

MINUTES OF THE ADJOURNED BUDGET MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON FRIDAY 11TH JANUARY, 2008.

PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR

Councillors/Comhairleoirí

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

Absent:

B. MacGearailt

IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager	Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance
Mr. M. McMahon, Dir. of Planning	Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Dir. of Roads & Transp
Ms. A. Haugh, Dir. of Environment	Mr. J. Breen, Dir. of Hsg., Comm. & Ent.
Mr. O. Ring, Dir. of Water Services	Ms. K. Lynch, A/SEO Finance
Mr. C. Mangan, SEE Water Services	Mr. T. O'Connor, County Librarian
Mr. K. Caffrey, Chief Fire Officer	Mr. G. MacNamara, SE Planning
Mr. E. Scanlon, SEE Roads	Ms. M. West, AO Roads
Mr. D. O'Connor, SE Environment	Mr. L. Brosnan, AO Environment
Mr. B. Sweeney, SE Water Services	Mr. G. O'Brien, A/SEO Corp. Affairs
Mr. G. O'Sullivan, SEE Enviornment	Mr. P. Corkery, Press Officer
Ms. B. Reidy, SSO Corp. Affairs	Ms. K. Felle, CO Corp. Affairs

The Meeting commenced at 11.00am.

The Mayor, Cllr. Michael Healy-Rae took the Chair.

The Mayor commenced the meeting with a prayer.

Vote of Sympathy

The Mayor extended a vote of sympathy to the family of the late Kit Ahern, former member of Kerry County Council, former Chairman of the Council, a T.D., and Senator, who died recently. Ms. Ahern served as a politician at a time when there were no reward for politicians and she worked very hard for the county.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald supported this vote of sympathy and all members said they wished to be associated with it.

**08.01.11.01 Consideration of the budget for the Financial Year ended
31 December 2008 (Cont'd)**

The Mayor informed the meeting that Division C Water Services and Division D Development Management would be taken together.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance referred members to Pages 57 – 82 of the Manager's Report and Pages 8 and 9 of the Budget Tables for details of the Water Services Division. The proposed expenditure on this Division is €22.83million, or 16% of the overall budget. The projected income is €14.305m mainly from commercial water charges and waste water charges. Details of the Capital Programme are set out on Pages 10 to 16 of the Schedule, and this is very extensive, with the total expenditure of €46m for 2008. Of this a sum of €34m is expected in grant aid and there will be a requirement for a local contribution of €12.5m. The importance of the water services infrastructure in the development of the county cannot be over emphasised. The Water Services Capital Budget accounts for 29% of the entire Capital Budget which is the highest of all the Divisions. Details of progress in 2007 and the work programme for 2008 are set out on Page 58 – 62 of the Manager's Report. He added that it is considered timely and opportune that a measured reassessment of the priority projects for the period 2008 – 2012 needs to be undertaken. Three major factors will influence decisions to be taken in such an assessment as follows:-

- The review of the County Development Plan currently underway
- The implications of the Waste Water Discharge (Authorization) Regulations 2007 and The European Communities (Drinking Water) (No. 2) Regulations 2007
- Availability of funding both from the Water Services Investment Programme and local contributions.

Mr. O'Connor informed the meeting that, in relation to funding, the Department contribution is based on the application of the Department's Water Pricing Policy and affordability limit on schemes. The implication of the Water Pricing Policy is limiting exchequer funding to the order of 70% of total scheme cost and the implication of the affordability limit is that exchequer funding is limited to a maximum of €10,000 per existing house.

Mr. O'Connor stated that one of the main challenges for the Council for 2008 will be to identify sources of funding locally to provide the required level of local contribution for schemes. The implication of the Waste Water Discharge Regulations on the Council's finances will be substantial as it will result in significant capital and operational costs and a sum of €300,000 is included in the Budget. The very sizeable volume of work outlined in the Manager's Report is being managed and supervised by an in-house team. A sum of €1.1m is being assigned from the Development Levies/contributions fund to finance

that design team in accordance with the Planning and Development Acts. The sum of €9.109m is provided for the operation and maintenance of water supplies.

The Council supplies a water supply for a population of almost 115,000 customers and this includes Tralee, Listowel and Killarney Town Councils. 35m cubic metres of potable water is produced per annum by the Council. The Draft Budget allocation includes a sum of €179,000 in respect of the share out of the work of the Council's Laboratory in respect of sampling and analysis undertaken for water quality purposes. This represents significant savings for the Council as opposed to having the work done by outside agencies. He referred members to Page 64 of the Manager's Report where a table sets out the main items of expenditure for this Division. He brought members attention in particular to the energy costs of €1.796 m which is a reduction on the provision for 2007. This is primarily due to the work of the Energy Officer and because of this reduction in energy costs it has been possible to give a 7% increase in the budget for this Division. A sum of €500,000 is provided for the Minor Improvements Programme. This is from development levies/contributions and details of the works carried out under this programme in 2007 are set out on Pages 65 and 66 of the Manager's Report. A sum of €1.01m is provided for Loan Charges for Water Supply Schemes. The majority of these loan charges, totalling €530,000, relate to the metering project. The balance of the estimate covers charges on a loan raised some years ago for water supply schemes and loan charges on new water supply schemes under the Polluter Pays Principal. This sum also includes loan charges for the Hydro-Electric project at Lough Guittane in Killarney. This plant was commissioned in 2001 and it provided 63% of the electricity requirements for the Central Regional Water Supply Scheme pumping station in 2007 and resulted in a significant saving in electricity costs.

He referred members to Page 68 of the Manager's Report where details of the Water Conservation Project are set out together with the Water Metering Project. The Water Conservation Project is a multi-annual project which is funded both from the revenue budget and from grants received from the Department. The metering of non-domestic properties was substantially completed in 2007 with approximately 15,000 metres being installed with 2,230 of these being installed on behalf of the Town Councils. Some 8,500 monitoring advices have on two occasions been issued to newly metered customers. The purpose of these is to advise customers of their water consumption prior to billing and to give these customers an opportunity to rectify any problems with their usage. In addition, 500 notices were issued to customers where unusually high consumption rates existed and the most obvious reason for very high usage would be leakage. As a result of these notices many customers did rectify leaks and wastage. Unfortunately, a number did not heed the advice and information given to them, and their bills will reflect this. He added that the Water Conservation Project and the Water Metering Project are both having an impact on water usage and there has been a 10% reduction in the demand on the Central Regional Water Supply Scheme in 2007.

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 69 of the Manager's Report where a sum of €1.909m is provided for Services Support Costs. This covers the salaries of Water Services Area Engineers/Technicians and administrative support, together with the

salaries of the Waste Water Inspectors and an apportionment of the costs of the Energy Conservation Unit. It also covers the share-out of Central Management charges. A sum of €5.21m is provided for the Operation and Maintenance of Waste Water Treatment Plants and Schemes and details of the impact of the EPA Regulations are set out on Page 70 of the Manager's Report.

He referred members to Page 70 of the Manager's Report where details of the Minor Improvement Programme are set out. A sum of €150,000 was expended on this programme in 2007 and details of the works carried out are set out on Pages 70 and 71 of the Manager's Report. Two additional staff were engaged for the purposes of meter reading and to deal with day to day enquiries on the water metering project. The Council does not under-estimate the challenge of moving over from fixed water charges to metered charges. A sum of €495,000 is provided for the operation and maintenance of public conveniences. Two new public conveniences were opened in 2007 in Killorglin and Castleisland. He informed members that the grant for private individual water supplies is now shown in the revenue budget. He referred members to Page 75 of the Manager's Report for details of grants for water/wastewater group schemes. The demand for water supply and sewerage connections declined in 2007 and this is in line with what is happening nationwide.

Division D – Development Management

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, informed the meeting that this Division covers the Planning Function, Community & Enterprise, and Building Control. He referred members to Pages 83 – 95 of the Manager's Report and Pages 10-12 of the Budget Tables, where details of this Division are set out. A sum of €800,000 is provided for Forward Planning for the production of Statutory Plans and Policy. The review of the County Development Plan commenced during 2007 and this will continue in 2008. A sum of €2.810m is provided for planning control and he referred members to the chart at the top of Page 85 which sets out the number of planning applications dealt with over the last number of year. He pointed out that the number of planning applications submitted in 2007 is down slightly on what was a very high number of applications received in 2006. However, during the last months of 2007 the number of planning applications submitted decreased by 30% and no sizeable development proposals were received during this period. This Division is essentially a salary budget as the service is staff driven and it also includes some miscellaneous costs. A sum of €647,000 is provided for enforcement costs and at the December Council Meeting members expressed considerable support for this service and it has been funded accordingly. Details of the enforcement activity levels are set out in the chart on Page 86 of the Manager's Report.

A sum of €390,000 is provided for Tourism, Development and Promotion and this allocation covers the contribution made to various local organisations that support and promote the economic, social and tourism interests of the county overall. A sum of €40,000 is intended as a contribution to the South West Regional Tourism Authority and a contribution of €23,000 is provided for Kerry Life Education Ltd. towards the Health, Education and Substance/Alcohol Abuse Awareness Programmes. Funding is also

provided for the County Kerry Amalgamated Shows, The Seanachai Centre in Listowel and the Kerry Mountain Rescue Association. Contributions to Tralee Town Council towards the salary of the County Museum Curator and Street Management costs arising from the Festival of Kerry amounting to €50,000 and €20,000 respectively are also included.

A total of €707,000 is provided for the Community & Enterprise Function. Details of this programme are set out on Page 88 of the Manager's Report and details of the projects supported in 2007 are set out in Pages 89-91 of the Manager's Report. He referred members to Page 92 of the Manager's Report where details of the Building Control Programme are set out. A sum of €395,000 is provided is the budget for this programme with €140,000 being in respect of inspection costs and €255,000 in respect of enforcement costs. The allocation provides for the staffing costs and miscellaneous office accommodation costs of the Building Control Unit. A sum of €1.242m is provided for Economic Development and Promotion and €100,000 of this is recoupable. In this budget, efforts were made to support the development of towns and villages in the county. He informed members that it is expected that there will be a substantial allocation, in the region of €200,000, from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltachta affairs for CLÁR schemes under the Village Enhancement Programme in 2008. Kerry County Council is committed to providing one third of the cost of the work. Under the new programme the 'cap' on projects will go from €30,000 to €100,000 so the gross expenditure in this area will be €600,000 with an expected grant/local contribution of €400,000 which is also being taken into account as a receipt.

Under the Urban and Village Renewal Scheme, it is expected that the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government will provide a grant of €300,000 of which the Council is required to contribute 8% i.e. €24,000. The contribution to the Southern and Eastern Regional Assembly and the Southwest Regional Authority is also included. As an exceptional measure, a sum of €50,000 is included to support especially worthwhile initiatives by local Tidy Town Committees.

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 94 of the Manager's Report where details of the Heritage and Conservation Service was set out. A sum of €311,000 is provided for this service and this includes the Heritage Officer's and Archaeologist's salaries, together with their Programme of Works. The Heritage Officer's salary is co-funded by the Heritage Council. A sum of €145,000 is included in the Budget for Conservation Grants and a total of 16 grants were allocated to qualified applicants under this Scheme in 2007. This is fully recoupable from the Department.

All members complimented Mr. Oliver Ring and the staff of the Water Services Department on the comprehensive work programme undertaken each year.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald said that the total expenditure of €22m on Water Services in 2008 is very substantial. Water conservation is a very important part of this programme and the reduction of 10% in demand for water is very welcome. He added, however, that the unaccounted for water could result in a loss of revenue to the Council and he asked what

percentage of water is unaccounted for and what is the cost of Council. He referred to the sum of €30,000 provided as a support towards the water charges liability of primary schools and clubs in the county and he asked if it was sufficient. Drainage in Tralee and the surrounding area has become a major problem in recent years and he would like to ensure that adequate funding is provided for the Tralee Main Drainage Study. He welcomed the reduction in energy costs achieved by the Water Services Department. In relation to the Planning Service he complimented Mr. Michael McMahon, Mr. Paul Stack, Mr. Tom Sheehy, and all the staff of the Planning Department on the excellent work carried out by them in 2007. The preparation of Local Area Plans is very important to members and they appreciate the efficiency of the Forward Planning Unit. He welcomed funding provided for the County Museum and he hoped that a meaningful programme for a proper County Museum would be undertaken. He called on the Kerry Enterprise Action Team to continue to promote the county. He thanked the present and previous County Manager's for their commitment to the Mitchells Regeneration Project. In conclusion he welcomed the funding provided for the Tidy Towns groups throughout the county who are doing excellent work and also the funding provided for street cleaning during the Festival of Kerry.

Cllr. D. Healy Rae called for the provision of a public convenience in Kilgarvan and asked if funding was included in the Budget for it. He referred to the provision of Broadband in Kenmare and asked if the pipes already laid by Éircom through public funding could now be used by the Council. He requested that sufficient funding be provided to take over Coolig and Artigallivan Water Supply Schemes and that priority be given to these in 2008. He referred to the funding provided for graveyards and asked if it was sufficient, particularly having regard to the fact that a new burial ground must be provided in Scartaglin and Gneeveguilla. He asked if the landowners have been approached in both these cases.

All members complimented Mr. Michael McMahon and the staff of the Planning Department, in particular the Forward Planning Section for the enormous amount of work they put into preparing Local Area Plans.

Cllr. P. McCarthy said that he hoped that the preparation of the Local Area Plans was not in vain as he was concerned that Minister Gormley's proposal could render that work unnecessary if his guidelines limit the development in villages to as little as 2 houses per annum where the population is under 400. He called on the Mayor to facilitate a discussion on Minister Gormley's proposed guidelines.

Cllr. B. Cronin said that the provision of a good quality water supply is of the utmost importance. Approximately 26m gallons of water is produced each day and this is a tremendous achievement and the maintenance of a quality service is crucially important to the county to ensure that there are no health risks to the people of the county and its visitors. There is great credit due to the staff involved in this Department who are constantly monitoring water quality. He referred to the Water Metering Project which is now almost complete. He added that there were problems with it and he called on management to be lenient. The notices sent out to landowners identified water wastage

and in some instances the caretaker has helped the landowner to identify where burst pipes are located. However, it will take time to resolve all these difficulties and one farmer had to dig up 35 metres of concrete to find the leak. If water charges are excessively high in the first few months of the year for individual landowners, he asked that the Council would be lenient and provide assistance in identifying the problems with them. He said that it was unfair to impose water charges on schools, as it is putting an undue burden on them. He complimented the Forward Planning Unit on all the Local Area Plans prepared by them over the past 15 months. He referred to Minister Gormley's Guidelines on Planning in Urban Areas and said that they have come too late as much development has already taken place in many small villages throughout the country. He pointed out that facilities for communities and children have not been delivered, but now that the Local Area Plans are in place there should be an improvement in this situation. He called for additional resources to be provided for Planning Enforcement who try to ensure that planning conditions are adhered to. He also commended the work done by the Planning Department in regularising quarries. He referred to the new sewerage schemes being provided in Milltown, Barraduff and Kilcummin and asked if there was any positive update on these. He referred to the pipe network around the county and asked if any asbestos pipes are still in use as he was concerned about this from the health and safety point of view.

As the Mayor Cllr. M. Healy Rae had to leave the meeting, the Deputy Mayor, Cllr. D. Healy Rae took the Chair.

Cllr. R. Beasley welcomed the allocation for street cleaning and said that as a tourism county the streets of every town and village should be washed at least once a month, in particular, after a dry spell. He commended all the voluntary groups around the county who are working to keep their towns and villages clean and tidy and he called for the provision of additional assistance to them. He requested an update on the position regarding the provision of a new sewerage scheme for Dirrha Cottages, Listowel. This scheme has been promised for the past 30 years, but no progress has been made. In conclusion he asked if Ballynoneen was included in Phase 2 of the Asdee Water Supply Scheme.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim referred to water quality and asked if there was any provision in the Budget for the removal of lime from water, in particular, in the Ardfert and Fenit areas. This is causing a lot of problems for householders as they have to replace washing machines etc. She then referred to the Planning Service and said that there is a very high turnover of staff there and she asked if planners could be encouraged to stay.

Cllr. M. O'Shea referred to the additional bored wells that were to be provided in the Firies and Lahern areas in 2007 and he asked if they were provided. It was intended that these would be a back-up for the reservoir at Laharn. He then referred to the new sewerage scheme for Milltown and said that the people of Milltown are extremely disappointed with the way this scheme has transpired. The village is torn apart with no proper roadway due to the work on this scheme which has been starting and stopping intermittently. He referred to the R563 and asked if it would be possible to install the

water pipe there immediately so that this road could be properly paved. He then referred to planning and said that he was very concerned regarding the difficulties being experienced by applicants for one-off rural house. Very few such planning applications are being granted and one developer who employs 11 people is about to close his business due to the refusals for one-off houses. He called on the executive to act immediately because these small developers are very important to the economy of the county.

Cllr. T. Ferris said that as a representative of the Ardfert and Fenit area she was very disappointed that the new Ardfert Sewerage Scheme has not yet commenced and she asked when would work on the scheme commence. There has been extensive discussions regarding the lack of softener in the water supply for the Ardfert/Fenit area. This is proved to be very costly for householders and business people as they have to replace machines due to the damage caused by the water. At present inflation is 5%, and she would be very reluctant to support a 5% increase in rates unless the ratepayers in Ardfert get equality of treatment with Ballyheigue and other areas. She stated that there is no reference to funding for playgrounds in the Budget so far and she requested clarification on this. She pointed out that the Ardfert Playground Committee has raised substantial funding towards their new playground. She expressed her disappointment with the progress in Comhairle na nÓg and said the Council is not being as active as it could be with this group. She suggested that a Youth Forum Website should be established where young people could contact elected members and officials but that has not been done. She called on the County Manager to look at advancing this work.

Cllr. T. O'Brien called for the provision of a water softener for the Ardfert/Fenit area and he referred to the movement of planners to different areas and he has said that this has resulted in inconsistencies in planning.

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald referred to the pressure being brought to bear on local authorities to provide sewerage schemes for all towns and villages and to upgrade those already in place and said that this is unreasonable. He suggested that the Council should contact the Ministers for Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs calling on them to fund these schemes.

Cllr. J. O'Connor thanked the Water Services Department for improvements to the water supply in Killorglin. He said that additional work needs to be done on the filtration system in Caragh Lake. He referred to the cost of water and said that, in Cork, the cost of a gallon of water is 96 cent, while in Kerry it is €1.03, and he asked why was the charge in Kerry greater. He pointed out that, as a result of the metering of water, the farming community will be facing substantial increases in the cost of water and with the additional cost of the meter they are being penalised. He requested that this be reviewed. He then referred to the Planning Service and said that Cork County Council produced an architectural guide for those who are applying for planning permission and he understood that a similar guide was to be produced by the Planning Department. He requested an update on this. The refusal rate in the Killorglin electoral area is 24%, however, just 62% of all planning applications are granted and a further 14% are withdrawn because

they are aware that permission will not be granted. He believed that, if agricultural buildings were taken out of the applications granted the grant rate would be as low as 50% in his electoral area. He called for the holding of regular meetings with planners and agents and said that there should be a minimum of 2-3 per annum. He added that almost €1m is being lost by applicants in the Killorglin Electoral Area in paying for plans when they do not get planning permission. He commended the Forward Planning Unit on the preparation of Local Area Plans but said they are now placing an emphasis on forcing people into towns if they are not landowners. Many people want to live in rural areas and they must be facilitated. He asked if funding was being provided for playgrounds and also if grant aid was available from the Department to match funding provided by the Council for the provision of walks.

Cllr. D. Healy Rae concurred with the sentiments expressed by Cllr. M. O'Shea regarding the refusal rate for one-off rural houses and the impact this is having on local builders. He called for the provision of an adequate water supply in the Barleymount area and to ensure that wells are bored to supplement this supply. He referred to applications for planning permission for commercial buildings which are charged per square foot and he said that the applications could not be deferred. He asked that the fee paid with the original application would suffice for a second application.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald referred to the protection of water sources and asked if this is dealt with under the Environment Department. He requested that priority be given to ensuring that all water sources are protected adequately, especially Lough Guitane.

Mr. O. Ring informed members that it is vital that water sources are protected and a Management Programme is being drawn up for it. A substantial capital programme for water services is outlined in the Manager's Report and one of the key tasks to be undertaken in 2008 is in Lough Guitane. The Tralee Main Drainage Study is on our Investment Programme at present and it is in our interests to ensure that this is included nationally. If not it may have to be funded independently.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald suggested that this study should proceed immediately.

Mr. O. Ring referred to the Cordal Group Water Supply Scheme and said that work on the ground is nearing completion but all members must be signed up. The Metering Project was intended to ensure that the loss of water was reduced. The installation of valving around Tralee resulted in a reduction of 10% in water loss in the area. The Water Conservation Metering Project is having a major impact on water loss and there are 3 vans working on this project. Coolig Group Water Supply Scheme is underway and there is no difficulty with funding for it. He referred to the Milltown, Barraduff and Kilcummin Sewerage Schemes and said that the consultants were meeting with the contractor that day and the other consultants were also meeting him regarding Barraduff. It appears likely that he will complete the works in Barraduff and if it possible, alternative arrangements may have to be made in relation to Kilcummin. He referred to the query on the use of asbestos cement pipes in water schemes and said that a lot of these pipes were laid in the 1960s and 1970s. However, they do not pose a health risk.

The difficulty with these pipes is in the installation of them and in breathing in the dust when the pipes are being cut. These pipes are no longer used.

Cllr. B. Cronin asked Mr. Ring if he was satisfied that there was no health risk associated with the continued use of asbestos cement water pipes. He was concerned as it is a known fact that the pressure of water corrodes pipes over time.

Mr. O. Ring again stated that the problem with asbestos cement pipes is when it is breathed in dust form when the pipes are being cut. This applies in particular to the blue asbestos and the white asbestos is not as dangerous. He then referred to the proposal to provide a sewerage scheme for Dirra Cottages and said that this Scheme is with the Department for some years but approval to proceed has not been forthcoming. The only way this scheme could be progressed is if it is linked into the Listowel scheme.

He referred to queries regarding the provision of a water softener for the Ardfert area and said that it is intended to commence work on the provision of a water softener for Ardfert and Chapeltown. He informed members that the CPO documentation and maps for the acquisition of a site in Ardfert are being prepared. Discussions are ongoing with the landowner and it is hoped that agreement can be reached. However, if not, the CPO will be issued by the end of the month. He referred to queries regarding the boring of wells in the mid-Kerry area and said that this was not successful and it is presently being reviewed. He added that there is a 22% reduction in demand at Crohane pumping station as a result of the metering and repair of defective pipes.

Cllr. M. O'Shea said that during the months of June, July and August severe water shortages and breakdowns have been experienced in the Mid Kerry area. These problems could arise again in 2008 and he requested that bored wells be provided to supplement the water supply in the area.

In response, Mr. O. Ring said that a study would be carried out in the coming year and consideration would be given to the laying of a water main.

Cllr. J. O'Connor again asked what was the cost of production for a gallon of water.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, said that it was €1.09 per cubic metre. It is important that members would be realistic about the service being provided and said that Kerry County Council provides a very extensive water service throughout the county.

Cllr. J. O'Connor said that he understood that water loss was substantial prior to the water metering project, however, he believed that the cost of water production is different to what is being charged to the customer.

In response, Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, said that Mr. Ring had briefed members extensively on the water works programme and he added that many counties have a higher water charge than Kerry.

Mr. O. Ring said that the Metering Project will give very detailed information on unaccounted for water loss in consumer pipes and public mains and staff working on this project will shortly be able to provide very detailed information on it. Staff are also engaged in the production of water as efficiently as possible. Kerry has 70 water supply schemes which is much more than many other counties and the topography of the county does not make it easy to supply water to all parts. He added that the contract for Ballynnoneen would be advertised on 25th January 2008.

Cllr. B. Cronin said that the reduction in the use of water at Crohane by 22% is credited to the metering of water in the area and to the fixing of leaks by landowners. However, this is only part of the reason for the reduction as many dairy farmers have renovated old wells and installed new wells rather than pay exorbitant water charges. He asked if there was any risk that untreated well water could get into the public water system. He recently visited a new house outside Fermoy and there was no mains water there or a group water scheme. This is in a mainland area and they had to provide their own well. He added that Kerry County Council has provided extensive schemes throughout the county.

Mr. M. McMahon, Director of Planning, thanked the members for the compliments paid to the staff in his Department and said that they have been working under huge pressure in recent years. The Planning Department processed 27,000 planning applications over the past 5 years and Local Area Plans have been prepared for virtually all settlements, with the last 2 being presented to members at the January meeting. He informed members that he was aware of recent comments by Minister Gormley but he was not aware of any formal proposals being published. He referred to queries regarding the turnover of planners and said that this is a feature of the public service where people move to advance their careers. Promotional opportunities arise and staff take advantage of this. He added that Kerry County Council has the highest proportion of Executive Planners for its size in the country. In the past it was difficult to replace planners but that is not the case now. He informed members that over 1,000 one-off houses were granted planning permission in 2007 in the countryside. He referred to the Rural Housing Guidelines being prepared by his Department and said that it was intended that they would be published before now but the Local Area Plans had to get priority. A substantial part of the work on the guidelines is done and he hoped they would be published in the first quarter of 2008. He informed the meeting that 2 seminars were held with planning agents in 2007 and all issues and circulars were forwarded to them. However, some applicants do not want to take advice from the Planning Department. There is a question on the Planning Application Form which asks if a pre-planning meeting took place. The response to this is often negative but on checking our records we find that a pre-planning meeting did take place but because the outcome was negative the applicant did not want to disclose it. He referred to the fees for repeat applications for commercial developments and said that provided the repeat application is submitted within 12 months, three quarters of the fee is refunded.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, referred to funding for playgrounds and said that the income from development levies for amenities would be used to support playgrounds as

well as certain local amenity works. The income from this scheme is anticipated to be €260,000, and this will be shared between Playgrounds and amenity projects. However, the availability of funding from the Department will determine the number of playgrounds that can be provided. If a playground committee is depending on Kerry County Council solely, it will take longer to provide the playground. In relation to water charges for schools, he added that the Council was notified of the Government decision yesterday and the details conveyed in the circular. He then read the following excerpt:

“The following arrangements will apply to schools for a transition period up to the end of 2009:

- *For 2007, a flat rate of €3.00 will apply. Bills for 2007 are to be recalculated on this basis and schools are to be given a credit in respect of any excess payment. Outstanding bills for 2007 are to be revised on this basis.*
- *For 2008, a flat rate of €3.50 per pupil will apply.*
- *For 2009, a flat rate of €4.00 per pupil will apply.*
- *The relevant rates for schools receiving a water supply, but not waste water facilities, will be €2.25 in 2007, €2.63 in 2008 and €3.00 in 2009.*
- *These arrangements provide the only basis on which schools may be charged for water services in 2007, 2008 or 2009. However, where in 2007 a local authority charged a school a fixed charge lower than would have applied under the new flat rate arrangements, the lower fixed rate may apply for that year.*
- *The arrangements will apply to recognised primary, non-fee-paying secondary, community, comprehensive and vocational schools having their own service connection (i.e. schools not part of a larger institution such as a hospital).*
- *In the case of boarding schools providing free education to day pupils, usage up to 3.5m³ per **day pupil** per annum will be charged at €1.00 per m³ and usage in excess of that will be charged at the local authority’s normal volumetric rate for each of the years 2007, 2008 and 2009. If the boarding school is not metered in any of the years in question, the water charges should be calculated on the basis of €3.50 x no. of day pupils plus the local authority’s normal fixed charge applicable to the boarding element of the school.*
- *These flat rates replace the fixed charges that were previously being applied by local authorities to unmetered schools. If actual usage as recorded by a meter would produce a lower charge than the flat rate, the lower bill will apply for the transition period.*
- *Apart from any readjustment to arrears for 2007 arising from the recalculation of bills at the rate of €3.00 per pupil, schools are legally liable to pay all other outstanding arrears, regardless of the number of years involved. Schools owing arrears of water charges are being advised to discuss a payment arrangement for the outstanding arrears with the relevant local authority.*

Local Authorities should proceed with the programme of meter installation in schools as speedily as possible. A charge related to the recovery of the cost of their metering may be applied when schools are being charged on the basis of metered usage.”

These flat rates will replace fixed charges, however, if the actual usage results in a lower charge, this applies. He added that the Department of the Environment would work with the Department of Education and Science in an effort to ensure water conservation in schools. The Council has been metering schools in Kerry and initial readings indicate good practice in some schools, with leakages in others. There are primary schools operating on a cost per pupil of €3 approximately, however, some schools are consuming approximately €20 per pupil. The last point of the Government circular was very important which says that *the two Government Departments would work together to highlight good practise*. From a limited assessment, Post-Primary Schools generally have measures in place to ensure the conservation of water. Arising from the Government decision, as far as Kerry schools are concerned we will not be getting as much as we budgeted for. New arrangements announced by the Government clarify the situation, and we are now in a period where schools can sort out their water consumption. He stressed that the Council is obliged to carry out arrangements made by the Government.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald said that he would like to see water wastage addressed, however, he did not want to see large expense imposed on schools. He acknowledged that the Council must implement national policy but said that he would like to see the Department of Education reimburse schools for water charges. He called for waivers for schools experiencing hardship arising from these charges.

Cllr. D. Kiely concurred with the sentiments expressed by Cllr. Fitzgerald, and said that the Department of Education should reimburse schools and in particular primary schools for water charges

Division E Environmental Services

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, referred members to Pages 96 – 117 of the Manager's Report and Pages 13-16 of the Budget Tables for details of this Division. This is a very extensive programme with proposed revenue expenditure of €22.67m which is 16% of the total Budget. The projected income for this Division is €12.84m which is derived mainly from charges at landfill, the transfer stations and income from the Refuse Collection service. Details of the Capital Budget are set out on Pages 18 – 20 at the back of the Manager's Report. The proposed expenditure is €14.2m and a small grant will be received towards this but 81% will be funded from our own resources. He Referred members to Page 96 of the Manager's Report where details of the work of the Environment SPC during 2007 are set out. The Energy Conservation Unit is primarily located in the Environment Division. The Council promotes energy conservation throughout the organisation and provisions are made in a number of services for this unit. The unit consists of an Energy Officer and a Technician which is deployed over a number of services for the purposes of monitoring energy use throughout the organisation and ensuring best value in energy costs, the promotion of energy conservation measures and to progress the Council's renewable energy programme. Details of the measures progressed in 2007 are set out on Page 97 of the Manager's Report. Energy Conservation is also very high on the agenda for 2008. He referred members to Page 98 of the

Manager's Report where details of the costs of operating the landfill site at Muingamuinnane are set out and he added that the costs involved in recycling are detailed separately. The waste management area requires a budget in excess of €6m and a sum of €840,000 is included for landfill levy. This is a contra item. The cost of operating the transfer stations is substantial in regard to the volumes of waste processed. This is largely due to the nature of the county and the local demand. The benefits of a new and heavier compactor purchased for the landfill at a cost of €0.5m at the end of 2006 are now becoming evident. It is estimated that this larger compactor has resulted in an increase of at least 15% in waste compaction rates, thus allowing more waste to be deposited into each cell. This will be reflected in the future in a slower rate of development of cells with consequent efficiencies into the future. It is proposed to carry out remedial works to the capping lining on some of the earlier cells and to improve the gas collection infrastructure early in 2008. This should improve the efficiency of the gas collection system and reduce the impact of odours from the landfill.

Mr. O'Connor referred members to the end of Page 99 where details of the costs involved in the landfill after care are set out. A sum of €480,000 is provided and this relates to provisions and loan charges for closure works on all landfill sites. A sum of €2.369m is provided for the provision of landfill. This is a combination of loan charges and provisions for development. The development work on the landfill extension consisting of Phase 9 cells and the capping of Phase 7 should commence in May 2008 and be completed by November 2009. The projected cost is €8.1m of which €2.5m relates to the infrastructure development of access roads, leachate storage, surface water lagoons, new offices and weighbridge etc. This expenditure must be funded as part of the ongoing operational costs and a term loan will be sought for the infrastructure costs of €2.5m. Already a loan of €2.6m has been raised to cover land purchase costs, preliminary design and licensing requirements. 57,000 tonnes of waste were taken in at the landfill in Muingamuinnane in 2007 and it is anticipated that this will increase to 63,000 tonnes in 2008. He referred members to the table at the top of Page 101 where details of the cost of recycling are set out. The cost of recycling is €0.5m each year and less than half of that is recouped to the Council. It is important to be mindful of how expensive recycling is. Details of the refuse collection service are set out on Page 103 and a sum of €3.415m has been provided for this service.

Mr. O'Connor informed the meeting that we are now 12 months into the new electronic payment system which is working well and the benefits to the customer and Kerry County Council are set out on Page 103 of the Manager's Report. A breakdown of the costs involved in the refuse collection service is set out at the top of Page 104 of the Manager's Report and this includes loan charges/leases. He referred members to the top of Page 105 where the number of domestic customers for the years 2005, 2006 and 2007 are set out and said that it is hoped to increase our customer base over the coming 12 months. The charge for 2008 and the annual package at €30 is very attractive. Details of the Litter Management Service are set out on Pages 105 and 106 of the Manager's Report and a sum of €9,000 is provided for the Litter Warden Service. Kerry County Council is very committed to the control of litter but it is a pity that so much of our budget has to be spent on it each year. Details of the various initiatives undertaken by the

Council are set out on Page 107 of the Manager's Report. A sum of €100,000 is provided towards the operation of the street cleaning service. Details of the Waste Regulations, Monitoring and Enforcement are set out on Page 108 of the Manager's Report. A sum of €136,000 is provided as our contribution to Limerick County Council for managing and administering the Regional Waste Management Office on our behalf. The sum of €670,000 is provided for the Operation and Maintenance of Burial Grounds and of this, a sum of €37,000 is provided for contributions to community organisations. He referred members to Page 111 of the Manager's Report where details of the budget for Derelict Sites is set out. €71,000 is provided and details of activity under this programme in 2007 are set out at the end of Page 111. A sum of €325,000 is provided for Water Safety Operations. The Council will continue to provide a lifeguard service in 2008 in a number of locations throughout the County. Voluntary rescue services at Ballybunion, Ballinaskelligs, Ballyheigue, Banna, Cashen, Derrynane and Killarney, together with Irish Water Safety and RNLI will receive financial support. An increased contribution is allowed for in the case of Ballybunion due to damage to their facility in recent storms.

He then referred to the Fire Service which is a substantial part of this division and said that a sum of €3.785m is provided for the operation of the Fire Brigade Service. A sum of €730,000 is provided for Water Quality, Air and Noise Pollution. This provides for the licensing and monitoring of water quality and details of the Council's activity in this area are set on Page 115 of the Manager's Report. Under the new arrangements the cost of the Council's laboratory is charged out across the services. Because of our excellent in-house laboratory service it is estimated that we save approximately €300,000 per annum.

All members complimented Ms. A. Haugh and her staff in the Environment Department on the excellent service provided in 2007.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald referred to the allocation of €6.6m for the maintenance of the landfill site and called on the Environment Department to ensure that the roads in this area are maintained to a satisfactory standard to ensure the least inconvenience possible for the local community. He stressed the need to support residents and said that the entire county benefits from this facility. He referred to Page 16 of the Budget Tables under the heading Other Income Miscellaneous Transfers where a figure of €400,000 was adopted in 2007 but there is no estimated outturn for 2007 shown and he requested clarification of this issue. He emphasised the importance of the waste collection service throughout the county. He asked if the Housing Department are satisfied that they are making progress on derelict sites as they detract from the beauty of an area. He paid tribute to the lifeguards who provide an excellent service each year. He also paid tribute to the Fire Service which is a very important service for the people of the county. He asked if all reports on potential pollution are investigated.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim said that the landfill site at Muingnaminnane is one of our most important resources and it is important to be sensitive to the needs of the local community. She requested that when a cell is being covered that due care would be taken to ensure that smells are not allowed to become a nuisance in the area and if necessary she called for a speeding up of the process of closing the cells. She referred to tenders to

be advertised to extract gas in an effort to reduce odours and requested that this new system be installed as soon as possible.

Cllr. J. O'Connor complimented the Environment Section on the Environmental Awards which he said are very successful. He commended the local voluntary committees who carry out excellent work each year on graveyards. He welcomed improvements in the street cleaning service and said that the Council has invested heavily in this service and it has resulted in great improvements. He asked why was it necessary to provide €71,000 for Derelict Sites when a sum of €35,000 was provided in 2007. He referred to the CCTV cameras provided at Bottle Banks and said that he hoped that the practices of the past have changed since these were installed. He referred to the collection of farm plastics in 2007 which was very successful and asked if there were any plans to continue this scheme in 2008. He called for the introduction of a scheme to facilitate the removal of old cars.

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald complimented the staff of the Water Services Department on the development of burial grounds. He emphasised the need to maintain burial grounds especially during the summer months and he said that the grass is not cut often enough especially in older burial grounds. He thanked the staff of the Environment Department for developing the new Civic Amenity facility in the Dingle area and he requested that this facility remain open six days a week. He referred to the budget for street cleaning of €100,000 and said that this is not adequate. He requested that additional funding be provided for this service as Kerry is a tourist county and it is important that it is kept clean especially during the summer months. He also called for a programme of beach cleaning to ensure that they are maintained to a very high standard. In conclusion he called for the continuation of the collection of farm plastics in 2008.

Cllr. D. Kiely referred to the sum of €10,000 provided in the Budget for after care at Ahascra and he said that it was a pity that this site was not developed into a Transfer Station. He paid tribute to the refuse service and all the staff operating the service and he called on all members to support and promote the Council's refuse collection service. He complimented the Council and all the voluntary groups on the maintenance of burial grounds in all parts of the county. He referred to the current policy relating to the purchase of graves and said that intending purchasers are permitted to purchase two graves only. He suggested that this should be increased to three or four. He welcomed the additional funding provided for Ballybunion Sea Rescue Service as a result of the damage to their equipment. In conclusion he complimented the Fire Service on their work throughout the year and said that it would be prudent to give local authority houses a chimney sweep once a year.

Cllr. B. Cronin said that this is a very large division that provide an excellent service in the collection of refuse, the operation of the landfill site etc. and the Environment Department must be complimented on providing an excellent service. He referred to the allocation of €100,000 for the provision of burial grounds and said that in Killarney town land is very expensive. New burial grounds are also required in Scartaglin and Gneeveguilla and he could not see how this allocation would be sufficient. He

commended the Environment Department on the Transfer Stations which are excellent facilities and are used extensively by the general public. He complimented the Council on the excellent work they did in his area in cleaning up illegal dumping and he asked what the current position was regarding illegal dumping in rural areas. The allocation for Water Rescue is crucially important as many organisations are voluntary and do not receive government grant aid. Their only other source of income is through fund raising yet they provide a very valuable life saving service. He then referred to the street cleaning service and to the purchase of small street sweepers and said that they are proving to be very successful as they can access footpaths. He added that every town and village in the county should be swept at least once a week. He complimented the Fire Service who provides a very important service. He asked if there was a restriction on the call out of the Fire Service in the event of flooding. He commended the work of the Pollution Control Section and said the staff are very reasonable and fair in their approach. He then referred to the Farm Plastics Scheme and said that farmers are paying a levy when they purchase plastic. He asked if this scheme would be continued in 2008 and he called for a continuation of it to ensure the protection of the environment.

Mayor M. Healy-Rae then took the Chair.

Cllr. R. Beasley welcomed the additional funding provided for Ballybunion Sea Rescue Service and said they provide an excellent service as a voluntary organisation and they have saved many lives. He referred to the removal of beach material from the Cashen and Beale and requested that this be monitored with a view to establishing who is responsible for it. He then referred to the Valentia Coast Guard Service and said that the Council should apply to Minister Dempsey to retain this service.

Cllr. J. Sheahan concurred with the views expressed by Cllr. Beasley regarding the Valentia Coast Guard Service and said that this service should be retained at all costs. He complimented the Council on the street cleaning service and said that it has improved substantially. He also welcomed the clean up done on country roads and said that it is important to give a good impression to people visiting the county. He called for the cleaning of place name signs throughout the county and said that this is very important to give a good impression of the county. He thanked the Fire Service for providing an excellent service. He then referred to a derelict site in Killarney which is Killarney House and he said at one time this was the jewel in the Killarney National Park but it is now disintegrating. It is time it was restored to its formal glory and it could be used as an art gallery which would be an excellent attraction in Killarney.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae referred to the halting site in Killarney where there is a lot of rubbish and he requested that it be cleaned up. He also requested that the road from Loo Bridge to Kilgarvan be cleaned up as there is a lot of rubbish dumped inside the ditch at one particular location. He called for an extension of the refuse collection service into more rural areas even if it was only provided every three weeks. Refuse collection vehicles should be utilised on Saturdays and this would allow for an extension of the service. If the refuse service was more widely available it would help to reduce illegal dumping. He requested that Transfer Stations would remain open late in the evening or longer on

Saturdays in order to facilitate those who are working during the week. He referred to the permit required by refuse collection vehicles and asked if the one permit would cover a vehicle used both in Kerry and in Limerick. He asked if this permit fee is transferred to the Council by the Regional Waste Management Office. Many of these contractors are operating near the border and one permit should be sufficient.

Cllr. M. Connor-Scarteen referred to the collection of refuse from holiday homes and asked if the Council would consider selling labels for refuse bags to facilitate them. He asked when would the new fire station commence in Kenmare and has the funding been provided for it.

Cllr. P. Leahy complimented the Environment Department on the excellent refuse service it provides. He stated that the street cleaning service has improved immensely in recent times, in particular, since the new machines were purchased. He commended all the local voluntary groups involved in the maintenance of their local grave yards and said that tremendous progress has been made in this area over the past few years. He thanked the staff of the Water Services Department for supporting these groups. In conclusion he welcomed the additional allocation for the Ballybunion Sea Rescue Service.

Cllr. T. Buckley stated that the level of illegal dumping around the county is not acceptable and he noticed in recent times that black bags are being dumped along the roadside. He called on the Environment Department to continue to tackle this problem.

In response to queries raised by members Ms. A. Haugh, Director of Environment, stated that the landfill at Muingnaminnane is a wonderful facility and it generates considerable income. It is important to maintain it to a very high standard and her Department are mindful of keeping residents in the area satisfied. A number of meetings were held to consult with them and to resolve issues they bring to the attention of her Department. She acknowledged there were issues with odour in 2007 but said that a new gas extraction system is being installed together with more gas wells. It is also intended to close off cells sooner in order to prevent odour. Illegal dumping is treated as a priority by her Department and any complaint is investigated within three days. However, the Council must rely on the public to report illegal dumping. A report will be brought to the March meeting on the activities in this area in 2007. She then referred to the Farm Plastics Scheme and said that in 2007 the Council organised this scheme on behalf of the Department. However, it is not envisaged that it would continue in its present format but the Department will probably continue it with its own contractor. The new Civic Amenity facility near An Daingean is almost complete and it is intended that it will open in February. It will be open on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday and these opening times will be reviewed on the basis of use to ensure that it is open at the appropriate times to facilitate customers. Funding provided for the Regional Waste Management Office is intended to fund the shortfall for the office. She thanked members for their compliments for the street cleaning service and said that the sum included in her division is funding provided by her Department to the Roads Department who carry out the work. 140 complaints of pollution were reported in 2007 and all of these were followed up. She referred to the Beach Warden service which was recently introduced and said that it was

very successful. Unfortunately the Beach Warden was appointed in August 2007 which was the end of the tourism season but it is hoped that we will see the benefits of this service in 2008. The refuse collection service offers a service for holiday homes at €20 per lift with not standing charge. However, most people with holiday homes tend to use Transfer Stations. Under The Presentation of Waste Regulations it is no longer permissible to present bags for collection.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, referred to the query from Cllr. Fitzgerald regarding the €400,000 provided in the Budget Tables under the heading Other Income Miscellaneous Transfers. A sum of €400,000 was introduced in 2007 as money unspent in 2006 and for this reason it was transferred to 2007. It was decided that it was not required in 2007 but it will be availed of in 2008. All income from waste disposal must be used for waste disposal. He assured members that the Council would be writing to those who qualified for a waiver for refuse in 2007 advising them of the procedure for 2008. Old age pensioners with no other source of income will be informed that they do not have to apply for a waiver on a pilot basis for 2008, but will receive a waiver automatically.

Cllr. M. Connor-Scarteen referred to the Waiver Scheme for the refuse collection service and said that there are two categories of old age pensioners, contributory and non-contributory. Those on a contributory pension do not get the same reduction as those on non-contributory pensions.

In response Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, said that any local authority giving a waiver to 2,224 customers is indeed very generous. He referred to the query regarding the allocation for Derelict Sites and said that one person is being allocated to this service full time for 2008 while in 2007 a member of staff only worked part time on this area.

Cllr. P. McCarthy referred to the structure of waste collection charges, i.e. standing charge and a charge per bin lift. He asked if it would be possible to consider payment on collection only.

In response Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, said that once the Council puts a truck on the road we must be guaranteed that a certain number of customers will use our service and guarantee a certain income. If someone joins the refuse collection service during the year we reduce the standing charge.

The Mayor informed the meeting that it was 1.45pm and the meeting would adjourn for lunch until 3pm.

The meeting resumed at 3.10pm.

Civic Reception

Cllr. J. Brassil PROPOSED that a Civic Reception be held for Pat Falvey leader of the successful South Pole Expedition.

This was unanimously agreed.

Division F Recreation and Amenity

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, referred members to Pages 118 – 125 of the Manager's Report for details of the Recreation and Amenity Division and Pages 17 and 18 of the Budget Tables. He referred members to Page 118 of the Manager's Report where details of the activities of the Community and Cultural SPC in 2007 are set out. A sum of €2.173m is provided for the operation of the Library Service and €1.8m of this relates to salary costs as this is a very personal service. He informed the meeting that the new Castleisland Library developed as part of an area services centre will open early in 2008. The new building will have a ground floor location enhancing accessibility, ready parking and improved staffing and book stock. It is intended that the development of the new Caherciveen Library as part of an area services and arts centre will progress during 2008. A sum of €145,000 is provided for the Archive Service which is a very valuable and much used service. This provision is mostly for staffing. €25,000 is provided for the Place Names project and this is the final year of that project. He acknowledged the substantial funding received from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for this project. A sum of €810,000 is provided for the Maintenance of Library Buildings. The library book fund has increased on an ongoing basis over the past number of years. The general book fund for 2008 is €130,000 which is an increase of 7.5% on the 2007 figure and a grant of €69,000 will be received from the Department for the School Libraries. €48,000 is included in the Budget as a contribution to the Library Council for school libraries and this is a statutory contribution. A sum of €760,000 is provided for service support costs and this covers salary and insurance costs and it also covers the share out of the central management charge. He referred members to the end of Page 121 for details on the Operation, Maintenance and Improvement of Outdoor Leisure Areas. A sum of €375,000 is included in the Budget under this heading and this will provide for the maintenance of walk ways, Ballyseedy Wood etc. He informed the meeting that co-funding is available for amenity/walking routes. A sum of €84,000 is provided for the Operation, Maintenance and Improvement of Playgrounds while a sum of €10,000 is provided for the Maintenance and Improvement of Beaches. €100,000 is provided for Community Grants and this allocation covers contributions made to various local organisations which promote sports and recreational events in the county. This allocation provides a contribution towards the ongoing training programme for Olympian participants Paul Griffin and Sean Casey.

Mr. O'Connor informed members that a sum of €383,000 is provided for the Arts programme which is a 17% increase on 2007. Details of the activities undertaken in 2007 and the areas to be focussed on in 2008 are set out on Pages 124 and 125 of the Manager's Report. This allocation includes contributions to Siamsa Tire, Samhalocht, St. John's Theatre and Arts Centre and Listowel Writers' Week subject to satisfactory programming.

Division G Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, referred members to Pages 126 – 129 of the Manager's Report and Pages 24 – 25 of the Schedule for details of the capital budget on this Division. This Division will have a capital expenditure in excess of €9m with grant aid of over €2m. The main items in this Division are the Operation and Maintenance of Piers and Harbours for which a sum of €220,000 has been included. A sum of €275, 000 is provided for planned protection of coastal regions. This provides for the making of a small local contribution towards grant aid provided from central government. A sum of €384,000 is provided for the Inspection of Abbatoirs and much of this is recovered in fees from slaughterhouses. A sum of €264,000 is provided for the Operation of the Dog Warden Service and Mr. O'Connor informed the meeting that the number of dog licences in the county is expected to be in the region of 18,000 in 2008. The income from these licences also helps to fund the service. Kerry County Council continues to administer the Higher Education Grant Scheme on behalf of the Department of Education and Science and a sum of €6.24m is provided for this service. The amount paid out in grants is recouped in full from the Department of Education and Science except for approximately €20,000. A sum of €4.113m is provided for the Payment of VEC Pensions and this sum is recouped in full from the Department of Education and Science. A sum of €32,000 is provided as a contribution to the VEC and this is a statutory contribution.

Division H Miscellaneous Services

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, referred members to Pages 130 – 134 of the Manager's Report for details on this Division and also to Pages 26 and 27 of the Schedule for details of the capital programme. Most of the capital expenditure in this Division is on libraries and area offices and the proposed extension to County Buildings. He pointed out that one third of all rate payers in the county pay less than €1,000 per annum and on average they pay €500. Two thirds of all rate payers pay less than €2,5000 and that two thirds accounts for only 9% of all rates collected. He pointed out that there are global valuations of the network of O2 Eircom, ESB etc. and that category is worth 37% of rates income. A number of applications for the waiver of rates are received each year and each of these is assessed on its merits. However, proper accounts and documentation is required in order to apply for a waiver. A sum of €245,000 is provided for the Register of Electors and this covers the salaries of staff and enumerators. A sum of €172,000 is provided for coroners fees and expenses and under the Coroners Act we are obliged to pay these. In 2007 Kerry County Council funded the carrying out of 128 Post Mortems and 31 Inquests. Details of the budget for members expenses are included under the heading Local Representation/Civic Leadership. Details of the Motor Tax budget are set out at the end of Page 132 of the Manager's Report with a sum of €1.16m provided for 2008. This covers salaries, office security and other expenses associated with the issue of motor taxation discs and driver licences. This is an exceptionally busy department that collected in excess of €23m in 2007. He pointed out that Kerry County Council receives more back from the Local Government Fund than it pays into it from the collection of motor tax. He expressed his disappointment that there was not a greater take up of the

on-line payment system and there was an increase of just 6% on the take up of this service in 2007.

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 133 of the Manager's Report where details of Agency and Recoupable Services are set out. A sum of €720,000 is provided and this covers the general expenses of courthouses such as caretaker wages, insurances, rent of premises etc. and this sum is recoupable from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Details of the Central Management Charges are set out on Pages 135 – 142 of the Manager's Report and a sum of €547,000 is provided for the Maintenance and Upkeep of Corporate Buildings. This covers the maintenance costs of all offices in the Rathass complex and offices in Maine Street, the Ashe Hall and in Statoi. A sum of €549,000 is provided for Corporate Buildings and the most significant cost in this relates to rates. A sum of €540,000 is provided for the Provision of Corporate Buildings and included in this is a sum for loan charges in respect of the new corporate requirements at the Áras an Chontae complex. Plans are being prepared for the construction of a new laboratory, file store, training rooms, additional office accommodation, maintenance workshop and improved parking and the Manager will shortly bring a report to Council on this item.

A sum of €280,000 is provided for Internal Audit together with Communication Cost of €315,000. Details on Information and Communication Technology are set out on Page 138 of the Manager's Report. €65,000 is provided for the Maintenance of Networks and PC's with €221,000 being provided for Internet and Intranet Services. €370,000 is provided for the GIS Service and €1.1m is provided for applications. This provision includes the support, implementation and development of systems across the range of local authority activities including systems in Finance, Planning, Housing, Roads, HR and Payroll, Fire, Environment etc. He referred members to Page 139 of the Manager's Report where details of the Human Resource Function are set out. A sum of €1.336m is provided for this service and this covers a contribution to the Local Government Management Services Board. A sum of €240,000 is provided for Health and Safety and Staff Welfare. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 places an obligation on the Council to provide, manage and conduct a safe environment for employees. A sum of €1.947m is provided for the Finance Function under the heading Financial and Management Accounting. A new HR payroll project is being rolled out nationally and Kerry is a pilot for it. A sum of €5.387m is provided for Pensions and Lump Sums. Previously pensions were charged out to the individual services but now they are all incorporated in this area and charged back out. A sum of €360,000 is provided for Area Offices and details of this allocation are set out on Pages 141 and 142 of the Manager's Report. The local contribution for the new Caherciveen area office will be almost €4m and it is anticipated that this will commence in mid 2008. The Part VIII report will be brought before Council shortly. There are no current proposals for any changes to the An Daingean area office. The Killarney areas offices have been located in poor accommodation for some time and an opportunity has arisen for the acquisition of purpose built offices which are being considered and a report will be brought to Council over the next few months.

Cllr. M. Gleeson welcomed proposals to provide a new Area Office in Killarney. He called for the provision of a satellite library on the eastern side of Killarney town and said that he hoped that the Council would purchase additional mobile library units in the near future as they are urgently needed and there is a huge catchment area to be served. He referred to Page 129 of the Manger's Report where there is reference to the provision of €6,000 for a child committed to care. He said that it was ridiculous that the Council should have to provide this funding as this should be the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science. He PROPOSED that the Department of Education and Science be asked to absorb this cost. He referred to the Local Sports Partnership and welcomed the funding provided for it. He referred to one of the growing phenomenon which is cycling cross country and he called on the Council to liaise with Coillte to develop facilities for this past time. He added that there is a magnificent facility provided near Fermoy and surely with the Kerry Mountains a similar facility could be provided. He called for a continuation of the Placenames Project and said that he hoped when it is completed the proper spellings of all placenames will be available. He added that a large number of people visit Kerry at Christmas time and walk our beaches. However, there are no facilities for litter, in particular, on Rossbeigh Beach at that time and in many instances public toilets are closed. He asked that this would be reviewed.

Cllr. R. Beasley congratulated all involved in the Recreation and Amenity Division. In particular he welcomed the excellent new library provided in Killorglin and also the new library to be opened shortly in Casteisland. He added that he looked forward to the new library which will be constructed in Caherciveen. He also called for an extension of the mobile library service. He complimented the Arts Officer on the excellent service provided to the various arts groups throughout the county and he PROPOSED that funding for the Arts be increased by €50,000.

Cllr. N. Foley SECONDED this proposal and acknowledged the tremendous work carried out by the Arts Department each year.

The Mayor informed Cllr. Beasley that in order for a proposal to be valid he would have to say how the increase in the Arts budget would be funded.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, urged members to be careful as they must ensure that they pass a sufficient Budget with adequate funding. The Budget presented to members for consideration is a carefully balanced document. A modest increase of 4% is proposed for rates in the current year.

Cllr. R. Beasley then referred to the tourism area and in particular to the Cork Swansea Car Ferry. He informed the meeting the Mr. James Campbell from Tralee is hoping to buy a ferry for this route. The loss of the Cork Swansea Ferry was a huge loss for County Kerry and Mr. Campbell could do with every help and support possible to make this viable. The provision of a Cork Swansea Ferry is equally as important to Kerry as the Shannon Heathrow route.

Cllr. J. Brassil said that the additional €50,000 in funding for the Arts programme could be provided by reducing funding for five divisions by €10,000 each. He referred to the recent comments on septic tanks in the county by the EPA where they said that 30,000 septic tanks are discharging into water courses. Limerick County Council have a specific division dealing with septic tanks and percolation test and they have established an approved list of assessors and this has proved to be very successful. At present in Kerry there are nine or ten planners with different views on the result of percolation tests and it is all down to the interpretation of the planner. He called for the establishment of a dedicated unit for the assessment of percolation tests. He PROPOSED that of the €2.8m provided in the Budget for Planning Control that €300,000 would be used for this purpose. He believed it should be practical to use this funding due to the reduction in the number of planning applications and there would be less demand for the planning control service. He referred to the waiver given to farmers for the domestic element of their water consumption and asked if there was any allowance for dairy farmers. He asked when it was intended to commence construction on the extension to County Buildings.

Cllr. D.Kiely SECONDED Cllr. Brassil's proposal.

Cllr. T.Fitzgerald complimented Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing, Community and Enterprise, and all the staff of the Library and the Arts and Heritage Department on the excellent service provided by their departments. He welcomed the proposed opening of the new library in Castleisland and also the allocation for Sports and Recreation. He asked that priority be given to the funding of the walk on the River Lee to Ballyseedy Wood. He urged the Council to commence construction of the extension to County Buildings as soon as possible as a number of offices are rented at present. He referred to comments by Cllr. Beasley regarding proposals for a new Cork Swansea Ferry and said that Kerry County Council was involved with the original ferry. This is a very important service from a tourism point of view and the Council should give every assistance possible to this project to ensure that it is a success.

Cllr. J. O'Connor paid tribute to Mr. E.Scanlon for his work at Tullig where a new walk way was provided going down onto the beach. He called for the provision of additional disabled access to the beach. He referred to erosion in Rossbeigh which is alarming and called for the carrying out of coastal protection works there before it is too late. He referred to the taxing of cars online and said that Area Offices should facilitate people who wish to tax their cars online and staff members should be available to assist members of the public to do this. He called for the development of additional walkways in the county and said they are a great asset from a tourism point of view. In conclusion he congratulated the County Manager on the provision of the car park and the widening of the road at Beaufort.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae welcomed proposals to provide new Area Offices in Killarney. He also called for a substantial increase in Councillors Allocations in 2008. He referred to the many accidents on our roads and said that many eastern Europeans and Polish do not understand our road signs. Polish is the most dominant foreign language and all major

road signs should be provided in that language. He also called for the provision of public toilets in Kilgarvan.

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager, referred to the proposal to allocate €300,000 to establish a dedicated unit to assess percolation tests and said that a number of staff are being trained in this area and it is intended that they will take over the assessment of percolation tests etc. in the near future. This allocation of staff does not affect the budget figure. He undertook to consider the request made by members on this issue.

Cllr. J. Brassil said that it would be cost effective to provide a dedicated unit with perhaps two or three staff.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue referred to the allocation for the payment of Coroners Expenses of €172,000 and said that it is wrong that the rate payers of Kerry are burdened with this expense. This should be a matter for the HSE as it has nothing to do with the services provided by the Council. He PROPOSED that a letter be forwarded to the appropriate Minister calling on him to transfer this function to the HSE. He referred to the Register of Electors and said that the most recent Draft Register was woefully inadequate and he suggested that the Council should contact schools and the Kerry Education Service to ensure that accurate information is received on those to be added to the Register of Electors.

Mayor M. Healy-Rae SECONDED Cllr. O'Donoghue's proposal in relation to Coroner's Expenses.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, indicated his agreement with the sentiments expressed by members in relation to Coroner's Expenses and informed members that a submission was made on behalf of the Council to this effect but unfortunately the relevant Department did not see fit to remove that burden from the Council. This function is enshrined in legislation and he did not envisage that there would be any change in it in the short term. However, the new Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform may consider it.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue PROPOSED that the new Minister for Justice be contacted requesting him to remove this burden from local authorities and to transfer it to the HSE.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, informed the meeting that in 2007 a once off contribution of €100,000 was received from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for additional staffing costs for a blitz on the Register of Electors.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald PROPOSED that a letter be forwarded to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government seeking similar funding in 2008 in view of the fact that the Local Elections will be held in June 2009.

Cllr. J. O'Connor SECONDED this proposal.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance informed the meeting that the cost of rented accommodation in town is €175,000. He referred to the query regarding the provision of public toilets in Kilgarvan and said that the Council has a development fund, but it is a subject to a suitable site and design being provided and Kilgarvan can be included in the programme. He pointed out that the Arts Budget has received an increase of 17% on the 2007 provision and this is amongst the highest increases proposed in the Budget. Additional funding is received through the Percentage for Arts Scheme, which is associated with major capital projects. He pointed out that a substantial contribution to the monument at the roundabout at Clashlehan was provided by the Council in recent years.

Cllr. M. Connor-Scarteen requested that funding be provided in the Budget to support the staging of the Fleadh Cheoil in Kenmare in 2008.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance confirmed that he had received a submission regarding this event and it would probably qualify for funding from the Council. He referred to the new format of the Budget for Service Costing and said that all central overheads, like office accommodation, ESB etc are charged back out over the service based on a unit level determined at national level. Housing occupies 20% of office accommodation and 20% of office accommodation costs is charged to that Division. This charge is broken down across the 11 services, proportionate to the number of staff in each service area. Financial costs are charged out in accordance with the number of financial transactions and an explanation on this area is provided on Pages 20 & 21 of the Manager's Report. IT services are charged out in accordance with the number of PC's and applications on PC's.

Cllr. J. Brassil asked Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, if he was satisfied that an additional €50,000 could be provided for the Arts Budget.

In response Mr. J. O'Connor said that he was not as an adequate proposal was not made on how this would be funded. He was mindful to keep the increase in rates as low as possible and the proposed increase in water charges is just 1%. The proposed increase in the Arts Budget would require an increase of 0.3% in rates.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald asked Mr. J. O'Connor if he would accept an increase of €30,000 in the budget for Estate Management on the basis that the income for planning fees could be increased by €30,000.

Cllr. J. Brassil supported this proposal.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance said that he had examined the income very carefully for planning fees and he was satisfied that the number of planning applications was in decline.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald said that this was a notional figure.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, said that Cllr. Fitzgerald proposal was acceptable in view of its relatively limited implication on the overall budget.

1. Charges for Attendance of Fire Brigade at Chimney Fires- Single Domestic Dwelling Houses.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance informed members that it was proposed that this charge would remain at €100, which is the same charge as 2007.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald PROPOSED that pursuant to Section 2 of the Local Government (Financial Provisions) (No 2) Act 1983, and the County Management Reserve Functions Order, 1985 it is hereby RESOLVED that a charge of €100 (*unchanged from 2007*) shall be made in respect of the attendance of the Fire Brigade at chimney fires in single domestic dwelling houses for the period ending 31st December 2008.

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald SECONDED this proposal.

A vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Beasley, Brassil, Buckley, Conner-Scarteen, Cronin, Ferris, S. Fitzgerald, T. Fitzgerald, Fleming, Foley, D. Healy-Rae, Leahy, Miller, O'Connor, O'Donoghue, Purtill, Sheahan, M. Healy-Rae **(18)**

Against: None **(0)**

Not Voting: None **(0)**

The Mayor declared the proposal carried and the Council so resolving.

Cllr. R. Beasley informed the meeting that his proposal was seconded and he asked if it would be incorporated in the Budget.

In response, Mr. T. Curran, County Manager said that no proposal was put forward on how this sum would be funded.

Cllr. R. Beasley said that a sum of €5.6m is provided for Miscellaneous Services and surely it could be provided from that sum.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, said that there is no Miscellaneous Budget for the Arts area. There is a separate Capital Budget under the Percentage for Arts Scheme and he pointed out that if a meritorious project was put forward during the year the Council would consider supporting it.

Cllr. T. Ferris pointed out that Cllr. Brassil had proposed that €10,000 would be deducted from each of five Divisions to support Cllr. Beasley's proposal.

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager said there are a lot of demands for various services that we would like to support. The Arts Budget is increased by 17% in 2008 and this must be acknowledged. Any meritorious specific project can be dealt with on its merits in due course.

Cllr. R. Beasley welcomed the 17% increase but said that this was an increase on a small budget.

Mayor M. Healy-Rae referred to Page 125 of the Manager's Report and read the details of the activities undertaken by the Arts Division in 2007. He added that all members are very proud of the Council's involvement in the Arts area and all members would like to see additional funding provided for it, if that was possible. However, there are many competing demands for funding and he again stated that any proposal must be substantiated on how the funding can be provided.

Cllr. R. Beasley requested that his proposal would be put to a vote.

Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing, Community & Enterprise said that following the Pre-Budget meeting, a specific request was put forward for additional funding for the Arts Division and an increase of 17% was provided to reflect the wishes of the members. There is also substantial funding available in the Percentage for Arts Scheme.

Mayor M. Healy-Rae said that there is also excellent work been done by the Tidy Towns' Committees around the county and he would like to see additional resources provided for them. However, this is not possible. He pleaded with members to accept the increase of 17% already provided for the Arts Budget and he called on Cllr. Beasley to withdraw his proposal.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance again stated that if a particular meritorious project was brought to the Council's attention, it could be supported under development management.

Cllr. N. Foley asked if funding from the Percentage for Arts Scheme must be used for a sculpture or can it be used for staffing.

Mr. J. Breen confirmed that some form of art work would have to be provided and this funding could not be used for the employment of staff.

2. The Adoption of the Local Authority Budget for the Local Financial Year Ending 31st December 2008.

Mayor M. Healy-Rae PROPOSED that pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001, the Local Government (Financial Procedures & Audit) Regulations 2002 and the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations, the Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31.12. 2008 as presented by the County Manager and as set out in Tables A and B, be and is hereby adopted subject to amendment that the provision in the Housing and Building Division be increased by €30,000 for Estate Management and that the income from planning application fees be increased by €30,000.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald SECONDED this proposal.

A vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Beasley, Brassil, Buckley, Connor-Scarteen, Cronin, Ferris, S. Fitzgerald, T. Fitzgerald, Fleming, Foley, D. Healy-Rae, Leahy, Miller, O'Connor, O'Donoghue, O'Shea, Purtill, Sheahan, M. Healy-Rae (19)

Against: None (0)

Not Voting: None (0).

The Mayor declared the proposal carried and the Council so resolving.

3. Determination of the Annual Rate on Valuation for the Local Financial Year Ending 31st December 2008

Mayor M. Healy-Rae PROPOSED that pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001, the Local Government (Financial Procedures & Audit) Regulations 2002 and the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations, and in accordance with the Local Authority Budget for the Financial Year Ending 31st December 2008 as adopted, the annual rate on valuation as set out in Table A hereunder be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for the said Financial Year. The Annual Rate to be levied shall be €78.93.

Cllr. C. Miller SECONDED this proposal.

TABLE A - CALCULATION OF ANNUAL RATE ON VALUATION				
Summary by Service Division	Summary per Table A 2008			
	Expenditure	Income	Estimated Net Expenditure 2008	
	€	€	€	%
Gross Revenue Expenditure & Income				
Housing and Building	14,192,066	12,518,182	1,673,884	11.8%
Road Transport & Safety	47,170,987	32,864,139	14,306,848	30.3%
Water Services	22,838,065	14,305,415	8,532,650	37.4%
Development Management	10,443,732	3,021,212	7,422,520	71.1%
Environmental Services	22,674,692	12,483,902	10,190,790	44.9%
Recreation and Amenity	6,229,386	566,737	5,662,649	90.9%
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	12,524,624	11,099,519	1,425,105	11.4%
Miscellaneous Services	5,567,573	986,110	4,581,463	82.3%
	141,641,125	87,845,216	53,795,909	38.0%
+ County Charge	0			
- County Charge		7,232,550	7,232,550	
Provision for Debit Balance	0		0	
Adjusted Gross Expenditure & Income (A)	141,641,125	95,077,766	46,563,359	32.9%
Financed by Other Income/Credit Balances				
Provision for Credit Balance		0	0	
Local Government Fund /General Purpose Grant		29,139,561	29,139,561	
Sub - Total (B)			29,139,561	
Amount of Rates to be Levied C=(A-B)			17,423,798	
Net Effective Valuation D			220,750	
General Annual Rate on Valuation C/D			78.93	

A vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Beasley, Brassil, Buckley, Connor-Scarteen, Cronin, Ferris, S. Fitzgerald, T. Fitzgerald, Fleming, Foley, D. Healy-Rae, Leahy, Miller, O'Connor, O'Donoghue, O'Shea, Purtill, Sheahan, M. Healy-Rae **(19)**

Against: None **(0)**

Not Voting: None **(0)**.

The Mayor declared the proposal carried and the Council so resolving.

4. Additional Expenditure for 2007

Mayor M. Healy-Rae PROPOSED that the additional expenditure for 2007 as set out in the Column titled "Estimated Out-turn 2007" in the Local Authority Budget as circulated, be and is hereby approved.

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald SECONDED this proposal and it was unanimously agreed.

The Mayor declared the proposal carried and the Council so resolving.

5. Report on Capital Programme 2008-2010

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald PROPOSED that the County Manager's Report on the Capital Programme 2008-2010 as incorporated into the Report on the Budget be noted.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue SECONDED this proposal and it was agreed.

Mr. T. Curran thanked the Mayor and Members for their support for the Budget. He also thanked Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance and his staff for preparing the Budget.

The Meeting concluded at 5:05pm.

Gerard O'Brien
A/SEO Corporate Affairs

Mayor of Kerry