

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

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9th NOVEMBER 2023 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER,
CIVIC OFFICES, DUNGARVAN, CO. WATERFORD.**

Present

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

Apologies: Cllr. Jody Power, Cllr. Frank Quinlan.

Officials in Attendance

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

1. Confirmation of Minutes

Special Plenary Meeting held on 11th October 2023 Proposed by Cllr. Nugent and seconded by Cllr. E. Quinlan and agreed by all.
 Plenary Meeting held on 12th October 2023 Proposed by Cllr. Bailey and seconded by Cllr. Brazil and agreed by all.

2. Matters Arising

None.

3. Land Disposals

None.

4. Monthly Management Report

Cllr. Pratt citing an incident asked about the Control of Dogs legislation.

Cllr. Hearne also spoke about the Control of Dogs legislation and the need for a review.

Cllr. Griffin asked if a cross party delegation of members could meet the Minister and discuss whether the problems in Dublin Airport could be alleviated by the airport in Waterford.

Cllr. Fitzgerald asked in relation to the bridge works if the centre span opening will be the same size as Rice Bridge. He asked if the Emergency Fund made available following the recent severe weather was available to address the damage to the road infrastructure.

F. Galvin, DoS said new regulations to tighten up on the laws to control dogs are imminent, there will be a working group that will examine wider issues around dog ownership and the expansion of the list of restricted breeds. He said there has been contact with the Department regarding the clean-up costs of damage caused by recent storms and also there will be a claim in relation to the permanent damage to roads.

M. Walsh, CE said in relation to the bridge that the span opening is the same and in relation to the airport he said we are actively still talking to the investors. Their decision is imminent, and he will be coming back to the Council immediately once he knows more, adding the business case and confirmation of investment would need to be submitted before a council delegation met the minister.

Cllr. Barry asked why a planning application for a state-of-the-art standalone health facility which he said is needed in Waterford given the population was refused because it was not on a bus route.

Cllr. Nugent noted the damage caused by the recent storms and commented that the bridges in villages throughout West Waterford are a major problem highlighting the size of the bridge eyes and the build-up of silt and asked that a letter issue to the Office of Public Works and Inland Fisheries.

Cllr. Doocey concurred with Cllr. Nugent in relation to bridges and also asked if the danger posed by deer on our roads could be addressed and if there was a means of controlling ticks that can carry bacteria that cause Lyme disease.

K. Kehoe, DoS said he would speak to Cllr. Barry separately in relation to the refusal of the planning application.

F. Galvin, DoS said in relation to the bridges that we will be talking to the Office of Public Works and Fisheries and said the issue of Deer and ticks is a matter for the Department of Agriculture.

Cllr. O'Sullivan suggested that where a dog license issues that details of license are made available to the dog warden and asked that this be brought to the Strategic Policy Committee for consideration. She also said that anti-social behaviour in Council Housing Estates needs more robust action.

F. Galvin, DoS said it is a legal requirement to have your dog microchipped and details registered. However he said Cllr. O'Sullivan's suggestion could be discussed at the SPC.

I. Grimes, DoS said in relation to anti-social behaviour that we work closely with the Gardai and urged people to report incidents of anti-social behaviour.

Cllr. McGuinness asked for an update on his previous requests for a meeting with the Minister in relation to the N25. He also asked about the former Waterford Crystal Site purchased by SETU and thanked Council Staff for their work during the recent storms. He asked that a letter issue to the Minister of Transport and the Road Safety Authority in relation to the driving test backlog.

Cllr. O'Leary asked whether it is the Council or Contractor who is responsible for works carried out by a Contractor on behalf of the Council.

Cllr. Murphy asked about the guidelines around granting of planning permission for telecommunications poles and the revenue generated. He asked for the number of applications received for the cost rental housing scheme. He enquired if Councillors could be made aware when their housing representations are successful. He welcomed the reduction in the Homeless Services figures while noting the increase in Housing Applications and asked if the figures are related and also commented on the figures in relation to the Tenant in situ Scheme.

F. Galvin, DoS said a letter has issued to the Minister in relation to the N25 and he will follow up. In relation to a Contractor working on behalf of the Council he said the Contractor is responsible.

K. Kehoe, DoS said there has been engagement in relation to the former Waterford Crystal Site. He said permission in relation to communications poles is provided for under Section 254 of the Planning & Development Act and does not allow for submissions, the fee is €80.00.

I. Grimes, DoS said the applications for the cost rental housing scheme are now closed with 120 applications received. He will pass on Cllr. Murphy's suggestion regarding communication to Councillors when housing representations are successful and said the increase in housing applications is due to the increased income limits and the tenant in situ scheme has had a positive impact on the homeless numbers.

Cllr. Roche asked about road markings and if there was legislation to deal with LED light overspills onto roads. She asked about the planning application for the North Quays and about IDA visits to Waterford and if City Hall is included in those visits and requested that the IDA be asked to present to the members.

Cllr. Ryan noted the high refusal rate of tenant purchase applications and asked for more details. He said there appears to be an increase in the number of people sleeping rough and asked what is being done for them. He asked for an update on the installation of LED lights, the Council's application for mobile library funding and the housing one stop shop.

Cllr. Kiely asked that a letter issue to the relevant Departments to request extra funding to deal with the effects of climate change. She asked about cats' eyes on roads and asked for a briefing from the National Transport Authority on routes throughout the county and who is responsible for on the provision of bus stops and bus shelters

F. Galvin, DoS said the issue with road markings is the limited number of contractors who undertake this work and in reply to Cllr. Roche who suggested an inhouse crew he said it is specialist work which would require specialist training and would also require capital funding from the point of view of purchase of machinery. LED lights which create a potential road hazard at specific locations could be looked at. In relation to the installation of LED lights he said it would be starting early 2024. He noted that receive funding for specific climate action schemes. He said cats' eyes are only on particular types of roads and are related to traffic volumes etc. and said there has been developments in relation to bus stops and bus shelters.

K. Kehoe, DoS said once the planning application for the North Quays is submitted he will inform the members and in relation to the Council's application for mobile library funding he said there will be a country wide announcement and said we are hopeful that our application will be successful.

R. Walsh, Head of LEO said the IDA have been invited to address the members noting that it was not practise that IDA visits would include a visit to City Hall.

I. Grimes, DoS acknowledged that there are a small number of people sleeping rough saying Homeless Services are in contact with them on a daily basis. In relation to a housing one stop shop he said there is a lot of information on the Council's website.

Cllr. S. Power asked about funding for traffic calming measures in villages.

Cllr. Kelly noted that there had been 2,852 callers to Homeless services in 2023 to date and noted the number of people in emergency accommodation including 35 children and asked what type of emergency accommodation is used to house families. He congratulated the Commemorative Committee on its very successful programme of events.

Cllr. Daniels asked about the rollout of fibre optic broadband and asked that a letter issue to National Broadband Ireland and asked that figures be obtained from IDA in relation to job creation by sector.

F. Galvin, DoS said there will be some funding which could include some of the locations needing traffic calming, pedestrian crossing etc.

I. Grimes, DoS said all callers to Homeless Services are recorded and not all callers would be presenting as homeless. In relation to emergency accommodation he said a number of Council houses are set aside for families who may become homeless.

K. Kehoe, DoS said in relation to the rollout of broadband he would circulate an update on progress.

R. Walsh, Head of LEO said he would request a breakdown of figures from the IDA.

Cllr. E. Quinlan requested a review of the Development Contribution Scheme in relation to contribution levies for extensions. He noted that the Housing Aid for Older People Grant does not include windows and doors and said those applying need to be made aware of this. He asked about the taking in charge of an estate in which the Council owns properties.

Cllr. Bailey said people who leave the family home as a result of a separation or a divorce are unable to access social housing as they would still have title to the family home and if they rent under the HAP Scheme the mortgage payments are reckonable for the purpose of rent calculation. She asked that a letter issue to the Minister to review the regulations and also requested that the issue be discussed by the Housing SPC.

Cllr. Phelan asked about Government funding for repairing and refurbishing empty properties to bring them back into use. He asked about logging public lighting faults on Deadsure and noted the time taken to repair and requested a report showing how many are out past the agreed time for repairing and the reasons and asked about the rates rebate for businesses from January 2024.

K. Kehoe, DoS said the Development Contribution Scheme adopted by members early 2023 removed contribution levies in respect of planning permission for extensions and said taking in charge of an estate is not an issue if the bulk of private owners make a request.

I. Grimes, DoS said in relation to Housing Aid for Older People Grant that works are agreed in advance and in reply to Cllr. Bailey he said action would be required at national level. He said we do not rely on Government Funding for voids saying last year seven properties were brought back into use.

F. Galvin, DoS said in relation to public lighting that there is a 10-day turnaround for standard repairs with no timeline for non-standard repairs as these could take longer.

B. Pollard, HoF said there are no specific details yet around the support to businesses from January 2024 saying it is a startup grant rather than a rates rebate.

5. Winterval Event Licence

Winterval Event Licence proposed by Cllr. Brazil seconded by Cllr. Wyse and agreed by all.

Cllrs. Ryan, Kelly, Roche, McGuinness, Bailey and Kiely welcomed the return of Winterval for 2023 with concerns in relation to parking and public safety at the Launch Event addressed by F. Brophy, Executive Technician, Economic Development.

6. Mount Congreve Funding Proposal – For Approval

In requesting the members approval for a €1 million grant and a €300,000 loan M. Walsh, CE said the objective is to make Mount Congreve a commercial success and create a world class destination. He said the total economic impact for Waterford to date is €6.3 million. He said the funding will allow for the upgrade of the gardens and the provision of accommodation.

Sara Dolan, Commercial Director, Mount Congreve Gardens also spoke about the importance of providing accommodation for visitors saying this revenue would bring life back into the gardens.

Des Whelan, Managing Director of Mount Congreve said investment is needed to raise the standards of the gardens.

Cllrs. S. Power, Wyse, Barron, Barry, Hearne, Fitzgerald, Phelan, Geoghegan, Kelly, O’Leary, Keating, Griffin, Kiely, Brazil, Roche, E. Quinlan and Nugent spoke in support of the funding proposal. Questions in relation to improved signage, the proportion of funding for accommodation versus gardens, accommodation of camper vans, auditing of accounts, council representation on the board, roads infrastructure, threats to projected turnaround, briefings to members, the local market and the possibility of the OPW looking for the return of the house and gardens were raised.

M. Walsh, CE and Sarah Dolan, Commercial Director, Mount Congreve Gardens addressed the questions raised.

Proposed by Cllr. S. Power seconded by Cllr. Wyse and agreed by all.

Extension of standing orders for ten minutes proposed by Cllr. Geoghegan, seconded by Cllr. Wyse and agreed by all.

The appointment of Cllr. Nugent to the Board of Mount Congreve was proposed by Cllr. Wyse seconded by Cllr. Doocey and agreed by all.

7. Correspondence

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

8. Notice of Motions

None

9. AOB

Cllr. McGuinness spoke about the horrific humanitarian situation in Palestine. He said people are appalled by the violence and by the horrific attacks committed against civilians, both in Israel and in Gaza. He spoke about the people of Gaza being impoverished, water and energy have been cut off and 70 per cent of the population have been displaced. He said both the Government and the United Nations have called for a humanitarian ceasefire and called on the Mayor to do so also and asked that the Palestinian flag be raised above City Hall on the 29th November 2023.

K. Kehoe, DoS said no one would disagree with the sentiment in relation to the conflict but said there are restrictions in relation to the raising of flags within the policy document approved by the members and said the request to fly the Palestinian flag does not comply with the policy.

The Mayor called for a minute's silence to remember all those who have lost their lives in the conflict.

Signed: _____
Mayor of Waterford City & County Council

Dated: _____