

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

**COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 14<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2023 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. Pat Nugent
Cllr. Lola O’Sullivan	Cllr. John Pratt
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. John Hearne	Cllr. Donal Barry
Cllr. Stephanie Keating	Cllr. David Daniels
Cllr. Declan Doocey	Cllr. Joe Kelly
Cllr. Seamus Ryan	Cllr. Mairead Tobin
Cllr. Jody Power	Cllr. Frank Quinlan

Apologies: Cllr. Ger Barron, Cllr. Declan Clune, Cllr. Seanie Power, Cllr. Mary Roche.

**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

Meeting was adjourned to 3.00p.m. as a mark of respect for Cllr. Roche on the death of her mother Rose Roche. Proposed by Cllr. Doocey and seconded by Cllr. O’Leary and agreed by all.

When meeting reconvened, the Mayor announced that the international jury of the European Capital and City of Christmas 2024 competition had unanimously voted to award the European City of Christmas 2024 title to Waterford City.

## **1. Confirmation of Minutes**

Minutes of Plenary Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023 proposed by Cllr. Brazil and seconded by Cllr. Keating and agreed by all.

Minutes of Budget Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2023 proposed by Cllr. Phelan and seconded by Cllr. Bailey and agreed by all.

## **2. Matters Arising**

Cllr. Ryan requested update on the Council's application for funding for mobile library services and for further information in relation to the expansion of bus services.

P. Johnson, A/DoS advised that no update in relation to mobile library funding.

F. Galvin, DoS said the process around expansion of bus services is just starting with workshops with Transport for Ireland planned for early 2024.

## **3. Land Disposals**

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

Proposed by Cllr. J. Power and seconded by Cllr. Keating and agreed by all. Cllr. Kelly excused himself from the Chamber because of a possible conflict of interest.

## **4. Monthly Management Report**

Cllr. Barry asked that the Differential Rent Scheme 2020 be reviewed and requested an update on the Tourism Plan for Waterford City.

Cllr. Murphy requested clarification in relation to the data provided in respect of the Housing Adaptation Grants and asked if there are adequate staff resources to deal with the volume of applications.

Cllr. Keating asked about the Council's Rent Arrears Policy in relation to housing repairs where tenants in arrears and not in a payment plan will have only essential repairs carried out.

I. Grimes, DoS said the current Differential Rent Scheme was adopted in 2020 and said it can be looked at in the New Year and brought to the Housing Strategic Policy Committee for consideration. The Housing Adaptation Grants Section is one of the busiest sections in the Housing Department and additional support is provided as required. A new Rent Arrears Policy is being drafted and the decision to withhold all but essential maintenance to tenants in arrears has been successful.

M. Quinn, DoS said the Tourism Plan is currently going through an environmental assessment which has resulted in a delay in it coming back to the members for adoption.

Cllr. E. Quinlan asked if the Council has insurance in the event of a cyber-attack. He said it should be a requirement for people who submit an objection to a planning application to state the rationale for the objection. In relation to applications for housing supports, assessing income for the previous 12 months needs to be looked at.

Cllr. J. Power asked if the Council's Biodiversity Officer is a senior management position and asked about enforcement notices in relation to noise pollution.

Cllr. Brazil asked that people, especially at this time of year, ensure their dogs are kept in at night to prevent attacks on sheep.

B. Pollard, HoF confirmed that the Council has cyber insurance.

M. Walsh, CE said the Biodiversity Officer must hold a recognised degree in a subject relevant to biodiversity and have at least five years relevant satisfactory experience saying the qualifications for the position of Biodiversity Officer are set out at national level. In relation to planning submissions he said people are obliged to outline the logic and reasoning for the submission.

I. Grimes, DoS said that the Housing Applications Team try to be as flexible as possible in determining Housing Applications and said he would look at the regulations to determine if something could be changed locally.

F. Galvin, DoS said that there are a number of cases in relation to noise pollution and enforcement notices that have been served within the past two to three months.

Cllr. Kelly also asked for a review of the Differential Rent Scheme in which he said there are anomalies in relation to maintenance payments and the application of the percentage rates.

Cllr. Phelan asked if the Council have any authority to question the genuineness of an objector to a planning application. In relation to the Waterford Age Friendly Programme he asked if the implementation Subgroup that is involved in walkability audits have met yet and if a walkability audit programme has been drawn up and as regards public lighting asked about open cases on Deadsure some dated 2020 and 2021 and requested a report outlining the top ten longest open cases.

Cllr. Kiely asked about the recent EPA report on water supplies which found the monitoring of private water supplies in Waterford inadequate and called again for a workshop on water quality. She mentioned the issue of mould in Council houses and asked if a pilot scheme whereby dehumidifiers are made available to tenants to tackle mould could be looked at.

F. Galvin, DoS said the Age Friendly Transport Subcommittee is due to hold its first meeting in January. In relation to public lighting he said a programme of work has been agreed with the contractor to tackle outstanding repairs. As regards water inspections he said in 2022 there were serious staff resource issues which are now being addressed and said we are looking to significantly improve results going forward.

M. Walsh, CE said that planning applications are considered on their merits and in the context of government policies and national guidelines and as regards submissions he said any submission that makes sense on its merits would be considered.

I. Grimes, DoS said the Rent Scheme can be looked at but the assessment of maintenance payments in the calculation of rent is laid down in national regulations. The provision of dehumidifiers as a pilot scheme to tenants for the most persistent and difficult cases of mould could be looked at.

Cllr. Ryan asked about the role of the Council and the resources available for private rented dwellings inspections and about the provision of a housing one stop shop.

Cllr. Fitzgerald asked if the Council had any role in or could advise of any scheme available to people who are privately renting and the Landlord is selling the property and they do not qualify for any housing supports and are not in a position to purchase their own home. He asked about the compulsory purchase of residential properties on the Airport Road and where responsibility for the opening of public toilets will lie come January.

Cllr. McGuinness asked about the dog warden service across city and county and asked for a workshop with Local Link Waterford and the National Transport Authority in relation to local link services. He asked if the 42 children in emergency accommodation at the end of November 2023 will remain in emergency accommodation over Christmas.

F. Galvin, DoS said that the Council will continue to be responsible for public toilets in 2024 and that the staffing issue in relation to the dog warden service will be resolved by year end and said a workshop with Local Link can be organised.

M. Walsh, CE said that the compulsory purchase of the properties on the Airport Road is not finalised as yet.

I. Grimes, DoS said he will revert back to Cllr. Ryan in relation to staff resources for inspections of private rented accommodation and in relation to a one stop shop he said it may be more beneficial to hold information sessions for people interested in a particular housing option. In reply to Cllr. Fitzgerald he said the Housing Agency operates a scheme which is similar to the Council's tenant-in-situ scheme, details of which are on the Housing Agency's website.

Cllr. Griffin asked for a workshop with the NTA with regards to bus stops and bus shelters and in relation to public lighting asked about the installation of LED lights.

Cllr. Bailey asked about the timeframe in relation to Housing Adaptation Grants and said there needs to be further discussion in relation to the HAP Scheme and in particular in relation to those who have to leave the scheme within two years. She also asked for a breakdown of the Housing Retrofit Scheme and a report on the motions as passed by the members.

Cllr. O'Leary requested the top three reasons for refusals by people bidding on Choice Based Letting and also asked that those bidding would be notified if they are not successful. He agreed with Cllr. Ryan in relation to better communication to the public in relation to the various housing options now available.

H. Dunphy, Meeting Administrator said a report in relation to motions would be circulated early 2024.

F. Galvin, DoS said there has been talks with the NTA in relation to bus shelters and said the first phase of BusConnects will be in the first quarter of 2024 and said the retrofitting of the LED heads will not commence until the second quarter of 2024.

I. Grimes said in respect of Housing Adaptation Grants that a list of the typical timeframes for both private houses and Council houses will be provided. He said the requirement to remain in a HAP property for two years is a national rule and said the retro grants are reported at district level. In relation to CBL he said the reasons for refusals are now being recorded and can provide a report. He said because of the volume of applications it is not possible to notify unsuccessful applicants with current staff resources and said the comments in relation to a Housing One Stop Shop are noted.

Cllr. Nugent asked if the Council has any role in the culling of deer and asked about the turning off of public lighting on the national road network to reduce energy usage.

Cllr. Pratt said he too supported Cllr. Ryan's call for a Housing One Stop Shop and asked for an update on the new legislation in relation to dogs and dog ownership. He asked where water supplies and treatment plants are inadequate does this affect the delivery of houses or otherwise. He said Local Link Waterford are also constantly looking for the provision of more bus shelters.

Cllr. Doocey also raised the issue of deer and the dangers posed by them.

F. Galvin, DoS said the culling of deer is a matter for the Department of Agriculture and in relation to the public lighting he said this rests with the TII. He said there was no update about the new legislation in relation to dog ownership and in relation to water supply delivery he said the Council has identified sites to Irish Water that require upgrades.

#### **5. Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2023-2029 – For approval**

In introducing the Local Economic & Community Plan M. Quinn, DoS said the plan is the culmination of almost two years work in terms of public consultation, engagement with various stakeholders and engagement with the Members and requested the Members' approval to the plan.

The Waterford Local Economic & Community Plan proposed by Cllr. Phelan and seconded by Cllr. Nugent and agreed by all.

#### **6. Vacancy Abatement Scheme – For approval**

B. Pollard, HoF said that there are no proposed changes to the Vacancy Abatement Scheme but with the commencement of Section 9 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019, this new legislation has to be cited therein.

Proposed by Cllr. E. Quinlan and seconded by Cllr. Bailey and agreed by all.

#### **7. Festival and Arts Grants 2024 – For approval**

Festival and Arts Grants 2024 proposed by Cllr. E. Quinlan, seconded by Cllr. McGuinness and agreed by all.

#### **8. Freedom of City and County Proposal**

It was proposed by Cllr. O'Sullivan and seconded by Cllr. J. Power and agreed by all that Mr. Gilbert O'Sullivan be awarded the Freedom of the City and County of Waterford.

#### **9. Committee Membership – Museum Advisory Board Rep Nomination**

It was proposed by Cllr. E. Quinlan, seconded by Cllr. O'Sullivan and agreed by all that Cllr. Daniels be appointed to the Museum Advisory Board.

#### **10. Audit Report**

Noted.

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

Deferred to next Plenary Meeting.

#### **12. Correspondence**

Proposed by Cllr. Phelan, seconded by Cllr. Wyse and agreed by all.

### 13. Notice of Motions

#### **Motion in the name of Cllr. Conor D. McGuinness.**

*“That Waterford City and County Council: recognises the N25 as a key part of Waterford’s infrastructure, forming the backbone of our transport network; notes that the N25 has been labelled Ireland’s most dangerous national road and is in need of a significant upgrades including safety improvements at a number of locations across Waterford; requests that the Minister for Transport agrees to urgently meet with Waterford City and County Council to discuss the matter.*

**Reg. No. PD/2023/238** (dated, 24<sup>th</sup> October 2023)

In proposing the motion Cllr. McGuinness said ensuring that the N25 is safe and fit for purpose is of strategic importance to city and county and called on the Minister for Transport to urgently meet with Waterford City & County Council.

Cllrs. Ryan, O’Leary, Phelan, Fitzgerald, Kelly, J. Power and Cronin spoke in support of the motion.

Proposed by Cllr. McGuinness, seconded by Cllr. Griffin and agreed by all.

### 14. AOB

Cllr. Ryan asked for improvement of the sound system in the Council Chamber. H. Dunphy, Meeting Administrator outlined that there are improvements planned for 2024.

The Mayor congratulated Bunmahon on the opening of the new Coast Guard Station and wished everybody a happy and peaceful Christmas.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

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

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