

Michael McCarthy: Okay, colleagues, we'll begin proceedings now. I want to welcome Roscommon County Council. I'm going to begin immediately with, Roscommon--, with introductions from this side of the table, and we'll work our way around to Roscommon, then I'll say a few words, and then I'll call on the Chief Executive... So my staff, down here to my-, my staff down here, we'll begin with Anne.

Anne Haugh: Good morning, everyone. Anne Haugh, I'm a member of NOAC and a former Director of Service with Clare County Council.

John Byrne: Morning, John Byrne, Board Member.

Noel Harrington: Good morning, Noel Harrington Board Member.

Claire Gavin: Hi, Claire Gavin, Head of Secretariat.

Michael McCarthy: Good morning, Michael McCarthy, Chair of NOAC.

Miriam McDonald: Miriam McDonald, Board Member.

Declan Breathnach: Declan Breathnach, Board Member.

Margaret Lane: Margaret Lane, Board Member.

Brian Cawley: Brian Cawley, Board Member.

John Goldrick: Good morning, John Goldrick. I'm with the NOAC Secretariat.

Alan McDermott: Morning, I'm Alan McDermott. I'm on the NOAC Secretariat.

Chris Flynn: Chris Flynn, Director of Services, Roscommon Council.

Mark Keaveney: Mark Keaveney, Director of Services.

Shane Tiernan: Shane Tiernan, Chief Executive, Roscommon County Council.

Caitlín Conneely: Caitlín Conneely, Director of Services.

Sean Mullarkey: Good morning, Sean Mullarkey, Director of Finance.

Michael McCarthy: Thanks very much, indeed. So you are very welcome here to the NOAC Scrutiny Meeting with Roscommon County Council. We thank you for making the effort and the time to send over materials and to be here with us. We have now moved into the phase of broadcasting proceedings. The scrutiny process has been very beneficial to us at NOAC in terms of how we started functions that provide that scrutiny of the local government sector. I think, Claire and I, previously, a number of years ago, probably pre-COVID at this stage, travelled to Roscommon. A lot has happened in the intervening period, so we're looking forward to the interaction with you, the members, and myself. We'll put questions to you after your presentation. And we won't detain you unnecessarily, but there'll- there's generally a good scope of interaction between members and the witnesses. So I would thank you, Shane, for sending over the stuff. But what you might do, and I'm just conscious of time, because we are broadcasting, you might just give us a synopsis of what you sent over, within a five minute timeframe, if you can please. The floor is yours Shane.

Shane Tiernan: Well, thank you to the Chair. Good morning, again, to Chair and members of the Board, and thank you for the opportunity to address the National Oversight and Audit Commission today. I welcome this engagement, which plays a crucial role in strengthening transparency, promoting best practice, and enhancing performance across local government.

I am pleased to outline the strategic achievements, priorities, and future direction of Roscommon County Council. I'm joined today by my senior management team, Caitlín Conneely, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Services for Climate Action, Environment, Resources, People, and Athlone Municipal District Manager. Mark Keaveney, Director of Services for Economic Planning and Physical Development. Sean Mullarkey, Director of Finance, Governance, Enterprise, Energy, Assets, Emergency Services, and Manager of the Boyle Municipal District, and Chris Flynn, Director of Services for Housing, Community, Culture, Integration, and Roscommon Municipal District Manager.

Our Corporate Plan 2024-2029 sets a clear and ambitious direction; to make Roscommon the county of choice, a welcoming, sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous place to live, work, invest, and visit. The vision underpins our strategic direction and guides all aspects of our organisational performance. Roscommon County Council has delivered a suite of transformative projects aligned to this vision and projects that strengthen infrastructure, support communities, enhance economic

opportunity, and build resilience for the future.

Some of the key achievements that underpin our vision over the last five years; the commencement and construction of the €450 million N5 Ballaghaderreen to Scramoge Road Project, a once-in-a-generation investment in the west of Ireland. Delivery of 2,586 roads projects supported by 400 million in funding. 983 homes and tenancies were delivered through capital delivery, RAS and HAP. A dedicated regeneration team was established in 2018 and delivered investments of 35 million with 56 mil- €35 million with 56 million of projects in progress and a further €130 million worth of projects being developed. Regeneration projects providing dedicated incubation and innovation space like on An Ríoga in Boyle, An Chistin in Castlerea and Monksland Innovation Hub are all part of this delivery.

Support for 164 businesses sustaining 1,038 jobs through our enterprise development programme. Adoption of our local authority climate action plan and establishment of a decarbonisation zone in Roscommon Town, demonstrating local leadership in the national climate response.

As of 2024, our housing vacancy rate of 2.09%, among the lowest nationally and average re-letting times of 14.59 weeks, the lowest across the sector. Significant progress in rental inspections, water scheme monitoring and community integration supports, including the establishment of a new Community Integration Team. Launch of the first My Open library in Ballaghaderreen, and a multi-million-euro investment in our major arts centres in Roscommon Town and King House in Boyle.

These achievements were reflected in NOAC's 2024 Performance Indicator Report, which acknowledged our strengths across multiple service areas. We recognise, however, that improvements are needed in areas such as aspects of environmental performance and digital engagement, and work is already underway to address these.

Ensuring a high-performance, resilient, and future-focused organisation remains a core priority. We have strengthened organisational capability, by introducing structured performance management framework, enhanced external stakeholder engagement, strengthening our approach to strategic risk management, establishing a dedicated digital transformation team, creating a communications unit, and of course, focusing on tourism, which is a powerful driver of economic growth, cultural exchange, and environmental sustainability.

Our capital programme for the next five years is both ambitious and targeted, reflected- reflecting our commitment to economic development, sustainability, and community wellbeing. Just to synthesise some key projects, again; the completion of the N5, a new sports centre in Roscommon Town, delivering service to SME sites to support enterprise growth, big investment in Lough Key Forest Park and activation of the Park Master Plan, advancement of the Hodson Bay Tourism and Waterfront

Experience, a sustainable flood alleviation solution to the long-going saga of Lough Funshinagh, a new My Open library in Boyle, a Monksland Masterplan to create a new town centre and a focused community hub, regeneration projects in key towns and villages, and key investments in the Greenways.

These initiatives are underpinned by our 2026 budget of €86 million, the highest ever revenue budget for Roscommon County Council, and €442 million in our three-year capital programme. The budgets in this council cycle, thanks to the commitment and foresight of the elected members include a 15% uplift of local property tax, and a 10% commercial rate increase so far in the lifetime of the council. These budgets ensure resources are aligned with our priority projects and key areas ranging from regeneration, housing, and climate action to digital transformation, economic development, and social inclusion. They represent our commitment to sound financial investment and stewardship, enabling us to maintain essential services while funding major infrastructure.

We are, however, experiencing constraints in relation to match funding as a requirement of government capital funding and the match requirements disproportionately affect smaller local authorities with limited income-generating capacities. However, we continue to maximise our ability to meet match funding. Whilst we see opportunities in expanded access to EU and national funding programmes, we continue to operate in a challenging environment with escalating delivery costs. Furthermore, we operate in a highly competitive labour market with associated recruitment and retention challenges. In order to maximise service delivery locally, we have developed a comprehensive strategic workforce plan positioning Roscommon County Council as an agile, progressive, and inclusive employer of choice. We are leveraging also off online services and embedding digital transformation to drive service efficiency and enhance customer experience.

We remain firmly committed to enabling sustainable economic growth, supporting vibrant communities, and delivering high-quality public services, through strong partnerships – local, regional, and national – we aim to secure a resilient, inclusive, and prosperous future for our county, Roscommon. We welcome the insights, challenge and guidance of NOAC as part of that journey and look forward to a constructive discussion today.

Apologies, Chair, if I went slightly over the five minutes.

Michael McCarthy: No, that's fine, thank you for that. So now we're going to begin with the questions section. So thank you for providing the overview of what you sent over. I know it's not easy to say as much that needs to be said within tight timeframes, so I acknowledge that.

So Working Group One – Brian Cawley.

Brian Cawley: Great. Thank you, Chair. And good morning, again, to everybody.

Just in terms of orienting you, I guess, the work of NOAC is mainly progressed through the working groups, so there are four working groups. I'm Chair of Working Group One, so together with my colleague Declan Breathnach, we'll just ask a couple of questions related to themes of Working Group One, so it's just to give you a sense of, you know, why certain questions are coming up first that's, that's the way they're organised. And just the first few questions are really quite general. The first one really is in relation to risk, generally, and your corporate risk register. And just to give us a sense of what would be the items that would be kind of at the top of the risk register at the moment, you know? What would be the areas that are high risk for you, kind of now, and over the past short while?

Shane Tiernan: Yeah, Chair, thank you – or, Brian, thank you. Look, we put a lot of effort into our risk register in the last number of years and worked with IPP and our section heads, our unit heads, to get a strong focus on delivering an up-to-date and live risk register. All the units work on that.

We've set up a senior officers group, which are the layer below ourselves. They focus on that as part of their monthly meetings and feed in their respective unit risks, which we in turn then assess at the management team level, to look at the risks and identify from a corporate standpoint what are the significant risks to the organisation. And I suppose to answer your question, the top three there would be health and safety of our employees, cybersecurity and business continuity. But a close fourth, as I outlined earlier, is financial risk and potential risk there with economic downturn and the very high level of expenditure we're now focusing on, just to ensure that that remains front and centre in our financial planning. So that would be the four major risks.

Brian Cawley: Okay. And, you know, without getting into major detail about any of them, but just to give us a sense about health and safety, for example, of workers is, kind of-, why is that at such a high level? Are there particular reasons, in other words?

Shane Tiernan: Well, I suppose we're always conscious that our number one focus is the duty and care to our employees. We work in a high-risk environment, we're involved with a fire service. We have workers now with the volatility and weather very much to the front line in terms of getting services up and running. It's a high-risk environment. We have to ensure that everybody goes home at night. And that's one of my top priorities, my top priority, that people come to work and can go home safely regardless of the conditions. So a continuous focus on health and safety and risk management in that area is a priority. But- and, I suppose I'm happy for my colleagues to come in and add to that, if necessary. Mark leads out in that area, Sean leads out on the emergency services. We're very, very focused on that. And we have a very strong Civil Defence Unit in Roscommon, they're volunteers. So it's essential that those people can feel safe and supported by the organisation.

Brian Cawley: Yeah, good. Okay, thanks very much. Just to move on to a different area, which ICT and digital strategy, and this is an area that you emphasise quite a bit in your new corporate plan and, again, we commend you on the quality of the plan. And I think in our recent NOAC report, we highlight a number of the strong points in Roscommon's corporate plan.

But before talking about the corporate plan, the new corporate plan, you had digital strategy 2022 to 2026. And I was just curious, has that been assessed or reviewed? How would you assess progress on that? And have there been kind of any significant learnings that you're bringing forward now in your ambitions in the new corporate plan? So, it's really about the 2022 -2026 strategy, what's happened, what have you learned from it, and where do you go next?

Shane Tiernan: Maybe you'd like to come in on that, Caitlín?

Caitlín Conneely: Uhm yeah, thanks Shane, thanks Brian. We've spent quite a lot of resourcing, I suppose, in terms of our digital transformation. We have a dedicated digital transformation team in place for a number of years now, and I think that has really helped us to move ahead in terms of that digital sphere.

We have a big concentration on our cybersecurity, obviously. But also in terms of digital transformation, we're moving a lot more towards the data management and showing the data dashboarding and the end-to-end transformation of our processes. So we're really concentrating on that. So we have digitised 175 of over 500 eligible processes, for the council under the services catalogue, so we're working our way through those very- very systematically, but we're not just concentrating on, maybe, fillable forms, we're looking at the end-to-end processes and digitising them. So that helps create efficiencies, create more effective management, and I suppose one of the ways that we measure that is the interaction with our online services.

So, we have a My Online Services feature on our website, so we have over 5,000 registered users on that. We've had over 25,000 registered issues, noted raised on that platform, so they're raised on the platform and they're sent to the correct individual to deal with and we're able to track all of that data. So we have carried out satisfaction ratings on that platform. So in terms of our My Online Services and that over 5,000 users, we have a 4.75 satisfaction rating out of 5, which is really successful. We've a bit more to do on it, but it's very effective.

So I suppose, in terms of the effectiveness of our digital strategy, I think that, I suppose, some of the work that we're doing in the coming year will be about dashboarding and about making more data available, but we have a very systematic approach towards it in terms of the digital workforce and the services for the public.

Brian Cawley: Okay, great. I think this is something that you kind of refer to in your opening statement, but in relation to some of the NOAC indicators on- around this

area, and I'm not saying these are related, but two items that kind of stood out a little bit were the page views, the total website page views, which in Roscommon, by comparison with other local authorities, is relatively low. And then equally, the percentage of revenue expenditure in ICT is relatively high, and I was just wondering could you just comment on those -- as I said, they're not necessarily related but...

Caitlín Conneely: Yeah, I can indeed. Yeah, in terms of our web pages, we're currently in the process of tendering for a new website for the Roscommon County Council website, so that's in train at the moment. We have analytics on our website. We had used Google Analytics, but they informed us two years ago that their processing was going to be in America, so obviously for GDPR reasons, we wouldn't have that. We no longer use that across all of our websites, so the analytics we used aren't across all of our websites that we manage. So that's one of the reasons for it being slightly lower. And I suppose we concentrated more on our social media presence for the last couple of years rather than the websites. So, we have worked at growing our interaction with and engagement with our customers on our social media, and I think that's reflected in some of the indicators as well.

And in terms of the spend, I suppose, we have spent a lot of money, time and resources in making our workforce very agile and digital. So, we've changed to everyone has laptops, there's docking stations with new monitors and webcams, our telephony has moved to Microsoft Teams.

We've made, you know, we've made a lot of progress in those areas. So while we've had issues with resourcing, we've tried to concentrate on those areas and I think the website probably didn't get as much resourcing, but we're looking into that now, so that's going to be addressed over this year.

And in terms of the page views, we're rolling out a tool now to pick up all of the websites. So, not all of the websites are reflected there at the moment, so I think that's why we're trending low on that. But in terms of engagement, I suppose with our online platforms, we're confident that we have quite a high level of engagement and I suppose we're concentrating on our social media to make it a trusted source of information for the county.

So, I think that's kind of our focus on that.

Shane Tiernan: If I might just add, Brian, that you know, we've moved significantly since COVID into digitisation internally, giving workers remote access, moving to cloud-based services, security investment, and the My Online Services has been a major drive by Roscommon County Council, which is working really well. Just to give an example, €22.5 million in grants have been given out through My Online Services, and community groups love it, because they only have to register once, put their details in once, and they can apply for grants successively. Where we've brought in, probably a flagship example in the country, in terms of the local roads, the ... what's the scheme?--

Mark Keaveney: Local improvement schemes.

Shane Tiernan: The local improvement schemes for people with small holdings on two properties on a road. We brought the waiting list from, I think it was 150 when I arrived, down to single figures simply because of digitisation in that area and ease of user access to applying. So, we're on a very good path of investment, but we'll hold our hands up to say that our website needs a big overhaul.

Brian Cawley: Okay, great. Uh, thanks for that and just moving on briefly and then I'll just hand over to my colleague from Working Group One, Declan, for a moment. You mentioned, and this is an area obviously of importance now, the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. And you reference that in your corporate plan, where you note that you have identified specific actions that are currently being implemented to address the duty. Would you be able to give us some sense of what they are, what actions you're taking in that regard? You know, what the current status of that assessment is?

Sean Mullarkey: As part of the corporate plan 2024 to 2029, we focused on the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights - put it there on Appendix 4 - to highlight the issues. We have, I suppose, essentially assessed what has to be done to sort of comply with the legislation to, I suppose, ensure there's equality of human rights across the various units and we have a cross-functional team now across all our units now where we're trying to integrate it into our plans going forward and, I suppose - and ultimately we're going to monitor where we're going with it, bring it into our annual report on an annual basis and- it becomes part of the norm. And I suppose, the areas we're looking at really, are I suppose like, when you look at housing disability, traveller accommodation, all these things they just have to be moved into the everyday of the organisation and I suppose that's where we're going. And by putting it on Appendix 4, that's our first step in the direction.

Shane Tiernan: I would just add, Chair, if you don't mind, on that. Again, I'm very strong at the level below ourselves, the senior officers' group, the unit heads drive all of the agenda of the units. So part of that collaboration is the public sector duty, and assessing, recording, and reporting in that area with regards to their respective units to ensure compliance and, as Sean said, even prior to this we would have been very much driving forward accessibility, equality, travellers' rights, a workforce with a percentage of people with disabilities accepted into the workforce and employed. So, I'd like to think that this is formalising a path that we were already on.

Declan Breathnach: Thanks. I'd just like to welcome Shane and the team. I'm going to deal with questions relating to regeneration. But I have to start by saying, I had an opportunity earlier in the summer to visit a lot of your tourist offerings, and regeneration, and particularly would like to reference King House and how

welcoming the staff were and how brilliantly it has been developed. And I think, any questions can follow on from that in terms of what you've listed in Section 4 of your corporate plan, in terms of many, many ambitious projects that you have for Roscommon in the area.

So, I suppose the question is, how confident are you of having resources, including financial and technical, to deliver on all of these ambitious projects that you've listed? And could you comment on the success, or otherwise, in assessing either EU funding? And indeed, I think earlier, Shane, in your presentation, you talked about the rural local authority and the difficulties in trying to get match funding, and maybe you might comment on that and how you're succeeding in terms of the finances and delivery of the projects.

Shane Tiernan: Sure.

Declan Breathnach: Thank you.

Shane Tiernan: Look we, certainly for a rural local authority, we set our ambition high because my goal is that if the county can be the best place it possibly can be then we'll bring people into the county and they'll spend money. So we've concentrated heavily in that area, and the management team watch this very closely because we are very dependent on central government funding, and these projects won't happen. But we set up a regeneration team under Mark, who got very focused on what we needed to do and how we go about getting the funding. They work solely in that area. We've been very fortunate with some very good applications and some very good projects in terms of some of them I outlined earlier. Obviously, the N5 is a national project, really, but the likes of King House, the An Ríoga in Boyle as an innovation centre, the same in Castlerea, the same in Monksland.

We are currently looking at our finances. Realistically based on current revenues and our operating model, we would have to be borrowing in the region of €30 million for match funding, but we know we can gear towards that based on current financial returns. But like I said, that's all dependent on the current status; we have to think ahead. I said it about the risk register, we have to watch that area, so year on year we continuously review that and make sure that what we're doing we can afford and we can match fund. Mark is leading out; I might let Mark if he would like to comment, he pursues all this funding for us.

Mark Keaveney: Yes, I'll try anyway. I suppose we've been very fortunate in Roscommon, in that we set up a Regeneration Economic Development team back in 2018, and we've grown that team over the years. And we have two strands on it; one is the Economic Development unit, which is where we have our Town Regeneration Officer at Grade 8, and then we have some admin staff, and we have the Biodiversity and the Heritage Officer, and the Tourism Officer, and the Tourism Activator, the EU-funded Tourism Activator in that unit.

And then on the Regen side, so-so that Economic Development Unit really does all our applications, and gets ready for the next funding call, and looks out for projects, and works with community groups and the councillors, etc., and all the various stakeholders.

And then on the implementation side, we have a strong Technical Regeneration Team of about eight people, six of which are technical, so Senior Engineer down. It's a good, strong team, and we've been very fortunate we've been able to keep that team, both teams, in place over the years. And you know, I suppose, we got a boost, probably last year, with the DRCD agreed to fund three posts nationwide, and we took advantage of that as well.

So, we've a very strong team in place, and we've a very strong book of projects. We have completed maybe 120 or 130 projects since 2018. At the moment, we have 60-odd projects on the ground, or in progress, I should say, with a value of €55 or €56 million. And then we have a book of about 22 projects that we're looking at in the next calls that come out over the next few years. You know, if they all came to fruition, we'd have somewhere around 129 million, or something, if they all came to fruition. Now, we know, probably, they won't all come to fruition, but if they did, that'd be the value of it.

But I suppose, we're very strong then in the management of it. We have an infrastructure team that we have, overseeing, and you know, it makes sure these projects are integrated across the council. So with housing, and with planning, and with climate, and the environment section, and roads obviously, and active travel. So, we have a fairly integrated model there.

We track it fairly well. We track it very well, in then, I suppose they're Excel trackers, but they're very useful. So we can track what we're doing- what we will be doing and what we hope to be doing, what we are doing, what we hope to be doing, in terms of progress on the project and in terms of spends on the projects and in terms of, particularly, the match funding, which, you know, the, you know, we have, the management team then gets involved in. We report to the management team regularly, but in terms of finance, we're talking to our Director of Finance and his staff on nearly a daily basis about the funding of these projects. And we have, I suppose, what would you call it? ... We have a timeline for the drawdown of money and the match funding that we'll require over the next five or six years, and which we review very regularly. And where now, as Shane mentioned, where we identify that there, you know, we will have pinch points and we will have, you know, we will put to the pin of our collar to fund all the projects if they all, if they all come true, over the next five or six years--

Shane Tiernan: And if I might come in, Declan, to just briefly say that, you know, I have to acknowledge the work of the elected members in Roscommon, because to

be fair we have, as a part of our good governance, we have a very collaborative relationship with our elective members, and we sit down consistently to discuss our ambition and ensure that they can be on site, because it can be difficult decisions to rise rates locally, to put up local property tax. But when we present it to them in what can be achieved for the county, they roll in behind us. And I think that has been a really useful piece of our success in Roscommon, that collaboration with the elected members.

Furthermore, in the European piece, we now have a Regional Enterprise Plan Programme Manager employed in Galway County Council, but works for Roscommon and Mayo. And that role will be working with us to help us achieve some European-Strand funding, which can be difficult to get and it's quite heavy-handed - I don't mean heavy-handed - but it can be very difficult to draw down and process. European funding is a challenge, but it's useful when you get it, there's no doubt about it. But having said that, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the elected members in Roscommon.

Sean Mullarkey: And just on this, through the Chair, that match funding is the key for the next couple of years. And to tie it down as to what percentage the government gives us and what percentage we have to come up with ourselves, because, to date, we've brought like three or four big projects, we haven't had to borrow, we've funded them out of our own resources, by I suppose, by being careful really. And I suppose the next phase we're moving into bigger projects, more ambitious projects and I suppose that's - the match funding is key, and Shane probably is tired of listening to me talking about match funding, but it is the key for the Roscommon for the next five to seven years.

Declan Breathnach: Yeah, and thanks for your response. You saved me actually coming back on an auxiliary question, but I suppose I'll frame it a different way; how difficult was it to get the 10% additional from the local authority members? Because it seems to be an issue right across the country where depending on how wealthy an area is, or the diversity of the political system in terms of local government, how do you get the members to agree it? Because it doesn't happen in every...

Michael McCarthy: Just briefly maybe Shane, because we have to move on.

Shane Tiernan: Okay, very briefly, I'll deal with that, very briefly. Roscommon is unusual, in that when you go to the north of the county, it's extremely rural. When you go to the south, we're seeing a huge area of growth, on the pharma, and the med-tech, and the Monksland. What we did was we put our money first into the entire county and the members saw the return. That then, in the last cycle of the council, we said, however, we can't continue this in the next council lifetime if we don't get - it had been nearly 20 years actually since rates were increased in Roscommon, and it was becoming too much of the norm that rates wouldn't increase,

so we had a very, I suppose balanced, but strong conversation with the members to say either this changes or we won't be able to deliver further projects, but like I said they rolled in behind us and I have to acknowledge that.

Declan Breathnach: Thank you.

Michael McCarthy: Thank you - thanks Declan, thank you Shane. And now we'll move on to Working Group 2 and Noel.

Noel Harrington: Yeah, thanks very much, thanks Chairman. And again, thanks for the appearance this morning. Working Group 2, and the Chair is Ciarán. Ciarán is unavailable this morning, but Working Group 2 looks at, kind of deals with the performance indicators chiefly. So, our questions will be more or less based around the performance indicators, and I'll kick off. Myself and Anne will take these questions. So the first one, ones that kind of, would kind of jump out really, and it's kind of to look for a bit of context behind the performance indicator, would be in the social housing retrofit.

It's a relatively new performance indicator, but it does show that 38 completions the year before last, going down to seven last year, or in 2024. And of those, you know, it was subdivided; Seven of those houses were retrofitted, so I presume it means the same seven houses with the heat pumps or the same seven houses got the BER B2 grade. The question is, is there any reason that you can give for the decline from 38 to seven in a year? Was it a policy or an operational issue? And maybe give a bit of context behind the spreadsheet, if you will.

Chris Flynn: Yeah, yeah. Thanks very much, Noel. And so just to address that, so the target for 2024, as you say, was 38, and we did deliver 38 units. We did 38 retrofits, I should say. And they were submitted, but there was actually queries that were made from the department, back to ourselves that the 38 units that we did the retrofitted in 2024 were actually delivered, but those 38 units are now going to be carried over into 2025. So, what I would expect us to see in those numbers, is when 2025 will be shown, that we completed 73, which is the 43 that we've delivered on for 2025, plus two additional, plus the 38 that we delivered on in 2024 is getting carried over to 2025. So the only reason that they weren't accounted for is just literally the recoupment hadn't happened in time, and I'm told that was just on the back of queries that were made from the department around the submission of the 38 units.

Noel Harrington: Okay, so just for clarity – so, in 2023, no, the figures for 2024 were 38?

Chris Flynn: 38, that's correct.

Noel Harrington: The figures for 2025...?

Chris Flynn: ... are 43, plus we delivered two additional. So 43 was our target for '25, which we delivered on, plus we'd done two additional. So altogether for 2025, we will be showing the 43 plus 2, plus the 38 in 2024.

Noel Harrington: Okay.

Chris Flynn: Yeah.

Noel Harrington: So that shows then ...

Chris Flynn: Absolutely so ...

Noel Harrington: ...it's a figure improvement.

Chris Flynn: Yeah, it'll show a significant spike for 2025 of 73 in total.

Noel Harrington: It's not clear... we might come back for more clarity on that and, just because it, just to get a bit, again, a bit of context behind the numbers on the spreadsheet. So, arising from that then, I presume you were presented with targets for 2030, or do you have targets for 2030 to retrofit?

Chris Flynn: So we haven't had our target yet for 2026...

Noel Harrington: Oh, you're given the targets on an annual basis?

Chris Flynn: On an annual basis, that's correct, yes. Normally, we would receive those targets in, towards the end of quarter one...

Noel Harrington: And have you any indication of your target for 2026 at this stage?

Chris Flynn: No, no. I would assume it will probably be 43 plus something, plus a percentage, but no, at this stage, I-I don't, I don't know.

Noel Harrington: And a difficult question arising from that, then, would you be confident that you would reach again your target for 2026?

Chris Flynn: Oh yeah, absolutely. I see, depending on what that target is set at, I would see no reason why we've got a very strong, robust team that are in place there with that. The only thing that I would caveat that with would be if there was any delay in the setting of the target, because we retender annually for the energy retrofit programme. If there was any issue, if we didn't know the number until, let's say, the start of Q2, for example, obviously, the time starts to get that little bit more

compressed there for us, so that might present a challenge. But if things run as they've normally ran in 2023 and 2024, I don't envisage any issue at all there.

Noel Harrington: Chair, if you don't mind, just arising that, and I note from the Chief Executive's report as well, very good figures on the housing, on the reletting and the vacancies. Can you just give, just a very brief, the housing stock? What's the profile of the housing stock? Is it relatively new, or is there challenges with older buildings and that just...

Chris Flynn: So, it's a combination, to be honest with you. The average age of the stock is in around just about 25 years, the average age of the stock. We've done our stock condition survey of a quarter of that stock so far to date. But it's... Are you looking for any particular trends or ...?

Noel Harrington: No, I'm not, no. I just want to give a very brief, just a snapshot of your, of the condition of the stock, we'll say. Like, clearly it can't be bad if you're achieving that kind of reletting.

Chris Flynn: No, and to be fair, it's—the-the stock that, I guess there's couple of things if I can just cover maybe really quickly on that, it's that obviously the-what's been very helpful is that, you know, as part of over the last sort of year, we've been using, we've been one of the county's that have piloted the new Adjust System. So most of the stock, most of the data, we're looking at very good data. So, as we're obviously doing more of the stock conditioning survey, we're looking at better data.

That's informing, being able to kind of package together works more neatly as well. So it's not so much that, undoubtedly there's going to be times as we progress through the full stock condition survey, there will be stock that will require significantly more investment, but at the moment in time, we're just making sure that we're obviously, we're getting the right balance there, and we're targeting the units that need that attention initially, that's coming up as part of the stock condition survey.

Noel Harrington: Okay. Can I move on to another area now? And that's the PI report, and that's under the Waste and Environment section. Uhm, the three-bin service.. Sorry, Caitlin. Again, we've seen very good work from 2020 on, and then from '23-'24, it decreased from ... 44 – it went from 85.97% in '23 to 44% in '24, and it just dipped below the national average, whereas before it was very much matching national average. Was there a policy or an operational reason for that? Or you can, again, explain the figure if you could.

Caitlín Conneely: Yeah, I suppose the good news is, to start with, we're at 95% now as of the Quarter 3 in 2025. There's been a huge increase in that, and I suppose that's the national legislation to require the provision of the three-bin service. It was very slow to roll out, slow compliance by the wheelie bin companies, essentially. I

suppose, because we're a very rural county, it takes, you know, a little bit longer maybe in terms of the rollout, but we worked closely with the other local authorities and with WERLA to put pressure on our wheelie bin companies. I suppose we're lucky in that we have one service contractor who services quite a portion of the county, so he's fully compliant now, so that has brought us up to 95%. So to answer your question, we were working with them all the way along, but 2025 is when we made huge progress, so we're at 95% and expect to be higher this year.

Noel Harrington: So was there any one reason why it just dipped low on--?

Caitlín Conneely: I think it was, I suppose, just before the legislation came in, I think there was a little bit of a kickback from customers, and I think the companies themselves were feeling the pinch, and I think there was just that, there was a bit of a blip there, but when we worked with them, those issues were easy enough to work out, and they became compliant, so we're at 95%.

Noel Harrington: Okay, thank you.

Caitlín Conneely: Okay, so that's a big improvement.

Anne Haugh: Okay. Okay, it's over to me now, and I'm back to you, Chris, you'll be glad to know. Just in relation to the homelessness figures, there was a significant increase in the number of long-term homeless adults under H6 from 2023. You had none in 2023, I think, and then it went to 46% or over it, which was still below the national average, but it's just because of that jump from zero, essentially. Is there a specific explanation for that, or is it an ongoing trend?

Chris Flynn: Well, it's a combination. So, there's a specific explanation in as far as, just for context, in 2023, we had, when the measurement indicator was taken at the 31st of December 2023, we would have had 12 people showing in homelessness accommodation. In 31st of December 2024, we had 13, so there was an increase of one. And as you'll be aware, what was driving that increase in percentage was we had six of the 13 were being accommodated in homelessness accommodation for longer than six months. And the reason for them, I guess, really, is kind of what has been reflected, I suppose, sector-wide, is that you know they're complex cases. You know, predominantly individuals, I don't, off the top of my head, I don't believe any of those six were actually families, they were predominantly individual males and females. And I guess they're complex cases, with kind of multifaceted issues of a combination of, whether it's drink or drugs, or so forth, that presented those challenges. So, the numbers themselves, you know, haven't increased dramatically from December '23 to December '24; it's only been an increase of one. It was just the length of those six individuals that were actually in homelessness for.. is what's driven that.

Anne Haugh: Okay, so the total number of people in homeless services was just 13, is that what you said?

Chris Flynn: It was just 13, in December 2024, yeah.

Anne Haugh: Yeah, and then of that, almost half of them had gone over the six-months?

Chris Flynn: Absolutely, gone over the six-months, absolutely, yeah.

Anne Haugh: Okay. Yeah, yeah, that's fine.

Shane Tiernan: So I suppose, Anne, there'll be 193 presentations but we might, because it's not a crisis point in Roscommon, the homeless, we will be able to resolve many of those, maybe not with ideal accommodation circumstances, but we would resolve many of them to have and reduced it down to that figure on average at any one time, and we don't have our own homeless shelter but we avail of services – we have identified partners for providing homeless services.

Anne Haugh: Okay, so that was my next question to you actually, you don't operate any of your own home...

Chris Flynn: No.

Anne Haugh: ...so, it's... you work in partnership with the other agencies?

Chris Flynn: Yeah, absolutely. If you want, I could just maybe add on that, that one thing we are looking to, we're doing, is piloting the community-based housing model, which is where we're going to have obviously...

Anne Haugh: Shared housing, is it? Yeah, yeah

Chris Flynn: Yeah, so we've identified a couple of houses already, and we'll have basically shared houses, so we'll kind of use that as transitional or stepping stone housing, so we'll have an NGO that will be there on license to support individuals and obviously work with them, through if there's any sort of any issues they may have, looking at CVs, employment, and so forth as well. So that's something that will be up and running this year as well.

Anne Haugh: And you mentioned the profile is generally single people, is it?

Chris Flynn: Predominantly, single male and female, yeah. Very few families.

Anne Haugh: Yeah, in that... because the numbers aren't big. Yeah, yeah, yeah, okay.

Shane Tiernan: And we are seeing, Anne, a trend as the social environment is changing. We do need a domestic violence refuge centre now in Roscommon and we're working with various NGOs to try and identify a site and work with them to get funding to deliver that as a provider of the service, but it's certainly something that's trending upwards and no doubt, homeless, albeit as I say, it's creeping, it is creeping upwards.

Anne Haugh: Okay, okay. Thanks for that. So then just uhm... just going to Social Housing Delivery, and I know Shane, you mentioned at the beginning about the numbers of tenancies, you had 983, but that was including the HAP and RAS and all of that. But in terms of actual new build delivery, and this is not taken from the indicators now specifically, it's just a comment that was in a newspaper article about, that at the middle of 2025, there was only four social houses completed out of a target of 52, for 2025 now this is. So, I know we haven't done the 2025 indicators yet, but just how did 2025 outturn in terms of delivery against target in 2025?

Chris Flynn: Absolutely. So, it turned out kind of pretty much bang on the button, really.

Anne Haugh: Okay.

Chris Flynn: So, we delivered 60 units in 2025, so we delivered over what the yearly target was in the Housing for All. At this moment in time, that leaves us in the kind of, well, like actually, right at this moment in time, we are literally, we're completely on point to over-deliver against the Housing for All target.

Anne Haugh: Okay.

Chris Flynn: So, we're... we're kind of exactly where we need to be on that at the moment, which is really good news. So, I think, obviously the track list, that tracks the that tracks the numbers, obviously, towards the end of 2025, we were able to, there was about 16 units that came through there altogether, just they were kind of last-minute, because that work had kind of taken a bit longer to get them through the system.

Anne Haugh: At the end of the year. Yeah. Yeah.

Chris Flynn: Yeah, but we delivered 60, so it was a good performance in 2025.

Anne Haugh: Okay.

Shane Tiernan: But we are gearing, Anne, we are gearing for a 150% type, target of that number.

Anne Haugh: Against Housing for All figures, yeah?

Shane Tiernan: Yeah, we were at 240 for the five-year for Roscommon, and realistically now we'll be 370 -- we're gearing for that before the numbers come because that's our expectation.

Anne Haugh: Okay. And just, which brings me on, I suppose, to the revised NPF and the requirement for local authorities to vary their development plans, and to create that 50% headroom. Has that had an impact? Or will that have an implication for Roscommon? Will your housing requirements increase as a result of that? And where are you at in terms of you know producing a variation of the plan if it's required? Yeah.

Mark Keaveney: So yeah, our housing requirement will go up by the 50%, so it will be over, just over 530, I think is our number in the- under the Section 28 guidelines...

Anne Haugh: 530, is it?

Mark Keaveney: 530, yeah.

Anne Haugh: Yeah, yeah, okay.

Mark Keaveney: So that's for housing in Roscommon County. And we're working through our variation at the moment. We would've done a variation for all of the county, but the main areas of, I suppose, activity in terms of housing is in Monksland, near Athlone, and in Roscommon Town. So, they'll get the, probably the lion's share of the additional zoned land, because that's where we see activity and, you know, we have been talking to various developers, or people who are involved in building houses, and they have shown interest and already bought most of the land that's owned in both of those towns or are in the process of buying lands in most of those towns. So there, that's a strong indication to us that that's where the demand is. But our variation will cover the whole county, so there will be additional zoning throughout the county, and we'll probably be publishing our variation in March or April of this year. We are working with Westmeath County Council as well, in relation to the Joint Urban Area Plan in Athlone, so that has a little complication. It makes it more difficult to do it, but we'll be doing the variation for all the county and then the variation for Monksland in Athlone separately. But our end goals are the same--

Anne Haugh: Okay. And I know, I already, you mentioned challenges in terms of

the north of the county, in terms of getting developers active in that area. Is there an actual housing need demonstrated in the north of the county that can't be met as a result of that? Or is the need focused more on the Monksland area that you're talking about?

Mark Keaveney: The need is, when we're talking about need now, we're talking about general housing need.

Anne Haugh: Yeah.

Mark Keaveney: There's a need throughout the county, but I suppose the focus of where the activity is-is Roscommon South, really, or maybe slightly north of Roscommon South, so where it's Roscommon and Monksland really. North of that, we think, you know, there's... We have land already zoned, and it's not being taken up at any great, great rate, or there's no preplanning like we have for Roscommon and further south. Having said that, we're encouraging, trying to encourage development all the time. The reality of it is, house prices in Roscommon town and Strokestown have reached a point where it's economically viable for developers to build houses and sell them. And that's not true really, generally, you know.

Shane Tiernan: And that's the big issue, in that, you know, I said it to the councillors, that this extra zoning isn't going to be the panacea of housing delivery in Roscommon, because we're seeing that developers will only really look in those areas if we're a significant customer of that development. And again, it's leading to their financial gearing as well, and working with the banks for lending for building, unless we're signed up as a significant customer. But at the same time, we want a balanced housing. We want a mixture of social, general, and affordable. We don't want it all social. We want sustainable communities. So, it can't be just that the council walks in and buys everything. So realistically, we are seeing buoyancy now in the two key urban areas, certainly, but I do still have concern about the north of the county and the general delivery of new housing estates there because of the viability in the market.

But it is getting there. It's just getting there now. But we are a very rural country, that, when we go north of Roscommon Town.

Anne Haugh: And just my final question. And it's just in relation to the ghost estates, and you had a very high level of ghost estates going back to 2018. But I think the most recent figures I've seen is that that's reduced by almost two-thirds. Is it down in the 50's now somewhere? I think I read that. So, have you had to deploy a lot of resources in order to get to that point? And I suppose the other question is, are you out of pocket as a result of it, or have you been funded by the Department fully for ...?

Shane Tiernan: Yes, and yes is the answer to that. But I don't know who--

Mark Keaveney: I can come in on that. I suppose they ... the 52 I think that's left at the moment, they're unfinished housing estates, but they're generally not ghost estates, like when this came in, this, when ghost states come out Uirst, they were after the crash and where houses half-built and empty and that sort of thing. Most of our list now, I think we're down to two or three, or maybe one or two actual ghost estates, or partial ghost estates, but the rest of them, all the other developments are really to bring the developments up to a level where they can be taken in charge. Now, in a good few cases, a developer may have moved on or, there, in some cases, they're--

Shane Tiernan: Defunct.

Mark Keaveney: ...yeah, they're defunct. So, they're still on the list, and we still have to spend money. We're calling in the bonds, but in a lot of cases we also have to add to the bonds to get the houses to get the development finished out to as well as a standard that we'd accept to take in charge.

Shane Tiernan: Yeah, the low-hanging fruit is gone. We're down now to the tough ones where there is no developer, pulling in the bonds might, and this is an area where Sean has a strong focus on as well, with me in terms of, you know, we can only put so much. I'd love to get all these estates taken in charge, but in reality, there's no central government funding for this, so we can only apportion annually, an amount annually to – I don't know, Sean, do you have a point on this?

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, no, I suppose it's probably one I'm emotive enough about because there's no funding. It's up to us, basically. We've been left with it. And I suppose we've been clipping down maybe six or seven estates every year. And it's very popular with the councillors, and every time I put it into the budget or put money aside in my ASF for it, you can see the response because they know it's very important to people. But there's no, no, there's no government funding coming. And I suppose, we're going to get to a point where there are going to be maybe less than 10, maybe really tough estates that are going to take serious money. Like, and I don't know, will we be able to fund those, let's say, the, like, without government support? And I suppose it's just a sort of a hangover from a prior...

Shane Tiernan: Celtic Tiger

Sean Mullarkey: ...well, Celtic Tiger, yeah.

Michael McCarthy: We'll move on, guys -

Shane Tiernan: ...I think the Chair wants to come in, sorry.

Michael McCarthy: No, I just think this time, I need to move on. Okay, well, if we have free time after, we can revisit the topic, okay? I want to hand it over now to Miriam – Working Group 3.

Miriam McDonald: Yeah, I'm Chair of Working Group 3, and our particular focus is on the customer and communications and so on. So that will be the drift of the questions. So, I suppose when I look, as you know, the LGMA carries out a survey in cooperation with NOAC every year. And I mean, Roscommon, although you know, the numbers are very small in that survey, so it's hard to drive, you know, firm conclusions from it. But nevertheless, when I look at the improvement in customer service, Roscommon doesn't perform quite as well, and particularly in terms of improved online services and being more customer-focused, you're below the national average. So, I'm just wondering what, what customer initiatives do you have in place? I know you mentioned that you want to increase digital engagement and stakeholder engagement, and so on. Do you have any customer initiatives in place?

Caitlín Conneely: I can take that. We do. I suppose we're disappointed with the outcome of that survey, but I think it's quite a small focus group, so I think it's not really representative. And I suppose in terms of the satisfaction we have with our own online services, we're trending quite high in terms of engagement with proven customers. So, I suppose that's quite positive.

Miriam McDonald: So, do you carry out a survey yourselves?

Caitlín Conneely: We carry that out.

Miriam McDonald: And what kind of percentage satisfaction are you getting out of that?

Caitlín Conneely: We're at 4.72, I think, out of 5 across that. So that's across 5,000 registered users, so we know that they do use our online platforms, so I suppose that's positive.

Miriam McDonald: Oh, so that's just online? That's not the general public?

Caitlín Conneely: That's the online, no, that's the online, so we haven't carried out, but we are considering whether we'll carry out further surveys, but I suppose we have quite a high focus on customer service in general.

Our new website is being redeveloped specifically because we feel that our current website might be able to lend itself so easily to that customer management piece. But I suppose, we have a communications unit in place. We are building our comms team

and our comms' focus on our social media presence. So, I think we're working across a lot of aspects of that customer service.

Miriam McDonald: And how many have you in the communications team?

Caitlín Conneely: We have one Communications Officer, and we have a graduate in place. So, they work as part of the corporate services. So, it's two totals. So, they work as part of the communication, the corporate services function.

Miriam McDonald: Okay. And do you know how much engagement you get? I know you mentioned your focus was more on social media. Do you know how much engagement you get on social media?..

Caitlín Conneely: Uhm, we've been ...

Miriam McDonald: ... How many followers you have or anything like that?

Caitlín Conneely: I don't have the numbers off the top of my head, but on the performance indicators, we're improving year on year. Between '23 and '24, we grew our followers 26%. I don't have the actual numbers, but we grew by 26 %, so it's quite positive. So... what we're doing, I suppose, is trying to be very much that trusted source of information in terms of the storm management and the incidents and all of that. But also leaning in the national campaigns that the LGMA run, or the recent social housing campaigns. So, we're leaning into that, we're getting good engagement. But I think in terms of the new website, I think that will allow us maybe to track traffic back to the website.

Miriam McDonald: And when do you think the new website will be in place?

Caitlín Conneely: It'll be towards the end of the year. We're currently – we had gone to the LGMA framework at the minute, we went with the EOI, so we're assessing them at the moment, so I suppose it's hard to put a time frame on that yet. But I am hopeful that it will be in place shortly, but I suppose in the meantime we are working across all of the functions, and we also, we would be, you know, we have a big focus on training our customer services staff as well. So, like we still have the person who's answering the phone and who's there on the public desk, so we would have quite a presence. We'd have quite a population in Roscommon who mightn't be just online. They want the in-person service as well, so there is a balance there.

Shane Tiernan: Yeah, I suppose, just briefly, Miriam, we did put a big emphasis, as I do call it, on the internal customer, because if the internal customers are well trained and happy and working well, the external customers will get that level of interaction and service. So, we've put a big effort into training for staff, into the customer management, into being able to do it from wherever they are, but at the same time,

dealing with our charter, making sure people get a response, even if you have to give the wrong answer, don't blank a customer, give them the wrong answer, but give them an answer, if that's what it has to be. I very much drive that, and we all drive that from the management team down. So, to get that focus, and we did an internal customer survey of our staff recently, and that was very positive. So now I believe the next phase is the external, and once we have that piece right.

Miriam McDonald: And when you say it was very positive, in what way?

Shane Tiernan: We had a lot of positive reaction to how we are now as an employer, how we train and develop people, how we consider their welfare and support and well-being, and giving them the ability for family-friendly work practices and all of that, and ensuring, of course, that we get full customer service. I believe that's essential. Because when staff are motivated and happy, they'll be a much happier customer dealing with them.

Miriam McDonald: Yeah, and you know you mentioned, you know, that you've as part of that training that, you know, they give—they try and answer the questions for the customers and so on. Do you track that? Do you track complaints? Do you track...

Caitlín Conneely: We have an online complaint system that we track everything, so it's through the online complaints. If we get them verbally, we'll put them up on the system, so we're able to track them. So, we're able to pull all that data and make sure that they're answered and replied to. So, they get an automatic reply straight away to an acknowledgement, and then it's followed up. It's redirected to the correct person. So, we're able to track all of that. So, within terms of environment, for example, we're trending at almost a thousand complaints per year, but we can track all of that and make sure that people are answered and are getting answers in a timely fashion and that they're being followed up.

Miriam McDonald: And so, when you track, let's say you track and you find that there's one issue that kind of is a consistent complaint, does that drive then changes within the organisation? Like, is that brought up to the senior management team level?

Caitlín Conneely: It is. It probably doesn't escalate to meet the senior management team too often, though, to be honest, because most of these are dealt with at senior management levels within the sections themselves. So, they would be particular to that section, nine times out of 10. So, we're able to identify maybe if there's a serial, if there's a serious issue that can't be identified, or if there's sometimes, we might have vexatious complaints as well. So, they would, you know, that would be identified through that process.

Miriam McDonald: Yeah.

Shane Tiernan: Yeah, and I suppose, just to finish, if I could say, we need to focus more on the silent happy customer. We don't hear from them at all because they're delighted, but we do hear from the agitated customer who's not happy with the response or with how we're dealing with something.

And as Caitlín says, I am seeing an incremental focus on people leveraging mechanisms of the state that were brought in with good intentions because they're aggrieved with the organisation. So they throw everything at it, let it be ombudsman, FOI, whatever, and our staff are consumed like dealing with that, which maybe, as Caitlín says, not a valid complaint, but we have to go through the processes. And I keep saying we need to be focusing on gathering information from the happy customers that we don't hear from at all. So that is something I see I am seeing creeping up, that there is sort of an element that are literally throwing everything if they're not satisfied with what the service we're delivering, but it may still have been the right answer.

Miriam McDonald: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I think a lot of organisations are seeing that-that phenomenon, you know, of people kind of, yeah, maybe getting more dissatisfied, a certain group of people. I mean, as you say, I suppose the silent people may contact you maybe once every four or five years, but then it has to work for them, you know, and how you do that.

And just going back, you said you wanted to increase digital engagement, and I know you mentioned that you're doing, you're revamping the website. How—and I suppose it crosses over Brian's earlier question around digital strategy, like, is there a revised digital strategy with digital engagement for 2026 to 2029?

Caitlín Conneely: We would operate under the National, under the LGMA digital strategy, so we would operate under that. There's the services catalogue, then, where we're required to digitised 90 % of eligible services by 2030. So that would be one of our huge aims. But in tandem with that, I suppose we're looking at our digital workforce, so making sure that our staff are enabled to work digitally. So, they're working on tablets where possible if they go out in the field, field worker surveys, rather than going out, maybe visiting a site and then coming back and doing the paperwork in the office. We want everything on-site and uploaded. We've invested hugely in GIS as well, which is really, I think, a coming area in terms of being able to show people what's happening and digitise. So, we're better able to analyse our data.

Miriam McDonald: Yeah, I suppose what I was coming from more was digital engagement by the customer, you know? In that you can roll out, say even the website and everything, but if the customer doesn't engage with it, you know, like you want the customer to engage, even to drive down complaints, you know, to understand where they can find information and so on...

Caitlín Conneely: I think we have My Online Workspace is very accessible, and I think we have huge engagement.

Shane Tiernan: And have consultant and planning.

Caitlín Conneely: And we have, yeah, we have a consult, I suppose, in terms of our public consultation, we have a consult hub on the website that people engage with. So, engagement with all of our services is very high, and I suppose we would be, we are quite high in terms of the number of services we've digitised. We have our own team who are working on that.

Shane Tiernan: I think the key point, Miriam, is that we have a lot of very good sub-elements, but they're not coming together properly on the website. That brings us back to having this major focus now on getting it coming together in a good website, and that's why we're a little bit slow at getting that delivered, but we want it right.

Miriam McDonald: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Mark Keaveney: We've a lot of engagement as well with our communities through our PPN and through the consultations we do for various projects and schemes, and we're moving to make those more understandable by the public, so, rather than where we can, rather than putting out say drawings, we're putting out models or videos of projects as best we can and we're getting like; for the iRos project, for example, that we did very recently, we put out videos of walkthroughs of what it would look like when it's done, and it got huge engagement and very positive engagement and it seemed to activate the silent people, as well as people that had some issues. But we're trying to move that way I suppose, and the portal helps with that.

Caitlín Conneely: Just to add that, we've processed over 22.5 half million grants for communities online through our online portals, so, I think, you know, it's a testament to the level of engagement, and we have repeat customers all the time on that, so that's very positive.

Shane Tiernan: And just to finish, like, I'm seeing this all the time. What Mark has just said there, the TikTok society, you know, they want videos, they want images. We put ads in the paper every week that are very statute-driven. Somewhat, we have to be honest here, it's out of date. We need to move on. We need to be, the younger generation don't even read that. We need it in an informative way that they will pick up, and if there's a project going on or something changing, they can see it in a visual way as opposed to this 500-word text that nobody... And then when something has been delivered, as we discovered once or twice, 'we never knew that was happening, and we don't like it now', you know?

So, I'm trying to bring this on, but I think this, as a nation or as the government needs also to maybe modify statute that instead of having to put an ad in a, nothing against local newspapers, but we, maybe we could suffice by doing, as we say, a promotional video on our social media, but we are obliged to still do this traditional media interaction, which sometimes I feel is not connecting with the public.

Miriam McDonald: Yeah, yeah, okay. Thank you. Sorry, were you going to say something?

Chris Flynn: Yeah, I was just going to add, Miriam, it's very similar to what my colleagues have said, but in housing as well, we're looking over the last couple of months, working with my colleagues, we're looking at kind of the key, the highest workflow areas that we have engagement with from our residents. And we've picked out four of them, which we're looking to completely digitalise that journey from the customer's perspective, right through the backend.

So, you know, stuff like the vacant homes grants, stuff like obviously the, differential review, the housing needs assessments, so stuff where it's engagement that's necessary, but it's about kind of giving that enriched experience to the resident and then bringing that straight back in, so it's kind of automated, streamlined the workload in the backend as well. So that's something that over the next couple of months that we'll be, we'll be kind of introducing those changes within housing as well, which will hopefully enrich that engagement.

Miriam McDonald: I love the words customer journey. I'll hand over to Margaret.

Margaret Lane: Yeah, I've only just one question Chair, and you spoke about earlier, but under the Equality and Access, Roscommon performed above average in improved access for minorities and more age-friendly, uhm, but for people with disabilities, you were below average. Is there a reason for that?

Shane Tiernan: Well, I suppose we're-- I'm Chair of the Age-Friendly Alliance in Roscommon, and very, I always say, from babies to grannies and all in between, we have to meet all the needs of society and accessibility and equality all form part of that. I think we put a big effort into that here. We have a very strong relationship, particularly on the age-friendly side. We have a strong engagement with Comhairle na nÓg from a youth perspective. Sometimes these results mystify me a little bit, because you'd ask yourself the question, is there something we're doing wrong? Could we do it better? Could we do it differently? I don't know if any of my colleagues have any comment there on that one?

Caitlín Conneely: In terms of staffing, I suppose, we have a focus on disabilities and increasing the number of employees with disabilities, so we have, we already

facilitate workplaces, placements, job shadowing, we're working with the WAM programme, we're not a member of it yet, but we're hoping to do that in the next year. So, I suppose by encouraging, you know, increasing our end, having bigger focuses on it internally as an issue or as a challenge, and to see is-can we identify is there anything that's stopping us being perceived as more accessible-friendly, I suppose.

Margaret Lane: Okay, that's fine, I'll hand over to Declan, so.

Declan Breathnach: Yeah, uhm, obviously, you're aware that NOAC are very concerned and interested in the whole issue of customer service and indeed good practice. You did participate, and you refer to the online system in 2024, where you made a presentation to NOAC. We're anxious to know, have you got any projects in the pipeline that you, maybe good exemplars to promote within the good practice seminars that NOAC conduct? And have you a view on that, or, it may not be today, but if you have ideas that you think are good exemplars for other local authorities, because it's really about sharing your success and projects that work well.

Shane Tiernan: I'll just briefly take one that's fair, I think has been a really exemplar and has been nominated for a number of national awards was the Community Welfare Toolkit, which is something we developed through our Healthy Ireland Officer, where we had, as I mentioned earlier in my plan, we have a significant flooding issue in South Roscommon, Lough Funshinagh as it's known, and the community there were, you know, very disillusioned and feeling there was no supports, and we developed a welfare toolkit to support them physically, mentally, linking with the local authority in other ways than just trying to find a physical infrastructure solution. And I think that would be a nice one to demonstrate. It's a project that came to the fore as well when the Storm Eoowyn hit and people were, it was a lot of trees, we're a highly forested county in Roscommon. There were a lot of people out for a lot of weeks, and, you know, it's just stress on the mental well-being of people and the strain. And again, we kicked into gear our Community Welfare Toolkit, and that was very well received. I think that's one I would give, maybe Caitlín you want to add one?

Caitlín Conneely: Uhm, yeah. I suppose the register of electors is something that we're all, you know, there's a national project going on, and I suppose there are concerns about that. So, what we've done with ours, we have field workers, so they all work on tablets. They update, they go out and they visit the houses, so they automatically update all of the data, including the, the Eircodes of all of the houses in the county. So, we're trending really high on that one. And it's a good way of, I suppose, having access to all of the households within the county. It's promoting the

work of the county council, but it's making sure that people are on the register and they're correctly, they're able to find themselves. They're able to be correctly on the register, and it led to a high satisfaction with the register. It also means for the national project, we're actually in a quite a positive space in terms of having our data cleansed. So that was going on over the last two years, and it was very successful just as an end to end process that has paid dividends in terms of that national project work that's happening now at the moment.

Declan Breathnach: That's great, and I encourage you to do that because if there are any barriers into getting involved in that process, be it the customer service or good practice that you would liaise with the Secretariat, because every local authority has really good practices that maybe should be shared more.

Just the final one, it was a famous presentation a number of years ago in relation to the issue of trees in Clare, and how they progressed with the identification of it. I don't see it being taken as an exemplar elsewhere where you talk about the floods and the storm damaged trees. Just wondering, are they being shared, other than good practice, and are local authorities looking at other presentations, maybe that are made, just a very quick one, you know, in terms of making sure that if you have good exemplars that you would promote them.

Caitlín Conneely: Yeah, just in terms of the Clare one, I suppose, we are aware of it but our first step, we've got the BlueSky's which is more a canopy mapping kind of a tool, as a halfway house and we've discussed it with our SPC in terms of progressing further, and I suppose it's balancing the practicality and the resources available to us.

Declan Breathnach: Yeah, thank you.

Michael McCarthy: Super, thanks indeed. Thank you, Declan. Now we move on to Working Group 4 - Margaret and John.

Margaret Lane: Thank you very much. I chair the Working Group 4, which is our Financial Management and Performance Work Group. I suppose just a standard question to begin with; can you outline the governance arrangement or measures that you have in place to give yourselves assurance in relation to both financial and operational performance of your subsidiaries? Generally, how you do it?

Shane Tiernan: Yeah, well, I suppose from a financial perspective, we're constant, we have the monthly management report, and we're constantly monitoring our performance against budget in that regard. From an operational perspective...

Margaret Lane: Is that a report they give you, is it?

Sean Mullarkey: This is for the associated companies, is it?

Shane Tiernan: Sorry, for the limited companies?

Margaret Lane: Yeah, for your subsidiaries that you have noted on your accounts.

Shane Tiernan: Apologies, I thought you were talking about...

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, no, no, we have five associate companies. Two-...

Margaret Lane: Five, is it? There are three recorded on your financial statements...

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, two actually, two new ones this year.

Margaret Lane: What are the two new ones?

Sean Mullarkey: They're to do with the Regeneration Projects –

Margaret Lane: Okay, fair enough.

Sean Mullarkey: ... An Chistin and the Monksland Innovation Hub.

Margaret Lane: Yeah, I suppose I am talking about three that are set out in your...

Sean Mullarkey: The three that are there, two of them, one of them is a partnership with Coillte for Lough Key, so we're 50-50 - that's Moylurg-Rockingham Company. And I suppose we have a working group which I sit on, with Coillte and the management team in Lough Key. We have quarterly meetings with them, and we also have an AGM and sign off the accounts. It's a 50-50 directorship as well.

Margaret Lane: Okay, so you have 50 per cent of the directors on that company as well, is it?

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah. And then we have a small company that- Back Lane Management, that deals with an apartment block in Boyle, and the last one then is the Roscommon Leisure Centre, I'm a director on that as well, and that literally, the Leisure Centre is across the road from us. We subsidise that quite heavily, and I suppose we have a lot of oversight in there. Now it's a separate company, but we are the directors on it, and we have a quarterly, we have, I think it's six directors from RCC on it. We meet on a quarterly basis, bring the management team over, they run through their management, they give us a management report, then they'll step out of the room, and we'll make the decisions, and it's the...

Margaret Lane: I think we've some more questions on that from John anyway, but I suppose, something I noted on the Local Government Audit Service Report was that the audited accounts for any of the three subsidiaries were not available, for either '23 or '24, and I'm just wondering why that was?

Sean Mullarkey: No, what she—what our auditor is really driving at is that the accounts aren't done by the 31st of March when we have to submit our accounts to the...

Margaret Lane: So they're due on the 31st of March, of the year-- after their year-end, is it?

Sean Mullarkey: No, no. The three companies have a 31st of December year-end, so they can file their accounts with the CRO by the end of September, but we have to sign-or send in our AFS to the Department by the 31st March, and our local auditor is saying those three companies should have their accounts done by the 31st March, while, like, their real deadline is the 30th of September.

Margaret Lane: And are there any measures you can take to address that? I can understand the auditor's concern because –

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, I suppose...

Margaret Lane: ...that's a level of assurance that you get that the accounts are audited, so you can draw comfort from it. But if they're not available, you've a question mark.

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, well, I suppose they're available then the next year, I suppose, like, we are—they all make their—

Margaret Lane: I know, but I suppose a timely availability?

Sean Mullarkey: Well, yeah, and I totally agree. Probably on two of the companies, I would be able to push the Roscommon Leisure Centre and Back Lane Management, because they're more under our control. But Moyler-Rockingham—

Margaret Lane: Okay, but just take those two, so. So what efforts have been made to bring that forward?

Sean Mullarkey: Oh well, this is, we're going to try and hit the 31st of March because we've a new Financial Management Accountant there, and she's on the work-she's working day-to-day with the Roscommon Leisure Centre. So, I have said to her, "Let's try and hit the 31st of March deadline this year".

Margaret Lane: At this point in time, are you aware of say the financial outturn for those three companies?

Sean Mullarkey: Oh yeah, because we have quarterly reports and I know exactly where they are in terms of where they are.

Margaret Lane: Okay, I think my colleague will ask a few more questions in that area anyway. I suppose my other question then is, there were nine recommendations relevant to Roscommon coming out of the NOAC report on internal audit. Can you let me know about where you are in terms of the implementation of those recommendations as they relate to yourselves?

Sean Mullarkey : Yeah, well, the internal audit sits under my remit as well. We had a gap there where we had no internal auditor for about a year and a half, so our internal auditor started in August 2023, so he's now working. So he essentially reports to the audit committee, and he, I sit in on every meeting with the audit committee. We have four meetings a year. The Chief Executive tries to sit in on two meetings. So we've set out the plan with the...

Margaret Lane: I understand that. I suppose what I'm talking about here are there were specific recommendations made in relation to, I suppose, ensuring that there was good operational, I suppose, good operation from an internal auditor's perspective, and there were specific recommendations about that. And I'm wondering where ye are in terms of the implementation of those recommendations? There were nine that referred specifically to Roscommon.

Sean Mullarkey: Okay, yeah. Well, I suppose that that has been made with, let's say, we've given those recommendations to our internal auditor, and he's working through them. Just off the top of my head, I don't know where we are on each of them.

Margaret Lane: Okay. So is that something that you can come back to us on? Because we're particularly keen to make sure that they're implemented.

Shane Tiernan: Yeah, yeah. No, internal audit- At the point of my taking over as Chief Executive, it was vacant, and it was something that I put an immediate focus on, quite frankly, it was difficult to attract in a qualified staff member, but we do have that now. And in fact, I looked at that, the list that you mentioned, and there's probably two now that need addressing. One is the, to work out on a pathway towards chartered membership of the Institute of Auditors. And the other was training, further training. The current auditor is on a programme of training, is a member of the network, has completed, I'd say, to answer your question, seven of the nine have been dealt with, in the current format.

Margaret Lane: And I suppose there is one in particular that was common to the

majority of local authorities, and that's in relation to this external independent assessment to be done as well.

Shane Tiernan: That's the one, that's the other one I was trying to think of. That hasn't been done yet, that's it.

Margaret Lane: Okay, yeah. But look, I think if you could come back to us in relation to that matter, alright? And I'll leave it at that for the moment. I'm going to hand you over to John now.

Michael McCarthy: Yeah, John? Thank you, Margaret.

John Byrne: Thanks, Chair. I'm going to stick with you, Sean, for a minute. Just in relation to Roscommon Leisure Centre, it's Appendix 8, showing a cumulative deficit of 150,000, and we just want to know what steps have been taken to address it.

Sean Mullarkey: Well, I suppose, being honest with you, there's a subvention of nearly 20,000 a month going into the leisure centre, and I suppose, where the problem with the leisure centre is, it has certain fixed costs, and we have no income capacity to generate any more income capacity because we're limited by the size of the gym and we have no exercise studios and yoga studios...

John Byrne: So what actually is in it outside of a gym? Is there...

Sean Mullarkey: A swimming pool—

John Byrne: A swimming pool.

Sean Mullarkey: ... and a toddler pool. And it's the only one in the county, so it's of vital importance. And I suppose the iRos project is the regeneration project where we want to expand the leisure centre so that we can have yoga classes, basketball tournaments, to...

John Byrne: This is the new one you're planning now, is it?

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, the iRos, yeah. So that's, we're planning on building that adjacent to the leisure centre, joining them up and onto the..

John Byrne: And what additional facilities are you putting into it?

Sean Mullarkey: Well, I suppose we're putting in—

John Byrne: It's a 20 million spend, is it?

Shane Tiernan: Yes, there's no indoor arena- Chair, just to say on this. It hasn't the scale that it needs to turn a profit. Because, so, we have entered into a collaborative arrangement with the Convent of Mercy for their grounds where we'll develop astro-pitches, we'll develop an indoor sports arena for a multi- a multi-sports surface area. There'll be Pilates rooms, a gym, addition to the gyms, meeting rooms so that we can – I would like to get it to a point where it would be attractive enough to bring in a service provider to run the operation for us. But the scale is there at the minute, it's not attractive enough, which is why we the generation team are so focused on this project, which would allow that scale to stop this continuous subvention, but from a social, recreational and community commitment perspective, and the way swimming pools have traditionally sat with the local authorities, we have to subvent it, because it would be an outcry if we didn't, in terms of providing a strong amenity. But that's why I'm so focused on this project, to give it that scale, and that it can create the income and revenue streams that will allow it to operate in a more successful way.

John Byrne: Okay. Just, in relation to the financial and contribution, in 2024 it was 639,000, as against 393,000 in –

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, yeah, we retiled the pool...

John Byrne: That's a 60% increase.

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, we retiled the pool that year.

John Byrne: It was capital... capital spend?

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, but we put it off as revenue because essentially we were replacing one tile with another tile. I don't know, can you say it's capital, really, to be honest with you. We thought about it, but that was the-the focus. And I suppose, that's what we're trying to do, we're trying to bring up the product—

John Byrne: ...around the point concerned...

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, well, I suppose, ultimately, we're fully behind that leisure centre, because it is the only one in the county, and ultimately it's totally oversubscribed for swimming lessons and all that. It's the other side where we can't generate the income to support it.

John Byrne: And sorry, I've a bit of a background- just in relation to the astro-facilities, are you putting in, are you envisaging a full-size multi-use for GAA, rugby, soccer, all of that?

Shane Tiernan: Well, maybe not GAA, but...

Mark Keaveney: No, well, we are -- So, the new facility is indoor recreation and outdoor sport. So the indoor recreation that Shane spoke about will be a six-court facility on the ground floor. And then with gym and rooms, or facilities upstairs for classes to be carried out and to be hired out and to generate things like, as Shane said, for Pilates and spinning and etcetera, which you know is missing in the existing, there's a pool, there's a very small gym, and there's no consulting rooms or rooms available for hire. And so that's the indoor part of it.

And the outdoor part then, we have what is locally called the Convent Pitches, but it's about six-acres, and we'll be providing two all-weather pitches there; one of a soccer size and one of a Gaelic size, and other smaller facilities like bowls and a track around, a walking track or running track around, or not, around the scheme. And other minor, ball wall and things like that. And that's all on Convent lands that are being made available through a long-term lease to the council. So between the two facilities we'll have a, you know, a state-of-the-art facility to serve all of Roscommon, that can cater for nearly any sport, any reason of sport.

Shane Tiernan: Yeah, and the school would have access then during the day as part of their commitment. And I suppose there's three things going on at the minute in Roscommon Town, that if they all come together and the investment gets completed, it'll hugely uplift the sports offering and recreational offering in Roscommon, so our effort is on the iRos. The GAA have got planning permission for a Centre of Excellence just on the Racecourse Road, and that's a state-of-the-art, also with some astro pitches, and multi-surface pitches and so forth. And the third is there's an excellent group in Lisnamult, a community group, who are working and have commenced plans and got the first phase of funding for a six-lane running track, a lit running track beside their, beside the Gaels football pitch. So if we have those three offerings, it would be great. And actually, at that one, you might say, well, why is that not at the new centre? Because quite literally, we have maxed out with the plans...

John Byrne: ...of what you're putting in, yeah.

Shane Tiernan: ...we won't have the other pitch, so the space is just not there. But we'd have a wonderful three-pronged sports facility-offering in Roscommon if all that comes together.

John Byrne: And are you going to be using the LSSIF to fund some of this, or your own money?

Mark Keaveney: Yes, we have LSSIF at the moment in the planning of designs so, so we're coming to the end of the planning design, and we hope to publish the part eight fairly shortly. And then we hope to be in a position to apply for the next round of

LSSIF for the—

Shane Tiernan: We have about, about a million going in at the minute, isn't it? For the Design and Project Management up to planning stage.

John Byrne: ... Anyway, one last question, the auditor questions if the level of governance in Back Lane Management Ltd. is at the level required for a public body. Obviously, that's a serious issue. Have you undertaken to review the corporate governance?

Sean Mullarkey: Yeah, I suppose Back Lane Management Company, it's essentially three invoices,

John Byrne: It's what Sean? Sorry.

Sean Mullarkey: It's three invoices; it's an audit fee, a cleaning invoice and an insurance. So the turnovers are on 7,000, around that mark. So, and I suppose, we're moving to get a director. It's basically- it's managing the common areas in an apartment block, which we owe to it, so we're going to put a director from, actually, from Uinance onto the company.

John Byrne: Thanks.

Michael McCarthy: Super. Shane, can I ask you, just in relation to Castlerea Fire Station, we picked this up previously on two scrutiny visits; It's been closed now for a period of eight years. Is there any kind of update on what's happening, or is there any kind of reason why it's still unopened after eight years?

Shane Tiernan: Well, there was a decision taken at that time, based on the Health and Safety Grounds and command and control, that it would be stood down, and the fire service continued to be provided in the county with the five remaining stations and 13 surrounding stations. And quite frankly, we carried out an area risk categorisation under keeping communities safe, which is the model to assess whether or not fire stations are needed, and under that risk categorisation for the Castlerea fire ground, we have continued to meet the need and meet the requirements of that risk categorisation for fire call-outs, and in fact exceeded it throughout that period of almost eight to nine years now. So throughout that period, then, there has been a decision made, obviously, through central government, that there will be 12 firefighters per station as opposed to the previous nine. So we're gone to the point now where we are delivering an effective and an efficient fire service for the county, and the cost of reopening it is just not justified based on the service being met.

Michael McCarthy: What would it cost roughly, Sean, if you were to reopen it?

Shane Tiernan: Well, it'd be, I think we said 1.8 million?...

Sean Mullarkey: 1.5 to 1.8 million, yeah.

Shane Tiernan: ...to reopen, and then the ongoing running costs would be in the region of €400,000 a year. And, you know, we're very committed, obviously, to providing an effective and an efficient fire service throughout the county, but the evidence shows now over the last eight years that the needs are being met based on the risk categorisation by surrounding stations.

Michael McCarthy: Okay, have the elected members for that municipal district made an issue of it? We'll say, given that we've... We had local elections, I suppose, whatever it is, 18, 19 months ago. Did it become an issue in the local elections, or have elected members gone with it since being elected? Like, everyone has kind of a hobby horse or a project, I would suspect if there was a kind of a concern locally you would have... --

Shane Tiernan: Well, it certainly has been raised, and our Chief Fire Officer has come in to Council meetings and presented the evidence, and we had those externally validated by a retired Senior Chief Fire Officer that, you know, and in fact, the risk categorisation for Castlerea, we actually are achieving response times in excess for the category above that. So if it's at an E, we're actually meeting a D, if I just give those examples, whereby we're reaching the scene within 20 minutes. And, you know, without being unfair to anybody or communities feeling the need for a fire station, we can't have a fire station in every town and village, but Castlerea is being met, and as it stands nearly eight years on, there just isn't the justification to invest that money in reopening it.

Michael McCarthy: So it is to remain closed for the foreseeable?

Shane Tiernan: It is.

Other: And where is it serviced from now?

Shane Tiernan: So we'd have Ballyhaunis, we'd have Roscommon Town, we'd have- what's the-

Mark Keaveney: Ballaghaderreen.

Shane Tiernan: Ballaghaderreen, yeah. Ballaghaderreen is the main response unit, yeah. And look it, again, I have to stress this about the fire service in Roscommon. We have the lowest call-outs in the country. The vast majority are, I suppose, we have the lot of gorse and bog fires in the summertime, we've chimney fires. I'm not

taking away from any incident, not in any way, but I suppose I'm here to provide a service based on need and based on the models that are adopted nationally for such assessments. I have a duty in that regard. And as it stands, I am, as the Chief Executive and as the Executive of the Council, we are discharging our obligations under the Fire Services Act for the entire county.

Michael McCarthy: Right and, the people who worked in Castlerea, you would say, I presume they're part-time firefighters like, that would be my similar experience at home, of a similar size – are they all redeployed elsewhere?

Shane Tiernan: No, there was a redundancy package; they accepted that.

Michael McCarthy: Okay, when was the redundancy package?

Shane Tiernan: It was about 2022, or thereabouts.

Michael McCarthy: Okay, okay.

Shane Tiernan: That was under my predecessor.

Michael McCarthy: Right, right. Okay, so now I have one final question, a standard question I ask everybody: Is there any other issue in Roscommon that you feel that we should be aware of? Any other issue at all, like, I mean, I know there's general headings, and a lot of information available, we've read a lot of it, there's been a good exchange of information, but is there anything else that you're dealing with at the moment that you feel we should be aware of?

Shane Tiernan: Well, look it, I think we've covered, we try to run a very collaborative management team in decision-making. We do that. We assess risks. We have strong governance structures in place. I think that our greatest concern at the minute, I suppose, linked to our ambition, is the match funding piece we mentioned earlier. We are concerned about, you know, the ability to fund projects into the future with limited income means. We are fortunate in that there's a very strong emerging pharma base in South Roscommon, and a lot of, although they may not be popular, there's a lot of wind farms, and so forth, emerging. That enhances our rate base and gives us that ability to match fund. But projects are getting more and more expensive, so even 10% of that book there, of 70-80 million, it's just a lot for a small local authority. Even at 10%, that's the biggest challenge for us, and the biggest concern I'd have in being able to deliver for the county going forward.

Michael McCarthy: Super. Colleagues, from the NOAC side, are there any other questions anyone wishes to allocate? Sorry, Miriam, of course.

Miriam McDonald: Just on that point, what about getting appropriate skills, you know? Given your ambitious, other councils, for example, find it hard to get

planners, IT people. Do you have any issues like that? In terms of, you know, fulfilling your ambitious plans?

Shane Tiernan: Well, there's such buoyancy in the market at the minute, and opportunity across the local authority sector. We're in a fortunate position from a travel perspective that we're very central going anywhere, but that has its downsides, where if there's a promotion in Westmeath, or Leitrim, or Mayo, it's an easy move for somebody to make. So we're in, that's why Caitlín has put a huge effort into making Roscommon an attractive place to work, an employer of choice in terms of well-being and supports that we can retain staff. We can't obviously have additional financial offers, but we try to create very good conditions for employees to retain them, and we've put a big investment into training and development and wellbeing, yeah.

Miriam McDonald: Thanks.

Michael McCarthy: Thank you, Miriam. And Claire wants to say something about the PI Reports...

Claire Gavin: Just in relation to the PI reports, say something like the H7, the retrospective figures, things like that. Just there is an opportunity that there's an outlying figure like to put in an explanation. And it's just, it would allow us to present it in the report better. So I just think you should use that facility, because even in the homeless figures, if you provide the explanation, the stark percentage doesn't look as good or as bad, and it just presents the picture. And we're asking, say the data coordinators, to use that facility, we're saying it at our workshops, but it's just, I suppose, to ensure that they go in, so that it's reflected in the report.

Chris Flynn: Absolutely.

Shane Tiernan: Okay, and we'll take that away. And we'll revert on the auditor queries, yeah.

Declan Breathnach: Just one final one, your opening times and closing times, are they in sync with other local authorities? And is it an issue? We've seen where it says offices are open to the public at half nine, there's a long lunch break, then overstepping my question in terms of workforce and that. But in modern local authority deliverance, is there a need for all local authorities to have an opening time and a closing time that's standard across the country?

Shane Tiernan: I certainly think there's logic in a consistency, because the customer then knows that if they go across from Carrick-on-Shannon to Roscommon, that it's the same opening times. I suppose it's something we could all look at as a sector. We

have cut down on opening times to try, simply because there wasn't the demand, and also because of our online movement in recent years. And we haven't received complaints about our opening times. But I suppose, we don't align necessarily, with other local authorities.

Caitlín Conneely: No, we don't align. I think it would be a good suggestion, though, to be honest, yeah.

Shane Tiernan: I can take that back to my colleagues.

Michael McCarthy: Super. Okay, listen, thank you so much for your interaction in proceedings. We're at a close. We appreciate the exchange. I found it very productive and interesting. We wish you a safe journey. Thanks indeed, Shane, thanks to the team.