

**From:** Gerald Hurley  
**Sent:** Friday, November 21, 2025 9:50 AM  
**To:** Sean McKeown <[smckeown@waterfordcouncil.ie](mailto:smckeown@waterfordcouncil.ie)>  
**Subject:** Proposed increase in commercial rates

Dear Sean,

On behalf of Waterford Chamber and our retail members, we are writing to express our deep concern regarding the proposed 3.5% increase in commercial rates currently under consideration by Waterford City & County Council.

The reaction among retailers has been one of shock and genuine alarm. Many local businesses are already operating under immense pressure due to a convergence of financial demands and declining trading conditions. The Chamber has been contacted by large numbers of members over the past 48 hours expressing urgent fears about their ability to absorb any further increases.

The following realities have been highlight :

- Significant increases in operating costs, including energy, insurance, and supply-chain pressures
- The upcoming minimum wage increase to €14.15, taking effect in January
- The introduction of auto-enrolment, which will impose additional employer costs
- The fact that Waterford already has one of the highest commercial rates multipliers in Ireland
- High parking charges and ongoing traffic issues deterring customers and reducing footfall
- Reduced consumer spending and the absence of any Government “giveaway payment” this year
- A large portion of businesses being excluded from the 9% energy rebate due to qualifying thresholds that do not reflect the realities of local trading
- Multiple recent closures of independent retail premises, with more businesses signalling that they are on the brink

In this context, the suggestion of increasing commercial rates feels entirely misaligned with the economic pressures faced by small and medium enterprises in the city. Retailers express concern that this measure will accelerate further closures, reduce employment, and undermine the long-term sustainability of the city centre.

There is also confusion regarding the proposed waiver for businesses with a rates bill under €5,000 and its applicability to those who pay by direct debit. It is important to note that most city centre retailers fall *above* this threshold and would therefore bear the full weight of the increase.

Waterford Chamber recognises the pressures facing the Council in balancing its budget, however, it is critical that solutions do not come at the expense of the very businesses that form the backbone of the local economy. It is evident from our engagement with members that many feel unheard during recent discussions and increasingly isolated from decisions that materially affect their chances of survival.

We therefore respectfully request the following:

1. That the proposed 3.5% commercial rates increase be reconsidered as a matter of urgency.

2. That an immediate meeting be convened between Council management, elected representatives, and Waterford Chamber with a delegation of retail members ahead of the budget meeting.
3. That the Council work collaboratively with the business community to explore alternative measures which support economic activity, including:
  - A freeze or reduction in the commercial rates multiplier
  - A review of parking charges and city centre accessibility
  - Transparent and practical supports for businesses historically excluded from rebate schemes
  - A structured, ongoing engagement mechanism between the Council and the retail sector

Waterford's independent retailers contribute substantially to local employment, the vibrancy of the city, and the economic strength of the region. Their survival is fundamental to the health of Waterford as a whole. The Chamber is committed to working constructively with the Council to find solutions, but we must emphasise that a further increase in costs at this time would have deeply damaging consequences.

We ask that the concerns of the business community be given serious and immediate consideration and look forward to your response.

Best regards,

Gerald

Gerald Hurley  
CEO  
Waterford Chamber