

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

**Minutes of Special Meeting of Wexford County Council
held on Monday 11th March, 2019 – 11.30 p.m.
in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Wexford.**

Attendance:

In the Chair: Cllr. K. Doyle, Cathaoirleach.

Councillors:

M. Byrne;	G. Carthy;	K. Codd Nolan;	A. Connick;
T. Dempsey;	M. Doyle	M. Farrell;	W. Fitzharris;
J. Fleming;	T. Forde;	J. Hegarty;	D. Hynes;
R. Ireton;	P. Kavanagh;	W. Kavanagh;	G. Lawlor;
B.A. Murphy;	J. Mythen;	L. O'Brien;	J. O'Rourke;
F. Ó Súilleabháin;	M. Roche;	M. Sheehan;	F. Staples;
J. Sullivan;	O. Walsh;	T. Walsh;	M. Whelan.

Officials: Mr. T. Enright, Chief Executive;
Mr. T. Larkin, Director of Services;
Mr. E. Hore, Director of Services;
Mr. E. Taaffe, Director of Services;
Mr. J. Carley, Director of Services;
Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance & ICT;
Mr. P. Collins, County Secretary.

Apologies: Councillors P. Breen, J. Moore.

1. National Revaluation Programme (Wexford) – Presentation by Valuation Office (In-Committee)

At the outset, the Cathaoirleach introduced Terry Fahey from the Valuation Office, who then made a presentation, which had been previously circulated to the Members. He advised the Members that the revaluation process will take place over the next 3-4 months and that the information he is giving to the Members today can be used to advise their constituents who are rate payers. He covered the following areas in his presentation:

- Valuation Office and Rating System in Ireland
- National Revaluation Programme
- The Revaluation Process
- Revaluation Outcomes so far
- Next steps and Key Dates
- Questions and Answers

At 11.47 a.m. Cllr. A. Connick arrived.

The details of the areas covered by Terry Fahey are set out in detail in his presentation which was circulated to the Members.

There then followed questions from the Members. Terry Fahey advised that he can come back to meet the Council at a later date if required. He has also left his email address and phone number with Ms. A. O'Neill, Head of Finance, so that Members can make individual queries to his office or to himself.

Topics covered during the questions and answers included the following:

- Definition of trading data
- Part of the process of the revaluation cert
- The assessment of local rental income
- Pressure on counties with urban centers
- The issue of issuing the provisional certs after the Local Election was then brought up and the timing of the issue of certs was queried
- The linking of valuation to improvements in premises has a penalising effect on the people who carry out the improvements
- Revaluations every 5 years is too long – Terry Fahey advised that every 3 years is the optimum target and that this will require change of legislation
- Issues looked at during the revaluation e.g. footfall, dereliction, and parking - are these taken into account in making the revaluation? Terry Fahey advised that rents should reflect all issues.
- Trading figures for supermarket chains – are they submitted to the Valuation Office? Terry Fahey advised that the Valuation Office doesn't look at the trading figures for supermarkets
- Access to Revenue Commissioners – can the Valuation Office look at ratepayers tax figures? Terry Fahey advised that the Valuation Office doesn't look at the tax affairs of ratepayers
- Treatment of charities under the new system – Terry Fahey advised that where Charity Shops are in direct competition with other ratepayers they are also liable to pay rates.
- Real-time adjustment for September 2017 – can that be taken into account if things have changed dramatically since that time? - Terry Fahey advised that the current situation can be factored into the revaluation
- Closure of shops in rural villages as a result of rate increases
- Vacancy rates in villages versus town by town - Terry Fahey advised that the difference in vacancy rates and the reason for revaluing the rental values will be reflected in the valuation
- Is there a time period to allow new businesses to get up and running? – Terry Fahey advised that the collection of rates from new businesses is a function of the Local Authority and not the Valuation Office
- Length of time of the appeal process
- Members will be notified directly of dates for walk in clinics for ratepayers.

2. Deferred Notices of Motion

2.1 Cllr. T. Forde:

“We ask that Wexford County Council seriously consider and take steps to end the over reliance of privately run bed and breakfasts or hotels for emergency accommodation. We ask that Wexford County Council recognise the unsuitability of the current emergency accommodation model and to examine the possibility of acquiring

and using more actual houses that could be operated by the council or in coordination with other housing organisations for the provision of emergency accommodation."

The above motion was proposed by Cllr. T. Forde seconded by Cllr. M. Roche.

Mr J. Carley, Director of Service, advised that it is not possible to change the system at present. However there is on-going progress with a wide range of issues and it is the Council's intention to reduce the amount spent on Bed & Breakfast by 20% this year.

Cllr. J. O'Rourke asked if owners of Bed & Breakfasts are Garda vetted.

The motion was then approved.

2.2 Cllr. T. Forde:

"We call on Wexford County Council to formulate and to make public a written mental health policy for housing which may include a clear protocol when dealing with tenants with mental health concerns and to include mental health issues as a priority in the allocation of housing"

The above motion was proposed by Cllr. T. Forde. Following discussion it was agreed that this motion will be referred back to the Housing SPC - this was agreed by Cllr. T. Forde.

2.3 Cllr. G. Carthy:

"That Wexford County Council immediately re-installs the vehicular access to the beach at Seaview, Kilmore. This commitment was given to the local community and the emergence services in May of 2018 and to date has not been acted on".

The above motion was proposed by Cllr. G. Carthy seconded by Cllr. M. Roche.

Mr. J. Carley, Director of Services, advised that consideration would be given to ongoing work. This matter was referred to the District. It was noted that the Senior Engineer Gerry Forde had attended District Meetings and will be available in the future.

2.4 Cllr. J. Mythen:

"That this Council sends solidarity and support to our nurses and midwives whom have legitimately balloted their members to take strike action, to secure restoration of pay with a safe fully staffed, functioning Health service, that values and pays them as essential skilled workers".

The above motion was proposed by Cllr. J. Mythen seconded by Cllr. T. Walsh and agreed by all.

2.5 Cllr. T. Forde:

"Maidir leis an Ghaeilge agus iarracht a dhéanamh í a chur chun cinn agus Seachtain na Gaeilge a cheiliúradh gach Márta: "Iarraim go spreagfaidh an Chomhairle seo go gníomhach úsáid na Gaeilge ag cruinniú Mí Mhárta de Chomhairle Contae Loch Garman gach bliain.

Iarraimid ar bhaill atá compordach leis úsáid a bhaint as ár dteanga-an Ghaeilge chun moltaí, comhghairdeas agus comhbhrón a thairiscint"

"In an effort to promote the Irish language and to mark Seachtain na Gaeilge every March, I ask that this Council actively encourage the use of Gaeilge at the March meeting of Wexford County Council every year by asking members of the council who are comfortable using the language to consider submitting motions and to offer congratulations and sympathies as Gaeilge."

The above motion was proposed by Cllr. T. Forde and agreed by all.

The remaining motions below were referred to the County Council Meeting which will be held at 2.30 p.m. this afternoon.

2.6 Cllr. M. Doyle:

"In support of events to mark the sitting of the first Dáil and in recognition of it's historic importance, I propose that Wexford County Council take this opportunity to recognise the core principles of the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil by displaying a framed copy of the document in a prominent place in this chamber."

2.7 Cllr. R. Ireton:

"On behalf of Aitheantas I am calling on Wexford County Council to write to Minister Zappone's Department requesting/demanding that her Department acknowledges Adoptee Identity Rights and immediately shows Adoptees access to their own information on health, history and heritage in line with the equality and personal autonomy rights of other citizens and as voted for in two referenda".

2.8 Cllr. M. Whelan:

"That Wexford County Council reviews its development fees for Solar farms in the county and raise them to a level that would reflect the impact on the local community".

2.9 Cllr. J. Hegarty:

"In line with our ongoing efforts to position County Wexford as a healthy county, I call on Wexford County Council to pass on live information and warnings when required in relation to the air quality of our main towns to the general public via the Map alert system".

2.10 Cllr. M. Byrne:

"That Wexford County Council condemns the outrageous cost overruns of the planned National Children's Hospital and calls for those responsible to be held to account."

2.11 Cllr. M. Sheehan:

"That this Council supports our GPs campaign for better terms and conditions with the undoing of FEMPI legislation and to calls on the Minister for Health to engage with the stakeholders to ensure that practices remain open, new doctors are recruited to ensure

that practices remain viable and that patients do not have to travel long distances for GP appointments”.

2.12 Cllr. T. Forde:

"I propose that this Council write separately to RTE, Eurovision Song Contest Ireland and the Irish performers, calling on all participants not to play any part in the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest, due to be held in Israel, until Israel recognises equal rights for Palestinians and observers international law."

2.13 Cllr. D. Hynes:

“That this Council considers in view of the many housing applicants, that the Council is not in a position to provide a social house for at present, would therefore develop a more direct link with letting agencies to find out what accommodations are available to rent within the HAP income guidelines and as far as possible which landlords will accept HAP. As many applicants are under severe pressure and are often stressed trying to find a suitable place to rent”.

2.14 Cllr. M. Sheehan:

“That this Council calls on the Minister for Social protection to abandon the costly piecemeal practice to reviewing all those affected by the 2012 pension rules changes and to reinstate the old criteria of the pre-change State pension while developing a mechanism to backdate the full arrears to those pensioners affected”

2.15 Cllr. F. OSúilleabháin:

"This Council acknowledges the large number of homeowners in County Wexford who are currently experiencing mortgage distress. It welcomes the passing of the first stage of the 'No Consent, No Sale" legislation in Leinster House which prevents banks selling home mortgages to vulture funds without the consent of the borrower/homeowner. This council is calling on all T.D.s to facilitate the speedy passage of the bill through the remaining legislative stages".

2.16 Cllr. D. Hynes:

“That this Council calls on the government to reverse the decision by revenue to impose VAT at 23% on Food supplements from health stores”.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

County Secretary

Daingithe ar an

lá de Aibreán, 2019.

Cathaoirleach