

MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING OF CORK CITY COUNCIL
HELD ON FRIDAY, 12th JUNE 2015

PRESENT	An tArd-Mhéara, Comhairleoir M. Shields in the Chair and subsequently An tArd-Mhéara, Comhairleoir C. O’Leary in the Chair.
NORTH EAST	Comhairleoirí S. Cunningham, T. Tynan, T. Brosnan, J. Kavanagh.
NORTH CENTRAL	Comhairleoirí T. Gould, M. Barry, K. O’Flynn, L. O’Donnell, J. Sheehan.
NORTH WEST	Comhairleoirí M. Nugent, T. Fitzgerald, K. Collins, M. O’Sullivan.
SOUTH EAST	Comhairleoirí K. McCarthy, C. O’Leary, D. Cahill, L. McGonigle, T. Shannon, N. O’Keeffe, S. O’Shea.
SOUTH CENTRAL	Comhairleoirí F. Kerins, P. Dineen, T. O’Driscoll, S. Martin.
SOUTH WEST	Comhairleoirí J. Buttimer, H. Cremin, F. Dennehy, P.J. Hourican, T. Moloney.
APOLOGIES	Comhairleoir M. Finn
ALSO PRESENT	Ms. A. Doherty, Chief Executive. Mr. T. Keating, Meetings Administrator. Ms. J. Gazely, Senior Staff Officer, Corporate & External Affairs. Ms. V. O’Sullivan, Director of Services, Corporate & External Affairs. Ms. N. O’Sullivan, Assistant Staff Officer, Corporate & External Affairs. Mr. N. Carroll, Staff Officer, Corporate & External Affairs. Mr. E. Walsh, Senior Engineer, Environment & Recreation. Mr. T. Duggan, City Architect, Architects. Ms. C. Forde, Clerical Officer, Corporate & External Affairs.

An tArdmhéara recited the opening prayer.

1. **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

On the proposal of An tArd-Mhéara, Comhairleoir M. Shields, seconded by Comhairleoir J. Buttimer, An Chomhairle agreed to Suspend Standing Orders to allow media cameras in the Chamber for the handover of the Lord Mayor’s Chain.

2. ELECTION OF AN tARDMHÉARA

An tArd-Mhéara M. Shields addressed the meeting.

Chief Executive, Cork City An Chomhairle, Ann Doherty, Meetings Co-ordinator Tadhg Keating, Members of Cork City Council, ex staff, Members of Oireachtas, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

This time last year following my election as Lord Mayor of Cork I outlined a number of initiatives/aims which I said I would like to focus on during my term in office as Lord Mayor. I did so bearing in mind that the year was – the beginning of a new elected council with a very different dynamic to previous councils, with some first time newly elected council members taking office, facing a new set of challenges and opportunities. I appealed to the new council going forward to embrace constructive change and that only happens when people come together and work towards achieving common goals. My mindset also was that we are a newly elected council and we must not fail the trust of the people of Cork. I also said we must work together decisively, constructively, fearlessly with authority and leadership by promoting active citizenship, giving and inspiring others to undertake service above self but I felt some apprehension. I trust that on assemblage here tonight, as I depart from office as Lord Mayor that you fully endorse these sentiments and agree that in my year in office I tried.

And now I would like to present to you a brief resume of my work as Lord Mayor during 2014/2015 and taking this opportunity to highlight some of the many areas of interest carrying out the duties of Lord Mayor which can be quite demanding and onerous.

However it is an enormous honour and privilege to undertake the role and I will always be grateful to Cork City Council for electing me.

Many of the events/activities I attended took place in the heart of the community be it sports centres, youth clubs, hospitals, care centres, retirement centres, schools, NGO, clubs etc. Many involved meeting active volunteers who indeed are the backbone of what makes Cork City unique for its generosity, sharing and caring spirit.

The Lord Mayor's Office is unique for creating the opportunity to fundraise for many worthy charities across the city:

The Lord Mayor's Coffee Morning
The Lord Mayor's Christmas Concert
The Lord Mayor's Ball

Nett profit of €40,000 distributed to the chosen charities. Thanks in particular to Jo Gazely, Tadhg Keating, Nicky Carroll and many other staff members and volunteers who contributed to the success of the fundraising.

I must also thank the sponsors especially the Evening Echo for their support.

Like previous Lord Mayors one of the highlights of my year was the school visits – all 110 I visited in the city – a tradition started by our martyred Lord Mayor Terence McSweeney over 90 years ago. Thanks to all the principals, teachers and management for their support.

Throughout the year I had many interactions and communications with the Defence Forces and the Gardaí, I want to acknowledge them for their dedication, professionalism and commitment to providing outstanding service to the country and indeed to Cork City and in protecting our democratic government and enforcing the Rule of Law.

I also attended many cultural events but the highlights for me were the St. Patricks Weekend Festival, Christmas Festival, Choral and Jazz etc. Cork stages 26 festivals annually creating a city which is a positive experience for citizens and visitors alike.

Other highlights from an educational perspective were attending and participating in the bi-centenary of the birth of George Boole, world renowned mathematician, who developed Boolean Logic, the foundation to the future development of computers. Visiting the National Research and Development Tindall Institute and the promotion of entrepreneurial activity in UCC, CIT and other events associated with Cork Chamber of Commerce, Cork Business Association, CETB etc.

I attended many sporting events during the year and the highlight was the winning of 2 All Irelands by the Senior Cork Ladies Football and Camogie Teams.

Visiting our twinned cities was also a very important part of my role, engaged in promoting, negotiating new and existing activities within our twinned cities relationships.

Many memories of the year stand out but the recent bestowing of the Freedom of the City on Niall Toibin and just last week the Lord Mayor's Civic Awards and Community and Voluntary Awards were exceptional occasions.

And now as I complete my year as Lord Mayor, it is especially gratifying for me to see the city progressing strongly as the economy recovers and confidence returns. This will be guided by the Cork City Development Plan 2015-2021 which was made by Council in March 2015.

In the past year, Cork City Council has finalised the City Centre Strategy, successfully completed the tendering process that will deliver public funding of €20 million to an events centre and seen OneAlbertQuay be granted planning permission and start to rise from the ground. Other milestones were the completion of improvement works on Parnell Place and the purchase of two fine stone warehouses there for startup companies and a variety of enterprise space. In addition, a planning application was lodged for the Capitol Cinema site and the area around it. It is also with great satisfaction that I note the commencement of development on Pairc Ui Chaoimh and the new centre

of excellence, that will be set in the jewel that will become Marina Park. Further afield, the Tramore Valley Park will also add greatly to the quality of life in the city.

However it is not just large developments that will illuminate the city centre. The Living Cities initiative will support the redevelopment of residential and commercial property in the city centre and the historic spine. The residential is aimed largely at owner occupiers and should lead to many buildings being improved and coming into productive use. This will further support city centre businesses.

The second half of my term as Lord Mayor has been largely dominated by the Cork Local Government Review and the future of independent governance for Cork. It is my firm belief and also the belief of this Council that Cork City requires a boundary extension to ensure balanced growth, both spatially and socially. In turn, it is also important that the city retains the authority to plot its own future in line with regional and national policies in order to bolster its responsibility and accountability. Anything less than full governance will hamper Cork as it will not be able to set its own budget and strategies to fully deliver on the priorities of an urban population. Anything less will also see the effective dissolution of city government that has been here for over 800 years and the devaluation of the office which I have proudly held for the past year.

The Elected Members and I are totally opposed to any loss of authority and have instructed the executive to deliver this message very clearly to the Cork Local Government Review Group. I am satisfied that this message has been delivered strongly, transparently and supported by extensive research and cogent arguments that effectively challenge the view that big is better or more effective. This is patently not the case.

Cork Airport is one disappointment for me over the past year. It is a wonderful facility that could deliver so much for the city and region. I would urge everybody to use it as much as possible as it is only through this conscious choice that numbers will rise and existing routes retained. As this happens, new routes will become more likely.

As we go forward in the coming year 2016 we will be celebrating our Nations Rising, followed by Freedom symbolising an end of an era but also a new beginning. Our role as a council as defenders of our constitution, defending democracy through Local Government action and upholding the Rule of Law must continue to be our primary responsibility. Indeed I welcomed it when challenged on occasions. It is important that the Office of Lord Mayor remains apolitical and descends the democratic structures of our state.

My sincere thanks to the Deputy Lord Mayor Cllr. Ken O'Flynn who was always available to support and represent me exceptionally well during the year. To my party colleagues who also supported me, and to all councillors for the dignity and respect afforded to the Office of the Lord Mayor. A very special thanks to the former Assistant City Manager Dan Buggy who guided

me diligently early in my tenure as Lord Mayor. I wish him well on his recent retirement. A special thanks to the new Chief Executive Ann Doherty for her co-operation, support and advice to me. Thank you sincerely Ann. Thanks to Tadhg Keating for your advice and help throughout the year. To Nicola O’Sullivan and Catherine Forde and Nicky Carroll and all the staff of Corporate and External Affairs a sincere thanks. A special word of gratitude to Finbarr Archer who was my rock during the year – always in good humour and totally dedicated.

Finally I wish to thank my family and particularly Michael my husband for his active support. We have always worked as a team. I promise no more Chinese take aways.

And now as we go forward it is my pleasure to wish my successor every success in the role as Lord Mayor as they lead the way going forward, and I assure the new Lord Mayor of my complete support.

Finally I end with the words of Winston Churchill

“If we open a quarrel between the present and the past we are in danger of losing the future”

Gure mile mhait agaibh go léir agus go néirí libh.

An tArd-Mhéara M. Shields requested nominations for the office of Ard-Mhéara:

Comhairleoir H. Cremin proposed, Comhairleoir S. O’Shea seconded the nomination of Comhairleoir C. O’Leary.

Comhairleoir M. Barry proposed, Comhairleoir T. Tynan seconded the nomination of Comhairleoir M. O’Sullivan.

A vote was called for where there appeared as follows:-

FOR COMHAIRLEOIR C. O’LEARY

FOR: Comhairleoirí S. Cunningham, T. Brosnan, J. Kavanagh, T. Gould, K. O’Flynn, J. Sheehan, M. Nugent, T. Fitzgerald, K. Collins, C. O’Leary, D. Cahill, L. McGonigle, T. Shannon, N. O’Keeffe, S. O’Shea, F. Kerins, P. Dineen, T. O’Driscoll, S. Martin, J. Buttimer, H. Cremin, M. Shields, F. Dennehy, P.J Hourican, T. Moloney. (25)

ABSTAIN: Comhairleoir K. McCarthy. (1)

FOR COMHAIRLEOIR M. O’SULLIVAN

Comhairleoirí T. Tynan, M. Barry, L O’Donnell, M. O’Sullivan. (4)

As the number voting in favour of Comhairleoir C. O'Leary exceeded those voting in favour of Comhairleoir M. O'Sullivan, An tArd-Mhéara M. Shields declared Comhairleoir C. O'Leary elected to the office of Ard-Mhéara.

An tArd-Mhéara Comhairleoir C. O'Leary then addressed An Chomhairle:

A dhaoine uaisle, failte roimh go dti and ocaid speisialta seo.

I would like to congratulate Cllr. Mary Shields on her fantastic year in office, the hard work, commitment and dedication you gave throughout the past year on behalf of this council and the people of Cork City. Thank you to you and your family especially your husband Michael, and your deputy Cllr. Kenneth O'Flynn.

Fellow councillors, City Officials, friends and comrades, it is with great pride and sense of honour that I take up the office of Ardmhéara at this historic time. It is historic in many ways. It sees a Sinn Fein Ardmheara for the first time in over 90 years in the rebel city of Cork. Fittingly, the period of office will also take in the centenary of the Easter Rising.

A City that gave us two of the most iconic Republicans in this country Tomas McCurtain and Terence McSwiney. Two patriots who dedicated their lives to this country and our great city. We should be forever proud that these two great men represented our city as Ardmheara and will forever be a shining light over our city and the office of Ardmheara. They should be the standard that all holders of the office should strive for but few if any will achieve. It is also historic, because of the d'Hondt system; this is first truly inclusive council in 40 years. Under this system each councillor from every party and none could potentially become Ardmheara. Thus reflecting the true will of the cork City Electorate at the last local elections. It was the same desire for inclusivity that gave such an emphatic result in the recent Equality Referendum. There is no doubt in my mind that the people of Cork City want a fair, equally and more inclusive society. For my part I pledge as Ardmheara, I will be non partisan and inclusive in all my duties whether inside or outside the council chamber and to highlight the injustices that make our society unequal.

We should remember that decent housing, education and employment are basic human rights. We should all hold the highest standards for these basic rights locally in our great city, nationally and internationally.

What power we have in this city should be used to benefit all our people. Furthermore where possible we should use our influence to improve the lot of people wherever we can. With this in mind I will seek regular meetings with our local Oireachtas Members and MEPs. I will work with them to address areas of need which are impacting on this great City of Cork and to devise the progress solutions.

For the next 12 months I will present our great city in the best light possible. I will highlight its numerous positives, while tackling the negatives in an honest and earnest way.

I believe that we share the view, that after 7 years of social and economic crises the people are looking for hope through positive and progressive politics.

Those of us elected to this Council, from all parties, have a responsibility to work together to make life better for the people we represent.

I look forward to working with all members of this Council. I also want to work constructively with all councillors elected to deliver for the people of Cork City.

I want to be a mayor for all of the people of this city.

To this end, my priorities for the year will include:

- Having the tricolour and the Cork Flag flown over City Hall throughout the centenary year of 2016.
- Centenary awards will consist of Civic, Voluntary and Cultural awards for 2016, showcasing the best of Cork City's Talents.
- Special school centenary awards will be initiated along with the traditional school visits.
- Cork city council will develop a charter for stakeholders and the users of services.
- A focus on the Voluntary and Community sector within Cork City taking the opportunity to visit organisations paying tribute to the enormous contribution they make to individuals, communities and the wellbeing of the city.
- To highlight the human impact of the ongoing housing and homeless crisis in Cork City. As Ardmheara I will establish a Cork City Housing Stakeholders Forum.

We are in the midst of the worst housing crisis in modern history. Almost 26,000 people across the city are on our waiting list. We now have families that are sleeping tonight in local hotels because they cannot afford the rent in private accommodation and council is unable to house them.

Since 2008 Government funding for social housing has been cut by 90%.

The solution to the housing crisis is very simple – we need to build more social houses.

As Ardmheara I pledge to use my office to highlight this crisis. To put a human face on the suffering of thousands of families who do not have a home of their own.

I also pledge to promote meaningful solutions to this crisis.

Local government must be able to meet peoples housing need. We need to have the money to build and buy more social houses.

Our homeless services must have the funding required to support those without a home and to assist them to live independently.

Cork city council has in the past has positive record in terms of its delivery of social housing and building quality social housing like those in my own area in Mahon.

I will also focus on positively promoting the growth potential and attractiveness of Cork City as the City for employment creation, business development, education and economic perspectives.

I will also strive to highlight the ongoing work of the Community and Voluntary sector and engage in a meaningful outreach initiatives with them in Cork City.

Looking to the future i hope that my year as Ardmheara will leave some legacies as well as building on the work of my predecessors. Cork has pressing issues to address and I have already identified some of these. However it also has a bright future and one of my tasks is to ensure that, during the next year, we all make solid progress towards that future. Last march the cork city development plan 2015-2021 was made by the elected members and we are in the process of preparing the Local Economic and Community Plan. This is being developed in conjunction with the Local Community Development Committee.

Both of these documents will chart our future actions over the short term. They are crafted using the principles of sustainable development which seeks to balance economic, social and environmental concerns in pursuit of strategic choices and decision making. Nationally, the National Planning Framework and the Regional Economic and Social Strategies will further guide the city's development. They all present challenges, but without challenge there cannot be progress.

The increase in development activity, particularly in the city centre, is welcome and I anticipate that it will continue supported by the City Council's strategic purchases of the former TSB building and two historic ware houses on Parnell Place, the redevelopment of Elizabeth Fort and the substantial support for the Event Centre at the former Beamish and Crawford site. Factoring in the prospect of two international telecoms cables boosting connectivity and reducing the cost of doing business in Cork, the future is bright. However, we must do more to encourage small businesses and start ups to ensure there is local economic activity in order to create a balance to foreign direct investment in the city.

A key objective of the city's economic strategy is to attract talented people and also to maximise the opportunities of our own citizens. This morning Cork City Council concluded a Memorandum of Understanding in relation to Learning with UCC, CIT and the Cork ETB in order to achieve this and build on the great work of the learning forum. Cork is a Learning City and is

recognised as such by UNESCO. Learning is a key part of Cork's strategic messaging and branding which will be rolled out globally this year. Part of my role as Ardmhéara is to bring positive messages about Cork to our prospective markets and I will do this in London, Shanghai and San Francisco during my term of office.

Cork trades on its reputation, talented people and quality of life. A key part of quality of life is access to affordable comfortable housing. This is in very short supply at present and I will make it a priority of my year in office. I want to ensure that it is addressed so as that people have a decent roof over their heads. Housing is not just a social issue. Short of housing will impact negatively on our economic competitiveness. Today everything is interconnected. It is the basis of sustainability.

However, a major issue that I wish also to address is the Cork Local Government Review. The Elected Members of Cork City Council are unanimous that their preferred option is an independent city authority with extended devolved powers and an increased are to cater for Cork City's growth over the next forty years. Anything less will usher in the dissolution of the city council which has governed Cork in various forms since at least the 12th Century. It is ironic and really disgraceful that the chamber which provided the platform for the supreme sacrifices made by Tomas MacCurtain and Terence MacSwiney, should now be threatened by demotion to a municipal district in around the centenary of 1916. The second largest urban area in the State requires strong independent government to address its challenges not least of which is the concentration of resources on the east coast. It is important that people understand that the governance of the city is important, not least because the decisions taken will affect their lives.

In taking up the office of Ardmheara I am humbled when I think of some of the names that have gone before, people of such high character that have set such a high standard for the office of Ardmheara. I will do my utmost to uphold these standards.

To Conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sinn Fein, my party colleagues, my fellow councillors and in particular my family. While tonight is a joyous occasion it is also tinged with sadness as two of my biggest supporters over the years sadly passed away this year, my brother Kevin in January and my mother Pat in recent weeks. Both were committed republican activists and i know they are here with us tonight in spirit. As they wouldn't have missed it for the world.

In twelve months time, when looking back on my term, if I can honestly say that I have taken the Mayor's role into the homes, communities and work places of those whom this office represents, then I will be a proud republican activist.

Go Raibh Maith Agaibh Go Leir.

3. **ELECTION OF LEAS ARDMHÉARA**

Nominations were requested for office of Leas Ard-Mhéara.

Comhairleoir F. Kerins proposed, and Comhairleoir K. Collins seconded the nomination of Comhairleoir M. Nugent.

Comhairleoir M. O'Sullivan proposed, and Comhairleoir L. O'Donnell seconded the nomination of Comhairleoir T. Tynan.

A vote was called for where there appeared as follows:-

FOR COMHAIRLEOIR M. NUGENT

FOR: Comhairleoirí S. Cunningham, J. Kavanagh, T. Gould, K. O'Flynn, J. Sheehan, M. Nugent, T. Fitzgerald, K. Collins, C. O'Leary, D. Cahill, L. McGonigle, T. Shannon, N. O' Keeffe, S. O'Shea, F. Kerins, P. Dineen, T. O'Driscoll, S. Martin, J. Buttimer, H. Cremin, M. Shields, P.J Hourican, T. Moloney. (23)

FOR COMHAIRLEOIR T. TYNAN

Comhairleoirí T. Tynan, M. Barry, L. O'Donnell, M. O'Sullivan, K. McCarthy (5)

As the number voting in favour of Comhairleoir M. Nugent, exceeded those voting in favour of Comhairleoir T. Tynan, An tArd-Mhéara declared Comhairleoir M. Nugent elected Leas Ard-Mhéara.

The Leas Ard-Mhéara then addressed the meeting.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**ARD-MHÉARA
CATHAOIRLEACH**