

Meeting 5 of the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) for a Directly Elected Mayor with executive functions for Limerick City and County Council

11 a.m. 16 June 2020, By WebEx video link

Attendance: Tim O'Connor (Chair), Mayor Michael Sheahan, Cllr John Sheahan, Cllr Elena Secas, Cllr Sasa Novak, Pat Daly (LC&C), Caroline Curley (LC&C), Dee Ryan (Limerick Chamber of Commerce), Dr Diarmuid Scully (Academic expert), Cillian Flynn (Limerick PPN), Jack Scanlan (Students' Representative) Barry Quinlan (D/HPLG), Diarmuid O'Leary (D/HPLG).

Secretariat: Áinle Ní Bhriain (D/HPLG), Grant Couper (D/HPLG), James Clune (LC&C).

Apologies: Cllr Michael Collins

1. Outputs and actions from the last meeting, and matters arising:

- The draft Outputs and Actions document for IAG meeting 4 of 11 March 2020, held in Newcastle West was agreed.

2. Chairman's update on events to date.

- The Chair began by complimenting the Council on their response to the Covid-19 crisis as an important demonstrator of the effectiveness of local government in this crisis.
- The Chair updated the meeting on several meetings he had undertaken in the 14 weeks since the last meeting. He circulated a summary along with separate accounts of meetings with members of the Limerick Charter Signatories Group, ie UL, LIT, MIC, Shannon Group, Shannon Foynes Port Company and LEDP, as well as with IBEC Mid-West Regional Council and the new Planning Regulator (the other Charter signatory in addition to the Council, Limerick Chamber, is represented on the IAG). In all of the engagements there was a general support for the new role, in particular in the areas of infrastructure, housing and enterprise, and agreement that the National Planning Framework

provides an important potential platform for the role. The importance of the Directly Elected Mayor for Limerick operating in a regional context was also highlighted. The concept of the Directly Elected Mayor as a statutory consultee was welcomed. One concern was that Limerick City & County must not be cut off from central government policy if made more autonomous.

3. Revised timeline

- The timeline was agreed. The Group noted it must complete its report by September 2020. It was noted that the draft programme for government includes an undertaking to have elections for Directly Elected Mayor in spring 2021.

4. Consideration of working papers

a. WP1 Consideration of the role of Cathaoirleach in the new DEM structure

- This Paper reflects previous discussions of the IAG and sets out how there may be a separation between the Directly Elected Mayor and the role of Chair or Cathaoirleach of the Elected Council. It proposes that a post of Príomh Comhairleoir (PC) or Speaker should be created. It is good practice from other jurisdictions – there are several examples internationally where there is a Directly Elected Mayor, there is also an independent chair of the Elected Council. It is also valuable in terms of checks and balances. The Group agreed that the PC would be elected annually by the Council from among elected members, in a manner similar to the current annual election for Cathaoirleach of the Council. Where the Mayor was unavailable for ceremonial or representational purposes, such duties would be fulfilled as required by the Cathaoirligh of the various municipal/metropolitan districts on the basis of an agreed protocol. In the event that the Directly Elected Mayor becomes incapacitated, the PC would step temporarily into the role pending new mayoral elections which are required within 3 months.

It was agreed that the Working Paper will be amended to reflect these key decisions.

b. WP2 Transfer of Functions

- This Working Paper sets out how current executive functions would be assigned between the Directly Elected Mayor and the Chief Executive. It was agreed that “specified“ functions would be vested solely in the chief executive. Further consideration will be given to expanding on the role of the CE in the new structure, to highlight the more significant and complex nature of the new role.

5. Public consultation exercise:

- The Secretariat updated the group on progress on the revised public consultation exercise being undertaken by the University of Limerick in light of Covid restrictions. This will involve a more targeted approach to community groups rather the more open approach envisaged pre-COVID.
- It was agreed to accompany this exercise with measures to enable the widest possible publicisation of the project (taking account of the circumstances arising from the Covid-19 pandemic, including the condensed time-table), and to ensure that anybody wishing to make a submission on it could do so.

6. Further consideration of case studies paper:

- The Secretariat presented briefly on the situation in the City of Spokane and on some cities in England.

7. General Discussion

- There was some general discussion on how to identify the new policy areas to be assigned fully to the Mayor and/or the subject of a Statutory Consultation role for the Mayor. Drafting of a Discussion Paper is underway and will be submitted to the next meeting of the Group.

8. Next meeting of IAG:

- The following dates were agreed for future meetings.
 - i. Monday 29 June 2020 at 3pm, by WebEx.
 - ii. Tuesday 14 July at 11am, venue tbd
 - iii. Tuesday 28 July at 11am, venue tbd

9. Any other business.

- The role of the Directly Elected Mayor's Special Advisors, and how they would interact with the Council was raised. This will be examined in a future paper.

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