

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE, LIMERICK, ON THURSDAY, 18TH FEBRUARY, 2016, AT 9.00 A.M.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Councillor L. Galvin, Mayor.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Butler, Byrne, Collins (J), Daly, Donegan, Foley, Gleeson, Hourigan, Keary, Keller, Leddin, Lynch, McCreesh, McMahon, Cmhlr. Ó Ceallaigh, O’Dea, O’Donnell, O’Hanlon, Prendiville, Quinlivan, Ryan, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (K), Sheahan (M), Sheehy, Teefy.

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Collins (M) and Secas.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive (Mr. C. Murray), Deputy Chief Executive and Director, Home, Community and Sport (Mr. P. Dowling), Director, Economic Development and Strategic Planning (Mr. P. Daly), Director, Regional Services, (Ms. C. Curley), A/Head of Finance/Human Resources/Corporate/ICT (Mr. S. Coughlan), Director, Transportation & Travel/Environment (Mr. K. Lehane), Director, Customer Services (Ms. J. Cotter Coughlan), Meetings Administrator (Ms. T. Knox).

The Mayor opened the Meeting by saying that he was both shocked and deeply saddened by the sudden death of Councillor Joe Crowley. He said that he had called the Special Meeting as a mark of respect for a colleague and dear friend and to pass a Vote of Sympathy to Joe’s wife, family, friends and wider community.

The Mayor said that he had only gotten to know Joe since he had been elected and that during that relatively short timeframe, he had found him to be a gentleman of the highest calibre. He added that he had taken his role of

Councillor very seriously and that he had been so proud to have been elected to the Council in 2014. He had been elected by the public to represent the area he had grown up in. He highlighted Joe's huge interest in Na Piarsaigh and said that one of Joe's last requests to him had been for the hosting of a Civic Reception for Na Piarsaigh. He said he had given a commitment to Joe and it was one that he intended to follow through on. He said today's Meeting was not the place for it to be discussed but that he would be bringing it back to the Members in the near future. Before calling on the next speaker, he concluded by saying that Joe was one of the nicest guys you would ever meet. He had not a bad word to say about anyone, he had provided assistance and a helping hand to all who sought it and needed it.

The Mayor advised the Meeting that Councillor Collins (M) had sent his apologies. He deeply regretted that he could not attend the Meeting to personally convey his sympathies. It was noted that he had sent a message which he had asked to be read into the Minutes of the Meeting.

The Deputy Chief Executive read the following message received from Councillor Collins (M) into the record of the Meeting:

"Mayor, Councillors, Chief Executive, members of staff, I am very disappointed that I cannot be in attendance today to pay my final respects to my dear friend and colleague, Joe Crowley. I am still shocked and greatly saddened since I received the terrible and tragic news of Joe's sudden passing on Monday afternoon. When Councillor O'Hanlon called me, I couldn't believe or understand what had happened.

I first got to know Joe prior to the 2009 Local Elections. He had been selected as a Fianna Fáil candidate, like myself, to seek a seat on the Local Authority. This was Joe's first attempt and I can recall his excitement and enthusiasm at the opportunity. Having been unsuccessful at his first attempt, he continued with his community work and got his chance a mere 20 months ago in being elected to the Metropolitan District, a truly great achievement for Joe.

As Party Leader, I got to know Joe well and found him to be passionate, dedicated and sincere in his capacity as a Councillor in helping his constituents on a daily basis. I can say without fear or favour that Joe was one hell of a nice guy, maybe too nice for politics at times! He took to the job like a duck to water and I know how delighted he was to be selected as Deputy Mayor of our first amalgamated Local Authority last June. This was truly a great honour for him and his family and a role he carried out with great respect and dignity.

Recently, he had been telling me of his improved health following a near death experience last summer. No one ever expected his passing at such a young age.

Joe was a committed member of Fianna Fáil, dedicated to the cause and always available to help the less needy in society. Though his life has been cut short, I am certain he has made an impact on many, not just his colleagues on the Local Authority, but the wider community as a whole. In the past few days, I have heard many talk highly of Joe – colleagues, Council staff and people within my party who had met Joe.

Joe died doing what he loved best – campaigning and engaging with people, trying to get his dear friend and colleague, Willie O’Dea, elected. I cannot imagine the deep sense of loss his family are feeling right now and I pray that the days, weeks and months ahead will be kind to them. I offer my sincerest of condolences to all present as Joe’s colleagues and friends but most of all to his wife Christine, his 3 children, Vivienne, Hugh and Andrew.

Finally, a quote I read recently from John Taylor, American politician and senator.....
‘while we are mourning the loss of our friend, others are rejoicing to meet him behind the veils.’ Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.”

Councillor O’Hanlon addressed the Meeting at this point and said he was totally devastated by the sudden death of his party colleague and good friend of over 20 years. He recounted how Joe had been passionate about life and about working for people. He said politics had been very much part of his life, he had been rooted in his community and had worked so hard to represent his constituents. He said that being elected a Councillor had been one of his greatest achievements. It had been his long time dream but one that had been cruelly cut short this week. He explained how he had been so proud to have served as the first Deputy Mayor of the new amalgamated Authority and that on many occasions he had said that the then Mayor, Councillor Sheahan (K), had provided great support and guidance to him throughout the year. He had represented the City and County at many functions during his year as Deputy and had been so proud to do so. Councillor O’Hanlon referred to Joe’s particular interest in ensuring the future of the Westfields Wetland natural beauty spot and had been the subject of much discussion at Meetings of the Metropolitan District – thanks to Joe.

He said the most important thing for Joe was his family, his wife, Christine, sons Hugh and Andrew, and his daughter Vivienne. He said that he would have been celebrating his 25th wedding anniversary later in the year. The loss to his family could not be put into words.

Councillor O'Hanlon went on to thank the media for their kindness and support at this very difficult time. He thanked Councillors and Staff of the Council for their support. In particular, he said that Joe's family had been honoured to have received the official flag to be used as part of the funeral service.

He concluded by saying that the shock of his sudden death had left people numb. Tributes had been received from across the political spectrum which was a testament to how well liked he was on the Council and far beyond. He said Joe would be missed by all – he was one of the best, one of life's great gentlemen.

Councillor Sheahan (K) addressed the Meeting and said that he too had only known Joe since he had been elected Councillor and both had worked closely together as Mayor and Deputy Mayor during the first year of the new Council. He said that he had been exceptional from day one in the Council. He had been so supportive, so helpful, so committed and so truthful. He spoke kindly of Joe and added that he had indeed been a unique individual in public life. He said he would never forget him for his kindness, his co-operation and his commitment for doing things right. He concluded by saying that he had developed a friendship with Joe and that last Monday was indeed a very sad day for him as he had indeed lost a great friend.

The floor was then open to all Members to speak. Members from Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour, Sinn Féin, Independents and the AAA all took the opportunity to say a few words, recount stories, share cherished memories – some funny and some sad – but which all gave those present a vivid insight into this unique and very special person who had departed this life too soon. He had so much still to offer. While some said he was too good a person for politics, some others raised the question – *was it not more people like Joe that were needed in politics*. The Members said that Joe epitomised everything that was good in politics, he was devoid of ego and self-interest, he had as his main

objective to look after his community. It was said that he was a man for all seasons and situations and that it was a very sad day for all present to sit in the Council Chamber with Joe's seat empty.

The Chief Executive paid tribute to Joe Crowley on his own behalf and on behalf of the staff and extended sincere sympathy to his wife, family, community and friends. He said of Joe that he was a gentleman, which had enabled him to embrace all aspects without controversy. He had enjoyed and understood politics, he had understood people which was perhaps far more important. As a Councillor, he said, Joe was enormously supportive of the ongoing organisational change and had expressed his views to Management. He believed in local government and he believed that, as a local representative, you could make real change. He was a doer and epitomised all that was good in local politics. He said it was a very sad occasion and he thanked the Mayor for calling the Special Meeting. He also expressed his appreciation to Councillor O'Hanlon for arranging a visit to meet Joe Crowley's family on the previous day. He concluded by saying that Joe was a man of integrity and that he would be sadly missed by all who knew him.

The Meeting concluded with a silent prayer.

Signed:

Mayor

Date:
