

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

COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 12TH MAY 2022 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER DUNGARVAN

Present

Cllr. Ger Barron	Cllr. Jason Murphy
Cllr. Donal Barry	Cllr. Pat Nugent
Cllr. Joanne Bailey	Cllr. Seamus O'Donnell
Cllr. Declan Clune	Cllr. John O'Leary
Cllr. Joe Conway	Cllr. Lola O'Sullivan
Cllr. Tom Cronin	Cllr. Thomas Phelan
Cllr. Conor D. McGuinness	Cllr. Jody Power
Cllr. Declan Doocey	Cllr. Seanie Power
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald	Cllr. John Pratt
Cllr. Damien Geoghegan	Cllr. Eamon Quinlan
Cllr. Jim Griffin	Cllr. Frank Quinlan
Cllr. John Hearne	Cllr. Mary Roche
Cllr. Joe Kelly	Cllr. Eddie Mulligan
Cllr. C Kiely	Cllr. James Tobin
	Cllr. Adam Wyse

Apologies: Cllr. L. Brazil, Cllr. D. Daniels and Cllr. S. Ryan

Officials in Attendance

Mr. M. Walsh, Chief Executive
 Mr. K. Kehoe, Director of Services, Corporate Services, Culture & Planning
 Mr. I. Grimes, Director of Services, Housing, Community & Emergency Services
 Mr. M. Quinn, Director of Services, Economic Development
 Mr. G. Hynes, Senior Engineer, Roads Dept
 Mr. B. Pollard, Head of Finance
 Ms. H. Dunphy, Meetings Administrator
 Mr. D. Mitchell, Corporate
 Meetings Administrator carried out a roll call to confirm meeting attendance.

1. Confirmation of Minutes

Minutes of Plenary meeting held on the 14th of April 2022 proposed by Cllr. Barron, seconded by Cllr. Doocey and agreed by all.

2. Matters Arising

Cllr. Mulligan commented on the spend on radio advertising and asked if there were plans to change the balance and spend towards Social Media campaigns. Cllr. Geoghegan enquired as to the nature of the SLA with local radio.

K. Kehoe, DoS, noted that they would look at the possibility of paid social media advertising. He explained that the SLA with WLR covered a certain number of promotional interviews and campaigns in a year. He stated that he would provide a copy of the SLA to the members.

Cllr. Barry raised again the issue of workshops being held in committee but the proceedings being disclosed to single media outlets and wanted a comment from the executive regarding the matter. M. Walsh, CE, stated that workshops were held in private with the intention that details discussed are not circulated. A discussion ensued on the topic of in committee workshops with the Mayor, Cllrs. J. Power, Murphy, Kiely, Fitzgerald, Pratt, Tobin, Geoghegan, Phelan, McGuinness and O'Sullivan contributing. It concluded with the mayor agreeing to refer the matter to the Procedures Committee/CPG for further debate.

3. Land Disposals

K. Kehoe, DoS, listed the three proposed disposals for consideration.

Item L884 in Ardmore was proposed by Cllr. Nugent and seconded by Cllr. Cronin with Cllrs. Phelan and McGuinness adding their support.

Item D778 in Kilmacthomas was proposed by Cllr. Barron and seconded by Cllr. S. Power.

Item D780 on the Old Tramore Rd Waterford was proposed by Cllr. P. Fitzgerald and seconded by Cllr. F. Quinlan. Cllr. J. Power enquired if this might impact on Active Travel plans in the future and K. Kehoe, DoS, confirmed that it wouldn't.

All three were passed unanimously.

4. Monthly Management Report

Cllr. Murphy asked how many RAS tenants there were and if tenants could be moved to the housing list and the RAS scheme removed. He also asked if there was budget for ensuring footpaths were disabled friendly. He enquired if the council had any power of enforcement for apartment blocks occupied by HAP tenants where there were issues with maintenance and Health and Safety not being looked after by landlords.

Cllr. Wyse asked about the North Quays project and if the council should be considering spending the funds allocated to it on the City Centre instead. He also wanted to know if there was any solution to independent housing for disabled people who might be living with their family and unable to move out. He further enquired when the Active Travel Bike Scheme might be going live.

Cllr. Phelan brought up the low numbers of retrofitting units and why this was so. He also enquired how long it would take to complete the retrofit on the council's own stock.

M. Quinn, DoS, stated that the funds for the North Quays were only for the North Quays and were not transferable. He added that there was also a €28m URDF fund dedicated to the city centre.

I. Grimes, DoS, stated that there were approximately 700 on RAS in Waterford and this was a declining number. It is a national scheme that WCCC is required to implement and tenants are deemed to having their housing needs met under it. Regarding issues with the maintenance of privately owned apartment blocks it was a matter for the management companies of the blocks in the first instance. He explained that there were specialised Approved Housing Bodies which deal with independent housing for the disabled. He suggested that Cllr. Wyse speak to him afterwards about any specific cases given that other disabled applications had been processed in the past. Regarding retrofitting he explained that the monies allowed by the department were in the region of €35k per property and it was not in our own budget and we can only spend what we are given.

F. Galvin, DoS, explained that the programme to address the accessibility of footpaths was on going. He stated that the bike scheme was provisionally scheduled to complete commissioning and the service launched on 20th May.

Cllr. Fitzgerald enquired as to when there would be standardised services delivered in all areas of the city and county and when it could be addressed.

Cllr. Griffin commended the Libraries and the Mayor on the People We Grow Up To Be intergenerational Concert in Christchurch Cathedral on 10th May. He said it was a great example of festival funding and

stated that it would be a pity if events like this were not funded in future years. The mayor also commended Jane Cantwell and her Library team on this and similar events.

Cllr. Mulligan enquired about the affordable housing scheme and the recent expressions of interest. He wanted to know how many units would be delivered in the next few years and how many of those expressions of interest might be viable. Additionally, he wanted to know the level of warnings or cases there might be for those who might be breaching the planning requirements for short term lets.

F. Galvin, DoS, responded to Cllr. Fitzgerald question on service levels that were delivered and explained how they are related to locations, commercial mix and population densities across the city and county. Services in beach areas such as bins and toilets were also increased in the summer season.

K Kehoe, DoS, stated that regarding short term lets inspections had been done and relevant owners informed of the planning permissions required. He would circulate the figures after the meeting. He also welcomed comments regarding the funding of cultural festivals.

I. Grimes, DoS, stated they he had written to the department on the impact of short term lets last month and he had received an acknowledgment from them. He explained that there were 3 affordable housing schemes in the city which had a total of 119 units. There were two other potential developments which were being discussed and they were also looking at the councils' own sites that could be used. Regarding the expressions of interest there were around 584 that were analysed and around 70% of those were likely to lead to viable applications. Anyone that expressed interest would be contacted by the Housing Department in due course. It was his expectation that up to 300 units could be delivered through this scheme in the next 3 or 4 years with the support of the department.

Cllr. Bailey enquired if there was any work being done to increase the supply of student accommodation. She asked if there was any way RAS tenants could get on to tenant purchase. She also wanted to know if there could be a category on CRM for logging issues with footpaths that disabled persons could not use.

Cllr. McGuinness commented on the negative impact that short term lets were having on the rental market across Waterford. He stated that the affordable housing figures given in a parliamentary response he has seen for Waterford were only 76 units over the next 4 years. He further commented that there needed to be more investment in deep retrofit of housing stock.

Cllr. O' Leary enquired about the Celtic Road Group and their responsibility to maintain and keep safe the dual carriageway out towards Kilmeaden. He enquired if there were statistics for accidents at the Carrick on Suir Roundabout in Kilmeadan. He also asked about a phone directory of council staff for the members.

I. Grimes, DoS, stated that some RAS tenants were moving on to long term leases and it is not possible to have such tenancies included in the nationally regulated tenant purchase scheme. He confirmed that up to 120 affordable housing units would be delivered in the next 18 months in Waterford which had been approved by the department.

F. Galvin, DoS, stated that the Carrick on Suir Roundabout had been safety audited in recent years and he would raise the matter with the safety officer for TII at their next meeting.

Cllr. Barry wanted to know why Rosslare port was selected for the multimillion funding announced recently and for wind energy and why Waterford was not considered. He also asked if some funds received from the sales of lands in Kilbarry could be used to supplement the Housing Adaptation Grants now that the funds from government were exhausted.

Cllr. Clune asked for an update on the PLEEP programme and if mini solar panels would be used in the new installations. He also wanted to know why the Local Roads Improvement programme did not use €250k from last year.

Cllr. J. Power wanted to know if Waterford Council had done anything to get funds from Irish Water funding recently announced for wastewater treatment. He also wanted to know what the progress was with the Broadband Rollout in light of the SETU establishment. Additionally, he asked for an update on the Ukrainian refugee's situation.

M. Walsh stated that the council had no control over port activities in Waterford and they it can only liaise with them. He stated that Waterford could not cope with the scale of what was required especially as the initial offshore wind developments were off the east coast.

I. Grimes, DoS, stated it was not a decision the executive could make to divert monies from the Kilbarry land sales, government should fund any shortfall in Housing adaptation grants for the council stock, it would also not be possible to access unused funds for private housing adaption grants. He confirmed that there were more than 700 Ukrainian refugees in the county at the moment with 200 people in the 4 centres looked after by the Council/WAP/Tusla/HSE and the schools as they worked together. There were also circa 350 in hotels who were being looked after by IPAS. He could not comment on the likelihood of further arrivals given the nature of the conflict but there were plans to accommodate more and they were working through pledged properties.

F. Galvin, DoS, stated that PLEEP was being led by Cork County Council for this region with works commencing in Cork with Waterford next. Survey works would begin in the west around September and continue eastwards to be fully completed around August 2023. Solar panels are not part of the scheme as they would not be able to service peak needs in the Winter. The issue with Local Road improvements was that planned schemes were sometimes lost when landowners were unable to provide their required contributions that they committed to. Resources were also an issue in 2021 due to skilled labour shortages. The Waste Water scheme funding was a matter for Irish Water, the council pushed for schemes but cannot influence how Irish Water spend funds.

K. Kehoe, DoS, stated that National Broadband Ireland had previously made a presentation to the members in February and details of how they are progressing is posted on their website.

Cllr. Kiely enquired about the low numbers of new LEO Clients in January and February and if a new set of clients needed to be attracted. She asked if there was any progress with a safety audit as previously raised. She also wanted to know about the plans for Pride events. Cllr Kiely also stated that there was a need to push To Go cups. Additionally, she asked if there would be sites for more trees for the Comhairle na nÓg to use.

Cllr. E. Quinlan asked about the branding of Waterford and how the Sunny Southeast was no longer in use in promoting the county. He also wanted to know if legal advice could be taken on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in terms of the statutory powers that might be available to take civil proceedings against offenders. Cllr. O' Sullivan asked if it was possible to get an information page for members and the public on ASB and what it is. She also for a copy of the report issued annually on instances of ASB and if she could have the previous year as well. She enquired if there was a policy on the flashing signage on roads that advised people of their speed and to slow down.

I. Grimes, DoS, stated that the Community Safety Partnership had received a lot of contributions on ASB and will be working through them in the coming months. ASB is defined in law and he will circulate figures to the members. He stated that ASB is a challenge that concerns us all but we cannot take actions that might obstruct Garda investigations. The Council has the power to remove tenants for ASB but otherwise ASB is criminal behaviour and would have to be proven in court.

F. Galvin, DoS, confirmed that the PLEEP programme was scheduled to complete the retrofit in August 2023. He stated that there were 10 Cafes in the Cups To Go Scheme. The uptake is expected to be higher later in the year when the levy on disposable cups comes in. There are initial issues that needed to be ironed out like who washes cups for example. They were looking for tree planning sites but there are limitation in that the land has to be available long term – so no likelihood of roads or housing been erected. With regard to the flashing road signs there is no specific policy, and their effectiveness tends to wane as drivers become familiar with them in specific locations, traffic calming infrastructure has proven to be more effective.

M. Quinn, DoS, addressed the branding question and explained that Failte Ireland and Tourism Ireland specify the branding focus with Waterford being part of Irelands Ancient East and for local promotion we also had “Where Ireland Begins”. The issue with using the Sunny Southeast is that the area it covers is ill defined.

K. Kehoe, DoS, explained that for Pride month Festivals budget had been allocated particularly for events in Dungarvan. There would also be flags and bunting put up in various locations across the county.

Cllr. Hearne welcomed the re-opening of Brooke House and the work public representatives have contributed to make it happen. He enquired what the progress was on the healthy communities' programmes. Additionally, he asked about the position of Irish people that had been studying in the Ukraine and how they might continue their studies in Ireland.

Cllr. Roche asked if there was any update on the Airport funding. She also asked if more could be done to move traffic from the city centre on to the ring road and across the toll bridge. She asked if it would be possible to move the toll off the bridge and on to the motorway.

Cllr. O' Donnell commented that the lack of public transport in rural areas was an issue for the placement of Ukrainian refugees.

Cllr. F. Quinlan enquired about progress with the communication boards installations for nonverbal children in the playgrounds. He also asked if there was a six-month free period for those that signed up early to the new Public Bike scheme in the city. He also commented that the Tourist Office on the Quay being closed was an issue given the number of visitors who arrived on a recent cruise ship.

Cllr. Tobin complimented James O'Donoghue on the work he was doing with the Local Link and the NTA in getting extra services to suit the needs of the Ukrainian refugees. This was achieved without an increase in staffing or funding which is controlled by the NTA.

M. Walsh, CE, explained that discussions on the Airport financing were on going and subject to confidentiality. He was hoping there would be news soon as the airport board were doing their best to progress.

F. Galvin, DoS, explained that the toll on the bridge is a TII responsibility and would need a government decision if any changes were to be made. He expected that the extension to the Greenway to the city centre would increase traffic volumes. He committed to writing to the Minister on the matter. The communications boards for the playgrounds were in progress. He understood that there would be incentives on launching of the bike scheme which might include elements of free usage.

I. Grimes, DoS, explained that Local Link were working with the council on the Ukrainians requirements, but that part of the pledged accommodation arrangements might be a host's commitment to providing some form of assistance with transport for refugees. He confirmed that issues relating to the Ukrainian situation and education were managed at national level

M. Quinn, DoS, explained that the Tourist Office was now in the Medieval Museum as there was declining demand for tourist offices (people used online options) and this option would allow colocation with attraction and the option for our own staff to cover the Tourist Office functions in the off season.

5. Annual Report 2021

K. Kehoe, DoS, outlined details of the 2021 Annual report.

Cllr. O' Sullivan was appreciative of the report but suggested that perhaps some images of Tramore and Dunmore East should be included.

Cllr. Phelan said he would prefer tabular presentation of data and asked about number of FOI cases which was clarified by Mr. Kehoe.

K. Kehoe, DoS, also confirmed that the format for the report was a standard one for local authorities and that he would include the images suggested by Cllr. O' Sullivan in the final version.

Proposed by Cllr. O' Sullivan, seconded by Cllr. Phelan and agreed by all.

6. Finance

1. Annual Financial Statement 2021 for noting

2. Section 104 – for approval

1. The Annual Financial Statement was introduced by B. Pollard who explained the contents and the surplus of €2.44m generated in the year 2021.

2. The Section 104 statement was explained by B. Pollard who explained the variances and highlighted the improvement in collections and how some of the benefit was due to the rates waiver. Cllr. Roche asked if there might be a negative impact when the rates waiver ended in the future and Mr. Pollard explained that it was hard to tell but he was hopeful that improved processes adopted would benefit longer term collection rates. Cllr. Roche also asked if the €187k underspent in Arts could be used in 2022 and Mr. Pollard said that that was not possible to move money between years Proposed by Cllr. Phelan, seconded by Cllr. O’ Sullivan and agreed by all.

7. Draft Scheme of Priority for Affordable Dwelling Purchase Arrangements – for approval

I. Grimes, DoS, explained that the scheme needed to be approved and sent to the Minister before it could be advertised.

Cllr. Bailey asked if applicants should look for a 4-bed house initially even if their family was not sufficient size at that time. I. Grimes clarified that almost all the houses in the initial schemes were 3 beds.

Cllr. McGuinness enquired if “First Come First served” was a good criterion for selection and if other means might be considered and if it could be considered at the next SPC meeting.

Cllr. Phelan wondered if the scheme might be useful in freeing up 2 bed homes in the council stock by giving a path to current tenants to buy under the scheme and vacate council properties.

Cllr. Mulligan asked if it was necessary to have a scheme and asked if the Housing SPC had considered it.

I. Grimes, DoS, explained that members could review the scheme at any time and that if tenants did apply that were in two bed social housing it would increase the supply. He explained that this 1st scheme had not been through the SPC but that it needed to be sent to the Minister in order to proceed with advertising for applicants.

M. Walsh, CE, stated that he was happy to keep it under review. At present were the first local authority in the state to offer the scheme and we needed to stay ahead so that we could exceed our targets and benefit from more funding and LDA allocation. Waterford’s objective was to allow the applications to proceed as the applicants would have to work to fulfil the conditions required.

Proposed by Cllr. McGuinness, seconded by Cllr. O’ Sullivan and agreed by all.

8. Climate Action Update

M. Walsh, CE, informed the meeting that Waterford had not been successful in the Climate action and Smart Cities EU Funding application which was disappointing. The funds had been allocated to capitals and larger cities. Other funds would be sought, and the resources were being recruited. There was also a possibility of partnering with a larger city.

Suspension of standing to extend the meeting by 15 minutes proposed by Cllr. McGuinness and seconded by Cllr. O’ Sullivan and agreed by all.

Cllr. Griffin asked if the submission prepared could be used again for other applications in the future.

M. Walsh, CE, confirmed they could reuse the application data and that feedback would be sought on the scoring of the application so that the content could be improved.

Cllr. Phelan stated that he would like to see a new plan given that a rates rebate was agreed to be given to participant small businesses. Cllr. Kiely also wanted some elaboration on the promised rates rebate and the associated environmental training. Cllr. S. Power enquired about the methods that were being proposed including Solar schemes.

M. Walsh, CE, confirmed that a whole suite of tools were being considered including retrofitting and renewables and the executive still wanted to train people. In relation to the rates rebate they would be giving people that had applied the benefit of the doubt for now.

B. Pollard, HoF, confirmed that that his team would be giving the benefit of the doubt while liaising with the Environment Directorate in handling rebates.

Cllr. Doocey commented that investment in renewables was slow due to the high initial costs involved in projects such as solar. He hoped that more use could be made of offshore wind and tidal energy sources.

9. Correspondence

Proposed by Cllr. Geoghegan, seconded by Cllr. Phelan and agreed by all.

10. Notice of Motions

1. Motion in the name of Cllr. Cristíona Kiely (For Noting Only)

“That Waterford City & Council agrees to not commit public funds to organisations involved in blood sports with the City and County.”

Reg. No. 213 (dated 17th April, 2022)

It was agreed at CPG held on the 3rd May, 2022, Motion No. 213 be referred to the Housing, Community & Culture SPC for consideration and report back to the CPG.

2. Motion in the name of Cllr. Lola O’Sullivan

“That Waterford City & Council provide an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) at the 5 Lifeguard beaches for this summer and every summer going forward.”

Reg. No. 214 (dated 25th April, 2022)

This motion was introduced by Cllr. O’ Sullivan who also proposed it and it was seconded by Cllr. Geoghegan.

Cllr Phelan, Kiely, McGuinness, and F. Quinlan spoke and added their support. The motion passed unanimously.

11. A.O.B.

Cllr. Fitzgerald stated that a wind energy workshop with input from Wind Energy Ireland was needed. This was supported by Cllr. Doocey and Cllr. Kiely who suggested that a briefing on solar power should be included.

The Mayor proposed a further extension of 5 minutes to conclude the business of the meeting which was seconded by Cllr. O’ Sullivan and agreed by all.

Cllr. J. Power asked that a letter could be sent to Irish Water regarding the release of raw sewerage into waterways.

Cllr. Geoghegan commented that the sound in the chamber was not too good for this meeting and needed to be looked at.

Signed: _____
Mayor

Dated: _____