



Inaugural Speech
On the Occasion of the Election of
the Lord Mayor of Dublin Cllr. Emer Costello



City Hall, Dame St., Dublin 2.

15th June 2009

It is the most wonderful honour and privilege to be elected Lord Mayor of Dublin City. I have to confess that I am not a “Dub” being originally a Louth woman, from Blackrock, Dundalk. I moved to Dublin on 1st May 1980 (29 years ago) to take up a Civil Service job in the GPO and I have to say from the day I moved to the City, I fell in love with this City and I felt at home immediately. The fact that my maiden name is “Malone” might indicate that there is some traditional Dublin blood there somewhere! I have had the pleasure of living and working at almost every postal address within the City and am equally at home North and South of the Liffey. I have settled in the Oxmantown/Stoneybatter area, one of the oldest and most traditional communities in the City.

There are a number of people I wish to thank for my election here tonight, I would also like to take some time tonight to outline some of my priorities which I will return to at the next meeting.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Labour Group for the enormous confidence they have shown in me by nominating me to be the first Lord Mayor for this new Council. I would also like to thank everybody who supported my nomination and voted for me. I feel deeply humbled by the faith you have shown in me and I promise you that I will repay this faith by carrying out the duties of Lord Mayor with enthusiasm, energy and fairness.

I would also like to thank the people of the North Inner City who re-elected me to serve for another five years on Dublin City Council. Tonight is as much for them as it is for me. The North Inner City has not had a Labour Lord Mayor since Billy Cumiskey in 1979 and I am delighted to be bringing home the mayoralty to the North Inner City.

On a personal level, I would like to thank my family for their help and support over the years. This evening is tinged with sadness, as I really regret that my mother, who died last October, is not here tonight. She was so proud this time last year when I was elected Deputy Lord Mayor. I’m sure both my parents are here in spirit and through my sisters, brothers nieces and nephews who are here this

evening. My parents instilled in me my strong sense of social justice, compassion and equality. These are values that I bring to all aspects of my council work and were my primary motivation for becoming involved in politics.

Of course, I would also like to thank my husband Joe, for his constant support and encouragement and for being there for me when I need him. The old adage – Behind every great man. ..can now be re-written that behind every great woman is a good man! Joe will now have the honour of being the Lady Mayoress – and I have no doubt he will be wonderful in the job. Last year we were both called “Deputy” as I was Deputy Lord Mayor, this year will be interesting as I’ve been promoted to Lord Mayor – I’m not sure how Joe will regard his new role of Lady Mayoress but I’m sure he’ll be great.

I would like to add my voice to the many other tributes to the outgoing Lord Mayor, Eibhlin Byrne. She served the citizens of our great city with dignity, style and class. She will be a hard act to follow.

This time last year I was deeply honoured to be elected Deputy Lord Mayor, and I would like to thank her for her support and co-operation with some of my projects, particularly her participation in the International Women’s Day events.

She was a strong advocate on behalf of the weaker and more vulnerable people in our City. I am aware that much of her work was done “under the radar” as she went out many nights with the Night Bus for the homeless and in the course of the year offered her support to numerous community and voluntary groups and organisations.

Her interventions on behalf of the residents from the collapsed PPP Projects were greatly appreciated by the residents and I know she met on several occasions with residents from O’Devaney Gardens and Dominick Street. The completion of the Regeneration Projects across the City will continue to be a priority for me. I shared the anger, disappointment and frustration, of the residents from these estates and their surrounding communities. We must have a strong focus on a City Council led approach to rebuilding these communities within a reasonable timeframe and in consultation with residents.

More recently, Eibhlin also caught the mood of the people by her decision to open a Book of Condolences in the Mansion House for the victims of Institutional Abuse. Many of those children were from the old tenements of Dublin City. I want to say now that those victims of institutional abuse will always find a friend in the Mansion House and I want to reassure them tonight that I will help and support them in any way I can and that the door of the Mansion House will always be open to them.

I would like to offer my commiserations to our colleagues in the previous Council who either retired or were not re-elected and thank them for their contribution. I would like to welcome back and congratulate colleagues who were re-elected and also welcome and congratulate the many new members who have joined the Council. This is a great night for those of you who were elected for the first time, and for your families and one you will remember forever.

We now need to get down to do the work and meet the challenges facing this City head-on and there is no doubt we are facing serious challenges in the future. We do this against a worsening economic backdrop as unemployment is becoming endemic throughout the City.

The soul of any City is its people and my main concern is and will be always for the people of Dublin. My priority will be to help make Dublin a cultured, vibrant and sustainable City that is safe and secure for young and old, a city that is clean and green, an accessible City with a decent public transport system, an inclusive City that cherishes the many diverse communities living within its boundaries and a City whose citizens are gainfully employed and whose businesses flourish. It should be a City that inspires pride in its inhabitants and a positive experience for its visitors. I want Dublin to be the jewel in the crown of European cities.

To achieve this, I believe that the City Council, i.e. the elected members of the City Council, must be the driving force of policy formation for the City. The results of the recent elections show that people want change and that they want leadership from their elected representatives on the City Council. They want us to work together for the people. Dublin needs strong and creative leadership, with a clear vision for the future of the City, to get its economy moving again. The priority must be the citizens who live, learn, work and play in Dublin and not the Developer or Speculator. Over the coming year the City Council will produce a Draft City Development Plan for adoption from 2011 to 2016. This will provide the basis for the future growth and development of the City and will constitute one of the most important tasks we face this coming year. I firmly believe that the needs of people, their environment and communities must be at the heart of how we grow our City for the future.

The greater Dublin area accounts for four out of every ten jobs and half of all goods and services produced in Ireland. Dublin is the engine of our economy. It must also be an engine of economic recovery. The priority must be job creation and the retention of existing employment. Over the course of the election campaign, unemployment was the single biggest issue on the doorsteps. The human stories behind those workers losing their jobs came to the fore as people described their fears about

losing their homes, being unable to provide for their families and despairing for their children's future and also losing their sense of self worth because of losing their job.

I strongly believe that Dublin City Council has a major role to play in stimulating the local economy. "Jobs for Dublin" is one of my key priorities. I am therefore proposing the establishment of a **Lord Mayor's Commission on Employment** involving all the relevant stakeholders to address the employment, education and training needs of the people of Dublin. I will announce further details in this initiative under Lord Mayor's business at a future meeting of the City Council.

Finally, there will be many hard decisions facing all of us on this Council. Unfortunately, we have to work with the constraints of the woefully inadequate financing of Local Government. We need to ensure the provision of quality services to the Citizens of Dublin while at the same ensuring Value for Money. There is much we can achieve in these hard times but we need to work together. We have many new Councillors, with innovative and creative ideas. We need to listen to these ideas and harness the energies of the new Council for the good of the people of Dublin. We need to be a policy driven Council, working together and we need to demonstrate the leadership the people expect from us. I hope that the change that people voted for at the ballot box will be reflected in the operation of the new Council and I am really looking forward to working with each and every one of you and with the City Manager and his staff to achieve a new vision for our City of Dublin.

Emer Costello.

Cllr. Emer Costello
Lord Mayor of Dublin
2009-2010

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