



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

Cork County Council

Minutes of Proceedings at Meeting of Cork County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Cork and by Microsoft Teams on 27th March 2023.

I LATHAIR

Comhairleoir Dónal Ó Coileáin, Méara Chontae

Comhairleoiri: Uí Chochláin G, Ó Colmáin, Ó Murchú C, Ó Suilleabháin S, Uí Shuilleabháin M, Ó Donnabháin, Ó Murchú PG, Ní Chroinín, Ó Conaill, Mac Craith, Uí Daltún, Ó Muircheartaigh, Uí Bhuachalla, De Foite Sean, Daltún-Ó Suilleabháin, Ní Cheallacháin, Barra, Sheppard, Rasmussen, Ó Conbhubhair Sean, Ó Conchubair Alan, MacCarthaigh N, Ó Fionn, Uí Bhriain, Ó Laoghaire, Dawson, De Róiste, Ó Muineacháin Bernard, Ó Dubhghaill, Ó Sé Sean Pól, Ó Mhurchú Gearóid, Críod, Ó Luanaigh, Ó Cochláin Mairtín, Uí Loinsigh, Ó Luasa, Ó Haodha Padriagh, Ó Múrcú Gearóid, Ó Cinnéide, Ó Madaoin, Ó Sé Tony, Léineacháin, Uí Foghlú, Ó hÉalaithe, Ó Héigheartaigh, Ní Heachthigheairn, Uí Thuama, MacCarthaigh Susan, Mac Uaid, Ní Cheallagh, Ó Cearbhaill, Ó Muirthile, Uí Chaochlaioich, Ó Haodha Pól.

PRESENT

Councillor Danny Collins, County Mayor, presided.

Councillor: Coughlan, Coleman, Murphy K, O'Sullivan J, O'Sullivan M, O'Donovan, Murphy PG, Cronin, O'Connell, McGrath, D'Alton, Murtagh, Buckley A, White J, Dalton-O'Sullivan, O'Callaghan, Barry, Sheppard, Rasmussen, O'Connor S, O'Connor A, McCarthy N, O'Flynn, O'Brien, O'Leary, Dawson, Roche, Moynihan B, Doyle, O'Shea JP, Murphy Gerard, Creed, Looney, Coughlan Martin, Lynch, Lucey, Hayes Pat, Murphy Gearóid, Kennedy, Madden, O'Shea T, Linehan-Foley, Healy, Hegarty M, Ahern, Twomey, McCarthy S, Quaide, Kelly, Carroll, Hurley, Coakley, Hayes Paul.

Chief Executive, Senior Executive Officer Corporate Services

[a] CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Proposed by Cllr. John Paul O'Shea

1/3-2

Seconded by Cllr. Seamus McCrath

RESOLVED:

“That the minutes of the Meeting held on 13th March 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Mayor.”

[b] VOTES OF SYMPATHY

TO: Patricia Liddy on the death of her mother-in-law Mary (Dolly) McCarthy.

2/3-2

[f] **REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF OFFICERS**
TÚAIRISCÍ AGUS MOLTAÍ ÍOIFIGIGH

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S MANAGEMENT REPORT TO COUNCIL:

3(a)/3-2

- a. Quarterly report of the Economic Development Directorate for the 3-month period 31st December 2022.

Members noted the Economic Development Directorate Quarterly Report.

During this discussion, the Members made the following points:

- Members asked if there are still smaller hub facilities in towns and villages.
- Members asked if they could have an update on the County Wholly Owned Companies.

The Chief Executive said that there is a letter going to all Chairs of the Companies requesting updates for Members. There is a number of smaller hub facilities still in place in some communities. He said a report will be brought to Development Committee on remote working hubs and industrial lands and units.

3(b)/3-2

- b. Quarterly report of the Finance Directorate for the 3-month period 31st December 2022

Members noted the Finance Directorate Quarterly Report.

[g] **CORRESPONDENCE FROM GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**
COMHFHREAGRAS Ó RANNA RIALTAS

MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT & HERITAGE

4/3-2

Correspondence received 8th March from the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage in response to Council's letter dated 23/01/23 in relation to WWTP upgrade projects for Cork County under the Small Towns and Villages Growth Programmes under the Capital Programme 2020-2024.

Members noted the correspondence from the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage

During this discussion, the Members made the following points:

- Members said the response was disappointing and unacceptable.
- Members said there was a waste of money in Uisce Éireann. Villages are not developing due to lack of water services.

Mayor thanked the Members for their contribution to the Uisce Éireann workshop held on 24th March and noted that additional communication with members by Uisce Éireann was promised.

Members agreed to write back to the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage to request that urgent prioritisation be given to the projects in the Capital Programme and that the five to seven year delivery outlined in the correspondence be expedited.

MINISTER FOR HOUSING, LOCAL GOVERNMENT & HERITAGE

5/3-2

Correspondence received 8th March from Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage in response to Council's letter dated 23/01/23 in relation to private rented accommodation availability and the necessity to encourage landlords to engage with the HAP Scheme.

Members noted the correspondence from the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage

HSE

6/3-2

Correspondence received 13th March from the HSE in response to Council's letter dated 13/02/23 in relation to take over of the Air Ambulance Service.

Members noted the correspondence from the Health Service Executive

Minister for Health

7/3-2

Correspondence received 13th March from the Minister for Health in response to Council's letter dated 24/10/22 in relation to concessionary medical cards to persons with Spinal Cord Injuries.

Members noted the correspondence from the Minister for Health

Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage

8/3-2

Correspondence received 16th March from the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage in response to Council's letter dated 13/02/23 in relation to delays with decisions from An Bord Pleanála and the filling of board vacancies.

Members noted the correspondence from Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage

During this discussion, the Members made the following points:

- Members noted that there was some positive aspects to reply which was welcome.
- Said An Bord Pleanála's timeline of 18 weeks for resolution of appeals was an extraordinary statement.
- Members said that 5 members were appointed which was positive progression but would welcome more staff and An Bord Pleanála must be resourced properly as appeal decisions taking upwards of 12 months is unacceptable.

[h] NOTICES OF MOTION

9/3-2

REVIEW THE PAY FOR FIREFIGHTERS

Cllr. Noel Collins proposed, seconded by Cllr. John Paul O'Shea

"I am calling on both Cork County Council and on the Department of Local government to review the pay of firefighters. It is urgent that we address these vital emergency services in rural areas before it literally becomes an emergency."

Councillor Caroline Cronin proposed, Council Michael Paul Murtagh seconded.

RESPONSE:

Members noted the response from Mr Louis Duffy, Director of Services, Environment as follows:

Challenges associated with both the recruitment and retention of retained firefighters personnel is being experienced by many local authorities around the country as is evidenced in the recently published review entitled "Retained Fire Services in Ireland – A Review of Recruitment and Retention and the Future Sustainability of Service Delivery".

The publication of this review follows extensive engagement with all relevant stakeholders, together with in-depth research and analysis of the current model for fire service delivery in Ireland and in other jurisdictions. The review sets out recommendations in key strategic areas to ensure a sustainable and effective fire service delivery model into the future. A process for implementation of the recommendations, which includes engagement with the Local Government Management Agency and staff interest groups, has recently commenced through the Retained Fire services National Oversight and Implementation Group under the remit of the National Directorate for Fire & Emergency Management.

During this discussion, the Members made the following points:

- Members said recent house fires have left fire crews in small towns such as Schull with a huge job as they are to cover large areas.
- Said there has been diminishing numbers in fire crews due to being unable to fill roles left by retirements and resignations.
- Said this is mainly due to inadequate pay for sacrifices made and risks of the role.
- Members said retained firefighters now do water and heights rescue in addition to fires. The candidates to fill these roles must be skilled in breathing apparatus and rescue management as well as attending road traffic accidents and attending to hazardous materials.
- Said firefighters are often the first response to a situation and in order to attract and retain suitable candidates the pay must be adequate.
- Members said there are challenges across the county with recruitment and supports the review being carried out.
- Members noted that recommendations should be carried out as soon as possible.
- Council should look at training General Operatives to be firefighters.
- Members said that there is a need to look at firefighters being in the higher tax bracket.
- Members said communities rely on firefighters, and that the firefighters have to work unsocial hours.
- Members said that there is a mandatory retirement age for firefighters and there is a need to look at the fitness level of the employee rather than their age.
- Members said its time to put together an attractive package to entice people to join the service.
- Members asked for the number of firefighters in each station.
- Members asked that when larger industries with an explosion risk is applying for planning permission that an assessment of the fire service should be taken into account and the personnel resources in that area.
- Member said there is a need for a bi-annual review on staff resources.

The Mayor said that he is in support of this motion. Ambulance services are overstretched and therefore firefighters will sometimes have to treat injured parties until the ambulance arrives.

The Chief Executive said there is a high level of turnover among retained firefighters nationally and there is a continuous recruitment process in the County. There is an extensive report published on the Department Housing website which looked at a range of issues, but the main recommendations need to go through at a national level. He acknowledged the challenge with recruitment and said Cork County Council is reviewing the application process.. All fire stations are fully compliant with staffing levels. There are adequate procedures in place to allow for escalating supports on the ground if needed. Council will furnish a report to Development Committee regarding numbers of firefighters in each station.

Members agreed to write to the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage to ask for a review of the pay of firefighter.

TENANTS THREATENED BY EVICTION IN SITU

“That this Council would furnish a report on how many acquisitions have been made by this Council of properties with a tenant threatened by eviction in situ in the years 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 to date by municipal area and what is the proposed budget acquisitions for the remainder of this year.”

Councillor Cathal Rasmussen proposed, Councillor James Kennedy seconded.

RESPONSE:

Members noted the response from Mr Maurice Manning, Director of Services, Housing as follows:

Circular 08/2023, issued by the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage on the 13th March, 2023 provided Cork Co Council with an initial allocation of 60 acquisitions that can be funded in 2023, where HAP/RAS tenants are in situ, where they have been issued with a valid Notice to Quit and where landlords are willing to consider selling their properties to the Council. Over the past number of years under Cork County Council’s Acquisition Policy the Council has been acquiring vacant housing stock. The option of purchasing units where tenants are in situ and in receipt of HAP/RAS was proposed by the Department of Housing in April 2022 and has now become policy, in March 2023.

Since April 2022 Cork County Council has considered 64 properties for acquisition where tenants were in receipt of HAP/RAS support.

The number of RAS/HAP tenants who were provided with Local Authority/AHB accommodation during the period 2019 to 2023 is as follows:

Number of allocations from HAP/RAS to council and AHB properties						
Municipal District	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Bandon/Kinsale	9	11	18	25	1	64
Carrigaline	23	38	17	32	2	112
Cobh	13	17	27	25	11	93
East Cork	34	59	56	48	1	198
Fermoy	17	26	56	14	3	116
Kanturk/Mallow	23	53	71	80	7	234
Macroom	8	16	43	18	2	87
West Cork	13	18	61	68	10	170
Total	140	238	349	30	37	

During this discussion the Members made the following points:

- Members said there is a lack of ambition and funding by Department.
- Members said that the legal process is slow and asked how long it takes on average to purchase property.
- Members asked if tenants given shorter notice would be able to stay in homes while negotiations with landlords is taking place?
- Members asked if additional staff are needed.
- Members asked what leeway the Housing Department has if a bidding war starts on the purchase of a property.
- Members asked if this is a fair way to deal with people in danger of losing their homes and is it fair to others on the housing list?
- Members said that it is a vital scheme, but process needs to be facilitated as we are in a housing crisis.

The Chief Executive said that the Minister has set a target of 1,500 nationally. Cork County Council's allocation is 60 but this may increase. Council will ensure each acquisitions applications will be dealt with by Council sensitively and efficiently. He said purchases and sales run into challenges on both sides and Council must achieve value for money as does the seller but the aim is to work with government policy in this regard.

11/3-2

ADVERTISING IRISH LANGUAGE

“To seek a report on the implementation by Cork County Council of the requirement under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act, 2021 that 20% of its advertising be in the Irish language and that Cork County Council avert any financial burden as a result of this on community groups placing road closure notices.”

Councillor Gearóid Murphy proposed, Councillor Seamus McGrath seconded.

RESPONSE:

Members noted the response from Ms Patricia Liddy, Director of Services, Corporate Services as follows:

Section 10A of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act, 2021 refers to the advertising requirements of Public Bodies and 20% of all advertising, paid and unpaid, must be in the Irish language.

This is a legal obligation which requires also that said advertisements be recorded and monitored for the purposes of compliance, effective from 1st January 2023. A report is required to be submitted to the Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga no later than 10th March 2024 in respect of 2023 advertising.

In respect of the implementation of the Act by Cork County Council, the Guidelines issued by the Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga have been reviewed in detail by the Cork County Council's Irish Office and are available to staff on the Irish Office section of the Staff Hub.

Members of staff from all Directorates have attended webinars and training in respect of the requirements. To ensure implementation of the Act throughout the organisation, liaison staff have been put in place across a range of directorates who have attended briefings on the requirements of the Act.

The Corporate Services Directorate has set up a recording system to allow each directorate to keep a record of all types of advertising for their Directorate, in all languages, all formats, paid and owned, whether displayed on Cork County Council own media or placed with Media Companies. This will provide the data for the report to be submitted to the Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga in compliance with this legislation. This will also give assurance that the requirement for 20% of all advertising, paid and unpaid, to be in the Irish language is being met by the organisation.

Regarding the specific concern outlined in the notice of motion, which relates to a financial burden being placed on members of the public or community groups that apply for road closure licences, It is agreed that community groups should be excluded from the requirement for Irish language advertisements related to road closures as it is expected that the 20% Irish advertising requirement will be met through other road closure advertisements. Should this position change, then this exclusion may have to be reviewed.

During this discussion the Members made the following points:

- Members said that to have adverts bilingual is adding an increased burden on community groups due to their expense and would impact local parades and festivals.
- Members noted the compliance with the Act but noted that there was no legal requirement to give notices in English and could save costs by advertising in Irish.

- Asked if there is a requirement to put in road closure notices in national newspapers as social media and website could be used instead.
- Said the proposal was a practical solution.

[k] VOTES OF CONGRATULATIONS

12/3-2

- TO:** The Bantry Bay Rugby Club on winning the Under 18's Point 5 Munster Rugby Cup.
- TO:** Mitchelstown CBS Community School on winning the Michael Cusack Cup (Senior C) Hurling Final.
- TO:** Bandon Rugby Club Under 16's on winning the Pan Munster Cup final.
- TO:** Ross Bullman on winning the 3rd European Snooker Championship in Malta.
- TO:** Youghal for All for organising of the St. Patrick's Day Parade.
- TO:** Clonakilty Sacred Heart Secondary School on winning the All-Ireland Light Entertainment Award for the TY case of Oliver.
- TO:** Michael Wycherley on winning the 5 Nations Ploughing Challenge 2023.
- TO:** Teresa Egger on being nominated as Grand Marshal of Courtmacsherry St Patrick's Day Parade.

[i] ANY OTHER BUSINESS

TAKING IN CHARGE OF ESTATES

Cllr. Danny Collins proposed, seconded by Cllr. Mary Linehan Foley

Members asked for a reminder letter to issue to the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage regarding taking in charge of estates.

CHANGE OF DATE OF MEETING

Members noted that the next Full Council Meeting is scheduled to take place Easter Monday 10th April and resolved that the date be changed to Tuesday 11th April 2023.

On the proposal of Councillor Seamus McGrath, seconded by Councillor Gillian Coughlan, the Members approved the change of date of the next Full Council Meeting to 11th April 2023.

~ THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING ~