

OPENING STATEMENT - NICOLE O'CONNOR – MEMBER OF THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

When I first got the letter through my door about the citizens assembly, I had no idea what a Citizens' Assembly even was. And to be honest while I awaited the first meeting I still wasn't 100% sure what awaited me.

However, it now is an experience I take great pride in being a part of. It was an opportunity to meet 66 other randomly selected citizens from diverse backgrounds and different walks of life alongside 12 councillors to discuss something that would impact Dublin for years to come.

We saw the assembly as an opportunity to have a say in what Irish politics could look like, more localised decision making which we felt could only be beneficial.

Over the course of 6 months we discussed the type of directly elected mayor most appropriate for Dublin and the local government structures needed to support this new role.

At the end of the 6 month process we recommended that responsibility for 15 specific areas , such as housing, homelessness, community healthcare, transport, the environment and emergency services should be devolved immediately to the new mayor. Six other areas like Policing, Water, and Education were recommended to be devolved over time.

As part of the process we also recommend that a plebiscite take place regarding a directly elected Mayor for Dublin. We felt that much like we had been given the opportunity to debate the pros and cons of a directly elected Mayor and what devolved powers to the mayor's office may look like, that other Dublin citizens should also have their say.

In conclusion, collaborating with an assembly of 79 other individuals, we seized the opportunity to shape the future of Dublin's political landscape through localized decision-making. Our six-month dialogue came together in a set of recommendations, advocating for a directly elected mayor with specific devolved responsibilities. We not only discussed the details but also championed the democratic process by recommending a plebiscite, ensuring that the voice of every Dublin citizen could be heard in shaping the city's governance.