

**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL  
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON  
MONDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JANUARY, 2008.**

**MIONTUAIRISCÍ CRUINNITHE BHUISÉID COMHAIRLE CHONTAE  
CHIARRAÍ, A THIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN  
CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, DÉ LUAIN, 7 Eanáir 2008.**

**PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR**

*Councillors/Comhairleoirí*

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

**IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR**

<b>Mr. T. Curran, County Manager</b>	<b>Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance</b>
<b>Mr. M. McMahon, Dir of Planning</b>	<b>Mr. J. Flynn, Dir. of Corp. Serv.</b>
<b>Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Dir. of Roads</b>	<b>Mr. O. Ring, Dir of Water Serv.</b>
<b>Mr. J. Breen, Dir. of Housing</b>	<b>Ms. A. Haugh, Dir. of Envir.</b>
<b>Ms. K. Lynch, A/SEO Finance</b>	<b>Mr. G. MacNamara, SE Roads</b>
<b>Mr. L. Quinlan, SEO Housing</b>	<b>Ms. B. Walsh, A/AO Housing</b>
<b>Ms. M. West, AO Roads</b>	<b>Mr. M. Corridon, SE Roads</b>
<b>Mr. P. Corkery, Press Officer</b>	<b>Mr. P. O'Connor, SSO Finance</b>
<b>Ms S. Sheridan, SSO Finance</b>	<b>Ms. B. Reidy, S.S.O. Corp. Services</b>
<b>Ms. K. Felle, C.O. Corp. Affairs</b>	

The meeting commenced at 10:40am.

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

The Mayor commenced the meeting with a prayer.

**08.01.07.01 Consideration of the Local Authority Budget for the Local  
Financial Year ending, the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008.**

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager, said that the 2008 Budget is one of the most important pieces of business to be considered by the Council as it will determine the priorities for the coming year. The 2008 Draft Budget is presented according to a new service costing structure, which is being rolled out in all local authorities throughout the country. The objectives of the new service costing approach are to:

- Identify the full economic cost of providing defined services.

- Standardise the basis for the apportionment of the central overhead charges to the various services.
- Eliminate direct administration costs outside the defined services.
- Provide common approach to costing services across all local authorities.
- Enable, in time, identification of unit output costs.
- Provide a common reporting structure for both the Annual Budget and the Annual Financial Statement.

He welcomed the new structure as it will clearly identify the full inclusive costs of our various services and over the coming years said it will help the Council to achieve improved value-for-money and to demonstrate efficiency in the use of the available resources. He added that his main priority in presenting the Budget is to ensure that services continue to be maintained to a high standard and the critical issues facing the Council are reasonably resourced. At the same time, he must protect the Council's medium-term financial sustainability in the interests of our ability to deliver our core essential services and retain the financial capacity to co-fund our on-going infrastructural development programme for the benefit of the social and economic life of the county.

Mr. Curran informed the meeting that the trend at Central Government, is that infrastructural project no longer receive 100% funding and local authorities must co-fund these projects. Until recently, sewerage schemes attracted 100% funding from the Department but now up to 40% must be funded by the local authority. The new programme, Housing Aid for the Elderly, again was funded 100% by the Department but now this has been reduced to 80%. In excess of €4m was expended on coastal protection works at Inch and likewise at Bunavalla in the past two years and the Council must pay a minimum of 25% of these costs and most of the funding for the coastal protection works at Inch is still outstanding.

The Council receives many requests for funding from voluntary groups and it is difficult to provide this funding and even more so to refuse them. Tremendous work is being done by the various Tidy Towns Committees throughout the county and after great difficulty in adjusting the Budget, a sum of €50,000 has been provided to assist them. There is a lot of demand for funding for walks but a contribution of between 25% and 50% is required by the local authority and is difficult to provide this funding. The biggest problem in Kerry is the lack of sources of local funding as the only sources of local funding at present are rates, water and wastewater charges and water must be charged on a commercial basis. Mr. Curran referred to the refuse collection service and stated that this charge must be competitive while the cost of landfill etc must also be met. He complimented the staff of the Environment Department on increasing the Council's customer base and added that Kerry is one of the few local authorities still operating this service. He thanked the people of the county for supporting the Council's refuse service. The Draft Budget provides for expenditure of €41.611m which is an increase of 8% on the 2007 projected out-turn excluding the road grant works programme and contra items such as VEC pensions and various grants paid out on behalf of Government Departments. He added that the Council has limited discretionary funding and it is important to maintain our core services. He thanked Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance and the staff of the Finance Department for preparing the Budget.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald referred to the growing demand on local authorities to co-fund capital projects and asked the Council's representatives on the ACCC to take this matter up at national level as it is placing an unfair burden on local authorities.

### **Adjourned Budget Meeting**

The Mayor informed the meeting that it was necessary to agree a date for the Adjourned Budget Meeting and he suggested Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008 at 10:30am

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. J. Brassil, SECONDED by Cllr. R. Beasley it was unanimously agreed that the Adjourned Budget Meeting would be held on Friday, 11<sup>th</sup> January 2008 commencing at 10:30am.

### **08.01.07.01 Consideration of the Local Authority Budget for the Financial Year ended the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008(Cont'd).**

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, informed members that in 2008 the Budget has been converted to the new format. He referred members to Page 9 of the Manager's Report where details of the revenue expenditure were set out. The combined expenditure of the Divisions titled Road Transport, Water Services and Environmental Services accounts for 65% of the Council's overall revenue budget in 2008 continuing the trend of recent years. These services are key to the on-going economic and social growth of the county. The new model provides for the introduction of a number of grants into the revenue account from the capital account but this does not result in any additional resources.

Mr. O'Connor then referred members to Page 10 of the Manager's Report, where the expenditure breakdown by Key Expense Element for 2008 is set out. Kerry County Council is a service organisation and our staff costs are significant at a cost of €2.54m this is in excess of 1/3 of the Budget and it compares favourably to comparable organisations. A further 1/3 is spent on operational costs including material and plant hire on which €46m will be expended. Loan charges are increasing and indeed they will increase considerably over the next few years. In accordance with T2016 pay increases are due under the modernisation programme. The Performance Verification Group assesses progress in Kerry and their report will be available publicly. He referred members to Page 11 of the Budget Report where details of the Revenue Income by Source are set out. State grants account for 57% of our income with commercial rates accounting for 12% and service charges account for 13% or €18m. He added that grants received for Specific Purposes must be spent in accordance with the conditions on which they are granted. He then referred to the Capital Budget and said that the projected capital expenditure for 2008 was €160m with 2/3 of this funded by Government and 1/3 funded from own resources. If the county is to progress, Kerry County Council must have the capacity to fund this contribution towards capital projects. He then referred members to Page 13 of the Budget Report, for the details of State Grant for Specific Purposes, which total €1.3m, are set out. A sum of €9.139m was received from the Local Government Fund. This grant accounts for 20.6% of the Council's budgeted income for 2008 and the allocation is an increase of 5.57% on the final figure for 2007. Rates continue to be the biggest source of income over which the Council has control and they account for approximately 12.3% of the Council's overall revenue receipts. A modest increase of 4% is proposed for rates for 2008 with a 1% increase on water charges. In

conclusion he said that there is a new method of charging out central management services in the 2008 Budget.

Cllr. M. Gleeson referred to Page 14 of the Manager's Report and in particular to Paragraph 4.1 on Water Charges and read the following excerpt, "*As part of the National Water Pricing Policy Framework, all non-domestic water customers are liable to pay the Local Authority the full cost of water provision to the sector*". He stated that Article 42.4 of Bunracht na hEireann states "*the State shall provide for free primary education*" or "*Ní foláir don Stáit socrú a dhéanamh chun gunoideachas a bheith ar fail in aisce*" Cllr. Gleeson said that the State has singularly failed in that constitutional imperative, particularly in the past 20 years. Boards of Management, whether legally entitled to do so or not, and more especially Parents Councils have been involved in fund raising in order to ensure that their school can provide appropriate educational facilities for their children. The Capitation Grant has failed hopelessly to keep pace with either inflation or educational requirements. Politicians of every hue and more with monotonous regularity declare that schools should or must ensure computer literacy, tackle the problem of obesity, lead the fight against drugs and occasionally do Irish, English Maths etc. He added that for 40 years or so, he had acted in '*loco parentis*' and so he assumed the school is in '*in loco parentis*'. It is deplorable that Government continues to fail in its constitutional obligation and equally deplorable, and indeed despicable, that it off-loads the problem to local authorities. He PROPOSED that local authorities and the Teachers Unions would unite in opposition to the imposition of water charges on schools.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald said that it is unreasonable to impose water charges on schools who can ill afford them. It should be a simply matter for the Department of Education to pay the Department of the Environment directly for all water charges for schools. This would ensure that water charges have no implications for schools.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae said that in a small country it is unreasonable that schools are being burdened with water charges. He requested that a letter be forwarded to the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Education & Science calling on them to resolve this issue. If schools are to meet these charges, they will have to undertake fundraising, yet all second-level children are entitled to free-education. He then referred to the 12% of the income coming from rates and said that this is becoming a very unfair burden on businesses in smaller villages. Many of the local shopkeepers are losing business to multi-national companies in the larger towns. He asked that when they appeal their rates that their application would be adjudicated upon as quickly as possible.

Cllr. R. Beasley supported the sentiments expressed by members regarding the imposition of water charges on schools, which he said was unreasonable. He referred to the proposed increase of 4% on commercial rates and said that prior to this increase, many small businesses are already experiencing difficulty and he suggested that a decrease in rates is what they require in order to help them to remain in business. The proposed increase in rates could apply to the larger businesses only.

Cllr. J. Brassil said that the issue of water charges for schools should be dealt with under the Water Services Programme and said that the State is bound by regulation from the EU. If schools become liable for water charges, he felt that the Department

of Education would reimburse the schools. He stated that Ireland has an education system the envy of Europe and he objected to the comments by previous speakers. The Government has increased expenditure on education and this is very welcome. He added that he wanted to put it on record that he did not agree with the sentiments expressed by Cllr. Gleeson, which he felt were inappropriate.

Cllr. B. O'Connell expressed his disappointment that it is proposed to increase rates by 4% in 2008. A small percentage of the people in the county are paying rates, which are supporting services for the rest of the county. He asked if rates in Kerry are the highest in the country and if this is the case, it must be addressed.

Cllr. L. Purtill said that Kerry County Council now has one of the highest rates in the country. Because the level of our rates and other stealth taxes such as ESB, water and wastewater disposal, the cost of heating oil and diesel many of our smaller businesses are under considerable pressure and will be forced to close. Rural pubs and shops are under extreme pressure to survive. These are an essential part of the fabric and infrastructure of rural areas. If these shops and pubs have to close, the likelihood of them ever opening again is very remote. He appealed to the County Manager and the Head of Finance to take income into consideration when they dealing with business people who are under financial pressure to remain trading. In some cases the rates chargeable by Kerry County Council could be equivalent to the total profit for the year. In relation to water charges being imposed on schools, he said that at present, management and parents are forced to do continuous fundraising to keep the schools heated, repaired and to provide equipment such as computers. On top of all of these costs, the Government is adding water charges. Schools are not a profit making business, but rather providers of education for the children of the nation. The Department of Education should be held responsible for the payment of these charges.

Cllr. M. Connor-Scarreen said that it is a sad day, when the small shopkeeper must pay for the lack of funding by Government. Her referred to the Local Government Fund Grant of €29.1m allocated to Kerry County Council for 2008 and asked how much was collected in Motor Tax in the county in 2007. He understood that it was approximately €30m.

Cllr. J. O'Connor supported the sentiments expressed by Cllr. Gleeson and said that he believed that the terms of the constitution should be observed by the Government. He asked what did it cost to produce one gallon of water.

Cllr. P. McCarthy said that there is an ever increasing trend by Government that local authorities must contribute to the funding of capital projects, yet many authorities including Kerry County Council have a declining rate base. He was concerned that the Council would be faced with having to limit the services it could provide. The imposition of water charges on schools will result in a major burden for them. The European Parliament has made a ruling on this and is forcing the Government to implement it. He suggested that a letter be written to all MEP's asking what was their position on this issue and what are they doing to address it at EU level.

Cllr. N. Foley concurred with the sentiments expressed by other councillors in relation to rates and water charges for schools and she added that all members should be united in their opposition to the imposition of water charges on schools. She also

supported the suggestion that this matter would be raised with MEP's and with the Department of Education and the Department of Environment with a view to resolving it.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, informed the meeting that at the end of each service within a division, there is a sizable sum included for the share out of central management charges. This includes the cost of offices shared out in accordance with the office space used by that service. It also includes the cost of maintaining the offices, heating lighting etc. Pensions are also charged to the relevant Divisions. Likewise IT is charged out to each service in accordance with the number of PC's and applications and usage by the various divisions. HR is also charged out in proportion to the number of staff in each of the service units. He referred to the provision for Housing Maintenance and Improvement of Local Authority Housing and said that the engineering and administrative costs are included in this, rather than in one lump sum at the end of this division as was the case previously. He referred members to Pages 20 & 21 of the Manager's Report where details of the Service Costing Model are set out. In response to the query raised by Cllr. M. Connor-Scarteen regarding the income from motor tax, Mr. O'Connor stated that a total sum of €23m was paid in Kerry for motor tax and driving licences in 2007. This was paid into the Local Government Fund and Kerry received a grant of €9.1m from it. In addition, grant aid for non-national roads was received from the Local Government Fund.

#### **Division A Housing & Building**

Mr. J O'Connor, Head of Finance, referred members to Pages 22 to 36 of the Manager's Report and Pages 2 to 4 of the Budget Tables for details of this Division. The total revenue budget for this Division for 2008 is €14.16m or 10% of the budget. The projected income is €12.5m from a variety of sources. This is the Division that has the greatest social impact on the county. Details of the Capital Programme are set out on Page 4 of the Schedule at the back of the Manager's Report. The proposed capital programme amounts to €13m and this will be funded by grant aid of €5m and a local contribution of €8m which will be funded through borrowing. This will eventually be funded by Government or by those who borrow from the Council. The capital expenditure on this division is 26% of the overall capital budget for the year. He referred members to Page 22 of the Manager's Report, where details of the housing programme delivered in 2007 are set out. 123 dwellings were completed during the course of that year and the various locations and the number of units provided in each of these locations is set out on Page 22. The Housing Department liaises with various voluntary groups in the county and assists in the provision of voluntary housing. Details of the schemes completed and under construction under this scheme are set out on Page 26 of the Manager's Report.

Mr. O'Connor stated that the issues dealt with by the Housing SPC are set out on Page 27 of the Manager's Report. One of the key elements of the Housing Programme is the maintenance of Local Authority Housing Units and a sum of €1.9m has been allocated for this in 2008, under two headings, Routine Maintenance €1.1m and repairs to vacant housing €800,000 which will be funded from internal capital receipts. The Central Heating and Installation Programme which has been ongoing over the last number of years is now almost complete and the final 60 dwellings will be completed shortly. He added that we were fortunate that the Department of Environment Heritage & Local Government approved the use of €4.5m from internal

capital receipts over two years to allow us to carry out a range of improvements to our housing stock. At the end of 2006 the Department advised local authorities that it was giving direct control to them over the spending of their internal capital receipts from the sale of council houses to existing tenants subject to certain terms and conditions. The funds must be used primarily for planned maintenance and improvement of the housing stock. A two year work programme is progressing well and the main elements of this programme are window and door replacement, interior of houses, exterior planned maintenance and estate regeneration. As a result of this investment in our housing stock, it is anticipated that the cost of repair will decline significantly over the next few years. A sum of €200,000 is provided for the Maintenance of Traveller Accommodation Units while a sum of €109,000 is provided for Traveller Accommodation Management. This allocation covers the cost of the employment of the Traveller Liaison Officer who supports the provision of traveller accommodation needs and helps to promote links between the Council and statutory or other voluntary organisations providing services for travellers. The 2005-2008 programme sets a target of accommodating a total of 87 families by the end of 2008. It provides for the accommodation needs of travellers to be met by the provision of group housing, single houses and halting sites located in areas where there is an identified need. Following a recent review of the programme a total of 54 families have been accommodated to-date and a further 33 families will require to be accommodated by the end of next year, in order to meet the overall targets.

A sum of €50,000 is provided for Estate Maintenance and this allocation is to provide for the purchase of equipment and some materials by resident associations who are active in the maintenance of their estates. Service Support Costs of €1.062m are provided and this allocation includes direct costs of €544,000 which covers salaries involved in the management, supervision and direction of this service, together with insurance and associated costs. The balance is in respect of the share-out of the central management charges. A sum of €65,000 is provided for Debt Management and Rent Assessment and he stressed the need for all tenants to pay their fair portion of rent. 20 Notices to Quit were served throughout the last year, where rent accounts have gone into serious arrears. Such action is unfortunate but is necessary in the interest of equity to the vast majority who pay on time. The overall reduction in both rent and loan arrears over the last number of years demonstrates the effectiveness in arrears management.

Mr. O'Connor added that a sum of €870,000 is provided for Homeless Grants/Other Bodies. This allocation is being provided towards the operation and running cost of Novas Initiatives Hostel in Tralee i.e. Arlington Lodge, The Adapt Refuge in Tralee and the reduced support facility, Knocklee House, which opened in late 2006. Provision is also being made for a further hostel which is expected to open in Killarney in the second half of 2008. 90% of these costs are recouped by the Department and the remaining 10% is shared out with the Town Councils. A sum of €81,000 is provided for Service Support Costs which includes salaries of staff working in the Homeless Information Office who play a huge role in managing the homeless. A sum of €20,000 is allocated for Technical and Administrative Support. These costs relate to the delivery of the various capital housing programmes in the county. He then referred members to Page 33 of the Manager's Report, where details of the RAS (Rental Accommodation Scheme) are set out. A total sum of €1.7m is provided for this programme, which represents a huge increase on the sum provided

in 2007. He stated that the roll out of the RAS Scheme commenced in Kerry in June 2006. Kerry County Council administers the Scheme on behalf of the four Kerry Local Authorities. The Scheme applies to people who are receiving rent supplement for more than 18 months, and who are in need of long-term housing. This scheme will provide additional good quality rented accommodation for people receiving rent supplement from the Department of Social & Family Affairs via the Community Welfare Scheme. The Scheme involves the Local Authority sourcing accommodation, transferring persons with a long-term housing need to the Local Authority, entering contractual agreements with Landlords, arranging rent payment, and recoups from the Department. To-date officials in the RAS unit have carried out over 400 home visits to rent supplement recipients in the county. Kerry County Council has at this stage transferred 176 clients to RAS, of which 21 were in voluntary housing accommodation. The total private transfers in Kerry to-date i.e. 155, represents 6.2% of all the national transfers which is indicative of the excellent progress being made in the roll out of the scheme in the county. He pointed out that this service will be cost neutral. A sum of €1.225m is provided for Loan Interest and Other Charges and this sum will be recouped by those who are repaying loans. He referred members to the end of Page 34 and the top of Page 35 of the Manager's Report where details of the Housing Adaptation Grants Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability are set out. A sum of €3.2m is provided of which €2.2m is in respect of the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme and a sum of €1m for the Essential Repairs Grant Scheme and their replacement schemes. There has been phenomenal growth in the demand for these schemes. He added that the transfer of the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme will have serious implications for the Council. He referred members to Page 26 of the Manager's Report where details of progress under the Voluntary Housing Scheme are set out. A sum of €844,000 has been provided for this scheme and this covers the cost of technical and administrative staff engaged in administering this Scheme. This sum also includes recoupable maintenance charges payable to voluntary housing bodies. There is also provision for the sum of €755,000 for loan charges which are recoupable.

Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing, Community and Enterprise, informed the meeting that the Council must constantly look at new and innovative ways of providing housing. The number of housing units completed in the county last year was at an all time high. Housing is provided through the purchase of houses, through the provision of housing under Part V and through the housing construction programme. Serious efforts have been made to improve various services within the Housing Department. The length of time it takes to repair a vacant house has been reduced from 33 weeks to 11 weeks and staff in the Housing Department are, at all times, conscious of the need to protect the Council's investment in property. The Housing Programme covers a wide range of services from social support to homeless services. The number of applications for grants under the various schemes has increased enormously and it has been the experience that when grants are allocated they are not being taken up as it has been very difficult to get contractors to carry out the works. Under the Housing Capital Programme 130 housing units are commenced each year with 524 housing units being completed in the past three years. A sum of €4m was used from internal capital receipts for the replacement of windows and doors and estate regeneration together with the provision of public lighting in local authority estates. This programme is very much dependent on tenants purchasing their houses and this expenditure must be done in a sustainable manner. To-date 49 estates have been

targeted. The availability of land for housing is an ongoing challenge for the Housing Department and every effort is made to acquire land throughout the county. Under Part V of the planning legislation the Council has adopted a policy of accepting housing units only. Overall to-date a total of 76 dwellings have been completed which developers have agreed to make available for social and affordable housing to meet their obligations under Part V. A further 64 dwellings are currently under construction which developers have also committed to make available throughout the coming year. He added that with the adoption of a large number of local area plans this will see an increase in the number of housing units becoming available to the Council. He referred members to Page 24 of the Budget Report where details of the Affordable Housing Scheme are set out. Under the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme a scheme of ten houses is currently under construction on Council owned land in Ardfert. A further five affordable dwellings are underway in Ballyheigue. Another scheme of nine dwellings is planned to commence shortly in Kenmare. He added that his Department will be making every effort to encourage a greater uptake of this scheme.

Mr. Breen informed the meeting that there are 1,013 approved housing applicants who have applied to Kerry County Council as having a need for local authority housing or other accommodation. These applicants are seeking to be housed by the Council in 44 towns and villages throughout the county. Each housing authority has recently been requested by the Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal, under Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988, to undertake an assessment of need for local authority housing accommodation as at 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2008. The result of the needs assessment will provide us with an up to-date position on need that will enable the Council to plan future investment programmes particularly in relation to location, scheme sizes and tenure types. Through a combination of local authority housing completions and the filling of casual vacancies the Housing Department provided homes to 742 qualified households in the first four years of the Social and Affordable Housing Action Plan 2004 – 2008. He emphasised the importance of the Voluntary Housing Scheme in the provision of housing in the county. Four schemes were completed in 2007 with a total of 65 housing units being provided. Eight schemes are currently under construction and these will result in the provision of 101 housing units. He referred to the comprehensive work programme undertaken by the Housing SPC in 2007 and said that he wished to record his appreciation to the members of the SPC for their commitment to this work programme. He then referred to the maintenance and improvement of local authority housing units and said that the present rental stock amounts to 2,231 properties which also includes 93 properties which are currently vacant. New procedures have been established to deal with housing repairs and a new Tenant's Handbook has been launched which sets out the obligations of tenants. These have brought about substantial improvements in ensuring that houses and estates are kept tidy. Provision is made in the Budget for the continued employment of a Housing Liaison Officer who, since taking up his position, has helped in the establishment of thirty four Resident Committees. He informed the meeting that the Council offers a variety of payment methods to facilitate and help its tenants. The most recent options made available are Bill Pay which was introduced early in 2005 and Direct Debit which was introduced in March 2007. A large number of tenants have opted for these payment methods. He then outlined the other payment methods available to tenants. Mr. Breen said that the close monitoring of arrears and early intervention continues to be a priority. In particular all new tenants are being

monitored to reduce the risk of arrears accruing on their accounts and advice is provided for tenants in relation to financial management to reduce risk of future difficulties with regard to payment. Tenants are advised that if their circumstances change they should contact the Housing Department immediately.

Mr. Breen then referred to the Homeless Service provided in the county and said that there is no one sleeping on the streets in Kerry and the Homeless Resource Centre is very busy. He referred to the Rental Accommodation Scheme and said that many of our tenants will end up in good quality accommodation as a result of this scheme. Most of the efforts have been concentrated on the Tralee area but it is now intended to roll it out to all other parts of the county. He referred to the loans being repaid by borrowers and said that many of these are paying a very high interest rate and they are constantly encouraged to redeem their loans. He referred to the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme which is scheduled to be transferred to local authorities and said that the local authority will have to fund 20% of this Scheme and also provide the staff for the administration of the scheme. Not all grants are taken up by applicants as they have experienced difficulties in getting contractors to carry out the work. He informed members that a new income test has been applied to the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme and all applications must go through an extensive evaluation. In conclusion he thanked members for their support for this programme and he thanked the tenants of local authority houses for the manner in which they maintain their houses. Finally he thanked all the staff of the Housing Department for their dedication to the provision of an excellent service.

All members complimented Mr. Breen and his staff on the excellent work carried out by his Department.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae thanked Mr. Breen for the detailed, wide ranging report which covers all aspects of the service and said that he was pleased to be a member of the Housing SPC. He thanked the Housing Department for the repairs carried out to local authority houses including the replacement of windows and doors, septic tanks, cookers etc and said that this has made a tremendous difference to many tenants lives. He also commended the Housing Department for their work on housing estates especially in Kilgarvan and he requested that attention now be given to the housing estates in Currow. He added that septic tanks need to be regularly emptied and he requested that this work be prioritised. He welcomed plans to open a hostel for the homeless in Killarney in 2008 and said that this would be very welcome. He then referred to the Rental Accommodation Scheme and said that certain applicants cannot avail of Rent Supplement because they have full time employment. He suggested that the assessment of applicants for this scheme should be based on income rather than the number of hours they work. In conclusion Cllr. D. Healy Rae called for the provision of additional affordable houses.

Cllr. J. Brassil referred to the provision of housing under Part V, in particular, having regard to the downturn in the number of houses being constructed and he asked if a developer constructs five houses must he provide 20% to the Council at an agreed cost? If the cost is greater than normal would the Council still opt to take the house and he would support this option. He welcomed the turnkey initiative in Ballyheigue which should be completed by early summer and said that this scheme has taken less than 12 months to complete. Of the total budget for housing he asked what

percentage was spent on staff and administration and does this compare favourably with other departments. He welcomed the initiative to encourage the regeneration of estates and he requested that consideration be given to the painting of the backs of houses. If they are not painted it reflects poorly on estates and tenants should be encouraged to paint them or alternatively the Council could subsidise the cost of the paint.

Cllr. M. Gleeson said that countywide there are three halting sites and 82% of the capacity is provided in Killarney. He asked why there was not a wider dispersal of sites throughout the county. He referred to the new Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability and said that he hoped that the Department would be sympathetic and give retrospective approval to those who installed fittings at the end of 2007. He asked if the Council had a role in determining rents in CLUID housing estates. He referred to the maintenance of housing estates and said that for years they were neglected and the appearance of a housing estate has a social impact on life in the estate. Estates built forty years ago had an emphasis on housing rather than on the social aspect of tenants lives and he hoped that the regeneration project would help to address this. He welcomed proposals to provide a homeless hostel in Killarney in 2008. He added that he believed that all houses in the town council area should be under the control of the Town Council. He pointed out that all houses rented to tenants by Killarney Town Council receive an annual chimney sweep but this does not happen in houses owned by the County Council in the town.

Cllr. J. O'Connor referred to housing provided under Part V and asked if a large number of these houses became available would funding be a problem. He referred to the carrying out of works under the Essential Repairs Scheme and the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme and said that many applicants have experienced difficulties in getting contractors to carry out the works and this must be addressed. He suggested that the Council provide a dedicated team to carry out these works. He called on the Council to take in charge private housing estates. He referred to the funding for the homeless service which he said is an increase of 30% on 2007 and he asked if this increase is justified. He welcomed the expansion of the RAS scheme to all parts of the county and requested that it be applied in the Killorglin area as soon as possible.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue said that he could not compliment the Housing Department sufficiently for the excellent work they are doing with voluntary housing organisations. Caherciveen Social Services delivered nine housing units for returning emigrants recently but only for the guidance of Kerry County Council this project would not have progressed and he wished to acknowledge this. At present Kerry County Council cannot process applications for housing from applicants who are not living in their administrative area. The housing provided in Caherciveen will facilitate returning emigrants from all parts of the county who wish to apply for local authority housing. It is important that our emigrant population are treated fairly. They went to England and sent home money when the economy was not doing very well. Many of these are now elderly and frail and we have a duty to repay them. He then referred to the processing of applications for single rural cottages and said that they are taking far too long to process and he called for a substantial improvement in the length of time it takes to process these applications. He informed the meeting that in some estates there are problems with disruptive tenants and, while the vast majority

of tenants are law abiding, in some estates one or two tenants are making life miserable for other tenants. It is time to get tough with these and to make an example of them. Consideration should be given to evicting them, if necessary.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald welcomed the allocation for the homeless service together with all other allocations for the housing programme. He added that there are 1,013 qualified applicants on our housing waiting list yet just 132 housing starts are approved each year. It is important that the allocation for the next five years is increased in an effort to meet current demands. He referred to the RAS Scheme and asked if there is a cap on funding for this scheme and does it affect the number of starts permitted. He asked what arrears were outstanding. He referred to the allocation of €50,000 for estate maintenance and said that it is important to support local voluntary groups and he PROPOSED that this funding would be doubled from internal capital receipts. Landscaping of estates should also be funded and he requested that this would be considered. He referred to the 93 vacant houses and asked how many of these are ready for re-letting.

Cllr. M. Connor Scarteen welcomed the housing now becoming available under Part V and he asked if houses become available when the entire development is completed. He added that some houses being constructed by private developers cost in excess of €1m and he said that he presumed that the Council would accept payment from the developer in this instance. He asked if houses provided by the Cluid Housing Association are for rent only or could they be purchased. In conclusion he thanked Mr. Breen and his staff for their support in progressing the voluntary housing project in Kenmare.

Cllr. B. Cronin said that he wished to put on record that the manner in which staff deal with applicants and members is excellent. He also commended the work being carried out in the repair of local authority houses and requested that these works be completed as soon as possible. He welcomed the RAS Scheme and asked if the Council monitor the quality of the housing units being provided under this scheme. He welcomed proposals to provide a homeless centre in Killarney in 2008. He asked if land was available in the Killarney Electoral Area to provide affordable housing and were there many applicants for this scheme in Killarney. Excellent work has been done by residents associations throughout the county and this has been encouraged by Sean McCarthy, Liaison Officer, who has assisted in the setting up of many resident associations in particular in Park View Estate in Currow. He added that the Council owns the area opposite the national school and he requested them to finalise works on it early in the New Year. He then referred to Parkmore Estate and said that the residents have issues regarding the service tank for this estate. He PROPOSED that this system be modernised. He also requested that the parking in that estate be reviewed after 6pm when parking is chaotic and he asked that the parking area would be extended as there is ample space available. He commended the various voluntary bodies throughout the county who are providing housing under the Voluntary Housing Scheme and also the Housing Department for the assistance given to these groups. He complimented the Mercy Order for providing land for voluntary housing in Killarney. The value of this land is immense and gratitude must be extended to the Mercy Order for their generosity. He referred to the large number of housing applicants on the housing waiting list and asked if an applicant is allocated a house and refuses it do they remain a priority or do they drop to the bottom of the

housing list. He welcomed the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and also the allocation for the Essential Repair Grants Scheme but expressed his disappointment that local authorities will now have to fund 20% of the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and said that this is unacceptable. He added that many grant applicants had extreme difficulty in getting contractors to carry out works and he hoped that this situation would improve.

Cllr. R. Beasley referred to the Respond voluntary housing project in Ballybunion and said that the people who moved into their houses have been treated badly by this organisation. Thanks to Kerry County Council this scheme is now getting the attention it deserves. He complimented the resident associations in Ballybunion for the maintenance of their estates and he requested that additional funding be provided to them. He asked when would additional local authority housing be provided in Ballybunion.

Cllr. L. Purtill welcomed the eight houses allocated in Ballylongford last September which have enhanced the area. He added that vacant houses can become centres of anti-social behaviour and he asked that vacant houses be repaired and re-let as soon as possible.

Cllr. T. Buckley expressed concern at the huge increase in the number of housing applicants on the waiting list. He also expressed concern at the number of grants allocated under the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme which were not taken up due to the difficulty the applicants experience in getting contractors to carry out the works. He was particularly concerned about the elderly and requested that every assistance be given to them by the Housing Department.

Cllr. M. Cahill said that everyone can be proud of the housing service provided by Kerry County Council. He referred to the housing waiting list which has increased substantially and said that there has been great pressure on it with the influx of non-nationals. He welcomed the integration of non-nationals into our communities. He referred to the acquisition of land in Glenbeigh which has not yet been developed and said that there is a need to acquire more land. It is noticeable in recent times that the number of houses coming on the market is increasing and he encouraged the Council to consider acquiring some of these houses where the price is reasonable. He suggested that the provision of community facilities in Council estates should be considered and he welcomed the fact that this is being debated. Two deputations were received at recent area meetings from Banshagh Residents and he hoped that community facilities would be provided for them in 2008 when the new estate in Ardmoniel will commence. He referred to the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and said that many smaller jobs were successfully completed under this scheme for the more vulnerable in our society. He was concerned that this scheme would now be means tested and he asked how would individuals, who were ill in hospital, be means tested. He stressed the need to provide adequate parking in Council estates and he added that there were complaints from the residents in the Sunhill, Killorglin regarding illegally parked caravans. He also referred to Rossbeigh and called on the Council to work closely with the Gardaí to ensure there would not be a repetition in 2008 of what happened in 2007.

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald said that in the Dingle area there are 180 housing applicants on the housing list, fifty of whom are single applicants. He urged the Council to facilitate them in the coming year and to encourage turn-key developments. He referred to the Affordable Housing Scheme and said that many people in good jobs cannot afford housing but this scheme allows them the opportunity to acquire a home. He requested that land be acquired for housing in Castlegregory as the Council does not have a land bank there. There is a young population in Castlegregory and he called for the carrying out of a survey to establish how many young people require housing there. He complimented the Council on the maintenance of green areas and called on the Housing Department to ensure that Council housing estates are made as attractive as possible. He referred to the processing of applications for single rural cottages and said that the time from receipt of the application until construction commences is far too long. In Ventry, one applicant was approved five years ago and the house is not yet built. He understood that much of the delay was with planning. He then referred to unauthorised tenants who move in with their friends in local authority houses and said that this matter was brought to his attention recently as one such person was dealing in drugs from a Council house in Dingle. He asked if anyone was policing this.

Cllr. P. Leahy expressed his disappointment that there are in excess of 1,000 applicants on the approved housing waiting list. He also referred to the construction of single rural cottages and said that very few are being constructed each year and he asked why this was the case. He added that the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme and the Essential Repair Grant Scheme are very important schemes and he was disappointed that 20% of funding for these schemes must be provided by the local authority. In conclusion, he said that the Social and Affordable Housing Scheme is an excellent scheme.

Cllr. D. Kiely referred to housing provided under Part V and said that he thought that more housing should have become available under this provision. He expressed concern that the number on the housing waiting list is increasing each year. He requested that applicants be encouraged to opt for the Affordable Housing Scheme in an effort to reduce the numbers on the waiting list.

Cllr. C. Miller said that as Chair of the Housing SPC he wanted to pay tribute to Mr. John Breen and the staff of the Housing Department on the excellent service they provide. He added that there is a problem in local authority estates with disruptive tenants and there is one or two in each estate that are causing difficulties for other tenants. This is not fair on other tenants and he called on the Housing Department to address this issue. Housing must also be provided for older single men and women. Cluid Housing Association has provided accommodation for some older men and women but a large number still need to be catered for.

Cllr. A. McEllistram referred to the allocation of €3.2m. for the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and the People with a Disability and asked if this allocation was adequate. A number of older people who have been awarded grants have had difficulty in getting builders with C2 Certs to carry out minor works. She requested that a new list of contractors available to carry out these works be drawn up by the Housing Department and that this list would be provided to all applicants who are awarded grants. She expressed concern at the large number of vacant houses and

urged that the time it takes to repair a vacant house be reduced substantially. She complimented the staff in the Housing Department on the manner in which they deal with hardship cases and said they have demonstrated a very caring attitude.

Cllr. B. MacGearailt said that there are a large number of single people on the housing waiting list in Dingle. There are also a number of emigrants in England who would like to come home. He called for a more pro-active approach to be taken by the Council in dealing with emigrants who require housing. Some of these are in their forties and fifties and are disabled yet their age seems to come against them. He referred to a housing applicant in Ceann Trá who applied for a single rural cottage and said they were waiting for approval for a long time and then the application was refused by planning. He requested that the time it takes to process an application for a single rural cottage would be reduced.

Cllr. M. O'Shea asked that in view of the land that has been zoned in villages that the Housing Department would be more pro-active in acquiring land for social housing. There has been a tendency to force people into towns such as Dingle but he believed that land should be acquired in villages such as Castlemaine and Castlegregory and this would also help the local economy. He asked if there is a large take up on the provision of housing under Part V and suggested that the Department should bend the rules and accept community initiatives in lieu of housing.

Mr. J. Breen thanked the members for the compliments they paid to the staff of the Housing Department. He informed the meeting that when an application for a single rural cottage is received the application must go through the same planning process as any other planning application. On occasion the applicant is not satisfied with the reply received from planning. He advised members that if they had particular cases that they were concerned about they should discuss them with him. He pointed out, however, that the Housing Department cannot contravene the County Development Plan. He then referred to Part V and said that any development of four houses or more must comply with Part V and added that large houses are not of particular use to the housing authority. He pointed out that every developer must have a pre-planning meeting at which time they are reminded of their duty under Part V. They must engage with the local authority in an effort to reach agreement and this must be done at the pre-planning stage. His Department will undertake the painting of local authority houses as a once off measure. He informed members that the Housing Department does not have a role in the rent scheme of voluntary housing schemes but national guidelines apply. The Housing Department encourages direct sales under Part V and no cost then accrues to the Council. He referred to the issue of disruptive tenants and said that his Department has two applications for Exclusion Orders ready to go through the Courts but evidence of the disruptive behaviour must be presented in court. He referred to the RAS Scheme and said that it is self financing and there is no cap on the amount that can be spent on it. He then referred to the query on rent arrears and said that there is €170,000 outstanding in rent arrears. In relation to vacant houses he said that of the 96 that are vacant 28 are ready for re-letting and 18 are presently being repaired. The time it takes to repair a house before re-letting has been reduced considerably. There has been great demand for low cost sites and while a number have been sold houses have not been constructed on all of them and these are being pursued. He added that all rental properties are monitored under the RAS Scheme.

Mr. Breen informed the meeting that land is available in Deerpark, Killarney under the Affordable Housing Scheme. He undertook to review the position regarding the septic tank at Parkmore, Currow. He referred to the query by Cllr. Cronin that if an applicant refuses a house what is the position and he informed members that each case is considered on its merits. He informed the meeting that the Council has substantial local authority housing in Ballybunion and Respond Housing Association is building a further twenty houses there. In some instances community facilities are being provided and they are being designed to ensure they can be converted back to a house in the event of them reverting to the local authority. He referred to the Ardmoniel housing development and said that this energy design is presently with the Department for approval. He referred to unauthorised tenants and said that this has become a major issue and there is an obligation on a tenant to notify the Housing Department when anyone moves into a local authority house. Approximately six to eight single rural cottages are built each year and this demand appears to be steady.

The Mayor informed the meeting that it was 1.55pm and the meeting would adjourn for lunch until 3pm.

The meeting resumed at 3.10pm.

### **Division B Road Transport and Safety**

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, referred members to Pages 37 – 56 of the Manager's Report and Pages 5 – 7 of the Budget Tables for details on this Division. The proposed expenditure on this Division is €47m which is just over one third of the entire revenue budget. The projected income is €32.9m and this includes road grants from the National Roads Authority and the Department of Transport and these grants determine the level of works to be undertaken. A sum of €17m is committed from own resources. He referred members to Page 44 of the Manager's Report where details of the expenditure of this €17m are set out. A sum of €4.839m is provided for the Non-National Road Maintenance Programme and this is an increase of over 11% on 2007 in recognition of the improved street cleaning service and increased loan charges for the coastal protection works at Inch. Details of the Capital Programme are set out on Pages 5 – 9 in the Schedule at the back of the Manager's Report. The proposed capital expenditure for this division is €33.2m which is 21% of the overall capital budget for 2008. €29m of this will be funded through grant aid and €4.3m will be funded by way of local contribution. Details of the capital programme are set out on Pages 39 – 43 of the Manager's Report. He pointed out that while grant aid is received for road works no funding is received for support services to cover engineering or administrative staff costs. In the new format, there is a requirement to apportion salaries of the people engaged in this work to the Division and the apportionment of the cost of area staff is also included. He then referred members to Page 54 of the Manager's Report where details of the Road Safety Promotion/Education are set out. A Road Safety Education Officer was appointed in 2007 following a recommendation from the members of the Transport SPC. The Road Safety Information Officer operates a programme of road safety awareness campaigns which includes promotion of road safety through the local media and in schools, organisation of local road safety campaigns, operation of the Junior School Warden Scheme, working with adult School Wardens and assisting in the

implementation of the work programme of the Kerry Road Safety Committee. He referred members to the end of Page 55 of the Manager's Report where details of the cost for the Support to the Roads Capital Programme are set out. A sum of €684,000 is provided and this figure includes the technical and administrative costs associated with the Capital Account which the Council is unable to recoup from any other Department or agency. He added that the costs associated with the Castleisland NRA office are fully funded by the NRA.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads, Transportation and Safety, said that the Roads Programme is dependent on grant aid from the Department of Transport and the NRA and he was informed that some grant aid will be reduced in 2008 in particular for national secondary roads. He referred members to Pages 39 – 43 of the Manager's Report for details of the Capital Programme and Pages 5 – 9 in the Schedule where details of the proposed major schemes are set out. In relation to the Castleisland By-Pass he informed the meeting that consultant engineers have been appointed to work on contract documents for this project which will be constructed through the design/build process and it is anticipated that it will proceed to construction towards the end of 2008 with completion in 2009. He then referred to the Tralee By-Pass and the Tralee to Bealagrillagh Road Improvement Scheme and said the extension of this scheme required a variation to the County Development Plan and a Strategic Environmental Assessment. A Screening Report is being prepared in accordance with SEA Directive in advance of CPO publication. The CPO/EIS is scheduled for publication in March 2008. In relation to the Farranfore to Killarney road he stated that the NRA Peer Review of the scheme was held in November 2007 and a report in this regard will issue from the NRA in 2008. He anticipated that this project would be carried out on a phased basis. He informed the meeting that under the National Primary Routes Pavement and Minor Improvements Scheme a submission was made for funding to complete the N22. In relation to the National Secondary routes and the N69 Listowel By-Pass he informed the meeting that a feasibility report was completed and approved by the NRA in October 2006. The first public consultation was held in June 2007 while the constraints report including the environmental report was completed and approved by the NRA in October 2007.

Mr. O'Sullivan then referred to the N70 Coolnaharrigle Lower – Coolroe Lower Road Improvement Scheme and said that subject to the availability of the necessary funding this scheme could proceed to the land acquisition phase in 2008. He referred to the National Secondary Routes Pavement and Minor Improvements Programme and said that there are 336km of national secondary routes in Kerry many of which are in poor condition. In 2007 approximately €10.5m was spent on improvement works. This sum allowed for the improvement of approximately 25km or 7.5% of the network. A capital programme has been drawn up for the next three years for improvements to national primary and national secondary roads at a total cost of €190m but all these works are grant aided by the NRA and the Department of Transport and progress will depend on the availability of funding from these sources. He referred members to Pages 44 – 46 of the Budget Report where details of the revenue programme are set out. Any works on national primary or national secondary roads will be funded by the NRA and he hoped that the allocation in 2008 would be similar to that received in 2007. Details of the Maintenance and Improvement Programme for Regional Roads are set out on Page 48 of the Budget Report. He informed members that an allocation of €25,000 was received in 2007 under the Regional Roads Surface Dressing

Programme and this was similar to the 2006 allocation and he hoped that a similar level of grant aid will be available in 2008. A sum of €3.924m is provided under the Regional Roads Surface Restoration/Road Restoration/Overlay Programme. A three year programme was approved in 2007 when a grant of €2.4m was received and he hoped that a similar level of grant aid would be received in 2008. This would allow for the improvement of 16km of the regional network. A sum of €150,000 is provided for bridge maintenance on regional roads. He stated that there are 278 bridge structures on the regional road network to be maintained out of this allocation. A sum of €150,000 was allocated in 2007 and it is anticipated that a similar level of funding will be received in 2008. A sum of €1.433m is provided for the Regional Roads General Maintenance Works. The level of funding available under this programme is anticipated to be €1.3m. €700,000 is provided by the Department of Transport as a Discretionary Maintenance Grant. The balance is provided from Kerry County Council's own resources. A sum of €5.106m is provided for Regional Roads – General Improvement Works. In 2007 Kerry County Council received €5.635m from the Department of Transport for specific improvement works on the following regional roads under the Specific Improvement Grants Scheme:-

- R556/551 Tralee – Ballybunion – Dale Road
- R561 Castlemaine – Annascaul Road
- R563 Fossa – Milltown Road and Fossa – Faha Road
- R569 Poulgorm Bridge to Kilgarvan Road
- R555 Listowel – Abbeyfeale Road
- R559 Sleah Head Road

This programme also provided for the reconstruction of the following bridges:- Owroe Bridge, Lissatinnig Bridge, Meanus Bridge and Gaddagh Bridge. A programme of works totalling €5.106m for 2008 has been prepared and submitted to the Department of Transport for approval. However, indications suggest that a sum of €5.1m will not be allocated in 2008.

Mr. O'Sullivan referred members to Page 50 of the Manager's Report for details of the Maintenance and Improvement Programme for Local Roads. There are 3,826km of local roads in the county and funding for this programme is provided by the Department of Transport and Kerry County Council's own resources provision. A sum of €75,000 is provided for Surface Dressing of Local Roads, while a sum of €15.693m is provided for Surface Restoration/Road Reconstruction/Overlay of Local Roads. In 2007 a grant of €7.873m was received under the Restoration Improvement Grant for local roads. If the adopted programme is fully fund aided by the Department of Transport, Kerry County Council expects an allocation of €8.202m. In 2008, this allocation would allow the improvement of 95km of the local road network. A sum of €3.432m is provided for the General Maintenance Works on Local Roads. Of this, €2.789m is provided from the Council's own resources. A sum of €53,000 is expected to be provided by the Department of Transport as a Discretionary Maintenance Grant. This service area includes footpaths, pedestrian crossings, signage and drainage works. In order to provide an acceptable level of service in the Street Cleaning of 60 conurbations countywide, a provision has been set aside in this programme. The balance of the funding is dedicated to Grass Cutting and the operation of the Roads Network Emergency On-Call System. This is a service area which always has a funding pressure, due to its extensive nature and it has received a worthwhile increase for the coming year from own resources. Kerry County Council administers the Local Improvements Scheme programme on behalf of the Department

of Transport. This scheme is for the upgrading of private roads which meet selection criteria and are part funded by the local community. In 2007 an allocation of €3.121m was received and this enabled the council to complete the existing priority list. 120 schemes including 25 under the CLÁR Programme were completed in 2007. An additional 9 schemes were carried out under the Hardship and Emergency Fund giving a total of 129 schemes. In October 2007 applicants were invited to submit new documentation to allow the Road Section compile a new prioritised Local Improvement Scheme list and these applications are currently being assessed. If a similar level of funding is received from the Department of Transport it is envisaged that the programme will be completed in a three to four year time frame. A sum of €50,000 is provided for Bridge Maintenance on Local Roads and this funding is provided from own resources. There are approximately 2,500 bridge structures on the local road network countywide. This represents a large amount of public infrastructure which receives no funding from Government. In 2007 the expenditure on street cleaning was €1.2m part of which was funded by the Environment Department. A sum of €65,000 is provided for improvements to public lighting. This is to allow for the continuation of the programme of erecting new lights as identified in the prioritised Public Lighting Programme. It is intended to provide additional lights in An Daingean, Muiríoch, Listowel and Cromane. The energy, maintenance costs and repairs costs in 2008 are estimated to be €760,000, which is an increase of €15,000 on the 2007 allocation and reflects increases in energy and maintenance charges to the Council. A sum of €30,000 is provided for Traffic Management and this provides for the preparation of Traffic Management Plans. The preparation of a Traffic Impact Survey on the proposed Austin Stack Development and relocation of Austin Stack Park to the Racecourse at Ballybeggan Park will be required and it is intended that the costs associated with this will be recovered from the developers through a special development contribution.

Mr. O'Sullivan informed members that a sum of €85,500 is provided under the Low Cost Remedial Measures Scheme. This is the sum that was provided by the Department of Transport in 2007 and it is anticipated that a similar level of funding will be forthcoming in 2008. He referred to the Road Safety Promotion/Education Programme and said that while the number of fatalities on our roads has reduced the level is still unacceptable. He informed the meeting that on the 19<sup>th</sup> February the AXA Road Safety Road Show would be coming to the county. This programme targets 16 – 20 year olds and it is expected that large numbers will attend. A sum of €93,000 is provided for Parking Enforcement. This allocation is provided each year for the year round operation of the Traffic Warden Service in Caherciveen, Castleisland, An Daingean, Kenmare and Killorglin and in Ballybunion for the summer months. The new I.T. system put in place is now fully operational and since September 2007 Traffic Wardens are operating the handheld system. Approximately, 3,500 Fixed Charge Notices for parking offences were issued in 2007. He added that when the road grant allocations are announced he would revert to members at Area Meetings to brief them and a Special Roads Meeting would be held probably in March. The Transport SPC met on two occasions in 2007 and they considered a range of issues including Car Park Bye-Laws, Road Safety Strategy and the development of Relief Roads in towns. He thanked the members for their support in 2007 and also the staff in his Department for their commitment in delivering the Roads Programme.

All members complimented the staff of the Roads Department including the outdoor workers and the area engineers on their work in implementing the Roads Programme each year.

Cllr. M. O'Shea said that roads in the county have improved hugely in the past few years and in particular the N86 from Blennerville to Dingle and also the N70. However, the R563 out of Milltown is one of the worst regional roads in the county. Kerry County Council allocated €1m for improvements to this road in 2007 but the works could not be carried out because the new sewerage scheme was not completed. The condition of this road is appalling and the general public cannot be expected to tolerate it much longer. He called for the completion of the sewerage scheme as soon as possible and the carrying out of the improvement works to this road. He commended the Government on the funding provided for the Local Improvement Scheme and said that it is a very beneficial scheme to local communities. However, people living in cul-de-sac roads do not qualify for this scheme and he called on the Council to lobby the Department to allow residents living on cul-de-sac roads to avail of this scheme. In conclusion he said that when councillors allocate funding for public lights it takes 2 to 3 years before the light is provided and this level of service is unacceptable from the ESB.

Cllr. D. Kiely said that many roads in the county have been improved greatly in recent years and he called on all councillors to attend the AXA Road Safety Road Show. He called for a change in the criteria for the Local Improvement Scheme as, in many instances, there is only one farmer using the road and for this reason the road does not qualify for funding under this scheme.

Cllr. M. Gleeson acknowledged the progress in improving roads in the county over the past 7 or 8 years and said that there have been tremendous changes and improvements. Roads are vitally important to the economic and social well being of the county. He expressed his disappointment that it is possible that there will be a reduction in the allocation for improvements to national secondary roads in 2008. This will have serious implications for roads in County Kerry as many national secondary roads need to be upgraded, in particular, the Lissivigeen to Rathmore Road. He added that he hoped that there would not be undue demands by health and safety regulations on the Budget in 2008 and he hoped reasonableness would prevail. He stated that many roads and footpaths in urban areas are the responsibility of the County Council and many people are unaware of this. He called for the carrying out of improvements to the Muckross Road and said that tourists would leave Killarney if these works are not carried out. He expressed his disappointment at the level of funding for improvements to footpaths and said that many footpaths in the Killarney area need improvements. Footpaths are used by people with disabilities and everything possible should be done, in an urban setting, to ensure that they are brought up to a reasonable standard and that they are safe for people with disabilities. He asked what provision is being made on national primary and national secondary roads for pedestrians and cyclists. Government Departments are asking motorists to leave the car at home and to walk or cycle but if provision is not made for cyclists and pedestrians this will not be possible. The Killarney outer relief road is badly needed and has been promised for many years and he understood that the funding for this road was withdrawn to provide interurban roads. He referred to the allocation of €150,000 for improvements to bridges on local roads and said that it is totally

inadequate. The vast majority of this would be required to improve Gortacoosh Bridge which is disintegrating. He called for the provision of a roundabout at Lissivigeen Cross as a matter of extreme urgency in 2008 and also for the provision of a roundabout on the eastern end of Rathmore.

Cllr. B. Cronin referred to the Farranfore to Lissivigeen Road and asked when would work commence on this road. He expressed disappointment that this project has not been funded over the last number of years. He also expressed his disappointment that there has been no progress in improving the junction in Farranfore with the Currow and Firies roads. This is extremely dangerous and he could not understand how the NRA did not acknowledge this as there was a fatality there in recent times and the Coroner commented on this dangerous junction. Motorists accessing the N22 from Madam's Hill are taking their lives in their hands on a daily basis. He believed there was adequate room for a roundabout at this location which would make it much safer. He pointed out that a new roundabout is being provided on the By-Pass Road to facilitate the new swimming pool and industrial units yet a new roundabout is not being provided at the Madam's Hill Junction. He referred to the bridge between Coolick School and Buddahins and said that the road is cracked and there is a severe drop off the road. He called on the Director of Roads to ensure that this road is repaired as a matter of extreme urgency. He also referred to the Annablaha Bridge on the road to Gneeveguilla and said that it is very blind and motorists cannot see oncoming traffic. He welcomed the funding for the provision of public lighting and asked that lighting be provided at Currow village to the Parkmore Estate. He commended the Roads Department on the junction realignment works at Leamnaguilla and said that this is very successful. A tremendous amount of work has been done under the Local Improvement Scheme but he called for a change in the criteria for the Scheme. At present two landowners are required to use a road in order for the road to qualify and he suggested that this should be reduced to one landowner. He referred to the school flashing lights provided at the Two Mile School under Councillors Allocations and said that these are operated by solar panels. There appears to be some technical difficulty with them and he requested that this matter be resolved immediately. He commended the work carried out on footpaths at Farranfore and called for an extension of the footpath up Madam's Hill.

Cllr. M. Cahill referred to the Ring of Kerry Road between Mountain Stage and Caragh Bridge and said that it is probably the worse section of road in the county and needs urgent attention. Work on this road commenced 10 years ago and has not been completed. He called for this project to be progressed to the land acquisition stage in 2008. Many sons and daughters of landowners have been refused planning permission in this area for road safety reasons. He then referred to the Killarney/Killorglin Road and called for an extension of the footpath to West's Caravan Park. He requested that the Cromane/Killorglin Road be upgraded to regional status. He asked if a CPO has been initiated for Cromane.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae commended the staff in the Roads Department on the excellent quality of workmanship on all road works. He called for a continuation of funding for the road from Killarney to Lissivigeen and on to Shinnagh Cross. He referred to the bridge in Barraduff which he said is in a deplorable condition and said that he hoped it would be improved in 2008. He added that he hoped that no difficulties would be encountered in acquiring land for a new roundabout at Lissivigeen Cross. He

informed the meeting that he understood that the improvement to the road from Kerry to Cork will be delayed because of the discovery of snails in the area where the new road was to be located. It is vital that this road is improved and he called on the NRA to ensure that these works are carried out as speedily as possible. He also called for the provision of a Relief Road for Kenmare which is vital, as the town is clogged up with traffic during the tourism season. He also requested the Council to ensure that if funding is provided for it, no development is permitted along the route. He acknowledged that substantial improvements have been carried out to Regional Roads but said that the road from Morley's Bridge to Inchees urgently requires attention and also the road to Bantry. These are tourist routes and should get priority. The road from Kilgarvan to Bantry Hospital also needs funding. He emphasised the need to continue and expand the street cleaning programme as he said some villages are not swept on a regular basis. Every town and village should be swept at least once a week. He referred to the materials used in some road improvement works in 2007 and said that they were not satisfactory and resulted in a lot of tar damage to cars. Some improvement works are delayed, as Eircom are demanding exorbitant sums to remove poles to enable bends to be removed. He called on the Roads Department to enter into dialogue with Eircom with a view to resolving this issue. He also requested that when it is proposed to widen roads that discussions are entered into with landowners at an early date. He requested that funding be provided under the Low Cost Accident Safety Measure Scheme for works at Mick the Bridge's. It would be of great benefit at night if public lighting was provided and he requested that this be considered. Substantial improvements have been carried out through the Local Improvement Scheme and the Community Involvement Scheme. However, many Class 3 and cul-de-sac roads have been neglected and he called for the provision of adequate funding for improvements to these roads. He referred to the implementation of Chapter 8 and said that he hoped that a sensible attitude to its implementation could be adopted. He was not denying the importance of improving the safety of both workers and road users, while road works are being carried out. He called for an increase in Councillors Allocations to 40,000 for 2008. He requested that Kilgarvan Bridge be surveyed, as he felt it was not in a good condition and he also requested that Coomeen Bridge and the Clydagh Bridge would also be surveyed.

Cllr. T. Fitzgerald acknowledged that substantial funding has been provided for roads over the last number of years and this has resulted in improvements to the work network. However, it is important that the level of funding received in recent years is maintained. He welcomed the proposed commencement of the Castleisland By-Pass and he called for the immediate funding of the Tralee By-Pass Road, as it is vital for the economic wellbeing of Tralee. He emphasised the importance of the Public Lighting Programme and welcomed proposals to provide additional lights in 2008. He requested that additional funding be provided for pedestrian crossing. During his term as Mayor, he placed a lot of emphasis on road safety, as has the present Mayor. There were 14 fatalities on Kerry roads last year and this is unacceptable. It is vital to ensure that the roads around schools are safe. He called for the drawing up of a programme for improvements to bridges because many are too narrow for the volumes of traffic using them. He welcomed proposals to carry out a traffic safety plan and he asked if there was any proposal to provide a roundabout at the railway station following the developments on the John Joe Sheehy Road. In conclusion, he said that it is important that Councillors Allocations are kept in line not only with inflation but with overheads.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim welcomed the new Road Safety Education Officer who is doing a lot of work on road safety with schools. She added that it is important that priority would be given to reducing bottle necks in towns. She welcomed proposals to progress the Inner Relief Road for Tralee. She referred to the proposed Castleisland By-Pass and asked must additional land be purchased for it. She welcomed proposals to carryout a Traffic Management Plan for the area near the John Joe Sheehy Road. She called for the continuation of funding under the Specific Improvement Programme for a continuation of the works on the Dale Road. She also called for the provision of a footpath out the Cordal Road in Castleisland to Glebe Lodge as a number of the residents are in wheel chairs and they would like to access the town but it is too dangerous at present. In conclusion she called for an increase in Councillor's Allocations in 2008.

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald commended the Roads Department on the improvements to the road network throughout the county over the past number of years and said that potholes are almost eliminated. He pointed out that Annascaul Bridge is dangerous even though the road at either side is good. He requested that improvements be carried out to this bridge as soon as possible. A lot of improvements have taken place on the N86 but work is required on the section from Annascaul to Dingle. He also stated that the Camp Junction is very dangerous and he called on the Roads Department to improve it along the lines of the works carried out in Annascaul. He emphasised the importance of street cleaning to all the towns and villages and requested that this programme at least be maintained if not improved. He called for an expansion of the School Flashing Lights Programme and said that it is very beneficial. He referred to the Tralee/Dingle Road where a number of bridges have been improved, but said that a few walls are sticking out and are dangerous. Work at Lispole Bridge is on-going for a long time and there are only two men working at it. He asked if this was a contract job. He called for the carrying out of improvement works to the Clahane/Brandon Road and the up-grading of it to a Regional Road. He referred to the replacement of public lights where the lights are no longer working and said that the ESB are very slow to carry out these repairs and in fact many of the public lights in Annascaul have been out of order for a number of days.

Cllr. R. Beasley expressed his disappointment at the possible loss of €4m in grants for National Roads in 2008 and said that he hoped efforts would be made to ensure that this funding is not reduced. He called for the funding of a new bridge at Ballinagar in 2008 as this is causing severe hardship to local landowners. He also called for the carrying out of improvements to Purtill's Bridge in 2008. He welcomed the commencement of the Ballybunion Traffic Management Plan and he called for the black topping of the Main Street in Ballybunion before the summer. He also called for the provision of footpaths at Sandhill Road, where there are a number of housing estates, the library and the sports field. In Doon Bay there is a mother with two daughters in wheelchairs and an application has been submitted for improvement works under the Local Improvement Scheme. He requested that this road be improved under the Hardship and Emergency Fund in 2008.

Cllr. M. Connor-Scarteen called for the continuation of the works on the road from Moll's Gap to Lady's View and also that consideration be given to closing the road and bringing in large rock breaking machinery to ensure that this work is completed

as soon as possible. He also called for the provision of a Relief Road for Kenmare in 2008 by the Council and said if the Council is waiting for a developer to provide it, it will not happen in the foreseeable future. He called for the re-enforcing of the bridge at the entrance to the Black Valley because if it collapses, the people of the valley will be isolated. He called for the erection of notices on bridges which are not up to an acceptable standard, advising the motoring public that they are not suitable for heavy traffic. He called for the provision of public lighting at Poulgorm Bridge in the interest of road safety.

Cllr. J. Brassil also called for a continuation of the works at the Dale Road in 2008. He requested that prior to the finalising of the new list of roads to be improved under the Local Improvement Scheme that members would be consulted regarding roads that do not qualify. Over the past few years he had called for a programme of works to be drawn up whereby roads improved under the Community Involvement Scheme i.e. cul de sac roads, would be improved on an on-going basis. He requested that this programme would be drawn up in 2008. He asked what was the position regarding the implementation of Chapter 8 for 2008. He requested that coastal protection works would be carried out at an area near Ballyheigue Village which requires urgent attention. He requested that consideration be given to reviewing the procedure for the repair of potholes as he did not believe that the present system was working satisfactorily. He believed that a more durable material could be used and he requested that this procedure be reviewed. In conclusion, he asked what percentage of local roads is now up to an acceptable standard.

Cllr. P. McCarthy welcomed improvements to the road network in recent years and said that if the allocation for 2008 was the same as 2007 further substantial improvements could be carried out. He welcomed the proposed commencement of the Castleisland By-Pass by the end of 2008. He referred to small bridges on local roads and said that if these were cleaned out regularly it would solve flooding problems, in particular, bridges on a flat part of the road or at the end of a fall.

Cllr. J. O'Connor, asked in relation to the location of a pole, who owns the land on which it is located. The farming community are generous in allowing poles to be erected on their lands and in their ditches. However, when they want to build a house they are charged exorbitant sums by the company they facilitated to remove the pole. The provision of new public lights is taking far too long and he called on the Council to enter into immediate discussions with the ESB on this issue. He expressed concern at the proposed reduction in the funding for National Roads from €10m to €6m in 2008 and he called on the Mayor to lead a deputation to the NRA on this issue. He referred to the bridge over the River Laune in Killorglin and said that the last arch on Coffey's side has slipped and he requested that it get immediate attention. He also requested that the Mountain Stage section of the Ring of Kerry Road be improved in 2008. He referred to the works being carried out on the Ballyvourane Road in Milltown, which he understood was being carried out by a contractor, and said that the local community should be informed when this road will be re-opened. He requested that the members be informed of the cost of the implementation of Chapter 8 in 2008. He complimented the Roads Department on the street cleaning programme, which is an excellent service. He asked when an audit of traffic in Killorglin would be carried out.

Cllr. B. MacGearailt thanked Minister Eamon O’Cuiv for providing funding under the CLÁR Programme for improvements to roads and also the Government for providing funding for the Roads Programme. He emphasised the need to ensure that water is kept off the roads. He referred to a number of bridges which need improving including the one at Muireach and also Pound Road, Lispole and at The Bothair Fáda. He requested that improvements be carried out to these bridges as soon as possible.

Cllr. T. Buckley said that over the past few weeks, with the heavy rainfall there has been a lot of water on roads and this has resulted in a series of potholes developing. It is important that drains are kept open to ensure that water flows off the road. He requested that priority be given to the provision of a new bridge at Ballinagare in 2008 and said that he hoped emergency funding would be provided for it as the loss of the bridge is causing serious inconvenience to landowners who have land on either side of the river. He called for the preparation of a priority list for improvements to bridges.

Cllr. J. Sheahan called for the provision of a roundabout at Lissivigeen Cross in 2008. He referred to bridges and requested that improvements be carried out to Grady’s Bridge in the Black Valley. He thanked the Roads Department for the excellent work carried out on the footpath in Rathmore and also on the road in Shrone. He added that the roads in Kilcummin are in poor condition and he pleaded with the County Manager to take a hands on approach in this matter with a view to getting the works on the sewerage scheme completed and the roads improved.

The Mayor stated that the roads programme would be presented to members at a Special Roads Meeting and any outstanding queries could be answered at that stage.

Mr. C. O’Sullivan, Director of Roads & Transportation & Safety, informed members that many of the issues raised will be considered at the Special Roads Meeting when notification of grants has been received from the Department. The issue of street cleaning will be considered by the Transport SPC as he would like to see this programme enhanced. He undertook to raise the issue of the removal of poles with the ESB and also the provision of new public lights and length of time it is taking the ESB to provide them. Chapter 8 came into law on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008 and most major road works comply with it. However, it will have implications for smaller works. He referred to the Tralee By-Pass and access from it to Ballinorig and said that the NRA have given a commitment that they would review this. He referred to the coastal protection works carried out at Inch, at a total cost of almost €4m, and said that this is a matter of major concern to the Council. To-date a sum of over €1m only has been received by way of Government Funding for it and additional funding is being sought. He undertook to make representations to the Department regarding the qualifying criteria for Local Improvement Schemes but said that at present, his Department must abide by the Scheme as it exists. In conclusion he undertook to notify members of unsuccessful applications under the Local Improvement Scheme.

The meeting concluded at 5:30pm.

**Gerard O’Brien**  
A/SEO Corporate Affairs.

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**Mayor of Kerry**