

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



Wicklow County Council
COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL MHANTAIN

Transcript of the County Council Annual General Meeting Held on 15 June 2015 In the County Council Chamber, Wicklow



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6
7 Monday, 15th of June, 2015. Wicklow County Council AGM

8
9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon members. Before I start, Cllr Doran?

10 Cllr DORAN: Chairman, could you bear with me for a couple of minutes.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: I will.

12 Cllr DORAN: I suppose nearly everybody knows that Féile na nGael is on next weekend and I
13 had a few people approach me that Wexford County Council, Carlow County Council and
14 Wicklow, not Wicklow yet, but, they were giving or donating some money to the Féile and
15 Wexford and Carlow is very, fairly adamant that Wicklow would be supporting it as well. So
16 there is 650 young people, boys and girls, involved in the Féile. Some from England and
17 America as well. And I think it's great for our area that we are part of it, there is young children
18 will be staying in all parts of Wicklow, Wexford and Carlow. And it will bring quite a bit of
19 excitement to the three counties, and I was going to propose that we would support them in some
20 way, the same at least - at least the same as the other counties.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: What sort of figure had you in mind, financial support?

22 Cllr DORAN: It would be up to the Council here, I wouldn't like to mention it, but I think the
23 money that Wicklow, Wexford and Carlow are talking about is 2,500 each for each county.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: And have you identified where you are taking this money from?

25 Cllr DORAN: No, sure I thought you now on your last ... (LAUGHTER) last dying kick that
26 you would make a man of yourself and come up with the money!

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'll tell you what, we will have the second collection on Sunday in
28 Kilmacanogue for it, already.

29 (Laughter)

30 Cllr DORAN: I didn't know you had a collection!

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Maybe each Municipal District could consider a little allocation from
32 their discretionary funding, maybe, because I know some municipal districts have larger amounts
33 of clubs taking part than others, I know Bray for example only have one.

34 Cllr CASEY: Chairman, the Wicklow Municipal District wrote to the Féile and got a list of the

1 clubs participating in the Wicklow Municipal District and we have given a contribution to each
2 of the clubs.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Maybe that could be replicated. Cllr Blake?

4 Cllr DORAN: It was for the overall running of the Féile, not nine different teams. Like we have
5 four or five teams in our area, with fundraising going on, the request I got was from the Féile
6 board themselves.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: You want the first and second collections, is that what you are saying,
8 Cllr Blake?

9 Cllr BLAKE: I would like to support Cllr Doran in regards this, this is a very, very worthwhile -
10 it's about ten years since it was held in Co Wicklow and it's gone so big probably the fact that
11 they're asking counties to share it now and that's why Wicklow, Carlow and Wexford have come
12 together this year to support the Féile. I think the hurling one is on in Cavan, Down and Antrim
13 next weekend, so the counties are sharing it among each other. It is a big event for children,
14 parents as well and I support Cllr Doran's request that we make some kind of a contribution
15 towards it, and I think it's about 70,000 in total in costs, that it costs the three boards in regards to
16 the total amount of money required to run it. So look at, 2,500, whatever it is, it's a small
17 amount of money, but if we can raise it in some form or another, I would certainly like to
18 support it. It is a very, very worthwhile cause in terms of children and we are asked on a
19 continuous basis to support children in their activities, sporting activities, and this is one of the
20 biggest events in the country and they're coming from America, London and parts of England as
21 well. I think it's a very, very worthwhile venture on behalf of tourism in Co Wicklow as well
22 and we should support it in some form and I think the 2,500 in the black hole you have there,
23 you should be able to find it at the end of the day.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you, Councillor Shay Cullen?

25 Cllr Shay CULLEN: I too would like to support the proposal. There is 19 clubs taking part in
26 Wicklow, both boys and girls, under-14 teams. It's really to showcase our county as a good
27 tourist area, good tourist attraction. I know there is teams from New York, England, all over
28 Ireland coming to both Wicklow, Carlow and Wexford. And as Cllr Casey has already
29 mentioned, we in our Wicklow Municipal District have given a financial contribution of €300
30 per club to the five clubs in the Wicklow municipal area. So I think it's certainly, it's showcasing
31 our county and we should do all we can to maximise the benefit for Co Wicklow. So for those
32 reasons, I certainly would concur with the sentiments earlier. Thank you.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. Cllr Ruttle?

34 Cllr RUTTLE: I would support the suggestion. There is always a great buzz around the Féile

1 and for a contribution of 2,500, the county gains more than that in all the people that come here
2 and stay here and activities. I fully support it and indeed I see Lorraine Lynch here behind us,
3 that's the woman with the money, so thank you very much.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Walsh?

5 Cllr WALSH: Again I would like to concur with the previous speakers and support Cllr Doran's
6 proposal. I have been involved in a number of Féiles over the years with my club and it's a
7 fantastically run competition, brings huge enjoyment to the boys and girls involved and like Cllr
8 Cullen says, it's an opportunity to showcase our county in a positive light. Again I would just
9 like to confirm my support for the proposal.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune.

11 Cllr FORTUNE: I also think we should support this. I have been involved myself over the years
12 in Féiles going back a few years ago. I think rather than messing around with it we should just
13 put in 2 or 3,000 into it from the County Council. I think we can revisit the NPPR in some way
14 and find the three grand and do it. I think it's money well spent and it's good for the county and
15 we are going to get a lot of publicity in the county from it. It's a national event that's going to get
16 a lot of publicity.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Councillor. Cllr O'Neill?

18 Cllr O'NEILL: I want to support Cllr Doran's proposal. It's a huge undertaking, the Féile, and I
19 don't think we should really dilly dally around going back to municipal districts for discretionary
20 funds and surely we can gather up that couple of pound there now. There is a huge amount of
21 volunteers in the county here that work hard to get this up and running, so it would be just a
22 small token but I would support it.

23 Cllr FITZGERALD: I will fully support it, I know we have a team from Arklow in the
24 competition and I visited the Féile on many occasions over the years. And really, rather than
25 going back to the municipal councils, we should be able to find €3,000 to give to the overall
26 organisation of the Féile. Because it's a huge undertaking and the number of people that come to
27 the county and stay in the county regarding, leaving sport aside, that spend money and it puts the
28 county, I know there is three counties involved, but it puts all of them into the focus. And I think
29 we should find the money by whatever means we can find it for other things, I think we should
30 find it for this.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Bourke?

32 Cllr BOURKE: Cathaoirleach, I think that the Protocol Committee should decide on where the
33 money is to come from. For example, there might be unspent money in the conferences and
34 training budgets, some of us may not have attended any conferences or training this year and we

1 are halfway through the year, it's likely there will be a surplus and underspend and I propose you
2 take it from there.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay that seems like a good proposal, have I a seconder for that?

4 Cllr WINTERS: I second that.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, we will send that to protocol then. It seems to be supported across
6 the board for that Cllr Doran?

7 Cllr DORAN: Thank you very much. Thank you.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Well that was a quick year members. Can I say what an honour
9 it's been and a privilege to be Cathaoirleach of the County Council for the last 12 months. It's
10 been a very enjoyable experience travelling up and down the county, meeting all the wonderful
11 people and organisations that are the fabric that keeps Wicklow together. I would also like to
12 thank all the staff here in the Council who have gone above and beyond their duty helping me
13 out with various different issues. I have got to know them a lot better over the last year, I
14 thought I knew most of the staff for the last eleven years in the Council, but it's only when you
15 become Chairman you realise exactly what every department and everybody does.

16
17 I have to single out one staff member and that's Lorraine Gallagher. She is so professional and
18 so good at what she does, she was absolutely fantastic and I couldn't have done the job without
19 her assistance. I know she is off on well deserved leave, spending money in Macy's probably at
20 the moment. But to thank Lorraine and all the staff for all their help and professionalism. From
21 the top right down to the bottom, everybody within Wicklow County Council have been very
22 supportive.

23
24 To my fellow elected members, thanks for all your help and support from all the parties, and
25 those of none. Everybody you have given me your help and support, and I am very grateful for
26 that. I know that after the election there was a lot of new elected members, I think there was 14
27 new members elected to the Authority here, and I have to say I have enjoyed seeing the new
28 members in particular finding their feet, and starting to express themselves and I look forward to
29 that continuing. And of course the more experienced members, you can never have enough
30 experience and when issues arise where you are sometimes looking for answers, that little bit of
31 experience around the Chamber is very, very worthwhile.

32
33 Of course it's been a year of change and Local Government and how it does its business. It has
34 been changed dramatically with the abolition of the Town Councils in all the new legislation and

1 the new ways that we have to do our business. It has certainly presented challenges, a and I
2 make no bones about it, I made mistakes, but there you go, you try to do the best thing you can.
3 But I have always tried my best, given it my best shot, so I have allowed a lot of latitude on
4 standing orders and speaking time, particularly because there was new members. Ironically it
5 was some of the more experienced members that probably took advantage of it, but there you go.
6 I would urge the new chairperson maybe to start to tighten up on the standing orders and
7 speaking time in particular, because we are all now here a year, we know what it's all about, and
8 I think the meetings will be more efficient if that area is tightened up on. So without further ado,
9 I wish whoever the new chairperson is the very best of luck. I am sure they'll bring new
10 enthusiasm and fresh ideas to the role and they can count on my full support. So we will move
11 on to - Cllr Vance?

12 Cllr VANCE: Could I just say a few words, just in regard to paying tribute to you Chairman, I
13 think you have had a great year, and I think the first year in any Council is the most difficult for
14 anyone to Chair, because you have a number of new people come in they have to bed them in.
15 But this year was particularly difficult because there was eight extra members as well. It's
16 always a particularly difficult in that contrary and I think in that respect that you have done a
17 great job in bedding in the Council to operate during the year. As you say yourself, and I have
18 said it to many Chairman over the years that it's a great experience. It's a different experience
19 when you are sitting up the top table there than when you are around the table here and it's great
20 experience and a great learning experience as well, that you pick up an awful lot of things. You
21 interact with an awful lot more of the staff and various things like you have said and you get a
22 great insight into the workings of the Council and the workings of certain Councillors as well in
23 how things operate as well. I think it's the first time for I don't know how long, that an
24 independent has been in the Chair as well. So I mean in that respect, it's an achievement as well.
25 And I think that you have performed your duties absolutely excellently, you have been very,
26 very good, I haven't heard any complaints whatsoever in regard to how you operated throughout
27 the year and I congratulate you for that. And I mean, when anyone takes the Chair, I mean the
28 first thing the people who are affected by somebody who takes the Chair are that person's family.
29 Because they have to make sacrifices as well throughout the year because you are away so much,
30 they have to fill in for various duties that obviously you are not around for. And I mean I have
31 been very lucky that I have been sitting around this Chamber and I sat beside your Dad when he
32 was Chairman of the Council here, sat beside Mildred as well and now yourself as well. As a
33 family, the Fox family have given tremendous service to Wicklow and it's been a great tribute
34 for me to sit here and watch you operate like that as well. I want to congratulate you on behalf

1 of the Fianna Fail group, thank you.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr Blake.

3 Cllr BLAKE: On behalf of the Fine Gael group, I would like to concur with what Cllr Vance
4 has said, that your contribution to the Council here for the last year has been an example to
5 everybody. You have been very fair, constructive in everything you have done in here. As you
6 said yourself, you gave people a bit too much time sometimes but certainly it's important to
7 ensure everybody gets a fair crack of the whip in that regard and I think you have been very
8 constructive throughout the entire year. On many occasions there could be difficulties you said
9 yourself there, but I think your own handling of those difficult situations was second to none.
10 You diffused certainly a lot of tense moments we had here, and I think it's a contribution of your
11 own ability to be able to control meetings that were difficult at times.

12
13 Certainly I don't believe there was any meeting here you didn't attend. I think I have met you in
14 four corners of the county as well, you carried out all your duties on behalf of the people as the
15 first citizen this county, you certainly have done an honour to the people and to this Council in
16 that regard. Certainly as Cllr Vance said, a larger Council here, a new Council as well, was a
17 difficult bedding in period of time but you certainly handled every aspect in a fair and good
18 manner and your contribution towards the difficult times that we actually have here as well. We
19 have no houses being built here but you have been to the forefront in ensuring Wicklow get their
20 fair share of the social housing money that's out there and I think your contribution to that aspect
21 has been second to none.

22
23 The other issue is employment in this county and your support for the think tank project has been
24 ongoing there for the last year or so, has been a compliment to yourself as well in that regard.
25 There will be no excuse not to be farming anymore, you won't be able to tell the wife or your
26 Mum that you can't milk the cows or whatever, you will be there, but certainly your contribution
27 for the last year has been a pleasure to be associated with you here in the Council and thank you
28 on behalf of the Fine Gael group to your fairness, your honesty and how you have dealt with it.
29 on behalf of the people of the county, thank you very much.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Councillor. Councillor Shay Cullen.

31 Cllr Shay CULLEN: Thanks Chairman. Yeah, as a new member, I would like to pay tribute to
32 you for your year's work. I suppose when I came in here first last year, it's a daunting prospect
33 for any new member coming into this Chamber not being used to the format and so on that goes
34 along with it, but on many occasion I have spoke to you on issues that maybe I found difficult.

1 But you were always fair, very, very approachable, very helpful, and I felt always gave time to
2 the new Councillors. And I commend you for that. And I would like to wish you all the best in
3 the future. I think you performed absolutely superbly for the year and I thank you for your
4 support and continued success. Thank you.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Fortune.

6 Cllr FORTUNE: On behalf of the independent group, I would just like to wish and hope that
7 you had a good year, and everything worked out as you planned and you got a lot of satisfaction
8 out of it. Just on a personal basis, obviously also I can't be a hypocrite and say that this time last
9 year I think what went on here in the chamber wasn't ideally what I would have been happy with
10 and I articulated that and it would be wrong of me not to also mention that today. But I wish you
11 the very best. And hope that the rest of your term on the Local Authority works out very well
12 for you.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Ruttle.

14 Cllr RUTTLE: Yes Cathaoirleach, I had the honour to propose you here a year ago and I knew
15 from day one that you would put the energy and effort into it and move around and meet people
16 and earlier on somebody said the four corners of the county, maybe five corners now, you were
17 everywhere to be seen and you gave a very good image of the Council, energetic, approachable
18 and they go on here about the mixture of youth and experience, I think you combined it all; you
19 have the youth and you still have the experience of knowing where you are going.

20
21 It is a heavy going on a family and I can well imagine that I think Jackie, Aoife and John will see
22 you more often now and maybe that cow won't kick off the cluster, she will know you in the
23 parlour the next time. It was lovely too, occasions and events that were suitable, you had the
24 children with you and that gives a very good image to the whole thing. I was proud to nominate
25 you on the day, I knew you would do a good job, you come from a good political pedigree, I was
26 a very good friend of your late father's, well done and congratulations.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Jim. Cllr Brady.

28 Cllr BRADY: Thanks Cathaoirleach, just on behalf of the Sinn Fein, just to congratulate you as
29 the outgoing Chair and for the year in which you have served. I think you did, you done an
30 excellent job in the Chair under what could have been perceived as potentially difficult and
31 turbulent times, coming with the changes to local authorities. We know a greatly expanded
32 Council here, 32 members, a lot of new members as you said yourself, all looking to make their
33 voices be heard and rightfully so. So it had the potential to get messy, but I think it has, it's been
34 a good bedding in 12 months, it's been a learning curve for everyone. But I think you did

1 manage it quite well, or very well I should say. Very well. And as the Cathaoirleach of the
2 district in Bray, ex Cathaoirleach, I know for one and anyone that has had the privilege of being
3 a chairperson of any of the local authorities here in Wicklow, know the honour and the privilege
4 it is to get elevate today that position and the workload that comes along with it. So you are no
5 different to anyone else in terms of the workload. I think you done exceptionally well. I was
6 critical last year around the process and that's not to take away from you in the position that you
7 done, and the old boys club that was in existence and the continuation of that, and hopefully we
8 will see a break of that old boys club tradition here today in the Chamber. I just hope that the
9 objectives that you set yourself 12 months ago, that you met all of those. I know rural planning
10 and Development Plan, I know you paid particular attention and focus to that, and look, it's
11 going to become more important over the next little while as our Development Plan progresses.
12 I know you put an awful lot of work into that, particularly around rural development and that, so
13 I thank you for that. Just - I think a couple of members did allude to the crisis, not of your
14 making, but the housing crisis that is in existence. I know yourself and the Chair of the Housing
15 SPC, my colleague Councillor John Snell, did meet with different people to push and promote
16 Wicklow in terms of the needs that we need for our citizens here within the county.
17 Unfortunately, the housing crisis has got worse over the last 12 months. Again through no doing
18 of yourself, it's a situation that has been made by this Government and their predecessors, so
19 hopefully the new chairperson, whoever they will be, will take that as their number one priority.
20 When you see headlines of four or five families staging sit-ins of the County Council because
21 they have no other - nowhere else to go, it is crisis. It's crisis times. I know the members in
22 Bray, the district members in Bray are meeting with the Junior Minister for Finance, Simon
23 Harris now on Wednesday, and I hope all districts will push to ensure that their voices are heard
24 within Wicklow with regard housing. But again just to commend you, I think it was an
25 achievement to get the Chinese Ambassador here to Wicklow. I think it was an even bigger
26 achievement to get him up on to your farm to have a look around. I think he took more of an
27 interest as you said yourself with the rabbit that he seen up there as opposed to the cows. Just to
28 commend you again Cathaoirleach.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks John. Cllr Casey.

30 Cllr CASEY: I'll be brief, I want to agree with everything that's been said before now, but just in
31 relation as a municipal Chair, I want to express my thanks to you and the fairness you have dealt
32 with the municipal chairs. I suppose in a period of change where we lost Town Councils and we
33 weren't sure of the civic roles we played. I want to put on record my thanks to the fairness you
34 showed to the municipal chairs during that period, thank you.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Pat. Cllr Matthews.

2 Cllr MATTHEWS: I just want to add to the comments on what an excellent job you did for the
3 year and as a new Councillor coming in here, you never failed once to take a phone call, respond
4 to a text or an email or request for a meeting and that was a great source of support and I would
5 like to thank you for that Chairman.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks. Cllr Thornhill.

7 Cllr THORNHILL: Cathaoirleach, (SPEAKS IN IRISH) as a new elected member on this
8 Council, as Cllr Cullen alluded to, it's a very daunting experience to come in amongst 32 people
9 and express yourself, but I must say from my heart that you really came up to the plate and really
10 helped the new members, and was very empathetic and showed interest and from that I must say
11 thank you. And as Councillor Steve Matthews alluded to there just about the Chinese coming, I
12 think you really trumped it by getting the Chinese to come here. It was excellent and maybe for
13 the future like I mean, that is really one of the great world powers and from that I would say
14 upwards and onwards, thank you.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Brendan, I can't claim credit for that, I have to give that to
16 Cllr Walsh for the Chinese Ambassador. Cllr Timmins.

17 Cllr TIMMINS: Just briefly Christy, I know you here eleven years since I started on the Council
18 with you in 04 and I have the height of respect for you. I knew when you went into that job a
19 year ago you would do a super job. And you have proven that to be the case and I never had any
20 doubt that would be the case. Cllr Blake captured it well when he said that you were completely
21 fair and honest and showed integrity, and I choose those words very carefully, they're words that
22 are thrown around a lot, and I very, very rarely use them if ever, and in your case, it definitely
23 warrants being used. Thank you for the year that you served this county and best of luck in the
24 future.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks. Cllr Behan.

26 Cllr BEHAN: Cathaoirleach, just to join with all of the rest of the members of the Council in
27 congratulating you on an excellent year and wishing you well for the future. Cllr Vance's point
28 is very well made, yourself, your late father and Mildred, when you add up the totality in years
29 and the quality of service your family have given to the people of Wicklow, it's credit to all of
30 them. Congratulations.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Joe. Cllr O'Brien.

32 Cllr O'BRIEN: (SPEAKS IN IRISH)

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Oliver. Cllr Cullen.

34 Cllr Tommy CULLEN: Chairman, I would agree with the comments made about you, and your

1 year regards - with the exception of one omission, and I think that was the way you treated Cllr
2 Fortune. I think at the last AGM, I think that was unfair, and you done yourself no justice on
3 that. I don't think today could be passed by without reflecting on that. I think at that meeting
4 Cllr Fortune was done a grave injustice. Thank you.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Thank you.

6 ACTING CEO: Can I congratulate you on a very successful year. You are an experienced
7 Councillor, you incorporated the new members into the scene here across the broad range of the
8 reform package, you have been a great assistance. I have seen that from afar, and now from very
9 close up. I think your enthusiasm for the role is second to none. I think you have more than
10 anyone I would say in the chamber has the finger on the pulse of Co Wicklow across a broad
11 breadth of things. Clearly you have the respect of your fellow Councillors, I think as the system
12 develops and how you re-incorporate the community into our thinking in this Chamber, the role
13 of the Cathaoirleach will be vital. I think you have put the seeds in place. I think you have also
14 enhanced the role of the Corporate Policy Group in the manner in which they bring stuff to the
15 full Council, and again I just wish you all the best. Enjoy the rest of the term.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Brian. Okay, we will move on. First item on the agenda is the
17 election of Cathaoirleach. Have I proposers? Cllr Brady.

18 Cllr BRADY: Thanks Cathaoirleach. Well I would like to propose Councillor Nicola Lawless
19 for the position of Cathaoirleach. I think over the last 12 months she has shone within the
20 Council chamber here, and within the work she has done within her own district and obviously at
21 a community level as well. I think she poses exceptional skills, people skills, and I think she
22 would make an exceptional Cathaoirleach to represent us in what is going to be an important
23 year for Wicklow and across this island. I think it would be fantastic to have a republican
24 Cathaoirleach leading us into the centenary celebrations of the 1916 Rising.

25
26 But also I think this Council has an obligation to ensure that we promote fair gender equality.
27 This Council unfortunately has only 22% representation of females and I think it is way way too
28 low. It is up on previous years, thankfully, but still we are very, very low. Now there has been a
29 number of new female Councillors added to the Council here, including my two colleagues of
30 which obviously Nicola is one. I think this Council as a whole still has a long long way to go to
31 promote gender equality. If you look at our SPCs that we put in place last year, all five are made
32 up of - held the - the Chair positions are held by males. If you have a look above that again,
33 within the officialdom of County Buildings here, all the senior directors, including our CEO,
34 they're all male with the one exception of Lorraine Lynch in finance. So - you thought you had

1 me there Cathaoirleach, but you didn't. I was coming to that Lorraine! I think in previous years,
2 Wicklow County Council has only ever had two female Cathaoirleach, Ann Ferris in 2007 to
3 2008 and then prior to that was in 1969 to 1970 and that was the late Senator Mary Walsh. We
4 have only had two leaders of this county that were made up of female representation which I
5 think is grossly unjust. And we need to be doing more to promote female participation within
6 politics. We need to be doing more to promote female participation in key decision making and
7 leadership roles. And I think when you look at nationally, when women only make up 30% of
8 the key positions in managerial roles, and you take that as a barometer as to how we are
9 managing things here in this Council, and we are nowhere even near that figure of 30%, only one
10 of our senior officials in the Council here holds a key position, so for those reasons, I would like
11 to propose Nicola, Councillor Nicola Lawless for Cathaoirleach.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have I a seconder for that.

13 Cllr McDONALD: I'll second that. Cllr Fortune.

14 Cllr FORTUNE: I would like to propose Cllr Matthews on behalf of the independent group. I
15 think he would make an absolutely excellent Chair. He is very fair. He is a lateral thinker, and I
16 think we need a bit of that, and I think he would be an excellent choice of Chair, so as I say I
17 propose Cllr Matthews.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I have a seconder. Cllr Kavanagh, thank you. Cllr Winters.

19 Cllr WINTERS: Thanks Cathaoirleach. I would like to propose Councillor John Ryan for the
20 position of Chair. I think when John was Cathaoirleach of Bray he I suppose showed his ability
21 at chairing and what he could do and achieve as a Chair and I know at that stage he headed up
22 the economic think tank. He has then gone on to facilitate the think tank here in the county and I
23 know that he would be keen to acknowledge the work done by Christine Flood and all the other
24 members of the team and I think that's probably one of John's best qualities is that he actually
25 works as part of a team and is always interested in making sure that all of the views are
26 facilitated and heard at all levels right across any project that he has worked on. Outside of his
27 Council work John actually works for a company called Great Place to Work, and that company
28 I suppose goes in and it sees employees as assets within any business, and it tries to use their
29 talents to the best of their abilities, which is obviously good for the business, but equally good
30 for the employee. And I would think that John will bring his skills and the experience that he
31 has from being in great place to work to the County Council. And I would encourage all
32 members to vote for him. Thank you.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Have I a seconder for that?

34 Cllr KENNEDY: I would like to second that nomination he's a former Cathaoirleach in Bray, I

1 would be delighted to second that nomination.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: We will take a roll call, if somebody receives more than 50% of the
3 ballot, they'll be deemed elected, if not the lowest shall be eliminated and we vote again, minus
4 the lowest, okay. So you call out the name of the person you are supporting, and Helen will do a
5 roll call.

6 SECRETARY: I am going to call out each Councillor's name and if they could say which of the
7 three candidates they wish to vote for.

8

9 (A vote was taken)

10

11 SECRETARY: The Councillors not present, 2, Councillors abstaining 1, Councillor Nicola
12 Lawless 7, Cllr Matthews 3, and Councillor John Ryan 19.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, well then I deem Councillor John Ryan to be the new Chairman.

14 (APPLAUSE)

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much members. (SPEAKS IN IRISH) I am going to
16 have to learn the system, so please bear with me during the time. (SPEAKS IN IRISH). I hope
17 that was right Brendan. (APPLAUSE). So firstly, I would like to thank my nominator Irene,
18 and seconder Gerry. And the members of my own party for giving me this opportunity which I
19 am really very humbled by.

20

21 Honestly, after the last election on the Saturday morning, when the first amount of votes came in
22 I honestly didn't think I would be elected to the Council, let alone be elected to the role as
23 Cathaoirleach. So it's indeed a real honour for me, and one I plan to work hard at and to repay
24 the trust of the members around this Council.

25

26 I think you have all said it, and I would like to also echo the views of each member around this
27 chamber about the outgoing Cathaoirleach, because just from talking to members around this
28 Chamber, people just have absolute praise for Christopher, and the way he has managed to put
29 everybody at ease, to deal with some tough issues in year one, and to kind of navigate us through
30 the new law as it exists, and I think the way he chaired meetings. I think the thing I love about
31 you most is you have this disarming wit that even in a very difficult, tense negotiation or the
32 like, you always seem to have that line just to come out which puts a smile on everybody's face
33 and just takes all that stress out of the situation. That's something I wish that I had, and I hope
34 maybe I'll be able to start to do it, but I honestly, your family can be really proud of you and I am

1 sure your father would be extremely proud of what you have achieved, and you will be really
2 difficult to emulate, particularly the knowledge you have which has just been amazing across
3 such a broad range of issues. And actually it's probably in particular for that reason that if the
4 members are happy, I would like Christopher to stay on the CPG as outgoing Cathaoirleach of
5 the Council. I think his knowledge and a number of issues that are transferring across to this
6 New Year, I think his insight would be much appreciated. Are members happy enough with
7 that?

8
9 I think, I mean I don't need to tell members around this Council that the Council itself has
10 probably had a pretty poor image over the last number of years, and received some justified
11 criticism. However I really think we need to fundamentally change how we do what we do and I
12 think we need to do it an awful lot better. Some people have said we need to change the PR.
13 Honestly I don't think it's about the PR. I think it's about the way we deliver the services we
14 deliver, and look at everything we do, and do it better, because I think the people of Wicklow
15 deserve a higher level of service from us and from this Council. One of the things I would love
16 to do is actually survey people who actually do interact with the Council to find out their views
17 on what they think of the service that they're actually receiving and see can we become more
18 customer focused and get better at everything we do. We need a higher level of engagement
19 with the community with which we serve and also I think the communication between that
20 community and also the business community, that's an area that I think we need to put a lot of
21 work into.

22
23 What I see is that we have got four years left of our term that we have been elected for, and
24 really I think everything that we should be about now is trying to make sure that those four years
25 are the best they can possibly be. And one of the things with the criticism the Council has
26 received over the last number of years, I really do think an aspiration and a fair aspiration would
27 be that we should aspire to be the best County Council in Ireland. And I really do believe that
28 we can do that. I think we have an opportunity, we have a new fresh start with the new CEO,
29 who is going to be elected, not elected, appointed, and it might be our own acting manager Brian
30 here. But whoever I think it is, I think what we have to show is that we have got clear priorities
31 as a group that we want delivered over the next four years. And that we will work with them to
32 try and make sure that that happens. One of the things I would love to do very quickly is to have
33 a workshop, because as everybody was sort of saying, year one was really very much a settling
34 in year, so that people understood what this was all about, and how it works and I know those

1 new rules frustrate me just as much as they frustrate I think most of the people around the table.
2 So I am not a fan of them. However, I believe we have to work together to deliver to the people
3 of Wicklow, so I would like to hold a workshop so that we can come together and actually just
4 kind of agree a set of priorities for the next four years of the things that are passionately
5 important to the people around this table so we can really hone in on them and work hard at
6 them. I also as part of that workshop would like to review the monthly management report,
7 because I don't know, people I talk to say it doesn't really do what they need in terms of
8 managing this Council. So I think it's important for us to sort of say what are the measures that
9 we need to put forward and we need to get reports on a monthly basis that will help us to know
10 whether or not this Council is performing to a really high level. Just in general, I think we need
11 to review the ways we work and I would love to set up a committee from - all parties and none,
12 of people to look at the Council, what it does and how we can do everything better. So I think
13 everything is up for grabs there.

14
15 A second thing I would like to do, one of the things that probably frustrates me a little bit is that
16 the SPCs, the SPC you are on yourself, you know what's going on, but in a lot of cases you don't
17 get the exposure to the other SPCs and what's actually happening on those. You might get the
18 minutes, but often times it's much nicer to be able to hear people articulate what's going on, what
19 are the priorities, what they're working on and how they're getting on with regard to that. I am
20 asking that a different SPC Chair and Director to address the Council each month to appraise us
21 of their work programme and the delivery. Because I think that will lead to a much better flow
22 of information so that we are more equipped to understand what we are doing across all the areas
23 that the Council deliver on.

24
25 Just looking ahead to the year, I think it's an exciting year but it's also a really busy year.
26 Obviously the Development Plan is a key strategic document and I suppose looking back at the
27 Development Plan that's been in place, there wasn't an awful lot of development, so maybe
28 people particularly new Councillors may not realise that it is a critically important document and
29 I think we need to put really a lot of time and effort because I would say the next five to six
30 years, there will be a lot of development, and I think that document being a framework to
31 facilitate development that's sustainable and compatible for our county is really important, so I
32 think we are going to have to put a lot of time and effort into that and I think we will continue
33 those workshops that the Planning Department have been having, which I think have been really
34 really useful to let not only the new Councillors, but every Councillor get a really clear

1 understanding of how the Development Plan works and the importance of it for the future of the
2 county.

3
4 The estimates, putting the correct funding in place to deliver services across the county is
5 absolutely essential and I think what I really loved this year was the new approach in terms of
6 the workshops around the estimates. I thought it was fantastic and I know Christopher you put a
7 huge amount of effort into going to all of those workshops and making sure all Councillors felt
8 they had full information, which over the years I think there was always a sense that it was
9 smoke and mirrors as to how the Council ran its finances. But I think we have gone a step in the
10 right direction in terms of bringing a much higher level of transparency to our finances, and I
11 would like to ensure that those workshops will continue and it will be there again for us to get
12 better and better at understanding the finances that drive this Council and hopefully we will
13 make really good decisions.

14
15 1916, over the next year, we will commemorate 1916 and I am excited about the programme of
16 events that's been developed so we can remember, reflect and re-imagine as it says. I have
17 chaired the Committee and there is some really great ideas coming forward, an oral history of
18 West Wicklow, development of an App which will feed information back from 1916 that the
19 people would have been reading in their papers and that will be coming out to everybody on this
20 App every single day, including advertisements and the like and a curation day where people can
21 bring in memorabilia and many other projects, because the grants scheme is after closing and
22 there is some - a lot of projects that have been applied for grant funding which are quite exciting
23 and we really look forward to that. I think it's a really important thing that we should
24 commemorate it in a really strong manner.

25
26 The think tank, obviously a few months ago, the Council unanimously voted through the
27 economic think tank proposals as policy and now it's the tough bit, it's actually to transfer those
28 policy issues into real live actions, and personally I would like to thank everybody who put time
29 and effort into making this a reality and just to reassure people that this plan isn't a stand alone
30 plan but it really links into the economic local, or the local economic plan, which is part of the
31 LECP. And there is a huge amount of people who are working really really hard in trying to
32 bring those priorities to fruition and we will get to make a lot of those decisions
33 very shortly and together at 6pm people are going to be given an opportunity again to listen to
34 the presentations by the different groups to tell us exactly what they're actually doing.

1
2 I think it's essential that we don't just talk about wanting more jobs in Co Wicklow, but we put in
3 place the environment, and the supports to develop local businesses and attract foreign direct
4 investment if possible. I think we need to bring a new energy to retailing across Co Wicklow, to
5 develop stronger civic spaces that just seems to be a real key. If you want to get the FDI in.
6 Promote in a more inventive way our tourism offering and ensure people stay in Wicklow rather
7 than just visit. I believe Wicklow can be the health and fitness capital of Ireland and I know we
8 are going, as part of the think tank, we are going to upgrade our web presence with a new portal
9 to all that Wicklow has to offer, which is a huge amount, and we will also have the job of
10 developing a new brand, hopefully with a more contemporary feel. And I also think we should
11 appoint a brand ambassadors who are known on a world stage to help us promote everything that
12 is truly great about this county.

13
14 While Wicklow has been hugely successful with the film industry, I think it's really important
15 that we don't have a God given right to the film industry and I think we saw here at the last
16 meeting some of the forces that are at play that could potentially cause a challenge to that. I
17 think we really need to fight to secure and expand this industry and I think over the coming
18 weeks, we will bring proposals forward to review the development levies with the aspiration of
19 hopefully trying to reduce those development levies for this industry so that they can overcome
20 their capacity issues. I am also open to the idea that the Council with support from the
21 Government might consider building infrastructure to support this industry. We have built
22 advance factories before so I don't know why we shouldn't look at maybe building the actual
23 infrastructure that's necessary for the film industry and leasing it back to them. It could be a
24 really good mechanism. Because I think it's really important that we do create a really vibrant
25 film cluster, so that we make ourselves nearly bullet proof from other places around the county,
26 or around the country, and elsewhere in terms of trying to make sure that we keep the finger on
27 the pulse of the film industry. And one of the things I would love to do and I would like to
28 investigate is the idea of holding a film summit, much the same as the web summit for
29 technology, but a film summit and actually doing it in Co Wicklow and inviting key players
30 from around the world to come here and discuss and debate what needs to happen in the film
31 industry. I think that would be a lovely way of actually really showing that we are the centre of
32 film in Ireland, and we can be the centre of film in the world. So I think that's really something
33 that would be wonderful.

1 As Cllr Brady quite rightly said one of the challenges that's facing this Council is in the area of
2 housing. There is too many people on the housing list, and I think there is too many people
3 homeless in this county. So money is obviously being made available centrally and I think our
4 challenge is to work together as a body and as a Council to ensure that we get our fair share of
5 the money and that we get to grips with homelessness in the county. So I know I am happy to
6 work really closely with the Chair of the Housing SPC John Snell in that regard and I know the
7 Bray Municipal authority has a meeting as you said not only with Minister Harris, but my
8 understanding is that meeting on Wednesday night is also going to be with the Minister for
9 Housing which is Minister Coffey. I just mention that to John before he went they think John
10 should be, John Snell should be included in that. Hopefully that will be the start of a movement
11 in terms of this, because as I said, it's - I share with you a desire that we actually really get
12 delivery in terms of housing for this county.

13
14 That also means affordable housing throughout the county too, which I think the Development
15 Plan might play a part in delivering.

16
17 In terms of roads, this year will also see the opening of the new stretch of the road on the N11
18 Rathnew to Arklow road improvement scheme. Hopefully I think around August that will be
19 happening and I mean for eleven years I have spent on this Council, there was a huge amount of
20 time spent talking about the need to have this and it's just fantastic that it's finally come about,
21 and that no longer will we have to be going around those bends. It also means that Arklow has a
22 much more connected feeling easier to get to Arklow from Dublin.

23
24 I think we also need to work hard to get action on the N11 M50, the merge, to remove the rush
25 hour misery the Wicklow commuters face each day. We currently have - there is a traffic study
26 in place at the moment and I hope we can accelerate plans to widen this road which would also
27 open up the zoned lands at Old Fassaroe for development which I think is a critical development
28 because the numbers we are supposed to deliver in terms of population in the Development Plan,
29 we simply don't seem to have the land zoned and that would be a huge benefit if we were able to
30 move ahead with that land there. And particularly I think we also need a solution to the crazy
31 junction at Kilmacanogue, and will hand a holistic plan to deal with difficulties experienced by
32 motorists on the N81. This year will also hopefully before Christmas anyway get a new library,
33 which is always good news, in Arklow. And I certainly look forward to seeing the development
34 of that.

1
2 Irish Water, I know it's something that you would nearly be afraid to mention, and regardless of
3 the view as to what you think of Irish Water or the charging mechanism, the one thing I know
4 for absolutely definite is they have the keys to capital programme of works and something may
5 be as a Council that when we were in control of water, that we weren't able, we didn't have the
6 finance or the funds to actually put an awful lot of effort into the capital projects that were really,
7 really necessary. We need to work with Irish Water in terms of making sure that we get the
8 funding for this county in the capital projects, particularly with regard to the reservoir in
9 Roundwood, because it's just unfair that people over the North of the county have been affected
10 so badly by the way the water was restricted over the years, but also other parts of the county in
11 Arklow too and the like.

12
13 I would like to believe that as a Council we will absolutely support communities and people who
14 step forward, and are willing to work hard in their own areas to develop and improve things and
15 I would like us to be absolute supporters of those.

16
17 Finally I suppose it would be wrong if I didn't say this, but all our plans and all our priorities,
18 whatever they emerge as from that workshop, can only be really truly delivered by a dedicated
19 staff here at the Council, and you know, I believe we have a wonderful set of talented people.
20 By the way I also believe around this Chamber we have a huge talent of people and I don't think
21 the systems or processes at the moment facilitate us actually getting the talents from the people
22 around this brought forward and hopefully that committee will look at the ways we work will
23 look at ideas of how we do that in a better way. I also think from just talking to some of the
24 members of staff, it's been a really difficult time for them when they're reading tough headlines
25 every week on the paper and obviously people when they're phoning them also mention these
26 things. I would love if we could really try and support them by providing the environment that
27 they need to be able to give their personal best every day they come into work here, and I would
28 love if in some way we can make Wicklow County Council a better place to work, maybe
29 eventually a great place to work, but I do think the key to it is we need to build higher levels of
30 trust between the management and staff of this Council. We need every staff member to feel
31 proud of the work they do, and the organisation they work for, and I think it's really important
32 that there are some fantastic work being done by this Council but it doesn't seem to see the light
33 of day in terms of the publicity that it deserves to get. Hopefully with your help, that we will be
34 able to shine the light on the brilliant projects that this Council actually does deliver on a

1 constant basis. So in summary, working together as a collaborative team to set the priorities for
2 the delivery over the next four years and that's really what time talking about, I think we need to
3 be more customer focused, better communicators, proactive rather than reactive, we need to
4 make Wicklow County Council a better place to work, we need to strengthen Wicklow as the
5 centre of the film industry, and we need to deliver the priorities from the economic think tank,
6 and on behalf of the people of Wicklow make it a better place to live and work and finally I think
7 we can actually deliver on the mandate that we received from the people who elected us in 2014.
8 So in conclusion, thank you very much. (APPLAUSE) and so now I think it's - oh thank you
9 very much. Cllr Mitchell.

10 Cllr MITCHELL: Thank you Cathaoirleach. Just a few words just congratulations on being
11 elected Cathaoirleach of the Council. I think you have been a Councillor for eleven years, it's
12 quite a substantial time and have not been Cathaoirleach in the past, so I think it's good to see a
13 new face at the top. But somebody who has been here for a substantial amount of time.

14
15 John is in business and I think it's good to see somebody with a business background as
16 Cathaoirleach of the county at times. And somebody also who commutes into Dublin.
17 Something which very few Councillors do and something which is quite difficult to combine
18 with being Cathaoirleach, to be a commuter and in business. Certainly when I was
19 Cathaoirleach, I found that quite difficult, those three aspects all together, but we do need a very
20 large number of our residents in Co Wicklow are commuters, I think we need somebody with
21 significant commuter experience to assist in dealing with some of their views and also try and
22 work on the things that are important to them. I also very much have appreciated the business
23 think tank which John has set up. I think it's important to try and get this together, and I think he
24 has done a tremendous job and as Cathaoirleach, he will be able to do far more. Personally also
25 as Chairman of the roads and environment committee, I am pleased of his emphasis on the M50,
26 N11 which he has contributed to in the past. I think it's very important for the Eastern part of
27 this county to get it to work properly and get proper focus on it and hopefully that will help.

28
29 I wish him success in moving this county forward, and dealing with the many different views
30 which there are around this table, which is only natural. I also would very much like to see a
31 positive view of Co Wicklow appearing in the media. I get concerned to see the amount of
32 negative publicity which I think does harm the county and I would like to see a much more
33 positive view emerging. Thank you.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Mitchell. I am getting coached as we go. Cllr Vance.

1 Cllr VANCE: Thank you Chairman, could I congratulate you, I think it's very important for
2 anyone that takes the Chair of the County Council that they have an adequate amount of
3 experience. I think that's very, very important as well. And that they have a different
4 background. Different chairmen bring different values and different strengths to the Chair, and
5 there is no doubt that with your background and particularly in business, that you will bring
6 those strengths that are necessary to move us on that little bit further again. And I think it's very
7 important that we do have a programme for the next few years as well in regard to that. But
8 anything that is positive and constructive that anyone, anyone, brings up at this Council will be
9 supported by the Fianna Fail group and we will constructively support you in your efforts to
10 make this county a better place than what it is in the next year and certainly you can rely on our
11 support. So from the Fianna Fail group, I would like to congratulate you and wish you well for
12 the next year.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr Vance. Councillor Tom Fortune.

14 Cllr FORTUNE: Thanks Cathaoirleach, can I wish you the very best with your coming year as
15 Chair. As has been said by other speakers and said here previously in the chamber, taking on the
16 Chair's role is not an easy one, it's a full-time role. Your enthusiasm and the way you have put
17 yourself across there is very enlightening. I just tickle a little when I see all the programme you
18 have set out, even if you only achieve 30% of that, you will be doing a hell of a job. Equally,
19 what you have outlined there in your speech, in reality it's probably a lot more reform than we
20 have actually got in the last 12 months from Government level. So I do wish you well in your
21 year on behalf of us all. How you are going to do all you have said you are going to do and run a
22 very - a business at the same time is going to be a real challenge for you but I am sure you have
23 all that organised because you come across as a structured organised individual. I really hope
24 you enjoy it and it's a great honour as other people have said, it's an honour to be Chairman of
25 your county and a great honour for your family so John I wish you the very, very best and hope
26 everything works out for you.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks. Cllr Fox.

28 Cllr FOX: Thank you Chairman. Well again just to wish you all the best. I have no doubt you
29 will do a fantastic job. When you were Chairman of Bray Town Council you brought it to a
30 different level and it just - you will bring a freshness and new enthusiasm as when most
31 chairmen change that happens, but I just know by the way you have set your stall out that you
32 will bring a lot of fresh ideas to the table. I look forward to the working group setting out the
33 priorities and how we can do our business better. I think you have tapped into something good
34 there and I look forward to that. On a personal level, I consider you a good friend and it's a huge

1 honour for yourself and Kelly and all the family and I wish you well. And on behalf of the
2 group that I am involved in, you can count on our support throughout the year, thank you
3 Chairman.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Lawless?

5 Cllr LAWLESS: Thank you Cathaoirleach. I just wanted to say congratulations on your new
6 position. I still think the chains would have looked a lot better on me, but sure I'll try again next
7 year! Just on behalf of the Sinn Fein group, I mean we are looking forward to working with you,
8 and the work that you have outlined for the year is very ambitious and I am hoping you can
9 achieve, and we can all help to achieve as much of that work as we possibly can. I do feel that
10 we need to bring Wicklow forward in a much more positive light. There is a huge amount of
11 work here done by everybody and that's including all the staff here, which I have had the
12 pleasure to work with for my first year. So just again, congratulations and I hope you will be a
13 well balanced Chair for us and I look forward to working with you for the rest of the year.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much Nicola. Cllr McLoughlin.

15 Cllr McLOUGHLIN: First of all I would like to wish you every good luck for the coming year
16 and I think we are fairly fortunate that for the first year of this Council we had the stewardship of
17 Christopher Fox and the wonderful work that he did and now we have you John to follow
18 through. I fully endorse your thoughts on community engagement, the aspirational thoughts for
19 Wicklow are commendable and I hope that everybody supports you in your work during the
20 year.

21
22 I do think that your work on the CPG will bear fruit and I feel your work with the think tank will
23 transfer this work into actual positive results for the county. It is important though and I reiterate
24 what you said John, that we know what is happening on the various groups and SPCs and
25 hopefully develop our county into one that's promoted more positively and has better standards
26 of living and working for all the residents. I genuinely feel John that with you at the helm, we
27 might just achieve that in our second year. Chris has started the great work, you hopefully will
28 follow it through and I wish you every success and you have my full support.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much Grainne. Cllr Thornhill.

30 Cllr THORNHILL: Thank you Cathaoirleach. (SPEAKS IN IRISH). May I congratulate you
31 on this new job as Cathaoirleach and I take it that you will be facing a lot of challenges and I just
32 noted just one or two things, but one thing that I did note was you mentioned the fact of working
33 together and I think it is very important and I think it's the essence of the political life nowadays
34 that we should all be working together, because if we don't work together, well how do we get to

1 the end?

2

3 I am also looking forward to working with you as I am now the newly elected Cathaoirleach on
4 the Bray Municipal District. And I may, I must wish yourself, Kelly and the family also the best
5 for the future. And after last year, we were very lucky with Municipal Council to have had
6 Christopher Fox as the Cathaoirleach, so you will be - he will be a hard act to follow but I take it
7 you will be well able and up for it, thank you very much.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Timmins.

9 Cllr TIMMINS: Thank you Chairman. John congratulations on your elevation, it's well
10 deserved and I wish you every success with it. I just will make a couple of short comments. I
11 like your positive approach. What you outlined in that speech was extremely ambitious. If you
12 achieve half of it, you will have done really well. The thing I really like about your approach is
13 you intend on putting your mark on the Council in the next 12 months and that's something that I
14 commend and maybe you will show it to us that us as Councillors, often we feel a little bit
15 passive around this Chamber, that we are the subject of officials and that and we don't have that
16 much power. I am quite hopeful and optimistic that you by putting your mark on it, you will
17 show that us Councillors have more power and more influence than maybe we realise, and I
18 admire your ambitious plans and certainly you get my support in them. Thank you.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Oliver O'Brien.

20 Cllr O'BRIEN: (SPEAKS IN IRISH).

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. I would just like to say, I was talking about the next four
22 years, I wasn't talking about the next year by the way, just to be clear!

23 ACTING CEO: Could I just assure the Chair of the support of the staff of the Council. I think
24 the architecture is in place for all the issues that you have mentioned. There is a drive and
25 enthusiasm within the Local Authority to move forward. The staff in particular have valued their
26 new role in the alignment of community and Local Government and also the economic role. I
27 think you have seen the support that we have given to these two important areas in the last recent
28 while and I can assure no matter who is sitting in this Chair, that support will be forthcoming to
29 you, to assist you and the Council in every aspect of your agenda.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Okay, now we move on with the election of the
31 Leas Cathaoirleach. So nominations. Cllr Vance?

32 Cllr VANCE: Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to propose Councillor Pat Fitzgerald for the
33 Chair of the Leas Cathaoirleach. A Councillor that was first elected in Arklow in 1999 and to
34 Wicklow County Council six years ago, 2009. And really and truly, I suppose I don't need to tell

1 members around this how good this councillor is. I think the electorate have proved that time
2 and time again since elected in 1999. Tremendous Councillor, works 24 hours a day, seven days
3 a week, and works for everybody, whether you have political affiliations or not. And I think if
4 elected Councillor Pat Fitzgerald will be an absolute marvellous asset to you as Leas
5 Cathaoirleach. And I would like to - it gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Fianna Fail
6 group to propose Councillor Pat Fitzgerald thank you.

7 Cllr DORAN: I would like to second that proposal please.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Cllr Lawless.

9 Cllr LAWLESS: I would like to nominate Councillor Mary McDonald for Leas Cathaoirleach
10 position. I feel Mary is an extremely hard-working representative of the people in her own
11 district and of the county and I feel she will do great justice in this position, so it would be my
12 pleasure to nominate Cllr McDonald, thank you.

13 Cllr O'NEILL: I would like to second that, it's not really on gender balance just on pure merit, I
14 think Cllr McDonald will make an excellent Leas Cathaoirleach and however I am not really that
15 much hopeful telling the truth looking at the last vote when the Civil War politics seemingly has
16 been dead and buried and it's over and done with the new -- I would hope for the best, I would
17 make that appeal maybe that the people would support Cllr McDonald here today.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you Cllr O'Neill. Councillor Tom Fortune.

19 Cllr FORTUNE: Yeah, we would like to propose Cllr Thornhill for the position of Leas
20 Cathaoirleach. I think going on what's been said by yourself and the outgoing Chair, that we do
21 need to freshen things up and change things up. We have had a lot of change in the chamber in
22 the last 12 mornings and I think Cllr Thornhill would bring that change and that difference in
23 and I think it would be very interesting to see the dynamic that would create so we would like to
24 propose Cllr Thornhill.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, do we have a seconder for that.

26 Cllr KAVANAGH: I'll second that.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Any other nominations? No, okay.

28 SECRETARY: Okay, again I am going to call the Councillor's name and if you could call out
29 the name of the person you are voting for.

30
31 (A vote was taken)

32
33 SECRETARY: Okay we have four absent, 19 in favour of Pat Fitzgerald, 6 in favour of Mary
34 McDonald and 3 in favour of Brendan Thornhill. So it's a majority of the Councillors have

1 voted in favour.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Congratulations Councillor Pat Fitzgerald. (APPLAUSE)

3 Cllr FITZGERALD: I have no long speech you will be grateful for that. But I consider it's a
4 great honour to having been elected today as Leas Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council. I
5 wasn't in a position in my early life to enter politics for two reasons, I had a young family and a
6 relation of mine decided to stay on the Council for many, many years, and I couldn't persuade
7 him to - my late uncle - to resign. And that's the way it is. But as Cllr Vance stated, my
8 objective in politics is to help everyone. I don't ask people what way they vote, who they voted
9 for, if they come to my home, I deal with everyone equally and that's the way I intend to do in
10 the future. It was alluded to in Councillor Ryan's speech there, the biggest crisis we have in this
11 county, country and county at the moment is the lack of housing, and certainly we are in the Dáil
12 on Wednesday meeting the five TDs, the Arklow Municipal District, to put our point across
13 about the housing situation. And certainly we will have facts and figures for our area, because
14 looking at the papers over the last few days, the cost of renting, the lack of suitable housing, and
15 the lack of social housing is causing problems health wise and every other way. Just coming in
16 there today, I see a family there at the counter who are homeless and the same thing happened on
17 Friday. It's a huge problem. I want to thank everyone that voted for me. I want to thank also
18 Mary and Brendan for running. I think there was a word used earlier about old style politics. I
19 don't view it that way. I think - I felt I should go for Vice-Chairman, or Leas Cathaoirleach, I
20 went and I was successful. If I had have been unsuccessful, I would have accepted it the same as
21 I have accepted other situations in life, but I'll certainly give the support to Councillor Ryan.
22 Don't call on me on too many occasions, as they say, but anyway I'll be around to help and I
23 want to sincerely thank everyone who voted for me and those who went also for the election.
24 Thanks very much.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Congratulations again. Councillor Nicola lolls.

26 Cllr LAWLESS: Thank you Cathaoirleach, I would just like to say congratulations to Councillor
27 Pat Fitzgerald on your position, I wish you well for the year. However, as a female Councillor
28 here in Wicklow County Council, I am extremely disappointed that once again not one woman
29 Councillor here out of the seven of us have got any Chair positions in this Council and that's
30 referring bang to the SPC and of course both chairs. Under the Local Government Reform Act
31 2014, it says that there should be a better gender balance appointments. I don't expect a woman
32 to take a position if she is not capable of taking that position. But I feel we have another three
33 years here, and I think that we should have at some stage a woman Councillor sitting in a Chair
34 position here in this county. I went out specifically over by housing to look at the notice board

1 and it says Chairman on it, I think that should be changed. It's chairperson. We should be
2 politically correct here. Chairman has been used here a few times in this Council today. It's
3 chairperson. There are seven women here elected by the public, who are well capable of doing
4 the job of any man here in this Council chambers. We were elected by the public so, therefore
5 we should be given a fair chance to take positions that the men have here.

6
7 So what I am asking is that we endeavour for next year when the AGM comes around that one of
8 the seven women is actually elected either as Chair or Leas Cathaoirleach for Wicklow County
9 Council. Thank you.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Fortune.

11 Cllr FORTUNE: I would just like to wish Cllr Fitzgerald all the very best in his role as Leas
12 Cathaoirleach and I am sure he will be of great assistance to yourself.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Ruttle.

14 Cllr RUTTLE: Yes Cathaoirleach on behalf of our group, I would like to wish Pat the very best
15 as Leas Cathaoirleach. I have known Pat a long time, a sound and solid operator and a great
16 support and help to you in the year ahead and the very best of luck to you both.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Bourke.

18 Cllr BOURKE: On behalf of the Fine Gael group I would like to congratulate Cllr Fitzgerald on
19 his election as Leas Cathaoirleach. He did a tremendous job last year as Cathaoirleach of the
20 Municipal District in Arklow and I am sure he will be a great help to you, and there is plenty of
21 work to be shared around especially in the South, a few interesting openings coming up in the
22 next couple of months.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Thornhill.

24 Cllr THORNHILL: (SPEAKS IN IRISH). On my behalf, I wish to congratulate Cllr Fitzgerald,
25 and I hope that he will have a very good year and that he will be of great assistance to your good
26 self. Thank you.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Kennedy.

28 Cllr KENNEDY: Thank you Cathaoirleach and congratulations to yourself and to Cllr
29 Fitzgerald on your election. I also would like to congratulate Cllr Bourke on being elected as
30 Cathaoirleach of the Arklow Municipal District last Wednesday, thank you Cathaoirleach.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Nobody else is showing, so I think we will move
32 on to the next item in the agenda. By the way I would like to say congratulations Pat Fitzgerald
33 and I absolutely do look forward to working with you very closely over the next year. So the
34 next item on the agenda is the proposed schedule of meetings for the year ahead. Do I have any

1 proposer, you propose them Cllr Bourke and seconder Cllr Casey. Okay. Agreed? I don't think
2 there is anything else on the agenda. but I do believe there is some - something upstairs,
3 hopefully, so it would be great if all the members could adjourn to the canteen and join us in a
4 cup of tea. Thank you.

5

6 The meeting concluded at 3.25pm

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