

**“This Council would agree to draft a scheme providing for the waiver of a portion of the rates due to Cork County Council when ratepayers in a town centre can demonstrate a reduction in turnover of 30% or more due to an extended period of road closures granted by Cork County Council. That approval for this waiver scheme would be sought from the Minister in accordance with the requirements of Section 2 of the Local Government (Rates) Act 1970.”**

Heard at full Council, 25-09-2018

This Council has an income of over 100m from rates each year. It could not operate without businesses, big and small, which operate all around our county. Equally businesses cannot operate without the services which local authorities deliver. The healthier and more pleasant the town environment, the more businesses thrive. So in essence, Cork County Council and the businesses of this county operate in a mutually beneficial partnership.

Many retailers in our town centres have lost business as a result of road closures limiting access to trade. That could be as a result of roadworks being carried out by the Council or its contractors, by Irish Water, gas-related, broadband-related. But whatever the reason for the road closures, there is one common thread throughout: Cork County Council grants the road closure licence.

Road closures can have demonstrable effects on a town centre business by blocking shop frontage, restricting access or deterring footfall. This can negatively impact the business trading environment and affect business finance. A road closure of a short duration is generally tolerable. But when the road closure continues for a prolonged period, business turnovers can be slashed and jobs lost. Customer patterns are impacted. People who have been frequenting a shop for years go elsewhere. When the prolonged road closure is over, those customer patterns may never re-establish. So even when the road is reopened, the effect of a prolonged road closure can linger.

Works need to be done but we cannot have businesses closing and people losing their livelihoods because they happen to deliver a service in a location impacted by extended road closures. The loss of a business has a ripple effect that means so much more than one door closing. It means the loss of a livelihood in one, two or more homes. It engenders a lack of confidence in the town itself.

Loss of a service in the town – people have to travel – pressure on the road network – congestion – increased pressure on parking

One of the critical ultimate losers in the loss of any business is the local authority. And that loss goes well beyond the obvious loss in rates.

We are asking the members of CCC to consider a scheme for the waiver of a portion of rates should a ratepayer have a demonstrable drop in income arising from an extended period of road closures. This would give the ratepayer's business a chance to recover from the enforced loss in footfall and would be a demonstration of empathy and collegiality on the part of CCC.