

Annual Meeting

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MIONTUAIRISCÍ AN CRUINNITHE BLIANTUIIL DE COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHIARRAÍ A THIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRÁ LÍ, AR AN AOINE 28 MEITHEAMH, 2013.

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TRALEE ON FRIDAY 28TH JUNE 2013.

PRESENT/I LÁTHAIR

Councillors/Comhairleoirí

R. Beasley	T. Buckley	P. Connor-Scarteen
S. Counihan	B. Cronin	J. J. Culloty
P.J. Donovan	J. Finucane	S. Fitzgerald
N. Foley	M. Gleeson	M. Griffin
D. Healy-Rae	J. Healy-Rae	P. Leahy
P. McCarthy	A. McEllistrim	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. M. McMahon, Director of Planning	Mr. J. Breen, Dir. Hsg.&Comm.& Ent.
Mr. G. MacNamara, A/Dir. Of Roads	Ms. K. Moriarty, Deputy Head of Fin.
Mr. T. Sheehy, A/Dir. Env.& W.S.	Mr. G. O'Brien, Meetings Admin.
Mr. P. Corkery, Press & Comm. Off.	Ms. K. Lynch, A.O. Finance
Ms. B. Reidy, S.S.O. Corporate Affairs	Ms. C. Fitzgerald, A.S.O. Corp. Affairs
Ms. O. O'Shea, C.O. Corporate Affairs	

The meeting commenced at 12.10pm.

The Mayor Cllr. T. O'Brien took the Chair.

Mayor T. O'Brien welcomed all in the public gallery to the meeting. He thanked the members for a very interesting year and said the meetings were very colourful. He thanked them for their support and respect during the year. It was a huge honour for him to serve as Mayor of Kerry for the past year and the highlight of the year was his visit to New York for St. Patrick's Day. The diaspora really appreciate the fact that the Mayor of Kerry travels to New York to celebrate this important occasion with them. He had five very hectic days there with a very busy schedule of meetings. He thanked the Manager, Directors of Services and the staff of the Corporate Affairs Department for their assistance over the past twelve months. The Mayor thanked Cllr. P.J. Donovan, Deputy Mayor for his support and assistance. In conclusion he thanked his wife and family for their support over the past year.

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Cllr. M. Gleeson congratulated the Mayor on an excellent year and said to represent your County is a tremendous honour. The Mayor's wonderful charm and easy style helped him through some difficult situations. He wished Mayor O'Brien well in the future.

On his own behalf and on behalf of Cllr. Ferris, Cllr. R. Beasley congratulated the Mayor on an excellent year in office and said he epitomised all that is good in the county and was a great ambassador.

Cllr. J. Finucane said it was an honour to serve with Mayor O'Brien over the past twelve months. He paid tribute to the Mayor for the way he dealt with many difficult issues. He wished the Mayor well in the future.

Cllr. B. Cronin concurred with the tributes paid to the Mayor by previous speakers and said he was a true gentleman and a tremendous ambassador for the county.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim complimented the Mayor on his year in office and said he represented the county well. He was fair and courteous to all members in the Council Chamber. She wished him well in the future.

Cllr. N. Foley congratulated the Mayor on a superb year in office and said he represented the county with great distinction. The Mayor was very fair to all members in the Chamber and his good humour helped in dealing with difficult issues. It was a huge honour for the Mayor, his family and the Tralee Electoral Area to be elected Mayor of Kerry for the year. She complimented him on a job well done and she also complimented his wife and his mother.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen complimented the Mayor on a successful year in office. He added that he was fair and professional and gave every member an opportunity to contribute when very serious issues were being discussed. He wished him well for the future.

Cllr. G. Wharton Slattery complimented the Mayor on an excellent year and said his sense of humour sets him apart. She said the Mayor brought something unique to the position. She also congratulated his entire family for their support during the year.

Cllr. P. Leahy complimented the Mayor on an excellent year in office and said he represented the county well. He was fair and courteous to all members and he was a great ambassador for the county. He wished the Mayor and his family well for the future.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae concurred with the tributes paid to the Mayor by previous speakers and thanked him for being open and fair in the way he managed the meetings. He did the county proud in particular when he travelled to New York.

Cllr. J. Sheahan complimented and congratulated the Mayor on a great year and said he was fair to all members giving them an opportunity to contribute on all issues. He wished the Mayor and his family well in the future.

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Cllr. L. Purtill said it was a pleasure to serve under Mayor O'Brien for the past year. He was fair and pleasant and business like and did a wonderful job. He wished him well in the future.

Cllr. J.J. Culloty concurred with the tributes paid the Mayor by previous speakers and said he was fair at all times. The Mayor was inspirational and his visit to New York was very important as we are a nation of people who have emigrated. He wished him well in the future.

Cllr. S. Counihan thanked the Mayor for the welcome he gave him when he was co-opted to the Council earlier in the year. He congratulated the Mayor and his family on a job well done over the past year.

Cllr. P. McCarthy congratulated the Mayor on an excellent year in office and said he did the county proud. The Mayor's easy going way put people at ease and he was proud to serve with the Mayor.

Cllr. T. Buckley congratulated the Mayor on his wonderful year and said he was a great ambassador for the county.

Cllr. P.J. Donovan congratulated the Mayor on a great year and said he was a wonderful ambassador and it was a pleasure to work with him. He wished him well in the future.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue said Mayor O'Brien was an excellent Mayor and ambassador for the County. The respect the Mayor is held in Dublin is really great and well deserved. Council meetings were run efficiently and with subtle firmness.

Cllr. B. Cronin congratulated and complimented the Mayor on his successful year in office. He carried out his duties with dignity, honour and respect. Being Mayor of Kerry for the past year was also a huge honour for the Mayor's family. The Mayor brought a unique sense of humour to the role and he gave every member an opportunity to speak. He represented the county with distinction in New York and members want to continue to cherish these links. Our emigrants never forgot home and we must remember them.

Cllr. J. Healy-Rae thanked the Mayor for promoting and progressing the county. He said the Mayor was to the forefront on many important issues including the Housing Grants issue. He wished the Mayor and his family well for the future.

Cllr. M. Griffin congratulated the Mayor on an excellent year in office when his ability as a politician came to the fore. He wished the Mayor and his family well for the future.

Cllr. M. O'Shea complimented the Mayor on a very successful year and said he was very professional. He was fair to all members and he wished him well in the future.

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Cllr. S. Fitzgerald congratulated the Mayor and his family on an excellent year in office. The Mayor was always courteous and had a great sense of humour while being very practical also. The Mayor also serves on KES and the IT and he is always to the fore with sensible solutions. He represented the county well both in Dublin and New York and this is very much appreciated.

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager commended the Mayor on an excellent year in office and said it was an honour for him to attend many functions with the Mayor. He said the Mayor excelled and was inspirational but he was also very humble. The Mayor has a very good working relationship with staff. The schedule for the New York visit was very demanding yet the Mayor had no difficulty with it. Teresa also gave great commitment for the past year as did his mother and brother who accompanied him to New York. It was a pleasure being in New York with that group and the Mayor showed great commitment by attending all the events. He wished the Mayor and his family success and happiness for the future.

The Mayor thanked everyone for their kind comments.

13.06.28.01 Election of Mayor

Cllr. B. O'Connell said he was honoured to PROPOSE Cllr. Séamus Cosáí Fitzgerald as Mayor of Kerry for the next twelve months. Séamus has represented the people of West Kerry with distinction since he was first elected to the Council in 1999. He will be an excellent ambassador for the county and he contested two General Elections when his performance was extremely credible. He welcomed Séamus's wife and his two children to the meeting.

Cllr. T. Buckley SECONDED this proposal and said he would be an excellent Mayor and he has just served as Chair of the South Western Regional Authority.

The outgoing Mayor, Cllr. T. O'Brien said as there were no other nominations he declared Cllr. S. Fitzgerald elected Mayor of Kerry.

Mayor Fitzgerald then took the Chair.

Mayor Fitzgerald then read the following statement:

"A Comhairleoirí, a Theachtaí Dála, Seanadoirí, Aire Rialtais agus a dhaoine uaisle agus a chairde go léir, is cúis mór onór é domsa, do mo chlann agus do Pairtí Fhine Gael go bhfuilim tofa anseo inniú mar Mhéara ar Comhairle Contae Chiarraí, agus chuirim fáilte speisialta roimh gach éinne atá tagtha anseo inniu.

Ba mhaith liom buíochas a gabháil leis an gComhairleoir Bobby O'Connell a mhol mé agus leis an Comhairleoir Tim Buckley a chuidigh leis an moladh.

Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a chur in iúil díobhsa a Comhairleoirí a thug tacaíocht dom inniu ionas go mbeinn tofa mar Mhéara ar an gComhairle ar feadh bliana.

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Gan dobhat treaslaíom leis an gComhairleoir agus iar-mhéara Terry O'Brien a dhein sár-job ó thoghadh é mar mhéara an bliain seo caite. D'obrigh tú go cruaiigh agus dheineas do chuid oibre go cruinn and go beacht.

We are in challenging times – having come from a decade of economic growth and prosperity during the Celtic Tiger years to the present, where this is no day or night that passes in which we hear of people or someone we know who have hit a difficult time.

This year will be an even more challenging year for us here in the Council and in the County, firstly in trying to maintain the services which we are providing and secondly in trying to maintain the budget to provide all those very necessary services.

The E.U./I.M.F/Troika programme which the last Government signed up to and which this Government has very little leeway to do anything with and has little or no choice but to implement will have direct impact on our Budget here in Kerry County Council. Trying to maintain the income which we have from the different sources, be it local income or state income will be difficult. I will be hoping that this Council will give its full support to the Finance team here in the Council when it comes to drafting the Budget for 2014.

Housing

On housing our aim is to provide suitable accommodation for those people who are unable to provide their own accommodation and for Kerry County Council to utilise the various social housing options.

The provision of housing and social support services has changed a lot in the last few years. The recession in this Country has led to the Housing Department in Kerry County Council being much busier. Also the way in which we are providing housing to persons on the waiting list has changed. Little or no house building is being undertaken and instead the Council is sourcing accommodation under the RAS, Social Housing Leasing Initiative, Long Term Leasing Agreements as well as working with the voluntary housing organisations.

Roads

On the question of roads can I say that a lot of improvements have been carried out on our roads over the last number of years. We must always aim to make our roads more safe and modern which will not only benefit the people living and working here in the County but also our many tourists from all over the world who visit this County year after year.

Kerry County Council depends largely on State funding from our Government to carry out the very necessary road improvement works.

The Tralee By-Pass which is costing in the region of €90m is due to be completed early next month.

The 4.5km section at Annascaul to Gortabreagoe on the N86 is completed at a cost of approx. €5.8m and this section of road will be officially opened by Minister Leo Varadkar next Friday and all members are invited to attend. Major work has been carried out on the Listowel Road, the N69, at Tullig.

Many sections of our County Roads are being improved and upgraded every year. All of these works give much needed employment and contribute massively to our local economy with the quarries, plant hire operators, service providers, employment of road workers and drivers all benefiting.

Funding for our roads is mainly provided by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and the reduction experienced in the last number of years in our grant aid has had an effect on the level of general maintenance that has been carried out on these roads.

It is imperative that this funding is increased by the Government if improvement works over the past number of years are to be protected.

Water

On the Water Services Division the Council is all the time striving to provide adequate supply of good quality water for domestic and industrial users and to provide a safe and adequate system for the disposal of wastewater.

Here in this County over €91m of investment has taken place in the upgrading of the water infrastructure in the last few years.

Last year this Council produced approximately 30 billion litres of drinking water for 130,000 consumers, served by some 60,000 water connections (domestic, agricultural, industrial and commercial).

As you are all aware Irish Water, a new State Agency, is being set up by the Government which is taking charge of our water nationally. My understanding is that Kerry County Council will still have a major involvement in the water programme – in so far as the Council will be acting as an agent for Irish Water. I am hoping to invite Minister Fergus O'Dowd to address a meeting here in Kerry to clarify issues which people are concerned about, and especially the investment opportunities on the strength of the extra funding which will materialise when Water Ireland is in place.

Tourism

In previous years this Council approved putting support aside towards tourism and economic development and promotion ideas. It is important that this continues. This year “The Gathering Project” aims to attract 325,000 additional visitors to the Country. This offers great potential for both the Kerry Tourism industry and Local Communities. This Council is working closely with Fáilte Ireland, Go-Kerry, Údarás na Gaeltachta, the Leader Companies and the Rose of Tralee to get as much as possible out of the “Gathering Project”.

The Wild Atlantic Way is another strong initiative which must be supported and developed. The Route where the Wild Atlantic Way is to be developed has been identified. Pilot sign posting has been rolled out in the Dingle Peninsula recently. Through this project, which will be marketed here in this Country and worldwide, it is hoped to bring tourists into the more remote areas of the West Coast. Therefore the Beaches, Mountains and the environment must be protected as well as doing everything possible to make our villages and smaller towns more attractive. Recently the County Manager and the President of the IT College here in Tralee travelled to China and have signed an agreement with the Zhejiang Province. The links to this Province provide major opportunities for this County and access to 1.5 billion people. Firstly to the College in attracting Chinese students to Tralee to study one of the many courses on offer at the College and secondly in attracting tourists to County Kerry.

I am hoping to work with Dr. Oliver Murphy, President of the ITT and Kerry Education Service to devise an attractive membership scheme for the 3,000 students attending the College with a view to encouraging them to use the state of the art Sports Complex in Tralee.

Fishing

For many years coastal communities in the County derived a living for themselves and their families from the sea. In recent years this industry has taken a hammering, due to quotas, regulations and the near extinction of some fish. Having said this it is estimated that an extra 42 million tonnes of farmed seafood will be required annually over the next 20 years to feed people globally. Fish farming is one way to meet this global food need. Ireland has a strong reputation for its organic farmed seafood. Having started this industry some thirty years ago at the same time as the Scots, Faeroe Islands and the Norwegians, we have fallen way behind in terms of production i.e. Ireland produces 15,000 tonnes annually while Scotland produces 150,000, Faeroe Islands 400,000 with Norway producing 1 million tonnes annually.

Mistakes have been made but not all fish farming is the same. With good planning and the highest of environmental standards and the use of the most advanced technology, this industry has a massive potential to create jobs especially along the sea. Údarás na Gaeltachta has been very active in supporting the development of this developing industry and see major employment opportunities in organic fish farming. If done properly and with strong support it would employ local people in long term jobs along our Coastal Communities.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the backbone of this County. Every euro that the farmer earns, either through the money they earn from producing milk, beef, lamb or through the direct supports which they receive from Europe, this money is spent twenty fold in this County. The merchants, the machinery contractors, the shops and all the other service providers in the County depend on them for a living. However, as if the recession was not bad enough, farmers have suffered financially because of the worst weather ever recorded with three winters rolled into one sending costs through the roof. I am calling on the Government to do all it can to help them manage themselves out of this breaking situation in which many find themselves in.

I am especially calling on the Banks to help them and their suppliers (merchants and contractors) to develop support schemes and finance repayment schemes which they can manage.

Credit for small businesses

And while on the issue of Bank lending, unemployment remains very high in this County. Many people have been without a job for at least two or three years and many more of our young people are emigrating. Talking to small business people, they keep telling me that they see the potential in hiring and giving a job to one or two people in their companies if only the Banks would ease off on the credit restrictions. I am calling on the Banks to stop paying lip service and funding advertising campaigns highlighting that they are lending which contradicts totally what I hear.

This money which they are spending on advertising would be better spent on people who are genuinely trying to keep their business afloat. Also the local Bank Manager should be given more discretion and leeway in lending to people who he sees and deals with every day.

Mar chríoch ba mhaith liom mo buíochas a chur in iúil do gach éinne anseo inniu: don Bainisteor Contae, an foireann banaistíochta agus do foireann an Comhairle Contae ar fad, míle buíochas díobh as bhúr gcuid cabhair ó thánas ar an gComhairle I 1999. Óbairóimid go maith agus go dícheallach don Chontae sa bhlian atá ag teacht. Míle buíochas dos na meáin a chuireann cúntas obair an Comhairle ar fail dá gcuid lucht éisteachta agus léitheoirí.”

Cllr. M. O'Shea congratulated Mayor Fitzgerald on his election and said he worked with him since his election in 1999 and he was professional at all times. He always had the best interests of the people of West Kerry at heart. He wished the Mayor well for the coming year.

Cllr. J. Finucane said it is a great honour to be elected Mayor of Kerry and the Mayor brings a lot of experience to that position. He commended him on his opening address and said he highlighted many important issues.

Cllr. T. O'Brien congratulated Mayor Fitzgerald and his family on his election as Mayor of Kerry and said he deserves this honour. He assured the Mayor of his full support for the coming year.

Cllr. R. Beasley congratulated Mayor Fitzgerald on his election on his own behalf and on behalf of Cllr. Ferris and he wished him success for the coming year.

Cllr. B. Cronin congratulated the Mayor on his election and complimented him on his opening speech. The Mayor comes from an agricultural background and is familiar with the issues that need to be highlighted. He wished him well for the coming year.

Cllr. T. Buckley congratulated Mayor Fitzgerald on his election and said he worked hard for his constituents since his election in 1999.

Cllr. B. O'Connell congratulated the Mayor on his election and said he has vast experience in Údarás na Gaeltachta and the Regional Authority and he will be a tremendous ambassador for the county.

Cllr. N. Foley extended her heartfelt congratulations to the Mayor on his election and said this honour is richly deserved. The Mayor has an excellent capacity for hard work and he always fought for a case where there was an injustice. She assured the Mayor of her fully support for the coming year and she wished him success for his term as Mayor.

Cllr. M. Gleeson congratulated the Mayor on his election and wished him and his family well for the year ahead.

Cllr. P.J. Donovan congratulated the Mayor on his election and said he is open and honest in all his dealings. It is a great honour to be elected Mayor of Kerry and Mayor Fitzgerald deserves this honour.

Cllr. L. Purtill congratulated the Mayor, his wife and family on his election. Mayor Fitzgerald was an excellent councillor and a fluent Irish speaker. He wished him well for the coming year.

Cllr. P. Connor-Scarteen congratulated the Mayor on his election and said he was an honourable man with vast experience. He contested two General Elections and did the Fine Gael Party proud. He wished the Mayor and his family the best for the coming year.

Cllr. J.J. Culloty congratulated the Mayor on his election and he wished him well for his year in office.

Cllr. P. Leahy congratulated the Mayor, his wife and family on his election and said it is a great honour for them and for West Kerry. He wished him well for the coming year.

Cllr. A. McEllistrim congratulated the Mayor on his election and complimented him on his opening speech. She wished him well for the coming year.

Cllr. D. Healy-Rae congratulated the Mayor and wished him success for the coming year. He assured the Mayor of his full support and welcomed the mention of farming, roads and housing in the Mayor's opening address.

Cllr. P. McCarthy congratulated the Mayor and said he would do himself, his family and the county proud. He complimented him on his opening address. Cllr. McCarthy said he was confident the Mayor would manage Council meetings fairly. He welcomed the Mayor of Tralee, Cllr. Pat Hussey and former Cllr. Danny Kissane to the meeting.

Cllr. J. Sheahan congratulated the Mayor and wished him well for his year in office. He said the Mayor is experienced and hard working and he had every confidence in him.

Cllr. P. O'Donoghue congratulated the Mayor and his family on his election and said he had great ability. It will be a challenging year ahead but said the Mayor was an excellent Chair of the South West Regional Authority. He assured the Mayor of full co-operation from his party members.

Cllr. S. Counihan wished the Mayor and his family every success for the coming year. He complimented him on his opening address and said he identified important issues for the county.

Cllr. G. Wharton Slattery congratulated the Mayor, his family and the Fine Gael party on his election as Mayor of Kerry. She said the Mayor was a very efficient Chair of the Regional Authority and she had no doubt he would be the same as Mayor of Kerry. She welcomed the newly elected Mayor of Tralee, Cllr. Hussey to the meeting and wished both Mayors well for the coming year. She assured the Mayor of her full co-operation where possible during his term as Mayor.

Cllr. J. Healy-Rae wished the Mayor and his family success for the coming year and assured the Mayor of his co-operation for the year.

Mr. T. Curran, County Manager, congratulated the Mayor on his own behalf and on behalf of staff and said it is a great honour for him and his family. He assured the Mayor of his full co-operation for the year ahead.

13.06.28.02 Election of Deputy Mayor

Cllr. J. Finucane PROPOSED Cllr. L. Purtill as Deputy Mayor for the coming year. Liam is one of the most highly regarded politicians and has given great service to his constituents.

Cllr. P. McCarthy SECONDED this proposal and said Cllr. Purtill will be an excellent Deputy Mayor.

The Mayor deemed Cllr. Purtill elected Deputy Mayor.

Cllr. Purtill thanked his proposer and seconder.

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, Oakpark. He also invited the Press to the Lunch.

The meeting concluded at 1.30pm.

Gerard O'Brien
Meetings Administrator

Mayor of Kerry