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MIONTUAIRISCÍ CRUINNITHE BHUISÉID COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHIARRAÍ, A THIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, DÉ LUAN, 10 EANAIR 2011.

MINUTES OF THE BUDGET MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON MONDAY 10TH JANUARY 2011.

PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR

Councillors/Comhairleoirí

R. Beasley	J. Brassil	T. Buckley
M. Cahill	P. Connor-Scarteen	B. Cronin
P.J. Donovan	T. Ferris	J. Finucane
S. Fitzgerald	T. Fleming	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	P. O'Donoghue	M. O'Shea
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. Services
Mr. O. Ring, Dir. of Water & Env.	Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Dir. of Roads
Mr. J. Breen, Dir. of Housing	Ms. A. McAllen, Fin./Mgmt. Accountant
Mr. G. MacNamara, SE Roads	Mr. M. Corridon, SE Roads
Mr. T. Sheehy, SE Environment	Mr. F. Dillon, SE Water Services
Mr. P. Neary, SEE Water Serv.	Mr. J. Kennelly, SEE Water Serv.
Mr. L. Brosnan, AO Planning	Mr. G. O'Brien, Meetings Admin.
Mr. P. O'Shea, A/SEO Finance	Ms. K. Lynch, AO Finance
Ms. S. Ronan, AO Housing	Ms. M. West, AO Roads
Mr. K. Curtin, AO Revenue	Ms. J. Brosnan, AO Housing
Mr. P. O'Connor, SSO Finance	Mr. R. Tangney, ASO Finance
Mr. P. Corkery, Press & Comm. Off.	Ms. B. Reidy, SSO Corp. Affairs
Ms. B. Walsh, SSO Housing	Ms. K. Doody, SO Roads
Ms. G. McCarthy, ASO Roads	

The meeting commenced at 10.50am.

Mayor P. Leahy took the Chair.

The Mayor called on Mr. O. Ring, Director of Water Services and Environment to brief the meeting on the impact of the recent severe weather conditions on water supplies in the county.

Mr. O. Ring read the following report into the record of the meeting:-

“December 2010 was the coldest on record. The lowest temperatures experienced occurred on Christmas Eve and Christmas morning, when temperatures dipped as low as -11°C. This was followed by a rapid thaw on St. Stephen's Day and subsequent days which saw temperatures recover to +11 °C, resulting in temperatures increasing by 22 degrees in about 72 hours. This severe weather event had a major impact on water supplies throughout the county.

Impact on Water Services

Although difficulties were encountered at some intakes, particularly on high ground, all of the 65 Public Water Supply Schemes in Kerry continued to supply water during the period from 23rd December 2010 to 3rd January 2011 and there was no significant increase in the number of bursts and leaks occurring on public mains (trunk mains). There were significant leaks however on the service pipes linking individual consumers to the trunk mains and these often occurred at the stopcock or meter box. It is estimated that Kerry County Council leak repair crews attended to over 500 of these leaks during the period.

By far the greatest number of leaks occurred on the consumer side (often within the premises) and KCC staff identified over 2,500 of these leaks during this period and shut off the supply where necessary. These leaks ranged from domestic supplies to large commercial supplies. These leaks have had a significant effect on the Council's ability to maintain water supplies throughout the county. For example, it has been established that the severe disruptions to the water supply in the Cromane, Dooks and Sunhill areas near Killorglin were primarily caused by a major burst within an unoccupied commercial premises. This problem was not notified to Kerry County Council until 3rd January 2011.

Many consumers experienced disruptions to supply during the period primarily due to:

- (a) Restrictions on supply due to demand exceeding supply and the need to refill many reservoirs.
- (b) Disruption on the consumer side due to freezing and/or burst pipes.
- (c) Consumers on high ground or at the end of supply networks without supply due to high demand elsewhere on the network.

Pipes froze at depths of over 300mm and despite the rapid thaw over-ground, pipes at these depths took many days to thaw out and this was a source of frustration for many consumers.

In response to the impact these leaks were having on water supplies, Kerry County Council deployed 4 crews across the county on Leak Detection and a further 15 crews on leak repair. In addition, 45 water caretakers were working throughout the county. The Senior Executive Engineers and all of the area engineers provided support services to the frontline staff. Most staff members worked throughout the period from 23rd December 2010 to 3rd January 2011 including late night working, often in freezing conditions. These workers are to be commended for their

dedication and for the sacrifices they made during the holidays to ensure that disruptions to supplies were kept to an absolute minimum.

Water restrictions were imposed on several supplies (including Tralee and Listowel) as the demand for water exceeded the supply capacity. Many reservoirs were depleted due either to leaks or to taps being left on overnight. While this situation has stabilised, water is still being produced at levels in excess of 'normal' consumption.

Where water restrictions were in place and in areas where many consumers struggled to regain supplies, Kerry County Council deployed standpipes and in some cases, water tankers. A total of 24 standpipes were deployed in areas including Tralee, Killarney, Listowel, Kenmare, Killorglin, Glenbeigh, Rathmore, Gneeveguilla and Currow. A water tanker was provided in Tralee town during the restrictions on 29th December while 2 tankers were used at Kerry General Hospital. Another tanker was provided to serve the Cromane, Dooks and Sunhill areas of Killorglin over 3 days until adequate supplies were restored.

Communications

Kerry County Council provided an emergency phone number during the Christmas period from 23rd December until 4th January to provide a communications service for members of the public while the main offices were closed. During the period of peak disruption to water supplies from 26th to 30th December, the emergency phone was overwhelmed with over 500 calls received and many others being diverted to voicemail.

While the emergency phone worked reasonably well during the corresponding Christmas period in 2009, where freezing temperatures were also experienced, it is acknowledged that the facility was unable to cope with the sheer volume of calls being received. Kerry County Council is reviewing its communications protocol in light of this.

The majority of calls received by the emergency phone related to disruptions on the consumer side, either burst or frozen pipes. Some calls related to the water restrictions that were being put in place, especially in the larger towns of Tralee and Listowel. Tralee Town Council also had a phone service in place once restrictions were imposed to the supply in the town.

Padraig Corkery, Kerry County Council's Communications Relations Officer provided regular updates to the public on the water supply situation through the KCC Website, Radio Kerry, RTE News and Twitter. He liaised closely with KCC Water Services in providing these updates.

Conclusions

The efforts of Kerry County Council staff in cooperation with staff from Tralee Town Council ensured that the water situation in Kerry had stabilised by 31st December 2010 and water restrictions have not been imposed since that time.

However, the demand for water remains high (at approximately 16% above normal) for all public water schemes throughout the county and consumers are being urged to:

- (a) Check unoccupied domestic, agricultural and commercial premises for leaks.
- (b) Report leaks where found to the Water Services Department by telephone: 1800 71 71 71 or email: WaterServices@kerrycoco.ie.
- (c) Conserve water – use sparingly and do not leave taps running overnight during cold weather. For further information on how to conserve water, visit www.taptips.ie."

Mayor Leahy complimented the staff of the Water Services Department who did an excellent job in very difficult conditions over Christmas. He also thanked Mr. P. Corkery for keeping the general public informed of any developments on Radio Kerry.

All members complimented the staff of the Water Services Department for their commitment and dedication during the recent severe weather conditions. They also complimented Mr. P. Corkery for keeping the public informed and said it was very much appreciated.

Cllr. M. Gleeson asked that reminders would be sent out to property owners with their water charges bill reminding them to carryout inspections of their property especially when it is vacant. An emergency phone number should also be included in this reminder. A campaign should be undertaken to clarify the responsibility of property owners i.e. from the stopcock to the property. Owners should be encouraged to cover stop cocks to try to prevent water from freezing. There is an urgent need for additional capacity and the proposed reservoirs at Sheheree and Leamnaguilla should be fast tracked. Water harvesting should also be encouraged. The Fire Services have a very important role to play in providing water to housing estates. However, there is an urgent need for the proper regulation of the depth that pipes are laid and also for the inspection of this work when it is ongoing. If pipes are laid at an appropriate depth the difficulties experienced recently with freezing water will not occur.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae said the water pipe at Coomcloherane from the intake to the reservoir is laid over ground and should be laid underground as it is an important water source. This pipe froze but the crew used an old pipe lower down to supply water. However this supply also froze on Christmas Day and Water Services staff worked all day to restore the water supply at 5pm. Some houses in the area did not have a water supply for a number of days. He thanked the staff for providing water tankers at Sunhill, Killorglin at short notice. In conclusion Cllr. D. Healy-Rae asked that an estimate would be prepared of the cost to the Council of the recent bad weather.

Cllr. J. Brassil said lessons were learnt from the freezing weather in 2009 and the response was better this winter. If these harsh weather conditions are to become an annual event it is important to prepare for it. An information campaign should be launched advising property owners how they can protect their water supply. Information leaflets should be made available and advice should also be on the Council website. When property is vacant the water should be turned off.

Cllr. T. O'Brien said the general public get frustrated when they phone in and get an answering service. It should no longer be the case that taps are left dripping at night. The importance of having a light on in the attic should be highlighted.

Cllr. R. Beasley said staff in the Water Services Department worked all over Christmas and did excellent work. Many stop cocks are just 5" underground and this is not sufficient. It is not unusual to get this severe weather so this issue must be addressed.

Cllr. J. Finucane said that the provision of salt, which was taken over by the NRA, did not work well. It is also proposed to establish a national Water Utility Company and he believed this would not succeed. At present local authorities have responsibility for the provision of water and they provide a very good service. He PROPOSED that there would be no change in this arrangement.

Cllr. M. Moloney said that while people leave taps running to avoid frozen pipes customers at the end of the line have no water, however, she accepted that it is hard to blame householders for leaving taps running. She submitted a notice of motion for the January Meeting calling on the Council to provide water taps in each village so that people who are without water could access water. In conclusion Cllr. Moloney suggested that a Civic Reception should be held to honour the commitment and dedication of the emergency services during the recent severe weather.

Mayor Leahy informed the meeting that last year a letter of thanks was sent by the Mayor and County Manager to all staff thanking them for their efforts and he undertook to do so again this year.

Cllr. T. Ferris said some tenants do not have insurance for the contents of their local authority house and she asked if there was any scope in the Council's insurance to allow them to get compensation for losses suffered because of burst pipes.

Cllr. P. McCarthy said that people do not know how to cope with the severe weather conditions. He suggested that a series of information sessions should be held by the Council where staff and experts would advise people on how best to minimise water problems and damage to their property. There is a need to lower the depth at which pipes are laid and he understood connections to the meter are too high.

Cllr. N. Foley said the constant updates by the Council on Radio Kerry were extremely helpful. The proposal to establish a national Water Utility Authority should not proceed and lessons should be learnt from the recent disastrous experience in Northern Ireland. She supported Cllr. Finucane's proposal that a national Water Utility Company should not be established. She suggested that alerts should issue to property owners over a six or eight week period advising them on how to protect their property from severe freezing conditions. She also suggested that a review should be undertaken to establish what worked and what did not during the recent severe conditions. The views of customers should also be sought in this review.

Mr. O. Ring, Director of Environment and Water Services, thanked members for their kind words to staff who did excellent work. The cost involved is being finalised. He assured members that the Council will consider the best means of communicating with customers on appropriate actions to be taken by them to protect their property. In many cases there is a need to lay water pipes deeper and to insulate them. If all

householders leave taps running there will be a shortage of water and restrictions will be imposed. The supply line from the stopcock is too high in many instances. In conclusion Mr. Ring said that a review of operations will be undertaken.

11.01.10.01 Consideration of the Local Authority Budget for the Local Financial Year Ending 31st December 2011

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager, said the Draft Budget was prepared for Kerry County Council for the financial year ending 31st December 2011 in accordance with Section 102 of the Local Government Act, 2001 for consideration by the Members at the Budget Meeting. The Draft Budget was circulated in advance of the meeting.

Over the past twelve months all sectors of business both public and private and all branches of society had a year of change and reduced opportunity. The forecast for the year ahead both nationally and world-wide is for marginal economic growth. Ireland as an open economy is quite dependent on international economic growth for any significant improvement in its financial well-being and so, in that regard the prospects are not encouraging for 2011.

As well, the challenges facing the national exchequer finances were clearly set out by the Government in its recent National Budget and in the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014.

It is against that background that the Council's Draft Budget for 2011 has been prepared and will be considered. The Council is acutely aware, though, of the impact of the Council's services on the everyday life of business and communities, and the draft budget seeks to balance the continuation of these services to the greatest extent possible with the available resources.

Council Budget Objectives

Against the background already outlined the draft budget mainly strives to:

- Maintain our core services at satisfactory levels.
- Deliver our services cost effectively and to the best quality.
- Minimize the need for any increase in the commercial rates multiplier or user charges wherever possible, and
- Maintain a balanced budget.

Draft Budget Overview

The Draft Budget provides for expenditure of €128747m, resulting in a reduction of approx. 2% on the 2010 projected out-turn, allowing for the same level of road grants as in 2010. As the Council is statutorily required to prepare a balanced budget, all expenditure provisions must match income projections. The proposed budget expenditure is fully funded as follows:-

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| • Division Income | €81.547m |
| • Rates | €17.303m |
| • Local Government Fund | €23.238m |

- Town Council share-out of charges € 6.659m

Total €128.747m

The explanatory memorandum circulated gives the background and full details of the various Budget figures.

Local Government Fund

The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DoEHLG) has notified the Council that the Local Government Fund (LGF) Allocation for the coming year is €23,238,216, a reduction of €2.334m (9.1%) on the 2010 figure. The 2011 allocation is just the same as the 2005 figure (€23.426m) - the Consumer Price Index increased by about 8% in the period 2005-2010, so, in real terms the value of the 2011 allocation is relatively lower by 8%.

However, of the total LGF allocation of €23.238m the Exchequer will fund only €20.648m. The balance of €2.590m will be funded through the Council staff pension levy deductions introduced in the December 2009 National Budget.

Staffing

As a consequence of the restrictions on funding arising from the economic downturn and the Government's moratorium on recruitment, staff numbers have decreased significantly since April 2009 and are likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Against that background the key services continue to be delivered in an efficient manner and this is being achieved through work re-organisation, increased use of technology and staff flexibility.

In Summer 2010, the Public Sector Agreement (The Croke Park Agreement) was entered into between the public sector employers and trade unions. In accordance with the agreement, Kerry County Council has produced a Local Action Plan of efficiency measures and cost savings. The measures outlined in the plan are being discussed with the relevant staff trade unions and will be implemented during 2011. Council management continues to have constructive dialogue with staff representatives from all levels through the Workplace Partnership Committee.

Prime examples of the commitment and dedication of our workforce were in the very severe weather conditions of January last and the recent spell. Mr. Curran complimented all the staff who were involved in responding to these two periods and, in particular, the staff of the Roads, Machinery, Water Services, Housing, Fire Services and Civil Defence Departments for their tremendous efforts and efficiency in dealing with the unprecedented conditions encountered during both periods. The Civil Defence had a key role in transporting HSE staff on house visits to patients. Occasions like these clearly show the necessity for the retention of an adequate skilled, trained and committed workforce by the Council in order to secure the capacity for dealing with emergencies when they occur. He said he very much appreciated the contribution of Pdraig Corkery, Communications Officer, in keeping the public fully up-to-date on developments. He also thanked Radio Kerry for its part in keeping the public informed.

Charge on Non-Principal Private Residences

This charge which was introduced in July 2009 is estimated to yield €2.00m for Kerry County Council in the coming year. The Town Councils benefit to the extent of approximately €1.00m, in addition. 14,319 people registered and paid charges in 2010. The liability date for 2011 is 31st March. The Council has been undertaking investigations with a view to identifying properties that have not been registered and the charges not paid. This element of work will be pursued further over the coming year.

Cost Savings

Getting better value in all our procurement remains a key senior management imperative across all our services and will be further targeted during the coming year. Cost savings have been achieved in a range of our purchases/contracts such as plant hire, civil works, telecommunications, advertising, energy, general goods and services. The Manager said it is his priority to use internal staff to the greatest extent possible and make full use of the available skills so as to avoid engagement of external services as far as practicable.

The report of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group has been considered. While implementation of many of the measures recommended will require national action or legislation, the Council will follow through on any local initiatives possible and practicable.

While the pursuit and achievement of efficiencies and the more competitive environment for procured goods and services will compensate for some reductions in income, there is an inevitable limit to what can be achieved and so services have to be prioritised for the available funding. The Manager said he had endeavoured to reflect the key requirements in the Draft Budget Allocations.

Commercial Rates and Commercial Water Charges

The Council is mindful of the challenges being faced by the agricultural and business/commercial sectors. On the other hand, Council services fulfill essential needs in the economic and social life of the county and the Council needs funding to provide them. The Council has striven to minimise its expenditure to the greatest extent possible, taking into account the cost savings mentioned earlier and the need to provide for the maintenance of our essential services and core responsibilities at a reasonable standard over the coming year. So, on the basis and for the reasons mentioned, he was not proposing any increases (for the second consecutive year) in the Rates Multiplier or in water/waste water charges for the coming year. As well, a much welcomed increase in the overall rateable valuation of the County Council area, due to new valuations mostly relating to wind turbines, has helped. Furthermore, reserves from previous years of €1m are being introduced – this will not be available for future years.

Revenue Budget 2011 – Main Service Features

- **Housing and Building**

This programme is the Council's main response to social needs and a special effort has been made to support it. There is significant provision for staffing to help with delivery of the many housing schemes and for housing maintenance. A sum of €900,000 is included for the repair of vacant houses to be funded from internal capital housing receipts subject to the approval of DoEHLG and the Energy Efficiency Programme Grant-aid. The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) is still continuing to attract increased participation in Kerry and this is reflected in the budget figures.

The Draft Budget contains an allocation of €3.547m for the Housing Adaptation and Aids for the Elderly Grants Schemes subject to grant-aid of €2.838m (80%) from DoEHLG. This requires a local contribution of €0.709m. In addition, there are the substantial costs of the implementation of the schemes which much be met from own resources locally, as well.

- **Road Transport and Safety**

The Draft Budget figures for the Roads Grants Schemes are based on the revised grants allocated by the NRA/Department of Transport in 2010 – the actual allocations to be notified later will determine the level of expenditure to be incurred. Again this year, a special effort has been made to retain the own resources allocation for the non-national roads works programme more or less at the same level as 2010 and indeed 2009, in effect, despite the overall pressure on funding in recent years.

- **Water Services – Operation and Maintenance**

Allowing for operational savings particularly relating to energy costs, additional allocations are included in the Water Services Draft Budget. These arise in response to the needs to meet increased national standards and to fund the operation and maintenance costs of new schemes and additional plant/equipment coming on stream. These follow on from the increased allocations over recent years.

In addition, loan charges on the borrowings for the local contribution towards the new water and waste water schemes will amount to €1.169m for the coming year. While these will be met from development contributions on hands, over time this fund will be dissipated in the absence of significant additional receipts and this seems very unlikely in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, over the coming years, the Council is committed to substantial additional borrowings to meet the local contribution towards new water and waste water schemes being delivered in accordance with the Water Services Investment Programme.

Adequately funding the water services programme over coming years is likely to be a major challenge unless the present local authority funding arrangements are modernised. In that regard two recent national documents are noteworthy.

The Plan for National Recovery 2011 – 2014 at section 4.9.2 envisages the introduction of a scheme for the metering and charging for domestic water.

The section further adds:

“It is intended that domestic water charges will cover local authorities’ operational costs. A proportion of the capital cost of providing water services will be recovered through the charge.”

The EU/IMF Programme of Financial Support for Ireland, December 2010, provides:

“In advance of the introduction of water charges - The Government will have undertaken an independent assessment of transfer of responsibility for water services provision from local authorities to a water utility and prepare proposals for implementation as appropriate with a view to start charging in 2012/2013” – Actions for fourth review.

- **Development Management**

The Draft Budget contains an allocation to continue the special project team known as the “Housing Estates Unit” for the coming year. This team has made significant progress on inspecting housing estates either where they are unfinished or where works are needed, and following up on remedial action as appropriate. The work here will have short and long term benefits.

In recognition of the special need at this time to support local initiatives in the tourism/economic development fields during the year, an allocation of €100,000 is included under this Division’s Draft Budget figures specifically for any new particularly worthwhile and innovative proposals in tourism/economic promotion and development. Mr. Curran said he was proposing payment only when a sustainable business plan including a self-funding arrangement for the future has been prepared and submitted to the Council. He undertook to keep the Council informed of progress during the year.

- **Environmental Services**

Councillors will recall from previous meetings that both our waste disposal services and refuse collection services are facing many challenges in the year ahead. Implementation of further measures under the EU Landfill Directive and National Waste Policy will impact significantly on both services and waste management practices generally. As well, the market place for both services is exceptionally competitive and aggressive. While both operations provide valuable customer facilities and service across the county, the Council must have regard to the financial implications in these very difficult economic times. For the sustainability of both services into the future very significant change, reorganisation and restructuring leading to reduced costs are required. Increased customers are needed for our refuse service to improve the viability of our existing routes. Already discussions have started between staff and management on the necessary changes and the outcome will determine the road ahead. A marketing initiative for the refuse service is underway, as well.

- **Library Services**

In recognition of the extensive use of our library services a special effort is made in the Draft Budget to support the book fund. The allocation provided is €350,000 - the same as 2010 and grant-aid of €30,000 is expected towards that figure.

Capital Investment Plan

The Council will continue to invest in the infrastructure of the county although at a much reduced level than in recent years. The Council Programme for the three-year period 2011-2013 prepared in accordance with Section 135 of the Local Government Act, 2001, is set out in Schedule 1 at the end of the Budget Explanatory Memorandum and commented upon in the course of the details of each of the Division Budgets – Roads and Water Services are the only programmes where any significant expenditure is envisaged. The Capital Programme must have regard to the available resources. The sources of capital funding, government grants, borrowing capacity and development contributions, are significantly reduced on recent years.

Development Contributions

A statement regarding the amount of Development Contributions on hands, the estimated income expected for 2011 and an indicative statement of the proposed application of the funding available is included at Schedule 2 at the end of the Budget Explanatory Memorandum. The current economic climate has led to a very sharp decline in our receipts from this source and the coming year is expected to show a continuing sharp downturn.

Acknowledgements

Mr. Curran expressed his appreciation and thanks to the Mayor, Cllr. Pat Leahy; to Cllr. Bobby O'Connell, the previous Mayor, and to the Members of the Council for their support, co-operation and application during the past year. He also thanked the Corporate Policy Group and the Strategic Policy Committees for their work over the past twelve months.

The County Manager paid tribute to the staff and management of all the Council's services for their work. The past two years have been very difficult with pressure on budgets, fewer staff, reduced pay owing to the pension levy and statutory pay reductions and restricted overtime working. The flexibility of all ensured that we got through our work programmes satisfactorily and that we continued to deliver quality services across the county. The coming year will be equally challenging and he looked forward to the commitment of all to doing the best we can for the benefit of the county.

Preparation of the 2011 Draft Budget has been a quite sizeable and challenging task because of the continuing difficult economic climate, and level of competing demands and expectations. He thanked John O'Connor, Head of Finance, Angela McAllen, Pat O'Shea, Karen Lynch and their Finance Staff for their work in preparing a balanced Budget. He said he wished to record his appreciation to each of the Directors of Service and their staff for their work in the detailed budgeting process, as well.

In conclusion Mr. Curran said it was his responsibility to present a balanced Budget and it is a matter for the members to adopt a balanced Budget. He said he was mindful of the impact of reduced services on communities. The Manager recommended the Budget for adoption.

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 2011 by each of the Divisions. The expenditure pattern is similar to the past few years when €74 out of every €100 spent goes on Roads, Water Services, Housing and Environment. This leaves just €26 out of every €100 for all other services. The emphasis in the Budget is on the maintenance of our core services. The provision for Roads is the same as 2010 and it is presumed the grants will be the same as last year. He then referred members to Page 11 of the Budget Report where the details of Expenditure Breakdown by Key Expense Elements are set out. Payroll costs account for 40% of the Budget, Operational Costs including Material and Plant etc. accounts for 38%, HEG/VEC/Agency/Rural Water/Conservation Grants 13%, Loan Charges 4%, Energy 3% and Insurances 2%. Much of the expenditure is spent in the county supporting local businesses. The various sources of income are set out on Page 12 of the Budget Report. He emphasised the need to maintain income and said this will be very challenging. State grants for Specific Purposes and the Local Government Fund account for more than 54% of our income, Commercial Rates 13% while Service Charges account for 10% of our income. Mr. O'Connor pointed out that 52% of all rate payers pay less than €2,000 per annum while a number pay €1m per annum. A large portion of income from rates comes from the Utility Companies i.e. ESB and the Telecommunication Companies. 25% of rate payers pay less than €1,000. Mr. O'Connor acknowledged the valuable contribution made by small rate payers. There were very few new valuations for the 2010 Budget but there was a catch-up for the 2011 Budget. Many people liable for rates and water charges who are in difficulty do not engage with the Council in time. The reduction in construction activity continues to have an impact in the county.

Division A Housing & Building

Mr. O'Connor referred members to Pages 21 – 37 of the Budget Report and Pages 10 – 12 of the Budget Tables for details of the Housing and Building Programme. Details of the Capital Budget are set out on Page 4 of Schedule 1 at the back of the Budget Report. The Capital Budget of €5.6m is a very significant reduction on previous years as there is a change in national policy. The revenue expenditure on this Division is almost €16.5m and the services provided include housing assessment, housing maintenance, loans, Homeless, RAS, DPG's and associated grants. The projected income for this Division is €15.79m leaving a deficit of €700,000 to be funded from general income sources. He referred members to Page 22 of the Budget Report and the heading 'Land Purchase Servicing Costs. Mr. O'Connor informed the meeting that there are currently approximately 89 acres of land owned by the Council in various locations throughout the county and available to the Housing Department for construction purposes. However, it is unlikely that any of these lands will be developed in the short to medium term due to the significantly limited capital funding expected to be available over the next number of years. The financial implications of servicing existing loans for housing lands purchased are an issue for the Council. These costs could previously be included as

part of the original loan acquired for the purchase of the lands, and recouped if development took place within a 7 year period.

Mr. O'Connor informed the meeting that over the past number of years the housing programme has benefitted from the sale of local authority houses. However there is a substantial reduction in the sale of houses under the Tenant Purchase Scheme. In 2007 52 houses were sold, 26 in 2008 and just 4 in 2009. Only 5 houses were sold to existing tenants in 2010. Again, one of the main contributing factors is the inability of potential tenant purchasers to secure the necessary mortgage finance, despite the generous tenant purchase discounts available. The Minister for Housing recently announced that in 2011, existing tenants would be able to avail of a discount of up to 45% on the market price of their dwelling under the tenant purchase scheme. The Assessment of Housing Need is a major task and increased resources have been allocated to it. The work of the Housing SPC is set out on Page 25 of the Budget Report. The social housing stock stands at 2,419 approx. This is the highest it has ever been and represents an 11% increase compared to the start of 2007. Last year a total of 1,098 individual response repair requests were carried out. The Council during 2010 secured an allocation of €1.145m which allowed for the introduction of significant energy efficiency measures in 97 houses i.e. plumbing, electrical including energy saving bulbs, heating - fitting oil condenser boiler, wall/attic insulation, solar panels, etc. Mr. O'Connor said that while that grant aid was welcome it cannot be expected to continue. A sum of €600,000 has been included in the Budget from Internal Capital Receipts and in addition a sum of €300,000 is provided, subject to grant aid in this area, under the Energy Efficient Programme.

Mr. O'Connor said the payment of housing rents continues to be satisfactory however, this requires constant monitoring. It is estimated that approximately 63% of our customers now regularly use electronic payments and it is our intention to continue to promote these options in 2011. At the start of the year, a policy for dealing with customers in rent arrears was introduced, which was drawn up in consultation with the HSE and Kerry Money Advice & Budgeting Service (KMABS). Early intervention in these cases is an integral part of this policy together with the putting in place of measures to help prevent significant arrears accumulating. It is anticipated that there will be a reduction in income from housing rents because of the reduction in social welfare rates. A sum of €708,000 is included for the Homeless Service but most of this is recovered from the DoEHLG. A sum of €4.355m is provided for the RAS Programme. Significant progress continues to be made with the roll-out of the RAS Scheme in Kerry. A total of 170 private transfers have been concluded in 2010, bringing to 638 the total transfers completed since the Scheme commenced in June 2006. A breakdown of the RAS transfers by the four local authorities is set out in the table at the top of Page 34. It is anticipated that the RAS Scheme will again not impact on the Council's nett expenditure Budget and this is reflected for 2011.

Mr. O'Connor informed members that a sum of €890,000 is provided for loan interest and other charges. This sum covers the repayment to the Office of Public Works and the Housing Finance Agency of the interest only on loans raised by the Council to fund various housing loan schemes, including the loan element of the Shared Ownership Scheme. The loan accounts are constantly monitored and he urged people in financial difficulty to engage with staff in the Housing Department sooner rather than later. A sum of €3.547m is provided for Housing Grants and Kerry gets

one of the largest allocations in the country. The cost implication of the scheme to Kerry County Council is considerable, particularly in this challenging financial climate. At the end of 2010, there were approximately 715 grant applications awaiting decision, with an estimated €0.5m to be paid in grants already allocated in 2010. Having regard to this continuous very high level of demand and the finite resources available, applications will continue to be assessed based on the priority criteria as set out in the DoEHLG guidelines. The expectation is that the same level of funding will not be made available from the DoEHLG in 2011. For this purpose, an overall budget allocation of €3.547m is included, which comprises of DoEHLG funding of €2.838m and a local contribution of €0.709m. There are considerable administrative and technical costs associated with these grants and in excess of €1m is provided from own resources for our contribution and staff costs. However, the benefits to be gained from these schemes must be recognised, in that they facilitate the improvement of living conditions for many elderly and disabled persons in an efficient and effective manner.

Adjourned Budget Meeting

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance said that a further Budget Meeting would be required to conclude consideration and adoption of the Budget and he suggested that the adjourned Budget meeting could be held on the afternoon of the January Ordinary Meeting on Monday 17th January.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. B. O'Connell, SECONDED by Cllr. A. McEllistrim it was unanimously agreed that the adjourned Budget Meeting would be held on Monday 17th January 2011 commencing at 1.30pm.

Cllr. M. Moloney PROPOSED that the January Ordinary Meeting would commence at 10am.

Cllr. A.J. Spring SECONDED this proposal and it was unanimously agreed.

Mr. O'Connor then called on Mr. John Breen, Director of Housing to brief the meeting on the operational issues relating to Housing.

Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing said there have been substantial changes in policy in housing together with funding cutbacks. There is a huge increase in the demand for housing services and that is evident in the increase in the number of housing applications received. The current housing stock is the largest ever and that presents a challenge to manage and maintain it. Over the last three years the annual capital funding provided by the DoEHLG has been reduced substantially. The allocation of €5.175m in 2010 compares with an allocation of €19m in 2007. The full impact of this significant funding reduction on construction projects has now become apparent with no new group scheme currently under construction or anticipated to commence within the next year. The only construction projects currently underway are 6 Single Rural Dwellings which will carry forward into 2011 with a further 8-12 hoped to commence in 2011. In addition, only 3 local authority extensions and Improvement Works in Lieu projects are currently under construction, with approximately 6 more anticipated to commence in early 2011. This decline in activity has seen a consequent reduction in technical staff in the Housing Department.

Mr. Breen informed the meeting that a further 9 units were purchased on the open market, together with 10 units acquired under existing Part V commitments in Lispolse and Caherciveen. It is expected that all 19 units will be allocated early in the New Year. Mr. Breen then referred to the Rental Accommodation Scheme and said there are currently 520 RAS tenants in total. This scheme has been very successful in Kerry to-date and is aimed at prospective tenants who are in receipt of rent supplement for 18 months or longer. The scheme is socially inclusive and provides the tenant with security of tenure, and the landlord with security of payment and a long lease. However, as the rent payable is tied into the rent allowance rent cap some landlords have expressed their concerns at remaining in the scheme on financial grounds.

The Social Housing Leasing Scheme is still relatively new and is being managed by the individual local authorities in the county. Despite having examined many proposals, no lease has been signed as of yet. It is anticipated that a number of leasing proposals will be up and running in 2011. A detailed report on the various issues and difficulties surrounding this scheme was considered by the Housing SPC at its September meeting. Mr. Breen then referred to Affordable Housing and unsold units and said that fortunately Kerry is not in the position of other local authorities as we have just 12 unsold affordable units on hands. The main difficulty being encountered by potential affordable housing purchasers is their inability to secure the necessary mortgage finance. These 12 unsold units will now be utilised under the Social Housing Leasing Initiative and let through an Approved Housing Body in accordance with criteria set down by the DoEHLG. Just 5 houses were sold to existing tenants in 2010 under the Tenant Purchase Scheme. Again, one of the main contributing factors is the inability of potential tenant purchasers to secure the necessary mortgage finance, despite the generous tenant purchase discounts available. The Minister for Housing recently announced that in 2011, existing tenants would be able to avail of a discount of up to 45% on the market price of their dwelling under the tenant purchase scheme. However this is of no advantage to tenants when they cannot secure the finance.

Mr. Breen then referred to the Assessment of Housing Need and said there has been a steady increase in the number of social housing applications being received by the Council over recent years in particular. In 2010, a total of 595 new applications have been received. There is at present a total of 1,147 approved applicants for housing, with a further 518 applicants awaiting assessment. An additional 577 applicants had their applications deferred as their long term need for social housing has yet to be established. Obviously this significant volume of applications is, in part, attributable to the recent downturn in the economy, in that more households are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their housing needs from their own resources. Also, it is now a requirement that in general, households seeking rent allowance must first have their housing need determined by the local authority which is adding to the workload in this area. In accordance with Section 9 of the Housing Act 1988, a statutory assessment of social housing need as at 31st March 2011 will again be undertaken. In 2010 182 new tenancies were commenced while 153 households were accommodated under the Rental Accommodation Scheme. There was a further 26 new voluntary housing lettings in the county in 2010 with 19 of these in the Kerry County Council administrative area. An Anti Social Behaviour Strategy was adopted in 2010 and Garda vetting of prospective tenants is now an established practice.

Funding of €85,761 was received from the DoEHLG for intensified inspections under the Private Rented Standards for 2011. This will involve an estimated additional 500 inspections, in addition to the routine inspections of 350 annually, which are carried out on RAS properties. It is proposed that inspections will initially concentrate on properties which are the subject of rent supplement payments, and which are not registered with the PRTB.

Contracts have recently been signed by Kingdom Voluntary Rural Housing Association for the construction of 22 Voluntary Housing units at Hawley Park/Mitchel's Road, Boherbee, Tralee. The construction of these units has been grant aided under the Voluntary Housing Capital Assistance Scheme at a cost of €3,364,190. In accordance with a Special Call for Proposals for the acquisition and refurbishment of housing units under the Voluntary Housing Capital Assistance Scheme, 3 separate projects involving a total of 24 units in Tralee, Killarney and Killorglin were recently approved by the DoEHLG to the overall value of €2.87m approximately.

Mr. Breen said the Housing SPC met on 4 occasions in 2010 and discussed 21 separate policy areas. He recorded his thanks to the Chair and members of the SPC for their valued contribution. Significant investment has gone into pre letting repairs mainly funded from Internal Capital Receipts. In 2010, repairs to 94 vacant houses were completed. Between 2006 and 2009 inclusive, repairs to 351 vacant houses were completed at a combined cost of €3.773m. This works out at €10,749 on average per dwelling. During 2010, the Housing Department was successful in securing an allocation of €200,000 from the DoEHLG towards upgrading housing stock to meet with private rental accommodation standards. This allocation was spent on supplying and fitting fire blankets to all our rented properties, the fitting of wired smoke alarms to any properties where they had not previously been fitted and the fitting of mechanical ventilation systems where condensation problems existed.

Mr. Breen added that 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. This is now a requirement in accordance with the European Communities (Energy Performance of Buildings) Regulations 2006 which became applicable in respect of local authority housing from 1st January '09. A sum of €171,000 is provided for the Maintenance of Traveller Accommodation Units. There are three permanent Halting sites maintained by Kerry County Council, comprising 23 bays in all:- Deerpark (14 Bays), Gortroe (5 Bays) and Rathass (4 Bays). This allocation covers the cost of the maintenance of these halting sites including the repair of the demountable units in the sites. Caretaking costs are also included. The DoEHLG recoups to the Council a substantial portion of the costs of employing the Halting Site Caretaker.

In 2010, Kerry County Council completed the refurbishment programme in Deerpark Halting Site, which commenced in 2009. In total, €230,000 was spent on these works which included the provision of an all weather play area, development of paths/cycle path, provision of additional lighting, painting, resurfacing of roadways within the site, installation of community facility for use by the residents, and other maintenance work. In addition, a further €16,000 was made available to fund the landscaping of the site.

This work was the result of a partnership approach between the HSE, Kerry County Council and residents to addressing traveller needs and improving living conditions for traveller families. The updated appearance of this site has been the source of much favourable comment. The DoEHLG has indicated that it will make €18,600 available for the improvement of security systems in both Deepark and Gortroe Halting Sites during 2011.

A sum of €142,000 is provided for Traveller Accommodation Management. The adopted Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 – 2013 is a county wide programme which has targeted the accommodation of 140 traveller families, based on existing families and projected new family formations, across the four housing authorities over the lifetime of the five year programme.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee is working very satisfactorily and has regular meetings. The main aims of the Committee are to develop, implement and review the Traveller Accommodation Programme, to work together in consultation to improve living conditions for travellers and to inform policy through discussion and consultation. In the first two years of the Programme 39 traveller families have been accommodated in social housing in Kerry. The curtailment of the capital construction programme and the implementation of the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy will impact somewhat in this area. €60,000 is provided for Estate Maintenance. This allocation provides for the purchase of equipment and materials and the carrying out of environmental works by resident associations. It also includes a contribution towards insurance costs, which is distributed to the residents association by our tenant liaison officer as an incentive to help participation in estate management. The allocation also includes provision for payment to management companies towards the upkeep and maintenance of private estates where the Council has purchased dwellings either through Part V or on the open market.

Mr. Breen then referred to the Assessment of Housing Needs and said that during the year the Council introduced a refusals policy, which is in line with changes introduced last year to the Rent Supplement Scheme. The Rent Supplement Scheme dictates that two refusals in a twelve month period of standard local authority accommodation, made available under Social Housing Leasing Initiative or the Rental Accommodation Scheme, will result in withdrawal of rent supplement by the Community Welfare Service. Mr. Breen thanked tenants for maintaining their houses and for paying rents. In cases, where unfortunately arrears do escalate, we will make every effort to negotiate an agreement with tenants before legal proceedings are issued. As a result of this the number of legal proceedings issued has again reduced in the last year. The Council will continue to work closely with the KMABS in this area. The average weekly rent in respect of our current active rent customers is €43.08 and is calculated in accordance with our Rent Scheme which is based on household income. Further reductions in social welfare payments, as announced, in the 2011 Budget will result in certain rents being reduced in the coming year which will consequently impact on overall rental income. A sum of €130,000 is provided for Housing Estate Maintenance and Tenancy Management. This is for the employment of a Housing Liaison Officer, Tenancy Compliance Officer, running Pre-Tenancy Courses, skills training for tenants, etc. It also includes for the employment of backup administrative staff who advise tenants on a regular basis of their rights and responsibilities with regard to their tenancy agreement and

other service support costs. Evidence of the very positive work being done in this area is the fact that we have resumed possession of 14 separate Council dwellings this year, due to non compliance with the tenancy conditions mainly in relation to non-occupancy. In 2010 all our elderly tenants living in demountable units in remote locations were visited and this resulted in certain improvements being carried out to their dwellings. There is no one homeless on the streets in Kerry at present.

A sum of €258,000 is provided for Technical & Administrative Support for the Housing Capital Programme to ensure that units under Part V are being delivered. To-date the RAS Programme has been very successful however the rent payable is becoming an issue with landlords. In relation to the Long Term Leasing Programme it is proving difficult to identify feasible projects for various reasons. Notwithstanding all these inherent problems, strenuous efforts will be made to identify developments, in suitable locations, which meet with all the necessary technical criteria. Mr. Breen then informed members there are still a number of people with housing loans on very high interest rates and they have been advised that it would be more beneficial to remortgage. Substantial resources have been provided for the processing of grant applications and he did not anticipate the same level of funding in 2011 as was provided in 2010. In conclusion Mr. Breen thanked the Mayor and previous Mayor for their support.

Cllr. A.J. Spring acknowledged that we are in a very difficult and challenging economic climate. The capital allocation is reduced and resources are stretched. He said the length of time it takes to assess an application for housing must be improved and additional staff resources should be assigned to this area. He welcomed the allocation in the Budget for the repair of vacant houses and said unfortunately the maintenance budget for existing tenants is not adequate.

Cllr. J. Brassil said he recognised the substantial challenge to balance the Budget but funding should have been provided for the Young Entrepreneur Programme and until this was rectified he was not satisfied to adopt the Budget. A request was made for funding of €125,000 to make Kerry County Council a substantial partner in the process yet no provision was made for it in the Budget and this is very disappointing. He hoped this could be resolved. He suggested that the NPPR charge could be increased to €210 per annum and the fee for dog licences increased to €20 to provide the funding for the Young Entrepreneur Programme. This would provide an additional €90,000. He complimented the work of the Housing Department in particular in relation to housing grants. Significant grants have been allocated over the past few years and this has resulted in improvements to houses and work for contractors. House purchases are down significantly as intended purchasers cannot secure loans. He asked if there is a role for Kerry County Council in providing loans as happened in the past. Cllr. Brassil referred to the 12 unoccupied houses provided under the Affordable Housing Scheme, 6 of which are in Ballyheigue and said it is unacceptable that they are unavailable for letting to people on the housing waiting list. He acknowledged that the Voluntary Housing organisations would be approached with a view to letting them. He requested more detail on the reference in the Budget Report to car parking charges to off set the cost of services provided in some towns.

Cllr. M. Gleeson complimented the County Manager and Management for the services provided to the county. East Kerry experienced severe snow falls and Kerry

County Council dealt with it very efficiently. All members met with business people in relation to the difficulties they are experiencing in paying rates in the current economic climate. Adequate funding of local authorities has not been addressed since 1977 and the lack of long term planning by central government is detrimental to local authorities. Cllr. Gleeson complimented the Housing Department on the efficient manner in which they dealt with applications under the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and said he hoped the present level of funding for this Scheme would be maintained. Business people have requested that valuations in Kerry would be reviewed and he hoped this would happen in the near future. The great crisis facing the county is the number of people on the housing list and the funding from central government for this purpose is greatly reduced. He believed the Leasing Scheme is doomed to be a disastrous failure. He pleaded with the Government to re-examine this Scheme and to enter into discussions with the Irish Construction Federation to make these houses available at a reasonable cost. He welcomed the energy efficiency measures set out in the Budget and called on the Council to ensure that value for money is achieved. In the late 1980's a good Tenant Purchase Scheme was introduced and it regenerated local authority estates but unfortunately now lending institutions are no longer willing to help people in need. Halting sites should be provided in other towns in the county as most of them are located in Killarney. He complimented the Council on upgrading the halting site on the By-Pass Road in Killarney. The homelessness service is excellent and there is no need for anyone to be homeless. Cllr. Gleeson referred to estate management and said he hoped the financial contribution provided will not mean the Council will have to carry out all the work to private estates where we have tenants. In conclusion Cllr. Gleeson said he was in favour of providing smaller housing estates.

Cllr. M. Moloney said the Hotels Federation had approached members expressing their concern regarding the high rates levied in Kerry as many of their members are experiencing difficulties. Some hoteliers were granted reductions of 30% in their rates and the Hotels Federation has requested members to reduce rates. She called on the Head of Finance to meet with them individually and to grant a reduction in their rates if appropriate. She welcomed the allocation of €100,000 in the Budget for tourism. She referred to the housing waiting lists and said the government should be providing more funding for housing. She complimented the staff in the Housing Department who administer the various grants schemes and said they provide an excellent service. The proposed Leasing Scheme is a total disaster and an alternative must be considered by government. She asked what happened the funding provided for this scheme in 2010 that was not spent. Cllr. Moloney expressed her disappointment that just three extensions and works in lieu were carried out in 2010. She was aware of many tenants living in overcrowded conditions who would like to get an extension to their existing house but they are told they must move. Consideration should be given to providing extensions for those tenants. She asked how many tenants have applied for extensions to their houses.

Cllr. T. Ferris said a sum of €85,000 is provided to investigate rented properties that are not registered, yet the state requires private landlords to register their properties. It is ironic that the local authority will be investigating these properties to ensure that they are to a suitable standard yet funding is not provided to local authorities to carry out improvements to their own housing stock. If a landlord registers for the RAS Scheme he/she does not have to pay the NPPR charge and this is ridiculous. Under the proposal Leasing Scheme rent will be paid and the local authority will have no

asset at the end of the leasing term. An option to purchase should be included in this scheme. She asked if the council's insurance would cover the contents of local authority houses where tenants did not have insurance. Cllr. Ferris referred to the Housing Grants Schemes and said she could not understand the reduction in funding for 2011 given the damage to houses with burst pipes etc. over the winter. She asked when the council would commence approving grants under these schemes. She referred to the Affordable Houses in Ballyheigue and said that a number of people would be interested in purchasing them but they cannot secure a loan. She asked if these houses could be leased to people with an option to buy at the end of a 5 year term. She also asked if the council would be in a position to offer loans to tenants to purchase their homes.

Suspension to Standing Orders:

The Mayor informed the meeting that it was 1:30pm and it would be necessary to suspend Standing Orders.

On the PROPOSAL of A. McEllistrim, SECONDED by Cllr. J. Sheahan it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae said that 13% of the council's income comes from rates from businesses in towns and villages that are finding it difficult to survive. These business people are concerned regarding value for money and they ask what service they are getting for their rates. He advises them that they get street cleaning, public lighting, repairs to footpaths etc. but many villages are not being cleaned. He asked that priority would be given to cleaning all towns and villages. He moved a notice of motion at the previous meeting calling for the introduction of a new system to assess people for rates as he believes the present system is unfair and cumbersome. He thanked the staff of the Housing Department for the efficient manner in which they process grant applications and he said the grants allocated mean so much to so many people. He thanked the Homeless Centre, especially Justin Brosnan who is trying to improve the lives of people who have fallen on hard times. He welcomed the demountable units which are adequate for the needs of the people who get them and asked that this service would continue. Cllr. Healy-Rae expressed concern at the RAS Scheme as most of the properties are located in Tralee, Killarney and Listowel and it is not being utilised in the rest of the county. Housing waiting lists are growing daily and some people are living in very crowded conditions, but their incomes are low and the rent allowance will not allow them to get a house. Many separated fathers can only afford a one bedroom flat and they cannot have their children to stay at weekends. He referred to the affordable housing units in Killarney which were vacant for the past 18 months and said that people are interested in purchasing them but they cannot secure a loan. He concurred with the suggestion by Cllr. Ferris that these houses should be offered to tenants to rent with an option to purchase at the end of 5 years or when they can afford to purchase. Tenants are not permitted to purchase their house from voluntary organisations. The Leasing Scheme is a disaster and he suggested that it would be more appropriate to purchase a smaller number of houses in the towns like Kilgarvan, Gneeveguilla etc. He then referred to the Tenant Purchase Scheme and said it is taking too long to get a valuation for a tenant and he asked is the council slow to sell houses because the value of property has fallen.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim referred to the RAS Scheme and asked when there is a break in an agreement is there a break in the lease. Does Kerry County Council have to pay the rent or is the property re let? She referred to the Housing Aid for the Elderly Scheme and the other grant scheme and asked had an application for additional funding been submitted to the DoEHLG outlining the level of applications to ensure that similar funding is provided in 2011. She referred to the long term Leasing Scheme and asked that a letter would be forwarded to the Department saying that it is not feasible in its present form and requesting that an option to purchase the property would be included.

Cllr. B. Griffin thanked Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance and Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing for their presentations. He made a strong case for the hotel and restaurant sector that some sort of stimulus should be introduced and he re-iterated this as this is the best chance for economic recovery in Kerry. If a rate reduction is not feasible some form of grant should be introduced to allow them to market their product. Cllr. Griffin said there needs to be greater recognition of the role of this sector. He asked if funding was provided in the budget for the white tailed eagle project. There is a delay in the valuation of houses for tenants who wish to purchase their homes and it is presently taking 6-8 months. He understood there is a problem with staffing but pointed out that the additional income generated from the sale of properties would be welcome. The NPPR is a very crude form of taxation and many people are being forced to emigrate to work. A waiver scheme should be introduced for people who are forced to emigrate to get work. In conclusion he extended his gratitude to the staff of the Housing Department in particular those who administer the grants schemes.

Cllr. B. Cronin extended his gratitude to the staff in the Housing Department for their work over the past 12 months in particular the staff in the Housing Grants Section as they have a huge volume of work to deal with. The various grant schemes administered by the council have been very successful and they have changed the quality of lives of the applicants. The take up of affordable housing is very disappointing but this is because people cannot get mortgages. He welcomed the fact that vacant affordable houses would be reallocated and not left idle at a time when so many people are seeking housing. He expressed his disappointment at the poor take up of the Tenant Purchase Scheme and said this is due to the economic downturn. He referred to the properties acquired under Part V and the 9 properties purchased and he asked if any of these were in the Killarney Electoral Area. He asked if the anti social behaviour policy is working and have issues in estates been resolved. Cllr. Cronin asked if there have been an increase in the amount of unpaid rates and how much is outstanding. He asked if a strong case was made by the Hotel Federation for a rates reduction as they have been adversely impacted by the bad weather when a lot of functions were cancelled. Members were informed that a number of hotels who approached the council got a reduction of 30% in their rates and he asked if this was true.

Cllr. T. Fleming complimented council staff who were very prompt in their action during the recent bad weather when they were informed of burst pipes. He also commended the work of the Water Services Department in council estates who provided stand pipes for those who didn't have any water. He commended the Housing staff for their great performance over the past few years in adverse conditions. They are always very courteous to both the general public and elected

members. Cllr. Fleming referred to the number of vacant houses and housing estates in the county and said that a strong case must be made to the Department regarding the use of these estates taking into account the large number of people awaiting housing.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue complimented the staff of the Housing Department and said that he had one case over Christmas where a house was destroyed with burst pipes and the council staff took immediate action and work was carried out to rectify the problem. He referred to housing applicants who are living outside of the county and said they should be assessed for housing in the county where they reside. This could be achieved through the County Manager's Association i.e. an applicant living in Louth could be assessed for a house in Kerry. Cllr. O'Donoghue said the RAS Scheme is an excellent scheme. He asked that the delay in getting valuations under the Tenant Purchase Scheme would be reduced. In conclusion Cllr. O'Donoghue welcomed the vetting of potential tenants.

Cllr. M. O'Shea commended the staff of the Housing Department who do tremendous work in particular in the assessment of grant applications and housing applications. He referred to the 89 acres of land owned by Kerry County Council throughout the county and suggested that this land could be handed back to communities for allotments. He PROPOSED that this suggestion would be considered by the Housing SPC.

Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing said that efficiencies achieved under the Energy Efficient Scheme highlights the savings that can be achieved. 71% of tenants and those on the RAS Scheme are on social welfare and the criteria for this scheme is received from the Department. He referred to the affordable houses which are vacant at present and said the Housing Department must follow Department guidelines on this issue. There is no delay in valuations but there is a query regarding VAT and a report was recently presented to the Housing SPC on this issue. There was a delay with the Department when clarification was sought as to whether VAT applies or not. The issue of the assessment of housing applicants outside the county must be addressed at national level. He referred to the housing land bank and said that the critical issue is how these loans will be repaid.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 2:10pm.

The meeting resumed at 3pm.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance informed the meeting that Divisions B - Road Transport and Safety and Division C – Water Services would be taken together.

Division B Road Transport and Safety

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance referred members to Pages 38 to 62 of the Budget Report and Pages 13 – 15 of the Budget Tables for details on this Division. The proposed revenue expenditure on this Division is €35.234m with a projected income of €22.663m. This is a very wide reaching Division and it is anticipated that grants in the region of €20m will be received for 2011. He referred members to Page 61 of the Budget Report and the bottom line which indicates that a sum of €12.902m will be provided locally and this will cover staffing, insurances etc. In the past few years despite the competing areas for funding we have retained our contribution for this

Division. Details of the Capital Budget are set out on Pages 5-8 of Schedule 1 at the back of the Budget Report and this accounts for 62% of the Capital Budget which is driven by the Tralee By Pass project. In June 2010 the local authority was advised by the Department of Transport of a revised Memorandum on Grants for Regional and Local Roads, which came into effect on the 1st December, 2010. The greatest impact of this memorandum has been the capping of funding available to the local authority of overheads associated with wages, machinery high rates and handling charges associated with stores and tar. The impact of these measures was previously discussed by Council and the Department of Transport has now issued a revised memorandum, which addresses some of our concerns. He referred members to Page 41 of the Budget Report for details of the work of the Transport SPC. Mr. O'Connor then referred members to Page 45 of the Budget Report for details on relief roads. He added that the provision of one of these relief roads will be severely challenging for the Council and there is no way that it could be funded from the revenue account. He referred to the An Daingean Relief Road and said that loan charges were to be defrayed from development contributions however these have dried up. There is presently between €500,000 and €600,000 of a debt balance on this scheme. Details of the Revenue Works Programme are set out from Page 48 onwards in the Budget Report. A sum of €418,713 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, Killorglin and for the summer months in Ballybunion. Approximately 2,670 Fixed Charge Notices for parking offences were issued in 2010, which generated approximately €70,000 in income while this service actually cost €300,000. In the current economic climate there is a need to consider alternative income sources. A number of preliminary traffic studies have been carried out in the towns, where a traffic warden service is provided and the initial findings indicate a potential to generate over €800,000 on the basis of a parking fee of 50c per 30 minutes of parking. The full details of these surveys will be presented to the Transport SPC in 2011, for further consideration. A sum of €685,000 is provided for staffing to support the Roads Capital Programme.

Division C Water Services

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance referred members to Pages 63 to 89 of the Budget Report and Pages 16 and 17 of the Budget Tables for details of this Division. This is one of our major programmes with a proposed expenditure of €24.197m or 19% of the Budget. The projected income for this Division is €15.323m. This income is from water charges, waste water charges and grants. The sizable Capital Programme is set out on Pages 9 to 11 of Schedule 1 at the back of the Budget Report. An update on the Capital Programme is contained on Pages 67 and 68 of the Budget Report. A contribution of €500,000 is made to the water services Draft Budget from Development Levies/Contributions collected to facilitate infrastructural improvements. Details of the works carried out in 2010 are set out on Page 74 of the Budget Report. During 2010 in-house centralised procurement was used in waste water treatment to achieve better value for money through economies of scale. Details of examples of in-house centralised procurement are set out on the top of Page 70 of the Budget Report. Details of the Draft Budget Breakdown are set out on Page 73 of the Budget Report and this includes staff costs, chemicals, plant hire, energy etc. Details of the work of the Water Conservation Unit are set out on Pages 76 and 77 of the Budget Report. At the end of 2009 17,639 meters were installed countywide. This represents 14,689 in the County area and 2,950 in the Town

Councils. During 2010 work continued in locating and metering any unfound connections not metered under the project. It is expected that this work will continue in 2011. A sum of €5.496m is provided for Waste Water Plants and Networks and €1.6m of this is attributable to the Town Councils and is recoupable. A sum of €515,000 is provided for the Operation and Maintenance of Public Conveniences. Mr. O'Connor referred members to the graph on Page 83 of the Budget Report where details of individual domestic water supply improvement grants are set out. Mr. O'Connor then referred to water and waste water connections and said that a sum of €290,000 is provided in the budget for Agency and Recoupable Services. This amount is in respect of private installations of water and sewer connections and is a contra item. The cost of providing connections has stabilised in 2010 and the estimated number of water and sewer connections for 2010 has fallen from the corresponding number of completions in 2009. Accordingly, no increases to either the standard water connection charge of €1,100 or the standard sewer connection charge of €2,210 are proposed for 2011. However, non-standard water and sewer connection will continue to be costed separately. The graph on Page 88 shows the number of water connections and waste water connections for the period 2004 – 2010 and it shows the fall off in the number of connections in recent years. Mr. O'Connor then called on Mr. Charlie O'Sullivan, Director of Roads and Transportation to address the meeting.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads said that 2010 was a very challenging year for the Roads Department and works carried out during the severe weather cost €2.16m. The full cost of works on national roads was recovered from the NRA and a further €600,000 has been spent so far this year. The total expenditure for the Roads Department last year was €61m and expenditure in 2011 is dependent on state grants which will be notified at the end of the month. A special roads meeting will then be held when a more detailed programme will be presented to members. The main achievements in 2010 were the opening of the Castleisland By Pass and the advancement of the Tralee By Pass. The key challenge for 2011 is the implementation of the memorandum from the Department and the impact of that will be monitored. A huge commitment was received from staff in relation to efficiencies; we have our own Health and Safety Officer and this has helped reduce our costs. In relation to road design, the council has two dedicated offices, one in Castleisland which is funded by the NRA and the second in County Buildings and this is funded from own resources. He thanked the members of the Transport SPC for their contributions in 2010.

Mr. O'Sullivan informed the meeting that details of the Capital Programme are set out on Pages 41 - 47 of the Budget Report. The Castleisland By-Pass was opened to traffic on 22 October 2010, two months ahead of schedule. The Tralee By-Pass Project is progressing and the second stage archaeological investigation started on site that week. He anticipated that this report would be available in five or six weeks. All other works are funded by the NRA and dependent on grant aid. Details of the Revenue Programme commence on Page 48 of the Budget Report. In 2010, some elements of the 3 year multi-annual Road Improvement Programme 2008 - 2010 were set aside and funding was provided to carry out emergency repairs on regional roads damaged due to the inclement weather. A sum of €150,000 is provided for Bridge Maintenance on Regional Roads. A sum of €1.7m is provided for Regional Roads and General Improvement Works. In 2010, a new bridge was provided at Ballinagar under this heading.

Under the heading Regional Roads – General Improvement Works a programme of works totalling €2.55m has been prepared and submitted to the NRA for approval. Local Improvement Schemes grants are used to upgrade private roads which meet selection criteria and are part funded by the local community. An allocation of €445,000 was received and this enabled the Council to complete 13 schemes as well as two under the Hardship and Emergency Programme. An anticipated allocation of €445,000 has been provided for in the preparation of the Draft Budget. A sum of €150,000 is provided for bridge maintenance on Local Roads. A sum of €5.098m is provided for general maintenance works on Local Roads and this programme includes footpaths, pedestrian crossings, signage, lining, surfacing and drainage works as well as the operation of the Roads Network Emergency On-Call System. In recent years, the Council has made a provision of €700,000 from own resources for street cleaning in 60 conurbations.

It is anticipated that the provision for Councillors' Allocations will be the same in 2011 as in 2010. He asked members to ensure that any proposed works are discussed with the Area Engineer at the outset.

Mr. O'Sullivan said a sum of €3.559m is provided for Service Support Costs. This allocation includes Direct Costs which relate to the Service and Indirect Costs, which represent the share-out of the Central Management Charge. The Direct Costs of €2.039m include the administrative, engineering and technical salary costs of €473,000, travel costs of €29,000, insurance costs of €680,000, training €7,500, sick and holiday pay costs of €828,000 and other associated office costs.

A provision is made in the current budget for the continuation of the post of Roads Enforcement Officer who is authorised to enforce the Roads Act 1993. This includes the removal of temporary dwellings, cars for sale, 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. He liaises with landowners to ensure that they undertake and maintain a hedge cutting programme as is their responsibility. In 2010, a total of 5,314 hedgecutting letters were issued, followed by 101 hedgecutting notices. There were four convictions in the District Court for non-compliance. He liaises with the Gardaí in the prosecution for overloaded vehicles. The Roads Enforcement Officer is also responsible for the implementation of Car Park Bye-Laws and the Casual Trading Act.

Mr. O'Sullivan said the Public Lighting Programme covers the maintenance, energy and repair costs associated with the provision of 5,642 lights in the county which are the responsibility of Kerry County Council. This is an increased number of public lights due to Kerry County Council taking in charge of private estates and additional public lighting having been provided as part of the Castleisland By-Pass. A sum of €800,000 is provided for the operating costs of public lighting. The energy costs of the public lighting infrastructure within Kerry Local Authorities are €439,000 and the maintenance costs are €361,000. Following the deregulation of unmetered electricity supply, the Council sought quotations from all suppliers in the Irish market and this resulted in a reduction in energy costs of €37,000.

In 2011, the Council proposes to upgrade the lighting in An Daingean and on the N69 Oakpark Road from Derrylea to Forge Cross, with modern LED lighting. The

estimated cost of these works is €96,000 which will be funded on a multi-annual basis. It is expected to yield savings in the region of €10,000 annually and will also reduce the risk of full lamp failure. A sum of €176,000 is provided under the Low Cost Remedial Measures Programme. Kerry County Council has prepared a programme of works and submitted it to the NRA in anticipation of the same level of funding as in 2010.

There were 11 fatalities on Kerry's roads in 2010 and while this number was down on the previous year, it was marred by the loss of four young lives. A sum of €84,000 is provided for School Wardens while a sum of €21,000 is provided for Publicity and Promotion of Road Safety. Given the funding constraints, the Council proposes to develop synergies with other public and private bodies who have promoted road safety initiatives in the past to deliver a comprehensive road safety programme in 2011.

Mr. O'Sullivan informed members that €418,000 is provided for Parking Enforcement. In 2010, the Council received an income of €70,000 from Fixed Charge Notices for parking offences and this is unsustainable. Serious consideration will have to be given to the introduction of parking charges in other towns and this issue will be progressed with the Transport SPC. The Roads Capital Programme is very important for the local economy with much of the materials sourced locally.

Mr. O. Ring, Director of Environment and Water Services then addressed the meeting on Water Services. He informed members that in 2010, progress was made on the Kenmare Water Abstraction Order and the RAL Schemes where great progress is being made in improving a large number of schemes and bringing them towards treatment works. To facilitate the preparation of a new Water Services Investment Programme covering the period 2010 - 2012, local authorities were required to prepare an updated Assessment of Needs for Water Services in their areas. This assessment was prepared in accordance with the general guidelines set out in the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government Circular Letter L6/09 and it had due regard to the policies, aims and aspirations of the following documents:

- National Development Plan 2007 - 2013
- National Spatial Strategy 2002 - 2020
- Building Ireland's Smart Economy - A Framework
- Assessment of Water and Wastewater Services for Enterprise
- Kerry County Development Plan 2009 - 2015
- Local Area Plans

All needs identified were assessed strategically to ensure that the schemes and projects set out in the Needs Assessment are aligned with National and Local overall objectives. The Needs Assessment set out the prioritised works required in Kerry over the period 2010 - 2012 and beyond in order to provide for the required Water Services Infrastructure in the County.

Mr. Ring then briefed members on the Water Services Investment Programme 2010 - 2012 as set out on Page 66 of the Budget Report. Progress for 2010 and objectives for 2011 are set out on Pages 67 and 68 of the Budget Report.

Confirmation has been received of the projects to commence in 2011 and these include Central Regional Storage - Scart Reservoir where additional storage will be provided for security of supply, Tarbert Sewerage Scheme - the provision of a pumping station and treatment plant and part of collection system, Ballylongford Sewerage Scheme - part of collection networks and treatment plant. There is greater emphasis on ensuring value for money and economies of scale and an example of in-house centralised procurement included tendering for laboratory analysis of cryptosporidium samples and in-house sampling by the Kerry County Council laboratory has led to a substantial saving in this area. It is proposed to establish a real-time database known as Energy Performance Indicators (EPI), through the provision of Scada (supervisory, control and data acquisition) systems, electricity sub-meters and flow meters which will allow for analysis of energy consumption versus throughput (e.g. pump flow-rates) for key electrical appliances (large pumps and motors) in both Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment.

Mr. Ring then referred members to Pages 71 and 72 of the Budget Report for details of Drinking Water: Compliance with Standards and he added that while there were a number of exceedences, the results are good considering the number of schemes in the County without adequate treatment facilities. The number of exceedences has increased because the parameters have changed. Much of the water testing is carried out in-house. A total sum of €10m was received from the Department under the RAL Programme to upgrade a large number of small schemes. In excess of €5m was received in 2010 and this is a reflection of the needs and the proposal put forward by Kerry County Council to the Department. An additional 20 water treatment plants will come on stream in 2011 at which time there will be 52 treatment plants in the county.

The Water Conservation Unit worked very well during the very bad weather. Currently, specialised leak detection and leak repair teams are actively working on the ground. Leakage management procedures are established. It is anticipated that by the end of 2010, some 3,500 leaks will have been reported/repared since mid 2006.

Mr. Ring then referred to the Mains Rehabilitation Programme 2010 - 2012 and said that as a result of a submission included with the Assessment of Needs which was submitted to the Department in 2009, Kerry County Council secured funding totalling €18.79m in the Water Services Investment Programme 2010 - 2012 for mains rehabilitation works throughout the county. Mains rehabilitation contracts will start during the period 2010 - 2012. There has been a greater emphasis in recent years on meeting the required water standards and this allocation is an acknowledgement at national level that mains need to be replaced. A sum of €5.496m is provided for Waste Water Plants and Networks. There are 47 Wastewater Treatment Plants in Kerry. Kerry County Council operates and maintains 44 wastewater treatment facilities throughout the county including 13 major wastewater treatment plants. A further 3 wastewater treatment plants in Barraduff, Milltown and Fries were commissioned in 2010 as Design, Build and Operate contracts. The Water Services Department has applied to the EPA for Wastewater Discharge Licences for 25 agglomerations with a Population Equivalent (PE) greater than 500 and for Wastewater Discharge Certificates for 22 agglomerations with a PE less than 500. No licences have yet been issued but there will be financial implications when they are.

Details of works carried out under the Minor Improvement Programme in 2010 are set out on Page 79 of the Budget Report. Under the heading "Operation and Maintenance of Public Conveniences" a sum of €515,000 is provided. There are currently 19 permanent conveniences under the care of the Council and the Council also provides mobile conveniences in a number of locations. No funding will be available in 2011 for the provision of new public conveniences. Details of grants for individual water installations and construction grants for new group water and wastewater schemes and the upgrade of existing schemes are set out on Page 83 of the Budget Report. Upgrading of existing schemes (serving more than 900 people) remaining in private ownership involves the installation of treatment/filtration works to allow schemes to comply with the Drinking Water Regulations. Installation of treatment/filtration works for each location costs in the region of €400,000 - €500,000 depending on the quality of the existing water supply. In addition, each group is required to fund 15% of the total costs of the works which could amount to in excess of €60,000 in some cases. For these reasons it has proven difficult to spend the allocation of €300,000 for 2010. However, the DoEHLG allowed the transfer of unspent monies of €280,000 approximately under this grant scheme to Refurbishment prior to Takeover grant scheme.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen thanked Mr. Ring, Mr. O'Sullivan, the Water Services and Roads staff and in particular the outdoor staff, who kept the roads passable during the recent inclement conditions. He welcomed progress on the Tralee By-Pass and he said he hoped that the Dingle and Kenmare relief roads would be funded in 2011. As Chair of the Transport SPC, he thanked the members of the SPC for their co-operation in 2010. Street cleaning is an important issue to be considered by the Transport SPC in 2011. He welcomed the four convictions for non-compliance with Hedgecutting Notices in 2010 and said it should encourage landowners to cut their hedges.

Cllr. B. Cronin, Chair of the Environment and Water Services SPC said that he wished to record his thanks to Mr. Oliver Ring and his staff for their excellent work and dedication especially during the recent very bad weather. There was enormous pressure on staff over the Christmas period and he complimented them on their dedication and said there is great credit due to them. People really began to appreciate the value of water when water supplies were frozen over Christmas. The Environment and Water Services SPC had a very busy year in 2010 and they made a Proposal regarding the Kenmare Water Abstraction Order which has now been referred to An Bord Pleanála. Cemetery Bye-Laws were also considered together with River Basin Management Plans. He thanked all the members of that SPC for their contributions during 2010. The Programme of Works for Water Services is set out on Pages 66 and 67 of the Budget Report and he said that a number of important schemes have been progressed. However, he expressed his disappointment that the Kilcummin Scheme failed to progress in 2010 and said this has been a huge source of disappointment to the people of the area. The road network in this area needs to be upgraded but this cannot happen until the sewerage scheme progresses. There were 10 reported fish kills in Kerry last year and he thanked the agricultural sector who made huge investments in pollution control measures. The harvesting of rainwater should be considered and promoted and the rainwater could be stored underground. He asked if the Department of the Environment is proposing that local authorities should carry out inspections of private wells. There is concern amongst private group water schemes regarding this proposal as they feel their

schemes may be jeopardised and they may be forced to apply to be taken over by the Council. Cllr. Cronin then referred to the metering programme and said that there is concern regarding the depth of meters as some meters froze during the recent bad weather. If these meters have to be laid deeper, will the cost be a burden on the Council. Some property owners are very irate and concerned that they may have to meet the cost of these works. There should be a focus on prevention measures which would ensure that water supplies and pumps would not freeze. There was a major break in the water network from Aghlish Cemetery to Flynn's Forge Junction on Christmas night. There were at least 12 leaks in that stretch of pipe. Coolick Group Water Scheme is experiencing difficulty regulating the water supply and he asked when this scheme would be taken over by Kerry County Council. In conclusion he said that there is a lack of water pressure at high points in Kilcummin because of the large number of housing developments.

Cllr. M. Gleeson said there are 2,500 bridges on County roads and these are of fundamental importance to the overall wellbeing of the county. The allocation allows €60 per bridge and this shows an abysmal failure to recognise the importance of these bridges. He expressed his disappointment at the reduction in funding for the Local Improvement Scheme. Cllr. Gleeson then referred to the N22 and said the surface of this road is beginning to show signs of wear and tear. He asked that in future when a roundabout is being constructed, that a two lane entrance and exit would be provided. The wellbeing of the Lakes of Killarney is very dear to him and he welcomed the improvement in water quality in the Lakes. It is vital that the Kilcummin Sewerage Scheme re-commences as soon as possible. He requested that the additional storage capacity at Sheheree would be provided as soon as possible. In conclusion, Cllr. Gleeson requested that the standard of water in the county is maintained.

Cllr. T. Buckley complimented Mr. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads and Mr. Ring, Director of Water Services together with the staff of these Departments and acknowledged the great work carried out by them. He welcomed the provision of a new bridge at Ballinagar and said that it is a great boost to the local economy. Many stretches of the N69 need attention and he asked that they would be given priority. Many sections of the Ballylongford/Tarbert road network need urgent improvement if the Shannon LNG Project is to proceed. A sewerage scheme for both Tarbert and Ballylongford is also urgently needed and he welcomed progress on these.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae complimented all involved in the Roads and Water Services Departments especially those outdoor staff who worked in very difficult climatic conditions recently. He asked that additional funding would be provided for Local Improvement Schemes and Community Involvement Schemes. He referred to the filling of potholes and said that cold black tar is a very temporary measure and a waste of money. Hot tar and chips lasts much longer and represents better value for money. The roads in Kilcummin are in a very poor state of repair and cannot be improved until the sewerage scheme is completed. It would be preferable that the sewerage would be piped to Killarney as it would benefit more properties. Cllr. D. Healy-Rae called for improvements to the roundabout at Hegarty's as it is too small. There have been many accidents at the exit to Countess Road and local people are in dread of it. He then referred to relief roads and said that a sum of €250,000 was allocated for the Kenmare Relief Road in 2010. He understood that land was acquired and he asked if funding was available to commence construction of the

road in 2011. He welcomed progress under the RAL Scheme on many small water schemes. He asked when taps are left running would it be advantageous to install meters as it would allow excessive usage to be monitored. Every effort should be made to isolate and eradicate excessive usage. He welcomed the completion of the Milltown, Furies and Barraduff Sewage Schemes and said the people of Barraduff had to tolerate very bad road conditions over the past few years until the sewerage scheme was completed and he was glad this situation has now improved. He asked that works would be carried out at Kilbannivane Burial Ground which is subject to flooding. He expressed disappointment that there has been no progress in the provision of a new sewerage treatment plant in Kilgarvan as sewerage flows into the Roughty River during heavy rain fall.

Cllr. P. McCarthy acknowledged the work of the staff of the Roads and Water Services Departments. The recent severe weather has been very damaging to the roads and he asked if a programme of repair has been drawn up. A small number of people ignore Hedgecutting Notices yet it is their responsibility to cut their hedges. He referred to the establishment of the proposed national Water Utility Unit and asked would this Unit have responsibility for the installation of domestic water meters.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim thanked the Roads and Water Services Departments for their excellent work over the past 12 months. Infrastructure is vital if industries are to be attracted to the county and she referred to the Tralee By-Pass and asked if the link road to the IT will be provided as part of this project. She asked if Kerry County Council will have to fund the construction of the new road from Forge Cross to the Bracker O'Regan Road from development levies. Cllr. McEllistrim referred to the recent bad weather and said that some sections of road are now in a very poor state of repair, in particular, the N69 and she asked that the worst sections of this road would be improved as soon as possible. She referred to the Road Safety Programme and acknowledged that there would be funding cuts but she asked that efforts would be made to liaise with schools as this is a vitally important function. She asked if funding is available to take over group water supply schemes, in particular the Meenbannivane GWSS.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue said there is great credit due to Council staff considering the risk they had to take to provide grit supplies to depots during the Christmas period. The people of Kerry owe them a great debt of gratitude. Mr. P. Corkery, Press and Communications Officer, also did an excellent job in the very professional way he communicated information to the general public. He welcomed the priority being given to the construction of the Tralee By-Pass and he asked that priority would also be given to carrying out improvements in Killorglin where there is severe congestion, in particular, at Iveragh Road. This congestion will continue to persist until a relief road is provided. The Kells road project has disappeared off the priority list. He acknowledged great improvements have been carried out to sections of this road but other sections need improvement together with parts of the Ring of Kerry Road. He asked that this road would be included on a priority list. Because of the reduction in funding hard decisions would have to be made to prioritise the maintenance of main routes. He called on Management to report to members on how value for money is achieved from contractors. The allocation for bridge maintenance is not at all adequate and it is important to ensure that bridges are stabilised. The Fertha Bridge, in particular needs urgent works. Cllr. O'Donoghue acknowledged the work

of Mr. Ring in getting the Waterville Water Scheme back on track. He said there is an inequality in the way water metering is dealt with. Uneconomic holdings that do not exceed the domestic allowance are still liable for the metering charge and this should be reviewed, in particular for elderly people.

Cllr. B. Griffin welcomed the work carried out on the Tralee/Castlemaine road and said he was looking forward to work on the N86 coming to fruition. He expressed his disappointment with the level of funding for Local Improvement Schemes as just 15 roads will be improved in 2011. At that rate of going it will take ten years to complete the current list. He asked if any assistance could be given to people whose roads are at the end of this list. Could materials be provided or any other assistance given to them? He expressed his disappointment that improvements will not be carried out to Listry Bridge in the near future as there are safety concerns regarding this bridge. In the past he requested that a sign would be provided at both ends of the bridge asking motorists to give way to traffic on the bridge but the signs have not been provided. He then referred to piers and harbours and asked that contact would be made with the various government departments to try to secure recoupment of monies outstanding as this money is badly needed for roads. He requested that consideration would be given to the carrying out of works to Brandon Pier. In relation to Water Services he asked that the use of Wetland Integration Systems would be considered rather than traditional systems. In conclusion he thanked the staff of the Roads and Water Services Departments who have been extremely busy during the recent bad weather. He also thanked Mr. Brian Hickey, EE and Mr. Colm Nagle, EE who were always available to take his calls and were very helpful.

Cllr. T. Fleming concurred with the compliments paid to the staff of the Roads and Water Services Departments for the wonderful emergency service provided during the recent severe weather. He thanked Mr. P. Corkery for his regular bulletins each morning on Radio Kerry. Cllr. Fleming then referred to the take over of group water schemes and said the take over of some schemes is delayed because of difficulties with way leaves, in particular, Ballahantourigh and Coolick. He called on Kerry County Council to take the initiative and to make contact with the Department with a view to resolving these issues. He asked that additional land would be acquired for an extension to the burial ground in Scartaglin. He asked that additional funding would be allocated to local authorities for the gritting and salting of roads. Many roads which were badly damaged by the severe frost last winter are in a bad condition as a result of the recent freezing conditions. There is a huge deterioration in the road near Kerry Airport. He complimented the staff on the excellent improvements to the Castleisland to Mallow road and said he hoped these works would continue in 2011. This is a very important strategic road. He referred to the Atlantic Corridor and said that the draft plans show the road coming to Adare and then diverting via Mallow. He suggested that the Atlantic Corridor should be amended to come from Adare to Abbeyfeale as it is vital for the economy of the county. He asked that this issue would be pursued at national level.

Cllr. T. Ferris suggested that the Budget should be considered in a half day next year as there was just a bare quorum present at the meeting. She asked if any funding is provided in the Budget for coastal erosion. Cllr. Ferris expressed her disappointment that there has been no progress on the provision of the Ardfert Sewerage Scheme since 2003 yet it is still a priority. When there is rain the street in Ardfert is flooded and properties are damaged and this has resulted in financial hardship for the

property owners. In the summer many roads boil up and in the winter they crumble, in particular, the road at Caherslee which has deteriorated and she asked is it a problem with the materials used. She asked if there was provision in the Budget for the metering of domestic properties. She suggested that members should study the Budget Report in their own time and then put questions to Management on it. This would be a more appropriate way to deal with the Budget.

Cllr. T. O'Brien supported this suggestion.

Cllr. P. McCarthy asked if consideration of the Budget had to proceed in a particular way.

Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance said there is case law on the consideration of the Budget in *Ahern – v – Kerry County Council* and that required the elected council to fully consider every Programme. The Executive will comply with the wishes of the members provided it complies with the law. Cllr. Ferris's suggestion could be implemented provided it is done logically, however, in order to proceed this way it would require a decision of Council. It has been the practice for many years that the Executive would go through each programme and then there would be a contribution from members.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue said there was a proposal in the past to short cut consideration of the Budget, however, the High Court pointed out that each Programme Group must be considered individually.

Mayor Leahy asked members to confine their remarks to the Budget.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen complimented the staff of the Water Services Department who did excellent work during the recent cold spell. He welcomed progress on the Waterville Water Scheme which is now proceeding. He referred to the water main supplying water to Kilgarvan which is laid over ground and he asked that it would be laid underground.

Cllr. T. O'Brien complimented the staff of the Roads and Water Services Departments for their efficiency and dedication. He complimented Mr. Colm Mangan for resolving the issue in Curraheen recently. He then referred to the Canal Road where he said the side of the road is falling into the sea and he asked that this issue would be addressed. He also referred to the road at Caherslee which disintegrated at the first sign of frost and said this standard of road is very poor.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads thanked members for their compliments to his staff who worked by night during the recent bad weather. There was great support and commitment from all staff during that period. He thanked his staff for their work during the past year. Mr. O'Sullivan informed the meeting that the Kenmare Relief Road did not progress because of delays in acquiring land. The land has now been acquired and the next stage is the Part VIII. He accepted that the damage to the road network in the county has been extensive but not as bad as last year. Some of these roads were scheduled for improvement works in 2011 anyway. There are 8 crews carrying out repairs to roads. He informed members that there are 5,300 landowners on our database and they are advised of their responsibility to cut their hedges. The vast majority of these take their responsibilities seriously but a small number do not comply and they are taken to Court. Mr. O'Sullivan then referred to

the Tralee By-Pass and the query regarding the link to the IT and said that this road is part of the Scheme. However, the new road from the Forge Cross to the Bracker O'Regan Road will be dependent on the availability of funding from development levies. If the GPCE project proceeds it will result in substantial development contributions and this will strengthen our case for funding from the State. He assured members, from a road safety point of view his Department would continue to liaise with schools on the issue of road safety. The Kells road was submitted to the NRA for funding and a response is awaited. Efforts will also be made to secure funding for the Ring of Kerry road. He acknowledged that the level of funding for the Local improvement Scheme is very disappointing and has reduced considerably with just 15 schemes to be completed in 2011. However, he was not aware of any other mechanism to provide assistance to communities to improve roads. He referred to the recovery of expenditure on piers and harbours and informed members that a sum of €935,000 was received from the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs in respect of works carried out at Knightstown Pier. The Macroom Road and N21 Abbeyfeale to Adare roads are outside the remit of Kerry County Council. He acknowledged that these roads are of strategic importance to the county and Oireachtas members have been asked to ensure these roads are kept on the priority list. The reduction in funding is challenge for all local authorities and it is important to ensure value for money. He referred to the problems with the road at Caherslee and said there are some soft areas and these will be addressed and this is an isolated incident. It is intended to carry out improvements to the road at the top of Caherslee in 2011. Mr. O'Sullivan referred to the roundabout at the Matt Talbot road and said while it is not the ideal solution given the constraints it is the best that could be achieved. Funding for the Kenmare Relief Road would have to be spent in the year it is allocated. He confirmed that no funding allocated under the Specific Improvement Scheme was returned. The overall allocation was €2.55m with €200,000 for the Kenmare Relief Road. Some schemes were over spent and the entire allocation was expended.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae asked if the €250,000 was spent in Kenmare.

In response Mr. O'Sullivan confirmed that the entire sum was not spent in Kenmare but the balance remaining was used to meet the over expenditure on other projects.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae asked that the balance of this money would be spent in Kenmare in 2011.

Mr. O'Sullivan said if this is to happen the funding will have to be taken out of the budget for Poulgorm.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae said that Kenmare is in urgent need of a By-Pass because of traffic congestion. He asked that the balance of the money for the Kenmare By-Pass would be taken from where it was spent last year.

Mr. O'Sullivan informed the meeting that it was spent in Poulgorm as the overall objective was to spend the full allocation.

Mr. O. Ring, Director of Water Services informed the meeting that the Council does have a network of bulk meters and this is a useful way to manage the network. The issue of charging for domestic water usage is a government decision. He then referred to the Ardfert Sewerage Scheme and said the Water Services Department is

working through procedures and wants to ensure and the land and access is in order. He said he would like to install water softeners in Ardfert when the funding was available.

Mr. J. O'Connor referred to the query from Cllr. O'Donoghue regarding the installation of water meters and said that it is national policy that any property not used solely for domestic use must be metered. If there are any individual hardship cases these would be considered on their merits.

Mayor P. Leahy informed the meeting that the adjourned Budget Meeting would be held on Monday 17 January at 1.30pm.

The meeting concluded at 5.25pm.

Gerard O'Brien

Meetings Administrator

Mayor of Kerry