

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

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 11th MAY 2023 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CITY HALL, WATERFORD.**

Present

Cllr. John O’Leary (Mayor)	Cllr. Cristiona Kiely
Cllr. John Pratt	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. Donal Barry
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. Adam Wyse
Cllr. Stephanie Keating	Cllr. Joe Kelly

Apologies: Cllr. Thomas Phelan, Cllr. Mairead Tobin, Cllr. Seamus Ryan, Cllr. Ger Barron

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. M. Nolan Reade, Corporate

1. Confirmation of Minutes

Plenary Meeting held on 13th April, 2023 Proposed by Cllr. E. Quinlan and seconded by Cllr. Brazil and agreed by all.

2. Matters Arising

None

3. Land Disposals

K. Kehoe, DoS outlined details of the land disposals for approval.

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

4. Monthly Management Report

Cllr. McGuinness highlighted the issue of water service staff transferring to Uisce Éireann, the concerns among staff regarding employment terms and conditions and their future, understands that unions have balloted for strike action and enquired if the council had received notice of this. Enquired if council would consider under rural housing an option where people who qualify in terms of an income threshold for social housing but may have a site if they could be considered for social housing on that site.

Cllr. Nugent welcomed the waiver on residential development enquiring if that includes one off houses, requested clarification on Uisce Éireann waiver scheme, requested workshop regarding vacant houses.

Cllr. Clune sought clarification that a written acknowledgement should issue in relation to public submissions made on planning applications and that it is a requirement under the Planning and Development Act, he referenced a recent planning application where a number of submissions were not acknowledged which prevents the person making an appeal to An Bord Pleanála. He enquired how a decision can be made without each submission being reviewed.

K. Kehoe, DoS, outlined staffing matters are an executive function and would be inappropriate to comment on the current national discussions. Outlined the development contribution scheme relates to any type of residential house, Uisce Éireann are a separate entity and it is their responsibility with regard to their waiver scheme. Noted that not in a position to discuss individual planning application cases, stated that all submissions are acknowledged. Outlined that the e-planning system is in place so acknowledgements can also be issued electronically, confirmed that every submission is considered and reviewed in detail in order to reach a decision.

I. Grimes, DoS, noted that if the Department is prepared to fund the scheme as outlined by Cllr. McGuinness the council would consider reviewing and investigating the operation of the scheme. Will schedule workshop to outlined details in relation to vacant sites and associated schemes.

Cllr. Griffin requested update regarding notice to quit asking if housing department are finding it challenging and if can meet the demand, enquired as to how many properties dealing with in regard to purchasing and are the council in receipt of sufficient funding. Acknowledged the work of the Active Travel team on organising recent fieldtrip to Utrecht, noting the trip was hugely beneficial and suggested workshop to be scheduled as follow up and should look at consideration of a pilot programme.

Cllr. Conway spoke of concerns regarding waste management companies who are operating outside sociable hours, this is impinging on quality of life and impact on workers rights adding parameters should be specified with companies regarding their service agreements.

Cllr. Barry requested update on talks with mediators between Kilkenny County Council regarding provision of fire services. Noted low number of applications received for vacant property refurbishment grant scheme, enquired if any improvements in applications following the scheme changes. Requested update on progress on propeller from the PhortLáirge tugboat in terms of making it a feature on the Quay, requested details on role of new Crafts Coordinator as part of Cultural Quarter.

I. Grimes, DoS, outlined that staff are dealing with the workload in relation to notice to quit and engaging with property owners, a number of landlords do not want to sell to council as rather go to the open market. In terms of presentation since eviction ban 12 notice to quit have issued. Will revert to Cllr. Barry with information regarding vacant property refurbishment grant and will detail in workshop.

F. Galvin, DoS, notes comments regarding fieldtrip and will arrange workshop. Will liaise with waste collection operators regarding their obligations, requested further details on specific companies observed.

M. Walsh, CE, noted that a conciliator is currently resolving issue in relation to Kilkenny County Council.

M. Quinn, DoS, noted there is a joint project with the Port of Waterford in relation to the Phortláirge propellor at the roundabout, adding there is wider proposal to enhance the general area.

K. Kehoe, DoS, will revert to Cllr. Barry in relation to the Vacant Property Scheme.

Cllr. E. Quinlan noted Sports Area Partnership launched new initiative for coming summer called Summer Camps Access Programme for mild to moderate disabilities, partnering with various clubs to facilitate camps, camps were booked out immediately, requested engagement with clubs who did not yet sign up to initiative to encourage participation following massive interest. Enquired if there is an intention by the council to pursue serviced sites programme in smaller towns and villages allowing families from community who may be on lower income to avail of purchasing to build their home.

Cllr. F. Quinlan requested review of application form for window grants adding elderly people applying for grant should be in receipt of higher standard of windows above what is set out in current application.

Cllr. Bailey requested details on the number of vacant sites liable for vacant site levy throughout city and county since introduction in 2019 with a full breakdown in CE report for next meeting on value of site, payments collected and money outstanding.

I. Grimes, DoS, will refer Cllr. E. Quinlan query to Sports Partnership. Outlined serviced sites comes under Housing for All programme and yet to receive details from the Department, council will consider if funds become available. Will review terms and conditions on form for window upgrades.

K. Kehoe, DoS, outlined serviced sites identified in Bunmahon and planning currently reviewing Stradbally. Will arrange preparation of full breakdown of vacant sites report for next month.

Cllr. Hearne thanked staff who deal with issues registered on the councillor portal, encouraging all members to use it. Enquired if under new Local Economic Community Plan could look at making facilities disability friendly and bring forward to appropriate SPC for consideration.

Cllr. Kiely requested update on installing rainbow crossings in support of Pride month, important that Waterford supports this initiative and demonstrates support for the LGBTQ community. Requested additional signage in pollinator areas to highlight and explain “No Mow May” campaign and to promote on council social media platforms. Requested water pollution workshop. Cllr. Roche enquired about what role council has regarding offshore wind farms, suggested an information meeting covering the subject, enquired about implications to the council on the development levy waiver. Requested tenant in situ be reported separately in management report. Requested update on motion passed at April meeting regarding the progression on delivery of teen spaces.

I. Grimes, DoS, will review query in addressing disability friendly facilities. Outlined issues regarding tenant in situ scheme, it's a new scheme and will provide update in management report as the scheme develops.

K. Kehoe thanked Cllr. Hearne for his comments regarding CRM portal, encourages continued use by the members. Outlined role of council regarding offshore wind will be in relation to the landing points as part of the planning application. Noted that the motion has been referred to the Cultural and Community SPC for consideration, next meeting due to be held in two weeks.

F. Galvin, DoS, outlined rainbow crossing will be installed in two locations in city which comply with traffic regulation. Will consider additional signage regarding 'No Mow May' and will refer to communications team to promote on social media platforms.

Cllr. Kelly requested website updated to reflect correct information regarding Tenant Purchase Scheme. Enquired if design could be re-examined regarding Greenway bridge crossing in the city, concerns in relation to narrow paths for cyclists. Requested update on progress of the roll out of beach mats to assist with mobility issues and buggies as summer season is approaching.

Cllr. O' Donnell enquired if council has any power to prevent 5G masts within 5 meters of residential dwellings adding it is a danger to health.

Cllr. Fitzgerald enquired if in person pre-planning meetings can be put back in place. Noted 37 HAP inspections were carried out last month 34 were found to be non-compliant enquired how many of the non-compliant properties were checked previously and remained non-complaint, asked if there is a sanction on landlords to provide good standard of accommodation.

I. Grimes, DoS, outlined new booklet and website will be updated regarding Tenant Purchase Scheme, confirmed since changes were introduced the new rules have been applied. Outlined all non-compliant properties are inspected, indicate what measures need to be carried out and there are sanctions for landlords who fail to comply with council regulations.

F. Galvin, DoS, noted comments on narrow paths on Greenway approach in the city at the bridge, works currently underway and will be carried out in accordance with standards. Outlined difficulties in managing beach mats and not suitable with tides on beaches, do not have staff to manage removal from beaches on daily basis.

K. Kehoe, DoS, noted EPA and World Health Organisation have no issue with licence being granted for 5G technology, have confirmed cause no ill health, adding roll out of 5G in rural areas is hugely important for connectivity. Outlined in person pre planning meeting can be facilitated and any request is satisfied within two weeks.

Cllr. Murphy raised concerns regarding registering to receive a special/postal vote outlining part of the form requires completion by GP, charges can apply for completion adding this is a further burden on vulnerable people, enquired if letter could be issued to medical council request ceasing the practice of charging. Requested on all social media platforms that the council is referred to as Waterford City and County Council rather than Waterford Council.

Cllr. Power requested review of crossing at St. Declan's Way on N25. Outlined tones of lumber being transported by train then transferred to trucks, enquired if product could be carried entirely by train. Enquired if there are any pre planning plans available for North Quays project. Enquired if any feedback or figures available regarding St. Patrick's Day tour visitors. Noted twelve registered cruise ships due to visit Waterford this year request greater effort this year to attract more ships.

Cllr. Geoghegan spoke regarding recent community/sports grants, requested review of dealing with applicants where refused due to minor reasons such as failing to complete form correctly and not including a signature.

K. Kehoe, DoS, will refer query to franchise section in the department to allow for issue to be raised with medical council.

M. Quinn, DoS noted comments regarding abbreviating to Waterford Council and refer to communications to be addressed. Regarding transportation of timber there will be restrictions as result of North Quays construction, arrangements are put in place with Irish Rail regarding traffic issues, noted decision on method of transport would fall to Irish Rail as outside the control of council. Outlined progress of North Quays included in monthly report, will arrange workshop to provide further update when progress is further ahead. Outlined tides cause restrictions regarding ability for cruise ships to dock at the Port and the city.

I. Grimes, DoS, outlined the criteria and process for community grants, stating it clearly sets out the deadlines and conditions for which applicants need to adhere to, grants are responsibility of one person with approximately 450 applications.

F. Galvin, DoS, outlined no current plans for changes to the N25 and St. Declan's Way, no funding available at present.

5. Annual Financial Statement (AFS) and Section 104

B. Pollard, Head of Finance, outlined detailed account of Annual Financial Statement, referred to the summary that was issued to members and outlined the exceptional items. Noted good collections for 2022 from rents, rates and loans resulting in releasing reserve, enabling to transfer money to 2022-2026 capital plan.

Section 104 proposed by Cllr. Wyse, seconded by Cllr. Doocey and agreed by all.

Cllr. Roche commented 95% rates collection is extraordinary enquired to what would attribute such a high collection level.

B. Pollard, HoF, outlined during covid most business obtained relief, plan was to turn rates book around, it is attributed to good communications, a team of people put in huge amount of hard work and have a good escalation strategy.

Cllr. Kelly enquired if mortgage loans are performing and extent of the arrears. Enquired how employee pensions are paid.

B. Pollard, HoF, outlined loans have improved over last few years, regarding pensions recent entry staff pension will be paid through central government, older entry staff from council funds.

Cllr. Daniels thanked Bernard Pollard and the team for hard work on producing report, requested breakdown of €12million and enquired if surplus can be put into accruals.

B. Pollard, HoF, provided a detailed breakdown of debts; Rates, Rents Government Grants Debt, Vacant Sites, Fire Charges, Development Contribution. Outlined as much as possible has been accrued.

Cllr. F. Quinlan requested the rent arrears figure.

P. Bollard, HoF, outlined figure of €3.9million outstanding as per note under appendix 7.

6. Twinning Ramallah Municipality

K. Kehoe, DOS provided a brief account of the twinning process to date and the details as outlined in the report from Ramallah.

Proposed by Cllr. D. McGuinness, seconded by Cllr. Power

Cllr. McGuinness outlined that the twinning proposal is a positive development, unique and unprecedented, adding a considerable amount of time spent to date on developing the twinning proposal, it provides links in such areas as boxing. He thanked the local twinning committee including David Reece and Brian Partridge. Supported by Cllr. Hearne who welcomed the proposed twinning.

Cllr. Kelly echoed previous councillors adding it is a good proposal and a lot of the groundwork is already happening, noting there are different community groups engaging with each other.

Cllr. Conway said while groups can learn culturally and socially from each other he feels the twinning is deeply problematic as there are non-democratic ways and human rights issues in Palestine and urged the council members not to proceed with the proposed twinning.

It was proposed by Cllr. Pratt, seconded by Cllr. Clune that the proposed twinning is deferred to next meeting to allow members time to research the issue.

Deferral was carried with majority vote through a show of hands.

7. Presentation by Port of Waterford

David Sinnott CEO of Port of Waterford provided a detailed presentation on the role of the port, its background and purpose, sustainability, the value and history of the Port. He thanked the councillors that have visited the port and Michael Walsh and officials of Waterford City & County Council for their support.

Cllr. Nugent, Cllr. Barry, Cllr. Kiely, Cllr. Murphy, Cllr. Power and Cllr. Fitzgerald Cllr. Quinlan, Cllr. Kelly, Cllr. Hearn, Cllr. E. Quinlan, Cllr. Griffin, Cllr. Roche and Cllr. Geoghegan all spoke and gave their observations and thanked David and Darren for an informative presentation.

David Sinnott, CEO, thanked councillors for their observations and comments.

Mayor O' Leary thanked David Sinnott and Darren Doyle for attending to provide presentation to the members.

Extension of standing orders for 30 minutes proposed by Cllr. Geoghegan, seconded by Cllr. Fitzgerald agreed by all.

8. Correspondence

Proposed by Cllr. E. Quinlan, seconded by Cllr. Kiely and agreed by all.

Cllr. Cronin asked to be added to list of attendees for the AILG Annual Conference 2023: 19th & 20th April, Hotel Kilkenny, College Road, Kilkenny.

9. Notice of Motions

1. Motion in the names of Cllr. Mary Roche, Cllr. Lola O' Sullivan, Cllr. Cristiona Kiely, Cllr. Mairead Tobin, Cllr. Joanne Bailey, Cllr. Stephanie Keating

“That this Council recognises the establishment of a Women's Caucus consisting of all the female Council members of Waterford City and County Council and resolves to support the work of the caucus”.

Reg. No. PM/2023/227 (dated, 21st April, 2023)

Proposed by Cllr. Kiely, seconded by Cllr. Roche and agreed by all.

Cllr. Kiely outlined the proposed motion thanked Cllr Roche for suggestion of motion.

Cllr. Roche thanked Honor Dunphy and Kieran Kehoe for their support to the group.

Cllr. Bailey echoed Cllr. Roches comments highlighting when she joined the council there were only two female councillors elected, is glad to see an increase in female representation to six members currently.

Cllr. Murphy supports the motion feels is progressive added a lot of men fact similar challenges also.

Cllr. Keating supports the establishment of female caucus feels it is a starting point to promote equality.

Cllr. Hearne concurred with previous speakers and support motion.

Cllr. Kelly agrees with motion feels its one step forward but there are many tasks and challenges for both men and woman.

Cllr. McGuinness supports motion on behalf of Sinn Finn party adding it is a fantastic initiative.

Cllr. Power supports motion wishes caucus group best wishes in future.

2. Motion in the names of Cllr. Thomas Phelan

“Waterford City & County Council calls on the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform to provide resources for the provision of at least one full time EU Funding Officer role in every local authority in order to ensure that Councils maximise opportunities and capacity to avail of EU and other funding streams. The purpose of the role, which would be at a sufficiently senior level, would, among other things, be to:

- *Keep up-to-date on EU funding calls and ensure that these are communicated appropriately within local authorities in a timely manner;*
- *Build capacity, including demystifying EU language and collaborate with cross directorate internal teams and with external partners including Regional Assemblies on EU funding applications;*
- *Examine local authority policies, strategies and objectives, and identify relevant calls for EU and national funding that support these Council goals;*
- *Support and develop relationships and partnerships with relevant funders and other stakeholders; and,*
- *Work with elected members and also in particular with regional assemblies to share knowledge and expertise.”*

Reg. No. PM/2023/228 (dated, 28th April, 2023)

H. Dunphy, Meeting Administrator informed the meeting that in absence of Cllr. Phelan and as per standing order Cllr. Phelan requested Cllr. Pratt place motion.

Motion proposed by Cllr. Pratt, seconded by Cllr. Kiely and agreed by all.

Cllrs. McGuinness, Geoghegan, Power, Kelly outlined their support for the motion.
Cllr. Pratt requested letter be issued to Minister for Public Expenditure, Minister for Local Government and Heritage, Minister for State Current Affairs, Minister for State of Local Government with the detail of the motion.

10. AOB

None

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Mayor of Waterford City & County Council

Dated: _____