

**Outcomes and actions of Meeting of Implementation Advisory Group to consider Directly
Elected Mayor with Executive Functions in Limerick City & County**

Thursday 19 December 2019

Attendees

Mr Tim O'Connor, Chairman

Mayor of Limerick City and County,
Councillor Michael Sheahan

Councillor Elena Secas

Councillor Brian Leddin

Mr Pat Daly, Chief Executive, Limerick City
and County Council

Ms Dee Ryan, CEO, Limerick Chamber of
Commerce

Dr Diarmuid Scully, Centre for European
Studies, University of Limerick

Ms Caroline Curley, Director of Services,
Limerick City and County Council

Mr Jack O'Connor, Limerick Public
Participation Network

Mr Jack Scanlan, Student President,
University of Limerick

Mr Barry Quinlan, Asst Sec, DHPLG

Mr Diarmuid O'Leary, Principal Officer,
DHPLG

Apologies :

Cllr John Sheahan, Limerick City and County Council

Cllr Michael Collins, Limerick City and County Council

Secretariat:

Ms Áinle Ní Bhriain, DHPLG

Mr Grant Couper, DHPLG

Mr James Clune, Limerick City & County Council

1. Introductions and opening statements

The Chair repeated the tour de table for the benefit of the new attendees. The outputs and actions of the previous meeting were agreed.

2. Consideration of Case Studies paper

The Chair invited Dr Scully to introduce his case studies paper. The following points were made:

- a. There is no other local government system exactly like the Irish one to be found internationally. A bespoke model for directly elected mayor will need to be created. However, there is potentially much learning to be had from other systems and sources. There are principles set out in the European Charter on Local Self Government which should be examined as part of this exercise.
- b. Many functions held by local authorities internationally, e.g. in relation to health, policing, education, are not necessarily held by local authorities in Ireland. However, it was also noted that Local Government does extend into other areas, with councillors represented on external bodies in areas that are external to Councils' remit.
- c. The challenges of identifying functions suitable for transfer to local authorities were also noted.

3. Further discussion on the scope of the role of Directly Elected Mayor

The following points arose from the discussion:

- a. There is a need to respect the policy proposals voted on by the people of Limerick City and County Council, but also to take this unique opportunity to examine additional functions which could be assigned to the local authority under the new Mayor's remit. In practical terms it will be necessary to work within the existing framework of the State and consider a role for the Mayor which will fit within that context. The Directly Elected Mayor should be able to consult at the highest level of national government i.e. cabinet subcommittee. Under existing arrangements, the route for councillors to central government is through the Seanad. However, it was suggested that the DEM could be assigned a direct means of ensuring that Limerick City and County Council's voice is heard at national government level. This approach would be in line with the Council of Europe's

European Charter of Local Self Government, which enshrines the right of local authorities to be consulted by higher levels of Government.

- b. If the Mayor in turn has a voice at national level, e.g. via a statutory consultee role, then other bodies with whom the Directly Elected Mayor interacts will have a formal basis for engagement with the new Office. A lot of consultation between central Government and local authorities takes place on a non-statutory basis. A more formal structure for engagement would enhance the office of the Directly Elected Mayor.
- c. Consideration could be given to the need for a separate budget to make the role effective and workable. The Directly Elected Mayor could have a voice in the allocations process at national level as it applies to Limerick City and County Council.
- d. The potential role of the DEM at European level was discussed, and in particular the role of the Directly Elected Mayor in relation to the Committee of the Regions.

4. Consideration of areas to be devolved from central government

- a. In relation to the devolution of functions to local government, the prioritisation of policies affecting Limerick City and County Council will be examined. Though any list is not exhaustive at this stage, consideration of areas such as an enhanced role in Project 2040, along with Joint Policing Committees (JPCs), health, housing, general economic development, urban regeneration, rural development, culture, sports and the Mayor's Plan would need to fit with and improve the delivery of national policies.
- b. The interdependencies between sustainability, infrastructure and forward planning were discussed. It was suggested that sustainable development is strongly linked to the appropriate infrastructure being in place.
- c. The potential impact of Brexit, and a role for a DEM in Limerick's response to the matter, were also discussed.

5. Public consultation

- a. A paper on public consultation will be prepared for the next meeting. It will outline proposals and guidance to be placed before consultees, including the public, stakeholders and councillors.
- b. Consultation should take place at the earliest date feasible and should be led by the public's views. Consultation exercises should take place in each Electoral Division, with at least 1 per ED and will take the form of World Café and Town Hall meetings, and include

traditional methods, using MyPoint and email/post. One-on-one sessions will be considered for key stakeholders.

- c. A large public information event will be considered towards the end of the Group's work.

6. Actions for next meeting

- a. Case studies will be progressed and developed, led by Dr Scully. These will examine Bristol (city and rural merged), one of Doncaster/Hartlepool/Stoke-on-Trent (an example a local authority where there were issues with the reform or where the office of DEM was rejected), Spokane and Hohenlohe (twinned with Limerick), Auckland (similar local government system to here), and Flensburg (a European model).
- b. A paper on how public consultation will be carried out will be prepared, led by Ms Curley, for the next meeting.

7. Date and purpose of next meeting

- a. The next meeting will be held in Limerick City & County office, Merchants Quay on Tuesday 28 January at 11am. This is to allow for a significant body of work to be carried out between now and then.
- b. Future meetings are to be listed in the Agenda.

8. AOB

Group members were asked to indicate by the day before each meeting if they require hardcopies of meeting papers to be provided by the secretariat.