

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

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2022 HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, THE  
MALL, WATERFORD**

**Present**

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

Apologies: Cllr. Seamus Ryan, Cllr. Pat Nugent

**Officials in Attendance**

Mr. M. Walsh, Chief Executive  
 Mr. K. Kehoe, Director of Services, Corporate Services, Planning, Culture, HR & IS  
 Mr. I. Grimes, Director of Services, Housing, Community & Emergency Services  
 Mr. M. Quinn, Director of Services, Economic Development  
 Mr. F. Galvin, Director of Service, Roads Water & Environment  
 Mr. B. Pollard, Head of Finance  
 Ms. H. Dunphy, Meetings Administrator  
 Mr. D. Mitchell, Corporate

**1. Confirmation of Minutes**

Minutes of Plenary meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 proposed by Cllr. E. Quinlan, seconded by Cllr. Doocey and agreed by all.

Minutes of Special Plenary meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May 2022 proposed by Cllr. Tobin, seconded by Cllr. Brazil and agreed by all.

**2. Matters Arising**

Cllr. McGuinness asked about the Affordable Housing figures for the council which are higher than those published by the Department and if there could be clarification.

I. Grimes, DoS explained that they had submitted a target of 360 plus units by 2025 but the Department set it at 76 so we had set higher levels than expected by government. The Council is planning to deliver 119 units in the next two years. There would be no issue with funding being limited to the department target level and the currently planned units were funded.

### **3. Land Disposals**

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

Reference 1462 - Waterford and Suir Railway was proposed by Cllr. O'Leary, seconded by Cllr. Barry, and agreed by all.

There were 4 further items reference 1463, 1464, 1465, 1466 were proposed by Cllr. Daniels, seconded by Cllr. Conway and agreed by all.

Cllr. Bailey enquired regarding the values of €100 and €200 put on some of the items, K. Kehoe, DoS explained that these were the nominal sums that were set in the original agreements.

Due to technical difficulties with the wireless network in the chamber which meant that the members could not access meeting documents, standing orders were suspended and an adjournment for 15 minutes was proposed by Cllr. Wyse, seconded by Cllr. Roche and agreed by all. On resumption a suspension of standing orders was proposed by the Mayor Cllr. Kelly, seconded by Cllr. O'Sullivan and agreed by all that Item 4 would be dealt with after Item 9.

### **5. Digital Strategy - for Approval**

K. Kehoe, DoS outlined that the Digital Strategy is aligned with other national strategies and is as presented and discussed at recent workshop.

Cllr. Roche welcomed the strategy and asked if some consideration could be given to having a one stop shop for citizens who may need a lot of help with digital and online participation especially those that currently need to switch banks suggesting that the ETBs or the banks could help locally. Also asked if the various social media platforms associated with the council could be more active where responses were made and items were not just reposted.

Cllr. Doocey commented on the issues with getting access to fibre broadband and the difficulties that caused in some areas.

Cllr. O' Leary enquired about the the current situation with Remote Working Hubs in the County.

K. Kehoe, DoS agreed that a one stop shop could be a good idea and suggested that the libraries were best placed to provide a service as they already supplied these types of services in branches and had recently been given iPads to help in their work with communities. He noted that some of the social media platforms could increase engagement outlining that council content is being enhanced with campaigns on public consultations now happening regularly. Noted that there is an extensive list in the strategy on remote hubs stating that extra funding in the form of vouchers to use for the hubs was announced the previous day by Minister Humphries.

Cllr. Fitzgerald also welcomed the strategy but hoped that a dual strategy could be maintained into the future and older people would not be forced to use digital only.

Cllr. Phelan asked if the terminology should not be Smart City and County rather than Smart City. He was concerned that it might cut off funding opportunities outside the city.

Cllr. Tobin welcomed the voucher scheme for the hub clients but pointed out that it was still difficult to get people to come into them especially as many had fully equipped home offices. There would need to be a lot of work to change people's behaviour.

K. Kehoe, DoS pointed out the existing learning services open to older people through the library service. He clarified that Smart City was an EU Concept so it must be used and the schemes could be extended through the connected rural hubs network. He also noted that one of the drivers for people to take up the vouchers was to show potential clients that they could avail of the social and innovative and networking benefits of working with others at a hub at least part of the time. LEOs are very actively promoting hubs and that would also give opportunities to liaise with them for other activities.

Cllr. Hearne gave his support but put forward the view that more funding should be provided by the government. Cllr. J. Power also gave his support but expressed concern at the progress of the Broadband Programme, Cllr. O' Donnell concerned with the issues of rural broadband reliability. In giving her support Cllr. Kiely said there were significant business networking advantages for people to co locate in hubs and that the strategy would also be of benefit to our decarbonisation targeting.

Cllr. Pratt asked if there could be more help and people allocated to hubs to assist people. Cllr. Daniels wanted to know what the cost of the strategy was and how it could be paid for. Cllr. Cronin also welcomed the strategy but pointed out that some of the broadband connectivity provided rurally did not go to every house some roads and that coming back later to connect the remaining houses would add to costs. Cllr. O' Sullivan and Cllr. S. Power supported Cllr. Cronin.

K. Kehoe, DoS pointed out that the document for approval was the Council Digital Strategy but that we are dependent on NBI and their rollout. Some providers had taken commercial decision not to service the full length of some roads. He agreed that the digital strategy would help reduce CO2 emissions. He clarified that the manning of hubs was a matter for those running the hubs locally. There was no direct cost or funding required for this strategy as it was a high-level document to bring together a strategy where the strands were funded through different mechanisms.

The strategy proposed by Cllr Roche, seconded by Cllr Doocey, and agreed by all.

#### **6. Resignation of Cllr S O Donnell as Chair of Transport SPC**

Item deferred as clarification on the composition on the CPG is required.

#### **7. Twinning – Proposal for new twinning with Markisher Kreis, Germany.**

K. Kehoe, DoS outlined the twinning proposal as circulated.

While having no objection to the proposal Cllr. Roche asked that there be a detailed discussion on all twinning activity to assess the ongoing activity with existing twinning's and the benefits obtained. Cllr. J. Power, Daniels, Phelan and Hearne agreed that a workshop assessment was needed. Cllr. Barry spoke about this as being a positive opportunity and stated that a German twinning with the industrial tourism and cultural opportunities apparent from their proposal put forward by Markisher Kreis.

K. Kehoe, DoS thanked the members for their contributions and clarified that there was a twinning policy and annual report on activities and budgeted costs was presented to the CPG annually. He clarified that activities were on going and the Newfoundland relationship actually strengthened during lockdown. The Tønsberg relationship was signed last week and Ramallah was on hold as requested information was outstanding. Workshop to review the status of current twinning proposals will be arranged.

Proposed by Cllr. Barry, seconded by Cllr. Daniels and agreed by all to defer decision until workshop.

#### **8. Correspondence**

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

Cllr. McGuinness thanked I Grimes for the letter he sent regarding the impact of short term lets on rents and the supply of private rental properties in West Waterford. He was also grateful to the Minister for the quick response but noted there was no data for the area so it could not be designated a rent pressure zone. I.Grimes, DoS stated that in addition to writing to the department he had spoken to the officials responsible in the Department and highlighted these issues in West Waterford and in other areas of the county and the official agreed to take this in to account when he discussed it with the Minister.

## **9. Notice of Motions**

### 1. Motion in the name of Cllr. Donal Barry

“The members of Waterford City and County Council call on the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Mr. Darragh O’Brien T.D., to increase funding to all Local Authorities to meet the increasing demand for Local Authority Housing and Private Housing Adaptions to meet the needs of all citizens and prepare for an ageing population. And to allow Local Authorities the discretionary use of money gained in the course of their responsibilities, i.e., sale of council-owned land, to alleviate the suffering endured by some and their families while waiting up to 26 months for house adaptions. This will help local authorities meet some age-friendly housing initiatives and the Healthy Age Friendly Homes Programme, which is part of Slaintecare and will be delivered through the Local Government and allow people to live longer in their own home environment.”

Reg. No. 215 (dated 17th May, 2022)

Motion proposed by Cllr. Barry, seconded by Cllr. Clune and agreed by all.

### 2. Motion in the name of Cllr. Seanie Power

“That Waterford City and County council insist that an Environmental Impact Assessment is carried out on all future solar farm applications as part of the planning process and further call on the Department of Housing, Planning and local Government to introduce specific national planning guidelines for solar farm developments.”

Reg. No. 216 (dated 27th May, 2022)

Motion proposed by Cllr. S. Power and seconded by Cllr. Tobin.

Cllrs. Brazil, McGuinness, O’ Leary, Barron, Kiely and the Mayor spoke of their recognition of the need for wind and solar energy and supported the motion and the requirement for regulations and EIAs. Cllr. Kiely suggested that a visit could be made to a solar farm recently built in Wicklow which the Mayor supported. Cllr. McGuinness suggested that there should be regional input into regulations also.

K. Kehoe, DoS clarified that as a planning authority we were required to abide by the current national regulations and cannot introduce local regulations or condition or we would be subject to judicial review. He suggested that council should write to the Government to suggest more regulation with EIAs and regional elements. He also clarified that a workshop would be scheduled to deal with both wind and solar power.

Motion approved by all.

## **4 Monthly Management Report**

Cllr. McGuinness raised the issue of private rented tenants facing homelessness due to rising rents and Notices To Quit issued by landlords who were selling their property. He enquired if there was anything that

could be done for these people given that they are not entitled to social housing and facing huge hardship and anxiety,

Cllr. E. Quinlan asked if the libraries could acquire a stock of revolutionary period books to provide to schools to raise awareness of local history. He also asked that the council could accept 3<sup>rd</sup> party representations for people that could be potentially becoming homeless. He requested again the council seek legal opinion on Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) by tenants.

Cllr. Daniels asked if there were any plans in place for a second vehicular bridge in the city as he felt a firm proposal for one needs to be put in place.

I Grimes, DoS recognised the enormous pressure on renters whose means left them outside the social housing thresholds and said that the affordable housing scheme would be able to help some of them in the future. There were also proposals submitted for cost rental schemes which might also help in due course if they were to be successful. He clarified that third party representation for housing could not be taken as GDPR required the council to deal directly with applicants and their data must be protected. He also said that a report requested on legal opinion related to tenant ASB was still being prepared and would be sent to the members when complete.

M. Walsh, CE stated that the draft NTA strategy was now published and refers to a 3<sup>rd</sup> bridge. He urged the members and the public to actively engage with this critical NTA consultation which included 2 open days on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of June as it could inform further investment and is critical for the area.

K. Kehoe, DoS said they would look at incorporating the local revolutionary history books into school resources.

Cllr. Mulligan asked that the planning enforcement statistics that he requested last month regarding short term lettings could be circulated as agreed. He asked if there was any particular reason for only having a 1 in 2 approval rate on home loan applications. He asked if there were any common reasons for the increase in families presenting to Homeless Services. He also wanted to know if pre planning meetings were only scheduled to take place online or over the phone rather than in person and if this was a new policy.

Cllr. Barry asked if the current position on the North Quays was as reported in the management report or was that as shown in the local media. Regarding the Age Friendly Housing Programme, he asked if consideration should be given when allocating houses that are not mobility and climate friendly when housing older people.

Cllr. Kiely asked for an update on the Mount Congreve project. She asked if additional signage could be provided in Ukrainian for water safety. Regarding dog fouling she said that more than just third and fourth class needed to be made aware of the problems it causes. A campaign was needed regarding its impact on disabled people and those with children's buggies. Requested signage for free EV parking in Waterford.

I Grimes, DoS stated that the high level of failures or refusals for council mortgages application was due to credit checks being carried out on applicants that were required to ensure they didn't have a poor credit history. The increase in the number of homelessness cases for families and children was a reflection of the crisis that exists in the private rental sector. He would take Cllr. Barry's suggestions back to the Age Friendly team regarding mobility and climate friendly housing units. He would also raise the Ukrainian signs suggestion with the Water Safety Officers.

K. Kehoe, DoS agreed to send the statistics for planning enforcement on short term lettings. He clarified that physical meetings can be requested for pre planning consultations.

M. Walsh stated that they were in discussion with a developer for the North Quays and there could be a significant milestone in the negotiations in the next few weeks at which time a briefing could take place.

M. Quinn, DoS stated that the expected Mount Congreve opening date was now 1<sup>st</sup> October and like many building projects at the moment there had been some delay due to supply chain issues.

F. Galvin, DoS clarified funding has just been allocated and could be used towards a dog fouling awareness campaign and he would look to including an emphasis on the issues it causes for disabled people and those with children's buggies. Regarding free parking places for EVs the council would be looking at this going forward in conjunction with charging points.

Cllr. Griffin asked if a cross party working group on housing issues could be considered given the current crises which would be additional to the Housing SPC and allow more interaction with senior housing officials.

Cllr. J. Power asked for a CSP progress report. He also asked about the Safety Audits that were previously requested. Regarding the Housing Adaptation Programme, he asked for the number of applicants as opposed to the number of approvals listed in the management report. He asked if the actual costs for HAP could be included on the monthly report. He requested update on the Climate Action Team and when it would be in place.

Cllr. Bailey asked where the public would find information on the location of their closest defibrillator. There were only 17 listed on the Council Website which were all in the City and there was also a need for those AEDs with 24 Hours access to be shown. She also asked if there was any report on progress of the new CSP from the seven council members on it and where it was going for the next meeting.

I Grimes, DoS clarified that the Housing SPC was in operation, and he was reluctant to commit to more monthly meetings on matters that were given regular airing in other meetings but would give it consideration. He pointed out that there were brief details of the CSP activity on page 14 of the monthly reports and that public consultation had commenced which could not happen during covid, he would provide a more detailed report for the next plenary meeting. The level of HAP payments made in a month is not currently provided by the shared service centre in Limerick City and County Council so it may not be possible to include this information monthly, but he could look at adding the number of applicants in the month to the report for housing adaption.

K. Kehoe, DoS committed to having the AED map on the Council website reviewed and be more inclusive of other areas of the county. He also clarified that sanction was awaited from the Department for the Climate Action Team recruitment so that interviewing could commence.

Cllr. Pratt commended the environment section on the booklets sent to national schools enquiring if promoted in the media. He asked if the tidy towns committees and others could be informed that there is help available from council such as bags and gloves given that judging would be occurring soon.

Cllr. Phelan asked about a breakdown by district for the retrofitting. Regarding homelessness he enquired how families are dealt with and if they got split up when the presented. He also asked about the situation with regard to MASP.

Cllr. Fitzgerald raised the cost of running community centres and the impact that inflation had on their costs, noting interim payments are needed for the centres.

F. Galvin, DoS thanked Cllr. Pratt for his positive comments regarding the booklets and will look at pushing the information to other people including those in adjoining councils in the region.

I Grimes, DoS stated that they worked to keep homeless families together and there were a number of own front door facilities used to avoid splitting up of family units. He would provide more information on retrofitting. He clarified that the grants the community centre groups get were given out in March and April and there was no extra funding available at this time, but that central government do allocate extra funds from time to time.

K. Kehoe, DoS said they were liaising with the department regarding MASP.

Cllr. Murphy asked if there was any commitment to keep the entrance to Mount Congreve from the Greenway open and the berth on the river open also. He hoped to see the infrastructure work on the North Quays commence by the end of the year and enquired if the 157 housing adaptations in the report had sufficient funding allocated to be completed this year.

Cllr. Hearne commented on the heroin issues in some areas of Waterford and the support families needed as lives were being destroyed and whole families impacted afterwards.

Cllr. Tobin gave his support to Cllr. Fitzgerald's enquiry regarding extra funds for community centres. He also asked about the current situation with regards to the Ukrainian Refugees and if people were still arriving and what progress was being made housing people in pledged accommodation.

M. Quinn, DoS clarified that both the jetty and the gate from the Greenway into Mount Congreve would continue to be in use, and they would look to developing the jetty further in the future.

M. Walsh, CE stated that he hoped work would be starting on the North Quays by year end and the infrastructure and bridge works would start in Q1 of 2023.

I Grimes, DoS stated that the housing adaption grant figures in the monthly report are for those that are approved from the €2m budget, they are not all drawn down and that occurs when the work is completed. CSP consultations would be starting and he reiterated that WCCC has a good relationship with AGS. He outlined that there were approximately 1,000 Ukrainian Refugees in Waterford, 300 are in hotels, centres in the city and Dungarvan had a capacity of 225. The Sports Halls that are in use currently will be handed back with alternative venue being brought in to use. Inspection of 181 pledged properties were underway with about half completed and 63 families have been moved into housing, other long-term accommodation offers were being looked at.

Cllr. Griffin asked for clarification to be made that Ukrainian Refugees had not been offered Social Housing.

The Mayor told the meeting that he had met with the Ukrainian Ambassador on Tuesday in City Hall, the ambassador thanked the people of Waterford, the council staff and the members for their hospitality and the generous assistance given to the refugees. He complimented the communities' efforts to integrate the Ukrainian people into the local community.

Cllr. Conway agreed with Cllr. Griffin that the false narrative that Ukrainian refugees were getting social housing over locals needs to be addressed. He also pointed out that there was a 25% increase in homelessness and asked what a housing assessment looked like and commented that there was a threefold increase in the numbers in emergency accommodation. He enquired if any approach had been made to the council in relation to acquiring the Ulster Bank Building once the bank exits the Irish market.

Cllr. O' Leary enquired about funding for community centres and if any grants were available. He also asked if anyone could predict what the number of Ukrainian refugees might be going forward.

I Grimes, DoS again clarified that any accommodation matches for Ukrainian Refugees are not from the social housing stock but from the pledges made by private individuals. Council tenants may be able to pledge rooms in the future but that is not the case at the moment. He could not speculate on the numbers of refugees that might come along in the future. He stated that homeless housing assessments have a multi-agency approach and while some people might be at risk but not actually homeless, they would not be considered homeless when in the at-risk category. A detailed assessment of need and the appropriate accommodation for applicants was carried out by the officers. The community centres may be entitled to some grants depending on how they are constituted and currently all available monies were fully allocated for the year.

M. Quinn, DoS hoped that the private sector would acquire the Ulster Bank building and it will be kept under review.

M. Walsh, CE commented that there was no way to forecast future Ukrainian inflows as there were many impacts including increased travel costs over the summer. Progress was being made with the pledged housing but placing people will be very challenging going forward.

The Mayor proposed extending the meeting duration by 5 minutes to facilitate AOB, seconded by Cllr. Phelan and agreed by all.

## **10. A.O.B.**

Cllr. Fitzgerald raised issues with Irish Water supply to 400 homes and stated that there was a need for a forum to interact with Irish Water publicly. Cllr Brazil supported this view as did Cllr .Tobin.

F. Galvin, DoS clarified that council was a service provider to Irish Water and did not have a role in operational decisions. The members did have representation at quarterly meetings and there was a number that members could use to contact them directly.

Cllr. Murphy asked if a letter could be sent to the Minister regarding the use of electric scooters which seemed to be unregulated, and their use was extremely dangerous, supported by Cllr. Bailey.

F. Galvin, DoS clarified that currently electric scooters need to be taxed and insured to be on the road and should not be used on footpaths. There was new legislation in the Oireachtas regarding these scooters that will address these issues.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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

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