**MONTHLY MEETING OF DÚN LAOGHAIRE RATHDOWN COUNTY COUNCIL**

**03 July 2023**

**‘TogetHER in Politics’ Conference Report**

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council received funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to host a conference promoting gender equality and encouraging more women to run in the Local Elections in 2024. Our conference ‘TogetHER in Politics’ was free to attend and was held in the Royal Marine Hotel in Dún Laoghaire, Co. Dublin on Saturday, 20th May 2023.

The conference was structured and planned by a steering group (members listed in Appendix 1). The objective of the conference was to provide for valuable peer support and networking between Councillors, possible new female candidates, academia and key community stakeholders. The conference had 70 attendees and information stands were provided by Women for Election, SHE - See Her Elected, the Immigrant Council of Ireland, Women’s Voice dlr, Women for Women, dlr’s Register of Electors Team and several political parties. The full list of stands is included in Appendix 2.

The format of the conference was to cover topics on women’s representation in politics, particularly women from diverse backgrounds, the process of running for election, how to empower women to run for election and then retain women elected to councils following the Local Elections. The full running order and speakers list is included in Appendix 3.

A workshop was held in the afternoon and the following are the questions considered by the conference participants with a representation of the information received:

**Q1 What are the challenges to women entering politics?**

Having the time to put in to the Councillor role

Rearing a family, working & being a Councillor is simply unmanageable

Caring for children, elderly parents, family members with disabilities

Childcare

Work-life balance

Saying no

The culture of politics – ‘not a woman’s job’

Being a woman

Self confidence

The system needs to change to encourage more women

The times of meetings

Support for women from marginalized communities

Migrant women and women with disabilities have all these challenges but multiplied

There is a language challenge for migrant women

Online abuse – social media particularly

The lack of accommodation of women’s’ experiences

Better salary

The timing of canvassing

Publishing of candidates addresses

Network and who you know

GAA is male dominated

The stereotyping of women as emotionally unstable

Conservative expectations on women

**Q2 What are the challenges to women staying in politics?**

Childcare

Family commitments, especially if lone parent

Inflexible role

Politics unstable – every round of elections may have no job

Masculine culture

More harassment

Time for the role

**Q3 How do we overcome these challenges?**

Encouraging younger women

Getting schools involved

Teaching boys in schools to be respectful

Hearing others – their difficulties

Provide training

More events like ‘TogetHER in Politics’

Different approach – culture of not being able to say wrong thing

Current system must change – changes need to be seen from the top down

Cross party caucuses in each County

Possible wrap around lines between politics and community groups

To drive gender equality further also on a grass route level

Following the workshop, a panel discussion took place with representation from local women and local women’s networks where the participants discussed their experiences on the issues raised during the workshop for example safety online, work-life balance, access to transport, confidence and resilience.

**Actions arising:**

With the information received on the day dlr will arrange specific training sessions in association with Women for Election and SHE – See Her Elected. Several conference attendees signed up for training courses to be arranged in the Autumn for example ‘Introduction to Politics’ with Women for Election.

dlr will pilot a mentoring programme for our women Councillors. Through this programme mentors will provide access to information for example financial supports available through the Council and nationally etc.

dlr will engage with women from diverse backgrounds to ensure access to information and encourage participation in training courses.

**Owner:**  Stephen Brady, Director of Corporate Affairs

**Appendix 1 – Steering Group**

Stephen Brady, Director of Corporate Affairs

Claire McGing, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, IADT / Gender & Politics Researcher

Siobhán Nic Gaoithín, Senior Staff Officer, Community Development and Social Inclusion

Mary White, Community Worker, Community Development and Social Inclusion

Pamela Graydon, Administrative Officer, Corporate Affairs

Mary Donegan, A/Assistant Staff Officer, Corporate Affairs

**Appendix 2 – Information Stands at ‘TogetHER in Politics’**

Dlr Register of Electors Team

SHE - See Her Elected

Women for Election

Immigrant Council of Ireland

Women for Election

WomenforWomen

Women’s Voice dlr

Labour Party

Fianna Fáil

Fine Gael

Social Democrats

**Appendix 3 – Running Order (including Speakers List)**

**TogetHER in Politics – Conference to promote Gender Equality**

**and Diversity in Local Government**

**Saturday 20th May 2023, 11a.m - 3p.m, Royal Marine Hotel, Dún Laoghaire**

**RUNNING ORDER**

**11a.m:  MC Stephen Brady,** Director of Corporate Affairs, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council **to open conference**

**11:05a.m – 11.20a.m**: **Welcome Address: Councillor Mary Hanafin,** An Cathaoirleach, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council - **“Celebrating our women in politics to date in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and the value of promoting equality and diversity of underepresented groups into the future”**

**11.25a.m – 11.45a.m:** **Keynote speaker: Professor Valesca Lima,** Assistant Professor of Political Science at the School of Law and Government, Dublin City University ***- “Women's Success in Politics and the Contributions of Migrant Communities”***.

**11.50a.m – 12.10p.m: Johnny Fallon,** Strategy Director, Carr Communications Ltd.,

***“How to run for election – the process as a candidate and how to run a successful campaign”.***

**12.15p.m – 12.30p.m: Questions & Answers**

**12.35p.m – 1.00p.m: Lunch break – Light refreshments served &**

**information stands in the room**

**1.05p.m – 1.25p.m: Claire McGing,** Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, IADT / Gender & Politics Researcher - ***“Promoting Women’s Equality in Irish Politics: Recruitment, Retention, Representation”***

**1.25p.m – 1.45p.m: Workshop & feedback from groups**

Questions to workshop participants:

* What are the challenges to women entering and staying in politics?
* How do we overcome these challenges?

**1.50.m – 2.35p.m: Panel Discussion chaired by Claire McGing,** Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Manager, IADT / Gender & Politics Researcher:

***“The importance of equality and diversity in Local Government for policy making and representation”* and responding to conference workshop findings on the challenges facing women entering politics**

* Marilyn Nyquist, Women’s Development & Education Worker, Women’s Programme, Southside Partnership Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown
* Geraldine Dunne, Director, Southside Travellers Action Group
* Mary Collins, Disability Advocate, Member of the Board of Accessible Community Transport Southside (ACTS)
* Ciara McHugh, Leadership Officer, National Women’s Council
* Liliana Fernandez, Training and Integration Officer from Immigrant Council of Ireland

**2.35p.m – 2.50p.m:**  **Questions & Answers**

**2.50p.m:**  **MC Stephen Brady,** Director of Corporate Affairs, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council **to close conference**