



Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae **Luimnigh**

**Limerick City**  
& County Council

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## **Report on Executive Review of Standing Orders Metropolitan and Municipal District Meetings**

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

### **Background**

At the July Plenary Council meeting the Members discussed the frequency and effectiveness of Council meetings when considering a Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Teskey. The Executive agreed to meet and conduct a review of the Standing Orders of Metropolitan and Municipal District Meetings, in order to consider reviewing and standardising procedures, and then report back to the Members at the November Plenary Meeting.

### **Legal Context**

Section 47 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended) outlines the following in respect of Council meetings: -

*A local authority shall seek to secure as regards -*

*(a) the establishment of committees under Part 7, and*

*(b) meetings of the authority and each of its Committees and Metropolitan/Municipal District members,*

*that they are organised and operate so as to promote effectiveness and efficiency in the discharge of business.*

For the purposes of clarity, Part 7 provides for the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees to consider matters connected with the formulation, development, monitoring and review of policy which relate to the functions of the local authority and to advise the authority on those matters.

It is apparent that the role of Metropolitan/Municipal District meetings, as outlined in the legislation, is to enhance the efficiency of Plenary Council meetings by facilitating Notice of Motions and Questions at District level.

## **Enhanced Role of Metropolitan/Municipal Districts and Standing Orders**

During the preparation of this report the Executive reviewed and considered the IPA Local Government Research Series “Municipal Districts: A Review”, June 2020. The report provides insight into the role of Metropolitan/Municipal Districts: -

*One of the intentions of the creation of Metropolitan/Municipal Districts was that, through enabling more local issues to be dealt with locally, it would free up the plenary Council meetings to focus on more strategic issues with a countywide focus.*

*The concept of the Metropolitan/Municipal District as envisaged in Putting People First, was that Metropolitan/Municipal Districts would be responsible for the day-to-day delivery of local authority services at the level closest to the citizen, with the plenary Council responsible for the more strategic/policy setting role of the council. Putting People First stated that the Elected Members would perform a substantial range of reserved functions at District level on a fully devolved basis.*

The Standing Orders of each Metropolitan/Municipal District outlines that Questions and Notices of Motion shall be relevant to the business of the Metropolitan/Municipal District. The Plenary Standing Orders contain a similar provision and further state that Questions and Notices of Motions which relate to the business of the Metropolitan/Municipal Districts, may only be submitted to the relevant District.

### **Coordination**

Meetings Administrators from each District meet on a regular basis to review and coordinate the approach to the conduct of meetings. Upon review of the approach in each District, it has been suggested that Notices of Motion on matters exclusively relevant to the District, should be actioned by that District, including Motions to contact central Government Departments, where appropriate.

The IPA review and the relevant regulations specify that Metropolitan/Municipal Districts should not exercise reserved functions where this might entail inconsistencies with local authority policies, unnecessary duplication of work, or where decisions might have significant implications for the wider local authority area.

### **Recommendation**

The Local Government Act (2001), as amended provides for Strategic Policy Committees and Metropolitan/Municipal District meetings to enhance the efficiency of Plenary Council meetings. It is apparent that with some minor enhancements and continued co-ordination undertaken by Meetings Administrators to ensure a consistent approach, that Limerick City and County Council is meeting its obligation to conduct its business in an effective and efficient manner.

It is recommended that Metropolitan/Municipal District Meetings Administrators accommodate direct interaction with Government Departments and other agencies on matters affecting the Municipal District. However, where an item or issue relates to more than one District, it should be submitted to the Plenary Council for discussion and consideration. The Corporate Policy Group also has a key role to play in determining the relevance of items at Plenary Council level.

Should an item of significance and urgency arise, it is also always an option to the Elected Members to agree to schedule a Special Meeting of the Council whether within their Metropolitan/Municipal District or at Plenary level.

Having regard to the matters outlined above, it is proposed that Limerick City and County Council continue to strive to improve co-ordination and increase efficiency and effectiveness by availing of the opportunity to conduct business via Metropolitan/Municipal District and Strategic Policy Committee meetings, as appropriate.

Laura Flannery

Head of Corporate Services, Governance and Customer Services

17 November 2022



## **Council Meeting to be held on Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> July, 2022**

### **Notice of Motion submitted by the Municipal District of Adare-Rathkeale – Councillors A. Teskey (Proposer), B. Collins, S. Keary, E. O’Brien, J. O’Donoghue, K. Sheahan**

**We will move at the next Meeting that the current bi-monthly meetings of the Full Council would revert to blended hybrid monthly meetings.**

#### **REPLY:**

#### **Background:**

A similar motion was also moved by Councillor Keary in 2016 and 2020. On both occasions, 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 the 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 Bi-Monthly, Annual and Budget Meetings        | 8  |
| • Metropolitan / Municipal District Monthly and Annual 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.

**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. In 2021, each Elected Member would have attended 9 Special Meetings of the Full Council. The Municipal Districts would also have held a number of Special Meetings.

**Additional Resource requirement:**

The additional cost of Monthly Full Council Meetings requires consideration in light of tightening budgets. The additional draw on staff to administer additional Full Council Meetings and the associated additional SPC Meetings must also be considered.

**Current arrangements:**

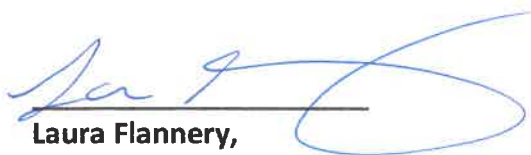
With the revised SPC arrangements now in place for over four years, it has been found that the five (5) SPC Chairperson's reports are consistently provided as agenda items of each bi-monthly Full Council Meeting and policies agreed at SPC are considered for approval at Full Council Meetings.

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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**Laura Flannery,  
Senior Executive Officer,  
Corporate Services, Governance and Customer Services.**