

MINUTES OF ANNUAL MEETING OF CORK CITY COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 21ST JUNE, 2004.

- PRESENT:** An tArd-Mheara, Comhairleoir C. Burke in the chair.
An tArd-Mheara, Comhairleoir S. Martin in the chair.
- NORTH EAST** Comhairleoirí M. Quill T. Brosnan, J. Kelleher, D. Murphy, A. Spillane.
- NORTH CENTRAL** Comhairleoirí M. Barry, C. Clancy, G. O' Flynn, D. Wallace.
- NORTH WEST** Comhairleoirí J. O' Brien, M. O' Connell, T. Fitzgerald.
- SOUTH EAST** Comhairleoirí D. Clune, D. Counihan, C. O' Leary, D. O' Flynn, T. Shannon, J. Corr.
- SOUTH CENTRAL** Comhairleoirí C. O' Connell, C. Lynch, S. Martin, T. O' Driscoll, D. Cregan.
- SOUTH WEST** Comhairleoirí J. Buttimer, F. Dennehy, M. Shields, B. Bermingham, M. Ahern.
- ALSO PRESENT** Mr. J. Gavin, City Manager.
Mr. J. D. Flynn, Director of Services, Corporate Affairs.
Mr. J. O'Donovan, Director of Services, Planning & Development.
Mr. D. O'Mahony, Director of Services, Environment.
Mr. J. Kennelly, Director of Services, Recreation, Amenity & Culture.
Ms. D. Hegarty, Law Agent.
Mr. T. Healy, Head of Finance.
Mr. F. Allison, Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Affairs.
Mr. D. O' Mahony, Communications Co-ordinator.
Ms. U. Ramsell, Staff Officer, Corporate Affairs.
- Apology:** Comhairleoir D. McCarthy

An tArd-Mheara recited the opening prayer.

The Meetings Administrator declared the names of those persons duly elected in the Local Elections held in Cork City on 11th June 2004.

An tArd Mheara addressed the meeting and stated:

A Chomhleoirí, a bhainisteoir Chathair Chorcaí, a dhaoine uaisle. Tá áthas orm fáilte a chur romhaibh go dtí an chrunniú seo, an chéad chruinniú den gComhairle Cathrach nua tofa.

Councillors, City Manager, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to welcome you all here this evening to this the first meeting of the new City Council which was elected on

the 11th of June, 2004. I wish to extend a special welcome to the new members who have joined us, Cllr. Jerry Buttimer, Cllr. Mick Barry, Cllr. Ciaran Lynch, Cllr. Dara Murphy, Cllr. Annette Spillane and Cllr. Tony Fitzgerald.

On the 7th of July, 2003, I was elected Lord Mayor by the members of Cork City Council. I am very proud and privileged that that honour was bestowed

on me. The office of the Lord Mayor has always been treated with respect by the people of the city down through the years and this respect was earned as a result of the commitment, leadership and a vision of each of the previous holders of the office. A very high standard had been set for me and I used my best endeavours to maintain that standard.

I also believe that the respect which the office enjoys, is as a direct result of the Lord Mayors down through the years visiting each of the schools in the city. During my term as Lord Mayor, there was a lively debate on this issue and I firmly believe that tradition, which has been established for over eighty years of visiting the schools and granting the half-day, should be continued.

In reviewing the Programme of Work of the City Council over the last twelve months, it is important that we focus on a number of issues.

1. EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE:

This is the most important project which this city has ever taken on board; the goals were clearly set out in the mission statement:

“Our vision will be both ambitious and realistic. Cork 2005 will be a punctuation mark in Cork City’s development concluding an initial era of renewal and beginning, an even greater period of cultural, social and economic progress. Our goal is to become a city that is a community of citizens, a community where all citizens are empowered, where all citizens hold mutual respect and understanding for one another. Cork will be a city where such common trust creates the basis for celebration, an expression of both local and global culture”.

As Chairperson of the Board of Management of the European Capital of Culture, I am delighted that over the last eleven months, major progress has been made in the planning and organising of the programme for the year. The events including opera, music, drama, dance, visual arts, sport, together with festival programmes, have all been clearly planned out. It is important however, that the information in respect of the planned programme is made available at an early date and in particular, the events which are planned for the first three months of 2005. It is not possible for the residents of the city to promote these events without having the dates and times when they are arranged for. As I said earlier in the year, if each household in the city sent out ten emails or cards to their friends or relatives around the world, we would have a direct hit of 400,000 homes.

This is not possible however without the information being provided. It is also important that we use our Third Level Institutions, as both of them have established information in respect of names and addresses of graduates who are now living in all parts of the world.

2005 is our one opportunity to make Cork City a tourist city with a particular focus on cultural, social and sporting events. It is important that we all play our part and that we make it a success.

2. REFURBISHMENT OF THE CITY

I am delighted that so much progress was made during my term of office on the following projects including:

- (a) Refurbishment of Patrick Street, now near completion at a cost of €12 million;
- (b) Refurbishment of the Shandon Area, cost of €15 million;
- (c) Refurbishment of Oliver Plunkett Street, which has just commenced, with overall cost in excess of €4.5 million;
- (d) The Cork Main Drainage Scheme, which is now fully operational, at a total cost in excess of €300 million;
- (e) The Heritage Centre, Lee Road, which will be in the old Lee Road Waterworks, with €5.5 million funding being provided by The European Free Trade Association, at a total cost of the project is €8.5 million and it will be opened as a Sustainable City Campus, which is a joint project with U.C.C.;
- (f) Ringmahon House. Monies being provided by the Dunne Family of €2 million for the refurbishment and for housing to be provided and managed by S.H.A.R.E.;
- (g) The Web Works, which is a joint project with Enterprise Ireland. This is a state of the art Regional Technology Hub with office facilities and a management and support structure for Enterprise Ireland Client Companies, estimated cost of €13.5 million;
- (h) City Hall Extension, provision of an extra 100,000 sq. ft. of offices for City Council adjoining City Hall. The cost will be in the region of €35 million.
- (i) Park n'Ride Access to the City. Provision for car parking at the Blackash for 920 cars. Bus service available every 10 minutes at peak hours. The cost of this project is €4 million;
- (j) The provision of seven Green Routes as bus priority corridors, at a total cost of €19 million.

These are some of the twenty-nine different projects that we have planned or which are presently in progress.

The total cost of all of these projects is €196 million and I would like to pay tribute to City Management, all of the City Council Officials and the previous Council for their initiative in making it possible for so many projects to be carried out in such a short period of time.

In both the public and private sector, major progress is also being made on a number of projects including:

- (a) The development in Mahon;
- (b) Lapps Quay;
- (c) Georges Quay;
- (d) Lavitt's Quay;
- (e) The School of Nursing in University College Cork which will cater for 1,200 nursing students;
- (f) The Maternity Unit in Cork University Hospital which will cater for 6,000 deliveries per annum and will be the most up-to-date facility in Europe, together with a Research and Development Unit;

- (g) The refurbishment of the Court House in Washington Street, which will be fully completed by January 2005;
- (h) The development of new facilities in Cork Airport.

When you add all of the projects together, the total expenditure in the building programme in Cork City is over €1 billion. At no time, have so many building projects come on stream together. When attending business functions during the year, on each occasion reference was made to the number of tower cranes in the city, it increased each month throughout my term of office.

I am also delighted that the commitment was finally given for the building of the new School of Music. At the start of my term I gave an undertaking that I would use my best endeavours to bring that matter to a final conclusion. I am delighted that the project is now progressing and that, in the not too distant future, the music students of the city, will have a well designed and comprehensive centre available to them.

3. A POSITIVE IMAGE FOR CORK

- (a) City Centre Area Regeneration: When I came into office, I found that there was very a negative view of City Council within the local business community and this was as a result of the disruption caused by the work of the Main Drainage Scheme and the refurbishment of Patrick Street. As a result of working with Cork Business Association, the Chamber of Commerce and Cork City Challenge together, we have helped to give a more positive image of the work of City Council. However, I believe a lot of progress has still to be made with convincing people to come in to the City Centre area and a major effort should be made throughout 2004 and 2005, to make the City Centre more customer-friendly. The development of the Park n'Ride Facility at the Black Ash is innovative and is welcome and the facilities should be used by both those working in the city and by shoppers.
- (b) Between 1996-2001, the total number employed in the city has increased from 48,484 to 72,193, which is a 49% increase. It is important therefore, that we continue to accommodate this growth in employment. We have already identified the City Centre/Docklands Area as a main focus for development in the Cork Metropolitan Area between 2003 and 2020. I note that the first planning application was submitted within the last six weeks, and I hope that this will encourage the major investment which is required for this area.
- (c) I am disappointed with the lack of progress being made by Iarnród Eireann in development of the lands which they occupy, as a state company, it is important that they clearly set out their plans and the timeframe for carrying out the development. No other city in Europe has over 520 acres to develop within five minute walking distance from the City Centre. It is important that we expedite and encourage the development of the Docklands Area if we wish to attract new employers from a range of areas including the financial, professional services areas, public administration area, software development, information technology, telemarketing, commercial research and development and data processing areas. It is important that we continue to promote and encourage the development of this under utilised land bank so close to the City Centre.

4. HOUSING

Over the last five years, no progress has been made in reducing the House Waiting List. At the present time, there are over 4,000 individuals or family units on the Cork City Council's Housing List. Last week we just saw the completion of 221 Affordable and Social Housing Units. I note that presently 1,400 Units are being built, both Affordable and Social Housing Units and there is a further 2,500 which are at planning stage, thus by the end of this City Council in five years time, major progress will have been made on the current list. We must continue to make every effort to reduce the waiting list.

I am delighted that purpose built student accommodation is coming on stream. While I may have concerns in respect of the size of some of the developments, I believe that any future development by Third Level Institutions should not proceed without the appropriate student accommodation also being provided at the same time. In many areas of the city, private investors have purchased family homes for use as student accommodation. This has forced many other families to move away from the city because of badly planned and badly managed student accommodation properties. It is important that the new developments, which we have allowed to take place, will be properly supervised and managed and that it does not interfere in any way with private residential areas. The third area of housing where major progress requires to be made over the next twelve months, is the area of Affordable Housing. At the present time, it is not possible for young people to buy a property within the city boundary. It is important therefore, that affordable housing is made available to young people and that young families can continue to live within the city and that our local National Schools continue to enrol the same level of new pupils each year.

5. R.A.P.I.D.

In April, 2001, we launched a major strategy for development of Knocknaheeny and also for the development of other areas of the city. Consultation took place and indications were given that the word RAPID meant that there would be early decision and that projects would get going at an early stage. While all of the submissions have been made to the relevant Government Departments, the lack of funding is disappointing. In particular, as all of the areas involved in the RAPID Programme are areas where there is a need for renewal and regeneration. If we give an undertaking, we should make every effort to honour those undertakings and it is important that the necessary funding is made available without further delay. I must express disappointment with the inadequate funding which was provided for Churchfield Swimming Pool, which is in a RAPID area.

City Council was provided with 50% funding and it was not allowed to borrow the additional funding. This clearly shows the lack of independence which Local Authorities now have but it also shows, the lack of commitment to what was marketed as the "Renewal, Regeneration and Upgrading of Disadvantaged Areas".

6. EVENTS DURING THE YEAR

Before I became involved in politics, I was involved with Local Community Organisations and in the course of the year, I was delighted that I was able to give something back to those organisations.

- (a) In particular, I was delighted to have established the Community Awards Scheme that two companies, namely the Evening Echo and Express Kitchens were prepared to invest €10,000 in the project. It is important that we give recognition to the large number of people who work in the various charitable and voluntary organisations throughout the city. Without their help and assistance, many of the services which we take for granted, would not be provided. At the present time, when we in City Council issue a circular to Voluntary Groups, there are over seven hundred different groups that receive the circular. This gives you an indication of the scale of involvement by so many of the people in the city and it is important that we, as a City Council, give recognition to their work. I would hope that this Award Scheme will continue in the coming years.

LORD MAYOR'S CHRISTMAS CONCERT

- (b) This year also saw a very successful Lord Mayor's Christmas Concert being organised and I wish to thank Ursula Ramsell, together with all the City Council staff and those who worked on the Committee on a voluntary basis, for their help and assistance in making it a success.

LORD MAYOR'S CHARITY BALL

- (c) Thanks is also due to all of the City Council staff who helped to make it possible to again, for the first time in three years, to organise the Lord Mayor's Charity Ball on St. Patrick's Night. As a result of this event, over €23,000 was paid to Marymount Hospice.

LORD MAYOR'S GOLF CLASSIC

- (d) The Golf Classic was also a success and thanks to Liam Casey, Stephen Scully and Mahon Golf Club for their help and assistance. In all, over €70,000 was raised during the course of the year for community and charitable organisations. Over forty different organisation benefited from those fund raising activities.

THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY

- (e) The Freedom of the City was awarded to John Hume by the City Council during the year and this was in recognition of the contribution, which he has made in Irish politics over the last 30 years and in particular, for the role he played in bringing about peace in Northern Ireland.
- (f) The 1st of May was a very special day not only for the city or the country but for all of Europe with 10 new countries joining the European Union. It was a historical event for Europe and it was also historical for the City Council when the Slovakian Prime Minister addressed a Meeting of Council.
- (g) At the invitation of the Lady Mayoress on International Women's Day, 30 different Women's Organisations set up their stands in City Hall and over 1,000 people visited the event. The vast majority of the work of these organisations is done by people on a voluntary basis and it is important that City Hall gives recognition and support to their work.

PRIORITIES OF NEW CITY COUNCIL

1. Marketing of the City Centre Area;
2. Conference Centre for the city;
3. Fast tracking the Docklands Development;
4. Park n'Ride on the north, east and west sides of the city;
5. Northwest By-Pass;
6. Flyover on the South Link Road (already sanctioned);
7. RAPID Programme (serious funding should be provided);
8. Unemployment black spots new initiatives required;
9. Housing - that the planned programme is fully implemented and that more affordable housing is made available within the city boundaries;
10. Extension of the city boundary.

I would like to thank all of the staff in Cork City Council, my Secretaries, Rachel, Maria, Lorraine, all of the staff of Corporate Affairs, John D. Flynn, Damien O'Mahony, Sean Crowley, Finbarr Allison, Ursula Ramsell and Pat Duggan, the City Manager, Joe Gavin and all of the staff of the various departments in the Council. I would also like to thank all of the members of City Council for their help and support throughout the year, the former members who are not in this new City Council, Theresa O'Brien, Ernie Nelson, Liam Burke, P.J. Hourican, Tim Falvey and Con O'Leary. To all members of the Media, thank you for your help, assistance and support throughout my term as Lord Mayor.

May I wish the members of City Council and Management every success over the next five years. I am delighted that I was part of the regeneration programme of the city and I know that you, the new Council and City Management, will continue to see this very progressive regeneration programme continue.

Finally, I would like to thank my wife Mary, my brothers and sisters, my nephews and nieces, all of my friends and relations and the members of the Fine Gael Party for their support throughout the year.

It would not be possible to fulfil the role as Lord Mayor without your backup, encouragement and advice.

Thank you one and all,
Go raibh míle maith agat go léir.

An Chomhairle paid tribute to an tArdmhéara for his achievements and his work in representing the city during the past year. The City Manager on his own behalf and on behalf of the staff of Cork City Council associated with these tributes to An tArdmhéara.

1. SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Comhairleoir C. O'Leary proposed and Comhairleoir M. Barry seconded the suspension of Standing Orders to discuss the visit of President George W. Bush to Ireland.

A vote was taken where there appeared:-

FOR:

Comhairleoirí J. Kelleher, A. Spillane, M. Barry, C. Clancy, J. O'Brien, M. O'Connell, C. O'Leary, D. O'Flynn, C. O'Connell, C. Lynch, M. Ahern. (11)

AGAINST:

Comhairleoirí M. Quill, T. Brosnan, D. Murphy, G. O'Flynn, D. Wallace, C. Burke, T. Fitzgerald, D. Clune, D. Counihan, T. Shannon, J. Corr, S. Martin, T. O'Driscoll, D. Cregan, J. Buttimer, F. Dennehy, M. Shields, B. Bermingham. (18)

An tArd Mheara declared the motion to be defeated.

2. **ELECTION OF AN tARD MHÉARA**

An tArd Mhéara requested nominations for the office of Ard Mhéara:

Comhairleoir D. Wallace proposed and Comhairleoir D. Cregan seconded Comhairleoir Sean Martin.

Comhairleoir C. O'Leary proposed and Comhairleoir M. Barry seconded Comhairleoir Con O'Connell.

A vote was taken where there appeared:-

For Comhairleoir Sean Martin:-

Comhairleoirí M. Quill, T. Brosnan, J. Kelleher, D. Murphy, C. Clancy, G. O'Flynn, D. Wallace, C. Burke, M. O'Connell, T. Fitzgerald, D. Clune, D. Counihan, D. O'Flynn, T. Shannon, J. Corr, C. Lynch, S. Martin, T. O'Driscoll, D. Cregan, J. Buttimer, F. Dennehy, M. Shields, B. Bermingham, M. Ahern. (24)

For Comhairleoir Con O'Connell:-

Comhairleoirí A. Spillane, M. Barry, J. O'Brien, C. O'Leary, C. O'Connell. (5)

An tArdmhéara declared Comhairleoir Sean Martin elected to the office of Ardmhéara.

SPEECH OF THE NEW-ELECTED LORD MAYOR OF CORK, CLLR. SEÁN MARTIN

A Iar-Árdmhéara, Comhairleoirí, Aire Sláinte agus leanaí agus a dhaoine uaisle go léir idir chléir agus tuath ba mhaith liom ar dtús báire mo bhuíochas a ghabháil díobh as ucht mé a thoghadh mar Árdmhéara Chorcaí. Is onóir agus pribhléid domsa é seo a bheadh deacair a sharú. Geallaim go n-oibreoidh mé go dian dícheallach Domhnach is dálach ar son mhuintir Chorcaí i rith na bliana atá romhainn.

Minister for Health and Children, City Councillors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank you all for your support and kindness shown to me to night. I wish, in particular, to thank my proposer and seconder and the members of City Council for electing me as Lord Mayor of Cork.

I am deeply conscious of the single honour that has been bestowed upon me here tonight. To wear the Chain once worn by Terence MacSwiney and Tomas Mac Curtin is, indeed, a great privilege and one which I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Given my love of Irish history, I am keenly aware of the legacy which these two men left our city. I remain inspired by the admirable qualities of these men and their contemporaries. They were highly idealistic, selfless, public-spirited and committed to the welfare of our city, I only hope that I can bring these same qualities to bear on my work during my period in office.

I wish at this stage to pay a particular tribute to our out-going Lord Mayor, Cllr. Colm Burke and his wife, Mary, represented the city with energy, distinction and honour. They worked diligently and conscientiously on behalf of the people of Cork. I am sure you will all join with me in wishing Colm and Mary a well-earned rest. Go raibh míle maith agaibh.

I also wish to thank my wife, Ann, for her commitment and support in my political life to date and our children, Kate, Shane, Kelly and Dara for allowing their dad time off to attend so many meetings!

To night is also a special night for my parents, Paddy and Lana. I thank them for the great opportunities they gave me during my lifetime. They are of a generation that worked hard and sacrificed a lot to bring the country to where it is today.

During my year as Lord Mayor I intend with City Council and our Management to pursue and promote a number of objectives and issues.

At the outset I want to ensure that the on-going momentum towards the rejuvenation of the city centre is accelerated and realised over the next twelve months. Our city traders and citizens over the last number of years have put up with much interruption and inconvenience as the Main Drainage and Patrick Street Projects have progressed. The time has come to give our city centre back to the people of Cork. We must make a special effort and focus our energies on rejuvenating the city centre. For example derelict sites and dilapidated buildings will either have to be taken over by the city or cleaned up and developed. I will be making cleanliness of the city a priority and will be insisting on a definitive cleansing programme.

Over €15 million has been spent on the upgrading of St. Patrick Street and I am going to ensure that a plan is in place for the removal of litter by bigger and better bins, emptied more often and that we invest in cleaning equipment capable of cleaning the street more quickly so that the high standard of the street is maintained. I am going to ask City Council to consider special initiatives to deal with the chewing gum problem on our streets. I am going to work with the City Manager to take a tough line with those responsible for illegal posters and graffiti. I also believe we should focus on cleaning the river bed and quay walls for Penrose Quay to North Gate Bridge and add feature lighting where possible.

We must also take stock and review our parking policies to ensure that they are not discouraging people from coming back into the city centre to shop and do business. To symbolically reinforce the theme of giving the City Centre back to the people, I will on September 22nd – Car Free Day – lead the City Council on a walk down Patrick Street.

Linked to the rejuvenation of the city centre is the need to continue and promote Cork City as the major shopping centre in the south and major tourist destination. I intend to discuss with various interested parties and to make recommendations on enhancing Cork to attract additional visitors to our city. Less than 10% of visitors to our city remain here for more than 24 hours and we have to find ways of encouraging tourists to stay in our beautiful city longer. In administering the clamping and tow-away practices, we need to review how they are applied on foreign registered tourists' cars and the signals being inadvertently sent to foreign tourists.

We can make the welcome signs at the entrance to Cork City more friendly and welcoming. Above all, I am conscious of the work Cork City Challenge and I will, through the Challenge, support their work in developing a five-year marketing plan for the city.

As a person reared in Turners Cross and who from my earliest days loved the thrill and excitement that sport brings I intend to do everything possible to highlight the importance of sport and recreational facilities for our young people. When I was young, I was lucky in that I lived next door to Turners Cross or the “Bon”, as it is more affectionately known, was given great opportunities for sport by Scoil and Colaiste Chríost Rí, Nemo Rangers and Togher A.F.C. Today's youth need more than luck. I believe City Council has a crucial role to play in enhancing the sporting, recreational and amenity opportunities for our citizens. I will work with the sporting organisations and with Government to ensure further improvement in this area. I salute the enthusiasm and selfless commitment of many of our citizens who on a weekly basis, give their time to provide opportunities to our young people. On the amenity side, I want to enhance some of our city's most famous amenities. The Lough has a special place in our hearts and I want to enhance its appeal even more with further improvements. Likewise we can enhance the attractions of the Glen Amenity Park.

The importance of sport and recreational opportunities is underlined by the increasing anti-social behaviour in our city and particularly the unacceptable degree of binge drinking by some young people. At ward level when particular problems arise in this context I believe there should be quarterly meetings between Ward Councillors, the Gardaí, Community interests and City Hall Management to bring forward proposals to resolve local issues that contribute to anti-social behaviour.

I want to create a string link between the city's public institutions and our young people. I will develop a Civic Awareness Programme for our schools to offer an opportunity to school children to visit City Hall and other public institutions and to become more aware of how their city works. In addition, I will continue with the tradition of a Lord Mayor's History Project to provide opportunities for young people to discover the rich heritage of their city in an enjoyable way. The Evening Echo has been particularly supportive of such a project in the past and I look forward to working with the Echo again in bringing forward such a project.

As a Councillor in the South Central Ward, I am particularly conscious of a trend in settlement patterns which is rapidly changing the character of some of our historic suburbs. From a policy perspective, Council should look at this trend with a view to developing initiatives to encourage families into our inner city suburbs like Greenmount, The Lough and so forth. Many traditional neighbourhoods are changing as a result of the increased rental nature of properties. We need to reflect on this to see if we can shape more balanced development in the future. Our social and affordable housing programmes are particularly important in this context.

Linked to this is of course, the need to build on our traffic calming initiatives to protect children and pedestrians in our suburban estates. Speed through our suburban estates is unacceptable and traffic calming measures such as ramps, rumble strips and chicanes are a legitimate response by City Council to protect our children and the residential amenity of our estates.

On the infra-structural side, we need to concentrate our energies on the regeneration of the Docklands which represents one of the more significant economic opportunities for the city over the next decade. The leadership of City Hall Management in this regard has been simply outstanding. I am also anxious to improve every further our waste and recycling facilities in the city and to encourage a change in mindset in terms of how we individually deal with waste. I want, in particular, to work with Bus Éireann and C.I.E. to further improve our public transport system. Collaboration between us all is the key to further success in this field. I will also work constructively with our educational institutions particularly the University and C.I.T. in advancing their agendas.

On the disability front, I believe it is time for us to review the administration and implementation of the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme. I believe we can do better for our citizens who require such assistance. It is a joint Government/Local Authority Scheme and I intend to explore with City Council and the City Manager ways in which we can respond to the needs of our citizens in the context of this scheme.

Tá sé ar intinn agam béim faoi leith a chuir ar an nGaelige agus an chultúr gaelach i rith na bliana. Úsáidfídh mé gach deis is ócáid chun an Ghaeilge a labhairt agus a chur chun cinn. Chomh maith le sin, bheadh an-áthas orm tuairmí a fháil ó dhaoine nó grupaí i dtaobh cur chun cinn na Gaeilge san chathair. Beidh sé i gceist agam lá na nGaeilge speisialta a reachtáil don chathair. Beidh mé ag súil le cabhrú ón Grúpa Stiúrtha chun na h-imeachtaí seo a chuir i bhfeidhm.

We live in historic times. Ireland has had the privilege of presiding over the largest ever expansion of the European Union since its foundation. I pay tribute to the Taoiseach on his leadership of Europe through these momentous times and in particular his skilful and brilliant negotiation of a new European Constitution. Cork has always been a European city from its earliest times. With a deep natural harbour it has over the ages welcomed many different strands of European influences through this peaceful waterway. It continues to do so.

It will be particular privilege for me as Lord Mayor of Cork to lead our city in celebrating that distinctive European culture in 2005. Cork 2005 European Capital of Culture will represent a unique opportunity for the citizens of Ireland and Europe to celebrate and enjoy a truly international cultural event.

As Europeans on the Atlantic fringe it is an opportunity for Europe to renew itself from the peripheries inward not from the centre outward. Not since the great Cork exhibitions of 1902 and 1903 will we have an event of such scale and influence. I salute the work of John Kennedy, Director of Cork 2005 and his dedicated team for the creativity, energy and vision displayed to date. In particular the decision to institute a public call for ideas was an inspired one. The response was huge and consequently we can truly say the programme as outlined to date is of the people. This year is one for all our people irrespective of age, class, race or ability. I am pleased that special efforts will be made to bring the programme to those who through the age of disability will not be in a position to access events. Cork is privileged to host this designation on behalf of Europe.

We will draw inspiration from our past, draw on the resources of our people living today and create a legacy for future generations who will see in Cork 2005 a watershed year for our city. Fellow Councillors we must put our best foot forward in preparing for and celebrating this unique opportunity.

Finally, as Lord Mayor, I intend to preside with fairness and impartiality. I will seek further and protect the rights of Councillors in the Chamber to articulate their views without fear or favour and to be awarded the respect their elected status deserves. We have been elected by the people to lead the affairs of our city over the next five years. A great privilege has been bestowed upon us. Colleagues let us rise to the challenge and let us work together to advance the fortunes of our great city.

3. **ELECTION OF LEAS ARD MHEARA**

Nominations were then requested for the office of Leas Ard Mheara,

Comhairleoir T. Shannon proposed and Comhairleoir F. Dennehy seconded
Comhairleoir Mary Shields.

Comhairleoir M. Barry proposed and Comhairleoir Con O'Connell seconded
Comhairleoir Chris O'Leary.

Comhairleoir A. Spillane proposed and Comhairleoir C. O'Leary seconded
Comhairleoir J. O'Brien.

Comhairleoir C. O'Leary proposed and Comhairleoir J. O'Brien seconded
Comhairleoir M. Barry.

A vote was taken where there appeared:-

For Comhairleoir Mary Shields:-

Comhairleoirí M. Quill, T. Brosnan, J. Kelleher, D. Murphy, C. Clancy, G. O' Flynn, D. Wallace, C. Burke, M. O' Connell, T. Fitzgerald, D. Clune, D. Counihan, D. O' Flynn, T. Shannon, J. Corr, C. Lynch, S. Martin, T. O' Driscoll, D. Cregan, J. Buttimer, F. Dennehy, M. Shields, B. Bermingham, M. Ahern. (24)

For Comhairleoir Chris O'Leary:-

Comhairleoir C. O' Leary (1)

For Comhairleoir J. O'Brien:-

Comhairleoirí A. Spillane, J. O'Brien. (2)

For Comhairleoir M. Barry:-

Comhairleoirí M. Barry, C. O'Connell. (2)

An tArd Mheara declared Comhairleoir Mary Shields to be elected Leas Ard Mheara.

An Chomhairle then agreed to adjourn the meeting to the Ordinary Meeting of Council to be held on 28th June 2004.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**ARDMHEARA
CATHAOIRLEACH**