

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT ANNUAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD AT LIMERICK RACECOURSE, GREENMOUNT PARK, PATRICKSWELL, CO. LIMERICK, ON TUESDAY, 30TH JUNE, 2020, AT 3.00 P.M.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Councillor M. Sheahan, Mayor.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Benson, Butler, Carey, Collins (B), Collins (J), Collins (M), Costelloe, Daly, Donegan, Egan, Foley, Galvin, Hartigan, Keary, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin, McSweeney, Mitchell, Murphy, Novak Uí Chonchúir, O'Brien, O'Dea, O'Donoghue, O' Donovan, O'Hanlon, O' Sullivan, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Ryan (M), Scanlan, Secas, Sheahan (J), Sheehan, Slattery, Talukder, Teefy, Teskey.

An apology for his inability to attend the meeting was received from Councillor Sheahan (K).

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Executive (Mr. P. Daly), Deputy Chief Executive and Director, Support Services (Mr. S. Coughlan), Director, Housing Development (Ms. A. Duke), A/Director, Capital Investment (Mr. S. Hanrahan), Director, Physical Development (Mr. B. Kennedy), Director, Service Operations (Mr. K. Lehane), A/Director, Economic Development (Mr. V. Murray), Meetings Administrator (Mr. J. Clune), A/Administrative Officer, Corporate Services and Governance (Mr. P. Williams), Staff Officer, Corporate Services and Governance (Ms. L. Creamer).

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from the Director, National and Regional Shared Services (Ms. C. Curley) and the Director, Community Development (Mr. G. Daly).

The outgoing Mayor, Councillor Sheahan (M), opened the Meeting by welcoming all attendees. He thanked Deputy Mayor Teskey and his fellow Members and all Council officials over the previous twelve months for their support. He then gave the following address:

“Looking back on the past 12 months, it is actually hard to believe that my term is nearly over. Everything moves very quickly when you are in office. Unlike other years, my Mayoralty has two clear halves, pre and post COVID-19. Like the whole of the country, everything went into hibernation in March and we are only now making our way slowly out from cocooning or self-isolating. Limerick was performing very well prior to the pandemic. In 2019, 2,470 jobs were announced on foot of €527 million worth of investments. The Local Enterprise Office supported 1,882 small and micro enterprises, creating 323 new jobs over the 12 months. All very strong figures. The Gardens International Building was officially opened and almost 100 per cent let. Troy Studios was at capacity. The two other tentpole

projects of Limerick 2030 Project Opera and Cleaves were progressing, so much so that Project Opera was granted planning permission in February. The Urban and Rural Regeneration and Development Funds have resulted in works taking place in towns and villages across the county. Work on a multi-million-euro revamp of the Great Southern Greenway Limerick, to bring it up to international standard, is underway. Innovate Limerick continued to drive innovation with ENGINE the focal point for its work. Satellite services in Limerick were also advanced with a new ENGINE Hub in Abbeyfeale announced.

Major infrastructure projects took important steps forward. The Foynes to Limerick Road project was submitted to An Bord Pleanála, while contracts for technical advisors were signed for the N/M20 Cork to Limerick Road Improvement Scheme. Work on the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Road, which is crucial to the future development of the northside of Limerick City, got underway. I had the pleasure to launch the new brand for Limerick - Limerick Atlantic Edge European Embrace. The dynamism, professionalism, confidence, pride, and vision showcased what Limerick can achieve and, more importantly, where it wants to be. This vision for Limerick is a one that everyone can be part of, and I would urge everyone to become part of it, become part of something bigger.

I have been impressed and proud of the way that staff of Limerick City and County Council has stepped up and handled the increased workloads, changing circumstances and ongoing demands to provide essential services and others, such as the Community Response programme, to the people of Limerick, while all the while having to deal with the everyday realities and problems associated with the pandemic. Despite the shutdown, a lot of important work was going on behind the scenes so that we can bounce back that little bit quicker. €1.5 million has been awarded to tackle dereliction in the five County Limerick towns of Askeaton, Ardagh, Abbeyfeale, Bruff and Rathkeale. This figure, under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, was the highest single award in the country. Tenders have closed for Coonagh to Knockalisheen, and there are the City Centre plans for the Summer, ahead of the major re-development of O'Connell Street. LEADER funding, SICAP, Community Enhancement Programme - all of these programmes are having a benefit in small and not so small communities across Limerick.

I was privileged to represent Limerick at the shortlisting presentations for the European Green Leaf Award. I will never forget that feeling as our name was called out. Again, the sense of pride in being chosen by our peers, was something we need to bottle and harness.

I am so proud to have been able to honour people over the last twelve months. I hope I have not let you down - I tried to do my best to represent Limerick as well as I could. Thank you again."

The outgoing Deputy, Mayor Teskey, then gave the following address:

“Looking back on the past twelve months, it is actually hard to believe that my term as Deputy Mayor is nearly over. It has been such a quick year and an unusual and unprecedented year.

Unlike other years, my term as Deputy Mayor has two distinct periods, pre and post COVID-19. Thankfully, we are only now making our way slowly out from cocooning as we now enter Phase 3 of society returning to normality. I look back with fondness on some of the main events during my term as Deputy Mayor, one of which was volunteering with Limerick Suicide Watch.

I had the pleasure of representing Limerick at many great events in deputising for the Mayor and promoting the continued economic renaissance of the City. I particularly enjoyed promoting Limerick internationally as a Smarter City, as well as leading a St. Patrick’s Day delegation in Savannah for the first time. Unfortunately, the last three months have curtailed these occasions but my abiding memory will be the spirit shown by the staff and the people of Limerick in tackling this pandemic and now leaving Limerick in a healthy place to face the challenges ahead. In this regard, I particularly want to mention the work under the Community Initiative in helping the most vulnerable and isolated in our society. It was a pleasure to serve as Deputy Mayor and represent this great City and County. I would like to wish the new incoming Mayor and Deputy Mayor every success and happiness in their new roles. Thank you.”

1. Election of Mayor of the City and County of Limerick

The outgoing Mayor invited nominations for the Office of Mayor of the City and County of Limerick for the coming year.

Proposed by Councillor O’Hanlon;
Seconded by Councillor Foley;

“That, Councillor Michael Collins be appointed Mayor of the City and County of Limerick to hold office to the next Annual Meeting or until his successor is appointed.”

Proposed by Councillor Novak;
Seconded by Councillor Leddin;

“That, Councillor Seán Hartigan be appointed Mayor of the City and County of Limerick to hold office to the next Annual Meeting or until his successor is appointed.”

A vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For Councillor Collins (M):

Councillors Butler, Carey, Collins (B), Collins (J), Collins (M), Daly, Donegan, Egan, Foley, Galvin, Keary, Kiely, McSweeney, Mitchell, Murphy, O'Brien, O'Dea, O'Donoghue, O'Donovan, O'Hanlon, O'Sullivan, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Ryan (M), Scanlan, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (M), Slattery, Talukder, Teefy, Teskey. **(31)**

For Councillor Hartigan

Councillors Benson, Costelloe, Hartigan, Kilcoyne, Leddin, Novak, Secas, Sheehan. **(8)**

The outgoing Mayor declared Councillor Michael Collins elected as Mayor of the City and County of Limerick and congratulated him on his election.

Having taken the Chair, the incoming Mayor, Councillor Collins (M), gave the following address:

"A bhail tofa, príomhfheidhmeannach, foireann Chomhairle Cathrach agus Contae Luimnigh, mo chlann, mo chairde agus lucht tacaíochta. Elected Representatives, Chief Executive, staff of Limerick City and County Council, my family, friends and supporters. Can I just say at the outset that it was great to be robed and chained by a fellow Newcastle West man – thank you Timmy!

I would firstly like to thank my immediate predecessor, Councillor Michael Sheahan, who has done an amazing job over the past 12 months, both at home and abroad, and through the very difficult and uncertain times with COVID-19. The whole of Limerick thanks you Michael and I would also like to convey my deepest sympathies to you and your family on the passing of your brother, Francis.

Today is one of the proudest days of my political career as I stand here addressing you as First Citizen of our great City and County. It is a huge honour for me to have been elected to this Office, something that I have dreamed of since before I was even elected to the old Limerick County Council for the very first time as a fresh-faced 35 year old in 2004. A sincere word of thanks goes to my Proposer, Councillor O'Hanlon, and to my Seconder, Councillor Foley, and of course to all those who voted for me, from my party colleagues, Fianna Fáil, to others, I am humbled and I promise to do my best over the next 12 months – a Mayor for all. I pledge to be fair, approachable and considerate to all my colleagues and officials over the next 12 months.

I would like to thank my family, and in particular my wife Fiona, for all their support over the last 16 years. I am also blessed to have my 90-year old mother, Peggy, here in the room with me today. I also know my uncle would be very proud of me today, as he was when I was elected in 2004. Without the support of my family, I would not be here today.

As we deal with the COVID-19 challenges over the next few weeks and months, we need to be fearless in our pursuit of a better way of doing things. We need to search out different and innovative ways to deliver for the people of Limerick. We need to listen to their needs and act where appropriate. Right now, we are about to start discussions on a new Development Plan for Limerick. This plan will give the blueprint of how Limerick will grow over the next decade or so. Do we need new schools, playgrounds, leisure facilities and amenities, and where should they be located. What about urban and rural housing, already a hot topic among some Councillors, do we need roads for public or private transport. And what about sites for economic development. These are some of the questions that need to be answered in the plan. We need to take all opinions into account, and adopt them into the plan as best we can. This is our opportunity to express our thoughts and wishes. I am urging people to get involved in the process and it will make for a better Limerick.

As we fight back against the COVID-19 Lockdown and its indiscriminate and sometimes horrific impact, we need to focus on the positives. Notwithstanding the COVID-19 crisis and resulting slump, we can look forward to the next few years with increasing confidence. Projects, long in the pipeline, are beginning to bear fruit. I was initially critical of the amalgamation of Limerick City and County but I have seen the progress made in the last few years under the amalgamated Council. The Opera Site is primed for work to begin, the re-development of O'Connell Street is happening, while tenders have been received for the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Road. Cleaves and Mungret are in the masterplanning stages and while they have been mentioned time and time again, the works going on behind the scenes on these projects are necessary so they have solid foundations when they begin. A re-imagining of what the City Centre means is happening with a new wide-ranging Transport Strategy, which will lead to a stronger Limerick for all. Road improvement schemes are being drawn up for Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale on the N21, the Adare Bypass has taken another step closer to becoming a reality, as has the M20 to Cork. These are all vital pieces of infrastructure, which are needed for Limerick to prosper. On Friday last, it was announced that rural County Limerick received a €1.5 million boost from the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund with the towns of Bruff, Askeaton, Rathkeale, Abbeyfeale and Ardagh all to benefit. €5million is being invested in the Great Southern/Limerick Greenway from Rathkeale to Newcastle West and on to Abbeyfeale, the Regional Athletics Hub in Newcastle West, an investment in Lough Gur, the list is endless.

Askeaton, Ballingarry, Broadford, Dromcollogher, Kiltely, and Murroe-Boher were awarded over half a million euro in total under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme last year. Limerick's Local Community Development Committee grant funded €2.2 million in SICAP funding, which assists groups and initiatives helping to reduce poverty and promote

social inclusion and equality. A hugely proactive LEADER programme has funded 29 projects worth €1.83 million in 2019 and were awarded additional funds from the Government for being one of the top programmes in the country. These are the type of headlines we want. Meanwhile 125 projects across the City and County were supported by the Community Enhancement Programme. The future does look bright. One of our great strengths is our communities. The people of Limerick have always shown pride, resilience, humour and resoluteness. This sense of community and selflessness came into its own a couple of months ago with the way communities came together under the umbrella of the Community Response to COVID. Guided by Limerick City and County Council staff, community after community, group after group, person after person stood up and was counted. Everyone recognised that we needed to support those most vulnerable in our areas. And what a great success that was borne out of the unknown and an unquenching desire to help and support those in our communities. Congratulations to each and every one who volunteered when called upon. And as was mentioned time and time again, this was the true/real Limerick. It is my intention to meet these community groups in the year ahead.

The future of the Mayoralty of Limerick is yet again to change. After 817 Mayors of Limerick City, and now seven Mayors of the City and County of Limerick, this could be the last year a Mayor is voted for by the Elected Members at an Annual Meeting. The new Government has outlined its plans to legislate for a Directly Elected Mayor for Limerick from next year on, so the landscape is yet again changing. But with the change is a chance for us to be innovative and reform. Limerick has the Edge as we are the first, the pioneers. Just like the Councils amalgamating, we are the first to have a Directly Elected Mayor, an honour and a challenge that we should grasp with both hands and seek to develop so that Limerick can be the winner.

I also sit on the Directly Elected Mayor Implementation Advisory Group led by Tim O'Connor. In my year as Mayor, I will engage with SMEs across Limerick – many of which are facing severe challenges. With regard to the recent job losses at Shannon Airport, we need to step up to the challenge and save and grow Shannon Airport. I am also acutely aware of the effects of COVID-19 on the Arts Sector and the hit that Sector has taken. I want to support the Arts sector in my year in office and I know Limerick City and County Council will assist me in that. The Hospitality Sector is another sector that has been hit by COVID-19. As a Local Authority, we will call for the VAT rate to be reduced to 9%. I also intend to honour the frontline workers who have been fundamental to guiding Limerick through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the next twelve months, I will work for the betterment of Limerick. I am humbled by and looking forward to the challenges ahead. Go raibh maith agaibh go leir.”

2. Election of Deputy Mayor of the City and County of Limerick

The Mayor invited nominations for the Office of Deputy Mayor of the City and County of Limerick for the coming year.

Proposed by Councillor Collins (J);
Seconded by Councillor O’Dea;

“That, Councillor Abul Kalam Azad Talukder be appointed Deputy Mayor of the City and County of Limerick to hold office to the next Annual Meeting or until his successor is appointed.”

Proposed by Councillor Secas;
Seconded by Councillor Benson;

“That, Councillor Sheehan be appointed Deputy Mayor of the City and County of Limerick to hold office to the next Annual Meeting or until his successor is appointed.”

A vote was taken which resulted as follows:

For Councillor Talukder

Councillors Butler, Carey, Collins (B), Collins (J), Collins (M), Daly, Donegan, Egan, Foley, Galvin, Keary, Kiely, McSweeney, Mitchell, Murphy, O’Brien, O’Dea, O’Donoghue, O’Donovan, O’Hanlon, O’Sullivan, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Ryan (M), Scanlan, Sheahan (J), Sheahan (M), Slattery, Talukder, Teefy, Teskey. **(31)**

For Councillor Sheehan

Councillors Benson, Costelloe, Hartigan, Kilcoyne, Leddin, Novak, Secas, Sheehan. **(8)**

The Mayor declared Councillor Talukder elected as Deputy Mayor of the City and County of Limerick and congratulated him on his election.

The incoming Deputy Mayor, Councillor Talukder, then addressed the Meeting:

“To begin, I am very pleased and honoured to have been elected as Deputy Mayor of the City and County of Limerick. I wish to thank all of my colleagues for their assistance, co-operation and continued friendship. I wish to thank my Fianna Fáil colleagues for making me their nominee. My thanks also to the members of Fine Gael for their support. Thanks also to all the members of Sinn Féin, the Labour Party, the Green Party and Independents who voted for me. My special thanks to all the officials for their continuous help. I also wish to thank my family, friends, journalists and supporters for their great support. I am grateful to the Limerick people who chose me as a Councillor – someone from a different background - beyond their colour, ethnicity and religion.”

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my deep condolences to Limerick families who have lost loved ones due to COVID-19. I wish to thank all of the Council staff, frontline and essential workers for their great support to Limerick during these challenging times. We are all experiencing a very tough time due to the COVID-19 situation and we have to be prepared for the consequences of COVID-19. I promise to carry out my duties to the best of my ability in regard to the COVID-19 situation. To help to accelerate the economic wheel, I would like to suggest improving domestic tourism. Before COVID-19, domestic tourism accounted for 9%. Tourism is one of the main income sources in Ireland and we are hugely dependent on international tourism. Due to the COVID-19 situation, our tourism sector has dropped significantly and we assume that this will continue for the rest of the year. COVID-19 is a worldwide issue. But we can promote domestic tourism as international tourism has dropped. To attract more tourists to Limerick, we can improve and promote tourist sites, especially King John's Castle, Lough Gur, Clare Glens Waterfall, Curraghchase Forest Park, Adare Heritage Centre, etc. I would like to see Limerick City and County Council support the introduction of River Cruises on the city reaches of the Shannon, this would attract tourists from around Ireland. Local businesses are hugely affected by COVID-19, increased tourism would be able to help local business as well.

Today is an immensely proud day for me, my family and the immigrant community in Limerick. Ireland is now a multi-cultural country. 17% of people living here now are non-Irish nationals. As the holder now of the second highest Office in Limerick City and County, my election to this office sends a very powerful and welcome message of acceptance, support and inclusion to the migrant population about integration. I want the migrant population to involve themselves in supporting their community rather than just complaining about issues. Complaining does not make any contribution to society – migrants need to working for the betterment of our communities. I am aware that some immigrant volunteer groups are working for the community and many are looking forward to supporting the community, but they do not have the proper platform and support to do that. I am calling on the Council to create an Integration Office, staffed by an Integration Officer, and a common kitchen, as a permanent place where volunteers will be able to run their activities. This Council has created many new offices in recent times and I sincerely hope my request here today will be followed through.

We migrants are receiving great support from Ireland - our children are treated the same way Irish children are treated, and they are integrated with this society. We are so grateful to the Irish community. So, this is time to give something back. Our children will follow in our footsteps, and I hope they will keep contributing to Irish society as well.

I look forward to supporting Councillor Michael Collins in his role as Mayor and I wish him well in the year ahead. Thank you very much."

The Members welcomed the guests who were present in the Council Chamber. They congratulated the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on their election and assured them of their full support. They wished them well in the year ahead and expressed confidence in their ability to carry out the duties of Mayor and Deputy Mayor with great honour and distinction. Tributes were also paid to the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Sheahan (M), and outgoing Deputy Mayor, Councillor Teskey. Members praised them for the manner in which they had performed their role and stated that they had been excellent ambassadors for Limerick.

The Chief Executive firstly congratulated Councillor Collins (M) and Councillor Talukder on their elevation to the Office of Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the City and County of Limerick respectively. He stated that it was an onerous position, a responsible position and that it carried with it the challenge of delivering leadership for and on behalf of the people of Limerick. He assured them of his support and the support of the Executive in assisting them in their roles in the year ahead. He also complimented the outgoing Mayor, Councillor Sheahan (M), and the outgoing Deputy Mayor, Councillor Teskey, on what had been a very successful year. He said both Councillors had been professional, had demonstrated great commitment to Limerick and had been a pleasure to work with.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed:

Mayor

Date:
