

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

**PLENARY BUDGET MEETING HELD ON 29th November 2022 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER,
WATERFORD.**

Present

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

Apologies: Cllr. Seamus O’Donnell, Cllr. Jody Power, Cllr. Eamon Quinlan

Officials in Attendance

Mr. M. Quinn, Director of Services, Economic Development
 Mr. K. Kehoe, Director of Services, Corporate Services, Culture and Planning
 Mr. I. Grimes, Director of Services, Housing
 Mr. F. Galvin, Director of Services, Roads, Water and Environment
 Mr. B. Pollard, Head of Finance
 Mr. D. Murphy, Financial Accountant
 Ms. H. Dunphy, Meeting Administrator
 Ms. A. Flynn, Corporate

1. Chief Executives Report and Draft Budget Book 2023

M. Quinn, DoS, acting on behalf of M. Walsh, Chief Executive, introduced the budget for 2023. He said the increase of 3% in commercial rates is reasonable given current circumstances and necessary to continue a reasonable level of services and he recommended the budget to the members for adoption.

Cllr. Geoghegan proposed “The Budget be adopted in accordance with the Chief Executives recommendation with the proviso that a further €150,000 of the expenditure in E1501 be committed to grant aid to ratepayers under €10,000 subject to compliance with Council’s climate change programme.” The net effect he said will be to maintain the same commitment to climate change expenditure given the Government support for staff costs while relieving over 80% of all ratepayers from any increase in rates. Cllr. Kelly seconded the proposal. He welcomed the additional funding for housing maintenance and roads. He said it allowed us to continue to tackle climate change and to maintain all of our services while also allowing for a rate rebate for small businesses. Taking in to account all factors he said it was a fair and balanced budget.

Cllr. Phelan proposed an adjournment so that Cllr. Geoghegan's proposal could be put in writing for the members.

B. Pollard, HoF said that there was a provision of €250,000 in the budget for the 5% rate rebate for rate payers with an annual bill of less than €10,000 and the extra €150,000 would provide for the further 3% rate rebate.

Cllr. Griffin spoke to thank the Chief Executive and the Executive who he said had made themselves available throughout the budget process. He seconded Cllr. Phelan's proposal for an adjournment to have the detail of Cllr. Geoghegan's proposal in writing. He said given the importance of adopting the annual budget, time should be given for discussion.

Mayor agreed to 15-minute recess and agreed by all, Cllr. Geoghegan circulated details of his proposal.

Following the adjournment Cllr. Phelan noted his agreement with Cllr. Geoghegan's proposal. He sought clarification on provision of a public toilet in Dungarvan as included in last year's budget at a cost of €70,000 and confirmation that the funding was still available for construction and maintenance of same.

Cllr. McGuinness supportive of budget with amendment. He said that in relation to Housing and Building the income is greater than expenditure and this extra income is used for other services. He noted a backlog of disability adaptations for social tenants and asked that any income over expenditure in 2023 be ringfenced to address this backlog. Sinn Féin were supporting the budget with amendment, it addresses party concerns and those of the business community and allows essential services to be maintained.

B. Pollard, HoF outlined that there is provision of an additional €50,000 for the public toilet in Dungarvan. Housing income is higher than expenditure, if allocation of this funding was to change would need to have significant income from other sources.

I. Grimes, DoS said there is an imbalance between funding available for disability adaptation for social housing and that available for private houses. A submission to the Minister for extra funding is being finalised at present.

Cllr. Pratt enquired if rate payers who are up to date this year but in arrears for previous years qualify of the rate rebate.

Cllr. Hearne commented on the high standard of new social housing but said that in terms of older housing stock we should ensure the same standard as would be expected from private landlords.

Cllr. Griffin also supported the budget saying that in the current circumstances small retailers needed support.

Cllr. Kiely said she was very happy to support the budget given the elements which will help our small businesses to decarbonise and be secure and sustainable into the future which was what she asked for at the workshop in Dungarvan.

Cllr. S. Power was also supportive of the budget welcoming the increased income for Roads and Housing and the rate rebate available for small businesses.

Cllr. Roche said she was also happy to support the budget. She said rate payers get good value for money in terms of the services provided. She said all income received was reinvested into the city. She said the Council do an extraordinarily good job and she was proud to be a member.

Cllr. Conway agreed with Cllr. Roche and said when compared with other local authorities Waterford City & County Council compare very well even in comparison to larger authorities. He said both the members and executive are respectful and he was proud to support the budget.

Cllr. Daniels also supported the budget with amendment. He said the CE and the Finance Team have done a good job in the circumstances. He said that funding from Government is taxpayers' money and he pointed out that at present a lot of people are suffering. He asked if there was an increase in Local Government Funding this year. He noted in introduction that there is an expectation for reasonable increases in road improvement grants and he asked what these increases would be as there are issues with footpaths, streetlighting etc.

Cllr. Brazil said he too totally supported the budget. He said the increased income for Roads and Housing would allow the continuation of the good work in these areas throughout the county. He also welcomed the rate rebate for small businesses.

Cllr. Ryan spoke to thank B. Pollard, HoF, the CE and the Executive Team for putting the budget together. He said he was delighted to support this budget which in the current climate will protect small businesses and to do that even in some small way is important. He asked if rate payers have to pay the full amount due and then get reimbursed, that could be difficult for some small businesses and asked how they can get the rebate. He said given the very poor condition of many of our footpaths he would liked to have seen additional funding provided here.

B. Pollard, HoF said that once rates up to 2022 are paid or at least an acceptable payment plan is in place the rebate can apply. He said the Local Property baseline has not increased in terms of Local Government funding. Satisfied with additional funding received which have positively impacted on the budget, the payroll agreement cost €3.59 million, and we received €3.53 million, and we received €1.98 million as a counter to increased costs in energy which helped put the Budget together. He noted footpaths are included in the Capital Programme.

Cllr. Ryan asked if that was sufficient.

F. Galvin, DoS replied that there was €3.2 million allocated over a 4-year period. He said that there is probably a year and 10 months of work to finish out that programme. He said that there is a good deal of work to be done and there is a good deal of money in that fund which will be spend over next year and a half.

Cllr. Doocey also spoke to support the budget mentioning the importance of Road Maintenance. He welcomed the rate rebate for rate payers and asked if the recovery of money by rate payers could be simplified saying that small businesses were very important. He spoke of the importance of the provision of Public Toilets in Dungarvan.

Cllr. Fitzgerald said it was the best that could be done given current circumstances. He said that, in particular in rural areas, communities depended on small businesses and welcomed the claw back scheme for small businesses, it is essential to keep small business in communities.

Cllr. Bailey asked how many had opted for rate rebate last year. She asked how the scheme would be communicated to rate payers. She welcomed the increased income for housing maintenance and roads.

B. Pollard, HoF said in relation to public conveniences that the Budget provides for an increase of 20% in 2023. In relation to rate payers, he said there is an online system where people can apply for the grant scheme. Communication is through websites and radio advertisements. He said we want people to apply and asked members to inform their constituents also.

The Mayor declared the Budget 2023 with amendment as proposed by Cllr. Geoghegan and seconded by Cllr. Kelly as adopted unanimously.

M. Quinn, Deputy CE thanked everyone for their support. He thanked B. Pollard, HoF, D. Murphy, Financial Accountant and the whole of the Finance Team for their work in preparing the Budget.

The Mayor wished the CE a speedy recovery and Cllr. Doocey also extended good wishes to Minister Bourke.

This Concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Mayor

Dated: _____