

Press Release

27th June 2011

Councillor Andrew Montague elected Lord Mayor of Dublin

Labour Councillor Andrew Montague was elected Lord Mayor of Dublin at the Annual Meeting of Dublin City Council tonight. He was first elected to represent the Ballymun-Whitehall Ward (North West Area) of the City Council in the Local Election in 2004, and was elected Deputy Lord Mayor the same year. He was re-elected in the Local Election in 2009 to represent the reconfigured Artane-Whitehall Ward in the North Central Area.

Labour Councillor Maria Parodi was elected Deputy Lord Mayor. She has represented the South East Inner City Ward since her election to the City Council in 2009.

After his election this evening, the new Lord Mayor, Councillor Montague broke with tradition and walked to the Mansion House from City Hall.

Further information on the newly elected Lord Mayor can be found at the following website:

<http://www.labour.ie/andrewmontague>

Ends

For further information contact: Dublin City Council Press Office at Tel: 2222170/087- 7400277 or email: info@dublincity.ie.

Notes to the Editor

1. Lord Mayor's Biography

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Andrew Montague is 43 years of age and currently lives in Ballymun with his partner Sinead, a psychologist with the HSE. He was born and raised in Santry, one of six brothers all living and working in Dublin. His father Terry is a bookseller and his mother Anne trained as a Nurse.

He attended Larkhill BNS, St Aidan's CBS and Plunkett College. He has a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's degree in Veterinary medicine. After finishing his training he spent a number of years working in the UK before returning to Ireland in 1998 to take up a research post in the Veterinary College in UCD. Two years later he left the Veterinary College to set up his own web design business, Driocht web.

The Lord Mayor was elected to represent the Ballymun-Whitehall Ward in the 2004 Local Elections and was elected Deputy Lord Mayor of Dublin for the same year. He was re-elected to Dublin City Council in 2009 to the newly formed Artane-Whitehall Ward.

The Lord Mayor holds a number of key positions as follows:

- Chairperson of the Transport and Traffic Strategic Policy Committee in 2009;
- Founder and Chairperson of the City Council's Cycling Forum;
- A member of the Board of Ballymun Regeneration and Chairperson of its Social Regeneration Committee;
- Chairperson of Ballymun's Local Drugs Task Force;
- Secretary of the Ballymun Whitehall Partnership.

2. Inaugural Speech

Introduction

Like many of you in this chamber this evening, I knocked on hundreds of doors during the cold, dark February nights in the run up to the general election. It was a tough election. I met a great many people who had lost their jobs, lost children to emigration, people who were under enormous stress due to mounting debts ... People who were simply at their wits ends.

Many felt that the day that Patrick Honahan announced the EU/IMF bailout, was the day that Ireland lost control of its own destiny.

As I've been preparing for this role in recent weeks and months, I've talked to many people about how we can meet the challenges facing us and I've read many reports on how we might turn our city's fortunes around.

Above all I've come to the conclusion that Dublin City Council's key role is to make Dublin a great city in which to live.

By making Dublin an attractive, family friendly city - all of us living here will benefit, but a high quality of life is also essential to attract businesses, to attract foreign students and to attract tourists.

I believe our national recovery will start here in Dublin and we must do everything in our power to kick-start that turn-around.

By giving us their votes the people of Dublin have put their faith in us and we as Councilors must demonstrate a sense of purpose, hard work and above all we must give people some hope.

Previous Lord Mayors

I want to pay tribute to the outgoing Lord Mayor, Gerry Breen and his predecessor Emer Costello. Both Gerry and Emer did superb jobs as Lord Mayor and showed a determination to meet the economic challenges facing this city. In particular, the report of the Lord Mayors commission on Employment which Emer Costello produced contains many innovative and practical ideas on how to turn Dublin's economy around.

In my year as Lord Mayor I want to build on the work that Emer and Gerry have begun and take full advantage of the great potential our city has to offer.

Quality of Life

It is our job in Dublin City Council to make Dublin a great city to live in.

So it's our responsibility to build quality neighbourhoods and communities; to maintain and enhance our vibrant city centre; to protect and improve our environment; to support a lively cultural life and to celebrate and value diversity.

By concentrating on our core role of making Dublin a great city in which to live we will attract talented and creative people to live in our city and as a result as the American academic Richard Florida has identified we will attract investment to our city.

Creative companies like Google and Facebook want to hire the best engineers they can get, whether they are from Coolock or the Czech republic and as a result these companies want to locate in cities where these talented people want to live. These are the cities, like Dublin, with the highest quality of life.

A high quality of life is essential to attracting foreign students to study in Dublin. Foreign students feel safe in our city, they value our heritage and culture and they appreciate that Dublin is a city where diversity is accepted – as we saw during the Pride Festival over the weekend.

The international education industry is worth approximately €500 million to Dublin and is growing rapidly. The City Council has a major role to play in facilitating the development of attractive accommodation at the right price for these students to make sure that this growth continues.

Our city has huge potential for tourism. Although there have been fewer tourists thronging the footpaths of the city in recent years early indications are that tourism is on the rise once again.

We must capitalise on our potential and continue to market Dublin as a tourist destination. The 2012 Olympic games will bring hundreds of thousands of visitors to London from across the world.

We must seize this opportunity to attract these visitors to make the short hop to Dublin. I will meet with Dublin Tourism and Bord Fáilte to make sure we are doing all that we can to attract these tourists.

City Markets

Like many of you, when visiting other cities, I'm always on the look out for new ideas and new thinking to bring back to Dublin. I often visit Spain as my brother Peter is married to Itziar who is from Pamplona. Both are here in the gallery this evening.

While on holidays in Spain I've often been struck by the number of indoor markets nestled among the city streets. Markets that remind me of the English Market in Cork.

Back in Dublin, from Molly Malone to Moore Street we've always had a strong market tradition. We can build on that tradition to create jobs and to provide Dubliners with high quality, locally produced food at affordable prices.

Dublin City Council owns the Fruit & Veg. Market building behind Capel Street. This beautiful, listed building is currently being used as a wholesale market. The council is renovating the building and up to half of the space could be offered to independent retailers to create our own "English Market" style centre. We will create a pilot market later this year.

In addition, An Bord Bia is interested in collaborating with Dublin City Council to developing a food quarter in this part of the city. This could provide a major boost to this historic quarter that has become rundown in recent years.

Urban markets don't have to be restricted to the city centre. If we can develop a successful pilot in the Fruit & Veg Market, I believe we can replicate that success across our city from Ballymun to Ranelagh and from Santry to Sandymount creating employment, stimulating the local economy and giving Dubliners access to high quality, affordable produce on their doorsteps.

Transport

Great cities have great transport systems. Paris and New York have their metros, Copenhagen and Amsterdam are great cycling cities.

As chair of the Transport and Traffic Committee on Dublin City Council I've set up a Public Transport Committee to bring together all the players in the public transport sector from the National Transport Authority, Dublin Bus, private bus operators, the Railway Procurement Agency, Iarnród Éireann, taxi drivers and the City Council. Despite the recession, we must continue to improve mobility if we are to make Dublin a great city.

Bus Rapid Transit

Bus Rapid Transit is a new idea. It's a new mode of transport that first became popular in South America but is now used in several European cities. Basically it is the Luas on rubber wheels. It has all the benefits of quality and reliability of a tram system, but as it runs on rubber instead of rail the costs are greatly reduced.

The NTA are developing plans to roll out Bus Rapid Transit on four possible routes in Dublin: the N11, Navan Road/Blanchardstown routes, Lucan to the city centre and along the Malahide Road route.

As Lord Mayor I will continue this work with all the stakeholders to bring this high quality transport service to Dublin.

I believe that cutting back on our public transport services is a mistake and I will take every opportunity as Lord Mayor of Dublin to make that point.

Cycling

I will be launching the Grand Canal Premium cycling route in August. We must continue by building the Royal canal cycling route and join the two routes together. The Sutton to Sandycove cycling route along our seafront, often called the S2S route, has been

launched and relaunched many times. I will assemble a team and agree a plan to fill in the few remaining gaps on this route, to finish the job once and for all.

The Dublin Bikes scheme is the most successful of its kind in the world and the bikes themselves have become part of the fabric of our city. When I first proposed bringing a bike scheme to Dublin, many people believed that it wouldn't work, that the bikes would be stolen, they'd be vandalized or thrown in the Liffey. I'm proud that I stuck to my guns. During my term of office I will be working to get a major expansion of the scheme.

The expansion of Dublin Bikes, and the new premium cycling routes will not only improve mobility for Dubliners, but it will allow us to market Dublin as a cycling holiday destination which can bring more tourists to our city and help create more jobs.

Equality

One of the most important factors predicting quality of life in any society is equality. Where there is inequality there will be more violence, more drug use, more mental health difficulties and more vandalism.

During the boom years, quality of life improved for most Dubliners but too many people were left behind.

I live in Ballymun and I represent Darndale. In my seven years as a councillor I have devoted more of my time and energy to the issues of these communities than anything else.

I have been a member of the board of Ballymun Regeneration since 2004 and it has been a great privilege to work with a team of some of the most talented and innovative people that I know.

In addition to changing the physical landscape of Ballymun we are working to improve the social wellbeing of this community.

Together with the local community we are working on tackling the broader inequalities present in these communities – literacy difficulties, barriers to employment and poverty.

Across Dublin, we have five regeneration projects that are stuck in limbo and too many people are living in unacceptable accommodation. Homes with black mould on the walls, raw sewage in the baths, communities where drug dealing and anti-social behavior are rife.

Throughout my term as Lord Mayor I will work with Dermot Lacey, chair of the Housing Committee and Dick Brady, Assistant City Manager for Housing to address the worst of the physical problems.

But I have learned through my work in Ballymun that we must also tackle the social problems.

We must bring all of the stakeholders together: the local communities, the city council; the HSE; local partnerships; educational leaders in order to address the long-term social needs of these communities.

We must ensure that, in our work on the council, equality is at the centre of all we do. Together we can work to make sure that our city is a great city – for all Dubliners.

Conclusion

We have lost power to the EU and IMF in our financial affairs and the last number of years have surely been some of the most difficult in our recent history.

However, we in Dublin City Council still have the power to make this city a great city to live in and a great city to invest in.

We can promote Dublin as a great place to live for foreign students, we can promote urban markets, cycling tourism, we can make sure that all Dubliners feel safe on our streets and have a home they can be proud of.

We must give hope to the people of Dublin and to the country that we can make a difference. As Sean Lemass once said “a defeatist attitude now would surely lead to defeat, we can't opt out of the future”.

I'm asking you now, to join with me and let's create our own future, a better tomorrow.

