

Meeting 6 of the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) for a Directly Elected Mayor with executive functions for Limerick City and County Council

3pm 29 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) Mary Hurley (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 5 of 16 June 2020, held by WebEx video link was agreed.

2. Opening by the Chair

- The Chair began by expressing the condolences of the group to Mayor Michael Sheahan on his recent family bereavement.

3. Consideration of working papers

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

A revised version of this paper, updated to reflect the discussions and decisions taken at the meeting of 16 June, was presented for formal agreement. The document was proposed by Cllr John Sheahan and seconded by the Mayor. The paper was agreed.

b. WP3 Roles and responsibilities

This paper presented an outline of the roles and responsibilities of the elected council, the Directly Elected Mayor and the chief executive. The group considered the following issues set out arising from the draft working paper:

- the necessity for a “leader’s questions” given that the group have decided that the Mayor should no longer chair Council meetings, and there is already a protocol in place to allow council members submit written questions. It was pointed out that a Q&A type session at plenary level is a visible and public means of demonstrating accountability;
- the requirement for the Mayor to attend Municipal District meetings and possible protocols around the attendance of officials at meetings on the Mayor’s behalf; It was suggested that samples of Municipal District agendas, work programmes and meeting notes should be circulated to the Group to give an example of the type and range of work considered at Municipal District meetings;
- the proposal that the Directly Elected Mayor would chair the Joint Policing Committee;
- the need for the Príomh Comhairleoir to be a member of the Corporate Policy Group in order to be fully involved in setting the agenda for each council meeting;
- the role and responsibilities of the chief executive, particularly in relation to management of risk, conflict resolution, and the importance of ensuring that the role of the chief executive continues to be accountable, satisfying and responsible;
- possible alternatives to the Minister-Secretary General type relationship between the Mayor and Chief Executive envisaged in the detailed policy proposals should be explored;
- The role of the Chief Executive as Accounting Officer, as set out in the Government’s detailed proposals, should be considered, perhaps as part of a draft finance paper.

It was decided that this paper should be divided into discrete working papers, each examining the roles and responsibilities of the elected council, including the Directly Elected Mayor, príomh comhairleoir, elected Council and the chief executive.

c. WP2 Transfer of Functions

There was no further discussion of this paper pending the finalisation of the roles and responsibilities paper. The delineation of functions will be more apparent once the roles and responsibilities are clearly defined.

4. Further consideration of case studies paper:

- Dr Scully presented the findings of the case study in Flensburg. The Group noted the similarities in the structures in Flensburg to the structures under consideration for Limerick City and County Council (ie Mayor – Chief Executive – Council President). While Flensburg is a predominantly urban authority, it was proposed that an examination of Auckland, scheduled for the next meeting, might shed further some light on how such a model works in a more rural setting

5. Public consultation exercise:

- The Secretariat updated the group on progress on the revised public consultation exercise being undertaken by the University of Limerick (UL). As soon as any visual material is ready it will be circulated to the group. UL are working with the Council's Communications Unit to consider how best to advertise the consultation to as wide an audience as possible. Jack Scanlan has indicated that he is ready to share any consultation exercise with various student groups, and will also engage with the social media officers in each of the 3rd level institutions to get the message out. Cillian Flynn referred to the importance of the PPN in this exercise too.

6. General Discussion

The Group was updated on Working Paper 4, which will consider the relationship between Project Ireland 2040 and the directly elected Mayor.

7. Next meeting of IAG:

- The following dates were agreed for future meetings.
 - i. Tuesday 14 July at 11am, by WebEx
 - ii. Thursday 30 July at 11am, venue tbd

Consideration will be given to holding the meeting on 30 July in a physical location. The Council are already holding meetings in Limerick Racecourse and are satisfied that the venue is suitable for a physical meeting while adhering to current health guidelines.

8. Any other business.

- As the meeting was held on Mayor Sheahan's last day in office, the chair thanked him for his support and enthusiastic participation, and wished him well. The Mayor wished the group continued success and is looking forward to reading the final report.
- The chair welcomed Ms Mary Hurley to the group. Ms Hurley has taken over from Barry Quinlan as Assistant Secretary with responsibility for local Government.