

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

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 11<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2024 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER,  
CITY HALL, WATERFORD.**

**Present**

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

Apologies: Cllr. Adam Wyse, Cllr. Declan Doocey, Cllr. Jody Power, Cllr. Pat Nugent.

**Officials in Attendance**

Mr. M. Walsh, Chief Executive  
 Mr. I. Grimes, Director of Services, Housing  
 Mr. M. Quinn, Director of Services, Economic Development  
 Mr. F. Galvin, Director of Services, Roads, Water & Environment  
 Mr. B. Pollard, Head of Finance  
 Mr. P. Johnson, A/Director of Services, Corporate Services, IS, HR, Culture and Planning  
 Ms. H. Dunphy, Meeting Administrator  
 Ms. A. Flynn, Corporate

The Mayor opened the meeting by mentioning the New York Times having named Waterford among the top places to visit worldwide in 2024, Waterford being awarded the European Capital of Christmas 2024 and Waterford been named Ireland's cleanest city in the latest Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) rankings.

He offered his condolences to the family of Bishop William Lee, Bishop Emeritus of Waterford and Lismore who died on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and to Bishop Cullinane, the clergy, religious and people of Waterford.

## **1. Confirmation of Minutes**

Minutes of Plenary Meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 proposed by Cllr. Kelly, seconded by Cllr. Phelan and agreed by all.

## **2. Matters Arising**

Cllr. Pratt asked if a letter had issued to Irish Water in relation to the issue of water supply treatment plants he raised at last month's meeting.

Cllr. McGuinness asked that his request for a workshop around local bus services with Local Link Waterford and the National Transport Authority be followed up and asked for an update on meeting with the NTA and the Minister for Transport to discuss the N25.

F. Galvin, DoS said there has been engagement with Irish Water in relation to sewerage and water upgrades and new developments. There was no update on meeting requested in relation to the N25.

Cllr. McGuinness said this was not acceptable and the frustration felt needs to be communicated to the Minister in future correspondence.

## **3. Land Disposals**

P. Johnson, A/DoS outlined details of the land disposals for approval.

In relation to the disposal of 8.47 acres at Maypark Lane (File: D809) Cllr. Hearne enquired about the future use of the site not part of the disposal to the HSE and Cllr. Kelly queried the disposal price and the cost of waste removal.

M. Walsh, CE outlined that there is a surgical hub proposed for the site and we are effectively transferring our contract with Glanbia to the HSE and are getting the majority of the money back from the HSE for the site, satisfied that there is no significant risk in relation to the waste removal cost. He said we are keeping a few acres of woodland, which are zoned amenity.

Proposed by Cllr. Phelan and seconded by Cllr. Kelly and agreed by all.

Disposal of 741msq at Dunkitt, Kilmacow (File: D814) Proposed by Cllr. Keating and seconded by Cllr. Brazil and agreed by all.

Disposal of 620msq at Poulmagunogue, Clonmel (File: D816) Proposed by Cllr. O'Sullivan and seconded by Cllr. Hearne and agreed by all.

## **4. Monthly Management Report**

Cllr. Geoghegan said that a recent letter that issued to ratepayers caused confusion and should have stated more clearly that the rates due for 2024 were not required to be paid in full at the start of the year and that monthly direct debit payments continued to be an option for ratepayers. Cllr. Brazil also said the letter to ratepayers was not clear and said clarification was required. Cllr. Griffin said he too supported Cllrs. Geoghegan and Brazil and said quarterly or monthly payments should be an option. He asked that there be prior consultation with the Members as regards any plans to use buildings in Waterford city and county to house refugees.

B. Pollard, HoF said that the change in legislation has resulted in the full rates bill falling due in January and not in two moieties as had been the case and said the letter issued did state that there was the option to pay monthly by direct debit.

I. Grimes, DoS noted there was no problem providing consultation regarding housing of refugees.

Cllr. O'Donnell said increases in various taxes etc will contribute to the closure of businesses. Cllr. Kelly asked that a further letter issue to ratepayers clearly setting out the methods of payment available to them. He asked if there is anything that can be done to address the significant increase in Housing Applications.

Cllr. Keating asked for clarification of the housing allocation figures in the Management Report and said the housing data as presented is difficult to read. She asked if there are targets for housing delivery and if so are those targets being met.

I. Grimes, DoS said the increase in housing applications is due in the main to the increased income thresholds for social housing applicants. The Housing Delivery Action Plan sets out targets for delivery of social housing and affordable housing which we are on course to meet and in addition houses returned to the Council are reallocated as soon as possible. The lower number of allocations in 2023 resulted from delays in some housing projects which were to be delivered and allocated in 2023.

Cllr. Phelan queried the total of 121 units under inspection of dwellings data in the Management Report. Requesting address details from a tenant of an occupant who leaves the household may be in breach of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). He asked what plans there are to capitalise on the accolade from the New York Times in naming Waterford among the top places to visit worldwide in 2024.

Cllr. Ryan asked about the number of prosecutions resulting from inspections of private rented dwellings and the resources available in this area and asked if the purchase of houses by Vulture Funds was taking place in Waterford. He asked if extra resources are being made available to support those sleeping rough in the cold weather and asked if there were beach wheelchairs on our beaches in Waterford.

Cllr. Fitzgerald asked that future notifications to tenants regarding rent increases include an explanatory leaflet outlining the reasons for the increase and information on the appeals process. He asked if applications for funding made available as a result of the damage caused by the recent extreme weather were still being accepted and asked what constitutes a Community Monument.

I. Grimes, DoS said HAP inspections are obligatory and are shown separately in Management Report and the total of 121 are PRTB inspections carried out as a result of complaints made by tenants or landlords. Any issues in relation to information sought from tenants would be forwarded to the relevant housing sections. There are three staff working on rental inspections and external resources are also used on occasion, he will revert with the number of prosecutions. There are additional resources available in the Men's Hostel and in the Women's Refuge. The recent rent review was carried out in accordance with the Rent Scheme 2020 and any increase or decrease in a tenant's rent was due to a change of circumstances. Tenants are required to notify the Rents Section as soon as there is a change in their circumstances. He was not aware of any house purchases in Waterford by Vulture Funds.

M. Quinn, DoS noted the New York Times having named Waterford among the top places to visit worldwide in 2024 will be discussed at a meeting scheduled with Failte Ireland and will discuss with Visit Waterford. The Community Monuments Fund is to protect archaeological monuments such as castles, churches and graveyards.

F. Galvin, DoS outlined that have one beach wheelchair. Money has been received as a result of a claim to the Department of Transport with further funding expected. Bridges that service public roads are the responsibility of the Council.

Cllr. Barry asked if the Executive could contact the Taoiseach's Office in relation to the purchase of 33 The Mall because of its historical significance as the location where Thomas Francis Meagher first flew the Irish Tricolour. He asked if there had been discussions with the Department of the Education in relation to schools for the Kilbarry area and asked the cost of leasing the 340 properties under the Repair and Lease Scheme for a number of years versus the cost of building 340 houses which the council would own.

Cllr. Hearne said Waterford was being held up as an example of what can be achieved in communities for very small investment.

Cllr. O'Leary asked what progress has been made in relation to the 81 derelict properties on the Derelict Sites Register and if any of them have been brought back into use and asked what the main difficulties were in identifying the owners of these properties.

M. Walsh, CE said we can make enquires in relation to the acquisition of 33 The Mall.

P. Johnson, A/DoS said the process in relation to Derelict Sites is lengthy and further detail will be provided in the Management Report going forward.

I. Grimes, DoS will revert in relation to the annual cost of the Repair & Lease Scheme. The benefits of the Scheme include the provision of social housing units quickly, provision of one- and two-bedroom units and tackles dereliction. The rent paid under the Repair & Lease Scheme is 82% of market rent.

P. Johnson, A/DoS will revert to Cllr. Barry in relation to schools in Kilbarry area.

Cllr. Bailey asked if the targets for delivery of social housing are too low given the increase in housing applications and requested more information in relation to Capital Projects and Housing Efficiency Retrofit.

Cllr. Clune said he was concerned about a housing estate of more than 75 houses which are connected to a private water supply and are without water for the past seven days and in particular in relation to fire safety and the implications for residents' insurance policies of having no working water supply in the event of a fire.

Cllr. Kiely raised the issue of rent arrears and asked what means are available to the Council to pursue rent arrears. She asked about the monies outstanding from Kilkenny County Council in relation to fire services and in light of increased services and the absence of bus stops and bus shelters asked if bus stops could be painted on the road. She asked for an update on the provision of dehumidifiers to tenants to tackle mould and asked in the cold spell if salt is being made available to communities.

I. Grimes, DoS said it was his understanding that the Minister is looking at revising the targets for all Local Authorities noting that we have already exceeded our target in relation to delivery of affordable houses. He said further detail on Capital Projects is available at District Level and said the number of Housing Efficiency Retrofits for 2024 will initially be the same as that for 2023 which was in the region of 111. In relation to rent arrears the Rents Office has additional staff who continue to encourage tenants in arrears to enter payment plans. Tenants in arrears and not in a payment plan will only have essential repairs carried out. A significant

proportion of those in arrears are in payment plans and currently there are a number of cases before the Court. He will follow up in relation to the provision of fire services to Kilkenny County Council.

F. Galvin, DoS outlined that he understands that there is a resolution to the immediate problem being worked on and believes that the developer has indicated his willingness to engage with Uisce Éireann to have the scheme taken in charge. Bus stops are the responsibility of the individual bus operators but would be happy to engage with them and said salt is not provided to communities.

Cllr. McGuinness asked about mixed tenure estates and the management of same. He asked if the Council has a plan in relation to developing and providing affordable serviced sites to people to build their own homes and asked if it could be considered by the Housing Strategic Policy Committee. We should ensure that all that Waterford has to offer in terms of tourism is accessible to people with disabilities.

Cllr. Pratt asked if a list of people currently on the housing list could be provided by accommodation type, length of time on list etc. and by district and asked if the members of Comhairle na nÓg could be involved in the SPC Committees.

Cllr. Murphy asked that the Council look at granting the public lighting maintenance contract to another contractor noting the consistent complaints received by Councillors across city and county in relation to faulty public lights.

I. Grimes, DoS said we commenced the delivery of affordable housing in the last year and all these schemes are part of mixed developments. The Housing Estate Management team work with residents setting up Residents Associations etc. The Housing List is not available by district but will circulate the most recent document produced by the Housing Agency which summarises the Social Housing Assessments of each Local Authority. The timings of SPC Meetings may not suit members of Comhairle na nÓg noting it was looked at previously.

P. Johnson, A/DoS noted that under the Ready to Build Scheme, local authorities will make serviced sites available to first time buyers at a discount up to €30,000. Sites in our ownership will be brought to the SPC Committee for discussion.

H. Dunphy, Meetings Administrator said the policy in relation to Strategic Policy Committees will be reviewed after the Local Elections and this may provide the opportunity to look at membership.

M. Quinn, DoS said in general accessibility for people with disabilities to the various tourist facilities is very good and the water activity centres for Ardmore and Tramore will include accessible changing places toilets and showers.

F. Galvin, DoS said there is an obligation on the contractor to replace faulty light bulbs within 10 working days. The more complex faults which involve underground cables do take time. Extra teams have been assigned by the contractor to clear the backlog and the retrofitting of the LED heads will commence soon.

Cllr. E. Quinlan asked if the Council can force Landlords to carry out repairs for our tenants in properties under the Repair & Lease Scheme. He asked if it would be prudent for the Council to consult with communities and the Gardaí in relation to areas used for anti-social behaviour with a view to having these areas closed off.

I. Grimes, DoS said the responsibilities of both the Council as the lessee and the property owner as landlord are set out under the terms of the Scheme.

F. Galvin, DoS said that closing off of areas may involve extinguishing public rights of way which is a reserved function of the elected members.

I. Grimes, DoS said that anti-social behaviour in relation to Council tenancies is dealt with by the Tenancy Management Team but closing off of areas where there is anti-social behaviour would not be part of their role.

#### **5. Amendment to Standing Orders – For approval**

Amendment to Standing Orders proposed by Cllr. Pratt and seconded by Cllr. Barron and agreed by all.

#### **6. Presentation by SIRO**

Amanda Clancy, Director of Corporate Affairs, SIRO presented saying SIRO is a joint venture between ESB and Vodafone to rollout high quality and reliable broadband and outlined the benefits for Waterford city and county.

Cllrs. Fitzgerald, Griffin, Barron, Phelan and S. Power raised questions primarily in relation to high quality and reliable broadband for rural areas.

#### **7. Mayors for Peace – For approval**

Mayors for Peace proposed by Cllr. Kelly and seconded by Cllr. Phelan and agreed by all.

#### **8. Correspondence**

Proposed by Cllr. Geoghegan and seconded by Cllr. Cronin and agreed by all.

#### **9. Notice of Motions**

None.

#### **10. AOB**

Cllr. Griffin said that he did not want to be associated with the question raised in relation to arrears of housing rents and the means available to the Council to collect arrears.

Cllr. Kelly said he felt the question was appropriate and it was legitimate for the council to pursue arrears of rent. He asked that the Council contact Bus Eireann and the NTA in relation to the locations of temporary bus stops, some of which pose a danger to bus users and others.

Cllr. Bailey asked what the procedure was to allow questions in relation to items raised under the Management Report if it could not be dealt under the Management Report or under AOB

Cllr. Ryan asked for an update on the Council's twinning with Ramallah to be provided to the members.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor of Waterford City & County Council

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