

Roche Warns Pact Against "Games" on 24/7 Nominee

Eoghan Dalton Reports

The outgoing Independent Councillor, Mary Roche has fired a farewell warning to Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael Councillors who might be considering nominating one of their own for her vacant Council seat, ahead of her nominee, cardiac campaigner Matt Shanahan. She has also admitted that she originally approached someone else ahead of Health Equality for the South East (HEFSE) spokesman, settling on Mr Shanahan when her first choice wasn't available. Speaking in the minutes after the Annual Budget meeting last week, her final meeting as a Councillor, she said she expected tradition to be followed when members choose her successor.

The legislation for co-option of Council seats does not refer to Independent members. Instead it states that if a Councillor vacates their seat, whether through resignation or an untimely death, their party gets to pick the replacement.



Outgoing Cllr Mary Roche

When this arose with outgoing Independent Councillors in the past, such as when Minister of State John Halligan was elected to the Dáil and he selected Cllr Seán Reinhardt to take his place, the legislation was informally extended to non-party members. Ms Roche expects the same to happen once again with Mr Shanahan. The pact is currently made up of nine Fianna Fáil members and eight Fine Gael, as well as one Labour Councillor. "Being that he is such a prominent campaigner for an issue the Council is fully square behind, I would be very surprised if they were to do anything other than confirm his nomination.

"(It) isn't up to me, I can only do so much, but it would be regrettable and I don't think the Council would come out well and I think the public would be a little bit surprised (if he isn't chosen).

"I initially wasn't going to nominate anybody because, my thinking being, that it was six months out from an election and maybe it would save the Council a little bit of money. But when I realised that the casual vacancy would be filled, if not by me well then by the Council and the pact, who have the majority votes on the Council, well then I decided to nominate Matt." Ms Roche has previously criticised the lack of representation for women on the Council, noting that meetings are often scheduled for times more suitable for the male members of the local authority. She also lashed out at her 14 male colleagues who stood

in a photo outside City Hall, calling for a No vote in last May's referendum on abortion legislation. Speaking to media afterwards, she called them "stale, male and pale".

However, after realising the voting pact could fill the vacancy, she said wasn't able to find a woman to fill her City East seat on short notice ahead of stepping down. "There was a number of women particularly I came across in the campaign for the termination of pregnancy, but none of them were in my area, so there was no point in going way outside the area," she said. "I did approach someone tentatively but she wasn't able at the time to do it. So I was really looking around then, because with six months you really don't have a lot of time.

"I think the 24/7 campaign is the most deserving and most capable, and I would hope that the Council would recognise the work of the HEFSE through Matt and it is to him, and to the group, that I am giving the seat to for the six months.