

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY**  
**COUNCIL HELD AT SHORELINE LEISURE CENTRE, GREYSTONES,**  
**CO WICKLOW**  
**ON**  
**MONDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2020 AT 4:30 P.M.**

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**Elaine McCarthy**

(Bell rings)

CATHAOIRLEACH: If members would take their seat please. Good afternoon and thank you for all your attention and I'd like to welcome here this afternoon the Kennedy family Helena, John, Ciaran and Pat, I have a timer on. People have said over the last couple of weeks as sort of my year's come to a close, people have said there's been a very difficult year to be Cathaoirleach but I would use the word "different" because though the normal focus had to change and adopt with the Covid-19, the council as a vital part of the community has to be able to adapt to the challenges in our community and I think that we did this exceptionally well.

Every staff member had to change aspects of their work practice between homeworking or changed extended working hours to allow for safety and for social distancing, each Director of Services implemented those changes and put in place solution to ensure the continuity of our services within the county and I want to thank on behalf of you the members, each member of staff who co-operated and willingness to adapt.

Many projects were started, and progressed or

continued, or planned and I took a look back over some of the work that was achieved in the last year. And I know sometimes a lot of people say oh what does the council do, so this is just a flavour of what the council actually does. So, in housing, we have a programme where we're hoping to have 13050 houses by 2021, house houses in Whitehall and Baltinglass, PP houses are due to open in Wicklow Town, I had the privilege and pleasure of residents moving into new houses in Rathnew and Arklow and I also got to meet Ronnie Delaney which was a personal highlight. And housing is a top priority within the council, and you can see that with Joe and all of his team and now we have proper homeless accommodation planned in Bray which I welcome. And a community level we have playgrounds, we have walkways and the Blessington Greenway, we're developing the east coast Greenway, and the cliff walk in Wicklow Town was opened.

We also have the mobile library unit, great development of the libraries I was in Arklow two separate occasions for developments within there, and we have the Sports Awards, Active Age and Age Friendly and huge work done in all of those areas, prior to Covid-19 and during Covid-19 as well.

Onto in the roads we had the public consultation on N11 and M11 safety scheme in Kilmac, work done in N81, bus lane for the N11 and small schemes throughout the entire county.

In water we have the waste Wicklow treatment plan in Arklow has finally started, and we also have an upgrade scheme in Vartry and have a complete water conservation project so we can have sustainable water over the coming years.

And I suppose one of the big things we've done is in environment is climate action and biodiversity and have SPC on that, and I suppose, it hasn't got up and running quite the way it would like and some things have been delayed but it is a top priority now we have a tree planting programme, we're putting in extra electric car charges and pollinator plan and energy upgrades and putting be in solar panels in specific office and carparks and energy retrofitting of social housing and planning department, they have started the county development plan, and in fairness to the staff in very challenging times, because of extended public consultation have had to adapt and work around the legislation that is in place and still try to deliver within planning and I would like to thank all planning staff for their efforts in that.

We don't work as a unit; we work in collaboration with central Government. With all of the state agencies to deliver for the county and successful applications for funding will see the developments of the new library in Wicklow down and Rathdrum, and the bridge in Bray which will link to the old golf club lands and money for Arklow. Other projects nearing completion is the new centre and new customer care hub in the County Buildings and we got a small taste of the customer care software management system, when during the Covid-19 crisis when we saw each query was logged and tracked, and noted for completion or left flagged if it wasn't completed. And I think that's going to give great confidence to all of our customers as they know their voice has been heard and responded to.

There are a few things I would have liked to have done better throughout the year as I said earlier, I would have loved to actually get to finish an agenda. And to have got to those notices of motion motions, and I would have loved for presentations to have been kept to ten minutes, and I did keep asking, but just the message never seemed to filter through to the presenters.

However, my last act as Cathaoirleach is to thank the very many people who have helped me throughout

the year and I'd like to thanks Frank Curran, Chief Executive all the directors of services and many staff particularly in housing who I seemed to have hounded for the year and I'd like to thank them for their knowledge, support and the frankness and it was greatly appreciated throughout the year, everybody was just a phone call away, I don't think, anybody didn't get back to me, it might have taken half a day or day or whatever but everybody came back to me and I feel that I have shown great respect and the office of Cathaoirleach was shown respect by all the council staff throughout the year and I'm very thankful for that. And in particular, I want to thank Lorraine Gallagher who is as always approachable, friendly and the font of all knowledge and that she made every aspect of my year smoothly and took out of hours calls with good humour and wise word so I do appreciate it thank you very much. I would also like to thank my mother.

Maybe I'll just thank her at home. The other people I would like to thank, I have to thank my boss, minister Simon Harris, as my employer, he actually made this job possible and his support has been unwavering, he's had an unbelievably challenging year himself and yet his commitment to

this county meant that he allowed me the time to attend the council meetings and all of the engagements that I've had to do as part of this job. And I really do appreciate that.

but I also want to thank you all the members for your support, courtesy and friendship that was shown to me throughout the year.

I shouldn't have mentioned my family I'm sorry I got so upset. But I do really want to thank each and every one of you for everything you done for me and say it is an honour and privilege to be Cathaoirleach and I have really enjoyed it.

(APPLAUSE)

MR CURRAN: On behalf of the staff I'd like to thank Irene for the help and support you gave us. She fully supported all the projects she is a member of in the areas of housing and community and climate action, biodiversity, economic development and town centres the infrastructure, the customer care, and you know she's been a great support all the way through. She said herself it is great to work in projects but there's people working in the council deal every day with preventing homelessness and this can take up a lot of time, there's people in the council working on

the likes of assisting a small business, and I think Irene was very supportive to those people as well to everybody in the organisation and I'd like to thank her for that. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: We move on the election of the Cathaoirleach, do I have a proposer, Cllr Vincent Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: To take the opportunity to acknowledge how you carried out your role for the last year as Cathaoirleach in exemplary ways, you conducted your meetings with and treated fellow members with respect and very accommodating and approachable as you outline in your speech a lot has happened in the year and a lot of progress and positives so well done.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

CLLR BLAKE: On behalf of Fina Gael can I just thank you as well, and I'll thank your mother for you then all right.

But look, we've only had three female Chairs, in Wicklow County Council and it is wonderful we have two of them here in the room today as well. And you are and you were the second, and we had Mary Walsh in the 60s, or 70s, so you're one of a very

select few in this county that has served us, you said it was a good year for you, we were looking at the first half it went smoothly the last few months has been difficult for yourself, and your staff around you as well but certainly as Cllr Gerry Walsh said you conducted meeting in a fair-minded manner over the last year, we thank you for that. And wish you well in the future as well. So, your predecessor as a female has done well as she had a position of Cathaoirleach in Wicklow County Council so maybe there's good days for you ahead in that regard. Thank you to yourself and to your mum and family as well. And wish you well for your future. Thank you very much.

CLLR O'BRIEN: Thank you Cathaoirleach and I've always taken great pleasure in addressing you as Cathaoirleach as part of the Labour Party I want to thank you, personally speaking as a new councillor you yourself has been a font of information to us, I remember your address last year when you said your door would be always open you would always answer your phone and you were true to your word, you have been an exceptional Cathaoirleach, you have set the standard as far as

I'm concerned, and I hope that your successors to the same as you in being so fair, open, and approachable. Cllr Vincent Blake said you're the third Cathaoirleach female Cathaoirleach, but I'm sure you won't be the last thank you very much.

CLLR MCMANUS: Thanks Cathaoirleach, and I remember you said that I'm good at being short when I make my contribution so I'll try to keep, I know that's been a challenge for you, but I want to say sincere thank you as well as new by I found you always very approachable and you bring a lot of humanity to the role and a good bit of heart as well and that definitely makes it easier especially when we have to have you have to conversations so I appreciate all the effort you went to wish you all the best.

>>: I want to congratulate you on the year and wish you the best for the future, I had a couple of times to call on the support when we were trying to sort out the places for the students in the Kilcoole and surrounding area, and I must say you dealt with it very well and interacted with the minister for us, you had a very good year to be fair. You're fair, approachable and you kind of display most of the time no nonsense and get on

with it. And I think even listening to your few words you've had a very good year and a lot of things have happened since you're chair, so congratulations and well done and it was nice to references your family as well.

CLLR ERIKA DOYLE: Cathaoirleach I'd like to to congratulate you on your year, I haven't been here long but in my previous job you have been courteous and accessible and on behalf of the Green Party and on behalf of Cllr Stephen Matthews who dealt with you for years, I'd like to congratulate you and thank you for the help you've shown the Green Party members over our term. I think you've probably got five words of that, but I'm sure you know the sentiment, thank you Cathaoirleach.

CLLR SCOTT: Thank you Cathaoirleach. Again, just want to add to the congratulations you've done an incredible job over the past year, I know one of the regrets was you haven't got through an agenda but I've been awe struck how you managed everybody here and agenda and get through everything with humour and kindness and with efficiency as well. I just want to say that as a new politician, it's been a particular honour and particularly inspiring to serve my first year in the council

that was chaired by a woman. And I'm kind of continually astounded there's only been three female chairs of Wicklow up to now. I sincerely hope it won't be another ten or eleven years before we see another female Chair and I would like to point out the people of Wicklow have elected many, very strong and capable women that are all sitting here in the council chamber. And I sincerely hope that we'll see at least one or two more female Chairs following the trail's been blazed by you today, Councillor Winters thank you again.

CLLR SNELL. Thanks, I want to personally thank you for everything that you've done for myself and all the other members down through the years. I've had the privilege of serving on the old area council the Municipal District and county council with you and I whether or not he was that there's never been a better Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council. You wear your heart on your sleeve which is admirable but the one thing that stood you out from everyone else, is that your fairness to everybody, your representation for everybody, irrespective of their political background, you gave them a fair crack of the

whip. I commend you for that and respect you deeply for that. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: OK thank you very much for all your kind comments.

CLLR NEARY: Thank you Cathaoirleach and I also want to on behalf of the Social Democrats congratulate you on a successful year. It has been very - for people like me, women in politics to see a woman in roles such as what you have taken up in the past year, we certainly need more women in those positions and I agree with Cllr Lourda Scott as well, I hope it is not the last. And I want to thank you for being so welcoming to me in my new role I'm still getting the hang of it and while I won't have you there in the chair for the next while I look forward to working with you in the future. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks very much. So, the election of Cathaoirleach, can I have a proposer? Cllr Pat Fitzgerald.

CLLR FITZGERALD: It gives me great pleasure to propose Cllr Pat Kennedy for the position of

Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council. Since being elected to the council in 2014, Cllr Pat Kennedy has proved to be a very effective councillor, very well respected in our community and trojan worker for all the county so I propose Cllr Pat Kennedy to be the Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council.

CLLR BOURKE: Thank you. Cathaoirleach, 1798 through up two powerful Irish leaders Michael Dwyer and Mr McAllister, in Glenmalure, into 2020 it is throwing up a powerful local leader, Cllr Pat Kennedy. In the last six years since he has been elected as a councillor, he's done trojan work proved himself to be worthy of the title councillor, and worthy of being Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council.

I believe he will do an excellent job, and I'm delighted to formally second him here today.

MS GALLAGHER: Are there any other proposals?

CATHAOIRLEACH: There have been no other proposals, I deem Cllr Pat Kennedy elected.

CLLR KENNEDY: Chief Executive, members of this council, I am honoured to be given the opportunity

to be Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council for the coming year. Thank you to the councillor.

CLLR FITZGERALD: Thanks, you for proposing me and Cllr Sylvester Bourke for seconding me and for the kind word. I want to thank Cllr Irene Winters; she has been an outstanding Cathaoirleach and will be a tough act to follow. Cllr Irene Winters I want to thank you for all you have done for this county both as councillor and Cathaoirleach.

I want to thank my fellow councillors both inside and outside of my party for all the work they do on behalf of the people that elected them to be their voice in this chamber.

This council from the members to the staff and management do fantastic work. However, we are not good at promoting all that is achieved. This is something that I wish to improve upon. I want to bring the council back to the people, into the towns and villages, into our communities. As I look around this chamber today, I see a wealth of experience. We have 32 dedicated hard-working councillors, nine of whom are former Cathaoirleach. All of that experience, and dedication will be invaluable over the coming year as we work through this difficult time and work to bring our county the other side of this terrible

pandemic. County Wicklow is a fantastic place in both to work and live. In our infrastructure, our amenities and most important of all our people we have the necessities to nurture economic development and incentivise job creation.

Our location, and our amenities are a commodity that many other counties would love to possess.

Over the last week, SSE renewables announced 18 new jobs in Arklow, a move to make the most of our natural amenities, built-in infrastructure and skilled workforce while working to help us to become environmentally stable county. We need to see more of this inward investment county-wide this Wicklow, in investment that facilitates joined up thinking.

We need multifaceted investment that allows us meet multi-indicators to measure targets through the use of our built and natural environment

providing jobs for skilled workforce while also being economic stable and environmental diverse

While it is great to see investment in our large towns and urban centres we cannot forget about rural Wicklow and small towns and villages

They need to see continued investment and greater focus placed on their needs and requirement to allow rural communities to once again grow and

flourish.

Many of our rural towns and villages have stagnated due to the lack of investment, waste water treatment plants we must work as a council to put pressure on Irish Water to correct this and allow us to work towards the rejuvenation of our rural communities

Over the coming year I hope to work with all of you to develop our ideas and the ideas of the people the business community and the organisations in doing it, that can make a real difference for the people we are elected to represent.

Great things are rarely achieved by one person. They are achieved by a team.

Ever since I was first elected to this chamber, I have always maintained this seat I hold is not my seat, it is the people's seat and I reiterate that here today.

I may sit in the position of Cathaoirleach, but that position is the position of the people.

And that is what I wanted it to be, now Cathaoirleach for and with the people of County Wicklow.

I want to thank the management and staff of Wicklow County Council who have gone to great

lengths to organise this meeting today in a safe manner.

I also want to thank them for all the other great work they do, for all in the county.

I want to thank my wife Helena, she has always been at my side, and will always continue to be.

I hope ...

This is immensely proud day for me personally and I want to thank all of you for placing your trust in me. I want to acknowledge the presence of Senator Pat Casey here today, go raibh maith agat. Thank you.

(APPLAUSE)

Item number two is the election of the Leas-Cathaoirleach, I call on Cllr Vincent Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: First of all, congratulations to yourself Pat on being Chair for the coming year, I've known for you many of years and to yourself and your family congratulations and the best of luck to you for the coming year. So for Leas-Cathaoirleach I would produce Cllr Shay Cullen he has been a member of the council for years and served and chair of the Wicklow District

so his experience coming in here would be beneficial to yourself as a Cathaoirleach for the coming year so I would formally propose Cllr Shay Cullen for Leas-Cathaoirleach

CATHAOIRLEACH: Is there a seconder?

>>: I want to propose Shay, I have known when he was first elected in 2014, and known him outside of the chamber he is an effective councillor and I have, it gives me great pleasure to propose Cllr Shay Cullen for the position of Leas-Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council.

CATHAOIRLEACH: A proposer and seconder for Cllr Shay Cullen are there any proposer?

CLLR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. First and foremost, I want to congratulate you and the Kennedy family for your success here today you're the first citizen of County Wicklow. I've known you and your family a lifetime. It is a huge honour, personal honour for you, and I know that you'll wear them chains with the utmost respect for everybody and I'm sure everybody in council chambers will appreciate that.

Pat you're a worker first and foremost so I know there's no obstacle you won't overcome for the

people of County Wicklow in regard of getting things sorted and at this vital time I think it is important to have a Chair like yourself so I wish you very, very well for the few. In regards of nominating someone for Leas-Cathaoirleach could I propose Cllr Tom Fortune, Tom's been a member of the Wicklow County Council since 2004, he is a very experienced member and valued member of the council. Over all those years he understands local politics more than most. We as a technical group and this is why I put the nomination here today because I have the utmost respect for Cllr Shay Cullen, somebody who I've known like yourself many, many years, outside of politics, sport and school, but today it is about contesting the Leas-Cathaoirleach and the technical group were admirable about stepping aside and not contesting the chair today. But we as members, whether we be independent, Social Democrats, Greens, Labour or Sinn Fein, have a mandate by the people of County Wicklow. 50% of County Wicklow voted for this particular group, 50%, there's 32 councillors in Wicklow County Council, and I know there's legislation out there that would refer the positions would be shared out equally to demonstrate what the people voted for, and on that

basis I think it is vitally important we in Wicklow send out a message that we are open, not just in regards we hear the soundbites we're opening for business and otherwise but don't exclude the 50% of population of Wicklow County Council saying unless you are a member of Fianna Fail or Fina Gael you can only dine at the top table, let's been open and transparent here today and let's throw it out to the membership the whole 32, we've all heard about, we all need to work together as a team and we commend that, of course we do, we'll all work together as a team going forward irrespective who wins the vote by motorist is for Cllr Tom Fortune.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thanks Cllr John Snell. Do I have a seconder for Cllr Tom Fortune? Cllr Mary Kavanagh has seconded it.

CLLR KAVANAGH: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and can I just first of all congratulate you on your own appointment I'm sure you'll do really well and look forward to working with you. I would like to second Cllr Tom Fortune. Tom is a very hard-working and committed public representative for the Greystones Municipal District and Bray County Council, he is an excellent Chair of

technical group and fair and thorough with all the members and it is quite a disparate membership because we come from all kinds of groups across the divide but he treated everybody very fairly in that. He was the one who officially presented me to the council, following my co-option to Wicklow County Council after the untimely death of my late sister Pat, so I'll grateful to him for that.

He's always been available to me whenever I was stuck on something, as independent you don't have party support and Tom was always there as were other members of the independent groups

I know that he would be available to all councillors equally if he was elected.

And finely I just want to concur with Cllr John Snell, there were, there was a vote taken a year ago an election, and 32 councillors were split evenly between Fianna Fail and Fina Gael on one side and everybody else on the other side.

Greens, Social Democrats, Sinn Fein, independents, and I just feel that, in the interest of fairness, and in the interest of representation, there are five years of a term and I don't think it would be unreasonable or unfair for the non-Fianna Fail, Fina Gael group to get two seats as chair I think that would be fully representational of the way

the community voted. So, that's why I'm proposing Cllr Tom Fortune here today or seconding Cllr Tom Fortune today.

(No sound).

CLLR KENNEDY: Thanks, are there any, Cllr Sylvester Bourke.

CLLR BOURKE: Cathaoirleach I'd like to make a point in relation to the suggestion that Fina Gael and Fianna Fail are being greedy as such. Which Cllr John Snell eluded to. I just like to remind members that five years ago, there was a similar situation when it came, after the 2014 local elections, and as far as I recall, it was Pat Vance who was the main speaker on behalf of most of the parties but they didn't have to give out a seat, SPC seat it was before the technical groups were established, as we've had in last year's election, but, it was handed out to Sinn Fein and Cllr John Snell benefited from that, so it is unfair to portray the system of alliance that occurs after elections as being and suggesting that Fianna Fail and Gina feel are greedy and never give out at all there's a resident there and Cllr John Snell benefited from that himself and he might have forgot when he suggested all was not

well in the house.

CLLR KENNEDY: If there's proposals, for anybody else for Leas-Cathaoirleach, I'm taking no contributions from the floor other than proposal from Leas-Cathaoirleach, and that's the right thing to do on this day. Will are any other proposals for Leas-Cathaoirleach? There are no other proposals we have two people proposed, Cllr Shay Cullen and Cllr Tom Fortune. We have to go for a vote.

MS GALLAGHER: OK. Cathaoirleach I'm going to call out the name of the elected member and then if you could indicate your preference, either Cllr Shay Cullen or Cllr Tom Fortune. So ...

So that's 21 votes for Cllr Shay Cullen and nine for Cllr Tom Fortune and two not present.

CLLR KENNEDY: I claim Cllr Shay Cullen elected for the Leas-Cathaoirleach for the coming year.

(APPLAUSE)

So, I also want to thank Cllr Tom Fortune for putting down his name going forward for the coming here. Tom you would like to come in.

CLLR FORTUNE: For quite legitimate reasons they put forward, can I congratulate Shay, I know Shay for a long number of years in many facets, and he's very capable individual and will contribute tremendously to yourself, chair over the coming year so I want to wish Shay well and well done. And before I say something else can I chair, congratulate you on your election to Cathaoirleach and it is a great honour for your family. I've no doubt that you will be excellent and do a great I know you also for a long number of years and you've a great way about you and you will make people work together so I wish you all the really very best with that.

Can I just say, reflecting on what's happening here with the Leas-Cathaoirleach, I think the point that Cllr Snell, Cllr Mary Kavanagh and Cllr Joe Behan made very well, the technical group should have 50% of the seats, it is amazing that, anyway, I'll save that comment for another time - but it reminds me of the film Braveheart, you know, metaphorically, you're kind of facing certain annihilation with the same time you feel it is only right you should, someone should do it, but today it was me put my name forward perhaps in

the coming years it is someone else that will face the annihilation, the makeup way of the current council should have a Chair from the technical group for two of the year. I think, if things were fair there's a great lot of thought about new normality and fairness and we need to change the way we do things the way we do that kind of stuff it is that kind of stuff because we should really have OK three from Fianna Fail and Fina Gael and then technical group, and that's the way it should be and it is not, but congratulations for Cllr Shay Cullen and chair very well done to you, you have my full support for the next twelve months.

CLLR KENNEDY: Thank you Cllr Tom Fortune.

As I said earlier on, there are nine former Cathaoirleach in this room and that experience is needed as we go forward in probably one of the most difficult years this council has ever faced and I look forward with working with all of members here and especially nine Cathaoirleach, Chief Executive would you like to come in.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: My own behalf I look like to congratulate and Lena, John and Peter and Ciaran. Irene mentioned a lot of the projects going on at the moment and I've no doubt that Cllr Pat Kennedy will support those and many more, it is going to

be a very difficult year, we don't know what the financial implications of Covid-19 will be or what recession we will have, so we'll have to deal with that and I know Pat will be well

For that. And I can guarantee you that you'll get 100% support from staff and myself and our door will always be open and we'll work very well together but I think you're fair, capable and great representative of the people of County Wicklow, thank you Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: The other item on the agenda we have to agree schedule for the meetings for the coming year and they have opinion circulated, can we take those as agreed? Yeah.

MS GALLAGHER: Proposer and seconder.

CLLR KENNEDY: Cllr Vincent Blake and Cllr Gail Dunne. That concludes the business of today. Thank you very much to everybody.

And just to say again I'm very honoured to be Chair and I look forward to working with each and every member of the council so thank you very much.