

**COMHAIRLE CATHRACH AGUS CONTAE PHORT LÁIRGE  
WATERFORD CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER WATERFORD**

**Present**

Cllr. John O’Leary (Mayor)	Cllr. Cristiona Kiely
Cllr. Donal Barry	Cllr. Jason Murphy
Cllr. Liam Brazil	Cllr. Pat Nugent
Cllr. Joanne Bailey	Cllr. Seamus O’Donnell
Cllr. Declan Clune	Cllr. Lola O’Sullivan
Cllr. Joe Conway	Cllr. Thomas Phelan
Cllr. Tom Cronin	Cllr. Jody Power
Cllr. Conor McGuinness	Cllr. Seanie Power
Cllr. David Daniels	Cllr. John Pratt
Cllr. Declan Doocey	Cllr. Eamon Quinlan
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald	Cllr. Frank Quinlan
Cllr. Damien Geoghegan	Cllr. Mary Roche
Cllr. Jim Griffin	Cllr. Seamus Ryan
Cllr. John Hearne	Cllr. Mairead Tobin
Cllr. Joe Kelly	Cllr. Adam Wyse
Cllr. Stephanie Keating	

Apologies: Cllr. Ger Barron

**Officials in Attendance**

Mr. M. Walsh, Chief Executive  
 Mr. K. Kehoe, Director of Services, Corporate Services, Culture and Planning  
 Mr. P. Johnson, Senior Resident Engineer, Housing  
 Mr. M. Quinn, Director of Services, Economic Development  
 Mr. F. Galvin, Director of Services, Roads, Water and Environment  
 Mr. B. Pollard, Head of Finance  
 Ms. H. Dunphy, Meeting Administrator  
 Ms. A. Flynn, Corporate

The Mayor proposed a vote of sympathy to Cllr. Geoghegan on the death of his mother, Annette Geoghegan. Cllr. Geoghegan thanked the members.

As Mayor of Waterford and City Council the Mayor extended his sympathies to the families of those who died in the Cresslough explosion, the people of Waterford were shocked and saddened by the enormity of the tragedy.

Congratulations were extended to Cllr. Roche, Cllr. F. Quinlan and Cllr. Kelly on recent achievements. Cllr. Ryan also extended congratulations to the Irish Ladies Soccer Team on their recent success.

**1. Confirmation of Minutes**

Confirmation of minutes of Plenary Meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022 deferred to the November meeting. This arose as Cllr. Roche stated that the amendments were not accurate and were not a true reflection of what had been said and asked that this be corrected. A discussion followed which did not result in a

resolution, the Mayor proposed to meet with the parties involved along with the Meeting Administrator and would come back with a recommendation in relation to the amendments for the next meeting.

As the minutes are to be Cllr. Jody Power asked for the following amendment to be made to the minutes: use the word company in place of inspector in the following sentence ‘Cllr. J. Power asked about the 7 fixed notices for litter and if it was a particular inspector involved’

Cllr. McGuinness asked that the minutes be amended to insert the following ‘He thought it would be in everyone’s interest if the transcripts of the part in question were appended to.’ after the sentence ‘He thought it would be fair if the recordings obtained were provided to Corporate Services and the other members’ on page 2.

## **2. Matters Arising**

Cllr. McGuinness requested details from the CEO in relation to local authority funding in light of recent budget and acknowledged thanks to the Mayor for their recent meeting.

M. Walsh, CE noted that this will be discussed as part of the Local Property Tax agenda item.

## **3. Filling of casual vacancies on Waterford City and County Council created by resignation of former Councillor Eddie Mulligan and following death of the late Councillor James Tobin, in accordance with Section 19 of the Local Government Act 2001.**

H. Dunphy, Meeting Administrator, confirmed that two casual vacancies exist after the untimely death of Cllr. James Tobin and the resignation of Eddie Mulligan. As both people were members of a registered party, namely Fianna Fáil and under the provisions of Section 19 of the Local Government Act, 2001 the political party has nomination rights to the casual vacancy. It was confirmed that the required notification was received from Fianna Fáil and the nominees.

Cllr. Cronin proposed Mairead Tobin, daughter of the late Cllr. James Tobin to fill one of the casual vacancies. He wished her the very best of luck in her new role as Councillor which he said she would fill with dignity and honour. Her appointment was seconded by Cllr. E. Quinlan who spoke of Mairead’s long involvement in her community and in politics.

The Mayor welcomed Mairead to the Council saying it was a great day for the Tobin family.

Cllr. Mairead Tobin said she accepted the role as Councillor with great honour. She thanked Cllr. Cronin and Cllr. E. Quinlan and said she hopes to continue the great work of her father in West Waterford.

Cllr. Wyse proposed Stephanie Keating for the second casual vacancy who he said he had known for many years. Cllr. Murphy seconded her appointment saying she comes representing a family steeped in politics.

The Mayor welcomed Stephanie to the Council saying it was a proud day for her family.

Cllr. Stephanie Keating said it was a special day for her and her family, thanked her proposer and seconder and paid tribute to former councillor Eddie Mulligan. She said it was an honour to be one of the Fianna Fáil Councillors on Waterford City and County Council. She spoke of her father’s involvement in Fianna Fáil for over 25 years and his service to his community. She spoke of her mother’s awareness of women’s health issues, her support for those living in difficult situations and the giving nature of both her parents, traits which they handed down to their children. Her own children Donnchadh and Jade, nieces and nephews also all have a strong sense of social justice. She spoke of the incredible sense of honour she feels, is humbled by the well wishes and is grateful for the support of her siblings, children, cousins, friends and members of the Fianna Fáil party. She spoke also of her involvement in the community and her awareness of the issues and challenges faced by local residents and their families in Waterford City East. She promised

to work hard and contribute to the Council in a positive and constructive way to better the lives of the people of Waterford.

Cllr. Tobin and Cllr. Keating were welcomed and congratulated by the other councillors with it being noted that the female representation on the council was now brought up to 18.7%.

Mayor proposed a suspension of standing orders to take a five minute break, seconded by Cllr. Cronin and agreed by all.

#### **4. Presentation by Professor Veronica Campbell SETU President**

The Mayor welcomed Professor Veronica Campbell, President of the South East Technological University to the chamber who gave a brief presentation on the policy and ambitions of the new University along with details of its Strategic Plan for 2023-2028.

Cllr. Daniels enquired about the future capital funding for the campus, student accommodation and the future number of students projected for SETU.

Cllr. Roche enquired about lack of investment compared to other regions, the issue of brain drain for the South East and how to keep students in Waterford, what resources will be needed and new disciplines that can be expected to be included in the curriculum.

Cllr. Hearne noted importance of having local schools visit the campus and it is seen as an important part of the community.

Professor Campbell outlined that the Capital Programme is essential to have investment in the campus and requirements have been outlined with the Department informing the members that the new Engineering building is due to commence construction in 2023. It is estimated that €250m investment in infrastructure is required. She outlined that a Task Force is set up in relation to Student Accommodation, as an immediate measure SETU has introduced Student Pad, an app that links students with potential landlords who may have a vacant room or a house available. The Department has also set up a Student Accommodation unit within the Department. She noted that there is currently 18,000 students with 14,000 students leaving the South East each year to study elsewhere. SETU has a five year Strategic Plan which feeds into an Implementation Plan and will require significant funding to deliver. She agreed with the need for community engagement and the University is very aware of this.

Cllr. Conway requested figure in relation to Research and Development in Ireland for 2023 and percentage for Waterford outlining that patents secured by an educational establishment is a positive indicator of performance in this area, enquiring if any such markers. He asked about what markers will be used as indicators for the Strategic Plan in this area.

Professor Campbell spoke about EU funding for research of €18.35m which was competitively won. SETU was the highest performing organisation in the TU/IT sector, research is not currently part of contracts and needs to be addressed.

Cllr. Kiely praised the University's research department, enquired about getting an update on the research programmes, noted the need to reduce the number of students leaving the South East each year and if they could be encouraged to stay by providing a wider suite of courses. She also asked if sustainability was part of the Strategic Plan. She spoke about student accommodation and the merits of matching students with work placements in the area in which they live.

Cllr. Kelly enquired about the administration centre of the University between Waterford and Carlow, spoke about increased student numbers into the future which would require more student accommodation and if the Strategic Plan catered for this and if there new courses available will be included into the curriculum.

Professor Campbell outlined that it was a decision of the government to have the administrative address in Waterford and will be reviewed in two years. Outlined that student numbers and KPIs will be included as part of the Strategic Plan which will outline what resources are needed. Currently working on programme portfolios and in early discussions regarding new course areas. Outlined that sustainability is a key feature for SETU and will be embedded across courses.

Cllr. Phelan raised the question of the location of SETU headquarters noting that there is a case for Waterford as the Regional Capital to be where the headquarters is located. He enquired about the breakdown of Capital Funding between the two campuses and if there will be significant spend to get adequate resources in place.

Cllr. J. Power spoke of SETU being a game changer for the region, if there will be course drain from Waterford to Carlow and need to progress Waterford as part of the UNESCO Learning City programme.

Professor Campbell noted that currently out meeting key stakeholders, need to work through the profile of courses, regional demand and growth potential. Will be looking at synergies between the two campuses, capital investment needs to be developed and prioritised and need to see the cost of delivering the Strategic Plan.

Cllr. McGuinness spoke about the challenge of the lack of student accommodation in terms of the overall current housing issue, supported the need to have University headquarters in Waterford and asked if the Council could do anything to assist the new university.

Cllr. Eamon Quinlan asked about the main priority facing the University is.

Professor Campbell said her priorities are to build a cultural, unified and sustainable University and to bring the team together. SETU is a strong University and Waterford is a University town, the Council could lend its support by communicating with local TDs to bring to Cabinet the University's Research Programme, it's Training Programmes and how it's tackling both local and national issues.

Cllr. Fitzgerald expressed concern about the delivery of Apprenticeships.

Professor Campbell said that the provision of technological courses was very much a part of a Technological University, it was a distinguishing feature provided for by legislation. SETU provided training for apprenticeships all the way through to PhDs.

Cllr. Nugent asked about overseas students and whether some courses could be completed over a shorter time of period which would facilitate employers' needs.

Cllr. Pratt enquired as to why members of the Council were not represented on the Board of Governors.

Professor Campbell said the Governing Body of SETU is established in accordance with legislation which prescribes the membership, she outlined that 45% of courses are part time which is important and overseas students are a source of Revenue but also positive in terms of globalization.

The Mayor thanked Professor Campbell for her time and honesty.

It was agreed that the councillors would be extended an invitation to the campus and to meet with the faculty.

## **5. Local Property Tax**

In recommending to Council that the local adjustment factor and local property tax for 2023 and 2024 be set such as to be the same as that prevailing in the current year Michael Walsh, Chief Executive said that he does not believe that the council should add to the current inflationary pressures. He said the Council is as vulnerable to inflationary impacts as any other sector in society. He noted that the increased prices in materials will have consequences for road maintenance and housing maintenance in particular and while

the Government has provided an extra €1.5 million to offset some of these increases, energy inflation alone will consume this. He urged the Council to support his proposal as a collective.

This proposal was proposed by Cllr. Geoghegan and seconded by Cllr. E. Quinlan.

Cllr. Geoghegan stated it was a reasonable proposal and said any reduction would be reckless, Cllr. E. Quinlan said further increases not possible and cutting services was not an option either.

Cllr. Kiely also supported the proposal saying the same stating that the Local Property Tax is the only tax where the larger the property the greater the tax.

Cllr. McGuinness rejected the Chief Executive's proposal saying he is responsible to his constituents. He said families are struggling and said the LPT is a tax on the family home. He proposed that the LPT should be brought back to the base rate and remain at base rate for two years. This was seconded by Cllr. Jim Griffin.

Cllr. Fitzgerald said the LPT should be brought back to the base rate given the increases in electricity, fuel and food. Wages and Social Welfare payments have not increased significantly, and people are desperate.

Cllr. Barry agreed with Cllr. McGuinness as the LPT being a tax on the family home.

Cllr. Brazil supported the Chief Executive's proposal saying money is needed to keep services for Constituents.

Cllr. Phelan asked the value of the 10% on the base rate and Cllr. Clune enquired what is the cost of the 10% per household. B. Pollard, HoF outlined that 10% equates to €998,650, for a household it is €9.00 per year for property in the first band 0-200,000 and €40.00 per year for property in the fourth band 350,000-437,500.

Cllr. Roche asked if an increased population meant an increase in the value of the property tax to which the Chief Executive Officer replied that any increase in households would not significantly increase the amount of LPT.

Cllr. Pratt asked about the impact of the 10% on the most vulnerable in our society.

M. Walsh, CEO, noted that finances are required and taking it out of other funds e.g. the Roads Fund, meant that the provision of those services would suffer.

Cllr. Fitzgerald spoke about the Equalisation Fund and why we should be competing with areas such as Donnybrook and D.4.

Cllr. Hearne spoke about families being thrown out of their homes while some companies continue to make huge profits.

A roll call vote was called for to either accept the Chief Executive's proposal as proposed by Cllr. Geoghegan or to reduce the LPT to base rate as proposed by Cllr. McGuinness.

<b>Name:</b>	<b>For CE Proposal</b>	<b>LPT to revert to base rate</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Not Present</b>
Ger Barron (Lab)				✓
Donal Barry (Ind)		✓		
Liam Brazil (FG)	✓			
Joeanne Bailey (SF)		✓		
Declan Clune (Ind)	✓			
Joe Conway (Ind)	✓			
Tom Cronin (FF)	✓			
Conor McGuinness (SF)		✓		
Davy Daniels (Ind)	✓			
Declan Doocey (FG)	✓			
Pat Fitzgerald (SF)		✓		
Damien Geoghegan (FG)	✓			
Jim Griffin (SF)		✓		
John Hearne (SF)		✓		
Stephanie Keating (FF)	✓			
Joe Kelly (Ind)	✓			
Cristiona Kiely (GP)	✓			
Jason Murphy (FF)	✓			
Pat Nugent (FG)	✓			
Seamus O'Donnell (Ind)				✓
John O'Leary (FF)	✓			
Lola O'Sullivan (FG)	✓			
Thomas Phelan (Lab)	✓			
Jody Power (GP)	✓			
Seanie Power (FG)	✓			
John Pratt (Lab)	✓			
Eamon Quinlan (FF)	✓			
Frank Quinlan (FG)	✓			
Mary Roche (Ind)	✓			
Seamus Ryan (Lab)	✓			
Mairead Tobin (FF)	✓			
Adam Gary Wyse (FF)	✓			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>		<b>2</b>

The Chief Executive's proposal that the local adjustment factor and local property tax for 2023 and 2024 be set such as to be the same as that prevailing in the current year was carried by 24 votes to 6 with two Councillors not present.

## **6. Land Disposals**

None

## **7. Monthly Management Report**

Cllr. E. Quinlan asked about the Notices to Quit recently served on businesses occupying Council property which he said could be seen as the Council undermining our own hard work in relation to businesses and could result in those businesses closing.

Cllr. McGuinness asked about the N25 in light of data made available to the Press of it being the most dangerous stretch of road in the state and asked that the TII be invited to address the Council to answer questions.

Cllr. Kiely asked about the plan for refill stations and options for its wider roll out, requested update on the availability of period products in public buildings. Inquired if the Local Climate Action Plan could be completed in one year and if there were any plans to increase the Commercial Rates Energy Credit Scheme. She asked for a Presentation by South East Energy Bureau (SEEB) and praised the work of Ella Ryan, the Council's Environmental Officer.

Extension of standing orders for 30 minutes proposed by Cllr. McGuinness, seconded by Cllr. Phelan and agreed by all.

M. Quinn, DoS, said the businesses in questions had specific licenses because there were plans for redevelopment of which they were aware of initially and rent was at a substantially reduced rate. The Council is not responsible for finding an alternative premises for the businesses and will endeavour to rehouse in the new development when completed.

F. Galvin, DoS, agreed to issue a letter inviting TII to make a presentation to the members of the Council, a number of refill stations have been rolled out with plans to expand the scheme when additional funding becomes available. Council are engaging with refill.ie campaign where local shops and cafes offer free water to customers. He said any changes to the Commercial Rates Energy Credit Scheme would form part of the budget process. In relation to the SEEB he said that 2 Councillors will be sitting on the Board going forward which will result in direct councillor engagement and two nominees will be required at the November Plenary Meeting.

K. Kehoe, DoS, stated that the procurement of the period products is currently underway and will follow with roll out in our public libraries.

B. Pollard, DoS, stated that in relation to the Commercial Rates Energy Scheme there are 1008 applications.

Cllr. Fitzgerald referred to the 1,822 HAP tenancies and asked how much of the Housing and Building Expenditure of €22.3 million was used to service HAP tenancies.

Cllr. Hearne requested update on the progress of the Greenway Extension and if a health and wellbeing provision was being extended to council employees.

Cllr. Barry enquired about timeline for business plan for the North Quays submitted to the Department and when it will come back to council.

P. Johnson, RE, will revert with details as requested Cllr. Fitzgerald.

K. Kehoe, DoS, outlined that there is a good health and wellbeing programme already available to the Council's staff.

F. Galvin, DoS stated that the Greenway Extension was due to be finished for March/April 2023.

M. Walsh, CEO said that a response on the North Quays Business case which sought funding for the additional works is expected in 3 or 4 weeks.

Cllr. Ryan enquired about the Bus routes in the City which he said are inadequate, he asked if the Ukrainian refugees here in Waterford might be relocated without due notice similar to what happened recently in Killarney. He also enquired about the provision of a Mobile Library Service.

Cllr. J. Power asked if the Council will be appointing a Biodiversity Officer, he outlined details of Project Stream in relation to monitoring of the Suir Estuary and if council is participating in it, he requested details on the volume and cost per annum of the use of Sodium Hypochlorite by the Council and if copy of Inland Fisheries report as previously requested could be supplied. He acknowledged the work of the council in support of the Ukrainian crisis.

Cllr. Bailey requested that details on vacant homes are added to the Monthly Management Report and requested a breakdown of motions outlining their status to date.

F. Galvin, DoS, outlined that bus route licensing is the responsibility of the National Transport Authority (NTA) and is due to be reviewed by the NTA in 2023. Not aware of the Project Stream and will need to revert with details as requested by Cllr. J. Power.

K. Kehoe, DoS, outlined that the council will apply for funding for a Mobile Library Service should such funding become available, a breakdown of motions can be provided.

P. Johnson, RE, is confident that the same situation in relation to Ukrainian refugees will not arise in Waterford.

Cllr. Griffin noted that media reports suggest a further influx of Ukrainian refugees which would put further strain on communities. He suggested that there be some liaising with Councillors who would know what's available in their communities with regards to properties or Community Halls, he said a workshop would be helpful.

Cllr. Roche asked if our Representative who sits on the board of Garter Lane and Theatre Royal could request the live streaming of events. She enquired if there could be a review of the Choice Based Letting Scheme to accommodate those who struggle with it. She enquired about the increase in Emergency Accommodation. She also spoke about the upcoming FAI semifinal and if it would be possible to engage with them around what the Council could do to assist.

P. Johnson, RE, said the housing of Ukrainian refugees had not impacted on the Council's Housing requirements and the Council had responded well to the crisis. He said that the increase in emergency accommodation is due to the market and the overall housing crisis.

K. Kehoe, DoS, said the Council would engage with the Arts in relation to the live streaming of events.

Cllr. Thomas Phelan enquired as to the level of applications for the Croí Cónaithe scheme and where the applications were for.

P. Johnston, RE, noted that most of the applications received to date were for outside of the city.

Cllr. Kelly asked about plans to replace sculpture on Greenway and commencement of the Sustainable Transport Bridge and update on Dock Road.

M. Quinn, DoS, noted there were no plans to replace the sculpture, it is a matter for the contractor and SETU, Dock Road will be looked at in terms of the overall North Quays project.

## **8. Correspondence**

Proposed by Cllr. Cronin, seconded by Cllr. Kelly and agreed by all.



**9. Notice of Motions**

Deferred to the November meeting

**10. AOB**

None

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Dated:** \_\_\_\_\_