

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

**LPT MEETING HELD ON 22ND SEPTEMBER, 2020 IN THE PARK HOTEL,
DUNGARVAN, CO. WATERFORD.**

PRESENT

Cllr. Damien Geoghegan (Mayor)	Cllr. Jason Murphy
Cllr. Donal Barry	Cllr. Pat Nugent
Cllr. Liam Brazil	Cllr. Seamus O'Donnell
Cllr. Breda Brennan	Cllr. John O'Leary
Cllr. Declan Clune	Cllr. Lola O'Sullivan
Cllr. Joe Conway	Cllr. Thomas Phelan
Cllr. Tom Cronin	Cllr. Jody Power
Cllr. Conor D. McGuinness	Cllr. Seanie Power
Cllr. Davy Daniels	Cllr. John Pratt
Cllr. Declan Doocey	Cllr. Eamon Quinlan
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald	Cllr. Frank Quinlan
Cllr. Susan Gallagher	Cllr. Seamus Ryan
Cllr. Jim Griffin	Cllr. Mary Roche
Cllr. John Hearne	Cllr. James Tobin
Cllr. Joe Kelly	Cllr. Adam Wyse
Cllr. Eddie Mulligan	

APOLOGIES

Cllr. Ger Barron

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

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

1. To resolve to vary/not vary the basic rate of the Local Property Tax for 2020

M. Walsh, Chief Executive outlined that we are in unprecedented times with absolute certainty that these are exceptional times that no-one would have expected or envisaged in terms of the global pandemic and impacts this is having across society. We have to accept it is the basis and background that we meet on today and also the need to meet our budgetary obligations which will be immensely difficult across the whole of society and especially businesses and our way of life. Worth recommending that of our total budget the reality is that two thirds of this is generated locally in the form of rates income and a whole host of local charges for goods and services such as parking income, housing rents, planning fees to mention a few. There is a reality in current circumstances that we will be challenged in the current year and further challenges in 2021 as we meet the challenge of a reduction of growth in the economy. Reality

the central bank is forecasting as a best case scenario a 10% reduction in growth with the ERSI predicting a greater reduction. Very difficult to predict and we know across the whole budget that we will be down significantly with a deficit in terms of €5m - €6m in income. Pressures that businesses will be under to discharge their rates cannot be underestimated, particularly in the retail hospitality sector and this needs to be considered when presenting the opinion as put forward in the Chief Executives recommendation. Assure the members that the council is making the case across the sector that assistance is needed in making budgets balance and being able to maintain services. In this context recommending a 15% increase in the Local Property Tax for the collective objective of maintaining local. Need to ask the question in current year as to what is reasonable to ask householders to do in the current climate as we need to protect the services to the most vulnerable people in our society and ensure continuity of core services. The increase will result in an impact of between €11.25 to €28.12 as the most that 70% of people will have to pay.

Cllr. O'Donnell proposed a 10% increase in the Local Property Tax and acknowledged the work of the staff in relation to the preparation of the budget and proposal.

Cllr. Brazil seconded the proposal and complimented CE in relation to presentation as given. Outlined that we are living in unpredictable times and need finances to continue to invest in the County.

Cllr. O'Sullivan stated that this is our opportunity to show leadership, there will be significant reductions in income that the council would have previously relied upon. The council needs to demonstrate responsibility and show commitment to protect the level of services that are provided to our communities, businesses and most vulnerable.

Cllr. D. McGuinness noted that while not unsympathetic to the issues as presented and council facing uncertain times and commends the council on initiative taken to assist local economy. Cannot support any increase in the rate of the LPT as it not a sustainable method of funding local government in Ireland and to be setting this ahead of local and national budgets is illogical and unfair to local householders. Requested that a cross party delegation is sent to Dublin for fight the case.

Cllr. Phelan thanked CE and team for information as presented. Noted that the government can currently borrow money at very low rates and shouldn't be hasty in tackling a national issue. As a council we cannot borrow money to make up the shortfall and the government can, need a comprehensive national approach to tackle this problem and asked that we do not pre-empt the solution of government. Will not support the proposed increase

Cllr. Murphy agrees that primary responsibility lies with central government but we all have a responsibility as local councillors, one of our responsibilities is the setting of the LPT and supports the increase of 10%. Notes that it has faults but is a progressive tax as it taxes those with an asset to assist the vulnerable in our community.

Cllr. Fitzgerald sympathises with management in trying to balance the books. Reality of this tax is that it doesn't target all property, just people's homes and should be spread across the whole property spectrum such as farmland and forestry.

Cllr. Tobin outlined that Fianna Fáil will support the proposed increase of 10%. Need to change the approach of going to central government to solve all the problems, we need to have resolution locally and then discuss additional support with central government.

Cllr. Barry understand difficult financial position the council is in, commercial rates waived and those who pay the LPT have already taken massive hits. Supports that there should be no variance and is an opportunity to put back into the local economy.

Cllr. D. McGuinness outlined point of order that it is the people of Waterford that will be paying this tax and not a political party and he is entitled to speak on his mandate.

Cllr. Hearne noted that there are laws passed this year to facilitate vulture funds who pay no tax, there are other people who should pay tax.

Cllr. Pratt noted that the Labour party won't be supporting the increase, understand the difficulties and supported retaining the current level of LPT.

Cllr. E. Quinlan noted that the impact of the pandemic has had a massive effect that needs to be considered in current discussions. He noted that 6,000 households across the city and county will pay no

LPT, average household pay an increase of €20 a year. We could be facing into another lockdown and if we don't increase the LPT services will suffer for our communities.

Cllr. O'Leary noted the biggest challenge is the reduction in growth, there will be an impact on services if the increase is not supported. Highlighted the great schemes available to people and communities such as the Local Improvement Schemes, Town and Village renewal that contribute to rural villages in particular. Real challenge and difficulty is protecting the most vulnerable.

Cllr. Griffin noted that last year the IW deficit was to continue and now COVID will impact into the future. The LPT is not a wealth tax but a tax on your home, Sinn Fein has called on a wealth tax on persons with assets in excess of €1m and also tax on banks and won't be supporting this increase.

Cllr. Daniels appreciate all points as presented by CE with many sectors and individuals taking a hit financially with more uncertainty ahead. Wrong time to introduce an increase in the property tax and remains disappointed that council remains out of pocket in relation to IW and not progressed.

Cllr Wyse noted that every councillor understands the responsibility to be involved in decisions. This government has already provided additional funding in the form of increase in disability grants, roads funding which delivers for Waterford. Cannot continue to go back to central government, we have a responsibility to assist the parts of the community that need it and supports increase.

Cllr. Roche agrees that need to go to central government but we also need to make some tough decisions and need to give leadership and have courage to make tough decisions. Would like to ask the government to exempt those who live exclusively on social welfare payments and pensions from the LPT. A deficit is in place and in order to take the tough decision will be supporting proposal of 10% increase.

Cllr. Kelly supporting proposal and supports delegation to Dublin to address issue and support 10% increase. Financial increase is small and the value that people will get outweighs it.

Cllr. Conway will support stating that it is not unreasonable that tax collection should reflect inflation. So many uncertainties currently and key note to highlight is vulnerability and the vulnerable that need support in our community.

Cllr. Brennan acknowledges that the increase may seem small but they are some in Waterford availing of food bank or food parcel and this increase can stretch people beyond their limits.

Cllr. J. Power supports that the LPT should not be a way of funding local government and agrees that money is available on national markets. Enquired if CE has any update on all councils having a balanced budget. Asked if amendment is passed that those in tourism and arts sector would be exempt from the LPT.

Cllr. Ryan noted that this is always a difficult discussion and stated that this proposed increase will have an effect on lots of families who have private houses and mortgages and are struggling. Labour party supports adopting the same position as last year. Asked if house evaluations due to happen this year.

Cllr. Fitzgerald clarified that LA housing tenants don't pay the LPT charge and asked for clarification if the local authority pays the amount due on these units.

Cllr. D. McGuinness clarity that the effective rate as levelled remains as was last year.

Mayor outlined the proposal of Cllr. O'Donnell as an increase of 10% and Cllr. Ryan's proposal for the rate to remain the same as last year with a net increase of 2.5% on the base rate.

B. Pollard, HoF confirmed that there will be a liability of €40,000 to the local authority with a 10% increase with a €700,000 increase in revenue.

M. Walsh, CE stated that the re-evaluation not happening in current year but due in 2021 and will not effect next year's budget.

Mayor requested a vote on the Cllr. Ryan's proposal, it was agreed to have a roll call vote.

FOR	AGAINST
Cllr. Donal Barry	Cllr. Liam Brazil
Cllr. Breda Brennan	Cllr. Joe Conway
Cllr. Declan Clune	Cllr. Tom Cronin
Cllr. Conor D. McGuinness	Cllr. Declan Doocey
Cllr. Davy Daniels	Cllr. Susan Gallagher
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald	Cllr. Damien Geoghegan
Cllr. Jim Griffin	Cllr. Joe Kelly
Cllr. John Hearne	Cllr. Jason Murphy
Cllr. Eddie Mulligan	Cllr. Pat Nugent
Cllr. Thomas Phelan	Cllr. Seamus O'Donnell
Cllr. Jody Power	Cllr. John O'Leary
Cllr. John Pratt	Cllr. Lola O'Sullivan
Cllr. Seamus Ryan	Cllr. Seanie Power
	Cllr. Eamon Quinlan
	Cllr. Frank Quinlan
	Cllr. Mary Roche
	Cllr. James Tobin
	Cllr. Adam Wyse
13	18

Motion fell, 13 for, 18 against and 1 absent

Mayor requested a roll call vote for Cllr. O'Donnell's proposal of an increase of 10%

FOR	AGAINST
Cllr. Liam Brazil	Cllr. Donal Barry
Cllr. Joe Conway	Cllr. Breda Brennan
Cllr. Tom Cronin	Cllr. Declan Clune
Cllr. Declan Doocey	Cllr. Conor D. McGuinness
Cllr. Susan Gallagher	Cllr. Davy Daniels
Cllr. Damien Geoghegan	Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald
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Cllr. Lola O'Sullivan	Cllr. Seamus Ryan
Cllr. Jody Power	
Cllr. Seanie Power	
Cllr. Eamon Quinlan	
Cllr. Frank Quinlan	
Cllr. Mary Roche	
Cllr. James Tobin	
Cllr. Adam Wyse	
19	12

Motion carried, 19 for, 12 against and 1 absent.

This concluded the meeting.

Signed: _____
Mayor

Dated: _____