

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Municipal District of Bray held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Bray on Tuesday 9th June 2015 at 7.30pm.

Present:

**Councillor John Brady,
Councillor Joe Behan
Councillor Christopher Fox
Councillor Steven Matthews
Councillor Oliver O'Brien
Councillor John Ryan
Councillor Brendan Thornhill
Councillor Pat Vance**

Also present:

**Mr. Des O'Brien, District Manager
Mr. David Forde, District Administrator.
Ms. Triona Irving, Administrative Officer
Mr. Liam Bourke, District Engineer**

1. Confirmation of Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Municipal District of Bray dated 10th June 2014.

Councillor Joe Behan proposed confirmation of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Municipal District of Bray dated 10th June 2014 and Councillor Christopher Fox seconded the proposal.

2. Election of Cathaoirleach

Outgoing Cathaoirleach, Councillor Brady gave the following speech:

"It's hard to believe a year has gone by and that my year as Cathaoirleach of the new Bray Municipal District is coming to an end. I want to thank the members of the council for their support over the last 12 months, I've endeavoured to be fair, respectful and open to all the members over the course of the year. I also want to thank the staff of the council for their work under the new challenges of the reconfigured structures with the County.

It's been a challenging and difficult year on both on a personal and political front for me and this local authority. Over the course of my term I've had to work alongside officials who are trying to evict my family and I from our home and that case is still before the High Court, but I've worked with them, putting my personal issues aside as it was my duty to the citizens of this District to work for the betterment of Bray, Enniskerry and Kilmacanogue. It's been a politically challenging year coming to terms and getting to grips with the new Municipal District structures which I think have been a disaster and has seen a hollowing out of the local authorities and have left us with a council representing the people of Bray, Kilmacanogue and Enniskerry but with little or no powers. We have a housing section in the District, not only do we have no houses for the people we represent, we have a shortage of staff. This has made my role as a public representative very difficult and something that needs to be addressed immediately. The Department for the Environment and Local Government will be shortly holding a review of the changes and the new system and I think this council needs make a submission.

When elected as Cathaoirleach last year I said I wanted to be a champion of equality, an advocate for strong community and bearer of change. I believe with the passing of the recent referendum, we live in a more equal society; I was delighted also that Wicklow County Council supported my proposal to fly the Rainbow flag during pride week. Hopefully this District will follow suit and fly it as well.

Over the year I represented this council at many public events and was delighted to meet many community groups. I endeavoured to use my term to support those groups and use this council chamber as a forum to give them a voice and a platform to showcase the excellent work they do. Whilst there are too many to mention I want to just highlight one, the Be Well Bray group, last year I helped them launch their month and invited them into the council. They are a group of young people promoting a practical and positive outlook within youth mental health, they have been

chosen to represent Wicklow in the Pride of Place competition and I wish them all the best in the judging which takes place tomorrow.

Last year I stated I was going to give a proportion of my Cathaoirleach's money back to the community, whilst I financially helped out many groups over the course of the year, i still have funds available and if any club or group has a specific plan or project I would be delighted to hear about it and try help them out financially in some way.

During my term i was delighted to ensure the refurbishment of the Ballywaltrim playground progressed and that has now been thankfully opened. I also had the privilege of opening the tenders of the Dargle Flood Protection work which have made huge progress over the last year. We also have the feasibility study into the provision of a badly needed full time fire service and I look forward to the report following the public consultation process.

Thankfully after 40 years Fran O'Toole from the Miami Show Band will finally get the recognition he deserves in Bray with the renaming of Bray Bridge after him and the erection of a plaque on his former home on Albert Ave. I was delighted to work closely with Peter Carroll on this special project and look forward to the event in early July. We did have a little controversy during the year with the issue of the Seafront usage policy. Thankfully the excellent Summerfest will continue this year and I look forward to the committee members coming to the chamber for our next meeting.

Unfortunately the housing crisis and homelessness has gotten worse over the last year. The Government disgracefully has no plans to construct any new social housing in the District this year and only 50 in the entire County. Hopefully the proposed meeting with Minister Harris can take place as soon as possible to try and address this issue. We have also had major difficulties with the provision of homeless accommodation in the town and thankfully changes are planned in the near future, however there are still serious problems in the facility in Brighton Terrace. And this came to the fore again last week with a second electrical fire. We also need the issue of emergency accommodation for families addressed immediately and a huge effort needs to be placed on finding suitable accommodation for the worsening crisis facing families.

I'm currently working with a fantastic group of young people and together we want to see a skateboard park in the town. This I believe is achievable and I will continue to push and work on this project and bring this project to fruition.

Next year marks the centenary of the 1916 Rising and I hope this Municipal District plays its part in commemorating the birth of the Republic. As Cathaoirleach I achieved unanimous support in the creation of a 1916 commemorative garden (Glor Na Casca) I look forward to the development of this plan and the selection of the site for it, along with other projects that hopefully will be brought forward.

Finally I wish the incoming Cathaoirleach well in the coming year and if I can be of any assistance I will gladly help, I do hope the Cathaoirleach's office in the council building that was removed last year is reopened for the new Cathaoirleach, the office is important for all Cathaoirleachs to be able to carry out their function to the fullest, in representing our council in the District."

The members raised the following points:

- Thanks to John Brady for his respect and fairness over the last year.
- An excellent job over the last 12 Months- It was a different Council since the power went to Wicklow County Council.
- It was a rocky start for the Council as there was no power in the body – excellent job done by Cllr Brady.
- Congrats on a successful year and well wished for the future.
- It was a great honour to be the first Cathaoirleach for the Municipal District.
- It was a learning curve for all and well wishes for future.

Councillor Christopher Fox nominated Councillor Brendan Thornhill for the position of Cathaoirleach and Councillor Steven Matthews seconded the proposal.

Councillor Brendan Thornhill was deemed to be elected as Cathaoirleach as there was no other nominee.

The newly elected Cathaoirleach Councillor Brendan Thornhill gave the following speech:

I am delighted and proud to be given the honour of being elected as Cathaoirleach of the Municipal District of Bray. Indeed I am very thankful to everyone in Bray for putting me in this position.

I am thankful to Councillor Brady for his support during my first year as a Councillor. I am also thankful to my own family for their support. Unfortunately they cannot be with me tonight.

I am also very thankful to my election agents Dan Hayes and John Cantillon and also some very close friends. I hope in the future I can repay their generosity and kindness.

I am also thankful to my fellow Council colleagues who have helped me in my first year as a County Councillor.

Now that I have been elected as a Cathaoirleach a new challenge lies ahead. It is a long time since there has been an independent Cathaoirleach, if any, - I have to check this out.

As a newly elected Cathaoirleach I will be calling on my skills in my former employment as a member of An Garda Síochána. I will be playing to my strengths as for 23 years I walked the beat around Bray. I have in that time spoken to many people and listened to their stories. I would like to think now I am in a position to further their cause.

Bray to my mind is one of the best located centres in Ireland. It has a great seafront, excellent cliff walk, great accessibility via public transport to Dublin; it is the gateway to the Garden of Ireland. We also have access to Dublin via the back door on the M50.

Bray was once known as the Brighton of Ireland. In my mind Bray has the potential to recreate the past. We have several things to tackle in Bray.

- The Business Community.
- The housing scarcity
- Our youth – facilities and education.
- Tourism
- Health issues, ie drugs, mental health and suicide prevention.
- Education.
- Policing.

Business

Bray at the moment is under pressure from increased competition from Dundrum and Carrickmines.

Car parking in the town has to be addressed.

Shopkeepers are under increased pressure re rates and rents.

We must look to see that these issues are addressed. I will be pushing for the business community to make a presentation to the Council.

Housing

As we all know housing has become a big problem. People are presenting at the Council Offices with terrible problems re overcrowding at home, people suffering from negative equity, landlords giving up on the RAS Scheme. I and my fellow Council members will be meeting with the relevant Government officials to see that they address the problem. A meeting has been organised with Minister Harris and questions have to be asked.

Our youth

The youth of Bray should be taken into account. I was very heartened recently when at the Royal Hotel the Phoenix Youth Club was resurrected under the stewardship of Dermot O'Brien. The hotel was packed with enthusiastic young people and their parents. It was a show of strength that the younger generation are getting on board re the future of Bray re different issues, i.e. health issues, suicide awareness and hopefully becoming better citizens of the town.

Tourism

Bray can play to its strengths re tourism. We have one of the finest cliff walks, an excellent seafront, walkways are to be developed at the cliff walk. A new walk – The Sugarloaf Way.

The River Dargle which was once a great fishing river could be restocked, I will look into this.

The name of the bridge in honour of Fran O'Toole is another project which could draw the Bray people together. Fran O'Toole, 40 years ago was killed in the north. He was an icon at the time. There is a great tradition of music in Bray.

The potential in this event might revive the music scene in Bray and maybe a music festival could be the product, after all in Bray we have some great residents;

Phil Coulter

Sinéad O'Connor

Mary Coughlan

Colm Wilkinson

Hozier

Education

I will endeavour to call to the schools of the area. I already have had discussions with some schools. I would like to be in a position of making the school going children more aware of their civic duties towards the town.

I would also like to promote the Irish language. Is í an Ghaeilge ár Teanga dúchais.

Irish is our national language. Bray has three Gaelschools and it would be great if Bray became a centre for the Irish language.

After the recent Referendum I will be respectful of the LGBT Group but the energy expended in that campaign should be reproduced to improve other inequalities, ie homelessness, disability groups, etc.

Only yesterday I was at a fund raiser for the Guide Dogs. Joe Bollard informed me that they only receive €800,000 from Government Funds. They also have to do a lot of fundraising.

In Bray we have the Wicklow Volunteer Centre, ably run by Leah Kinsella. This centre is the hub of a lot of good works in Bray.

- a) The Tidy Towns
- b) Bray Cancer
- c) Looking after old people.
- d) Teaching English
- e) Bray Area Partnership
- f) Old Folks Meals on Wheels

Finally I would like to say that this position is a challenging position. As John F. Kennedy said in 1963 'it isn't what your country can do for you, it's what you can do for your country'.

What I say 'its not what your community can do for you, its what you can do for your community'.

I hope we will be back here in a years time and that the town will be better.

The members raised the following points:

- Congratulations of election to Cathlaoireach and I wish you every success.
- I wish you well in the coming year. Don't forget Kilmacanogue and Enniskerry.

3. Election of Leas Cathaoirleach

Councillor Joe Behan nominated Councillor Pat Vance for the position of Leas Cathaoirleach and Councillor John Ryan seconded the proposal.

Councillor John Brady nominated Councillor Steven Matthews for the position of Leas Cathaoirleach and Councillor Brendan Thornhill seconded the proposal.

The District Administrator called for a vote on the position of Leas Cathaoirleach and the Councillors voted in the following manner:

	Councillor Pat Vance	Councillor Steven Matthews
Councillor John Brady		√
Councillor Joe Behan	√	
Councillor Christopher Fox	√	
Councillor Steven Matthews		√
Councillor Oliver O'Brien		√
Councillor John Ryan	√	
Councillor Brendan Thornhill		√
Councillor Pat Vance	√	
Total	4	4

Due to the tie break situation, the district Administrator read out the Standing orders.

“Without prejudice to any enactment or other provisions of these Standing Orders requiring either the presence of a specified number or proportion of the members or that a specified number or proportion should vote in favour for the doing of any particular act, all acts of the municipal district members which are reserved functions or questions duly coming or arising before a meeting of the municipal district members shall be determined –(a) by a majority of the members present and voting or where there is an equality of votes, by a second or casting vote of the person chairing the meeting (which person shall have and may choose to exercise such a vote)”

The members raised the following points:

- I would like to query this standing order. This is an unprecedented situation we have never seen this before.
- We are all equal around this table, we each have one vote. For the sake of equality, do not exercise casting vote.
- This standing order is in favour of equality. We stick to the standing orders by rules of the Council.
- The Council should take legal advice in future. Interpretation of these things can differ. We need to get clarification.
- Is it possible for members to agree on a method and bypass the need for legal clarification?

A short recess was taken before Cllr. Thornhill made his casting vote for Cllr. Steven Matthews.

The members raised the following points:

- I wanted to speak before the decision was made and I wasn't let. I am very frustrated by this.
- I would like to wish Cllr. Matthews all the best in this position.
- Congratulations to Cllr. Matthews
- Congratulations to Cllr. Thornhill, I look forward to working with you.
- Congratulations also to Cllr. Matthews. He can do a lot for Bray; will work together all going for one end.

4. To Approve Schedule of Meetings for 2015/2016

The Schedule of Meetings for 2015-2016 was proposed by Cllr. John Brady and seconded by Cllr. Joe Behan.

The members raised the following points:

- Could we have the county AGM before the Municipal District AGM next year?

* * * *

This concluded the meeting.

Signed:

CATHAOIRLEACH

Signed:

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR

Dated:
