

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

ON

MONDAY, 20TH JUNE 2022 AT 2.00 P.M.

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CATHAOIRLEACH: Good afternoon, members. You are very welcome to our Annual General Meeting. A very important day in the calendar of the Council. Before we move on, I just want to check the link, remote link to make sure that members can hear us remotely? All hear us?

CLLR FERRIS: Yes, we can.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, thank you. We are just going to hand you over to Helen for a roll call and meet etiquette.

ADMINISTRATOR: I would like to welcome everyone to the meeting. It's great to have so many people in the chamber to welcome the press and members of the public who are here remotely and in person. To remind the elected members if they lose connectivity to ring, either myself or Teresa to let us know and we will ensure we get you back into the meeting. I will now go ahead with the roll call.

[ROLL CALL TAKEN]

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, members, we move on. Just before I go to the election of Cathaoirleach, I just want to reflect on my year as Cathaoirleach. I suppose it's been a quick year, since last June. An eventful year. When I came into the chamber last June to an empty chamber for the hand over from the outgoing Cathaoirleach, Cllr Kennedy. It was a very strange experience not having any members in the area here. I suppose at this time we were still dealing with Covid and had become used to lockdowns. There was a nervous tension across the country, wondering how long Covid would keep us away from living our day-to-day living experiences. First, I want to thank our staff on how the staff managed the pandemic and the role they played in helping communities across the county. Covid has changed our lives and some of these changes have been a positive, with opportunities in terms of remote working, increased family time, more engagement in communities, the economic benefit of remote working will enhance our work in the community. Sadly, Covid took its toll in our communities, and I would like to take this opportunity to remember all those who lost their lives to Covid and in particular, their grieving families at this time. I would ask you to take a moment.

Thank you. We went from total Zoom meetings, which I personally hope will never happen again, telling members you are on mute, and God knows hearing what else is on the end of the line at times, particularly with Cllr Bourke, I think

he was selling barley at one point, to hybrid meetings and now a full return to normality where councillors can attend in person if they wish. It's great to see you all here today.

I spoke last year about two important areas of the Council, that I wanted to focus on during my tenure as Cathaoirleach. Firstly housing. My first official duty in June of last year was to welcome President Higgins to Greystones. He spoke passionately about housing and the homeless situation we have in our country. When chatting to the President I explained we had ambitious plans in Wicklow to provide social housing and our zoning policy. It's therefore fitting that one of my last duties this year was to officially open over 80 social houses across Wicklow and Bray District. There is currently an ambitious target in Wicklow County Council of over 1500 homes through build Part 8 acquisitions over the next three years. We have such a wonderful work being done by our housing section that the President last week referenced Wicklow as an example for the country in our building and support mechanisms that we have in place.

This excellent work is led by the Director, Joe Lane and I would like to thank him and the staff in housing for their dedication in making sure that Wicklow continues to deliver homes.

My second area of focus was on investment into our county. This is something I am and have been passionate about over the last 12 months. I urge the management to apply for as much funding as possible for Wicklow and I think we have done this, and we should continue to keep this as a priority going forward. The Urban Regeneration Fund announces significant funding for Bray Harbour in approximately 7 million. We got funding for part 2 of the public realm works that are currently under way in Arklow.

The Rural Regeneration Scheme awarded one million for the regeneration of Blessington Town Centre and Newtownmountkennedy received one million.

A further 280,000 of an investment into Bray Healthy Communities programme. Apart from the successful applications across the county, by various sporting clubs and on the sports capital allocations, Wicklow County Council had four successful applications in Wicklow, Arklow and Greystones. The investment of over nine million through the NTA for active travel and public realm projects was very welcome with further investments expected this year. The announcement of one million by the Chief Executive for the Sustainable Transport Rural Scheme will benefit rural communities across the

county. The local improvement scheme provided 900,000 in funding for 14 projects across the districts. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Roads Department in particular for their dedication and work in achieving these projects across the county.

On the 26th of February, we woke up to the news of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and little did we know about the displacement of Ukrainians that would follow. Like many other countries Ireland was asked to help in terms of supporting families that had to flee from conflict and found themselves homeless. The response from the people of Ireland was incredible. With very taken in over 35,000 people into Ireland with over 13,330 to county Wicklow to date, which is a staggering figure. A community response forum was started to co-ordinate refugees. The forum has brought together, state, private, community and voluntary organisations as a level to support this emergency. The Council secured emergency accommodation across the county in hotels, guest houses and leisure centres. And I want to pay tribute to the Council staff who worked tirelessly to ensure they were treated with the dignity and respect they deserve

Moving on, I want to recognise the achievements of Wicklow County Council last year. It was crowned Council of the Year at a recent awards ceremony at the Crowne Plaza in Dublin. Council of the year recognised a local authority which has gone above and beyond for the people of the community by developing innovative projects and initiatives which improve and enhance aspects of environmental cultural and economic aspects of our community lives.

This came as Wicklow County Council won six others in those awards. This was truly a magnificent achievement by all involved. It was also my pleasure to welcome Wicklow County Council at the Pride of Place awards in Killarney where Kiltegan won an award for their dedication in the community. We had other successes in the Irish Council of Social Housing awards. They won an award and the first Ever Public Choice award. During the year we had the openings of Wicklow Library and County Archives and Rathdrum Public Library both are proving a huge success in their areas. I want to mention our last Cathaoirleach who had the honour of unveiling a state of Ronnie Delaney in Arklow, a proud day for Ronnie and the people of Arklow.

Some other projects completed over the year, Fitzwilliam Square Civic Space Bray Seafront Plaza. The N11 junction, bog meadow. The N81 realignment. The

solar car park at County Buildings. Further investment into the Clermont campus. Funding was also received for the Abbey Grounds in Wicklow to just name a few.

It's also important to recognise the districts and the works that they do and the projects that have been carried out across the county over the last 12 months. I want to thank everyone, all staff involved to make sure that that happened.

The County Development Plan played a big part of my year as Cathaoirleach, with my constant engagement with the planning department led by Sorcha and her team. Engaging with members to ensure that the work was done to the satisfaction of all councillors and parties. While the plan is not finished, I believe that most of the contentious issues have been dealt with and I want to thank you for your engagement to the satisfactory job done.

If I could say one thing that is paramount for me going forward with the relationship between management and councillors, that is the word communication. Most of the problems or issues that occurred over the year as a result of poor communication. I believe this is something that needs to be kept at the forefront of every department in the Council. Again, I was ably assisted by my last Cathaoirleach, Cllr Tommy Annesley and I had to call on him on a few occasions particularly when Covid knocked me back and I want to thank you, Tommy for all your support during the year.

We welcomed a new CE during the year, Brian Gleeson, after the departure of Frank Curran. I would like to take this opportunity to recognise Frank Curran's achievements over the four years that he was with us. In my opinion he laid strong foundations for Wicklow County Council going forward. I just want to put on record my sincere thanks to Frank for what he did over those four years.

Moving on to Brian, our new Chief Executive. I think Brian is doing a wonderful job and has fitted in very well to his role. I think he is five or six months, and we are seeing the benefits of what Brian can bring to the position. I want to thank all the directors for their support and availability, Joe Lane, Michael Nicholson, Breege Kilkenny, Leonora Elaine and Breda and everyone I have worked with over the past year.

A very special commendation to my close colleague, Helen Purcell. I have sat beside her for the whole year and it's been a pleasure. Helen's knowledge of

policy and procedure guided me through the year, something that I might not have been very strong on, but thank you, Helen for all your work.

I want to thank my wonderful wife, Rhona, who is here today.

She came into an empty chamber last year, so it wasn't very much fun for her. She is really here really to make sure I give back the chain and make sure I get out of this position, but anyway! Rhona, thank you very much for everything you have done. I suppose on a more serious note we all have families that we need their support to do this role and without their support I don't think it would be easy to be a councillor or do this job, so I want to just pay tribute to all the families of the members here who give their time, selfless to make sure that you can get the opportunity to represent your county.

Finally, members, it has been an absolute honour and privilege to have held the position of Cathaoirleach. Nine years ago, I never thought I would be elected as a councillor let alone to ever hold the position as a Cathaoirleach. I want to thank all the members of your council for your support. I spoke last year about mutual respect, and I do believe I treated everyone equally I believe you extended the role of Cathaoirleach with the same respect.

I would like to think that I have done the best to represent my county to the best of my ability, it's something that I have always lived by, if you can just be the best, you can be. So, I think I have done the best I can do with the Cathaoirleach's role, and I want to extend my support to the new Cathaoirleach and last Cathaoirleach for their coming year ahead. So again, just finally thank you to everyone for all your support during the year. [Applause]

ADMINISTRATOR: Before we continue with the meeting, I want to note that Cllr Bourke is present. Can you hear us? Cllr Bourke? You are on mute.

CLLR BOURKE: There is no escaping mute.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Sylvester Bourke, can you hear us now?

ADMINISTRATOR: Okay we will come back to that.

CATHAOIRLEACH: I want to bring in the Chief Executive before I open it up to the members.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I would like to thank the Cathaoirleach for all his help and support during my time as Chief Executive, since January. I am sure my predecessor, Frank Curran would say the exact

same for all the support he got himself. What I would say about Shay is he always has the best interests of the county at heart, and he never shies away from making tough decisions when he believes it's the right thing to do. That is what leadership is all about. I think Shay has done an excellent job leading the county over the past 12 months.

On a personal level I was delighted for him when the restrictions opened up earlier this year so we could attend some official openings and promote the work of the Council. I know as mentioned earlier he was extremely proud to collect the Councillor of the Year award on behalf of Wicklow County Council. He has always been a great supporter of the Council's work and its staff at all times. He has also done a tremendous job chairing the meetings which aren't easy, especially with the new hybrid format. As he said himself, he has always treated the members with the utmost respect.

So overall, Cathaoirleach, you can be very proud of your year in charge and what you have achieved, and you can now look forward to spending some more time at home with Rhona and the kids. Well-deserved because everyone knows Shay is such a hard worker. He puts in a huge amount of work and effort and hours in his role. So, as I say, I am sure Rhona, and the kids will be delighted to have time with him going forward. Thank you very much, you have been a tremendous Cathaoirleach, it's been a privilege and pleasure to work alongside you and I wish you the very best. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. I am going to open it up, Cllr Miriam Murphy.

CLLR MURPHY: I am first this time, Shay! I am just, that means so much to me. Shay, your speech just, I think hit the right notes at the right time. Especially in the beginning, because we all came into this for a second year with Covid. I think it really hit us, where we able to get through a second year, for lots of reasons. For the loss of family and friends through Covid and still having to know that we still have to, within our time working. For me, it wasn't as easy as others to do that with the loss of family and friends. I think the hybrid meeting got me through it. I thought I wasn't going to be able to be part of that. I think your chairmanship certainly helped me in the sense of knowing I was quite confident in knowing that you understood my situation. For the work you have done, for the and I think for recognising one of the big things, I mean we can all always be positive on days like this, but for you to but in where the County

Council is failing on the communication, I think that is exactly what needed to be said.

You held Wicklow very proud, and I know that you are very proud of your work. You also made us members feel very confident in being able to ring you with any situation and to come back with answers we liked, or we didn't like. That is where it was left. Shay, you are an honour to know as a friend and a colleague. I really mean that. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr Tom Fortune.

CLLR FORTUNE: On behalf of the independent group can I say well done in the past year and, as I say, you came in into a hybrid situation in every sense of the world, the empty chamber you mentioned. Based on the list you read out, the last six months, I have no doubt at all that Rhona must not have seen you at all, so I am sure they are glad to get you out of there. I think, as a chair, I think you have been very good, I think you have been fair. I don't think we have had too many arm wrestles with you, and you have obviously done a great job as the CEO as outlined.

Obviously, Shay, I know you in different spheres apart from politics and I wish you the very best. I have no doubt that there are bigger and other plans for you, maybe in the future. You have certainly, as I say, built up a very good CV with the work you have done over the last 12 months, being chair of anything is not easy, but in particular being a chair of a council with 32 people with opinions and notions about things is not easy. But you did it exceptionally well. I like to wish you the best and thank you for the last year. Thank you very much.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Paul O'Brien.

CLLR P O'BRIEN: I will keep this brief, not that I want to be brief, but I know there will be other speakers coming in. On behalf of the Labour Party, I want to congratulate you on a successful year, as Cllr Fortune alluded to it couldn't have been easy in an empty chamber. We would have liked to have been here to support you, but in fairness you have given us a lot of support during the year. One thing that hasn't been mentioned today and I think it should be mentioned. Okay it's not quite finished yet, but how you handled the County Development Plan is a credit to you. With the hybrid meeting it wasn't easy, to run that was extraordinary you have gone through a list of achievements of the council, I think at one stage we were running out of ribbons for you to cut. That

is a testament to your workload. So, all I can say is I hope the re-entry is not too painful for you coming back in here. The back benches aren't too bad. I wish you well and congratulations on what has been a very successful tenure as Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Paul. I appreciate that. Cllr Dermot O'Brien.

CLLR D O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. On behalf of myself and

Cllr McManus, apologies I couldn't be there today, hybrid served me well when I woke up with a sick child this morning. When someone takes on a leadership role there is an element of steering and leadership required. The standouts for me were how you did steer us back into the chamber and did it in a mindful and considerate way. I think there was a lot of authenticity there.

As you handled the technical challenge. There is a whole new skill set emerging for people who have to sit in that chair. Similarly for the County Development Plan, I think you went out of the way to ensure that councillors were front and centre in your considerations of how we contribute to the County Development Plan and I particularly, as a new councillor, appreciated that, because it was a minefield at the best of times.

Finally, Cathaoirleach, something I got to witness, and I have seen in your speech the consistency of your messaging when you made yourself available to the young people of the county at the Youth Summit you spoke about being the best you can be, and you honoured them and again the sincerity of your messaging really shines through. I look forward to seeing you in action on our side of things because I know you have a lot to contribute here, but fair play on your year.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Irene Winters.

CLLR WINTERS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Last time I get to call you that. I want to thank on behalf of all of the Fine Gael members to congratulate you on your year. You said in your speech everyone should try to be the best they could be, you have done that.

To be a successful leader they always say you need the three As. That is ability, availability and affability. Without doubt you have made yourself available throughout the entire year. I am surprised you didn't meet yourself coming backwards at times. There was nothing people asked you to be at or help with or attend that you weren't available for. Affability, that is your personality, you

are an affable person, you are always in good humour, or at least you look like you are even when you are not. You have great business; you have a great business head and a pragmatic person. I suppose you are mindful that all resolutions require both parties to feel like something has been achieved at the end of it. That is a quality which has stood you throughout the year as Cathaoirleach.

I want to thank you for the job you did, despite the Covid restriction, the online meetings, all the social distancing. It didn't feel like everyone was apart, it actually felt like you had done a really good cohesive job of making it all gel together and thank you very much. And the best of luck for the year and I am sure Rhona will be thrilled!

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much for the words. Cllr Stokes.

CLLR STOKES: I come at it with alternative views because for 51 weeks of your tenure I was on the outside. I really thought you led the Council with great distinction and honour. There were many positive improvements that I could see in the media. It's not easy being chair, because you have to be switched on for every second of every meeting. It's really a challenging position to have. Then, could I just say finally in the build-up to my own co-option we had a lovely chat, and you were encouraging to me, and I thought to myself what an absolute gentleman. I look forward to working with you in the future.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr Pat Kennedy.

CLLR P KENNEDY: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. On behalf of the Fianna Fail group, as chair, you have always been available to all members in this chamber at all times. We want to thank you for that. You have also been involved in many projects behind the scenes that will come to fruition over the next year, year-and-a-half. I know your hands are all over those projects and I look forward to those coming to fruition. You have been a steady pair of hands over the last year, we want to thank you for that and wish you well for the future.

As a friend, you and I have been friends for a very long time. I was delighted to see you elected as chair. As a friend I know the family man you are, we can see that your wife being here and I know Rhona is behind you 100% and so is your two children, but we want to thank you for everything you have done, not just for us as group, but what you did for the county. I think you have brought Wicklow as a county, equal with any county in the country and we want to thank you for that. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr Lourda Scott.

CLLR SCOTT: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I just want to echo what has been said before and congratulations you on an excellent year. I very much enjoyed your chairing of the council here and I wanted to particularly commend you on the ability to chair the hybrid meetings so skilfully and you made it look so easy which it is not. For me especially for the CDP process that is a challenging process to enter into as a new councillor. I very much appreciated the fact that despite doing it largely on Zoom you made sure every councillor had time to speak and everyone was equally listened, and I never felt there was an issue if I had to clarify anything or contact you.

On a personal note, you were a great support to me as chair of the Greystones District in the last year. It was never a problem for you to answer my calls or come out and meet and help me with things in the district. For that I really do thank you. Wish you all the best in the future and looking forward to having you back in the rows in the chamber.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: Briefly, Shay, I would like to echo the statements expressed by my fellow councillors. I won't repeat them, but I endorse every word spoken. I would like to say well done on a job really well done and thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

Cllr John Snell.

CLLR SNELL: Again, like previous speakers I want to be associated with the sentiments and I suppose to acknowledge the fantastic year that you had.

I suppose first and foremost what we look for is someone with leadership skills and to represent the constituents of County Wicklow. You certainly ticked the boxes there. Secondly, I know you are a local man to Roundwood, and you are following in the footsteps of previous Cathaoirleachs from that district and again you lived up to the expectations from your homeland up around Roundwood. Thirdly, your family, you represented your family to the utmost. Indeed, not just Rhona and the kids but indeed your mother and your extended family. I know Cllr Gerry O'Neill who I am speaking on behalf of says whilst we are losing one Cullen from the top table, we still have a very experienced Cullen in West Wicklow, your brother Liam is flying the flag over there at administration level. More importantly than all of that, I think you

represented yourself and you only have one thing when you come into this world, you are given is your name. I certainly think that you have lived up to and endorsed your representation as a decent person. I want to commend you for the last 12 months.

CLLR GLENNON: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I'd like to join with my colleagues in wishing you well, best wishes to Rhona and your mother and all your family as you go forward with your political career. It was great to see you on Friday. We had a great day. Thank you very much, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: It was wonderful to work with you all for the year. Again, I know as I said earlier, I really appreciated the support and, you know, you can't do this job without the support of people around you and regardless of parties or individuals, you're doing the right thing and you do what you believe in and thank you everybody for that. It was a pleasure again to be in this position to maybe steer meetings to the satisfaction of everybody and I think we spoke earlier about doing the right thing and I always try to do the right thing regardless of what party you're in or if you're in no party, it made no difference to me. It was a way of working with people and I think that is important going forward. Thank you all again for that.

We're going to move on to the election of Cathaoirleach. So, I want to ask if there are proposals, please for Cathaoirleach. Cllr Pat Fitzgerald.

CLLR FITZGERALD: I won't say too much. I just want to nominate Cllr Tommy Annesley to be the next Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council. Tommy's election to the Council some years ago has been a very effective public representative. He's available night and day, widely respected in our community. I have no doubt that Cllr Annesley will be an asset to our community. I nominate Cllr Tommy Annesley.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Vincent Blake.

CLLR BLAKE: I would like to second the nomination of Cllr Tommy Annesley as Cathaoirleach for Wicklow County Council for the next year. I have known Tommy for quite a number of years. I knew him long before he came into Wicklow County Council as well. I know the dedication he gave to the people of Arklow, and he has given to South Wicklow in the last few years. I'm sure he will give the same dedication and commitment to the same county. He is to me a very worthy replacement for you as Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County

Council. It gives me great pleasure to second the name of Cllr Tommy Annesley as Cathaoirleach for Wicklow County Council.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Tom Fortune.

CLLR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. The Independent Group would like to propose Cllr Joe Behan. Cllr Behan has been a Councillor since 1991 and has so much ability and so much to offer. He has experiences in all areas of local government and national government and would be an absolutely fabulous asset to this organisation in that position.

And also, from our perspective, following on the local elections, it was the people's will I think that there would be changes and the resulting election was basically 16-16 in the context of what we're talking about here today. I think it is only fair that this side of the grouping gets a crack at being Cathaoirleach and Cllr Behan would be a fabulous choice in that position.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Peir Leonard.

CLLR LEONARD: I would formally second Cllr Fortune's proposal of Cllr Joe Behan for Cathaoirleach. I have a few different points I'd like to support the proposal. The first one being democracy. I think we'd all agree that Cllr Joe Behan's work he works relentlessly within the Chamber and in his role as the representative of the AILG for all of the voices throughout all of the political parties and non-parties and smaller parties throughout the council.

Inclusiveness, I think by supporting Joe for the position of Cathaoirleach today, I'm highlighting the need for more inclusiveness within the Chamber. We all know 50% of this Chamber is made up of smaller political parties and independent councillors and I would hope that collectively we would recognise and respect this and compare a fair and equal opportunity for all of our voices to also take a proportionate share of the Cathaoirleach's seat within the five-year term.

Lastly, as Tom touched on there, change. In 2019, I was elected by my local community of Arklow MD on a mandate of change, meaningful change that puts the people and the environment at the centre of all decision making. I believe that the most important place for this change to happen is from the ground up at local level where we sit as local representatives in our local Council Chamber. Together, we need to open up to this change by letting the voice of change be heard so that collectively we can work towards finding the right solutions to fix all of the problems for the next generations to

come. I know many of you like my right honourable friend, I know many of you, like myself and Cllr Behan and my fellow independent councillors here today, were also voted in on a similar mandate of change.

Finally, Cllr Joe Behan is a wonderful example of what a public representative should be. He works relentlessly on behalf of all of the constituents right across the county and never seeks recognition for it even though he might deserve it. I would respectfully ask before you make your decision today to really consider giving Cllr Joe Behan your support as Cathaoirleach. Thanks.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Okay. At the moment, we have two proposals for the position of Cathaoirleach. The first proposal is proposed by Cllr Fitzgerald and seconded by Cllr Blake, proposing Cllr Tommy Annesley for the position. Secondly, Cllr Joe Behan for the position proposed by Cllr Fortune and seconded by Cllr Leonard. Before I move on, do we have any further proposals? No other proposals. I will hand over to Helen for a vote.

HELEN PURCELL: As the Cathaoirleach has outlined, we have two nominations, Cllr Tommy Annesley, proposed by Cllr Pat Fitzgerald and seconded by Cllr Vincent Blake, and Cllr Joe Behan proposed by Cllr Tom Fortune and seconded by Cllr Peir Leonard. As I call your name, if you could say the name of the person you wish to vote for, either Cllr Tommy Annesley or Cllr Joe Behan.

[Vote taken]

HELEN PURCELL: We have eight for Cllr Joe Behan and 24 for Cllr Tommy Annesley. Cllr Tommy Annesley is elected as Cathaoirleach. [Applause]

CLLR CULLEN: Just before Cllr Annesley takes his position; I would just like to congratulate you Cllr Tommy Annesley on the position of Cathaoirleach and wish you well for the coming year. I think you will do a fine job. It is a great for yourself and your family so enjoy it! Thank you. [Applause]

CATHAOIRLEACH: [Speaking as Gaeilge]

Members, Senator Pat Casey and Members of Wicklow County Council and my own family and friends, can I just say what an honour it is to sit here today. Can I also say, thank you Cllr Behan because it is a local democracy and I would have voted for you, Joe, but my name was there and there was nothing I could do about that!

Can I just also say every single person sitting in this Chamber is good enough to be sitting where I am today. So, I just want to say that and I'm willing and want to work with every person in this Chamber and my phone is 24/7.

I have a very hard act to follow with Shay Cullen, but Shay, I didn't say a word because one of our fellow Councillors a, Fianna Fail councillor spoke but, Shay, you did a tremendous job. Your phone was 24/7, God knows what you were going through in your own business life because of the price of oil and what was happening in Ukraine, but you were always available. If we couldn't get you, you always rang back to solve the problem or try to solve the problem. I have learnt a lot from you, Shay. As also I have learned from Cllr Kennedy, Cllr Irene Winters.

On reflection, I just want to pay respect to honour in memory of Cllr Pat Doran, who I sat there for five years beside as well. Pat was a great influence on me. I can't mention Cllr Pat Doran without mentioning Cllr Pat Kavanagh. These are people we haven't forgotten about but they're still with us. They played a major role in my life and on the Council.

I forgot to mention the most important people in my life, my mother and father. My God, what my father would say here with me sitting up here today. In fact, I won't even go there. I know my mother would be very proud, but my father wasn't a very local democratic supporter. He did his own thing. He had six kids and he gave every one of them an opinion and a voice. And then I thought about it, my God, I'm in the most opinionated room in Wicklow today because there's 32 people here and every one of them have an opinion. I want to listen to them all and it is like backsides; they come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, so we have to just listen to the voice of reasoning.

And I'd also like to thank the officials here, because the officials do a terrible lot of work and they don't always get the credit for it, but they've done a lot of work in Arklow, they've done a lot of work in Wicklow.

My God, I had the great honour of going out on the SSC vessel and watch the all-Ireland race. Poor old Shay, he didn't know the front of the boat from the back of the boat!

I want to mention my partner Joy there who is at the back there with her mother. She is part of Arklow Sailing Club, so she really enjoyed it as well.

Another thing we have in common, Shay, is we have two young kids. Twenty-two years of age, TJ went to the rally in Donegal. I haven't seen him yet. He's on the phone, I know he is safe. My other daughter, thank God, your daughter is your daughter for the rest of your life; your son is your son until he takes his wife. But Orla was at a concert in Donegal and Orla is there in the audience. I want to thank you all because it means a lot to me.

I know Shay had a young lad up there as well, but Shay's young lad would be used to a bit of muck and the boots, but my princess is not used to the muck or getting wet. She rang me on Friday morning, Da, what am I going to do? I know a woman in Donegal. The next day, the sleeping bags were all dried. It is great knowing people.

Thanks to the Council. I know a lot of people around the country, and it is a great honour for me here today. Okay, what I had said, you notice I haven't written anything down, but Shay stole a lot of my thunder. Well done, Shay. I will keep it brief. I look forward to working with you. Thank you very much, Cllr Fitzgerald for nominating me and Cllr Blake for seconding me. I appreciate that, lads. Thank you very much. Thank you to everyone for coming to the Chamber today and everyone at home on the screens. Thanks a million. [Applause]

LEAS-CATHAOIRLEACH: A fantastic opening speech, Cathaoirleach. It is a great way to start. I would like to congratulate Cllr Tommy Annesley. He gets the full support of myself and the Council staff during his coming year. I look forward to working with the new Cathaoirleach to address the many challenges that we face in the areas of delivery, climate action, roads infrastructure and community development. We will see the completion of the County Development Plan, as well as the local and economic community plan. The Cathaoirleach's support is crucial to this support.

Cllr Annesley took over the reign for one of the Council's meetings earlier this year when the previous Cathaoirleach was unavailable and did a fantastic job on the day. So, I'm sure he will do a great job for the coming year in that position.

As a proud Arklow man, it is also a great day for the people of Arklow who have been represented by you so well over the past number of years. So once again, I'd like to wish you ever success for your new role. I look forward to working with you to try and achieve the many great things for the people of Wicklow over the next 12 months. Thank you.

CLLR BEHAN: I would like to sincerely congratulate you here on your success here today. It was important we had a contest. I agree with you; it was very important from your point of view that you now have the mandate from the election at the AGM.

I know you're a very genuine, sincere person, who always has the good of the people you represent at heart. I've no doubt you're going to have a very successful year and based on the meeting that you did chair, and I said it to you at the time, I think we can look forward to a very, very productive year under your leadership.

I just also want to take the opportunity to congratulate and thank Shay Cullen for the magnificent job, everything that has been said about you, Cllr Cullen, has been absolutely true. Thank you for your service to the people of the county during the year. Finally, I want to thank Cllr Fortune and Cllr Leonard for seconding me. Thank you very much.

HELEN PURCELL: Sorry, we're having some technical issues here. It didn't take them long to break the whole system!

CATHAOIRLEACH: I was starting to work about that. Councillor Stokes.

CLLR STOKES: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Firstly, I want to congratulate you. We first met in 2009 in this room. There was a meeting for new town councillors with the Council staff. While most of us were just trying to find our feet as town councillors, I vividly remember that you were straight in advocating for the people of Arklow for the wastewater treatment centre. I really commend you on that because as a new town councillor, it made a lasting impression on me that we need to be vocal for our communities.

Although we went on different paths over the intervening years, I would see you pop up from time to time doing different things. I know you've been very active. I'm sure you had a lot to do with the Arklow wastewater treatment centre being built.

When I was being co-opted, I had a lovely conversation with yourself, if I remember vividly, we were talking about our own interests. You have a background in boxing and mine is in chess. I thought you were very welcoming of me, and I really look forward to working with you. I wish you the best of success because it is very exciting position to be the first citizen of the county.

I remember when I became Mayor of Greystones, what a great day I felt it was. But to be Cathaoirleach of the County Council is the best honour of all in Wicklow. I wish you my full support and the best of success.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Stephen, for those kind words. Cllr Peir Leonard.

CLLR LEONARD: I want to congratulate you, Tommy. This was a terrible day for me. This is what I hate about politics. You made it much more difficult with Joy and Angela sitting there, my neighbours, from Abbeville. I have no doubt you're going to be fantastic as Cathaoirleach for the coming year. I think that you're going to be brilliant. It is brilliant to have an Arklow man sitting here. You've been a really, really good support to me at times on the council in Arklow, where you rolled in behind me to give me support as an independent councillor, sometimes it can be very difficult.

One of the reasons why I supported Cllr Joe Behan is because they are my support group, as you know as the kind of not being in the bigger parties or whatever. I want to say it wasn't personal, and I think you understand that. I just want to wish you the best of luck in the coming year. I'm here to help you as much as I can.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Irene Winters.

CLLR WINTERS: On behalf of the Fine Gael group, I want to wish you for your year as Cathaoirleach. It is a great honour and I know you will do it with great dignity and great pride. Throughout your time as councillor, your passion for your own Arklow and for your own municipal district has been evident at all times. I know it is something that you will bring to the entire county. I look forward to working with you over the coming year and I wish you ever success. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Miriam Murphy.

CLLR MURPHY: Well, Tommy, it is great to see you in the hot seat!

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Miriam.

CLLR MURPHY: I can honestly say, there will never be a dull moment and your Irish will just blossom from word to word. Tommy, you truly deserve it. You're a man of the people. You certainly, I know hold Arklow in your utmost pride in everything that you do and the county. I really look forward working with you and I know that you will always be a good team together personally and

political. So, we will always be there for each other. So, enjoy your day, enjoy your celebrations. Let the fun begin! Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Miriam. Thanks a million for that. Cllr Gail Dunne.

CLLR DUNNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. It has a great sound about it. Tommy, I want to congratulate you on becoming Cathaoirleach of the Council. It is a great honour for you and your family and for your district. I know how hard you work and what an honest man you are and when you have all of them attributes, you'll be a great chairman.

I have to pull you up on one thing and you can add Cllr Cullen there at the front and back of the book, I thought it was the bow and the stern of the boat! You learn something every day!

CATHAOIRLEACH: I was talking in layman's terms, Cllr Gail Dunne.

CLLR DUNNE: I want to wish you the best of luck. If I can be any help during the year, don't hesitate to contact me.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Paul O'Brien.

CLLR O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. On behalf of the Labour Group, I want to congratulate you and wish you well. I was delighted to see a contest here. It proves that local democracy works and there's so many countries around the world would give their right arm to have democracies. It is a great day for us. It is a great day for the county to show that democracy works. I wish you well in your tenure. You know you have our full support. You have started off as you mean to go on. I have got to know you on the Housing SPC, you're not afraid to speak your mind. So, I wish you well and every success because your success is our success. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Paul. Cllr Lourda Scott.

CLLR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I just wanted to offer you my name is congratulations on becoming Cathaoirleach and wish you all the very best in the year. We were talking on the phone the other day and we have said that our paths have not crossed that much between COVID I suppose, and we don't sit on similar committees. But I really do look forward to that changing over the next year and getting to know you better. Again, the best of luck. I know you'll be a great success and be assured of my support through the year.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr John Mullen.

CLLR MULLEN: Tommy, I'm delighted for you, and it is a great day for you personally, for your family and for the people of Arklow. You're a very fair man. You're a very straight man, you're very honest. When you speak, it is because you have something to say. It is always measured and well thought of and passionately spoken. I'm delighted for you. I look forward to working with you throughout the year.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, John. Cllr Dermot O'Brien.

CLLR O'BRIEN: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I want to, again, congratulate on today's big achievement and no doubt there will be many more achievements as the year progresses. Again, for me, our paths have crossed a few times over the years. You're the type of person who wears your heart on your sleeve. I have vivid memories of you speaking at the policing committee about drugs and impact on young people. You don't hold back when it is real. Your passion shines through. I looked forward to working with you. I also look forward to you taking the edge off things. When things are tense in the Chamber, you're the best man for the job to take the edge of it a little bit and ground us all and get us back to business. I really look forward to working with you and congratulations on today.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much, Cllr O'Brien. Cllr Tom Fortune.

CLLR FORTUNE: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. Can I just say congratulations on your appointment as Cathaoirleach? I must say, I was very impressed with your remarks. There was a lot of passion and honesty in them. Every Cathaoirleach that gets elected at this time of the year all bring something unique and different to the role. I have no doubt at all that you will do the very same. The passion you demonstrated in what you had to say, I look forward to that being your modus operandi for the year. I really look forward to working with you on that basis. Congratulations and congratulations to your family and all of your friends. I think it is a great occasion for yourself and the family and well done.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Tom. Cllr John Snell.

CLLR SNELL: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I suppose today summarises the role of a public representative and it illustrates just how difficult it is to fulfil your role and the hard decisions that have to be made. I suppose on behalf of myself and Cllr O'Neill, we looked at this and we have a joint feeling that it's in our opinion very difficult to vote against an incoming Cathaoirleach,

a Leas-Cathaoirleach and particularly as we supported you as the vice-chair at last year's AGM.

On a personal level, we would like to first and foremost well done to Joy, your partner, and your kids and your extended family. It is a great honour for them. But for you as an Arklow man, South Wicklow and more importantly the first citizen of the garden county, it is a huge honour. I've known you long before politics in our shared passion for the boxing game and also, I think we're the only two people in this chambers that have a passion and a hobby for racing pigeons, believe it or not. So, if all technology breaks down, we'll be able to communicate by pigeons!

But Tommy, look, I have no fear for the next 12 months with you in the Cathaoirleach because all of the glowing remarks are true and it is not just sound bites, you know. Your integrity, your honesty, your respect, I know that you will bring that wholeheartedly to the position that you hold now for the next 12 months.

I'm lucky enough to have served here at the end of this term, we'll have shared 15 years in this Chamber together. And I genuinely feel that it is your time. I've been lucky enough to sit on sub-committees such as the strategic policy committee on housing for over ten years with you. What a lot of members won't know, your contribution to the committees that people don't jump up and down to jump on, such as east coast regional drugs and alcohol taskforce, where we all know there are issues on the ground in most towns and villages within our county and you have been a huge advocate getting out there and trying to take on these people at grass roots level. For that, I commend you. So, the best of luck for the next 12 months on behalf of myself and Gerry O'Neill.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Snell. I would like to thank Helen here beside me. She doesn't know what she is letting herself in for. On the agenda now is item number two and that is to elect a Leas Cathaoirleach for 2022. Are there any nominations from the floor? Cllr Gerry O'Neill.

CLLR O'NEILL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Again, well done on your position. As Cllr Snell pointed out, it's hard to vote against a good friend of mine, Cllr Joe Behan, but I would never vote against an incoming Cathaoirleach. Can I propose, I know I am breaking the mould here a little bit. I am only in here what, eight years, but I have seen it throughout the eight years where we had a Tweedledee and Tweedledum Flanagan's ball type procedure with the two

main parties. Really at the moment they are only hanging on there. I would appeal for councillors to break that mould in electing a vice chairperson. I think to be fair; it doesn't look good on the outside that we have this Flanagan's ball type, he steps in again and I stepped out again. It's going on every year, year in, year out.

I honest to God would appeal to councillors here today and to propose, or to support my motion and someone who has been here a long time, 15 years in the chamber and he is well-known and he has the chamber off to a tee and the council off to a tee. He is probably the hardest working councillor that we ever had in Wicklow. I would really say that. Throughout the length and breadth of the county he is well-known... a good hard-working lad and for the sake of just being fair and that is what I am asking for, just a little bit of fairness to consider supporting my proposal. I would be proposing Cllr John Snell to give him that crack. I think he deserves it, and I would love to see, on this occasion even, I would love to see support for him right across the board, instead of hanging on in there to the usual antics of promoting Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. I think he has plenty of friends in both Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. But it would be a signal to the people of Wicklow that we are fairer than what we maybe look at times. So, I would strongly propose Cllr John Snell for Leas Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you very much. Cllr O'Neill, have we got a seconder for John Snell?

CLLR SNELL: I like to withdraw my name if I could, please.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay, Cllr Snell. Very honourable of you. I am sitting on my Tweedledum and Tweedledee, I say that in jest by the way. Have we any other nominations? Sorry, Cllr Corrigan.

CLLR CORRIGAN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach, I look in order to working with you. I would like to propose Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy for the position of Leas Cathaoirleach. Since her elect in 2019 she has shown huge commitment and dedication to her role as councillor. She works extremely hard for the community and the whole of county Wicklow in general. She takes the position of councillor very seriously and with her excellent communication skills, organisation skills, integrity and sense of fairness and with her work experience prior to becoming a councillor, I feel she would bring a huge amount of expertise to this position. This with her dedication to serve the people of county Wicklow. I propose Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy for the position of Leas Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Is there a seconder for Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy? Cllr Gail Dunne.

CLLR DUNNE: I like to second Cllr Corrigan's proposal of Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy. I have met her before we came into the council chamber and that is what I can remember especially of what a decent person she is, and I have no hesitation in saying she would be a great Leas Cathaoirleach and hopefully down the road she would be a great Cathaoirleach. So, I will second Cllr Corrigan's nomination.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr M Kavanagh.

CLLR M KAVANAGH: Thank you, chair. Can I just say congratulations on your appointment and thank you to the reference to my sister, it's much appreciated? I would like to propose my independent colleague, Cllr Peir Leonard for the position of Leas Cathaoirleach of Wicklow County Council. Cllr Leonard arrived in this chamber three years ago full of enthusiasm and brimming with ideas. I am delighted to see she has gone from strength-to-strength. Her own strengths lie on the importance she places in community and consensus, but for her, communication is the key to everything.

She is first and foremost a community representative in the traditional sense. She has thrown herself into everything that has gone on in the Municipal District and has worked with many groups from rivers and biodiversity to the arts and restoration and heritage projects as well as carrying out the day-to-day workload of a public representative. Above all true democracy lies at the heart of everything she does. She is thoughtful and always tries to work with the people to reach consensus, especially over difficult issues where she regularly navigates over choppy waters to achieve acceptable outcomes. These are what she would bring to the chamber if she was elected. She has vision and resilience and understanding which helps keep her committed to anything she undertakings. She is tenacious and when pushed can show greater tenacity and dogged determination. She has never been able to stand up for her beliefs and call out inequities in the system when she finds them. She is open and transparent and it's these qualities that inspire many people around her. For these reasons I think she would make a wonderful Leas Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr R O'Connor.

CLLR O'CONNOR: I like to second Cllr Leonard for the position of Leas Cathaoirleach. From working with Cllr Leonard on the climate change and biodiversity SPC, I can say she is a committed worker and also honest worker. If anything gets in the way of her, she won't step down until it's done. So, I think she has really good characteristics for the position. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Joe Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: Cathaoirleach for the first time ever I am going to third a nomination, I just want to support what has been said about Cllr Leonard. I would make one point. Those of us who have been on the council before 2019, I certainly remember at the count, before we ever got to a council chamber, most people who were involved in politics in Wicklow at the time were asking who is this Cllr Peir Leonard? She came out of nowhere, she had a very much a ground-up, from the ground up campaign and she has shown in the last couple of years since she has become a member how genuinely sincerely, she wants to represent the people of Arklow and indeed the people of Wicklow. I also just want to refer, if I could, for a second, to what has been said about Cllr Snell, because there is no doubt that everything that Cllr Gerry O'Neill said about Cllr Snell, we would all agree with. We are in the situation where we have a democratic cop test, but we would like to see that the will of the people will be reflected in the decisions that are made about who holds the power in this chamber. Because, unfortunately, at the moment, the people who hold the power are not the people who are elected. It's the people who are unelected and we all, no matter whether we are in a party or not, have a duty to change that situation. But thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Behan. Any other nominations? Okay. Going for a vote.

ADMINISTRATOR: We have two nominations for item number two the election of the Leas Cathaoirleach. Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, proposed by Cllr Melanie Corrigan and seconded by Cllr Gail Dunne and Cllr Peir Leonard proposed by Cllr M Kavanagh and seconded by Cllr R O'Connor. I am going to do a vote. Once I call your name if you could say either Kennedy or Leonard, please.

[Vote taken]

ADMINISTRATOR: Ten votes for Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy, sorry, for Cllr Leonard, 22 votes for Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy. So, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy has the majority of votes and is elected Leas-Cathaoirleach. [Applause]

CATHAOIRLEACH: Congratulations, Cllr Aoife Flynn Kennedy. I won't say commiserations to Cllr Peir Leonard, because you are up and coming and you will be there again. I can't express how hard it was to vote against an Arklow lady, I was just returning the compliment to you, Cllr Leonard, nothing personal, as you said yourself. Now, Helen... no requests, okay. Sorry, Cllr Miriam Murphy.

CLLR MURPHY: Can I just come in on a point, chair? Cllr Gerry O'Neill spoke there about Tweedledee and Tweedledum. To a point he has a point on it. But people who have been in political parties and who then go independently know the system. It's not a system that we like, but we must remember that if you are looking for a vote, sending an email of any sort two days, or putting in a proposal on the day of an election, to me, that is not fair. Because either of those would have been very honoured to sit in that position. But I as an independent gave my commitment to the person who came to me first. Because nobody else came to me. It's very difficult for myself to sit, either in my sitting room or in the chamber to go against people that we sit with in our districts or also work with as County Councillors in the chamber. It really upsets me all the time and I think we all feel the same but are probably not saying it. It's not that we are against people personally, whatever, but it's very difficult, very, very difficult and there are people sitting there, in the chamber, over a long time who would have been doing a brilliant job and would have deserved to sit there. If you are looking for votes, you come, you speak, you pick up the phone and you seek your sell, whoever you want to sell, if that is the word. I have to say it, because it's just unfair.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Cllr Murphy.

Sorry, the third item on the agenda is to agree the scheduled meetings, as circulated.

ADMINISTRATOR: I like to point out first there are two changes to the schedule of meetings as circulated to the meetings compared to generally. We now have a bank hole in February, so the February meeting will be on the 13th of February and the President has requested that the LPT meeting be included as part of the ordinary meeting on the 3rd of October. 80% would have it as part of the ordinary meeting. It was discussed by CPG at their last meeting, and they felt it should be left to the councillors to make the decision at the full council, but it was suggested that if the meeting started on the 3rd of October

and didn't complete that it could complete on the 10th of October. So that is the two changes to the schedule as proposed.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Derek Mitchell.

CLLR MITCHELL: I am happy with the schedule. I just want to say that we will have a vote on the County Development Plan. I quite like that in the schedule of meetings, so I can schedule my time, because if it's not going to be taken at an ordinary meeting, if it's a special meeting, I would like to know when that is.

CATHAOIRLEACH: The Chief Executive has asked, I might ask him to come in, let him explain. Thank you, Chief Executive.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Obviously at the moment we are working through the submissions. Obviously, you are well aware it was on display, and we were working with the submissions. The Chief Executive's report has to be prepared and sent out as per the timeline. At the moment we can't give an exact date when it will be available. So, it can't be in the schedule here today. But as soon as we have a date, we can email the members and you can put it into your calendar. Okay.

Cllr Joe Behan.

CLLR BEHAN: Cathaoirleach, I don't agree with bundling the property tax meeting into a normal meeting. We have had lots of discussions over the last couple of years with different Cathaoirleachs about the difficulty of getting agendas covered, particularly notices of motion. The property tax is one of the few powers we have managed to hold on to. I for one, would be opposed to just changing the arrangements that we have had every year up to now, which was a special meeting, where we can discuss that issue at length and make informed decisions. So, I want to propose that we go back to the original plan, which was normally the last Monday in September, for the property tax meeting.

I want to make that a formal proposal.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Have you a seconder? Cllr Kavanagh, next.

CLLR M KAVANAGH: I will second that. I just wanted to know could Helen give us the change, the actual changed dates again for taking this one out of it.

ADMINISTRATOR: There is one other change which is the February meeting. Which will be the 13th of February. Because there is a bank holiday in February and where there is a bank holiday the meeting is the following Monday. The schedule, we sent out copies of it.

CLLR M KAVANAGH: Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Can I bring in the Chief Executive here for a second.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Just to clarify in relation to the LPT. Obviously, there is going to be no restriction on discussion on the issue of LPT and the decision, if it did go ahead on the 3rd of October at an ordinary meeting. As the background that was laid out, we did survey other local authorities and 80% have it at the ordinary meeting. As I said, we have a back-up plan, to go to the 10th, if required at a special meeting. The requirement to have it at the end of September is no longer valid. There has been changes made in legislation now in order to try and bring the LPT decision date nearer to the November budget date. So, we have up until the 15th of October to make the Local Property Tax decision, so it would make more sense to have it on 3rd with a back-up on the 10th, rather than have it at the end of September, thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Gail Dunne.

CLLR WALSH: Cllr Walsh here. On that, Brian, I assume that will be the main item on the agenda for the October meeting because the LPT is at least a full meeting if not longer. So, the fact of having it as an add on, on the 3rd of October doesn't make sense. It would have to be a one-item agenda in my view.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE: If it's a one item agenda it's a special meeting. I suppose you have the Chief Executive Report, you would have the normal disposals. I suppose, as I said, 80% of local authorities around the country are able to do this and are able to have their vote and get through the rest of the agenda. So, as I said, it was put to the CPG, the CPG decided to put it to the council members here today. At the end of the day, it's the members' decision. This isn't something that the officials are forcing on to the members, it's just a proposal to try and progress matters and I think it's just a historical thing that happened in Wicklow and we have proceeded with it year on, year out. As I said, at the CPG, we put forward a presentation that is probably half an hour long that we have seen year in, year out, that we probably don't need to go through, which would cut off a lot of time, but rest assured there will be no

restriction on debate or discussion if it was put at an ordinary meeting and, as I said, as a, I suppose to have some comfort we put forward the date of the 10th of October to go back again, if required. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Paul O'Brien.

CLLR P O'BRIEN: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. I am reassured to hear what the Chief Executive is saying, but my only issue is when it comes to quarter to five, the temptation might be to finish early. So even though, and I am confident it's been given the reassurances are being given, but we meet earlier for County Development Plans, so what I would suggest, and I can throw it out there. I have no issues with the ordinary meeting going ahead on the 3rd, but maybe meet earlier so we do get to the LPT rather than getting to the temptation of 4.45pm we cut it off because it could be a lovely day like today and we want to get out. I want to have a serious discussion about it and take the temptation away.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Pat Fitzgerald.

CLLR FITZGERALD: I am concurring with what Cllr Behan said, we are in a situation in in country now where lower paid are in extreme difficulty and I just think we need to give, I don't mind who is doing what, I am just worried about what is going to happen here. So, my opinion is there should be, we should have a day for the local property tax. I am dealing with people who can't pay the property tax and they are on lower incomes and whatever else, so I just feel it should get, it needs the full day to deal with the matter.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Tom Fortune.

CLLR FORTUNE: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Cllr Fitzgerald has said nearly precisely what I was going to say. I just think, I don't know why this is being put to us this way. I, for the life of me, can't understand how any local authority are able to get through this process, call me doubting Thomas if you like, but that is the way I feel about it. I think Cllr Fitzgerald has hit the nail on the head, the big problem we are having, we are living in a vastly changing environment that is getting worse and to think that we can have it done at a meeting and what will happen is we will end up rush the Chief Executive's report. So, I would be a strong advocate of just leaving it as it is and have the meeting as we always have had it and I think that is the way it should be. I wouldn't support putting it on an agenda of an ordinary meeting, there is no way you are going to get it completed. It just won't happen.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. John Snell.

CLLR SNELL: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Unfortunately, I was away for that CPG meeting, and I do appreciate that this is only down for discussion for the members to make an informed decision. But I personally would support, you have set aside the 10th of October and I would suggest that we should have the 10th of October as the day for the local property tax meeting. If you wanted, Cathaoirleach, you could start it in the morning so it wouldn't interfere, if there was Municipal District meetings in the afternoon. To allow for, if it did need to go into the afternoon, because the local property tax meeting is a very important meeting as members have outlined. Probably this one will be more important than the previous two or three. I do think that we shouldn't go down the line of putting it in on a full council meeting. I think it's inappropriate. I think we send out the wrong message to people out there who are struggling, that we are not particularly going to give a whole lot of time to it. It demands a full meeting and I believe that the 10th of October should be that day and go ahead with your ordinary meeting on the 3rd of October. Then you have a decision, Cathaoirleach, you either start it in the morning, or you put it in for the afternoon as is, at 2.00pm. If it clashes with Municipal District meetings they will have to be moved, Cathaoirleach. With plenty of time, it's not until October.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Ferris.

CLLR FERRIS: Thank you, Cathaoirleach. Congratulations on your election today, Tommy. I just want, I want to second Cllr Paul O'Brien's proposal that we have it on Monday the 3rd with the other meeting. I don't know why we couldn't start the meeting at 9.00am or 10.00am in the morning have the ordinary meeting first and then in the afternoon go on, after the lunch break, go on and have our local property tax meeting and even, to extend the timeline on that, if needs be. If 80% of the Council's in the country can do it in the one day with the ordinary meeting, I don't know why people want County Councillors and I think it's a sensible suggestion. On top of that, on the following Monday, I have commitments, at 12.00pm, so I wouldn't be available. But I really don't understand why we couldn't do it in the one day. Thank you, Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you. Cllr Edward Timmins.

CLLR TIMMINS: We clearly need a full meeting for this. The 10th of October is the logical time at 2.00pm. There are extra reasons to give it more time this

year, because we have a couple of very big issues that unfortunately didn't materialise in the last few years. One is the 20% equalisation that Wicklow sacrifices every year. We are hoping we will get to retain that this year. Secondly the daft set up whereby the new houses that were built since 2013 which would also raise two or three million, we were only going to be able to keep 20% of that tax raised, so we need that to be brought in under the same system as the existing houses before 2013. In other words, we get 100% of the property tax from those, from that source of new houses built since 2013, which obviously haven't paid any property tax since then. So, they are two big burning issues and that will actually add complexity to the discussion, so I think it's really important that we have a full day's discussion on it, and I think from what I am hearing around the table here the vast majority of councillors are of the same opinion.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Stokes.

CLLR STOKES: Go rabi maith agat. Could I echo what Pat Fitzgerald said. A vital issue, many people are hard-pressed at the moment and if I could concur with Cllr Snell and Ferris, I believe this would be good to have on one day whereby you would have one meeting to deal with the property tax and then another meeting would be the ordinary meeting. For a lot of people who are working, myself included, it's much easier to take one full day off rather than say two half days. It might give people even more incentive to be in the chamber for that discussion where we can talk about it at length. So that would be my sentiments. That we would have two meetings on the one day.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Shay Cullen.

CLLR CULLEN: I wanted to make the point; this got a good airing on our CPG meeting. There seemed to be unanimous support of 3rd October as part of the main meeting. I'm going to suggest our propose that we start the meeting at 11 o'clock, so that should give us ample time to cover the item of the LPT, but equally to cover the agenda that will be in front of us for our Ordinary Meeting. So, as I say this did a good airing at CPG. There seemed to be unanimous support for that date, albeit the 10th of October was set aside if we didn't get finished. In my view, if we start a meeting at 11 o'clock, I don't see any reason why we can't finish it. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Lourda Scott.

CLLR SCOTT: Thanks, Cathaoirleach. I spoke about this at the CPG meeting last week as well. My preference would be very strongly for the LPT meeting to be separate from the normal meeting. Whether it is a separate meeting on the 3rd or a separate meeting on the 10th, I'm not too bothered. But I think it has to be a separate meeting to give it due time to discuss it properly and we're not cutting short our normal scheduled council meeting which is of equal importance and also shouldn't be rushed. Thank you.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Okay.

HELEN PURCELL: We have received two proposals. The first is that the draft schedule (as circulated) is amended and that the LPT meeting is left as a separate meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Joe Behan and seconded by Cllr Mary Kavanagh. The amended then -- the second proposal is that the Ordinary Meeting on 3rd January starts earlier and accommodates the LPT meeting as per the schedule, the draft schedule circulated.

We have the vote on the amendment first. I'm now going to ask you to vote on the draft schedule (as circulated) with the LPT meeting included on 3rd October but starting that meeting earlier in the morning. There were a number of suggestions in relation to time. We can agree that. This is to agree this draft schedule with the LPT meeting on 3rd October. If you could either vote in favour or against, please.

[Vote taken]

HELEN PURCELL: 14 in favour, 15 against, and three not present. We have 15 against, so now we will have the second vote, which is the draft schedule (as circulated) but with a separate meeting for the LPT. It was proposed by Cllr Joe Behan and seconded by Cllr Mary Kavanagh. On the 10th of October.

>> Could I ask what time it is, please? Two o'clock.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr Tom Fortune.

CLLR FORTUNE: The fact that the amendment has lost, does that not follow that the ear is automatically carried? No.

HELEN PURCELL: We need to adopt the actual schedule of the meeting. People might change their minds! This is the draft schedule with a separate LPT meeting on the 10th October at 2.00 pm. Okay. You're either for or against.

[Vote taken]

HELEN PURCELL: 22 in favour, 7 against and three not present. We will have a meeting on 10th October.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you.

HELEN PURCELL: We have refreshments in the canteen now for anybody who would like to join us to celebrate our new Cathaoirleach and say goodbye to our outgoing Cathaoirleach.

CATHAOIRLEACH: Thank you, Members. Slan.

[The meeting concluded at 3.40 pm]