

## NewsPeople



Pictured at the Roscommon Women's Network meeting in Gleeson's, Roscommon on Thursday last were Mairead O'Shea (See Her Elected Communications Manager) and Cllr Emer Kelly. Photo: Michelle Hughes Walsh



Pictured at the Roscommon Women's Network meeting in Gleeson's, Roscommon on Thursday last were Margaret Mulligan, Nora Fahy (Project Manager, Women's Network Roscommon) and Tara Farrell, CEO of Longford's Women's Link. Photo: Michelle Hughes Walsh

## Roscommon to mark International Women's Day by 'reversing gender numbers' in council chamber

Women throughout County Roscommon are being invited to take part in a 'flipping' great idea! For one day only, there will be a complete reversal of the gender balance in Roscommon County Council chamber to mark International Women's Day on March 8th.

This was one of the exciting plans to emerge from a recent meeting organised by Roscommon Women's Network in Gleeson's Townhouse in Roscommon Town. 'Promoting Women's Participation in Politics' attracted a full house with women from all over the county showing great interest in the 2024 local elections.

Plans are now afoot for a follow-up event and a flip or reversal of the gender balance at the council chamber on International Women's Day on 8th of March, 2023. All women living in County Roscommon are invited to a planning meeting on Thursday, 23rd of February in Gleeson's Townhouse, Roscommon at 7 pm to help organise the International Women's Day event.

The recent meeting, hosted by Rita Kearney, a Board Member of Roscommon Women's Net-

work (RWN) in partnership with Roscommon County Council, focused on raising awareness of the importance of women getting more involved in local politics – with a particular focus on the 2024 local elections.

Rita Kearney, a board member of RWN explained: "The aim was to raise awareness of women's role in local politics, specifically in County Roscommon."

"Women – and particularly those from minority backgrounds – are vastly underrepresented in county councils generally in Ireland. According to the National Women's Council based on evidence after the 2019 local elections, women hold just 26% of council seats and only 10 councils have 30% or more women councillors. In addition, this disparity is more marked in rural areas."

"This imbalance in local politics leads to deficits in planning and decision-making. Though there are moves to address this at national and local level, there is still a long way to go. There was a consensus at the meeting that by bringing more balance to representation – in this case by having more women

involved in local politics – Ireland will be a better place".

Over 30 women from around the county attended. Councillors Orla Leyden, Kathleen Shanagher, Valerie Byrne, Emer Kelly and Senator Aisling Dolan shared their experiences of how they began in politics and their journeys since then.

Among those who attended were young women from Comhairle na nÓg who spoke about their latest mental health initiative, representatives of the See Her Elected programme, who shared information on their campaign to raise awareness about the 2024 local elections, members of Roscommon Women's Network, and women who came with a great deal of curiosity and passion.

There was great energy and excitement in the room and another discussion will take place on Thursday, 23rd of February in Gleeson's Townhouse, Roscommon at 7 pm to help organise the International Women's Day event. All women living in Co. Roscommon are invited. Information on this event will be shared in local media and social media platforms.



(Above) Pictured at the Roscommon Women's Network meeting in Gleeson's, Roscommon on Thursday last were Rachel Trimble, Cllr Orla Leyden and Rita Kearney. Photo: Michelle Hughes Walsh



(Right) Pictured at the Roscommon Women's Network meeting in Gleeson's, Roscommon on Thursday last were Amy O'Dowd, Cllr Kathleen Shanagher and Cllr Valerie Byrne. Photo: Michelle Hughes Walsh