

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

**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7th NOVEMBER, 2019
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, DUNGARVAN**

PRESENT

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Cllr. J. Pratt | Cllr. J. Hearne |
| Cllr. G. Barron | Cllr. J. Kelly |
| Cllr. B. Brennan | Cllr. E. Mulligan |
| Cllr. D. Clune | Cllr. J. Murphy |
| Cllr. J. Conway | Cllr. P. Nugent |
| Cllr. T. Cronin | Cllr. S. O'Donnell |
| Cllr. J. Cummins | Cllr. J. O'Leary |
| Cllr. C. D. McGuinness | Cllr. L. O'Sullivan |
| Cllr. D. Daniels | Cllr. T. Phelan |
| Cllr. D. Doocey | Cllr. S. Power |
| Cllr. P. Fitzgerald | Cllr. M. Shanahan |
| Cllr. D. Geoghegan | Cllr. J. Tobin |
| Cllr. J. Griffin | Cllr. A. Wyse |
| Cllr. D. Barry | |

APOLOGIES

Cllr. L. Brazil, Cllr. M. Ó Cathasaigh, Cllr. J. Power, Cllr. E. Quinlan, Cllr. S. Ryan

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr. M. Walsh, Chief Executive
Mr. B. Pollard, Head of Finance
Mr. D. Murphy, Financial Accountant
Ms. H. Dunphy, Meetings Administrator

BUDGET BRIEFING

The Mayor introduced the meeting, outlining the sole agenda item of the meeting to deal with the issues in relation to the €3.2 income deficit. He requested all members to work together in addressing the issue. He stated that the West Waterford Chamber of Commerce had contacted him and a number of other councillors requesting that members would not consider a rates increase as part of their deliberations.

CE, M. Walsh summarised the reasons behind the potential loss of income to Waterford City and County Council in respect of Irish Water Rates. As a consequence of changes in government policy the water assets have been re-evaluated as part of a global re-evaluation of state wide public utilities which includes Irish Water. The loss to Waterford City & County Council is proportionately far greater than other local authorities and results in a significant impact on the budget of the council. The issue has been raised with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and while Minister Eoghan Murphy is considering the position there is no commitment for specific assistance.

The members discussed a number of issues in relation to their concern on the impact of this development and its effect on the local authority being able to deliver services and the unrealistic expectations that the

council is expected to fill the financial gap created by the deficit. The members requested details on how this deficit would impact on the budget and delivery of services.

Cllr. Hearne suggested that a cross party delegation requests a meeting with Minister Murphy and requested the timeline for the budget is extended to enable the issue to be debated.

M. Walsh, CE outlined that there is discretionary spend in relation to housing maintenance, roads maintenance and community grants and there is the possibility of having to increase rates. B. Pollard, HoF detailed ongoing pressures on the budget in relation to increasing costs and pensions outlining that there is a legal obligation to have a balanced budget. It was outlined that the budget timeline is very limited

Cllrs. Mulligan, Geoghegan, Kelly, Clune and Murphy outlined their concerns over the implications of a rates increase on the business community and impact on communities if services were reduced. The need to address the current rate and rent collection as highlighted in the Local Government Auditors report and needs to be tackled. Cllr. Clune requested that the proposed budget workshop scheduled for Monday 11th November is deferred as difficult to discuss budget with current uncertainty.

M. Walsh, CE acknowledged that there needs to be improvements in relation to the collection of arrears in terms of rents and rates, this area is currently under review by the finance section. Management team are reviewing budget in relation to the level of service reduction that would result as a consequence of the budget deficit.

The Mayor proposed a resolution to the members which was circulated to the members at the meeting. The resolution was read out at the meeting.

This Council resolved at an Emergency Meeting specific to the issue of Irish Water Rates on November 7th, 2019 to communicate with the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government that

In the event of the loss of any compensation for Irish Water Rates as currently proposed and given that

- a) the principle of compensation has already been established in the past five years,*
- b) the issue arises solely as a consequence of varying changes in Government policy in respect of Irish Water,*

- c) Waterford City and County Council is adversely affected relative to other local authorities to a disproportionate scale simply as a consequence of the coincidence of timing of the full revaluation exercise for the Authority, the intended formation of Irish Water as a commercial entity and the amalgamation of the three Waterford Authorities in 2013/2014,*

- d) there are significant pressures on local authority finances generally,*

- e) the cost of services has not maintained parity with income gains post recession,*

- f) reductions in service and/or disproportionate increases in charges are simply not tolerable to the community in any event, let alone where these arise as a consequence of Government decisions outside of the control of this Council,*

This Council will not be in a position to adopt a Budget for 2020 in the coming weeks.

The meeting was adjourned for 10 minutes to enable parties to discuss the resolution.

Following discussions with the members the Mayor agreed to amend the resolution to include communication to Minister of Public Expenditure and Reform Mr. Paschal Donohue TD and An Taoiseach, Mr. Leo Varadkar TD. It was also agreed to replace the last line with 'this council will find it extremely difficult to adopt a budget for 2020'.

The members agreed the whips would nominate to the cross party delegation and it was agreed to defer the proposed budget workshop meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Mayor

Dated: _____