

CORRESPONDENCE
MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF LIMERICK

19TH SEPTEMBER, 2022

- Letter dated 14th July, 2022 from the Office of the Minister of State with responsibility for Planning and Local Government in reply to Notice of Motion from Members that this Council writes to the Taoiseach, the Minister of State for Local Government and the Minister of State for Electoral Reform requesting that legislated candidate gender quotas of 40% be introduced to apply to the local elections in 2024.

- Email dated 15th July, 2022 from the Office of the Minister for Health, in reply to the following Notice of Motion from Members:

I will move at the next Meeting that, having regard to the thousands of people who are suffering with adverse effects from Covid-19 for long periods of time, that the Metropolitan District of Limerick agrees the following:

 - to write to the Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly, the Oireachtas Health Committee and the HSE CEO Paul Reid, requesting that the provision of Long Covid Clinics is retained and expanded;
 - to raise it with our regional health board and/or local hospital;
 - to circulate this motion to the rest of the Councils around the country asking them to consider doing the same.

- Letter dated 9th August, 2022 from the National Transport Authority in reply to Notice of Motion from Members that the Metropolitan District of Limerick write to the Minister for Transport and to the NTA asking that the existing 304a bus service in Castletroy/Monaleen is extended to Annacotty and Groody/Ballysimon Road as soon as possible.

- Letter dated 16th August, 2022 from the National Transport Authority in reply to Notice of Motion from Members that Limerick Metropolitan Council write to the National Transport Authority (NTA) to express our concern on the elongated process required to secure approval for Smarter Travel Projects such as new cycle routes and bus connects.

- Email dated 12th September, 2022 from the Office of the Minister for Justice in reply to letter sent to the Minister with a request to reverse the decision to transfer Logan Jackson to serve the remainder of his sentence in the U.K.



Oifig an Runaí Aire

Office of the Minister of State

14 July 2022

Mr. Mark Leahy
Limerick City & County Council
customerservices@limerick.ie

Ref: HPLG-MoSB-00412-2022

Dear Mr. Leahy,

I refer to your correspondence regarding a motion passed by a meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick requesting that legislated gender quotas of 40% be introduced to apply to the local elections in 2024, which was forwarded by Minister Malcolm Noonan.

It is acknowledged that a provision of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 links the State funding of political parties in the Electoral Acts to the achievement of a gender balance in candidate selection for Dáil general elections only. The intention at the time was that these measures would have a knock-on effect by providing an incentive to political parties to expand voluntarily their gender diversity. These funding provisions also had an impact by highlighting the issue of gender disparity in politics and providing a starting point for addressing imbalances.

The Programme for Government - Our Shared Future sets out a broad range of electoral reforms which the Government is committed to delivering during its term of office, including a specific commitment to the establishment of an independent, statutory Electoral Commission. These reforms are being prioritised through the progression of the Electoral Reform Bill 2022, which was recently published and has now begun its passage through the Oireachtas.

The Electoral Commission will strengthen our electoral system as a whole and help us to anticipate and respond to the challenges we face in our evolving electoral environment. One of the Commission's key functions will be a public awareness and an education role in respect of electoral events. It is envisaged that the Commission will carry out this function with a particular emphasis on increasing participation in our democratic processes among segments of society which are marginalised or traditionally under-represented in electoral matters.



In addition, the Electoral Commission will also have a research and advisory function. In this context, the Programme for Government commits the Electoral Commission, when established, to undertake a number of items of research on electoral matters and the Commission will be well placed, if requested, to undertake a comprehensive review of the Electoral Act 1997, which provides the statutory framework for dealing with political financing and the funding of political parties.

It should be noted that the outcome of the 2019 local elections was in some respects positive for the participation of women in local government. There was a solid increase in the percentage of women candidates, as well as an increase in the number of women elected. There were also a number of local authorities which reached or surpassed the 30% threshold of women elected members.

However, it is also recognised that a great deal of work remains to be done to address the under representation of women in local government. This is a policy priority for me. Since my appointment, I have undertaken a number of initiatives aimed at improving the gender balance on councils, in addition to making the role of the councillor more flexible and sustainable for all.

In recognition of the need to promote gender equality in local government, a funding scheme was introduced in March 2019 to incentivise political parties to increase the number of women candidates in the 2019 local elections. The scheme was open to all political parties on the Register of Political Parties on an opt-in basis. Extensive engagement took place with a number of political parties and key stakeholders in early 2021 regarding the grant scheme, which has since been reviewed, and now includes suggested activities and measurables along with additional funding provided. This new scheme is open to all registered political parties and in the interests of inclusivity, to official representative groups of independents. In 2021, €150,274 was awarded to seven parties and one Independent group to fund activities such as a Party Diversity Officer, a social media recruitment drive to increase participation of women, development and training workshops for women members and an annual women's conference.

In addition, my Department continues to support local authorities in their efforts to encourage the participation of women and wider diversity in local government structures. Since 2019, funding was provided to local authority initiatives for projects, which included building general awareness of local government and participation in local decision-making structures, particularly among women, minority and diverse communities. In 2021, €103,383 was awarded to 14 local authorities where approved proposals had a clear and strategic focus on activities that would encourage and support gender and diversity balance in local government structures and decision making ahead of the 2024 local elections. A further call for funding issued recently with more funding made available.



My Department also funds partner organisations such as Women for Election, Longford Women's Link and The National Women's Council of Ireland to undertake research and provide excellent capacity building and training services, benefitting all women interested in entering local government, with or without political party affiliation.

In early 2021, my Department provided funding to the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) to undertake research entitled "Women doing politics differently – development of local or regional caucus for women councillors – identifying interest and examining possible supports". To support the findings of this research, funding was approved for local authorities to assist with the establishment and running of such caucuses. €62,000 was provided in total to 15 local authorities, the AILG and Longford Women's Link and one inter-county group, with my Department envisaging that annual funding for caucus-related activity will be provided again in the future.

Following a lengthy engagement and consultation process, Cabinet recently approved policy proposals to deliver a package of maternity-related measures, including proposals for legislative change, which councillors will be able to avail of.

These reforms, supports and measures, taken together with the pay reforms approved as part of the implementation of the Moorhead Report from 1 July 2021, will make the role of councillor more sustainable and manageable, facilitating a cohort of members that are representative and fully reflective of the diverse communities where they are elected.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Burke T.D.

Minister for Planning and Local Government

Please note: I am a Designated Public Official under the Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015

From: Ministers Office <noreplymo-health@corr.cloud.gov.ie>

Sent: Friday, July 15, 2022 4:27 PM

To: Customer Services <customerservices@limerick.ie>

Subject: HEA-MO-07552-2022

HEA-MO-07552-2022

15th July 2022

Dear Mr. Leahy,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, T.D., regarding Long Covid.

COVID-19 is a relatively new disease so information on it, its features, incidence and its course are still emerging. The natural history, clinical course and consequences of COVID19 are still not completely understood. It is recognised that most patients with COVID-19 return to baseline after acute infection with SARS-CoV-2, but a proportion report ongoing health issues.

The number of people that are affected with longer term sequelae after acute COVID-19 remains unknown, but published reports indicate that approximately 10– 20% of COVID-19 patients experience lingering symptoms for weeks to months following acute SARS-CoV-2 infection. Patients with persistent symptoms following COVID-19 infection may be followed up by their GP or in hospital settings as clinically appropriate.

If an individual is concerned about Long COVID, they can engage with your GP in the first instance for advice and referral, if needed. The HSE has developed an interim Model of Care for Long COVID which aims to build on existing service provision, in addition to establishing new services across a number of health care settings including GP, community services and acute hospitals. There will be a phased implementation with a focus on establishing, Post-Acute and Long COVID clinics as initial priority. This will involve expanding the resources at existing clinics where required and development of new clinics in line with the Model of Care.

The HSE has advised that funding of €2.2 million has been allocated within the HSE for Long COVID service development in 2022. Access to these services will be in line with the current approach across health and social care services.

The HSE's funding for 2023 has not yet been allocated, therefore the level of funding available for Long COVID has not yet been determined. Proposals in relation to Long COVID and the associated funding requirements will be considered by my Department, as part of the annual Estimates process later this year.

I trust that the above is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Conroy
Private Secretary to the Minister for Health.

**Limerick City and County Council
Corporate Services
Corporate Headquarters
Merchants Quay
Limerick
V94 EH90**

FAO: Laura Flannery

9th August 2022

Dear Ms Flannery,

I refer to your correspondence dated 21st July 2022 regarding a motion that was adopted by Councillors at the 20th July 2022 meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick.

For background, bus services in Ireland are provided either by:

- Direct funding by the Department of Transport, via the NTA, for services deemed as socially and economically necessary (known as a "Public Service Obligation")
- Commercially operated services, provided by a private operator who has applied and received a licence from the NTA.

Routes 307 and 308 fall into the second category of services above, i.e. they are commercially-run, privately operated services. Under current legislation the operator has the right to terminate their licence. In the case of the Routes 307 and 308 the operator informed the NTA in late June that they would suspend services from the 8th of July. This decision was made for commercial reasons.

Once the Authority became aware of the suspension we commenced an evaluation as to whether there is a requirement for the state to provide a service (which we refer to as a Public Service Obligation, as outlined above). Our evaluation concluded that because of the high number of people and businesses in the area, and the lack of public transport resulting from the withdrawal, a Public Service Obligation exists. As a result, we are now considering how to source a replacement service for the area.

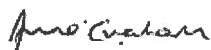
The Authority has developed a service specification for a potential replacement service. This is currently being discussed with possible providers, Bus Éireann and Dublin Coach. The Authority is currently seeking funding from the Department of Transport for the funding of a new route which will provide a service to the Annacotty and Castletroy areas in Limerick. Subject to approval, which we

expect shortly, we hope that a new service will be in place in the near future though we can't be specific about a date at this time.

In the medium term, the Authority has commenced the review of bus transport provision in the city as part of BusConnects Limerick. Changes and enhancements to routes such as Route 304a will be considered as part of this review.

I trust that this clarifies the Authority's current position on the matter.

Yours sincerely,



Anne Graham
Chief Executive Officer

**Limerick City and County Council
Corporate Services
Corporate Headquarters
Merchants Quay
Limerick
V94 EH90**

FAO: Mark Leahy

16th August 2022

Dear Mr Leahy,

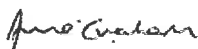
I refer to your correspondence dated 25th April 2022 regarding a motion that was adopted by Councillors at the 19th April 2022 meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick relating to Smarter Travel Projects. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The NTA is the Approving Authority for Active Travel Projects in Ireland and is required under the Public Spending Code to ensure that the State achieves Value for Money in all infrastructure investments. To aid this the NTA has developed Project Approval Guidelines, the purpose of which is to provide a framework for, and a phased approach to, the development, management and delivery of sustainable mobility projects of all types, for all capital values, funded by the NTA. Due to the significant funding commitment required, NTA Approval Points, called Gateways, occur at key Approval milestones throughout these Guidelines. The primary objective of these Guidelines is to set out a consistent and transparent approach across projects undertaken by Sponsoring Agencies (Local Authorities) in receipt of NTA funding and to provide the NTA with the degree of transparency and certainty that is appropriate for an Approving Authority. It is the responsibility of the Sponsoring Agency to provide sufficient information to the NTA in order to allow the required approvals to be given.

In the case of Limerick City and County Council the NTA has worked with the Executive, and their consultants, to guide and assist in the development of schemes so as approvals can be expedited and based on the Sponsoring Agencies recent monthly report no significant approvals are outstanding from the NTA.

I trust that this clarifies the Authority's current position on the matter.

Yours sincerely,



**Anne Graham
Chief Executive Officer**



NTA
Údarás Náisiúnta Iompair
National Transport Authority

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From: Ministers Office <noreplymo-justice@corr.cloud.gov.ie>

Sent: Monday, September 12, 2022 2:37 PM

To: Customer Services <customerservices@limerick.ie>

Subject: Ref: DJE-MO-06297-2022

Mr. Mark Leahy

customerservices@limerick.ie

Minister's Reference: DJE-MO-06297-2022

Dear Mr. Leahy,

I refer to your letter dated 28 June, 2022, to the Minister for Justice Helen McEntee T.D. in relation to prison transfer of Mr. Logan Jackson. The Minister has asked me to reply to you on her behalf.

Please be advised that your correspondence has been noted but the Department of Justice cannot comment on this case as this matter is "sub judice" or before the courts.

I trust that you understand this position.

Yours sincerely,

Emma McHugh

Private Secretary to the Minister for Justice

Please note that if the issue raised in your correspondence is deemed more appropriate to another organisation, such as another Government Department or Agency, your correspondence will be forwarded to that organisation for attention in accordance with the provisions of the Department of Justice Privacy Statement, which can be accessed [here](#).