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**MIONTUAIRISCÍ CRUINNITHE BHUISÉID COMHAIRLE CHONTAE
CHIARRAÍ, A THIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN
CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, DÉ LUAN, 11 EANAIR 2010.**

**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON MONDAY
11TH JANUARY 2010.**

PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR

Councillors/Comhairleoirí

R. Beasley	J. Brassil	T. Buckley
M. Cahill	P. Connor-Scarteen	B. Cronin
P.J. Donovan	J. Finucane	S. Fitzgerald
N. Foley	M. Gleeson	B. Griffin
D. Healy-Rae	M. Healy-Rae	P. Leahy
P. McCarthy	A. McEllistrim	M. Moloney
T. O'Brien	B. O'Connell	L. Purtill
J. Sheahan	A.J. Spring	

IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager	Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance
Mr. M. McMahon, Dir. of Planning	Mr. J. D. Flynn, Dir. of Corp. Serv.
Mr. G. MacNamara, A/Dir. of Roads	Mr. O. Ring, Dir of Water Serv.
Mr. J. Breen, Dir. of Housing	Ms. A. McAllen, Fin./Mgmt. Accountant
Mr. L. Quinlan, SEO Housing	Mr. G. O'Brien, Meetings Administrator
Ms. K. Moriarty, A/SEO Finance	Ms. J. McCarthy, SEO Planning
Ms. M. West, AO Roads	Mr. P. O'Shea, A/SEO Finance
Ms. K. Curtin, AO. Revenue	Ms. J. Brosnan, AO Housing
Mr. P. O'Connor, SSO Finance	Mr. C. Managan, SEE Water Services
Ms. J. Foley, AO Water Services	Mr. R. Tangney, ASO Finance
Mr. P. Corkery, Press Officer	Ms. B. Reidy, SSO. Corp. Services
Ms. D. Griffin, SO, Corp. Affairs	

APOLOGY

T. Ferris

The meeting commenced at 10.35am.

The Mayor, Cllr. B. O'Connell took the Chair.

The Mayor informed the meeting that members requested a discussion on the current icy weather and road conditions and it would be necessary to suspend Standing Orders to facilitate this debate.

Suspension of Standing Orders

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. J. Finucane, SECONDED by Cllr. M. Healy-Rae it was unanimously agreed to suspend Standing Orders to facilitate this debate.

Mr. G. MacNamara, A/Director of Roads then read the following report:

“Unprecedented Times; You are all aware that we are currently in the grip of a severe cold spell, the like of which has not been experienced in the County, or Country for in excess of 40 years.

We have had cold spells before but never in my memory has it extended for as long a period. Nobody could predict in Mid December that this weather spell would last as long. The duration of the spell was being lengthened day by day. In the last 10 years whenever cold weather has hit the County it has been adequately addressed by the Area Offices and on the ground staff. A current spell of this magnitude has never been experienced and it has been completely different from anything we have had to handle before.

Staff; I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the compliments issued by Councillors over the last number of days to the staff who have been carrying out Trojan work since this weather arrived in mid December. I also want to add my own thanks and that of management to outdoor staff in all areas for their commitment and excellent work in these very trying times. I also want to acknowledge the Area Office Staff and the indoor staff in County Buildings who man phones and are usually the first point of contact with the public and the elected members. They also do a huge amount of behind the scenes work in helping organise and manage these operations.

Equally, our own Press Officer, Padraig Corkery ,Kerry Radio and Radio na Gaeltachta has served us very well in providing news and information on the conditions around the County and indeed continue to do so.

Salting; There appears to be a misunderstanding generally between salting and gritting. Historically grit was spread on the roads. This was predominately quarry run material. With the increased availability of industrial salt or rock salt as distinct from table salt however, it has become the material of choice to grit the roads. In fact 51% of the world output is used by cold countries to de-ice roads. Salt is used because it raises the temperature of the road moisture by about 4 degrees to either inhibit the formation of ice or induce melting of the ice. It is the most effective method of improving the road during frosty weather. However it is not the panacea of all ills. It has limitations in low temperatures and if refreezing occurs, as has happened on our roads during this latest period of cold weather,

one has to repeat the salting operation. Grit from quarries assists in providing some traction to tyres but it loses its effectiveness fairly fast when refreezing occurs. It can also lead to blocked drains afterwards.

In normal times when we experience cold weather in the county, the salting operation kicks in without any fuss. A cold weather prediction system called Viasala, which is manned on a rota basis by the Area Engineers, advises when and where frost is likely to occur. Gritting Lorries are activated and they respond as required. This operation usually takes place in the middle of the night and the very early hours of the morning. The experience gathered over the last number of years has determined our level of equipment required to handle such occurrences and has indicated the routes most susceptible to frost and ice. These routes are grouped in the north and east of the county. We do not historically have the same level of salting requirements in the west or south. Indeed some locations in the county are experiencing frost and ice that would not normally be affected.

In the winter of 2008/2009 which was a little colder than normal, but nothing compared to the present weather, we had salting operations on 45 nights out of a 5 month period. This equated to 344 individual salting runs at various locations around the county. A total of 1590 tonnes of salt was spread in this period and the cost associated with this was €430,000. The average daily use of salt was about 35 tonnes. All these operations were carried off smoothly and seamlessly.

Current position; Since the middle of December temperatures have been dropping around the county. At night we have experienced lows of – 6 or - 7 degrees. During the days the temperatures have not risen much above 5 degrees, and have remained much lower in a lot of areas. Other areas which have not received direct sunlight have not thawed out at all. The difference between now and normal winters is that the entire road network county wide is experiencing freezing conditions.

Since the severe weather started our salting operations have been working continuously for the past 27 days. This is unprecedented and has stretched our resources. Fortunately we have been able to secure salt from suppliers to ensure this operation has continued. **To date we estimate that 3500 tonnes have been spread on the roads.**

We have had to prioritise those routes that are carrying the greatest volume of traffic.

The Council has 7 lorry mounted gritters and we have been spreading about 130 tonnes in the 24 hour period. This has been mainly concentrated on the most heavily trafficked roads. The 130 tonnes has allowed 530 kilometres of road to be salted; 430 kilometres of the National Primary and Secondary Network and 100 of Regional and important local roads. This is still only a small portion of the total number of kilometres in the county, which is 4713 kilometres. Other gritting

plant has been hired and is covering additional areas not included in the above. As you all know this length of public road network is one of the highest per capita in the European Union.

Most routes have had to be salted twice and certain others have been salted 3 times in any 24 hour period. It would have been most desirable to try to salt a lot more kilometres of road network. To do so would have required more gritters, and a more certain supply of salt. It also would have meant moving the existing gritters off the priority routes where they were most required them.

The operation of getting salt into the county has been very difficult. The machinery yard Engineer has performed amazingly in sourcing salt stocks. The main importation port for us is Cork. In order to ensure continuity of supply we have been sending our lorries to Cork, in very difficult weather and road conditions usually at around 3 o'clock in the morning. When loaded they then return to the county and have to travel to the various depots scattered around the county. This operation is very onerous, but we have persisted. As long as salt is available we will continue to draw it into the county. When supplies were not available in Cork we have sourced salt through Foynes and have gone as far as Waterford. We do not know at this stage what effect the decision from the Government to hand over the allocation of the salt stocks to the NRA will have on our ability to source the material.

In the midst of the frost, we have also had to deal with flooding at numerous locations as well as removing fallen trees as a result of a severe storm over the Christmas period. Two major routes, the N21 at Dooneen, Castleisland and the N86 at Gleannagealt became snow bound but were kept open to traffic as a result of snow clearance.

Yesterday we had a light coating of snow across the county. We probably have been lucky that the intensity of snow fall in the past number of weeks has been low, except in a few high locations, like the Connor Pass, Gleann na Gealt and Gleannsharoon. Were we to experience an inch coverage on all the roads, the volume of snow on the roads would exceed half a million cubic metres or about a quarter of a million tonnes if compacted. The logistics in clearing this amount of snow is enormous.

Outlook; The long term forecast has indicated that this current spell may well continue for another 5 to 6 days. Our current salt levels indicate that we have between 1 and 2 days supply remaining. However we have been mixing salt with quarry grit and if the salt supplies dry up completely we will continue with grit spreading. Following representations from various Councillors we arranged to provide stockpiles of quarry grit at different locations county wide to be available to the public for their use. We also liaised with the IFA indicating that their members could avail of these supplies if they wanted to. We will continue this practice for as long as is practical.

We have been in touch locally with both the Gardaí and the HSE assisting them and working with them in relation to any health emergencies, road closures or other problems when requested and this will continue.

The Civil Defence have also been assisting both these organisations and other Community Organisations in providing access to vulnerable people when requested.

Cost; All of our actions over the severe weather period have a cost implication. We will not know how much this operation will cost us until the final bills are all accounted for. The Roads staff and drivers have been working long hours constantly since Mid December. This includes delivery of salt, spreading of salt and grit by whatever means, distribution of grit, removal of snow and attending to various emergencies as they also arose. However some of the costs are as follows;

- **The cost of the 3,500 tonnes of salt is in the region of €250,000**
- **The transportation into and around the county will be about €100,000**
- **The salting using the gritting trucks could be in excess of €700,000**
- **The wages of the staff who have worked long hours since mid December to date will be in excess of €500,000**
- **A conservative estimate is that this spell will cost in the region of € 2.0 million**

We do not know how this will be funded. We will get an allocation from the NRA, but it will need to be greatly increased. If we do not receive assistance then we will have to fund this cost from our existing maintenance budgets and this will have a roll on effect.

Future; There is going to be a large amount of residual damage to our roads after this inclement weather. Coupled with the high rainfall and the flooding of the previous months, potholes are more evident than usual. When the snow on the mountains starts to thaw, we could experience flooding in some areas, as well as damage to culverts and drains and maybe some roads. There will be damage to surface dressing and pavements. We will not know the full extent until we carry out an assessment.

When we get out of this cold snap we will be sitting down to review our response to it.

- How did we react?
- Was our response adequate within our resources?
- Were we slow in reacting?
- Are there things we should do or organise differently?

- Can we plan for an occurrence that might happen next year or not again for 40 or 50 years? Do we look at increasing our number of gritters and training up more drivers?
 - How feasible is it to fund salt barns and store salt stocks?
 - Who is going to fund these improvements?
- The list goes on.

I feel that the Local Authority has accounted well in how it managed the weather problem. We have received great support from Councillors, indoor and outdoor staff, both in attending at work and giving of their efforts. Some of the public have been supportive; others have felt left down by our response. I regret that we could not respond to all requests to grit certain roads. We made certain decisions that we felt were in the common good and that had the most beneficial effect on the greatest number of people. We will learn from our handling of this. Whereas we hope we do not have the same type of weather next year, the experience garnered should stand to us in providing a better response within available resources.

Finally, I would request all drivers to slow down and exercise care in their driving. Even though roads might be salted or gritted one can still come across an icy patch that can catch you out.”

All members thanked Mr. MacNamara for his detailed report.

Cllr. J. Finucane said the powers of local authorities are being further eroded with the transfer of responsibility for regional and local road to the NRA. He welcomed the provision of grit for use by local communities throughout the county. A strong community spirit has become evident in recent weeks and this is a positive development. The national media concentrated on the legalities of people helping others and this is not a time for this debate. He congratulated the staff of the Council on the excellent work they are doing and said the strategy of focussing on main roads is the correct decision.

Cllr. M. Gleeson said a number of years ago following a fall of snow in Dublin a member of the Fine Gael party called for the establishment of a centralised body to deal with snow fall. It is vital that powers are retained locally. He congratulated all Council staff and said the level of dedication shown by them over the past few weeks was heroic. Arising from the recent freezing conditions there is a salutary lesson for everyone building a house i.e. pipes should be laid deep and all pipes in the attic should be insulated. He called for an intermediate inspection of houses to ensure pipes are laid deep and that all pipes are insulated. He pointed out that some Council houses do not meet these requirements. He asked what the legal liability for householders is when they clean in front of their house and someone subsequently falls. He called on all motorists to wash their cars when the snow and ice thaws as the salt on the road damages vehicles.

Cllr. B. Cronin said he wanted to put on record his gratitude to roads staff that did excellent work over the past few weeks. They had no Christmas holidays and it appears the freezing conditions will continue. Credit must be given especially to the staff in the Killarney and Castleisland areas that did tremendous work over the past few weeks. There were three funerals to Aghadoe Burial Ground that morning and the Council staff gritted the road to allow the funerals to take place. He welcomed the initiative to provide grit to enable communities to grit local roads. This was a very positive initiative and was very successful. Members of the public must realise that every road in the county is affected by the bad weather conditions. It is evident that there is still a great community spirit in many areas. However people are concerned if they spread grit on a road and there is an accident could they be held liable. He did not believe that any court would hold the person responsible for gritting the road. He also commended the work carried out by the Water Services Department during the past few weeks. The booster pump at Firies was not working the previous day and they were out to repair it immediately. They also helped to thaw frozen pipes where this was possible. He requested that a water tap would be provided in Firies village and also in Faha to facilitate the large number of households who do not have a water supply.

Cllr. P. McCarthy thanked all Council staff for the tremendous work carried out over the past few weeks in very difficult conditions in particular the Water Services repair crews who worked in freezing conditions. They did not have a Christmas and we owe them an enormous debt of gratitude. He PROPOSED that a Mayoral Reception would be held for them on a Friday evening in recognition of their excellent work and dedication. He added that providing grit to local communities worked very well. In the US all property owners must clean in front of their properties. The general public are very disappointed with the response from the Minister and the NRA. He witnessed frozen water pipes in local authority estates and also in private estates. He suggested that it should be a condition of planning that a builder would be required to employ an engineer with appropriate insurance who would personally inspect the water and sewage pipe network to ensure it is installed to an appropriate standard.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae concurred with the tributes paid to the staff. In particular he thanked staff who facilitated visits to the sick and elderly by Home Helps. He welcomed the provision of grit at strategic locations for the gritting of local roads and said this was very successful. He asked in future that a few loads of grit would be dropped off at strategic locations. He thanked the water maintenance crews who also did excellent work over Christmas and who repaired a water leak in Kilgarvan the previous night. He asked if insulation is provided in all Council houses in particular for the water tank. It is necessary to ensure that stop valves are installed at a level to ensure they do not freeze during very cold weather.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen wished Mr. C. O'Sullivan a speedy recovery. He concurred with the tributes paid to all Council staff who worked long hours over Christmas. He called on the Council to ensure that developers comply with the relevant legislation to ensure pipes are laid to a suitable depth. He asked that developments would be inspected during construction to ensure pipes are installed at a suitable depth. Cllr. Connor-Scarteen added that a number of houses in Kilgarvan are without water due to a frozen pipe which is laid over ground. He asked that this would be rectified as soon as possible. He welcomed the provision of grit for use on local roads and said it was a pity this initiative was not started earlier.

Cllr. M. Healy-Rae commended the work carried out by Management, the Area Engineers, road workers and staff from the Water Services Department over the past few weeks. In particular he thanked the Water Services repair crew that worked to repair a burst water main in Kilgarvan until late the previous night. He congratulated Pdraig Corkery, Press Officer, who kept the public up to-date on road conditions in the county on Radio Kerry throughout the past few weeks. He also complimented the hospital staff and ambulance drivers who worked under severe pressure over the past few weeks. A large number of people were hurt while falling on the ice and the hospital staff deserve great credit for the way they dealt with this emergency. He also complimented the District Hospitals, Kerry General Hospital and Cork University Hospital for the tremendous work done by them in coping with this crisis.

Cllr. R. Beasley congratulated Kerry County Council on its response to the situation over the past few weeks in particular the staff attached to the Listowel Area Office. Many housing estates were without water due to frozen pipes and he was concerned there would be problems in these estates when the pipes thaw. He requested clarification on the implication for property owners who clean outside their premises during these freezing conditions. Could they be liable if someone has an accident outside their premises? Cllr. Beasley condemned the arrogance of the Minister for Transport and said that Kerry County Council should call for his resignation.

Cllr. P. Leahy thanked all staff who dealt with a very difficult situation over the past few weeks. He welcomed the grit provided for local roads but said it should have been provided sooner. If local people did not grit local roads people would be trapped in their homes since before Christmas. He complimented all outdoor staff who worked day and night to keep traffic moving. When the thaw sets in there will be large numbers of potholes on our road network and he called on the Council to address these as soon as possible. In conclusion Cllr. Leahy thanked the Council and Radio Kerry for keeping the people of the county briefed on road conditions.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim thanked the staff of the Roads and Water Services Departments for their excellent work during the freezing conditions. People in Cordal and Knocknagoshel were particularly badly affected by these harsh conditions and staff travelled long distances to bring grit and salt for their roads. Many people are without water because of freezing pipes and she asked that the Council would try to assist them. She asked that the SPCs would come up with a policy on how best to deal with this type of situation in future.

Cllr. M. Moloney said the dedication of Council staff should be publically acknowledged. She thanked staff for keeping the county open during the freezing conditions. She also thanked the staff of the HSE and in particular ambulance drivers who worked in very difficult conditions over Christmas. She suggested that Management should consider setting up of an emergency helpline for the public good during times of extreme weather conditions. The public could then use this number and messages could be passed on to the relevant Area Engineer. Many car parks in shopping centres were very dangerous and management at these locations should salt or grit car parks to make them safe for shoppers. Following the flooding in recent times potholes were filled but the potholes have now reappeared. In Kilcummin Village the ice has compacted and she urged motorists to drive with due care in particular when the thaw sets in.

Cllr. M. Cahill acknowledged the work of the staff of the Roads Department over the past few weeks and said it has been a difficult time for the county. He submitted a notice of motion calling on the Council to review our strategy and response to such events. He thanked Mr. Brian Hickey, Area Engineer who was very helpful, in particular to the vulnerable, over the past few weeks. He asked when a water supply is turned off that public notice would be given. The public are very co-operative and at present they do not know if their pipes are frozen or if the water is turned off. He commended the work carried out in salting and gritting roads. He sought clarification on who is responsible for the road from Killorglin to Sneem. He thanked the Council for providing information on road conditions to the general public through Radio Kerry and he complimented Mr. P. Corkery who was on Radio Kerry with updates on road conditions on many occasions. In conclusion he called on the Department of Transport and the NRA to refund the cost of gritting, salting the roads to the Council.

Cllr. N. Foley acknowledged the leadership shown by Management, engineers and all Roads and Water Services staff over the past few weeks. She complimented Mr. P. Corkery who provided Radio Kerry with updates on road conditions regularly. She acknowledged the role of the Press and in particular Radio Kerry who provided an excellent community service in keeping the public updated on road conditions. The transfer of responsibility for regional and local roads to the NRA will be to the detriment of the county. This system will not serve Kerry well and she called on the Roads Department to advise the Minister for Transport of members' views. The gritting stations around the county worked very well. She said she received many calls from people who were concerned if

they clear the paths outside their property and someone falls they could be held liable. Cllr. Foley asked for clarification on this important issue. The Minister recently stated that no liability would accrue to property owners in these circumstances. In conclusion she asked that a review would be carried out of the Council's response to the recent harsh weather conditions and that a report would then be presented to Council by the end of February.

Cllr. J. Brassil joined in the praise of staff and Management for their response to the recent bad weather. Response teams were monitoring the forecast 10 days before Christmas. He called for the establishment of a national response team as it is unfair to expect each local authority to do this work. He added that the Council is capable of managing the crisis and there is much work to be done yet and he wanted the County Manager and his team to be responsible for managing this crisis. However, the Council needs help in financing this operation. He added that the response from his local engineer Michael Griffin was excellent. He contacted him on Christmas Day and he responded to his request for assistance. He asked that Church car parks and schools on a hill would be gritted. He added that the cold spell is not over yet and it is important to continue with the excellent work.

Cllr. J. Sheahan concurred with the compliments paid to Management and staff for their excellent work during the recent icy weather conditions. He thanked the Killarney Area Engineer who has been very accommodating and said the gritting stations have been a great success. Cllr. Sheahan thanked Radio Kerry for keeping people updated on road conditions and said this service was very reassuring for motorists. Many households in Gneeveguilla do not have water because of frozen pipes and he asked that a tap would be provided in Gneeveguilla.

Cllr. T. Buckley thanked the engineers and outdoor workers who worked late into the night to grit and salt roads. Many footpaths are very icy and they should also be gritted. This has been a very difficult period and the Council should be better prepared in future.

Cllr. B. Griffin concurred with the compliments paid by previous speakers to area engineers and staff and said that the public appreciate their efforts. He thanked Brian Hickey and Colm Nagle for their assistance. Funding for the Housing Aid for the Elderly should be increased as the insulation, doors and windows in many houses occupied by the elderly are inadequate.

Cllr. P.J. Donovan thanked Mr. G. MacNamara, the Roads staff and the staff of the Water Services Department who did excellent work over the past few weeks. He acknowledged that it is not possible for the Council to grit all roads. He thanked Michael Kelliher and his staff who could not have done more for their area.

Cllr. L. Purtill said the distribution of grit was a massive success. Many footpaths and Church car parks have been gritted and he appreciated all the work done by the staff.

Cllr. T. O'Brien said he wanted to be associated with the remarks and compliments to the staff for the great effort they put in over the past few weeks. There was a great community effort in gritting local roads but unfortunately some people did not salt in front of their properties.

In response Mr. T. Curran, County Manager, thanked the members for their compliments to staff. He was aware that some cul de sac roads have not been gritted. He thanked the indoor and outdoor staff for their dedication and hard work during the prolonged severe weather conditions and said he was fortunate to have staff of this calibre. Nationally there was a lot of criticism of local authority staff and some counties do not have gritters or road salting machines. Over the past few weeks road staff were out during the night gritting and salting roads. Historically the Council used quarry grit but now rock salt is more effective. He would have liked to salt more roads but it was necessary to preserve the salt for more heavily trafficked roads. Mr. Curran said he was delighted that members got a good response from Area Engineers etc. He thanked Mr. G. MacNamara who deputised for Mr. C. O'Sullivan who has been out sick and he wished him well. Some counties have a difficulty in securing salt but he preferred to depend on his staff for a response. They secured salt from three or four sources and Kerry did better than other local authorities in this regard. He added that a two day reserve is maintained and we are still drawing salt. He thanked the drivers who went to collect the salt and who delivered it to many difficult locations throughout the county. He thanked the media for the reports on the Council's response to this crisis and said this acknowledgement is important for the staff doing the work. He thanked, in particular, Radio na Gaeltachta and Radio Kerry who provided a great service to the community. He also thanked Mr. P. Corkery, Press and Communications Officer who liaised with the Press to provide them with updates on road conditions. While the worst is not yet over he was concerned about the damage from water when the thaw comes. The Council will be vigilant in areas where water was cut off. He thanked Mr. O. Ring, Mr. C. Mangan and the staff in Water Services for their excellent work in the past few weeks. He anticipated the Council would be busier than ever when the thaw comes with the resulting potholes and damage to roads. The Council will be challenged over the next twelve months and if the cost of dealing with the recent freezing weather conditions is not recouped we will be under pressure to provide our services. He referred to the queries on the liability of property owners who clear paths outside their properties and said it is difficult to comment on this as a Judge makes a decision on each case. The Minister recently commented that he could not see a liability where the work was done safely. He added that he could not see how a person would be liable if they put out grit. He urged property owners to clear the footpaths in front of their property.

Mr. Curran thanked the IFA for identifying drop off points for grit and said that a great community spirit was displayed during the bad weather.

Cllr. R. Beasley stated that he made a proposal calling on Minister Dempsey to resign.

There was no seconder for this proposal.

10.01.11.01 Consideration of the Local Authority Budget for the Local Financial Year Ending 31st December 2010

Mr. T. Curran, Co. Manager said that the Budget was prepared and will be considered in such a difficult economic and financial climate as has not been experienced for several decades. In preparing and presenting this Draft Budget to the elected members for consideration and adoption, the main emphasis was on:

- Ensuring that we maintain our essential core statutory functions and responsibilities at satisfactory levels
- Continuing to deliver our services at the most economical cost in the prevailing competitive climate and
- Minimising the need for any increase in the commercial rates multiplier or user charges wherever possible.

The Draft Budget provides for expenditure of €130.354m resulting in a decrease of approximately 3% on the 2009 projected out-turn. The Council is statutorily required to prepare a balanced budget, so all expenditure provisions must match income projections. The proposed budget expenditure is fully funded as follows:

• Division Income	€81.596m
• Rates	€16.459m
• Local Government Fund	€25.573m
• Town Council Share Out of Charges	€ 6.726m
• Total	€130.354m

The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government has notified the Council that the Local Government Fund Allocation for the coming year is €25,572,631 a reduction of 3.3% on the 2009 revised figure. The 2010 allocation is €3.567m or 12.2% below the 2008 figure. However, further adjustments consisting of the transfer of the value of the pension levy introduced in 2009 and a portion of the reduced staff pay rates taking effect from the 1st January 2010 as announced in the December 2009 Budget will revise the Local Government Fund allocation for the coming year to approximately €22.484m in effect. The pay rates for public sector staff are being reduced from the 1st January 2010. The reductions range from 5% upwards depending on basic pay levels. These reductions (which are additional to the pension levies introduced earlier in 2009) will apply to all staff employed by the Council. The reductions will not apply to

pensioners of the Council. The value of the pay reduction in the context of the Council's Draft 2010 Budget is estimated at €2.393m. The Department has advised local authorities that they are allowed to retain 65% of the payroll savings to be realised in their authority in 2010 and that the remaining 35% of the savings is to revert to the exchequer. Those requirements are incorporated into the Draft Budget figures as prepared.

Mr. Curran said that reflecting the scale of the economic downturn and the restriction on funding together with the government's moratorium on recruitment, staff numbers have decreased significantly over the past 18 months or so. No new staff are being taken on, contracts for existing temporary staff are not being renewed apart from exceptional cases and a sizable number of staff have retired. The co-operation of staff, redeployment and prioritisation of work programmes have ensured continued quality service to-date. Inevitably, though, as budgets further reduce and staff numbers decline, services will be affected. However, he looked forward to the ongoing co-operation of staff in helping to get through this difficult period and keeping the impact on our core services and responsibilities to a minimum. We are fortunate to have a very good Workplace Partnership. He said that while he understood the need for the emergency payroll reductions over the past 12 months, he trusted that channels can be identified and implemented to overcome the present difficulties at national level and that a stable and progressive industrial relations environment can be maintained to meet the very big challenges ahead.

Mr. Curran then referred to the charge on Non-principal Private Residences and said that the income from this charge, introduced by legislation in July last, is a welcome broadening of the funding base for local authorities. It is, also, entirely appropriate that the owners of this type of property would make some contribution to the local authority where the property is located to support the local public services benefiting the property such as water, roads, pollution control, environmental services, beach management etc. The income from this source for the coming year is estimated at €1.9m for Kerry County Council. It is planned to set up a small project team to follow up on the potential for additional income and this is reflected in the estimated income figure. The Council has been pursuing an ever growing sharper focus on greater cost effectiveness and costs savings. Cost savings have been secured in such areas as plant hire, energy, telecommunications, materials, advertising, contract management, use of own staff resources where possible etc. During 2010 it is intended to proceed to implement the measures recommended in so far as possible and he intended to keep the on-going review of our procurement processes and practices to the forefront of the management agenda over the coming year.

Mr. Curran said that the past year has been very difficult for business and agriculture. The Council is mindful of the role of both sectors in the economic and social life of the County. For this reason he was not proposing any increase in the Rates Multiplier or in water/waste water charges for the coming year.

However, only minimum expenditure on services, as we are proposing in 2010, is not sustainable in the longer term.

Mr. Curran then referred to the main service features of the Revenue Budget and said that significant allocations are included again this year for housing services. A sum of €800,000 is included for the repair of vacant houses to be funded from internal capital housing receipts subject to the approval of the Department. This fund has dwindled substantially owing to the fall off in house purchases by tenants in the recent past. The Draft Budget contains an allocation of €3.547m for the Housing Adaptation and Aids for the Elderly Grant Schemes subject to grant aid of €2.838m (80%) from the Department. This requires a local contribution of €0.709m. In addition there are the substantial costs of the implementation of the schemes which must also be met from own resources locally.

Under the heading Road Transport and Safety a special effort has been made to retain the own resources allocation for the non-national roads more or less at the same level as 2009 allowing for the reduction in payroll costs. Mr. Curran then referred to Water Services and said that over the coming years the Council can expect and, indeed, will be required to allocate substantially increasing budgets to this area in response to the obligatory improved standards and additional plants both for water and waste water being brought on stream consequent on the Water Services Investment Programme. He welcomed the government's proposal on metering and charging for domestic water use. He believed that any income accruing from this measure in time should be in addition to existing funding rather than in substitution for any of the existing sources and values. Carrying the government's proposal into effect will be a major undertaking in a county with such a widespread network and user base as Kerry and he intends to set up a project team during the year to begin preparations. He added that metering domestic properties will also help in the conservation of water.

Mr. Curran then referred to Development Management and said that during 2009 a special project team was set up to assess and follow up on the state of compliance or otherwise of recently built private housing estates with the terms of their planning permissions and with particular reference to the standard of completion so as to qualify for take-over by the Council in due course. The work of this unit to-date indicates the considerable work needs to be undertaken in many cases where housing estates have not been satisfactorily completed. It is important that timely action be taken in these cases so as to draw on the appropriate insurance/finance bonds where applicable or that legal enforcement action be pursued. The Draft Budget contains an allocation to continue and strengthen this unit for the coming year.

Mr. Curran said that the tourism/visitor sector is a key contributor to the overall economy of the county. A proposal has been put forward on behalf of the sector to establish a promotion/marketing initiative for the entire county building on the quality produce that is available here. Some “start up” funding has been sought from the Council to help to establish the proposal. A sum of €75,000 is included provisionally in the Draft Budget for that purpose as an exceptional measure. However, he is proposing that payment would only be made when a sustainable business plan including a self-funding arrangement for the future has been prepared and submitted to the Council. He added that he would keep the Council informed of developments during the year.

Mr. Curran said that a request has been received on behalf of the Cork-Swansea Ferry Service for finance support towards its capital funding through a secured bond purchase. This would entail an investment of a minimum of €50,000 for a period of 4 years and it would then be repayable with interest subject to the liquidity of the ferry vessel at the time. There is little doubt that the service will be an advantage to the Kerry economy, particularly South Kerry, and on that basis and subject to the approval of the Elected Council, an allocation of €50,000 has been included in the Draft Budget. Mr. Curran welcomed the Cork-Swansea Ferry which will be in service for the 2010 tourism season.

Mr. Curran said that the Waste Management and Waste Collection Services face major changes and, indeed, challenges over the coming years and 2010 will be a transitional year in that regard. A major task for the Council and the Environmental Services Management and staff at all levels will be to work through the changes required in a sustainable and cost effective manner. An ever present challenge is to keep our refuse collection service sustainable in the interest of being able to maintain it financially. Through a combination of identified cost savings/efficiencies and a targeted strategy to attract more customers a revised pricing structure is being introduced for the new collection year starting in February and this will result in the annual bundle costing €260, a reduction of €80 on the 2009 charge. It is essential that we increase our customer base in 2010 to ensure the continued involvement of Kerry County Council in the refuse collection business. Our services are being aggressively attacked by the private sector and it is essential that we increase our customer base in 2010.

Mr. Curran expressed his thanks and appreciation to the Mayor, Cllr. B. O’Connell, Cllr. T. Fleming, the previous Mayor and to the Members of the Council for their support, co-operation and application during the past 12 months. He also thanked the Corporate Policy Group and the Strategic Policy Committees for their work over the past year.

Mr. Curran also thanked the staff and management of all the Council’s services for their work during the past year. 2009 has been a very difficult year with pressure on budgets, reduced staffing levels, reduced pay owing to the pension

levy and restricted overtime working. The co-operation of all ensured that we got through our work programme satisfactorily. Preparation of the 2010 Draft Budget has been a very sizable and challenging undertaking because of the continuing difficult and uncertain economic climate, the overall size of the Council's Budget and level of competing demands and expectations. He thanked John O'Connor, Head of Finance, Angela McAllen, Kathleen Moriarty, Pat O'Shea, Karen Lynch and their Finance staff for their long hours and late nights in preparing a balanced budget. In conclusion Mr. Curran said he wished to record his appreciation to each of the Directors of Service and their staff for their work in the detailed budgeting process.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance referred members to Page 10 of the Budget Report, where the graph sets out the Estimated Expenditure for 2010 by each of the Divisions. €74 out of every €100 spent goes on Housing, Roads, Water Services and Environment. Much of this money is spent locally and benefits many local businesses. He then referred members to Page 11 of the Budget Report where there is an expenditure breakdown by Key Expense Elements. As can be seen, Payroll Costs account for 39% of the Budget, Operational Costs including Material and Plant etc. accounts for 38% of the Budget, while Energy Costs account for 3% of the Budget. The various sources of funding are set out on Page 12 of the Budget Report. State grants for Specific Purposes and the Local Government Fund account for more than 50% of our income. The income from Non-Principal Private Residences is an important source of income as is rates. The income from rates reflected in the 2010 Budget is €1.5m lower than 2009. It is anticipated that there will be a shortfall of €1m in the collection for 2010. Principal Service Charges account for 11% of our income with Other Local Income amounting to €21.93m. This is an increase in recent years because of the Non-Principal Private Residences charge which is included under this heading.

Mr. O'Connor then referred members to Page 14 of the Budget Report where details of the State Sector Grants for Specified Purposes are set out. The total income of €45.5m under this heading represents 35% of the entire income of the Council. The figures included for 2010 are based on the continuation of the enhanced level of funding for the Restoration Improvement Programme on Non-National Roads during the coming year as in recent years. He added that the value of the pay reduction of €2.24m is built into the Budget figures as presented. The Council cannot retain the benefit of this reduction as the Department will claim back 35% of the benefit. Kerry County Council gets no direct benefit from the pension levy as this is not retained locally but is transferred to the Department. The pay adjustment is an advantage and on average it reduces the payroll cost by 5.5%.

Division 1 – Housing & Building

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Pages 20 – 36 of the Budget Report and Pages 10 – 12 of the Budget Table for details of the Housing and Building Programme. Housing is dependent on the Capital Budget and details of this are set out on Page 4 of Schedule 1 at the back of the Budget Report. The total revenue expenditure on this Division is almost €16m or 12% of our overall Budget with a projected income of €14.76m. There is a local authority contribution of €1.2m approximately to this Division. The State Capital Allocation for the housing programme was reduced in 2009 and it is expected that this reduction will continue in 2010. The sale of local authority houses has dropped substantially in recent times. The income from this source was used for good housing purposes, in particular, the repair of vacant houses. Subject to the sanction of the Department it is intended to allocate a sum of €800,000 for the repair of vacant houses in 2010. Substantial funding has been provided for this purpose in recent years.

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 27 of the Budget Report and said that there are 3 permanent halting sites maintained by Kerry County Council comprising of 23 Bays in all – Deerpark (14 Bays), Gortroe (5 Bays) and Rathass (4 Bays). The allocation of €171,000 in the Budget covers the cost of the maintenance of these halting sites including the repair of the demountable units in the sites. Mr. O'Connor referred members to Pages 10 and 11 of the Budget Tables where Service Support Costs are included and he said this includes salaries and also the maintenance of buildings, heat and light etc. Senior Management Team costs are shared out across the organisation as prescribed at national level. He referred to the collection of rent and said that a lot of our tenants pay promptly and this is very welcome. However, a number of tenants must be followed up and unless we can maintain our income reasonably close to the budget we would have to adjust our expenditure. In accordance with the Differential Rent Scheme, tenants pay according to the household income. If a tenant finds themselves in financial difficulty they need to contact the Housing Department as soon as possible. The Kerry Money Advise and Budgeting Service provide great assistance to people in financial difficulty and advice is also available from the staff in the Housing Department. He referred members to Pages 32 and 34 of the Budget Report where details of the Homeless Service and Support Grants for disabled and elderly are set out. The Homeless Service is supported through recoupment from the Department. The Rental Accommodation Scheme has been very well received in Kerry with significant benefits accruing to all parties with a total of 468 transfers completed since the Scheme commenced in June 2006. This scheme is self financing.

Mr. O'Connor then referred members to Page 34 of the Budget Report where details of housing loans are set out. The level of activity in this area has been very limited over the past few years. Mr. O'Connor advised members that details of the Housing Support Grants for the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for

Older People and People with a Disability are set out on Page 35 of the report with a sum of €3.547m being provided in the Budget. A substantial contribution has been made by the Council to these schemes over the past number of years, and in 2010, we are continuing to make the same local contribution as the outturn for 2009. The local contribution and administration costs of these schemes amount to approximately €1m.

Mr. O'Connor then called on Mr. J. Breen, Director of Services for Housing to address the meeting.

Mr. J. Breen said that at present, there are over 1,000 approved housing applicants on the housing waiting list with 15 new applications received each week. The Council has a housing stock of 2,300 units which must be maintained and very few local authority houses are being purchased by tenants. There has been an improvement in the response and repair of vacant houses. In 2009 the Social Housing Investment Programme allocation was substantially reduced. The exchequer allocation for 2009 for the housing construction and acquisition programme was €9m which is a reduction of €6.5m from the previous year. He anticipated that there would be a further reduction in 2010. There is a move away from the Building Programme and the Council has been advised by the Department that the Social Housing Leasing Initiative is expected to provide the main delivery mechanism for social housing over the next 3 years and that funding will be made available to Housing Authorities for this purpose. Due to the requirement on the Local Authority to maintain the property for the duration of the lease period which could be up to 15 years the Council would need to be fully satisfied with the standard of construction and completion before deciding to enter into any such agreement. In addition, it is not desirable to enter into leasing arrangements in unfinished estates owing to planning and engineering difficulties, as well as the future difficulties it would pose for perspective tenants. At the end of 2009, 46 social housing units were under construction, with an additional 22 units being completed. Details of the Improvement Works Programme are set out on Page 21 of the Budget Report. These works are funded from internal capital receipts. Only 4 houses were purchased by tenants in 2009 and this compared to 57 in 2007. The Council did, however, secure funding from the Department of €100,000 which was matched by a similar amount from our own internal capital receipts. This was utilised for upgrading of Single Rural Dwellings throughout the county. Further submissions to the Department for additional funding for remedial works on Single Rural Cottages were not approved.

Mr. Breen then referred to land availability and said the Council has a land bank of 89 acres approximately in various locations throughout the County. The Housing Department has a number of significant proposals to develop some of these lands for further housing development which are under consideration by the Department. Because of current Department policy, land is no longer being purchased.

Mr. Breen then referred to Affordable Housing and said that under Part V of the Planning & Development Act, 2000 (as amended) only four new dwellings have been acquired for affordable housing in 2009. As the sale of these affordable houses is proving difficult, the Council can be considered fortunate in so far as that only a small number of dwellings have been acquired, to-date, under this scheme and so the burden of either funding or selling off avoided. The Shared Ownership Scheme also continues to reduce in popularity. While 24 applications were received in the past year, only 4 houses were actually purchased under the scheme. The average purchase price for a house under the scheme in 2009 was €166,750 compared to €194,333 in 2008.

Mr. Breen said the number of households seeking housing support continues to rise. There are currently 1,037 households approved for Council housing with another 377 applicants awaiting assessment. A further 516 households have had their applications deferred as their long-term need for social housing has yet to be established. The number of new applications has increased substantially in the last 2 years. The majority of housing applicants are privately renting with the help of rent supplement. The rent supplement was originally intended as an income support for tenants of private rented accommodation, who suffered a change in household circumstances that affected their ability to pay their rent. It has, however, in recent years evolved in such a way that it is seen as a long-term support. Regulations made by the Department of Social & Family Affairs in the latter half of 2009 whereby two refusals of standard local authority accommodation or a dwelling in a 12 month period made available under the Long-Term Leasing Scheme or the Rental Accommodation Scheme will result in a withdrawal of rent supplement. This and other changes are intended to return housing authorities to being the principal agents in both assessing and meeting the housing needs of households currently in receipt of rent supplement. All applications for rent supplement must have a full housing application evaluation done before they will be approved for rent supplement. In total, 370 families were accommodated with local authority housing in 2009. Last year, in excess of 800 checks were carried out by the Gardaí on housing applicants and he thanked them for their co-operation in this matter. As a result of these Garda checks, a number of applications have been deferred.

Mr. Breen informed Members that under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2009, a comprehensive new sanctions regime and a new definition of what constitutes "a proper state of structural repair" has been introduced in respect of private rented accommodation. This section of the Act came into effect on 1st December 2009. Enforcement action as prescribed in the legislation can be taken by Housing Authorities against landlords who are in breach of same. While we have increased our inspection rate of standards in the private rented sector over the last number of years through our RAS Unit, it is intended to make further progress in this area in 2010 as resources permit. Specific funding is available from the Private Rented Tenancies Board (PRTB) based on the number of private rented inspections carried out.

Mr. Breen then referred to Voluntary Housing and said that as in all other areas, the level of capital funding available for the provision of new Voluntary Housing was reduced significantly during 2009. This resulted in only one new project being approved at Cahereens, Castleisland for 13 family units and being provided by Clúid Housing Association.

He referred Members to Page 24 of the Budget Report where the activities in relation to the provision of Voluntary Housing are set out. 70 units were completed or acquired in 2009. There is an extensive amount of voluntary housing in the county and details of all lettings are provided to the Council.

Mr. Breen thanked the members of the Housing SPC for their valuable contributions and said that the new Housing SPC is due to meet in January 2010 following nomination of sectoral representatives. The policy areas/tasks to be considered through the Housing SPC in the coming year are set out on Pages 24 and 25 of the Report.

Mr. Breen referred Members to Page 26 of the Budget Report for details of the Maintenance/Improvement of Local Authority Housing Units Programme. He said that in the past, substantial planned maintenance was carried out but there is not adequate funding to continue this in the current economic climate. Only immediate response maintenance will be carried out in 2010. In May 2009, the Department announced details of the availability of funding for the retro fitting of insulation and other energy efficiency measures to vacant Local Authority stock. Under this scheme, energy efficiency measures were undertaken in respect of 29 vacant dwellings and were incorporated into the pre-letting repairs. We were successful in securing a grant from the Department in the sum of €250,000 under the scheme towards the overall cost of these works. Mr. Breen added that in accordance with the European Communities (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2006, all dwellings that are completed, sold or newly let by housing authorities are required to have a Building Energy Rating (BER) Certificate from 1st January 2009. All vacant dwellings prior to being re-let are now being inspected by staff in our Housing Engineering Section, that have undergone specific training in this area, for the purposes of providing a BER Certificate.

Mr. Breen informed members that a sum of €121,000 is provided for the Traveller Accommodation Management Programme. A new Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee has been formed following the Local Elections. This Committee has already met twice and will continue to meet bi-monthly to oversee the implementation of the Programme. A sum of €60,000 is provided for Estate Maintenance and he encouraged any group to form a Residents' Association. This allocation and the work of the Council's Tenant Liaison Officer have contributed to 42 resident associations in Local Authority estates in the County being formed or re-activated. An example of the high level of tenant participation in the upkeep of estates in Kerry was evident when Iveragh Park Housing Estate, Killorglin captured top prize in the Housing Estates

Category in the Pride of Place Awards held in Newcastle, Co Down recently. This is an all-island competition which is directed towards recognising improvements by local communities to create civic pride in their area. Under the heading "Housing Assessments, Allocation and Transfer" Mr. Breen said that the Council received approximately 800 applications in 2009 which is an increase of 17% compared to 2008 and a 47% increase compared to 2007. These applications can only be assessed when the full information is provided. Recent changes announced in the administration of the Rent Supplement Scheme require housing authorities to assess all recipients of rent supplement at 12 monthly intervals in order for their supplement to be continued by the Community Welfare Service. The workload in this area will require significant resources. Another significant change in the administration of the Rent Supplement Scheme as already mentioned was introduced in 2009 whereby two refusals in a 12 month period of standard local authority accommodation or a dwelling made available under Social Housing Leasing Initiative or the Rental Accommodation Scheme will result in the withdrawal of rent supplement by the Community Welfare Service. He added that the Council's own policy, which allows for up to three refusals, must now be amended to reflect national policy. There are ongoing problems with the take up of offers for houses in some new housing estates where applicants qualified based on need and it is difficult to understand why these houses are refused. If an applicant does not need accommodation, they should be removed from the housing waiting list.

Mr. Breen then referred to Housing Rent and Tenant Purchase Administration and said that in the last year, there was an overall increase of 23% in the use of electronic or non-cash payment methods including Bill Pay, Direct Debit, Household Budget deductions etc. Rent is based on household income and the Housing Section continues to work closely with the Kerry Money Advice and Budgeting Service. The average weekly rent is €43.49 and there has been a decrease in rent in line with the reduction in Social Welfare payments. Rents are assessed using the Differential Rents Scheme and if a tenant is in economic difficulty, they should contact the Housing Department immediately. Mr. Breen stated that while the DoEHLG Housing Management Initiatives Grants Scheme has ceased for the funding of the position of Tenancy Compliance Officer, it is intended to continue the position for a further 12 month period on a temporary basis as a result of the positive effect being seen within our estates. His main role is to ensure the compliance by tenants with Council policies and procedures in respect of lettings, anti-social behaviour etc and the enforcement of Terms of Tenancy Agreements, e.g. ensuring tenants keep their dwellings and surrounding areas in good condition and ensure all occupants are declared to the Council for rent assessment purposes etc.

The Housing Department also tries, where feasible, to continue to work with community groups to make available sites or premises where a clear benefit exists in further developing sustainable communities within our estates. An example of this is former Local Authority dwellings in Iveragh Park, Killorglin

which were converted to a Family Resource Centre. This development has proved to be a tremendous success and benefit to the local community and a further extension to same was completed in 2009. The Kerry Head/Ballyheigue Family Resource Centre, which was provided by the Council as part of Social and Affordable Housing at Sráid Thaidhg, Ballyheigue, will also be a tremendous community benefit for Local Authority tenants in the area.

Mr. Breen advised the meeting that a sum of €708,000 is provided for Homeless Grants/Other Bodies and said that this allocation is being provided towards the continued operation and running costs of the Adapt Women's Refuge in Tralee, Novas Initiatives Hostel in Tralee, i.e. Arlington Lodge and the reduced support facility, Knocklee House which opened in 2006. A further step-down facility to help homeless people to sustain long-term tenancies was opened in 2008 in Tralee by Novas Initiatives at no additional revenue cost. This allocation also provides for the cost of emergency B & B accommodation with 90% of these costs recouped from the Department and the balance shared between Kerry County Council and the three Town Councils. It is expected that a further facility in Killarney, which has been purchased by Clúid Voluntary Housing organisation will be further adapted into independent living units with services to provide tenant sustainment. Mr. Breen said that Kerry County Council recently opened its new Homeless Information Centre in the former HSE Community Welfare Offices in Denny Street, Tralee. The Centre is operated jointly between Kerry County Council and the Health Service Executive and provides an integrated service for Homeless Persons in the county. Having regard to the new Government Strategy - "The Way Home: A Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness 2008 - 2013", a review of the operation of the Homeless Service in Kerry is being undertaken. The findings of this review will be considered by both the Kerry Adult Homeless Forum and the Housing and Social Support SPC. It is intended to commence preparation of a new Homeless Action Plan in 2010 in accordance with the new housing legislation and having regard to the National Strategy. This review will be done in conjunction with the Homeless Forum and the Housing and Social Support SPC.

Mr. Breen then referred to the Rental Accommodation Scheme and said that this is a very successful scheme in Kerry and it is envisaged that an additional 120 households will be accommodated under this scheme in 2010. A total of 468 transfers have been completed in Kerry since this scheme commenced in June 2006.

A sum of €115,000 is provided for Debt Management of Housing Loans. This sum covers the cost of clerical and administrative staff engaged in the collection of housing loans and processing of loan applications. There are currently 892 active housing loans and 80 loans were redeemed during the year. In total, only 6 new loans were issued in the current year which again reflects the market downturn in house purchases generally. Only one of these loans was in respect

of tenant purchase sales during 2009. The Council has written to customers with fixed high interest rates encouraging them to remortgage.

A sum of €3.547m is provided for Housing Support Grants in the Budget. The Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for Older People and People with a Disability are funded by the exchequer contribution from the DoEHLG and a local authority contribution. The initial capital allocation for 2009 was €2.883m and was made up of an exchequer contribution of €2.226m and a Local Authority contribution of €656,667. In recognition of the very high level of demand for the scheme throughout the county, the Council was notified by the Department in October 2009 that it was successful in securing a supplementary capital allocation of €663,750 which is made up of an exchequer contribution of €531,000 and a local authority contribution of €132,750. In the 2 years since the introduction of these housing support grants in November 2007, a total of 602 grants have been allocated broken down as follows: 349 grant allocations under the Housing Adaptation/Mobility Aids Grant Schemes and 253 grant allocations under the Housing Aid for Older Persons Grant Scheme. There are currently 778 grant applications outstanding - 152 allocations under the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for People with a Disability, 141 applications under the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme and 485 applications under the Housing Aid for Older Persons Grant Scheme. In addition, a significant number of grant claims have been allocated in 2009 in accordance with the priority criteria which will need to be funded from the 2010 allocation from the Department. Having regard to this continuously very high level of demand and the finite resources available, the Council will continue to assess applications based on the priority criteria as set out in the Department guidelines. Therefore, both a technical assessment and overall assessment is required to determine the overall priority of applicants. Following notification of our financial allocation for 2010 from the Department, we will process the outstanding and new applications based on this overall priority criteria. In conclusion, Mr. Breen said that because of the limited level of resources, it will not be possible to fund all grant applications.

Mr. Breen thanked Mayor Fleming and the current Mayor, Cllr. O'Connell together with the members of the Housing SPC for their work over the past 12 months. He also thanked local authority tenants for the way they maintain their property. He thanked Mr. L. Quinlan, Ms. S. Ronan, Ms. J. Foley, Ms. D. Sullivan and Mr. J. Sheppard, who retired recently, for their work over the past 12 months. He said that Housing and Social Support is all about people and he thanked the Housing Maintenance Crew for their excellent work carried out in the very bad weather conditions. In conclusion, he thanked all the members for their co-operation in 2009.

Date of the Adjourned Budget Meeting

Cllr. B. O'Connell said that a date must be agreed for the Adjourned Budget Meeting.

Cllr. J. Brassil PROPOSED that the Adjourned Budget Meeting would be held on Monday, 18th January in the afternoon following the January Ordinary Meeting.

Cllr. N. Foley SECONDED this proposal and it was unanimously agreed.

Mr. J. O'Connor said that the meeting could commence at 2.00pm.

Cllr. M. Healy-Rae PROPOSED that the January Ordinary Meeting would commence at 10.00am to facilitate the Adjourned Budget Meeting.

Cllr. J. Sheahan SECONDED this proposal and it was unanimously agreed.

Cllr. J. Finucane asked if members vote on each Division as they are discussed.

In response, Mr. G. O'Brien said that all Divisions would be discussed and then votes would be taken at the end.

All members thanked Mr. Curran, Mr. O'Connor and Mr. Breen for their presentations.

Cllr. P. McCarthy thanked the staff of the Housing Department for the excellent service they provide. They are very receptive and patient. He welcomed the fact that 370 families were accommodated in 2009 and that €2.8m was provided for grants. He asked were all emergency applications processed up-to-date or are some still outstanding. He asked what percentage of applications received are actually awarded grants.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen complimented Mr. Breen and the staff of the Housing Department and he also complimented the Iveragh Park Residents' Association who recently won an award. He also welcomed the introduction of a policy whereby if an applicant refuses an offer of two houses, they will lose their rent supplement. He asked how many grant applications would be dealt with in 2010. He referred to the allocation of €60,000 for estate maintenance and asked how much was provided in 2009.

Cllr. M. Cahill referred to Page 9 of the Manager's Report which states the Government proposes to meter and charge for domestic water use. He asked that an average cost per household would be established for the next meeting. He welcomed the proposed contribution of €75,000 towards the promotion and marketing of the Cork/Swansea Ferry and said he would like to see a proper management plan in place. He asked that consideration would be given to promoting Kerry in areas such as Germany which have links with Kerry Airport. Cllr. Cahill paid tribute to Mr. J. Breen and his staff in the Housing Department for their work over the past year and said that they are facing very difficult times. Over the past two years, there was a 50% increase in the housing waiting list and this is likely to spiral with job losses. He asked that the Housing Department

would look carefully at the Long-Term Leasing Scheme. He referred to the Voluntary Housing Scheme and said that in Killorglin, the Vincent de Paul Society are interested in undertaking a scheme and suitable land is available. He asked Mr. Breen to revert to him on this issue. He referred to the current situation whereby a housing applicant who refuses two offers of a house is removed from the housing waiting list and said this is only fair. He referred to the Family Resource Centre in Iveragh Park where houses were made available to the local community and said this has proved to be a great success and should also be considered for the Banshagh Housing Estate in Killorglin. The phenomenal success of the Iveragh Park Family Resource Centre is down to the work and commitment of the local community and the co-operation and assistance given by Sean McCarthy of the Housing Department. The lack of adequate funding for housing grants is proving to be very difficult. Over a 2 year period, since the introduction of these grants in November 2007, a total of 602 grants have been allocated but there are currently 778 grant applications outstanding. He anticipated that there would be greater demand for these grants in future and said there is a need for a significant increase in this funding. In the past, the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme was administered by the Health Service. The processing of these grant applications is taking too long and many of the applicants are living in very difficult situations and they need help from Kerry County Council. He asked if the funding provided for these grants is similar to that allocated last year.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae thanked Mr. J. Breen and the staff of the Housing Department for the wonderful work they are doing. He asked if the energy costs of €4.46m can be reduced and if the savings achieved could be allocated to the Grants for the Elderly. The allocation of these grants has become very problematic for people who are vulnerable and do not have much time left. Some people are living in very cold conditions and they need these grants to improve their living conditions and subsequently their quality of life. He expressed his disappointment at the length of time it takes to reallocate a house when it becomes vacant and he asked that every effort would be made to improve on this. When a housing applicant is allocated a house and refuses it, it delays the allocation of the house to the next person on the list. This situation arose in Killarney last year because the houses were too far out of town. Cllr. Healy-Rae then referred to Voluntary Housing and said that when a person is allocated a house, it is not always suitable as they cannot purchase the house. He asked if this will continue to be the case into the future.

Cllr. M. Healy-Rae thanked Mr. J. Breen and the staff of the Housing Department for their assistance and the excellent service they provide. He referred to a situation where a housing applicant is being assessed to be a qualified applicant and they co-own a house, at present they are prohibited from becoming a qualified applicant. He PROPOSED that the Investigating Officer would assess the situation and if, in their honest opinion, the applicant will not benefit from the

house, they can then be deemed to be a qualified applicant. He asked Housing Management to accept his proposal.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae SECONDED this proposal.

Mayor B. O'Connell said that it was 1.30pm and the meeting would be adjourned for lunch until 2.15pm.

The meeting resumed at 2.15pm.

Cllr. J. Brassil thanked the Housing staff for their excellent service. He referred to the Housing Leasing Programme and said that although it is Government policy, there is not a lot of confidence in it and there could be difficulty in getting a quality finish in the house. He said that he thought it was a good scheme if it is pursued correctly. Rather than pursue the estate approach, he felt that local authorities should opt for one or two houses in a scheme which is similar to the RAS Programme which is working well. He envisaged that the Long-Term Leasing Programme could work well as the number of housing applicants is increasing and the Council's ability to build houses is not there. There is criticism at the length of time it takes to re-let a vacant house. Nationally, Kerry fared poorly in this area and he was aware that measures were put in place to address this and he asked that members would be advised of these measures. He asked does the Housing Department use many service providers when going to tender and are these short-term or long-term. He suggested that it would be appropriate to go to tender again, if possible, in an effort to reduce costs. He asked if Council tenants can apply for insulation grants to insulate their local authority houses. If they can, they should be encouraged to do this. He thanked the Housing Department for helping to get the new Ballyheigue Family Resource Centre up and running. Cllr. Brassil said he could not support Cllr. M. Healy-Rae's proposal as he felt the Investigating Officer should not be asked to put people who already own a property on a housing waiting list. This is the only ability the Council has to encourage people to put their affairs in order.

Cllr. M. Moloney welcomed the proposal for the provision of further housing units, especially for the homeless. People who need the homeless service cannot access information on it and this should be made available through Killarney Town Council. She said she was not surprised at the increase in the numbers applying for housing and the Government should assist people in accessing housing. There is a delay in the assessment of applications for rent supplement and at present, it takes approximately 3 weeks. If applicants must wait for a full housing assessment, it will take much longer and it is unfair on people who are in urgent need of housing. She asked that these applicants would be given priority. She welcomed the fact that housing applicants are now being vetted by the Gardaí and she asked that local knowledge would also be taken on board. She referred to the Housing Grants for the Elderly and said the funding for this needs

to be doubled. She asked if the backlog of applications would be dealt with before new applications would be accepted.

Cllr. J. Finucane said that the Budget as presented is very practical and he welcomed the fact that there would be no increase in rates and that there is a reduction in the standing charge for refuse. The Banks were given €12bn so far and it is projected that a further €10bn will be given to them next year. There should be an investigation into the Banks through the Public Accounts Committee. He is aware that there is a new managerial process but said it is important to establish what happened in the past. Cllr. Finucane referred to the Long-Term Leasing Programme and said that he agreed with Mr. Breen when he said that a property would be leased for 15 years but the local authority will not have an asset. This does not seem to be logical where house prices have dropped between 30% and 40%. He asked if the Council could add incentives to encourage tenants to purchase their homes.

Cllr. M. Gleeson said that he was very pleased that rates would not be increased in 2010. He referred to the County Demand and said that Killarney Town Council recently met with Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance to discuss this issue. At that meeting, the members of Killarney Town Council stated that the level of services received for the County Demand is disproportionate to the amount they pay. He believed this system was inherited from the past. Cllr. Gleeson referred to the Traveller Accommodation Programme and said that there should be more halting sites in other towns in the county other than Tralee and Killarney. He PROPOSED that consideration would be given to establishing halting sites in areas other than Tralee and Killarney. He said it is time the Government was pro-active in purchasing some of the vacant houses throughout the country. The housing waiting list has increased substantially and there is no prospect of reducing it.

Cllr. Gleeson referred to private rented dwellings and said it is vital that properties are inspected regularly in the interest of those who reside in these estates to ensure that vacant houses are maintained. Many people undergo hip and knee surgery each year and because of this, they need housing grants to adapt their houses. He said he could not come up with a higher priority than this category of applicant and they should be facilitated if possible. He welcomed the proposal to provide a homeless facility in Killarney and said that it is needed. In conclusion, Cllr. Gleeson welcomed the Voluntary Housing Programme and said that he hoped that the Minister would respond favourably and provide funding for the two voluntary housing projects proposed for Tralee and Killarney.

Cllr. L. Purtill said that the Budget presented is fair and balanced. He complimented Mr. J. Breen and the Housing staff on the excellent service they provide and he welcomed the funding provided for mobility grants and for the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme. These Schemes are vital to facilitate elderly people who want to remain at home.

Cllr. B. Griffin welcomed the fact that there would be no increase in rates in 2010 and he hoped that this trend would continue over the coming years. This is a small but significant stimulus to the local economy. He welcomed the funding for the Housing Aid for the Elderly Programme and said that while any increase is welcome and priorities should be reviewed. He was aware of one elderly lady who has just one kidney and is living in an extremely damp house yet she would not qualify for grant aid. He asked that the criteria would be re-considered. He referred to the length of time it takes to process these applications and asked that staff would be redeployed within the Housing Department to bring these applications up-to-date. He was recently contacted by local residents who were wondering why some people get houses when they are criminals. Some tenants treat their neighbours with contempt and this is unacceptable. The Housing Department should encourage tenants to purchase their houses and the current housing slump can be seen as an opportunity for tenants to purchase their homes at a reduced cost.

Cllr. T. Buckley thanked Mr. J. Breen and the Housing staff and said that he was a member of the Housing SPC for the past 5 years. He welcomed the Garda vetting of housing applicants and said in the past there was a lot of anti-social behaviour. He also complimented Mr. S. McCarthy, Housing Liaison Officer on the work he is doing with local authority tenants and tenants associations. He called on the Housing Department to ensure that the most needy are allocated housing grants. Cllr. Buckley referred to the allocation of vacant houses and said that the time it takes to allocate houses must be improved. He acknowledged the wonderful work done by the Homeless Service which is an excellent service for the most vulnerable in our society. He congratulated those involved with the Iveragh Park Family Resource Centre on their recent award which was an excellent example to all other Family Resource Centres. In conclusion, Cllr. Buckley said that all residents should be encouraged to form Residents' Associations.

Cllr. B. Cronin said that he recognised the excellent work done by the Housing Department and the Director of Housing, Mr. John Breen. He welcomed the fact that there would be no increase in rates for businesses or in water or wastewater charges in 2010 which is a step in the right direction. He said 2010 is a make or break year for the Refuse Service and it is vital that the elected members highlight and promote this service. If the Council continues this service, a Waiver Scheme will be provided for the less well off but if the service is privatised, this will not be the case. He asked if the service could be promoted through the Internet. The Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme is administered by Kerry County Council since 2007 in which time 672 applications have been processed. There is huge demand for these grants. There are a large number of outstanding applications and he was concerned at the length of time it takes to process applications. He was aware of one applicant who wanted to widen a door and put in a level access shower. His application was submitted last April and he has not yet had a decision. There is an urgent need to assess these applications as

speedily as possible. A number of applicants who are in poor health are not making the Priority 1 status and are therefore not getting grant aid. It is important that these priorities would be reviewed. He asked when the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme was transferred from the HSE to the local authority, was adequate funding provided at that time. The Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme was an excellent scheme when it was administered through the HSE for smaller works. He PROPOSED that members would call on the Minister to increase funding for these schemes to enable all applications on hand to be dealt with. He complimented Mr. J. Breen on the manner in which he dealt with the illegal parking of caravans in a housing estate in Castleisland. Mr. Breen's public statements cleared the position for the public. He welcomed the new regulations made by the Department of Social and Family Affairs whereby two refusals of standard local authority accommodation in a 12 month period will result in the withdrawal of rent supplement. He added that he gets very annoyed when housing applicants contact their local Councillor claiming to be in urgent need of housing and when they are allocated a house they refuse it. He believed that those who are in genuine need of housing would avail of an offer of housing. He also welcomed the excellent initiative whereby all housing applicants are vetted by Gardaí and said that approximately 18 months ago, a house was allocated by the Council and two weeks later a '09 Audi and an SUV were parked outside the house. Also a state of the art kitchen was installed. In conclusion, he asked that the Section 183 Notice, proposing the disposal of land at Aghadoe, Killarney which was approved at the November meeting would be finalised as soon as possible.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim complimented Mr. J. Breen and the staff of the Housing Department on their excellent work and said that they are faced with major challenges with a 50% increase in the housing waiting list. She referred to the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and said that €4.8m is required to deal with current applications. She called on the Director of Housing to prioritise the elderly and the disabled. She asked what action would the Housing Department take to deal with the current volume of applications and would priority be given to applicants who fall within the first two priorities. She complimented the work of the RAS team and asked that more houses would be leased under this Scheme in different areas. She asked that the length of time it takes to re-let a house would be shortened as a matter of urgency. In conclusion, Cllr. McEllistrim welcomed the fact that there was no proposed increase in rates or water/wastewater charges for 2010 in an effort to safeguard jobs.

Cllr. P. Leahy complimented Mr. J. Breen and the staff of the Housing Department and said that they are facing major challenges with the huge increase in the number of housing applicants. He said that there is huge demand for grants under the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme and the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and an additional allocation should be sought from the Department to meet this demand.

Cllr. N. Foley said that the housing grants should be allocated to the most needy cases. She complimented Ms. J. O'Connor and Mr. J. Breen for the way in which they deal with these applications. For every one needy case that is dealt with, there are a further ten. She asked if all outstanding applications would be dealt with before any new applications would be accepted. Cllr. Foley welcomed the Garda vetting of all housing applicants and also the Government regulations whereby two refusals of housing within a 12 month period will mean the withdrawal of a rent supplement.

Cllr. J. Sheahan thanked Mr. J. Breen and the staff of the Housing Department for their exceptional work. The Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme are essential schemes but he expressed his disappointment that it takes so long to assess applications. He welcomed the fact that there would be no increase in rates in 2010 and said that this should assist businesses in retaining jobs. He welcomed the Directive from the Department that an applicant who refuses two local authority houses within a 12 month period would no longer get rent supplement and said that this is very fair. Occasionally there is anti-social behaviour and neighbours have to endure this in local authority housing estates. This happened in his area and the people involved towed caravans into an estate. It cost the Council a lot of money to have these removed. These people are breaking the law and it is unfair that the Council has to pay for their removal. He expressed his full support for the Cork/Swansea Ferry and said this would be the greatest help to the tourism industry. In conclusion, Cllr. Sheahan asked that the length of time it takes to reallocate a house would be reduced.

Mr. J. Breen thanked members for their compliments to the staff of his Department. He referred to comments on the various grants schemes and said that with a limited amount of resources, his Department must prioritise the allocation of grants. They would continue to accept new applications and he anticipated that approximately 50% of applications on hands will be dealt with in 2010. He undertook to outline the Priority Scheme at a forthcoming Housing SPC meeting. He referred to Cllr. M. Healy-Rae's proposal regarding housing applicants and marital break up and said that the Council will not force people to make decisions. Applicants for rent supplement must now have their applications for housing assessed before they will be allocated a rent supplement. This takes time and all applications are dealt with as speedily as possible. The re-allocation of houses takes time as the house must be repaired and all applicants must be vetted by the Gardaí and this takes time. He pointed out that the Housing Department does not house criminals. A criminal is someone who has a criminal record. He referred to the query on the purchase of voluntary housing and said that a tenant cannot purchase a house provided through the Voluntary Housing Scheme. Mr. Breen then referred to the Leasing Scheme and said that the Council would only lease properties that meet the required standards. He referred to the query from Cllr. Brassil regarding value for money and said that his Department seek to get value for money on all contracts. He expected that

the Homeless facility in Killarney would progress in 2010. He undertook to encourage tenants to purchase their houses in 2010 and to encourage tenants to apply for grants to insulate their houses etc. He said there is a reduction in the Budget for Estate Maintenance in the coming year. He informed members that Ms. J. Foley has been managing the RAS Programme but she is now moving and will be replaced by Ms. S. Ronan. The issue of marital breakdown and housing applicants has arisen on a number of occasions and his Department must balance housing need without influencing decisions of applicants. This is a difficult issue and it can be considered further by the Housing SPC.

Cllr. M. Healy-Rae asked that this item would be referred to the Housing SPC for further consideration.

Mr. J. Breen said that this is a matter of policy and would have to be considered by them. Some applicants can have substantial property registered in their name and they are looking to qualify for social housing so his Department must be very careful in considering this issue.

Cllr. B. Griffin asked what happens when a tenant in a local authority house commits a crime.

In response, Mr. J. Breen said that if it is an act that is prohibited by the housing legislation, it is a matter for the judge to decide.

Cllr. P. McCarthy asked if an applicant had a criminal record 10 years ago and no longer engaged in criminal activity, would they be considered for local authority accommodation.

In response, Mr. J. Breen said that Kerry County Council has a very detailed anti-social behaviour policy and he would be happy to go through it with the members if they so wished.

Division B - Road Transport and Safety

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance referred members to Pages 37 - 59 of the Budget Report and Pages 13 - 15 of the Budget Tables for details of the Road Transportation and Safety Division. The overall revenue expenditure on this Division is in excess of €36m with a projected income of €23m. Much of this income is from road grants. It is reasonable to assume that the 2010 road grants will be reduced on the 2009 allocations and the Budget is framed on that presumption. However, the same provision is made in the Budget for the contribution from own resources and we are one of the few local authorities to do this. He added that he would not go into too much detail on this Division as Ger MacNamara would deal with it and there would be a full Council meeting when grants are notified.

Mr. O'Connor informed members that the Capital Programme is set out on Pages 5 - 9 at the back of the Budget Report. The Capital Programme is delivered by the National Road Design Office in Castleisland and the proposed Programme for 2010 is 10% of the entire Capital Programme. Various stages of planning and design have been advanced on the provision of relief roads identified in Local Area Plans. These include An Daingean where Phase 1 of this road was opened to traffic in early 2009. Part 8 planning for Phases 2 and 3 have been completed. It is hoped to start construction in 2010 following land acquisition. The Council adopted a Supplementary Development Contribution Scheme to fund this project in March 2007. This commitment by Council strongly supported our application for loan approval of €6m to advance its construction, which was subsequently approved, and will provide significant relief for traffic congestion in the town, particularly during the tourist season.

In relation to Castleisland, lands were acquired for the construction of an inner relief road through the Mart in 2008. A funding source for the construction of this road needs to be identified. He pointed out that no national funding is available for these roads and in 2010, Members will need to consider a Supplementary Development Contribution Scheme for the provision of these roads and consideration will need to be given to additional car parking charges as well. Details of the Revenue Works Programme are set out starting on Page 46 of the Budget Report. The Programme for the National Primary Road Maintenance and Improvement is dependent on State grants through the NRA. The Council makes a substantial contribution to this Programme and he referred members to the last paragraph on Page 59 of the Budget Report which reads as follows:

"The Roads Transport and Safety Programme is a critically important contributor to the overall economic and social activity of the county. This is reflected in the net local contribution of almost €14m which the Council is making available to the programme under the many headings mentioned in the Draft Budget Tables on Pages 13 - 15." Mr. O'Connor said it is intended to continue the support for the Public Lighting Programme and the Budget provision is the same as 2009. There has been a redistribution of functions under the heading Road Safety and Promotion within the Roads Department and there has been staffing redeployment. However, this is not to say there is a less commitment to road safety. In an effort to achieve greater efficiency the Council has a full time Quality Control Officer who constantly liaises with suppliers and tests materials on a regular basis. Most of the testing is carried out in the Council's laboratory. In 2009 over 1,200 tests were carried out in house. This represents a considerable saving to the Council.

Mr. O'Connor informed the meeting that the extreme rainfall experienced in 2009 with almost 2100mm of rain recorded at Valentia Observatory had a severe impact on the delivery of our Roadwork's Programme. This level of rainfall was almost 50% above normal and in particular the conditions experienced during the summer months, with monthly rainfall records reaching 348% of the 30 year

monthly average, resulted in delays to our roadworks and caused considerable damage to our network. Despite the extreme rainfall during the summer of 2009 the Roads Department delivered the Roads Programme by the end of November.

Mr. G. MacNamara said there were 13 fatalities on our roads in 2009 which was down on the previous year. While road grants were reduced in 2009 the programme was delivered. The Castleisland By Pass is the only major project to receive funding last year and it is scheduled to be completed by December 2010. A contractor has been appointed for Ballinagare Bridge and it is anticipated that that will progress in 2010. The surface of the N69 through Listowel was improved in late 2009 and surfacing works were also carried out to the Tarbert Ferry Road. The roads grants for 2010 have not yet been notified and any specific queries will be deferred until these allocations are received. Kerry has the largest amount of road per capita in the country. Responsibility for road grants was transferred to the NRA and road grants in Kerry were down €6m in 2009. Arising from the very heavy rainfall and the resulting flooding costs of €300,000 were incurred by the Council. It has been said that the Council spends too much on Health and Safety but he pointed out that we are obliged to do this by law. If this legislation is not fully complied with the Safety Inspector will close down the works. He referred members to Page 39 of the Budget Report where details of the work undertaken by the Roads and Transport SPC in 2009 are set out. He added that the issue of pay parking needs to be addressed and also the provision of additional relief roads. As previously stated it is anticipated that the Castleisland By Pass will open in December 2010 and thanks to the speed of work by the contractor the bridge near Curranes School opened before Christmas. The CPO for the Tralee By-Pass and Tralee to Bealagrellagh Road was confirmed by An Bord Pleanála on the 18th of September 2009. A notice was published on the 29th October 2009 in a local newspaper confirming the CPO. Kerry County Council has 18 months to serve the statutory Notice to Treat. Funding is expected to be required in 2011 for the acquisition of the lands for this scheme. Under the National Primary Routes Pavement and Major Improvement Programme works were carried out in 2 locations in 2009 as follows:

- The pavement improvement work on the N22 was continued with a reduced grant allocation of €400,000, allowing a kilometre length to be improved towards the Madam's Hill Railway Bridge. The Council hopes that a similar figure for overlays will be allocated in 2010.
- An allocation of €450,000 was received for the completion of Lissivigeen Junction Roundabout which was opened to traffic in early 2009.

National Secondary Routes Remedial Safety Measures

In 2009 a reduced allocation of €276,500 was received from the NRA for safety improvement works on the National Secondary Network. This figure also includes an allocation for the Road Safety Engineer based in the Castleisland National Road Design Office. Improvement works have been carried out in the following locations:

- Cloonfineela Cross
- Tythers Bend
- Gortnahaneboy West
- Camp Junction

A list of locations requiring improvement works has been prepared and submitted to the NRA to seek further funding under this programme. Details of the National Secondary Routes Programme are set out on Page 42 of the Budget Report. In relation to the N69 Listowel By-Pass the Constraints Report including the Environmental Report was completed and approved by the NRA in October 2007. Approval was also granted to proceed to Phase 3, Route Option Design in 2008. A number of route options have been developed and the Environmental Assessment of these options is being carried out with a report in this regard scheduled for completion shortly. It is proposed to publish the preferred route for this scheme in 2010. The study area for the N70 Coolnaharragill Lower to Coolroe Lower is located approximately 3 km west of Glenbeigh Village on the N70 Ring of Kerry route. The Constraints Report and Route Selection Report were completed in 2007. The preferred route has been identified. A Phasing Report has been completed and submitted to the NRA for consideration and a decision to proceed further is awaited. Details of the National Secondary Routes Pavement and Minor Improvement Programme are set out in Pages 42 and 43 of the Budget Report. In 2009 approximately €2.8m was spent on improvement works. This allocation was a considerable reduction on the amount received in previous years. The majority of the work in this programme is carried out by direct labour and reflects the ability of Kerry County Councils staff to deliver efficient and cost effective works. Realignment works were continued on sections of the following:

- N70 Blackwater to Tahilla
- N72 Gortahanboy

Design work was progressed on the improvement of Barraduff Bridge but due to unforeseen difficulties this project will run over to 2010. A programme of works to the value of €2.6m has been prepared as requested and submitted to the NRA for funding under this programme.

National Secondary Bridge Improvements

An allocation of €300,000 was set aside by the NRA for improvement works on bridges on the National Secondary network. This allocation is administered in its entirety by the Bridges Section of the NRA. In 2009 a contractor was appointed to carry out improvement works to Laune Bridge which got under way in October and will be completed early in 2010. Mr. MacNamara said that some work has been done on the provision of relief roads and Phase 1 of the relief road in An Daingean was built by Kerry County Council. There has not been great progress in the provision of relief roads in Castleisland, Kenmare and Killorglin and the Tralee Relief Road is an ongoing project with parts of it still in the planning

process. The local area plans require €130m for road infrastructure and the Council must be inventive on how this will be funded. There is also a need for car parking and coach parking. Details of the Revenue Works Programme are set out starting on Page 46 of the Budget Report. This programme deals with the on-going improvement, day to day repair and maintenance of the national primary, national secondary and non-national road network in the county, including road improvement works, the provision of safety measures, public lighting and traffic management. It also provides for the administration of all national and non-national road grants received by the local authority, as well as the administration and delivery of Local Improvement Schemes, Community Involvement Schemes, Gaeltacht Grant and County Councillors Allocations. The Revenue Programme also undertakes a considerable body of work in the administration of the following work elements: Preparation of Public Notices, Road Opening Licences, Hedge Cutting Notices, Traffic Warden Services, Casual Trading, Parks and Open Spaces, Ballyseedy Wood, Street Cleaning, Beach Cleaning, Abnormal Load Permits, Event Licences and Road Closures, Roads and Services queries. This Budget is set out in anticipation that grants will be similar to those received in 2009. The own resources provision will remain at the same level as that of 2009. Works on National Primary and National Secondary Roads are funded by the NRA. A sum of €114,000 is provided for National Primary and Surface Dressing while €100,000 has been provided for Winter Gritting. A sum of €30,000 is provided under the heading National Primary Bridge Maintenance and a sum of €330,000 is provided for National Primary General Maintenance. No allocation was received in 2009 for the elimination of noxious weeds. Any work carried out was funded from the ordinary Maintenance Fund. Details of the National Secondary Roads Programme are set out on Page 48 of the Budget Report. The funding in 2009 for this programme was reduced by 34.3% on the 2008 allocation which equated to €756, 000. The service support costs a portion of this programme is funded from Kerry County Council's own resources. €401,000 is provided for National Secondary Surface Dressing. In 2009 a similar amount was received and surface dressing works including overlays were carried out at the following locations:

- N69 Listowel
- N70 Glenbeigh Village

It is anticipated that a similar level of funding will be received in 2010. A sum of €135,000 is provided for National Secondary Winter Maintenance and this is totally inadequate for normal expenditure. A sum of €87,000 is provided for National Secondary Bridge Maintenance. There are 162 bridge structures on the National Secondary roads to be maintained out of this allocation. A sum of €86,500 was allocated for routine maintenance of bridges in 2009. This programme has been reduced by 36% in 2 years. A sum of €807,000 is provided for National Secondary General Maintenance. A grant allocation of €806, 639 was received in 2009. This allocation was a decrease of €215, 239 on our 2008 allocation. This programme covers the day to day maintenance of the network and maintenance of drainage, signage, lining and footpaths. A separate

allocation of €65,000 was provided for a pilot maintenance scheme on the N86 by the NRA. This helped improve the general maintenance of this route to Dingle. It is highly unlikely that a similar allocation will be received in 2010. As with a national primary network we did not receive any Special Maintenance allocation for the treatment of ragwort and noxious weeds on our national Secondary network in 2009. It is again anticipated that low funding will be forthcoming for this work in 2010. Mr. MacNamara briefed members on Service Support Costs of €1.149m. In 2009 the grant allocation for both Regional and Local Roads was reduced by €6.047m from the 2008 allocation. This reduction has impacted upon the amount of Road Improvement Works that were completed in the county. It also had an effect on the level of general maintenance that has been carried out on the road network. It is imperative that this funding is increased if the improvement works over the past number of years are to be protected.

A sum of €2.002m is provided for Regional Roads – Surface Restoration/Road Reconstruction/Overlay. This is made up of the following grants:

- Restoration Maintenance Grant – this allocation is spent primarily on strengthening works and surface dressing previously improved roads. The amount allocated here is €914,264. This is a similar amount to that received in 2009. Some areas where works were carried out in 2009 are: The R558 Fenit Road, R876 Rock Road, R551 Ardfert, R553 Courthouse Road, Listowel and R560 Kilcummin and Aughacasma in the An Daingean area.
- Restoration Improvement Grant – This programme covers the 3 year Multi Annual Road Improvement Programme 2008-2010 which was requested by the Department of Transport and prepared and approved by the elected members. In 2009 due to a reduction of €889,319 in the allocation of the Regional Road element, four schemes were deferred. It is proposed to complete these roads in the current year subject to funding. Some examples of the improvement in 2009 were: the R874 (Basin Road Tralee), R555 (Abbeyfeale to Listowel Road), R459 and R550 (An Daingean) and the R565 in Valentia. This multi annual programme again forms the basis of Road Improvement Works in 2010. The NRA requested that we submit the balance of the 3 year programme for Regional and Local Roads for funding in 2010 which is estimated at €14.4m. The Budget has been prepared on the basis of receiving a similar grant allocation to the 2009 provision.
- Regional Roads – No Gaeltach Road grants were received in 2009 and it is anticipated that this will also be the case in 2010. A sum of €20,000 is provided in the Budget for Regional Roads Winter Maintenance. This is from our own resources for winter gritting at exceptionally vulnerable locations on the Regional Road Network. A sum of €150,000 is provided for Bridge Maintenance on Regional Roads. There are 278 bridge structures on the regional road network to be maintained out of this

allocation. A sum of €1.044m is provided for General Maintenance Works on Regional Roads. An amount of €400,000 from this allocation was provided by the NRA as a Discretionary Maintenance Grant in 2009. The balance is provided from Kerry County Council's own resources. Works carried out under this programme include improvement to footpaths and pedestrian crossings on the regional roads, as well as day to day maintenance of the 524 km network. This allocation also includes loan charges of €218,000 arising from major road realignment and protection works at Inch carried out in 2000 and 2007. A sum of €1.980m is provided for General Improvement Works on Regional Roads. In 2009 Kerry County Council received €3.1m from the Department of Transport for specific improvement works under the Specific Improvement Grant Scheme. This was a reduction of €1.9m on the previous year. This grant allowed for the funding of improvement works completed in the previous year 2008:

- Gaddagh Bridge
- R556 Tralee Ballybunion Road
- R874 Strand Road Roundabout.

In 2009 this grant also allowed improvement works to continue on the R555 Listowel – Abbeyfeale, the R563 Fossa – Milltown, the R561 Castlemaine – Annascaul and the R569 Poulgorm – Kilgarvan Regional Roads.

Mr. MacNamara referred members to Pages 52 – 54 of the Budget Report where details of the Maintenance and Improvement Programme for Local Roads are set out. The local road network in the county measures 3,757 km and funding for this programme is provided by the NRA and Kerry County Council's own resources provision. A sum of €12.329m is provided under the heading Local Roads-Surface Restoration/Road Reconstruction/Overlay. The majority of funding for this programme is provided by the NRA. In 2009 the allocation was made up of the following grants:

- Restoration Maintenance Grant. An allocation of €3.119m was received in 2009 and spent primarily on strengthening works and surface dressing previously improved roads. Approximately 88 kilometres of local roads were surfaced dressed under the programme at 77 different locations county wide.
- Restoration Improvement Programme – In 2009 due to a reduction in this allocation for the Local Road element of €2.797m, 24 schemes were deferred. It is proposed, that if funding is forthcoming, to complete these roads in the current year. The reduced allocation allowed the improvement of 71.5 km at 50 different locations countywide. As in previous years a portion of this allocation in the sum of €180,000 was set aside for use in the Community Involvement Scheme. This allocation allows works to be carried out on 5 schemes.

- Discretionary Improvement Grant This grant provides for improvement works on local roads not included in the Restoration Programme. It also includes provision for improvement works to junctions and selected public access roads to burial grounds. It also provides for upgrading of signage. In 2009 this allocation of €1.186m was reduced by 50%. As a result only 9 km of local roads were improved. It is expected that similar reduced funding in the order of €593,000 will again be received from the NRA in 2010.
- Local Improvement Schemes Grant An allocation of €1.335m was received under this heading and this enabled the Council to complete 43 schemes as well as 5 under the Hardship and Emergency Programme.

Historically Kerry County Council received funding from the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltach Affairs to carry out improvements on Gaeltach roads, as well as in CLÁR Areas. We would also have got some funding from Coillte to upgrade haulage roads. In 2008 these grants amounted to €1.45m. However, in 2009 no funding was received by Kerry County Council from these sources and this is also likely to be the case in 2010. A sum of €150,000 is provided for Bridge Maintenance on Local Roads and this is provided in full from the Council's own resources. A sum of €3.462m is provided for General Maintenance Works on Local Roads. €2.543m of this is provided from the Council's own resources. A sum of €913,000 is provided by the NRA as a Discretionary Maintenance Grant and this budget is based on the Council receiving a similar level of funding in 2010. 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 of €700,000 has been set aside in this programme. He added that this is a substantial allocation and it is a pity that people do not take their litter home as it would result in a substantial saving for the local authority. €1.148m is provided for General Improvement Works on Local Roads. In 2009 a sum of €783,000 was provided from our own resources for maintenance works on local roads nominated by the elected members. A similar sum is provided in 2010 to maintain the work programme identified by elected members. The Council has secured loan approval of €6m towards the construction of the An Daingean Relief Road. Phase 1 of the N86 to John Street was opened to traffic in early 2009. Part VIII planning has been granted for Phase 2 & 3 and it is hoped to continue with construction in 2010. A provision of €365,000 is made in this programme for 2010 in respect of loan charges and which is to be funded by development contributions as they are received or from the Council's own resources.

Mr. MacNamara informed members that a provision is also made in the current budget for a Roads Enforcement Officer who is authorised to enforce the Roads Act 1993. This includes the removal of temporary dwellings, cars for sell, abandoned cars and unauthorised advertising and signs from the public road. He also investigates drainage issues, damage to the public road and mud or dirt

on the public road. He ensures compliance with the reinstatement conditions of road opening licences. The public lighting programme covers the maintenance, energy and repair costs associated with the provision of 4,788 public lights in the county which are the responsibility of Kerry County Council. This area is predominately funded from the Council's own resources with a small allocation forthcoming from the NRA. A sum of €835,000 is provided for the Operational Costs of Public Lighting. The energy, maintenance and repair costs in 2010 are estimated to be €765,000. This small increase in costs over the 2009 figure is as a result of an anticipated 5-6% increase in electricity charges as advised by our Energy Officer. It is hoped that savings can be achieved in this area through deregulation. However, a large number of our public lights are on ESB poles. It may be necessary to upgrade lights and to use more energy efficient light bulbs. The Traffic Management Improvement Programme covers the cost of the preparation of Traffic Management Plans as may be required due to planning applications or changing traffic flow patterns in towns countywide. A Traffic and Transportation Study for the town of Tralee and environs has commenced and a draft report is expected in April 2010. The cost of this study, which will be shared equally between Kerry County Council and Tralee Town Council, will be funded from our own resources. A sum of €24,000 is provided in the Budget for the preparation of Traffic Management Plans. The Road Safety Engineering Improvement Programme covers the provision of low cost safety improvement works on non-national routes. The locations are selected in consultation with Gardai and the Road Safety Auditor and are sites where a history of accidents exist or are considered to be high risk locations. A sum of €182,000 is provided under the Low Cost Remedial Measures Scheme. The Council has prepared a programme of works and submitted it to the NRA in anticipation of a similar level of funding as 2009. A sum of €94,000 is provided for School Warden Scheme and this covers the employment/training needs of 8 Adult School Wardens employed throughout the county. The duties of the Road Safety Education Officer have been assigned to an existing member of staff as the position of Road Safety Education Officer is no longer in place. The Mayor, Cllr. Bobby O'Connell, recently launched the Road Safety Calendar for 2010. A sum of €425,000 is provided for Parking Enforcement. This allocation is provided for the year round operation of the Traffic Warden Service in Caherciveen, Castleisland, An Daingean, Kenmare, and Killorglin and for the summer months in Ballybunion. Approximately 2,500 Fixed Charge Notices for parking offences were issued in 2009, which generated approximately €65,000 in income.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen welcomed the reduction in road fatalities in 2009 and expressed his disappointment that funding is not provided for the Relief Road in Kenmare. He requested that the issue of casual trading in Kenmare and Killorglin would be resolved in 2010. Cllr. Connor-Scarteen pointed out that there was only one successful prosecution in 2009 for non-compliance with Hedge Cutting Notices which seems to be very low and he requested clarification on this figure. He hoped that funding would be made available in 2010 for improvement works to Laune Bridge, Sneem Bridge and Blackwater Bridge.

Cllr. B. Griffin said that it will be necessary to give serious consideration to improvements to key strategic routes into the county if we are to attract investment and to make it more attractive for tourists. There are a number of glaringly dangerous areas in the county such as Listry Bridge and he would like to see these attended to. There have been great improvements on the N86 but there is still room for further improvement. The Castlemaine/Inch road is a very straight busy section of road and needs improvement.

Cllr. L. Purtill welcomed the appointment of a contractor to provide the new bridge at Ballinagar and he also welcomed the road improvement works recently carried out in Tarbert and Listowel. He asked what progress is being made on the proposed Listowel By-Pass. The Ballylongford Listowel road needs improvements and this will be a very busy route when the Shannon LNG project commences. This road is in very poor condition and urgently needs investment in particular the section from Listowel to Colgans Cross.

Cllr. P. Leahy welcomed the work recently carried out on the N69 in Listowel and also the work on the Tarbert Ferry road. 2009 was a very difficult year to carry out the Road Works Programme in view of the very heavy rainfall experienced. He welcomed the appointment of the second contractor for Ballinagare Bridge and said that the allocation of €135,000 for Winter Maintenance on National Secondary Roads is inadequate.

Cllr. M. Gleeson said it was unfortunate that no funding was received under the CLÁR Programme in 2009 and he was astonished that the Government did not make funding available for the elimination of noxious weeds. The transfer of responsibility for Regional/Local roads to the NRA will not be to the benefit of Kerry and he was concerned that the East coast will get priority. The Council is responsible for the economic wellbeing of the county and it is important to develop tourist trails with car parks at either end of these trails. He predicted that 2010 would see the collapse of at least 1 bridge which would result in a peninsula being isolated. The weight and size of vehicles travelling over many bridges in the county are totally inappropriate. Cllr. Gleeson added that parking on footpaths is causing immense damage to them. He called on the Council to put an end to this practice. He expressed his disappointment at the level of littering in the county and said that it is unfortunate that a small percentage of the population are responsible for this.

Cllr. J. Brassil complimented the staff of the Roads Department and he asked what would be the impact of the NRA taking responsibility for Regional and Local Roads. In Mr. MacNamara's presentation he mentioned that roads were left off the programme last year and that people were disappointed as a result of this. He also stated that these roads would be the first to be done in 2010; however, this may not be the case if the NRA has responsibility for Regional and Local Roads. He asked what function do members of Kerry County Council now have in deciding the Road Works Programme. In the past Area Meetings were held

and the Roads Work Programme was agreed based on need and local knowledge. If the members do not continue to have this role he would see his usefulness reduced as a rural Councillor. Cllr. Brassil said that the Council is not winning the battle in relation to hedge cutting. He called on the Roads SPC to come up with a policy to effectively tackle this issue. He commended the work of Mr. S. Barry, Roads Enforcement Officer and said that it is impossible for him to carry out all his duties without assistance even if he was only to ensure compliance with Hedge Cutting Notices. Cllr. Brassil referred to the maintenance of beaches and said the week before Christmas the Tidy Towns Committee in Ballyheigue cleaned the Promenade and it was immaculate. Five days later the place was a mess and householders are depositing domestic refuse in the litter bins. The birds are pecking at this refuse and it is strewn around the place. People are also using Bottle Banks as refuse tips and this is completely unacceptable. He called on the Council to put more resources in place to ensure that these people are identified. He referred to the LNG project and asked what road works would be carried out in 2010 in that area and how development levies will be spent. He asked if funding is provided for the Community Involvement Scheme in 2010 or is this Scheme obsolete. This was a very worthwhile Scheme which was used to improve cul de sac roads. The Lixnaw to Abbeydorney road has deteriorated significantly and he asked that funding would be provided in the Roadworks Programme to improve it.

Cllr. B. Cronin said that in his opinion it is a retrograde step that the NRA has assumed responsibility for Regional and Local Roads. This is diminishing the power of elected council. He asked for clarification on progress on the Farranfore to Lissivigeen Road and would the NRA clarify if it will ever happen. Cllr. Cronin asked if funding is provided in the Budget for the Community Involvement Scheme. A number of towns and villages benefit from the Street Cleaning Programme but there is a large amount of indiscriminate littering and this is very annoying considering the effort that goes into keeping our towns and villages clean. 100 metres from the Coolcaslagh landfill site, landowner's properties are being destroyed by illegal dumping. The Litter Warden gathered up six bags of rubbish in this area and 14 days later a similar amount of rubbish had been dumped illegally at the same location. It is very difficult to get evidence to prove who is responsible for this illegal dumping. He asked that the full rigors of the law would be brought to bear on whoever is responsible for this act. Cllr. Cronin said that four roads in his area were left out of the Roads Programme in 2009 and he hoped that they would be included in 2010.

Cllr. Cronin said that if works on the N22 keep raising the level of the road it will eventually be a fly over. As a result of these works water is flowing on to private property and this needs to be addressed. Accommodation works have been very costly as a result of the raising of the level of this road on the instruction of the NRA. Funding for Bridge Maintenance on Local and Regional Roads is totally inadequate. Many of these bridges on narrow roads were built for a horse and cart and cannot cater for the large vehicles. Cllr. Cronin added that in the past

ditches were removed at junctions etc. and concrete paling was installed. However, these have all become overgrown and at a Killarney Area Meeting he proposed that the growth at these junctions would be sprayed with weed killer. The removal of the ditches in some cases has been a waste of money as visibility is obstructed through the over growth of briars and bushes. He complimented Mr. S. Barry on his work and also complimented landowners who cut their hedges each year. There are some blatant cases where landowners do not cut their hedges and they have been advised that they will not be prosecuted. He referred to a recent report on Hedgerows which was carried out at a cost of €10,000 and asked if the Report was yet available.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae asked if the Community Involvement Scheme was being funded in 2010. Funding is urgently required to improve the road surface at Barraduff as it is in a very bad state of repair. There are a number of bridges on the River Flesk and he has been informed that one eye in at least three bridges is blocked. If these are not cleared there is a danger that the bridge could collapse and it would result in a substantial cost to the Council. The blockages in these bridges have resulted in flooding in Foiladown and houses have been ruined. One eye of the bridge at Ballinalane is also blocked and has resulted in flooding locally. The flooding at Fossa also needs to be addressed together with safety measures which are urgently required there and he hoped that these works would be carried out in 2010. A General Operative living in Sneem passed away recently and he called on the Council to ensure that he is replaced. Cllr. Healy-Rae emphasised the importance of street cleaning for many businesses and said that this is the one service they see as being value for the rates they pay. Cllr. D. Healy-Rae asked that in advance of funding being announced for road works that land would be purchased as this would allow for a saving to be achieved in the cost of the land. The Coomeenavrick and Knockrour Roads were not on the Roads Programme last year and if they are not improved they will have to be closed as they are in such poor condition. He asked that works would be carried out at the entrance to Pinewood Estate as it is very difficult for residents to access the main road. He added that tar and chip has served the Council well in the past and he could not understand why the NRA is insisting on a pre mix which is very expensive. Cllr. Healy-Rae asked that the public lighting in Rathmore would be improved. In conclusion he welcomed the change in the traffic management in Kenmare.

Cllr. J. Finucane expressed concern that the NRA are assuming the role of Councillors in taking responsibility for Regional and Local Roads and said that this should be contested as it is adding another layer of bureaucracy. The new Ring Road for Tralee is crucial for the town and he called on the Council to secure funding for it. He welcomed the sum of €75,000 for tourism development which is provided in the Budget. Cyclists cannot understand how the Council can justify just one prosecution for non compliance with Hedge Cutting Notices, especially at a time when we are trying to encourage walking. It is not safe for people to walk many country roads as they are over grown. Hedge Cutting

Notices are being issued but prosecutions are not being taken and this is of no benefit. He asked that a quarterly report would be presented to Council on this issue. In conclusion, Cllr. Finucane called on the Council to try to secure as much funding as possible for roads in particular National Secondary Roads in 2010.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim said that the flooding on the road beyond the Lidl Store outside Tralee has been unprecedented and there are a huge number of housing estates in that area. She asked that the bridge in this area at Ahern's road is cleared to ensure that it can take the volume of water. She asked that every effort be made to secure funding for the Tralee Relief Road. She referred to the Annual Roads Meeting at which the roads to be included in the Roads Programme under Discretionary Funding are discussed and she asked if that process would now change.

Cllr. N. Foley said the allocation of €700,000 for street cleaning is a huge amount of money. By-Laws should be introduced to make it mandatory for property owners to clean the footpaths in front of their premises. There must also be a duty of care on a community. She welcomed the provision of funding for the Castleisland By-Pass and said that the Tralee By-Pass is vital for the town. However, in the current economic climate it maybe difficult to secure funding for it. She welcomed the Traffic Management Study being carried out in conjunction with Tralee Town Council. She requested clarification on the funding for the Community Involvement Scheme which has been very successful. Cllr. Foley said that she regretted that no funding was made available under the CLÁR Programme in 2009. She referred to the reduction in the Budget for the Fire Services and Training and asked if this was as a result of the reduction in the number of staff. Cllr. Foley said that the roundabout at Strand Road is a hazard and many people do not realise that it is there. She asked that works would be carried out to significantly improve its visibility.

Cllr. T. Buckley welcomed the excellent work carried out to the N69 in Listowel and also on the Tarbert Ferry Road. The road from Lixnaw is very heavily trafficked and he asked that potholes would be filled following the thaw. In conclusion, Cllr. Buckley asked when work would commence on the construction of the Ballinagar Bridge.

Cllr. J. Sheahan said that funding is required to improve or replace Barraduff Bridge and he would also like to see Barraduff village resurfaced in 2010. He concurred with the views expressed by previous speakers that funding for bridges is totally inadequate. The raising of the level of the N22 has resulted in the flooding of people's property and this should be addressed. He concurred with the sentiments expressed by Cllr. N. Foley in relation to littering and said that when somebody is caught littering they should be given 100 hours community service in cleaning up litter. He referred to the Old Kenmare road from Torc waterfall and said that the wall has fallen-in in places and he asked

that this would be repaired. In conclusion Cllr. Sheahan asked that traffic calming measures would be provided in Rathmore together with additional street lighting.

Cllr. M. Moloney thanked Mr. G. MacNamara for his comprehensive report. She referred to the substantial cost to Kerry County Council of salting and gritting roads over the past few weeks and asked if these costs are not refunded by the NRA would the Roads Programme have to be amended to take account of this expenditure. She asked if it would be possible to arrange a meeting with the NRA to discuss this matter. She referred to the filling of potholes and said that it appears that two types of material are used (1) Tar and Chip and (2) Tarmacadam. It appears that the tarmacadam is more successful and in the long run it might be worth spending more initially. She requested an update on the funding for the Community Involvement Scheme. She asked what deterrent was there in relation to the non compliance with Hedge Cutting Notices if there was just one prosecution in 2009.

Cllr. M. Healy-Rae said that the Community Involvement Scheme is very important for rural areas and he hoped funding will be provided for it in 2010. He added that he hoped that key projects would also be funded in 2010. He referred to hedge cutting and he called on the Roads Department to revert to the system in place in the past whereby Councillors could use their Councillor's Allocation for this purpose. In conclusion he complimented the Area Engineers and the Senior Engineers on the excellent work done by the Roads Department over the past 12 months.

The Mayor indicated that the various issues raised could be dealt with during the Special Roads Meeting which would be held later on.

Division D Development Management

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance referred members to Pages 88-104 of the Budget Report and Pages 18-20 of the Budget Tables for details of this Division. The overall expenditure on this Division is €8m with a projected income of €2m approximately. In this Division the emphasis must shift from development control to enforcement. Details of the activities of the Planning SPC are set out on Page 88 of the Budget Report. A sum of €487,000 is provided for Statutory Plans and Policy. This provides for the review of the Functional Area Local Area Plans. One of the most challenging charts in the entire document is set out in the middle of Page 90. This documents the decline in the level of planning applications. This highlights the impact of the recession and the near demise of the construction industry. This graph shows that the level of planning applications received in 2009 was the lowest received in many years and will have many implications. This is also referred to in the Water Services Programme. The savage down turn in the economy and in the construction sector means that the development levies fund is diminishing and this is a very significant issue. A sum

of €2.258m is provided for Development Management. A specialist team from existing resources has been set up to provide expert assessment of the reports from approved personnel on-site drainage for the purpose of waste water discharges. It is envisaged that this team will continue to operate in 2010 and a provision is made in the Budget for same. The Enforcement Section incorporates the Housing Estates Unit which the Co. Manager recently referred to. In a reply to a notice of motion at the December Council meeting the extent of planning bonds we are holding was set out. It is important that any difficulties in private estates are addressed while the Bond is in place. It has become apparent since the establishment of the Housing Estates Unit, during 2009, that considerable work needs to be undertaken in areas where housing estates have not been fully completed. It is important that drawdowns from appropriate insurance/financial bonds are received in these cases to better safeguard against non compliance of planning conditions. Appropriate enforcement action will need to be taken in some cases. During 2010, it is intended to further progress work in this area. The benefits of the work done by this Unit will become apparent in time. A sum of €413,000 is provided for General Economic Promotion. This is the only allocation that has increased and it is proposed to support a fund for a new tourism marketing initiative in the sum of €75,000. This grant will be paid over only when a viable business plan is in place and a report will be submitted to the Council beforehand for discussion. It is also intended to provide a sum of €50,000 for a secured bond for the Cork/Swansea Ferry. According to the structure this bond will be secured on the worth of the vessel. Given the overall contribution the Ferry can make to the county and in particular to the South of the county if members agree an item will be included on the agenda for the next meeting to approve the necessary resolution in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act 2001. Contributions are also provided to Tralee Town Council towards the salary of the County Museum Curator, Outreach Officer, County Exhibition at the County Museum and street management costs arising from the Festival of Kerry amounting to €110,000. The balance is intended for supporting other exceptionally meritorious promotions that may arise during the year including in particular contribution towards Brú Colmbanus, Wilton, which provides accommodation to families from all over Munster with long-term and critically ill relatives in the Cork hospitals, including a substantial number of bed nights for Kerry people; the County Kerry Amalgamated Shows, the Seanachai Centre, Listowel, The Kerry Mountain Rescue Association, The Miltown Bodhrán World Championship Festival etc.

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 93 of the Budget Report where details of the budget for the Community and Enterprise Function are set out. A sum of €438,000 is provided for General Community and Enterprise expenses. The Community and Enterprise Department support the work of the County Development Board. The work of the various units within the County Development Board is set out in the report. He referred members to Page 99 of the Budget Report where details of the Budget for Building Control are set out. A sum €287,000 is provided for Building Control Inspection and Enforcement

Costs. During 2009 the Building Control Section received 130 building plans for Fire Safety Certificate Applications and issued 135 Fire Safety Certificates following assessment of the plans. The mandatory introduction of disability access certificates (DAC) for new buildings other than domestic dwellings and apartments will commence from the 1st January 2010. The DAC will be issued by the Building Control Section and will certify compliance at design stage with the requirements of Part M of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations 1997 – 2008. A sum of €236,000 is provided for Economic Development and Promotion and this includes a sum of €68,000 in respect of loan charges for Broadband. Due to the special endeavours of the Tidy Town Committees throughout the county, a sum of €20,000 is provided to support exceptionally worthwhile Tidy Town initiatives by local Tidy Town Committees. Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 101 of the Budget Report where details of the Budget for Heritage and Conservation Services are set out. A sum of €245,000 is provided for Heritage Services and this includes salaries and project work. He informed members that considerable grants are received towards this work. A sum of €100,000 is included for grants for the Conservation of a Protected Structure. A total of €105,600 was received from the DOEHLG in 2009 in respect of grants in this area. In 2009 for the first time, Kerry County Council's Conservation Officer undertook all the inspections and prepared the necessary reports which resulted in significant savings for the Planning Department.

Cllr. J. Finucane said that the County Museum is the designated Museum for the county and the contribution for this facility by Kerry County Council should be increase.

Cllr. M. Healy-Rae referred to Enforcement and he PROPOSED that a Charter should be drawn up for dealing with cranks. A sum of €800,000 was spent on enforcement in 2009 with 605 cases investigated. 33 cases were taken to court at a cost of €26,000 per case. Some of the cases taken to court were dismissed and he was not blaming staff for this but blaming the system in place. He added that no one should be allowed to make a complaint unanimously. Any complainant should give their name and contact number. The numbers of staff dealing with these anonymous complaints is unreasonable and they should be redeployed to other areas. He asked how many successful prosecutions were taken in 2009.

Cllr. J. Brassil welcomed the setting up of a fund for Tourism as this is crucial for the county. He also welcomed the provision of €50,000 for the Cork/Swansea Ferry and he asked that targets would be set for the management team to ensure they deliver for Kerry. If they meet these targets further funding could be considered. He accepted the drop in the number of planning applications is alarming and said that any applicant applying for planning permission now is genuine and they should be facilitated wherever possible. This would also help to maintain the development levies fund. Cllr. Brassil expressed concern regarding the Site Assessment Unit who deals with the assessment of

percolation tests. A number of the approved assessors also deal with Limerick County Council and they have greater difficulty dealing with Kerry County Council than Limerick. The reports submitted to Limerick County Council are assessed critically and approved while the ones submitted to Kerry County Council are being assessed critically and rejected. Both local authorities should be following the same EPA manual. In conclusion Cllr. Brassil welcomed the continuing contribution to Kerry Life Education and said they provide a very worth while service.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen welcomed the allocation for Tourism Development and Promotion. He welcomed the provision of €50,000 for the purchase of bonds in the Cork/Swansea Ferry. He added that he was satisfied that Kerry will benefit from the restoration of this service as the loss of the ferry has had a negative impact on South Kerry since it ceased operating in 2006. The UK is the biggest tourism market for South Kerry.

Cllr. B. Griffin welcomed the allocation in the budget for the Cork/Swansea Ferry which he said is vital for tourism in Kerry. He submitted a motion calling on the Council to strengthen links with areas that have direct links through the Ferry and Kerry Airport with Kerry. He welcomed the provision in the Budget for the World Bodhrán Festival and said it is very welcome.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance referred to the comments by Cllr. M. Healy-Rae in relation to the Budget for Enforcement and said that this allocation also provides for the Housing Estates Unit and 50% of the costs relate to that Unit. He informed members that Kerry County Council has been increasing its contribution to the County Museum over the past few years. However, if a specific exhibition or initiative is undertaken this could also be supported. In relation to the Festival of Kerry, he stated that €20,000 is provided for street cleaning while €40,000 is provided towards the Curator's salary and the Kennelly Archive Exhibition.

Mr. M. McMahon referred to the comments by Cllr. M. Healy-Rae in relation to the enforcement activity levels and said that the total number of new complaints received was 345 and legal proceedings were initiated in 33 cases which could not be resolved. The decision to take Circuit Court proceedings is not taken lightly but there are some very serious breaches of planning legislation. His Department has been very successful in Circuit and High Court cases and they are in possession of six Circuit Court Orders in relation to various properties and these will have to be demolished. A garage was demolished the night before the owner was due to go to jail. He accepted that a portion of complaints, possibly 5%, are people trying to get at their neighbours. A complaint or a report received with regard to illegal building which is in breach of planning legislation must be investigated. He said that he rejected the broad thrust of Cllr. Healy-Rae's comments and said that the work of this Unit is very necessary and some people have no regard for planning legislation.

Cllr. M. Healy-Rae said that he accepted what Mr. McMahon said, however, he would like the instruction to be given to staff that a complaint will only be investigated if the complainants name, address and contact number is provided. That may be a way of getting rid of career objectors.

Cllr. J. Finucane said that there are serial objectors.

Mr. McMahon said that he was not sure that we have serial complainers but the new Planning Bill strengthens his duties. As there is such a huge problem with non compliance it was necessary to establish the Control Assessment Unit. Some people living in new estates have been abandoned and this is a huge problem. Mr. O. Ring who established the Site Assessment Unit in the Environmental Department can address queries in relation to site assessment.

Division F Recreation and Amenity

Mr. J. O'Connor referred members to Pages 129 – 135 of the Budget Report and Pages 24 and 25 of the Budget Table for details on this Division. A sum of €5.136m is provided for this Division with €3.725m being provided for the Library Service. There are nine branch libraries in the county and the use of the library services has increased substantially. An all out effort was made to maintain the Book Fund in 2010. A sum of €776,000 is provided for Outdoor Leisure Areas Operations and €235,000 of this is for Parks Pitches and Open Spaces. €394,000 is provided for beaches. However, despite the record levels of rainfall in Kerry again during July and August of 2009, it now appears that we will retain the existing 12 Blue Flag Beaches and regain the one previously lost at Maherabeg for 2010. A sum of €64,000 is provided for the maintenance and inspection of Playgrounds. Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 134 for details of the Arts budget. A sum of €295,000 is provided for the administration of the Arts Programme. This budget was reduced substantially in 2009 and it is intended to continue to support local art grants.

Division G Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare

Mr. J. O'Connor referred members to Pages 136 – 140 of the Budget Report and Pages 26 and 27 of the Budget Tables for details on this Division. The total projected expenditure for this division is €15.593m. There are two main headings in this Division the payment of VEC Pensions and the total superannuation gratuities and pensions of retired VEC staff are paid by the Council and are recouped in full from the Department of Education and Science. However, administration costs are not refunded. The payment of these salaries results in a cash flow cost for the Council. A sum of €7.5m is included for the payment of these pensions. A sum of €6.5m is provided for the payment of Higher Education Grants. The amount paid out in grants is recouped in full from the Department of Education and Science except for approximately €20,000 and the cost of administering this Grant Scheme must be funded by the Council.

Cllr. J. Finucane asked if a letter could be forwarded to the Department of Education, calling on them to recoup the administration costs associated with both these payments.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, confirmed that this letter could be issued if the members so wish. Mr. O'Connor then referred to Piers and Harbours and said there has been very little investment nationally in this area in recent years. A sum of €75,000 is provided for Planned Protection of Coastal Regions. The local authority is required to cover 25% of the cost of any scheme co funded by the State. A sum of €177,000 is provided for the Operation of the Dog Warden Service. This is a very efficient service and we recover the costs of the service from the income from dog licences. A sum of €224,000 is provided for the Inspection of Abattoirs and this money is recovered from fees from slaughtering and grants from the Food Safety Authority.

Division H Miscellaneous Services

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Pages 141 – 146 of the Budget Report and Pages 28 – 30 of the Budget Tables for details of this Division. The costs associated with this Division include the administration of the Rates Office, the payment of the collectors, cost of Register of Electors, Coroners etc.

Cllr. J. Sheahan asked who employs the coroner.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance, informed members that Kerry County Council has no control over the employment of coroners. The Council has been calling for a change in the legislation which would see responsibility for coroners removed to another authority, but so far this has not happened. The Council even had to contribute towards the cost of a saw for Post Mortem at Kerry General Hospital in recent years. Also included in this Division is provision for payments to Councillors and the 5% reduction in salaries also apply to Councillors. The cost of running the Motor Tax Office is also included in this Division. He referred members to the graph on Page 145 which details Motor Tax transactions 2008, 2009. What is evident from this graph is that very few people are using the online option for paying their motor tax. It is hoped that more people would avail of this service.

Cllr. M. Moloney asked if the income from Motor Tax stays within the county.

In response Mr. J. O'Connor said that this is lodged to the Local Government Fund from which we get an allocation. Our allocation for 2010 is €26m and additional grants are also received for non national roads. The allocation for 2010 is reduced by 3.3% on the 2009 revised figure, however, we did benefit from the Needs and Resources Model.

Cllr. M. Healy-Rae requested clarification on the provision of €10,000 for foreign travel.

In response Mr. J. O'Connor said that this is to cover the visit to the US in March.

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Page 147 of the Budget Report where details of the Central Management Charges are set out. A sum of €1.842m is provided for the Maintenance and Upkeep of Corporate Buildings. This includes loan charges for Castleisland and Killorglin Area Services Centres. An application for planning permission has been lodged for the extension to Co. Buildings, the new Laboratory, the File Store and Parking to ensure that when the economy recovers we would be in a position to apply for loan approval for this extension. The Council has approximately 15,000sq feet of rented office accommodation. The locations include Manor West, Maine Street, 24 Denny Street and the Ashe Memorial Hall in Tralee along with Farrankilla House in An Daingean. The Water Services design team are located in the Castleisland Area Services Centre and a file store is also located there where the Planning and Finance files are stored. In applying for planning permission for the extension to Co. Buildings a 10 year planning permission has been sought. It is possible that there would be objections and it maybe decided by An Bord Pleanála.

Cllr. J. Finucane asked does Kerry County Council seek tenders for Treasurer.

In response Mr. J. O'Connor said that it does go to tender and the Council is enjoying a good rate from the Bank of Ireland. A lot of progress has been made in moving towards Electronic Fund Transfer. He referred to Council loans and said that our Treasurer does not automatically get our loans as these go out to competitive tender. The most recent loan sought was one for €13m for Water Services and the Housing Finance Agency were successful in securing that loan and this is at an exceptionally good rate because half of it is from the European Investment Bank.

The Mayor B. O'Connell asked members if they were satisfied to accept Mr. O'Connor's briefing on the previous three Divisions.

This was unanimously agreed.

The meeting concluded at 5:45pm.

Gerard O'Brien
Meetings Administrator

Mayor of Kerry