

27th November, 2020.

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To: The Mayor and Each Member of Limerick City and County Council

**Motion to amend Standing Orders to facilitate Monthly Meetings of
the Full Council**

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

Councillor Keary moved the following Motion at September's Meeting of Limerick City and County Council:

I will move at the next Meeting that, by Resolution, Standing Order No. 3 be changed (Meetings of the Council) to read as follows: 'Unless upon any occasion when it is otherwise fixed by Statute or by Resolution of the Council, Ordinary Meetings of the Council shall be held monthly on the fourth Monday of the months of September, October, November, December, January, February, March, April, May, June and July.'

Background:

A similar motion was also moved by Councillor Keary in 2016. At the time, it was agreed that Meetings of the Full Council would continue to meet bi-monthly but that the SPC meetings would be held in intervening months to allow detailed discussion on any policy issues before they are referred to Full Council for approval.

Matters to be considered in regard to Councillor Keary's motion:

Existing Number of Meetings Annually

Based on the table below, every Councillor in his/her respective membership of the Full Council/Municipal or Metropolitan District/two SPCs currently attends **30 meetings** per year from those meetings alone as follows:

- | | |
|--|----|
| • Plenary Council, including Annual Meeting and Budget Meeting | 8 |
| • Metropolitan / Municipal District Monthly Meetings | 12 |
| • SPC Meetings | 10 |

In addition, Councillors attend JPC meetings, LCDC meetings, various other sub-committee meetings as well as briefings and workshops.

Role of Municipal/Metropolitan District Councils

Municipal Districts now have an enhanced policy provision remit since 2014. Members can move Motions and Questions relevant to their District at their respective monthly meetings. It should also be noted that Standing Orders for Full Council provide that “Motions which relate to the business of the Metropolitan/Municipal District may only be submitted to the relevant District.”

Therefore, only matters of wider strategic application are generally decided at Plenary level and the Municipal Districts should continue to perform a range of functions relevant to their own District at their statutory monthly meetings.

Covid-19 ‘1 hr. 55 minutes’ Rule/Adjourning Meetings

The current Covid-19 Safe Work Practice Guidance Document sets out that meetings have a 1 hr. 55 minutes limit. Some Members have stated that a 1 hr. 55 minutes meeting is not sufficient to conduct a Full Meeting of the Council. However, if a Full Council Meeting cannot be completed within this timeframe, the remaining business can be adjourned to a later date – as was seen with the Ordinary Meeting of Full Council in June.

Special Meetings of Full Council

An option available under existing Standing Orders is to hold Special Meetings to deal with Full Council business or any issues that may arise in the period between Council Meetings.

Additional Resource requirement:

The additional cost of Monthly Full Council Meetings requires consideration in light of tightening budgets – noting that the cost of holding a meeting at Limerick Racecourse is not insignificant when hire of equipment, the venue, and catering are considered. The additional draw on staff to administer additional Full Council Meetings and the associated additional SPC Meetings must also be considered.

Current arrangements:

With the revised SPC arrangements now in place for over four years, it has been found that the five (5) SPC Chairperson’s reports are consistently provided as agenda items of each bi-monthly Full Council Meeting and policies agreed at SPC are considered for approval at Full Council Meetings.

Any change to Monthly Meetings would require a realignment of all meetings to synchronise with this change, including the current integrated series of Council Meetings / SPC Meetings to deal with policy matters of the Council. A change to Monthly Full Council Meetings would require SPCs to change to monthly meetings also. It would also require a review of the current arrangements pertaining to issues dealt with each month at District Level.

The current system has worked effectively since the changes adopted in July 2016. The addition of a further five Ordinary Full Council Meetings and, by extension, five additional monthly SPC meetings, would further add to pressures on Elected Members on top of the existing large workload.

Having regard to the matters outlined above, it is proposed that Full Council Meetings would continue to be held on a bi-monthly basis in January, March, May, July, September and November in addition to the Annual Meeting, Budget Meetings and Special Meetings as required.

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James Clune,
A/Senior Executive Officer,
Corporate Services, Governance and Customer Services.