

**MIONTUAIRISCÍ AN CHRUINNITHE BHLIANTÚIL A
TIONÓLADH I SEOMRA NA COMHAIRLE,
AN 17 MEITHEAMH, 2022 AG 3.00 P.M.**



**MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER ON FRIDAY, 17TH JUNE, 2022 AT 3.00 P.M.**

Chair: Fidelis Doherty

Cllrs: Eamon Aylward, Tomás Breathnach, John Brennan, Martin Brett, John Coonan, Peter Cleere, Deirdre Cullen, Michael Delaney, Maria Dollard, Matt Doran, Michael Doyle, Pat Dunphy, David Fitzgerald, Pat Fitzpatrick, Ger Frisby, Joe Lyons, Joe Malone & Michael McCarthy, Andrew McGuinness, Eugene McGuinness & Patrick O'Neill.

MS Teams: Cllrs. Mary Hilda Cavanagh.

Officials: Sean McKeown, Tim Butler, Mary Mulholland, Kevin Hanley & Anne Maria Walsh.

Cllr. Fidelis Doherty welcomed all the Members to the Council Chamber. She also welcomed members of the public.

Cllr. Fidelis Doherty addressed the Council as follows:

It's been a busy year since June 2021. Today I would like to say how much I appreciate all those who have helped, supported and guided me through the various processes and structures of being Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council.

I wish to thank Anne Maria Walsh, Catherine Cooney, Director of Services Tim Butler, Brenda Kelly, Meg Molloy, Catherine Walsh, Andrew Wall and Teresa Mahon for all your help to me.

Today I say Thank You.

Throughout the year there have been many events, openings of roads, housing units and community facilities right across and up and down County Kilkenny:

- *The opening of the Ferrybank Neighbourhood Park in association with Waterford City & County.*
- *Launch of the Tea Rooms in Woodstock.*
- *Abbey Quarter – Brewhouse.*
- *Silaire Boardwalk in Graiguenamanagh.*
- *Pedestrian Bridge in Castlecomer.*
- *Several Commemorative events in James Stephens Barracks.*
- *Poulnassy Waterfall Carpark and Trail Walk.*
- *Celebrating Kilkenny as only 1 of 4 Craft Regions in Europe.*
- *Being part of the installation of Rev. Stephen Farrell, Dean of Ossorry – St. Canice's Cathedral.*
- *Launch of Tradfest Kilkenny.*
- *Business Awards in Lyrath.*
- *Yulefest 2021.*
- *Community Events Awards.*
- *Representing Kilkenny at the National Pride of Place Awards and National Enterprise Awards.*
- *Mens Shed in Graiguenamanagh and developments at Abbey Hall and Multi-Purpose Sports Facilities in Graiguenamanagh.*
- *Kilkenny County Fleadh launch and event in Freshford.*
- *Youth Awards*
- *Opening of the refurbished Tea Rooms on Bateman Quay.*

- Opening of Woodstock Waterfall Loop Walk.
- Representing Kilkenny at the Chief Fire Officers Association Conference hosted by Kilkenny County Council.
- Opening of the Walkway in Graigue Ballycallan GAA grounds and of their gym.
- Lions Club Presentations to groups and organisations.

With many highlights to treasure and to be part of there was one that stands out – the St. Patrick's Festival, a feast of activities, glorious weather, marching bands from America, street entertainment, Ferris Wheel and the highlight being the Parade. If I had been anywhere else that very same day I wouldn't have met former Republic of Ireland goalkeeper, Packie Bonner and had the opportunity to welcome him to Kilkenny.

I wish to thank the Leas Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael McCarthy and former Mayor Cllr. Andrew McGuinness. We enjoyed a good friendly working relationship and I thank both for that.

At last years Annual Meeting I referenced a good friend and mentor to me Willie Walsh of Busherstown, Glenmore. Willie was a great supporter and a source of sound advice. Willie was laid to rest just on Monday of this week and I remember him today.

I wish to thank all the frontline and all retail staff – Civil Defence and Gardaí.

Today I would like to reference the First Citizen's Forum whereby the Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny, Wexford, Carlow, Tipperary and Waterford meet monthly and meet with the Oireachtas members every second month to raise and highlight and seek support for matters of regional concern.

Kilkenny was also visited by several Ministers:

- Minister Heather Humphries
- Minister Darragh O'Brien
- Minister Damien English
- Minister Frank Feighan
- Minister Stephen Donnelly (St. Luke's Hospital – opening of the 76 bed modular unit)
- Minister Robert Troy
- Minister Jack Chambers visited Kilkenny recently to open the Astro turf in Danesfort

Today, I joined with Minister Joe O'Brien who visited the Kilkenny Volunteer Centre early this morning and other facilities across the City throughout the day.

Recently I enjoyed lovely visits to Clogh and Callan and on Wednesday just gone was in lovely Glenmore to mark the opening of the Broadband Connection Point in the Hall and also in Galmoy saw at first-hand how communities will benefit from such great infrastructure that sees life back into community facilities.

Best wishes to the Irish Open being held in Mount Juliet.

On the passing of three former Members of Kilkenny County Council we remember former Councillor and former Chair of Kilkenny County Council Andy Cotterell and Cllr. Tom Brennan. We also remember former Cllr. Joan Murphy.

Finally thank you to my husband Andrew and to our family of Ben, Rory and Katie.

Andrew made sure I was at events in good time and if the truth be told I would probably have been sailing a bit close to the wind otherwise.

On quieter days and at home in Ballyfacey, Glenmore there was a share of days where I could have done the dinner, indeed there was a share of days where I should have made the dinner and again Andrew looked after that with no bother and he is hugely supportive to me and today Andrew I say thanks.

May I wish the incoming Cathaoirleach and the incoming Leas Cathaoirleach the very best. Best wishes to our newly appointed Deputy Chief Executive Sean McKeown and also newly appointed Acting Directors of Services, Fiona Deegan and Denis Malone.

I would like to congratulate Cllr. David Fitzgerald who was elected Mayor of Kilkenny City on Friday last and also to Deputy Mayor Cllr. Andrew McGuinness.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all of the Elected Members in relation to the work of Kilkenny County Council. Indeed there are challenges ahead and ongoing and these will be met and given the time, the consideration and attention in order to provide and address.

Go raibh mile maith agat go leir.

Mír/Item 1: Toghadh an Chathaoirligh - Election of Cathaoirleach

Cllr. Andrew McGuinness proposed Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick as Cathaoirleach for the coming year. He referred to Cllr. Fitzpatrick's career in politics over 14 years. He referred also to his outstanding contribution to his community. He has been involved in many organisations and is very hardworking. He is Chairperson of Joint Policing Committee and has been Chair of the Castlecomer Municipal District. He will bring a wealth of experience to the role of Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. John Brennan seconded the proposal of Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick as Cathaoirleach. Cllr. Brennan referred to Cllr. Fitzpatrick's work in the Castlecomer Municipal District. He is very efficient and hardworking and will do his county proud.

Cllr. Doherty asked for any other proposals. As there were no other proposals Cllr. Fidelis Doherty declared Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick to be elected as Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council and invited him to take the Chair and Chain of Office.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick addressed the Council as follows:

Comhairleoiri, foireann banistíocht, iriseoiri, a dhuine uaisle. Is mor an onoir dom ceapaithe mar Cathaoirleach Comhairle Contae Cill Chainnaigh, le linn an bhliain seo chugainn.

Fellow Councillors, Management and staff, members of the Fourth Estate, ladies and gentlemen, it's a great honour for me to be elected Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council for the coming year.

I wish to thank my proposer and seconder and my fellow members for placing their trust in me to lead the Council as County Kilkenny's 'First Citizen' in the year ahead.

It is an honour that I have aspired to since I was first co-opted to the Council in 2004. Since then, I have experienced the highs and lows of public life – being elected in my own right and then relinquishing the seat in 2009. However, such was my regard for the work of the elected council and the staff that I was determined to be able to participate again in the Council and I worked to regain a seat in 2014.

The characteristics which I bring to the role have been shaped by people who have inspired me from my young days in Dunbell.

The example of my mother Lil and my father Paddy Fitz set me on a path in which respect for all I encountered was a guiding principle. It was at the core of a set of values which is shared with my sister Anne Marie. Such characteristics were reinforced through my education in Bennetsbridge national school under the tutelage of Mrs Marnell and through secondary school under the guidance of the legendary Billy Burke in Kilkenny City Vocational School.

My early experience in public life were moulded through observing closely the careers of such outstanding Kilkenny representatives as Aylward, Gibbons, Crotty and Pattison and subsequently my association with the McGuinness family – Mick and John – whose commitment to tireless representation of the public was, and is, inspirational.

In local government I have been fortunate to have served along with talented and hard-working staff and managers – in the latter category I would mention the contribution of Michael Malone, Joe Crockett and most recently Colette Byrne. I am sorry that we are losing Colette to retirement such was her willingness to work closely with elected members and her policy of keeping the door open to all reasonable representations. Her guidance regarding the progression of the county and city both at the strategic and the operational levels has secured for us a strong basis for further development.

She hands over the baton to the ever-capable Acting CE Sean McKeown whom I look forward to working with on a daily basis to advance the projects already in train.

Among the developments we can look forward to are:

- *the further enhancement of the Abbey Quarter in the City;*
- *the New City Library;*
- *the southern Kilkenny Greenway*
- *flood relief schemes in Graiguenamanagh and Ballyhale*
- *the commencement of works on the Urlingford Fire Station*
- *the development of the new Biodiversity Park at the disused landfill at Dunmore*
- *improvement of the N77 road from Ballyragget to Ballynaslee*
- *and the all-important progressing of housing plans in each Municipal District.*

Mentioning the Municipal Districts, I intend to be a “first citizen” for all of our county from Crettyard in the north to Mooncoin in the south and from Graiguenamanagh in the east to Callan in the west. Kilkenny has so much to treasure in terms of our pastoral and fertile landscape.

Kilkenny is notable for its “Three Sisters” – the three great river valleys which define the boundaries and character of our county. At a time when there is great concern regarding climate change and the environment, I intend to chart a path which will protect and highlight our precious environment while at the same time ensuring that our thriving agri-business sector is allowed operate to its full potential.

Farming and the Food industry form the backbone of our local economy. It is my contention that we, as public representatives, must carefully distinguish between idealism and pragmatism.

The climate problem cannot be solved in one year-it is a generational issue. We must assist industry and farming with necessary environmental changes – Not close them down!

One of my first initiatives as Cathaoirleach will be to continue to promote Kilkenny Day when we will bring together many of our community groups, youth organisations, sporting clubs and the Council to show pride in our county and to help maintain and enhance its public spaces, townscapes and landscapes.

I am also pleased that a Clean Up Day will be launched to coincide with this year’s Kilkenny Day and I am delighted to say that sponsorship has been secured for this initiative for each of the coming three years and I look forward very soon to announcing details of how all can get involved.

As well as its rural landscape, the county also embraces the jewel that is Kilkenny city. In terms of its cultural and historic assets there is no city or town in Ireland to match it. The conservation and promotion of heritage assets such as the Butler Gallery and the Medieval Mile adds to the already well-established attractions of the Castle and Rothe House. I intend to work closely with the Mayor of Kilkenny City in promoting the locality and in marrying the best of city and county to burnish our already high repute as a visitor destination.

The coming year will demand close co-operation between all the local government stakeholders in the county such are the changes in the external environment. Little did we think in the early part of this year as we appeared to shake off the shadow of Covid, that we would be faced with another crisis in the shape of a war on the continent of Europe. Although well removed from the battlefield our country and our county are learning to cope with the consequences of such an interruption to the previously peaceful circumstances of the continent.

In both emergencies local government has risen to the challenge. From the early days of the Covid crisis Kilkenny County Council mobilised its Community Call plan which reached out to every locality in town and country offering support and contact for those who felt isolated and in want of assistance.

Again, the resources of the Council were called upon following the outbreak of the atrocities in Ukraine – on this occasion Kilkenny County Council Civil Defence Staff and volunteers put in place emergency arrangements to offer reception and respite to the people fleeing the war in their homeland. We welcome them as we do all who have found a home within our county. They are part of an increasingly cosmopolitan population in the county whom as Cathaoirleach I intend to get to know and to work with to aid their integration in the life of our locality.

Yes – we can be proud of how we responded to these incredible challenges. I aspire to such initiative being the default strategy for our council. We are here to serve our community and for me that means ever improving efficiency and services – delivered on time and with respect for the public.

The foregoing examples and a host of other endeavours demonstrate the increasing focus on community development as a function of modern local government. While the provision and maintenance of traditional services such as roads, fire brigades and libraries will remain at the core of the council's output, we are also challenged to look at creative ways in which community development including local enterprise can be progressed through supporting organisations in the development of amenities and in the resourcing of local groups and clubs.

A big part of Kilkenny's identity on a national level is the endeavour of our sportspeople and particularly on the hurling fields of the nation. Wherever Kilkenny people meet there is pride in the black-and-amber as worn so successfully by our hurling and camogie heroes.

With these words I look forward to the challenges of the coming twelve months. I follow in the footsteps of esteemed leaders as "First Citizen" of the County - from John F Smithwick the first chairman in 1899 to my immediate predecessor Cllr Fidelis Doherty. In this regard I want to pay tribute to Fidelis for her accomplished chairing of the Council as the organisation tentatively exited the period of the pandemic. I know I will be asking for her guidance as I take the reins in my own period of tenure.

As I stated at the beginning, I intend to be a "First Citizen" for all of County Kilkenny and let me assure you that my door will be open to your concerns as councillors no matter what part of the county or which political persuasion you hail from.

At this mid-point of the year 2022, we face many challenges, known and unknown. But as an elected council we will stand up as leaders and ensure that the people of Kilkenny are supported and motivated to face with courage all that lies before us as a nation and as a county.

Finally, I want to thank those who have supported and helped me to this day. I am grateful to my family, and to the Electorate in the Castlecomer Municipal District for putting their faith in me.

Go raibh mile maith agaibh, a dhaoine uaisle.

Mír/Item 2: Toghadh an Leas-Chathaoirligh - Election of Leas Cathaoirleach

Cllr. Michael Doyle proposed Cllr. Pat O'Neill as Leas Cathaoirleach. He referred to his years of service as a Councillor and his role as Mayor of Kilkenny City. He spoke on how Cllr. O'Neill will be well capable of stepping up where required.

Cllr. Andrew McGuinness seconded the proposal of Cllr. Pat O'Neill as Leas Cathaoirleach. He referred to the importance of this role as a support to the Cathaoirleach.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick called for any other proposals. As there were no other proposals Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick declared Cllr. Pat O'Neill to be elected as Leas Cathaoirleach. Cllr. Fitzpatrick invited Cllr. Pat O'Neill to come forward and take his Chain of Office.

Cllrs. Andrew McGuinness, Tomás Breathnach and Michael Doyle congratulated Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick and Cllr. Pat O'Neill on their election as Cathaoirleach and Leas Cathaoirleach and offered the support of all Members for the coming year. Cllr. Pat O'Neill offered his support to Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick and stated that he will be available to support him during the year.

Mr. Sean McKeown, Deputy Chief Executive congratulated Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick on his election as Cathaoirleach. He wished him well in his role as First Citizen of Kilkenny. The Executive and staff look forward to working with you and the Council as we work through these challenging times and progress the many projects you referred to in your address. He assured him of the support of all staff and hoped he will have an enjoyable year.

Mr. Sean McKeown congratulated Cllr. Pat O'Neill as Leas Cathaoirleach and wished him well.

Mír/Item 3: Dátaí do Ghnáthchruinnithe - Dates for Ordinary Meetings

It was proposed by Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, seconded by Cllr. David Fitzgerald and agreed:

“That Kilkenny County Council hereby approves the following dates for Plenary Meetings of Kilkenny County Council for the period June 2022 to May 2023:

<i>June.....</i>	<i>20th June, 2022</i>
<i>July</i>	<i>18th July, 2022</i>
<i>August</i>	<i>No Meeting</i>
<i>September</i>	<i>19th September, 2022</i>
<i>October</i>	<i>17th October, 2022</i>
<i>November.....</i>	<i>21st November, 2022</i>
<i>December</i>	<i>19th December, 2022</i>
<i>January</i>	<i>16th January, 2023</i>
<i>February</i>	<i>20th February, 2023</i>
<i>March</i>	<i>20th March, 2023</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>17th April, 2023</i>
<i>May.....</i>	<i>15th May, 2023</i>

That concluded the business of the meeting.

CATHAOIRLEACH

DATE