



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHORCAÍ

Minutes of Proceedings at Special Meeting of Cork County Council held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Cork on 7th September, 2018

I LATHAIR

Comhairleoir P.G. Ó Murchú, Méara Chontae

Comhairleoiri MacCraith, Mac Seafraida, Daltúin Ó'Donnabháin, Dheasmhumhnaigh, Ó Cainte, M. Ó Murchú, Ó hEarchaí, Ó Colmáin, C. Ó Murchú, Ní Cochláin, J. Ó' Donnabháin, G. Ní Mhuimhneacháin, Críod, Ó Luasaigh, Ó Riain, P. Ó Suilleabháin, C. MacCárthaigh, Ó Ceocháin, Sheppard, De Barra, Ó Cadhla, N.Ó Coileán, Ó hEachteirn, Ó hEigearthaigh, S. NicCárthaigh, Léanacháin-Foghlú, N. MacCárthaigh, Ó Floinn, Ó Dúghaill, G. Ó Murchú, G. Ó Murchú, B. Ó Muimhneacháin, Uí Mhaoláin, D. Ó Coileán, J. Ó Suilleabháin, Ó hAodha, D. Ó hUrthuile.

PRESENT

Councillor Patrick G. Murphy, County Mayor presided.

Councillors McGrath, Jeffers, D'Alton, Ó'Donnabháin, Desmond, Canty, M. Murphy, Harris, Coleman, K. Murphy, Coughlan, O'Donovan, G. Moynihan, Creed, Lucey, Ryan, P. O'Sullivan, McCarthy, Keohane, Sheppard, Barry, Ó Cadhla, N. Collins, Ahern, Hegarty, S. McCarthy, Linehan Foley, O'Brien, N. McCarthy, O'Flynn, Doyle, Gearóid Murphy, G. Murphy, B. Moynihan, Mullane, Collins, J. O'Sullivan, Hayes, Hurley.

Chief Executive, Divisional Manager, Director of Corporate Services, Senior Executive Officer.

The Mayor welcomed Senator Joan Freeman and Mr. Sean Gallagher to the chamber, who were seeking the Council's support for their nomination as candidates in the forthcoming Presidential Election.

The Mayor asked Members for their agreement to allow video and audio recordings to be taking in the chamber.

On the proposal of Councillor Noel McCarthy, seconded by Councillor Derry Canty, it was agreed to allow proceedings in the chamber to be filmed by the various media/reporters present.

The Mayor informed members that as agreed by the Corporate Policy Group, candidates will be afforded 10 minutes speaking time and an additional 10 minutes for Q&A, and that Senator Joan Freeman would be the first candidate to address members.

Senator Freeman thanked the Mayor and members for the opportunity to meet with Cork County Council. Senator Freeman said that she was applying for the most important job in Ireland and that it was important that elected members are involved in the interview process as provided for by the Constitution.

Senator Freeman noted that she was aware of the limitations of the role of President, and said that the President has the ability and power to influence others and bring about change, as our current President and his two predecessors have done.

Senator Freeman told members that if elected she would apply the Pieta House model by being a champion for charities and mobilizing communities just as was done for the “Darkness into Light” walks.

The Mayor informed Senator Freeman that her 10 minutes speaking time had elapsed and that there would now be an additional 10 minutes for questions and answers.

Members raised the following points and questions for Senator Freeman;

- How would you go about bringing about improvements to children mental health services?
- Would Senator Freeman’s personal views prevent her from signing the recent divisive 8th Amendment into law?
- President Michael D Higgins has brought tremendous dignity to the role of President.
- What can Senator Freeman bring to the role that the current President does not?
- Is Senator Freeman comfortable with the increased levels of militarisation and would she be prepared to lobby for members of Irish defence forces and their families.
- Does Senator Freeman have an affiliation with any political party or organisation?
- How can the role of the President help solve the ongoing housing and homelessness crisis?
- Members said they admired what had been achieved by Senator Freeman and Pieta House but struggled to see what she had achieved in her role as a Senator because of the state of mental health services in Cork.

Senator Freeman responded to members’ comments and queries as follows;

- By failing to invest in our children we will fail in making a resilient society.
- As President my personal convictions will not influence my public duties.
- As President I cannot lobby on any particular matter or issue within our society; however, as President I would draw attention to all groups and people that are being forgotten.
- Wherever the President goes so does the public and the media, meaning that attention is drawn to that area.
- As a Senator I brought in public consultation days for service providers, parents and children to come to the Seanad so they could speak openly and frankly and I am trying to make the HSE accountable on how they are expending public funds.

The Mayor thanked Senator Joan Freeman and then invited Mr. Sean Gallagher to address the chamber. The Mayor informed Mr. Gallagher that he would be afforded 10 minutes speaking time and an additional 10 minutes for Q&A.

Mr. Gallagher thanked the Mayor, Councillors and all staff of Cork County Council the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Gallagher stated that if he were elected he would work to ensure that those of the margins would be at the heart of his presidency and that he would seek to support people with disabilities. He said that he would also continue to focus on “Glaoch- The Presidents Call” and the centenary celebrations.

Mr. Gallagher said he has a visual impairment and that he has spent his entire life focussing on the things he is able to do rather than the things he cannot do.

Mr. Gallagher said that Ireland’s recent Presidents have built trust with other groups, and if elected he would be a President for all of the people of Ireland and that he would see a united Ireland within his lifetime

Mr. Gallagher said he was not seeking to be the current President’s replacement, but instead his successor.

He referred to Article 29.1 of the Constitution (Peace & Security) and said as President he would visit the Irish Defence Forces serving abroad with the United Nations’ peace keeping missions.

Mr. Gallagher recalled some of the events of the 2011 Presidential Election, and then thanked his 500,000 voters and campaigners from 2011.

The Mayor then informed Mr. Gallagher that the 10 minutes speaking time had elapsed and that there would now be an additional 10 minutes for questions from and answers.

Members commented as follows and raised the following questions for Mr. Gallagher;

- As President how would you help people that are being evicted from their family home?
- What are your views in the areas of quality of life, mental health, climate control/change and the use of plastic election posters?
- West Cork is a rural constituency and is Mr. Gallagher aware of the challenges that rural Ireland is facing?
- How would you use the role of President to address these challenges?
- What are your views on a potential border poll and Brexit implications?

Mr. Gallagher thanked members’ for their comments and responded to members’ queries as follows;

- The role of the President is referring bills that are repugnant to the Constitution to the Supreme Court for a decision; however, as President I could not get involved in day to day matters.
- It is urgent that an immediate task force should be set up to look at the practice of banks selling loans to vulture funds.
- The County of Cork is branded on an image of scenic countryside and landscapes and Mr. Gallagher committed that he once again would not be using election posters.
- I am aware of the rural and urban divide and there needs to be balance.
- Mr. Gallagher acknowledged the importance of the Ludgate Hub in West Cork.
- We need to foster and encourage or SME’s and business in our rural communities as this help keep schools, pub and post offices open.
- I will represent Ireland abroad showing the quality of life of its’ people and promote Ireland business hub.
- Mr. Gallagher said that he believed in his lifetime he would see a united Ireland. This would include not only a unification of geography but also a unification of people.

The Mayor thanked both Senator Joan Freeman and Mr. Sean Gallagher for attending the special meeting.

The Senior Executive Officer stated that Council has requested that a special meeting be convened on Thursday 13th September, 2018 for the purpose of considering and voting on any nominations received.

The Senior Executive Officer outlined that any and all nominations from councillors should be sent to the Senior Executive Officer by Sunday 9th September. In order for a nomination to be valid it needs to include all of the following details relating to the proposed candidate:

- a. Surname,
- b. Other name (given name),
- c. Address,
- d. Occupation (if any),
- e. Written consent of person proposed to be nominated.
- f. A declaration from the person proposed to be nominated that they are eligible for election to the office of President.

The Senior Executive Officer confirmed that any nomination received would be circulated to all councillors with the agenda that will issue on the morning of Monday 10th September, 2018.

This concluded the business of the meeting.