

## **District council meeting of 14 December 2022**

### **Convened and announced on 08 December 2022**

**Present:** ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET Marion (CSV), Mayor; SCHILTZ Fernand (LSAP), Deputy Mayor; JUNGBLUT Tom (CSV), Deputy Mayor; EIFES Eric (DP); DI GENOVA Jean-Pierre (CSV); SCHMITZ Jean-Pierre (CSV); LAKAFF Laurent (CSV); ARRENSDORFF Jean-Jacques (Déi Gréng); WOLTER (LSAP), Councillors; TAZIAUX Tim, Acting Municipal Secretary; SCHILTZ Nadine, Secretary.

**Apologies:** ZHU Dali (DP) and THIERIE Geoffrey (LSAP), Councillors

#### **1. HR matters (in closed session)**

In closed session

#### **2. Special development plan (PAP) for Leessen 3 in Contern – Approval of the implementation agreement and implementation design**

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) said that the implementation agreement and the implementation design for the PAP Leessen 3 building project were on the agenda again due to problems with the wording of the cancellation period, raised by the Interior Ministry, and due to an uncertainty concerning preservation of a walnut tree. The Mayor invited Tom SCHMIT, architect, to speak to provide a more detailed explanation of the latest developments.

Architect Tom SCHMIT reported that the walnut tree could not be retained, since it was recorded in the special development plan already drawn up in the preceding legislative period in 2017 as not meriting preservation. The special development plan was subsequently approved at the district council meeting of 13 December 2018 without any amendment in that regard. In addition, the consultants ENECO SA had carried out an ecological survey of the area in which various tree species were recorded as meriting protection, but that did not include the walnut tree because according to ENECO S.A it was a lone tree and not a fruit tree. The tree in question was consequently not protected from the outset.

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) emphasised that it was a shame to fell the tree. The Cabinet had sought to find another solution, but unfortunately its hands were tied in this matter, since the developer held a valid permission from the Environment Ministry to fell the tree.

Councillor Jean-Jacques ARRENSDORFF (Déi Gréng) asked whether the vote on the implementation agreement and the implementation design needed to be taken together. He had no issues with the implementation design, but in his view the implementation agreement should not state a two-year deadline. As this concerned the building of social housing, he felt these homes should not be offered on the regular property market once a given period had elapsed.

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) explained that a deadline had to be set. Architect Tom SCHMIT emphasised that the present wording adhered precisely to the suggested improvement from the legal team at the Interior Ministry, and that the vote needed to be taken on both documents together.

The district council voted by a majority, with 6 votes in favour and 3 votes against [Eric EIFES (DP); Jean-Jacques ARRENSDORFF and Laurence WOLTER (Déi Gréng)], to approve the implementation agreement and the implementation design for the PAP Leessen 3 in Contern.

#### **3. Approval of the revised district arrangements concerning cemeteries and burials**

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) explained that the district arrangements concerning cemeteries and burials had been adjusted, because it was not possible for residents outside the district to apply for a licence. She also advised that it was not yet possible to insert the provisions concerning the planned inter-district forest cemetery in Waldbredimus district, since as yet there was no template for this.

The district council voted unanimously to approve the revised district arrangements concerning cemeteries and burials.

#### **4. Approval of charging arrangement for IT courses**

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) advised the council that IT courses were again to be offered in the district from 2023. These were introductory courses on IT and IT security, to offer support and help with IT problems. The fee per course was €70. The courses will be held in the old school in Moutfort.

The district council voted unanimously to approve the charging arrangements for IT courses.

#### **5. Abolition of parking zones within the district of Contern**

The district council voted unanimously to abolish the MOU and OET parking zones within Contern district.

#### **6. Change to traffic regulations for Contern district**

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) said that one year after introducing residents' parking in Moutfort and Oetrange and a bus vignette, an evaluation had been conducted. This was in collaboration with the consultants Schroeder & Associés, the council officer and the police. The Mobility Committee had similarly been invited to give advice, and had prepared a detailed report. The complaints received and the collected suggested improvements from residents were similarly taken into account. Following this, the traffic regulations were reviewed and amended. The aim was to simplify parking in their district for residents, and to prevent long-term parking by people who live outside the district. In the revised regulations, the residents' parking was now simplified by expanding the parking zones to the whole area of Contern district.

Parking in various parking spaces was to be limited to 3 or 5 hours. The Cabinet remained open to suggestions for improvements and to new ideas for adjusting the traffic regulations, in order to implement these if possible. The new vignettes are being printed in several colours (1 colour per locality). For the time being, the existing vignettes remain valid. Those residents who already have a vignette will automatically be sent a new one.

The district council unanimously approved the change to the traffic regulations for Contern district.

#### **7. Approval of a document – Sale of a parcel of land in Contern**

*Deputy Mayor Fernand SCHILTZ (LSAP) left the room.*

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) presented a document for sale of a parcel of land, located in "Op Briicherpad" in Contern.

The district council voted by 7 votes in favour and 1 vote against [Jean-Jacques ARRENSDORFF (Déi Gréng)] to approve the document for sale of a parcel of land in Contern.

#### **8. Approval of a division of a plot of land in Oetrange**

The district council unanimously approved the division of a plot of land in Oetrange in order to develop it as several sites.

#### **9. Approval of the resignation of a member from the Board of Administration of the Ieweschte Syrdall social welfare office**

The district council unanimously accepted the resignation of Mr Edmond Rollinger, Chair of the Board of Administration of the Ieweschte Syrdall social welfare office. Mr Rollinger is moving to another district.

#### **10. Approval of income**

*Deputy Mayor Fernand SCHILTZ (LSAP) entered the room.*

The district council unanimously approved income of €252,038.07 for the financial year 2022.

### **11. Approval of the Council budget 2023**

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) invited Deputy Mayor for Finance, Tom JUNGBLUT (CSV) to outline the budget for 2023.

As previously set out in the presentation of the 2023 budget, the Deputy Mayor for Finance emphasised the particular challenge that preparing the budget in the current, economically difficult times represents. The last year was characterised by a pandemic that was almost overcome, an energy crisis, and rising inflation where prices were sky-rocketing. In addition to this, there was climate change – something that the district needed to engage with more than ever. Moreover, the Cabinet needed to respond to the rapid growth in population in the district, and enlarge and renew the school and sports infrastructure. The work of technical administration was similarly increasing with the growth in population. Consequently, ever more time and personnel expense was needed to battle through the administrative jungle and to keep up-to-date with Housing Pact 2.0, the Nature Pact, Climate Pact and water conservation. In these times, the primary challenge was to pursue realpolitik and to find efficient solutions for problems, as well as implementing them in short order. The Cabinet has succeeded in meeting all these obligations in preparing the 2023 budget.

Without going into detail again, it was worth noting that the Cabinet was continuing to invest in the district and to modernise. At “Op der Millbech” €880,000 was being invested in safety, in Moutfort €665,000 in re-naturing the Syre river and including flood protection, and at “Op Horbett” in Oetrage €670,000 in laying new pipes for drinking water and drainage. The Cabinet was also addressing the demand for affordable housing, with the building of social housing in Oetrage and Contern. Significant expenditures were planned in combating the climate crisis, in both the regular budget and in the extraordinary budget. €2.2 million is flowing directly or indirectly into measures to protect resources and the environment, via the SIAS or SIDEST syndicate. In concluding, the Deputy Mayor for Finance picked out some key figures from the 2023 budget. In closing, he thanked the Finance Committee for its work in recent years, and all staff who had worked on preparing the 2023 budget. Particular thanks went to Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) and Deputy Mayor Fernand SCHILTZ (LSAP) for their commitment in these turbulent times.

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) invited members to speak.

Councillor Eric EIFES (DP) commented that the surplus in the regular budget was too low, and was not able to finance the intended expenditures. Various expenditures, such as salaries and syndicate costs, were unavoidable. There was no scope for savings here. He criticised the licence costs for the ticketing service and the high expenditures on paper. With regard to the extraordinary budget, he regretted that it was not possible to see the full financial scope of the planned projects, such as the expansion to the school and the Maison Relais, the building of the new sports hall and the renovation of the Conter Stuff. He questioned the overall financing of these projects, and expressed concern that, if loans were being taken out, it should be noted that interest rates were now on the rise and the loans would need to be repaid. He also regretted that no solution had yet been found to build a new fire station.

Deputy Mayor for Finance Tom JUNGBLUT (CSV) explained that in January the medium-term budget plan would show the detailed breakdown of the planned expenditures. At this time, the Cabinet did not yet have the final price quotations available. For that reason, in recent years many working sessions had been arranged with the consultants, to clarify the projects, the detailed breakdown of costs and the financing for members as far as possible. In addition, the demographic trends in the district’s population in recent years were not to be underestimated. The revenues from the Global Municipal Endowment Fund will therefore also increase. The receipts from issuing planning permissions were similarly producing a considerable income. In future, the district was likely to need to take out loans to part finance the planned projects. Up to now, the district’s indebtedness was very low, and the existing loans would also be paid back by then. After the presentation of the medium-term budget plan, all the cards would be on the table and the financial situation could be analysed in precise detail.

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) reviewed the past five years – a generally difficult time, characterised by a global pandemic and the war in Ukraine. During this time, the day-to-day work of the district's employees and school staff had to be repeatedly adjusted to new situations and circumstances. Doing shopping for residents, conducting Covid tests or setting up the first collection centre in Luxembourg for Ukrainian refugees, together with accommodation in Moutfort, are just some examples of this.

The Cabinet was working intensively on preparing the district consistently for the future. With regard to project planning, the Mayor emphasised that it was now necessary to reckon on a doubling of prices in cost estimates and quotations.

With growth of over 600 residents since 2017, the district has grown to become a mid-sized district. Accordingly, various of the existing district infrastructures, such as the school, the sports hall, the Maison Relais and the council building were too small. Expanding these buildings and renewing many other infrastructures is consequently inevitable, in order to ensure continuing high quality of life for residents. For that reason, sizeable expenditures were planned for these items. Ultimately, these are undeniably valuable, forward-looking investments in family-friendly infrastructures (school, Maison Relais), in the safety and well-being of all residents, and the Cabinet cares about these very much. The Mayor emphasised some of the key elements, such as the renovation works to the water and gas pipes, the laying of fibre-optic cable, the creation of small parks, new play areas, a skater park, new walks and cycle paths, and implementing traffic calming measures on many streets and at the entrances to villages. It was similarly incumbent on the Cabinet to create affordable housing, in order to counteract the current housing shortage. This was currently happening, via the building of social housing in Oetrange and Contern.

The Mayor was looking confidently to the future, despite these major projects, and would be voting for the 2023 budget. It was giving the district the necessary means to develop further and to equip itself for the future. In closing, she thanked all those involved in preparing the 2023 budget for their efforts.

Councillor Jean-Jacques ARRENSDORFF (Déi Gréng) again emphasised the turbulent times, which regrettably have impacts on the state budget. And the district was dependent on the state and its grants. Regular income, such as the business tax revenues, was too dependent on the economy, while other revenues – such as the district's income for water, drains and waste – in turn covered costs. For that reason, there was barely any scope in the regular income to finance major investments.

“Déi Gréng” were inclined to be sceptical regarding the opinion of the Finance Committee, particularly concerning its statement on investments in water. Councillor Jean-Jacques ARRENSDORFF also regretted that six of the planned projects were being carried on the shoulders of a single firm of engineering consultants. “Déi Gréng” presently saw no need to plan for a bigger council building, and certainly not without considering beforehand a possible merger with neighbouring districts. In his view, the commitment to the Environment, Climate and Nature Pacts in the 2023 budget was not sufficient to decisively counteract the climate crisis and climate change.

The 2023 budget, in his eyes, was a collection of many projects whose purpose for the well-being of residents he was regrettably unable to discern, and the financing of which he questioned. For all these reasons, “Déi Gréng” would not be voting for the 2023 budget.

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) spoke about the need for individual building projects. Various of the existing structures were already too small when they were formally opened, and given the still-growing population in the district these now needed to be redeveloped or made bigger.

Deputy Mayor Tom JUNGBLUT (CSV) noted that the cost of buying water had doubled in recent years. As soon as the spring in the Millbech could be fed in again, these costs would fall. Rental income was also helping to pay for investments. The de facto answer will be apparent in the medium-term budget plan. The Cabinet had done its best, and he fully and wholly supported the 2023 budget.

Deputy Mayor Fernand SCHILTZ (LSAP) commented that preparing the budget was never easy in times of crisis. The Cabinet had given matters a lot of thought in advance, in order to act in the interests of

the district and its residents. In recent years, a number of working meetings had been arranged to involve the district council in the project planning and to inform it about the financial expense. He emphasised that in the areas of climate, energy, biodiversity and nature and water protection, many projects had already been realised and many more were planned. He listed some of these projects. In addition, the Deputy Mayor referred to the successful implementation of the new law on waste. In 2022 alone, residents had produced 600 tonnes less waste.

In the social sphere, the Cabinet had similarly been very active. Accommodating refugees from Ukraine in Moutfort, and converting the old sports hall in Contern into a collection centre, were just two examples of this.

Fernand SCHILTZ declared that, as an LSAP member, he would certainly support the 2023 budget. It was forward-looking and took account of the key challenges, such as climate, sustainability, social matters, the economy and quality of life. He thanked all his colleagues.

Councillor Jean-Pierre DI GENOVA (CSV) first thanked Deputy Mayor for Finance Tom JUNGBLUT (CSV) for the detailed explanations on the 2023 budget and the Cabinet for the presentation and the excellent work done. He fully and wholly supported the budget presented, and would be voting for it.

Councillor Laurent LAKAFF (CSV) supported what Councillor Jean-Pierre DI GENOVA (CSV) had said. He again stressed that many projects had already been implemented, and that investments continued to be made in many areas to take the district forward. He was certainly voting in favour of the 2023 budget.

Councillor Jean-Pierre SCHMITZ (CSV) emphasised the good work that had been done in difficult times. Many works, such as renewing the drinking water pipes, laying fibre-optic cable, or enlarging the sports hall, school and Maison Relais, were essential. For this, a functioning Technical Services department was needed. He thanked the Cabinet, the Finance Committee and the officers for their work.

The district council voted by a majority to approve the council budget 2023, with 6 votes in favour and 3 votes against [Eric EIFES (DP), Jean-Jacques ARRENSDORFF and Laurence WOLTER (Déi Gréng)].

## **12. Announcements and councillor questions**

Councillor Eric EIFES (DP) wanted to know whether it was possible, during the collective holiday, to install two temporary pedestrian crossings at the site in the main street in Contern – one by the church and the other near the hairdresser's shop – until the works were resumed in February. He also asked whether a letterbox could be fitted at the Henkeshaus for the associations which have their main address there.

Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) agreed with both questions and will pass on the requests to the district's Technical Services department for them to be implemented.

Councillor Laurent LAKAFF (CSV) extended an invitation to the winter cinema on 15 December in the school's amphitheatre. He also informed those present about his imminent resignation as councillor, as he was soon to be moving to another district. He had enjoyed his involvement, since 2011, and wished his successor every success. Mayor Marion ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET (CSV) thanked him for his years of service, and regretted his resignation.

In concluding, the Mayor thanked the council for the excellent collaboration and the lively discussions, and wished all those present happy holidays. The Cabinet then invited those present to share in a glass of sparkling wine, to mark the end of the year.