

Consideration of the Citizens Assembly report on the Directly Elected Mayor of Dublin

Statement by Mr. Frank Curran, Chief Executive, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

19th October 2023

Chairman and members of the Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Thank you for the invite here today and I welcome the opportunity to address the Committee as it considers the Citizen's Assembly report on the Directly Elected Mayor for Dublin.

1.0 Background

Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (DLR) is home to 18.6% of the population of Dublin, with a population of 233,860. It covers an area of 126.4km² stretching from UCD to the Wicklow border, bounded to the east by 17km of coastline and to the west by the Dublin Mountains. The County's vibrant Community is focussed across a necklace of villages, each with its own strong identity such as Dalkey, Foxrock, Monkstown, Rathfarnham, Shankill, Sandyford and Stepaside. In the region of 95,000 people are employed in the County, based mainly in the Sandyford Business District and the larger towns of Dún Laoghaire, Stillorgan, and Blackrock with the Council providing services ranging from homeless supports to libraries, transport to road sweeping, all from an annual budget of €235M. There is also a three-year Capital Works Programme of in excess of €1bn.

The Council employs over 1300 staff and provides in excess of 1000 services to the public.

2.0 The Council

DLRCC is made up of 40 Councillors, who are elected from the six Electoral Areas. Each Councillor serves a five-year term.

The responsibility of delivering essential public services to the Communities of the County, rests jointly with Councillors, and the Executive. As the policy makers, Councillors exercise their authority through Reserved Functions. These functions include adoption of the County Development Plan, Corporate Plan, Annual Budget including the setting of the commercial rate, and the varying of the Local Property Tax.

The Executive make the daily operational decisions having regard to the policies adopted by the Councillors. Such decisions include planning decisions, budgetary control and housing allocations. The Executive also perform the regulatory functions in the best interests of the County.

Councillors are assisted in their policy-making role by the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) which consists of the Cathaoirleach and the Chairs of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's). The CPG provides the forum to support the Elected Members and the SPC's to put forward policy makers that impact the entire Council for discussion and agreement to bring before the full Council.

The SPC's develop, review and monitor policy implementation. Membership of an SPC may consist of Councillors and representatives of sectoral interests, such as business community, environment and trade unions. There are six SPCs in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council; Housing; Economic Development and Enterprise; Community, Culture and Wellbeing; Planning and Citizen Engagement; Environment and Climate Action and Transport & Marine.

3.0 Goals and Objectives

Our Corporate Plan sets out eight corporate goals and objectives as follows:

- Show leadership in protecting our Environment through education and in how we work
- Facilitate the development of a variety of housing options enabling improved choice, that drives quality of life for all.
- Enhance people's lives through access to sustainable travel choices across our network of Communities.
- Provide quality community, recreation, sporting and cultural opportunities for all who live, work and visit the County.
- Enhance the vitality of our towns and villages while preserving our natural and built heritage.
- Engage with businesses to support their presence and growth in the County.
- Promote equality and human rights by implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.
- Optimise human, financial, and physical resources to deliver accessible customer focussed quality services.

4.0 Current Priorities

Current Priority areas include:

- **Housing Delivery** - Housing commencements in Dún Laoghaire have exceeded all other Local Authorities in the state in three of the last four quarters and DLR is in line to exceed it's social housing delivery targets in 2023 and 2024.
- **Cherrywood Strategic Development Zone** – This is currently under construction and projected to have a future population of 25,000 residents, more than 8,000 homes, a retail-led town centre, six new schools and three major parks, as well as three LUAS stops.
- **Climate Action** – DLR along with the other Dublin Local Authorities recently published a Draft Climate Action Plan and a significant amount of work is ongoing in relation to Active Travel, Energy Retrofitting, Community Engagement etc.
- **Sandyford Business Improvement District** – The Council works closely with Sandyford BID which now has 26,000 employees, 5,000 residents, 1000 companies, 13 Fortune 500 Companies, €21.6M commercial rates generated and €1bn gross wage bill.
- **Infrastructure** – The Council has a very significant Capital Programme including the provision of Roads, Parks, Libraries, Playing Pitches, Parks, Swimming Pools etc.

5.0 Observations on the Citizens Assembly Report

In relation to the Citizens Assembly Report on the Directly Elected Mayor of Dublin I would like to highlight the following issues:

- It is essential that the work programme mentioned above continues and is enhanced. I welcome the recommendations that the four Local Authorities will be retained.
- Clarity is required in relation to Budgets and policy making around all of the areas of responsibility for the new Mayor. It needs to be clear what remains with Central Government Departments and what is devolved to the Mayor.

- DLR is now a distinct County in its own right with its own identity. It is important that this is retained in the new arrangements.
- I welcome the recommendation that Councillors will be full time, particularly with the new structures recommended along with the existing workload.
- It is important that the wording of the plebiscite is clear and unambiguous and that citizens are fully informed of the extent of the new arrangements and impacts it will have on services at a local level.