation is going to get worse. Now, there are so many things we could say about it, but just one thing I want to isolate, because it came up earlier on, and it is in our up-to-date directors' report here. There are currently 55 village cannot houses belonging to this council in Bray. There are 25 vacant houses in the Baltinglass area, and 45 in Wicklow. That's 130 physical houses that need to be done up for the families to move in. If there are 100 homeless families, we could have those houses ready for emergency accommodation or full-time accommodation. The reason we haven't got them ready is because the self-same government that ending the eviction ban is the government that is denying us the resources to make those houses fit for purpose and fit for use. They have about three, four, five months in order to get in in place before they ended the eviction ban, they didn't use it. The staff here at Wicklow County Council are doing huge work in trying to bring as many vacant houses as they possibly can on stream. It is utterly hypocritical of our government to end an eviction ban at the same time to end resources to provide those houses for people who are being made homeless. The last point I would make is this, and it is a question for the Fianna Fáil councillors and the Green councillors. Father ... was quoted and saying the minister for housing was not in favour of ending the ban. The Fiann5 Fail was overual. If that is the case, we haven't heard definitive answers on this yet, I would have to say there are serious issues for this government. If a minister for housing can be overruled on such an important issue. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Behan before Cllr Jan Mullen.

>> Thank you, I would like to agree with most of the speeches up to now, but again, you know, we are trying to talk about the stress of the situation that the families are in at the moment, and then start to have political speeches and accusations being made that I don't know anything about, and I don't know where that's coming from. I do know that my colleagues in this chamber in every party bar none all work with our constituents when they find themselves at risk of homelessness, and we

work with the staff in the council who are also under the daily burden of this pressure. In fairness to Cllr Behan when he was thanking — correctly — the work of the staff and the management this council at executive level because I deal with the collective as well on this, that the money has been coming back into the system in the last three or four years on supply, and he's dead right, because Wicklow is one of the best-performing counties on housing supply in the country at the moment. That's down to the hard work of the staff, but also the difficult decisions that we as councillors have had to make in the supply of housing, in our county development plans, the zones, lands, appropriate for housing, and sometimes we have had to go against hierarchy of plans laid out by I think departments that are out touch, but at the same time we've done our job and taken risks here to provide an increase in supply of housing. What I would like to know from Joe when he does get a chance is, and again, how confident is he? Is he managing what will undoubtedly be an increase in risk of homeless situations, as they come forward, I also think we have to have as a country and at a council, and as a media as well, a serious conversation about not demonising landlords. The vast majority, like the vast majority of tenants, are good people, and the vast majority of landlords have one house. A house times they're trying to get back into. And the eviction ban has huge problems because of that, and it was always going to be a temporary solution. But what I want to do, and I want to assure Joe and colleagues across the political divide here, whatever we have to do to get on top of this particular problem at this particular time, we are here. When you do get a chance to respond with the management, we will do what you asked us to do to make sure that we handle this problem, and so we can work with colleagues to make sure that we do not have families on the road in the next few weeks. I know you have a couple of new policies of ways of dealing with this matter. There is a multi-strand approach to dealing with people who will be at risk of eviction, and I want you to hear how you feel those situations will be into play, as this problem develops. I think I would like take some of the political heat we see in national media about this, which is out of this chamber. Up to now, in fairness, across the board, we've tried to do everything possible to increase supply. That is the only answer to solving what is a housing crisis across the board, is more houses that's what we have to do here. Thank you.

>> I want to go on record that I'm against eviction completely, and I'm also against the proposed by Sinn Fein to extend the eviction to the January next year, you know? Whether you put someone on the road today, or in the middle of winter next January, it's all the same, it's all wrong. And that is the policy. I wrote, I wrote to, I had an idea maybe that there are houses at the moment, two lots of land in West Wicklow here, that have been ear-marked for emergency housing for Ukrainians. I did put it suggest that maybe these houses that are rapid build could be used for the nine people, 59 people here in Wicklow, who are going out on the road in the next week or two. We can build houses, and quite rightly, for the unfortunate people of Ukraine, I'm just asking that of the 70-odd houses that in the proposals that are to be people the, they will be built and ear-marked, there are maybe nine of those would be used to house the people that I have, the nine people that I have ready for the road. I don't know whether these people from Ukraine have have left the country yet? It is hard for me to sell that, there could be up to 74 houses built here in west Wicklow, or over there in west Wicklow, and maybe considering the circumstances of the people, and some of these people are not nationalists, so don't get me wrong, that I look after whoever comes to my door for help. I look after them. No matter where they are from, their religion, or anything else. So maybe that should be seriously considered, but the director pointed out to me that that can't be used. It's a separate act. This is a ... what we signed up to last June in Europe. The emergency accommodation is all EU stuff again, so I think really we are all coding ourselves. We can get in here and here and start shouting and bawling and at the back of it all, the EU are our real masters in all of this.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, councillor.

>> I want to find out one other thing. Hearing the members of the Labour Party here talking about you know, point-scoring, that's a laugh. The Labour Party put us in the gutter we are in, and you know that as well as I do.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We have to move on now.

>> If we want seriously to get out of this, I think —

>> Thanks, Cathaoirleach, I want to ask a couple of specific questions and I want to thank Cllr O'Brien and McManus for bringing the suspension of standing orders. I do have some deep concerns about the ending of the eviction ban at the moment, but I suppose my specific questions to Jo and his team is the there are certain reassurances given by governments that there will be safety nets in place for renters when the moratorium is phased out on 1 April. I wanted to note, you know, really, what is the situation on the ground in Wicklow County Council in the housing section at the moment in terms of what steps have been taken to expand the existing tenant-in-situ scheme and what steps are being taken to ensure the new cost rental backstop scheme? I would like details on that in terms of what specifically extra resources the council have to deal with these two pieces which have been touted I suppose as the safety nets to prevent this potential catastrophe that we are looking at happening. Like what resources have been given either from central government to Wicklow County Council or what resources have you re-allocated in house in terms of staffing and specifically budgetary? And in terms of budgetary, when it comes to offers of purchase of houses, like what sort of budgets are we looking at? Is it realistic or are landlords going to go back to the market and go what the council are offering is not going to be worth our while, really, dealing with? So I just really would appreciate if there is some time for a detailed response on that, or if there was some time under this discussion of suspension of standing orders that a detailed report would be circulated to all the members after the meeting so that we know in reality what we are dealing with in Wicklow County Council on the ground in terms of these safety net procedures.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Jerry Walsh?

>> Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Firstly in relation to the lifting of the eviction ban, there are obviously concerns around that, but the reality is that as Cllr O'Brien rightly pointed out, there is no good time to lift this ban. It was a short-term measure introduced during Covid and extended there during the winter months. The issue as we all know around this is supply. There is a major challenge around supply. We wouldn't go into the perfect storm as we call it around Covid and the Ukraine war, inflation, you know, materials et cetera. But, look, it is a challenge for the government and everybody, for our housing section here. I see an ambitious suite of measures being put in place, some already put in place by the department, the minister to address this issue, including the voids programme being intensified, including the ramping up of the cost-rental schemes there. We saw last Thursday a scheme there in ... the land agency involved in that. Another large one announced this morning in Galway City, over 700 units, there's a review of the funding model under way and the acquisitions of housing with tenants in-situ, and I see the department has written to each local authority to target ... under a notice to quit, develop their own acquisition plan, seek a report in train for 2023 and maybe suggest going forward with our Chief Executive's report that we would include some reference to this measure there on a monthly basis just to capture it. So the housing department successful is setting up an acquisition delivery team to ensure each local authority meets its tenant-in-situ purchase targets. We have the first home scheme being advanced, again, I mentioned about the LDA and project ... and all the other schemes. The vacant Holmes Scheme action plan has been set up, as mentioned by the Chief Executive earlier, the URDF funding is 150 million invested to create vacant properties. The Residential Tenancies bill has been revamped and

the paydown on legacy sites has been addressed to include modern methods of these sites for social housing units, modular units. There is a lot going on. It's going to take time. There is no panacea for this. It is a range of measures, a suite of actions with support by all and including everybody in this chamber, and people in our housing section there. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Vincent Blake.

>> I will be brief on it, I know you're running out of time on it. I know there's been comments made here, done by Wicklow County Council in the last few years. I know they went over housing, done a huge amount of work in terms of going out there and sourcing sites, built housing on them, and looking at figures there in the CEO's report today, on 635 houses, they have delivered are in the pipeline, another 5,500 houses proposed as well in the short-term as well. An amount of work has been done throughout the whole country. We wouldn't have what we have today. The eviction thing was a short-term thing but during the Covid, never intended to be a long-term policy out there in that regard. Also bearing in mind, this country has expanded so much in the last few years. 30 years ago, three million people on this island, or — there are 5.2 million here today. That's a huge volume of increase of population that has been dealt with. It is a reflection of the economic progress made in the country. But bear in mind as well, 30,000 houses built last year in this country as well. Other people should remember as well, and maybe it's not in Wicklow, but in Dublin the amount of objections that people are out there objecting to ... and people have said support ... here, maybe should support them in Dublin as well, they wouldn't have the same problem. One person mention 4,000 objections of 4,000 houses in Dublin to be built. One last point in regards to as well, 16, 17 years ago, we were here, and when we were building houses, we had a whole structure in this council. We abandoned it. We abandoned building social housing. There were very few people today that were here at the time but we said, a few said we are we should forget about this issue of abandoning, building our own house people who can't build it for themselves. It's only coming home to roost in the last few years. We had to continue to build even 100,000 in the county, we wouldn't have the problems we have. The people who are campaigning at that time and bragging let's have private sector out there to build the houses for them, we take them for cheap prices. We are reaping the rewards of that now. But there was a few that said at the time we should continue to build the houses for our own people and discontinued it.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr. Vincent Blake. Cllr Shay Cullen?

CLLR CULLEN: I agreed with what Cllr. Vincent Blake is saying. The key to tackling the housing crisis as has been said is the supply. County Wicklow is not found wanting in this regard. The band was a short-term measure as has been said. But, we in County Wicklow and the Director and his team, have made provisions in terms of vulnerable people, vulnerable households, the measure, you know, to supply target at least in the universities the first secure home scheme and securing tenants and purchases purposes, and expanding emergency accommodation, County Wicklow is one of the best-performing councils in this country, you only have to ask the people of County Wicklow, rat knew, Ashford, Newtown, the amount of development that happened in our County Wicklow Municipal District is just unprecedented as far as I'm concerned. So, look, to suggest, you know, that we are falling

behind or anything like that, it is not the case. County Wicklow is over achieving, as far as I'm concerned in the whole housing sector. I just want to finish by saying there was a comment made earlier that I simply don't agree with, the case of Wicklow being denied resources to do up council houses, as far as I'm concerned it is not the case and anything that the council staffed look for in terms of getting funding to do up housing is available. Albeit it is difficult to get contractors at this moment in time to do up let's say 140 or 150 homes but as far as I'm concerned, the resources are in place and available to the council. I think it was not a good comment to make. Look, I want to offer my support and thank the Director and his team for all the work done on this whole sector. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Shay Cullen, Cllr Derek Mitchell?

CLLR MITCHELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach to be brief, to emphasise the number of houses that are being built in county concerned, Wicklow, an enormous number of houses being built. In Greystones there are 3 sites, and at the moment, between this year and last year, this are 450 socially supported houses have been supplied new, and those are greatly reducing the housing list and the crisis in housing and in the area. There are many more sites than that as well. Those are the biggest. So, we are doing our bit both in County Wicklow and in Greystones to do this, I don't think our problem is to find the resources to cope with those people and the social facilities within the towns and that is, nobody should forget, that huge expansion that is going on. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Derek Mitchell. Cllr Sylvester Bourke?

CLLR BOURKE: Just following on from Cllr. Vincent Blake's comments, to remind the management that when I was in the Chair in 2012, I remember going with Nicky Kelly to meet the Minister for housing, Willie Penrose, maybe Michael Nicholson was with us, we emphasised strongly a rebuilding resurgence of council building, they had stopped us building houses in 2012, the last ones I opened in Avoca, and I wanted to remind the management and the members that the current planning regulator was the then adviser to the Government insisting that private sector would satisfy the housing need into the future. It is the same planning regulator dictating our current policy in terms of where we zone and where we don't zone land and what is to be de-zoned so keep it in mind when the management are meeting and discussing with the senior off shall in the Department of

Environment, that the senior planning regulator we have at the moment didn't get it right in the past and he put his hands up at the Conference to say he did not get it right. So sometimes the members can know better and know the best so to keep that balance in the decision-making in the future.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cllr Sylvester Bourke. Director Joe Lane, you have a few questions, so, would you like to answer them or ... sorry ... apologies.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Heartened to hear the comments at the moment, led by Joe and Teresa, my experience in the short time I have been with the Wicklow County Council, is that they are doing absolutely everything possible within their power to address the housing needs as it arises in the county, if you are a member and you are aware of a tenancy in difficulty to get the tenant to contact the council, that is the first port of call, then we can look at the measures to help. Joe will go through the numbers but we have a good handle on the current situation as it is presenting the numbers of the notice quits effective in the moment in the counterparty and those yet to come. So, I will get Joe to go through the figures but to yourselves, thank you to the support of the team, and if there is anybody in difficulty to put them in contact with us, we will do all in our power to assist them.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

JOE LANE: Wicklow County Council received 74 [inaudible] since the start of the year. To put in context, we have circa 70 new applications also. So it is that there are solution, I will go across them in a minute. Last week we were notified of 3. However, on those 74, when the Local Authority informed [inaudible] it is a multi-team approve process to go through to allocate with the homeless team, HAP and allocations. Each case is different and as you know there are nuances and challenges, and it is very challenging for the people involved.

In the last couple of weeks we have a purchase in [inaudible] we have a target of 30, that has been achieved. To date we have 6 agreed, five in progress as close, and 14 inquiries of consideration. There is also 18 that are wanting to progress [sic] there is a standard acquisition that is not a problem. If the house sits within the price range and impending evaluation and the expectations are the same with the suitable accommodation and the housing is in good condition, we will not have a long-term issue with them. There is less problems, there are judgment calls required when there are refurbishment works are

required. Older houses and older accommodation when the person it is way above their needs. They have to be judgment calls on those.

There is, that plan A ... plan B there is an allocation process with equity issue regarding using the hopeless criteria versus those on the waiting list so we are cognizant of that.

Understanding that as people know, Wicklow County Council have a significant number of units coming in many areas over the next couple of weeks, months, and therefore, there will create a solution to some of those. HAP are extending cob tracts dealing with the landlord, and there has been successful there in a number of situations.

[inaudible] but on top of that, notwithstanding we have seen an expression of interest for interested parties to apply for the social units way above the targets and we are had negotiation with the key stake holders in the Wicklow development with an approved body [sic] again, that may or may not happen but again the relets, we worked with the SPC and change the situation where problem would take relets as seen, that is probably not so successful, we hope we might, we are working with the relets as best as possible on that one. So, I have gone through the statistics, answering the specific questions, the notice to quit, how many [inaudible] will fall after the 1st of April. April, that is 14 due. May 0, August and September 9 that is 31, these are once where we don't have a solution. That was 31, 74 which we accounted for but 40/60 were dealt with through a number of solutions and bear in mind that some of the people would have been on the list in the first place and they were getting nothing extra, they were going to get the units anyhow, it is only the timing with the two. One is met with the other. Do we have a sense of projections around the land after the 1st of April? No. We got 3 last week. We are, again, as the Chief Executive said, just tell us early, we don't want to know about it at the last-minute. It makes it more difficult. There are solutions, the more difficult ones are the ones at the last-minute. D and Arklow MD23, Wicklow MD17, Baltinglass MD13 [inaudible] I am not saying we will use all new units for those but there are, I think we have allocated 30-50, there are over 100 units in the Southern Cross to be allocated and also [inaudible] coming up, so, Bray, Greystones, this are a lot of solutions there. Update on emergency, lots of questions there, I will answer a few issues, homelessness is challenging. Because the cases are challenge, the solution is challenging.

In some cases without notices, there were challenging cases presenting to the staff and we have been dealing with that as we are going through.

Solutions can include homeless HAP, renegotiating the HAP or the RAS contract, extending or sometimes the contract is extended and a person can stay where they are. In the Chief Executive's report there are 22 households on merge accommodation and there are 19 housed at the moment. We take people in as required. There is also for RAS properties that we hold on to at the moment, four. And if required, we will hold on to, we held back three units per area for relets, we held them back in COVID and will, if we need to, go through that route to, at the moment we don't need, to but it is an option we can use when required.

There is not a situation but if there is we must be told early. Have I dealt with tenants, target 30, we have no update on the Chief Executive [inaudible] where a house is suitable to the tenant our independent value weighs and the independent value weighs from a professional evaluation is the same as the expectancy, we will be looking at those.

[sic] all of the things to consider is the availability of the social housing in the area. We mention Bray, some of the units in Bray are close to the UCC, that is a level that the department says we should not breach. But there is availability of social housing in Bray, therefore in a merge situation we will allocate from there we can look at priority tenants, and large families and people with disabilities, those are the units we could concentrate on immediately. Housing need and the property size, yes, people will have to look at that, if there is a 2 bedroom with a 4 bedroom need and people have to accept that homeless category.

We have to look at checks to make sure we are giving the right messages and the acquisition and cost savings, sometimes for houses are expensive. And there are options in the area, again, if there are options in the area, you give to the homeless. It is not ... the scheme is not designed to look at units it is designed to deal with homelessness. We have meetings to ensure that no houses, acquisitions or that are used in the issues we have no new tenant liaison officers we have 145 with the money available and the Budget provided. The allocation last year, what happens, the income of 850,000, if we get extra it goes into that and the ICRs that is not a major issue, the problem is the ones that we think we will get

going forward. Again because of the allocation, and allocating the units in the normal course particularly in north Wicklow. So, the normal process is now that there will be a request over the next couple of weeks for that application for expression of interest and how much money we will need, we will put in for significant money there, some in advance of the new units coming in. I hope that clarifies it, it was a lot of information. [sic]

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Joe. A lot of information. Helen to turn over to you quickly for correspondence.

HELEN PURCELL: A public JPC scheduled in Arklow Boxing Day at 7pm on Wednesday 26th of April. Appreciated if the JPC members and others can attend.

Launch of the National Women's Council Tool kit for Local Authority and supporting family to be launched in the council chamber. It is regional, 11.30am on the 8th of May. And training events for elected members was sent to you this morning.

It is basically a rehash in relation to training plans you adopted earlier. You are doing well on that. That's it. Thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Helen. Protocol meeting next. Members, can I say, thank you very much for being supportive for me and my family over the last ten days and a lot of mixed emotions here today for me as there are a few councillors I have not seen before, and putting it out to councillor Barry in Greystones, I could see his head but never saw his face in the Chamber, so lots of mixed emotions and thank you for being supportive and Caroline for doing a great job in being here today again. Thank you, members.