

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

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2022 BY TEAMS**

**Present**

Cllr. Joe Kelly (Mayor)	Cllr. Jason Murphy
Cllr. Donal Barry	Cllr. Pat Nugent
Cllr. Joeanne Bailey	Cllr. Seamus O'Donnell
Cllr. Ger Barron	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. David Daniels	Cllr. John Pratt
Cllr. Declan Doocey	Cllr. Eamon Quinlan
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald	Cllr. Frank Quinlan
Cllr. Damien Geoghegan	Cllr. Mary Roche
Cllr. Jim Griffin	Cllr. Seamus Ryan
Cllr. John Hearne	Cllr. James Tobin
Cllr. Cristiona Kiely	Cllr. Eddie Mulligan
	Cllr. Adam Wyse

Apologies: Cllr Liam Brazil

**Officials in Attendance**

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

Meetings Administrator carried out a roll call to confirm meeting attendance.

**1. Confirmation of Minutes**

The minutes for the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2021 proposed by Cllr. Daniels and seconded by Cllr. Fitzgerald and agreed by all.

**2. Matters Arising**

Cllr. Bailey asked to have her voting on motion reference Reg. No. 203 (dated, 19th October 2021) on page 8 of the minutes from the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> December corrected she was recorded as absent as well as correctly recorded as voting in favour.

The Mayor proposed a suspension to standing orders in order to discuss the urgent matter of the future of Rescue 117 and the Airport base, this was seconded by Cllr Griffin and agreed by all.

Cllr. Griffin informed the meeting that he had learned that the national Search and Rescue helicopter service was being tendered with expressions of interested invited before 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022 for a minimum of 3 bases nationally while the current contract has 4. He said there was a danger that the R117 service may be lost to the Southeast Region noting that on the previous tender it took a significant campaign to have the Waterford service retained and now it was under threat again.

Cllr. O' Sullivan spoke to support Cllr. Griffin outlining the essential service provided by R117. She asked all members to write to their colleagues in the Oireachtas to express concern at the potential loss of this vital service that rescued so many over the years and provided help in medical emergencies. She also said that the availability of the service was also a great comfort to people in the region.

Cllr. Phelan agreed and stated that it was a safety issue for the whole region where the use of coastal areas was increasing. He committed to having the matter discussed at the next Southern Regional Assembly meeting and asked that the members spoke with one voice to keep the Waterford Airport R117 service in place.

Cllr. Mulligan stated that he was from a maritime background and worked on rescue missions before the R117 service was in place where lives were lost that might have been saved with local helicopter support. There was a reliance on RAF support at that time. He stated that calls for R117 were up 20% over the past year and asked that all members lobby their political parties, particularly those that had ministerial responsibilities in this area to have the four bases maintained in the new contract.

Cllr. Daniels said that he had previously requested a debate on the future of the airport and the helicopter service. He also stated that funding of R117 was vital to the whole the Southeast Region.

Cllr. J. Power stated that having worked as a mariner that maintaining the service was vital and a sensible decision. He committed to lobbying Minister Ryan to maintain the service. There was a five-fold increase in the ferry traffic since Brexit and proposed offshore wind farms which needed to be supported by having a search and rescue service locally.

Cllr. McGuinness added his support to maintain the 4 bases nationally and suggested that a position statement or text needed to be issued by the council. He added that the local requirements were increasing given the extra maritime traffic and the increasing numbers of visitors to coastal areas.

Cllrs. Barron, Pratt, Fitzgerald, Nugent, S Power, Hearne, Kiely, Tobin, Conway, Bailey, Roche, Geoghegan, Murphy, Clune. Ryan, E. Quinlan, F. Quinlan, Doocey, Wyse, Cronin, Barry, O Leary and the Mayor added their support to ensuring the search and rescue service was maintained and that cost should not be a factor when saving lives.

The support the service gives on shore in our mountains, on rivers and roads was pointed out by Cllrs. Geoghegan, E. Quinlan and Cronin. Cllrs. Nugent and S. Power added that it was a service that also saved lives on farms in the region by responding to farm accidents.

On the basis of the unanimous consensus the Mayor agreed to write to the relevant government departments, the other councils in the Southeast and the local Oireachtas members. He also agreed to bring the matter up in the First Citizens Forum for the Southeast. He stated that efforts to keep the 24-hour service had to be regional and that all four bases in the country needed to be kept on a full-time basis noting it was not a campaign to keep the Waterford base at the expense of another.

The meeting then returned to its scheduled agenda.

### **3. Land Disposals**

The items for disposal were introduced by K. Kehoe. Proposed by Cllr. Daniels, seconded by Cllr. McGuinness and agreed by all.

#### 4. Monthly Management Report

Cllr. Wyse requested details on the number of houses on the vacant register since the law changed in 2017. He also wanted an update on the €5m national fund for the Local Live performing arts and how much Waterford had been allocated. Additionally, he wanted details of how the allocated funds could be accessed. Cllr. Daniels wanted to know why there were 255 refusals of CBL housing units, He wanted to know if the Tenant Purchase Scheme was still in operation and accepting applications. He asked if anything could be done about the high level of fly tipping and illegal dumping offenses. He also asked about the Western Flood Scheme applications that were with An Bord Pleanála and if they would delay development work on the North Quays or if Irish Rail were on board for the station move. He welcomed the recent IDA jobs announcements for Waterford. Additionally, he asked for an update on the Michael Street development. Cllr. O Sullivan asked as to why CBL refusal rates were so high. She further enquired as to the how many single people might be on the housing list awaiting one bedroom housing. It seemed that most of the new units were houses and didn't cater for older single people. There were single people on the list a long time that didn't seem to be progressing. She suggested it was something the SPC might look at.

I Grimes, DoS stated that there was no law on vacant housing reporting but there were plans in place to get them back in to use. He would arrange to get the figure requested by Cllr. Wyse. The CBL refusal rate was 20% which was much lower than the 45% that obtained under previous schemes. The current scheme was under review and the SPC would be reporting back in due course. The tenant Purchase Scheme was still open and receiving applications. He outlined that 50-60% of people on the housing list had a one or two bedroom need and 40% of the units in the capital programme were aimed at those people.

M. Quinn, DoS, said that it was not clear if An Bord Pleanála would delay the flood defences work and would have to wait for them to pass judgement. He confirmed that Irish Rail were 100% committed to the development and moving the station.

K. Kehoe, DoS, explained that it was the 3<sup>rd</sup> iteration of live performance support scheme and Waterford had received €143k from it on each occasion. The deadline for the submission of this tranche is the end of January.

Chief Executive, M. Walsh stated that advertisements for Expressions of Interest for the Michael Street development should be advertised in the coming weeks.

Cllr. Conway stated that the members needed more detail on what was happening with the North Quay even if it was provided confidentially. He stated that traffic in the city was getting worse and asked if there were still plans to have another bridge across the river built to the south of the city. Additionally, he asked if there were expressions of interest in the Age Friendly Strategy 5-year Plan.

Cllr. McGuinness asked if more housing maintenance staff could be made available especially plumbers, He also enquired if Firefighters that were trained could be allowed deal with National Ambulance Service calls. He additionally asked about the inspection failures where 22 out of 24 long term lease properties were non-compliant.

Chief Executive, M. Walsh clarified that there were ongoing discussions between the National Ambulance Service and the Fire Service at national level involving the CCMA noting an issue about getting the services cost recovery in place.

I Grimes, DoS stated that he didn't know the level of interest on the Age Friendly Tender as it was open to applicants until 14<sup>th</sup> January. He confirmed that there was no staff shortage in Housing Maintenance but where external contractors such as plumbers are required there is an undersupply in the market. The number of non-compliant inspections are often due to minor issues which are followed up and rectified.

Chief Executive, M. Walsh stated that there were commercially sensitive discussion ongoing regarding the North Quays and he would try to appraise the members in the next 2-3 weeks. Regarding the down river

crossing he said that the current funding focus from the departments was on Active Travel rather than major roads projects. This project would be pursued as it would be necessary in the next 5 to 10 years.

Cllr. Fitzgerald stated that HAP non-compliant homes was an issue but that the situation was worse in the private rented sector where properties were in a bad state and the tenants could do nothing.

Cllr. Clune wished to acknowledge the great efforts of Mr. Galvin and his team as Waterford won the cleanest city in Ireland accolade again. He asked why the number of housing applications in 2021 was down 28% on 2020 and allocations went up massively in the same period. He asked if the recruitment of qualified lifeguards could be commenced earlier than last year to ensure the service could be in place for the start of the summer season on our beaches.

Cllr. Barry enquired if there had been a recent survey of all the small bridges in Waterford to avoid issues as experienced in Wexford due to recent floods. He wanted to know why the Homeless Person Services did not intervene well in advance of actual homelessness for people that had been given notice on their rented accommodation. He enquired about the duration of the South Quays enabling work and noted need to ensure appropriate signage was in place to inform people.

I Grimes, DoS, stated that properties in the private rented sector were the remit of the Residential Tenancy Board who could act against landlords of substandard properties. The reduced housing applications in 2021 was demand related and the allocations increase was down to the delivery by the council of appropriate homes. Homeless prevention staff had to prioritise those in immediate and urgent need rather than those that might need assistance in the near future. Lifeguard Recruitment would begin in the next few weeks.

F. Galvin, DoS, acknowledged the good wishes of Cllr. Clune for the Cleanest City accolade. He clarified that all bridges are surveyed every 3-5 years and are regularly reviewed.

M. Quinn, DoS, stated that the duration of the South Quays works would be approximately 6 months and it should not interrupt traffic and that signage would be in place.

Cllr. Murphy said that one bed housing units should not be built, only two bed units to allow the long-term support of older people. He also wanted to know when the Housing for All Affordable Housing Scheme would be published.

Cllr. J. Power also complimented the Environment Department and Mr. Galvin on the Cleanest City title. He would like to ensure that the good news about roads, footpaths and Active Travel was made know to all. He asked if the North Quays pumping station tender might delay other works on the North Quays and asked for the Wetland Survey Report and the Analysis of Traveller Accommodation Needs Report to be made available.

Cllr. Hearne stated that the standard of HAP housing needs to be addressed given the inspections statistics. He explained that he had met with senior Gardai recently and thanked them for the progress that had been made on drug related intimidation. He asked if there could be some form of quarterly meeting with the members and Gardai to continue engagement now that the JPC was no longer in place. He asked about the level of detail required for the Community Activation funding application including map co-ordinates.

I Grimes, DoS explained that decisions on having 2-bedroom housing units for single people needed to be made at national level as the requirements for household size were set in regulations. The affordable Housing Scheme criteria had still not been provided to the councils and they are likely to be advised about them in the next couple of months. He had asked the Department regarding the Traveller Accommodation needs but had not been given a response, noted that ongoing district level meeting with the Gardai would be a good idea. He will review the application form for the Community Activation fund but said it was what the Department had supplied to accompany the scheme.

F. Galvin, DoS, confirmed that Active Travel would be ramping up in the next few months and Part 8s would be coming through plus a lot of public promotion on the scheme.

M. Quinn, DoS, confirmed that the Pumping Station work on the North Quays was not critical for the rest of the infrastructure project to proceed. He will follow up on the Wetland Survey as he thought it had been previously distributed.

Cllr. Nugent asked if consideration could be given to having signage for Townland names, history and details of local features added to the Greenway as an enhancement. M. Quinn, DoS, agreed review this suggestion with the Trails Officer and try to get it included in a future project.

Cllr. Bailey asked if consideration could be given to a workshop on housing so that the waiting list by category could be reviewed as well as looking at details from Housing for All and its impact. This was supported by Cllr Ryan who also stated that two bed housing units were needed for people not one bedroom.

I Grimes, DoS, stated that he was happy to facilitate a housing workshop and could share a breakdown of the housing stock by category. He also explained that Housing for All was just being launched and its impact could be gauged later.

Cllr. Phelan stated people who fell into the category for one bedroom housing units were being passed over and didn't come to the top of the list. He asked if they could be prioritised and given bigger units after a particular period on the housing list awaiting smaller ones.

Cllr. O' Leary enquired about disabled car parking and the number of available spaces in the city and county and how they were allocated. There were strong criteria to qualify for a disabled pass but there was evidence that they were often misused.

Cllr. Pratt believed two-bedroom housing units were needed rather than one bedroom. He also enquired if more plumbers could be employed rather than tendering the work given the outstanding works needed on the council's own stock, noting availability of plumbers from Irish Water..

I Grimes, DoS, reiterated the provision of one bedroom accommodation was due to national regulation and the council could not stop their provision. He would look at the availability of plumbers from Irish Water. F. Galvin, DoS, could not give an exact figure for disabled spaces but there was a national standard which was complied with. There were regular representations from Disabled Drivers and similar groups relating to allocation, reallocation and extra spaces which were considered. He also said that the misuse of disabled bays and permits was enforced by the wardens and the penalties were severe.

Cllr. Kiely asked if the age profile for 1-2 bed of applicants could be considered at a housing workshop. She would also like to see regular updates on Active Travel with the number of projects that are ongoing.

Cllr. Roche also stated that one bedroom housing units were not suitable. She would like to see more tangible action and information regarding the North Quays and Michael St. She asked if there was a need to market the North Quays/ Ard Ri/ Michael Street sites nationally, this was supported by Cllr. Mulligan.

Cllr. Cronin also spoke in favour of 2-bedroom properties as a minimum, requested council write to the Department regarding the income thresholds for social housing, people could not afford private rentals or mortgages and income was too high for social housing lists currently. Cllr Bailey supports this view also.

Chief Executive, M. Walsh stated that there was a clear schedule of work on the North Quays, key infrastructure with tenders to be completed by April before a move to the development phase. He was expecting progress on Michael Street in the next couple of weeks and will brief members in due course. He noted that the council could put site on the open market but would then lose control of delivery, he is confident of a positive outcome which will deliver a game changing development for the city.

I Grimes, DoS, wrote to the minister last year regarding the income thresholds for social housing and was told that it was under review, will follow up with a second letter. He would also provide the members with a link to housing data which would help Cllr. Kiely with her demographic information.

F. Galvin, DoS, stated that they were negotiating with the NTA on the 2022 works programme and when that is settled the Active Travel updated plans would be provided at district level and then further updates provided during the year.

## **5. Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan (SECAP)**

F. Galvin, DoS outlined the details of the plan and recommended the plan for adoption. It was proposed by Cllr. Fitzgerald as chair of the SPC and seconded by Cllr. J. Power and agreed by all.

Cllr. Phelan enquired if this is additional to the Councils Climate Adaptation Strategy or replacing it. He also wanted to know if this was the final version or a draft.

Cllrs. McGuinness, Daniels, Hearne, and J. Power commended the SPC and the staff on the work that has been done on the Plan and gave their support, Additionally, Cllr. Daniels enquired if it addressed the minimum energy rating for council houses and fleet adaptation details. Cllr. Hearne was concerned that protection of wildlife be prioritised, and Cllr. J. Power asked if land-based wind solutions were excluded.

F. Galvin, DoS, stated that the SECAP was central to membership of the European Council of Mayors. There would be a significant Climate Action Plan coming before the members later in the year (November or December perhaps) which will have reporting requirements and KPIs. SECAP would complement the climate adaptation strategy and will be published formally in the next couple of weeks. There is a reporting mechanism currently in place. He outlined that electrifying the council fleet had already started with some vans being procured. The initial capital expenditure was slightly higher but there are SEAI grants and lower running costs which will make them cheaper. Retrofit programme for own housing stock and SEAI grants available to private sector homeowners. Noted that wildlife will be part of the plan in future including biodiversity. Wind Offshore will be the biggest contributor but there will still be some on shore in line with the county development plan. Considerable work was done on council buildings in recent year with the help of SEAI. He outlined that a 50kv solar installation in Dungarvan depot was delivered in November which is satisfying much of the need on the site and there would be similar initiatives for other buildings.

Cllr. Pratt enquired if there was any measurement of expected fuel poverty that could be included under the plan. F. Galvin, DoS stated that there was not data in this area at the moment, but it would be an area to look at the future.

Chief Executive, M. Walsh spoke about the Decarbonised City informing the members that they were working in partnership with WIT and the Chamber on a funding application to the EU for Climate Neutral and Smart Cities. This would accelerate our progress to 2030 and we could learn from other cities that were further down the road. As part of the application must demonstrate the ambition and commitment of the council which requires a letter of support from the Mayor. He asked the members to issue a resolution to formally apply for the fund. This was proposed by Cllr. Phelan and seconded by Cllr. Pratt and agreed by all. The recommendation to adopt SECAP was also accepted by all.

## **6. Nominations to Board: LTACC**

A vacancy arose due to the resignation of Cllr Conway. Cllr McGuinness proposed Cllr Griffin which was seconded by Cllr O Sullivan. As the LTACC chair Cllr O'Leary welcomed Cllr Griffin and extended his thanks to Cllr Conway for the great work he did will on the LTACC board.

At this point the Mayor suggested suspending standing orders to extend the meeting duration by a half an hour, It was proposed by Cllr Hearne and seconded by Cllr Pratt.

## **7. Correspondence**

Proposed by Cllr. O'Sullivan, seconded by Cllr. Geoghegan and agreed by all.

Cllr. Barry requested that the list of estates requested by the Community Safety Partnership be provided to all members. I Grimes, DoS agreed to provide this information.

## **8. Motions**

### **1. Motion in the name of Cllr. Jody Power (Deferred from November & December meetings)**

*“That Waterford City & County Council develop and implement forthwith an effective Urban and Rural Tree Management Policy as mandated in the Council's formal "Climate Mitigation Strategy" recently constituted. The Plan should include, inter alia, indigenous species planted where ever possible, liberal criteria for tree preservation orders, a robust tree removal policy with preventative tree destruction measures and sanctions, adequately enforced”.*

**Reg. No. 205** (dated, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021)

Motion was introduced and proposed by Cllr. J. Power and seconded by Cllr. Phelan.

Cllr. Conway commented that developers planted the wrong types of trees and he hoped an audit of trees could be done with inappropriate ones being replaced,

Cllr. Barron gave his support and enquired when Tree Week might be held.

Cllr. Roche also gave her support to the motion as stated but added that not all trees were good (e.g. Leylandii)

Cllr. Hearne hoped that planting could occur in some of the open green areas like in Ballybeg and that perhaps many orchards could be sown in schools.

Cllr. Pratt also supported the motion but stated that unsuitable trees should be replaced.

Cllr. S. Power supported the motion but pointed out that there are dangerous trees on roads.

F. Galvin, DoS clarified that National Tree Week was annually in March. He also pointed out that not all the trees covered by the motion were in the control of the council. There were many trees in urban housing estates planted up to 30 years ago that were inappropriate and are now impacting on infrastructure requiring them to be removed and the infrastructure repaired, the Councils Tree Policy is currently being processed through the SPC,

The motion was unanimously supported and passed.

### **2. Motion in the name of Cllr. Damien Geoghegan**

*“That Waterford City and County Council, in recognition of the successful roll-out of the initiative in Dungarvan, will now seek to expand the amount of spaces available within its own car parks throughout both City and County for use by people with hidden disabilities such as Autism.”*

**Reg. No. 206** (dated, 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2021)

This motion was introduced and proposed by Cllr. Geoghegan and seconded by Cllr. O’ Sullivan. Cllr. Geoghegan expressed his thanks to F. Galvin, G. Hynes and the White Strand Foróige Group for their support with the Dungarvan pilot.

Cllrs. Phelan, Nugent, F. Quinlan and O’ Leary spoke to commend Cllr. Geoghegan and speak in favour of the motion. The Mayor also added his support. The motion was agreed unanimously

## **9. AOB**

Cllr. Cronin asked that the council could write urgently to Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth regarding the urgent need for orthopaedic intervention and surgery for many children with Spina Bifida and the damage that would be done if treatment was further delayed. He asked that the Minister be asked to put the required resources in place, this was seconded by Cllr. Fitzgerald. Cllr. Doocey

suggested that children suffering Scoliosis were in the same position and asked that they be included. This was agreed unanimously.

Cllr. Conway stated that 2022 was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of An Garda Siochana and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Radio na Gaeltachta and would like the Commemoration Committee to mark these occasions.

Cllr. F. Quinlan wanted to make it know that a memorial walk for Aisling Murphy was planned for 4pm on Saturday 15/01/22.

Cllr. Tobin asked that the members extend condolences to Anita Meagher (Water Services) on the very recent death of her father Sonny (James) Meagher.

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

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