



June 2024

30 Years of  
South Dublin  
County Council

Anniversary Edition

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## Cathaoirligh /Mayors

NAME	FROM	TO
Cllr Don Tipping	1993	1994
Cllr John Hannon	1994	1995
Cllr Breda Cass	1995	1996
Cllr Therese Ridge	1996	1997
Cllr Eamon Walsh	1997	1998
Cllr Mick Billane	1998	1999
Cllr Charlie O Connor	1999	2000
Cllr Stanley Laing	2000	2001
Cllr Cait Keane	2001	2002
Cllr Jim Daly	2002	2003
Cllr Maire Ardagh	2003	2004
Cllr Robert Dowds	2004	2005
Cllr Therese Ridge	2005	2006
Cllr Eamonn Maloney	2006	2007
Cllr Billy Gogarty	2007	2008
Cllr Tony McDermott	June 2008	June 2008
Cllr Marie Corr	2008	2009
Cllr Mick Duff	2009	2010
Cllr Eamonn Maloney	2010	2011
Cllr Marie Corr	March 2011	June 2011
Cllr Catherine Jones	2011	2012
Cllr Cathal King	2012	2013
Cllr Dermot Looney	2013	2014
Cllr Fintan Warfield	2014	2015
Cllr Sarah Holland	2015	2016
Cllr Guss O'Connell	2016	2017
Cllr Paul Gogarty	2017	2018
Cllr Mark Ward	2018	2019
Cllr Vicki Casserly	2019	2020
Cllr Ed O'Brien	2020	2021
Cllr Peter Kavanagh	2021	2022
Cllr Emma Murphy	2022	2023
Cllr Alan Edge	2023	2024

## County Managers/Chief Executives

NAME	FROM	TO
John Fitzgerald	1994	1996
Dan O'Sullivan*	1996	1997
Frank Kavanagh	1997	2002
Tom Doherty*	2002	2002
Joe Horan	2002	2012
Philomena Poole*	2012	2013
Daniel McLoughlin	2013	2023
Colm Ward	2023	Current

\*Denotes acting position

Following the Local Government Reform Act 2014 the position of County Manager was replaced by Chief Executive.

# Celebrating 30 Years of South Dublin County Council



Original Council Members

Pictured left (front l-r): Cllr Catherine Quinn; Cllr Finbarr Hanrahan; Hugh Hanley, Deputy Manager; An Cathaoirleach Cllr Don Tipping; An Leas Cathaoirleach Stanley Laing; John Fitzgerald, County Manager; Cllr Breda Cass; Cllr Cáit Keane; (middle l-r): Cllr Guss O'Connell; Cllr John Hannon; Cllr Sean Ardagh; Cllr Michael Keating; Cllr Pat Rabbitte; Cllr Colm Tyndall; Cllr Margaret Farrell; Cllr Alan Shatter; Cllr Máire Mullarney; Cllr Mary Muldoon; (back l-r): Cllr Charlie O'Connor; Cllr Ann Ormonde; Cllr Mick Billane; Cllr Colm McGrath; Cllr Peter Brady; Cllr John O'Halloran; Cllr Thérèse Ridge; Cllr Eamonn Walsh; Cllr Pat Upton and Cllr Ned Gibbons.

County, Councillors remained in post from the 1991 local elections through the 1994 elections, until 1999, keeping their mandate for an eight-year period to accommodate the transition to the new Council. At that time, there were 26 sitting Councillors. South Dublin Councillors, shown in the accompanying photo (top left) at that inaugural meeting along with Cathaoirleach, Councillor Don Tipping, John Fitzgerald, County Manager, and Hugh Hanley, Deputy Manager. In

County Library Tallaght, which also opened 30 years ago



2014, this increased to the 40 Councillors we have today, reflecting the significant growth and expansion of the County over that time. The Council featured some notable names including then TDs and subsequent Ministers Pat Rabbitte and Alan Shatter, along with currently serving Councillors Guss O'Connell and Charlie O'Connor. Councillors O'Connell and O'Connor are the only remaining sitting elected members from that time and both have signalled that they are retiring at the end of the current Council term after long and distinguished service, marking the end of an era.

Staff moved to the newly built offices in 1994 to take up their new positions. They had been given the option of moving

to a choice of the three new Dublin local authorities (Fingal, South Dublin, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown). Promotional opportunities, which followed an extended recruitment embargo, provided additional incentives for the move. Another notable change was the introduction of technology, with SDCC being one of the first local authorities to provide all staff supplied with desktop computers. Automated book lending was also introduced then at the County Library, which was delivered along with the new County Hall. Staff found the new offices less accessible with limited public transport options in contrast to today with the introduction of the Luas in 2009 in particular, reflecting the advancement of Tallaght and South Dublin since then.

## History In The Making

The inaugural meeting of South Dublin County Council took place on Wednesday 5th January amid a fanfare of trumpets.

Councillors and local dignitaries assembled in the grounds of the R.T.C. for a flag-raising ceremony, before adjourning to the lecture theatre for the official speeches. Council Chairperson, Cllr. Don Tipping, was presented with a new chain of office by the Regional Manager of the Bank of Ireland. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Cllr. Tipping said the creation of the new council is a unique opportunity for positive

change. "Our immediate task is to carve out and establish a clear identity for the entire area, especially the two major towns of Tallaght and Clondalkin" he said. With a population of over 210,000 people, the South Dublin administrative area is the second biggest in the state. "With a greater than average youth population, severe unemployment and related social problems, our priority must be to create op-

portunities for jobs" he continued. One of the more immediate responsibilities of the new council



Mr. Paul Hartnett, General Manager East Region, Bank Of Ireland, presents new South Dublin County Council Chairman, Don Tipping, with a specially commissioned Chain

will be accepting the ownership of Dublin Corporation lands and housing stock. Cllr. Tipping believes the

new council relevant in and "life" positioning" over parks than thorit will, placir centre ende comir. The n ever, financ heriti from Dubli cil. Concl Cllr. speci

This year, South Dublin County Council celebrates 30 years in existence. The Local Government (Dublin) Act, 1993 dissolved Dublin County Council and created three new administrative counties; Fingal County Council, South Dublin County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, from 1st January 1994 along with the then Dublin Corporation. The inaugural meeting of the new Council took place in January 1994 in the temporary setting of Regional Technical College Tallaght (now the Technological University Dublin Tallaght Campus). The



Official Opening of the new office building in Tallaght



### Flashback to 1994

In 1994, the County and indeed Ireland were a much different place. As well as the formation of South Dublin County Council, the year marked significant social, cultural and political moments in Ireland and around the world including:

- Mary Robinson was President of Ireland, while Albert Reynolds was Taoiseach until December 1994 when new Taoiseach John Bruton formed the “Rainbow Coalition” government.
- Current president Michael D. Higgins was Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht.
- New drink driving laws were introduced in December, severely limiting the volume of alcohol that could be consumed before driving.
- Nelson Mandela was appointed as the first democratically elected President of South Africa in May.
- Jack Charlton was awarded the Freedom of Dublin City before leading the Republic

of Ireland football team in the USA '94 FIFA World Cup, won by Brazil.

- In September, Down beat Dublin by 1-12 to 0-13 in the All-Ireland Senior Football Championship Final
- Offaly scored two goals in a minute to beat Limerick in the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final by 3-16 to 2-13.
- Shamrock Rovers were crowned champions of the 1993-94 League of Ireland Premier Division.
- Ireland’s “Rock ‘n’ Roll Kids” won the Eurovision Song Contest, which was held in Dublin and featured the debut of Riverdance as an interval act
- In April, Kurt Cobain, lead singer of Nirvana, was found dead in Seattle
- Several classic films were released including The Shawshank Redemption, Forrest Gump, Pulp Fiction and The Lion King.
- The sitcom ‘Friends’ debuted in the US in September, while the PlayStation was

also released and Amazon was launched by Jeff Bezos. We now look forward to seeing what the next 30 years brings for South Dublin County and beyond.



President Mary Robinson in 1994

### South Dublin Census - Then and Now

The population of South Dublin has grown by 44% from 208,739 in 1991 census to 301,075 in 2022.

Polish is now the largest non-Irish nationality in the County with 5,740 people in 2022 compared to 1994 when 6,964 British people made up the largest non-Irish cohort.

Along with these population changes, there have also been notable changes in religious status with 91% (190,608) of people in South Dublin identifying as Catholic in 1991 where only 63% (190,131) did so in the 2022 census. This has coincided with a whopping 951% increase in people identifying as “No Religion”, moving from just 4,521 people in 1991, to 47,537 in 2022.

### 125 Years of Local Elections

This year marks the 125th Anniversary of the first local elections which took place in early April of 1899. These elections followed the enactment of the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898 which provided the legislative basis for much of our present local government system. All of Ireland’s local authorities trace their origins directly or indirectly to the elections in April 1899 which were followed by their first Council meetings in the same month. Those inaugural Council elections marked key advances in Irish democracy– the franchise was widened beyond the landed gentry to include householders and it was also the first time that women were afforded voting rights.

Local elections are held in Ireland every five years with the polling date set by the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, allowing people to vote for Councillors to represent them in their local authorities.

The 2024 Irish local elections were held in on Friday, 7th June along with European Parliament elections, and, in a historic development for local government, a vote for a directly elected Mayor for Limerick.

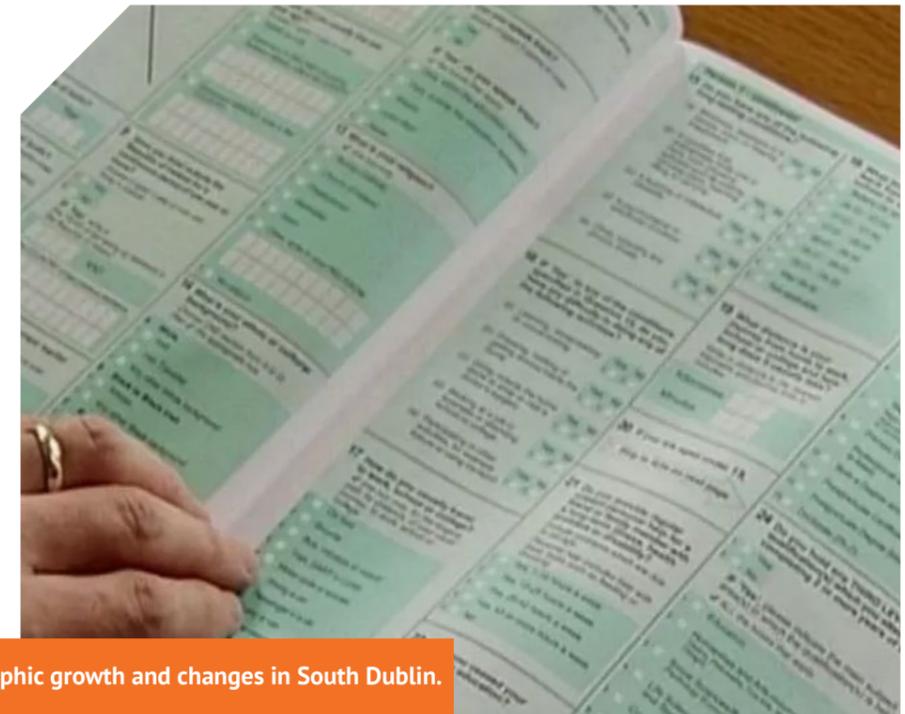


### Evolution of Our Council

The Council comprised 26 Councillors at its inaugural meeting in January 1994, all of whom had served on Dublin County Council. In 2014, following the Local Government Reform Act 2014, this increased to 40 Councillors.

That first Council included just eight women, comprising 30% of total Councillors. However, following the recent local elections, the new Council will now comprise at least 19 women, representing 47.5% of total members.

Of the new Council, Cllrs. Paul Gogarty and Joanna Tuffy were both first elected to SDCC in 1999 while Cllr. Trevor Gilligan, first elected in 2004.



Census 2022 highlighted demographic growth and changes in South Dublin.

# Looking Back on 33 Years of Service Cllr's O'Connor and O'Connell



**After 33 years of service to South Dublin, Councillors Guss O'Connell and Charlie O'Connor announced that they would not seek re-election in the June local elections so we sat down with them to get their thoughts on the past 30 years in South Dublin.**

**SDCC: 30 years ago, South Dublin County Council was officially established after the dissolution of Dublin County Council. What do you recall of the initial conversations about the formation of the new Council?**

**Charlie O'Connor:** I was first elected, as indeed Gus (O'Connell) was in 1991 to the big Council, I think it was 76 members and to some extent the local area out our way were swamped in that big pool. But we coped and people are very nice and kind to us and then

we moved towards understanding what the government was about and creating a situation where our Council and other Council's would separate. In our case, South Dublin County Council was created. That happened in 1994 and the reaction was that it would be good, because it would mean a smaller Council and we would then have more of an opportunity to raise in my case, Tallaght based questions and issues. It was going to be a smaller council, confined

to the areas in our County and therefore we could get more done. That was the view and I certainly looked forward to that. I was happy, as Guss was, to be a founding member of that Council with John Tipping becoming our first Cathaoirleach.

Not to digress, but I remember Pat Rabbitte, who was the last chairperson of Dublin County Council, told the story on the last day, that when he was proposed the year before to be Cathaoirleach, Ray Burke, another famous name, said that "if Pat Rabbitte became chairman of the Council, the Council would be finished." Pat Rabbitte famously said. "And so it's come to pass!" We stayed in O'Connell St for a while, until our building was ready.

**Guss O'Connell:** One of the debates we had, first of all; we were elected to the Belgard Area as well as the old Dublin County, that was to make it legal when the new County was set up. So in 91, that's how we got elected. We were immediately taken up with completing the Dublin County development plan and that took on an awful lot of our time. During the discussions around that, we were also conscious of the fact that we were making a county development plan for the whole County, it was very soon going to be in three different bits.

The other debate we had was what it should be called. What this new County would be called and some wanted to call it the My Liffey because that would have been the old name for the area. Others were also toying with the idea of Esker. Because the Eiscir Riada runs from Lucan all the way to Galway. It's disappeared in patches. So we debated whether it would be called Esker or you know, My Liffey. Eventually I remember Eamon Walsh while he was the chair said, "look, let's put this to bed once and for all. The Minister is anxious that Dublin would appear in one of the three new Council's names. Fingal weren't going to do that, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown are not going to do it." So we said, OK, we're going to accept that, we're going to be South Dublin or Dublin South County Council and that's how it happened.

We came out on a hell of a very cold day to turn the sod on what is now County Hall and then we had our first meeting in Tallaght IT, I was the only elected Independent and I insisted that I should say a few focails and I got to say those. It was history making. It was the first County, the last previous County to have been set up was Wicklow and that had been carved out of the old Dublin County. I certainly felt that



**Guss O'Connell launching the 300k Participatory Budgeting Initiative**

John Fitzgerald drove it more than anybody else because, he said look, let's get this on the road. Let us get out to Tallaght and let us begin to carve out an identity for ourselves and get away from here.

**Tallaght and South Dublin has changed immensely in the past 30 years. What has been the biggest change?**

**Guss:** It has absolutely become much more developed. The feature of the County really has been the expansion of the residential areas beginning with Adamstown. That's one of the huge developments that has come forward. I wouldn't have been entirely conscious at the time that it was very agricultural. Lusk and Rush and all that was always the bread basket of Dublin and the country. So I wouldn't have seen it like that, but I would have been very conscious in the early days about a number of things. One was the Liffey Valley and that had been under serious threat and we had got the special Amenity Area order established. The other one we were anxious to protect was Dublin mountains and we got that into the County development plan that it wouldn't go above a certain height, but apart from that I would have to say that the County as we took it at the time would have been much more sparsely populated obviously than it is now.

**Charlie:** Tallaght was a mere village. I came to Tallaght first; people would say to me "you're not really from Tallaght." No. "How long are you here?" Here now 54 years. I came to Tallaght in 1969 with a job. I went to work in Cookstown Industrial Estate and funny enough, probably cut my political teeth by getting involved in the local Business Committee group that was

lobbying for better facilities and services. We used to say that Tallaght had the growing population of a city but still the status of a village and so it was. Tallaght then began to grow very much.

The opening of The Square was really the catalyst that set everything off. Even the Council building where we sit now and the hospital and all the facilities around here were fields, full of horses. So that's how Tallaght started. And when I moved to Tallaght first and bought a house in 1972. It was still very much a Village really devoid of facilities and the battle then began. It's completely different and that obviously has provided a particular challenge for the Council because the Council over the years have had to react – not only in Tallaght but in Clondalkin and Lucan and Palmerstown and so on. These areas, as far as population development was concerned, ballooned and that presented its particular challenges and if you look back in the minutes of the various meetings of South Dublin County Council over that period, it reflects that. And they were the issues we were all raising.

**The past 30 years has seen significant challenges for the County. How do you think South Dublin County Council has performed and evolved during these challenges?**

**Charlie:** The local authority had to respond to various challenges such as Covid and the Economic crash and I think an evaluation of that period will show that it coped reasonably well. Certainly COVID was a challenge for all of us. It interfered with meetings, made life difficult, but local government evolves and it'll always be there. The challenge is to make

## 33 Years of Service

- Guss O'Connell has served as a Councillor from 1991 until 2024 as an Independent.
- Charlie O'Connor was also elected to the Council in 1991 and was elected to Dáil Éireann in 2022 and re-elected in 2007 before returning to the Council Chamber in 2014.

them processed and delivered to us at our meeting a couple of days later. Making the Development Plan, overnight staff turned over and gave us new printed documents the following morning. Whereas eventually burst onto the scene the whole emergence of being able to send in stuff by internet. This has been a huge transformation. It has probably resulted in two things - One: Being more efficient in terms of getting your information across, but two: maybe because there is so much, I think the old system tended to regulate how much I could put in myself and regulate what kind of feedback I got. And I think the new system gets overloaded very quickly because at the end of all, these are people and they can only handle so much in a in a given day.

### **What has been the greatest project the Council has delivered in your opinion and is there any project that you were involved in in the past 30 years that you're particularly proud of?**

**Guss:** To make the Development Plan every five years has been a huge achievement and working together with staff. I suppose if you look at the footprint two or three things come out very strongly. I think Tallaght and West Tallaght has benefited greatly. there has been focus and resources put into them and the parks developed in those areas and getting the people to see that they really count. And again in North Clondalkin similarly and the upturn in the economy where you now have far less unemployment. But we still have, as I'm a member of the Partnership as well, you still have significantly higher levels of unemployment and disadvantage in those two areas and across the County. But to go back then to the big achievements, Adamstown itself is the first SDZ and then later on Clonburris as the second SDZ.

A negative achievement would have been Liffey Valley Shopping Centre. The fact that that got through and got built, it interfered with what might otherwise have been a different County. Where Clonburris is now being developed was intended to be the town centre for Clondalkin and Lucan. Because that epicentre shifted from there across to Liffey Valley which eventually ended up more as a retail centre rather than a Town Centre, we never got that heart into the new towns that we would have hoped. But having said that, maybe it has helped to create and develop an identity in Lucan, to create an identity in Clondalkin that mightn't have happened if we tried to amalgamate the two of those. I would be proud of the fact that we succeeded in preserving the Liffey Valley from a number of attacks. Now we did lose one piece

of it in the old Council but that's not the end of the world. It's a nice development, as it turns out.

But to go back, there are a couple of things I would be very proud of being associated with. The first one started out its life as trying to get LETS, Local Economic Trading Systems, what emerged out of that debate was Social Credits. So Social Credits was one of the things that I promoted and got in.

The second thing was the participatory budgeting, which is the first time it had been done in any local authority in Ireland. Now it had been tried in other countries and their feeling here was that it wouldn't work. And I think the fact that 300K Have Your Say has helped to show how we might bridge that gap between the perception that the public have, that Councils have deep pockets. I think it has helped, people have seen that yes, you can influence what's being done. So I think participatory budgeting is something I would be particularly proud of.

**Charlie:** Well, of course a lot has happened over the last 30 years in Tallaght alone. When I became a Councillor first the college was developed. The Square certainly is a big thing in the history of the County and the Council clearly helped develop that. And then over the period, we had lots of other very important developments like the Hospital. And I was a member of that Board, nominated through the Council to the Eastern Health Board, and that was important that that gave us an opportunity to have somebody representing local views as that hospital developed.

There are other standouts like the Luas, for example. The Council's fingerprints were clearly on that and all the other developments. The National Basketball Arena and other facilities that you would expect in any major population centre and that's continued to be the case. And of course the big thing for me, a politician would probably say I've been involved in this, that and the other, and still if I'm known for anything, it's probably because I go to matches in Tallaght stadium. So Tallaght Stadium has been a big part of the Council's life and certainly a big part of my life. I became Cathaoirleach of the Council in 1999. I was serving for a month and 1/2 went off on my holidays, went to Paris and then to Wolverhampton to attend Robbie Keane, a Tallaght footballer, last match for Wolves. I came home had a heart attack and missed the Council for six weeks while I had my surgery and came back I think it was

the 5th of November 1999. And to chair the meeting of the Council in a packed gallery at which effectively brought Rovers to Tallaght Stadium and helped develop Tallaght Stadium. As Cathaoirleach, I was also present in March of the following year 2000 when the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern turned the sod for our Stadium. There were a lot of people protesting saying they didn't want Rovers to come to Tallaght, but that was a big thing and it was a big moment for the Council.

I was very unwell and on the day of that meeting, it was the then County Manager, Frank Kavanagh who insisted to my sister that I be taken out of my sick bed and chair the meeting. He said to me, "if you don't chair this meeting, you'll regret it for the rest of what's left of your political life." So until this day, Tallaght Stadium's development has been big, big news for the Council and people like me have been deeply involved and I think that's very important. The works outside the Council building, the Innovation Centre, the playing pitch beside the Stadium and so on. All over the County if you talked to other colleagues they'll talk about all the developments that they've gone through. But I'm proud of anything I have contributed to, with others.

### **Looking forward, what are your hopes for the new Council and what advice would you give new Councillors joining the Council as we look forward to the next 30 years?**

**Charlie:** Well, I've always taken the view and I hope we've been successful; always listen to the people. I had this conversation with a colleague. I get stopped everywhere going to the post office, going into the doctors, going into my local shops, certainly going into my church. People stop us because they know you and they think it's OK. Usually they're very kind about it - they say can I talk to you someday? Yeah. Talk to me now.

Cllr. McManus has told me that he believes that when I retire, I'll still be seen as an unelected public Rep. People will still stop me, and certainly at the moment they're stopping me and people I think will continue to do that. People will still come to us with issues. I think if any up and coming politician asks me what's the important thing? I would always say listen to the people, because they are coming to you because they want you to do something and believe you can do it. And that's just the way it's going to be. I should have said, that since I came back to the Council, I don't know whether you know, 2014 was a very difficult time for me where my son had died 5 weeks before

the election. And it was a very difficult time. And I remember a man saying to me as I went into the funeral home, "I'm really sorry, Charlie, about Robert but I still can't vote for you." So I had to deal with that. And then when I came to the Council, I found people, colleagues and officials were very kind to me and helped me through that, and that was important for me.

**Guss:** Well, from day one I have always maintained that the 40 Councillors in the Chamber should work together. In some respects, you know there have been highs and lows. It is a contradiction in certain terms, that 40 Councillors who have been elected to go in there and do the best they can for their constituents should then divide into groups and begin debating across the chamber about maybe how things should be done and what should be done in a confrontational manner rather than in a collegiate and cooperative manner.

I think politics needs to resurrect itself from a climate we have all contributed to, where we have undermined the concept of democracy by attacking the individual rather than disagreeing with and trying to tease out the issue. A lot of my life would have been spent helping in training and education. And I would always at meetings, try to get people to build on the previous statement and I would hope that the new Council coming in will try and build on each other's positives rather than try to undermine each other with a negative approach. I would hope that when the new Chamber does assemble, that there will be a different approach. If we could all agree

that there was a job to be done that we're not starting with a clean sheet, we're actually picking up where a lot of us have left off. I think we need to work closer with the professionals, that is the permanent staff that are there. We're elected staff and we need to work more closely and pick up what ideas are there, rather than begin to think we can reinvent a wheel that we don't need to do at all.

I was involved in the Glencree and the John Hume Trust efforts at getting politicians and others to sign up to a pledge that we would be more respectful and more thoughtful and listen to what other people have to say. To build on the positives and by a process of elimination, you can't do everything, but if we all work together to do what we need to do. I did a lot of work with different countries and the training and education and employment side. We would say, we all have different objectives here, we're all working out of a different pool, but we have common stuff and let us help each other to achieve what each other needs to achieve and in the process then by definition we will get our work done as well.

So I would hope for the new Council coming in as we move forward into the 31st year, that there is a building on the goodwill. And the fact that the population of South Dublin, which is now huge, sends us in there as 40 Councillors to do something on behalf of all the citizens. Because at the end of our term, they will judge what has been done, not what an individual did or didn't.



Charlie O'Connor turning the sod on Tallaght Stadium

# Images over the Years



Councillor Don Tipping officially opening County Hall

# Images over the Years



Cllr. Emma Murphy (r) Mayor of South Dublin and Cllr. Joanna Tuffey (l) Deputy Mayor 2022-2023



Twice Mayor, Cllr. Therese Ridge celebrating County Libraries 500,000th customer in 1997



Mayor Don Tipping and John Fitzgerald, County Manager in the newly built Council Chamber

# Images over the Years



Councillor Marie Corr, Mayor of South Dublin at Readers Day in 2008

# Images over the Years



New Offices in County Hall



County Hall Tallaght under construction



Councillor Breda Cass, South Dublin County Councils first female Mayor in 1995

# Images over the Years



Tallaght Stadium in 2008 and Now

# Images over the Years



Deputy Mayor Guss O'Connell meets Olympic silver medal winning boxer, and future Councillor, Kenneth Egan at Dublin Airport in 2008

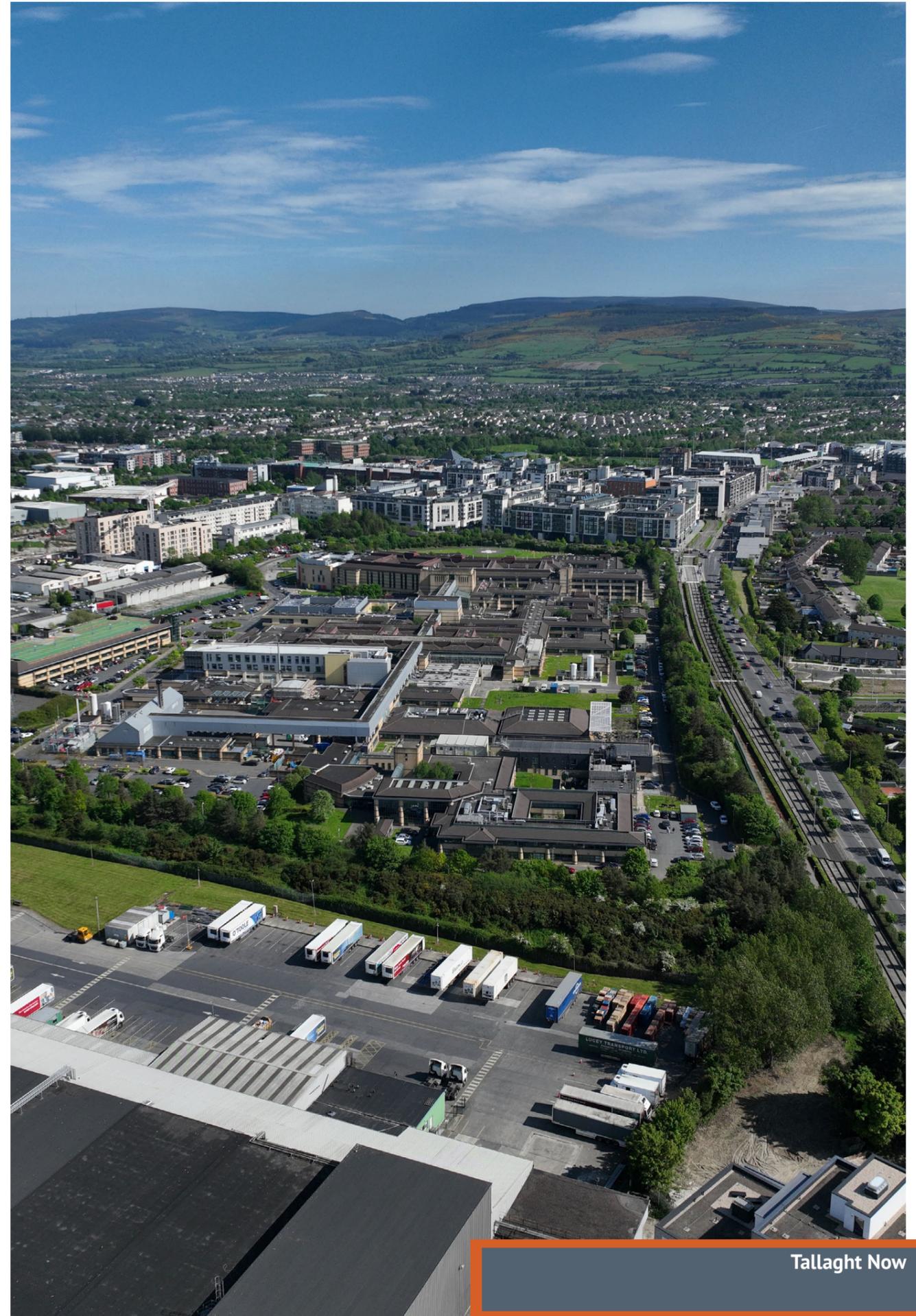


Donal Harvey, Harcourt Developments, Taoiseach Brian Cowan and Mike Murphy at the opening of the Luas in 2009



County Manager Joe Horan, Minister Seamus Brennan and Mayor Billy Gogarty at Tallaght Stadium in 2008

Tallaght then



Tallaght Now



South Dublin County Council



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