

HOGAN KEEN TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM ON REFORM OF CITY AND COUNTY STRUCTURES

Mr. Phil Hogan T.D., Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government has announced details in relation to the establishment of an Implementation Group to oversee preparatory work and initial implementation of the reorganisation of local government in Tipperary. He has also announced details of a Local Government Committee which will undertake a review to consider whether the creation of a unified authority in Waterford would be desirable. The establishment of the Group and the Committee follow on from a Government decision last July to establish a unified local authority in Tipperary and to examine whether a similar approach in Waterford would be warranted.

“The setting up of the Group and Committee is part of an ongoing programme of work aimed at strengthening local government at County and City level. Implementation work is already underway in relation to the merger of Limerick City and County and today’s announcement will help to maintain momentum and build towards a programme of reform and development in the local government sector” - the Minister said.

A unified County Council will be established in Tipperary with effect from the 2014 local elections, replacing the existing North and South Tipperary Councils. The new authority will serve a significantly increased population of 159,000 people (compared with North Tipperary County Council 70,219 and South Tipperary County Council 88,433). A merger should achieve savings both through the generation of scale economies and efficiencies and the removal of duplication, with integration of administrations and service delivery. It should also help to equalise commercial rates to the lower South Tipperary rate.

Details of membership and Terms of Reference for the Implementation Group are attached. The Group, to be chaired by Mr. Joe MacGrath (County Manager in North Tipperary County Council), will oversee the initial practical work of local government reorganisation in Tipperary. It will complete its deliberations by 31 May 2012, with the

production of a plan which will set a clear agenda and guidance for the completion of the process leading to the establishment of the unitary authority in 2014.

In relation to Waterford, the Minister said -

“I am also announcing the membership and Terms of Reference (details attached) of a Committee to consider whether the creation of a unified authority in Waterford would be desirable; to assess the benefits and cost involved in the event of a recommendation that the City and County Councils should be unified; and to make recommendations on these and related matters. The review will be undertaken by a Local Government Committee established under the Local Government Act 1991 and will be chaired by Mr. Sean Aylward, former Secretary General, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.”

“The reform measures we have announced in relation to Limerick and Tipperary are among the early actions in a wider programmed of local government development that I will be bringing forward over the coming months” concluded Minister Hogan.

Ends

Tipperary Reorganisation Implementation Group

Establishment and Terms of Reference

Arising from the Government decision to establish a unified county council in Tipperary to replace the existing North and South Tipperary County Councils, the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government has established an Implementation Group consisting of the following members: -

- Mr. Joe MacGrath (Chair) (Manager, North Tipperary County Council);
- Mr. Billy McEvoy (Manager, South Tipperary County Council).
- Mr. Joe Allen (former Principal, Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government); and
- Mr. Gerry Kearney (former Secretary General, Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs).

Mr. Kearney will work as an External Evaluator and will assist the Group in covering all aspects of its mandate in an objective and effective way and with the resolution of any necessary issues in the completion of its work.

The Group has a general mandate to oversee planning, preparatory work and initial implementation of the reorganisation process. Without restricting its scope or flexibility pursuant to its general mandate, and subject to any additional matters that the Minister may require, the functions of the Group will include oversight of, and assuring delivery in relation to, the following matters: -

1. Establishment of effective co-ordination/project management arrangements.
2. Detailed planning and identification of early actions for the amalgamation of the two county councils including: -
 - analysis of income, expenditure, assets, liabilities, staff (numbers/grades and identification of any surpluses), services, procedures and other relevant matters in the two authorities;
 - identification of requirements for service and organisational rationalisation and integration;

- such other preparatory, transitional, procedural or administrative measures as may be necessary in relation to the existing authorities or their functions, in preparation for the establishment of the unified authority and the effective performance of its functions.
3. Rationalisation of the provision of services not already subject to joint arrangements in preparation for merger of the authorities and establishment of joint arrangements, as appropriate, with a view to orderly transition to the unified authority, while maintaining effective service delivery.
 4. Organisational arrangements, including the early establishment of a joint management team to oversee and deliver successfully the implementation of the restructuring process and integration of corporate functions; and organisational rationalisation and integration generally in line with arrangements relating to services (as at 3 above) including consolidation of particular functions in respective authorities, deployment of staff accordingly and rationalisation of local authority offices and other facilities.
 5. Action necessary to maximise cost reductions and efficiencies, and arrangements to measure and monitor their achievement, including savings necessary to ensure that the level of the commercial rate in North Tipperary is reduced to the current level in South Tipperary, following the establishment of the unitary authority.
 6. Arrangements to support continued effective performance of functions by the elected councils of the two authorities, service to the councils by management and staff in the context of organisational changes; and arrangements to prepare for the effective operation of the unified council, including such matters as committees, procedures and representation on other bodies.
 7. Provision of information to, and consultation with, the elected councils, as appropriate, in relation to the reorganisation process, including provision of regular reports to the councils or a joint committee of the elected councils.
 8. Measures to ensure adequate balance between the two authorities in the reorganisation process and in their management generally prior to establishment of the unified authority.
 9. Action to achieve alignment and convergence between the objectives and policies of the two authorities as part of the transition towards a unitary authority in 2014.

10. Arrangements to merge relevant bodies linked with or related to local government such as the separate County Development Boards, Joint Policing Committees and County Enterprise Boards, and relevant measures to support the alignment of local government and local/community development in line with overall policy in that regard.
11. Identification of measures to maximise the capacity of local government to contribute to the economic development of Tipperary as a whole.

The Group will ensure that Government policy on local government, the public service, the public finances and other relevant matters are reflected, as necessary, in the implementation process and that due account is taken of relevant analysis and recommendations in reports such as the Local Government Efficiency Review.

The Implementation Group will provide progress reports to the Minister, as appropriate, with an initial report to be provided not later than **30 November 2011**, which should include a statement of the implications of unification.

Having regard to the foregoing and any other matters considered appropriate, the Group will adopt an Implementation Plan not later than **31 May 2012** to set a clear agenda and guidance for the continuation and completion of the reorganisation process under transitional management arrangements from early 2012 leading to the establishment of the unitary authority in 2014.

The Waterford Local Government Committee

Establishment and Terms of Reference

1. The Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government hereby establishes the Waterford Local Government Committee under Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1991, hereinafter referred to as “the Committee”.
2. The following persons are hereby appointed as members of the Committee: -
 - Mr. Sean Aylward (Chair) (former Secretary General, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform);
 - Mr. Joe Allen (former Principal Officer, Department of Environment, Community and Local Government);
 - Ms. Louise Grubb (Managing Director, NutriScience);
 - Mr. Ned O ‘Connor (former County Manager, South Tipperary County Council);
and
 - Mr. Frank O’ Regan (Vice President, Global Operations at Bausch & Lomb).
3. The Committee shall stand dissolved upon submission of its final report to the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government.
4. In accordance with section 32 of the Local Government Act 1991, the Committee is hereby required to carry out an objective review of local government arrangements in Waterford and to submit a report containing recommendations on whether the County Council of Waterford and the City Council of Waterford should be unified.
5. In the event of a recommendation that the City and County Councils should be unified, the report shall contain relevant information in that regard, including a broad outline of the following matters: -
 - The potential outcomes to be achieved, including likely benefits and costs.
 - The actions and arrangements that should be implemented in order to maximise savings, efficiency and effectiveness and achieve desired outcomes generally with regard to key elements of local government.

- Key issues that are considered likely to arise in the implementation of revised arrangements and how these should be addressed.

6. In carrying out its review, the Committee shall have regard to the following matters in particular: -

- The need to maximise efficiency and value for money in local government, taking account of the work of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group and the relevant timescale for implementation of measures.
- The need to ensure that Waterford City and County are served by effective local government structures, including any measures considered necessary to strengthen local government arrangements and enhance the effectiveness of democratic representation and accountability.
- Staffing, organisational, representational, financial, service delivery and other relevant requirements
- The need to enhance the capacity of local government to promote the economic and social development of Waterford City and County as a whole.
- The need to maximise the capacity of Waterford City, in particular, to act as a strong and dynamic focus and generator of growth for the wider hinterland under the National Spatial Strategy, and that of other urban and rural areas to contribute in that regard in the context of balanced development.
- The need to ensure that that the particular status, identity, character and heritage of Waterford City are maintained and where possible, enhanced, within a balanced overall system of local government for Waterford City and County.
- The appropriate configuration of local authority boundaries, having regard to relevant factors including traditional public loyalties, as relevant.
- The social, economic and demographic profile of Waterford and issues relating to the area of relevance to local government.
- Detailed information to be provided by the local authorities in relation to the structure and operations of the local authorities or other matters relevant to the Committee's functions.
- The need to continue, and where possible extend or enhance, aspects of current local authority operations, policies and arrangements that are operating successfully.
- Any weaknesses in current local authority arrangements or operations that need to be addressed.
- Government policy in relation to local government, the public service, the public finances and other relevant matters, and analysis and recommendations in reports relevant to local government or to any of the foregoing matters.
- Any additional matters that the Minister may require.

7. The Committee shall make such recommendations with respect to the above issues as it considers necessary in the interests of effective, efficient and innovative local government. It shall prepare and furnish to the Minister, not later than **29 February 2012**, a report in writing of its review and its recommendations, which the Minister shall publish.