

## Local Property Tax Rate Retained



WATERFORD'S rate of Local Property Tax (LPT) for 2019 is to remain the same as the current rate. Every year Councillors across Ireland vote on whether to apply an increase or decrease to the LPT.

A call to increase the LPT by 10 per cent was made by CEO of Waterford City & County Council Michael Walsh at a meeting held in Dungarvan last week.

However, Councillors instead opted to keep the rate at the rate currently in place following their decision to increase LPT by 2.5 per cent for 2018.

In explaining the rationale behind recommending a 10 per cent increase, Michael Walsh said nothing had changed significantly in terms of finances that would bring him to any other conclusion.

He said he was concerned about the extent of expenditure on many assets, with roads expenditure of particular concern. In the past, Mr Walsh said footpath maintenance across the city and county had suffered.

He explained that this was one of the reasons why an increase was sought last year and said a further increase would enable progress to continue.

Mr Walsh said he was conscious of the concerns of Councillors. However, he added that the increase he was recommending was "moderate" and pointed out that "in the grand scheme of things" there hadn't been any increase of consequence that would address seven to nine years of declining income. In response, Cllr James Tobin (FF) said the LPT process is the same "circus" every year. "The people who will be paying the most if LPT is increased are the people who will benefit the least," he said. Cllr Damien Geoghegan (FG) also expressed dissatisfaction with the process.

He described the current system of deciding budgets at local authority level as "farcical" and pointed out that LPT was being discussed weeks in advance of budget documentation coming before Councillors.

Cllr Jim Griffin (SF) said an LPT increase was being sought at a time when the country is facing "the worst housing crisis ever". "Everyone is hard pressed," he said. "We can't put another increase on the people of our city and county." After being granted a 15 minute adjournment to discuss the issue in private (which was closer to 30 minutes), Councillors returned to the Council Chamber. Cllr Geoghegan rejected the 10 per cent increase put forward by Mr Walsh which he said would be "unacceptable". Instead, he proposed that the rate of LPT imposed for 2019 remain the same as the LPT rate for 2018. This was seconded by Cllr James Tobin (FF) and approved by Councillors meaning the rate remains at 2.5 per cent above the base line.