

Kevin Sharkey calls for death penalty for crimes against older people

Three councils hear from would-be presidential candidates but none make immediate call

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James Fogarty, Elaine Keogh, Anna Hayes



Kevin Sharkey, presidential hopeful pitching Kildare County Council members for a nomination last month. Photograph: Dara Mac Dónail/The Irish Times

The death penalty should be imposed on anybody who harms an old person in their home, according to presidential hopeful Kevin Sharkey.

Mr Sharkey was addressing a meeting of Roscommon County Council, where he along with other candidates was seeking the support of members for a presidential bid.

Three county councils convened meetings to hear presentations from would-be presidential candidates on Wednesday. Anyone seeking to stand in the election requires the support of four local authorities or 20 members of the Oireachtas.

In Roscommon, councillors will decide who they will back on Monday morning next. However, two councillors nominated Seán Gallagher at the end of the meeting.

Mr Sharkey said he was a “culchie” and that Dublin had forgotten about rural Ireland.

“I personally believe that the death penalty would be appropriate for anybody who harms an old person in their home,” he said in relation to rural crime.

Asked by Sinn Féin Cllr Michael Mulligan about the “Tweetgate” controversy during the 2011 campaign, Mr Gallagher said he had no resentment. He later sued RTÉ for damages after a false tweet was read out during the final televised debate during the campaign.

“What I have is a desire to address the facts, to sort out the issue that I saw and root out injustice, and to make sure that processes and protocols were put in place within RTÉ,” he said. He said he took his case against RTÉ so that all election candidates would receive the treatment they deserved.

Confidence

Fine Gael Cllr Liam Callaghan asked whether he had confidence in RTÉ Current Affairs going into the campaign. Mr Gallagher replied that he hoped many lessons had been learned by the national broadcaster and that many protocols were now in place as a result of his action.

During the meeting, Senator Joan Freeman said she supported giving voting rights to the diaspora, saying it would be a wonderful gift.

“I will effect change at the top,” she said. “I will champion the charities that are doing the job of the Government.”

Journalist Gemma O’Doherty said her candidacy for the *Áras* began in Co Roscommon when she began investigating the death of Fr Niall Molloy. She added she would stand up against the elites who have traditionally run Ireland and would be a voice for equality.

Speaking to Louth County Council, presidential hopeful Gavin Duffy said he voted for Mr Gallagher in the 2011 presidential election.

Mr Duffy, who was a judge with Mr Gallagher on the TV programme *Dragons’ Den*, was the only candidate to address a specially called meeting of Louth County Council on Wednesday night.

An official confirmed Mr Gallagher has not requested to meet the council.

Councillors in Louth will decide on whether to support a candidate, and who that will be, at a meeting on September 17th.

Wexford County Council will meet next Monday to decide who it will nominate to run in the presidential election. A special meeting of the council heard pitches from three candidates on Wednesday.

Backing

Two of three candidates hoping to run in the presidential election received backing from councillors in the room – Mr Gallagher was promised a proposal by independent councillor Ger Carthy, while Senator Freeman is to be proposed by Fine Gael’s Cllr Paddy Kavanagh.

Cllr Carthy, offering his support to Mr Gallagher remarked on the votes the former *Dragons’ Den* judge had secured in the 2011 election, saying he was hopeful that people would support his nomination of him.

Actor Sarah Louise Mulligan pledged to use social media to share videos that would help those feeling vulnerable. She also felt that not enough was being done about the issue of elder abuse, something she had written her college thesis on.