

SPECIAL MEETING OF WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL  
HELD AT COUNTY BUILDINGS, WHITEGATES, WICKLOW TOWN  
AND VIA TEAMS

ON TUESDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER AT 2:00PM

STENOGRAPHER: Niamh Kelly-Leahy, RMR, MBIVR

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MEETING COMMENCED ON THURSDAY, 16 SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 2:00 PM,  
AS FOLLOWS:

CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to welcome our Elected Members, officials, those seeking nomination for the Presidential Election, press and visitors to the chamber. You're all very welcome to our chamber this afternoon in Wicklow. We are looking forward to an afternoon of presentations, and I am asking that we all adhere to the procedures of the meeting which Rachel, our meetings administrator, will read out now. Thank you.

MS GILLESPIE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to welcome everyone to today's special meeting. Can I remind any members of the public or media that are online that your cameras and microphones must remain off. Members of the public here in the chamber shall be seated and maintain silence and observe any directions given by the Chair or by any employee in attendance from the Council. Such employees are responsible for the execution of all measures necessary for the maintenance of order and decorum in and about the chamber. No cameras of any kind or sound recordings or communication equipment may be used. I remind candidates of their obligations to comply with Wicklow County Council's standing orders while addressing the meeting with emphasis on respect, dignity, equality and integrity. I will now take the roll call. Councillor Danny Alvey?

COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Mark Barry?

COUNCILLOR BARRY: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present online. Councillor Joe Behan?

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present online. Councillor Sylvester Bourke?

COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Melanie Corrigan?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Avril Cronin?

COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Erika Doyle? Not present. Councillor Malachai Duddy?

COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Anseo.

- 1 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Gail Dunne? Not present. Councillor Louise  
2 Fenelon Gaskin?
- 3 COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN: Present.
- 4 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Orla Finn?
- 5 COUNCILLOR FINN: Present.
- 6 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Pat Fitzgerald?
- 7 COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Present.
- 8 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Tom Fortune?
- 9 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Present.
- 10 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Patsy Glennon?
- 11 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Present.
- 12 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Pat Kennedy?
- 13 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Present.
- 14 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Shane Langrell?
- 15 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: Present.
- 16 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Peir Leonard? Not present. Councillor Pat  
17 Mahon?
- 18 COUNCILLOR MAHON: Present.
- 19 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Jason Mulhall?
- 20 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: Present.
- 21 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Miriam Murphy? Miriam was present online  
22 so I might come back to her. Councillor Ian Neary?
- 23 COUNCILLOR NEARY: Present.
- 24 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Dermot O'Brien?
- 25 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Anseo.
- 26 MS GILLESPIE: Present online. Councillor Paul O'Brien?
- 27 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Present.
- 28 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Gerry O'Neill? Not yet present. Councillor  
29 Warren O'Toole? Not present. Councillor Graham Richmond?
- 30 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: Present.
- 31 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Lourda Scott?
- 32 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Here.
- 33 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor John Snell?
- 34 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Present.

1 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Peter Stapleton?

2 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: Present.

3 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Stephen Stokes?

4 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Present.

5 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Ned Whelan?

6 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: Present.

7 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Caroline Winstanley?

8 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Present.

9 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Thank you very much.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have we any condolences at the meeting from the floor? And  
11 are there any staff condolences?

12 MS GILLESPIE: We would like to extend our sympathies to the family and friends  
13 of Eoin Cooke, father of our friend and colleague Sarah Jane Cooke, and to Margaret  
14 Kinsella, sister of our friends and colleagues Billy and John Cullen.

15

16 (Moment of silence.)

17

18 MS GILLESPIE: May their souls and the souls of all the faithfully departed, through  
19 the mercy of God, rest in peace.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Just before we start the meeting I will reiterate that I will be  
21 strictly adhering to the five-minute presentation rule and ten minutes of questions  
22 and answers. This is to keep the timing of the meeting running as much as possible  
23 in the order of the candidates, and I will not be taking any proposals or nominations  
24 from the floor until we get to Item 2 on the agenda.

25

26 So the first item on the agenda is the request to address Wicklow County Council  
27 from those seeking a nomination for the Presidential Election pursuant to section 16  
28 of the Presidential Act 1993.

29

30 So I will read out the list of all the candidates: Mr William P Allen; Mr Abbas Ali  
31 O'Shea; Professor Dolores Cahill; Mr Peter Casey; Mr Tony Corrigan; Mr Nick  
32 Delehanty; Mr Charlie Keddy; Ms Charlotte Keenan; Ms Seana Kerr; Mr Donncha  
33 MacGabhann; Ms Lorna McCormack; Mr Conor McGregor; Mr Keith McGrory; Mr  
34 Diarmuid Mulcahy; Ms Rowena Mulcahy; Professor Doctor Joseph Chikelue Obi;

1 Dr Aodhán O'Hartigan; Ms Lucy-Anne O'Leary; Mr David Parnell; Mr Dominick  
2 Plant; Mr Walter Ryan-Purcell; Mr Gareth Sheridan; Dr Cora Stack; Mr Gerben  
3 Uunk; and Mr Barry Wheeley-Row.

4  
5 And before we go into the presentations I am just asking, that there are four  
6 candidates on that list that weren't on the original agenda that went out, are we happy  
7 to receive them? And I need a proposer and seconder for that, please.

8 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Proposed.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Proposed by Councillor Stephen Stokes and seconded by  
10 Councillor Paul O'Brien. And I also am proposing that after we receive all the  
11 presentations that we have a brief recess for about 15 minutes. Proposed by  
12 Councillor O'Brien. Seconded by Councillor Scott. Thank you. And if candidates  
13 are not available at their allotted time slot but present themselves later to make their  
14 presentation are we happy to receive them at a later stage in the day? And I need a  
15 proposer and a seconder. Councillor Patsy Glennon and Councillor Tom Fortune.  
16 Thank you.

17  
18 So in alphabetical order, the list of candidates, the first one is --

19 MS GILLESPIE: As the Cathaoirleach has outlined, since the agenda was circulated  
20 there have been changes to those seeking a nomination. Twenty-five candidates are  
21 now seeking a nomination with 17 due to present here today. All information  
22 provided by the candidates has been circulated to the Elected Members for your  
23 consideration. Candidates not present at today's meeting can be considered in  
24 absence. Each candidate is allocated a maximum of 15 minutes; five minutes  
25 presentation time and ten minutes for questions and answers from the councillors.  
26 Each presentation will be timed and a bell will ring after five minutes to mark the  
27 end of the presentation time. The bell will ring again at the end of the 15-minute  
28 time slot. All those present are obliged to adhere to these times. There will be no  
29 exception to the maximum 15-minute time allocated to the candidate. Thank you.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: So the first candidate on our list was Mr William P Allen who  
31 won't be attending, so the second candidate is Mr Abbas Ali O'Shea. Thank you.

32 MR ABBAS O'SHEA: Good afternoon.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: We will start the clock.

34 MR ABBAS O'SHEA: I would like to clarify; my name is Abbas.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Apologies.

2 MR ABBAS O'SHEA: Thank you very much. Cathaoirleach and councillors, ladies  
3 and gentlemen, my name is Abbas O'Shea. I was born in Baghdad and I moved to  
4 Ireland many years ago and became a proud Irish citizen. It is an honour to stand  
5 before you today to seek your nomination as a candidate in the upcoming  
6 Presidential Election on the 24th October 2025. I deeply appreciate this opportunity  
7 and the democratic role of local government in shaping our national future.

8

9 I come before you not as a career politician but as someone with over a decade of  
10 experience working across education, international trade and community service. I  
11 have dedicated my professional life to building a bridge between Ireland and the  
12 wider world, particularly in the Gulf region and Europe.

13

14 My background combines consultancy, international diplomacy, and deep  
15 community engagement. As someone who has lived, worked and represented  
16 Ireland abroad I understand both the opportunities and the challenges of representing  
17 Ireland on the global stage. The presidency is not about politics. It is about service.  
18 It is about embodying the values of Ireland, inclusivity, dignity fairness and respect.  
19 I want to represent every citizen whether they are based in the city or countryside,  
20 young or old, long established or newly arrived. I believe in a presidency that listens  
21 and gives a voice to communities that often feel unheard. I place public good above  
22 partisanship, and I aim to represent Ireland with dignity and influence on the world  
23 stage. Above all, I want to use the presidency to highlight Ireland's role as a bridge  
24 builder in international affairs, a champion of peace, innovation and education.

25

26 In seeking your nomination I want to recognise the role of the Council in shaping the  
27 story of Ireland, not just history but in the future, the stability of the Government,  
28 and culture.

29

30 If honoured with the office of the presidency I will focus on three key areas.

31 1. Community inclusions: Ensuring the presidency is a symbol of unity that  
32 represents the diversity of today's Ireland.

33 2. Youth education: Championing education research and innovation so that young  
34 people can see a future of themselves here at home.

1           3. Global Ireland: Promoting Ireland's position abroad as a country of peace, culture  
2           and global partnership.

3

4           In conclusion, Cathaoirleach and councillors, I stand before you not just to seek  
5           nomination but to ask for your partnership in offering the people of Ireland a choice  
6           in this Presidential Elections. With your support we can present a vision of a more  
7           inclusive Ireland.

8

9           Thank you for your time and I welcome your questions. Thank you.

10          CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Are there any questions from the  
11          floor?

12          COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Cathaoirleach.

13          CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Duddy.

14          COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. You're very  
15          welcome, Mr Ali O'Shea.

16          MS O'GORMAN: Councillor Duddy, can you wait until your light comes on?

17          COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat. Mr Ali O'Shea, I understand you  
18          ran for Seanad Éireann.

19          MR ABBAS O'SHEA: Yes.

20          COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Was it in the Dublin university constituencies?

21          MR ABBAS O'SHEA: Yes.

22          COUNCILLOR DUDDY: How did you find that electoral process, and how did you  
23          do in the election?

24          MR ABBAS O'SHEA: Actually this experience was a good experience for me as a  
25          first time I go for election. I found this a very rewarding experience to start to  
26          represent the universities of Ireland for Seanad Éireann. And it is not that easy, to be  
27          honest, it is very tough by in getting a lot of graduates, they are spread all over the  
28          world, not just in Ireland, and it is very hard to reach all these graduates. Not like  
29          national general council, you can lock the door. It is very hard. It is not that easy as  
30          an experience, but I get a lot of experience from this election -- sorry from this  
31          campaign.

32          COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat.

33          CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Tom Fortune.

34          COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Yeah, I just want to thank you

1 for your presentation and just an observation, that it was encouraging to hear your  
2 rationale for putting yourself forward. So I think that's a point in your favour, and  
3 again I just want to say thanks.

4 MR ABBAS O'SHEA: Thank you.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have we any other questions? Okay. There's no further  
6 questions. So thank you very much for your presentation.

7 MR ABBAS O'SHEA: Thank you.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. So the next candidate on the list is Professor  
9 Dolores Cahill. Professor Cahill, would you like to come up? She's not here yet.  
10 Professor Cahill isn't here yet. So the next one is Mr Peter Casey who actually isn't  
11 present. So the next on the list then is Mr Tony Corrigan. Mr Corrigan. Thank you  
12 very much.

13 MR TONY CORRIGAN: Hello. Firstly, thank you for giving me the opportunity to  
14 address the Council. It's a great sign of democracy and sets an example for others,  
15 not criticising anyone else. What I would like to do is basically set out my  
16 understanding of the role of the President again to the Constitution, what the  
17 President can and can't do, and then I would like to just maybe move on to my  
18 principal motivation for being here, in relation to my personal motivation which is a  
19 public policy issue in the public interest.

20

21 So with that in mind, again I am going to be very brief about this, in relation to the  
22 duties, powers and responsibilities of the President are obviously set out in the  
23 Constitution, Articles 12 and 14. Everyone knows what they are. I only reference  
24 them because it does limit the power of the President so that any aspiring candidates  
25 obviously we have to work within the powers of the Constitution. So again,  
26 maintaining the Constitution, powers and functions on advice of the Government,  
27 using the Council of State as again for aid and council. The absolute power of the  
28 President, as I see it, obviously is the dissolution of the Government, of the  
29 Oireachtas, and then signing Bills with reference to Article 26 and Article 27 in  
30 relation to the referendum, and Article 26 for references to the Supreme Court.

31

32 So with that in mind, the preamble states in relation to the common good. Now, as I  
33 see it, the common good is evidenced by someone like me standing here today as a  
34 candidate looking for you to support me. In relation to my interpretation of the



1 Constitution, I would distil it down to being the President is the voice of the people,  
2 represents the people and represents the country in a non-political manner. Now,  
3 from what I can see, without going into any sort of legislation or case law, there's  
4 various interpretations of the legislation but I am going to leave it at that and move  
5 on to again my principal motivation for being here.

6  
7 I sent out a letter to all Councillors dated the 9th September 2025 to Minister Jim  
8 O'Callaghan setting out an issue which unfortunately has sort of framed my  
9 motivation for being here. I am unaware of who has seen it or not seen it, and if  
10 someone wants to comment on it you're more than welcome to ask me obviously. It  
11 involves issues which are not discussed mainly in the public domain or even in the  
12 political domain, like issues of child abuse, elder abuse, domestic violence, and  
13 gender-based violence and abuse. I am going to reference the issue in relation to  
14 myself just to frame it into the wider conversation in relation to what goes on in  
15 society at the moment.

16  
17 My mother was an elderly lady with Alzheimer's. Unfortunately she suffered from  
18 abuse from family members. Sorry, I didn't think my voice would break. So putting  
19 that to one side for the moment, my expectation was the most vulnerable in society  
20 would be protected by all, by the guards, by HSE, by HIQA, by every agent and  
21 institution of the State. That didn't happen, to the point that my mother's illness was  
22 used against her. Now, I struggle to understand how that happened but because I  
23 spent time in nursing homes and hospitals I spoke to a lot of people in there and they  
24 were suffering or experiencing the same thing as my mother.

25  
26 Now, I am going to stop there at the moment because there's no point in me going  
27 into too much detail on that, but my point is, in relation to the presidency, is that  
28 abuse victims are not a political issue. Abuse victims are basically a product of a  
29 society that shouldn't allow it to happen. Now, I am going to make a subtle  
30 differentiation here by saying that abuse victims aren't a political matter, the  
31 circumstances which put them in that situation are. The President cannot and should  
32 not comment on the circumstances but should be the voice of sympathy, empathy  
33 and compassion for victims of all types of abuse.

34

- 1 Now, I follow this quite a lot, and I am sure a lot you people here do as well.  
2 Women's Aid, which I am sure you are all familiar with, they had 41,432 disclosures  
3 of abuse against women, 5,333 against children. FLAC had record reports. And I'm  
4 sure you're aware of the Prime Time investigations, I can't say documentary but  
5 programme on the 4th June. Now, all these issues are out there. They get their  
6 moment in time in the media or, say, in front of yourselves and then they disappear  
7 that. To me is the problem. Now, from my position if I --  
8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, your five minutes are up, Mr Corrigan.  
9 MR TONY CORRIGAN: Thank you for your time.  
10 CATHAOIRLEACH: If you wait there. We might have questions.  
11 MR TONY CORRIGAN: Yes, sure.  
12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Stephen Stokes.  
13 COUNCILLOR STOKES: That's very much, Cathaoirleach, and thank you for  
14 coming to present to us. Is there anything else you would like to conclude on that?  
15 MR TONY CORRIGAN: Thank you for the opportunity. My brief conclusion  
16 would be that the personal issue of abuse is a public policy issue for everyone here  
17 and everybody in society. It's something that I believe -- I believe that the President  
18 is the voice and the support for people. I did think about using the word influence  
19 but I think the word support is better because the President again cannot overstate his  
20 role in relation to Government. Now, I do think that supporting citizens in relation to  
21 this horrible issue of abuse which people don't like talking about is not a political  
22 matter. Some may agree, some may disagree. I firmly hold the opinion that the  
23 President should be able to speak for victims, but not again in relation to the  
24 circumstances which led them to that position.  
25  
26 I will end on that. That was my conclusion. Thank you, Councillor.  
27 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Are there any other questions from the floor,  
28 please?  
29 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Cathaoirleach.  
30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Duddy.  
31 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat, Mr Corrigan. What areas of law did  
32 you practice as a solicitor?  
33 MR TONY CORRIGAN: I worked for a boutique firm. So it was mainly  
34 bankruptcy, conveyancing, employment law. All types of litigation. Basically

1 anything that came across the table. The firm I worked for have been taken over by  
2 a larger firm since I left so I think they have gone on to bigger and better things. So,  
3 for myself, what I would say is that I qualified as a solicitor in 2016, late in life, as I  
4 said the year my mother passed away, so I don't practice law. So I am not sure if  
5 that's a loss to society or a loss to me, but again being a solicitor, once you qualify,  
6 like, you have to do constitutional law so I would say I have a good understanding of  
7 the role of the President. I don't want to sit an exam on it but happy to speak about  
8 it.

9 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. There are no other lights showing so thank you  
11 very much for your presentation, Mr Corrigan.

12 MR TONY CORRIGAN: Thank you very much.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. So the next candidate is Mr Nick Delehanty. If  
14 you come up to the podium, please. Thank you. Great thank you very much.

15 MR NICK DELEHANTY: Thank you very much. (Addresses chamber in Irish.) I  
16 am delighted and honoured to be presenting to you today.

17  
18 So the first question is: Why are you running for President? Why are you doing  
19 this, Nick? And there are a few reasons, but the two main reasons that I want to talk  
20 about right now, one is there's nobody in this race at the moment that is speaking for  
21 young people, and we're in very much danger that this turns into a three-horse race  
22 with the lowest turnout probably in history for a Presidential Election that inspires  
23 nobody under the age of maybe 40 or 30. And I am 35-years-old. I will be the  
24 youngest ever candidate to get on the ballot, and that alone will cause so much  
25 optimism for a generation that feel the social contract is broken.

26  
27 The other reason I get from Article 9.3 of the Constitution, and it's an article that is  
28 quite profound in fact. I will read it out, it's very short: "Fidelity to the nation and  
29 loyalty to the State are the fundamental political duties of all citizens." That  
30 language, "fidelity to the nation," doesn't exist as far as I am aware in many other  
31 constitutions, if any. And looking at this race I am quite convinced that the other  
32 candidates in the race have demonstrated their loyalty to the State but the question I  
33 am asking is: What is their fidelity to the nation? And I think it is something we all  
34 must start asking ourselves, especially those in political and public life. What is our

1 fidelity to the nation? We have seen and heard about political diktats and things like  
2 that, and that is your loyalty to the State but it is time to start thinking about fidelity  
3 to the nation.

4  
5 My name is Nick Delehanty. As I said, I am 35-year-old. I am seeking your  
6 nomination for the presidential ballot here today. I do not have a political or party  
7 machine behind me. What I have is something different. I have grass-roots support  
8 up and down the country. And I built this support, an enormous amount of it in fact,  
9 through my work analysing Government budgets, policy documents, expenditure  
10 reports, and taking that analysis and compacting it into a very digestible formats on  
11 social media, on articles on LinkedIn and viral videos on TikTok, that, as I said, has  
12 engaged a whole cohort of young people into politics, something that nobody else is  
13 doing as effectively as I am doing. I am very proud of what I have done so far.

14  
15 I gave up a career in corporate law to do this, to enter public life. I worked as a  
16 corporate solicitor for ten years and I am using that experience for public good. That  
17 is my fidelity to the nation. And at times it takes a lot of courage to do that. In order  
18 to be independent I need to be financially independent, so I set up a small business  
19 where I employ 11 people from Ireland, Brazil, Croatia, South Africa. So I  
20 understand all the best impacts and positive impacts of good immigration policies. It  
21 is really important to say that. I am raising a small family with my wife and young  
22 son. We live in a rented apartment in Dublin. So I am a firm member of generation  
23 rent. Again, I am just speaking for a generation of young people that feel that the  
24 social contract is broken. But I am not from Dublin; I grew up on a big farm in  
25 Tipperary.

26  
27 So what I feel what needs to happen for us to demonstrate our fidelity to the nation is  
28 this concept of radical candour, which is basically brutal honesty. And if I am to be  
29 brutally honest about Irish political life or the structures of it I would say that we live  
30 in an accountability-free democracy. There is no one being held account for the bike  
31 shed, for the Children's Hospital --

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: One minute, sorry.

33 MR NICK DELEHANTY: There is no one being held accountable for the bike shed,  
34 for the Children's Hospital. We are not having a Covid inquiry. Why is that? It's

1 because there is no one being -- we have decimated local democracy. The Local  
2 Government Reform Act of 2014 has decimated the powers of local councillors. The  
3 councillors are the -- I am looking at the cold face of democracy in Ireland at the  
4 moment, but your powers have been stripped piece-by-piece over the last number of  
5 years and decades, and that is not true democracy. I think it is the job of the  
6 President to hold up a mirror to Government and ask the question: Are we doing  
7 democracy right?

8  
9 So I will finish on this final point. I want the Government of Ireland to succeed, I  
10 really do, but that doesn't mean Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael. It is not about  
11 parties. The success of Ireland should not be based on the fortunes of one coalition  
12 or one party but the progress of our people. And that is why I believe the next  
13 President should embody fidelity to the nation. Thank you.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Mr Delehanty. Have we any questions from the  
15 floor then? Councillor Peter Stapleton.

16 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: Thanks for that, Nick. Just on your point there  
17 talking at the end around local councils and accountability, given as you said we're in  
18 a local council, what is the main power you'd look to hold up a mirror to or look to  
19 shine as should be reinstated at local councils or just put in the first time to make  
20 sure there's accountability throughout Ireland?

21 MR NICK DELEHANTY: What has the Local Government Reform Act done, and  
22 are we happy with the results of that? Because that was a huge piece of legislation  
23 that basically transformed the shape of local democracy across the country. It  
24 abolished town councils. I think it took away water rights. It was around the same  
25 time as the establishment of Irish Water. It reinforced the CEO model. And I think  
26 there are lots of grumblings around the country saying that everything that happened  
27 in that Act we don't agree with and maybe it wasn't for the ultimate benefit -- we are  
28 now ten years out since that Act was passed, it is the perfect time to have a bit of  
29 revision and look at that. I actually think the Taoiseach has said that he wants to see  
30 town councils be re-established but he's kicked it down and said, you know, in three  
31 or four years, which I protest against. If we agree that we should get town councils  
32 back let's do it now. Why are we waiting? So there's a whole body of work to be  
33 done I think in examining the drastic change that happened at the stroke of a pen in  
34 2014.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Neary.

2 COUNCILLOR NEARY: Thanks very much, Cathaoirleach. Excellent  
3 presentation, Nick. Very good. Just one quick question: What would your stance be  
4 on a united Ireland if that was to come down the line?

5 MR NICK DELEHANTY: Yeah, so I am a republican. I am happy to say so.  
6 United Ireland is a massive topic, and so many people say that they are experts and  
7 they want this, and I do want it but we must be careful. And the person I lean to the  
8 most is the expert in the area is Brendan O'Leary, who is an Irish professor. He  
9 works over in the US at the moment. But I read a lot of what he has said, and  
10 basically the number one thing he talks about is preparation. We need to prepare,  
11 prepare, prepare, before we steam roll into talk and voting on a united Ireland.  
12 Because there so many big questions. Like, what will happen to the North? Will it  
13 remain a devolved state within Ireland? Does it just immerse into the Irish political  
14 system? Will it have its own councils? These are massive questions and it is a very  
15 sensitive topic and it's gathering steam but again we just need to prepare properly.  
16 And if I was to be successful on the ballot a phone call to someone like Brendan  
17 O'Leary would be one of the first phone calls I'd make to try and get him onto the  
18 council of state.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Lourda Scott.

20 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Yeah, thanks, Cathaoirleach, and thank you for your  
21 presentation. I am just curious, I saw you quoted in an interview, which may or may  
22 not be correct, where you say how you do not believe or agree with multiculturalism,  
23 I am just wondering how that would tally if you were elected as President of the  
24 country, how would you represent all members of our nation, many of whom hail  
25 from many different backgrounds?

26 MR NICK DELEHANTY: Yeah. So I think when we talk about multiculturalism,  
27 just to put that interview into context, I think it was a two- or three-hour interview  
28 and that was the quote that got picked up, but I take my lead from this from Kemi  
29 Badenoch, who is the leader of the Tory Party in the UK, which she gave an  
30 incredible interview about this. She is someone who grew up in Nigeria which has  
31 lots of different cultures and there was culture wars over this, and her belief, and I  
32 agree with this, is that we must have a shared culture. And that shared culture can be  
33 as broad as we like but we must not go just blind into accepting that all cultures are  
34 equal, because some cultures don't allow gay marriage, some cultures don't allow

1 abortion, some cultures don't allow women to drive cars, to vote. So we must be  
2 very careful that we must not tolerate the intolerable. And that is not an easy thing to  
3 talk about, but it comes back to the point I make in my speech of radical candour and  
4 being able to talk about uncomfortable truths. So everyone is welcome obviously  
5 but we must make sure that we all have a shared culture. That's the terminology I  
6 prefer to use.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Malachai Duddy.

8 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat, Mr Delehanty. Mr Delehanty, you  
9 say you're 35. Are you aware in the Constitution that there's a discrepancy between  
10 the Irish language text and the English where it may place the age -- the earliest age  
11 for the presidency at 36? If you're 35, you're in your 34th year, and the Constitution  
12 talks about people reaching their 35th year. If that was to be an obstacle how would  
13 you overcome it?

14 MR NICK DELEHANTY: That is news to me. I have not come across that point  
15 before. And I do know that the Irish language text of the Constitution does take  
16 preference, but I will have to revisit that. That is a most interesting point that had not  
17 been raised to me so far, but I need to look into see how serious that point is. Thank  
18 you.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Peter Stapleton.

20 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: I could be wrong on that, but if you were 35, would  
21 you not be in your 36th year? As in, when you're a baby you're in your first year,  
22 when you're one you're in your second year. Just throwing that out there.

23 MR NICK DELEHANTY: Thank you.

24 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: And I'm not even a lawyer! But no, my question or  
25 the reason I have my light on was just to follow up, when you talk about the huge  
26 body of work at looking at the Local Government Act like there is currently a task  
27 force looking at reform of local government, so that is kind of happening here. And,  
28 like, that is the huge body of work. So my question was more just to you, like, what  
29 specifically, if you were making a submission, say, to that, which is now closed,  
30 what would it have been for the main change you would like to see in local  
31 government?

32 MR NICK DELEHANTY: Yeah. I think local governments should have lots more  
33 powers around decision-making around housing. And I know there's a lot going on  
34 with Wicklow County Council in the news this weekend around housing and

1 planning. But I think the model I like, which is on the other end of the spectrum, is  
2 the Swiss model of cantons, and how cantons are allowed to set their own tax  
3 policies and things like that and compete against each other. Now, I'm not saying we  
4 have to go all the way over there, even though I am a big fan of the Swiss model but  
5 I do think we could try and create competition between councils, and whether that is  
6 housing targets and giving them more flexibility to do different things to attract  
7 people, you know, to move to Wicklow from Dublin because of different policies.  
8 Now, I know structurally to get to where Switzerland is would be a complete  
9 overhaul and that is not practical, but things like that. That would be the sense that I  
10 would be doing it. And on the task force that you're mentioning, my criticism of that  
11 is it is very slow. You know, I don't know how serious it was to actually, you know,  
12 overhaul or change the dramatic impact that the 2014 Act had, so I would have some  
13 criticisms over that. It is a huge question, but I think the people we elect should be  
14 the ones that make decisions because they are the people that will be held  
15 accountable at the end of the five-year cycle. Thank you.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. You have a minute and a half left and there's three  
17 more questions. Councillor Stephen Stokes.

18 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Sorry to harp on about this 35 thing. And, Malachai, I  
19 don't have as much legal experience as yourself but I did do constitutional law for a  
20 module at college, and I was taught that the English version you would be 35, but the  
21 Irish version translates to you only had to be 34. So there might be some  
22 discrepancy. That's what was taught to me, but I could be wrong.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Winstanley.

24 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I was just interested to  
25 follow on from something in the Journal article. You refer to yourself as a Danish  
26 Social Democrat. I just wondered, as a Social Democrat what does that mean for  
27 you and how would we see those values reflected in a presidency position? Thank  
28 you.

29 MR NICK DELEHANTY: Yeah. So I am a big fan of Mette Frederiksen who is the  
30 Prime Minister of Denmark, and the head of Danish Social Democrats, and they have  
31 a brilliant high-functioning welfare system, they have some of the lowest corruption  
32 rates in the world, they have very strict and controlled immigration policies, they  
33 have very, as famously I talked about on TV, flag rules and things like that. They  
34 just have a very -- Ireland is a left-leaning country. We have high taxes, we have a



1 high welfare state, but it's not functioning the way some of the Nordic countries are  
2 and I think we just need to increasingly look at what they are doing because I think  
3 we can easily get to those positions. I am not saying --

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: That's ten minutes up.

5 MR NICK DELEHANTY: May I finish the point?

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Very quickly.

7 MR NICK DELEHANTY: Basically I am a big fan of that Mette Frederiksen's  
8 government.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Right. Thank you very much. And thank you for all the  
10 questions, Councillors. Thank you very much, Mr Delehanty.

11 MR NICK DELEHANTY: Thank you very much.

12 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Cathaoirleach, I have the light on a while here.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor O'Neill, the ten minutes ran up.

14 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: On a point of order actually.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: The ten minutes have been up though.

16 MS PURCELL: Your microphone is not on, Councillor O'Neill. Wait until it goes  
17 on.

18 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: I would like to leave that yoke on. On a point of order I  
19 am asking here, why entertain the taking up of time here by members of Fine Gael?  
20 Fine Gael councillors in here are instructed to ignore independents and block them.  
21 So I can't see, you know, why you're taking up here by giving them a platform here  
22 to give their opinion. They're totally against any other people --

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Everybody is entitled to their opinion and everyone is entitled  
24 to ask questions.

25 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Hold on, Cathaoirleach. They are totally against the  
26 likes of this man here speaking, why are they taking up time here in this chamber in  
27 asking any questions?

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Everyone is entitled to ask questions. Councillor O'Neill, I  
29 am going to have to ask you to --

30 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: They are under instructions to vote one way from the  
31 lady in Monaghan, and that's the end of it. Why take up time?

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Everybody is entitled to ask a question in this chamber.

33 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Not at all. No. Well, okay. Why is the like of Nick  
34 being blocked? Why are independents being blocked by Fine Gael?

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: The time is up now. Thank you, Mr Delehanty.

2 MR NICK DELEHANTY: Thank you.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: So the next candidate then is Mr Charlie Keddy. Charlie, if  
4 you would like to come up to the -- thank you very much. We will start the clock  
5 now Mr Keddy.

6 MR CHARLIE KEDDY: Are we on?

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Yes.

8 MR CHARLIE KEDDY: (Addresses chamber in Irish.) Now, I do know there'll be  
9 a lot of people here very surprised to see me, and I am sure there's not very many  
10 who know me. I have no big book. I have no big anything. It's just from the heart.  
11 I know I have a constitutional home, a different colour to that other chap, and it's the  
12 one who said that babies were safe when in the womb, they needn't worry about  
13 outside forces. Now, I will just say, the Constitution also said when I am President I  
14 will do what I am told. As my life has been, I wasn't the greatest at doing what I was  
15 told but the Constitution says I go there, I go here and should your mouth. The  
16 reason I am here is, as President I want to just be the figurehead for the unborn, just a  
17 figurehead. And nothing else. I was born, obviously my mother was born, my wife  
18 gave birth to six children, you were all born, and I want to give that same right to  
19 every unborn baby from today on. But yes, as President, as I said, I have no say, I  
20 just want to be figurehead and that's all I have to say and thank you very much.  
21 You can ask me what you like.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Mr Keddy. Have we any questions for  
23 Mr Keddy? Councillor Duddy.

24 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: (Addresses chamber in Irish.) I wonder, Mr Keddy,  
25 could you tell me how many elections, both Local and General Elections, have you  
26 contested so far? Go raibh maith agat.

27 MR CHARLIE KEDDY: I always answer the question honestly, and honestly I have  
28 no idea. You may go to Wicklow People. I really have no idea. No idea. Many.  
29 Many. But the President's job would be number one and I would love it. A  
30 figurehead for the unborn.

31 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Paul O'Brien.

33 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you,  
34 Mr Keddy, for words from your heart, as you say. Just one quick question. You

1 want to represent I believe the entire people of Ireland if elected, so can I ask you,  
2 would represent the LGBTQIA+ community if you were elected President of  
3 Ireland? Thank you.

4 MR CHARLIE KEDDY: As I did say, the Constitution gives me no power  
5 whatsoever. The Government will say President Charles or Charlie, whichever you  
6 prefer, Quizzing Charles, so I don't know what the Government would call me, they  
7 tell me what to say and what not to say. That's the Constitution. I can't change it.  
8 That's my answer.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

10 MR CHARLIE KEDDY: And you're right about being Irish. I did send out a letter  
11 to Council, I don't know if everyone got it or not, but yes, I am Irish by birth, and I  
12 am Irish by heart, and I only will have one national anthem. I only entertain one  
13 national anthem, and I only entertain one national flag. So Irish, Irish, Irish, Ireland,  
14 Ireland, Ireland. That's Charlie.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Have we any further questions for Mr Keddy?  
16 Thank you very much for your presentation then.

17 MR CHARLIE KEDDY: Go raibh maith agat.

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: So the next candidate is Ms Charlotte Keenan. Is Charlotte  
19 here? Thank you. If you would like to come up to the podium. When you're ready  
20 we will start the clock then. Thank you.

21 MS CHARLOTTE KEENAN: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach, Elected  
22 Members of Wicklow County Council. Thank you very much for this opportunity to  
23 address you. (Addresses chamber in Irish.)  
24

25 It's time. Bring change. I stand in solidarity with those less fortunate than myself  
26 advocating for empowerment and self-determination through education and  
27 community participation. My vision for the future is rooted in core values of  
28 equality, fairness, and transparency. I believe that respecting each other and  
29 embracing peaceful negotiation can foster growth and progress, not only in our  
30 country but globally.

31

32 Regarding Palestine, I firmly support the people who are enduring unimaginable  
33 hardships. It's essential to offer refuge and assistance to those fleeing war-torn  
34 countries. We cannot stand idly by while innocent lives are being lost to conflict.

1 As a neutral nation we have a moral obligation to promote peace and understanding.

2

3 We share a rich heritage and a dream for a brighter future for our children. Let's  
4 work together for the common good, leaving a legacy that showcases our current  
5 determination and resilience. Thank you all for your contributions. Focusing on our  
6 shared heritage and culture, our population is changing and with that we need to  
7 adapt. More consideration should be placed upon housing associations, wildlife  
8 trusts, parklands, lakes, rivers and bogs. Our farmers need to be consulted about  
9 how we can utilise our natural heritage and landscape and at the same time how we  
10 can protect it and the creatures that we share our habitat with.

11

12 As an artist, we don't do things for money; we do it for love. I love Ireland and all its  
13 peoples, both native and foreign. I hope that you love me too. If so, please nominate  
14 me for President of Ireland. If not, please pray for me. Thank you very much for  
15 your confidence and your trust, and I'd hope that someone has some questions for  
16 me.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much for the presentation.

18 MS CHARLOTTE KEENAN: Thank you.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Any questions for Ms Keenan? Councillor Orla Finn.

20 COUNCILLOR FINN: Thank you. I would like to thank you very much for your  
21 presentation and ask what made you decide to run for Presidency of Ireland?

22 MS KEENAN: I used to work here in Wicklow County Council. I was the tenancy  
23 liaison officer in the Housing Department. I now live in my grandparents' cottage  
24 that was built in the 1940s with no running hot water. I have applied for grants, I  
25 have asked for help and assistance, but no, I am not getting help. I am not  
26 complaining because I have a roof over my head, but there's a lot of people that don't  
27 and at the moment we have an influx of people who are coming to Ireland, I'm not  
28 saying whether they're coming legally or illegally but we can all see that there is a  
29 big pressure for us to house a lot of people, native people, people who are coming,  
30 tourists. I just believe that I have the character traits that can help to promote Ireland  
31 on an international scale. I am approachable. I believe that people can see  
32 themselves in me. I have had hardships that I have overcome and I think that way I  
33 can be like a motivator for young people, and they've always come to me for advice.  
34 As a psychologist, a trained psychologist, I work well with younger people and I

1 always have an ear to listen. And sometimes you don't need to say much but you can  
2 look, you can observe. And I see Ireland as an amazing place, we just need to work  
3 together, not be fighting, no political -- this isn't a political role. I just want to be that  
4 face for Ireland around the world, if you'll have me. Thank you.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have we any more questions? Councillor Duddy.

6 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat. I wonder could you tell me what  
7 your priority would be on a single issue as Uachtarán na hÉireann? Go raibh maith  
8 agat.

9 MS CHARLOTTE KEENAN: I have a disability. It's a hidden disability. You  
10 wouldn't know by looking at me. So that would be my priority; to have access to  
11 disability services and mental health services made more available to the young  
12 people that I believe are a bit disenchanted with this country. There are lots of social  
13 issues to do with drug use, abuse, alcohol use and abuse, and so that's why I would  
14 focus on our health service and providing a good mental health service for our  
15 citizens. Thank you. Go raibh maith agat.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Any more questions? Thank you very much  
17 Ms Keenan for your presentation.

18 MS CHARLOTTE KEENAN: Go raibh maith agat.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: So the next on our list of candidates is Ms Seana Kerr who  
20 will not be present, and Mr Donncha MacGabhann who has just let us know that he  
21 won't be present. So the next is Ms Lorna McCormack, who is here. Thank you,  
22 Lorna, if you would like to come up. Thank you very much. When you're ready  
23 we'll start the clock then. Thank you.

24 MS LORNA McCORMACK: Thank you for the invitation today to speak with you  
25 about the next Presidential Election. My name is Ms Lorna McCormack. I am  
26 fluent ISL. I am a mother of four children. I run a business; a social enterprise  
27 called One School. I am a heritage specialist, a European Climate Pact Ambassador,  
28 artist, author.

29

30 I am here today to discuss with you the reasons why I feel it's important that we get  
31 the right person in the Áras an Uachtaráin. I always believe it is vital that we bring  
32 young and older people together to create meaningful connections. We need to keep  
33 a focus on everyone. Protect, support and ensure that their voices are raised,  
34 respected and treasured.

1  
2 For three decades I have worked in your classrooms, in your schools, in your nursing  
3 homes, in your community. In Kildare and across the country I have run a  
4 programme called Stitching the Community Together, and in Kildare I brought 200  
5 children and 200 people from nursing homes together, where they learned how to  
6 knit; a programme that was based on powerful social healing after Covid. I also did  
7 a programme and project with Kildare in relation to St Brigid's 1500. That brought a  
8 thousand people together. St Brigid's celebration was about a woman of the land, a  
9 woman of hospitality, a peacemaker and a model of equality. So Ireland has a story.  
10 It is based on our choices, on our hopes and our courage. It is written in the  
11 resilience and retold in every generation. And we know now that Ireland is facing its  
12 hardest story.

13  
14 I believe now that it is important that a campaign is run with positivity and optimism  
15 for this future. If we can solve housing we restore fairness, if we invest in our  
16 services we restore trust, and if we lead on action we safeguard Ireland for our  
17 children.

18  
19 I believe that power is not about connection. We have many assumptions about the  
20 character traits of anybody who is in politics or any kind of position. Those  
21 character traits I believe are not just strength and courage, they're also kindness and  
22 empathy. And I have been told by TDs and Councillors running in this election to  
23 get nomination that I have no backbone, that I have to get back in my box.

24  
25 So today I am standing up for our older people, for our younger people. Our  
26 younger people now are facing their own fears and uncertainties, and I believe it is  
27 vital now that I remind them that it is not about being the best, but it is about being  
28 the best that they can be. This is a principle that I will continue in my work in  
29 raising my children and in serving my communities.

30  
31 I believe that as a person who values community we need now to address the whole  
32 picture from how we live, who we work with and how we care for each other and  
33 how we care for the land. I believe my blend of national and international engaging  
34 positions me as a candidate who embodies values that demonstrate the potential to

1 serve and unify as a President as I will also use my voice to generate debate, what is  
2 at the heart of the concerns of people and respond to those needs at home and abroad.

3

4 I see an Ireland where everyone is included, contributes actively and wisely, and no  
5 one is left behind. I see Áras an Uachtaráin, it's not just a place, a building, it's a  
6 gathering voice for everyone. Within its walls we don't just find history but lived  
7 experiences --

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: One minute there.

9 MS LORNA McCORMACK: -- lived experiences of our Presidents, their actions,  
10 their hopes, their values and their vision for our nation. As I stand here today to ask  
11 for your nomination I promise to offer one campaign for presidency as one of unity,  
12 purpose and connection. So today it is not just about me, it's not just about you, it's  
13 about all of us. Thank you.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Have we any questions for  
15 Ms McCormack? Councillor Tom Fortune.

16 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Lorna, thanks for your  
17 presentation, very passionate. I am just wondering, a lot of the content of what you  
18 said, if I was to say to you that maybe you'd have a better opportunity of maybe  
19 achieving a lot of that as a TD rather than the President of Ireland, how would you  
20 react?

21 MS LORNA McCORMACK: I disagree completely.

22 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Tell me why.

23 MS LORNA McCORMACK: I think the presidency is about moral leadership. It is  
24 about truth to power. And I work directly with Project Dandelion, you can see the  
25 pin I am wearing here, with President Mary Robinson. Patrick Hillary is actually  
26 related to me as well, and I feel education in our youth is very, very important. I  
27 think the voice of a President is one that echoes the values of our communities, of  
28 our older people, and of our younger people, and of the people whose voices have  
29 remained violent or invisible. Now, I have worked directly with the deaf community  
30 for the last 30 years and I would ensure that their voices are raised, people with  
31 hidden disabilities and the hidden homeless. So I just feel that this is a  
32 role -- although you may feel that I need to be going forward as a TD, but this is  
33 not -- with my links with the Áras already, Sabina Higgins is patron of my business,  
34 you know, Patrick Hillary, Mary Robinson, and the Mary McAleese is a connection

1 there, and also Michael D Higgins, who as a heritage specialist myself he also started  
2 Heritage Week 25 years ago. So I don't see this as just -- this is actually fortuitous.  
3 Thank you.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Malachai Duddy.

5 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat, Ms McCormack. You referenced  
6 St Brigid. Is there any theme from the life of St Brigid that you think you could use  
7 in your presidency or might represent your presidency?

8 MS LORNA McCORMACK: Yes, thank you. Lovely question. I have a Master's  
9 in Ag Innovation. So St Brigid was for farmers, for the land, for the sheep, for all  
10 that as well. So I have a Master's Agricultural Innovation. I also work with, in  
11 relation to equality for women in Haven Horizons, you know women's voices,  
12 elevating those voices. So St Brigid was about equality, I am definitely about  
13 equality too but not just for women but for the silent voices of Ireland as well, and  
14 I'll wrap my cloak around them.

15 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have we any further questions? Councillor Jason Mulhall.

17 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thank you,  
18 Ms McCormack, for your presentation. You are well-known for your work as a  
19 climate ambassador and sustainability advocate. If elected, how would you use the  
20 presidency, you know a largely non-political but symbolic office, to advance  
21 Ireland's role as a leader in climate action?

22 MS LORNA McCORMACK: Yeah. This is a topic people don't seem to really  
23 want to talk about right now. There's two sides to this: Those people who do and  
24 those people who don't. And I see climate as probably a symptom of everything else  
25 that is happening around the world: Our loss of nature and biodiversity, the  
26 baselines are changing. So the baseline that our grandparents saw is completely  
27 different to the baseline that our own children are seeing now. So I think it is very  
28 important that those conversations come through within the Áras, and maybe build  
29 and show, you know, from the top that the sustainability focus is there at the top and  
30 it is brought down. And those conversations really need to be entrusted in somebody  
31 that knows what they are talking about.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have we any further questions? No further questions. Thank  
33 you very much, Ms McCormack, for your presentation.

34 MS LORNA McCORMACK: Thank you for your time.



1 CATHAOIRLEACH: So the next candidate on the list was Mr Conor McGregor,  
2 who will not be attending. And the next then is Mr Keith McGrory. Thank you  
3 Keith, if you like to come up to the podium.

4 MR KEITH McGRORY: Good afternoon, Councillor, and thanks. My name is  
5 Keith McGrory, and I am honoured to be here today seeking your support to allow  
6 my name on the ballot as an independent candidate for the upcoming Presidential  
7 Election 2025.

8  
9 I stand before you not as an career politician but as an ordinary Irish citizen who has  
10 lived through the challenges, hopes and struggles that many of our people face. I  
11 want to share my story, my vision, on why I believe I can serve Ireland with dignity,  
12 compassion and strength. I bring over 25 years in the construction industry,  
13 specialising in residential housing, with a family background of two or three hundred  
14 years. I hold a Degree in Construction Economics and Quantity Surveying, and I am  
15 the inventor of the world-recognised Hightower Telescopic Paint Bucket System,  
16 which I have secured international patents both in USA and Europe. This invention  
17 was not just a business achievement for me but a lesson in resilience, creativity and  
18 innovation. I built my businesses from scratch and I know the hard work it takes to  
19 create something meaningful for others. These experiences give me an  
20 entrepreneurial mindset, one that I believe is valuable for encouraging new Irish  
21 businesses, innovation and sustainable growth at home and abroad.

22  
23 I grew up in Donegal during The Troubles, and my life has been shaped by the  
24 realities of conflict and division. My own family experienced this directly. My  
25 younger brother, Ronan McGrory, was caught up in the Omagh bombing, one of the  
26 worst atrocities this country has ever witnessed. Ronan luckily survived but carries  
27 lifelong injuries. Tragically that day he lost three of his young friends. Experiences  
28 like this taught me the true value of peace, unity and compassion. It gave me an  
29 understanding that every Irish citizen no matter their colour, religion or background  
30 deserves to live in a safe, inclusive and respectful Ireland. As President, I would  
31 hold that principle close to my heart in every action I take.

32  
33 I also want to share another side of my life. From a young age sport has been a big  
34 part of who I am. I was invited at just 15-years-old to the English Premiership Club,

1 Ipswich Town, and I also played for Derry City and Finn Harps. I represented my  
2 local boxing club, athletics team and GAA club. In 1996 I was part of the Derry  
3 soccer athletics team that won Portsmouth International Tournament in the UK. That  
4 victory was especially meaningful because our team was made up of both Protestants  
5 and Catholics, and when we returned home we were honoured with a mayor's  
6 reception. It was a symbol of unity through sport. From sport I learned team work,  
7 communication, discipline, and resilience. Lessons that continue to guide me to  
8 today. I believe deeply in the link between a healthy body and a healthy mind. I  
9 carry high energy and commitment in everything I do. And as President I would  
10 encourage our citizens at home and abroad to stay active, focused and resilient for  
11 the challenges that we will face in modern day life.

12  
13 One of the most important issues Ireland faces today is the housing crisis, and I feel I  
14 am the right man at the right time.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: One minute left.

16 MR McGRORY: With both formal qualifications and hands-on experience in house  
17 building I believe I can contribute meaningful ideas and help identify practical  
18 solutions which I have already done so. As President I would work constructively  
19 with the Minister for Housing to address this long-standing issue and put it to bed  
20 once and for all, to bring about affordable homes and to increasing housing output  
21 across the country. We cannot continue down the road where young families are  
22 saddled with debt for 30 years, leaving them unable to enjoy life. We need to give  
23 people good life balances, affordable homes that allow them to live happily and not  
24 under constant financial pressure.

25  
26 Beyond housing, I also understand the importance of international business and  
27 trade, particularly with the United States. Having launched my patented product in  
28 both the USA and UK, I know the value of building strong international  
29 relationships. Our connection with the US is vital not just economically but  
30 culturally and as President I would work to strengthen that and deepen our bond for  
31 future generations to prosper. Thank you.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Mr McGrory. Have we any questions from the  
33 floor? Councillor Mulhall.

34 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: Thank you. Just a quick question. I suppose as

1 someone with a deep experience in construction and retrofitting, why do you think  
2 Ireland has been so slow and poor at delivering large scale retrofitting and  
3 sustainable housing and how would you as President use the authority of the office to  
4 push for real progress?

5 MR KEITH McGRORY: Thank you. Working with the Constitution, which we're  
6 all governed to do, I will stay in line with the Constitution, and one of the main  
7 things uphold it. So by upholding it I can convene weekly, monthly, whatever  
8 meetings I want with whatever body. So I have the power and the voice to call upon  
9 the Minister for Housing. And what I have seen in my experience to date with my  
10 own personal experience 25 years building houses year-on-year, I have seen where  
11 we have added additional costs to the housing unit. Let's not forget the housing unit  
12 is a product. It is a home more importantly but it is a product. The Government's  
13 involvement is too much. I know that inside out from top to bottom. I know the  
14 changes I can make to identify it with my construction economic background and  
15 research I have already conducted, where to bring that back to afford ability. So  
16 working with the housing, which I can do, I will put that as a project, as a priority,  
17 because that is an in-house problem, not an international. It is an in-house problem  
18 that we need to solve before we try solve the world's problems, which affects every  
19 single one of us here because we've children and grandchildren. It is about  
20 everybody. Young, old, middle-aged. Because everybody is moving on. Some  
21 people are being pushed to downsize. Where are they going? This is not fair. It is  
22 unfair. And I want to sort it. Thank you.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Tom Fortune.

24 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Keith, thanks indeed for your  
25 presentation. Again delivered with great passion. I have two questions. One is, I  
26 am just curious of how and why you decided that you would go for the role of  
27 President. And secondly, I have an issue when I hear presidential candidates talking  
28 about solving health and solving housing, because that isn't the role of the  
29 presidency. It's a ceremonial role by and large. So while you have that expertise,  
30 that kind of expertise you can deliver through the Dáil of course, so I am just curious  
31 about why you think you could achieve that. But I am more interested I suppose as  
32 well in why you decided you were going to go for this.

33 MR KEITH McGRORY: Yeah. As I referenced in my speech, I was brought up  
34 during The Troubles and I seen a lot, witnessed a lot and know a lot, and I was very

1 politically involved. When you're brought up along the border in Donegal you had to  
2 show your colours. You were either Fianna Fáil or Sinn Féin. Everybody was  
3 interloped at that time. I grew up a Fianna Fáil Republican. I was always very hands  
4 on. You had to fight at the time. Everybody was going out for the same thing but  
5 there was different struggles. So yes, from a very young age I visualised being here  
6 today. I have got the qualifications, experiences in my journey, and I knew that I  
7 was going to end up somewhere and use them experiences, and that's why I feel at  
8 this moment in time I did witness certain presidential races before encourage me,  
9 certain business people, and I feel the President's role needs to change. Because of  
10 resources this goes against it. We needs to see results. I am a results-driven person.  
11 I feel we are at one of the biggest crossroads this history will ever see. We are not  
12 even in the middle of it. I fear we are going into it, to be quite honest. So regards  
13 housing, that is a national -- that is a humanitarian crisis. This is not something that  
14 we can play lightly with. It's homes. It's not houses. It's homes. And if we can't  
15 correct what people really need then we are not succeeding. And I just want to finish  
16 on this: I was brought up in a construction family and we can build houses, very  
17 simple, and we were brought up with the terms the house is very simple: It's a  
18 rectangle with a triangle on top. Everything else is bells and whistles. And that's  
19 industry talk. Thank you.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Have we any more questions? Councillor  
21 Silvester Bourke.

22 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Just a quick one. Did you ever consider running for  
23 public office before?

24 MR KEITH McGRORY: Again I just referenced there from the beginning I have a  
25 huge interest in politics from a young age, been active and I know all the players up  
26 and down the country to be quite honest and I have watched it and I have seen it  
27 evolve. And the reason why I didn't run -- I was always asked to at a local level, and  
28 the reason why I didn't is because with my record I have achieved a lot and I  
29 continued with that, and I continued with building houses, and I felt that my day  
30 would come. And I feel this is the right time.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. There are no further questions so thank you very  
32 much, Mr McGrory, for your presentation.

33 MR KEITH McGRORY: Thank you.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: So the next candidate we have is Mr Diarmuid Mulcahy, if

1 you would like to come up to the podium. When you're ready we will start the clock.  
2 MR DIARMUID MULCAHY: Can you all hear me okay? Thank you. (Addresses  
3 chamber in Irish.) Firstly, I wish to thank you all for giving me the opportunity to  
4 speak with you today and to make my case to you regarding seeking a nomination to  
5 allow me to progress the process of getting on the ballot paper for the upcoming  
6 election of President of Ireland. It is an honour to be here. And again, I really thank  
7 you for the opportunity.

8  
9 Just by way of background, my name is Diarmuid Mulcahy. I live in Galway City  
10 on the road to Barna, out towards Connemara. I was born in West Kerry but I have  
11 lived in Galway and its environs since the mid-1980s.

12  
13 Again, why am I here? I just want to highlight some of what I have done within my  
14 life and hopefully this will give you an idea of what I am about. I am a former  
15 regional manager or chief executive of South Connaught MABS, the Money Advice  
16 and Budgeting Service. I ran that organisation for a number of years: Six offices, 35  
17 staff, two and a half million annual budget, dealing with people in difficulty in Irish  
18 society. And I also sat on a national board which included the chief executives of all  
19 the other MABS companies. We looked at policy around things like mortgage debt,  
20 around things like the difficulty with homelessness, around things like the difficulty  
21 with people in financial difficulty. This was my daily task for a number of years.

22  
23 I am a former senior manager in the seafood industry, working for multinationals and  
24 venture capital funds, helping produce farmed salmon for a lot of the world. I have  
25 worked in the community sector, running things like the island of Inishturk's  
26 cooperative. That's off County Mayo. I work with a company called Schull  
27 Enterprises in Galway, which is part of a credit union. It is an enterprise company  
28 dealing with community. And I have also worked with a Gaeltacht cooperative  
29 dealing with the Irish language and people in need in the area of South Galway.  
30 Furthermore, I am a former chair of the Irish Salmon Growers Association, which is  
31 the national body looking after seafood, and that's affiliated with the Irish Farmers  
32 Association. So I am formerly a member of the national executive of the IFA. I am  
33 a former board member of the Western Development Commission, a regional  
34 development body with its own venture capital fund and development agency for the

1 entire west coast. I am a former board member and chair of Council for the West  
2 which is a primary lobby group for the West of Ireland, and its trustees include all  
3 the western bishops, and also the archbishop of Tuam. I am a former chair of  
4 Galway County Community and Voluntary Forum, and I am also a former chair of  
5 the National Fora Chairs Network --

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: One minute left.

7 MR DIARMUID MULCAHY: -- which took all of the community groups around  
8 the country. In my time that was 24,000 groups. I am a former independent  
9 European election candidate for Midleton Northwest and I am also a former  
10 underage coach in GAA with Moycullen in County Galway, and in rugby with  
11 Galwegians.

12

13 I have been and wish to continue to be of service. I think all of that would say that I  
14 have been of service a lot but I would like to continue in that. I come from a long  
15 line of service-givers and service providers in Irish society. My parents, Aidan and  
16 Sheila Mulcahy, set up and managed a school in West Kerry for their entire lives.  
17 They were eventually knighted by the Pope for their services in community and  
18 education. I speak fluent Irish and French. I am a traditional musician. I am very  
19 steeped in Irish cultural heritage. Is that the finish? Okay. Can I just, one last  
20 sentence? As President I would like to be a unifying presence building consensus  
21 with a huge focus on peace which I think is really important. Thank you.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Councillor Stephen Stokes.

23 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Thank you very much for your presentation today. I just  
24 think you were kind of cut off towards the end, is there anything else you would like  
25 to add from your statement?

26 MR DIARMUID MULCAHY: Thank you. One comment I would like to make is  
27 that I gather that Ireland is going through massive change and I think as that change  
28 is ongoing we need strong voices, particularly in the office of President. It is not a  
29 political role but it is a role that speaks for the people of Ireland. I believe I am  
30 someone who has a strong voice and I would love to be given the opportunity to seek  
31 that position.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Ned Whelan.

33 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: Thank you, Mr Mulcahy, for your presentation. If  
34 elected President what would your priorities be over the next, say, three, four or five

1 years?

2 MR DIARMUID MULCAHY: My priorities, and again having the awareness, again  
3 I have been studying this book Bunreacht na hÉireann with great attention over the  
4 last little while, being aware that it is not exactly a political role but it does work  
5 closely with the Government. I believe that the priorities for Ireland, and again the  
6 President will be the elected head of state, elected by the entire population, I believe  
7 the priorities need to be those priorities that are there at the moment. The big one  
8 which I am really familiar with because of the whole MABS situation is economics.  
9 It's really important that we tackle the economics. There are so many people in this  
10 country who are in financial difficulty. I would see data every month which used to  
11 scare me, and my role was to try and see what could be done about that. I think the  
12 second thing, which is related, is around homelessness and housing. Again that's  
13 been touched on a number of times already. And I think the third thing is about the  
14 multiplicity of people within our population. I think Ireland always has been a  
15 welcoming state. I would wish it to continue as that, but I do think we have to have  
16 balance about how many people this country can sustainably look after and I think at  
17 the moment some of what is happening would suggest that perhaps we're not doing  
18 such a great job. Thank you.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Malachai Duddy.

20 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Go raibh maith agat, Mr Mulcahy. (Addresses chamber  
21 in Irish.) Why would you like to be President? Go raibh maith agat.

22 MR DIARMUID MULCAHY: Thank you, Councillor. Again it is something I have  
23 thought about a lot. I have gone for public office on a number of occasions. The  
24 most recent time was for the European Parliament. I have a very large body of  
25 knowledge and experience in many, many different sectors. I am also known as  
26 someone that's very, very calm. I am usually the calm person in the room. And I  
27 genuinely believe that there are so many things happening in this country and around  
28 the world -- and again, just to name a couple of things just to get them named: The  
29 whole issue in Gaza which I totally abhor; issues with Ukraine, again I abhor. I  
30 believe that with all of those things happening in the greater world and those things  
31 that are happening at home which I have just described, I really believe that the  
32 Office of President needs to be able to speak strongly, and I believe I am somebody  
33 that can do that. So that's why.

34 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Have we any further questions, please, for  
2 Mr Mulcahy? Okay. Thank you very much for your presentation.

3 MR DIARMUID MULCAHY: Go raibh maith agat. Thank you.

4 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. So the next candidate is Ms Rowena Mulcahy. If  
5 you come up to the podium, thank you. Thank you, Ms Mulcahy. When you're  
6 ready we will start the clock.

7 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: Good afternoon, Councillors. Thank you for giving  
8 me the opportunity to address you here today. I just would like to say at the outset  
9 two things which I hadn't intended to say but I do need to say. First of all, I regret  
10 not making contact with all of you. You're all very busy people, but that I think  
11 arises from the fact that I am not a politician and I have never in my life canvassed  
12 for anything. I am a lawyer, and if you canvass for things as a lawyer you're  
13 rendered ineligible. So no disrespect was intended to any of you by not making  
14 contact before, nor did I understand that it was necessary to seek someone to  
15 nominate and second you as a candidate.

16

17 The second thing I wanted to address very, very briefly was that I am here, as are all  
18 my other fellow potential candidates, seeking nomination by Wicklow County  
19 Council as a presidential candidate. I understand certain parties have directed their  
20 Councillors not to nominate an independent candidate. The President is elected by  
21 the people of Ireland, and the choice of the candidate is limited by political parties if  
22 directions are given not to nominate anybody. The candidate presented to the people  
23 to choose whom they wish to represent them as head of state and as first citizen  
24 should be determined by the people. And of course elected representatives elect  
25 people -- are elected by people, but in reality this process is being dictated by the  
26 political parties, and I don't believe that in the interest of democracy that that is  
27 correct.

28

29 The President is required to be above politics without any party political ideology yet  
30 each one of the three declared candidates in this Presidential Election is a politician  
31 and/or a member of a political party. The citizen who is elected President will be the  
32 President for all the citizens on this island of Ireland but there is no independent  
33 non-political party candidate standing for election as President. The electorate  
34 should in my view be given a chance of voting for a candidate who is independent of



1 any political party, who is first and foremost a citizen without any allegiance to any  
2 political party or ideology, and who will be a President for all.

3

4 The Presidential Election is effectively an application for a job. So what is that job?  
5 Before I get into that I just want to say, talk about myself and why I believe that I  
6 would merit consideration for nomination. I am not and have never been a member  
7 of any political party, not am I a politician. I have a keen interest in politics and I am  
8 familiar with the political system but I am above politics, as the President is required  
9 to be. If elected, I would discharge the role of President and most importantly would  
10 be seen to discharge the role independently of any political party or ideology without  
11 fear or favour and with no agenda save to serve the interests and welfare of the Irish  
12 people and to safeguard and enhance the reputation of our country.

13

14 I am a law graduate of Trinity College Dublin and a qualified solicitor with more  
15 than 30 years' experience practising law in Ireland, in latter years working primarily  
16 in quasi-judicial arbitrations and alternative dispute resolution. I am a chartered  
17 arbitrator, an accredited mediator and a former Taxing Master of the High Court.  
18 That is a quasi-judicial adjudication of legal costs incurred in legal proceedings. I  
19 have spent my entire adult life studying law and working in the application of law in  
20 Ireland. I believe in public duty and have spent the past 20 years in public service. I  
21 have furnished a copy of my CV which will describe what my qualifications and  
22 experience are.

23

24 As I said, each one of us here is seeking nomination as a presidential candidate, the  
25 highest office in the land that could be bestowed on anybody, but it is at the root of it  
26 a job. So what is the job? The President's role is --

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: A minute left.

28 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: Oh my goodness! -- it is constitutional and  
29 representational. The constitutional role does not appear to be addressed by  
30 anybody. It is an important job and it is a serious job, and I believe someone should  
31 be -- the office should be held by someone who is qualified to do the job. You have  
32 to have a knowledge and a familiarity with legislation, being able to read it,  
33 because one of the most important functions to sign a Bill into law, and that is a  
34 check on the Government of the day in order to ensure it is constitutional. Am I

1 qualified? Yes, I am. I have a working knowledge of the provisions of Bunreacht na  
2 hÉireann, studied constitutional law while reading law in Trinity College Dublin, and  
3 acquired experience in the application of provisions of the Constitution as a  
4 practising lawyer and as Taxing Master of the High Court. I understand fully the  
5 role of the President under the Constitution and the constraints of the office. What is  
6 not actually appreciated I think by many people is that there is a far-reaching  
7 immunity for the President in the Constitution. So it is very important that whoever  
8 is elected President is aware of the constitutional constraints. Thank you.

9  
10 Could I just make one last statement, please? I believe that the Irish people want a  
11 President who has knowledge and understanding of the Constitution and of the  
12 legislative process, who as head of state will represent the Irish people abroad and at  
13 home with dignity and the requisite gravitas that the situation demands, who is  
14 approachable and can communicate with the public, who would be a unifying figure,  
15 not a divisive one, who is concerned with transparency and with what is right.

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. We have to go to questions now in fairness to all  
17 the candidates. Thank you. Before we go to questions Rachel wants to reiterate  
18 something.

19 MS GILLESPIE: Can I just remind everyone present that no recording is permitted  
20 in the chamber. Thank you.

21 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Now, I will go to questions. Councillor Paul  
22 O'Brien.

23 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, and thank you,  
24 Ms Mulcahy, for your presentation. I know it is not easy to be up there giving that  
25 presentation.

26 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: I have no problem. I am used to speaking in public.  
27 Unfortunately I didn't get a chance to say what I wanted to say. I wanted to say the  
28 first two issues at the outset.

29 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: That is okay. Thank you. You reference you are  
30 not a politician.

31 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: No

32 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: But you are in a room mostly full of politicians,  
33 and can I just reassure you, we're not all bad.

34 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: You perform a really valuable public service and

1 believe me I know. I have considered running for political office myself. Never did  
2 that. So I think we need you all.

3 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Best of luck. The world we're living in at the  
4 moment is not safe at the moment for some people. There's threats out there. So I  
5 just wanted to make that clear. Also you referenced that there's no independents  
6 running I think in this election so far, and you're looking for our support here today  
7 to ensure that an independent runs.

8 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: Yes.

9 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: So just, Catherine Connolly is running as an  
10 independent candidate. Even though she has been endorsed by a number of political  
11 parties, but she is running as a proud independent. So can I ask you what your  
12 opinion is on Catherine Connolly and her run as an independent candidate? Thank  
13 you.

14 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: Thank you for the question. I think I intended to  
15 convey an independent non-political candidate. I have huge respect for Catherine  
16 Connolly. She is a woman of integrity which I think is hugely important. She has  
17 courage which I think is important too. And I had considered voting for her myself,  
18 and if I am going to be honest I am -- I think that as President, as head of state on the  
19 international stage you have to have good judgment and be very careful about what  
20 you say. You cannot I think say matters that may be of an embarrassment to our  
21 country. I wholly support -- I'd make a distinction: I wholly support what President  
22 Higgins has gone to the defence of the Irish people in calling out the slander, the  
23 defamation against the Irish people calling them anti-Semitic, and I have great  
24 respect for that. Having said that, we can't be criticising our international allies,  
25 that's my view. Whatever your own personal view may be, as a President I think you  
26 have to exercise judgment about what you can and can't say. But to answer your  
27 question shortly, I have huge respect for Catherine Connolly.

28 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Patsy Glennon.

30 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you very much for your presentation. Again  
31 Councillor O'Brien has already took you up on one of the issues I was going to  
32 mention, but the second one you said is certain parties have given an instruction to  
33 councillors not -- I am only aware of one party. Are you aware of others?

34 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: No, I am not. I didn't want to identify anybody so

1 perhaps I used it in the plural rather than the singular. I didn't want to name  
2 anybody.

3 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Yes. That is factually incorrect in my view. I wish  
4 you well in your campaign. You are clearly well qualified. Thank you.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Stephen Stokes.

6 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. Yes, I would share  
7 your concern about the presidential nomination process. I mean I would be happy to  
8 go on record and say that I personally think that the diktat from Simon Harris, our  
9 Tánaiste, is absolutely shameful and outrageous. I think it is an attack on  
10 democracy. But my question to you is: What would you like to see in terms of  
11 reform for the nomination process going forward?

12 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: Well, I think it is a difficult one, and I think it is a  
13 discussion that needs to be had. If I was elected President one of the things I would  
14 like to do is to -- I believe I would be a unifying figure, and I would like to have  
15 conversations about issues that affect the public, because the President is there to  
16 represent the public, being careful of course about the constraints of the office and  
17 what you can say and cannot do. But I think to answer your question, Councillor, is  
18 that I think possibly there would have to be some formula where a formula would be  
19 devised whereby you would have a selection process to show that people who are  
20 qualified to do the job, both from the point of view of their skills, their experience,  
21 their knowledge, and most importantly the values that they bring to the office,  
22 because that is -- the President is the person who should embody the values of the  
23 Irish people. So whether that is what it would be -- I do believe politicians play a  
24 very important role in the selection process because you after all have been elected  
25 by the people of Ireland. It can't be a free-for-all. What the process is I don't know.  
26 It possibly might be that the political parties -- there are two routes to nomination  
27 process: One is through the 20 members of the Oireachtas, and perhaps that could be  
28 left as that, but the county councillors perhaps they should be given more latitude in  
29 deciding who they wish to nominate.

30 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Silvester Bourke.

31 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Thank you, Ms Mulcahy. First of all, I don't suppose  
32 you're related to the previous man or candidate, Diarmuid Mulcahy?

33 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: No.

34 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: But given your vast knowledge of Bunreacht na

1 hÉireann and your vision for the presidency how would you rate previous Presidents  
2 in terms of being exemplary, or would you say they strayed from the high ideals that  
3 you are setting?

4 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: The presidency has changed, and I think the change  
5 first came about with Mary Robinson. I was actually a law student of hers in Trinity  
6 College Dublin, and I was an apprentice to her husband, Nicholas Robinson. But  
7 yes, she did change matters. But even before that, Erskine Childers I understand had  
8 wanted to have what I think would be a good idea, some form of a civic assembly  
9 where people could perhaps outline to the President what their concerns are. I do  
10 think that often the problem with -- and what is becoming divisive in Ireland as I see  
11 it just in the change in latter years, is that there are people out there who have  
12 concerns, they're taking to the streets, and people only take to the streets when they  
13 feel they are not being heard. It is most important that people do feel that they are  
14 being heard. So in short, in answer to your question, I do think, I think that they  
15 played a very significant role in the development of the presidency. I think it is very  
16 important if you are President to be aware of the constraints in the office under the  
17 Constitution. Yes, you can speak to civic society but you must do so within the  
18 constraints of it. So I myself consider, yes, I feel free that I would express concerns  
19 as President, for instance where there was a racist attack against members of the  
20 Indian community, who provide a very valuable service especially in healthcare here  
21 in Ireland. So as President to express my solidarity I would ask Áras an Uachtaráin  
22 to show the sympathy of the Irish people towards all the -- not sympathy, the  
23 abhorrence of the racial attacks on them. I think I would stop short on criticising the  
24 Government of the day on whatever policy they have, whether it is housing or  
25 whatever. I have a very strong concern about the housing and how it has developed.  
26 If I was elected in the Dáil or the Seanad I would be making those views known, and  
27 sometimes I am sorry I am not there because I do have ideas that I would express  
28 because I think people could take them on. The question is supply and demand, but I  
29 am not going to get into that. And there are ways of addressing supply and demand,  
30 but I won't get into that. It is not the forum here and it would take too long. Thank  
31 you.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Jason Mulhall.

33 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thank you, Ms Mulcahy.  
34 It's very clear that you have got a strong legal and regulatory background from your

1 career, but what three issues or values would you see as most important in  
2 championing and how would you maybe use the powers of office to bring about  
3 impact in those areas?

4 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: I believe that the President has what we call soft  
5 power; the ability to speak to the people and highlight what needs to be highlighted  
6 in our society. My concerns would be equality, unity. And when I talk about  
7 equality, yes, the Constitution says each person shall be held equal before the law,  
8 but the reality of that is -- I am a firm believer in social justice, and in terms of unity  
9 I think, I am not just talking about the unity of our island which I would be a  
10 concerned about ensuring that there was a discussion about what kind of Ireland we  
11 want, because I do believe that in the next seven to ten years there will be a  
12 referendum and I would like our nation to be ready to actually deal with it at the  
13 time. So that is one thing that I would be concerned to deal with and I would use  
14 that power to take on board what the people of Ireland want. I also would be  
15 concerned -- I would like to think and I believe I would be a unifying figure. I  
16 believe there is a lot of divisiveness in Ireland which is not healthy. I believe that by  
17 talking about issues that -- when you talk about issues they become a norm. If I  
18 could just give one example, please. I have a long-standing interest in the mental  
19 health of my fellow citizen, my fellow human being. I served for a number of years  
20 as chairperson of mental health tribunals which determine the legality of the  
21 detention of persons involuntarily detained because of their mental illness in an  
22 approved centre. It was formerly called a mental asylum, which is a horrible name.

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: I'm sorry, that's time up I'm afraid.

24 MS ROWENA MULCAHY: Thank you very much indeed for hearing from me.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: And I am sorry; we had another question but we ran out of  
26 time. Thank you. So the next candidate is Professor Doctor Joseph Chikelue Obi  
27 who I am not sure is here. No. Okay. We will go on to the next one then. Dr  
28 Aodhán O'Hartigan. Sorry, he's not actually present either. Ms Lucy-Anne O'Leary?  
29 Mr David Parnell. Thank you, Mr Parnell. Do you want to come up to the podium.  
30 When you're ready we will start the clock then.

31 MR DAVID PARNELL: Okay. Go ahead. Dear Wicklow County Council, Elected  
32 Members, I am delighted to be addressing our chamber here today. I address you as  
33 a presidential hopeful as part of my four-county councillor campaign. I convey two  
34 messages as part of my presidential vision: 1. Protect Ireland's heritage; 2. Improve

1 public safety on public transport.

2

3 I will present to Waterford County Council on September 19th and Meath County  
4 Council on September 22nd. I presented to Westmeath County Council yesterday.  
5 Their chamber was picked as our heritage once parallel with Irish history. My  
6 ancestors, Charles Stuart Parnell and John Howard Parnell, represented Meath in  
7 times past as members of parliament, and it is why I have asked Meath for  
8 presentation consideration under the Presidency Elections Act.

9

10 I ask you for support the same way I have asked Westmeath's chamber to consider  
11 repatriating the remains of Anna Parnell, the founder of the Ladies' Land League,  
12 who drowned whilst out swimming in Devon in 1911 and is buried in Ilfracombe.  
13 She deserves to be brought home and put to rest in her home country and not be a  
14 forgotten part of Irish history.

15

16 I addressed Dublin City Council and Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council that  
17 whoever our next President is when we decide on October 24th to commemorate our  
18 forgotten ancestors Anna Parnell and John Howard Parnell. May 3rd, 2023, marked  
19 one hundred years of John Howard Parnell's passing without any commemoration. It  
20 took myself on my father's instructions to Shanganagh memorials in Bray to repair  
21 and restore his grave in Deansgrange. I asked Dublin City Council and Dun  
22 Laoghaire-Rathdown County Councils to help commemorate John Howard Parnell,  
23 the former Dublin City sheriff and brother of the famous Charles Stuart Parnell. Ivy  
24 Day is at risk of dying in Glasnevin Cemetery. My grandad, Frank Parnell, spoke  
25 about Charles Stuart Parnell often and was a close friend and cousin of Victor  
26 Parnell, a relative of the Henry Brooke Parnell faction of the Parnell dynasty.

27

28 My message will remain similar throughout my presidency hope: Protect Ireland's  
29 heritage and, secondly, improve public safety on public transport. I support Darragh  
30 O'Brien's measure to see a transport security force introduced into our capital city  
31 and the sooner our next President signs off a Bill passed by Dáil Eireann and Seanad  
32 Éireann to give security on public transport, power of arrest, the better for people  
33 travelling on their daily routines. I was on a train coming home from Mullingar  
34 yesterday and I witnessed another example of antisocial behaviour where two

1 individuals had to be escorted off the train.

2

3 We need to support our European leaders in a time of international conflict as they're  
4 under serious pressure. The next President needs to utilise their advisers from both  
5 the Government and the Council of State and refer matters to the Supreme Court to  
6 determine constitutionality on matters of constitutionality.

7

8 Frankie Keena, the former Athlone mayor, asked me a question about the IPAS  
9 centres legislation to be drafted by the Government and whether I should refer its  
10 legislation to the Supreme Court, referring the High Court case that the four county  
11 councillors in Athlone have brought against the Government. My campaign come  
12 from a fully independent standpoint. I have never stood in any elections as my  
13 ancestors already done that and my political views are reserved.

14

15 Throughout Ireland's history we have seen many presidential hopefuls, and I do wish  
16 that our next President will protect the backdoor in presidential campaigns as there  
17 are citizens out there wishing to run whose rich history is at risk of being forgotten. I  
18 look forward to October 24th, and I thank you all for listening.

19 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Mr Shane Langrell.

20 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Thank you, David. Good  
21 stuff. Two questions. Regarding the public transport, what would you do to control  
22 that antisocial behaviour? And I suppose I am sitting here, you're running to be a  
23 President, why not run in a local election; start at the bottom and work your way up,  
24 David? Good lad.

25 MR DAVID PARNELL: Can I answer the second one first?

26 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: Yes.

27 MR DAVID PARNELL: Okay. So the second one, I think you asked me why don't  
28 I run in local elections. Well, our dynasty comes from an expunged political party,  
29 the Irish Parliament Party, so, for example, if I wanted to be a county councillor in  
30 any county or run as a TD or run in the [\[Seanad\]](#), when I knock on people's door to  
31 ballot they are just going to talk to me about Irish history. So I have to explain our  
32 position in the Irish history books first before I can get any political parties agenda,  
33 you know, on the record. The first question you asked me was?

34 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: The antisocial behaviour on the public transport.



1 MR DAVID PARNELL: Antisocial behaviour. Absolutely. The Gardaí needs to  
2 be subsidised with security work on our public transport services in particularly our  
3 capital city. There's a lot of assaults happening on public transport systems and I  
4 think the best way to tackle that problem is to delegate powers of arrest to security  
5 personnel which is already I think -- I think legislation might be getting drafted.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Ned Whelan.

7 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: David, thank you for your presentation.  
8 Thank you.

9 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: What would your priorities be, say, if you were elected  
10 President over the next five or six years?

11 MR DAVID PARNELL: I'd certainly help our European key leaders, absolutely,  
12 and liaise with them as much as we can, for a start. Particularly remind our own  
13 people never to forget their roots and certainly protect their heritage. It is very, very  
14 hurtful when you feel that you're a part of a forgotten part of Irish history.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Gerry O'Neill.

16 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Yeah, thanks for your presentation. What's your views  
17 on the genocide in Gaza?

18 MR DAVID PARNELL: I think that's another issue where we need to be constantly  
19 liaising with our European key leaders to understand from a European perspective  
20 what their views are. I think it is absolutely horrible what is going on.

21 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Do you condemn the genocide in Gaza?

22 MR DAVID PARNELL: Can I ask you to repeat that, please?

23 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can you put your microphone on?

24 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Sorry. Do you condemn the Israeli genocide in Gaza?

25 MR DAVID PARNELL: It is absolutely horrible what is happening to some of them  
26 children.

27 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: I'm asking do you condemn it? We all know it is  
28 horrible.

29 MR DAVID PARNELL: Well, that is a very interesting question. That will be a  
30 question that I will reserve for my presentation in Waterford on September 19th.

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: So there are no further questions. So thank you very much,  
32 Mr Parnell, for your presentation. Thank you. So the next candidate on the list is  
33 Mr Dominick Plant who is not present, and Mr Walter Ryan-Purcell who is not  
34 present, and Mr Gareth Sheridan who has notified us that he is not going to be

1 present. So the next one there is Dr Cora Stack. Would you like to come up to the  
2 podium?

3 DR CORA STACK: Do you have a copy of my presentation there? I was going to  
4 change my speech today, and the Tipperary papers said I said I was being stitched up  
5 right, left and centre. I didn't say that.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, Dr Stack, when you're ready to make your presentation  
7 just let us know and we will put on the five-minute alarm.

8 MS PURCELL: Do you wish to put up the last presentation you submitted to us?

9 DR CORA STACK: Yes.

10 MS PURCELL: Thank you. Can you just wait until we have it on the screen and we  
11 will start your five minutes. Thank you very much.

12 DR CORA STACK: You haven't got it here for a computer so I can read it?

13 MS PURCELL: It will be on the big screen.

14 DR CORA STACK: So I just wanted to --

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: The clock is starting now.

16 DR CORA STACK: (Addresses chamber in Irish.) I am delighted to be here in  
17 Mr Simon Harris's constituency, Tánaiste, who I thought was an outstanding  
18 Minister for Higher Education. He has done great work for autism and disabilities,  
19 and we were great friends for many years until quite recently, on LinkedIn, and with  
20 Malcolm Byrne, and I am very disappointed that our brilliant Minister for Health  
21 was not also elected, unfortunately, but that's the way it is. I think he was a fantastic  
22 Minister for Health. So Anyway, that's my position. And I gave a very different  
23 speech to Tipperary Town Council today and I am going to make a bit more -- you  
24 know, this is only very superficial. There's an awful lot more to me. I have written a  
25 huge amount of policy papers based on a huge amount of things, they're all up online  
26 and all the world are reading my policy papers. So I have written a huge amount of  
27 research over the last couple of months.

28

29 So, a republic of service. How many minutes have I got, sorry?

30 MS GILLESPIE: Four minutes.

31 DR CORA STACK: Not ten minutes?

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: No.

33 DR CORA STACK: Oh, I misunderstood. Sorry, I thought it was ten minutes. You  
34 should read my policy papers and then you should decide whether I am the best

1 candidate or not.

2

3 A republic of service solidarity and dignity. I am not seeking power but service and  
4 a commitment to every citizen's dignity, voice and participation in our democracy.

5 This is a respectful request to consider this vision. Also, I made the point today  
6 about the, inverted commas, injustices done to people who are excluded silently from  
7 the process about there not being written guidance about how to deal or go for  
8 President, what you have to do in terms of approaching councillors, et cetera.

9 There's no written guidance, and I was unaware of it X, Y and Z. So I am looking  
10 for the respective proposers and nominator now because of my public service  
11 commitments, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So I just talked about that. How public  
12 service is hugely disadvantaged by a lack of proper guidance on how to, you know,  
13 start the presidential campaign. And I have also offered solutions. A respectful  
14 request to consider the submission rooted in justice, compassion, inclusion, respect  
15 for all communities. Next slide, please.

16

17 With gratitude to Local Councillors before anything else. Thanks to Councillors,  
18 your daily efforts often quiet and unseen, sustain communities. You act without fear  
19 or favour, serving with commitment and integrity. This nomination begins with  
20 respect for your dedication and a request for a proposer and a nominator, according  
21 to procedures because I did not have any knowledge of the system which required  
22 you to canvass. Because of my role in the public service I felt that was conflict of  
23 interest.

24

25 So can we go to the next one please? Next slide. Shaped by a difference, guided by  
26 justice. I was raised in a household of divergent political beliefs but united by  
27 service and compassion. This background fostered deep listening, fearlessness and  
28 independence. I have a commitment to represent all communities with integrity  
29 without fear of favour. True leadership bridges difference and nurtures communities.

30

31 Next slide, please. A nation facing real pressures. We are all aware of the chronic  
32 situation with regard to the housing crisis, that rural Ireland faces chronic  
33 under-investing and equity, particularly with regard to transport, and the squeezed  
34 middle, which is all of us, feels invisible. Despite major contributions we are paying

1 for everything and entitled to nothing.

2

3 Next slide. The social fabric is fraying. Small businesses, communities, hubs,  
4 closing daily, loss of shops, cafes, post offices, taking the community out of towns,  
5 frontline workers under strain, burnout, under-resourcing, lack of recognition. That's  
6 a very important one. Lack of recognition.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: One minute left.

8 DR CORA STACK: Will you do the slides then? Quiet power, strong presence. I  
9 will just do the first one. The President should be a moral compass, not a  
10 multimillionaire. Not a multimillionaire, but a moral compass. A republic that  
11 cherishes those who serve, the rest of us, teachers and academics. A just society  
12 ensures fair pay resources and dignity. So that is what I am for; a just society. And  
13 what I realise: We are all legally captured. We are captured by the legal  
14 profession - under our noses are eroding our justice. And this is my big thing. We  
15 have got to change from the legal system to arbitration first.

16

17 Next slide, please. Justice begins with dignity. You cannot have justice if you have  
18 a flawed legal system, and our system is captured by lawyers and everybody -- not  
19 everybody, in fairness Simon Harris isn't a lawyer, no, he isn't, so that's one good  
20 thing about him. Justice begins with dignity for all, secure housing, healthcare,  
21 work, et cetera. Then I have all my policy work, everything you have read before.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. We are going to go to questions now.  
23 Councillor Stephen Stokes.

24 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Thank you, Dr Stack, for that presentation. Just two  
25 things. I suppose is there anything else you would like to say following on from  
26 your presentation because you weren't aware of the time?

27 DR CORA STACK: No.

28 COUNCILLOR STOKES: And also, could I ask about your qualification. What's  
29 your PhD in?

30 DR CORA STACK: It's in pure mathematics. But I have also spent a long in  
31 governance. I was selected twice with a huge majority the second time round on  
32 governance. So I have ten years' experience in governance. I have a huge  
33 experience in governance. I have written a huge amount of -- I did a big thing on  
34 Project Maths, and I identified the methodology that I have used there which

1 benchmarks, is reflected in all my policy papers. So I have examined housing, I  
2 have examined Tusla, I have examined law, the legal system, everything is  
3 examined. I have examined the Northern Ireland agreement. Everything. It is all up  
4 on online. All my policy work is finished but I am particularly proud of how I have  
5 examined how the legal system is flawed everywhere but particularly in Ireland, that  
6 justice really is denied to the vast majority of people because they cannot afford  
7 lawyers. This is a real erosion of democracy which is not being highlighted in Dáil  
8 Eireann because so many of them are lawyers. So I am afraid I cannot and would  
9 not support a lawyer politician because of what lawyers do; they preserve privilege,  
10 and we the taxpayer, the ordinary people, are paying for the lawyers' privilege to  
11 charge the fortune so that we can get no justice.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor Orla Finn.

13 DR CORA STACK: There's an awful in that but I have a lot of policy papers up  
14 online if you want to get into it. They are all up on Academia.eu. And I'll tell you,  
15 you'll be the best politician in the country if you read my research. Yeah. The most  
16 knowledgeable. You'd be the most knowledgeable politician. I am hoping  
17 to -- because already piles of people around the world are reading my research.

18 COUNCILLOR STOKES: I'm doing okay at the moment anyway but thank you.

19 DR CORA STACK: Ah no, I am a lifelong learning. I am always learning. And the  
20 latest thing is legal capture. I am learning about legal capture. And when you're that  
21 learned you'll know what justice is about. Yeah. Anybody else?

22 COUNCILLOR FINN: Dr Stack, how are you? I have to say quite honestly I am  
23 shocked to hear you come in here and to pick out a politician, one politician,  
24 regardless of any of our political views here, and I myself am as an independent, and  
25 to what I would call pick on him a little bit.

26 DR CORA STACK: Who is this?

27 MS PURCELL: Well, Simon Harris.

28 DR CORA STACK: Well, didn't he block all the independents?

29 COUNCILLOR FINN: Well, I mean, I don't feel blocked.

30 DR CORA STACK: And Sinn Féin. Of course you're not blocked.

31 COUNCILLOR FINN: Yeah, so he didn't block all the independents. I think you  
32 mean he might have blocked supposedly --

33 DR CORA STACK: Me. Yes. You're right. You're putting words into my mouth.

34 COUNCILLOR FINN: You're putting words into my mouth actually.

1 DR CORA STACK: No, no, I am not. I am not. You are twisting now. You're  
2 trying to do what is called projection and narcissism.

3 COUNCILLOR FINN: No, I don't think so, Dr Stack, actually.

4 DR CORA STACK: I understand narcissism projection, what you think you're  
5 putting on to me. Okay, we will leave that there.

6 COUNCILLOR FINN: Dr Stack, I have to tell you as somebody who wants to run  
7 for the presidency and somebody who I suppose would work with politicians across  
8 the board it is a little bit disconcerting that you would come in here and you would  
9 pick one politician, that being Simon Harris, as I said regardless of our political  
10 views here, and that you would single him out.

11 DR CORA STACK: I disagree with his block. And there is a lot of people  
12 following me on my YouTube, and if you go into my YouTube you will see what the  
13 normal person is saying about this block. I think you should read that before you try  
14 to block me. Obviously what you are trying to do now is make sure I don't get a  
15 nomination. I mean, that is manipulation. That is how I feel. That is how I feel.  
16 That is how I feel.

17 COUNCILLOR FINN: Sorry, I am entitled to ask a question or to pass a comment.

18 DR CORA STACK: You are.

19 COUNCILLOR FINN: Under no circumstances am I trying to block you. In fact,  
20 this is my first --

21 DR CORA STACK: I feel you are.

22 COUNCILLOR FINN: This is my first interaction with you today.

23 DR CORA STACK: Yeah, no, I feel you are.

24 COUNCILLOR FINN: And my opinion is based on the presentation that you made  
25 and on your comments, and I am entitled to pass a comment about your comments.  
26 And that is all I am doing. Thank you very much.

27 DR CORA STACK: Yeah. Well, I feel offended by what you said.

28 COUNCILLOR FINN: Well, I am sorry you feel offended.

29 DR CORA STACK: I do. I feel very offended because I feel a slight twist and I'm  
30 very sensitive to that kind of twist. Anybody else have a straight question, please?

31 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Patsy Glennon.

32 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you very much for your presentation.

33 DR CORA STACK: Thank you.

34 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: You also condemn lawyers per se.

1 DR CORA STACK: Not all lawyers. There's a few lawyers. Not all lawyers. But  
2 the amount of stories I have heard over the years how the squeezed middle have been  
3 ripped off by lawyers, it is huge.

4 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: No, but in your presentation you included all lawyers.

5 DR CORA STACK: No, no, there are lawyers for justice.

6 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: There's a number of lawyers in this chamber at the  
7 moment.

8 DR CORA STACK: Well, there's actually a very good lawyer who helped me from  
9 County Wicklow, and I won't say who he is, but he is one of the top brass, and he  
10 gave me information that no lawyer -- and he said you're hearing it from the inside.

11 Oh my god, what he told me was shocking. And he was from County Wicklow. But  
12 I won't say who he is. But by God he gave me insider information that no

13 lawyer -- and I know he's one of the best lawyers because he was on the ethics  
14 committee of the Law Society but I can't say his name out. Conflict of interest.

15 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: You've clearly had a bad experience somewhere.

16 DR CORA STACK: Yes, I have. Well, it has led to here. Yes, it has. But he  
17 said -- you're hearing it from the inside about a certain area of law, and he gave me  
18 the story and I was absolutely shocked. But he mapped out, he put enough it in it for  
19 me to figure out the puzzle. It was like here's few pins, do a PhD on this.

20 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: There's a very active complaints procedure for  
21 lawyers that misbehave, so perhaps you should take your case there to have it  
22 properly adjudicated on rather than just giving your own view on it. Thank you.

23 DR CORA STACK: Okay. I'm sorry, you're a lawyer yourself, are you?

24 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: I am.

25 DR CORA STACK: I'm sorry, I apologise, but I know some very good lawyers who  
26 have helped me from Wicklow, but I can't say their names.

27 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you.

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: Have we any further questions for Dr Stack? Councillor  
29 Silvester Bourke.

30 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Why run now for the presidency? Have you never  
31 thought of running for office before?

32 DR CORA STACK: Well, I have. I ran for office. I was an elected female  
33 representative of the governing body of a college for two terms serving ten years. So  
34 I was ten years in office. I was the only elected. Everyone else was appointed. I

1 was the only one that went in front of the electorate, all the staff, and I was voted  
2 twice. I was regarded as outstandingly fair, outstanding representative because I was  
3 very straight down the line. Too straight maybe. So I think this lawyer fellow,  
4 you're wrong about me. You're absolutely wrong. I am as straight as a dye and I  
5 have the sharpest legal brain in the country. That's the truth of it. Because I have  
6 done two papers on the Protected Disclosures Act. No lawyer has done it. No judge.  
7 No solicitor has done it. I have done not only the Protected Disclosures Act, I have  
8 done the Amended Protected Disclosures Act. I know inside out of the Protected  
9 Disclosures Act and I know the power of it. And I can tell you if you knew what I  
10 knew you would know that I was a brilliant legal brain. So what do you make of  
11 that? Two papers that no lawyer -- why aren't any lawyers talking about the  
12 Protected Disclosures Act? It was done in Wicklow. Because it's too powerful,  
13 because it's too much, it's for the ordinary person and it's for the ordinary decent  
14 worker against the powerful. So it has to be preserved. It has to be -- acts of  
15 omission have to be introduced by alleged -- who would have put the acts of  
16 omission in? Do you think, you know, an ordinary work would know what an act of  
17 omission was?

18 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Glennon, did you want to come in again there?

19 DR CORA STACK: I'm sorry.

20 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Thank you. I'm not going to engage in an argument  
21 with you. You're here to answer questions. I suggest that if you have a complaint  
22 with lawyers you take it to the appropriate authority to have it investigated.

23 DR CORA STACK: You couldn't get any justice. You can't get any justice. There's  
24 no justice.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Paul O'Brien.

26 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. What can you say?  
27 We're here to discuss the presidency of this country to be quite honest with you.  
28 This is turning into a farce and a circus to be quite honest with you. No disrespect to  
29 you.

30 DR CORA STACK: No, I have --

31 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Excuse me, I haven't interrupted you. We're here  
32 to talk about the highest office in the land, and we're descending into a farce here.  
33 So can we have some respect for the highest office in this land please and we must  
34 be nearly at the ten minutes here at this stage so thank you.



1 DR CORA STACK: Sorry, what was your question?

2 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: I didn't have one.

3 CATHAOIRLEACH: We have one further question. Councillor O'Neill.

4 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Sorry, yeah, Dr Stack, can I just say I wish you the very  
5 best.

6 DR CORA STACK: Who are you representing?

7 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Sorry?

8 DR CORA STACK: Who are you representing?

9 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: I represent myself. I am an independent councillor. DR

10 CORA STACK: Yeah. Well, actually I have had an awful lot of emails from people  
11 like you who said fair play to you, and contrary to the feeling I have got here, have  
12 said fair play to you well done, we can't vote for you because we have to vote for X.  
13 And you would be very surprised by how people from all parties have written to me  
14 and have said well done and fair play to you and thank you very much. I am sorry if  
15 I come across --

16 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: You insulted no one. No, I just want to wish  
17 you -- you've definitely woken up the place anyway.

18 DR CORA STACK: Well, actually, that's what I would do in the Áras. And I  
19 respect the points that are made as differences. Like, there's different perspectives  
20 here. This lady had a point and I have to reflect on that later on. And this man here  
21 had a point and I'll reflect on it later on. But I am upset that you would take -- you  
22 know, I have integrity, I have deep integrity, but I was treated very badly in  
23 Tipperary today, and I am absolutely killed from the drive, so I am absolutely about  
24 to collapse. So I apologise, I am about to collapse.

25 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: You're all right.

26 DR CORA STACK: I was waiting for the question on the triple lock and Gaza.  
27 Where is that coming from?

28 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am afraid we are out of time now. Thank you Dr Stack.  
29 The time is up. So if anyone has any further questions they can ask you. Thank you.  
30 So the next candidate we have is Dr Gerben Uunk who has notified us he will no  
31 longer be present, and Mr Barry Wheeley-Row who is not present. So that's all the  
32 candidates. I am going to put in a for a time extension for another half an hour. Can  
33 I have a proposer and seconder, please? Proposed by Councillor O'Brien, seconded  
34 by Councillor Scott.

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I am just going to read out any of the candidates that we missed that hadn't notified us that they weren't going to be here. Is Professor Dolores Cahill here? She sent apologies. She won't be here. Professor Doctor Joseph Chikelue Obi? He hasn't -- or Ms Lucy-Anne O'Leary? Not present. So we will take a 15-minute recess which will bring us back at 20 past four. Thank you.

(Short recess.)

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, members. Rachel is going to read the roll call again before we get on to Item 2 on the agenda.

MS GILLESPIE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I will take another roll call now. Councillor Danny Alvey?

COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Mark Barry?

COUNCILLOR BARRY: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present remotely. Councillor Joe Behan?

COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present remotely. Councillor Sylvester Bourke?

COUNCILLOR BOURKE: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Melanie Corrigan?

CATHAOIRLEACH: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Avril Cronin? She has just stepped out. Councillor Erika Doyle?

COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Here.

MS GILLESPIE: Present online. Councillor Malacháí Duddy?

COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Anseo.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Gail Dunne? Not present. Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin?

COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Orla Finn?

COUNCILLOR FINN: Present.

MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Pat Fitzgerald?

COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Present.

- 1 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Tom Fortune?
- 2 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Present.
- 3 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Patsy Glennon?
- 4 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Present.
- 5 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Pat Kennedy?
- 6 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Present.
- 7 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Shane Langrell?
- 8 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: Present.
- 9 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Peir Leonard? Not present. Councillor Pat
- 10 Mahon?
- 11 COUNCILLOR MAHON: Present.
- 12 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Jason Mulhall?
- 13 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: Present.
- 14 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Miriam Murphy? Councillor Murphy was
- 15 present online. There's no answer there now. Councillor Ian Neary?
- 16 COUNCILLOR NEARY: Present.
- 17 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Dermot O'Brien?
- 18 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Present.
- 19 MS GILLESPIE: Present remotely. Councillor Paul O'Brien?
- 20 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Present.
- 21 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Gerry O'Neill?
- 22 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Anseo.
- 23 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Warren O'Toole? Not present. Councillor
- 24 Graham Richmond?
- 25 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: Present.
- 26 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Lourda Scott?
- 27 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Here.
- 28 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor John Snell?
- 29 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Present.
- 30 MS GILLESPIE: Present remotely. Councillor Peter Stapleton?
- 31 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: Present.
- 32 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Stephen Stokes?
- 33 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Present.
- 34 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Ned Whelan?

1 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: Present.

2 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Caroline Winstanley?

3 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Present.

4 MS GILLESPIE: Thank you.

5 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: Sorry, I had just stepped out.

6 MS GILLESPIE: Councillor Avril Cronin present. Thank you.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: So the second item on the agenda is to consider the  
8 nomination of one candidate for election to the Office of President in accordance  
9 with the Presidential Elections Act 1993. Before I ask for nominations proposals I  
10 want to Rachel to read out the voting procedure.

11 MS GILLESPIE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Just to clarify the voting procedure.  
12 Section 16 of the Presidential Elections Act 1993 states: "A Council of a county or a  
13 corporation of a county borough may by resolution resolve to nominate one named  
14 person to be a candidate at a Presidential Election."  
15

16 Wicklow County Council's Standing Order Item No. 21 deals with votes and  
17 divisions. Point D states: "Without prejudice to any enactment or other provisions  
18 of these standing orders requiring either the presence of a specified number or  
19 proportion of the members or that a specified number or proportion should vote in  
20 favour for the doing of any particular act, all acts of the Council which are reserved  
21 functions or questions duly coming or arising before a meeting of the Council shall  
22 be determined (a) by the majority of the members present in voting or (b) where  
23 there is an equality of votes by a second or casting vote of the person chairing the  
24 meeting which person shall have and may choose to exercise such a vote."  
25

26 To clarify, the procedure for Presidential Elections as agreed by the members is as  
27 follows. It will be open to the members not to nominate a candidate. If the intention  
28 to nominate a candidate the procedure for voting, once a candidate has been  
29 proposed and seconded, will involve a roll call. If multiple candidates, being more  
30 than two, are proposed Elected Members will be asked to state the name of the  
31 candidate they are voting for. The candidate with the least amount of votes will be  
32 eliminated. The process will continue until there are two candidates left. When  
33 there are two candidates the candidate receiving the majority of votes of the  
34 members present and voting will be nominated. Thank you.

1 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. So I have a few people looking to come in. The  
2 first to come in is Councillor Paul O'Brien.

3 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Can I just say well  
4 done today, Cathaoirleach, and on what was at times a difficult meeting. There's no  
5 other way of putting it. And I have to say well done to you, Rachel and Helen and  
6 all the staff who assisted most of us here today in what is our first Presidential  
7 Election using this process. Can I also say thank you to all the speakers here today,  
8 because as we all know as elected officials it is not easy to get up in front of a packed  
9 chamber and speak your mind. Most of them spoke from the heart today and most of  
10 them were very impressive, if not entertaining.

11

12 Can I also pay tribute to our outgoing President Michael D Higgins who in fairness  
13 to him has done this State proud. When he was elected, in fairness to Michael D  
14 Higgins, he parked his political allegiances at the door when he was elected  
15 President and he was a President for all the people of Ireland. He has been a  
16 campaigner for social justice and inclusion his whole life and he brought that  
17 experience to Áras an Uachtaráin, and to me he is a President all of us can be very  
18 proud of. Whoever is our next President will have a hard act to follow, I hope you  
19 all agree.

20

21 Today I came in with an open mind. I did declare on social media last week I  
22 wouldn't be for one candidate, and I am grateful that he didn't turn up here today. I  
23 am also reminded the people here that I am not whipped; this is my own decision  
24 here today and I exercise it as a duly elected representative of Wicklow County  
25 Council. I don't believe we have seen a successor here today to Michael D Higgins  
26 and I don't believe we should nominate someone here today for the sake of it.  
27 Therefore, I propose that Wicklow County Council resolve not to nominate a  
28 candidate for election to the office of President of Ireland. I know I will require a  
29 seconder and if I get a seconder it will also require a vote, which is democracy in  
30 action. I also respect the process that if candidates here haven't been proposed and  
31 seconded by a proposer and a seconder by fellow councillors I respect that right.

32

33 Cathaoirleach, I said earlier on that we live in a dangerous time and that's why I am  
34 going to be respectful here today as I have always been and always will be. Because

1 all of us have a mandate in here as elected representatives and we should be  
2 respecting each other's mandate as elected representatives. I have proposed that we  
3 do not nominate a candidate. I stand over that decision because I don't see a future  
4 President of Ireland in this chamber from the candidates that have come in. So thank  
5 you again, Cathaoirleach, for your time, your efforts today and well done. Thank  
6 you.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Brien. We have Councillor Joe  
8 Behan online is next.

9 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, and good afternoon, and good  
10 afternoon to my colleagues. I have been listening to the vote. Obviously I am not in  
11 the county at the moment. I just want to concur with the beginning of what  
12 Councillor O'Brien said in congratulating you, Cathaoirleach, in how you managed  
13 the meeting; a very unique meeting and you equipped yourself extremely well. And  
14 to Helen and Teresa and Rachel, and everybody else involved on the administrative  
15 side in organising what was a very useful meeting today and an informative one as  
16 well.

17  
18 To cut to the chase, there was one person that I feel would be an excellent President  
19 but she did not attend today, but she is still a candidate for consideration and she is a  
20 person who I think made a huge contribution to the national debate when discussing  
21 the child and family referendum some time ago. In fact, her interventions in that  
22 debate mirrored how the people of the country believed and how they voted  
23 subsequently. A percentage of people agreed with the stance she took at the time.  
24 That person is Maria Steen. I believe she has essential human qualities. She would  
25 be an excellent President.

26  
27 The three candidates we're aware of so far have particular views and they might be  
28 considered to be on the more liberal side of society and of politics. Maria Steen  
29 would be a more conservative figure in this country, and while I may not agree with  
30 some of what she says or all of what she says I think in order for us to have debate  
31 that's meaningful in the Presidential Election it would be worthwhile having a person  
32 of her stature as a candidate, and on that basis, Cathaoirleach, I want to propose  
33 Maria Steen. Thank you.

34 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Behan. Rachel is just going to come

1 in.

2 MS GILLESPIE: Councillor Behan, just to clarify, Maria Steen didn't seek a  
3 nomination from Wicklow County Council.

4 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Yeah, I gathered that from she wasn't on the list of names,  
5 but my understanding is that she is a candidate and I don't see that barring me from  
6 proposing her name.

7 MS GILLESPIE: Prior to the closure of the meeting we would have to get in contact  
8 with her and confirm that she wishes to be nominated and confirmation of her being  
9 an eligible candidate, so I am not sure if that is possible. But as I said she didn't  
10 nominate herself, Joe, so...

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Behan.

12 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: I would like to second Councillor Behan.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: You will have to wait your turn.

14 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: I don't think she has to be here today.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: But she hasn't sought nomination. So Councillor Stokes.

16 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. And can I commend  
17 you, Cathaoirleach, on your work today, and all of the staff. It's been I felt very  
18 impartial and very fair, so thank you for that. I would like to congratulate all of the  
19 candidates that put themselves forward. It's not easy putting yourself forward for a  
20 public office let alone the presidency, and I acknowledge that many of you have  
21 travelled from the four corners of Ireland.

22

23 I would like to make a proposal. I would like to propose Lorna McCormack for the  
24 presidency. As a dedicated heritage specialist, EU Climate Pact Ambassador, artist,  
25 author and agri inventor, Lorna has spent her career championing the values of  
26 sustainability, inclusion, cultural preservation and social progress. She has had the  
27 privilege of working in partnership with charities, county councils and numerous  
28 Government departments, and a wide network of farmers, artists, schools and  
29 colleges, and the community as a whole across Ireland. Lorna's work is rooted in  
30 community and driven by purpose. She is proud to have led nationally recognised  
31 initiatives that blend climate action, education and heritage, empowering the next  
32 generation with the skills and values to meet the challenges of the future. In  
33 addition, Lorna brings extensive experience from the disability and deaf sector,  
34 childcare and older people. Roles which have given her invaluable insight into the

1 lives of those with additional needs and care. This has strengthened her commitment  
2 to building an Ireland that is truly inclusive, compassionate and fair. And now more  
3 than ever Ireland needs a President who can unify tradition, community and  
4 innovation, who can celebrate our past while confidently leading us into a  
5 sustainable and inclusive future. With forward thinking, she would be deeply  
6 honoured to serve in this role and represent the people of Ireland with authenticity,  
7 empathy and vision. Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach.

8 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Stokes. Councillor Lourda Scott.

9 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Yeah, thank you, Cathaoirleach. I just want to echo my  
10 thanks to yourself and the staff for running this meeting so successfully. It's my first  
11 time through this process and it's a process that I do take very seriously. I do want to  
12 state for the record that although I am a member of a political party I am not whipped  
13 in my decision here today. I do want to extend my thanks to the candidates who  
14 have gone to the trouble of putting through their information through email, some of  
15 them sent their email information through, and for turning up and spending the time  
16 here and for fielding questions. That's all appreciated. And I have listened very,  
17 very carefully to everybody's words today. For those that sent on information  
18 through email, I have read very carefully what was sent. I have done some research  
19 on the backgrounds of several of the candidates as well. And I suppose taking all  
20 that on board, I have asked myself here today do I see somebody with the stature and  
21 experience to be the next President of Ireland, and my answer to that is no, I have  
22 not. And I don't believe in nominating for the sake of nomination, so I would like to  
23 second Councillor O'Brien's proposal.

24 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Scott. Councillor Ian Neary.

25 COUNCILLOR NEARY: Thanks very much, Cathaoirleach. I want to say thanks to  
26 every single one of yous for coming out today. It is a very, very big achievement  
27 just to get here, so fair play to every single one of yous. It is much appreciated. But  
28 from all the candidates today the best spoken I feel was Nick Delahanty. I thought  
29 he done excellently and I would like to propose him. He is young, he is honest, he is  
30 direct, he's passionate, and his ethos is in family values so I think he would be a  
31 prime candidate for the Presidency of Ireland.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Neary. Councillor Malachai Duddy.

33 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach. Likewise, I would  
34 like to echo what has been said and thank all those people who have put themselves



1 before the Council for consideration. I am sure a certain amount of time and effort  
2 has been invested in that. I think the function we have is a solemn constitutional  
3 function, and I think of those people who addressed us and went to the effort to come  
4 and address us I would like to second the nomination of Lorna McCormack. Go  
5 raibh maith agat.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Duddy. Do we have a seconder for  
7 the nomination for Nick Delehanty? No. Okay. And, Councillor O'Neill, you're  
8 happy to second Maria Steen? Councillor O'Neill? Councillor O'Neill, did you  
9 propose you're going to second Maria Steen?

10 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Yeah, I second Maria Steen, yeah.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay. Well, the first proposal was that we not nominate a  
12 candidate. If that isn't carried we have to then take a recess and contact Maria Steen  
13 to make sure that she is willing to accept the nomination from this Council. So I  
14 think we will have to go to the first proposal first before we go on to that. Sorry,  
15 Councillor Snell. Press your light again.

16 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Yeah, thanks, Cathaoirleach. I suppose first and for most I  
17 want to thank everyone that put their names forward, not just the people who  
18 presented here today, but there's people racing up and down the country here trying  
19 to get nominations through the County Councils. I think it is a tough system, it  
20 really is, on anyone that wants to go through, get four local authorities. It is a big  
21 ask, it is a huge task, and I don't envy anyone who has to go through that route. And  
22 even to seek the 20 people through whether they be senators or TDs it is proving  
23 very, very difficult. At the moment we only have three people in the race. If I am  
24 being honest, one of the people is someone that I would hold up there very high in  
25 regards to what they stand for, but I am also -- when I look around and I hear of  
26 people being told that they can't support a democratic process, that they have actually  
27 to be a hindrance, that doesn't sit well with me to be honest. I think if that was to be  
28 implemented at local level, put yourself in the position of the people behind you who  
29 presented here today, if you're being stopped from putting people forward it is not  
30 democracy. I think that the people of County Wicklow, irrespective of what our  
31 personal opinion or our personal views on anyone that wants to stand, ultimately this  
32 is an election where the people of Ireland will decide. Not even just the people of  
33 County Wicklow. The people of Ireland will decide. And I'd love to see people  
34 getting on the ticket, and for that reason I am not going to stand in the way of

1 someone getting on the ticket here today. I think they should be encouraged.

2

3 I do think that your first piece of work, Cathaoirleach, needs to be to clarify. It  
4 would be very, very difficult for the members of this local authority to pin their  
5 colours to the mast if somebody -- if they're not allowed go forward, so I believe you  
6 need that legal opinion before we actually have your first vote in regards to Maria  
7 Steen. You have a nomination and you have a seconder.

8 MS O'GORMAN: Councillor Snell, just to confirm, it is not a legal opinion. It is  
9 just that whether Maria Steen is willing to take a nomination from Wicklow, because  
10 she didn't look for one from this local authority. That's all it is. So there is no legal  
11 impediment to her being nominated. Just to clarify that for members.

12 COUNCILLOR SNELL: So in the absence, if it's not a legal opinion, is somebody  
13 contacting Ms Steen as we speak?

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: I don't know if we have contact details for her.

15 MS PURCELL: We will. If the first motion is defeated, then we will ask for a  
16 recess to contact her.

17 COUNCILLOR SNELL: You really could have had the first vote before you had  
18 nominations and seconders if you were going to go down that line. Like, you have  
19 created a very confusing scenario here for everyone in the chamber in my opinion.  
20 But if you're going to go straight to the first vote to see does the garden county of  
21 Wicklow nominate somebody or have the choice to nominate somebody, because it's  
22 not if we nominate, it's whether we believe that we want to put somebody forward,  
23 that that's what the people of Wicklow want, well then you're going to go to that vote  
24 first. I am fundamentally against standing in the way of any of these candidates.  
25 And I think if you're not going to revisit this you have two nominations of which we  
26 don't know if one of them wants their name to go forward. Do you not see the irony  
27 in that? That you now only have one person. And without any clarity, I have to say  
28 that, you know, it is a contest, and as a contest there doesn't seem to be -- and I hope  
29 I am not speaking ahead of others, but there doesn't seem to be any other  
30 nominations coming forward. And if there isn't, well then, I would second  
31 Councillor Ian Neary's proposal, because I think it is a contest, as is the Presidential  
32 Election. So I would be seconding Councillor Ian Neary's proposal for Mr Nick  
33 Delehanty.

34

1 But I honestly believe you should have had the first vote first without all of this  
2 shenanigans. And certainly it is very disingenuous on everybody, including the  
3 candidates, if we've someone who is not here and we don't know if they want the  
4 nomination or not.

5 CATHAOIRLEACH: We were allowing everybody put in their nominations and  
6 now we will go to the first. So you're happy to second Nick Delehanty as a  
7 candidate?

8 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Because I want a contest.

9 CATHAOIRLEACH: So we will go to that if the first proposal isn't carried. So are  
10 you happy for that?

11 COUNCILLOR SNELL: I really think, Cathaoirleach, you should have done that  
12 first, but, yeah, I'm happy to go ahead with what you are doing now.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, members, one other candidate has just presented  
14 herself and we did say that we will allow them. So I know we're about to take a vote  
15 but I am just going to check do we want to go ahead? Is the floor happy to accept  
16 the other candidate? Anne O'Leary. I need a proposer and seconder on that.  
17 Councillor Finn and Councillor Duddy then. We just have to -- if Ms O'Leary is here  
18 would they like to come up to the podium.

19 MS LUCY-ANNE O'LEARY: Thank you so much.

20 CATHAOIRLEACH: So, Ms O'Leary, sorry just before you start, it's five minutes  
21 speaking time and ten minutes for questions and answers. And after the five minutes  
22 we will ring the bell just to let you know your time is up. So whenever you are ready  
23 then you can let us know.

24 MS LUCY-ANNE O'LEARY: Thank you. I beg your pardon. I am just after  
25 coming straight from Galway, I came as quickly as I could and thank you so much  
26 for this. I appreciate it.

27

28 My name is Lucy-Anne O'Leary, and I thank you again so much for this. I really do  
29 appreciate it. I stand before you today because I believe the Presidency of Ireland is  
30 more than an office. It is a living symbol of who we are and who we aspire to be as  
31 people. I believe I am qualified to be President of Ireland because I bring a unique  
32 combination of leadership, compassion and international experience that aligns with  
33 my core values and responsibilities and the responsibilities of Uachtarán na  
34 hÉireann. For over two decades I have dedicated my career of public service, human

1 advocacy. My leadership role as CEO/director across multiple charities, human  
2 organisations and global initiatives have equipped me with deep experience in  
3 governance, crisis response and community empowerment. I have consistently  
4 demonstrated the ability to unite diverse groups, build trust and inspire collaboration  
5 while in times of peace or in times of great need. My academic background in  
6 diplomacy, political science and international relations further compliments this  
7 practical experience, giving me the skills to navigate complex global challenges with  
8 wisdom and vision.

9  
10 As President I would bring forward-thinking leadership, rooted in compassion, moral  
11 clarity and a steadfast commitment to justice and inclusion. Above all, I believe that  
12 the presidency should embody the spirit of Ireland, its people, its dignity, unity,  
13 resilience and generosity. My life's work has been dedicated to those values and I  
14 am ready to carry them in forward in service in this nation. My presidency will not  
15 be about me; it will be about the nation and its people and its future together. I want  
16 to serve as a President because I believe in an Ireland that leaves no one behind, an  
17 Ireland where compassion, fairness, inclusion and dignity are not just words that we  
18 speak but values we live by. An Ireland where every voice matters, where difference  
19 is respected and where community is cherished. As President, I will strive to  
20 embody these values. The presidency offers a rare opportunity to unite and to  
21 inspire, and I will use it to amplify unheard voices, to highlight the importance to  
22 unify and inspire. I will use it to amplify all of these things and remind ourselves  
23 that we as a nation when we work together we are stronger.

24  
25 Through public engagement, cultural events and outreach I will bring the country  
26 together by focusing on inclusion and diversity, homelessness, which we will shine a  
27 light on, on this urgent need for safe homes. Because homelessness is not just a  
28 housing issue, it is a homeless one. It is one where I have worked a lot in actually,  
29 and that is what I believe the presidency is. I beg your pardon; I have just come in  
30 from the car. This is what I believe the presidency is. It is a bridge from the people  
31 to the higher office of the President. The presidency in the Constitution is Head of  
32 State. The Government are dealing with issues on the ground.

33 CATHAOIRLEACH: One minute left. Thank you.

34 MS LUCY-ANNE O'LEARY: Okay. Thank you so much. So, in summary, I will

1 seek to serve as a unifying and inclusive voice for all of the people of Ireland, rooted  
2 in compassion, moral clarity, and I will foster an Ireland built on dignity, equality  
3 and justice. As Uachtarán na hÉireann I will uphold the Constitution with respect  
4 and I will serve the people with heart, I will listen, I will advocate and I will strive to  
5 embody the best of who we are together. Go raibh maith agat. Thank you. Thank  
6 you very much for your time.

7 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Do you want to wait and we will see  
8 if there are any questions from the floor?

9 MS LUCY-ANNE O'LEARY: Sure.

10 CATHAOIRLEACH. Thank you. Does anyone have any questions for  
11 Ms O'Leary? Councillor Tom Fortune.

12 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Lucy-Anne, thanks very much  
13 for your presentation. I want to compliment you on rushing here to do it. I think it is  
14 grossly unfair that you're put in that position. Just the system, the way it works, I  
15 don't know if you heard Councillor Snell earlier or not, but he kind of summarised it  
16 very well. I just think it is unfair the way it is done. I think you've done  
17 exceptionally well, and to come into a gathering like this and rushed for a very  
18 important event for you is a big compliment.

19 MS LUCY-ANNE O'LEARY: Thank you.

20 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: And you presented very well, and the best of luck.

21 MS LUCY-ANNE O'LEARY: Thank you very much.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Have we any further questions? No. Again  
23 thank you for attending.

24 MS LUCY-ANNE O'LEARY: Thank you very much.

25 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry it is such an exhausting day.

26 MS LUCY-ANNE O'LEARY: Not at all. It was an honour. Thank you so much.

27 CATHAOIRLEACH: We are just going to confirm on the proposal to nominate  
28 Maria Steen. She has declared to other councils, so on that basis we can take her as a  
29 candidate but we just have to -- Helen?

30 MS PURCELL: She has confirmed that she is happy to accept the nomination, and  
31 she is eligible.

32 CATHAOIRLEACH: So she is eligible and she is happy to confirm she will take the  
33 nomination. That brings us back to our proposals that we have in. So we have the  
34 first one to come in. So I am going to ask Rachel --

1 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Sorry, Rachel.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, no questions from the floor. Sorry. Councillor  
3 Fortune?

4 MS O'GORMAN: There's no questions from the floor. There's no questions from  
5 the floor.

6 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry.

7 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. No, I am just thinking, that  
8 last presenter came in, you know, having put herself out tremendously hard to be  
9 here and we're going to go ahead with what has been proposed today. I think we  
10 need a five-minute break to respect that potential candidate.

11 CATHAOIRLEACH: Absolutely.

12 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I think it is only manners to do that.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: You're proposing that?

14 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: I propose that.

15 CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I have a seconder?

16 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: I propose that.

17 CATHAOIRLEACH: We will take a five-minute recess then. Thank you.

18

19 (Short recess.)

20

21 MS GILLESPIE: Councillor Danny Alvey?

22 COUNCILLOR ALVEY: Present.

23 MS GILLESPIE: My apologies. I am just running another roll call here. So can I  
24 just check, Councillor Joe Behan?

25 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Present.

26 MS GILLESPIE: Present online. Councillor Mark Barry?

27 COUNCILLOR BARRY: Present.

28 MS GILLESPIE: Councillor Erika Doyle?

29 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Present.

30 MS GILLESPIE: Thank you. Councillor Malachai Duddy?

31 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Present.

32 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Gail Dunne?

33 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: Present.

34 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin?

- 1 COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN:  
2 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin?  
3 COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN:  
4 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Orla Finn?  
5 COUNCILLOR FINN: Present.  
6 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Pat Fitzgerald?  
7 COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: Present.  
8 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Tom Fortune?  
9 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Present.  
10 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Patsy Glennon?  
11 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Present.  
12 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Pat Kennedy?  
13 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: Present.  
14 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Shane Langrell?  
15 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: Present.  
16 MS GILLESPIE: Councillor Peir Leonard? Not present. Councillor Pat Mahon?  
17 COUNCILLOR MAHON: Present.  
18 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Jason Mulhall?  
19 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: Her.  
20 MS GILLESPIE: Councillor Miriam Murphy? Present online. We may have to call  
21 her for the vote. Councillor Ian Neary?  
22 COUNCILLOR NEARY: Present.  
23 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Dermot O'Brien?  
24 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: Anseo.  
25 MS GILLESPIE: Councillor Paul O'Brien?  
26 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: Present.  
27 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Gerry O'Neill?  
28 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Anseo.  
29 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Warren O'Toole? Not present. Councillor  
30 Graham Richmond?  
31 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: Here.  
32 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Lourda Scott?  
33 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: Here.  
34 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor John Snell?

1 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Here.

2 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Peter Stapleton?

3 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: Present.

4 MS GILLESPIE: Councillor Stephen Stokes?

5 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Present.

6 MS GILLESPIE: Councillor Ned Whelan?

7 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: Present.

8 MS GILLESPIE: Present. Councillor Caroline Winstanley?

9 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: Present.

10 MS GILLESPIE: Thank you. Present.

11 MS PURCELL: Sorry for those remote, we just have a slight technical issue, we'll  
12 be with you in a second.

13

14 (Short pause in proceedings due to a technical issue.)

15

16 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Joe Behan just wanted to come in before we go to  
17 the next side.

18 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. As you know, I think Maria  
19 Steen has confirmed that she would like to be -- would be happy to accept the  
20 nomination obviously. I think her personal circumstances where she suffered a  
21 family bereavement the last couple of days, and that's probably the reason. I do want  
22 to put forward that nomination.

23

24 On that note, Cathaoirleach, can I just say that having listened to all the candidates  
25 and having heard the proposals I would propose that we actually take a vote on the  
26 individual candidates first rather than a blanket refusal at the very start, just to allow  
27 people to express their opinion for or against the people proposed, rather than having  
28 a blanket out of every candidate at the first vote.

29 CATHAOIRLEACH: Councillor Erika Doyle.

30 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Sorry my phone won't allow  
31 me to use the video, apologies. I'm wondering what the new criteria is now for  
32 nominating a candidate as we can nominate, it appears, a candidate, seek a  
33 nomination for somebody who is not present? So what is the criteria now for  
34 nominating a candidate? I thought we had a criteria but now it seems to have opened



1 up, so I am just wondering can we nominate anybody who volunteers, say? Thank  
2 you.

3 MS PURCELL: Yeah, just to clarify, Councillor Doyle. We had agreed a policy  
4 how we would deal with people who expressed an interest, but it is open until the  
5 time of the meeting, and until the end of the meeting I suppose, for people to actually  
6 be put forward. And Maria Steen had indicated to other councillors, to other  
7 councils that she was interested in running and her credentials had been checked by  
8 them. We have also contacted her and she has confirmed that she is eligible.  
9 Basically we need to ensure that a person is eligible in order to nominate them.  
10 That's what the legislation states. And she has confirmed that she is over 35 and an  
11 Irish citizen, and her documentation can be submitted if required before a nomination  
12 form is completed, if she is successful.

13 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Councillor O'Neill.

14 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach, yeah. I just want to concur with  
15 Councillor Behan there, and I was talking to Maria only yesterday too, and she's  
16 going through a rough time at the moment with a family bereavement. I know she  
17 expresses, the way today went, her gratitude to the staff of Wicklow County Council  
18 there. I want to second Maria and give her a chance here. I think it's going to be a  
19 very strange election as such, and one of the candidates earlier on pointed out that it  
20 could be a very low turnout, and I think unless we really have a proper election put  
21 in place here with good candidates, you know, that's what's going to happen here. I  
22 am absolutely disgusted with the line that the leader of Fine Gael has taken, and I  
23 know in my heart and talking to Fine Gael people not only in this county, in other  
24 counties throughout the week, that they're not really happy about it.

25  
26 I would like to put that to one side. At this very last minute I would appeal to  
27 councillors here to, you know, look at a real alternative. That Maria, she's an  
28 articulate lady. She's been involved in different referendum before. You know, she's  
29 branded maybe at times by leaders of the two main parties here as being, you know,  
30 the likes of being antiabortion and that. I mean there's a lot more. Maria Steen is a  
31 very articulate person with plenty of knowledge on a lot of issues, you know. And  
32 I'd have no problem whatsoever in seconding Maria. And I'd appeal to councillors  
33 even at this very last minute that she would be a real challenge to what we have. I  
34 mean we have at the moment there, we have a Fianna Fáil, Jim Gavin, we have Fine

1 Gael, and there's a lot of questions and chatter over those people and their association  
2 with other groups and that, and especially the Orange Order, you know. That there, I  
3 don't think there's anyone going to be happy with that here.

4

5 So I think a real challenge and make a real election of it. Honest to God, I think if  
6 the people of Wicklow got the guts here today to say, look, we'll leave Maria Steen a  
7 chance and support her. So I'll leave it at that. I just send that appeal to my fellow  
8 councillors, you know, to give her that chance of getting her name on the ticket. I  
9 know that she's up against it from every angle, you know. From the liberals and  
10 whatever. Maria is a very down to earth, honest to God person, a nice person, a good  
11 Irish woman and I'd ask everyone to maybe consider her here at this very last minute.

12 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor O'Neill.

13 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Go raibh maith agat, Cathaoirleach.

14 CATHAOIRLEACH: I am just aware now we only have our extension until half  
15 five. So, Councillor Richmond, you wanted to come in there.

16 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: Sorry, I'll be brief. It's just in response to Councillor  
17 O'Neill's last comment, and it is not in relation to the proposal of Maria Steen. But  
18 to call into question someone's character for having a relation who was in the Orange  
19 Order from the border counties, a member of the Presbyterian community who were  
20 the founding part of the United Irish Men in 1978 has no point and shouldn't be  
21 stated in any elected chamber. Thank you.

22 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Councillor Richmond. So we have to take the  
23 first nomination first -- sorry, first motion first. Sorry, it's been a long day. So I am  
24 going to go to Rachel here and she's going to read it out and do the roll.

25 MS GILLESPIE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I will now conduct a vote -- sorry.

26 CATHAOIRLEACH: Sorry, before we do, are there any further nominations that  
27 we will go to if this isn't carried? Just before, I want to be clear. No. Okay. Thank  
28 you.

29 MS GILLESPIE: Thank you. I will now conduct a vote. Please clearly state  
30 whether you are for or against the proposal by Councillor Paul O'Brien and seconded  
31 by Councillor Lourda Scott for Wicklow County Council not to nominate a  
32 presidential candidate. To clarify: If you do not wish for the Council to nominate a  
33 candidate you should vote for the motion; if you do wish for the Council to nominate  
34 a candidate you should vote against the motion. I will go to Councillor Danny

1 Alvey?  
2 COUNCILLOR ALVEY: For.  
3 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Mark Barry?  
4 COUNCILLOR BARRY: For.  
5 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Joe Behan?  
6 COUNCILLOR BEHAN: Against.  
7 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Sylvester Bourke?  
8 COUNCILLOR BOURKE: For.  
9 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Melanie Corrigan?  
10 CATHAOIRLEACH: For.  
11 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Avril Cronin?  
12 COUNCILLOR CRONIN: For.  
13 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Erika Doyle?  
14 COUNCILLOR DOYLE: For.  
15 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Malachai Duddy?  
16 COUNCILLOR DUDDY: Against.  
17 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Gail Dunne?  
18 COUNCILLOR DUNNE: For.  
19 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Louise Fenelon Gaskin?  
20 COUNCILLOR FENELON GASKIN: For.  
21 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Orla Finn?  
22 COUNCILLOR FINN: Against.  
23 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Pat Fitzgerald?  
24 COUNCILLOR FITZGERALD: For.  
25 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Tom Fortune?  
26 COUNCILLOR FORTUNE: Against.  
27 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Patsy Glennon?  
28 COUNCILLOR GLENNON: Against.  
29 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Pat Kennedy?  
30 COUNCILLOR KENNEDY: For.  
31 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Shane Langrell?  
32 COUNCILLOR LANGRELL: For.  
33 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Peir Leonard? Not present. Councillor Pat  
34 Mahon?

- 1 COUNCILLOR MAHON: For.
- 2 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Jason Mulhall?
- 3 COUNCILLOR MULHALL: Against.
- 4 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Miriam Murphy?
- 5 MS PURCELL: Councillor Murphy doesn't have sound, so we are going to read out  
6 the motion to her again and then ask for her vote.
- 7 MS GILLESPIE: Please clearly state whether you are for or against the proposal by  
8 Councillor Paul O'Brien, seconded by Councillor Lourda Scott, for Wicklow County  
9 Council not to nominate a presidential candidate.
- 10 COUNCILLOR MURPHY: For.
- 11 MS GILLESPIE: For. Thank you. Councillor Ian Neary?
- 12 COUNCILLOR NEARY: Against.
- 13 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Dermot O'Brien?
- 14 COUNCILLOR DERMOT O'BRIEN: For.
- 15 MS GILLESPIE: For Councillor Paul O'Brien?
- 16 COUNCILLOR PAUL O'BRIEN: For.
- 17 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Gerry O'Neill?
- 18 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: Against, against, against.
- 19 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Warren O'Toole? Not present. Councillor  
20 Graham Richmond?
- 21 COUNCILLOR RICHMOND: For.
- 22 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Lourda Scott?
- 23 COUNCILLOR SCOTT: For.
- 24 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor John Snell?
- 25 COUNCILLOR SNELL: Against.
- 26 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Peter Stapleton?
- 27 COUNCILLOR STAPLETON: For.
- 28 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Stephen Stokes?
- 29 COUNCILLOR STOKES: Against.
- 30 MS GILLESPIE: Against. Councillor Ned Whelan?
- 31 COUNCILLOR WHELAN: For.
- 32 MS GILLESPIE: For. Councillor Caroline Winstanley?
- 33 COUNCILLOR WINSTANLEY: For. That is 20 votes in favour of no nomination,  
34 10 votes against no nomination, and 2 members not present.

1 COUNCILLOR O'NEILL: That's a pure and utter disgrace.

2 CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Thank you, members. The meeting is over. I  
3 just want to thank everyone for giving their time, making representations, and all the  
4 members for attending the meeting and for the respect that the candidates have all  
5 shown. I also want to thank Helen, Rachel and Teresa for all their work over the last  
6 few days and weeks in organising this meeting. Thank you.

7

8 (Hearing concluded at 5:23 pm)

9

10

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