

MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING

HELD IN THE WATERGATE ON FRIDAY, 12TH JUNE, 2020 AT 3.00 P.M.

Chair: Peter Cleere.

Cllrs: Eamon Aylward, John Brennan, Martin Brett, John Coonan, Deirdre Cullen, Michael Delaney, Fidelis Doherty, Maria Dollard, Matt Doran, Michael Doyle, Pat Dunphy, David Fitzgerald, Pat Fitzpatrick, Ger Frisby, Denis Hynes, Joe Lyons, Joe Malone, Michael McCarthy, Andrew McGuinness, Eugene McGuinness and Patrick O'Neill.

Officials: Colette Byrne, Martin Prendiville, Tim Butler, Sean McKeown, Catherine Cooney and Anne Maria Walsh.

Apology: Cllrs. Tomás Breathnach *[on Audio]* and Mary Hilda Cavanagh *[on Audio]*.

Cathaoirleach welcomed Members to the Annual Meeting in the Watergate Theatre. He also welcomed Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh and Cllr. Tomás Breathnach who are listening into the meeting remotely.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Peter Cleere thanked all the Members for their ongoing support given to him during his year as Cathaoirleach. He thanked the Executive, staff and media for their assistance during the year. He thanked the people of Kilkenny for their generous warmth given to him at all times and for all the invitations to attend events all across the County.

He said it was a great honour and privilege for him to represent his parish and County both locally and nationally. He thanked Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, Leas Cathaoirleach for his support during the year.

Finally, he thanked his wife Brenda, his children and family for their ongoing support over the last year.

Cllrs. Denis Hynes, Andrew McGuinness and Martin Brett complimented Cllr. Peter Cleere in his role as Cathaoirleach and for his tremendous job in managing meetings with fairness to all Elected Members. Despite the curtailment of functions over the last three months the Members paid tribute to Cllr. Cleere on his availability at all times to communities and organisations.

Ms. Colette Byrne, Chief Executive, on her own behalf, and on behalf of the staff thanked Cllr. Peter Cleere for his professionalism and support during the year. She complimented him on the manner that he represented the County as first citizen at local, regional and national level. She wished him well in his future endeavours.

Item 1: Election of Cathaoirleach

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick proposed Cllr. Andrew McGuinness as Cathaoirleach for the coming year. He referred to Cllr. Andrew McGuinness's career in politics since 2004. He referred to the long history of the McGuinness family in politics starting with his great grandfather. Cllr. McGuinness has served on many organisations and as Mayor of Kilkenny on a number of occasions.

Cllr. Martin Brett seconded the proposal of Cllr. Andrew McGuinness as Cathaoirleach. Cllr. Brett referred to Cllr. Andrew McGuinness many years as a Councillor and his deep knowledge of local government and his ability to bring people together.

Cllr. Peter Cleere asked for any other proposals. As there were no other proposers Cllr. Peter Cleere declared Cllr. Andrew McGuinness to be elected as Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council and invited him to take the Chair and Chain of Office.

Cllr. Andrew McGuinness addressed the Council as follows:

Firstly, I'd like to thank my proposer, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick and seconder Cllr. Martin Brett. Pat and I started in local politics together over 17 years ago and he has been a great colleague and a very close friend ever since. Likewise, Martin Brett, despite the rivalry of our political parties, we share a great friendship and have always worked well together. I'd also like to congratulate Martin on another fantastic year as Mayor.

I'd like to congratulate Cllr. John Coonan on his election as Mayor this morning and I want to commend Cllr Peter Cleere on a fantastic year as Chairman.

I want to thank all of the members for their support here today and for putting your trust in me to be your Chairman for the coming year. My commitment to you, is that I will chair our meetings with fairness and efficiency, and I will treat the position with the respect, professionalism and diligence that it demands.

We are no doubt living in uncertain times. Almost four months ago our lives were turned upside down and we have since been coming to terms with living with a virus that has caused devastation. Phrases that we never used before like social distancing, cocooning, self-isolation and 'new normal' are now more common than a handshake or hugging a loved one.

We have become immune to the shock delivered with the daily death toll and numbers of new cases and we have had to force ourselves to remain distant in the interest of public health.

We have made great sacrifices professionally and within our own families. We watched with great sadness as businesses shut their doors and people lost their jobs. We entered a period of uncertainty that we never witnessed before.

But, with all of that, emerged an unbelievable strength within every community that has given hope and a sense of determination to not only fight our way out of this crisis but to come out of it better and stronger than ever before.

There is a new-found determination to improve, to progress and to do better. There's a new fire in the bellies of our communities and you can see it within our business community as they reopen and welcome us back through their doors.

There is a greater appreciation for what we have and a desire to build on it. That, is the 'New Normal'! And that, is what we are here to enhance, encourage and promote as elected representatives.

In doing so, we must acknowledge the huge sacrifices that were made by our frontline workers. All of them. Our fantastic health care professionals who risked their own health to protect ours but also our service providers who took the same risk.

Everyone from supermarket cashiers to refuse collector's, truck drivers, Gardai, our own council staff, musicians entertaining us from their sitting rooms and so on. We could not have done so - well without their help.

It would be remiss of me not to mention Dr. Tony Holohan who has done this country a great service. So many made a positive contribution and prevented us from the level of devastation that could have been. I'm sure I speak for all when I say we will be forever grateful.

In managing our way out of the financial impact that this has created we will have to make tough decisions. Decisions that no public representative wants to make.

But I ask this - that we make those decisions with compassion for the sacrifices that have been made in every home and business in this city and county.

We need to cut costs but let's do so by being humble. Let's look at what we don't need or what we can park for now and come back to later. Let's put aside projects that can wait in order to protect and enhance what we have. It won't be easy, but we must do our best for local businesses and communities. That is the type of leadership that is required of us now.

Despite the negative impact of COVID 19, we do have the completion of some projects to look forward to, such as the opening of the new Butler Gallery, which I hope will become another jewel in Kilkenny's crown and the Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park in July.

The Abbey Quarter and Linear Park are well underway, creating future employment for the City and an amenity that will greatly enhance the city. The Skate Park, one of the first projects I campaigned for when I started in local politics, is something I greatly look forward to opening.

We have many housing projects to be completed this year in Callan, Piltown, Castlecomer and in the city. They are badly needed and will give many people an opportunity to have a place they can call home.

The Completion of road network in the Western Environs will open up lands for much needed school developments and further housing.

We will see progress on flood relief schemes in Graiguenamangh and Ballyhale and the delivery of a pedestrian bridge in Castlecomer. That is just a sample of some of the projects already underway.

We must continue supporting community-based facilities such as the one we are sitting in right now. Facilities like this are needed now more than ever and we look forward to their doors opening again for everybody to enjoy. In that regard I'd like to announce that I will help The Watergate to host a series of live streamed events from this stage that will help support local artists while in the process raise money for charity. The first event will be The Kilkenny's at The Watergate in aid of Relay for Life. A formal announcement will be made in the coming days.

During my term as Chairman my office will remain at O'Loughlin Road where it always has been. I take great pride in that base and my family's history connected to it. It is where I grew up and still work today along with my father. My late grandfather, Mick McGuinness based his operations there also. In fact, I'm sure he'd be very proud today as I'm the first of our family to be elected to this position. My door will always be open, and I will always be available.

I am intent on hitting the ground running and immediately after our Council meeting, I will accept a large donation of PPE for our hospital donated by the Taiwanese Ireland Friendship Association.

I want to finish by thanking my family & friends, some of whom are in the gallery today. I want to particularly mention Joe Reidy, Mary Kiely, John Travers and my aunt Mary and my uncle Declan and my brothers and sister. I'm forever grateful for their support. My mother who is my best canvasser and I could not ask for a better role model than my father. I want to say a special thank you to my partner Carol and my children Jack and Phoebe who are up in the gallery. They make everything worthwhile.

This is the first time a Chairman has been elected outside of County Hall. Unfortunately, we can't celebrate in our usual fashion, but we will soon. Today we will get on with our council business. I look forward to working with you all and dealing with the challenges ahead

Thank you

Item 2: Election of Leas Cathaoirleach

Cllr. John Brennan proposed Cllr. Martin Brett as Leas Cathaoirleach. He referred to his many years as a Councillor and his recent role as Mayor of Kilkenny City Municipal District.

Cllr. Peter Cleere seconded the proposal of Cllr. Martin Brett as Leas Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Andrew McGuinness called for any further proposals. As there were no other proposals Cllr. Andrew McGuinness declared Cllr. Martin Brett to be elected as Leas Cathaoirleach.

Cllrs. John Brennan, Peter Cleere, Joe Malone, Denis Hynes, Eugene McGuinness, Maria Dollard and Matt Doran congratulated Cllr. Andrew McGuinness and Cllr. Martin Brett on their election as Cathaoirleach and Leas Cathaoirleach and offered the support of all Members for the coming year.

Ms. Colette Byrne, Chief Executive congratulated Cllr. Andrew McGuinness on his election as Cathaoirleach and wished him well in his role as first citizen of the County. The Executive and staff look forward to working in partnership with him and the Council as we work through the current crisis.

She congratulated Cllr. Martin Brett as Leas Cathaoirleach.

Item 3: Dates for Ordinary Meetings

It was proposed by Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. Martin Brett and agreed:

“That Kilkenny County Council hereby approves the following dates for Plenary Meetings of Kilkenny County Council for the period June 2020 to May 2021:

*July: 20th July, 2020
August:..... No Meeting
September: 21st September, 2020
October: 19th October, 2020
November:..... 16th November, 2020
December: 21st December, 2020
January: 18th January, 2021
February: 15th February, 2021
March: 15th March, 2021
April: 19th April, 2021
May:..... 17th May, 2021*

That concluded the business of the meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH

DATE