

**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON FRIDAY 5<sup>th</sup>  
DECEMBER, 2008.**

**MIONTUAIRISCÍ CRUINNITHE BHUISÉID COMHAIRLE CHONTAE  
CHIARRAÍ, A THIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN  
CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, DÉ HAOINE, 5 NOLLAIG 2008.**

**PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR**

***Councillors/Comhairleoirí***

R. Beasley	J. Brassil	T. Buckley
M. Cahill	M. Connor-Scarteen	B. Cronin
T. Ferris	T. Fitzgerald	T. Fleming
N. Foley	M. Gleeson	D. Healy-Rae
M. Healy-Rae	D. Kiely	P. Leahy
A. McEllistrim	C. Miller	T. O'Brien
B. O'Connell	J. O'Connor	P. O'Donoghue
M. O'Shea	L. Purtill	J. Sheahan

**IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR**

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager	Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance
Mr. M. McMahon, Dir. of Planning	Mr. J. Flynn, Dir. of Corp. Serv.
Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Dir. of Roads	Mr. O. Ring, Dir of Water Serv.
Mr. J. Breen, Dir. of Housing	Ms. A. McAllen, Fin./Mgmt. Accountant
Mr. M. Boyce, A/Dir. Of Environment	Mr. G. MacNamara, SE Roads
Mr. L. Quinlan, SEO Housing	Mr. F. Dillon, SE Water Services
Mr. J. Sheppard, SE Housing	Mr. G. O'Brien, A/SEO
Ms. M. West, AO Roads	Ms. K. Moriarty, AO Finance
Mr. L. Brosnan, AO Environment	Mr. P. O'Shea, A/SEO Finance
Ms. A. Ronayne, SO Finance	Ms. N. McCarthy, SO Finance
Mr. P. O'Connor, SSO Finance	Ms. N. O'Sullivan, SO Finance
Mr. R. Tangney, ASO Finance	Mr. B. Doolan, ASO Finance
Mr. P. Corkery, Press Officer	Mr. P. O'Connor, SSO Finance
Ms S. Sheridan, SSO Finance	Ms. B. Reidy, SSO. Corp. Services
Ms. M. Galvin, CO Corp. Affairs	Ms. O. O'Shea, CO Corp. Affairs

The meeting commenced at 11.20am.

The Mayor, Cllr. T. Fleming took the Chair.

**08.12.05.01 Consideration of the Local Authority Budget for the Local Financial Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009**

Mr. T. Curran Co. Manager said that in presenting the Budget for consideration to members, he was conscious that it was one of the most difficult Budgets in view of the current economic climate and this will be reflected in the work programmes. In view of the reduction in the allocation from the Local Government Fund and other income streams it was extremely difficult to present a balanced Budget to Council. The proposed expenditure is in excess of €141m for 2009. The Local Government Fund allocation for the coming year is €27.336m which is a reduction of almost 6.2% on the 2008 figure and this will have a huge impact on the Budget. The grant received from the Local Government Fund can be spent at the discretion of the local authority. However, grants received from other sources are specific and must be spent for the purpose for which they are received. As the Local Government Fund accounts for 20% of our income this reduction will have a direct impact on all our services. Arising from a Government decision the Council was asked in July last to implement a 3% reduction in payroll costs in 2009. The reduction required amounts to approximately €1.8m over the revenue and capital payroll, both for both indoor and outdoor staff. The reduction will be achieved through a reduction in overtime working except for urgent works and emergencies, significant restrictions on the number of temporary/seasonal staff engaged both indoor and outdoor and in the number of student placements, together with deferring the filling of vacancies, as circumstances require. The availability of funding for the work programmes and services will determine the need for the level of temporary/seasonal staff employed and this is particularly so in the case of Road Grants and the engagement of temporary/seasonal road workers and machinery drivers. He added that the Council was aware of the loss of any employment opportunities and the social consequences of job losses and the Council will deal with those affected sympathetically and sensitively. A key consideration by Management in the implementation of the payroll restrictions is, and will continue to be, to limit the impact of reductions on the quality and availability of our core services.

Mr. Curran stated that it has been necessary to make cost saving cuts in a number of areas. A reduction of at least 10% was required in the travelling expenses, including expenses for conferences, seminars, etc in the budget of all sections for all staff. Allocations for miscellaneous costs such as equipment, office furniture, computers etc has been kept to the bare minimum absolutely necessary. All non-essential expenditure has been eliminated. Expenditure will be monitored on a regular monthly basis to ensure compliance. Over the years we have taken several initiatives to increase flexibility, to operate to performance management measures, to effect cost savings (e.g. energy) and increase efficiency through technology (e.g. Refuse Payment and Management System, L.A. Quotes for procurement). It is important that all grants are spent to ensure maximum value for money. There have been significant infrastructure

improvements carried out over the passed 10 years due to the commitment of staff. While considering delivery of service we must also be very prudent with the finances available to the Council. The Minister for Finance in his Budget Statement in October introduced a new charge of €200 per dwelling, coming into effect in 2009, payable by the owners of private rented accommodation, holiday homes and other non-principal residences. The charges will be paid into the National Local Government Fund and then shared out as part of the general Local Government Fund allocation. A sum of €40m from this charge has been included in the Local Government Fund allocation already made to local authorities for 2009. No additional income to the Local Government Fund allocation already made to the Council is expected at this stage. Full details of the charge and collection arrangements are to be set out in legislation to be introduced by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. If local authorities do not realise this €40m in 2009 it will result in a reduction in local authority funding from the Local Government Fund.

The main features in the 2009 Budget are set out on Pages 3 and 4 of his report. Substantial funding has again been provided for the Housing Aid Schemes as there is a requirement for a local contribution. As the national situation is changing it is incumbent on the local authority to examine the way we provide housing. In the next few years local authorities will build very few houses and will be depending on Part V to provide housing. Under Roads & Transportation the funding provided under own resources is the same as 2008 and the funding provided from own resources over the last number of years by the Council was well in excess of inflation. The Water Services and Waste Water Programmes will require huge investment in coming years. The EPA increased standards for drinking water and the EPA licensing system for waste water discharges require on-going significant operation and maintenance costs. Substantial increased allocations are included again for 2009 for Water Services. The allocation for Water Services is increased by 12% on 2008. The Waste Management Programme is very expensive to deliver and the recycling market has collapsed with no outlet for material. It is proving to be more expensive and a review of this service will be carried out in 2009 and any proposed changes will be presented in the 2010 Budget.

The following are the principal charges for a balanced Budget.

<b>Description</b>	<b>Increase</b>
Annual Rate on Valuation €80.98	2.6%
Waste Disposal in North Kerry Landfill €165 per tonne (excl. levy) subject to Volume Discount (last increase in 2004)	€10 per tonne
Waste Disposal at Transfer Stations €190 per tonne (excl. levy) subject to volume discount	€10 per tonne

Water charges – Metered €1.10 per cubic metre	2.8%
Waste Water Charges	change to water In/water out system
Domestic Refuse Collection Charges. Average Domestic Customer €340	€10 per year

Mr. Curran added that he felt that these increases were reasonable. As required, the Capital Programme is set out in the report circulated and it is dependent on grants, levies etc. There has been a severe reduction in levies and this will impact on our work programme. Mr. Curran expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Mayor Cllr. Tom Fleming, to Cllr. Michael Healy-Rae the previous Mayor and to each Member of the Council for their support, co-operation and commitment during the past 12 months. He complimented the Corporate Policy Group and Strategic Policy Committees on their work and application over the past year also.

Preparation of the 2009 Draft Budget has been a very sizable and challenging under taking because of the current difficult and uncertain economic climate, the overall size of the Council's Budget and level of competing demands and expectations. He also recorded his thanks to Mr. John O'Connor Head of Finance, Angela McAllen, Kathleen Moriarty, Pat O'Shea and their Finance Staff for their work in preparing a balanced budget. In conclusion he said he wished to record his appreciation to each of the Directors of Service and their staff for their work in the detailed budgeting process also. In conclusion he recommended the Budget for adoption.

Mr. J. O'Connor Head of Finance referred Members to Page 8 of the Manager's Report where details of the revenue expenditure are set out. The Draft Budget provides for expenditure of €141,798,000 resulting in a nil increase on the 2008 projected out-turn excluding the Road Grants Work Programme, loan charges and contra items such as VEC pensions, Higher Education Grants, Rural Water Grants and various other grants paid out on behalf of Government departments. It will be a major challenge to continue to deliver our core services. There have been substantial increases in fuel costs, electricity costs, service standards and expenditure on waste water etc and with a nil increase in operating costs this will present a major challenge. The combined expenditure on the Divisions titled Housing and Building, Road and Transport, Water Services and Environmental Services accounts for 76% of the Council's overall Revenue Budget in 2009 continuing the trend in recent years. He added that Water Services is a growing element of the Budget. The critical areas of expenditure are set out in the pie chart on Page 9 and payroll costs including Kerry County Council's pension and travel/subsistence account for 38% of the Budget or €53.56m. Operational costs, including material and plant etc, account for 40% of the Budget or €57.04m. A very substantial portion of our indebtedness is attributed to housing loans, voluntary housing etc. Two thirds of our debt is attributable to these areas and this needs to be monitored critically. It will be a challenge to manage our

borrowings for key services only. He referred members to Page 10 of the Manager's Report where the various sources of income are set out. State Grants for Specific Purposes and the Local Government Fund Grant in total account for 56% of our income. Rates on commercial properties account for 13% of our income with Principal Charges accounting for 12% or €17.34m.

Mr. O'Connor informed the meeting that the projected Capital Budget is reduced considerably for 2009 at €100m. 72% of the works will be grant aided for roads, housing, water services etc. He referred members to Page 12 of the Manager's Report which sets out greater detail of the grants received from the State Sector for various purposes. Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 13 of the Manager's Report which refers to rates on commercial property and added that there is a view that the €18.1m is being paid by small shop owners. This is not the case as 37% - 38% of commercial rates is funded from global valuations by the networks companies including CIE, ESB, Eircom etc. A further one third of rates are paid by major rate payers while the final one third is funded by small businesses. The Kerry economy has not closed down and there is still a lot of activity and recent increases in rates have not matched this level of activity. Rates are a contribution to Kerry incorporated by businesses to maintain the environment and social fabric of the county. He then referred to water charges and said that the non domestic sector is liable for its fair share of the cost of production of water. The proposed charge is an increase of 2.8% while the network management charge remains at the existing level. The income from Town Councils is increased relative to their usage. He added that there is much better management of water by non domestic customers resulting in a reduction in the overall production of water. There is a need for all customers to manage leaks to reduce wastage and also to reduce their bills. The coming year will be most challenging and the Council has given commercial customers a great opportunity to reduce wastage. He referred to commercial rates and said that people who experienced genuine incapacity to pay their rates, arising from bad trading over a period of time, may apply to the Revenue Department to have their rates reduced and each case will be considered on its merits. Mr. O'Connor referred to the charge for public sewer service and said that this will be based on the principle of "water in-water out". The metering programme has been substantially completed and the Council is now in a position to charge for commercial sewage connection on a "water in-water out" basis. Mr. O'Connor referred to waste disposal sites and said that the Budget is balanced on the basis of an increase of €10 per tonne in the standard charge. The main source of income at waste disposal sites is from major contractors and there is intense competition for large volumes customers. It will not be possible to maintain our income from this source and the income from this source shows a reduction overall. He then referred to the refuse collection service and said that a lot of work has been done on this service over the past few years and the average increase per domestic customer for 2009 is €10 per annum.

All members thanked Mr. Curran Co. Manager and Mr. O'Connor Head of Finance for their presentations.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald said the reduction of 6.2% from the Local Government Fund is substantial but must be accepted. He referred to the €1.8m reduction in payroll costs and asked that further consideration be given to the employment of students for student placements. He asked how much loans the Council has at present and are there any savings to be made in recent interest rate reductions. He referred to the charges on non principal residences and asked how many houses in Kerry would be liable for this charge and what costs would be incurred by the Council in collecting the charge. He added that any costs involved should be recouped by the Department. Cllr. Fitzgerald added that the Department do not take into account our ability to pay when imposing regulations such as the water and waste water regulations and the proposed licensing of schemes. The proposed increase of 12% in the Water Services Budget is substantial and the Department should not be too strict in enforcing these regulations. He asked that derogation from compliance with these regulations be sought from the Department for 1 or 2 years in the current economic climate.

Cllr. M. Connor Scarteen referred to Page 10 of the Manager's Report where details of Revenue Income by Source are set out. He referred in particular to the 'Other Local Income' of €20.24m and requested a more detail break down of this figure. Cllr. Connor Scarteen referred to the projected income of €26m from Motor Tax in Kerry and said that we receive just €27.336m from the Local Government Fund in return. He suggested that a 1% increase in rates would be adequate in the current economic climate. Cllr. Connor Scarteen asked if the 3% cut in payroll costs would apply to indoor and outdoor staff. He referred to the proposed €200 levy on non principal residences and pointed out that property owners are not getting any service for this charge. The Cork-Swansea ferry was a tremendous loss to Kerry and it has been estimated that it cost the South West region €30m in 2007 and almost €40m in 2008. A lot of businesses who paid rates in 2008 will not pay rates in 2009 as they will be gone out of business. He asked what sum was collected in development levies in 2007 and 2008 and are development levies still outstanding.

Cllr. T. Ferris said her biggest concern is the employment of staff with the 3% reduction in payroll costs. She understood that up to 90 staff will lose their jobs. She requested clarification on the number of staff who will be let go and she was particularly concerned about seasonal workers. She said she was disgusted that there is a deliberate attempt to reduce the number of staff working in the public service and there has been a deliberate undermining of unions. She asked could the funding for the Capital Programme be used to employ seasonal staff. She referred to the proposed increases in service charges and landfill charges and asked had management considered a system similar to that proposed by Mary Harney in the Risk Equalisation Fund. Kerry County Council is the only service provider to offer a Wavier Scheme and this should be introduced by private

operators. Members are anxious to protect as many jobs as possible and she was concerned that those being targeted were the lower paid.

Cllr. M. Gleeson stated that the Head of Finance said that you should not spend what you do not have and it was a pity the banks had not practiced this. This country is paying a huge price for the practice of short term gain rather than long term strategy. The proposed cuts in the Budget for education by Minister O'Keeffe were badly thought out and he is now back tracking on them. He urged Minister O'Keeffe to withdraw these cuts. It maybe time to introduce multi annual budgets. He added that any reference to the impact of the Hub is a waste of time and he believed that the Hub would never be realised. He added that he remembered when the roads in the county were in disarray and they have now been brought up to a reasonable standard. However he was concerned that they would deteriorate because of lack of funding. He welcomed the commitment to water quality which is very important for tourism. There must be continued emphasis or commitment to recycling in the county; however the customers that recycle and compost at home and put out 9 or 10 bags of refuse per year are paying an astronomical charge of €35.50 per lift. He asked where the acknowledgment of that household's commitment to recycling is. Unless the Council deals with this issue there will be more road side dumping and this is a cause for concern. It is estimated that there are 5,000 holiday homes in Kerry. This would result in an income of €1million from the proposed €200 levy but it could cost €1million to collect this charge. It maybe necessary to advise the Minister that the cost of collecting this charge could exceed the income from it.

Cllr. M. Cahill said that rates should be levied on the basis of a person's ability to pay and the turn over of their business. The proposed €200 levy should be collected and retained within the county and he asked that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for the Environment to ensure that this is provided for in the new Finance Bill. There are a large number of holiday homes in Kerry and the income from the levy in Kerry would supplement other counties. There are a huge number of applications for grant aid under the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and the budget for this scheme should be increased significantly in 2009. If these essential works are not carried out to the houses of our elderly they will eventually end up on our housing waiting list. He welcomed the proposed Long Term Leasing Scheme recently announced by the Government as he believed that funding would not be available for the housing construction programme. This Leasing Scheme should help to ease waiting lists and encourage developers to complete developments. He asked what is recycling costing the county and he urged the Council to be cautious in any review as the recycling scheme operated in Kerry is an excellent scheme. The Transfer Station at Milltown is very busy every Saturday and customers are very careful to segregate their waste. It is important that the charge for customers at the Transfer Station is maintained at a reasonable level in order to discourage the burning and dumping of waste. He heard rumours that the Milltown Transfer Station may close 1 or 2 days a week and he hoped these rumours are not true

as there are queues there regularly and this is a very well managed facility. He suggested that rather than introduce a charge for the recycling of goods at Transfer Stations that the cost per car for the disposal of refuse could be increased to €15. The charge for the call out of the Fire Brigade to chimney fires is €100 for a number of years and consideration could be given to increasing this. The Council should consider a reduction in the use of the services of consultants in order to achieve savings. He was very concerned that some staff would lose their jobs and the Council has an excellent seasonal work force. He acknowledged that the cut backs must be made but he asked that they would be dealt with sensitively.

Cllr. B O'Connell said that 12% of the county are paying commercial rates and they are carrying the burden for the entire county. Rates have increased every year together with water and sewage charges. This is grossly unfair and undemocratic. Cllr. O'Connell referred to the Refuse Collection Service and said that households that do not avail of the service are getting away with it. Rent Collectors should be instructed to ask these householders how they are disposing of their rubbish. This would encourage householders to join the Council service which would result in additional revenue and every household would be accountable for the disposal of their refuse.

Cllr. M. O'Shea referred to Page 14 of the Manager's Report and in particular to the Annual Charge for Public Sewer Service and said that in his presentation Mr. O'Connor mentioned water in-water out. This is a deplorable charge and was in fact a new stealth tax of approx. €200 - €1,000 per premises. He believed that this charge could result in the closure of some businesses. He said that it is a disgrace to penalise commercial customers in this way.

Cllr. J. Brassil said that over the last number of years Kerry County Council has grant aided the Kerry Life Education Service to the tune of €24,000 per annum. They have extended their service from South Kerry into North Kerry and he was concerned that funding was not provided for this service in 2009. He asked if funding was provided in the Budget for the employment of a Tourism Officer to deal with the uncertainty regarding Cork – Kerry Tourism. He referred to the comments by Cllr. Gleeson regarding the proposed education cuts by Minister O'Keeffe and said that the Minister is now rowing back on these cuts. However, Minister O'Keeffe had said that if unions and teachers could address the issues and indicate where savings could be achieved he would be open to discussion on them. Secondary school teachers did put forward a proposal which would result in savings and as a result of this he reviewed his proposals for cutbacks.

Cllr. M. Healy-Rae said that in adopting the Budget for 2009 members have very difficult decisions to make. There are many businesses in difficulty in the county and he would be very slow to impose the proposed rate increase on them as they are already suffering badly in the present economic climate. He referred to the 3% reduction in payroll for 2009 and said that this will impact on staff in the



organisation but he acknowledged that the Council must comply with this national directive. He referred to the proposed cutbacks in Education and said that representatives of the Schools' Forum met with Deputy Jackie Healy-Rae and made specific proposals to him. He in turn made these proposals to Minister O'Keeffe and arising out of this he welcomed the €2m Minister O'Keeffe is making available. He added that Deputy Jackie Healy-Rae would also be meeting with representatives of primary schools and he would direct any proposals made by them to Government. He believed that the Government was willing to make changes when realistic proposals are put to them. He acknowledged that in tough economic times painful cuts have to be made. He asked if funding was provided in the Budget for Tech Amergin in Waterville as they provide an invaluable service. He also supported the provision of funding for Kerry Life Education who also provides an invaluable service to schools. In conclusion he said that he pledged his confidence in the Senior Management Team.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae expressed concern that a small percentage of people in the county are asked to pay rates but he accepted that a wavier is in place for hardship cases. Multi-national supermarkets are taking most of the business from businesses in the heart of Killarney and villages in East Kerry. They have massive profits and they should be targeted for additional revenue and not the local shops. He was concerned that these multi-national companies would close all small shops and would end up with a monopoly. These companies do not charge for parking while in town there is a charge for parking. He expressed concern at the proposed increase in refuse charges and its impact on our customer base. He asked that consideration be given to extending this service to areas not already serviced. There are a number of areas in the county where groups of houses do not have any form of refuse collection service and if these houses were serviced it would provide additional revenue for the Council. Cllr. D. Healy-Rae expressed concern at a possible reduction in the number of outdoor staff and the impact this will have on our ability to deliver the Road Works Programme. He asked the Director of Roads to ensure that all part-time staff retain their jobs if possible as they do an excellent job. These workers have families and their survival depends on Kerry County Council. During the year development levies were increased and he was concerned for small builders and young couples who must pay these levies. He called for the provision of a public toilet in Kilgarvan now that a suitable site has been identified and this maybe available at a reasonable cost. He called on the Council to pursue the acquisition of this land as a matter of urgency. Cllr. D. Healy-Rae referred to the €200 levy and called on the Council to ensure that the administration costs for the collection of this levy would be paid by the Department. He requested that funding would again be made available in 2009 for the Kerry Life Education Service.

Cllr. L Purtill said that he understood that commercial rates are an important source of revenue for Kerry County Council. It has been stated in the Draft Budget that collecting rates for 2008 has proved more challenging and he

understood this as many small businesses have experienced a huge drop in income. In the current economic climate their income will drop even further and with the banks tightening up on credit facilities, many small businesses will have no option but to close their doors. By increasing rates by 2.6% this may be 'the straw that breaks the camel's back'. Kerry County Council will certainly have an even more challenging time collecting rates in 2009. If the fruits of the celtic tiger economy had been managed prudently by the Government we would not be experiencing the financial difficulties we now find ourselves in. As a resident of a small village Cllr. Purtill said he sees, on a daily basis, the financial difficulties experienced by small businesses. They are now going to be further burdened by an increase in rates and other services which will lead to many more closures. For this reason he could not possibly support an increase in rates. Cllr. Purtill referred to the 3% cut in staffing and said that he would be most disappointed to see any staff member lose their job as they provide an excellent service.

Cllr. T. O'Brien referred to the refuse charges and said that he was concerned that the increase in charges could result in illegal dumping. He was also concerned that some areas have no refuse collection service. Cllr. O'Brien also expressed concern at the possibility that some temporary staff may lose their jobs as a result of the reduction in payroll costs.

Cllr. J. Sheahan said that in increasing rates Kerry County Council is doing a disservice to the people of the county. A number of businesses have asked if they could be exempt from the increase in rates as they would not be able to afford it. He recently received a phone call from a lady in business and with all the proposed increases and charges it will be virtually impossible for her to remain in business. Many of her staff have been left go and the family members work seven days a week.

Cllr. D. Kiely said that rates are a very big issue for all business people in the county. It is unfortunate that a tiered system of rates could not be introduced. A number of months ago the ESB imposed a huge increase on their charges but now that the cost of oil has reduced these charges have not been reduced. He said that additional rates could be imposed on the ESB and this would spare the smaller shop keeper. He asked what was the current position regarding the repayment of housing loans and rents. There will be a huge reduction in fees from planning applications and he hoped the Planning Department would be more flexible now in facilitating planning applicants. He asked if there was any scope for the Council to introduce charges to off set rates. Cllr. Kiely commended the Council on restoring the roads over the last number of years and said that the recent heavy rainfall has resulted in a number of potholes on roads and he called on the Council to address these as soon as possible.

Cllr. R. Beasley said it is hard to quantify the decline in tourism in North Kerry. He referred to the proposed increase in rates and asked that consideration would be given to the smaller shops, Bed and Breakfast etc that are experiencing major

financial difficulties. He added that in the major towns rents are very high and they are controlled by a few people. He welcomed the recent announcement that Valentia Coast Guard Station would remain open. In conclusion he said that the recent National Budget should be renegotiated.

Cllr. J. O'Connor said that the cuts being imposed on local authorities are forced by a very inefficient Government. The Financial Regulator was not aware of what was going on in the banks and he called on the Government to appoint a new Financial Regulator immediately. In 2008 water charges were not increased but a 2% increase is proposed for 2009 and he was totally opposed to this. He asked what was the increase in income as a result of the metering of water. He expressed disappointment at the proposed 3% cut in payroll costs and said that he would be very disappointed to see staff let go. He asked if this proposal could be reconsidered. He called for the re-introduction of the Student Summer Scheme. Cllr. O'Connor referred to the abolition of the Installation Aid Scheme for young farmers and said that the cost per farmer of €15,000 would help to create a job. Jobs created by the IDA are costing €90,000. Kerry is very much dependent on farming for employment.

Cllr. T. Fleming asked that the decision to let go staff, both indoor and outdoor, would be reconsidered. Council staff are a very valuable asset and should be retained. He called on Management to review the decision to leave some staff go. He referred to loan charges of €8m included in the Budget and asked if these could be re-negotiated. He referred to insurance costs of €2m and asked that this would also be reviewed and that consideration would be given to approaching other companies with a view to getting quotations. He referred to energy costs and said that the ESB are seeking an increase for the New Year. The price of oil has stabilised at the present time and it is possible that some savings would be achieved in this area over the next few months. He called on the Council to ensure that the drainage of all roads is attended to so as to ensure that the investment in our roads in recent years is protected.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance said that there are a lot of competing demands on funding for 2009. For 2009 there is a very clear emphasis on our core services, i.e. Roads, Housing, Water and Environment. There will be a major emphasis on efficiencies and this will grow over the next 12 months. There will be a restriction on overtime aimed at keeping as many staff employed as possible. Seasonal staff are mostly employed in the Roads Department and the roads grant will determine the level of employment in that area. Kerry County Council has built up a very cost-effective operation and a substantial number of jobs will be carried out by our own staff. It is not intended that all temporary/seasonal workers will not be employed in 2009 but opportunities will be more limited and we will not have the same level of employment in 2009. The Budget was arrived at to keep the maximum number of people employed to ensure delivery of service. Mr. O'Connor said that Cllr. T. Fitzgerald referred to the level of capital debt and he said that at the end of the year, the Council has a

capital debt of €91m. €63m of this relates to housing loans which are lent on to our customers but this funding is also used for the purchase of land banks, voluntary housing etc. The Council is not liable for the interest on these loans. Less than one-third of the loans relate to roads, water schemes, waste water schemes, Council offices in Killorglin and Castleisland and these loans were taken out at preferential rates and we have taken reductions into account. Wherever possible, we borrow from the HFA as they offer the most competitive rates. The Council seeks quotations from a number of institutions to get the best deal possible.

He then referred to the query from Cllr. Kiely regarding a tiered system for rates and said that it is not possible to have different rate multipliers for different businesses and this is the law of the land. The Council's funding base is very narrow and despite the tremendous growth over the past few years, our rateable valuation has increased by just a few percent. He then referred to a query on funding for Kerry Life Education Service and said that members had made a good case for them. As the Budget is constructed at the present time, there is provision for them and also for Tech Amergin in Waterville. He referred to queries regarding the €200 levy proposed for non-residential houses and said that until the law is enacted, it is very difficult to know exactly what is involved and it depends on the legal definition in the relevant legislation.

He referred to the query from Cllr. M. Connor-Scarteen requesting greater detail on Other Local Income Sources and said that these are detailed on Pages 16 and 17 of the Manager's Report.

Mr. O'Connor referred to the proposed waste water charge which was referred to by Cllr. O'Shea as a stealth tax and he said that people will have control over it. It has already been the experience with the metering of water that customers have managed their usage and this has resulted in a substantial reduction in the number of leaks and in many cases a reduction in charges. This is an area that requires ongoing attention and he hoped that 2009 would see the end to most of the enquiries. If customers control their water in, then they can effect savings but there are some very wasteful practices. He referred to the use of water by schools and said that the Government has set an allowance for schools and some schools are using less than this allowance but others were using very substantially more. The proposed increase in the refuse charge is just €0.20 per week for the average customer. He added that a lot of improvements and efficiencies have been carried out on this service and we have been growing our customer base. However, we are depending on economies of scale.

Mr. O'Connor referred to the query from Cllr. M. Connor-Scarteen in relation to Motor Tax and said that motor tax collected in Kerry is lodged to the Local Government Fund from which we will receive €27.3m in 2009. In addition, Non-National Road Grants are also paid from this Fund and he suggested that Kerry County Council is doing exceptionally well out of this Fund at a time when

approximately €24m is collected in the county from Motor Tax. He referred to Development Levies and said that to date, no development levies have been written off as a bad debt. Development Levies are a condition of planning and if there is a breach of this condition of planning, they are pursued by the Planning Department and in a limited number of cases, legal proceedings have been initiated. Approximately €5m was collected in Development Levies in 2008, and in 2009 it is anticipated that the income from levies will be €2m. This is a substantial decline on the 2007 and 2008 figures. While we are going through a difficult time at present, in the 1990s, a number of waste water schemes were undertaken and this was a substantial challenge at that time. In comparison with other counties, we have modern waste water treatment plants in all our major towns. In the 1990's we received 100% EU/government funding and if these schemes were funded by the Government, nowadays we would have got 60% - 70% of the funding only. We must ensure that we do not prejudice our position when the economy improves.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae asked if additional rates could be levied on multi-national companies.

In response, Mr. J. O'Connor said that the law of the land said there must be one rates multiplier and therefore this would not be possible.

Cllr. R. Beasley asked if the €200 levy applies to mobile homes.

In response, Mr. J. O'Connor said that until such time as the law is published, it is not clear.

The Mayor informed members that it was 1.30pm and the meeting would be adjourned for lunch until 2.15pm.

The meeting resumed at 2.30pm.

### **Housing and Building and Road Transport and Safety**

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance informed members that Division 1 - Housing and Building would be taken with Division 2 - Road Transport and Safety.

He referred members to Pages 18 - 32 of the Manager's Report for details on Division 1 - Housing and Building and Pages 10 - 12 of the Budget Tables. The total revenue expenditure proposed for this Division is €16.23m and this is 11% of the overall Draft Budget. Housing is one of the Council's main instruments for social inclusion and improving housing conditions. Details of the Capital Programme are contained at the back of the Manager's Report in Schedule 1. The proposed Capital Expenditure for this Division is €24.25m with grant aid of approximately €17m. The Council is heavily dependent on grant aid for housing and voluntary housing. The Housing Capital Programme accounts for 25% of the

proposed total Capital Programme for 2009. He referred members to the end of Page 18 and the start of Page 19 for details of the Internal Capital Receipts Works Programme and said that over the past number of years considerable expenditure, in excess of €4m, has been spent on house improvements and estate improvements out of housing capital receipts with the approval of the Department. However, capital receipts have declined significantly and there will be very little income from this source over the next few years. €800,000 is provided for the refurbishment of vacant houses and over time, there should be very little maintenance required in these houses. He referred members to Page 19 of the Manager's Report where details of land availability is set out. At present, the Council has 79 acres of land in various locations throughout the county for the purpose of providing housing. The Council continues to buy land where there is need and land is available at a reasonable cost. He referred members to Page 24 of the Manager's Report where details of the Maintenance and Improvement of Local Authority Housing Units are set out. A substantial programme of planned maintenance has been carried out utilising internal capital receipts from the sale of Council houses to existing tenants. This planned improvement works programme ultimately should reduce the number of 'response' maintenance requests received as our housing stock is improved on a phased basis. However, as advised previously, as a consequence of a noticeable reduction in tenant purchase sales we will be more curtailed in our planned maintenance programme next year. Expenditure on repairing vacant houses and making them available for re-letting will continue to be refunded from internal capital receipt, pending sanction from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Reductions in the time involved in repairing vacant houses and offering them for re-letting continues to be achieved through careful monitoring. The central heating and insulation programme in respect of our entire stock, which have been ongoing over the last number of years is now complete with the exception of tenants who have declined to be included in the programme.

Mr. O'Connor then referred members to Page 26 where details of Debt Management and Rent Assessment are set out. Kerry County Council offers a variety of payment methods to facilitate and help its tenants. The most recent options which were made available were An Post Billpay and Direct Debit. There has been a positive uptake on these alternative methods of payment with 757 and 184 Rent Customers availing of each of the options respectively. The impact of the introduction of this payment option in the context of arrears management is being continuously monitored. The full range of options of payment now available is as follows:

1. Payments to local Revenue Collector
2. Payment at local Council Offices as well as at the Killarney and Killorglin Area Services Centres
3. Bank Standing Order
4. Direct Debits

5. An Post Bill Pay
6. Household Budget Deductions from the various Social Welfare Payments
7. Payments through Kerry Money Advice & Budgeting Service
8. Laser Card / Credit Card - in person, through the post or by telephone

The Council does not want to see a build-up of arrears on accounts and he would urge tenants to talk to their Revenue Collector if they are experiencing any difficulties. The Money Advice & Budgeting Service is a very worthwhile advisory agency and he would urge people in difficulty to contact them.

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 28 of the Manager's Report where details of the Homeless Service are set out. There is substantial expenditure in this area but the vast majority i.e. 90% is recovered in grant aid. This is a very sensitive social service. He referred members to Pages 31 and 32 where details of the Housing Support Grants are set out. The Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability became operational from 01/11/2007 and replaced the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme and the Essential Repairs Grant Scheme. There has been enormous expenditure on these schemes over the past few years and Kerry has one of the highest levels of uptake and expenditure on these schemes amongst all County Councils in the country. The Council depends on the 80% grant aid received from the Department. For the purposes of the 2009 Budget, an overall budget allocation of €3.2m is included subject to Department grant aid of €2.56m and a local contribution of €640,000. The Council is also liable for the administrative and engineering support costs of approximately €280,000 and this, combined with the local contribution of €640,000, results in a local contribution in excess of €900,000 for these schemes.

### **Road Transportation and Safety**

Mr. O'Connor then informed members that details of this Division are set out on Pages 33 - 55 of the Manager's Report and Pages 13 - 15 of the Budget Tables. The proposed expenditure on this division is in excess of €45m with substantial grant aid in excess of €28m. The size of the work programme will be determined by the Road Grants received. Details of the Capital Programme for this Division are set out on Pages 5 - 8 of Schedule 1 at the back of the Manager's Report and the expenditure proposed is €27m which is 27% of the overall Capital Programme envisaged for 2009. €24m of this will come from grants from the Department of Transport and the NRA and €3m will be predicated on local streams of income to support delivery. This will include relief roads etc. Details of the programme achieved in 2008 are set out in the Manager's Report. The provision for public lighting is similar to 2008 at €65,000 and provision is made for the continuing road safety effort. The Roads Programme will be discussed in greater detail at the Special Roads Meeting to be held in March following notification of the 2009 Road Grants.

Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing informed members that at present, the council has almost 2,300 properties throughout the county but it also has in excess of 1,000 applicants who are in need of housing. Consideration must be given to any new means of providing housing. A Tenancy Compliance Officer has been appointed and photographic evidence of the interior works is taken before a house is let in order to protect our investment. When the economy slows down, the level of housing applications increases and since March, almost 300 applications for housing were received. In 2008, the Capital Programme was reduced from the previous year. The early indications from the Department are that this allocation will be further reduced in 2009 and in future years. This reduction in capital funding obviously impacts on the overall number of social housing units which can be constructed or acquired together with any Part 5 social unit acquisitions. As a result of this reduction in funding in 2008, targeted house starts had to be curtailed. This resulted in just 26 social housing dwellings, including Part V units, being commenced or acquired during the year. The balance of the funding was used to continue the construction of houses already commenced. Since 2004, 601 local authority housing units have been provided including 62 Demountable Units. In 2008, 106 dwellings were completed and substantial works were carried out to improve dwellings and public areas in housing estates and this work was funded from the sale of local authority dwellings. However, the funds available from this source are now lower. Mr. Breen then referred to land availability and said the Council had a programme of building up a land bank for housing but in the current economic climate, we must be very careful where we purchase land as we are aware that funding for the Capital Programme has been reduced. There is a tendency now to move away from house construction and he understood that new leasing arrangements are being agreed by the Department.

He referred members to Pages 19 and 20 of the Manager's Report where details of affordable housing are set out. Kerry County Council continues to fulfil its expanded role in the provision and sale of affordable housing to eligible first time buyers in the County with 75 affordable housing units being made available to-date both under the 1999 and Part V Affordable Housing Schemes. The Housing Department recently advertised 19 affordable housing units. However, given the current reduction in house construction activity, a fall-off in the number of affordable housing units becoming available under Part V in the county in 2009 is anticipated. The number of dwellings sold to tenants under the Tenant Purchase Scheme has reduced significantly with only 25 sales being completed to-date in 2008 compared with 58 in total for 2007. This will impact adversely on our internal capital receipts and consequently on our ability to carry out improvement works within our estates utilising these funds as has been done in the past 2 years. The Shared Ownership Scheme also continues to reduce in popularity with 26 applications being received in the past year and only 3 houses purchased under the Scheme. The Council was advised by the Department of significant changes in the manner under which affordable housing is to be



delivered to buyers through a new Government Equity Loan arrangement. Until the introduction of this legislation, existing arrangements will remain in place.

Under the heading "Assessment of Housing Needs", Mr. Breen informed members that the Housing Department was requested by the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal under Section 9 of the Housing Act, 1988 to undertake an Assessment of Need for local authority housing accommodation as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008. As part of the Assessment of Need, a total of 1,424 applications were examined with 997 being deemed eligible for housing accommodation. The Department has advised that future housing capital allocations to local authorities will be determined on the basis of this assessment. In that regard, we have also been advised by the DoEHLG that based on their preliminary assessment of housing need throughout the county, the relative need in Kerry County Council is not as high compared to other authorities. This may impact on and adversely affect our annual capital allocation. Clarification is awaited on the methodology to be used by the Department in their calculations of 'net need' on which future capital allocations will be based. 850 qualified applicants have been accommodated since 2004. He advised members that revised procedures for the appraisal, approval and implementation of voluntary housing projects were issued by the Department with effect from 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2008. These will need to be fully complied with for all future projects. The overall objective is to achieve a more integrated approach in individual local authorities and to streamline the approach to the appraisal and approval of projects. The allocation for voluntary housing is included in the overall Capital Allocation received by local authorities and it is understood that funding for this scheme will be limited. Details of the various voluntary housing projects under construction, completed etc are contained in Page 22 of the Manager's Report.

Mr. Breen acknowledged the work of the Housing SPC which met on 3 occasions in 2008 and considered a number of issues which are set out on Pages 22 and 23 of the Manager's Report. Details of the Revenue Programme as set out on Page 24. Substantial funding has been provided for our housing maintenance programme over the last few years and the focus has been on achieving value for money. His Department try to ensure that all properties are well looked after. Over the last 2 years, a significant element of our planned maintenance has been carried out utilising internal capital receipts from the sale of Council houses to existing tenants. This planned improvement works programme ultimately should reduce the number of 'response' maintenance requests received as our housing stock is improved on a phased basis. However, as advised earlier, as a consequence of a noticeable reduction in Tenant Purchase sales, we will be more curtailed in our planned maintenance programme next year. Expenditure on repairing vacant houses and making them available for re-letting will continue to be funded from internal capital receipts pending sanction from the Department. Reductions on the time involved in repairing vacant houses and offering them for re-letting continues to be achieved through careful monitoring. The central heating and insulation programme, in respect of our entire housing stock which

has been ongoing over the last number of years, is now complete with the exception of tenants who have declined to be included in the programme. From January 2009, local authorities will be required to provide a Building Energy Rating for all its houses and the rating of houses is being dealt with in-house at a cost of €25 - €30 per certificate. If this work was carried out by a consultant, it would cost approximately €300 per property.

Details of the Traveller Accommodation Management Programme are set out on Page 25 of the Manager's Report and the allocation of €109,000 includes the employment of a Traveller Liaison Officer who continues to support travellers in the provision of their accommodation needs and helps to promote links between the Council, statutory bodies and voluntary organisations providing services for travellers. He then referred members to Pages 26 and 27 of the Manager's Report where details of Debt Management and Rent Assessment are set out. During 2008, legal proceedings in 12 cases of serious loan arrears were issued and 2 Orders for Possession were obtained. In addition, the Council served 45 Notices to Quit throughout the last year for rent accounts in serious arrears. The average weekly rent is €43 and it is important that the tenants would keep the Housing Department up-to-date on family circumstances. Mr. Breen informed members that as a result of funding being made available under the Department Housing Management Initiatives Grant Scheme, the Housing Department had recently engaged, on a temporary basis, a Tenancy Compliance Officer. This role is to ensure the compliance with Council policy and procedures with regard to tenancy agreements, anti-social behaviour and accurate completion and submission of rent assessment forms.

Details of the Homeless Service are set out on Page 28 of the Manager's Report and Arlington Lodge is the accommodation provided in Tralee for homeless persons. A lot of progress has been made in this area in Tralee over the past few years and it is hoped that a new policy will be available early in the New Year. He referred members to Page 29 where details of the Rental Accommodation Scheme Programme are set out. To date, a total of 321 tenants have transferred under the RAS Programme, of which 38 are in Voluntary Housing Accommodation and we expect that 380 households will benefit from the Scheme in the coming year. In relation to the balance of 283 transferred from private tenancy, 191 tenants remained in their existing accommodation and 92 transferred to new accommodation acquired by Kerry County Council from private landlords. This scheme ensures security of tenure for tenants and this must be welcomed. The total private transfers in Kerry to-date represents over 5.18% of the National transfers to-date. When one considers that the total numbers eligible for RAS in Kerry (i.e. 884 households) represents only 2.76% of the national total (i.e. 32,000 households approximately) the percentage of 5.18% of all national transfers completed in Kerry is indicative of the excellent progress being made in the roll-out of the Scheme in the county. A sum of €1.3m is provided in the Budget for housing loans and with the reduction in interest rates the Council encourages those on fixed interest rates to re-mortgage. He referred

to Debt Management and said that inevitably, there is some element of arrears with housing loans and housing rents.

Mr. Breen then referred members to Pages 31 and 32 of the Manager's Report where details of the housing grants and the Budget for them are set out. Substantial funding is provided for these schemes and the level of applications received has been huge. It was necessary, due to the large level of demand, to introduce a prioritisation scheme and in excess of 2,000 grants have been paid out over the past few years.

In conclusion Mr. Breen thanked Mayor Fleming and previous Mayors and the members for their support for the Housing Programme and for their work on the Housing SPC. In conclusion, he thanked the staff of the Housing Department for the excellent service they provide.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads said that the Budget was prepared on the basis that the grant level would be similar to that received in 2008. He referred members to Pages 33 - 35 of the Manager's Report where details of the Roads Programme are set out. Mr. O'Sullivan informed the meeting that the Council has a statutory obligation to comply with health and safety legislation and Chapter 8 and training is provided to support staff in this regard. His Department made representations to the Department of Transport in relation to documentation required under Chapter 8.

Details of the work of the Roads and Transportation SPC are set out on Page 35 of the Manager's Report. The Work Programme for the SPC in 2009 will be reviewed at the start of the year. However, in light of the downturn in the economy, consideration would have to be given to identifying areas of increasing income and reducing costs. Areas that need to be addressed in particular include funding for the delivery of car parks, relief roads and other road infrastructure identified in the Local Area Plans adopted by Council. This will need to be examined in line with the demands of local communities for the retention of current standards of street cleaning and the provision of amenity services currently funded from the Roads Budget. The implications of a significant increase in energy costs, particularly in the provision of public lighting, will also be reviewed.

Mr. O'Sullivan informed members that details of the Capital Programme are set out on Pages 36 - 41 of the Manager's Report and on Pages 5 - 8 in Schedule 1 at the back of the Manager's Report. Tender documents for the Castleisland By-Pass were issued to the five tenderers on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2008. The tender submission date is 15<sup>th</sup> January 2009 and the contract award is likely to take place early in 2009 subject to NRA approval. Mr. O'Sullivan then referred to the Tralee By-Pass and said that the Route Selection Report for this scheme extension was submitted for NRA approval in November 2007. He then referred to the Farranfore to Killarney Road and said that the preferred route for this

section of road was published in 2003. Preliminary Design work has been proceeding as well as specific environmental studies and evaluations. Site investigation contract for Phase 1 commenced in November 2007 and was completed in 2008. The NRA Peer Review of this scheme was held in November 2007 and a report in this regard was received from the NRA in 2008. A draft interim report has issued to the NRA in relation to the Peer Review of the scheme. Some of the issues identified in the Peer Review process can only be addressed when Kerry County Council is in a position to procure traffic and environmental consultants which will be subject to funding and approval by the NRA. Mr. O'Sullivan informed members that a constraints report will be available shortly for the Castleisland to Farranfore Road.

Mr. O'Sullivan referred members to Page 38 of the Manager's Report where details of National Primary Routes Pavement and Major Improvements are set out. Grants for remedial safety works were received during 2008. Works were carried out at two locations.

- A grant of €700,000 was spent on overlay of the N22, Lawlor's Cross towards Killarney improving 1.3km of road length. The Council hopes that a similar figure for overlays will be allocated in 2009 and this would allow the continuation of the 2008 works towards Killarney.
- An allocation of €600,000 was received for the construction of a roundabout at Lissivigeen Junction. Work started in September 2008 and will be completed early in 2009. In 2008, an allocation of €469,000 was received for National Secondary Routes Remedial Safety Measures for improvement works on the National Secondary Network. This includes an allocation for the Road Safety Engineer based in Castleisland National Road Design Office. Improvement works have been carried out at the following four locations:

- Mountcoal Junction
- Caragh Bridge
- Bridge at Gortnadullagh, Kenmare
- Barraduff Bridge

This allocation was a major reduction on the 2007 allocation of €1.387m. A programme of works has been prepared and submitted to the NRA to seek further funding. In relation to the N69 Listowel By-Pass, a Feasibility Report was completed and approved by the NRA in October 2006. The first Public Consultation was held in June 2007. The Constraints Report including the Environmental Report was completed and approved by the NRA in October 2007. Approval was also granted to proceed to Phase 3. Route option design is ongoing in 2008. The National Roads Authority has not provided a grant allocation for this scheme in 2008.

Mr. O'Sullivan referred Members to Page 39 of the Manager's Report for details of the National Secondary Routes Pavement and Minor Improvement Programme. Mr. O'Sullivan informed the meeting that there are 336 km of National Secondary Routes in Kerry many of which are in poor condition. In 2008, approximately €6.6m was spent on improvement works. This allocation was a considerable reduction on the amount received in 2007 of €10.5m. The majority of the work in this programme is carried out by direct labour and reflects the ability of Kerry County Council staff to deliver efficient and cost-effective works. Major realignment works were carried out on sections of the following:

- N70 Coomaciste to Caherdaniel, Blackwater to Tahilla and Caragh Bridge
- N71 Moll's Gap and Bonane
- N72 Gortanahaneboy
- N86 Lougher Cross to Stage

An allocation of €95,000 was received for the design of schemes at Coolnaharrigle Lower to Coolroe Lower, Carhoomeengar, Shinnagh Cross and Hairpin Bends re-alignment on the N86. It is hoped that this design work will lead to capital funding for construction work in the future. In relation to National Secondary Bridge Improvements, an allocation of €800,000 was set aside by the NRA for improvement works on bridges on the National Secondary Network. This allocation is administered in its entirety by the Bridges Section of the NRA. In 2008, improvement works were carried out on Lispole Bridge and preparatory works have been carried out on Laune Bridge to allow the NRA appoint a contractor in the near future.

Mr. O'Sullivan then referred to relief roads and said that now that the Local Area Plans have been adopted, there is a need for relief roads and these have been identified. Work has commenced on the An Daingean Relief Road with an expected opening date in early 2009. A need for ring roads has been identified for Castleisland, Kenmare, Tralee, Killorglin etc and the key challenge will be how these projects will be funded. The overall cost of providing this infrastructure excluding national roads schemes to be funded by the NRA is provisionally estimated at €130m and the delivery of these will be subject to Council considering and adopting an appropriate funding stream. Mr. O'Sullivan added that it is an objective of the Roads Department to progress the provision of additional car / coach parks in An Daingean, Killorglin and Kenmare. This is dependent on suitable sites being acquired and subject to the Council considering and adopting an appropriate funding stream such as paid parking.

Details of the revenue budget are set out on Pages 42 - 55 of the Manager's Report. This Programme deals with the on-going improvement, day-to-day repair and maintenance of the national primary, national secondary and non-national road network in the county including road improvement works, the provision of safety measures, public lighting and traffic management. The length of road network to be maintained in this programme is 4,713kms. It also provides for the

administration of all national and non-national road grants received by the Local Authority as well as the administration and delivery of Local Improvement Schemes, Community Involvement Schemes, Gaeltacht Grants and County Councillor Allocations. The funding for national primary roads is similar to 2008 but it is dependent on the grants provided by the NRA. A Special Maintenance allocation of €39,000 was received for the treatment of ragwort and noxious weeds on our national primary network in 2008 and it is anticipated that a similar sum will be received in 2009 for this purpose. A sum of €782,000 is provided for the surface dressing of National Secondary roads and again, this funding is provided by the NRA. A sum of €135,000 is provided for winter maintenance on National Secondary roads and due to the bad weather in 2008, we have over-expended on this allocation largely due to flooding and the gritting of roads. A sum of €130,000 is provided for bridge maintenance on National Secondary routes. There are 162 bridge structures on the national secondary roads to be maintained out of this allocation. A sum of €130,000 was allocated for routine maintenance of bridges in 2008. This was a reduction of €40,000 on the previous allocation.

A sum of €1.33m is provided for the general maintenance of national secondary roads. A grant allocation of €1.021m was received in 2008 and this was an increase of €35,000 on the 2007 allocation. This programme covers the day-to-day maintenance of the network and maintenance of drainage, signage, lining and footpaths. In addition in 2008, a Special Maintenance allocation of €111,480 was received for the treatment of ragwort and noxious weeds on our national secondary network. This allocation, which was welcomed following repeated representations from Council, was divided county wide. It is anticipated that a similar sum will be received in 2009 for this purpose.

Mr. O'Sullivan referred members to Page 46 of the Manager's Report where details of the Regional Road Maintenance and Improvement Programme are set out. A sum of €3.137m is provided for surface restoration / road restoration / overlay of Regional roads. This is an increase on previous allocations and is as a result of the re-classification of a number of roads from Local to Regional roads by the Minister. A sum of €914,264 is provided for restoration maintenance of regional roads. A sum of €20,000 is provided for winter maintenance of regional roads. This allows for the gritting of regional roads at exceptionally vulnerable locations on the Regional Road network. A sum of €1.344m is provided for general maintenance works on Regional Roads. The level of funding provided under this programme in 2008 was €1.434m. €700,000 was provided by the Department of Transport as a Discretionary Maintenance Grant and the balance is provided by Kerry County Council's own resources. This allocation also includes loan charges arising from major road re-alignment and protection works at Inch carried out in 2000 and 2007 and the reduction in the allocation is due reduced loan charges. A sum of €4.407m is provided for general improvement works on Regional Roads. In 2008, Kerry County Council received €4.406m from the Department of Transport for specific improvement works under the

Specific Improvement Grant Scheme. This allocation allowed for the funding of improvement works carried out in the previous year, 2007, on the following roads:

- R556 Dale Road
- R561 Castlemaine - Annascaul Road
- R559 Sleah Head Road

These works accounted for €2.31m of the grant. In 2008, this grant also allowed for the completion of the Gaddagh Bridge. Improvement works were also commenced in the R555 Listowel to Abbeyfeale and the R563 Fossa - Milltown Regional Roads. An allocation of €100,000 was made available to progress the design of Ballinagar Bridge. A programme of works totalling €5.287m for 2009 has been prepared and submitted to the Department of Transport for approval.

Mr. O'Sullivan then briefed members in detail on the allocations for surface restorations/road reconstruction/overlay for local roads. A sum of €16.192m has been provided for this programme.

In conclusion, Mr. O'Sullivan informed members that he would revert to them when the full grant allocations for 2009 were received.

All members complimented Mr. Breen and Mr. O'Sullivan on their presentations and their staff on the excellent service provided.

Cllr. J. Brassil said that he would be interested to see the details of the Leasing Scheme proposed by Junior Minister, Michael Finneran. There is adequate housing stock in the county and he believed that there was no point in building any more houses but those already constructed should be utilised. In this way, builders will acquire the much needed finance to assist them in their repayments and the Banks will get paid. He asked that when the details are available, that a presentation would be made to Council on it. He referred to the Tenant Purchase Scheme and said that there has been a reduction in the number of houses being purchased and he asked if the Council could assist tenants with borrowings/mortgages. Cllr. Brassil complimented Mr. Breen and his staff on training staff on Building Energy Rating and said this would save the Council a lot of money. The RAS Scheme is also working very well. The rigid assessment of housing applicants by the Housing Department should be extended to assessments for Affordable Housing as it is very successful. He commended the Housing Department on the Ballyheigue Affordable Houses and social housing project. He said that he hoped that these houses would be occupied by the end of January 2009. Cllr. Brassil then referred to the Roads Programme and in particular, to the Community Involvement Maintenance Programme and said that he was anxious that the maintenance of roads improved under this scheme over the last 10 years would continue. He asked if the Community Involvement Scheme has been continued. He referred to Ballinagar Bridge and pleaded with

the Roads Department to secure funding for this project in 2009 as it is very important for the local community.

Cllr. M. Gleeson welcomed the upgrading and improvement of Deerpark Halting Sites and said that there are only two towns in the county that have halting sites and he would have expected a greater spread of them around the county. The provision of a Homeless facility in Killarney is very important and he was concerned that the present financial situation could result in more homelessness. He asked that returning exiles would be given priority in the allocation of housing. He welcomed the completion of 106 dwellings in 2008 and said this will accommodate less than one-ninth of the applicants on the housing waiting list. He understood that there are 90,000 unoccupied houses and housing units in Ireland and unless they are used wisely and quickly, they will become dilapidated and detract from towns and villages. By arranging to use these houses to accommodate qualified applicants it would be an innovative way to reduce the housing waiting list. Cllr. Gleeson welcomed the emphasis in recent years on estate maintenance in local authority estates and said that it is important that this would commence as soon as tenants move into an estate, if not, problems could arise. There are 997 qualified applicants on the County Council housing list with a further 700 on the Killarney Town Council housing list. Even allowing for an overlap, this is an enormous number of people awaiting housing. In East Kerry, a lot of people gravitate to Killarney and the Council must be proactive and buy land in surrounding villages. Cllr. Gleeson then referred to the Roads Programme and expressed his bitter disappointment that there has been no progress on the Farranfore/Killarney/Lissivigeen road. €1m has already been expended at Lissivigeen Cross and he welcomed this as an interim action. Cllr. Gleeson said that there has been a focus at area meetings on the council's responsibility for services within Town Council areas. If the County Council has a legal responsibility, then they have a duty to ensure that these roads etc. are maintained. He called on the Council, as a matter of extreme urgency, to ensure that Muckcross Road and Rock Road are upgraded before the tourism season.

Cllr. Gleeson said that one of his greatest worries is about the county's 2,000 bridges. When a bridge collapses, it has a major impact on the local community. The type of vehicles permitted to use these bridges can lead to a disaster and their ruination. He called on the council to ensure that all bridges in the county are safeguarded. He referred to cycle lanes and asked that the surface of these lanes would be maintained and that vehicles are not allowed to park on them. He asked that the Council would liaise with the Gardaí on this issue. The maintenance and repair of public lighting is very important and any lights that are not functioning should be repaired immediately. He called on the Roads Department to ensure that all water tables are kept open to take water off our roads, in particular on county roads. At a recent Killarney Area Meeting, he requested that a crossing to the Church would be provided at Fossa. There is a lot of traffic on this road and it moves very quickly and he understood that funding was allocated for this. The Principal of the local school is worried about the



safety of the children. Safety measures are also urgently required at Kilcummin National School. In conclusion, Cllr. Gleeson congratulated the Council staff on the works carried out following the receipt of a grant for the treatment of noxious weeds.

Cllr. B. Cronin welcomed the substantial allocation for the Housing Aid for the Elderly Schemes and said that demand for these schemes has increased dramatically. This allocation is a clear indication of the council's commitment to the most vulnerable in our society. Tremendous work is being done in providing access for people with disabilities under these schemes and he fully supported the continuation of these schemes. He commended the Housing Department on the excellent work carried out on the maintenance of the Council's housing stock through the provision of central heating, windows, doors and improvements to insulation which will result in a reduction in heating costs. He asked that the Peter Bradley Foundation would be permitted to make a presentation to the Council as they provide an excellent service and their sole focus is helping people with acquired brain injury. Cllr. Cronin referred to the land bank of 79 acres and asked where this land is located.

Cllr. Cronin complimented the staff of the Roads Department and said that it is important to recognise their work, in particular this year, in horrific conditions. He asked how confident was the Council that funding would be provided for the Castleisland By-Pass in 2009 and has approval been given to go to tender for this project. He added that excellent work has been done under the Local Improvement Scheme but unfortunately the criteria has changed and it is now necessary that the road serves two agricultural land holdings. He asked that the Department would revert to the old system whereby it was acceptable that the road would serve one agricultural land holding. The new criteria excluded a number of roads from qualifying for funding under this scheme. He referred to the payroll cuts of €1.8m and asked how many staff would lose their jobs as a result of this and in particular, how many outdoor staff. Cllr. Cronin concurred with the sentiments expressed by Cllr. Gleeson in relation to the provision of a pedestrian crossing at Fossa. Cllr. Cronin asked that development levies collected would be used to provide a pedestrian crossing and footpaths at the Church in Kilcummin. Mr. O'Connor, Head of Finance has emphasised the need to ensure value for money with over €10m being paid to private contractors. Small operators with one machine are finding it very difficult to get work from the Council. He called on the Roads Department to ensure that all the work is not given to a handful of contractors. It is important that these operators are given an opportunity to work for the Council as it is very difficult to secure work at the moment. He urged the Council to get the best price possible for machinery hire. He believed that it should be possible to negotiate all tenders to ensure value for money. He requested an update on the Community Involvement Scheme.

Cllr. M. Connor-Scarteen referred to the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and said that applicants who have single-glazed windows are being refused grant aid

by the Council to replace them. In one particular case, the windows are 15 years old and the husband and wife are over 80 years of age. He asked how many houses has the Council purchased and how many of these were acquired under Part V and where. There are a lot of single people on the housing waiting list in Kenmare and these are not being catered for. He asked that any future schemes in Kenmare would cater for this category of applicant. Cllr. Connor-Scarteen then referred to the Roads Programme and requested that the bridge in Kenmare would be improved while work is ongoing on the sewerage scheme. This bridge is 200 years old and a weight restriction should be placed on it. Large lorries and buses are travelling over it and it was never intended to carry these weights. He referred to the proposed Relief Road for Kenmare which will cost approximately €4m and said that a sum of just €100,000 has been provided for land purchase and design work. This road will be almost 0.5 miles long and this allocation is not sufficient. He expressed his disappointment that the Council has not made a serious commitment to the provision of additional parking in Kenmare. He welcomed the road grants outlined in the report but said that the major roads into towns need a substantial allocation each year to maintain them to a reasonable standard. In conclusion, he said that he hoped that funding would be made available for the R569 Kilgarvan to Mick the Bridges to Kilgarvan road in 2009 and improvements to this road could be funded over a number of years.

Cllr. J. O'Connor said that there is increased dependency on local authority housing, in particular for the elderly. He asked what the timescale was for the completion of the new development in Ardmoniel. He called on the Housing Department to acquire land in Killorglin and in the Mid-Kerry area in general as land prices have now dropped and it would be a good time to purchase land. He complimented staff in the Roads Department on the excellent work carried out to roads over the last number of years and he requested that blacktop would be used where possible. He acknowledged that it is more expensive but said that it would last longer. He asked how much per kilometre is it costing the Council to implement health and safety legislation. Cllr. O'Connor referred to the number of fatalities on our roads and said that it is alarming. He believed that there are a number of very bad bends on the county's roads that need to be removed to make the roads safer. He referred to the allocation for Laune Bridge and said that in 2008, Kerry County Council received an allocation of €200,000 for it but this money was not spent. A relief road is needed in Killorglin but he did not see much prospect of that at the present time. He referred to the build-outs on the Iveragh Road and said that they are very unsatisfactory and should be reviewed. In the past, he sought a meeting with the NRA in relation to Laune Bridge and he was still awaiting a response from them. He called for the provision of funding for an extension to the footpaths on the Killarney Road. In the past, footpaths were provided on both sides of the road when it would have been more practical to provide a longer footpath on one side only. Cllr. O'Connor referred to public lighting and said that he allocated funding for the provision of nine new lights in Killorglin but none of these have been provided. The proposed light at Ballykissane is urgently needed as this area is within the 30 mph speed limit and

a nursing home is located there. Cllr. O'Connor referred to wind turbines and asked could Kerry County Council commence supplying electricity to the national grid and offset some of its costs in this way. He asked the County Manager to investigate this matter.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald commended the staff of the Housing Department on the level of activity in that Department. Kerry County Council is one of the biggest employers in the county and it is important that we would use our funding to boost the economic activity of the county. There has been a reduction in the sale of Council houses and this will result in a reduction in internal capital receipts. He PROPOSED that the Department would be requested to improve the discounts available to tenants under the Tenant Purchase Scheme for the next 2 years in an effort to encourage more tenants to purchase their homes. With the downturn in the economy, this is an opportune time to purchase land as it is more affordable. Cllr. Fitzgerald commended the staff in the Roads Department for the tremendous works programmes undertaken over the past number of years. He requested that the Tralee Ring Road would be brought to a stage where it is ready to progress if funding is made available. He referred to the cost of public lighting at €760,000 and said that this is a very substantial sum and the Council, as a major customer of the ESB, should refuse to pay the recent increase. The cost of oil is reducing and he did not think that the more recent increase could be justified.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae said that he is on the Housing SPC who do tremendous work. He concurred with the suggestion by Cllr. Fitzgerald that the Council should seek to purchase land now that land prices have reduced. He also concurred with Cllr. Gleeson who stated that many houses are vacant around the county and developers would be glad to dispose of them at cost price or less. In Kilgarvan, there are 24 or 25 new houses that are unoccupied and Kilgarvan is very central. Many people will not be able to build their own homes as they will not be able to secure the finance for it. The number of planning applications has reduced radically and there will be a greater demand on our services. He complimented the Housing Department on the service provided for the homeless and said that this was an invaluable service. A number of applicants under the various grant schemes want to replace teak windows and this should be considered and each case thoroughly investigated. The Housing SPC requested that no more one bedroom houses would be constructed but that these would be replaced by two bedroom houses to enable a tenant to have someone come and visit or if they are ill, someone can stay the night with them. Cllr. D. Healy-Rae commended the staff of the Roads Department, in particular, the outdoor workers and supervisors who do very necessary work. In the past 4 or 5 years, tremendous improvements have been carried out to the roads in the county. Great work has also been carried out to improve roads under the Local Improvement Scheme. He emphasised the need to ensure that drains are maintained on roadsides so that water will not damage the major investment in our roads. He requested the Roads Department to ensure that all potholes are filled. Many bridges were built

for horses and cars but now have to take the weight of huge vehicles. We cannot afford to allow any bridges to collapse. In many situations, trees are blocking the eye of the bridge and these rivers will have to be cleared in order to maintain the bridges. He concurred with Cllr. Gleeson in relation to the provision of a pedestrian crossing at Fossa and said that it is a very dangerous area and many elderly people are crossing to the Church. He understood that funding was provided for this in the past but this funding was subsequently transferred to Cork. Cllr. D. Healy-Rae added that a footpath is also urgently required adjacent to the school in Kilcummin and development levies should be used to provide this footpath. He asked that additional funding would be provided for the Community Involvement Scheme as many local communities are prepared to pay the 25% local contribution required for this scheme. The budget for street cleaning cannot be reduced as this is a very essential service. He referred to the junction at Inch/Clonkeen which was approved by the NRA and said that it was not satisfactory or safe and he called on the Roads Department to contact the NRA with a view to getting this rectified. Cllr. Healy-Rae said that he regretted that the Castleisland By-Pass will not proceed at the present time.

Cllr. T. Buckley said that as a member of the Housing SPC, he was very proud of the standard of housing being provided by the Council. He emphasised the need to establish Residents' Associations to ensure that estates are maintained to a high standard. There are a huge number of applications for the Housing Aid for the Elderly Schemes and it is important that these applications are processed as soon as possible to ensure the applicants are not kept waiting too long. Cllr. Buckley referred to the Roads Programme and called on the Director of Roads to give priority to the provision of a new bridge at Ballinagar in 2009. The absence of a bridge at this location is a huge inconvenience to the local community. In conclusion, he asked that roadside drains would be kept open to drain the huge amounts of rainfall we have been getting over the last number of months in order to limit the damage to our roads.

Cllr. T. Ferris referred to the affordable houses in Ardfert and thanked the Housing Department for completing the contracts to enable the purchasers to move in before Christmas. She referred to Page 26 of the Manager's Report and the allocation of €309,000 for the Assessment of Housing Needs and Transfer and she asked does this provision allow for the employment of a second Investigating Officer. She asked that the Housing Department would negotiate, at a national level, that applicants in receipt of Community Welfare would be given a letter by the Community Welfare Officer to enable their application to be processed. She referred to the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and expressed her disappointment with the level of funding provided as there is a substantial increase in the level of demand for these grants.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim referred to vacant houses, even in new local authority estates and said when these houses are boarded up they are detrimental to the appearance of the estate. She called on the Housing Department to carry out the

necessary repairs to these houses and to ensure that they are let to new tenants as soon as possible. She referred to the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and asked if an application is deemed to be Priority 3, what are their chances of getting funding in 2009. She referred to the Northern Relief Road and asked what progress is being made with this project as it is important for the economic viability of the town. Cllr. McEllistrim referred to the €1.8m cut in payroll and said that she hoped that staff would not have to lose their jobs. She asked the Manager to review the position in relation to the employment of students, especially engineering students who need work experience as part of their course. She asked that consideration be given to paying them a reduced rate of pay to allow them to get this experience. She emphasised the importance of the Community Involvement Scheme and she requested clarification on funding for the scheme as it was not mentioned in the Manager's Report.

Cllr. L. Purtill referred to the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme which is an excellent scheme and said that he hoped they would continue to be funded. He commended the Housing Department on the excellent quality houses built in Ballylongford and also in Tarbert. He called for the provision of funding for Ballinagar Bridge in 2009 and said that this is a huge concern for the people of this area.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue supported the proposal made by Cllr. T. Fitzgerald in relation to the Tenant Purchase Scheme and said that over the past 3 years, house prices have soared and as a result of this, many tenants could not afford to purchase their houses. It is now an opportune time to re-visit many of these cases and to review the valuations with a view to offering tenants a more realistic valuation. Additional incentives are also needed to enable the tenants to purchase their houses. He added that just six single rural cottages were constructed in 2008 and he believed that there is still a considerable delay in the legalities prior to the construction of a single rural cottage. Many people consider these processes too long and will not consider this option. The number of houses allocated to single people is disproportionately low and single people in bedsit type accommodation have no prospect of being re-housed until they are much older. Many are living in squalid conditions and we need to be more sympathetic to this category of applicant. Housing applicants who have gone through a marriage break-up do not have their applications considered until their separation has been finalised. This is not fair as they are in need of housing. He called on the Council to be more facilitating with these applicants. He asked that this matter would be referred to the Housing SPC for further consideration.

Cllr. O'Donoghue then referred to the Voluntary Housing Scheme and said that he could not speak highly enough of Kerry County Council on this scheme. He is Chair of the Caherciveen Voluntary Housing Group and the support they received from the Council was been excellent. That project was completed six weeks outside of schedule and on budget. Cllr. O'Donoghue then referred to the Roads Programme and said that he concurred with the views expressed by Cllr. Cronin

in relation to the new criteria for Local Improvement Schemes. As a result of the requirement that two farm holdings must be served by the road, some roads will never be improved. Kerry will get very little funding for National, Primary or Secondary roads because of the Atlantic Corridor which does not include Kerry. Vast resources are being provided for this corridor and Kerry is being neglected as a result. National Secondary routes are the poor relation when it comes to funding. The Kells project was ready to roll-out and if the Council had shown a greater sense of urgency, this work would have been completed. It is regrettable that this is not the case. He called on the Council to honour its commitment and to prioritise this road for funding in 2009. Funding should also be provided for the provision of public lighting in the periphery of towns and villages together with funding for footpaths.

Cllr. M. O'Shea said that in relation to housing, it is time that the Council got involved in revitalising the local economy. Many people are afraid to take out a mortgage in the present climate and there is a role for the Council in this. Landbanks could be acquired by the Council at a reasonable cost and through the use of the new house loan houses could be provided at a reasonable cost. This would result in employment being provided in the construction of these houses. The taking over of private housing estates is a problem for the Council and the best kept estates in the county are those owned by Kerry County Council. Cllr. O'Shea then referred to the Roads Programme and asked that priority be given in 2009 to the improvement of surfaces in villages which have been severely disrupted by sewerage schemes that have been badly carried out. He also requested that priority be given to the carrying out of improvements to the road leading to the Transfer Station in Milltown. Kerry County Council is the ESB's largest customer and he had tried to get poles on the R563 removed from footpaths but this has not happened. Many local people are coming out of estates with double buggies and they must go onto the road to avoid these poles. He called for the removal of these poles in 2009.

Cllr. T. Fleming called for the expansion of the availability of affordable houses around the county. He welcomed progress made under the Voluntary Housing Scheme which is a very successful scheme. In relation to housing applicants, he asked that priority would be given in 2009 to single people and returning emigrants and that every support would be given to organisations assisting returning emigrants. Some people have difficulty in securing mortgages and he looked forward to hearing the details of the new mortgage loan announced by the Department. He complimented the Housing Department on providing demountable units in emergency cases and said this service is very efficient. He supported the call by Cllr. B. Cronin that the Peter Bradley Foundation would be allowed to make a presentation to Council and said that he had requested approval for this at a meeting a number of months ago. Cllr. Fleming then referred to the Roads Programme and in particular to National Primary roads and said that Kerry is the premier tourist county in the country and there are no major capital projects receiving funding at present. He expressed his disappointment

that funding was withdrawn for the Castleisland By-Pass. He then referred to National Secondary roads and complimented the Roads Department on the work carried out on the Barraduff to Rathmore Road and he added that additional work is being carried out on the upgrading of the road surface at Barraduff. The Castleisland to Ballydesmond Road urgently needs improvement works as this road is heavily trafficked and is a very important road economically. He was aware that an application was forwarded to the Department for funding for this road and he hoped it would be successful. He referred to the road from Ballydesmond Bridge to Ballinahulla and said that 1 mile of that road urgently needs to be improved. The Cottage Road to Gneeveguilla and the Glenlea Road, Scartaglin also need remedial works. Cllr. Fleming referred to the Village Regeneration Scheme and asked that an application for funding would be made to the Department for improvement works to Scartaglin which needs to be given priority. In conclusion, Cllr. Fleming agreed with the sentiments expressed by previous speakers in relation to the provision of pedestrian crossings at Fossa and Kilcummin Schools as these locations are very dangerous.

Cllr. T. Ferris asked how many job losses would there be in the Roads Department and how many seasonal workers would not be taken on in 2009.

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager said that he understood the huge concern amongst members in relation to the reduction in the number of jobs in 2009. The Department have demanded that payroll costs be reduced by 3% in 2009 and we have no discretion in this. During the economic boom local authorities were required to increase staff. The Council has a constant rollover of staff, students etc and there will be a reduction in overtime and a number of temporary staff will have to be let go to achieve the 3% reduction required. Kerry County Council is geared to do most of the roadworks by direct labour and we have built up a substantial Machinery Yard complex to support these works. He did not envisage that this system would be changed over to the contracting out of work. The Council has a strong core workforce but we supplement our staff with seasonal workers. Depending on the work programme, a number of seasonal workers will be employed in 2009. Through the direct labour system, we deliver our work programme on schedule and within budget and through the flexibility of being able to employ seasonal workers that this is achieved. Many seasonal workers are employed from March to November or December but by the end of the year, all seasonal workers have been let go. Indications from the Department are that the level of funding will be reduced in 2009 and therefore, the number of seasonal workers employed will be reduced. Kerry County Council has a strong tradition of employing students on both the technical and administrative side and the number of students employed increased considerably over the past few years. This number will be reduced in 2009. It is envisaged that 10 - 15 students will be taken on between technical and administration in 2009. He accepted that many students will have difficulty in getting experience as a result of this. He would like to consider employing more students, if by agreement with the

students and unions, we could consider paying them less. A number of temporary staff are on contracts and when these expire they will not be renewed.

Cllr. T. Ferris asked if all staff would be affected by these cutbacks.

In response, Mr. T. Curran, County Manager confirmed that these reductions will take effect across the board and there would be a substantial reduction in overtime. By reducing the overtime, there will be less of a reduction on staff numbers.

Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing said that the details of the new leasing scheme recently announced by the Department have not yet been released. He informed members that the Housing Department provide loans to people provided they are refused by two financial institutions but obviously, loan approval would be dependent on their ability to meet the repayments. He referred to the Affordable Housing Scheme and the assessment of applications and said that Garda checks are provided for in this scheme. He undertook to contact the Department of the Environment in relation to discounts available under the Tenant Purchase Scheme. Mr. Breen informed members that there is a huge increase in demand for grants under the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and at present, applications are being prioritised. The RAS Scheme is very successful and the uptake in Kerry is very good. He referred to vacant houses and said that every effort is made to have repairs carried out in the shortest time possible. This work is usually carried out by contractors. While six single rural cottages were constructed in 2008, eight additional houses are under construction. The Housing SPC can review the manner in which applications from applicants who have experienced marriage break-up are dealt with. 40% of houses allocated in 2008 were allocated to single people. Details of the new Equity Home Loan Scheme would be included on the Agenda for the December meeting. His Department had met with the Peter Bradley Foundation and they were close to reaching agreement with them.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads & Transportation advised members that most of the issues raised will be dealt with at the Special Roads meeting to be held in March 2009. Funding for the Community Involvement Scheme is provided under the Restoration and Improvement Works Programme and he hoped that funding would be provided in 2009. Ballinagar Bridge is on the priority list submitted to the Department and he hoped this would be progressed in 2009. The repair of existing public lighting and the provision of new public lights will be re-examined. The revised criteria relating to the Local Improvement Scheme was raised on a number of occasions by members and his Department made representations to the Department to have this criteria amended and they are awaiting a response. It is not proposed to reduce the budget for street cleaning but in the current economic situation it is important to look at alternative income streams.



Cllr. P. O'Donoghue asked did the Council intend to renegotiate the rates paid to outside contractors.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads said that the Council advertises for tenders at the start of every year. This is a competitive tendering process but there have been circumstances where we have negotiated for bulk purchases.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue said that Minister O'Keeffe returned tenders for schools and asked companies to re-tender and as a result of this he saved millions. This should also be considered by the Council.

The meeting concluded at 5.45pm.

**Gerard O'Brien**  
**A/SEO Corporate Affairs**

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**Mayor of Kerry**