



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

**ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING HELD ON 29th November, 2019 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CITY HALL, THE MALL, WATERFORD.**

PRESENT

Cllr. John Pratt (Mayor)	Cllr. Joe Kelly
Cllr. Ger Barron	Cllr. Eddie Mulligan
Cllr. Liam Brazil	Cllr. Jason Murphy
Cllr. Breda Brennan	Cllr. Pat Nugent
Cllr. Declan Clune	Cllr. Marc Ó Cathasaigh
Cllr. Joe Conway	Cllr. Seamus O'Donnell
Cllr. Tom Cronin	Cllr. John O'Leary
Cllr. John Cummins	Cllr. Lola O'Sullivan
Cllr. Davy Daniels	Cllr. Thomas Phelan
Cllr. Declan Doocey	Cllr. Jody Power
Cllr. Conor D. McGuinness	Cllr. Seanie Power
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald	Cllr. Eamon Quinlan
Cllr. Damien Geoghegan	Cllr. Seamus Ryan
Cllr. Jim Griffin	Cllr. Matt Shanahan
Cllr. John Hearne	Cllr. James Tobin
	Cllr. Adam Wyse

APOLOGIES

Cllr. Donal Barry

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. M. Walsh, Chief Executive
Mr. I. Grimes, Director of Services, Housing, Community & Emergency Services
Mr. F. Galvin, Director of Services, Roads, Water & Environment
Mr. K. Kehoe, Director of Services, Corporate, Culture, HR & IS
Mr. B. Pollard, Head of Finance
Mr. D. Murphy, Financial Accountant, Finance Dept.
Ms. H. Dunphy, Meetings Administrator
Ms. A. Maher, Corporate Dept.

Chief Executive introduced and outlined the complexities of this year's budget as presented. He explained that the obligation was on everyone to look at presenting a reasonable budget that allows the Council to continue and fulfil its role to society. The Irish Water issue has impacted significantly and the €2m compensation due from the Department will assist but there is still a deficit to be bridged. He outlined that during the merger a revaluation of rates took place and at the same time Irish Water was formed. This was a significant new commercial entity which would financially generate income. IW was valued at that time and the Council choose to give the benefit of this to the rate payers, the lowest rate was applied across the board to everyone and resulted in 90% of rate payers reducing their rates to as much as 50-60% at that time. There is an increase in demands and costs and if the existing level of service is to be

maintained then this has to be done as efficiently and effectively as possible. It is in this context that the proposal of a 5% increase is included in the budget as presented.

Caution is needed on adjustments to items as there are many fixed costs leaving relatively small discretionary monies. He acknowledges that the council have a difficult political choice to make and outlined that rate payers have only one increase of 2.5% in 11 years. He advised that the Executive will continue to look over the coming year at any savings that can be made across the organisation.

Cllr. Phelan advised he was not proposing the budget as presented and the increase in commercial rates. He welcomed the Ministers response on the allocation of €2m to the council and requested that the meeting is adjourned to allow time to schedule a meeting of a cross party delegation with the Minister to address the remaining shortfall. He read out his resolution as follows:

“Waterford City & County Council has written to the department and we appreciate that letters were duly acknowledged. We welcome Minister Phelan's response, in particular his confirmation in his response that there would be a once-off allocation of €2 million in recognition of the financial difficulties that we are unexpectedly facing. While we welcome confirmation of this announcement it remains the case that it does not fully address the budgetary shortfall faced by this council through no fault of our own. We note and understand that the minister was unable to accede to our request for a meeting with him by a cross party delegation of councillors owing to his previously scheduled commitments and the short space of time between his receipt of our last letter and the present budget meeting. We appreciate that the minister did not reject our request for a meeting in principle and therefore in fairness to him we are proposing adjourning this budget meeting for at least one week to allow for time to have a meeting with the minister at which he can be fully informed in person by a cross section of Waterford councillors of the financial difficulties facing the council in this and subsequent years. Given that we informed the minister in our letter to him that we would not be in a position to finalise a budget until we have exhausted our discussions with him it is only fitting and proper that we ensure that our scheduling of budget meetings does not preclude the minister from having an opportunity to meet with us to review the situation fully.”

Cllr. D. McGuinness advised that Sinn Fein will not be supporting the current budget as presented as they were not elected to approve these cuts and increases. He feels that their original request to meet the Minister has not been met and supports adjourning of the meeting.

Cllr. Pratt, Mayor asked to seek clarification on the next meeting and the dates allowed for approving a budget.

Cllr. Kelly replied on behalf of the Independent Councillors, confirming that they will support deferring the meeting as the deficit is too much to make up. He acknowledged that the shortfall is not of the Councils making and has been imposed by Government and the expectation for the council to cover this loss is unacceptable.

Cllr. Ó Cathasaigh supported Cllr. Phelan's proposal in looking for a deferral. He also thanked the Executive who assisted him through the budget process as a new councillor. While the council waits on the positive developments of the North Quays this budget doesn't support this progress.

Cllr. Wyse sought clarification about the process that ensues if there is no agreement on a budget and what would be decided by an appointed commissioner.

Chief Executive explained that the Commissioner can decide the budget himself/herself and that is the budget brought in.

Cllr. Hearne requested all councillors to come together in relation to the budget.

Cllr. Cummins responded that councillors in the pact have used press and social media in a negative manner over the past few weeks. His colleagues have lobbied the Minister for the allocation of €2m and noted that no other Local Authority have got any extra money. It is difficult for the full council to come together when they are not working together.

Mayor acknowledged that €2m will be received and asked that the resolution to be put to the floor.

Following some debate the Mayor requested a show of hands to deferring the meeting to the 12th December prior to the scheduled plenary meeting. A roll call vote was requested and agreed by all.

	Yes	Abstained
Cllr. John Pratt (Mayor)	Yes	
Cllr. Ger Barron	Yes	
Cllr. Liam Brazil		Abstain
Cllr. Breda Brennan	Yes	
Cllr. Declan Clune	Yes	
Cllr. Joe Conway	Yes	
Cllr. Tom Cronin		Abstain
Cllr. John Cummins		Abstain
Cllr. Davy Daniels	Yes	
Cllr. Declan Doocey		Abstain
Cllr. Conor D. McGuinness	Yes	
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald	Yes	
Cllr. Damien Geoghegan		Abstain
Cllr. Jim Griffin	Yes	
Cllr. John Hearne	Yes	
Cllr. Joe Kelly	Yes	
Cllr. Eddie Mulligan		Abstain
Cllr. Jason Murphy		Abstain
Cllr. Pat Nugent		Abstain
Cllr. Marc Ó Cathasaigh	Yes	
Cllr. Seamus O'Donnell		Abstain
Cllr. John O'Leary		Abstain
Cllr. Lola O'Sullivan		Abstain
Cllr. Thomas Phelan	Yes	
Cllr. Jody Power	Yes	
Cllr. Seanie Power		Abstain
Cllr. Eamon Quinlan		Abstain
Cllr. Seamus Ryan	Yes	
Cllr. Matt Shanahan	Yes	
Cllr. James Tobin		Abstain
Cllr. Adam Wyse		Abstain
Total	16	15

Vote is 16 in favour of the adjournment and 15 abstained so meeting deferred to 12th December, 2019 carried. Agreed to reconvene at 3pm.

Meeting concluded.

Signed: - _____
Mayor.

Dated: - _____