

**COMHAIRLE CATHRACH AGUS CONTAE PHORT LÁIRGE
WATERFORD CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL**

**SPECIAL PLENARY MEETING CIVIC RECEPTION FOR WLR FM HELD ON 31ST
MARCH 2023 IN COUNCIL CHAMBER, CITY HALL, WATERFORD.**

Present

Cllr. John O’Leary (Mayor)	Cllr. Cristiona Kiely
Cllr. Donal Barry	Cllr. Jason Murphy
Cllr. Joe Conway	Cllr. Pat Nugent
Cllr. David Daniels	Cllr. Lola O’Sullivan
Cllr. Declan Doocey	Cllr. Conor McGuinness
Cllr. Mairead Tobin.	Cllr. Seamus O’Donnell
Cllr. Jim Griffin	Cllr. Mary Roche
Cllr. Joe Kelly	Cllr. Seamus Ryan
Cllr. Damien Geoghegan	Cllr. Adam Wyse
Cllr. Thomas Phelan	Cllr. Stephanie Keating
Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald	Cllr. Liam Brazil
Cllr. Joanne Bailey	Cllr. Jody Power

Apologies: Cllr. Ger Barron, Cllr. Tom Cronin, Cllr. Declan Clune, Cllr. John Hearne, Cllr. Seanie Power, Cllr. John Pratt, Cllr. Eamon Quinlan, Cllr. Frank Quinlan.

Officials in Attendance

Mr. Michael Walsh, Chief Executive
Mr. Kieran Kehoe, Director of Services, Corporate Services, Culture and Planning
Ms. Honor Dunphy, Meeting Administrator
Ms. Anne Flynn, Corporate

1. Civic Reception to honour WLR FM

The Mayor welcomed everyone to City Hall for the Civic Reception in recognition of WLR FM winning ‘Local Station of the Year’ at the Irish Music Rights Organisation National Radio Awards for an unprecedented fourth year in a row and sixth time in its history. WLR FM first won the much-coveted award in 2009 and again in 2012 but the current run of four in a row from 2019 to 2022, is a record-breaking achievement for the industry. The station dedicated the award to their thousands of listeners across Waterford City and County. Des Whelan is a pioneer of local radio in Ireland, is the driving force behind the highly successful WLR FM where he has been Managing Director since its inception and WLR has continued to provide a top-quality local sound broadcasting service to Waterford City and County for the last three decades. The station is deservedly recognised as one of the outstanding local radio stations in Ireland’s independent sector. As part of the radio station’s strategy to further immerse itself within the community to which it broadcasts, WLR FM has developed numerous community initiatives over the years which have all helped to shine a spotlight on all that is positive about Waterford including Arts and Entertainment awards, GAA awards, “best of” awards and Community awards. He said it is fantastic to have a local radio station recognised for their years of hard work keeping Waterford entertained and informed. He congratulated all the staff at WLR FM on this achievement. He also congratulated WLR FM on winning one of the top awards at the first ever Irish Audio Awards on Thursday evening.

The Mayor called on Cllr. Murphy to formally propose the motion.

Cllr. Murphy said, as Metropolitan Mayor and as proposer of today's reception he would like to echo the greeting from Mayor O'Leary and welcomed everyone to the Civic Reception for WLR FM's amazing achievement. WLR FM has its foundations back in the radio days of the late 1970s when local businessman Des Whelan built on his genuine love of Waterford at a time when almost one hundred stations went on air in response to the void in the market for an alternative to RTE Radio One. He said in 1989, after over 10 years of broadcasting, WLR was one of just two "pirate" radio stations to apply and receive a licence to broadcast to their respective area; in WLR's case, Waterford City and County. He said from studios in George's Street, Waterford Local Radio (WLR) went on air on September 9th, 1989, and was an almost instant success. In 1998 WLR opened new offices and studios in the county capital of Dungarvan which gave the station and its staff an important base in the west of the county. He said these facilities were significantly upgraded in 2007 through the purchase of a 1,500 square foot premises overlooking the square in Dungarvan town centre. WLR FM broadcasts one primetime programme live from its Dungarvan base every day and undertakes several special broadcasts during events like the West Waterford Food Festival. To be running for so long and to still be winning record breaking awards speaks for itself in regard to the standard WLR FM is held to and he commended all of those involved in the running, production and broadcasting over the years.

Cllr. O'Sullivan seconded the motion and said she would like to reiterate the sentiments of Mayor O'Leary and Councillor Murphy of welcoming everyone and congratulating the staff of WLR FM on being 'Local Station of the Year' at the IMRO National Radio Awards for a fourth consecutive year. WLR FM has developed the local radio station to the point where it is part of the fabric of daily life in the city and county, attracting 69% of all adults living in Waterford each week and 50% of all adults daily. She said the station employs circa 50 people between full, part-time and seasonal staff and is managed by a committed team who along with a talented group of producers and broadcasters share a real passion for radio and for Waterford. The station's website, WLRFM.com receives almost 1 million visits each month. With hundreds of TV, radio, and social channels available at the touch of a screen, WLR FM gives Waterfordians across the world the opportunity to catch up on all things local whenever and wherever they like. WLR FM continues to believe that just like in the pioneering early days of radio in Ireland, talent, professionalism, hard work and being local will continue to win the day with Waterford listeners. The station consistently remains true to its well-known slogan "We love Waterford, We are WLR". She congratulated all on the remarkable achievement and wished them continued success for the years to come.

Cllr. Wyse, Cllr. Kiely, Cllr. Brazil, Cllr. McGuinness, Cllr. Griffin, Cllr. Roche, Cllr. Power, Cllr. Ryan, Cllr. Nugent, Cllr. Nugent Cllr. Barry, Cllr. Daniels, Cllr. Kelly and Cllr. Conway all spoke in support of the motion. The Councillors said it was a privilege and an honour to attend the civic reception. They commended WLR FM on being one of the top Local Radios in Ireland and the dominant media force in Waterford delivering up to date news and sport, discussing current affairs and playing a mix of music for the people of Waterford City and County. They congratulated WLR FM on their achievements to date and wished them continued success.

Mr. Whelan, Managing Director WLR FM thanked the Mayor and Waterford City & County Council for honouring WLR FM with a Civic Reception acknowledging all those who worked in WLR FM, past and present. He congratulated Damien Tiernan and Jennifer Long on the award won at the Irish Audio Awards for "Deise Today". The station had humble beginnings. It was started by his brother Rick, and his friend Egedio Gianni, that summer of 1978 was magical. The licensing of local radio was always around the corner and while it was a full ten years coming, in hindsight we were all students of the university of life, studying for a degree in broadcasting. In 1989 he said they won the franchise to broadcast to Waterford city and county with WLR FM going on air in September 1989. The station has purpose-built studios at Ardkeen since 2002 replacing WLR FM's previous studio at Great Georges Street while the Dungarvan studio was opened in 1998 to provide a better service for listeners in West Waterford. As has been reflected by the Councillors WLR FM has become part of the everyday fabric of Waterford life and said the support is never taken for granted. Every year the WLR Christmas Radio Appeal has raised hundreds of thousands for the St Vincent De Paul in Waterford and he said the station also helped to build the Solas Cancer Support Centre in Ardkeen. Mr. Whelan commended the

contribution of Programme Director Michael Byrne who spearheaded the awards' entries and that of the station's staff, past and present, recalling those who were an integral part of the fabric of the station, in particular the late Billy McCarthy, Eddie Wymberry, Tony Weldon, Bob Heuston and Kevin Casey. He acknowledged the stations production, sales and administrative teams and the on-air presenters including Damien Tiernan, Oliver Carroll, Maria McCann, Kieran O'Connor, Aoibhin Fallon, Geoff Harris and John O'Shea. The common factor that unites all in the station is that everyone has a passion for Waterford and he said they believe they are privileged to broadcast to Waterford.

Mr. Michael Byrne, Programme Director WLR FM thanked the Mayor and Councillors for their kind words and hospitality. Winning the 'Local Station of the Year' at the Irish Music Rights Organisation National Radio Awards four years in a row and six times in thirteen years is a record-breaking achievement for any station in Ireland and the awards are well deserved. These are a group of passionate people who go beyond the call of duty to bring the listeners of Waterford a variety of awarding winning programmes. WLR FM has a fantastic line up of broadcasters. He acknowledged the contribution of the company's management team, News & Sport Editor, the station's sales team, reception staff and freelance contributors, all of whom play a role in the station's success. He acknowledged the co-operation of Waterford City & County Council, the Gardaí, Waterford University Hospital and other agencies. WLR FM's good relationship with these agencies is crucial in bringing information to the listeners as it happens. Des Whelan has been Managing Director since 1989, he is passionate about Waterford and acknowledged his outstanding contribution in Waterford, in business, community, arts and cultural and radio over the past five decades. Waterford City and County has improved so much over recent years and he looks forward to the years ahead when WLR will remain a key partner in the promotion of its success. On behalf of all at WLR he thanked the Mayor, councillors, council staff and friends.

The motion was passed by the unanimous acclamation of the members present. The Mayor presented a scroll and a commemorative piece of Waterford Crystal to Mr. Des Whelan, Managing Director WLR FM.

Mayor invited Mr. Whelan and Mr. Byrne, guests and the members to the Large Room for photographs and refreshments.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____
Mayor of Waterford City & County Council

Dated: _____