

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

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13th APRIL 2023 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER,
DUNGARVAN, CO. WATERFORD.**

Present

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

Apologies: Cllr. Donal Barry, Cllr. John Pratt, Cllr. Mairead Tobin.

Officials in Attendance

Mr. M. Walsh, Chief Executive
 Mr. K. Kehoe, Director of Services, Corporate Services, Culture and Planning
 Mr. I. Grimes, Director of Services, 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

1. Confirmation of Minutes

Plenary Meeting held on 9th March 2023 Proposed by Cllr. Roche and seconded by Cllr. Doocey and agreed by all.

Special Plenary Meeting held on 27th March 2023 Proposed by Cllr. McGuinness and seconded by Cllr. Wyse and agreed by all.

Special Plenary Meeting held on 31st March 2023 Proposed by Cllr. Kelly and seconded by Cllr. Phelan and agreed by all.

2. Matters Arising

Cllr. Roche asked for update on the list of Council owned properties she had previously requested.

Cllr. Conway asked that it be noted that his welcome to Cllr. David Daniels at Plenary Meeting on 09th March 2023 was on behalf of himself and his Independent Party Colleagues.

Cllr. McGuinness said that at plenary meeting on 9th March 2023 he raised the question of correspondence to the TII and the Minister for Transport regarding a meeting in relation to the N25. He said that an invitation to meet the Minister had not issued at that time and he asked that it be noted that at the plenary meeting on 08th December 2022 it was agreed that any cross-party delegation to meet the TTI should also meet with the Minister for Transport on the same day. He asked if there has been any correspondence since last meeting. In reply F. Galvin, DoS said that a letter had issued to the Minister since last meeting and will revert when a response is received.

Cllr. Bailey asked that the Minutes of Plenary Meeting held on 9th March 2023 be corrected to replace Cllr. Griffin with Cllr. Barron in the following line “Cllr. Geoghegan elected with 14 votes to 12 cast for Cllr. Griffin with six Councillors not present.”

3. Land Disposals

K. Kehoe, DoS outlined details of the land disposals for approval.
Proposed by Cllr. Wyse, seconded by Cllr. J. Power and agreed by all.

4. Monthly Management Report

Cllr. Murphy asked in relation to the 119 eviction notices for Waterford effective from April 2023 mentioned at the Special Plenary Meeting held on 27th March 2023, if there was an increase in the number of people presenting to Homeless Services and if so, what that increase was.

Cllr. Phelan asked that the decarbonisation programme be given a separate heading in the Environmental Services section of the Management Report each month. He said that Galway City Council had recently received EU funding under the Net Zero Cities pilot and noted that they had collaborated with the Northern & Western Regional Assembly in making their application, he asked if Waterford City & County Council had collaborated with the Southern Regional Assembly in the submission of their application. He asked if the Council could look at creating a senior role of a EU/SRA liaison officer to ensure full advantage is taken of EU and SRA funding going forward. He requested that updates on the Greenway are included in Management Report. With regard to the Community Recognition Fund he asked if the applicants who were not included in the 13 projects submitted to the Department would be informed of this and would be given the reason as to why.

Cllr. S. Power noted that there are delays in replacement of public lighting bulbs by the contractor Killaree Lighting Services Ltd, noted that bonds in relation to the granting of planning permission for solar farms need to be substantial in the event of compensation claims into the future.

I. Grimes, DoS stated that the Homeless Services figures for the first two weeks in April were 57 presentations in the first week and 64 in the second week. He said presentations do not mean people are homeless. The average figures for the first 3 months of the year prior to 1st April was between 50 and 70 indicating that the number of presentations has not increased. There are 53 landlords,

who have issued Notices to Quit in the past number of months, engaging with the Council and where the Council hope to make offers to purchase. In relation to the Community Recognition Fund he said expressions of interest were invited and proposals went forward to the Department based on the number of refugees located in the area. He said the projects that were unsuccessful will be looked at.

F. Galvin, DoS outlined that the Council is preparing a new Climate Action Plan, an integral part of which will be the integration of decarbonisation zone proposals. There will be a workshop for members in May with updates in terms of the public consultation process over the coming months with the Climate Action Plan coming before the members for adoption in early 2024. The Council's application under the Net Zero Cities project was unsuccessful. There is an ongoing stream of applications from Waterford & City Council under a variety of different programmes and working with various groups in their development. He requested details to be provided on the locations where issues are arising in relation to public lighting.

M. Quinn, DoS noted that in relation to the Greenway that where the project is of a larger scale it can be included in the Management Report but he said a lot of the works are more local so it is more appropriate to include them in District Reports.

F. Galvin, DoS advised Cllr. Phelan that the Council did not consult with the Southern Regional Assembly on the Council's application under the Net Zero Cities project however he said there is ongoing liaison and contact with the Regional Assembly.

M. Walsh, CE also advised Cllr. Phelan that there are no proposals and no budget to create a new senior role.

Cllr. Conway asked in relation to a recent recommendation by the Minister for Agriculture for additional dog wardens, if Waterford City & County Council are likely to benefit from this. He asked in relation to the Register of Electors if it is possible to get a hardcopy.

A minutes silence was observed and the meeting was suspended for five minutes as a mark of respect for the late Craig Breen who passed away following a crash in Croatia. The Mayor extended his deepest sympathy to the family on behalf of himself and the other members of Waterford City & County Council.

Cllr. Kelly welcomed the increase in support given by the Local Enterprise Office and congratulated both the Local Enterprise Office and the businesses involved. He congratulated Nathan Sfindji of Waterpark College who won the Student Enterprise County Final and will represent Waterford at the national final in Croke Park in May and Hopfully Brewing, the Waterford company who will represent Waterford at the 23rd National Enterprise Awards in Dublin on 1st June. J

Cllr. Geoghegan asked what will happen to the €200,000 worth of funding allocated for a project in Tramore, which the Metropolitan District members recently voted against. He believes the funding should not be returned to the Department and should be used to fund other projects, making a case for projects in Dungarvan.

F. Galvin, DoS noted that there has been no correspondence from the Department as yet in relation to dog wardens. In relation to the works in Tramore he said the funding was allocated by the National Transport Authority under the Safe Routes to School programme under Active Travel and any decision as to where that money may be spent or where it may be allocated if not spent in the current year would have to be approved by the NTA.

K. Kehoe, DoS noted that in relation to the Register of Electors that we have an electronic system for the Electoral Register. It is now a rolling register which is continuously updated and is available on the home page of the Councillor Portal, a demonstration can be arranged if required.

Cllr. E. Quinlan enquired about the expansion of the Schools Meals Scheme, noting there is a secondary parallel scheme called Urban Schools Meal Scheme where the Local Authority can recoup 50% of their costs by working with schools. He said if the schools across the city and county were to liaise with Waterford City & County Council, we could partner with them to have central locations for meals to be provided. Referencing the proposed Dungarvan to Mallow Greenway he asked if Waterford City & County Council in general are susceptible to having to cover costs around negotiating with owners of land subject to a CPO and if so, do we have a budget in place to cover such costs.

Cllr. McGuinness asked for an update on the guidelines for the use of CCTV by local authorities needed to help deter anti-social behaviour, littering and illegal dumping. He asked given the increase in housing applications from 31 in March 2022 to 184 in March 2023 if there is sufficient staff in the Housing Section to manage this increase in the number of people seeking social housing. In relation to the 119 Notices to Quit actionable from the beginning of April he said he wished to clarify that this is an accurate figure provided by the Residential Tenancy Board part of whose remit it is to provide this data.

Cllr. Fitzgerald asked about extension of duration of time for planning permission where the 5 years has lapsed. He asked how many planning permissions have expired where previously applicants could have applied to extend the planning permission. He asked what the advice is for people who will not get an extension and if they will need to reapply. He asked if Waterford City & County Council is the only local authority where this is the case or is this national policy. He noted the different policy in relation to grass cutting between rural and urban areas with urban areas having grass cutting weekly during the summer which is not the case in rural areas.

K. Kehoe, DoS noted that schools should liaise with Corporate Section in relation to school meals. He outlined that applicants have 5 years in which to bring their development to substantial completion and if that has not been achieved there is no entitlement to an extension of duration of permission and this applies nationally. The permission should be used within five years, or the development brought to substantial completion. Where applicants find permission has lapsed, they are advised to reapply as quickly as possible. In relation to the compulsory purchase of any property the Council covers the persons' legal costs, any challenge payment of legal fees is decided by the Court.

F. Galvin, DoS outlined that CCTV guidelines are due to issue in the coming months. Grass cutting is carried out in the main public open spaces across the county. It is not cut in private housing estates and is the responsibility of individual residents or residents' associations.

I. Grimes, DoS noted that the increase in Housing Applications is because there are more people eligible as the income limits have increased. Staffing is always a challenge however he said he is satisfied the applications team are currently adequately staffed.

Cllr. Hearne spoke about difficulty for parents in accessing services for children with autism and special needs, consideration needs to be given in future plans

Cllr. Daniels thanked the CE & staff for their hard work in commencing the North Quays project, he noted that Waterford has an opportunity to partner with the financial services sector as part of the development. Noted that if we could replicate a part of the success of the IFSC in Dublin we could bring back our graduates and help transform the city. He requested a meeting with the Irish Funds Industry Association and the IDA to set out the unique opportunity that is unfolding in Waterford. He also asked for monthly updates on the airport.

Cllr. Ryan enquired about the role of the council in relation to rented accommodation in poor repair in both city & county, the role in inspections and improvement of these properties and given the extent of the problem if additional staff required. Enquired if the Housing Applications Section is

adequately staffed given that there were 6 times more housing applications in March 2023 compared to March 2022.

K. Kehoe, DoS noted Cllr. Hearnese's comments adding that we will continue to make all our services as assessable as possible, regular updates on the airport will be provided to the members. M. Quinn, DoS, noted that constantly engaged with the IDA & Enterprise Ireland around the development of the City and County, they are aware of developments on the North Quays and are aware of the potential that SETU offers.

I. Grimes, DoS said in relation to private rented accommodation that the Council's role is to conduct inspections and issue enforcements notices to landlords who are non-compliant adding that this section now has its full complement of staff. In relation to the increase in Housing Applications he said the increase is because there are more people eligible as the income limits have increased. Staffing in the Applications Section will be kept under review and staff can be moved within the Housing Department if necessary.

Cllr. O'Donnell wished to support Cllr. Geoghegan in relation to the funding of €200,000, the funding should not be returned to the Department and should be used to fund other projects.

Cllr. J. Power noted that the Port of Waterford is currently at 30% capacity and need to make representations for additional business. He expressed his concern in relation to SETU movement of the Civil Engineering Courses to Carlow and the move of the Administrative Offices from Waterford to Carlow.

Cllr. Clune requested update in relation to the affordable sites scheme where local authority sites are made available at a discount. He said in the Keeping Communities Safe a Framework for Fire Safety in Ireland document it states that it is National Directorate policy that the nearest available resource (in terms of speed of arrival) should be deployed to emergency incidents irrespective of administrative boundaries, he asked for clarification in relation to a recent fire in Butlerstown which was attended by fire personnel from Dunmore when Waterford City fire personnel were closer in terms of distance.

M. Quinn, DoS noted that the issues raised in relation to the Port of Waterford and SETU are not the direct responsibility of Waterford City & County Council.

I. Grimes, DoS noted that no additional information in relation to the affordable sites scheme, a workshop for members to look at details of the various schemes announced in recent months will be arranged. He will revert in relation to query about the fire in Butlerstown.

Cllr. Griffin enquired if there has been a change in relation to housing succession rights. He noted if need to inform the public about possible traffic delays etc as a result of works on the North Quays and asked for workshop for the members in relation to the Guardian project.

Cllr. Keating noted that the increase in housing applications is because of the increased income limits and not as a result of the lifting of the eviction ban, the 119 Notices to Quit for Waterford effective from April 2023 did not increase the number of presentations to Homeless Services and congratulated the Housing Department for their handling of the situation.

Cllr. Kiely requested update on spending under Active Travel and if there will be an underspend this year. Enquired if an anaerobic digester could be provided for businesses.

M. Quinn, DoS, noted that there is a newsletter due to be distributed in relation to the North Quays project, there will be an effective communication process in place with the contact details of the project liaison officer provided along with regular updates in relation to ongoing works and advising of any disruptions.

I. Grimes, DoS noted that there has no change in the relation to the succession policy.

F. Galvin, DoS outlined that intend to draw down full allocation under Active Travel and will provide updates during the year in relation to the projects. Noted that the council would not be involved in the provision of an anaerobic digester to businesses

M. Walsh, CE in relation to the “Guardian” project said it will be the be the end of year before it is brought before the members.

Cllr. Bailey requested update in relation to Energy Efficiency Retrofitting requesting the allocation for 2023, noting the allocation for 2022 of 76 houses with 67 completed enquiring if there are 9 houses left from the 2022 allocation for retrofitting. She asked going forward if the details in relation to the tenant in situ scheme be included in the monthly Management Report. Noted that the effect of the lifting of the eviction ban would not be evident as yet.

Cllr. Roche enquired how many applications are there in relation to Airbnb’s, applications to change the use of a property so it can be used as an Airbnb or applications to continue as an Airbnb have been received and how many permissions have been granted. In relation to the increase in call outs to incidents by our Fire Services she asked how many of these call outs were outside the boundaries of Waterford City & County Council and if there are arrangements in place to recoup the costs of attending these incidents.

Cllr. Doocey asked for a workshop around the proposed Dungarvan to Mallow Greenway in order to highlight the difficulties for landowners impacted.

I. Grimes, DoS noted in relation to the energy retrofitting that there has been no change as there has been no further development from the Department. The council provide the Department with a list of the poorest energy performance houses, and they indicate what funding is available on a year-to-year basis and will revert with the details as requested. Information in relation to the tenants in situ scheme will be circulated and updated on the website. In relation to fire services the number of incidents would be in the order of 10% in the area of South Kilkenny where there is an agreement between Waterford and Kilkenny. He said the incident attended in Wexford was part of a major response arising from the fire in Wexford Hospital.

K. Kehoe, DoS noted that the changes in relation to short term lets have not come into force yet, the current regulations apply in Rent Pressure Zones and the Planning Department continue to monitor in the City. Warning letters have issued and he will circulate the figures and will inform the members when the new provisions come into place.

M. Quinn, DoS outlined that the Dungarvan to Mallow Greenway is at feasibility study stage and there is also an engagement process under way with landowners. The current engagement process and the feasibility study should be allowed to come to an initial conclusion before workshops are arranged with the Councillors.

Cllr. Nugent requested a workshop for members in relation to the various schemes announced in recent months around derelict and vacant houses. He asked what the uptake was on the offer of houses for the Ukrainian refugees.

Cllr. Wyse said with regard to Choice Based Letting that there were 369 refusals on properties out of a total of 1185 properties advertised to date, a refusal rate of 32%. He said the CBL site had 12% less views this year to date compared to same period last year and yet there is an increase in housing applications.

I. Grimes, DoS noted that there will be a workshop arranged on funding available for vacant and derelict sites. Since the offer of homes initiative was launched 90 offers have been received, 45 of which are already occupied by 100 Ukrainian refugees and he said we are working through the

remainder. In relation to the CBL he will discuss with the Allocations Team the refusal rate for properties advertised on CBL.

5. Supporting Waterford Community Fund 2023 – For Approval

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

6. Annual Report

The Mayor introduced the Annual Report for 2022 noting the report shows Waterford as progressive and connected, well positioned to lead in terms of business development, economic growth and educational excellence. It offers top class amenities with many tourist attractions.

Cllr. Griffin acknowledged the excellent work completed in 2022 noting concern in delays in payment by the International Protection Accommodation Services (IPAS) in respect of accommodation requesting a letter expressing concern in relation to payments could issue.

Cllr. Phelan said the report was an excellent synopsis of the range and diversity of work completed by the Council in 2022. In relation to the format of the report he requested that the previous years data could be provided to allow for comparisons. He asked that future annual reports clearly set out in table format what the specific aims, strategies and objectives were going into the year and then report on the progress towards achieving those so that performance can be measured.

Cllr. Kelly said the report highlights the excellent work taking place in Waterford and he believes Waterford is the best place to live in Ireland. He said that need to progress the reopening of the Airport and 24/7 cardiac care.

Cllr. Ryan supported the need for targets to be set out clearly in future reports. He noted that the Library Service is the best in the country with the area of culture very strong in Waterford.

Cllr. McGuinness noted that the report gives a snapshot of the excellent work taking place and it shows the value of local government to communities.

Cllr. Fitzgerald welcome the report, the work taking place and said we are making our way forward. He said there is a need to create a balance between rural & urban development saying in particular in smaller areas private investment must be matched with public investment to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with any development.

K. Kehoe, DoS noted that the annual report is not to showcase how the council has performed in the delivery of services and said that detail is provided in the NOAC report. The Annual Service Plan sets out our aims and objectives across the various sections. He highlighted the 77 meetings of the full Plenary Council which included 11 Plenary Council Meetings, 24 Special Meetings and 21 Workshops with further meetings and workshops at district level acknowledging the huge workload and thanked the members. The annual report reflects back at all times to the corporate plan, the Annual Report is an opportunity to showcase what the Council supports and champions.

Cllr. Hearne noted the report shows that in every aspect of Waterford society people are better off as a result of the work taking place and in particular, commending the work of staff.

Cllr. J. Power suggested that future annual reports might show any weaknesses or any threats to what we hope to achieve to highlight what we might need to do to overcome them.

7. Committee Vacancies – Community Safety Partnership

It was proposed by Cllr. S. Power and seconded by Cllr. O’Sullivan that Cllr. John O’Leary be appointed to the Community Safety Committee and agreed by all.

8. Correspondence

Proposed by Cllr. Power, seconded by Cllr. Brazil and agreed by all.

9. Notice of Motions

Motion in the name of Cllr. Mary Roche

“That Waterford City & County council will develop and implement a policy with a view to delivering Teen Spaces whereby teenagers can hang out in a safe and fun manner and to investigate how our current assets can be made more teenager friendly”.

Reg. No. PA/2023/226 (dated, 6th March 2023)

Cllr. Roche in proposing the motion said that Waterford City & County Council do very well in the provision of services, from children to older people but she said she believes there is room for improvement in terms of providing spaces for teenagers. South Dublin Co. Co. have a policy which recognises that teenagers need a slightly different type of space, a more unstructured space to allow them to develop their independence and asked the Council to look at this area of teen spaces.

Cllr. Kelly seconded the motion.

Cllr. J. Power, Cllr. Hearne and Cllr. Kiely also spoke in favour of the motion.

Motion proposed by Cllr. Roche seconded by Cllr. Kelly and agreed by all.

10. AOB

Cllr. F. Quinlan requested opening a Book of Condolences for the late Craig Breen

Cllr Geoghegan spoke to mention some of the late Craig Breen’s great achievements.

Cllr. McGuinness said he wished to make clear that what he had said at the special meeting last month was that there were 119 Notices to Quit that were issued in Quarter 3 of last year that became actionable on 1st April. He said the fact that all 119 households did not present on the 1st April seeking emergency accommodation is down to their landlords and not to Government policy.

Cllr. Bailey asked for an update in relation to the members’ previous motions.

Cllr. J. Power said that more trees are required in the Country and we need to be planting trees not cutting them down.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Mayor of Waterford City & County Council

Dated: _____