

Public Information Campaign for Plebiscites on Directly Elected Mayors with Executive Functions launched

The Committee to Oversee the Plebiscite Public Information Campaign has today (15 April 2019) launched the public information campaign for the plebiscites on directly elected mayors with executive functions for Cork City, Limerick City and County Council, and Waterford City and County Council.

The three local authority areas will hold plebiscites on 24 May 2019 on the Government's proposal for directly elected mayors with executive functions and powers. Under the proposal, a directly elected mayor/lord mayor would be the chair of the council, have some of the roles and responsibilities currently held by a chief executive and assume the representational role held by the lord mayor/mayor of a council.

Former judge of the High Court, Henry Abbott, Committee chairperson, said this morning: "The people of Cork City, Limerick and Waterford will be asked for their views in a plebiscite on the Government's proposal for a directly elected mayor with executive functions for their area, on May 24th 2019. It's very important that people have access to factual and impartial information before they vote on the issue. The committee are providing comprehensive information in a range of formats to the voters. I would urge everyone with an interest in this issue to take the time to read the information and consider attending a public information meeting in their area."

The public information campaign will include:

- A dedicated webpage about the plebiscites, www.mayors.gov.ie, which will have a downloadable, detailed guide to the plebiscite in each administrative area, and a short video on the plebiscites
- Each household in the three local authority areas will also receive a guide to the plebiscite
- A newspaper and radio advertising campaign and social media campaign to raise awareness of the plebiscites
- A poster campaign, with posters displayed in local authority offices and elsewhere
- Public information meetings, presided over by the committee chair, to be held in the three local authority areas

Chairperson Abbott also urged members of the public in the three local authority areas to check if they are registered to vote on 24 May. He said: "Being informed about the issues is important but being registered to vote is equally critical. Anyone who is eligible to vote in the local elections for the three local authority areas is also eligible to vote in the plebiscites. I would urge everyone in Cork City, Limerick and Waterford to check if they are registered at www.checktheregister.ie and to have their say on May 24th."

[ENDS]

Notes to editors

- On 24 May 2019, the people living in Cork City, Limerick City and County, and Waterford City and County, will be asked if they approve of the Government's

proposal for a directly elected mayor/lord mayor with executive functions for their area. Polling in the plebiscite will take place between 7am and 10pm.

- Under the proposals, a mayor/lord Mayor would be elected for a five-year term for a maximum of two terms. At present, the lord mayor/mayor of a council is elected for a one-year term by other councillors. Under the Government's proposal, the directly elected mayor/lord mayor would assume some of the executive functions currently held by a chief executive and the representational role currently held by the mayor/lord mayor. They would also have additional functions, not currently performed, such as, preparing a 5 year Programme of Office.
- The plebiscite is taking place under provisions of the Local Government Act 2019. Under the Act, if the proposal is accepted by a majority of voters in a local authority area, the Minister will submit a report within two years to the Oireachtas with legislative proposals for an election of a mayor by the people. The Oireachtas will then consider the legislation. If the law is passed, an election would take place.
If the proposal is rejected by a majority of voters in a local authority area, the current structures in the local authority could not be changed without legislation. No such draft legislation currently exists.
- People are encouraged to check if they are registered to vote at www.checktheregister.ie. Application forms will need to be received by the registration authority (local authority) for the area in which the applicant is resident not later than Tuesday, 07 May 2019. For those seeking inclusion in the supplement to the postal and special voters lists, the relevant application forms will need to be received by the registration authority not later than Sunday, 28 April 2019.
- The Committee to Oversee the Plebiscite Public Information Campaign, chaired by retired judge of the High Court, Henry Abbot, also includes:
 - representatives of Cork City Council; Waterford City and County Council; and Limerick City and County Council
 - officials in the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government
 - a representative of the Local Government Management Agency
 - an independent legal advisor