

Minutes of the Meeting of Galway City Council held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and Online via MS Teams on Monday 11th November 2024 at 3.00p.m. (Demonstration of sympathy to Mr. Billy Lawless RIP)	
Presiding	Cllr. P. Keane, Mayor of the City of Galway
Present (Elected Members)	Councillors: A. Burke, A. Cheevers, J. Connolly, J. Forde, S. Forde, F. Fahy, E. Hoare, D. Lyons, J. McDonagh, D. McDonnell, N. McNelis, T. O’Flaherty, H. Ogbu, E. Seoighthe
Present (Online)	Councillors: A. Curran, M. Cubbard
Present (Executive)	Mr. L. Cleary, Chief Executive Ms. P. Philbin, Director of Services Mr. P. Greene, Director of Services Ms. H. Kilroy, Director of Finance Mr. D. Pender, Director of Services Ms. L. Fanning, A/Director of Services Ms. A. Rohan, Meetings Administrator Ms. A. Kenny, Administrative Officer
Apologies	Cllr. C. Higgins

Ms. A. Rohan, Meetings Administrator commenced the meeting with a statement of intent to conduct the business of the meeting in line with Standing Orders followed by a moment of silent reflection.

In light of the sad passing of Mr. Billy Lawless, Freeman of the City of Galway and former Senator, Mayor P. Keane proposed that this meeting be dedicated to Billy Lawless (RIP) and proposed to adjourn the November plenary meeting to Monday 18th November at 3:00pm. This was Proposed by Cllr. D. Lyons and Seconded by Cllr. N. McNelis and agreed.

Mayor P. Keane further proposed that the Statutory Budget meeting, which was scheduled to take place at 3:00pm on Monday 18th November, be adjourned to 3:00pm on Monday 2nd December 2024. This was Proposed by Cllr. D. Lyons and Seconded by Cllr. F. Fahy and agreed.

On behalf of the Elected Members of Galway City Council, Mayor P. Keane extended his deepest condolences to the family of the late Billy Lawless, especially to his wife Anne, and children, John Paul, Amy, Clodagh and Billy, and their partners and families.

Billy was a native of Dangan, and played an important role in the civic, political and social life of Galway City and his adopted home in the City of Chicago, where he moved in the 1980s. Billy served the Irish people as a Senator from 2016-2020, and likewise in the United States, championing immigration reform and the case of the 50,000 undocumented Irish men and women living in limbo in the United States.

Billy was Vice Chairman of Galway/Chicago Sister Cities Committee and was instrumental in nurturing the Chicago-Galway Twinning relationship, and in supporting the Circle of Life Garden in Salthill.

Mayor P. Keane referred to May 2015, when Billy was honoured with the status of Freeman of the City of Galway, Billy spoke of how easy it was to be an ambassador for Galway, with fond memories of delivering milk with his father to the restaurants and hotels, rowing up and down the river Corrib more times than he could care to remember and milking cows at family lands across from Menlo Castle.

Cllr. D. Lyons expressed his sympathy to the Lawless family and referred to the Freedom of the City award as being one of Billy's proudest moments. He described Billy as a big hearted man who opened the doors for Galway sister cities and that he will be a huge loss to his family, sister cities and the Galway Community.

Cllr. D. McDonnell also expressed his deepest sympathy to Anne and the Lawless family. He described Billy as a true friend and spoke of his rowing achievements and his love for sport and Irish politics.

Cllr. E. Hoare thanked Mayor P. Keane for his kind words and expressed his sympathies to the Lawless family. Cllr. E. Hoare grew up in Dangan and knew Billy from a young age. He spoke about how Billy embraced everyone and loved to see people progress and get on well. He thanked Billy for all his support and contributions over the years and added that he will be sadly missed.

Cllr. F. Fahy expressed sympathies to Billy's family and the family of Menlo. Cllr. F. Fahy spoke of Billy's house in Menlo and how it was known as a "visiting house" where the door was always open. Billy will be a huge loss to Galway in Chicago. He always saw the positives in everyone and could work with anyone. He opened doors for a lot of people in Chicago and was well known for his generosity and kindness. Billy was always very complimentary of City Hall and the people of Galway, and he will be a huge loss to this city.

Cllr. J. Forde expressed sympathies to Billy's family and spoke of his rowing and regatta days.

Cllr. S. Forde expressed his sympathies and referred to Billy as a great man with a love for politics.

Cllr. N. McNelis expressed his sympathies and added that Billy was always very proud of his children, and how he opened so many doors for people in Chicago and that he was really respected by Irish America politicians. He added that his proudest moment was getting the Freedom of the City of Galway.

Cllr. T. O'Flaherty expressed her sympathies to Anne and the Lawless and O'Toole families. Billy will be a huge loss to his family and friends and added that she was happy to have known Billy, as he has enriched all our lives.

Cllr. A Burke extended her sympathies to Billy's wife and family and to all the Elected Members of Galway City Council, on the passing of a great friend.

Cllr. J. Connolly added that a word that resonates with him is "generosity". Billy brought undocumented Irish in America onto the political table, and this gives people a great sense of who he was. He extended his sympathies to his wife and family.

Cllr. J. McDonagh expressed his sympathies and described Billy as a very approachable person, who showed compassion and empathy to all. Billy supported a lot of voluntary and community organisations discretely, and never looked for acknowledgement. He added that Billy had a great energy to drive people and is a very sad loss to Galway.

Cllr. E. Seoighthe, on behalf of herself and Cllr. A. Curran extended her sympathies to Billys family.

Cllr. A. Cheevers extend sympathies to Billys family and described Billy as a great businessman and employer in Galway and a generous warm person who was always very encouraging and supportive. He added that Billy will be a great loss to Galway and Chicago.

Cllr. M. Cubbard extended his sympathies to Billys family and the community of Menlo. He described Billy as an unofficial ambassador for Galway.

Cllr. H. Ogbu also extended her sympathies to Billys family and to everyone who knew him.

Mr. L. Cleary, Chief Executive, extended his sympathy to Billys family and friends.

Cllr. D. McDonnell proposed that the Mayor and Members of the Executive attend the funeral in Chicago as he felt it was important that the people of Chicago recognise the contribution Billy Lawless made to Galway and to recognise his great achievements and work. This was Seconded by Cllr. D, Lyons and agreed.

Mayor P. Keane thanked all Members for their kind words and informed Members that all messages will be conveyed to the Lawless family. Mayor P. Keane concluded the meeting by thanking Billy Lawless for his service, friendship and commitment to the undocumented and added that while he became a citizen of the United States, he remains always of Galway – the 29th Freeman of the City, a friend of the city, and one of our own.

Ms. A. Rohan informed all present that a Book of Condolences in memory of Billy Lawless, Freeman of Galway City, was opened in City Hall, Galway City Council, today by Mayor P. Keane, which is available to the public for the entry of messages of sympathy.

The meeting concluded at 16:00.