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**MIONTUAIRISCÍ CRUINNITHE BHUISÉID COMHAIRLE CHONTAE
CHIARRAÍ, A THIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN
CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, DÉ LUAN, 9 SAMHAIN 2015.**

**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON MONDAY
9TH NOVEMBER 2015.**

PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR

Councillors/Comhairleoirí

R. Beasley	J. Brassil	M. Cahill
P. Connor-Scarteen	B. Cronin	J.J. Culloty
P. Daly	T. Ferris	J. Finucane
S. Fitzgerald	J.F. Flynn	N. Foley
M. Gleeson	D. Grady	D. Healy-Rae
J. Healy-Rae	N. Kelleher	M. Kennelly
S. Locke	D. McCarthy	P. McCarthy
T. McEllistrim	J. Moloney	N. Moriarty
D. Nolan	B. O'Connell	M. O'Shea
L. Purtill	D. Quigg	J. Sheahan
G. Spring	A. Thornton	

IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR

Ms. M. Murrell, Chief Executive	Ms. A. McAllen, Head of Finance
Mr. M. Scannell, A/Dir. Job Creation	Mr. M. O'Donoghue, A/Dir. of Corp. Services
Mr. O. Ring, Dir. Water Services	Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Dir. Op., Health & Safety
Mr. J. Breen, Dir. Sust. Comm./Q of L	Mr. J. Kennelly, SE Water Services
Ms. M. O'Leary, SEO Finance	Ms. J. McCarthy, SEO Tourism Unit
Mr. P. O'Shea, A/SEO Finance	Mr. G. O'Brien, Meetings Admin.
Mr. L. Quinlan, SEO Env. Protection	Ms. K. Moriarty, A/SEO Housing
Mr. D. Doyle, SE Operations	Mr. T. O'Connor, County Librarian
Mr. J. McCarthy, AO Finance	Ms. K. Lynch, AO Finance
Mr. B. Looney, Head of IT	Ms. M. West, AO Operations
Ms. S. Sheridan, SSO Finance	Mr. P. O'Connor, SSO Finance
Ms. N. O'Sullivan, MD Officer	Ms. J. Foley, MD Officer
Ms. B. Reidy, SSO Corporate Affairs	Ms. C. O'Connor-Galvin, SO Finance
Mr. R. Tangney, ASO Finance	Mr. B. Doolan, ASO Revenue
Ms. N. O'Keeffe, Sen. Exec. Lib.	

The meeting commenced at 10.40 am.

The Cathaoirleach, Cllr. P. McCarthy took the Chair.

The Cathaoirleach stated as a second meeting was taking place he would adjourn the meeting for 20 minutes.

The meeting adjourned at 10.42am.

The meeting resumed at 11.05am.

Vote of Sympathy

The Cathaoirleach extended a vote of sympathy to Cllr. Locke and his family on the death of his uncle Michael.

15.11.09.01 Consideration of the Local Authority Budget for the Local Financial Year ending 31st December 2016

Ms. M. Murrell, Chief Executive stated the Draft Budget prepared for Kerry County Council for the financial year ending 31st December 2016 in accordance with the Local Government Act 2001 and the Local Government Reform Act 2014, together with regulations and guidance issued under the auspices of both Acts was circulated. She briefed members on the initial part of her report as follows.

Preparation of Draft Budget 2016 has taken place following 12 months of significant change to Kerry County Council.

- The four Kerry Local Authorities have been successfully merged into one organisation over the 2015 period.
- Kerry County Council is progressing the economic development priorities of the County in co-operation with key economic partners at a County level including state agencies, business interests and the community. The County Economic Advisory Committee which was established during 2015 will oversee the implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plan (L.E.C.P.). A number of the strategically important economic activities have progressed over 2015. These include: -
 - o The proposal to purchase Kerry Technology Park in partnership with the I.T.T.
 - o The commitment to achieving the County Kerry objectives through the 140 actions outlined in the South West Regional Action Plan for Jobs.
 - o The recent proposal for the regeneration and possible securing of EU Funding for a designated economic Urban site in Tralee.

- o Sanction received for an Economic Development Officer and during 2015 an Economic Development Unit for Kerry County Council was established. It is intended to develop this further during 2016.
 - o Significant progress made in respect of Greenway Development.
 - o Extensive forward planning achieved on Capital Projects.
 - o The Destination Kerry Forum has strengthened its membership and through the Tourism Strategy has brought a number of state, business and community interests and priorities to one forum.
 - o A €62m 2015 – 2017 Housing Capital Program allocated to Kerry County Council and it is expected that over the course of 2015 over 400 units will either be leased, purchased or upgraded to add to the Council Social Housing Provision in the County.
- The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) is established and operational. The SICAP Programme is underway and the LEADER Strategy will commence over the coming weeks with a co-ordinated approach across all the key partners.
- The Municipal District Structures have seen significant work programmes undertaken since their establishment. The Elected Members have agreed the Operational Plans and works are underway accordingly. During 2015, the Municipal District Officers were put in place and it is intended that their role will grow and develop over the coming year.
- The ongoing compilation of a comprehensive Tourism Strategy will drive tourism development as a key economic driver for the county over the next five years 2016-2020. Extensive consultation across all sectors to identify both a common vision, key priorities and goals for each municipal area are key to a comprehensive strategy. This Strategy will form part of the Local Economic & Community Plan and it is anticipated that it will be presented to Council early in 2016.

Preparation of Budget 2016 and the ongoing financing of the Council is not without its challenges both in the short, medium and long-term. However, it is essential that we fund the new organisation to meet our economic and community objectives.

Revenue income collection remains challenging in the current climate. Ongoing restructuring of the loan portfolio, delivery of Forward Planning, economic development initiatives, Municipal District funding (general municipal allocation), remediation of the Landfill and funding of future financial liabilities are all significant expenditure obligations that must be met. The Rates Harmonisation process has limited our Revenue raising abilities in 2016.

Presentation of the statutory Budget for adoption by Members concludes the three stage Budget process for 2016. The first stage required Members to consider adoption of the Local Adjustment factor for the 2016 rate of LPT at the Budget Strategy meeting of the 14th September. The second stage of the Budget process required consideration of the Municipal District Allocation for 2016 at the Municipal District Budgetary Plan meetings held during the statutory period in October. The third and final stage of the Budget process commences during the prescribed Budget period at the Annual Statutory Budget Meeting of 9th November 2016.

General Municipal Allocation

The General Municipal Allocation (GMA) proposal for 2016 as adopted by the Municipal Districts of Tralee Killarney and Listowel has built on the 2015 Municipal District Scheme. The scheme was discussed and agreed with the CPG in advance of the Municipal District meetings and was revised from the 2015 Scheme to provide for a Rural Periphery Fund allocation to the Listowel Municipal District and the South and West Municipal District. This resulted in an allocation of €12,000 each to the Municipal Districts of Listowel and South and West from the Municipal Districts of Killarney and Tralee.

Ms. Murrell stated she had at that stage taken account of the Draft Budgetary Plan as adopted by Tralee, Listowel and Killarney Municipal Districts and whilst the South and West Municipal District did not adopt the Plan – she had, after consideration of funds available to the County, demands on those funds and the discretionary element of the Municipal District Funds in the context of the former Town Council commitments - decided to submit the GMA as presented to the Municipal District Meetings. This in her opinion represented a fair and reasonable approach to the Municipal District allocation for 2016.

She proposed that Kerry County Council would assess the model over 2016 as it is an evolving funding mechanism to ensure that it is targeted at those areas of greatest need.

The amount provided in this Draft Budget for the General Municipal Allocation is €1.707m which is amongst the highest in the country. This is comprised of the €750,000 for Municipal District allocation and is for the purpose of amenity/recreation/community/tourism/economic supports in addition to the Councillor Specific Municipal Operations District allocation of €957,000 maintained at €29,000 per Councillor. This is the amount presented to members during the Budgetary Plan meeting as adopted by three of the four Municipal Districts as referred to above. This is a significant discretionary allocation for each Municipal District.

Furthermore, it is important that the GMA is not viewed in isolation from the general budget provision which for 2016 has proposals to support Community Development and Community Enterprise. For example, a sum of €100,000 is included in own resources to avail of national Rural Economic Development Zone

REDZ scheme (Cahirciveen, the McGillicuddy Reeks, Killorglin Mill Enterprise Units). Furthermore, a funding submission has recently been made by Kerry County Council to avail of the ERDF designated Urban Grant Scheme (Tralee Regeneration Site) and the Public Enhancement scheme (countywide) which will require own resource commitment. These grant allocations attract a significant own resource allocation, which when taken in conjunction with the GMA will have a considerable and very positive impact on communities county wide.

Local Authority Financing

The Council received notification from DECLG on 3rd September 2015 of the Provisional Local Property Tax Allocation for 2016. The Local Property Tax allocation for Kerry County Council for 2016 (pending any decision to locally vary the basic rate) is €11,106,204 as adopted at the LPT meeting. This represents 80% of total estimated LPT to be collected in Kerry in 2016 which is to be retained locally. The remaining 20% will be re-distributed to provide top-up funding to certain local authority areas that have lower property tax bases due to the variance in property tax values across the state. Compensation to the value of €552,982 will be provided to Kerry County Council to make up the current shortfall which results in a total allocation of €11,659,186 for 2016.

Irish Water

The Draft Budget 2016 has been prepared on the basis that the full cost of water services provided by the County Council to Irish Water will be recouped. Purchases of goods and services made through Kerry County Council systems will be recouped from Irish Water. All other expenditure will be processed on the Irish Water System. An Annual Service Plan for 2016 is currently being negotiated with Irish Water. The Irish Water Business Plan has been adopted as Government policy. The Plan looks at a €5.5bn investment in infrastructure from 2015 – 2021. Irish Water is seeking to reduce costs and achieve efficiencies of €1.1bn and the indicative reduction for 2016 is 7%. Kerry County Council will engage with Irish Water as it is essential that the efficiency gain to Irish Water is not at a cost to Kerry County Council. This will be an on-going consideration for Kerry County Council over the coming years and the Chief Executive undertook to revert to Council when appropriate. In this regard it is worth noting that Irish Water has indicated that they will be seeking efficiencies and reductions which may impact in the cost of the SLA in 2016 as potentially a reduction in central management charge payments to this Council.

The Local Government Operational Procurement Office, Killarney, Co Kerry

This Council is established as the National Procurement Office to host procurement initiatives on a shared service basis on behalf of all local authorities for 2016 and other state agencies. Draft Budget 2016 reflects the income and expenditure arising from this initiative. The cost of this office is fully recouped from the DECLG and Local Authorities. This is a very significant area and the

frameworks contracts are valued at €250m not only for local authorities but also for the public sector.

Current Financial Update & Looking Forward to 2016

The Draft Budget 2016 provides for expenditure of €124,986,463 which is comparable to the 2015 Adopted Budgets.

Grants and Subsidies amount to €28.721m while Rates income of €41.359m is one third of our income and shows our high dependency on a small number of large rate payers.

Staffing

There is increasing difficulty in providing for the revenue payroll budget particularly given the current level of capital grant allocations both general and specific. Priority will continue to be given in 2016 to maximize projects that will attract capital funding. The Revenue Payroll Budget assumes recoupment of the extensive Housing Capital Program costs and maximises recoupment of costs associated with development of the Capital Program. This Budget also assumes a significant compensatory payment for costs associated with Pension Related Deduction Income from the DECLG following National Budget 2016 decisions. DECLG correspondence has issued this week in relation to this matter requesting information. It is hoped that actual allocations will be notified in December /January.

Income Collections

Consolidation, centralisation and stream lining of processes and procedures continue across all income collection areas. Comprehensive arrears management systems have been put in place with particular emphasis on long term and high value arrears. This approach focuses on prevention of arrears with early intervention and close monitoring of accounts. It is anticipated that this targeted approach will impact on all income arrears levels in the coming months.

Commercial Rates

The Budget was framed in the context of limited buoyancy in the 2016 income. The Council, while making all efforts to optimise collections, will continue to review the position of businesses on a case-by-case basis particularly those experiencing difficulties due to the current economic climate, subject to the submission of required documentation. A distinction, however, needs to be made between those businesses that have genuine trading difficulties and those apparently unwilling to pay. The latter businesses will be pursued through the appropriate channels.

2016 represents the 2nd year of the 8 year harmonisation period agreed with members last year. The 8 year harmonisation period will gradually result in a single Annual Rate Valuation of €79.25 at the end of the harmonisation period by using the base year adjustment factor.

Draft Budget 2016 is supported to a limited extent by limited capital provisions made by Members to the value of €856,000. This source of income has diminished significantly. Buoyancy and efficient debt management of our locally sourced income streams will be critical in the short and long term. In addition, Housing internal capital receipts of €340,000 are part funding overall Vacant Houses refurbishment expenditure of €1.26m in 2016 which is reflected in its entirety in the Revenue Account in 2016.

- **Housing and Building**

This program is the Council's main response to social needs and a special effort has been made to maintain and increase the Budget allocation in this area. The allocation includes a reallocation of wages and salaries across the Housing Department following centralisation of services. The combined stock of Kerry County Council totals over 4,000 properties. Significant resources are required to maintain this stock. Provision is made for staffing to help with delivery of the many housing schemes and for housing maintenance for the entire county, and includes an extensive in house housing stock survey. A sum of €1,260,000 is included for the repair of vacant houses to be funded from DECLG and internal capital housing receipts. The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) is still continuing to attract increased participation in Kerry and this is reflected in the budget figures, as is the expansion of the long-term leasing scheme and in particular the availability agreements.

The Draft Budget 2016 contains an allocation of €1.788m for the Housing Adaptation and Aids for the Elderly Grants Schemes subject to grant-aid of €1.43m (80%) from DECLG. This requires a local contribution of €0.358m. The 2016 provision was based on the initial 2015 DECLG allocation.

This Council has an extensive portfolio of land for the construction of housing. The Council is obliged to service the loans on these lands out of our revenue budget. It is disappointing that the Department has advised that the Land Aggregation Scheme, announced in April 2010, has ceased. On that basis, the Council consulted directly with the HFA in 2014 and negotiated a 5-year interest only payment option for matured land loans. The impact on the revenue Budget 2016 is €1.047m expenditure taking account of all factors in relation to this issue. Recent developments in social housing policy will enable use of some of these lands in the near future. However, a strategic review of these lands will take place during 2016.

It is important to take a strategic approach to our housing stock and it is intended to carry out a housing stock survey in 2016. Following this a

planned maintenance programme will be developed. It is proposed to set aside funding each year for this programme.

This Council is liable in 2016 for €357,000 approx. for the Local Property Tax in respect of liable properties.

- **Road Transport and Safety**

The Draft Budget 2016 figures for the Roads Grants Schemes are prepared on the original National and Non-National road allocations from the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (T.I.I.) as advised in 2015. During the year an additional allocation of €1,125,450 was received for Restoration Improvement works and further allocations included €183,000 for the provision of safety barriers, €77,925 for speed limit signage and €98,000 for the removal of Japanese knotweed. The own resource allocation for the non-national roads works maintenance programme is maintained at €16.2m. In addition, an own resource provision has been included for road design costs in support of reduced funding in recent years from T.I.I. The Councillor Specific Municipal District Operations Fund of €957,000 is being provided from own resources for discretionary works nominated by the Elected Members. The fund will be administered in accordance with the scheme adopted by Council in 2015. This is now included in the General Municipal Allocation – Miscellaneous Services.

- **Development Management**

The Draft Budget 2016 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. The draw-down of existing bonds will be considered in cases where deemed appropriate. The work here will continue to have short and long-term benefits.

Also included in this program are the operational costs of the Tourism Promotion and Development Unit and the Community Development Unit.

- **Environmental Services**

The Budget Allocation for 2016 provides for the costs of operating the five Transfer Stations/Civic Amenity Sites in the county at Killarney, Milltown, Kenmare, Caherciveen and Ionad Athchúrsála agus Dramhaíola Chorca Dhuibhne. Following the closure of North Kerry Landfill in July 2014, provision is also made for ongoing maintenance costs associated with the Landfill including leachate removal and the requisite maintenance contracts in accordance with EPA requirements. Expressions of interest were sought during 2015 for possible uses of the North Kerry Landfill Site which will allow the Council to plan for its future use.

- **Library Services**

Kerry Libraries provide an invaluable and evolving service to the county and in 2015 estimate over 450,000 visits to its nine libraries and two mobile units. In addition, over 620,000 items will be borrowed. In recognition of their role in supporting communities a special effort is made in the Draft Budget to maintain and support the book fund of €270,000.

- **Miscellaneous Services**

The General Municipal Allocation of €1,707,000 is shown in Division H. Also included is the cost of Local Representation and Civic Leadership. Agency and Recoupable Services includes the costs associated with the Procurement Office, which is fully recoupable from the DECLG and other local authorities.

Capital Investment Plan

The Council will continue to invest in the infrastructure of the county aiming to maximise grant funding. The Capital Programme for the three-year period 2016-2018 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. The Capital Programme must have regard to the available resources, which have diminished in recent years due to limited borrowing capacity and development contributions. The Housing Capital Programme 2015-2017 will lead to significant capital activity over the period.

Development Contributions

A statement regarding the amount of Development Contributions on hands, the estimated income expected for 2016 and an indicative statement of the proposed application of the funding available is included in Schedule 2 at the end of the Budget Explanatory Memorandum. A focused approach to Income Collection has already seen significant improvements in 2015 collection levels. A new development contribution scheme will be brought before Members in early 2016. Efforts continue however to maximise return from this Revenue stream.

Acknowledgements

Ms. Murrell expressed her appreciation to the Cathaoirleach, Cllr Pat McCarthy to Cllr John Brassil, the previous Cathaoirleach, the Members of the Council, the Corporate Policy Group, the Strategic Policy Committees for their support, co-operation and application during the year.

She also paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of all Council staff to the county over the 2015 period. This has been a year of significant change and has required an exceptional response highlighting the commitment of staff throughout all areas of Council operations.

The Chief Executive thanked Angela McAllen, Head of Finance, and all the staff of the Finance Department for both their professionalism and work ethic in preparing Budget 2016. She recommended the Budget for adoption.

The Cathaoirleach then called on Ms. McAllen to present her overview on the Budget and he stated members could then ask questions or make comments.

Ms. A. McAllen informed the meeting she presented a balanced Budget for 2016 and the Chief Executive had covered many of the issues facing the Council from a financial perspective which impact on the balancing of the budget. Consideration of the Budget strategy in September and Municipal plan meetings in October have enabled us to move forward to this stage of the legislative Budget process to enable the Budget process to come to a conclusion. As we approach 2016 income and expenditure certainties have crystallised and where certainties exist and we have received confirmation we have factored these into the Budget. In the absence of known certainty we have factored in best estimate based on information available on outturns or best estimates for this time of year.

Across expenditure headings in the Budget Table members would see the allocation of resources which reflect the financing of the restructured and reorganised local authority to enable it to respond efficiently and effectively to meeting its increased and central role in relation to economic and community development whilst maintaining budget allocation to maintain service delivery of our services across the county. As in previous years the Revenue Budget includes a number of Capital Transfers detailed in each Division.

The statutory budget format is presented as prescribed by the DoECLG. An overview is given on Pages 11-21 of the Chief Executive's Report of each directorate followed by an overview of the new Municipal District structures. The Budget for each of these directorates is reflected across the divisions as indicated as we go through each chapter of the Chief Executive's Report.

The expenditure proposed amounts to €124,986,463. As usual, the 2016 expenditure reflects an estimated provision for Road Grant related works as the Council has not received any notification of Road Grants from the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport and Transport Infrastructure Ireland for 2016 to date. The actual expenditure on the Road Works Grants Programmes will be based on the allocations to be notified later.

The accompanying diagram shows the distribution of the proposed expenditure amongst the divisions for 2016. The combined expenditure of the Divisions titled Housing and Building, Road Transport, Water Services and Environmental Services accounts for 70% of the Council's overall Revenue Budget in 2016.

The graph on Page 26 reflects the breakdown of expenditure. Payroll continues to be the largest element of revenue expenditure at 50% of overall expenditure. It is important to note that a large percentage of salaries such as Irish Water, Procurement etc. is recouped.

The graph also clearly illustrates the proportion of spend on non discretionary expenditure such as payroll, loan charges, insurance and energy and elements of operational costs remain very high. It leaves us with very little scope for further reductions in expenditure, maintenance of income streams for 2016 is critical.

Ms. McAllen referred members to the Graph on Page 27 titled Estimated Sources of Income 2016 which illustrates our continued reliance on central government funding which has increased from 2015 by 2% to 23% at €28.72m. The LPT allocation represents 9% of overall income at €11.6m. Commercial rates accounts for 33% of overall income and there is significant income also for Irish Water recoupment and PRD and other locally sourced income is 24%. Rates and other locally sourced income total 57% of overall income, it is critical therefore that our focus on debt management is increased during 2016. Ms. McAllen stated she made pragmatic provisions for income in 2016 based on 2015 outturns and where realistic increased collection targets to reflect efficiencies of centralisation of services and this increased focus on debt management.

The Head of Finance then referred members to Page 29 of the Chief Executive's Report for an analysis of sources of Income and she briefed the meeting on this Chapter as follows. As mentioned already State Sector Grants form 23% of our overall income and Road Grants are represented as per the initial allocation for 2015. In all instances actuals are reflected where notified and realistic estimates are included pending formal notification of allocations.

2. Local Property Tax €11,659,186

Kerry County Council by resolution decided when considering the budget strategy in September 2015 not to vary the basic rate of the LPT for 2016. The DECLG have subsequently confirmed in Circular 10/2015 LPT allocation for Kerry County Council for 2016 at €11,659,186.

Pension Related Deduction €1,900,000

An amount of €1,900,000 is included to reflect the anticipated receipts from pension related deductions from payroll in 2016. This income was introduced in 2009 to supplement the Local Government Fund. The reduced income in this area reflects the proposed reductions in accordance with the provisions of the Landsdowne Road Agreement following a rowing back of some of the provisions of the Emergency legislation put in place to get government fiscal position under control at that time.

3. RATES ON COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

€41,358,891

The elected members decided at the Budget Meeting for 2015 to adopt an annual rate of valuation of €79.25, which would apply over an eight year period of harmonisation. 2016 represents year 2 of the harmonisation process and the rate is achieved using a base year adjustment factor.

The maximising of the collection of rates is vital to service delivery by the Council. However, it is also understood that rates pose a significant business expense in the current climate. The budgeted figure for rates for 2016 shows a slight increase on 2015, while at the same time, the budgeted figure for irrecoverable rates has also been decreased. This emphasises the Council's commitment to increase collection levels, while at the same time reducing arrears outstanding.

The Council, while making all efforts to optimise collections, will continue to review the position of businesses experiencing difficulties, owing to the current economic climate, where supporting documentation indicates a serious downturn in activities and turnover for a period of time, on an individual case by case basis. A distinction, however, needs to be made between those businesses that have genuine trading difficulties and those apparently unwilling to pay. Considerable progress has been made in addressing serious arrears cases in 2015.

The unavailability of new properties for rateable purposes in Kerry is a major concern at this time as well as the uncertainty of the impact of pending global revaluations as it allows for little or no buoyancy in this area.

In the figures presented in September it was expected that due to rates revaluation our income would reduce by €300,000 but the loss in fact was €435,000 in the global revaluation. We continue to work closely with the Valuations Office and fortunately this year one large valuation and a number of other valuations pending were valued, these have benefitted 2016 income and this can be attributed to the good working relationship between the Rates Office and the Valuations Office. We are dependant on Revenue collectors to identify new properties and also on constant representations to the Valuations Office. There is a very real risk facing the Council as 50% of rates are paid by just 3% of rate payers while the remaining 50% of rate payers pay less than €5,000. Ms. McAllen stated there is a very real risk to the Council in the global revaluation, and indeed in the overall Rates Income given our dependence as a source of income.

4. IRISH WATER

€13,325,344

Income reflected here represents the recoupment of Water Services related payroll, goods and services and net Central Management Charges recoupable from Irish Water under relevant expenditure headings in the Water Services Division budget for 2016, as outlined in the Water Services chapter in this document.

5.1 Housing Rents - A0101 **€8,825,000**

This sum represents income expected from Housing tenants, exclusive of rents paid in respect of the RAS and Social Leasing rents. This provision has been increased over the budgeted allocation for 2015 to reflect both outturn for 2015 and the continuing emphasis on collections and reduction in arrears outstanding. The Council will continue to promote all payment options available to tenants and liaise with those experiencing difficulties.

5.2 Housing Loan Repayments - A0801 **€565,000**

This figure represents interest payments on house loans due by customers to the Council.

There are currently 496 loan accounts in Kerry County Council, with 17 redeemed in 2015 to date. The Budget for 2016 reflects a small decrease in this area due to loans expiring / redemptions and the age profiles of the remaining loans where a large portion of the monthly instalments relate to the principle element.

5.3 Charges on Non-Principal Private Residences
(N.P.P.R.) – H1102 **€550,000**

The Draft Budget figure of €550,000 represents projected income in this area which we have benefitted significantly from in years past.

5.4 Planning Application Fees/Charges - D0201 **€511,000**

Provision of €511,000 is made for Planning Application Fees/Charges and this is a slight increase on 2015.

5.5 Burial Fees - E0901 **€309,400**

The draft Budget figure reflects the income expected from the sale of grave spaces in the coming year. It is anticipated that Burial Ground Fees will be standardised to €425 per plot from 1st January 2016.

5.6 Fire Safety Certificates, Disability Access Certificates and Inspection Fees

Provision of €194,000 is made for Fire Safety Certificates, Disability Access Certificates and Inspection Fees.

5.7 Charges for Attending at Fires

Provision of €300,000 is made in the Budget for Charges for Attending at Fires and this reflects the outturn for 2013 and 2014.

5.8 Library Charges - F0201

€50,800

A revised library membership system was put in place in 2014, whereby all members could borrow up to 8 books at any given time and also have access to available library online sources such as World Book, Encyclopaedia Britannica and online language courses at an annual fee of €5. This replaced the charge per item borrowed that was in place in the past.

The reduction in income for this area in 2016 is in anticipation of a revised structure of charging, whereby the existing annual fee of €5 will cease and in accordance with national policy, membership for the use of core library services will be free to members of the public and charges for fines on overdue items will change from 10 cent per week to 5 cent per day. Members will be allowed borrow up to 12 items concurrently and will have free access to an enhanced range of online services, including e-magazines, e-books, e-audio books, e-learning and e-language courses.

5.10 Use of Waste Disposal Sites

€1,378,934

A weighbridge fee and / or rate per tonne of €300 (including both VAT & landfill levy) will apply at our Civic Amenity Sites (or Transfer Stations).

For 2016, the total income shown includes an estimated Landfill Levy of €344,000, which is a contra item, as the Council has to pay the sum collected into the DECLG Environmental Fund. VAT, at the rate of 13.5%, also applies, to the Landfill Levy - currently €75 per tonne.

The budget allocation for 2016 provides for a portion of the cost of operating the five Civic Amenity Sites at Killarney, Milltown, Kenmare and Caherciveen and Ionad Athchúrsála agus Dramhaíola Chorca Dhuibhne.

It is envisaged that the requirement for the introduction of a pay by weight system and the need for the separation of organic waste at each of the sites in 2016 as signalled by the DECLG will require an increase in expenditure due to increase in staff numbers and additional infrastructure required. A working group has been established nationally by the DECLG to examine the implications for the operation of local authority C&A sites throughout the country arising from this requirement.

5.11 Parking Fines and Charges

€2,794,025

Parking revenue is a critical source of local income for the Council. It is proposed to maintain existing parking charges and schemes as existed in 2015 across the county.

Ms. McAllen stated that concluded her overview of the Budget, and proposed income for 2016.

Cllr. J. Finucane PROPOSED that Ms. McAllen would brief members on the first three Divisions and they could then comment on the overview and those Divisions.

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

HOUSING AND BUILDING

Ms. A. McAllen referred members to Pages 11 - 13 of the Budget Tables and Pages 34 – 45 of the Chief Executive's Report for details on this Division. She also referred to Schedule 2 Development Contributions, Appendix A and B, Circulars relevant to the preparation of Budget 2016.

Social Housing Strategy 2015-2017

The Council received notification from the DECLG of the Targets for Delivery under the Social Housing Strategy 2015 – 2017 for 1,058 housing units at an estimated cost of delivery of €62 mn. These are to be delivered using a combination of the Rental Accommodation Scheme, Social Leasing, Voids Programme, House Purchases and House Construction. The Housing Section is actively working towards delivery of these targets using all available delivery mechanisms.

For 2015, a target of 30 house purchases has been specified and there are currently 17 houses at contract signed stage or at pre-contract stage for legal examination. We are at offer/inspection stage with a further 18 no. houses and expect to meet or exceed our purchase target of 30 by year end. We continue to seek suitable house purchases to meet our needs in order to meet targets.

Targets for 2015 for RAS and Leasing have been set at 257 units and the Housing Dept. has completed or is in the process of completing 216 RAS/Leasing contracts for 2015. We expect to meet or exceed our target number for RAS/Leasing for 2015 by year end and continue to actively seek suitable houses for Lease.

In relation to Vacant Houses, we expect to complete work on at least 125 houses by year end through the Voids Programme.

Through close working with Approved Housing Bodies, it is expected that 29 units will be delivered through Long Term Leases and a further 11 units will be delivered through the Capital Assistance Scheme by year end.

In total, it is expected that over 400 housing units will be delivered by year end which demonstrates substantial progress on achieving the targets on the Social Housing Programme.

In terms of the Housing Construction Programme, we are at Pre-Tender/Cost Plan Stage for 20 houses in Park, Killarney and 4 housing units at Bill Kinnerk Road, Tralee. We expect to start work on site in new housing developments in

Lixnaw, Killeen, Tralee and Kenmare in 2016 and planning for these schemes is advancing.

We are also advancing our Single Rural Housing Programme, with 1 unit now nearing completion, 1 unit being constructed on site, 1 unit going to tender and 1 unit at legal transfer stage.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

The DECLG advised in June 2015, that the Minister intends to introduce in the coming months, the Tenant Purchase Scheme for existing tenants under Part 3 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. We await commencement of Part 3 of the 2014 Act in order to give effect to operation of the Scheme, it is expected this will commence in early 2016.

Maintenance/Improvement of L.A. Housing Units

Provision of €3.418m for Housing maintenance of 4,058 housing units across the county is maintained for 2016. €2.159m is provided for the cost of both planned and regular maintenance of these assets. Ongoing procurement efficiencies will be secured in this area to ensure maximum use of resources.

€1.259m is included for the purpose of carrying out pre letting works to vacant properties, the county wide allocation of €905,000 received from the DoECLG in respect of this expenditure is very welcome which will enable additional units to be returned to productive use.

Assessment of Housing Needs, Allocations & Transfer (A0201) €766,000

Assessment of Housing Need

This allocation is in respect of the administrative cost involved in the employment of investigation officers and of backup administrative staff engaged in offering housing advice, liaising with the Department of Social Protection, the HSE, other relevant statutory and non-statutory agencies, assessing housing need and making recommendations on the allocation of individual tenancies.

During the period January to September 2015, 97 households were accommodated in the county through the direct provision of local authority housing. A total of 489 new applications were received for social housing support in this period, of which 262 have been assessed and qualified for social housing support, 193 applications are in the process of being assessed and 34 applications were closed.

In 2016, the National Housing Needs Assessment is required to be carried out which is a considerable task given the size of our housing waiting List and provision is included for this.

Debt Management and Rent Assessment (A0301)

€939,000

This allocation covers costs associated with the collection of rent and tenant purchase annuities. The Council continues to work with tenants to assist them in paying their rent and offer a variety of payment methods including Household Budget, Bill Pay, Standing Order, Direct Debit, Cash, or directly to the Revenue Collector. It is estimated that approximately 75% of our customers regularly use electronic or 'non-cash' payments methods. A significant number of rent customers, particularly in the larger towns of Tralee, Killarney and Listowel, continue to make cash payments at Municipal Area Offices. The Council will continue to encourage these customers, who are not utilising electronic options, to do so where feasible.

The Council has implemented a new Rent Arrears Strategy which is a very pro-active approach to assist tenants who may be experiencing difficulty in paying their weekly rent. As part of this new strategy, accounts that are falling into arrears are identified at an early stage and effective measures are implemented to address the situation before significant levels of arrears accumulate. The new Rent Arrears Strategy also includes a dedicated office administration support team for each Revenue Collectors to enable them to perform their duties as debt managers in a very pro-active manner.

Excluding the Rental Accommodation Scheme and leasing arrangements, the Council now manages 3,871 active tenancies.

The DECLG have advised that the necessary regulations and guidance relating to the introduction of a new Rent Scheme under Section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 are due shortly. However, we have not been advised of a commencement date.

**Housing Estate Management
& Tenancy Management (A0401 & A402)**

€314,000

This allocation is for the employment of staff dealing with issues relating to Tenancy Liaison, Tenancy Compliance, Tenancy Enforcement and Community Liaison.

The Council will continue to actively promote and support community participation in estate management. It is intended that A Strategic Action Plan will be drawn up which will include Community Surveys in our housing estates which will allow the Council to continue to focus on creating and building sustainable communities.

Homeless Grants/Other Bodies (A0501)

€682,000

Ms. McAllen stated that this is largely recouped.

RAS Operations (A0701)

€6,433,000

The Scheme remains one of the principal mechanisms available to local authorities to provide suitable quality accommodation for those in need of housing. RAS has and continues to be a successful programme, which has achieved considerable output levels to date and delivered quality housing to a large number of households.

It is anticipated that funding will be made available from the DECLG to continue to operate the scheme in 2016 in respect of the associated costs of ongoing payments to landlords in respect of existing and new RAS tenants.

Kerry County Council remains one of the highest performing local authorities in the provision of RAS accommodation having regard to the number of eligible households in the county (i.e. in receipt of rent supplement for 18 months or longer).

The following is a summary of activity in this area:

- Total Active Tenancies 883 (incl. 117 Voluntary)
- New tenancies to date in 2015 115

Long Term Leasing / Availability Agreements (A0702)

€1,330,000

This allocation is in respect of the leasing costs anticipated in 2016, together with salary and support costs. The increased allocation is recouped from the DECLG.

Loan Interest and Other Charges (A0801)

€1,703,000

Land Purchase Service Costs

The impact on the Revenue Budget for 2016 is €1,046,939 for Land Purchase Loans representing interest only payments to the HFA. Note this amount would increase to over €2m if the principal was paid in 2016.

Housing Support Grants (A0901, A0903 & A0905)

€1,788,000

Kerry County Council continues to administer these three grant schemes on behalf of the DECLG – Mobility Aids Scheme, Housing Adaptation Scheme for Persons with a Disability and Housing Adaptation Scheme for Older Persons. The 2016 provision of €1,788,000 is based on the initial DoE Allocation. 80% of the total allocation is funded by the DoECLG i.e. €1,430,400 with the 20% balance of €357,000 coming from our own resources. In 2015 to-date, the Council approved 441 new grant applications, which will fully account for the 2015 funding allocation inclusive of the additional funding.

The Council is cognisant of the immense benefit to be gained from these schemes as living conditions of eligible elderly and disabled household members in our county are improved. The schemes also continue to provide a welcome stimulus package for construction, plumbing and electrical trades in the sector.

ROAD TRANSPORT & SAFETY

Ms. A. McAllen referred members to Pages 14 – 16 of the Budget Tables and Pages 46 – 61 of the Chief Executive's Report for details of this Division. This is the largest area of expenditure in the Council at 26% and is based on 2015 allocations.

Ms. McAllen then stated the amount of own resources allocation of €16m is outlined on Page 60 of the Chief Executive's Report and is quite significant. It is broadly maintained at the 2015 level. The Municipal District Operation Fund has moved from this area to Division H which combined with the Municipal District Fund creates a Municipal District Allocation of €1.7m. This amount combined with the Street Cleaning Budget now shown under Environmental Services of €2.7m is considerable but critical to ensure we continue to maintain our road network and attract grant funding.

WATER SERVICES

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 17 – 18 of the Budget Tables and Pages 62 – 67 of the Chief Executive's Report for details on this Division. The following areas in the Water Services division have been retained by Kerry County Council. The 2016 Draft Budget proposals include:

Operation & Maintenance of Public Conveniences (C04)

<u>Operation & Maintenance of Public Conveniences (C0401)</u>	<u>€675,000</u>
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Kerry County Council owns and operates Public Conveniences at 33 locations throughout the County. The 2016 Budget includes caretaking, maintenance and repair costs of these public conveniences.

Seven of the facilities, located at Ballybunion, Portmagee, Sneem, Waterville, Cromane, Kells and Knightstown, are operated by local community groups on behalf of the Council. The Council is most appreciative of the work of these local groups and provision is again made in 2016 to continue with this co-operative approach. This partnership represents good value for money as the service is provided to a high standard at a relatively low cost.

Significant upgrades to Ballybunion and Ballyheigue Public Conveniences are scheduled in 2016.

RURAL WATER PROGRAMME (C05)

The administration and development of the Group Scheme Sector continues to be a function of the Local Authorities under the guidance and supervision of the DECLG and Irish Water has no authority, responsibility or involvement.

IRISH WATER PROGRAMME

Irish Water Operations

Kerry County Council continues to provide water services to the people of Kerry, as an Agent of Irish Water, under a Service Level Agreement (SLA).

For 2016, the following service areas are covered under the SLA:

C01	Water Supply	€7,670,580
C02	Waste Water Treatment	€3,328,350
C03	Collection of Water & Waste Water Charges	€1,588,222
C06	Support to Water Capital Programme	€1,004,817
C07	Agency & Recoupable Services	€220,726

The amounts shown in the tables reflect monies recoupable – Payroll, Central Management Charge (net of Superannuation Income) and, to a lesser extent, Goods & Services as much of this water services expenditure has been transferred to Irish Water's Financial Procurement system.

Irish Water Capital Programme

Under the SLA the Council's Capital Project Office will carry out specific projects on behalf of Irish Water and the costs of this office are fully recouped also.

The Estimated expenditure of Kerry Projects included in the Irish Water Capital Programme is €14.144m (€3.457m on Water Schemes and €10.687 on Wastewater Schemes).

The Irish Water Capital Investment Plan for 2017 - 2021 is currently being formulated. The KCC Project Office is liaising with Irish Water on the development of the plan and a number of workshops have been held in Kerry giving the Project Office an opportunity to set out the priorities for the County. We will continue to work with Irish Water on the prioritising of Kerry Water Services projects for investment. Final assessment and approval of projects is a function of Irish Water.

Cllr. D. Grady stated while an allocation of €62m was received for the Housing Programme progress is very slow and he hoped it would improve. Approx. €1.2m was allocated 2 years ago to build 8 houses in Killarney and members were informed this year that approval was received to build a further 12 houses yet construction has not commenced. The turn around time for vacant houses is too long and he asked that this issue would be addressed. There are very few houses available for letting in the Killarney area. Cllr. Grady asked if funding is provided in the Budget for Litter

Wardens as they are badly needed in Killarney and the countryside is destroyed by illegal dumping.

The Cathaoirleach reminded members that a Special Housing Meeting would be held early in 2016.

Cllr. M. Gleeson stated in 2004 a commitment was given that the Farranfore to Killarney road would be delivered by 2009 but it still has not been constructed. There is an impasse but this and the road from Muckross to Lissivigeen must be prioritised. He understood the Muckross to Lissivigeen road should be relatively easy to deliver. The fact that these roads are not in place is impacting on the economy of the county. Priority should be given to programmes that will enhance the economy of the county especially the Greenway in South Kerry. In 1987 he proposed that the Greenway from Glenbeigh to Caherciveen would be progressed but unfortunately that did not happen. In the interim Mayo is prospering since the Greenway was opened there. Cllr. Gleeson welcomed the support for the Carrauntoohill Project. It is vital that estates are maintained to the highest standard in as near pristine condition as possible. He asked that nothing untoward is developed in estates.

Cllr. Gleeson noted 2016 will be the first year Killarney rate payers will be affected by the abolition of Killarney Town Council and they deserve great credit and thanks. Non payment of rates should not be tolerated when a business can afford it. He requested that the housing stock survey would be carried out as soon as possible as the longer houses are idle the more they will cost to repair them. He welcomed the provision of funding to maintain the 5 Transfer Stations as they are required to uphold the level of cleanliness in the county. He asked that the cost per bag at Transfer Stations would not be increased as he feared if it is increased unduly black bags will become a permanent feature on our roads. Cllr. Gleeson complimented the Council on its efforts to eliminate Japanese Knotweed and said he hoped this Programme would be successful if funding continues to be provided over the next few years. He asked that appropriate signage would be provided where Japanese Knotweed is growing. The Government should be encouraged to bring clarity to the treatment of Japanese Knotweed on private property.

Cllr. S. Locke also complimented the Council on their efforts to eliminate Japanese Knotweed and stated he hoped these efforts would continue. He expressed reservations regarding Long Term Leasing as he believed it was problematic. He would prefer if the funding for Long Term Leasing was put into renovating vacant houses. He welcomed the provision in the Budget for Housing Grants and the proposal to survey the housing stock. Cllr. Locke complimented the Chief Executive, Ms. McAllen and all staff on compiling the Reports on the Budget.

Cllr. B. O'Connell complimented Ms. McAllen and the staff on presenting a balanced Budget. Traveller Accommodation is a very topical issue and there was a national media frenzy following the Carrickmines tragedy and in general they were very critical of local authorities. He complimented Kerry County Council on the manner in which they deal with traveller accommodation and said it is important to strike a balance and he was satisfied that is achieved in Kerry. There are many houses boarded up in

towns and villages and priority should be given to having them repaired and ready for occupation as people re-energise an area. Kerry County Council should take the initiative on this issue. Some of these properties could be leased by the Council and let to tenants. Cllr. O'Connell then referred to the RAS Scheme and said there are rogue landlords who abdicate all responsibility to estates where there is a Management Company. They just rent out their property, collect the rent and they are in effect absentee landlords. They should contribute to the maintenance of the estate in the same way other property owners do. This should be included in the contract under the RAS or Long Term Leasing Scheme and if the landlord does not comply the contract should be terminated.

Cllr. O'Connell called on Mr. J. Breen to arrange a meeting with the manufacturers of Chimney Safe with a view to establishing a pilot programme in Kerry as a grant is available from the DoE. He requested an update on the compilation of a Waste Collection Database and stated every house should avail of a collection service or have receipts for a Transfer Station otherwise there maybe an issue with illegal dumping.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen thanked the Head of Finance and her staff for compiling the Budget and added that the Council finances are in a good state in comparison to other local authorities. He emphasised the need to fast track the repair of vacant houses. While he welcomed the provision for housing grants and the fact that 441 grants were approved in 2015 he stated there is still a big backlog of applications and he expressed his disappointment that additional funding was not allocated for this purpose. Cllr. Connor-Scarteen welcomed the new housing units to be constructed in Kenmare in 2016. He also welcomed the inclusion of the Macroom/Ballyvourney and Adare By-Passes in the Capital Plan and he asked that work on the Macroom By-Pass would commence as soon as possible. Cllr. Connor-Scarteen requested an update on the Renard to Glenbeigh Greenway and added it is important it progresses in 2016.

Cllr. J.F. Flynn thanked the Chief Executive, the Head of Finance and staff for presenting a balanced Budget. He expressed concern at the turn around time for vacant properties and asked that it would be improved. Since January 97 households were facilitated yet a further 489 applications were received and 262 of these have been assessed. At a recent meeting in Iveragh Park he was informed there are 4 houses vacant there since early 2015 at a time when there are 260 people on the housing list in Killorglin. This is very frustrating for them. Public lighting costs the Council €1.9m per annum yet members must insist that adequate lighting is provided in towns and villages and in housing estates that do not have public lighting at present. Cllr. Flynn welcomed the €78,000 for speed limit signage and he asked if the Speed Limit Review would be funded nationally. This Review is urgently required and he raised a number of serious issues on this at MD Meetings particularly in relation to schools. The road at Killorglin was resurfaced 6 weeks ago and he received an email from Irish Water that €1.6m was allocated to replace the pipe network on this road. He asked if Irish Water consult with Kerry County Council on their Roadworks Programme.

Cllr. Flynn stated he voted against the Community Support Fund as he believed the allocation for the South and West Kerry MD is unfair. This Municipal District has a population in excess of 39,000 people. A sum of €10.2m Leader funding will be allocated in the coming year and in the past Tralee and Killarney did not qualify for Leader funding but now they will. He asked that additional funding would be allocated to the South and West Kerry MD in 2016. South and West Kerry is very dependant on tourism and substantial investment is required in infrastructure such as public toilets etc.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae thanked Ms. McAllen and her staff who work very hard to maintain the finances of the Council in order and which culminates in the presentation of the Budget. He thanked the Chief Executive for her compliments to the outdoor staff who are out in all types of weather and it is important to appreciate those on the front line. Cllr. Healy-Rae expressed concern at the reduction in the numbers of outdoor staff over the past 8 years and added in the Killarney area where there were 6 crews this has reduced to 3 and Castleisland has been added to the area. The road staff and the engineers are under severe pressure to ensure the Roads Programme is completed. Very few jobs that were allocated funding under Councillors Allocations have been completed and it is now November. He acknowledged that the recruitment of staff is dependent on the Capital Programme but added that the same length of roads must be maintained by reduced staff numbers. There are problems with blocked gullies and drains and they need to be cleaned otherwise the water will flow onto the road and damage the road surface. He was concerned many roads would be damaged particularly if there is frost. Members are constantly told there is no funding for Class III roads yet residents on these roads pay LPT. While some of them are told their road could be improved under the Community Involvement Scheme they cannot afford the local contribution.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae stated up to 2 or 3 years ago members were asked to submit 2 or 3 roads to be included in the Roads Programme but that is no longer the case. He called for adequate funding for local and cul-de-sac roads. While he welcomed the allocation of €62m for housing he pointed out there are a significant number of vacant houses in the county and this should be addressed. In Killarney the average monthly rent is €950 and many people on the housing list cannot afford this. Landlords want to get their houses back from tenants so they can get a higher rent from a new tenant. Cllr. Healy-Rae supported the views expressed by Cllr. O'Connell in relation to rural regeneration. In the past he raised the issue in relation to a number of villages such as Gneeveguilla and Kilgarvan where there are a number of vacant houses at the side of the street. If it was not for the Tidy Towns Committees many of these properties would be unsightly. These houses would suit elderly people who would appreciate company around them and they would be near shops and emergency services.

Cllr. Healy-Rae complimented the staff in the Housing Grants Section and said he appreciates their work on grant applications. A small grant can help to make an elderly person more comfortable for their remaining years. He asked that funding for the Grant Schemes would be maintained and increased if possible. Funding for Group Water Supply Schemes and Group Sewerage Schemes is at an all time low

and he asked that additional funding would be sought from the Department. Cllr. Healy-Rae referred to Irish Water and said his biggest concern is that people who paid their water charges bill are getting a second bill for the same period which is wrong. Irish Water should have an office in Kerry County Council as they are very difficult to contact. Cllr. Healy-Rae then referred to the flooding on the N22 and he asked the Council and the OPW to clean the River Flesk with a view to preventing this flooding. In the 1970's and again in 1985 or 1986 Kerry County Council cut back the banks and where one tree was cut at that time there are now 3 or 4 trees. There are also problems with Curreal and Gortahoosh Bridges where two of the eyes of the bridges are blocked. He called on the Council to free them as he was concerned the structure of the bridge would be damaged.

Cllr. Healy-Rae referred to the proposed Farranfore to Killarney road which would include a road from Lissivigeen to Castle Lough and he asked that it would be divided into two schemes and that priority would be given to the Lissivigeen to Castle Lough section. He requested an update on the problem with access at Tomies Wood. Kerry County Council supports the building of a new road to Tomies and he asked that it would be fast tracked.

Cllr. T. McEllistrim complimented Ms. McAllen and the staff in her Department on the Budget. He referred to paid parking in Tralee and PROPOSED that paid parking would finish at 4.30pm to help businesses and rate payers. This would encourage business into the town. For the Christmas period normally there is free parking for part of the day in December but he PROPOSED that the free parking would commence at 1pm from 5th December and continue to 5th January.

Cllr. S. Locke SECONDED these proposals.

Cllr. P. Daly thanked Ms. McAllen for the Budget Report and added there are a lot of positives in it. The Tralee to Fenit greenway is aspirational but he noted the section to Casements Avenue is complete despite problems with Dunnes Stores. The Homeless Service is working well and great work is also being done by the LCDC. He referred to Page 43 of the Chief Executive's Report where it states that '*the construction of new social housing is linked to Government Policy*' and said this does not state that the Government are not interested in constructing houses. Current Government Policy relies on the private sector and it has failed. Almost 500 housing applications were received since January and the RAS Scheme and Long Term Leasing Schemes benefit private landlords but do not address the real issue. Cllr. Daly complimented the staff of the Housing Department who are restricted by the Department in what they can do.

Cllr. M. Cahill commended Ms. McAllen and her staff on producing a balanced Budget. The slippage at the Cliff Road, Rossbeigh happened 2 months ago and the residents still do not have vehicular access to their homes. He noted that the consultants report was due that week. Tidal flooding is an ongoing problem in Incharee, Cromane etc and luckily the sea was very calm during the last high tide otherwise Glenbeigh Village would have been flooded. Coastal flooding is a major issue that must be addressed nationally. Cllr. Cahill referred to the Greenway and

said the Council should work with landowners and they should be allowed to deviate from the railway line where necessary. One landowner's holding is already divided by the Ring of Kerry road and it will be divided again by the Greenway. The provision of an annual payment for landowners is critical to the success of this project. He called for the provision of a fund for the cutting of hedges on public roads and he asked that an education programme would be undertaken to advise the general public on Japanese Knotweed and how it should be treated.

Cllr. Cahill stated emergency housing accommodation is provided in Tralee and Killarney which leaves a large part of the county unserved. It is inexcusable that council houses are vacant for 12 months or longer and if necessary a loan should be taken out to repair them. There are in excess of 5,000 people on the housing list and it is very frustrating for them to see houses vacant. Due to the success of the Wild Atlantic Way beaches were busier in October than during the summer because of the good weather. The public toilets should be open all year round at least at weekends and he asked that this would be considered.

Cllr. N. Kelleher thanked the Chief Executive, the Head of Finance and her team on presenting a balanced Budget. A number of months ago members were informed that 16 new houses would be delivered in Rathmore but there is no mention of them in the Chief Executive's report. Rural regeneration is vital and he understood there was an announcement that funding was being made available for village and town enhancement. There are 25 vacant houses on Main Street in Rathmore and this will not help the town to progress. The Council wrote to housing applicants asking them if they would consider moving out to other areas and some incentive should be offered to the owners of the vacant properties to renovate them or for the Council to rent them. He called on the Chief Executive to take this issue up at a national level. A pilot scheme could be trialled in one town or village and if that was successful it could be rolled out to other towns and villages. Cllr. Kelleher welcomed the provision of funding for housing grants and said it is very important to enable the elderly to remain at home and he complimented the Council on availing of these grants.

Cllr. Kelleher referred to the landbank which is costing €1m in interest payments and he expressed concern that some of this land is valueless and cannot be developed. He requested that a report would be presented to Council on all housing land in the county. It is vital that the turn around time for vacant houses is reduced as it is very frustrating for housing applicants to see vacant houses that are not being repaired.

Cllr. J. Finucane acknowledged the work that went into producing a balanced Budget. The level of rates arrears reflects the lack of economic activity in the county and the only way forward is to increase economic activity. He welcomed proposals to purchase the Kerry Technology Park and to appoint an Economic Development Officer. The refurbishment and construction of houses should be a catalyst for the county. Cllr. Finucane expressed his disappointment at the lack of development of the Tarbert/Ballylongford landbank and he called on the Minister to designate it for special incentives. He asked that a Rates remission policy would be considered for start up business as he believed if we depend on the State for new start up businesses we will be disappointed. He referred to the Pension Deductions and

stated they are treated as income while normally these deductions would go into a Pension Fund. He asked if there is any planning for pensions. If such a fund is not in place he PROPOSED that a letter would issue to the Minister for Finance insisting that such a fund would be established.

Cllr. M. Gleeson SECONDED this proposal.

Cllr. A. Thornton thanked the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance for the comprehensive Budget report. It appears members are not clear on the plan for social housing and this is not a criticism of management. She has confidence in the Chief Executive and her team to bring the best Plan forward but there is a need to brief members on this Plan. The Budget is substantial and she wanted to understand it and how targets can be achieved. The Cathaoirleach mentioned the Special Housing Meeting would be held early in 2016 but she felt it should be held before the end of the year. She suggested that members would be briefed on the Housing Programme at the next round of Municipal District meetings. She PROPOSED that a Strategy would be developed for roads and services on the Wild Atlantic Way as many of these roads are in need of repair. Cllr. Thornton acknowledged the work of the Capital Infrastructure Unit and she accepted that projects must be prioritised. However she would like to see the North Kerry Way getting priority. Rate payers have worked so hard to stay in business and she suggested there should be a network between the Council and rate payers to secure improvements into the future. In conclusion Cllr. Thornton stated she would like to see more done for rate payers.

Cllr. N. Foley commended the Chief Executive and all the staff on presenting a balanced Budget. She noted the allocation of €1.7m for Housing Grants and the additional allocation of €225,000 for which no confirmation in writing has been received and she said it is very late in the year. It is regrettable that the provision in the 2016 Budget for these Grants is only at the original 2015 level given that demand outstrips funding available. It is disgraceful there was no Tenant Purchase Scheme over the past few years and it was announced in June that the new Scheme was imminent yet formal notification of the Scheme has not been received. Cllr. Foley called for a plan to be put in place to replace/repair the aging public lighting infrastructure and where one or two lights are broken she asked that they would be repaired immediately. She expressed her regret that funding is not provided for a winter maintenance programme for regional roads. As it is predicted we will have a white Christmas are appropriate plans in place to deal with a severe winter.

Cllr. Foley acknowledged the ongoing work on Greenways and given the impasse with Dunnes Stores she welcomed the fact the greenway was progressed anyway. She asked that further discussions would take place with Dunnes Stores regarding the wall. She acknowledged the patience of the residents in Casements Avenue and the staff also. In conclusion Cllr. Foley asked where the refugees will be housed.

Cllr. B. Cronin complimented Ms. McAllen and her staff on presenting a balanced Budget. He complimented the staff in the Housing Grants Section on their excellent work in assessing applications and awarding grants. These grants transform the lives of the recipients. Cllr. Cronin referred to the Homeless Service and welcomed the fact

that no one needs to sleep rough in the county and he urged people to make contact with this service if they have issues. He asked if there are any plans to provide modular homes in Kerry. Funding has been allocated to replace two sections of the water pipe network in the Killarney area on the Mid Kerry Water Supply Scheme and he asked that these works would be carried out as soon as possible and that priority would be given to the section from Aglish to Flynn's Forge. Non domestic customers are paying for water for the past 15 to 20 years and he acknowledged their loyalty.

Cllr. Cronin referred to grants for septic tanks and said just 4 applications were received in 2015. He PROPOSED that the Guidelines would be scrapped and that the grants would be available to anyone that has a difficulty with their septic tank in order to protect the environment. This would create a lot of employment and would protect water ways.

Cllr. M. Gleeson SECONDED this proposal.

Cllr. Cronin acknowledged the work of the Roads Department and asked if funding is in place for the Local Improvement Scheme and how many roads are still on the list. Members called for a restoration of funding for this Scheme and he hoped funding would be provided for it in 2016. The Community Involvement Scheme is operated by the Council and he complimented residents who contributed to the work on their road and the Council for carrying out the work. He asked that this Scheme would be retained. The local contribution was reduced from 25% to 15% and this was welcome. The funding allocated for the upkeep of bridges is totally inadequate and works out at approximately €40 per bridge. Many stone bridges were constructed over 100 years ago and they were not built for the weight or volume of traffic using them today. There is an urgent need for adequate funding for a bridge maintenance and repair programme. Cllr. Cronin welcomed the funding provided in the Budget to eradicate Japanese Knotweed but stated it is still rampant in some areas and it is not being treated. The areas treated by the Council are showing the benefits. In the past he highlighted the problem where the Council spent hundreds of thousands of euro taking away or improving dangerous bends but they are now completely overgrown. This is a waste of public money and he asked that consideration and priority would be given to undertaking a spraying programme for these areas in the interest of public safety. Cllr. Cronin then referred to hedge cutting and stated he would wait to see how the Chief Executive proposes to deal with those who refuse to comply. He asked that action would be taken by the end of January. He asked if a response was received from Minister Humphries on the public consultation on the extension of time for the burning season. Cllr. Cronin asked that a letter would issue to the two farming organisations i.e. the IFA and the ICMSA calling on them to ask their members to cut their hedges out of respect for the public. He made this call as a landowner who always cuts his hedges and he acknowledged all landowners that cut their hedges each year.

Cllr. Cronin stated he received a phone call from a man who lives 2½ miles in a road and the hedges have not been cut for years. The day he phoned he was very irate as he received his bill for LPT for €224. He stated if the hedges were not cut he would pay to have them cut and would send the bill to the Chief Executive.

Suspension of Standing Orders

The Cathaoirleach stated it was 1.30pm and it would be necessary to suspend Standing Orders.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. J. Healy-Rae, SECONDED by Cllr. N. Kelleher it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow the meeting to continue.

15.11.09.01 Consideration of the Local Authority Budget for the Local Financial Year ending 31st December 2016 (Cont'd)

Cllr. J. Healy-Rae said the turn around time for vacant houses is a bad reflection on management, councillors and staff. He asked that a plan would be put in place whereby a vacant house must be offered to a new tenant within a certain timeframe. Funding for the Housing Aid for the Elderly and Disability Grant Schemes were reduced by 56% a few years ago and there was a big fanfare when it was increased by 3% last year. Cllr. Healy-Rae referred to the Macroom By-Pass and asked if a start date is available for it. He also requested further details on the Urban and Village Renewal Scheme. He understood a Press Release issued but no formal notification of the Scheme issued by the Department. The Department recently announced a deer cull and when asked how many deer would be culled and when it would take place they did not know.

Cllr. Healy-Rae thanked the Chief Executive and the Head of Finance for providing funding to do the minimum number of roads under the Local Improvement Scheme. This scheme is very important and people appreciate the improvements to their roads especially those living in the most peripheral part of the county. There is an ongoing problem with hedge cutting and the present regulations for hedge cutters are very onerous and no contractor will be interested in doing this work. If there is an accident on the road is it the contractor or the landowner that is liable. The School Bus and the Creamery Lorry are refusing to travel the Dromoughty Road. Two gullies are blocked and the only solution is to install new ones. There are 11 families on this road with school going children. He asked if the road collapses what will happen. There are 15 less outdoor staff in the Kenmare area since 2008 and the patching lorry only goes to Kenmare one week per month.

Cllr. Healy-Rae referred to the landbank and said some of it is worthless as it is a flood plain. Thankfully the Land Aggregation Scheme did not proceed and he voted against the inclusion of land in it at the time. At least now the Council has land on which to build social housing.

Cllr. J.J. Culloty thanked Ms. McAllen and her staff for presenting a balanced Budget. In the past funding for Housing Grants was reduced and the present allocation is not adequate to meet the demand. However those that receive a grant benefit greatly from it. He complimented the staff in the Housing Department that administers these schemes. Hedge cutting is an ongoing

problem and landowners should be given until a certain date in the Spring to cut their hedges. Any hedges not cut by that date should then be cut by the Council.

Cllr. Culloty stated it is vitally important that the Muckross Road is joined with the Cork Road as it would alleviate traffic in the town. He asked that priority would be given to progressing this road. Cllr. Culloty referred to Counguilla Bridge and stated one eye of the bridge is blocked and if the bridge is damaged the Council will have to repair it. If it is cleared now it will save money in the long term.

Cllr. J. Moloney complimented Ms. McAllen and her staff on presenting a balanced Budget. Rates will increase in Listowel in 2016 and even though 50% of rates are paid by 3% of customers the other 50% employ 68% of the workforce. He asked that some rates relief would be offered to unique new businesses for the first 3 years. Previously members were informed that 16 houses would be built in Listowel but it is not mentioned in the Budget Report. Cllr. Moloney asked why the GMA was moved to Local Representation/Civic Leadership. While the CFRAM Study related to coastal flooding there is no funding provision for flood relief measures in areas affected by flooding. He welcomed the provision of €120,000 for the Great Southern Trail and said he hoped it could proceed. Cllr. Moloney stated that Limerick County Council have already agreed to take over the 40km of the Great Southern Trail in Limerick.

Cllr. T. Ferris welcomed the positive elements in the Budget even though some are aspirational like the Greenways and the purchase of the Kerry Technology Park. She welcomed the funding provision for non-national roads at the same level as 2015 but she hoped an increased allocation would be received. She welcomed the additional allocation for Housing Grants and also the funding for the repair of vacant houses. Cllr. Ferris referred to the end of Page 5 regarding Staffing and requested clarification on it. She also requested clarification on the rates to be levied on vacant properties. She welcomed the appointment of a Tourism Officer and said she could not see why we are trying to develop tourism and yet allow a landmark building to be vacant.

Cllr. Ferris expressed concern at the €62m Housing Programme and stated that $\frac{2}{3}$ of it will be used to subsidise private landlords. This will result in €14m being paid annually under the RAS and Long Term Leasing Scheme. The Council is signing 5, 10 and 15 year leases yet the commitment from Government is only for 3 years. What will happen if a lesser allocation is received in subsequent years and it is not adequate to cover the cost of all leases entered into? The Council would have no option but to get additional income from rates but members entered into an 8 year commitment on Rates. The only means of raising additional income would then be from LPT and she expressed concern that in four years time there would be no choice but to increase LPT. She felt it was not appropriate to enter into these leases. When the LPT meeting was held in September members were advised there was a €3.5m shortfall in the Budget and she asked how this was bridged. The Chief Executive mentioned a 0.5% decrease in expenditure and she also mentioned the Lansdowne Road

Agreement. At least other local authorities were honest when it came to LPT as the 80% payment to local authorities was already notified to them.

Cllr. G. Spring acknowledged the work of Ms. McAllen and her team in presenting the Budget and stated the Budget Report is very comprehensive. The Wild Atlantic Way is very beneficial to the county and he welcomed the funding for the Skellig Lighthouse and Fenit. As the Wild Atlantic Way is developed beaches will be used all year round and will no longer be just a summer attraction. He asked when the funding application would be submitted for the Tralee Fenit Greenway. Cllr. Spring asked that the housing survey would be carried out as soon as possible. The funding of €62m for the Housing Programme is substantial and he would like it to be a stimulus package for towns.

Cllr. J. Brassil stated he wanted to be associated with the words of praise for Ms. McAllen and her team for presenting a balanced Budget. Housing is the single biggest issue for members and this is the same all over the country. The figures provided recently by Mr. Breen make very stark reading. There are 75,000 houses in the county and 53,000 of these are occupied. When you allow for holiday homes there are 12,000 unoccupied houses in Kerry. That does not make sense when there is such a demand for housing. He was convinced the solution to the housing problem is there but we have not yet recognised it. The current vacancy rate in Kerry is 26.4% and if that could be reduced to 12.5%, which is the national average, it would solve the problem. There must be some incentive to let these vacant properties. He asked if NAMA own vacant properties in Kerry. He requested that a procedure would be established whereby there is a set timeframe from when a house becomes vacant to when it is re-let and he asked that this target would be achieved. It is incredible there is still no Tenant Purchase Scheme in place and he asked that this would be pursued with the Department.

Cllr. Brassil welcomed the review of the Development Levy Scheme. He indicated his support for Greenways but said members do not know what progress is being made. He asked that a procedure would be set down for these also and that a presentation would be made to Council on these time line early in 2016. Cllr. Brassil welcomed the provision for Landfill aftercare and asked if there is any prospect of reducing the costs or increasing the income. In conclusion he referred to the provision in the Budget for Motor Tax of €1.2m and stated the income is €88,000 and he asked if the balance is recouped.

The Chief Executive stated there was a huge work load in Housing this year with the allocation received. The RAS and Long Term Leasing Schemes aim to tackle the vacant properties. However vacant properties are not always available where there is a housing need. It is intended to purchase 30 houses in 2015 and she was confident that the targets in the Programme for 2015 would be achieved. She anticipated the costs of the Long Term Leasing Scheme would be met by the Department beyond the current programme. Ms. Murrell accepted it is taking a while to turn round some vacant houses but stated some of the factors are not within our control. A process is being developed where a time frame will be set

down for the turn around of vacant houses where it is within our control. Some of the costs of the landbank can be set off through the Housing Programme and she assured members that a strategic view of the landbank would be taken. A Press Release issued on funding for the Town and Village Renewal Scheme and she hoped this would help to revitalise villages. The Council will work with other Agencies and Departments on the revitalisation of villages and one or two pilots would be considered in 2016. She referred to the comments in relation to communications with rate payers and stated that the support given by the Council in establishing Chamber Alliances is a very effective mechanism for engaging with rate payers.

The CPO process must be gone through for the Greenway in South Kerry and Government funding will only be available where rights have been acquired over the property. A three year plan will be produced with timelines for each project and the Council will work to this Plan subject to the availability of funding. The allocation of the General Municipal Allocation is not based on population alone and she has committed to reviewing it and it is important to add value to it through Leader funding. The SPCs will work on how to target funding in future. In relation to hedge cutting the Chief Executive stated she had given a commitment she would increase the level of enforcement activity and she is committed to that. Provision is made in the Budget for flood relief which can be used for minor schemes or joint schemes with the OPW. Under the old Scheme 7½% of the cost of a capital scheme was considered appropriate to cover the cost of technical salaries. At present there is a gap and a case was made to the Department and she understood there will be significant recoupment of salaries in this area. Significant resources were invested in the Capital Infrastructure Unit and she expected these would be reimbursed. Expressions of interest were sought for the Landfill and these are being assessed at present. She would revert to members in due course. She referred to Cllr. McEllistrim's proposal in relation to free parking in Tralee and stated it would have a significant financial implication in the order of €150,000 with no funding source available. She also stated that this matter could not be considered in the context of the Budget in isolation from an over Traffic Management Strategy for Tralee.

Cllr. S. Locke welcomed the Chief Executives replies and apologised as he had to leave the meeting before the vote but he encouraged members to adopt the Budget.

While Mr. C. O'Sullivan acknowledged the level of funding available for roads he said it was not adequate to maintain the road network. He understood funding for roads would not increase until 2019 or 2020. The own resources provision of €16m is significant. There is no indication that funding will be proved for LIS in 2016 but some funding can be allocated from discretionary funding for these roads. These issues would be dealt with in the Roads Programme.

Mr. J. Breen stated the extent of the work that is ongoing in Housing must be acknowledged. Houses were allocated to 180 families so far this year and he undertook to take on board members comments in relation to voids. There

should also be a debate around why so much work is required on some houses. He thanked the members for their kind comments to staff. Almost 80 vacant houses have been repaired to-date this year and he anticipated a further 30 would be repaired by year end. Of the six vacant houses in Iveragh Park none are vacant for longer than 4½ months and two are ready for allocation. There are no plans for modular housing in Kerry. Accommodation for refugees is being finalised at present.

Cllr. R. Beasley stated housing is a major problem for members. Even if 400 units are provided each year that represents just 10% of what is required. He expressed concern that the position could be worse next year. He welcomed progress on the Greenways but asked that efforts would be made to speed up progress on the Listowel to Limerick greenway. Cllr. Beasley referred to the Tenant Purchase Scheme and asked that it would be impressed on Government that it is important to allow tenants to purchase their homes.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 2.15pm.

The meeting resumed at 2.55pm.

Approval for the opening of tenders

Mr. G. O'Brien informed the meeting that approval was required for the opening of the following tenders:-

1. Radio WAN Maintenance – Closing date: Friday 6th November, 2015 at 2pm.
2. Dell EqualLogic SAN Expansion – Closing date: Friday 6th November, 2015 at 2pm.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. J. Finucane, SECONDED by Cllr. D. Grady it was agreed to approve the opening of these tenders.

Ms. A. McAllen referred to Cllr. Ferris's query regarding the €3.5m gap in the Budget and how it was bridged and she stated she covered that in her overview. Expenditure overall is up by €437,000 from September to-date but as a percentage of the overall expenditure of €124.9m that variance is quite small. The figures presented in September were compiled with the information to hand at that time. However the figures have crystalised since then. Preparing figures for September is very early in the context of expenditure for the following year. €200,000 is provided for the Fenit Feasibility Study but this is a contra amount therefore the variant was reduced to €237,000. She earlier commended staff who undertook a major assessment of expenditure for 2016. There was some uncertainty in relation to income from Rates and a loss of €500,000 was factored in, in anticipation of the negative effect of the global revaluation. These valuation figures were received early the previous week and amounted to €420,000. Staff work closely with the Valuations Office and one large valuation and some new properties were valued and this allowed us to recoup some of the loss from the

global revaluation. A sum of €1.7m is included for grants and subsidies and €1.7m for other income. The Circular in relation to the withdrawal of the Financial Emergency Measures for PRD has not yet been received and the amount involved is still not known but she believed this amount would be refunded by the Department. The Budget includes a number of assumptions, including in relation to recoupment for non technical salaries for the Social Housing Programme. This would not have been factored into the Budget Estimate figures in September. Capital transfers of €850,000 have been used to support the Budget. Notification of the IPB dividend for 2016 has recently been received also and that was not included in the figures for the LPT Meeting. There is also an increase in the income from the Landfill. The difference between the overall figure for September and now is €277,000 and the gap was bridged through certainty of income and the need to increase collection levels.

Cllr. T. Ferris accepted that some figures were confirmed recently but she added that the estimates given to members in September were not accurate. She anticipated the €1.7m increase in grants and subsidies would be matched by expenditure. Members were told there was a €3.5m gap in September and last year management challenged the Sinn Féin proposals, and stated that she felt the response to her queries was not adequate.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 19 – 21 of the Budget Tables and Pages 68 – 90 of the Chief Executive's Report for details on this Division.

Forward Planning (D01)

This allocation covers the salaries and other costs associated with the preparation of Local Area Plans and other Statutory Plans and Policy.

Provision of €686,000 is made for Statutory Plans and Policy including Local Area Plans (D0101).

During 2016, work will be progressed in the following areas:

- Preparation and Adoption of Variations to the Tralee, Killarney and Listowel Town Development Plans 2015 – 2021 in relation to residential Zonings and compliance with the Core Strategy as adopted in the CDP.
- Completion and Adoption of a new Development Contribution Scheme 2015 – 2021.
- Commence preparation of the 4 Municipal District Plans.
- Commence review of the Renewal Energy Strategy in line with new DECLG guidelines.
- Prepare Shopfront Design Guidelines.
- Prepare Urban Design Guidelines and identify urban regeneration projects.
- Prepare site appraisals and guidelines for Opportunity sites throughout the County

- The Economic Development Unit will engage with the LEO and LCDC on LEADER schemes and other various projects.

Provision of €1,810,000 is made for Planning Control. The improving economic climate is reflected in a further slight increase in activity levels in planning control with approximately 1,150 planning applications received county-wide during 2015.

This small increase in activity is in line with other local authorities around the country and may be an indication that the decline in applications during the past number of years has stabilised. An allocation is included in this area for salaries of staff dealing with CFRAM Studies.

Enforcement Costs (D0301)

Provision of €876,000 is made for Enforcement Costs and the Table on Page 71 outlines activity in this area. This allocation includes provision for staff in the Housing Estates Unit and the Quarries Unit.

Tourism Development and Promotion (D05)

General Economic Promotion (D0501)

€645,000

Ms. McAllen stated an increase of €50,000 is made to provide for contributions to walks groups e.g. Beara Way, North Kerry Way, Dingle Way and Kerry Way, previously budgeted for in Division F. This also covers financing the preparation of the Tourism Strategy.

An increased allocation is made for the Rose of Tralee Festival in respect of support for the planned expansion of the Festival in 2016. An increase of €5,000 is also provided for Town Twinning and the balance of this allocation refers to the recruitment of a graduate.

This allocation includes the salaries, operational and associated costs of a strengthened Tourism Development & Built Infrastructure Unit. One of the key priorities for the Tourism Development Unit is the development of a comprehensive Tourism Strategy for the county, which should help to drive tourism for the next five years 2016-2020. A comprehensive programme of public consultation was initiated during the year. Nine public meetings were held, which helped to provide an overview of the proposed strategy to communities as well as helping to identify a vision and key priorities and goals for each area and district. Seven Working Groups were formed, which were chaired by local representatives in the industry and administered by staff of the Tourism Development Unit. Membership also included representatives from community groups as well as national bodies such as Fáilte Ireland and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Each chairperson has recently submitted a report on their area and these will form part of the Strategy and Action Agenda. This Strategy

will form part of the Local Economic & Community Plan and it is anticipated that it will be presented to Council early in 2016.

Project Development

The extensive work programme of the Tourism Unit is outlined on Pages 73 – 76 of the Chief Executive's Report and includes:-

- Destination Kerry
- The Kerry International Dark-Sky Reserve

The Council is working with the local communities, together with ACARD, Fáilte Ireland, Údarás na Gaeltachta, South Kerry Development Partnership, Kerry Education Training Board, University College Cork, Cork Institute of Technology and the Institute of Technology Tralee to develop an Astro tourism strategy for the Region. This is a growing niche market within the international tourism industry.

During 2015, signage was erected and a sky monitor provided to the local second level school, Coláiste na Sceilige. The Council is working closely with ACARD on their proposal to develop a planetarium in Caherciveen.

Wild Atlantic Way (WAW)

The Council is progressing plans with Fáilte Ireland to develop signature viewing points for the Skelligs and Blasket Islands and the completion of works on a number of Discovery Points along the Kerry Section, which is the longest section of the Wild Atlantic Way.

In North Kerry, the Council is exploring a third signature viewing point in Ballybunion. The Council are partners with a number of agencies to maximise this valuable asset.

The Tourism Unit supported a number of initiatives including the following:

The Connect Aviation Conference

The Council supported Kerry Airport in hosting the Connect Aviation International Conference in Killarney in June 2015. This conference was attended by over 400 delegates representing international airlines. The objective was to showcase Kerry Airport for the purpose of attracting new scheduled and chartered services to Kerry.

Community Tourism, Festivals and Events - Kerry County Council supported contributions to a limited number of voluntary bodies during 2015 which provided a county-wide benefit. The 2016 allocation includes a provision of €120,000 towards the Rose of Tralee Festival. The increased allocation in this area represents support for the planned expansion of the Festival in 2016. It also includes a contribution to Listowel Writers Week.

- Provision has also been made to support the existing Twinning arrangements that are in place.
- Supports for links with Zhejiang Province, China, including the secondary school Chinese language initiative.

Marketing Initiatives

Support was provided to Kerry Trade in participating in the ***Holiday World Travel Fair*** and also to the Kerry Tourism Tent at the ***National Ploughing Championships***.

The key achievements in 2015 were:

Kerry County Council Wins Top Tourism Local Authority Award in Ireland

Kerry County Council won the Best Local Authority Innovation Award at the inaugural Irish Tourism Industry Awards 2015 which were announced in Dublin on Friday 24th April. The award was presented to the local authority that demonstrated excellence in tourism planning and execution, the provision of tourism facilities and services, marketing, event development and management – including cross county border initiatives and festivals, and the overall contribution made to the local tourism industry. Kerry, the adjudicators said, excelled across all category headings and demonstrated how it remains Ireland's top performing regional destination.

As part of the KCC Tourism Unit submission, an excellent video showing the many facets of the tourism industry, which KCC supports was submitted. This may be accessed at <http://youtu.be/qwKo1XZDeDo>.

Tourist Facilities Operations (D0502)

Provision of €217,500 is made for Tourist Facilities Operations and they will continue to build on this success.

This allocation relates to the staff costs for the Windmill in Tralee, together with a contribution of €130,000 in respect of the operation of the Tralee Bay Wetlands Centre.

It should be noted that the Tralee Bay Wetlands won a silver award for '**Best in a Marine or Environmental**' category at the inaugural Irish Responsible Tourism Awards in March 2015. The judges were particularly impressed by the Centre's plans for the development of the area through the North Kerry Ecotourism network. The Centre also achieved a second award in October, 2015. This award formed part of the **Green Hospitality Programme (GHP) National Responsible Tourism & Travel Awards** which are designed to identify and celebrate Travel & Tourism Businesses that are committed to implementing

responsible business practices and minimising and reducing their environmental impacts.

General Community and Enterprise Expenses (D0601) **€742,000**

Provision of €742,000 is made for General Community and Enterprise Expenses. €30,000 relates to an own resource contribution towards Public Participation Network (PPN), which will enable the Council to draw down grant funding of €50,000. €30,000 is also provided to enable the implementation of the Community aspect of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP).

As in previous years, it includes voluntary contributions to a number of groups such as Kerry Community Awards, Pride of Place, Comhairle na nÓg and Kerry Children's Services Committee.

Community Department priorities for 2016

Key areas of work for 2016 will focus on consolidating the new structures established over the past year. This work will include the following:

- Supporting Kerry LCDC & its operating structures in the exercise of its functions.
- Implementation & monitoring of the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) for the County (community elements).
- Implementation, monitoring & financial control of SICAP (Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme).
- Supporting Kerry LCDC in its role as LAG (Local Action Group) in the delivery of LEADER 2014-2020 in the county and implementing the County Development Strategy.
- Supporting representative role of the PPN (Public Participation Network) and the operating structures.
- Administration of the Community Support Fund. Review of CSF procedure and delivery 2015. It is intended that the Scheme will be further reviewed by the relevant SPC.
- Continue to deliver existing work areas: - JPC, Comhairle na nÓg, Mitchel's Regeneration – Social Projects/ Minor Sundry Works, Tralee Community Horse Project, NPAR, Pride of Place, Community Awards, etc.

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 78 – 81 for details of the structures that are in place to deliver this work.

Building Control Inspection and Enforcement Costs (D0801 and D0802)

€283,000

The increase in this budget provides for the cost of the Building Control Management System which is now the preferred electronic means of administration of the Building Control Unit.

The Building Control Section will continue to maximise and use its allocated resources to ensure a better quality of building in the county and to protect public health & safety by:

- The promotion of local awareness of the regulations through the issue of best practice notes on certain aspects of regulations to builders and designers and the provision of information on the Council's website
- Monitoring the implementation of the regulations through site inspections, planning application assessments, etc.
- Investigating complaints and enforcing where necessary, the provisions of the Building Control Acts 1990 and 2007. This may in some cases result in criminal prosecutions.

Economic Development & Promotion (D0905)

€825,000

The Budget for Economic Development is showing a significant increase. This increased allocation will underpin and resource our commitment to economic development and promotion of the County. Expenditure in respect of the Greenway Infrastructural Unit, previously provided for in Division F is now included here. In addition, salaries have been reassigned to reflect one of the corporate priorities that is economic development. Provision has been made to give effect to the economic aspect of the Local Community and Economic Plan.

In addition, a sum of €100,000 is provided as the own resource funding for projects funded under the National Rural Economic Zone – REDZ Scheme.

Local Enterprise Office (D0906)

€1,096,600

This allocation covers the Council's expenditure in staffing, administration and miscellaneous office supports to the Local Enterprise Office (LEO). This includes estimated expenditure supporting businesses, which is recoupable from Enterprise Ireland, however, this allocation will not be confirmed until Q1 2016.

The LEOs will serve as the first point of contact and provide support and services to start, grow and develop small and micro business in each local area. A specific Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been signed by both Kerry County Council and Enterprise Ireland specifying the actions and roles of the LEO.

Some key pieces of work to be delivered by the Local Enterprise office in 2016 are outlined on Page 86 of the Chief Executive's Report.

Heritage Services (D1101)

€195,500

The Heritage Office carried out an extensive work programme across the county during 2015 and the details are set out on Pages 87 – 89 of the Chief Executive's Report. Ms. McAllen drew member's attention, in particular, to the hugely successful Conservation and Excavation Project at Killaclohane. The project has provided an important focus for any future heritage tourism initiative in the Milltown/Mid-Kerry area and provides a template for how local authorities can engage with local landowners to conserve, research and open access to the many monuments on private lands around the county/country. The Killaclohane Project is one of the most important, proactive heritage/archaeological projects undertaken by a local authority in recent years.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 22 – 24 of the Budget Tables and Pages 91 – 112 of the Chief Executive's Report for details of this Division.

From an operational perspective the section is managed as four distinct business units:

- Waste Management
- Environmental Regulation and Environmental Awareness
- Laboratory
- Veterinary Services

Landfill Operations (Civic Amenity Sites) (E0101)

€2,335,000

The budget allocation for 2016 provides for a portion of the cost of operating the five Civic Amenity Sites at Killarney, Milltown, Kenmare and Caherciveen and Ionad Athchúrsála agus Dramhaíola Chorca Dhuibhne. The costs associated with the five licensed Civic Amenity Sites includes operation and maintenance of facilities, transport of waste and disposal cost of waste to a private waste operator and treatment of effluent off-site as well as administration costs.

It is envisaged that the requirement for the introduction of a pay by weight system and the need for the separation of organic waste at each of the sites in 2016, as signalled by the DECLG, will require an increase in expenditure due to increased staffing and additional infrastructure required.

The budget provision also provides for the aftercare cost of North Kerry Landfill, which includes the maintenance of the site, wages, leachate management / collection and disposal, landfill gas management, building maintenance, site management, security and EPA licence requirements.

The contract for the generation of electricity from landfill gas, fed into the national Grid, will generate approximately €35,000 in income for the Council for 2016. Leachate management continues to be an expensive cost element for the North

Kerry Landfill and it is planned to install a SCADA system in North Kerry Landfill in 2016. This computerised control system will monitor and control the leachate pumps on site and will allow us to target works that will reduce the volume of leachate produced on site.

Bring Centres Operations (E0202)

€262,000

The Council maintains 98 Bring Centres located at various locations around the county. The usage of these recycling facilities has resulted in approximately 3,340 tonnes of recyclables being accepted in 2014 which is an increase of 2% over the previous year.

As a measure to counteract illegal and indiscriminate dumping at these sites, the Council work in co-operation with 35 Community Groups to participate in our "adopt a bring bank" scheme. This involves the local community helping to police the Bring Centre site to limit the illegal dumping and help enhance the site. The Environment Section pays an annual contribution to the local community and provides a 240L wheelie bin and gives collection credit for their disposal.

In addition, a provision has been made to enhance and provide permanent security cameras to prevent illegal dumping. The Council has also rolled out a covert roaming camera which is monitoring known dumping areas associated with our Bring Centres Network.

Provision of Waste Collection Services (E04)

The provisions in this area continue for 2016 and relate to the provision of the refuse collection service in the former Killarney Town Council area.

Litter Warden Service (E0501)

€200,000

Kerry County Council employs three full-time Litter Wardens county-wide on a permanent basis and assistance is also provided on a part-time basis by the Traffic/Litter Wardens in the towns of Dingle, Caherciveen, Castleisland, Killorglin, Killarney, Kenmare and Listowel.

The Table on Page 97 illustrates the increased activity in investigations of illegal dumping.

Litter Control Initiatives (E0502)

€105,000

Environmental Awareness Services (E0503)

€105,000

This area provides for the broad range of initiatives including issues on waste management, energy conservation, water protection and other issues related to sustainable living. These services also include raising awareness of sustainable living, community resilience and climate change.

Examples of the many environmental awareness-raising activities undertaken in 2015 are set out on Page 98 of the Chief Executive's Report.

Contribution to Street Cleaning Service (E0601) **€2,134,000**

This provision is for the operation of the street cleaning service in various towns throughout the county. This amount is a significant provision from our own resources each year. However, as a tourist county it is acknowledged that factors such as exceptional weather conditions or local festivals can result in increased numbers of visitors to the county and some flexibility is provided in the allocation for such contingencies.

Monitoring of Waste Regs (including Private Landfills) (E0701) **€209,000**

The allocation provides for continued activity in this work area.

Operation and Maintenance of Burial Grounds (E0901) **€806,000**

Community Organisations continue to undertake excellent maintenance works in an increasing number of graveyards throughout the county and the Council is highly appreciative of their support and assistance. This co-operation and the close working arrangement with such groups, builds and strengthens the Council's relationships with local communities.

The Council is currently working with approximately 60 community groups, and in 2015 we made financial contributions to 47 of these organisations in recognition of their voluntary work in burial grounds. These contributions are based on the submission of Programmes of Work and are subject to the approval of the Sustainable Communities and Quality of Life Directorate. Provision is made in the 2016 Budget for continued support to community groups, in recognition of their ongoing involvement and valuable assistance.

The Council has responsibility for the maintenance and operation of 153 burial grounds in the county.

Burial Grounds Capital Works

This provision covers the cost of borrowings incurred in respect of the improvement of existing burial grounds and also the provision and development of new graveyards throughout the County. Progress has been made on the following developments:

- Construction of an extension to the Burial Ground at Abbey Island, Derrynane is ongoing and it is anticipated that this will be completed and fully operational in 2015.
- In 2015/2016 our priority is to acquire land and construct a new Burial Ground for Killarney and complete the part 8 planning process for a new Burial Ground in Beaufort.

- The part 8 planning process for extensions to Causeway and Old Kilcummin Burial Grounds are complete and it is anticipated that these will be constructed during 2016.
- During 2015 the part 8 planning process commenced for a proposed new Burial Ground in Clogher, Lixnaw. The process is approaching completion and it is anticipated that construction will commence in 2016.
- The Council has carried out significant works at a number of burial grounds as part of an ongoing Improvement Programme. This includes the provision of paths and headstone plinths and works such as improvements to entrances, gates, walls, drainage. Capital improvement works were carried out in 2015 at Killaha, Kilmoyley, Kenmare, St. John's Castleisland, New Cemetery Killarney, and Ardmoneel Killorglin. Works of a similar nature will continue in 2016.
- Development of new grave spaces in Rathass graveyard will continue, as required.

Operation Costs Civil Defence (E1001)

€205,000

The key activities of the Civil Defence for 2015 are set out on Page 102 of the Report.

Derelict Sites (E1004)

€148,000

The Derelict Sites Act 1990 places a general duty on local authorities "to take all reasonable steps (including the exercise of any appropriate statutory powers) to ensure that any land situated in their functional area does not become or continue to be a derelict site".

At the end of 2015 there were 99 sites on the Derelict Sites Register. The continuing assistance of community based and voluntary groups will play an increasingly essential part in the management of dereliction at a local level.

The budget allocated covers the staff related to the enforcement of legislation with regard to Derelict Sites and Dangerous Structures.

Water Safety Operation (E1005)

€329,000

Operation of Fire Brigade Service (E1101)

€4,494,000

The operation of the Fire Brigade Service is estimated to cost €4,494,000 for 2016 and the Table on Page 105 illustrates activity by type of incident.

Fire Services Training (E1103) **€495,000**

Fire Prevention and Education (E1202) **€188,000**

Water Quality Management (E1301) **€667,000**

Operation of the Council Laboratory

In 2015, it is estimated that the laboratory will process at least 5,500 samples involving a total of 75,000 tests. It is expected to receive formal accreditation by the Irish National Accreditation Board (INAB) in the near future.

Strengthening business case for laboratory

The development of Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) and attainment of accreditation will put the laboratory on a firm footing, which potentially will allow for the generation of additional income in this area in the event of the laboratory service being extended beyond its current remit.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

The Energy Office is deployed over a number of services to promote energy conservation, monitor energy consumption, procure energy, meet legislative requirements relating to energy reporting and ensure best value through installation of energy efficient equipment, such as pumps, electric motors, lighting, heating systems and utilising renewable energy sources where appropriate. The Energy Office is part of the Kerry County Council Capital Infrastructure Unit.

The Council has made much progress in the area of energy conservation in recent years by utilising renewable energy. The achievements in this area in 2015 are outlined on Pages 111 and 112 of the Chief Executive's Report.

RECREATION AND AMENITY

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 25 – 26 of the Budget Tables and Pages 113 – 121 of the Chief Executive's Report for details of this Division.

Leisure Facilities Operations (F0101) **€447,000**

The costs in this area relate to the Killarney Swimming Pool and Sports and Leisure Centre.

Contribution to External Bodies Leisure Facilities (F0103) **€60,000**

This allocation is provided in respect of financial support of €40,000 from the Council to Ballybunion swimming pool. It also includes a contribution for financial support of €20,000 to Tralee Sports and Leisure Centre.

Library Service Operations (F0201)

€2,322,000

Kerry Library serves the public through a network of nine full time branch libraries throughout the county - at Ballybunion, Caherciveen, Castleisland, An Daingean, Kenmare, Killarney, Killorglin, Listowel and Tralee. In addition, 2 Mobile Libraries serve 93 communities throughout rural and urban Kerry and a dedicated Local History and Archives section operates from Library Headquarters.

The Library Service is one of the most widely used services provided by the Council. The increase in recent years of the core adult and children's book lending service continued for the 8th successive year. In 2014 the no. of items borrowed increased to 647,533 items.

Kerry Library works at many levels with communities throughout the county, including a varied exhibition and events programme, mobile library stops to both rural and urban communities, the provision of block loans and classroom novels to schools, open days, children's services, book clubs, literacy support and local history material. The library website www.kerrylibrary.ie facilitates 24/7 access to the library catalogue and an expanding range of online resources. A total of **53,221 free public internet sessions** were provided in 2014 and WiFi is available at all 9 branch libraries.

The 2015 library work programme is set out on Pages 115 and 116 of the Chief Executive's Report.

Purchase of Books, CD's etc. (F0204)

€270,000

The provision in this area is maintained at the 2015 level.

Parks, Pitches and Open Spaces (F0301)

€1,506,000

This allocation relates to maintenance of amenity areas throughout the county.

Playgrounds (F0302)

€106,000

Beaches (F0303)

€389,000

Beach cleaning is an area which would benefit from assistance from local community groups.

Blue Flag Beaches

The provision made in the budget will allow for the continuation of the Blue Flag Programme in 2016. All 13 Kerry Blue Flag beaches received the Blue Flag award in 2015.

Community Grants (F0401) **€42,000**

This allocation is in respect of a contribution towards Kerry Life Education Ltd towards health education and substance / alcohol abuse awareness programme across the entire county.

Community Facilities (F0403) **€26,000**

This allocation represents a contribution to the operational costs of community facilities such as the Cultural Centre in Killarney and allotment projects in Tralee and Killarney

Recreational Development (F0404) **€114,500**

Kerry Recreation & Sports Partnership (KRSP)/ Páirtíocht Spóirt & Áineasa Chiarraí

The allocation in the Draft Budget provides for salaries in this area. Kerry Recreation and Sports Partnership (KRSP) is funded on an annual basis, primarily by the Irish Sports Council.

Administration of Arts Programme (F0501 & F0502) **€375,000**

Our Arts programme is supported by the Arts Council and other partner agencies to secure financial input and value for money.

The budget provides for a sum of €72,220 in respect of the Arts programme, eg Artists in Residence programs across the county, arts Bealtaine program, visual arts projects etc as well as a sum of €15,000 for Cultural Night. Both areas are co-funded by the Arts Council and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Kerry County Council must commit funds to draw down matching funds.

The 2015 main arts programme delivered through working in partnership, where possible, included:

Artist in Residence Programme (co-funded)

Kerry Screen commission

Kerry Music Education Partnership

Kerry Film Festival

During 2016, work and support will continue for arts activities. In addition, the Draft Budget 2016 includes allocations in respect of contributions of €68,800 to the following voluntary groups: Siamsa Tíre, Tralee; Samhlaíocht/Kerry Film Festival, Tralee; St John's Theatre & Arts Centre; Seanchaí Literary Centre, Listowel; Teach Amergin, Waterville and the Carnegie Arts Centre, Kenmare. An

additional sum of €25,000 is allocated, to be granted on a case by case basis having regard for the delivery of the arts programme.

Museums Operations (F0503)

€458,000

This allocation is in respect of the operational costs of Kerry County Museum. The Museum received the Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence and has maintained a consistent 5 star standard of review. The joint ticketing of the three attractions, the Kerry County Museum, Tralee Bay Wetlands and the Windmill will continue in 2016. The work programme for 2016 will also include the hosting of an exhibition commemorating the centenary of the 1916 Rising called 'Casement in Kerry: A Revolutionary Journey'.

While there is a cost to the Council in supporting this area, the significant positive contribution to cultural, recreational and economic activity of the town is recognised in the provision for Budget 2016.

AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 27 – 28 of the Budget Tables and Pages 122 – 125 of the Chief Executive's Report for details of this Division.

Maintenance of Land Drainage Areas (G0101)

€78,000

This allocation is maintained at the 2015 level.

Operation and Maintenance of Piers/Harbours (G0201)

€261,000

The Council has responsibility for the operation of 59 piers and slipways located around the county. The allocation covers the routine maintenance works and energy costs associated with all the piers, provision of tourist moorings and aids to navigation, as well as communication costs associated with this programme. This allocation includes provision for pay costs in respect of the Harbour Constables. This allocation also part funds projects approved by Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine for repairs and improvement works.

Operation and Maintenance of Piers/Harbours, Fenit (G0203)

€1,014,000

Kerry County Council has responsibility for the operation and promotion of Fenit Harbour. Major development of this facility is planned over the coming years. This will promote economic activity and assist with the operational costs and viability of Fenit Harbour into the future. This budget also accounts for the maintenance of Fenit Marina and Fenit Lighthouse.

A grant of €1.5m was allocated by the Department for improvement works at Fenit as part of the takeover of the facility in late 2011. No allocation is envisaged for 2016 and any improvement works will have to be funded by Kerry County Council.

The tendering process for the proposed dredging of the harbour is complete and a Dumping at Sea and a Foreshore licence were granted to enable dredging to take place on the approach channels and alongside where the ships berth. Work will commence in the first quarter of 2016. The costs involved will be a capital expenditure item and funded from Revenue over a number of years. The sum of €100,000 is provided towards this cost in Budget 2016 as a multi-annual contribution.

A contra item of €200,000 is shown in Draft Budget 2016 for the preparation of a feasibility study for the expansion of Fenit Harbour. This is subject to funding being approved under the Action Plan for Jobs by the relevant funding agency.

Planned Protection of Coastal Regions (G0302) **€200,000**

In light of recent challenges identified on the impact of erosion on our coastline, an increased sum has been provided for 2016 to fund existing commitments and to leverage grant aid for coastal protection works and further studies.

Provision of Veterinary Service (G0401) **€108,000**

Inspection of Abattoirs, etc (G0402) **€185,000**

Operation of Dog Warden Service (G0404) **€154,000**

Other Animal Welfare Service (incl. Horse Control) (G0405) **€69,000**

Payment of Higher Education Grants (G0501) **€150,000**

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 29 – 31 of the Budget Tables and Pages 126 – 132 of the Chief Executive's Report for details of this Division.

Refunds and Irrecoverable Rates (H0303) **€7,800,000**

The allocation provided is in respect of irrecoverable rates in cases of vacant / disused properties or settlements negotiated with rate payers. The Council, will continue to make every effort to pursue all collectable rates and outstanding arrears in 2016. The overall provision for 2016 has again been reduced, following a previous substantial reduction in this area for Budget 2015, to take account of reducing settlements and the continuing emphasis on the management and collection of outstanding arrears.

Rates on Vacant Properties

Section 31 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides for a change to rating law in relation to the refund of rates on vacant properties; it gives the power to the Members of local authorities to vary the level of rates refunds that apply in individual local electoral areas/Municipal District Areas within the authority's overall administrative area. The new reserved function commenced with effect from June 1st 2014. Regulations provide that any decision to alter the rate of refund be taken at the annual budget meeting and that the rate of refund decided be in respect of local electoral areas/Municipal Districts. Going forward, it will be necessary for the Council to take such a decision at each relevant budget meeting. The absence of a decision to vary the refund means that the existing legislative provisions regarding the rate of refund applies i.e. the existing rate of refund at 100% continues to apply.

Kerry County Council has conducted a detailed in-house analysis in this area, together with an external economic assessment. All indications from these reviews are that collection levels in this area are very difficult and could not be considered as viable income. Many of these rated vacant properties are currently with the Valuation Office for de-rating or have ceased operation due to financial difficulties. The provision in this area also includes settlements agreed by the Council in respect of part-occupied premises and write-off of rates in respect of many purpose-built units, which are unlikely to ever operate again for the original intended purpose. It must be noted that the Council has no option but to continue to assess rates on these properties as the valuation will continue to remain effective as long as structures remain in place.

As outlined above, the Council can only vary the rate by Municipal District. It is accepted that some potential income may exist in parts of the larger towns in the county. The discretion to vary the rate in selected locations is not available under current legislation. Any variation of the rate is not proposed in this area. However, if any changes occur in legislation, this matter will again be reviewed.

The following is a summary of the main points arising from these reviews:

- Given that in effect no tax has been payable on vacant property heretofore in County Kerry it is likely that any change would be perceived as the introduction of a new tax and be subject to significant resistance.
- It is likely that the implementation of a revised vacancy refund rate would be strongly resisted while also placing a heavy administrative burden on the staff of Kerry County Council (and the Valuation Office) and would result in relatively high level costs of collection.
- There appears to be little evidence that property is held vacant unreasonably, accordingly the variation in the vacancy refund rate is unlikely to contribute to economic activity.
- In cases where concerns exist that property is being unreasonably withheld the existing legal position would allow Kerry County Council to charge full rates until the bona fides of the ratepayer had been established.

- The lack of income being generated by the properties would result in significant level of claims of inability to pay.
- The experience of other local authorities and the non use of the new powers would suggest that, given the present economic circumstances albeit with some “green shoots”, it would be premature to introduce what is in effect a tax on vacant property.

Coroner Fees and Expenses (H0501)

€306,000

The enactment of legislation transferring this service from Local Authorities is long overdue. A Coroners Bill was prepared in 2007 which proposed the transfer of this service to a National Coroners Service but no progress has been made to date on this issue.

Casual Trading Areas (H0702)

€18,000

The process in relation to the extinguishment of the Market Rights in Kenmare and designation of a revised casual trading area will be finalised in 2016. A review of casual trading at beach car parks will also be undertaken for 2016.

Local Representation/Civic Leadership (H09)

Costs associated with the Local Representation/Civic Leadership Budget are set out on Pages 129 and 130 of the Report. This includes the General Municipal Allocation (GMA) of €1.707,000.

Motor Taxation Operation (H1001)

€897,000

The approximate, number of transactions, which will be dealt with in 2015 by the Motor Tax office will be 65,000 with an estimated value of €13.5 million. Approximately 71% of these transactions will be dealt with over the counter, with 29% processed by post. The volume of online transactions has facilitated the reassignment of some staff to support other Council services.

Agency and Recoupable Services (H1101)

€2,325,000

The Local Government Operational Procurement Centre (LGOPC)

The recoupable cost of the Local Government Operational Procurement Centre (LGOPC) of €1.5 million is included in this allocation. In developing a sector wide approach to public procurement the CCMA provided the charter for delivery of the sector's savings and efficiencies targets. Kerry County Council based on their previous extensive experience of delivering procurement initiatives on behalf of the sector, was tasked with setting up an operational centre, the LGOPC. The LGOPC based in Killarney is assigned responsibility with procuring approximately €522m worth of Plant Hire and Minor Works on behalf of the entire public service. The role involves considerable engagement with Local Government, Education,

Health, the Office of Public Works and other relevant bodies. The LGOPC acts as a Central Purchasing Body under the auspices of Kerry County Council, coordinating the establishment of frameworks of supplies/services/works for Minor Works and Plant Hire categories of expenditure with the responsibility for the development of these categories and relevant procurement software.

Draft Budget 2016 reflects the income and expenditure arising from this initiative, the costs of this office is fully recouped from the DECLG and Local Authorities.

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT CHARGES

Ms. McAllen referred members to Page 33 of the Budget Tables and Pages 133 – 141 of the Chief Executive's Report for details of this Division.

Maintenance and Upkeep of Corporate Buildings (J0101) **€1,961,179**

This Budget includes caretaking, security and maintenance costs for the Áras an Chontae Campus, the Area Services Centre in Castleisland, the file storage facility located at Monavalley, the Area Services Centre in Killorglin, the Town Hall at Princes Quay, the Town Hall Building in Killarney, the Town Hall Building in Listowel, the Ashe Memorial Hall, Tralee and loan charges of €240,948 in respect of portion of Castleisland Area Services Centre.

The Council has approximately 12,000 sq. ft. of rented office accommodation. The renting of office accommodation for staff is a necessary requirement due to the unavailability of any spare accommodation in our existing buildings. Our main headquarters at Rathass has been at capacity for some time. Existing rents are kept under regular review and more preferential rates are negotiated where possible. The lease of the former AIB Bank Building in Killarney has ended in 2015, resulting in savings in this area to the Council. Provision has been made towards the cost of the Property Management Unit, which provides services in this area.

The Facilities Management Unit (FMU) continues to use the National Contracts and Frameworks to achieve savings in the purchasing of stationery, paper, office supplies and janitorial consumables. Other areas of operation and maintenance of Corporate Facilities will be reviewed, with a view to achieving further efficiencies.

Corporate General Policy (J0201) **€1,606,758**

This provision includes:-

Contribution to Local Government Management Agency

- Freedom of Information
- Press and Communications

- Insurances / Risk Management
- Oifig na Gaeilge

Audit Services (J0202)

€265,403

This allocation covers the costs of staffing and other expenses of the Internal Audit Unit as well as the payment of the Statutory Audit Fee to the DECLG.

Communication Costs (J0203)

€400,231

A provision of €296,320 is required to support the data communications links and related services which the Council is heavily reliant on. This includes primary and secondary links to Area Offices, Municipal District offices, Libraries and a growing number of Council facilities, plant and mobile fleet, including Irish Water locations.

The sum includes the costs of circuit and mast rentals, equipment maintenance and licenses from ComReg. It includes costs associated with the provision of Internet services, dual links to Government Networks, email services and network management systems.

The number of network connections on the Council's Wide Area Network (W.A.N.) has more than doubled in recent years while the costs have remained broadly the same. This is due to long-term design, aggressive value for money approaches, inter-agency partnerships and the re-use where possible of existing Council infrastructure. Our data network facilitates the annual saving of over €35,000 on mobile and landline voice calls.

Information and Communication Technology (J03)

In 2016 increased application of ICT to Priority Directorate areas of Economic Development & Quality of Life / Community will form part of our programmes. In addition, 2016 also sees significant re-investment in storage and desktop infrastructure under our Capital programmes.

Maintenance of Networks and PC's (J0301)

€841,791

This provision has been made towards supporting over 900 computers and users across the county, over 100 servers, over 150 network locations and over 250 printers.

Human Resources Administration (J0501)

€1,508,776

The provision for 2016 covers the operation of the Human Resources and Organisational Development Unit (including the Training Department). The Unit is responsible for the development, implementation and management of policy

affecting Organisation Development and HR Strategy, including the, employment of staff and Employee/ Industrial Relations.

The Council's training and development programmes will continue but with the available resources targeted on Health and Safety, statutory and mandatory training and certification requirements.

During 2015, as part of Local Government Sectoral initiatives, the processing of Payroll payments moved to the MyPay Shared Services Centre in Laois County Council. All payroll processing, payment and associated queries are now dealt with in Laois. During 2016 the Superannuation function will undergo a similar transfer. This will require additional work on data validation to ensure an orderly transfer.

Health and Safety and Staff Welfare (J0502) **€244,372**

The Council has a statutory obligation to comply with the requirements of Health Safety & Welfare at Work legislation and considerable training has been provided to staff to meet these requirements. The need to promote a strong safety culture in the workplace has been supported by all staff and is paramount in the safe delivery of the roads programme.

Training will continue in 2016 to ensure the development of high safety standards amongst staff in the workplace. All safety audits are being carried out by the Council's Safety Officer. In 2015, 112 safety audits have been carried out on road work schemes, including audits carried out in the area of Water Services and Contractors. This level of auditing has substantially increased the awareness of safety within the local authority, and made the work sites safer locations for the Council staff and the general public.

The allocation is in respect of salaries and associated costs in this area including provision for an additional Health and Safety Advisor in 2016.

Financial and Management Accounting (J0601, J0602, J0603) **€2,137,876**

Pensions and Lump Sums (J0701) **€7,787,167**

This sum covers the pensions of former staff of all departments, which are now shared out across all Services in accordance with a National Unit share-out parameter.

Area Offices Costs (J0801) **€459,988**

Cllr. M. Gleeson welcomed the acknowledgement of the work of Tidy Towns Groups and volunteers and stated without their commitment the Council would be liable for greater costs. Illegal dumping is an ongoing problem and convictions must ensue. He thanked the Irish Office for their work and added that he hoped placenames would be correct. It is vitally important that there is equality of treatment for every town and village in the county when it comes to street cleaning however; some villages are not regularly cleaned. He complimented the Library Service on their excellent work and extra curricular activities and he said this greatly enhances the experience. He welcomed the commencement of the work on the disabled access to Killarney Library. The annual provision in the Budget for the Arts Programme is never adequate and the cultural richness of the county attracts visitors. Cllr. Gleeson stated that Sliabh Luachra is losing its cultural heritage and it is important that it is recorded for future generations. It is also vital that flood plains are preserved and that buildings are never permitted on them. The Library has a huge role to play in the genealogy of the county and School Roll Books should be digitised.

Cllr. Gleeson stated that sand and gravel quarries are a great resource but they must not be allowed to impact adversely either on the local community or on rivers. It is important to ensure that people's rights are respected.

Cllr. M. O'Shea referred to the Housing Estates Unit as mentioned on Page 71 of the Chief Executive's Report and he asked what the Council's relationship is with the Banks in relation to the claiming down of Bonds. He understood Bonds were drawn down up to 2011 and he requested clarification on the position since then. Efforts were made to include all of Castlegregory in the Wild Atlantic Way but just part of it was included. He hoped that the remainder would be included in the future. He suggested that the Council should host an annual Seminar/Conference on Tourism in co-operation with Fáilte Ireland and it would afford an opportunity to promote the county. Cllr. O'Shea asked how much did the works on offices etc. cost for the amalgamation of the local authorities.

Cllr. J. Finucane stated there are two aspects to the meeting (1) the shortfall in income primarily as a result of the erosion of the rates base and (2) how the rates base can be increased. The Forward Planning Office has a very important role as private money follows public money. He asked that this Office would not be fragmented into a number of smaller jobs. There are a number of flagship sites in the county i.e. the Denny Site, the Fels Point Site and the Pretty Polly Site in Killarney and these should be promoted with a view to securing investment in tourism projects. Cllr. Finucane welcomed the development of the Laboratory and added that it provides a specialised service. He acknowledged the work of the Procurement Office and the 22 staff employed there. For the past number of years members have campaigned to have the burden of Coroners Expenses removed from local authorities to no avail. He asked that a letter would issue to the Ministers for Justice and Health calling on them to finalise the legislation that would remove these costs from local authorities. In conclusion Cllr. Finucane PROPOSED that the Budget be adopted.

Cllr. A. Thornton referred to the Killarney Swimming Pool and asked if the €266,000 loan charges are an annual cost. She asked that members would be given the opportunity to discuss how different recreational facilities in the county are funded. The Tralee Swimming Pool does not receive similar funding to the one in Killarney and perhaps this should be reviewed with a view to achieving a balance. She moved a Notice of Motion in October in relation to development levies and she was aware of a relatively new business that was charged a parking levy of €21,000 which she felt was excessive. She asked that the new Scheme would be circulated to members as soon as possible. If the charge imposed on that business was more reasonable the Council may have received €7,000.

Cllr. J. Sheahan thanked the Head of Finance and her staff for the Budget Report. Kerry is dependant on tourism and he supported all initiatives that support that industry i.e. Tidy Towns Groups and volunteer groups. He welcomed the provision in the Budget for Transfer Stations and stated that clean beaches are of paramount importance. Blue Flag Beaches are also very important as they send out a message that they are maintained to a high standard. Cllr. Sheahan welcomed the provision of signs at beaches which indicate what is permitted on the beach and what is not. This helps to counteract anti social behaviour. He asked that a new burial ground would be purchased for Killarney as soon as possible. Fenit Harbour is vitally important for the county especially for Liebherr who employ a lot of people. He called on the Council to work with Liebherr and to assist them in any way possible. He commended the McGillicuddy Reeks Committee who do excellent work and he thanked Eoin Kelliher who has been of great assistance to them. He hoped the Committee and the Council would continue to work with landowners to maintain these paths some of which need urgent repair.

Cllr. N. Moriarty echoed the views expressed by Cllr. Gleeson in relation to street cleaning in villages. The road sweeper should clean all small villages on a regular basis. She commended the Library Service on their excellent work and stated it is a great venue for cultural events. She acknowledged management's commitment to the Greenway in South Kerry. The best way forward is to have a larger rates base and the work on the Greenway in South Kerry should benefit the entire county. In conclusion Cllr. Moriarty stated the county should be marketed as a unit.

Cllr. D. Nolan referred to the refund of rates on vacant properties and she PROPOSED that a Scheme would be adopted through the SPC to alter the rate of refund on vacant properties. This should take account of the criteria used by the Revenue Office for writing off rates. The relevant SPC should draw up a Scheme which would provide that the owners of vacant properties would engage with the Local Enterprise Office / LCDC to make the property available to start up businesses/groups and this may give an opportunity to allow for a write off of rates for new businesses. She understood there would be economic costs involved but there would be benefits also as a balanced Scheme would

encourage regeneration and economic growth. The information gathered from such a Scheme, in relation to the number of properties that are unusable in their present state but with potential to be rehabilitated back to commercial usability, could equip us with the facts and statistics needed to campaign for targeted regeneration and grant schemes.

Cllr. M. Cahill referred to people who own just one property and who were forced to emigrate for economic reasons and said they are liable for NPPR. He asked that favourable consideration would be given to these cases as it is unreasonable that they should have to pay this charge. He welcomed the provision of €200,000 for coastal erosion which will enable the Council to provide a local contribution should funding be forthcoming. Cllr. Cahill stated he moved a number of Notices of Motion calling for the provision of a Pier at Cromane. For the past few weeks six trawlers are dredging for oyster seed in the area and because there is no Pier they must go up on the bank and this unacceptable. He requested an update on the provision of a burial ground at Churchtown. It is unreasonable to expect Kerry County Council to pay Coroners Expenses and the relevant legislation should be enacted to remove this expense from local authorities. He PROPOSED that the Council would cease paying these costs and write to the Minister for Health advising him of this course of action. The provision of €306,000 could then be allocated to Housing Grants.

Cllr. J.F. Flynn SECONDED Cllr. Cahill's proposal. He referred to the Diaspora fund and the 40 events held which brought 2,500 people to the county which is a great benefit to the economy of the county. There are a number of new festivals and some long standing ones like Puck Fair that do not receive funding from the Council. Cllr. Flynn asked if a sub committee would be established on the Diaspora and to facilitate twinnings. He requested that members would be given an update on housing estates at Municipal District meetings to inform them of the current position in relation to the drawing down of Bonds. Cllr. Flynn expressed his disappointment at the level of funding provided from the GMA for the South and West Kerry Municipal District in the Budget and stated he would support the Budget on condition that the South and West Kerry and Listowel Municipal Districts got a 20% increase next year.

Cllr. M. Cahill supported this request.

Cllr. R. Beasley SECONDED Cllr. Nolan's proposal in relation to vacant properties. He welcomed the recognition of the work of Tidy Towns Groups and stated while the Council staff do excellent work they could not do the work done by these groups because of the reduction in staff numbers. The problem of dog fouling has not improved and it is frustrating in Ballybunion as people come into the town to walk their dogs by night but do not clean up after them. Cllr. Beasley asked that beach cleaning would continue as it has in the past in both Ballybunion and Ballyheigue. The beach cleaning machine leaves the beach in pristine condition. He commended the Arts Officer on her work with limited funding. He also paid tribute to the County Librarian and his staff who maintained the library service during difficult times. Cllr. Beasley suggested that

a Conference would be hosted in North Kerry early in 2016 to promote the Wild Atlantic Way. This is one of the best initiatives of the present Government and was badly needed. The entire coastline should be included in the Wild Atlantic Way.

Cllr. D. Grady stated local authorities should not be liable for Coroners fees but he understood they could not stop these payments until the legislation is enacted. He expressed his disappointment there is no provision in the Budget for a district heating system in Killarney. The Swimming Pool is costing €200,000 per annum but he believed if a district heating system was in place it would eliminate that cost. The Leisure Centre in Killarney cost €16m and a grant of €5.5m was received. If the facility closed that grant would have to be repaid and the facility is doing very well at present. Cllr. Grady stated that Killarney Town Council provided funding to purchase a burial ground at Aghadoe and he was anxious that a burial ground would be provided for the people of Killarney.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae requested a breakdown of the €1.96m budget for the LEO and how much it cost to renovate the Motor Tax Office, Housing Offices etc. He believed the offices should have been left as they were. He asked what the cost per tonne is to deliver waste to the Transfer Stations. Street cleaning should be carried out in every town and village in the county as this is the only service businesses get for their rates. He asked that Farranfore and Currow would be included on a regular rota. Cllr. Healy-Rae also asked that gullies would be cleaned as some are blocked and they are only cleaned when there is flooding. The Ross Road needs to be swept as there is grit on the footpath and it is slippery. Many people walk and jog on this footpath and he asked that it would be swept as soon as possible.

Cllr. J.J. Culloty emphasised the importance of the work done by voluntary groups. There is a shortage of outdoor staff but these groups pick litter on the roadside outside towns and villages and he was glad it was acknowledged. Cllr. Culloty acknowledged the tremendous work done by the Arts Officer in promoting arts in the county.

Cllr. N. Foley acknowledged the work done in the promotion of the arts, heritage and culture of the county. She commended the Library Service on the tremendous use of their Service. The Arts Office promotes various programmes and she would like to see this budget provision increased.

The Chief Executive stated that an EU Regeneration Seminar would be held in Kerry in 2016 and this will be very important for the county. As further details became available she could advise members. There is a focus on tourism and rural regeneration and the Forward Planning Capital Infrastructure Unit is looking to develop strategic sites. An application for an EU Grant was submitted and if it is successful she hoped that the Denny Site would be developed. She would take Cllr. Nolan's proposal on rates on vacant properties on board as part of her consideration regarding overall proposals in relation to the regeneration of towns and villages and its economic benefits.

Ms. Murrell referred to Cllr. Flynn's request that the Municipal District allocation for Listowel and South and West Kerry would increase by 20% in 2017 and she stated that was not what was discussed with members. She gave a commitment that she would review the Scheme and she added that the Chamber Alliances also target funding. Any increase would form part of the 2017 Budget process and she was committed to reviewing it. The Chief Executive assured members that she is very committed to District Heating but it would have to be self financing. The Council is legally obliged to pay Coroners Fees. A lot of work has gone into trying to acquire a burial ground for Killarney and this would continue. She undertook to present a report to Council on the cost of renovating offices in due course. It is important that all of Housing is in one location and the benefits of this strategy are already evident. It is also important that the LEO is brought into County Buildings where the Economic Development Unit is also located and this will ensure one point of contact for a person interested in setting up a business in the county. €726,000 of the LEO Budget is spent on grants and salaries and by and large this is recouped. The relocation of the Motor Tax Office to Princes Quay has benefitted the town and there is positive feedback from businesses in the town. There is a 30% increase in the Arts Budget and she understood a similar increase would be forthcoming from the Arts Council. The Arts should be viewed with the Tourism Budget.

Cllr. M. O'Shea welcomed the proposal to host a Seminar in Kerry and he asked that it would be held on the coast on the Wild Atlantic Way.

Cllr. J.F. Flynn referred to the Community Support Fund and stated he proposed that South and West Kerry and the Listowel MD would get a 20% increase in 2017.

The Chief Executive stated this proposal must be considered in the context of Budget 2017 and could not be considered with Budget 2016. However she gave a commitment to review the GMA for 2017.

1511.09.02 Adoption of the Council's Budget for the Local Financial Year ending 31st December, 2016

Cllr. J. Finucane PROPOSED that we the members of Kerry County Council hereby resolve that pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 and the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations, the Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31st December, 2016 as presented by the Chief Executive and as set out in Tables A,B ad C be and is hereby adopted.

Cllr. D. Grady SECONDED this proposal.

A vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Brassil, Cahill, Connor-Scateen, Cronin, Culloty, Finucane, Fitzgerald, Flynn, Foley, Grady, Kelleher, Kennelly, D. McCarthy, McEllistrim, Moloney, Moriarty, O'Connell, O'Shea, Sheahan, Spring, Thornton, P. McCarthy **(22)**

Against: Cllr. Beasley, Daly, D. Healy-Rae, Nolan, Quigg **(5)**

Not Voting: None **(0)**

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal CARRIED and the Council so resolving.

15.11.09.03 Determination of the Annual Rate on Valuation for the Local Financial Year ending 31 December, 2016

Cllr. N. Kelleher PROPOSED that we the members of Kerry County Council hereby resolve that pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 and the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations, and in accordance with the Local Authority Budget for the Financial Year ending 31 December 2016, as adopted, the annual rate on valuation as set out in Table A hereunder be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for the said Financial Year having regard to the Base Year Adjustment determined in accordance with Section 29 of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Annual Rate to be levied shall be €79.25.

Cllr. J. Finucane SECONDED this proposal.

TABLE A - CALCULATION OF ANNUAL RATE ON VALUATION							
Summary by Service Division		Summary per Table A 2016				Estimated Net Expenditure Outturn 2015 (as restated)	
		Expenditure	Income	Budget Net Expenditure 2016			
		€	€	€	%	€	%
Gross Revenue Expenditure & Income							
Housing and Building		23,518,917	22,998,766	520,151	0.9%	741,519	1.3%
Road Transport & Safety		30,777,812	19,054,960	11,722,852	21.3%	13,017,993	23.4%
Water Services		16,039,107	14,969,512	1,069,595	1.9%	1,008,428	1.8%
Development Management		9,665,084	2,438,751	7,226,333	13.2%	7,263,259	13.1%
Environmental Services		16,950,140	3,374,452	13,575,688	24.8%	13,014,202	23.6%
Recreation and Amenity		7,960,446	500,542	7,459,904	13.6%	7,190,004	12.9%
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare		2,830,701	1,901,257	929,444	1.7%	828,140	1.5%
Miscellaneous Services		17,244,256	4,830,146	12,414,110	22.6%	12,464,853	22.4%
		124,986,463	70,068,386	54,918,077	100%	55,528,398	100%
Provision for Debit Balance							
Adjusted Gross Expenditure & Income	(A)	124,986,463	70,068,386	54,918,077		55,528,398	
Financed by Other Income/Credit Balances							
Provision for Credit Balance							
Local Property Tax			11,659,186	11,659,186			
Pension Related Deduction			1,900,000	1,900,000			
Sub - Total	(B)			13,559,186		55,528,398	
Net Amount of Rates to be Levied	(C)=(A-B)			41,358,891			
Value of Base Year Adjustment				560,965			
Amount of Rates to be Levied (Gross of BYA)	(D)			41,919,856			
Net Effective Valuation	(E)			528,957			
General Annual Rate on Valuation	D/E			79.25			

A vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For: Cllrs. Beasley, Brassil, Cahill, Connor-Scateen, Cronin, Culloty, Daly, Finucane, Fitzgerald, Flynn, Foley, Grady, D. Healy-Rae, Kelleher, Kennelly, D. McCarthy, McEllistim, Moloney, Moriarty, Nolan, O'Connell, O'Shea, Quigg, Sheahan, Spring, Thornton, P. McCarthy **(27)**

Against: None **(0)**

Not Voting: None **(0)**

The Cathaoirleach declared the proposal CARRIED and the Council so resolving.

15.11.09.04 Report on the Capital Programme 2016 – 2018

Cllr. B. Cronin PROPOSED that the Chief Executive's Report on the Capital Programme 2016 – 2018 as incorporated into the Report on the Budget be noted.

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

15.11.09.05 Approval of additional Expenditure for 2015

Cllr. J.J. Culloty PROPOSED that we the members of Kerry County Council resolve that the additional expenditure for 2015 as set out in the Column titled "Estimated Outturn 2015" on Table F in the Local Authority Budget, as circulated, be and is hereby approved.

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

The meeting concluded at 4.55pm.

Gerard O'Brien

Meetings Administrator

Cathaoirleach of Kerry County Council