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**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD
IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON MONDAY
27th JUNE 2011.**

**MIONTUAIRISCÍ AN CRUINNITHE BLIANTUIIL DE COMHAIRLE CONTAE
CHIARRAÍ A THIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN
CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, AR AN AOINE 27 MEITHEAMH, 2011.**

PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR

Councillors/Comhairleoirí

R. Beasley	J. Brassil	T. Buckley
M. Cahill	P. Connor-Scarteen	B. Cronin
P.J. Donovan	T. Ferris	J. Finucane
S. Fitzgerald	N. Foley	M. Gleeson
M. Griffin	J. Healy-Rae	P. Leahy
P. McCarthy	A. McEllistrim	B. Moynihan Cronin
T. O'Brien	B. O'Connell	P. O'Donoghue
M. O'Shea	L. Purtill	J. Sheahan
G. Wharton-Slattery		

IN ATTENDANCE/I LÁTHAIR

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager	Mr. J.D. Flynn, Director of Corp. Servs.
Mr. J. O'Connor, Head of Finance	Mr. M. McMahon, Director of Planning
Mr. O. Ring, Director of Env. & W.S.	Mr. J. Breen, Dir. of Hsg. & Comm.& Ent.
Mr. G. MacNamara, A/Dir. Of Roads	Mr. G. O'Brien, Meetings Admin.
Mr. P. Corkery, Press & Comm. Off.	Ms. B. Reidy, SSO Corporate Affairs
Ms. S. Broderick, SO Corp. Affairs	Ms. D. Griffin, SO, Corporate Affairs
Ms. M. Galvin, CO Corporate Affairs	Ms. O. O'Shea, CO Corporate Affairs

The meeting commenced at 12.15pm.

The Mayor Cllr. P. Leahy took the Chair.

Mayor Leahy read the following statement into the record of the meeting.

“A Bhainisteoir Chontae, Comhairleoirí, oifigeach agus baill foirne an Comhairle, agus gach duine anseo, tá fáilte roimh gach duine anseo inniu.

Annual Meeting

County Manager, elected members, officials and staff of Kerry County Council and everyone here today, I would like to welcome you to the AGM of Kerry County Council. It is with a mixture of pride and sadness that I hand over the Chain of Office of Mayor of Kerry after my 12 month period.

It hardly seems like 12 months ago that I accepted the Chain from Cllr Bobby O'Connell, and during that time I have represented Kerry County Council at a myriad of events, locally, nationally and also abroad.

It is my hope that during my time as Mayor, I served the people of Kerry well, represented the county with dignity and honour, promoted Kerry as the best place in the world to live, work, visit and invest in. I hugely enjoyed my time as Mayor, and some of the people I met along the way have left a lasting impression on me personally.

There are so many people I would like to thank for their efforts in making my time as Mayor so much easier. Firstly my own family, for their patience and understanding when once more I had to leave the house of an evening to attend a function or meeting.

I would also like to thank the Management and staff of Kerry County Council for their assistance and courtesy throughout. In particular I would like to thank Ger O'Brien and the staff in the Corporate Affairs section, Beth, Olive, Sheila, Maireád, Davina, Loraine & Tracey.

I would also like to pay a special tribute to the Senior Management Team, led by the Manager Tom Curran. I think that we worked well together and it was a pleasure to work with someone who is as committed to bettering the county as Tom is.

I would also like to thank my fellow councillors for their support, especially in this chamber during meetings. We are all working hard for our constituents and for our part of the county and it is very easy for one wrong word to follow another. However, our councillors have a deep respect for each other and it shines through in the positive way we work together. That said, it wasn't all plain sailing, but for your work throughout the past year, I offer my gratitude.

In particular, I want to thank Cllr Bobby O'Connell, who preceded me as Mayor. Bobby set the bar high, particularly in relation to his handling of meetings as well as his support of community activities and events. His advice and assistance to me at the start was greatly welcomed.

Over the past 12 months the economic difficulties that have affected this country have not receded any. In fact, they have worsened and we as a Local Authority have seen the impact of budgetary cuts. This will continue and we must prepare ourselves for tough times, difficult and unpopular decisions.

The coming years will not be a time for political battles in this Chamber. We must work together, explain to the people of Kerry what we are doing and why we are doing it and work with our Oireachtas representatives to have our voice heard at Central Government.

However, the past 12 months have not been all doom and gloom. We have seen some significant improvements to the county in this time. In particular I would point to the Castleisland Bypass, which was officially opened last October. At local level, the opening of the Ballinagar Bridge was welcomed by those living in the Lixnaw and Ballyduff areas.

Welcoming home the Kerry Bus from its hugely successful tour of the UK was very pleasing, given the positive reception that the Bus had received during its tour of the major cities of Britain.

Two weeks ago, I was fortunate to be able to attend the official opening of the carpark at Lisleibane and footbridges at the bottom of Carrauntouhill, which will greatly improve access to Ireland's highest mountain.

On a personal note, the Mayoral visit to New York to take part in numerous meetings with business, political and tourist interests during St Patrick's week, was a major highlight. It showed me just how important these visits are for a peripheral county like Kerry.

They may be dismissed by some as junkets, but St Patrick's Day offers us an open invitation to meet with some of the most important business and political figures in America and across the world. We would be fools not to take up this opportunity and create crucial contacts and links that will benefit this county.

In closing, I would like to wish my successor, Cllr Tim Buckley, the very best of luck in the role. I know Tim of old and having worked with him here in the chamber and in our Listowel Electoral Area, I know that he will have a hugely successful 12 months."

Cllr. T. O'Brien congratulated Mayor Leahy on his hugely successful year. He said he was an excellent ambassador for the county and he represented the Council and county with distinction on his visit to London and New York. He also complimented Mayor Leahy's family and said the Labour Party were proud to have him as their first Mayor for many years.

Annual Meeting

Cllr. B. O'Connell congratulated Mayor Leahy on his wonderful year in office and said he was a great ambassador for the county both at home and abroad. He did his electoral area and local community proud during his term as Mayor.

Cllr. J. Finucane concurred with the compliments paid to Mayor Leahy and said he carried out his duties with great personal dignity and honesty. The signing of the contract for the Tralee By-Pass last week was the culmination of an exceptional year. In conclusion Cllr. Finucane said Mayor Leahy is held in the highest esteem.

On behalf of the Fianna Fáil party Cllr. J. Brassil thanked Mayor Leahy for his outstanding year in office. There was no controversy at meetings and this was a tribute to the esteem he was held in by members. It was great to have a Mayor from the Listowel Electoral area and members really enjoyed their visit to Moyvane in April when the Council meeting was held there. Moyvane has improved hugely in the past decade and this is a testament to the Mayors work.

Cllr. M. Gleeson congratulated Mayor Leahy on a job well done. He said the Mayor attended many functions in South Kerry and he conducted Council business with dignity and respect.

Cllr. B. Cronin complimented the Mayor on his year in office when he carried out his duties with dignity and honour. There is a great sense of pride in the way he represented the county and his area. The Mayor was fair to all members and this was appreciated.

Cllr. R. Beasley congratulated Mayor Leahy on his very successful year in office and said he represented the Council, the county and his own area with honour and dignity both at home and abroad.

Cllr. J. Healy-Rae concurred with the compliments paid to Mayor Leahy and said he was fair to all members.

Cllr. G. Wharton-Slattery congratulated Mayor Leahy on his year as Mayor and said when she was co-opted to Kerry County Council recently it was very reassuring to have him as Mayor. He reached out to all the people of the county and is a devoted community man.

Cllr. T. Buckley congratulated Mayor Leahy on a wonderful year in office and said he was a credit to Kerry County Council, his family and the parish of Moyvane. He wished him success in the future.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim congratulated the Mayor on a job well done and said he represented the Council with pride and dignity.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen congratulated Mayor Leahy and said he was very fair and was involved in a lot of projects. He represented the Council well and officially opened the Castleisland By-Pass and Ballinagar Bridge during his term in office.

Cllr. P. McCarthy congratulated Mayor Leahy on a very successful year. He thanked him for the manner in which he represented the Council, his family and his community throughout the year. He said the Mayor is light hearted and humorous and that endeared him to all those he met.

Cllr. B. Moynihan-Cronin wished Mayor Leahy well in the future and said he represented the Council with dignity and honesty.

Cllr. J. Sheahan congratulated the Mayor on a wonderful year and he thanked him for his fairness to all members. He was a great ambassador for the county and he wished him well in the future.

Cllr. N. Foley said she wished to be associated with the compliments paid to the Mayor who had a superb year in office. It is appropriate after his many years of service that he was elevated to the position of Mayor of Kerry. It is a tribute to the Mayors leadership style that there were no difficulties at meetings over the past year. The Mayor gave the community priority during his year and this was appreciated. In conclusion Cllr. Foley said Mayor Leahy represented the Council and county with great charm and dignity in the US and she wished him success in the future.

Cllr. L. Purtill congratulated the Mayor on a magnificent year in office and said he was a credit to the county and his family.

Cllr. M. Cahill concurred with the tributes paid to the Mayor and said he had a wonderful year. He carried out his duties efficiently and with pride and he wished him the best for the future.

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald congratulated Mayor Leahy on a job well done and said he was very helpful to all councillors. He promoted the Irish language and he hoped to see him more often in Corca Dhuibhne.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue congratulated the Mayor on an excellent year and said he was very pleased he got the opportunity to serve as Mayor. The Mayor went about his business quietly and efficiently and he was fair and impartial. On his own behalf and on behalf of the Fianna Fáil party he wished Mayor Leahy well in the future.

Cllr. P.J. Donovan congratulated the Mayor on a very successful year in office and said he was always open and honest and a pleasure to work with. He wished him well in the future.

Cllr. T. Ferris congratulated Mayor Leahy on an excellent year in office.

Cllr. M. O'Shea congratulated the Mayor and said he was a great friend and colleague. He was fair to all members and he wished him well in the future.

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager said he did not believe that the public fully understand how demanding the role of Mayor is. They must attend many events both in Kerry and nationally. As a peripheral county we must work hard to ensure we get our fair share and the Mayor has a very important role to play in this. On his own behalf and on behalf of all staff he thanked the Mayor for his co-operation and said he was always available. It was a pleasure to work with him. He also thanked the Mayor's wife, Mary and his family for their hospitality when the April Council Meeting was held in Moyvane. It is a huge commitment to serve as Mayor and he was sure his family and community are very proud of him. He thanked the Mayor for his support and courtesy and he said he looked forward to working with the next Mayor.

Mayor P. Leahy welcomed Minister Jimmy Deenihan to the meeting.

11.06.27.01 Election of Mayor

Cllr. J. Sheahan said it was an honour for him to PROPOSE Cllr. Tim Buckley for the office of Mayor of Kerry. Since his election to the Council in 1991 Tim has dedicated a huge amount of time and energy to the service of the people of the Listowel Electoral Area. He has been a tireless worker and is always available to his constituents, whose support he appreciates and values.

During his time as a councillor Cllr. Buckley has served on many committees and represented the Council on various bodies. Tim was a member of the South West Regional Authority from 1994 – 2004, of which he was Cathaoirleach for the year 1998 – 1999. He was the first Kerry man to hold that office. He also served as a member of the Association of City and County Councils from 2004 – 2009 and was elected to the Executive for 2006 – 2008. Cllr. Sheahan said he had no doubt that with his dedication, capacity for hard work and sense of fair play, Cllr. Buckley would make an excellent Mayor.

Cllr. P.J. Donovan SECONDED this proposal and said that having given 20 years service on Kerry County Council Cllr. Buckley deserves this honour.

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Mr. G. O'Brien, Meetings Administrator informed the meeting as there were no other nominations he declared Cllr. T. Buckley elected Mayor of Kerry.

Mayor T. Buckley then took the Chair.

Mayor Buckley welcomed Minister Deenihan, Deputy Griffin and Senators Coghlan and Sheahan to the meeting. He then read the following speech into the record of the meeting:

“A Bhainisteoir Chontae, Comhairleoirí, Stiúrthóirí Seirbhísí agus baill foirne an Comhairle, mo chlann féin agus a chairde go léir, is onóir mór dom a bheith anseo inniu mar Mheara Chiarraí.

County Manager, elected members, Council officials and staff, my family and friends, it is a huge honour to stand here before you holding the office of Mayor of Kerry.

Since I was first elected to Kerry County Council back in 1991, I have had the good fortune to serve with many great councillors, past and present, and thanks to their good advice and guidance, I have attempted to serve my constituents and my county with honour.

Today is a special occasion for me and for my family and I am delighted that they are here today to share this honour with me.

I would like to thank my proposer and seconder, Cllr John Sheahan and Cllr PJ Donovan and all who supported me, both today and down the years. I appreciate your expression of confidence in me and I will do my best to treat everybody here equally and fairly during the coming year.

I also acknowledge the presence here today of many of my supporters and canvassers, without whose help this day would not have been possible. I will always appreciate what you have done for me during the past 20 years.

As this is a very tough time economically for our country and for our county, we will have to make some unpleasant and difficult decisions inside this chamber. It is my hope that we as councillors and officials will work together, regardless of party affiliation or geographical location, for the best possible outcome. These decisions may be unpopular but will have to be made for the good of the county.

AIMS & PRIORITIES

During the next 12 months, my aim as Mayor of Kerry will be that this Council will continue to prioritise the delivery of its key services: roads, water, wastewater, housing, & planning. In relation to Roads, there is no doubt that we need greater investment in our road network, in particular our secondary and local roads, which were badly affected by two winters of bad snow and ice.

Additionally, while we are fortunate to have Kerry Airport on our doorstep, we face a challenge to ensure that it is properly serviced by both internal and international flights.

As a Council, we must work with the various agencies and our Oireachtas members to ensure the continued security of funding and an increase in flights to and from Dublin. The current frequency of flights to and from the capital and flight departure and arrival times are simply not suitable for the business user, and also impact negatively on tourism in the county.

I will also use my term as Mayor to further promote road safety in the county. To date we have three deaths in Kerry in 2011, and while people say that a target of zero deaths is too optimistic, I say that it is our duty to aim for that figure.

Looking at housing the fact that no Local Authority houses are being built is a matter of grave concern for me, especially as we have growing numbers of people on our housing lists in Kerry.

National policy has changed from building and buying to leasing, but I am concerned that it removes the opportunity for people to purchase their Local Authority house, an issue that should be looked at.

Given the large amount of empty housing stock around the country there is a need for local authorities to engage with NAMA and developers to bring about a solution that will reduce housing lists and also fill these houses.

The need for additional investment in our Water & Wastewater services is also something that I will be pushing forward at Government level, along with Council management.

A replacement programme for the water pipe network needs to be accelerated at National level while there are also key towns and villages around the county that are still calling out for wastewater treatment facilities. I make no apologies for being parochial in mentioning Tarbert, Ballylongford and Lixnaw in this category.

Having held a meeting last week to discuss planning, it is my intention to only touch on it briefly here, but it is a live issue in rural areas. Rural dwellers should be allowed to build in their own locality provided all the necessary legislation is adhered to. Rural villages and communities are suffering from younger people leaving and this creates further strain on the existing services such as post offices, schools and Gardaí.

Finally, in relation to employment, the work Kerry County Council is doing with the agencies to promote the county as a destination for business investment must be continued. It is my hope that the Shannon LNG and GPCE projects come to fruition.

The loss of jobs leads to knock-on effects with less money being spent in the local economy and local shops and businesses being affected. This vicious circle must be broken, and in this regard I must praise the work of the Kerry County Enterprise Board who does fantastic work with small and emerging businesses, helping them get off the ground. This is work that must be further supported at national level and again our Oireachtas members.

In closing, I would like to thank the Fine Gael party for their support both inside this chamber and outside. I would also like to thank my predecessor Cllr Pat Leahy for the work he carried out during his term of office. Pat held the office of Mayor with distinction over the past 12 months and I will do my best to uphold the standards that he and previous Mayors have set.

I would also like to thank the Manager, Tom Curran and the staff and officials of Kerry County Council for their support to me as a councillor over the past 20 years. I look forward to working closely with them and my fellow councillors over the next 12 months for the betterment of this great county.

Finally, to my wife Mary, daughters Maura, Lisa & Linda and sons Seamus & Timothy, I would like to thank you for support over the past two decades. It promises to be a busy 12 months but one I look forward to."

Cllr. M. Gleeson congratulated Mayor Buckley on his election and said he represents his constituents and indeed the Council with respect, integrity and dignity, an image that is sadly lacking in higher offices. He wished the Mayor and his wife and family well for the coming year.

Cllr. B. O'Connell congratulated the Mayor on his election and said the Fine Gael party are very proud of him. He said they were both elected in 1991 and he has been a good friend since then. Minister Deenihan would not be at Cabinet today if it was not for the work of the Mayor. He also congratulated the Mayor's wife Mary and family and wished them well for the coming year.

Cllr. J. Brassil congratulated Mayor Buckley on his election. He said the Mayor served with his late father Noel and he was delighted to continue that friendship. The Mayor is an honest, respectful gentleman and it is a pleasure to work with him. His knowledge of his constituency is a testament to his dedication and hard work.

Cllr. T. O'Brien congratulated Mayor Buckley and his family on his election. In 2004 when he was elected to the Council the Mayor was very welcoming and helpful to him. He assured the Mayor of his full support and wished him well for the coming year.

Cllr. T. Ferris congratulated Mayor Buckley on becoming the first citizen of Kerry and said that no member is more deserving of this honour. She said the Mayor is a gentleman and is always very helpful.

Cllr. B. Cronin congratulated Mayor Buckley on his election and said he really deserves this honour as he is a gentleman. The Mayor served with his late father and he held him in high esteem. This is a great honour for the Mayor and his family and he wished them every success during his term in office.

Cllr. J. Finucane said it was a great honour to welcome Mayor Buckley to his new role after 20 years service. The Mayor is known for his honesty, integrity and hard work.

Cllr. J. Healy-Rae congratulated the Mayor on his election and said he looked forward to working with him.

Cllr. R. Beasley congratulated the Mayor on his elevation to the position of Mayor and assured him of his co-operation during his term in office. He was confident that Mayor Buckley and Minister Deenihan would work together for the betterment of the county.

Cllr. B. Moynihan-Cronin congratulated Mayor Buckley and his family and said it is a great honour for the Fine Gael party. The Mayor and she were elected to the Council on the same day and he was very helpful on many issues. She assured him of her support over the next year.

Cllr. L. Purtill wished the Mayor and his wife success for the coming year. He said the Mayor has worked tirelessly for North Kerry over the past 20 years and he was confident he would be a wonderful Mayor.

Cllr. P. McCarthy concurred with the compliments paid to the Mayor on his election and wished him and his family well for the coming year.

Cllr. P. Leahy congratulated the Mayor on his election and said since they were both elected in 1991 the Mayor worked very hard for his electoral area. He wished him well for his term in office.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue congratulated the Mayor on his election and said he chaired the South West Regional Authority with distinction. He was delighted with the priorities outlined by the Mayor, in particular planning and Kerry Airport. He hoped these could be resolved and he wished the Mayor success for the coming twelve months.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim congratulated Mayor Buckley and said she was confident he would do a great job. He is a great ambassador for the county.

Cllr. S. Fitzgerald congratulated Mayor Buckley on his election and said he deserves this honour. He also congratulated the Mayor's wife and family and the Listowel area on his election.

Cllr. M. Cahill congratulated Mayor Buckley on his election and said he is a gentleman of the highest integrity. The Mayor has an amazing knowledge of people and their connections. He wished him success for the coming year.

Cllr. N. Foley said that the election of Mayor Buckley for the coming year is richly deserved. It is a tribute to him that he was elected unanimously and he is a gentleman.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen wished Mayor Buckley well for his term in office. He said it is a great honour for the Mayor, his family and the Fine Gael party.

Cllr. M O'Shea congratulated the Mayor and said he has been a great friend. He wished him well for his term in office.

Cllr. P.J. Donovan congratulated the Mayor on his election and said no member is more deserving of this honour. He looked forward to working with him in the coming year.

Cllr. J. Sheahan said that the Fine Gael members are very proud of Mayor Buckley and look forward to working with him.

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager congratulated the Mayor on his election and said he looked forward to working with him. He also congratulated the Mayor's wife and family on his election.

11.06.27.02 Election of Deputy Mayor

Cllr. P. McCarthy PROPOSED Cllr. J. Finucane for the position of Deputy Mayor. Jim is one of the most professional people he ever met and would be very suited to this role.

Cllr. L. Purtill SECONDED this proposal and said they are both from Tarbert. He was certain that Cllr. Finucane would make an excellent contribution.

The Mayor declared Cllr. J. Finucane elected Deputy Mayor.

Annual Meeting Lunch

Mr. G. O'Brien informed the meeting that a group photograph would be taken on the front lawn immediately after the meeting and this would be followed by Lunch at the Meadowlands Hotel at 1.30pm. He invited the Press to the Lunch.

The meeting concluded at 1.45pm.

Gerard O'Brien
Meetings Administrator

Mayor of Kerry