



**To: The Mayor and each Member of Limerick City & County Council**

t: +353 (0) 61 557150  
f: +353 (0) 61 415 266

**January 2023**

### **Mayoral Visit to Austin**

#### **A Chomhairleoir, a Chara,**

As you may be aware, I was recently invited to participate in the annual Austin Sister Cities International Passport to the World Festival. I am pleased to provide an overview of my visit to Austin, Texas, from Thursday 7th to Saturday 9th December 2023. I was accompanied on this trip by Rory Corbett, Trade & Investment.

#### **Thursday 7th:**

I began my visit with a meeting at the Consulate General of Ireland Office, engaging in a discussion with Consul General Robert Hull. The talks centred on strengthening ties and fostering collaboration between Limerick and Austin.

Following this, I had a meeting with Sylvnia Holt-Rabb, Director of Economic Development at the Austin City Council. The Economic Development Department oversees aspects such as the cultural arts division, small business programmes, and international engagement. Progressing the 2019 MOU to a "Friendship City Agreement" was discussed. A new Friendship City Agreement, outlining the original exchange and including up to four agreed objectives/projects, will be prepared in the coming weeks.

In the afternoon, I met with Austin Sister Cities International Chairperson Kristie Bryant and Vice Chair Aditi Joshi. This meeting focused on reinforcing the connections between Austin and Limerick through the proposed Friendship City Agreement. It was agreed that the Friendship City Agreement would have a strong economic, educational, and cultural focus, and be delivered over the proceeding 2 years.

The day concluded with a guided tour of the LBJ Museum, offering a glimpse into the legacy of Lyndon Baines Johnson, the 36th President of the United States.

#### **Friday 8th:**

The following day, I discussed the City of Austin's promotional strategies during a meeting with Tom Noonan, CEO of Visit Austin. The discussion centered on marketing Austin as a premier business and tourism destination, emphasising similarities with Limerick. We discussed Limerick's hosting of Ryder

Cup 2027 and the opportunities, which that will bring. Austin, regular hosts of Formula 1 and the World Golf Championships Dell Technologies Match Play, are no strangers to hosting global sporting events and lots can be learned from their experiences.

In the afternoon, I met with Jennifer Bosten, Chief Advancement Officer at Austin Opera, to discuss a possible collaboration with the Limerick Opera Festival.

Later that evening, we had dinner with Limerick native Pat Doab, founder of the Irish Network Austin and members of Irish Diaspora community.

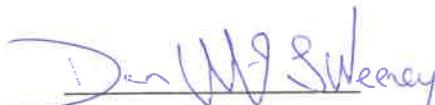
**Saturday 9th:**

On Saturday, I spent the day with members of the Limerick Austin Friendship committee, actively promoting Limerick and recruiting new members at the Passport to the World Festival. This family friendly event explores Austin's rich international community through live performances, interactive games and crafts.

On conclusion of the event, I was invited to a VIP Reception with Mayor of Austin, Kirk Watson. This provided me an opportunity to discuss directly with Mayor Watson about furthering the relationship between our two cities. Mr Watson expressed his desire to visit Limerick during the summer of 2024. Committee members, business leaders, and community representatives were also present at this reception.

**Conclusion:**

My visit to Austin was productive and a confirmation of the strong links between our two cities. This has been an important step in advancing the relationship between Limerick and Austin. The discussions and engagements during this trip have successfully progressed us to the Friendship City stage, marking a significant achievement in the overall Sister Cities process. As we move into this second phase of the Sister Cities process, we will have a strategic roadmap to fulfill the objectives outlined through a Friendship City Agreement. The groundwork laid during this visit has set the stage for further progress on the Limerick and Austin story.



Councillor Dan McSweeney

Deputy Mayor of the City and County of Limerick

January 2023



COUNCILLORS REPORT ON CONFERENCE WHICH THEY ATTENDED

REQUIRED TO BE COMPLETED UNDER SECTION 142(5) (f) and (fa) OF THE  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001

Organiser of Conference CELTIC CONFERENCES

Name of Conference A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO BUDGET 2024

Location of Conference CARLINGFORD CO LONDONDERRY

Date of Conference 13/15 OCT 2023

Summary of Conference Content

DISCUSSIONS & PRESENTATIONS ON BUDGET 2024, INCLUDING EXPENDITURE REPORTS, TAXATION MEASURES, BUDGET SUBMISSION, PRESENTATIONS ON SOCIAL WELFARE WEEKLY PAYMENTS, CHILD BENEFIT, WORKING FAMILY PAYMENT, CARERS ALLOWANCE, FREE TRAVEL SCHEME, MATERNITY BENEFITS. ALSO PRESENTATIONS ON ENERGY COSTS, U.S.C. RENT TAX CREDIT, VACANT HOMES TAX, VAT, SUPPORTS FOR FARMERS, HOUSING, RENTALIST INTEREST TAX RELIEF, VACANT HOMES TAX, SOCIAL & AFFORDABLE HOUSING, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE SUPPORT GRANTS, CARBON TAX, PUBLIC TRANSPORT SUPPORTS

Signature: Kieran O'Hanlon

Print Name: Kieran O'Hanlon

THIS FORM TO BE SUBMITTED WITH CLAIM FORM FOR TRAVEL AND  
SUBSISTENCE