

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE, LIMERICK, ON MONDAY, 26TH JANUARY, 2015, AT 2.00 P.M.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Councillor K. Sheahan, Mayor.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Browne, Butler, Byrne, Clifford, Collins (J), Collins (M), Crowley, Daly, Donegan, Foley, Galvin, Gilligan, Gleeson, Hurley, Keary, Keller, Leddin, Loftus, Lynch, McCreesh, McMahon, Mitchell, Neville, Ó Ceallaigh, O’Dea, O’Donnell, O’Donoghue, O’Hanlon, Prendiville, Quinlivan, Ryan, Scanlan, Secas, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (M), Sheehy, Teefy.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive (Mr. C. Murray), Deputy Chief Executive (Mr. P. Dowling), A/Director, Community, Leisure and Emergency Services (Mr. D. Brady), Director, Economic Development and Planning (Mr. P. Daly), Head of Finance, Motor Tax and ICT (Mr. T. Gilligan), Director, Travel and Transportation (Mr. P. Crowe), Meetings Administrator (Mr. E. Griffin), Administrative Officer, Corporate Services (Ms. T. Knox).

The Mayor stated that the Special Meeting had been convened to discuss the issue of Aer Lingus following receipt of a Requisition signed by a number of Members as follows:

“We, the undersigned, on behalf of the Fianna Fáil Party, call a Special Meeting of Limerick City and County Council to discuss the potential impact to the Limerick and Mid-West Region of a takeover of Aer Lingus by International Airlines Group (IAG) given the strategic and balanced regional development importance of maintaining the Shannon/Heathrow landing slots.”

Signed: Councillors J. O’Dea, K. O’Hanlon, J. Collins, S. Clifford, J. Crowley, S. Lynch.

Councillor Collins (J), in proposing the Motion on behalf of his party, put forward the following amended Motion.

“That, Limerick City and County Council call on Minister Paschal Donohoe to use the State’s 25% shareholding to block any International Airlines Group (IAG) outright purchase. Ireland’s strategic national interests must be protected and that will not be done through a quick fire sale, which relinquishes valuable slots at Heathrow, risks up to 1,000 jobs and gives away forever an important strategic asset.”

Councillor Collins (J), in proposing the amended Motion, stated that his party was calling on the Minister for Transport to rule out any sale of the Government’s stake in Aer Lingus in order to protect Ireland’s strategic national interests. He said the threat to the valuable Heathrow slots could see Ireland’s access to international destinations severely curtailed, as many of the routes to Asia, America and Australia were serviced through the airport. The continuation of these slots was of major strategic interest as Ireland was highly dependent on exports and tourism and access to international destinations was a major enabler in facilitating inward investment, as well as boosting tourism figures. He added that not only were the Heathrow links under threat if a sale proceeded, but there were also major concerns about possible job losses.

The amended Motion was seconded by Councillor O’Hanlon.

Councillor Leddin, on behalf of his party, proposed an amendment to the Motion as follows:

“That, Limerick City and County Council call on the Minister for Transport to block the sale of Aer Lingus unless a legal guarantee is given to protect connectivity links and Heathrow slots.”

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Leddin stated that his party was concerned regarding connectivity through Shannon Airport and the potential negative economic impact to businesses if there was a loss of air routes. He added that connectivity to Heathrow was a prerequisite to doing business in the global economy.

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Secas.

Councillor Prendiville, on behalf of his party, stated that they supported the original Motion put forward by Fianna Fáil and that they were totally opposed to the sale of Aer Lingus.

Councillor Sheahan (J), on behalf of his party, proposed an amendment to the Motion as follows:

“That, Limerick City and County Council call on the Government to use its 25% share to block the sale of Aer Lingus unless current connectivity and Heathrow slots to London are 100% legally protected.”

Councillor Sheahan (J), in proposing the amended Motion, stated that his party did not support the sale of Aer Lingus unless the Heathrow slots to London were legally protected. He stressed the need to protect Shannon and highlighted the growth and positive work that had taken place at Shannon Airport since going independent. He expressed the fear that job creation and retention would be severely hampered in the Mid-West Region if the lucrative links between Shannon and London Heathrow were lost. He added that any potential reduction in connectivity would have a detrimental impact, not only on foreign owned firms who operated here, but on our indigenous firms as they sought to expand into new markets internationally.

The amended Motion was seconded by Councillor Byrne.

Councillor Quinlivan, on behalf of his party, stressed that the Shannon-Heathrow route was an essential part of the infrastructure for maintaining the economic wellbeing of the entire Mid-West and Western Region. He highlighted that his party was not only concerned about potential job losses, but they also had a fear that, if the Heathrow connection was lost, the Shannon Region would become isolated and that this would have a huge impact on the Region's ability to attract investment and tourism.

At this point, the Mayor suggested a short adjournment and this was agreed. He asked the Party Leaders to review the various Motions put forward at the Meeting with a view to agreeing a single Motion which could be sent from the Council to the Government on the matter.

On resumption of the Meeting, the following Motion, which was proposed by Councillor Collins (J) and seconded by Councillor Sheahan (J), was unanimously agreed:

“That, Limerick City and County Council call on Minister Paschal Donohoe not to sell the State’s 25% shareholding in Aer Lingus in order to protect Ireland’s valuable slots at Heathrow and to protect the 1,000 jobs reported to be at risk.”

It was also agreed that this Motion would replace the previous Motion and amendments raised earlier in the Meeting.

Signed:

Mayor

Date:
