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**MIONTUAIRISCÍ CRUINNITHE BHUISÉID COMHAIRLE CHONTAE  
CHIARRAÍ, A THIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN  
CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, DÉ LUAN, 9 EANAIR 2012.**

**MINUTES OF THE BUDGET MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD  
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON MONDAY  
9<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2012.**

**PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR**

**Councillors/Comhairleoirí**

J. Brassil	T. Buckley	M. Cahill
P. Connor-Scarteen	J.J. Culloty	B. Cronin
P.J. Donovan	T. Ferris	J. Finucane
S. Fitzgerald	N. Foley	M. Gleeson
M. Griffin	D. Healy-Rae	J. Healy-Rae
P. Leahy	P. McCarthy	A. McEllistrim
B. Moynihan-Cronin	T. O'Brien	B. O'Connell
P. O'Donoghue	M. O'Shea	L. Purtill
J. Sheahan	G. Wharton Slattery	

**IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR**

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager	Ms. A. McAllen, A/Head of Finance
Mr. M. McMahon, Dir. Of Planning	Mr. J.D. Flynn, Dir. of Corp. Services
Mr. O. Ring, Dir. of Water & Env.	Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Dir. of Roads
Mr. J. Breen, Dir. of Housing	Ms. K. Moriarty, A/SEO Finance
Mr. G. MacNamara, SE Roads	Mr. T. Sheehy, SE Environment
Mr. T. O'Connor, County Librarian	Mr. P. Stack, SE Planning
Mr. L. Quinlan, SEO Housing	Mr. C. Managan, SEE Water Services
Ms. J. Foley, AO Water Services	Ms. J. McCarthy, SEO Planning
Mr. J. Kennelly, SEE Water Serv.	Mr. L. Brosnan, AO Planning
Mr. G. O'Brien, Meetings Admin.	Mr. P. O'Shea, A/SEO Finance
Ms. K. Lynch, AO Finance	Ms. M. West, AO Roads
Ms. K. Curtin, AO Revenue	Ms. J. Brosnan, AO Housing
Ms. S. Sheridan, SSO Finance	Ms. C. O'Connor-Galvin, SO W.S.
Mr. P. O'Connor, SSO Finance	Mr. R. Tangney, ASO Finance
Mr. P. Corkery, Press & Comm. Off.	Ms. B. Reidy, SSO Corp. Affairs

The meeting commenced at 10.35am.

Mayor T. Buckley took the Chair.

### **12.01.09.01 Consideration of the Local Authority Budget for the Local Financial Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012**

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager said the Draft Budget was prepared for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 in accordance with Section 102 of the Local Government Act, 2001. As each year goes by it is more difficult to balance the Budget and the availability of income continues to be a source of concern. The Manager said the Draft Budget was circulated in advance of the Meeting.

#### **Background Economic Climate**

The overall economic and National Exchequer positions remain very difficult. Uncertainty in the Eurozone and the global economy continues which militates against our potential for economic growth given the open nature of our economy. In that context the availability of income continues to be a source of serious concern. The Council's Budget for the coming year is prepared against that background and reflects such a reality.

The Manager said he was aware of the difficulties facing business people and in turn their difficulties in paying their service charges. For 2012 we will be relying on savings through efficiencies and cost- effectiveness to maintain our services satisfactorily and effect any essential improvements and concentrating all available funds on our core statutory functions and focussing on the effective financial management of the Council's resources through application of prudent expenditure control and strengthened debt collection will continue in 2012.

#### **Council Budget Objectives**

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

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

#### **Draft Budget Overview**

The Draft Budget provides for expenditure of €120.905m, resulting in a reduction of approx. 6.23% on the 2011 projected out-turn, allowing for the same level of road grants as in 2011. As the Council is statutorily required to prepare a balanced Budget, all expenditure provisions must match income projections. The proposed Budget expenditure is fully funded as follows:-

- |                                     |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| • Division Income                   | €72.780m |
| • Rates                             | €20.20m  |
| • Local Government Fund             | €21.465m |
| • Town Council share-out of charges | €6.46m   |

<b><u>Total</u></b>	<b>€120.905m</b>
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The explanatory memorandum circulated gives the background and full details of the various Budget figures.

### **Local Government Fund**

The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DoECLG) has notified the Council that the General Purpose Grant Allocation from the Local Government Fund (LGF) for the coming year is €19,005,401, a reduction of 8.01% on the €20,660,244 paid from the Local Government Fund in 2011. The general purpose grant allocation for 2012 refers only to the amount paid from the Local Government Fund. A further €2.46m will be funded through the Council staff pension levy deductions introduced in the December 2009 National Budget. The total local government allocation for Draft Budget 2012 is, therefore, €21,465,401. The 2012 allocation is just the same as the 2004 figure (€21.515m) - the Consumer Price Index has increased by approx. 12.7% in the period 2004-2011, so, in real terms the value of the 2011 allocation is relatively lower by 11.5%.

The pension related deduction figure of €2.46 m is also reduced from €2.59m in 2011, due to falling staff numbers and consequential reductions in staff pension related deductions.

The Local Government (Household Charge) Bill, 2011, provides for the introduction of a €100 household charge payable by owners of private residential property. The income from the household charge will be lodged to the Local Government Fund out of which funding will be provided to local authorities in the form of General Purpose Grants. The household charge is an interim measure and proposals for a full property tax will be considered by the Government in due course. The introduction of this charge is welcome as it is finally addressing the funding of local government. For far too long local authorities have been dependant on the commercial sector.

### **Staffing**

The Public Sector Agreement (The Croke Park Agreement) provides a structure to manage change across the public sector up to 2014. In accordance with the agreement, Kerry County Council has produced a Local Action Plan of efficiency measures and cost savings. The measures outlined in the plan will continue to be implemented during 2012. Council management continues to have constructive dialogue with staff representatives from all levels through the Workplace Partnership Committee.

As a consequence of the restrictions on funding arising from the economic downturn and the Government's moratorium on recruitment, staff numbers have decreased significantly since April 2009 and are likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future particularly in light of the February 2012 pre-pay cut pension entitlement. Against that background the key services continue to be delivered in an efficient manner and this is being achieved through work re-organisation, increased use of technology and staff flexibility. It is expected that staffing numbers will continue to fall in 2012, however, this impacts on required

pension/lump sum payments and also results in reduced income in relation to superannuation contributions/pension related deductions from staff.

### **Charge on Non-Principal Private Residences**

This charge which was introduced in July 2009 is estimated to yield €2.15m for Kerry County Council in the coming year. The structure of this charge has promoted self-certification with significant penalties for late payment which has encouraged compliance. 14,600 properties were registered and paid charges in 2011, the Town Councils benefit to the extent of approximately €1.00m, in addition. The liability date for 2012 is 31<sup>st</sup> March. The Council is undertaking investigations with a view to identifying properties that have not been registered and the charges not paid. This element of work will be pursued vigorously over the coming year. Following the National Budget 2012 properties registered in the Rental Accommodation Scheme will no longer be exempt from the charge; we welcome the additional funds arising from this change in the legislation. The Manager informed the meeting that he was assigning a staff member to identify properties which have not been registered for this charge.

### **Cost Savings**

Better value in all our procurement practices remains a key senior management imperative across all our services and will be further targeted during the coming year. Cost savings have been achieved in a range of our purchases/contracts such as plant hire, trade services, civil works, road making materials, telecommunications, advertising, energy, general goods and services. The Manager said it is my priority to use internal staff to the greatest extent possible and make full use of the available skills so as to avoid engagement of external services as far as practicable. The Council will maximise procurement initiatives such as use of LA Quotes and Framework Agreements in order to achieve further savings and efficiencies. This Council continues to host these procurement initiatives on a shared service basis on behalf of 32 other local authorities. Draft Budget 2012 reflects the income and expenditure arising from this initiative.

### **Commercial Rates and Commercial Water Charges**

The Manager said the Council is mindful of the challenges being faced by the agricultural and business/commercial sectors. These sectors face significant cost pressures in the context of dampened demand and consumer sentiment. On the other hand, Council services fulfill essential needs in the economic and social life of the county and the Council needs funding to provide them. The Council has striven to minimise its expenditure to the greatest extent possible, taking into account the cost savings mentioned earlier and the need to provide for the maintenance of our essential services and core responsibilities at a reasonable standard over the coming year. So, on this basis and for the reasons mentioned, he was not proposing any increases (for the third consecutive year) in the Rates Multiplier or in water/waste water charges for the coming year. Furthermore, reserves from previous years of €1.4m are being introduced to fund various programme of works this year. This option will be severely restricted in the years ahead.

The Manager then outlined the main service features in the Revenue Budget for 2012 as follows:

### **Revenue Budget 2011 – Main Service Features**

- **Housing and Building**

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

The Draft Budget contains an allocation of €3.547m for the Housing Adaptation and Aids for the Elderly Grants Schemes subject to grant-aid of €2.838m (80%) from DoECLG. This requires a local contribution of €0.709m. In addition, there are the substantial costs of the implementation of the schemes which much be met from own resources locally. Kerry County Council's 2011 initial allocation of €3.459m for the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme and People with Disability was the fourth highest in the country.

This Council has acquired an extensive portfolio of land, in excess of 90 acres, for the construction of housing. Due to new Government policy it is unlikely that any new social housing will be constructed in the foreseeable future. The Council will be obliged to service the loans on these lands out of our revenue Budget unless transferred to the Land Aggregation Scheme. A provision of €180,000 is being made in the Budget towards the interest payable on these land loans for 2012. This sum will increase substantially over the coming years as other land loans mature. Mr. Curran said he believed it would be prudent not to transfer all land to the Land Aggregation Scheme and he circulated a list of all housing land in the Council's ownership. In view of the request to complete consideration of the Budget that day he suggested that, subject to the approval of Council, he would ask the Chair of the Housing SPC to consider this matter at its next meeting. A report on their deliberations and their recommendations could then be brought to the March Council Meeting for consideration by the full Council.

On the PROPOSAL of Cllr. J. Finucane, SECONDED by Cllr. A. McEllistrim, this was unanimously agreed.

Cllr. B. Moynihan-Cronin, Chair of the Housing and Social Support SPC agreed to consider this item at the next Housing SPC meeting and she called on all members to submit their views and suggestions to the Director of Housing so that they could be taken into account when the item is being considered.

- **Road Transport and Safety**

The Draft Budget figures for the Roads Grants Schemes are based on the initial allocation received from the NRA/Department of Transport in 2011 – the actual allocations to be notified later, will determine the level of expenditure to be incurred. This year the own resource allocation for the non-national roads works programme is maintained at the 2010 level, overall, taking into account all own resource funded elements of the roads programme, the reduction reflected is marginal.

- **Water Services – Operation and Maintenance**

Improved Water and Waste Water Standards have resulted in further substantial additional expenditure in 2012 in order to meet EPA increased standards for drinking water and to comply with the EPA licensing requirements for waste water plants. As the infrastructure being provided under the EPA Remedial Action List (costing €16.2m in capital investment) comes on stream significant additional expenditure on operations and maintenance will be incurred. In relation to Waste Water Plants, the significant additional cost drivers are sludge disposal, EPA Licensing, monitoring/testing and annual operational and maintenance fees.

Loan Charges on the borrowings for the local contribution towards the new water and waste water schemes will amount to €1.905m for the coming year, comprising €1.175m in respect of water and €0.73m for waste water. While these will be met from development contributions on hands, over time this fund will be dissipated in the absence of significant additional receipts and this seems very unlikely in the foreseeable future. Furthermore, over the coming years, the Council is committed to substantial additional borrowings to meet the local contribution towards new water and waste water schemes being delivered in accordance with the Water Services Investment Programme.

- **Development Management**

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

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

- **Environmental Services**

While every effort has been made to maintain existing services this has not proved possible in the case of waste collection services. The real benefit of this decision for the overall viability of the Council will be reflected in the years ahead.

The Muingnaminnane Landfill has experienced falling tonnage intake over the past several years. This will be impacted further by the limits on the landfilling of organic waste.

The costs associated with the Landfill are in the main mostly fixed costs. The costs of loan repayments on the outstanding loan amount of €3.8m are estimated at €500,000 for 2012. Leachate management/collection disposal, landfill gas management, cover requirements and EPA license requirements including provision for aftercare are estimated to be in the order of €1m for 2012.

Draft Budget 2012 is prepared on the basis that Muingnaminnane Landfill and the Transfer Stations will remain open for business. Charges to the public will remain the same for 2012 as 2011 for the landfill gate fee. It is likely that the Council will have to apply volume discounts to large operators to remain in the market and to ensure recoupment of our operating and fixed costs.

The Draft Budget has, therefore, been prepared on the basis of an estimated 43,000 tonnes at landfill in order to maximise use of available capacity, this situation will be kept under close constant review for 2012.

- **Library Services**

In recognition of the extensive use of our library services a special effort is made in the Draft Budget to support the book fund. The allocation provided is €320,000 - the same as our own resources contribution in 2010.

### **Capital Investment Plan**

The Council will continue to invest in the infrastructure of the county although at a much reduced level than in recent years. The Council Programme for the three-year period 2012-2014 prepared in accordance with Section 135 of the Local Government Act, 2001, is set out in Schedule 1 at the end of the Budget Explanatory Memorandum and commented upon in the course of the details of each of the Division Budgets – Roads and Water Services are the only programmes where any significant expenditure is envisaged.

### **Development Contributions**

A statement regarding the amount of Development Contributions on hands, the estimated income expected for 2012 and an indicative statement of the proposed application of the funding available is included at Schedule 2 at the end of the Budget Explanatory Memorandum. The current economic climate has led to a very sharp decline in our receipts from this source and the coming year is expected to show a continuing sharp downturn.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Manager expressed his appreciation and thanks are expressed to the Mayor, Cllr. Tim Buckley; to Cllr. Pat Leahy, the previous Mayor, and to the Members of the Council for their support, co-operation and application during the past year. He also thanked the Corporate Policy Group and the Strategic Policy Committees for their work over the past twelve months.

He also paid tribute to the staff and management of all the Council's services for their work. This Draft Budget represents a fourth year of contracting resources, despite this, every effort is being made by our staff to support the ongoing development of the Kerry economy. In the year past, staff have been flexible in adapting to the changing work environment and trying to ensure the maintenance of quality services. The coming year will be equally challenging and he looked forward to the commitment of all to doing the best we can for the benefit of the county.

The Manager thanked Angela McAllen, A/Head of Finance, Kathleen Moriarty, Pat O'Shea, Karen Lynch, Pat O'Connor and Sheila Sheridan, and their Finance Staff for their work in preparing a balanced Budget.

He said he also wished to record his appreciation to each of the Directors of Service and their staff for their work in the detailed Budgeting process.

In conclusion the Manager said he had presented a balanced Budget with no additional charges proposed for rate payers. The Council has very little discretionary funding and based on the Mayor's request to conclude the meeting in one day Management would support this request if it is the wish of the members. In conclusion he recommended the Budget for adoption.

Cllr. J. Finucane said it is the consensus of the members that they wish to finalise consideration of the Budget in one day.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae asked how much did the three parcels of land which he listed cost.

The Mayor informed Cllr. Healy-Rae that this issue would be dealt with at the next Housing SPC meeting.

Cllr. J. Brassil asked would this issue not impact on the Budget.

In response the Manager said that provision was made to obviate any risk.

Cllr. N. Foley said she understood a provision of €180,000 was made in the Budget. However, if members do not agree to submit land for inclusion in the Land Aggregation Scheme she understood an additional €140,000 would have to be found to fund the loan repayments.

The Manager confirmed that was correct.



Cllr. M. Gleeson expressed his disappointment that the €100 household charge would not be an additional source of revenue for the Council but would be subsumed into the Local Government Fund.

Ms. A. McAllen, A/Head of Finance said this was her first time presenting a Draft Budget to Council. She had, however, worked on the last ten Budgets and both she and her colleagues would say that the Budget for 2012 has been the most difficult they had encountered yet. She had first hand experience, on a daily basis, of the financial difficulties experienced by the county's business and agricultural sector and that also of the general public. In framing this Budget she aimed to minimise any additional expenditure to them whilst maintaining funding for the core services of the Council. For this reason she did not propose any increase to the rate, commercial water charges or any other locally set charges in 2012.

It is safe to say that except for the prudence of both the elected members and the executive over the past few years in setting aside provisions for anticipated expenditure for specific projects that we are now in a position to draw on these funds to balance this Budget in the order of €1.4m and details are listed under each of the Division headings in the Manager's Report. She stressed, however, that this option will not be available in the years ahead. The availability of these capital funds has allowed the Council to minimise further cuts in Budget provision for our core activities. Some Divisions have, in fact, seen an overall increase given the increased costs associated with new improved infrastructure and legislative requirements. Any cuts to Divisions are marginal and reflect savings made in the past year and savings to be made through further efficiencies in work practices and procurement initiatives.

Income from all sources, whether grant aid or locally based, must be maximised to ensure that critical challenges can be met. In summary for 2012 we will be relying on savings through efficiencies and cost effectiveness to maintain our services satisfactorily and effect any essential improvements and concentrating all available funds on core statutory functions. The percentage of local funding to this Council has steadily increased over the past number of years to the present level of over 54%. It is imperative, therefore, that income is maximised. Since the Budget Briefing in November the household charge has reached its liability date. She previously informed members that it was to be collected centrally by the Local Government Management Agency. It has now been decided that each County Council will receipt locally at its Headquarters. This facility is available since the previous week both in County Buildings and at the Revenue Department in the Ashe Memorial Hall. It is intended to facilitate our customers throughout the county by providing this service at all Area Offices and procedures are being drafted currently and this will be rolled out on a countywide basis in the next week or so.

Ms. McAllen said that she, her colleagues and the Executive wanted to assure members that the Council will continue to focus on the effective financial

management of the Council's resources through application of prudent expenditure control and strengthened debt collection in 2012.

Ms. McAllen then referred members to the top of Page 11 of the Budget Report which outlines the total revenue expenditure proposed for 2012. The graph on Page 11 illustrates the spending pattern over the Service Divisions. The pattern is broadly similar to previous years where €75 out every €100 spent goes to Housing, Roads, Water Services and Environment. The emphasis in this Budget is on the maintenance of our core services. The Budget is prepared on the basis that initial Road Grant allocations for 2011 will be maintained. The overall Budget is €120,905,172 much of which is spent in this county supporting local business. The graph on Page 12 shows a breakdown of expenditure into the various categories. Payroll forms 42% of the overall expenditure of this Council which is not unusual given the type of organisation we are. This represents an overall reduction of €760,000 for the amount of payroll to be paid compared to last year. Despite this reduction, payroll, as a percentage of overall expenditure, has increased over the years as overall Budget totals have reduced. As Budget totals continue to reduce overall, it will become more and more difficult to maintain the current level of services. Operational costs form 40% of expenditure in this Council and much of this, €48.5m, is spent in the county for materials, plant hire, trade services etc. Contra payments amount to 8% of overall expenditure with a corresponding income stream but this has reduced significantly given the take over of payment of VEC pension payments by the Department of Finance. Loan charges amount to 5% of the overall Budget and this has increased by €500,000 due to additional provision for loan charges for Housing and Water Services. As is apparent there is a large element of non discretionary cost which, in the main, are fixed i.e. payroll, contra payments and loan charges.

Ms. McAllen said she could not emphasise enough the importance of maintaining income, maximising State Sector Grants where possible and in particular maximising local income. State Sector Grants account for 48% of our overall income and as this is reducing we will become more reliant on local sources of income which are essential for the ongoing operation of this Council. She then referred members to Page 15 of the Manager's Report and said that Section 1 of this Page outlines the 30% funding stream of Specific Purpose State Sector Grants and Roads continues to have the largest grants available. The Table in Section 2 outlines the decrease in the Local Government Fund allocation since 2009. The notification of the Local Government Fund for 2012 is slightly different to previous years in that the amount of €19,005,401 is quoted net of Pension Related Deduction, we have €2.46m in the Budget for these deductions which is a decrease of €200,000 on 2011.

A provision of €20.2m is included for commercial rates and this includes a provision for irrecoverable rates of €2.5m. This is reflected in the substantial amount of legal proceedings in this area, with approximately 190 cases brought to Court for non-payment in 2011 and with more expected to follow in early 2012.

Commercial rates continue to be a very important source of income for the Council. As mentioned earlier we are conscious of the climate out there with our commercial rate payers and this Budget does not reflect an increase in commercial rates to our customers. A large percentage of our rates i.e. 40% come from the major utilities and the remaining 60% comes from rate payers with bills of less than €2,000 and half of these again have bills of less than €1,000. In 2011 we had buoyancy of €1.2m due to the valuation of wind farms, this year this buoyancy is only in the region of €50,000. We only expect minor increases in valuation. We need to be mindful though of the very many people who pay their rates and water charges on time and in the interest of equality and the provision of services we owe it to the citizens of this county, who depend on our services, to pursue debt particularly with those who do not engage with us.

Provision of €12.161m is included in the Budget for income from Principal Local Services Charges and €6.723m relates to Water Charges. No increase is factored in here and it is a slight reduction on previous years. Following completion of the metering project, customers continue to improve their consumption management and many customer bills have reduced accordingly. The standard network management charge of €105 for each metered connection, with a discounted charge for multiple connections held by the same customer, will remain unchanged for 2012. The meter charge per Cubic Meter will also remain unchanged at €1.10 (€5.00 per 1,000 Gals.). This has proven difficult to achieve having regard to the increased expenditure being incurred in the Water Programme. During 2011, some 300 disconnection notices were issued and 47 carried out, resulting from failure to reach a satisfactory resolution. In addition legal proceedings have been initiated in another 123 cases, resulting in 36 summons issuing. This high level of activity is similar to 2010. A significant effort is required to manage our collections satisfactorily and this is reflected in the expenditure allocation.

Provision of €630,000 is made in the Budget for Charges for Public Sewer Service. It is not intended to increase the unit charge of €0.83 per m<sup>3</sup> or the network management charge of €88 for 2012. Provision is also made in the Budget for an income of €4.808m for the use of Waste Disposal Sites and this is broken down into €2.368m for the Landfill Levy and €2.4m for Landfill Charges. A general gate fee of €165 per tonne for the coming year and a rate per tonne of €190 will apply at the Transfer Stations. The higher rate at the Transfer Stations is required to meet some of the additional costs incurred by the Council in the operation of the Transfer Stations and for the transport costs from the Transfer Stations to Muingnaminnane Landfill. It is proposed to offer a discount, based on volume, to the sizeable users of our facilities again during 2012 as in previous years. Draft Budget 2012 is prepared on the basis that Muingnaminnane Landfill and the Transfer Stations will remain open for business, and this Draft Budget has, therefore, been prepared on the basis of an estimated 43,000 tonnage intake at landfill. This will be kept under close constant review for 2012, to ensure maximum use of available capacity in Muingnaminnane Landfill. For 2012, the total income shown includes the Landfill Levy of €2.368m which is a

contra item, as the Council has to pay the sum collected into the DoECLG Environmental Fund, as already mentioned. VAT at the rate of 13.5% also applies to the gate fee inclusive of the levy. The Landfill Levy at present is €50 per tonne and this is said to increase to €65 per tonne from the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2012. Provision for an income of €4.9m from Housing Rents is included. This represents the income expected from the tenants of the Council's housing stock. Collection levels in this area continue to remain steady considering the current economic climate. Income of €900,000 is included in the Budget for Housing Loan Repayments. This figure represents interest payments on house loans due by customers to the Council. The focus on improved debt management will continue to be a priority in this area over the coming year and the monitoring of accounts will be essential given the current climate. Our local income streams which form an increasing importance in our overall funding will not be increased and these include Burial Fees, Fire Charges including Chimney Fires now set under the Fire Services Act 1981 as with all other fire charges and Library Fees. An income of €2.150m is provided for charges on Non-Principal Private Residences. This represents the amount anticipated to be collected in respect of the €200 annual charge, payable by owners of non-principal private residences. Revenue from this area supplements our reduced Local Government Fund. Some 14,600 second homes were registered countywide during 2011 – approximately 68% of that number is in the County Council area. We intend to increase activity in this area to fully maximise the available funding here.

Ms. McAllen said that that concluded her overview of the Draft Budget 2012.

The County Manager then asked members if they wished to proceed with an overview of Division 1 – Housing and Building.

This was unanimously agreed.

## **Division A Housing and Building**

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 21-35 of the Budget Report and Pages 10-12 of the Budget Tables for details of the Housing and Building Division. Details of the proposed Capital Programme are set out on Page 4 of Schedule 1 at the back of the Manager's Report. The provision of Housing and Social Support services has changed fundamentally in the past few years, in particular, the downturn in the economy has led to a significant increase in activity in the Housing Department. Our focus now, in accordance with the Government Housing Policy of July 2001, is on expansion of the Rental Accommodation Scheme and the Social Housing Leasing Programme as the main delivery mechanisms for the provision of housing accommodation. The Capital Programme is presently unable to be forwarded to the same extent as previously, due to this change in Government Housing Policy. Activity levels in the Housing Department continue to grow due to the increase in assistance requests, maintenance of our housing stock of 2,400 units, refurbishment of 74 vacant units to ensure these are available for re letting, completing energy efficiency upgrades on 65 units and returning 4 abandon demountable units and 20 unoccupied

houses to stock. The economic downturn is affecting everyone and most notably those on social welfare. A total of 81% of our tenants have social welfare as their sole income and again through prudent and dedicated work we manage their rental payments to prevent arrears arising. Such interventions require a compassionate, knowledgeable and personable approach delivered each day by all our staff.

Members will be aware that the Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) allocation was again significantly reduced in the last year. The DoECLG made one overall allocation of €2.235m covering the four housing authorities in Kerry. This was the first time the allocation was done in this manner. Kerry County Council's share in this allocation was utilised mainly to discharge outstanding Final Accounts in respect of housing schemes completed in 2010, to fund the completion of 4 single rural dwellings and to purchase a limited number of specific need dwellings in the county for addition to our social housing stock. The Council is continuing to examine proposals under the Social Housing Leasing Initiative. While only 4 properties have been transferred to date, we anticipate that up to 20 additional units will be transferred early in 2012, following submissions of further details by landlords to finalise leasing arrangements. We plan to target additional resources into this area and to explore further ways to increase leasing arrangements throughout 2012.

The 2011 Purchase Scheme for long-standing tenants adopted by Kerry County Council in March has resulted in 30 sales. The proceeds of which will be ring fenced for housing improvement works in 2012 subject to DoECLG approval. This compares favourably with other counties. At 31 December 2011, the Council will have loans (including rolled-up interest) for housing land outstanding amounting to the sum of €20.5m. The impact on the 2012 Budget is likely to be in the region of €180,000. These loan charges are shown in A0801. It is important that we are prudent and Budget 2012 is prepared on the basis that lands will have to be transferred to the Land Aggregation Scheme.

Provision for €1.928m is made for the Maintenance of Local Authority units and this is a marginal decrease due to anticipated savings through efficiencies, procurement savings and better value for money initiatives. In addition, the DoECLG has continued to fund an energy efficiency programme in respect of vacant houses and we were successful in securing €1.275m between the 4 housing authorities for qualifying works. In the County area, this funding allowed us to introduce significant energy efficiency measures to an additional 65 houses e.g. plumbing, electrical including energy saving bulbs, heating/fitting oil condenser boiler, wall/attic insulation etc. The improvement of the Building Energy Rating of these properties results in significant energy cost savings for our tenants. This work also provides a welcome stimulus to local trades people engaged in this area of work.

Provision for €630,000 is made for Debt Management and Rent Assessment. The Council offers a variety of payment methods to facilitate and help our tenants and encourages where possible use of the various electronic methods of

payments most suited to our tenants' circumstances. In the last year there was a further increase of 13.3% in the use of electronic payment methods e.g. bill pay, direct debit, standing order, Household Budget deductions etc. We will continue to encourage customers who are not utilising these options to do so where feasible. We continue to operate our Rent Arrears Management Policy in a pro-active manner to assist tenants with rent arrears. As part of this policy we quickly identify accounts which are falling into arrears, and through early intervention, put in place effective measures to deal with such arrears before they accumulate to significant levels. A sum of €4.764m is provided for the operation of the RAS Scheme. There are currently 636 RAS properties in the County. We remain one of the highest performing local authorities, in the provision of RAS accommodation, having regard to the number of eligible clients residing in the county. This amount is recoupable.

The Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability are 80% grant funded. We have made a provision for a similar level of funding as per Budget 2011 and an allocation of €709,000 is provided for in the Budget. 2011 has seen the highest number of grants issued in any one year and continues to require significant technical and administrative input. The cost implication to this Council is considerable and cannot be underestimated in this climate. However, the immense benefits to be gained from these schemes must be recognised. They facilitate the improvement of living conditions for many elderly and disabled citizens and have the potential to reduce and prevent their housing needs becoming the ultimate responsibility of the housing authority. Also the very many trades people and hardware suppliers in the county also benefit immensely from these grant schemes. The allocation of €3.547m includes DOECLG of €2.838m and a local contribution of €0.709m.

Cllr. J. Finucane welcomed the main items in the Housing Division but said the Long Term Leasing Initiative has still not taken off and must be addressed at Department level. Tenants wishing to purchase their local authority house have difficulty getting finance and the Credit Union should facilitate these people in getting a mortgage. Some very good tenants have been denied the opportunity to purchase their home because they could not get the finance. The advantage of tenants purchasing their houses under the Tenant Purchase Scheme is that it will reduce the amount of maintenance required. He called on all Credit Unions to operate a scheme where they would provide finance to allow local authority tenants to purchase their homes.

Cllr. J. Brassil said that the €100 household charge is of no real benefit to the Council as it is lodged to the Local Government Fund. People accept that some form of charge will be introduced but the fact that it is the same charge across the board is unfair, even though he accepted that this would be replaced by a charge based on valuation. There should be some incentive for local authorities to pursue the collection of this charge. Householders are being asked to pay additional charges but there will be no improvement in the services they receive. He asked that a clear and strong message would be sent to Minister Hogan that

whatever system is devised there must be an incentive to local authorities to ensure collection levels are maximised. 15,000 people pay NPPR in Kerry and the vast majority of these are not wealthy speculators but they have acquired a second house and they must now also pay the €100 household charge. This is very unfair on that group of people. Substantial funding has been provided in the Budget for the Housing Adaptation Grants Scheme for Older People and People with a Disability and this is very welcome. The contribution provided by the Council for 2012 is similar to 2011 and he hoped that the same level of grant aid would be forthcoming from the DOECLG. He referred to proposals to submit land for inclusion in the Land Aggregation Scheme and said that while he accepted the County Manager's explanation he hoped that members will not be told in March that a sum of €140,000, which is the additional amount required to meet the loan charges in 2012, is not provided in the Budget and that members must agree to submit the lands under this Scheme. The predicted income for 2011 was less than that eventually realised. Income should be monitored on a monthly basis and if the target is not reached expenditure should be cut accordingly.

Cllr. M. Gleeson said he made many written contributions to the review of Local Government and he hoped the present review would be more realistic. He referred to Minister Hogan's recent comments that the proposed €100 household charge is not an ideal system and he said that is a very poor start which reflects the Government's attitude to local government. Mr. Declan Ganley of Libertas Ireland proposed that power would be vested in local authorities and he agreed with this as he believed that local authorities would be more efficient than Central Government. The following night Killarney Town Council Budget Meeting would be held and the first item of concern will be the Town Council's contribution to the County Council. On many occasions in the past both he and the other members of the Town Council expressed concern regarding this charge and while Mr. J. O'Connor, former Head of Finance explained it to them they were still not satisfied at the level of the charge. He welcomed the fact that those making no effort to pay their rates will be pursued through the Court and he said that he presumed the Council's legal staff would take on this work. He referred to the landfill levy which he said is a form of urban thinking which tends to dominate public policy. Every morning in the town rubbish bins are put out for collection but this is not the case in rural areas where he lives. He believed there will be more illegal dumping if the landfill levy increases further and this would be regrettable. He complimented the Housing staff on the way they deal with tenants especially those experiencing difficulty paying their rent. He asked that the process of dealing with applications for single rural dwellings would be speeded up. In conclusion he welcomed the allocation for the Housing Grants which are excellent as they allow people to continue to live independent.

Cllr. M. Cahill asked if tenants could still apply to purchase their homes under the Tenant Purchase Scheme - is it open ended. He understood there was a surge of interest in this Scheme in the last months of 2011. It is an excellent Scheme as it offers reductions of up to 45% if the applicant was a tenant for 15 years or

longer. He congratulated all staff involved in the administration of the Housing Grant Schemes and he asked when will outstanding applications from 2011 be processed? No group housing was constructed in 2011 and he did not anticipate any change in 2012. As a result he believed there will be an increase in the number of applications for rural housing. He asked will there be an allocation for the provision of rural housing in 2012. Cllr. Cahill referred to the RAS Scheme and asked that it be extended and that the focus would be on the smaller towns in the county as he believed the concentration is mainly in Tralee. He asked that every effort would be made to secure housing under the Long Term Leasing Initiative which has not been successful to-date. He asked that consideration be given to the acquisition of single houses or 2 or 3 house developments under this Initiative. Last year the Department announced that funding would be made available for the completion of ghost estates. He asked if any of this funding was received by Kerry County Council. In conclusion he asked if there would be any possibility of getting houses from NAMA for social housing purposes.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim welcomed the allocation for housing grants and asked that additional staff would be allocated to the processing of these applications. Public representatives get numerous calls from applicants because it takes so long for the Investigating Officer to call out to them. Cllr. McEllistrim referred to the household charge and said that those already paying the NPPR will be liable for both charges. She requested that a letter would issue to the Minister for Environment objecting to this double charge. She welcomed proposals to pursue the collection of the NPPR and asked that an advertising campaign would be undertaken to ensure that everyone is aware of it. She was aware of people living abroad who were not aware of this charge.

Cllr. T. Ferris commended the staff of the Housing Department and she suggested that the name of this Division should be changed to just Housing as there is no building going on at present. She referred to Page 10 of the Budget Tables where the amount expended on the Maintenance of Local Authority Housing Units in 2011 exceeded the sum adopted in the Budget by €49,000. She asked how this was funded and why is there a reduced allocation under this heading for 2012. She referred to the Homeless Service and asked why this allocation was reduced in 2012. She commended the staff working in this area and sent best wishes to Mr. Justin Brosnan, who has not been well and who served this area very well. She asked if the affordable houses in Ballyheigue have been allocated or are due to be allocated. She referred to the Long Term Leasing Initiative and asked why this has not been successful in Kerry so far. She was approached by a developer who submitted details of his property to the Housing Department but he had not heard anything back. Cllr. Ferris then referred to the proposed Housing Assistance payment which is referred to on Page 22 of the Manager's Report and said it is clear that local authorities will be given responsibility for the administration of this Scheme. In England this role is privatised and leasing companies provide housing. She referred to the proposed new Tenant Purchase Scheme which will be introduced later in 2012 and she asked if the reductions permitted would be closer to 45% than 30%. It has been



agreed that the report on the submission of land to the Land Aggregation Scheme would be referred to the Housing SPC. She asked if members adopt the Budget as presented is adequate provision made for loans and if not why not. In conclusion Cllr. Ferris referred then to the two Housing Grant Schemes and asked if there is flexibility to use the allocation for either of the two schemes.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae complimented Management and staff of the Housing Department on the number of grants allocated in 2011. Many elderly people got assistance and it made a huge difference to their lives. He referred to the calculation of rents and said he had a number of queries from single and older people regarding their rents. He expressed concern at the lack of funding for the construction of rural housing and said he hoped that this will be addressed in 2012. Some applications are at an advanced stage and they need to be progressed. In some instances the Part VIII has been approved but there is a delay in commencing construction. These people should be informed if their house will proceed or not. Cllr. Healy-Rae then referred to the Land Aggregation Scheme and asked that members would be given details of the cost of each portion of land and how much of the land has been used so far. He expressed concern that the Long Term Leasing Initiative has not taken off in Kerry. He understood a number of developers submitted details of their developments but they were advised that it does not comply with planning and cannot be considered. As this Initiative has not taken off, he was concerned about proposals to submit lands to the Lands Aggregation Scheme as it maybe cheaper to build a house. Cllr. Healy-Rae referred to the household charge and said that a number of elderly people contacted him who are in nursing homes and still have a house. They are anxious to know if they are liable for the charge. He was recently contacted by 3 people who are tenants in local authority houses and they have old houses which are not habitable and he asked if they would be liable for the household charge.

Cllr. B. Cronin acknowledged the work of the Housing Department under Director, Mr. John Breen and Mr. Liam Quinlan, SEO. The Housing Adaptation Scheme and Housing Aid for the Elderly Schemes are excellent and they have transformed many houses in Kerry. Many houses have been adapted which has allowed the applicant to remain at home. Cllr. Cronin expressed concern at the lack of progress on the construction of single rural dwellings and said that normally 4 or 5 were built a year but none were constructed in 2011. There are a number of applications in the system but they are in limbo. These applicants deserve to be informed if their house will progress or not. There is a number of unfinished housing developments in the county and there are hundreds of people on the housing waiting lists. A small amount of funding will help to finish these houses. Some are in NAMA and if they were transferred to Kerry County Council they could be completed and qualified applicants could be housed. He asked if there were any mechanism whereby these houses could be finished and utilised. He then referred to the Long Term Leasing Initiative and said there has been no progress on this and he asked if it is likely to be a success in Kerry at all. Cllr. Cronin expressed concern regarding the proposed household charge which is

unfair on those already paying NPPR. He understood the household charge will be increased over the next number of years and this is a cause for concern for many people.

Cllr. M. O'Shea complimented the staffing of the Housing Department. There are 1,400 people on the housing waiting list and if houses are not constructed or purchased how will these applicants be catered for. The RAS Scheme is excellent and has proved to be very successful for those who availed of it. However, he understood no properties have been taken on by the Council under the Long Term Leasing Initiative as of yet. In view of this he requested that additional staff would be provided to facilitate applicants under the RAS Scheme. He asked was it intended to construct single rural dwellings in 2012. Cllr. O'Shea then referred to the Land Aggregation Scheme where councillors should agree with Management to submit land for inclusion in this Scheme provided the land is retained and is made available to the local authority if it is required in the future. He agreed that there was no point in paying interest on land when it will not be used. He would support the submission of land for inclusion in the Scheme provided the land would be returned to the Council or to communities if required. During the boom, many housing estates were built in villages but the amenities required were not provided. This should be addressed. He commended the work of the Grants Section and also the Homeless Service who have done excellent work over the past 12 months.

Cllr. N. Foley said that there were particular difficulties with those that applied to have their properties included under the Long Term Leasing Initiative and to-date no properties have been taken on by the Council under this Initiative. She asked would it be worth advertising again. She supported the views expressed by her Fianna Fáil colleagues in relation to the household charge that it is unfair on those already paying NPPR that they have to pay this charge also. She acknowledged the tremendous work done by the staff in the Grants Section of Housing who has done excellent work in processing grant applications. There were 500 outstanding grant applications at the end of 2011 and she asked when these will be processed.

In response Mr. J. Breen, Director of Housing and Community and Enterprise said that in relation to single rural dwellings an application was submitted for funding to commence a number of these houses for 2012. The position in relation to the Social Housing Leasing Initiative is set out on Page 22 of the Manager's Report. If any councillor is aware of any scheme that meets the criteria he asked them to inform staff in the Housing Department of the details. Agreement will not be entered into where a developer is not planning compliant. The closing date for receipt of applications under the most recent Tenant Purchase Scheme was the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2011 and no notice of the new Scheme was received to-date. Notwithstanding the current credit difficulties 30 houses were sold under the Scheme. He advised members that discussions had taken place with the Credit Union. Mr. Breen then referred to the Housing Assistance Scheme and said that a fundamental change is proposed where

rental assistance is provided this role will be transferred to the local authority. This will present a huge challenge for the Housing Department. He pointed out that there is a difference between what a tenant pays when they are on Rent Supplement and Differential Rent. Mr. Breen informed the meeting that he had written to NAMA but had not received a reply. The allocation in the Budget for the provision of B&B accommodation is reduced as there is no demand for it. The Differential Rent Scheme, which dictates the rent charged to tenant, is based on income and any individual queries should be brought to the attention of staff in the Housing Department. There is now an opportunity for those involved in voluntary housing to access private funding. In conclusion he thanked the SPC for their input during 2011 and he also thanked Mr. Liam Quinlan and the staff of the Housing Department for their work in 2011.

Cllr. N. Foley referred to funding for voluntary housing organisations and asked if they make the application can the council support the application.

Mr. Breen confirmed that the Council can support the application and he added that the new Scheme replaces the Voluntary Housing Capital Assistance Scheme. He again stated that 244 families were housed by Kerry County Council through the RAS Scheme and the provision of local authority housing in 2011. The vast majority of those on the housing waiting list are in good quality housing and are already considered to be adequately housed.

Mr. A. McAllen referred to the reduction of €20,000 or 1% in the provision for the Maintenance of Local Authority Housing and said efficiencies should more than compensate for this reduction.

Cllr. B. Cronin referred to the 89 acres currently owned by the Council and said that the Manager's Report states that as of the 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2011 the Council will have loans for housing land outstanding amounting to €20.5m. He estimated that the lands cost €230,000 per acre and he asked for clarification on this figure.

In response Mr. J. Breen said that some land was purchase a long time ago while others were purchased more recently at a greater cost. The total loans outstanding at present amount to €20.5m.

Cllr. B. Cronin asked that the Housing SPC would be given the cost of the lands at the time of purchase.

Ms. A. McAllen referred to Cllr. D. Healy-Rae's query in relation to the household charge and said that the household charge will apply to properties already liable for NPPR. If a house is suitable for occupation, the household charge applies.

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

Ms. A. McAllen referred members to Pages 36-58 of the Manager's Report and Pages 13-15 of the Budget Tables for details on this Division. She also referred them to Pages 5 and 6 of Schedule 1 for details of the Capital Programme for this Division. The revenue provision for Roads, Transportation and Safe is €32,108,609 which is the largest expenditure area for the Council, representing 26.5% of our overall expenditure. The Draft Budget figures for the improvement and maintenance of the existing road network are based on the initial allocation received from the NRA/Department of Transport in 2011 and as members can see from the Table on Page 15 of the Manager's Report provision is made for €17.23m in grant aid in this regard.

The overall projected income for Roads is €19.8m as set out in Pages 3 and 15 of the Budget Tables and includes parking fines, car parking fees in Dingle and Ballybunion, road opening licence and monies recouped from other agencies. The grant allocations to be notified by early February, will determine the actual level of expenditure to be incurred and Charlie O'Sullivan will then bring a more detailed report on the Roads Programme for 2012 to Council. Taking into consideration the Capital Funding for Road Projects in the County, including the construction of the Tralee By-Pass, the N69 Rae to Tullig and N86 Annascaul to Gortbreagogue Road Improvement Schemes, the Dingle Relief Road and the Kenmare Eastern Relief Road, as detailed on Pages 40-43 and Schedule 1 at the back of the Manager's Report, the overall projected expenditure on roads is estimated to be €79m in 2012.

Looking back at 2011, the main points to be noted from Pages 36 -39 of the Manager's Report can be summarised as follows:

- The construction of the Tralee B-Pass commenced in June and is scheduled for completion in April 2013.
- The CPO and EIS for the remainder of the N86 Dingle to Camp Road Improvement Scheme were published in December 2011. This is the only full national road scheme, under the Low Cost Volume Tourist Route Programme to receive approval from the NRA for the publication of a CPO and EIS in 2011
- Additional funding of €3m was secured for Pavement and Minor Improvement Works on the National Secondary Road Network, on top of the initial grant allocation of €7m. Further additional funding of €1.77m was secured during the year for National Secondary Safety Remedial Measures at Bolton's Cross, Listowel; Banhsa, Killorglin and Fossa. To deliver these contracts, engineering staff were temporarily seconded from other sections to the Roads Department, thus eliminating the need to procure consultants.

- An additional allocation of €2.8m was secured for the Regional and Local Road Restoration Improvement Programme that is on top of an initial allocation of €7.29m. This allowed us to bring forward 14 schemes on the 2011 to 2013 Programme, which had initially been scheduled for completion in 2012 and the Council took on 27 temporary seasonal workers and 17 additional drivers to deliver this programme.
- Over 190km of Regional and Local Roads were surface dressed or reconstructed last year.
- The total cost of responding to the severe weather conditions at the start of the year was €890,000. Funding was received from the NRA for the construction of a 2,500 tonne Salt Barn at Ballycarty, which is substantially complete and will allow for the storage of adequate salt supplies for our salting operations in the County.
- €1.2m from our own resources was required to supplement the grants for Regional and Local Roads, in accordance with the revised Memorandum on Grants, which came into affect on 1 December 2010.
- Funding of €445,000 was provided under the Local Improvement Scheme and members will be aware of the announcement by the Minister last month on the future of this scheme.

The Budget today is solely to consider the level of own resources to fund the operation of the Roads Department. This includes funding for ongoing improvements, day to day repairs and maintenance of the road network, the provision of safety measures, public lighting and traffic management. It also provides for the administration of the Roads Department, including the seven other Area Offices around the county, which provide a range of services to the community. In recent years the Council has increased the level of own resources provided for Roads and this year, there is a marginal reduction in this funding from €12.57m to €12.30m. However, we hope to achieve these savings through continued efforts in increasing efficiencies in our operations. New procurement procedures, developed in house by Kerry County Council, will be rolled out in 2012 and we hope that these will provide more competitive pricing from our suppliers.

The following are the main areas of expenditure from our own resources:

- €4m is provided for General Maintenance for the Regional and Local Road network and support costs for grant aided projects – this includes a sum of €783,000 for County Councillors Allocations and €700,000 for street cleaning.

- A sum of €733,000 is provided for public lighting, of which €517,000 is for energy costs. A limited amount of funding, in the sum of €50,000 is provided for the upgrading of old lights but we will not be in a position to provide any additional new lights.
- €414,000 is provided for parking enforcement, which primarily covers the cost of our traffic warden services. Whilst, the implementation of Parking Enforcement is primarily to control traffic flows in our towns and reduce congestion during busy periods, the cost of this service is not sustainable, unless an alternative source of income and a more efficient process for traffic management control is implemented. The Director of Roads has previously brought a report to members through the Transport SPC outlining the potential to generate €800,000 additional income through paid parking.
- €1.97m is required to administer road functions, including the operation of our Area Offices, staff costs, travel, legal fees etc..
- €505,000 is provided for loan charges in respect of road protection works on the R561 at Inch and the Dingle Inner Relief Road. Members will be aware that a Supplementary Development Contribution Scheme was adopted by Council in March 2007 to fund the Dingle Inner Relief Road. This commitment by Council strongly supported our application for loan approval of €6m to advance its construction, which was subsequently approved, and will provide significant relief for traffic congestion in the town, particularly during the tourist season. Construction of the section of the road from John Street to Spa Road will be completed in 2012. However, given the downturn in the economy and the level of income from this Development Contribution Scheme, the Council will not be in a position to advance the construction of further sections of this scheme until the funding position improves. Provision for the loan charges associated with this scheme cannot continue to be funded from this Development Contribution Scheme in 2012, due to the lack of receipts. Annual loan charges of €360,000 are funded in 2012 – 50% from Capital Initiation Fund for Relief Roads and 50% from the Council's own resources. This reflects an accounting and audit requirement. It is intended that funding will revert to the Development Contribution Scheme when the financial position improves.
- More detailed information is given on Pages 44-58 of the Manager's Report, but as previously stated, Charlie O'Sullivan will be presenting a full report on the Roadworks Programme for 2012, when details of the grant allocations are available.

All members thanked Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads, Mr. G. MacNamara, Senior Engineer, Area Engineers and all staff of the Roads Department for their excellent work in 2011.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen welcomed the many substantial road works commenced in 2011 and said he hoped that a similar allocation would be received in 2012. A considerable amount of safety works and bridge strengthening works were carried out in 2011. As discussed at the December CPG meeting and Full Council meeting a letter was forwarded to the Minister for Transport calling on him to reinstate the Local Improvement Scheme. This is a very valuable scheme for rural areas. He thanked all the members of the Transport SPC for their work during 2011. The SPC considered the introduction of on street parking but felt it was more important to attract people into towns and villages and they were not in agreement that on street parking should be introduced.

Cllr. M. Gleeson said the proposed new road from Farranfore to Lissivigeen was scheduled for completion in 2009 and it is regrettable that there will be no progress on this road for the foreseeable future. He expressed his disappointment at the discontinuation of funding for Local Improvement Schemes as it was a very valuable scheme for a rural county such as Kerry. He recently drove the road near Lough Guitane and there are not potholes but caverns on the road and the only means of improving it is through an LIS. This is a very important tourist road. He requested that when works are undertaken on National Primary Roads in future that a two lane entry and exit from roundabouts would be the norm. He asked the Roads Department to ensure the public lighting at Barraduff is turned on immediately and in future when new public lighting is provided that it would be turned on within 6 weeks of completion of the works. He requested that if a Councillor wants to allocate funding for the provision of a new public light at a Church or a School and if the Church or School is prepared to undertake the cost of the ESB that they would be permitted to allocate funding for this purpose. In conclusion Cllr. Gleeson called on the Department of Education to fund the cost of School Wardens.

Cllr. J. Brassil said there has been no progress on hedge cutting in Kerry over the past number of years. He called on the Council to cut hedges and to recoup the cost from landowners. Funding for National Secondary Roads is reduced in 2012 to €1.7m from €5m in 2011. He hoped the grants yet to be allocated would make up the difference. If not it would have a major negative impact on the county. He said that the Minister for Transport should be lobbied to ensure that grants allocated are at a reasonable level. He welcomed the provision in the Budget for Councillors Allocation and that there would be no reduction in 2012.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae said that he was very disappointed with the loss of funding for Local Improvement Schemes and also the reduction in funding for Community Involvement Schemes. The CIS is a very good Scheme where the local community contributes 25% of the cost yet funding for this scheme is reduced by 50% in 2012. Many business people ask why they pay rates, in particular in Gneeveguilla where the road surface at the junction is a disgrace and the potholes must be continuously filled. He asked that this area would be properly surfaced. It is essential that roadside drains are maintained but especially on Local Roads as there is no funding for the repair of these roads. The Mangerton

Road needs improvement and it is used for local and tourist access. Funding is also required to repair the bad lags in Kilgarvan village.

Cllr. J. Finucane said that bearing in mind the challenges there was huge progress made on our roads in 2011 especially with the commencement of the Tralee By-Pass. The introduction of the Development Levy Scheme contributed to securing funding for this road. He welcomed the takeover of the Fenit Harbour by Kerry County Council and the commencement of the Kerry/Dublin Air Service by Aer Arann. These are the foundation stone for industry and development in the county in the future.

Cllr. B. Cronin said that the discontinuation of funding for Local Improvement Schemes in the Budget was a terrible mistake. This will have a severe impact on rural Ireland. This was the only means of improving many bohereens and excellent work was done through this Scheme. There are still 160 roads on our priority list. €440,000 was allocated in 2011 and even if this level of funding was retained it would be very welcome. Many people had applied for 4 or 5 years and had been given an indication when their road would be done but this will not now happen. This was a vitally important scheme for rural Kerry and members must seek to have it reinstated. Cllr. Cronin referred to the proposed Farranfore to Killarney Road and said that a huge number of landowners are involved. He asked if the road would ever be constructed or will the plans now be scrapped. He asked if funding would be provided in 2012 for Community Involvement Schemes. The allocation included in the Budget for the maintenance of bridges is small but we should be thankful to our forefathers who built these bridges as they are taking huge volumes of traffic and have stood the test of time. However, he envisaged there would be problems with bridges in the future. He referred to the funding provided in the Budget for street cleaning and said this is a vital service and every town and village is reaping the benefits of this work together with the work of community groups as they are improving their standing in the Tidy Towns Competition. Every effort must be made to continue this vital service.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim welcomed the provision for Councillors Allocation in 2012 which is unchanged. She expressed her disappointment that funding will not be continued for the Local Improvement Schemes and said that many roads will fall into disrepair. She asked if funding could be provided for the Council's own Budget to repair two or three roads each year. She asked if there was provision in the Budget to cater for hardship cases. In conclusion she welcomed progress on the Tralee By-Pass.

Cllr. J. Sheahan expressed his disappointment that funding for Local Improvement Schemes was discontinued and he asked that this decision would be reconsidered as it is the only means of improving and repairing some roads. He hoped that additional funding would be provided for National Secondary Roads in particular Gneeveguilla, Kilcummin and Scartaglin to bring them up to an acceptable standard. A number of landowners are affected by the proposed Farranfore to Killarney Road and he asked what the future of this Scheme is?



He welcomed the funding provided in the Budget for Councillors Allocations which will be well spent. He requested clarification on funding for Community Involvement Schemes for 2012. In the past discretionary funding was provided and councillors were allowed to submit two sections of road for consideration and inclusion in the Roads Programme. He asked that this system would be reinstated.

Cllr. P. Leahy thanked Ms. McAllen and the staff of the Finance Department for the presentation on the Budget. He complemented Mr. Charlie O'Sullivan and all the staff in the Roads Department for the great improvements to roads in Kerry. In conclusion he supported the call for the reinstatement of funding for Local Improvement Schemes.

Cllr. L. Purtill complimented Ms. McAllen and Mr. O'Sullivan and all the staff of the Finance and Roads Departments on their excellent work. Hedge cutting is a huge problem in rural Kerry and needs to be addressed. Approx. 250 yds of the Listowel to Ballylongford road in a dreadful condition and he asked that it would be repaired. He asked that the street cleaning truck would be assigned to Ballylongford and Tarbert on a fixed schedule. Cllr. Purtill asked if a decision was made on the route for the Listowel By-Pass.

Cllr. JJ Culloty said the discontinuation of the Local Improvement Scheme will cause great hardship and he called for its reinstatement or the introduction of a similar scheme. He acknowledged that improvements have been carried out to National Secondary Roads over the past number of years but said more improvements are required. He previously moved a Notice of Motion in relation to the road surface at Gneeveguilla Junction and also the need for improvements to the Mangerton Road. He asked that these works would be given priority. In conclusion he said it is vital that water is removed from roads to prevent them deteriorating any further.

Cllr. N. Foley complimented Ms. McAllen and Mr. O'Sullivan and the staff of their respective Departments on their excellent work in 2011. She welcomed progress on the Tralee By-Pass and supported the views expressed by Cllr. Cronin in relation to bridges. There are a lot of bridges in the county and funding should be provided to strengthen them. She expressed her disappointment at the discontinuation of funding for Local Improvement Schemes and said this is a shameful loss. She welcomed the funding provided for Councillors' Allocations which remains unchanged for 2012. Cllr. Foley referred to Page 52 of the Manager's Report and the section relating to Local Roads General Improvement Works which states "However, given the constraints on funding, consideration can only be given to works funded through County Councillor Allocations on works that will not require ongoing investment, such as public lighting, school warning lights, etc". She asked if Members are being limited on what they can allocate money to.

Cllr. M. Cahill asked how many roads in Kerry would qualify for a Local Improvement Schemes. He requested that a letter would be sent to the Minister for Transport seeking an allocation even for pothole repairs on these roads. Approx. 15 - 20 households normally live on each of these roads and the discontinuation of the Scheme is a huge disappointment to them. There must be a greater emphasis on drainage works to protect the investment in roads in recent years. He welcomed the works carried out to the bridge near Hoare's as it has made the road safer. However, there are many other bridges that need attention including the S-shaped Bridge at Glenbeigh. A special case should be made for funding for the Ring of Kerry road as it is a major tourist route. He referred to proposed works from Glenbeigh to the school which had not yet commenced and he asked if these works would commence shortly. He referred to the traffic congestion at the Intermediate School, Killorglin at the start and conclusion of the school day and asked if any measures could be put in place to alleviate it. Cllr. Cahill said that the Secondary School buses pull in at the side of the Ring of Kerry road to allow students to disembark. This is in an area where the speed limit is 100km/h and it is dangerous. This issue needs to be highlighted.

Cllr. B. Moynihan-Cronin thanked Ms. McAllen for presenting a most difficult Budget. She expressed her disappointment with the discontinuation of funding for Local Improvement Schemes. She referred to the proposed Farranfore to Killarney Road and said she attended the launch of this road in the Great Southern Hotel many years ago and it was anticipated that it would be complete by now. However, in the light of the current economic situation, a decision must be taken on the future of this project. A drainage plan for the county's roads should be drawn up as the Council cannot afford to be continually repairing roads. In many instances, when roads are improved, adjacent houses are below road level and they were flooded. She asked that in conjunction with road improvement works, drainage works would also be provided to ensure that this does not happen. In conclusion, Cllr. Moynihan-Cronin said that the public lighting on the Tralee Road can be problematic and she asked that the ESB would be requested to resolve this problem.

Cllr. M. O'Shea welcomed the funding for the N86 and also the fact that an application for funding has been submitted for improvements to the Killorglin to Beaufort Road. He also welcomed the extension to the Dingle Relief Road. He asked if it is intended to introduce widespread car parking charges in all towns in the county. Cllr. O'Shea referred to funding for the strengthening of bridges and said he hoped funding would be provided for the bridge at Ballyrameen which has been hit on a number of occasions. It is important to maintain the investment in our local road network and as a result of recent heavy rainfall, there has been flooding on some of these roads and they have been damaged. He asked that every effort would be made to keep the drains clear on these roads. He expressed his disappointment that funding for Local Improvement Schemes has been discontinued and he asked the County Manager and Mr. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads if the Council could provide funding for hardship cases until the

Government re-introduces this Scheme. Funding for two or three of these roads a year should meet the needs of hardship cases.

Cllr. P. McCarthy said that the removal of funding for Local Improvement Schemes was a source of concern for many rural people. Members, through the political system, should make their voices heard and should lobby to have this funding reinstated. The maintenance of roadside drains, in particular on National Primary Roads, is very important. On one section of the Tralee/Castleisland Road, water is running on the road for about ½ mile before it goes down a side road. This matter needs to be addressed.

Cllr. P.J. Donovan complimented Ms. McAllen and the staff of the Finance Department together with Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads and his staff. He asked if Kerry County Council would be in a position to fund some roads that would normally be improved through a Local Improvement Scheme. Many roads are dangerous as a result of hedges not being cut. He asked if landowners are being written to requesting them to carry out this work. If they do not comply the Council should cut them and recover the cost from the landowner. Cllr. Donovan requested that priority would be given to ensuring that roadside drains are maintained to ensure that water is kept off the road. In conclusion Cllr. Donovan requested that members would be allowed to allocate funding for the provision of public lights at Churches, Schools, and Hospitals etc.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads & Transportation said that a number of the issues mentioned would be addressed when the Road Grant Allocations for 2012 is received. As members are aware, there is a new policy on hedge cutting and a letter is issued to landowners annually advising them of their obligation to cut their hedges. However, where safety is an issue, the Council cuts hedges and seeks to recoup the cost from the landowner. The Council cannot use their own resources on roads that would normally be improved under LIS. It will be necessary to lobby the Minister to provide some funding, even for hardship cases. There is an indication that there will be a cut in funding for Community Involvement Schemes but there is very little take up of this Scheme. At this point, there is no indication when the Farranfore to Killarney Road will progress but it would be a retrograde step to abandon that project altogether. The NRA recently issued guidelines on route selection in the context of the planning process and members should encourage landowners to contact the Council if they have any queries. Mr. O'Sullivan informed members that the Discretionary Improvement Scheme was discontinued in 2010 and so it is not possible to allow members to put forward roads for improvement under this Scheme. The report on the route selection for the Listowel By-Pass is nearing completion and discussions are underway with the NRA on it. Work on the road from Glenbeigh to the school should commence shortly. Work on bridges normally costs between €17,000 and €20,000 but funding for bridges is limited.

A sum of €120,000 is provided from the Council's own resources for Bridge Maintenance on Local Roads with €200,000 being provided for the Maintenance of Bridges on Regional Roads. The specific issues raised by members can be

considered when the Grant Allocation for 2012 is received. He referred to Members' queries regarding the introduction of parking charges in towns and said that any proposal in relation to this matter will be a matter for resolution by the full Council. He pointed out that the clear message coming from Central Government is that the level of funding they will provide will be reduced from 2013. If funding is required for local work, i.e. street cleaning, consideration will have to be given to the introduction of additional charges. Provision in the Budget for Councillors' Allocation remains the same for 2012. He referred to queries regarding the provision of new lights at Schools, Churches and Hospital etc and said that while he would not have a difficulty with the provision of new lights, the ongoing cost would put further strain on the Budget. Recently, the repair of lights at a school cost €15,000; therefore, members must be mindful of ongoing costs. In conclusion, he thanked Cllr. Connor-Scarteen and the members of the Roads & Transportation SPC for their work over the past 12 months. He also thanked Mr. G. MacNamara, Mr. M. Corridan and Ms. Maria West and all the staff of the Roads Department for their dedication and commitment to the work of the Department.

The meeting then adjourned for lunch at 1.20pm.

The meeting resumed at 2.05pm.

At the outset, Cllr. J. Brassil PROPOSED that Divisions 3 and 5 would be taken together.

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

### **Division C - Water Services**

Ms. A. McAllen referred Members to Pages 59 - 83 of the Manager's Report and Pages 16 and 17 of the Budget Tables for details on Water Services. The Capital Report is contained in Schedule 1 at the back of the Manager's Report. Ms. McAllen informed members that water is one of our major Programmes with a proposed expenditure of €25,037,888 and a projected income of €15,285,653. This is an increase on the Budget 2011 allocation. It also has a significant Capital Programme progressing as outlined in Pages 59 - 64 of the Manager's Report. While the Water Services Capital Programme has seen a reduction due to the economic downturn it has not reduced as significantly as other sectors. Significant work is still being progressed and, in fact, in Kerry we have seen an increase in activity in small to medium scale water quality improvement works. Details of the Water Services Investment Programme are outlined over the first six pages of the Chapter on Water Services. All investment is very welcome but has an own resource implication for the Council, in particular, in relation to the funding of loan charges of €2.3m which are funded from diminishing development levies as outlined in Schedule 2 of the Manager's Report.

With regard to Revenue Expenditure, as outlined at the Pre-Budget Briefing, significant additional costs are provided for within the Water Supply and Wastewater Treatment expenditure Budget. This is despite many efficiencies and value for money initiatives introduced over the past number of years. These additional costs are as a result of improved water and wastewater standards and have resulted in additional expenditure in 2012 in order to meet EPA increased standards for drinking water and to comply with the EPA licensing requirements for wastewater plant. As the infrastructure being provided under the EPA Remedial Action List comes on stream, significant additional expenditure on operations and maintenance will be incurred. When all of the upgrades from the Remedial Action List (RAL) Programmes are completed, the total number of water supply schemes with full treatment will have increased from 10 in 2010 to 52 in 2014. A dedicated Water Conservation Unit endeavours to reduce leakage and wastage by network management/mains pressure management and by establishing procedures which will lead to a sustained reduction in water demand. Provision for €491,000 is made for the Operation and Maintenance of Public Conveniences. Seven of the nineteen facilities available are operated on behalf of Kerry County Council by local community groups. These facilities are located at Ballybunion, Portmagee, Sneem, Waterville, Cromane, Kells and Knightstown. The Council is appreciative of the work of these local groups and provision is again made in 2012 to continue this co-operative approach.

In conclusion, Ms. McAllen said no increases to either the standard water connection charge of €1,100 for the standard sewer connection charge of €2,210 are proposed for 2012. The Water Services Department, as with all Divisions, has illustrated many 'value for money' initiatives which are set out on Pages 82 and 83 of the Manager's Report and these are very welcome.

## **Division E - Environmental Services**

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 104 - 129 of the Manager's Report and Pages 21 - 23 of the Budget Tables for details on this Division. Ms. McAllen said that waste management throughout the Country is undergoing dramatic change at present. It is Government policy to discourage disposal of waste to landfill and the Landfill Levy (currently at €50) will increase very substantially over the next few years. The amount of organic waste which can be sent to landfill is being progressively reduced. There is exceptional competition across the country amongst landfill operators for waste disposal, leading to what would seem as uneconomic pricing. The Council will operate the North Kerry Landfill and its Transfer Stations as usual for 2012. These operations will be kept under constant review during the year. Provision for €4,796,000 is made for Landfill Operations. Draft Budget 2012 is prepared on the basis that Muingnaminnane Landfill and the Transfer Stations will remain open for business. The gate fee to the public at North Kerry Landfill will remain at €165 per tonne. The fee at the Transfer Stations throughout the county will be €190 per tonne. This higher rate at the Transfer Stations is required to meet the additional costs required to transfer the waste to the North Kerry Landfill. It is likely that the Council will have

to apply volume discounts to larger operators to remain in the market and to ensure recoupment of our operating and fixed costs.

The Draft Budget has, therefore, been prepared on the basis of an estimated 43,000 tonnes at landfill in order to maximise use of available capacity, this situation will be kept under close constant review for 2012. The allocation provides for the expenditure at the North Kerry Landfill, which includes the operation and maintenance of the site, and consists mainly of wages, leachate management/collection and disposal, plant and fuel, landfill gas management, cover requirements, building and weighbridge maintenance, site management, security and EPA licence requirements as well as administration costs.

As well as the North Kerry Landfill facility, this allocation also includes a portion of the cost of operating the four Transfer Stations at Killarney, Milltown, Kenmare and Caherciveen and also a portion of the operating cost of Ionad Athchúrsála agus Dramháiola Chorca Dhuibhne. The allocation also includes the Government Levy on non-Council waste deposited at the Landfill which is currently set at €50\ton. It is anticipated that this levy will increase to €65\ton in mid 2012. A sum of €2.36m is included in this regard, which will be fully recoupable from the users of the facility. The provision of landfill capacity at North Kerry Landfill is carried out on a phased basis. At the present rate of fill, Phase 8 (Cells 15 and 16) will be full by March 2012. Provision for loan charges of €754,269 is included in the allocation pertaining to capital development works at the facility.

Provision for €321,000 is made for Bring Centres Operations. This Council has a total of 106 Bring Banks located at various locations around the county. The usage of these recycling facilities has resulted in approximately 3,090 tonnes of recyclables being accepted in 2011. As a measure to counteract illegal and indiscriminate dumping at these sites, the Council has provided the “adopt a Bring Bank” to 33 Community Groups. This involves the local community helping to police the Bring Bank 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 collection credit for the bins. In addition, a provision has been made to enhance and provide permanent security cameras to prevent illegal dumping. The first of these new cameras has been installed in Dingle. It is hoped to continue to expand this initiative to further sites in 2012. The Council has also rolled out a covert roaming camera which is monitoring known dumping areas associated with our Bring Bank Network. Provision for €94,000 is made for the Litter Warden Service.

During 2011, covert CCTV cameras were used in an attempt to identify offenders. Seven known ‘black spot’ areas in remote locations were monitored during the year. Our first prosecution on foot of the footage captured is entered for hearing in the Listowel District Court in January 2012. Signs have been erected on the approach roads to each of the sites included in the surveillance programme to advise that the sites are subject to periodic covert surveillance. Notwithstanding, no significant increase to date in the number of prosecutions

pursued on foot of the use of surveillance, as will be noted from the statistics set out in the graph on Page 111 of the Manager's Report. However, our experience is that the awareness among the general public of the use of the system has served as a deterrent against unauthorised dumping and a significant improvement has been noted by our Litter Wardens.

Provision for €55,000 is also made for Litter Control Initiatives. Under the Waste Management Acts, and associated statutory instruments, Kerry County Council has responsibility for the enforcement and regulation of a broad range of waste-related activities in the county. Page 114 of the Manager's Report outlines the details of the Budget provision in this area. A sum of €718,000 is provided in the Budget for the Operation and Maintenance of Burial Grounds. This is a marginal reduction on the 2011 allocation and it is hoped that this will be minimised through procurement savings and efficiencies. There is an ever increasing influence of Community Organisations on the upkeep and maintenance of local burial grounds. This has contributed to an obvious and ongoing improvement, year on year, in the presentation of many burial grounds across the County. The Council is highly appreciative of this assistance and continues to obtain outstanding value for money when working closely with such groups which also builds on relationships with local communities. The Council is currently working with over 50 community groups and is continuing to expand this number. Groups receive contributions from the Council, in recognition of their voluntary work, based on the submission of a works programme and subject to the approval of the Water Services (Operations) Department. Provision is made in the 2012 Budget for continued support to community groups, in recognition of their ongoing involvement and assistance.

In July 2011, Kerry County Council, together with North and East Kerry Development, IRD Duhallow, South Kerry Development Partnership and Meitheal Forbairtha na Gaeltachta launched [www.kerrylaburials.ie](http://www.kerrylaburials.ie) which reproduced high quality scanned images of original burial record books and facilitates public access to approximately 70,000 records via the Internet.

Provision for €197,000 is made in the Budget for the Operation Costs for the Civil Defence.

Ms McAllen then referred members to Page 119 of the Manager's Report where details of the operation of the Fire Service are set out. The estimated cost of providing an efficient and effective Fire and Emergency Service for the county for the year 2012 amounts to €5,255,136. There has been a marked reduction in the number of incidents in 2011 when compared to 2010. This reduction can be attributed to the ongoing advertising campaign targeting landowners and householders and an active policy in promoting fire safety is important in preventing additional fires. The reduction in the number of incidents relating to Gorse during 2011 has been very welcome. Any reduction in this Budget is marginal based on 2011 results and it is again hoped that efficiencies and procurement initiatives will reduce any impact. Ms. McAllen then referred

members to the Table on Page 120 of the Manager's Report which outlines the main expenditure items for this Service.

Ms. McAllen informed the meeting that in 2011, the Laboratory processed 5,700 samples involving a total of 77,220 tests. The breakdown in activity is as shown in Figure 1 on Page 124 of the Manager's Report and reflects the primacy of samples for a rural county with significant emphasis on tourism such as Kerry. Activity in this area continues to grow due to:

- Increased sampling demand with regard to river and drinking water regulations
- Increased emphasis on quality control measures and protocols with regard to both sampling and analysis. The Council's Laboratory is registered to test all 26 areas as set out by the EPA.

Overall it is estimated that the Laboratory saves the Local Authority at least €300,000 annually in monitoring costs alone by completing the vast majority of mandatory workload in-house i.e. 96% rather than using external laboratories.

The Energy Office, while located in the Environment Department, is deployed over a number of services to promote energy conservation, monitor energy consumption and ensure best value through the installation of energy conserving equipment, such as pumps, electric motors, lighting and heating systems. The Energy Office is also responsible for progressing the Council's Renewable Energy Programme and for the tendering process for the electricity supply in the four Kerry Local Authorities. Funding for the Energy Office is provided from allocations in Housing, Water, Environment and Corporate Services Divisions. Much progress has been made in this area in recent years. The work programme implemented during 2011 is set out on Page 126 of the Manager's Report and the financial benefits have and continue to be felt in all Divisions of the Council as mentioned earlier.

Cllr. J. Brassil said that the issue of the septic tank charge must be clarified. Everyone agrees if a septic tank is causing pollution, it should be upgraded. He understood the proposed charge would be collected by the local authority. He asked that a letter would issue to the Department of Environment requesting that a Grant Scheme would be put in place for those who have to upgrade their systems. The upgrading of septic tanks will generate a huge volume of work. Cllr. Brassil then referred to the €165 Landfill Levy and said now that Kerry County Council no longer collects waste, we should encourage private operators to use our landfill site for the disposal of refuse. He proposed that the Executive would be given full flexibility to reduce the gate price in an effort to acquire this business. At present, private operators are using a landfill in Limerick and they are destroying roads transferring waste outside the county. It would be much more beneficial to the Council if they used the North Kerry Landfill. He expressed concern at the increase in roadside littering and said that a campaign is required to highlight this problem. He asked that when Road staff are passing



by a bag of refuse on the side of the road they would pick it up, otherwise, after a few days, the bag is torn open and the litter is strewn all over the roadside.

Cllr. Brassil referred to the 'Water In Water Out' charge which is costing businesses a lot of money. All domestic houses will be metered in the next year and he asked if this system would also apply to them. If it will, the general public should be advised of it and the potential consequences. In the past, Cllr. O'Connell asked that a survey of households would be carried out to establish how they dispose of their refuse. With the introduction of the €100 household charge two additional questions could be included on the application form - (1) how do they dispose of their waste and (2) do they have a septic tank. This was an ideal opportunity to gather this information but it appears to have been lost.

Cllr. B. Cronin said Ms. McAllen had outlined a huge body of work in these two Divisions. In 2011, the Council produced approximately 33bn litres of drinking water for 130,000 consumers. This is a huge responsibility. He welcomed the substantial remedial works carried out in Fossa which cost in excess of €800,000. He welcomed the fact that there will be no increase for water or wastewater to non-domestic customers in 2012 as they have been paying these charges for years. It is anticipated that it will cost €100m to install domestic water meters and non-domestic customers are looking forward to sharing the burden with them. Cllr. Cronin welcomed the €5m contract for the provision of a new reservoir at Scart Cross. He referred to the water meter charge of €106 p.a. which he understood was due on a holiday home. He asked if the holiday home was let long-term, would this charge still be due. He commended the Laboratory on their excellent work and said that pollution monitoring is a huge responsibility. The EPA and the EU monitor virtually everything at present. He asked what the long-term future of Transfer Stations is. Cllr. Cronin welcomed improvements in relation to illegal dumping and said that this campaign must continue. He welcomed the use of covert cameras and said while they have not been a huge success there is a fear of them among the public. He asked what the reduction is in the Budget for Burial Ground Maintenance. Local Community Groups are doing tremendous work in this area with the assistance of the Council and he commended them for it. In conclusion he welcomed the fact that burial ground records are now available on the Internet and some go back to the 1920's while others go back to the 1950's.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen complimented all staff in the Environment and Water Services Departments. He thanked the Council for their excellent work with Tidy Towns groups throughout the county. He complimented the Environment Department on the excellent work they are doing in combating illegal dumping and said that the covert cameras are certainly helping. He concurred with Cllr. Brassil and said that clarification is needed in relation to proposals for septic tanks. He welcomed the upgrading of water pipes at Fossa and also proposals to upgrade the toilet in Kenmare where work is due to commence shortly. He asked when would the Waterville Water and Sewerage Schemes commence and

he called on the Water Services Department to liaise with the OPW in relation to an extension to the Abbey Island Burial Ground.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae asked if a reply to his Notice of Motion was received in relation to the provision of adequate wastewater schemes in all towns and villages prior to the introduction of the septic tank charge. He referred to the allocation for the Clahane to Iron Mills Water Scheme which was subsequently diverted to the RAL Scheme and he asked if there was any prospect of the Clahane to Iron Mills Scheme progressing in 2012. He agreed with the views expressed by Cllr. Brassil in relation to the use of the Muingnaminnane Landfill and said he feared it would close if prices are not competitive. He understood the landfill at Limerick is almost full and if this is the case will households in Kerry have to pay more to transport waste further up the country. If the Landfill closes the Transfer Stations will also close and this will have a dreadful impact. He was concerned if these facilities are sold to private interests they would not give the same level of service the Council does. If the volumes of waste being deposited in Muingnaminnane are not increased this year he believed it will be closed. He appreciated that this is a managerial function but members are asked to approve the raising of loans for these facilities to allow their views/suggestions to be taken into account. The cost per tonne should be reviewed and we should be matching the price at the Limerick landfill. If the Landfill closes it will not reopen. He asked if the pipe to carry leachate from the Landfill site to the Castleisland Wastewater Treatment Plant will be laid in 2012. He referred to the sum of €95,000 in the Environment Budget for street cleaning and asked if that was the total Budget for street cleaning for all villages and towns. He asked how much was paid to consultants in 2011 and he believed there was no need to employ them with the calibre of staff in the Council. Savings can be achieved by managing the work in-house.

Cllr. J. Finucane concurred with the sentiments expressed by previous speakers in relation to the Landfill and said it was sensible to exit the Refuse Service but it is unlikely that any private operator would be able to afford the Landfill. Kerry County Council subscribes to the Regional Waste Management Office in Limerick yet Limerick County Council is taking our customers. This is nonsensical. A directive should be issued to them by the Minister demanding that they cease under cutting on price. He asked what value are we getting for our contribution to this Office.

Cllr. M. Gleeson said that everyone accepts there are septic tanks that need to be upgraded. The example given by County Cavan should be replicated around the country. Our environment is the lifeblood of the county and Killarney came third in the most recent IBAL results announced that day. He complimented Micheál Ó Coileáin on his weekly column in The Kerryman. He pleaded with Management to maintain the Transfer Stations as they are used by large numbers of people. He asked that €3 per bag of refuse would be charged at Transfer Stations. The Landfill Levy of €165 is increasing to €175 shortly and this will lead to illegal dumping. Cllr. Gleeson said it is important that the Bring Banks are well presented and there is a category in the Tidy Towns Competition

for the most aesthetically pleasing Bring Banks. Consideration should be given to visiting the winning location in Cork to see how they integrate their Bring Banks. The involvement of Transition Year Students in the collection of litter adjacent to their schools is most welcome. Noise pollution continues to be a problem which is not being addressed and many young people will be adversely affected in the years to come. He hoped that the need for a new Burial Ground for Killarney is being addressed. He asked that prior to the commencement of hedge cutting in an area that local communities would be advised so that they could pick the litter before it is cut into hundreds of pieces.

Cllr. B. O'Connell said that there is concern in Scartaglin as the Burial Ground is filling up and they are running out of space. He called on the Council to acquire an extension or land for a new Burial Ground as soon as possible. He concurred with the sentiments expressed by Cllr. Finucane and said that action should be taken if there is transgressions by an adjoining local authority. He asked if there is a statutory fee incorporated in the gate fee at landfill. If this is so they should not be permitted to reduce this cost. He also concurred with Cllr. Brassil that the application form for the household charge should be amended to incorporate a question on how the applicant disposes of their refuse.

Cllr. L. Purtill asked what progress was made in the acquisition of land for the Ballylongford Treatment Plant and also the Tarbert Treatment Plant. This infrastructure is vital for the Shannon LNG development. He highlighted the necessity to restore the Fire Station in Tarbert if the LNG Project proceeds from a health and safety point of view. He said illegal dumping is getting worse, in particular between Listowel and Ballylongford adjacent to Fitzgerald's Cross.

Cllr. M. O'Shea complimented the staff of the Environment and Water Services Departments. He understood two years ago the EPA gave local authorities a strong signal in relation to the provision of treatment plants for small towns and villages and local authorities were given until the end of 2011 to comply. After that he understood fines could be imposed. He asked if the income of €2m from the septic tank charge was taken into account in framing the Budget. He welcomed the new Milltown Sewerage Scheme. In 2012 additional work will be undertaken by the Water Services Department and indeed other Departments and he asked if the work is not undertaken by Council staff that local contractors would be employed. He asked what the future of Bring Banks is as it is so expensive to have them emptied regularly. He referred to the income of €501,000 from Transfer Stations and asked what the income at Milltown Transfer Station was. He called for the retention of Transfer Stations. He referred to the recent sale of the Refuse Service and asked if there was any clause in the contract to compel the purchaser to use the landfill at Muingnaminnane for a period of four or five years. Cllr. O'Shea referred to unfinished or unoccupied housing estates and said in some instances the estates are in NAMA and the hoarding is in disrepair and was blown down. He asked what Department is responsible for pursuing this matter. He referred to the closure of the Fire Station at Castlegregory and said he understood there were valid reasons for its closure.

However, the people involved are interested in continuing this service for the wider community. He called on Mr. O. Ring to meet with them as they are anxious to ensure that a facility is in place for when it is needed. He asked if they could be trained to continue with the service as it would take a long time for a Fire Tender to come from Tralee to Cloghane or Brandon.

Cllr. B. Moynihan-Cronin supported the proposal in relation to the Landfill and said if it is not utilised by the private operators it will result in additional cost to rate payers. She would be very reluctant to close this facility as it would be very difficult to acquire a new site in the future. This is a very important issue and should be dealt with at another meeting. Cllr. Moynihan-Cronin paid tribute to all the staff in the Water Services Department and said that a clean water supply is a very valuable resource. Advice should be given to people on how to conserve water through the elimination of leakage and other waste. A campaign could be put in place that would be delivered through the schools. She referred to the refuse bins and said some people are having difficulty with other people using their bins by night. She asked if a meeting would be arranged with the private operators to see if they would provide locks for the bins. In conclusion she complimented the staff of the Laboratory on the excellent work they do in testing water samples etc.

Cllr. J. Sheahan complimented Mr. O. Ring and the staff of the Water Services Department. He welcomed the new infrastructure provided at Fossa which is much appreciated. He hoped that the Landfill and Transfer Stations would remain open as they are a very valuable facility for those who do not have a refuse service or who want to dispose of additional waste. He complimented the Council on the provision of high visibility vests, litter pickers and bags etc for those involved in the clean up of roadside litter. He requested an update on progress on the acquisition of a new Burial Ground for Killarney.

Cllr. T. Ferris asked if funding was provided in the Budget for a water softener for Ardfert. She also asked if the Ardfert Sewerage Scheme would proceed to construction in 2012 and said all development in the village has been delayed until the new sewerage scheme is in place. She referred to the water reconnection fee and asked why is it so expensive – is it punitive in nature. Additional funding should be provided for litter control as there was never so much litter on the roadsides. It is more important now than ever to invest in this area. She referred to the acquisition of new burial grounds and asked how are they funded and at what stage does the Council start looking for an alternative burial ground – is it two or three years before the existing burial ground is full.

Cllr. J. J. Culloty said the proposed septic tank charge is causing huge concern in rural communities. He acknowledged that some septic tanks maybe causing pollution and said the approach adopted by Cavan County Council appears to be the most common sense approach. He hoped that a grant scheme would be introduced to support people who have to upgrade their systems. He welcomed progress on the acquisition of land for a new Burial Ground in Scartaglin.

Cllr. M. Cahill complimented Mr. O. Ring and the staff of the Water Services and Environment Departments and said the Council can be proud of the fact that they provide very good quality drinking water. He welcomed work carried out on the water mains at Fossa recently. He asked that funding would be allocated to address the poor water pressure at the High Road, Glenbeigh. He asked what is the position regarding the presence of cryptosporidium in the water supply at Tulligmore, Killorglin. Is the Council supply turned on there now? He called for the retention of the Transfer Stations and the Bring Banks. Many people in rural areas are very concerned at the proposed septic tank charge and the implications for them if their systems must be upgraded. In many instances the septic tank is on another person's property. He called on the Council to finalise the purchase of land for a new Burial Ground at Cromane. Rock is present in the Burial Ground in Ballinakilla and it can be very difficult when a burial is taking place. This is a very sensitive issue and he asked that it would be addressed.

Cllr. G. Wharton Slattery referred to the statistics relating to enforcement activity as set out on Page 111 of the Manager's Report which indicates that 506 cases of illegal dumping were investigated which resulted in just 4 successful prosecutions. She asked why so many cases were not prosecuted. Illegal dumping is on the increase yet the number of cases of illegal dumping investigated from 2009 to 2011 decreased. In conclusion she congratulated Killarney and Tralee on their success in the recent IBAL poll.

Cllr. P. Leahy complimented Mr. O. Ring and the staff of the Water Services Department on their work over the past 12 months. He welcomed the proposed commencement of the Tarbert and Ballylongford Sewerage Schemes. He also welcomed the ongoing street cleaning in villages. He complimented the local Community Groups involved in improving Burial Grounds. In conclusion he thanked Mr. C. Manager of the Water Services Department for resolving the problem at Kilsinon Burial Ground.

Mr. O. Ring, Director of Environment and Water Services said it is the Council's intention to make the maximum commercial use of the Landfill. It is intended to utilise the remaining capacity between now and 2013 when the rules change in relation to the land filling of organic waste. He informed the meeting that the landfill at Limerick is not almost full. Transfer Stations are a strategic asset given the dispersed population of the county but their future will be reviewed in due course. He informed members that the future of Transfer Stations is not directly linked to the North Kerry landfill. In relation to Waterville contracts are signed and work will commence in the next month or two and it is hoped the scheme will be in operation by the Summer of 2013 even though it is a two year contract. He referred to queries regarding the minor reduction in the provision in the Budget for Burial Ground Maintenance and said this reduction is very minor and it is hoped to breach that gap with efficiencies. Every effort is made to maximise the use of our staff in an efficient and effective way and outside consultants are only engaged where it is absolutely necessary. The Environment Department have

prepared a Draft Oil Pollution Plan and this will be an excellent blue print for other local authorities.

The gathering of data on what means households are using to dispose of their refuse by including a question in the application form for the household charge is not an option open to the Council as this form is controlled nationally. He was aware that the Housing Department conducted a similar survey of a number of housing estates and 75% had some form of collection with 20% using landfill facilities. A very small percentage of households could not account for how they dispose of their waste. The Minister is carrying out a major review of waste services and a paper is due to be published on it which will clarify issues in relation to waste collection, Landfill, Transfer Stations etc. He referred to the queries on the Ballylongford and Tarbert Sewerage Schemes and said that the CPO for Ballylongford is being prepared while the pipeline contract for the Tarbert Scheme was submitted to the Department for approval. The Ardfert Sewerage Scheme is progressing and the EIS is now ready. There is no Departmental approval yet to indicate what the extent of this scheme will be. The level of large scale illegal dumping is decreasing. Mr. Ring then referred to the Fire Stations at Tarbert and Castlegregory and said they were invited to become part of the Civil Defence. A meeting can be arranged between the Castlegregory representatives, himself and representatives of the Fire Service. If agreement can be reached training will be provided. Excellent work is done by the Council's Laboratory and we outsource the minimum amount of work possible and we get the best value for money. He paid tribute to all the staff in the Environment and Water Services Departments and he called on Mr. C. Mangan to comment on any Burial Ground issues.

Mr. C. Mangan, SEE Water Services informed members that discussions are ongoing with a landowner in Scartaglin and he was optimistic about the outcome. A similar situation pertains in Cromane. He referred to the Ballinakilla Burial Ground where rock is present and said there were particular difficulties with one burial and a number of trial holes had since been dug. This matter will be kept under review. In relation to the acquisition of land for a new Burial Ground at Beaufort contact has been made with a landowner and the site is suitable so he was hopeful of a satisfactory outcome to these negotiations. The Council is always on the look out for land to purchase for new Burial Grounds and every effort is made to ensure adequate space is available. The Burial Ground at Abbeydorney is filling and efforts are ongoing to acquire additional land or a new site for a Burial Ground.

Ms. A. McAllen referred to Cllr. Brassil's query in relation to charges for domestic water and whether it would be on the basis of 'water in water out' and she said legislation is awaited but it is likely to be on that basis. Domestic water charges are payable on a property which is let short term but if it is let long term there is no charge at present. The provision in the Budget for the Maintenance of Burial Grounds is reduced by 1.6% which is marginal and it is hoped that the deficit will be bridged through efficiencies. Street cleaning costs €795,000 in total and a

sum of €95,000 is provided in the Environment Budget as a contribution to the Roads Department for this work. The only statutory charge that applies at Landfill is the Landfill Levy and VAT. No provision is made in the Budget for the inspection of septic tanks. The income from the Transfer Station at Milltown is €300,000 per annum with expenditure of €177,000 per annum. The reconnection fee for a water supply is €1,100 and this acts as a deterrent. Water is disconnected only as a last resort. Before the water is reconnected the fee must be paid and this covers the cost of disconnection and reconnection.

Cllr. M. O'Shea said that in accordance with EPA Guidelines serious fines can be imposed on local authorities.

In response Mr. O. Ring said he was not sure what Cllr. O'Shea was referring to but fines only relate to water schemes. Kerry County Council had to apply for licences and permits but the licences have not yet issued. When they are issued the Council will comply with the conditions of the licences. All deadlines for the submission of 46 applications were complied with. He then referred to the Regional Waste Management Office in Limerick and said he understood the concerns of councillors that Kerry County Council is involved with Limerick County Council in this Office. In fact four local authorities are involved and Clare County Council has similar misgivings as Kerry in relation to the way Limerick County Council is reducing Landfill charges to attract private operators from other counties. A sum of €75,000 is provided in the Budget as our contribution towards the running of this office. They provide a very valuable service in relation to the issuing of waste management licences and they issued 600 in 2011 while a further 500 were reviewed. The Resource Exchange Programme is very useful and a meeting was held in Dingle recently in relation to the management of food waste. A further meeting will be held in Castleisland shortly.

Cllr. J. Finucane PROPOSED that this contribution would be withheld until clarification is received on Limerick County Council's attitude to Landfill charges.

Mr. O. Ring said the Regional Waste Management Office provides a service for Kerry County Council and while it is hosted by Limerick County Council they provide a service we would not be in a position to provide. All the Regional Waste Management Offices will be reviewed in 2012.

Cllr. J. Finucane said he wanted clarification on Limerick County Council's Landfill charges before the 2012 contribution is paid.

Mr. O. Ring said that the Regional Waste Management Office does not have a role in this issue. We are no longer in the refuse collection business and we will be competing commercially. Land acquired for Burial Grounds are funded from own resources. In conclusion he referred to the query from Cllr. Cahill in relation to the water supply at Tulligmore and said that a new treatment plant was provided in Mid Kerry and this provides crypto free water. The 'Boil Water Notice' was lifted some time ago in Tulligmore.

Mayor Buckley then PROPOSED that the four remaining Divisions would be taken together.

This was unanimously agreed.

### **Division D Development Management**

Ms. A. McAllen referred members to Pages 84 to 103 of the Manager's Report and Pages 18 to 20 of the Budget Tables for details on this Division. She informed the meeting that the Planning Function/Development Management Programme of Kerry County Council is divided into three specific business units:

- Forward Planning
- Planning Control
- Planning Enforcement

During 2011, a further decline continued in activity levels in planning control with applications in all sectors reduced significantly. In particular, applications for large-scale housing and commercial developments are at their lowest level since the early nineties. In the current economic climate, there is no indication that this downturn will be reversed in 2012. Hence, both administrative and technical staff numbers have been reduced significantly in the Development Management Unit. However, changes introduced by section 28 of the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 has resulted in a significant increase in the numbers of applications for extensions of duration of Planning Permissions with approximately 180 such applications processed in 2011. Ms. McAllen referred members to the graph at the top of Page 87 which tracks the volume of planning applications received since 2002. There is provision in the Budget of €1.026m for Enforcement Costs. The workload in this area has not witnessed any significant decrease in activity and the Table on Page 88 sets out the enforcement activity levels for 2011.

Within this Budget there is also an allocation for the Housing Estates Unit. Considerable progress has been made with regard to inspecting housing estates in the county since the establishment of the Housing Estates Unit in 2009. Significant resources (4 technical and 3 admin staff) have been allocated to the Unit. The Estates Unit is endeavouring to liaise with developers/receivers to ensure that estates are completed to a satisfactory standard. Where satisfactory progress is not achieved Bonds are being drawn down and the Council arranges for the works to be carried out. Inspections are also carried out on new estates prior to and during construction. To date, 20 such estates have been identified and the Unit is liaising with the developers and monitoring each phase of construction.

Provision is also made for a Quarries Unit. The Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 contains significant changes relating to quarry developments, particularly in relation to applications for retention permission and



planning enforcement. Each planning authority is required to examine every quarry in its operational area to determine whether development was carried out which would have required EIA, a determination as to whether EIA would have been required, or an appropriate assessment under the Habitats Directive. These new regulations have necessitated the establishment of a Quarries Unit within the Planning Department from existing staffing resources. To date 182 quarries have been identified and 100 of these have been registered under section 261 of the 2000 Act. This Unit will liaise with quarry owners with a view to regularising the status of their quarries where necessary.

Ms. McAllen informed the meeting that provision of €513,000 is made in the Budget for General Economic Promotion. This allocation covers the contributions made to various local organisations which promote and support the economic, social and tourism interests of the county overall, and includes a provision to enable support for any exceptionally worthwhile initiative which may arise during the year. Funds are limited given the current economic climate. A sum of €100,000 is again being included in this allocation, specifically for any new particularly worthwhile and innovative proposals in tourism/economic promotion and development. Any disbursement from this funding will be on the basis of a detailed costed business plan and a report from the County Manager to the Elected Council.

A contribution of €20,500 is included for Kerry Life Education Ltd towards health education and substance/alcohol abuse awareness programme across the entire county.

Contributions to Tralee Town Council of €100,000 towards the salary of the County Museum Curator, Outreach Officer, County Exhibition at the County Museum and street management costs arising from the Festival of Kerry are also included in this allocation. This allocation also is intended to support other exceptionally meritorious promotions that arise during the year including a contribution towards Brú Columbanus, Wilton, which provides accommodation to families with long-term and critically ill relatives in the Cork hospitals, including a substantial number of bed nights for Kerry people. This year €115,000 is being brought into the Revenue Account from Capital to support this programme.

Provision for €405,000 is made for General Community and Enterprise Expenses and details of the extensive work programme of this Section are set out on Pages 91 – 98 of the Manager's Report. Ms. McAllen drew members attention to Page 95 of the Manager's Report under the heading Pride of Place and said that Kerry County Council nominated three groups Currow, Listry, Killorglin and the Community Communications Network Project for the Pride of Place Competition 2011. These communities were nominated following their entries to the Kerry Community Awards 2011. Killorglin and the Community Communications Project were runners up in their categories and Kerry County Council won the overall Best Local Authority Award. Kerry County Council was complimented for the work carried out with the Pride of Place groups and the general positive and

collaborative working arrangements evident between the Local Authority and the community sector.

A sum of €247,000 is provided for Building Control while a sum of €230,000 is provided for Heritage Service.

## **Division F Recreation and Amenity**

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 130 to 138 of the Manager's Report and Pages 24 – 26 of the Budget Tables for details on this Division. The cost of operating the Library Service for 2012 is €2.313m which is marginally reduced on the 2011 allocation and this reflects value for money initiatives implemented by the Service. A sum of €320,000 is provided for the purchase of books, CD's etc and this is maintained at the 2010 level. Provision for €383,000 is made for Beaches. Thirteen beaches retained their Blue Flag status for 2011. A provision of €54,800 is made in the Budget which will allow for the continuation of the Blue Flag Programme in 2012. The provision also includes for the monitoring of lesser known beaches frequented by visitors. Provision for €281,000 is made for the Operation of the Arts Programme. This also includes a provision of €80,000 in respect of contributions to Voluntary Groups including Siamsa Tíre, Samhlaíocht Chiarraí, St John's Theatre and Arts Centre, Teach Amergin etc. The current economic climate poses huge challenges for the arts sector in Kerry. In this regard, the programme requires support from the Arts Council and also seeks to partner other agencies to secure financial input and value for money.

## **Division G Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare**

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 139 – 143 of the Manager's Report and Pages 26 and 27 of the Budget Tables for details on this Division. Provision for €255,000 is made in the Budget for the Operation and Maintenance of Piers/Harbours. The Council has responsibility for the operation of 31 piers and 26 slipways located around the county. A sum of €472,000 is provided for the Operation of Harbours. Kerry County Council has assumed responsibility for the operation, maintenance and improvement to Fenit Harbour from the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011. A provision of €472,000 has been made in the present Budget to allow for wages and salaries of the port staff and day to day maintenance associated with the infrastructure. It is intended that this facility functions in an economic manner and operates within the resources allocated. Kerry County Council has recently advertised for a Port and Marine Facilities Manager who will have direct responsibility for the operation of Fenit Harbour. Kerry County Council received a commitment from the Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport of capital funding of €750,000 for improvement works on the pier in 2012.

Provision for €7m is made for the Payment of Higher Education Grants. Following the announcement earlier in the year by the Minister for Education and Skills, Local Authorities will not be processing new grant applications for 1<sup>st</sup> year

students from the 2012/2013 academic year onwards. The City of Dublin VEC has been chosen as the single awarding authority for the student grant scheme going forward. Local Authorities will continue to deal with ongoing students until they complete their relevant courses.

## **Division H Miscellaneous Services**

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 144 to 149 of the Manager's Report and Pages 28 – 30 of the Budget Tables for details on this Division. Provision for €2.5m is made for Refunds and Irrecoverable Rates. Whilst the majority of settlements are partial settlements based on the submission of documentation including trading accounts early intervention and monitoring of accounts will be ongoing. Details of the provision for Local Representation/Civic Leadership are set on Pages 146 and 147 of the Manager's Report. Provision for €1.026m is made for Motor Taxation. Killarney Area Service Centre accepts cash payments for Motor Tax applications. These applications are processed online in the Killarney office, subject to the provision of a PIN by the customer. A total of 5,500 applications were dealt with in 2011. From November 2011, goods vehicles that have been allocated a PIN can also be taxed online and will also be processed in the Killarney Area Service Centre.

## **Central Management Charges**

Ms. McAllen referred members to Pages 150 to 159 of the Manager's Report and Page 32 of the Budget Tables for details of Central Management Charges. Provision for €1.648m is made for the Maintenance and Upkeep of Corporate Buildings. This Budget includes caretaking, security and maintenance costs for Áras Chontae and other corporate offices in Tralee, the Castleisland and Killorglin Area Services Centres. During 2011 the new Area Office in Killarney opened to the public. Staff from the Housing, Roads and Water Services Departments provide an integrated service to our customers in this new modern office accommodation.

Kerry County Council, like all modern organisations, depends on Information & Communication Technology (ICT) and Information Systems (IS) for the provision and/or management of almost all frontline and back-office services. These are delivered by a Shared IT Service for the four Kerry Local Authorities. Provision for €1.123m is made for Human Resources Administration.

Cllr. M. Gleeson said he hoped the proposed Coroners Bill would be enacted in 2012 so that the cost incurred for Coroners would be transferred to the appropriate authority. It is regrettable that the processing of Higher Education Grants is being centralised as it will make it much more difficult for applicants. Cllr. Gleeson then referred to Libraries and in particular to Ms. Mary Murray of Killarney Library and he thanked her for the excellent service she provided to the public down through the years. He wished her well in her retirement. At present old age pensioners are entitled to get free books in the Library and he asked if

this also applies to all full time students irrespective of age. If not he PROPOSED that it would apply to students.

Cllr. J. Brassil complimented Ms. McAllen on the timely manner in which she dealt with all Divisions. He referred to Forward Planning and asked if activity in this area has slowed down. He asked if a number of Local Area Plans will be reviewed in 2012 and he requested an update on the 2012 Work Programme for this area. He asked if there was any provision for the staff in the Site Assessment Unit to carry out the septic tank inspections. He welcomed the ongoing investment in playgrounds and the provision of €40,000 in the Budget for their upkeep. He referred to the provision of €30,000 as a contribution to the VEC and requested clarification on this contribution. Cllr. Brassil referred to the sum of €80,000 provided for drainage, in particular for Ardkeragh and the two lochs and he said it is critical there is adequate funding to ensure that flooding is managed in this area. In conclusion he asked when the Draft Piers and Harbour Bye-Laws would be presented to Council.

Cllr. J. Finucane said there was a huge decrease in the number of planning applications. In the past few weeks Shannon LNG entered into discussions with An Bord Pleanála in relation to the building of a Gas Fired Combined Heat and Generating Power Plant. The LNG project is critical for Kerry with 350 to 400 jobs to come on stream in the construction phase. The work of the deputation from Kerry County Council in relation to this project will continue. He welcomed the provision of €750,000 for further developments at Fenit Harbour and said it is in the Council's and counties interest that the Harbour was taken over by the Council. He welcomed the Council's approach to tourism and said our ongoing involvement in a number of tourism projects is critical including the Rose of Tralee Festival.

Cllr. G. Wharton Slattery welcomed the Kerry Integration Strategy. She thanked Ms. Cora Carrig, Sports Co-ordinator, for her work and also Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh who agreed to be its patron for 2012. She acknowledged the provision in the Budget for Kerry Life Education and said the only way to address suicide is through early intervention. She asked how much would be allocated to Siamsa Tire in 2012. Siamsa makes a huge contribution to the town of Tralee and also to the county. In conclusion she asked if Teach Amergin would receive funding from the Council in 2012.

Cllr. B. Moynihan-Cronin thanked Ms. A. McAllen for presenting a balanced Budget in most difficult economic times. She asked if it is only the Blue Flag Beaches that are cleaned and if so why is this so. It is important to promote the involvement of local communities in the cleaning of their areas. She welcomed the funding for Fenit Harbour which is vital for the Liebherr Factory in Killarney. In conclusion she welcomed the funding provided for Kerry Life Education.

Cllr. T. O'Brien complimented Ms. McAllen on her presentation on the Budget. Funding was provided nationally to complete ghost estates but there are no estates in this category in Kerry to qualify for that funding. He asked if a person

living in a ghost estate would be liable for the €100 household charge. He concurred with the sentiments expressed by Cllr. Wharton Slattery in relation to Siamsa Tire and said that Kerry County Council should support it as much as possible.

Cllr. M. O'Shea complimented Ms. McAllen and all the staff of the Council for their work in 2011. He expressed his disappointment at a recent article in Kerry's Eye which said the IDA website did not show Kerry as an ideal location for new business. He called for the establishment of a Committee, including representation from the County Development Board and Management with a view to attracting business to the county. He called on the Mayor to take this on as a goal in 2012. He complimented the staff working on Higher Education Grant applications who gave excellent service over the years and said it was a shame that new applications are being centralised from 2012. The centralising of the processing of Medical Cards in Dublin has not been successful and it is also said that the processing of Driver Licence applications for the country will be processed in Dublin in the near future.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue complimented Ms. A. McAllen on the preparation of the Draft Budget. Everyone anticipated the huge reduction in the number of planning applications from 2009 onwards and he asked how it was proposed to compensate for the loss of income from this source. 186 applications were received for an extension of time and many applicants were disappointed with the response they received. He asked how much was received in fees from these applications and how many were refused. He then referred to Page 88 of the Manager's Report where it is stated that 119 complaints regarding planning enforcement were dismissed. He said all complaints should be signed and he was concerned that resources and staff time are being wasted in investigating anonymous complaints. He welcomed the funding in the Budget for Tourism Development and Promotion and said he understood the Manager will decide if funding will be allocated to a project. He suggested that the appropriate SPC should be consulted and should have an input in these applications. He was at a loss to see why Kerry County Council must pay €290,000 for Coroners expenses when it has nothing to do with the activities of a local authority. It is very unfair to expect the rate payers of the county to pay for this service. He referred to the provision in the Budget for the Maintenance and Upkeep of Corporate Buildings and asked if the Council is renting office space in Tralee and Killarney and is there any spare capacity available in Council buildings at these locations. If there is it should be used rather than renting.

Cllr. P. McCarthy complimented Ms. A. McAllen on presenting a balanced Budget at a very difficult time. As Chair of the Planning SPC it was a very busy year despite the fact that just 1,000 planning applications were received. Staff are very busy in other areas. It is intended that a number of Local Area Plans will be reviewed in 2012. A lot of work is also being undertaken in relation to unfinished housing estates and the new regulations on quarries will result in a large workload for the Planning Department. He expressed concern at the large

number of complaints made to the Planning Enforcement Department which were subsequently dismissed as minor/trivial/exempt. He referred to the take over of Fenit Harbour by Kerry County Council and said in the past the Harbour Board drew down grants for dredging, development etc. and he asked if these grants will now be drawn down by the Council. He asked what the financial implications for the Council would be in relation to the proposed septic tank charge and what other aspects require clarification from Government.

Cllr. T. Ferris commended the Council for continuing to support the Arts in Kerry as it creates a lot of employment. Despite the downturn in the number of planning applications it is still very difficult to get in contact with a planner. She expected that a large number of property owners would have to apply for permission in relation to the upgrading of their septic tanks. She requested that the 2012 Work Programme for Forward Planning would be emailed to members. The Library Service is a very valuable service which often goes unrecognised. A large number of unemployed people use this Service and are very appreciative of the generous opening hours. The list of events which is circulated electronically is also very welcome. She said that books can be purchased for as little as €3 to €4 on bookdirectory.com. She acknowledged the work of the Higher Education Department under Pat O'Sullivan who are very efficient in dealing with grant applications. She also commended the staff of Kerry Education Service who process grant applications for students attending ITs. Unfortunately the processing of new grant applications from 2012 is being centralised and it is will be very interesting to see when students receive payment of grants. She referred to the provision of €236,000 in the Draft Budget for the Register of Electors and she asked why this antiquated system for registering people to vote is continued. A database of PPS numbers is available and the present system is too costly and ineffective. A sum of €4,500 is provided for Casual Trading and this appears to be low. The Farmers Markets should be advertised more extensively. The Budget for councillor's expenses is reduced and she asked how much is provided in the Budget for staff expenses for attendance at conferences.

Cllr. B. Cronin commended Ms. McAllen and her staff on presenting a balanced Budget. The graph on Page 87 shows the volume of planning applications received between 2002 and 2011. This also indicated the huge volume of work to be dealt with by the Housing Estates Unit and he complimented them on their work to-date. Some people purchased houses in estates and they did not have any problems while others had a lot of problems and it falls back on the Housing Estates Unit to rectify these. He asked if it was accurate to state and every planning application granted with a septic tanks since 1963 would be recorded in the Planning Department. If this is so this should be used as a Register of Septic Tanks and there should be no need for a registration charge. He concurred with the compliments paid to the staff of the Higher Education Department and said that it is a backward step to centralise the processing of Higher Education Grant applications. He referred to complaints submitted to the Planning Enforcement Department and said that Cllr. O'Donoghue wants the names of the complainant revealed but he did not agree with this because if this was the case the Council

would never be informed when there are serious breaches of planning. He believed the anonymity of complainants must be maintained. He referred to the funding provided for playground and he pleaded with the Planning Department and Mr. John Breen to make every effort to ensure that a playground is provided in Furies where huge development has taken place in recent years.

Cllr. N. Foley complimented Ms. A. McAllen and the staff of the Finance Department on the very efficient manner in which they presented the Budget. She welcomed the provision in the Budget for Kerry Life Education and tourism initiatives in particular the Rose of Tralee Festival and the County Museum. The allocation of €60,000 for the County Museum is very small when the bulk of the cost is borne by Tralee Town Council. She acknowledged the many initiatives undertaken by the County Library and she welcomed the funding provided for the Book Fund. The number of readers is increasing and recitals and exhibitions also take place in Libraries. The provision in the Budget for Parks, Pitches and Open Spaces is very important in particular funding for Ballyseedy Wood. She also welcomed the support for the Arts Programme in the Budget together with funding for St. John's Theatre and Siamsa whom she hoped would receive the same allocation as in 2011. She welcomed the proposed works at Fenit Harbour and commended the County Manager and the Mayor on undertaking this project. She asked if there was any update on the appointment of a new Harbour Master. In conclusion Cllr. Foley welcomed the Council's open door approach to those in financial difficulty who are liable for various charges including rates and she asked that this approach would be promoted.

Cllr. M. Cahill said that the Development Levy Scheme must be revisited as the cost of sites has reduced significantly. The dumping of dogs is a growing problem particularly in seaside areas. He asked that this issue would be considered in the context of the Beach Bye-Laws with a view to resolving it. He commended Mr. T. O'Connor, County Librarian and all library staff for the excellent service they provide. He welcomed the increase in the level of book borrowings. Cllr. Cahill welcomed the provision in the Budget for beach cleaning. He supported the view expressed by Cllr. O'Donoghue in relation to the use of Council offices rather than renting office accommodation. He requested an update on the proposed playground for Milltown. He expressed his disappointment that no funding was allocated for coastal protection in 2011. Kerry has one of the longest coastlines in the country and it is not acceptable that funding would not be provided to protect our coastline.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae complimented Ms. A. McAllen and the staff of the Finance Department for the efficient manner in which they conducted the Budget Meeting. He condemned the transfer of the processing of Higher Education Grants to Dublin City VEC and said this will be very inconvenient for applicants. He thanked the Higher Education Grants Section in the Council for their excellent work down through the years and for the great assistance given to applicants. He referred to the provision in the Budget for Coroners and said it is most unfair, in these very difficult economic times that a local authority has to carry these

costs when they bear no relation to their functions. He referred to recent changes announced in relation to Motor Tax and said the additional charges will not be paid into the Local Government Fund but will be paid to the Central Exchequer and this is very worrying. People who pay motor tax like to think that it is ring fenced for improvements to roads. He referred to the new planning laws in relation to improvements to farm lands and asked if there is adequate staff in the Planning Department to deal with this. Cllr. Healy-Rae asked that anonymous complaints would not be investigated. He agreed that the Development Levy Scheme should be revisited and said that the charges should be reduced in line with the current cost of sites and buildings. A number of years ago members were asked to approve an increase in development levies for connection to the public sewer because Kerry County Council would be fined if public schemes were not brought up to a certain standard. He asked that the inspection of septic tanks would be delayed until all Council treatment plants are brought up to an acceptable standard. The sewerage scheme in Kilgarvan was provided in 1929 to cater for 20 houses and has not been upgraded since.

Cllr. L. Purtill complimented Ms. A. McAllen on her presentation on the Budget. He asked that Kerry County Council would draw up plans for a playground in Ballylongford at a suitable location. He thanked the Council for the new playground provided at Tarbert.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim asked that support for the International Children's Games would be maintained.

In response to a query raised by Cllr. Brassil regarding the VEC contribution Mr. J.D. Flynn, Director of Corporate Services said that this arises from the 1930 Vocational Education Act. The VEC draws up a Scheme which the Minister approves and they then issue a Demand to the local authority. We have a statutory obligation to pay this Demand.

Cllr. Brassil asked if Kerry County Council requested that this legislation would be changed.

Mr. J.D. Flynn said that a request to this effect was not made. The Coroners Bill is in place since 2007 and has not been enacted. He concurred with the views expressed by Cllr. Ferris in relation to the PPS Nos. and the means of updating the Register of Electors but he added that there appears to be a data protection issue in relation to the use of PPS Nos. for this purpose. He thanked members for their compliments to Pat O'Sullivan and the staff in the Higher Education Grants Section who are always very efficient in the processing of grant applications and arranging payment. Of the €1.648m provided in the Budget for the Maintenance and Upkeep of Corporate Buildings €178,000 relates to the payment of Rent. The cost of the Dingle Area Office is charged to the Roads Department. A 10 year planning permission was granted for an extension to County Buildings but as it will be some time before this extension will be constructed part of the office space in the Castleisland Area Services Centre had to be converted to a file store. Offices are let to the South Kerry Development



Partnership Ltd. in Killorglin and Laune Properties are leasing the remainder of that building. The Council has 15,000 sq ft. of office space rented at a cost of €16.60 per sq ft.

Mr. M. McMahon, Director of Planning, referred to queries in relation to Forward Planning and said that a lot of time was spent in 2011 on the preparation of the Core Strategy. At the December Council Meeting the Draft Dingle Functional Area Local Area Plan was presented and this is currently on display. The Caherciveen LAP will be brought to the February or March Council Meeting with other LAP's including the HUB Settlement incorporating the Environs of Tralee and Killarney will all be brought to Council in 2012. He then referred to the Shannon LNG Project and said that notice of discussions with An Bord Pleanála was received and while he expected the application would be dealt with under the Strategic Infrastructure Act a copy of the application would be forwarded to Kerry County Council to be assessed. Mr. McMahon then referred to the €5m made available nationally to deal with safety issues in Category 4 ghost estate and said there are no such estates in Kerry. It was his understanding that people living in Category 3 and 4 unfinished estates will be entitled to a waiver of the household charge. However, they must still register but the fee will be waived. This is in accordance with a document published on the Department's website. The fee for an application for an extension of time is €62 and €11,000 was received in fees in 2011 under this category. This sum is not adequate to meet the cost of dealing with these applications. He then referred to queries in relation to the investigation of complaints and said he did not agree with making the names of the complainants available as the Planning Department depends on the public to draw attention to any planning breaches. A complaint must be made in writing and phone queries are not accepted. The number of technical staff dealing with planning applications is down from 14 to just 4. While there is a record of every planning application made and granted since 1963 every development did not proceed. He referred to queries in relation to the upgrading of septic tanks and said that under normal circumstances where a notice is serviced requiring works to be carried out such work would be exempt. The Planning Department made a recommendation to that effect but to-date no notification was received from the Department that this recommendation is accepted. Permission was granted for a housing development in Fries and it was a condition of planning that a playground would be provided. However, this estate is unfinished and this situation will have to be reviewed. The Development Levy Scheme was reviewed in 2011 and larger houses must now pay higher charges.

Mr. C. O'Sullivan, Director of Roads and Transportation, said that the provision in the Budget for the maintenance of Ardkeragh Lough is based on the level of expenditure incurred in 2011. The 2011 allocation was increased on previous years as there was severe flooding in 2010.

Mr. J. Breen said that the Community & Enterprise Department is actively working with a number of community groups at present in relation to the provision

of at least four playgrounds. He thanked members for their compliments for the Library Service and said in 2011 they issued in excess of 560,000 books.

The County Manager referred to queries regarding the proposed septic tank charge and said that regulations will be made by the Minister for Environment and the Bill is vague. The implications for local authorities are that they must deal with the applications received and manage the inspections. At this time it is not clear who will be responsible for carrying out inspections. He understood this is a one off charge and there are approximately 44,000 septic tanks in Kerry which should result in an income of €2.2m.

Ms. A. McAllen, A/Head of Finance, said the submission from Siamsa for funding detailed the programme of events for 2011. In 2011 they received an allocation of €30,000. All large funding allocations must, into the future, provide audited accounts pending consideration of allocation of funds. Attendance by staff at training events is approved by the relevant Director of Services and booked through the Training Department. The processing of new Higher Education Grant applications and the payment of VEC pensions will be removed from local authorities in 2012.

Cllr. T. Ferris again asked if there is provision in the Water Services Budget for the Water Softener for Ardfert. The rate payers in this area pay the same rates as other rate payers yet they must pay hundreds of euro for the repair of electrical appliances. She called for the support of all the members from the Tralee Electoral Area for this issue.

In response Mr. O. Ring said the provision of a water softener for the Ardfert area is very desirable. Funding that was intended for this work had to be used for the RAL Programme and the Council has a legal obligation to carry out particular works but this does not include the provision of a water softener. He undertook to do everything he could to try to ensure that this work is carried out in 2012.

The County Manager said this work would cost €200,000 and without going through the programme he did not know how this work could be funded.

Mr. O. Ring said that he had intended that this work would be carried out under the Small Schemes Programme and the Council would have to contribute 25% of the cost of the work. He was not in a position to guarantee that the work would be carried out in 2012 but he assured Cllr. Ferris that he felt the water softener should be provided. Notification of the allocation under the Small Schemes Programme will be received in the next two months and it is relatively discretionary. It is possible that this work may have to be carried out over a number of years.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue said he understood that the Council is seeking to introduce parking charges from 2013. He advised Management that he would not support the Budget in 2013 if car parking charges were proposed.

**12.01.09.02 Adoption of the Local Authority Budget for the Local Financial Year ending 31 December, 2012.**

Cllr. B. O'Connell PROPOSED that pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001, the Local Government (Financial Procedures and Audit) Regulations 2002 and the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations, the Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31.12.2012 as presented by the County Manager and as set out in Tables A and B, be and is hereby adopted.

Cllr. J. Finucane SECONDED this proposal.

A vote was taken which resulted as follows:

**For:** Cllrs. Brassil, Connor-Scarteen, Culloty, Cronin, Donovan, Ferris, Finucane, Fitzgerald, Foley, Griffin, D. Healy-Rae, Leahy, McCarthy, McEllistrim, Moynihan-Cronin, O'Brien, O'Connell, O'Donoghue, O'Shea, Purtill, Sheahan, Wharton-Slattery and Buckley **(23)**

**Against:** None **(0)**

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

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

**12.01.09.03 Determination of the Annual Rate on Valuation for the Local Financial Year ending 31 December, 2012.**

Cllr. J. Finucane PROPOSED that pursuant to the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001, the Local Government (Financial Procedures and Audit) Regulations 2002 and the Local Authority Accounting Code of Practice and Accounting Regulations, and in accordance with the Local Authority Budget for the Financial Year ending 31 December 2012, as adopted, the annual rate on valuation as set out in Table A hereunder be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for the said Financial Year. The Annual Rate to be levied shall be €80.35.

Cllr. P. McCarthy SECONDED this proposal.

<b>TABLE A - CALCULATION OF ANNUAL RATE ON VALUATION</b>						
<b>Summary by Service Division</b>	<b>Summary per Table A 2012</b>					
	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Budget Net Expenditure 2012</b>		<b>Estimated Net Expenditure Outturn 2011</b>	
	<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>€</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gross Revenue Expenditure &amp; Income</b>						
Housing and Building	17,216,416	16,731,476	484,940	1.0%	486,493	1.0%
Road Transport & Safety	32,108,609	19,804,507	12,304,102	25.6%	12,571,696	26.6%
Water Services	25,037,888	15,285,653	9,752,235	20.3%	8,874,205	18.8%
Development Management	7,837,084	1,714,858	6,122,226	12.7%	6,316,076	13.4%
Environmental Services	16,491,948	6,870,026	9,621,922	20.0%	11,662,792	24.7%
Recreation and Amenity	4,792,619	374,588	4,418,031	9.2%	4,564,436	9.7%
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	9,013,512	8,147,052	866,460	1.8%	898,572	1.9%
Miscellaneous Services	8,407,096	3,852,372	4,554,724	9.5%	1,825,968	3.9%
	<b>120,905,172</b>	<b>72,780,532</b>	<b>48,124,640</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>47,200,238</b>	<b>100%</b>
+ County Charge						
- County Charge		6,459,237	6,459,237		6,659,008	
Provision for Debit Balance						
<b>Adjusted Gross Expenditure &amp; Income (A)</b>	<b>120,905,172</b>	<b>79,239,769</b>	<b>41,665,403</b>		<b>40,541,230</b>	
<b>Financed by Other Income/Credit Balances</b>						
Provision for Credit Balance						
Local Government Fund /General Purpose Grant		19,005,401	19,005,401		20,648,216	
Pension Related Deduction		2,460,000	2,460,000		2,590,000	
<b>Sub - Total (B)</b>			<b>21,465,401</b>		<b>23,238,216</b>	
<b>Amount of Rates to be Levied C=(A-B)</b>			<b>20,200,002</b>			
<b>Net Effective Valuation D</b>			251,400			
<b>General Annual Rate on Valuation C/D</b>			<b>80.35</b>			

A vote was taken which resulted as follows:

**For:** Cllrs. Brassil, Connor-Scarteen, Culloty, Cronin, Donovan, Ferris, Finucane, Fitzgerald, Foley, Griffin, D. Healy-Rae, Leahy, McCarthy, McEllistrim, Moynihan-Cronin, O'Brien, O'Connell, O'Donoghue, O'Shea, Purtill, Sheahan, Wharton-Slattery and Buckley **(23)**

**Against:** None **(0)**

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

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

**12.01.09.04 Report on the Capital Programme 2012 – 2014.**

Cllr. J. Sheahan PROPOSED that the County Manager's Report on the Capital Programme 2012 – 2014 as incorporated into the Report on the Budget be noted.

Cllr. P.J. Donovan SECONDED this proposal and it was unanimously agreed.

**12.01.09.05 Additional Expenditure for 2011**

Cllr. B. O'Connell PROPOSED that the additional expenditure for 2011 as set out in the Column titled "Estimated Out-Turn 2011" in the Local Authority Budget, as circulated, be and is hereby approved.

Cllr. G. Wharton Slattery SECONDED this proposal and it was unanimously agreed.

The Mayor thanked Ms. A. McAllen, A/Head of Finance, Mr. T. Curran, County Manager and the Directors of Services for their co-operation in dealing with the Budget in one day. He also thanked all the members for their co-operation.

The meeting concluded at 5.30pm.

**Gerard O'Brien**  
**Meetings Administrator**

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**Mayor of Kerry**