



---

**An Bille um Chuntasacht Rialtais Áitúil, 2018**  
**Local Government Accountability Bill 2018**

---

*Meabhrán Mínitheach*  
*Explanatory Memorandum*

---





---

**AN BILLE UM CHUNTASACHT RIALTAIS ÁITIÚIL, 2018**  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY BILL 2018**

---

**EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

---

**Background**

The Local Government Accountability Bill 2018 gives powers to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government to publish Guidelines which would provide greater democratic accountability and responsiveness to Local Government through empowering Local Authority members.

Local Government acts as a manifestation of local democracy and a provider of local services. The strengths of Local Government as a democratic instrument are its closeness to the population, its elected status, its accessibility and the opportunity it provides for public participation in the democratic process. Elected Members of Ireland's Local Government network provide the crucial democratic link with citizens.

It has been garnered that many Locally Elected Members are finding it difficult to obtain written responses to constituents queries (emails or letters they send in on behalf of a community group or individual) when they email or write to Council management and officials. In fact, some Local Authority staff in some Councils choose to completely ignore such correspondence, while other Local Authority officials provide a prompt reply. As such, a lack of consistency exists across local authorities.

Unlike the Houses of the Oireachtas, specifically Dáil Éireann, where Ministers have statutory obligations to reply to elected members parliamentary questions, no analogous system is present within Local Government. As such, Irish citizens and community groups, engaging with the democratic facet of Local Government (Councillors), cannot be assured that representations made on their behalf, by Councillors to Council management, will receive the same level of consideration or be provided with equality of treatment.

**Overview**

The two overarching objectives of the Bill are:

1. To provide for a statutory mechanism whereby the Minister can publish guidelines for Local Authorities to implement a binding obligation on Local Authority staff to issue a full and comprehensive response within fourteen days (an acknowledgement within seven working days) to Local Authority Member representations submitted on behalf of constituents or community groups.
2. To allow the Minister to publish league tables (quarterly), comparing Local Authority response times across the country to foster a healthy

level of competition, effectiveness and efficiency between authorities,  
and encourage greater consistency right across local government.

*Senators Brian Ó Domhnaill, Diarmuid Wilson, Victor Boyhan, Gerard  
Craughwell*

*Bealtaine, 2018.*