

- *A lot of money was seriously under-spent last year in such areas as Self Help, Estate Management, Taking in Charge, Road Signs, Street Cleaning and many more.*
- *€155,000 extra income was taken in last year on water charges and with Housing Rents, €524,000 more income than we budgeted for last year, ignoring the wishes of the members.*
- *The figures in this budget are so far out, this needs to be addressed.*
- *Budget for 2006 is just maintaining what we have, it is disappointing, there is very little economic growth. In previous budgets there were always some exciting projects.*
- *Businesses in this town are finding it hard going and with an increase of 7% for commercial rates we would be collecting the highest rates in Ireland. Not acceptable.*
- *Money has disappeared. We need some kind of audited accounts.*
- *It is not fair to evaluate programmes without all of the information.*
- *We are entitled to a breakdown of the County Demand, are we being double charged?*
- *Bray Town Council and Wicklow County Council should have dealt with County Demand increase.*
- *Global valuations – the Manager has made no indication towards this.*
- *Funding Loans – serious questions, Budget is not presented well. Disappointed with the written statement.*
- *Cannot see where the money is going in this draft budget. It is not fair to evaluate the programmes without all the information.*
- *The Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government has a lot to answer for with under funding. We are in a worse position than we were this time last year.*
- *Over the last two years major rate-payers have left the town (Dell and A.O. Smith) – how much of an impact has this had?*
- *Funding Loans – The gritter has been a sham. Twelve months on and we are still paying for an idle gritter.*
- *Members who go against development in the town are driving developers out. Do not agree with existing rate payers paying an extra 7%.*
- *Funding Loans – flood protection scheme – have we a plan in place.*
- *Shredder – a few years ago money was put in to buy a shredder. Where is it now?*
- *County Demand – 12% is daylight robbery. Bray is being made to pay because of the failures of Wicklow County Council to take the necessary decision regarding Capital Development Charges. All Bray Town Councillors who are on Wicklow County Council need their voices to be heard.*
- *Centre of the Town is in semi-dereliction. Florentine Centre is going on for eleven years.*
- *Most of the quarterly increases in the Local Government Fund went to other Authorities Restricted Parking Scheme. What about Capital Expenditure?*
- *The estimates are the best guess of what will be spent over the coming year. We must begin this year in a much more developmental mode.*
- *Planning Department – crucial that adequate staffing is given. Large fees are being received with the Golf Club application.*
- *We can do something about the rates but we must cut back on capital expenditure.*

- *In previous years we got a big thick book of estimates which were confusing to look at so this year I think the way the officials have presented it is very user friendly.*
- *In the 1980's there was hardly any money to be spent and there was not as much moaning then as there is today.*
- *The rates we have taken from people in Bray have been astronomical over the last couple of years.*
- *There is no great support in Wicklow County Council because a lot of the Councillors are from rural areas in Wicklow and would not have Bray high on their lists.*
- *Bray Town Council needs a full time manager.*
- *Commercial water charge has gone up. Waiver Scheme did not increase.*
- *Bray is in a unique position, it has set-up its own Rent Scheme, do Wicklow County Council not recognise that this County is in serious decline?*

The Town Manager responded with the following –

- *We did not have a huge amount of leeway preparing this budget.*
- *Wicklow County Council is the sanitary authority for the county so they would manage the water charges.*
- *The Government Grant is decided by the Government - % on rates is €40,000. 7% is 280,000.*
- *Projects over the last year are listed in the draft budget. Difficult to estimate out-turn figures as these are done in October – not under spent.*
- *€130,000 is the Global Valuation.*
- *The Rate Base goes up and down – cannot put this in until we are sure.*
- *The income figure put in for rents was conservative – cannot give exact figure on housing rents – if income goes up, rent goes up etc.*
- *Regional Roads – Bray took these over from Wicklow County Council and were given €57,000 to do this last year, so that is the amount that we have put in. This could lead to a decrease in the maintenance of Regional Roads.*
- *Funding Loans – Cosgrave Company gave €1,000,000 for the Mermaid Centre and they have said they will give more.*
- *The Main Street will be changing over the next few years for the better.*
- *Confident that the Florentine Centre will go ahead soon and also the Golf Club Lands. An appointment with the Planners takes approximately 1-2 weeks.*
- *Bray Town Council has been ambitious over the last year.*
- *The Finance Officer suggested that we headline the things that have changed in this year's budget. This is the method used by Dublin Corporation. We certainly did not do it to starve you of information.*
- *Auditing of accounts is not something we would organise – this is done by an independent auditor. The auditor is due to come to Bray in February 2006.*
- *County Demand is a legal statutory demand, the Finance Officer can come to explain the calculation of the Demand.*
- *There are a number of projects ongoing in the capital programme and other projects such as Fire Safety Audit, the Recycling Centre, Swimming Pool etc.*

The Members commented further:

- *Best estimate is based on experience and reports. Will question each figure.*
- *No grass cutting in November and December. Works same for expenditure/income.*
- *County Demand is a statement of County Charges.*
- *Has it been provided in the past?*

8611– Programme Group 1 – Housing and Building

The members were advised of the following estimated expenditure and income under this programme group.

Estimated Expenditure - €2,841,326

Estimated Income - €3,455,525

A general discussion took place where the following points were made and views expressed:

- *Planned Maintenance - €10,000 not spent and now €70,000 is being given for this year.*
- *Self Help Scheme - €85,000 is in the Budget when in fact the estimated out turn is €73,640.*
- *Rapid Scheme - €75,000 is in estimates when in fact the estimated out turn is €27,000*
- *Miscellaneous Expenses - €25,000 is in estimates when in fact the estimated out turn is €35,000, an increase on printing of €10,000.*
- *Income in rents - €2,584,155 – extra money from tenants contrary to the wishes of the members of this Council.*
- *Fire Insurance - €153,700 is in estimates when in fact the estimated out turn is €102,409. Is the increase in insurance costs because of the fires?*
- *Homeless persons grant - €275,000 is in estimates when in fact the estimated out turn is €202,000.*
- *Planned Maintenance – last year we were told there was no money for this as it had been transferred to the central heating scheme. This does not show anywhere. Fire Safety Audit – match funding from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Will both private and tenant houses be inspected?*
- *What exactly is going to be happen with the housing inspection?*
- *Outreach officer – funding seems to be higher than last year – is this necessary as the previous officer was only in place for 6 months? Has a new officer been appointed yet?*
- *Government Grants and Housing Construction – massive amount went unspent on these. Want information on why so much money was not used.*
- *Replacement Window and Door programme needs to be considered again.*
- *Rents – the increase this year is about 8% over the year. What is the actual percentage increase proposed?*

- *Central Heating – last year €16,000 was put aside but it does not seem to have been spent.*
- *Fire Audit – this figure is very high. The houses in Oldcourt were built with money from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.*
- *Would we be better to demolish Oldcourt estate and rebuild new and improved houses? Are the houses meeting the required standards?*
- *Housing Units – how many do we now own and how many did we own last year?*
- *Should be given details of people on housing lists – points system.*
- *What was the amount of money spent on houses before they were re-let?*
- *Central Heating – should be a target to have this completed by 2008.*
- *More details on response times for repairs is needed.*
- *Self Help Scheme – number of applicants? Money is too small.*
- *Fire Safety Audit – substantial funds were put in so we need to look at why more work needs to be done. People in Oldcourt pay rent and are entitled to good quality housing.*
- *Carbon Dioxide Alarms save lives – suggest money be put in for these.*
- *When people purchase council houses and want to sell them on, they have to go to the management of the Council. People are not aware of this. “Consent to Sale” should be explained.*
- *Halting Site – the caretaker is working very well.*

The Town Manager responded as follows:

- *25% of the houses in Oldcourt are privately owned. All fires in Oldcourt involved environmental implications.*
- *You are devaluing these houses by bad mouthing them here tonight. People are entitled to not having their property spoken about like that.*
- *Audit may get full funding from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.*

At this stage of the meeting the Cathaoirleach proposed an extension of time till 11 o'clock. The members rejected this proposal.

Councillor Caroline Burrell then proposed that the members consider a time extension for next Tuesday's meeting. The members agreed to this.

The Administrative Officer for Housing and Planning then responded to the member's queries –

- *Planned Maintenance - €10,000 committed expenditure.*
- *Self Help Scheme – there is no update regarding this.*
- *Central Heating – the council is putting in same amount. That is why the budget was decreased.*
- *Rapid – a lot of works will be fully funded through Government.*
- *Fire Insurance - €102,000 reflected payments made and a 25% increase in 2006.*
- *Direct Administration – Outturns in other programme groups are lower. This group would include staff salaries and retired staff.*

- *Residential Accommodation Scheme - €200,000 is fully funded for first year. This did not go ahead in 2005.*
- *Rents – we have been conservative in our figure as there is good buoyancy here at present with people in employment.*
- *Our proposal for 2006 is 8% on total accrual. Some rents will decrease, some will increase depending on income. This is estimated income and it does not mean that we will get all this income.*
- *Central Heating – funding is part of capital grants and was put in to highlight this.*
- *Housing – €50,000 was spent in 2005 on re-lets. We applied to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and were granted permission for three houses to be refurbished with Department funding.*
- *Outreach Officer was appointed yesterday.*
- *Points system – currently being used and will have update in February meeting.*
- *Selling on of Local Authority Houses – owners have to obtain consent from the Local Authority if the property is being sold within 25 years. Would look at this again.*
- *We are aware that some people do not know about the Self Help Scheme and this will be taken on board.*
- *Replacement Windows and doors programme – there is no programme as yet. If people want to contribute under the self help scheme we have no problem. This will be done in Fassaroe under the Refurbishment Scheme.*
- *Housing Construction – allocation is only an estimate from the Department and we draw down as required.*

The members raised the following points –

- *What basis are people informed about the Self Help Scheme? How was it advertised?*
- *Planned maintenance – contradictory answers from officials. Can we have clarity where money is planned to go?*
- *Fire Safety Audit – are private and council houses both going to be inspected in the Oldcourt estate? I will keep raising this issue until it is addressed.*
- *Does the Self Help Scheme only apply to Council tenants? Are there loans available?*
- *Ashlawn Court – previous windows and doors scheme was a disaster here.*
- *Something should be in agreement that a person who has bought a house from the Council cannot sell it back within two years.*
- *Has there been an increase in the Council housing stock?*
- *Self Help Scheme was mainly used in the past for Central Heating. We should review this now and maybe focus the funding on a different area.*

The Administrative Officer for Housing and Planning then responded to the member's queries –

- *Failte Park - €10,000 was given in 2005 for works. In 2006 €70,000 was given for maintenance of boilers, facias and soffits.*

- *Self Help Scheme has not been advertised well but a number of tenants have asked about it. Will look into seeing if loans are available.*

The Town Engineer then responded to the member's queries –

- *Fire Safety Audit – there are private houses and council houses in the Oldcourt estate so there will be difficulties obtaining access to some of the private owned dwellings. Not sure if we will be doing the private houses because of such difficulties.*
- *Costings – two sets of interviews and two proposals of outlying costs which ran into multiple figures.*
- *We will only be able to comment on the audit once the first set of houses have been inspected.*
- *We have not made the official appointment as yet.*
- *The audit will include looking at fire safety and fire safety precautions. The same electrician used in Oldcourt who carried out works in Rockfield Park and Kindlestown Park.*

The members raised the following points –

- *Fire Safety Audit – all houses should be inspected.*
- *We need to alleviate the tenants concerns about fire safety.*
- *The self help scheme should have been advertised.*
- *Miscellaneous Expenses – this turns out to be an inspection of premises. We need more clarity on this.*
- *We, the members, know about self help scheme so it is also up to us to let the public know.*

This meeting was then adjourned until 17th January 2005.

Signed:

_____ **Cathaoirleach**

Signed:

_____ **Town Clerk**

Dated:
