

BUNREACTH FÓRAM POBAIL CHONTAE LUIMNIGH

LIMERICK COUNTY COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY FORUM CONSTITUTION

(Amended 6th November at a fully constituted EGM)

MISSION STATEMENT

The Community and Voluntary Forum represents the views of the Community and Voluntary groups by influencing policy and decision making for the benefit of the people of County Limerick through effective communication and consultation between the County Development Board, Strategic Policy Committees, Area Committees, other relevant bodies, this Forum and especially local community and voluntary groups.

CONSTITUTION

1. The Limerick County Community & Voluntary Forum shall comprise of thirty representatives from the Community & Voluntary organisations in the County.
2. Group/organisations must be active within County Limerick and have relevance in the locality or Electoral Area.
3. Groups/organisations must be in existence for a minimum of six months prior to affiliating to the Forum. Groups/organisations must hold meetings and be broadly representative and accountable. Nominees must be active members within the group.
4. The Forum shall be non-political and non-sectarian and as far as possible, reflect the views of all the Community & Voluntary organisations in County Limerick.
5. All representatives of the Forum must always articulate and support the agreed policy and views of the Forum. However, individual members may, when representing their own local organisations, articulate and support different views provided that they do not claim these to represent the views and the policy of the Forum.
6. The Forum shall have the support and co-operation of the staff of the Community & Enterprise Section, Limerick County Council.

STANDING ORDERS

1. The Community & Voluntary organisations in each of the five Local Government Electoral Areas of County Limerick shall elect 4 representatives. These representatives will form an executive for their respective Area Fora and shall represent that area on the Limerick County Community & Voluntary Forum together with elected representatives of sectoral interest groups who may reside in that area.
2. Sectoral Interest Groups shall nominate ten representatives to Limerick County Community & Voluntary Forum to represent the following interests:

Arts & Culture, Sports, Traveller, Disability, Youth, Childcare, Voluntary Housing, Elderly, Parents Associations and Unemployed.

These representatives will form an executive for their respective Area Fora and shall represent that area on the Limerick County Community & Voluntary Forum together with elected area representatives.

3. The methodology and system of election to the County Forum and to the Electoral Area Fora shall be agreed by the Forum and the Director of Community & Enterprise, Limerick County Council. The following three requirements must be observed in the election process:
 - a. The need for a geographical balance
 - b. The need for a gender balance
 - c. The need for different interests to be represented
4. All delegations and deputations and sub-committees from the Forum shall include at least one member of the Executive Committee.
5. The Forum shall, from time to time, appoint sub-committees to enquire into or investigate matters relevant to the Forum and these sub-committees shall report their findings as soon as is practicable to the Executive Committee, who shall in turn make the relevant information known to the Forum prior to the next meeting so that it can be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.
6. A minimum of one public Area Fora meetings for each Area shall be held within a 12 month period.
7. **Membership**
 - (1) The term of office of the Forum shall be coterminous with the term of office of Limerick County Council. Not less than six months prior to the date of election, in any local election year, the officials of Community & Enterprise Section of Limerick County Council in consultation with the Forum shall begin the process of electing a new Forum.

The following shall apply in relation to membership of the Forum:

- a. Membership is open to all Community & Voluntary groups, individuals cannot be members.
- b. Each affiliated group/organisation is entitled to one vote for the purpose of election onto their respective Area Forum.

(2) Disqualification for Membership

- a. The following persons shall be ineligible for election to the Electoral Area Fora or County Forum:

- (1) Public Representative
- (2) Those seeking public office
- (3) Employees of nominating Bodies.

(3) Co-option / Substitution of Members

If a vacancy occurs in the membership of the Forum the Community & Voluntary groups in the respective electoral Area Forum or Sectoral Interest Group as appropriate, shall elect a replacement in consultation with the Executive Committee.

8. The County Community & Voluntary Forum shall elect representatives to the following bodies:
 - (1) The County Development Board and its sub-structures
 - (2) Strategic Policy Committees
 - (3) The County Childcare Committee
 - (4) Other relevant bodies which require representation from/to the Forum from time to time.
9. The County Community & Voluntary Forum shall decide all matters relating to strategy or policy by a majority vote of those present and voting. Any issue on which the Forum has taken a policy decision shall not be reopened for debate until at least a year has elapsed since its initial decision.
10. The Forum shall decide the date and time of meetings. The Executive Committee, having consulted with the Forum, shall decide the agenda.
11. The Executive Committee of the Forum shall comprise of seven members; one member from each of the five Electoral Areas plus two from the Sectoral Interest Group.
12. The election of the Executive Committee shall take place at the A.G.M of the Forum.
13. The Cathaoirleach shall be elected by the Forum from the Executive Committee at the A.G.M.
14. The incoming Executive Committee shall assume office at the conclusion of the A.G.M. at which it was elected.

The Executive Committee of the Forum shall elect from its membership:

- Leas-Cathaoirleach
 - Runaí
 - Chisteoir
 - Leas Chisteoir
 - Oifigeach Caidreamh Poiblí (P.R.O.)
15. In the interest of continuity if a member of the Executive Committee resigns, he/she shall be replaced by a member from the Electoral Area or Sector of the resigning member.

16. The Executive Committee shall act as instructed by the Forum and cannot assume any powers not given to it by the Forum.

17. The following provisos will apply to membership of the Executive Committee:

- a. No member of the Executive Committee shall hold the same office for a period in excess of three consecutive years within the term of office of the Forum.
- b. Where expert knowledge is required and does not exist within the Forum this expert knowledge may be obtained with the approval of the Forum members.

18. **Arrangements for Meetings**

- (1) A minimum of four ordinary meetings of the Forum shall be held every calendar year at a time and venue to be agreed by the Forum members.
- (2) A Special meeting of the Forum may be called by any three members of the Executive Committee or by at least ten members of the Forum by written application to the Cathaoirleach and any such request shall be complied with by the Cathaoirleach.
- (3) A Special meeting of the Forum may be called by the Cathaoirleach at any time.
- (4) An EGM (Extraordinary General Meeting) may be called by any four members of the Executive Committee or by at least ten members of the Forum by written application to the Cathaoirleach and any such request shall be complied with by the Cathaoirleach. Twenty one clear days notice shall be given to all Forum members of an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Forum.
- (5) An A.G.M. must be held no later than eighteen months after the proceeding Annual General Meeting.
- (6) The County Community and Voluntary Forum will seek to work in partnership with the Local Development Companies in County Limerick.

19. **Notice of Meetings**

- (1) Fourteen clear day's notice shall be given to all Forum members of all ordinary meetings of the Forum and where possible there shall be an agreed schedule of meetings.
- (2) Want of service of notice on any member or members shall not affect the validity of the meeting.

20. **Quorum**

- (2) The quorum for meetings of the Forum shall be eleven members present.
- (3) The quorum for an Annual General Meeting and/or Extraordinary General Meeting shall be 50% plus one of the membership to the nearest whole number i.e., sixteen members.

21. Rules of Meetings

- (1) The Cathaoirleach shall preside over all meetings of the Forum. In the absence of the Cathaoirleach the Leas-Cathaoirleach shall preside. If neither the Cathaoirleach nor Leas-Cathaoirleach is present, a Cathaoirleach shall be selected by a majority vote of those present.
- (2) The order of business shall be decided by the Cathaoirleach and where possible be communicated to Forum members with the notice of meeting. All relevant documentation should, where possible, be furnished to Forum members also with the notice of meeting.

22. Minutes

- (1) The Runaí Cúnta shall have responsibility for the minutes of all meetings of the Forum and all meetings of the Executive Committee Committee.
- (2) The minutes shall reflect a true and accurate account of decisions made.
- (3) The minutes of all meetings of the Forum shall be adopted on the receipt of a proposer and seconder to adopt and the acceptance by the majority that they reflect a true and accurate account of the business of that meeting. The Cathaoirleach shall sign the minutes following their adoption.

23. Rules of Debate

- (1) All matters for discussion shall relate to policies and strategies of relevance to the Forum.
- (2) Each member shall have the right to speak on any relevant issue and shall have equality with all others in making their views known.
- (3) A local issue where possible should be raised initially at local Area Forum level and then submitted in writing to the County Forum.
- (4) To conduct the order of business in an orderly fashion points already articulated should only be repeated if a new emphasis or angle relevant to the debate is being enunciated.
- (5) Meetings shall be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and inclusiveness.
- (6) The ruling of the Cathaoirleach on a point of order shall be final.
- (7) Decisions shall be reached in the Forum by consensus where possible and by majority decision thereafter.
- (8) In the case of an equality of votes, the Cathaoirleach shall exercise his/her casting vote.

24. Duration of Meetings

- (1) All meetings shall start at the appointed time or as close as possible thereafter.
- (2) If after thirty minutes later than the appointed time of starting a meeting the agreed quorum of members has not arrived, the meeting shall be cancelled and a new date scheduled by those present.

- (3) All meetings of the Forum shall be an optimum duration of 90 minutes and any item on the agenda not debated or decided shall be entered on the agenda for the next meeting of the Forum.

25. Non attendance

Further to 8 above the following will apply:

- (1) Subject to agreement with the Forum, and only by a decision of at least two-thirds of the membership of the Forum, the Cathoirleach may request a nominating body/Area Fora to replace a member on the County Forum who fails to attend three consecutive meetings within a Forum year and/or fails to fulfill his/her duties as a representative of the Forum without legitimate reason. The member and his/her representing body /Area Fora will be notified in writing of the Forum's intention to seek his/her replacement by the Executive Committee.

Any action under this section shall be taken by the Forum on the advice of the Executive Committee.

- (2) (a) An individual member of the Forum may be removed from the Forum, by a decision of at least two-thirds of the membership of the Forum, for conduct unbecoming, if it is deemed that that person has brought the Forum into disrepute. The member and his/her representative body/Area Fora will be notified in writing of the Forum's intention to seek his/her replacement by the Executive Committee.

(b) Where it is intended to invoke the power under 28.2(a) above, an item clearly stating same must be included in the agenda for the next ordinary meeting of the County Community and Voluntary Forum.

26. Finance

- (1) The Forum shall manage its own finances in accordance with guidelines from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government or relevant Department.
- (2) The overall administration of the Department's funding is the responsibility of Limerick County Council.
- (3) The Forum shall have its own bank account. All cheques and withdrawals from the account shall require two designated signatures.
- (4) The Forum shall submit an agreed annual work programme, including costings, and an itemised income and expenditure account to Limerick County Council for submission to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government or relevant Government Department.
- (5) The financial year shall be the calendar year.
- (6) Properly vouched and out of pocket expenses shall be paid to members who incur such expenses while carrying out their duties on behalf of the Forum and/or its members.
- (7) Expenses shall be paid at a rate agreed by the Executive Committee.

27. Other Matters

- (1) Any matter not catered for in these standing orders may be dealt with by a ruling from the Cathaoirleach until such time as the Forum has debated and decided the issue at hand.
- (2) No individual member of the Forum may use the Forum for Party political purposes.

28. Suspension of Standing Orders

Standing Orders may, at any time, at a properly constituted meeting as set out in 20 and 22 above and with the support of not less than two-thirds of those present and voting, be suspended on a proposal made for any specific business. Where possible, prior notice shall be given to the Cathaoirleach of any such proposal.

29. Amendments to the Constitution

Amendments to the constitution may be made only at (a) the Annual General Meeting or (b) a specially convened Extraordinary General Meeting. see 20 above.