



Social Justice Ireland

National Social Monitor

Local Issues Edition - May 2019



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Introduction

The local elections are due to take place on the 24th May 2019. The public will be asked to vote for the person or people who most accurately reflect their values and those of their community to represent them in local government. While increased centralisation has diminished the role of local government over the years, decisions made by local councils, on housing, roads and recreation facilities to water services, waste management and climate action, right through to development management and local representation and participation affect both the lives of those in the immediate community and the country as a whole.

In this edition of our National Social Monitor, *Social Justice Ireland* looks at the budgets of each of the 31 Local Authorities and analyses where the money was spent, and where it wasn't, to assess the priorities of local government. We look briefly at voter turnout in the last local elections held in 2014, before taking a look at Local Authority expenditure¹ (as published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in its 'Local Authority Budgets 2018' document), and the following budget lines in particular:

1. Housing and Accommodation
2. Road Transportation and Safety
3. Water Services
4. Development Management, including local job creation
5. Environmental Services, with a focus on Waste Management
6. Recreation and Amenity
7. Local Representation and Civic Leadership
8. Climate Change

For too long, too many decisions have been taken at an elite level, without explanation or justification, instead of following reasoned debate with citizen and civil society participation. Social dialogue involving all sectors of society is hugely beneficial. It helps highlight issues at an early stage which would allow them to be addressed promptly. More importantly, it ensures that the various sectors of society are involved in developing mutually acceptable solutions to problems that emerge which in turn would be most likely to ensure their support for such solutions when implemented by Government.

A commitment to deliberative democracy is needed, where decisions about what kind of society and economy Ireland needs are founded upon reasoned, evidence-based and enlightened debate, and in which decisions taken by local and national governments are justified and acceptable to the public. In such a process, stakeholders are involved in the framing, implementing, and evaluating of policies and measures that impact on them.

The right to vote is a cornerstone of any democracy. Being informed enables voters to ask meaningful questions of those canvassing for their vote. An informed decision, based on the information available, contributes to a more participative and deliberative democracy. *Social Justice Ireland* provides this edition of our National Social Monitor as a contribution to the democratic process.

¹ Gross Expenditure before adjustment for inter-Local Authority contributions

A note of caution

An analysis of invalid ballot papers shows that 1.30% of all votes cast, some 22,286 papers, were invalid. The most common reason for this was voters indicating their first preference vote for more than one candidate (resulting in 9,697 invalid votes), followed by first preference votes not being clearly indicated (resulting in 9,531 invalid votes) and want of an official mark (resulting in 1,408 invalid votes). A simple error can result in the loss of a vote.

What was voter turnout like in local elections in 2014?

Table 1.1: General Statistics – No. of seats, Electorate, Poll and % of Electorate represented by Poll, 2014 Results

Local Authority	No. of Seats	Electorate	Total Poll	% Poll
City Councils				
Cork	31	82,943	41,687	50.26
Dublin	63	329,024	140,256	42.63
Galway	18	44,104	22,124	50.16
Total: City Councils	112	456,071	204,067	44.74
City & County Councils				
Limerick	40	141,297	72,711	51.46
Waterford	32	80,607	44,856	55.65
Total: City & County Councils	72	221,904	117,567	52.98
County Councils				
Carlow	18	40,990	21,749	53.06
Cavan	18	56,531	31,980	56.57
Clare	28	90,620	52,114	57.51
Cork	55	303,357	158,918	52.39
Donegal	37	125,830	73,096	58.09
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	40	153,510	70,070	45.65
Fingal	40	177,655	74,931	42.18
Galway	39	134,641	77,124	57.28
Kerry	33	116,701	70,602	60.50
Kildare	40	140,254	62,675	44.69
Kilkenny	24	69,080	39,444	57.10
Laois	19	59,703	33,333	55.83
Leitrim	18	27,318	18,313	67.04
Longford	18	31,146	19,845	63.72
Louth	29	92,870	45,831	49.35
Mayo	30	102,412	63,084	61.60
Meath	40	140,262	63,544	45.30
Monaghan	18	48,493	28,282	58.32
Offaly	19	56,531	32,931	58.25
Roscommon	18	49,057	32,088	65.41
Sligo	18	53,013	32,267	60.87
South Dublin	40	185,313	77,956	42.07
Tipperary	40	123,042	76,176	61.91
Westmeath	20	68,071	35,239	51.77
Wexford	34	111,015	55,734	50.20
Wicklow	32	93,213	51,936	55.72
Total: County Councils	765	2,650,628	1,399,262	52.79
Total: All Councils	949	3,328,603	1,720,896	51.70

Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Elections 2014 Results Book

What was voter turnout like in local elections in 2014?

The last time local elections were held, in 2014, Ireland was just beginning to recover from the recession. There was hopeful talk of an economic recovery, but many were still feeling the effects of the austerity programme introduced as part of the EU-IMF loan agreement. Ireland today is a different place – better for some than for others – yet there are those who continue to feel the effects of that austerity programme in cuts to public services, local amenities and poor infrastructure.

The right to vote is one of the most basic rights of any democracy. In the era of fake news, populism and rising autocracy in some countries, exercising that right is more important than ever. While there are many issues with how local government is structured in Ireland, discussed later in this Monitor, local government elections continue to provide an opportunity for people to shape their local communities. How local governments choose to allocate their discretionary budgets tells us what they choose to prioritise. Those priorities are based on individual values or party ideologies. In shaping a future for communities, and this country as a whole, it is important that voters ask the candidates what it is they value and how they will work to ensure that those values are reflected in local government policy.

According to the 2014 Local Elections Results Book, published by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, just over half of the electorate (51.7%) voted in 2014. The highest proportionate turnout was in Leitrim (67.04%), Roscommon (65.41) and Longford (63.72%), with the lowest turnout in the Dublin Local Authority areas of South Dublin (42.07%), Fingal (42.18%) and Dublin City (42.63%). Overall, voter turnout was lowest for City Councils (44.74%), with County Councils and those where City and County Councils are combined being about even (with 52.79% and 52.98% respectively) (Table 1.1).

A breakdown of the vote by political party shows that Sinn Féin topped the polls in the **City Councils**, with 22.57% of all first preference votes (23.99% in Cork, 24.22% in Dublin and 9.49% in Galway), followed by Fianna Fáil, with 16.96% of the overall first preference votes (23.99% in Cork, 14.47% in Dublin and 19.47% in Galway), Fine Gael with 15.19% of the overall first preference votes (18.96% in Cork, 13.98% in Dublin and 15.77% in Galway), Independents with 19.31% of overall (15.05% in Cork, 17.75% in Dublin and 37.14% in Galway) and Labour with 11.13% of the overall first preference votes (5.95% in Cork, 12.71% in Dublin and 10.84% in Galway).

These relative positions changed somewhat when it came to where **City and County Councils** are combined, with Fine Gael topping the polls with 29.81% of the overall first preference votes (32.73% in Limerick and 25.07% in Waterford), followed by Fianna Fáil with 24.37% of the overall (27.39% in Limerick and 19.46% in Waterford), Independents with 20.29% of the overall vote (15.94% in Limerick and 27.35% in Waterford), Sinn Féin with 14.12% of the overall vote (12.94% in Limerick and 16.02% in Waterford), and Labour with 7.15% of the overall vote (6.63% in Limerick and 7.99% in Waterford).

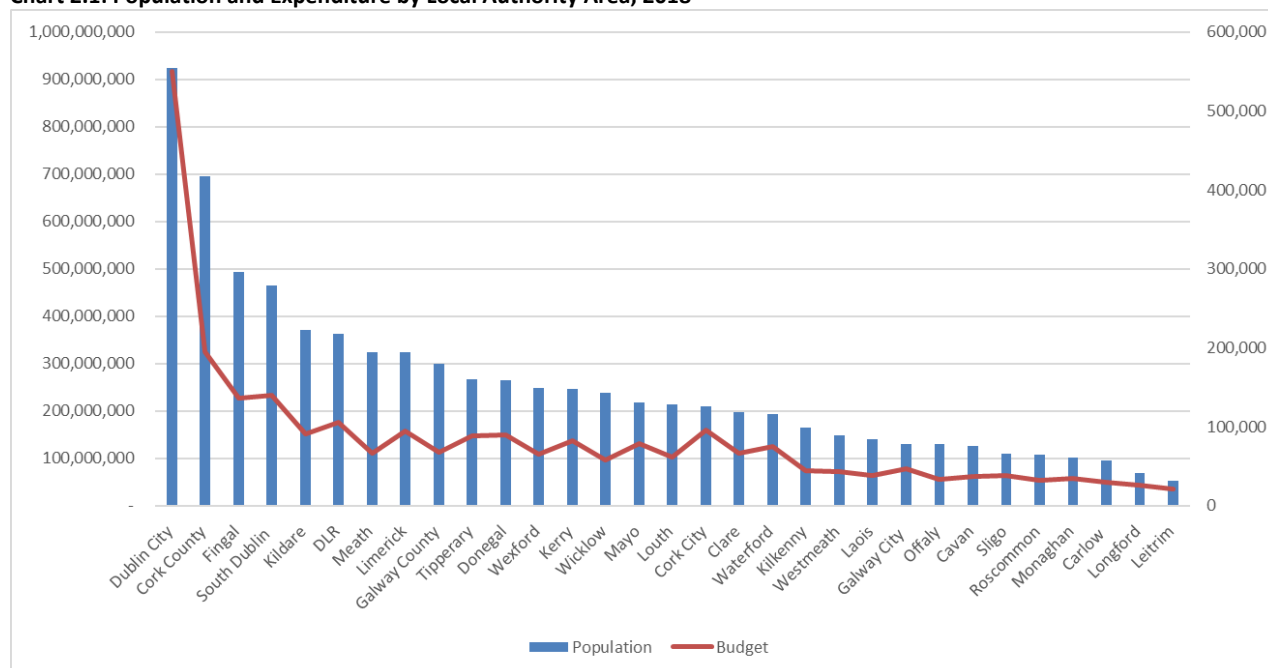
A similar voting pattern was seen in **County Councils**, with Fianna Fáil topping the polls in the County Councils with 26.6% of the overall first preference votes, Fine Gael with 24.83%, Independents with 23.22%, Sinn Féin with 14.3%, and Labour with 6.6%.

Policy Priorities

- Provide accurate, reliable information to allow voters to make an informed decision.
- Promote participation in the democratic process particularly among younger people.

Local Authority Budgets

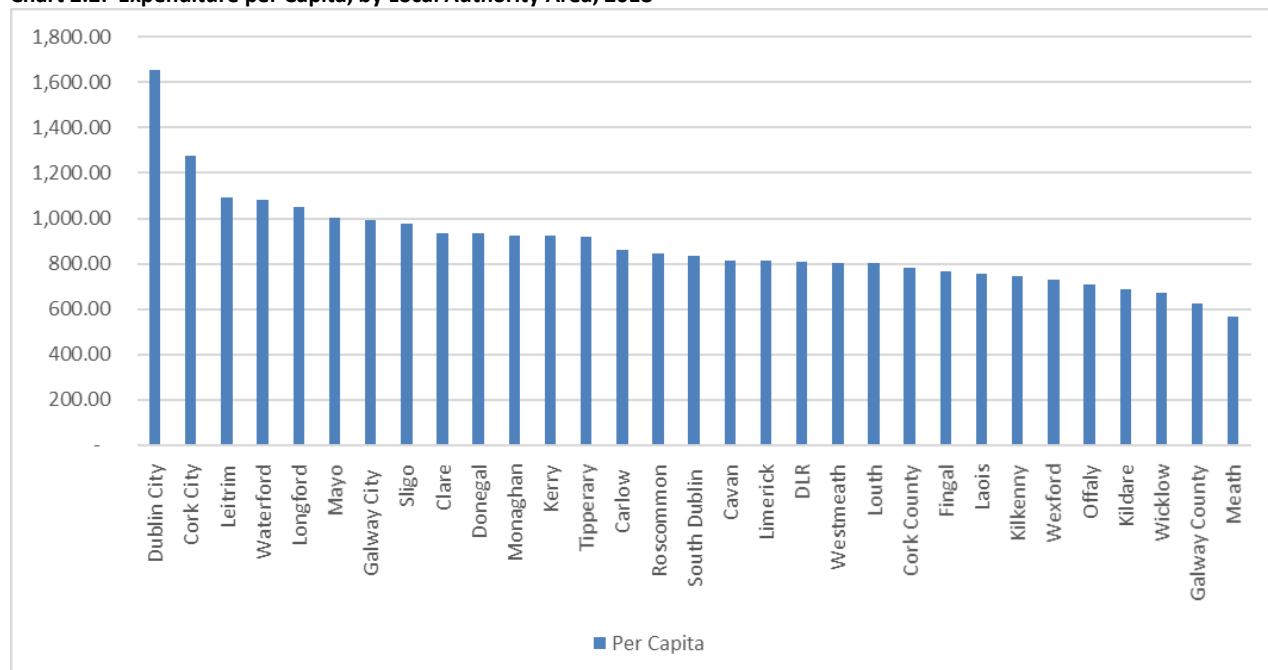
Chart 2.1: Population and Expenditure by Local Authority Area, 2018



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018; Population Statbank [E2004]

Note: Expenditure in respect of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is excluded from the budget for Limerick City and County as Limerick City and Council operate the HAP Shared Service Centre with expenditure of €402,772,776 in 2018

Chart 2.2: Expenditure per Capita, by Local Authority Area, 2018



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018; Population Statbank [E2004]

Note: Expenditure in respect of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is excluded from the budget for Limerick City and County as Limerick City and Council operate the HAP Shared Service Centre with expenditure of €402,772,776 in 2018

Local Authority Budgets

In her paper for *Social Justice Ireland's* Social Policy Conference in 2018, entitled '*Power Monopoly: Central – local relations in Ireland*'², Dr. Theresa Reidy spoke of the profound challenges for representative democracy in Ireland, in particular the centralisation of power and decision-making at national government level. Dr. Reidy points to Ireland's position relative to other European Member States in terms of tax and spending functions at local government level – Ireland is second to last, behind Malta. More than 95% of tax revenues are raised by central government in Ireland and 93% of all public spending in Ireland is done at central government level. Local Authorities are heavily dependent on central government to fund large sections of their work. In discussing the inherent risks associated with Ireland's high levels of centralisation, Dr. Reidy warns that decisions about a range of services are taken at national level and the potential of local communities to shape and develop their areas is more limited than it need be and more limited than is the case in most of our European neighbours.

Recent research published by MacCarthaigh and Hardiman³ also shows how the terms of the Bailout were used by central government to introduce additional reforms which, it states, "political elites had previously found difficult to implement". At local government level, these reforms included centralisation of public sector procurement, new e-government agenda, and Local Authority mergers and consolidation. In concluding this research, the authors state that the "drive to drive to consolidate centralised budgetary controls and to push through far-reaching changes in public sector work organisation and practice was motivated by the crisis and legitimated by the Troika.... The exploitation of conditionality was central to Ireland's

transformation from what might be seen as a reform laggard to experimentation with post-NPM-style [New Public Management] priorities."

The availability of funding plays an obvious role in the efficacy of local governments. There is a need for a more transparent allocation process, taking account of population, geography, age-distribution, current infrastructure and so on. Chart 2.1 shows that Dublin City Council, with €917 million had the largest expenditure, followed by Cork County with €326 million, Fingal County Council with €227 million, and South Dublin with €232 million. An analysis of the Local Authority budget per capita (Chart 2.2) shows that Dublin City with €1,654 per person, Cork City with €1,275 per person, Leitrim with €1,092 per person and Waterford with €1,083 per person had the highest per capita expenditures. Meath with €568 per person, Galway County with €626 per person and Wicklow with €671 per person had the lowest per capita expenditures.

Local Property Tax is one of the key revenue sources available to Local Authorities outside of grants and subsidies from central government. In the absence of a move to a more sustainable Site Value Tax, and acknowledging that some households cannot afford a large increase, plans to delay increasing this tax until next year will impact on the ability of Local Authorities to determine their own course.

Policy Priorities

- Seek to replace the Local Property Tax with a Site Value Tax and increase the tax-take while including hardship measures for those who cannot afford to pay it in full.

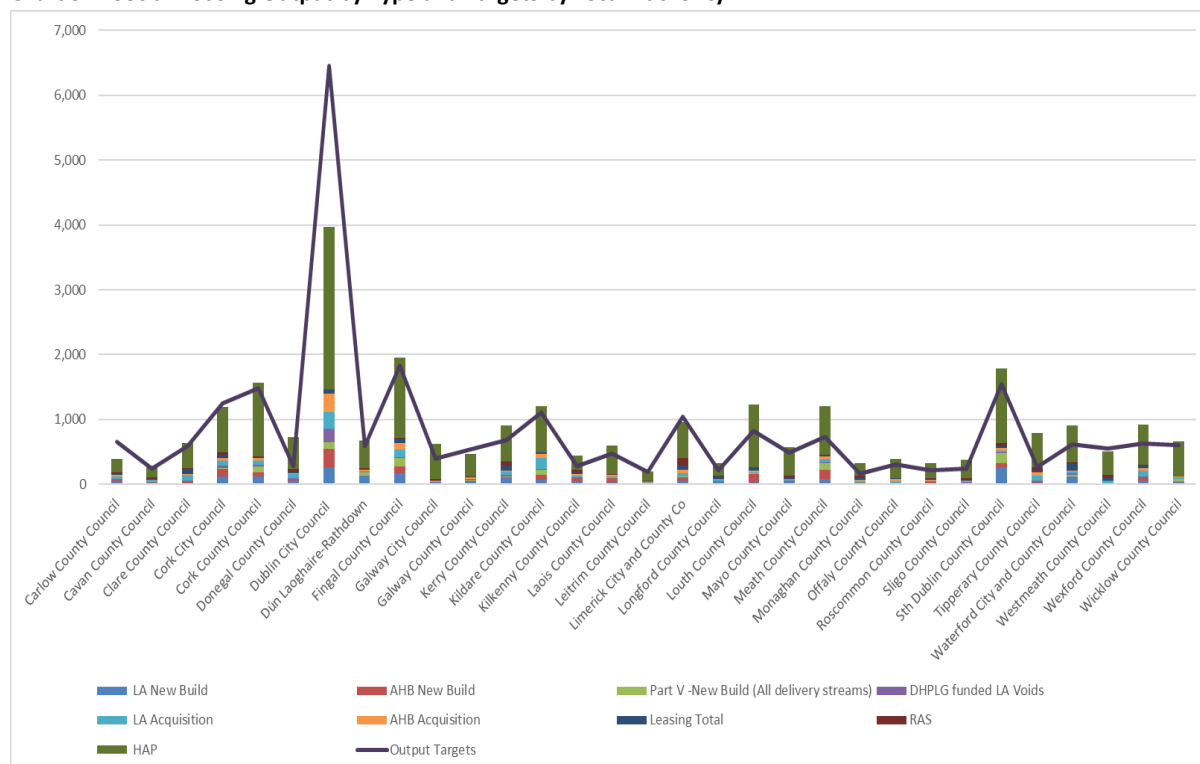
²<https://www.socialjustice.ie/sites/default/files/attach/publication/5545/chapter5.pdf>

³<https://pure.qub.ac.uk/portal/en/publications/exploiting-conditionality-eu-and-international-actors-and->

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Housing and Building

Chart 3.1: Social Housing Output by Type and Targets by Local Authority



Source: Social Housing Output Overview by LA, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Table 3.1: Delivery Method as % of all Social Housing Output per Local Authority, Q3 2018

Local Authority	All Build as % of Total Social Housing Output	All Acquisition and Leasing as % of Total Social Housing Output	RAS as % of Total Social Housing Output	HAP as % of Total Social Housing Output	Total 2018 Output under Rebuilding Ireland
Carlow County Council	20	20	6	55	395
Cavan County Council	11	17	8	63	283
Clare County Council	9	28	3	61	636
Cork City Council	25	14	3	58	1189
Cork County Council	19	7	1	73	1565
Donegal County Council	13	13	7	67	724
Dublin City Council	21	15	0	63	3968
Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown	28	7	2	62	674
Fingal County Council	22	15	1	63	1953
Galway City Council	4	5	5	86	621
Galway County Council	16	7	1	76	466
Kerry County Council	15	16	6	62	911
Kildare County Council	19	21	0	59	1202
Kilkenny County Council	23	19	10	49	444
Laois County Council	16	9	2	73	591
Leitrim County Council	9	9	5	76	201
Limerick City and County Co	13	17	12	58	955
Longford County Council	17	19	3	61	326
Louth County Council	14	7	0	79	1229
Mayo County Council	10	9	4	76	574
Meath County Council	28	8	1	63	1204
Monaghan County Council	14	19	6	61	325
Offaly County Council	4	20	1	75	387
Roscommon County Council	13	8	7	72	319
Sligo County Council	9	10	4	77	372
Sth Dublin County Council	28	5	3	64	1787
Tipperary County Council	7	20	7	67	794
Waterford City and County Council	18	16	3	63	912
Westmeath County Council	3	19	7	71	509
Wexford County Council	13	18	1	68	920
Wicklow County Council	13	6	0	81	667

Source: Social Housing Output Overview by LA, Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government

Housing and Building

In February 2019, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government published a breakdown of Social Housing Output by Local Authority area. This showed that 45% of all Local Authorities failed to meet their build targets last year, with Galway City Council only providing a quarter of its target builds and Westmeath County Council providing just over a third. The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), a subsidy to landlords in the private rented sector, continued to outpace the provision of long-term sustainable homes, accounting for 66% of all Social Housing Output in the reporting period.

Chart 3.1 shows the composition of Social Housing Output for each Local Authority area compared to the target output for that Local Authority. On this basis, just 6 of the 31 Local Authorities failed to meet their targets, and even those met 60% or over. However, when the 'build' data and associated targets is isolated, a very different picture emerges.

The number of Local Authorities who missed their build targets was more than double that indicated by the data in Chart 1.1, with the provision of long-term, sustainable social housing under-built in 14 of the 31 Local Authority areas. The numbers acquired and leased, compared to the targets set in this area, fared better in terms of targets reached, with targets exceeded in all but 8 Local Authority areas. Actual Acquisitions and Leases in most areas which exceeded targets were 100-250% of target, with Offaly being over 550%, albeit from a low target of 14. In terms of the actual number of units provided through this method, more social housing units were provided through Acquisitions and Leasing than actual builds (including Regeneration) in 14 of the 31 Local Authority areas. Speed of delivery is likely a contributing factor in why Acquisitions and Leases are outperforming

their targets, however in many areas this would be a more expensive form of housing provision compared to Local Authorities and Approved Housing Buildings, particularly if using State lands. The continuing cost to the Exchequer must also be a factor in determining the best method and it is time that a full comparative long-term cost analysis is developed.

As can be seen in Table 3.1, the proportion of Social Housing Output attributed to HAP can be as much as 86%, with those Local Authorities at the lower end of the scale still providing almost half of their social housing through this method. It is interesting to note that Galway City Council, which met the smallest proportion of its build target (just 25%), had the highest proportion of Social Housing Output attributed to HAP.

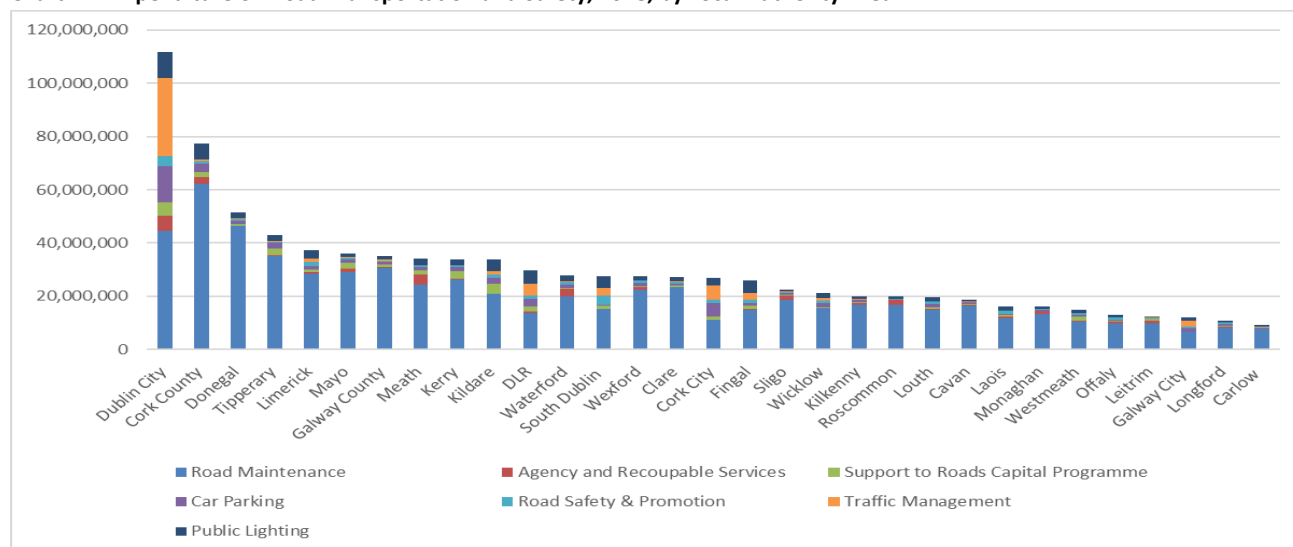
Local Authorities and Local Representatives must be accountable for their budgetary decisions in the midst of a housing crisis, both to their immediate constituents and to the wider population who will feel the impact of poor Exchequer decisions, which look to the short-term rather than plan for the future. Questions must be asked as to the sustainability, and reliability, of a private subsidy in the provision of long-term homes.

Policy Priorities

- Utilise State lands owned by Local Authorities to build more social and affordable housing.
- Invest in cost rental development to scale up the availability of affordable rental properties.
- Ring-fence receipts from housing and land sales for the provision of increased social and affordable housing.

Road Transportation and Safety

Chart 4.1: Expenditure on Road Transportation and Safety, 2018, by Local Authority Area



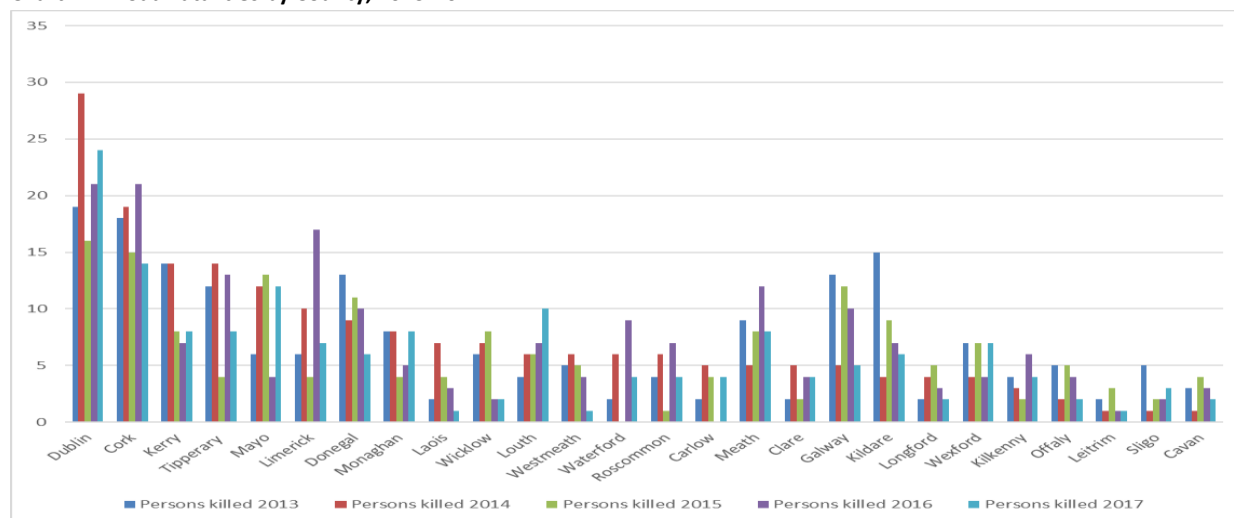
Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018

Table 4.1 National route length in kilometres by carriageway type and county, 2017

County	Motorway	Dual carriageway	Single	County	Motorway	Dual carriageway	Single
Carlow	24	-	54	Louth	40	9	49
Cavan	-	-	123	Mayo	-	-	397
Clare	32	20	182	Meath	88	12	104
Cork	49	63	403	Monaghan	-	15	88
Donegal	-	6	298	Offaly	15	-	101
Dublin	82	41	16	Roscommon	21	1	225
Galway	62	12	380	Sligo	-	13	141
Kerry	-	11	413	Tipperary	122	3	210
Kildare	108	8	18	Waterford	-	10	97
Kilkenny	68	17	112	Westmeath	56	18	102
Laois	67	-	102	Wexford	22	-	142
Leitrim	-	7	49	Wicklow	35	18	38
Limerick	27	9	156				
Longford	-	0	97	Total	916	294	4,096

Source: CSO, Transport Omnibus 2017

Chart 4.2: Road Fatalities by County, 2013-2017



Source: CSO, Transport Omnibus 2017

Road Transportation and Safety

Local Authorities spent almost €1 billion on road transportation and safety in 2018. While Dublin City Council spends the most, particularly in the area of traffic management, the vast majority of expenditure in this area goes to road maintenance (Chart 4.1). Cork County (€62 million), Donegal (€46 million), Dublin City (€44.5 million) and Tipperary (€35 million) spend the most on road maintenance, while Galway City (€6.6 million), Carlow (€7.5 million), Longford (€8 million) and Leitrim (€9.7 million) spend the least.

As can be seen in Table 4.1, the longest stretch of motorway is in Tipperary, with 122km, followed by Kildare with 108km and Meath with 88km. Kerry has the most single roads, with 413km, followed by Cork with 403km and Mayo with 397km. Cavan, Longford and Mayo are the only counties entirely reliant on single national roads, with there being some level of dual carriageway or motorway in all other counties.

According to Census 2016, 61.4% of working commuters commuted by car, a decrease on the previous Census figure of 63% in 2011. Lack of public transport alternatives means 72.7% of commuters in rural areas used their car, compared to 55.3% in urban areas. Galway city and suburbs had the highest number of walkers proportionally, at 16% (5,330 people), followed by Dublin, Cork and Waterford with nearly 14% each. In rural areas only 4% of the commuting population walked to work. High levels of road usage in areas with few or no alternatives to single national roads leads to increased traffic congestion, longer commute times and a decrease in quality of life.

Road Injuries and Fatalities

According to the Road Safety Authority's Road Safety Strategy 2013-2020, motorways are approximately seven times safer than single carriageway roads, and so it might be expected that counties with more single

carriageways would have more accidents and fatalities.

Overall, the number of road fatalities in Ireland decreased between 2013 and 2017 by 31. However, there remain county-level variances, with Mayo (+6), Louth (+6) and Dublin (+5) experiencing the largest increases and Kildare (-9), Galway (-8) and Donegal (-7) experiencing the largest decreases in this period (Chart 4.2).

Dublin also had the highest increase in persons injured on Irish roads between 2013 and 2017 – an increase of 800 people. The increase nationally in this period was 830. Westmeath (+61), Meath (+55) and Kildare (+51) were the next highest, with Louth (-63), Limerick (-51) and Sligo (-50) showing the largest decreases in road injuries. Dublin spends the most of all counties on both traffic management and road safety, yet continues to have significant numbers of road accidents.

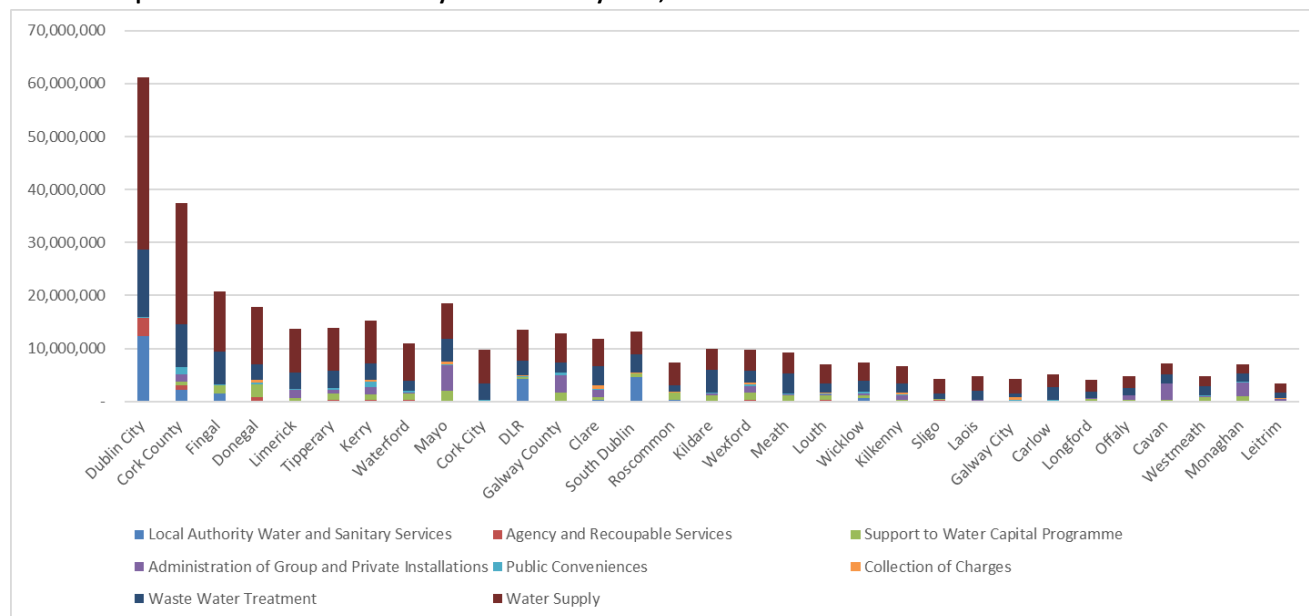
The Road Safety Strategy seeks to bring national and local governments together with other stakeholders (e.g. Gardaí, National Roads Authority etc.) to improve safety standards on Irish roads. Local Authorities are tasked with introducing, and implementing, work related vehicle safety policies for staff travelling for work; to be involved in monitoring road works for safety; to introduce technological enhancements to ensure compliance with existing policies on roads and bridges, in particular heavy vehicles; and in partnership with the National Roads Authority, the provision of a safe, reliable network of roads.

Policy Priorities

- Improve the primary road network across the country to support the increased provision of public transport.
- Invest in innovative road safety and traffic management campaigns.

Water Services

Chart 5.1: Expenditure on Water Services by Local Authority Area, 2018



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018

Chart 5.2: Water Quality and Enforcement Information for Public Supplies by County or Area in 2016

County/ Area ⁶	Public Supplies ¹		Parameter Compliance (%)		Boil Notices ²		Water Restrictions ³		Directions ⁴	Audits ⁵
	Number	Population	Microbiological	Chemical	Number	Population affected	Number	Population Affected	Number Issued	Number
Carlow	16	44,975	100	100						2
Cavan	16	38,886	100	99.8	1	750				2
Clare	19	114,988	100	99.9	2	872			4	2
Cork	177	348,204	100	99.6	4	10422	1	21		5
Cork City	1	106,681	100	99.5						
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown	8	207,350	100	99.7						
Donegal	33	171,179	100	99.0					2	4
Dublin City	6	525,907	100	98.9						1
Fingal	2	272,000	100	100						
Galway	40	131,158	100	99.5	8	21629	1	15	1	10
Galway City	1	80,558	100	100						
Kerry	69	134,448	99.4	99.8					1	4
Kildare	11	195,088	100	99.8						
Kilkenny	20	79,172	100	99.7	1	281				3
Laois	27	65,691	99.6	99.9			2	1144		2
Leitrim	4	25,433	100	99.8	3	409				1
Limerick	42	157,574	100	99.9	1	18	2	9	1	2
Longford	6	43,154	100	97.5						1
Louth	14	107,178	100	99.3						1
Mayo	24	81,811	100	99.7	1	39435			3	7
Meath	36	144,225	99.7	99.3	1	9				1
Monaghan	10	28,526	100	98.2						
Offaly	23	53,824	100	100						1
Roscommon	14	56,088	100	98.8	3	7506			1	1
Sligo	9	58,104	100	98.4	2	206				2
South Dublin	4	266,312	100	100					1	
Tipperary	54	165,672	100	99.9	5	316				1
Waterford	104	88,578	100	99.6	4	1131	1	2	1	1
Westmeath	10	79,466	99.4	100						
Wexford	52	136,155	99.7	99.6	2	27				2
Wicklow	52	111,248	99.7	99.5	3	33	1	15		3

Source: EPA, Drinking water report for Public Supplies 2016

Notes: ¹ Full list of public supplies available at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/drinkingwater/publicdrinkingwatersupplies/>; ² boil notice and water restriction numbers included above refer to notices that were the responsibility of either Irish Water or both Irish Water and the property owner to resolve. ³ Water Restrictions excludes advice issued to consumers in respect of lead. ⁴ Further information in Section 3.5 of the report; ⁵ Audit reports available at <http://www.epa.ie/pubs/advice/drinkingwater/audits/>; ⁶ Drinking Water Monitoring results and water supply details for each year since 2000 for each county is available at <http://erc.epa.ie/safer/resourcelisting.jsp?oID=10206&username=EPA%20Drinking%20Water>.

Water Services

Water supply was the largest expenditure item under the ‘Water Services’ budget line for each Local Authority in 2018. Dublin City had the largest expenditure with €32 million (53% of Water Services budget line), followed by Cork County with €22.7 million (61%) and Fingal with €11 million (54%) (Chart 5.1).

According to the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) latest report on this issue, the ‘Drinking Water Report for Public Water Supplies 2016’, the quality of drinking water in public supplies is high with both microbiological and chemical compliance near 100% and 4,000 fewer people on boil notices at the end of 2016 when compared to 2015. The main issues affecting water quality in public water supplies in 2016 were high levels of disinfectant by-products, pesticide failures in some supplies and large numbers of lead pipe connections in some areas. According to the EPA’s report, lead was commonly used in plumbing fixtures in the 1970s and has an impact on the development of the nervous system, particularly affecting children and young adults. It is estimated that there are 180,000 lead service connections in Ireland. In June 2015, the Government published a National Lead Strategy to reduce exposure to lead in drinking water. This Strategy aims to tackle lead from both the supplier and consumer side, by reducing the amount of lead in the distribution pipework and making grants available from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to replace lead fittings in affected homes (with reports that only 71 applications have been made for the grants since the introduction of the scheme in 2016).

In 2016, 97.8% of the samples sent by Irish Water to the EPA complied with the standards for lead in drinking water. Actions taken by the EPA and Irish Water in 2016 consisted of awareness raising, dosing water treatment

plants in both Carlow and Limerick City to reduce the amount of lead that can dissolve into the water and an additional monitoring framework undertaken by Irish Water.

Boil notices and water restrictions are issued when water fails to meet the required standard or where there is a risk to health caused by contaminants in the water. Irish Water consult with the HSE who decide if a restriction or boil notice should be served. A total of 41 boil notices were issued in 2016, affecting 83,044 people. Mayo was the most affected, with 1 notice affecting 39,435 people, followed by Galway with 8 notices affecting 21,629 people and Cork with 4 notices affecting 10,422 people. A total of 8 water restriction notices were served in 2016, affecting 1,206 people. The worst affected was Laois, with 2 notices affecting 1,144 people (Table 5.1).

A Drinking Water Safety Plan must be developed for each public water supply, identifying all potential risks and detailing mitigation and control measures. This provides the public with assurance that not only is their drinking water currently safe, but should issues arise there are plans in place to address safety concerns. While Irish Water are progressing these plans, Local Authorities could provide invaluable consultation and input into their development through the establishment of a dedicated Social Policy Committee in the area and encouraging stakeholder engagement in a key policy area.

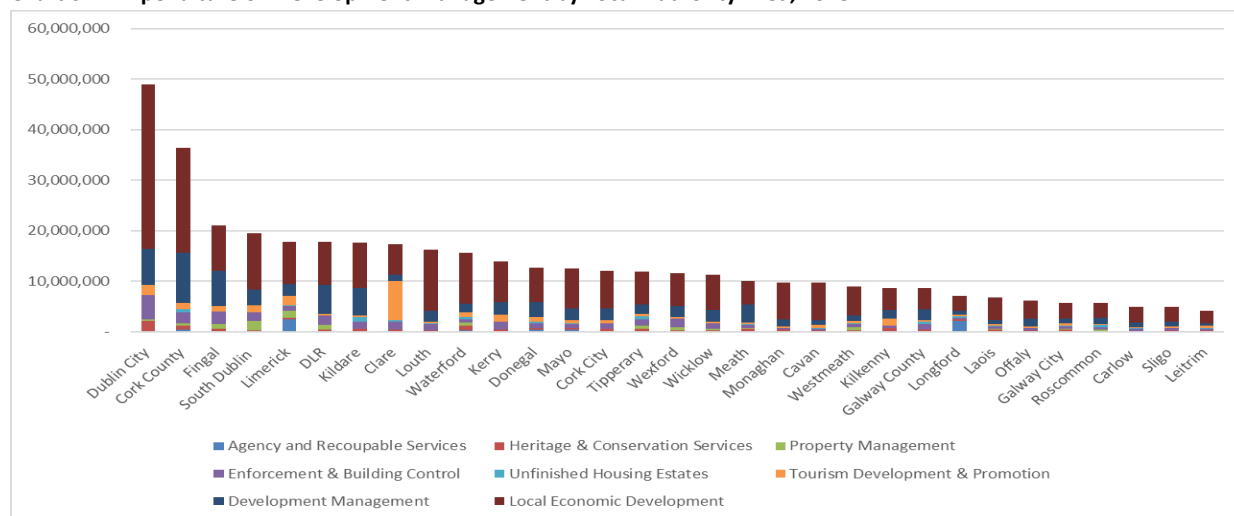
Policy Priorities

Our policy priorities in this area mirror those set out by the EPA in their 2016 Drinking Water report, namely to:

- Put a plan in place to tackle pesticides in drinking water.
- Put Drinking Water Safety Plans in place to protect supplies.

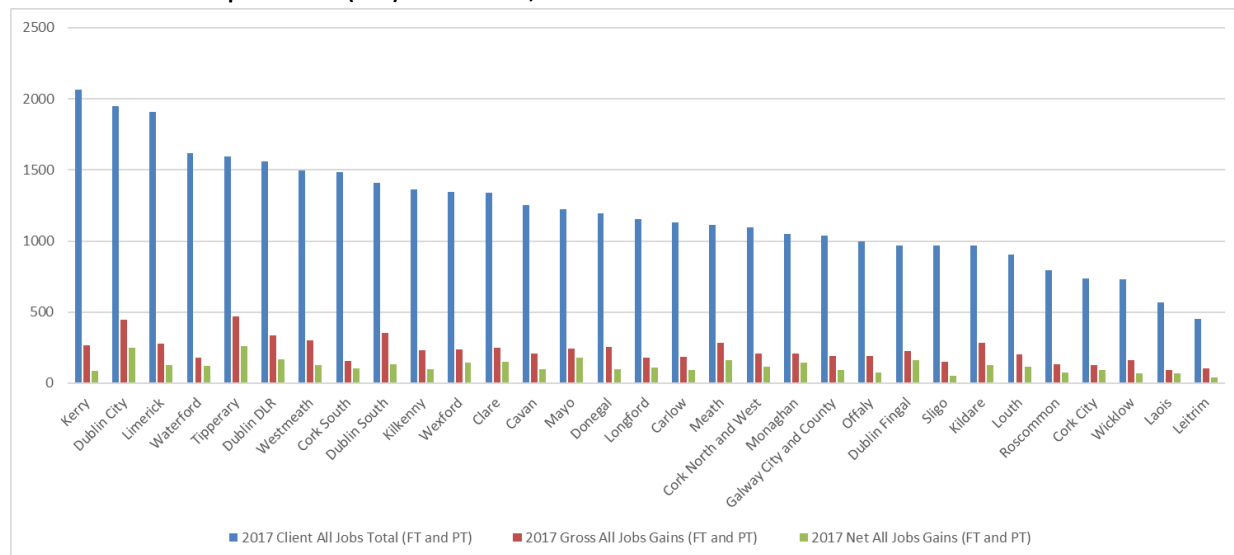
Development Management

Chart 6.1: Expenditure on Development Management by Local Authority Area, 2018



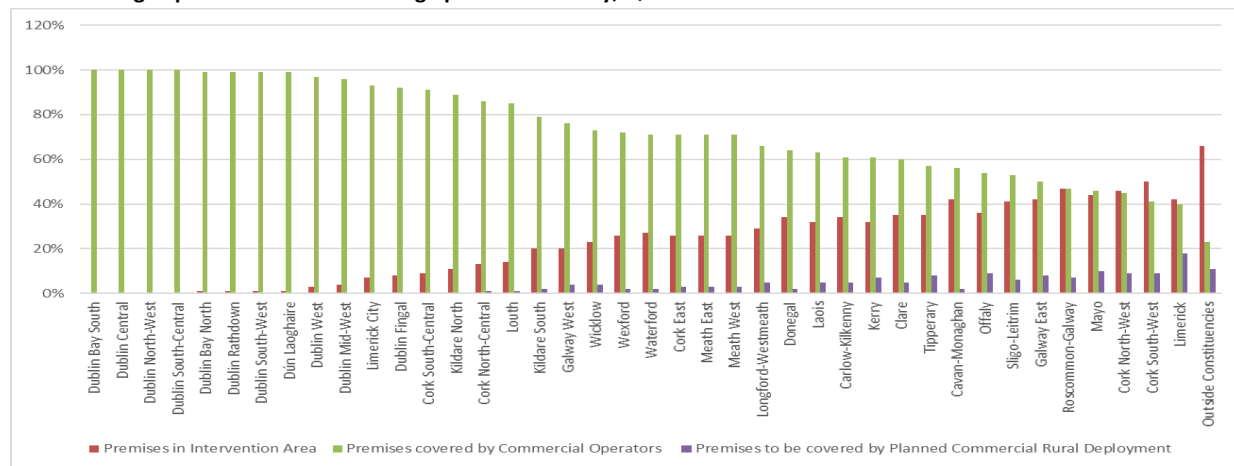
Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018

Chart 6.2: Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Job Creation, 2017



Source: Local Enterprise Office Impact Report 2017, www.localenterprise.ie

Chart 6.3: High-speed Broadband Coverage per Constituency, Q4 2018



Source: Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, National Broadband Plan, Constituency Maps

Development Management

A 2018 report by Institute of Public Administration (IPA) reviewing the role of Local Authorities in selected jurisdictions⁴ found that in recent times of austerity Local Authorities are increasingly expected to do more with less. The Local Authorities studied had a diverse range of economic development functions, both between and within countries. This, the author surmised “reflects the increase in place-based economic development policy and the increasing capacity of Local Authorities to carry out their responsibilities to provide better environments for their citizens”. However, with increasing centralisation of both finances and decision-making in government in Ireland, it is unlikely that Local Authorities in this country can fulfil this potential. As can be seen in Chart 6.1, the majority of spending in this area in 2018 was in respect of Local Economic Development, that is the combined budget lines of Forward Planning, Industrial and Commercial Facilities, Community and Enterprise Function and Economic Development and Promotion. According to the IPA report referred to earlier “Local Authorities have been provided with increased responsibilities for economic development through the establishment of Local Enterprise Offices, the preparation of Local Economic and Community Plans and their involvement with Regional Action Plans for Jobs”. With Local Economic Offices (LEOs) forming such an important part of local government’s ability to influence economic policy, it is worth considering how much they have impacted local job creation.

According to the latest Local Enterprise Office Impact Report, 37,485 people were employed by 7,182 small businesses and start-ups supported by LEOs at the end of 2017. In 2017 alone, 7,135 gross full-time and part-time jobs and 3,760 net full-time and part-time jobs were created with LEO support. While the 3,760 net jobs are welcome,

questions must be asked about the sustainability of these jobs if almost the same number, 3,375, were lost during this period. This follows the pattern of previous years where 3,589 jobs were lost for a net gain of 3,533 in 2015 and 4,204 jobs were lost for a net gain of 3,679 in 2016. As can be seen in Chart 6.2 there are local variances in retention, with Dublin having the largest number of gross jobs, and Mayo having the largest net number of full and part-time jobs created.

Local economic development will continue to be hampered until such time as reliable, high-speed **broadband** is available across the country allowing for greater and more sustainable regional development. According to statistics published by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment on the roll-out of High-Speed Broadband, Dublin and surrounds is well serviced by commercial operators, with 100% coverage in most areas. Move away from Dublin, however, and increasing numbers of households come within the intervention area of the National Broadband Plan (Chart 6.3). In the Cork South-West constituency, 50% of premises (26,336) come within the intervention area, followed by Roscommon-Galway constituency with 47% (23,950 premises), Cork North-West constituency with 46% (20,537 premises) and Mayo constituency with 44% (33,915 premises).

Policy Priorities:

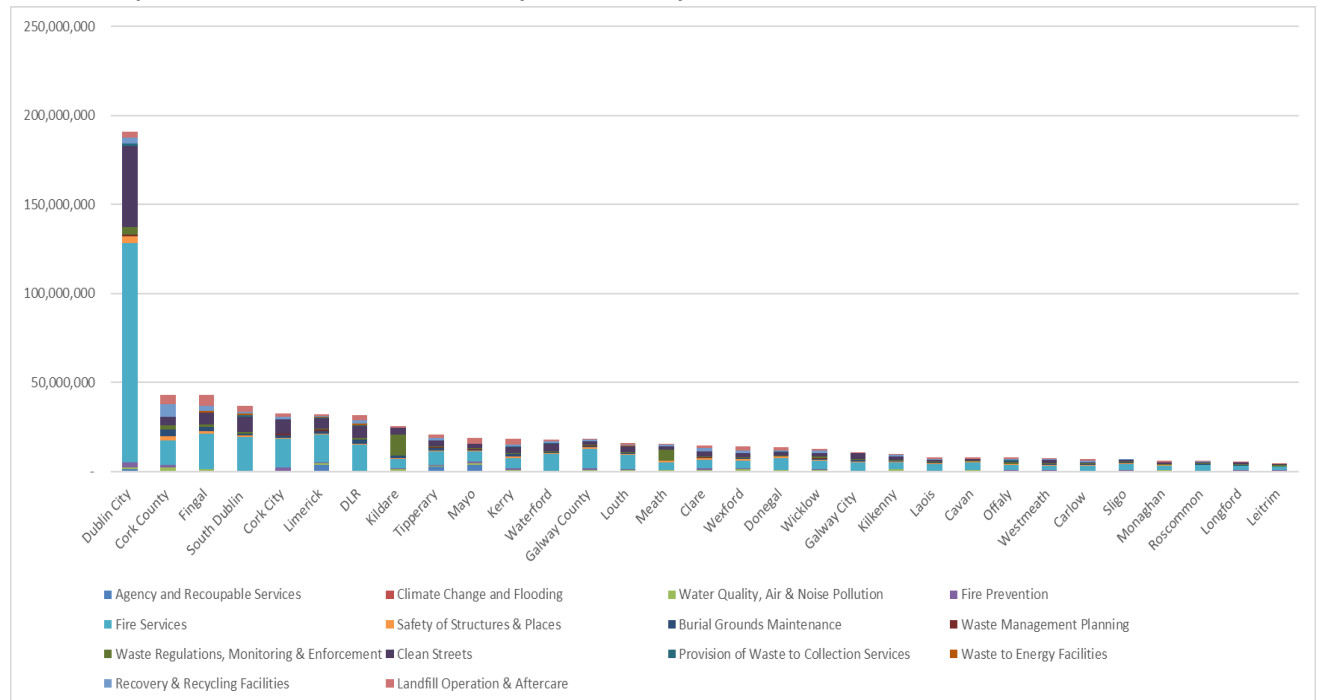
- Review the sustainability of jobs created through LEOs and develop plans to ensure the security of decent work.
- Expedite the roll-out of the National Broadband Plan, commencing with those with the largest proportion of premises dependent on it.

⁴Northern Ireland, England, Belgium, New Zealand and the United States, see

https://www.ipa.ie/_fileUpload/Documents/LocalEconomicDev_2018.pdf

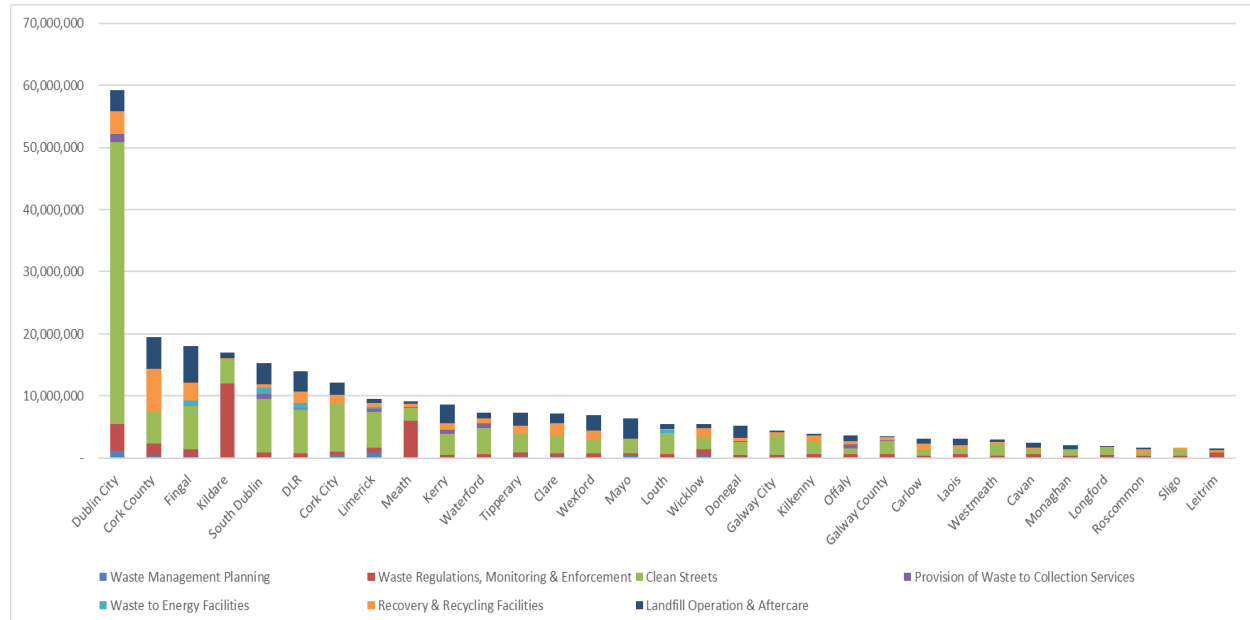
Environmental Services

Chart 7.1: Expenditure on Environmental Service, by Local Authority Area, 2018



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018

Chart 7.2: Expenditure on Waste, Waste Management, Clean Streets and associated lines, by Local Authority Area, 2018



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018

Environmental Services

After Fire Services, the largest outlay under the Environmental Services budget line is on Waste Management and related services (Chart 7.1). Dublin City Council spends significantly more than the others, with almost €60 million, the majority of which (€45 million) is on 'Clean Streets'. Cork County (with €19.5 million) and Fingal County Council (with almost €18 million) had the next highest expenditure, with Leitrim (€1.5 million), Sligo (€1.6 million) and Roscommon (€1.7 million) spending the least (Chart 7.2).

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Ireland's waste management practices, infrastructure and regulations have 'matured significantly over the last 20 years' driven by both EU and domestic legislation and policy. More residual waste is now used as a fuel, through energy recovery, than disposed to landfill. Five landfills accepted waste in 2017 and 2018. In their National Waste Statistics report, the EPA state that municipal waste was 'the largest component of waste accepted at landfill in 2017, even though the amount of municipal waste accepted at landfill decreased from over 744,000 tonnes in 2016 to approximately 685,000 tonnes in 2017. Early indications from the BMW [biodegradable municipal waste] reporting system suggest that this tonnage dropped further in 2018.' The EPA attribute this reduction in waste to landfill to a fall in construction and demolition waste, and an increase in that waste being brought to soil recovery facilities.

In terms of meeting EU targets on waste reduction, Ireland is meeting its targets in respect of recovery and recycling of waste packaging, waste electrical and electronic equipment, batteries and accumulators (WEEE) and the diversion of BMW from landfill, however we are falling behind in our recovery of end-of-life vehicles, despite improvements in recent years. The EU Waste

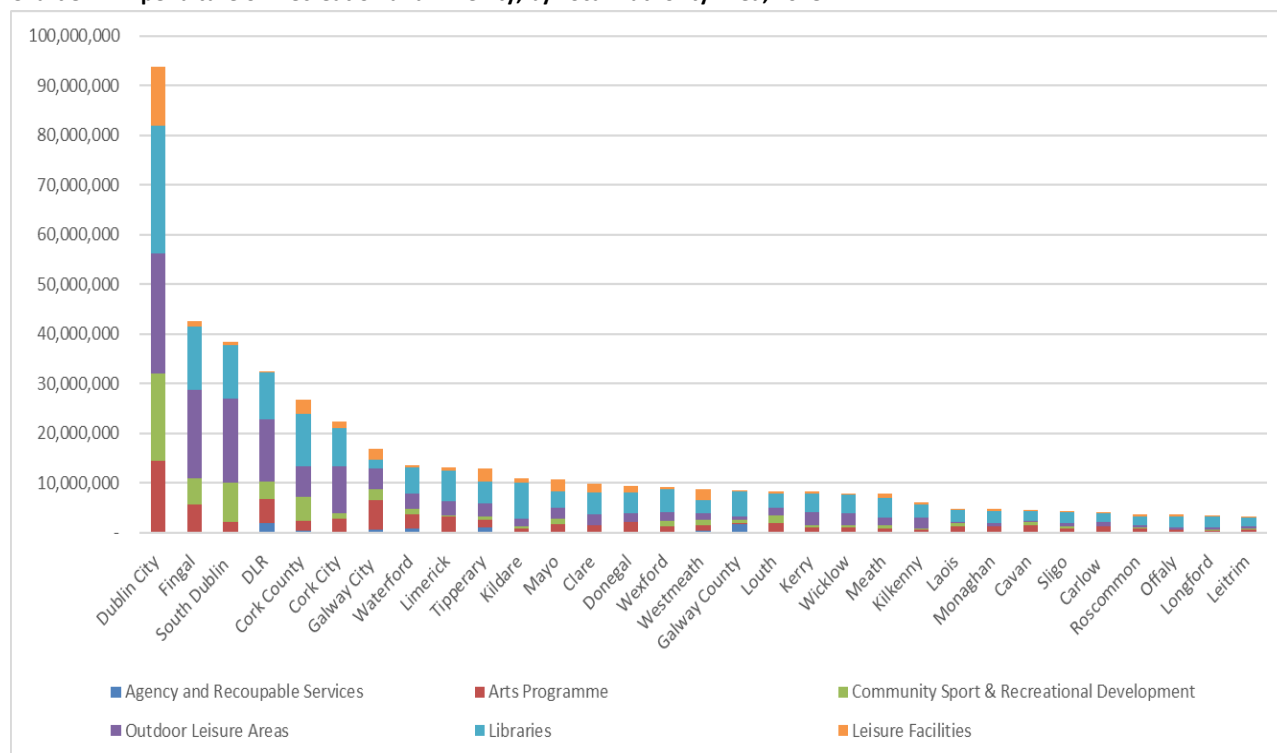
Framework Directive will introduce targets for household waste recycling and construction and demolition waste recovery in 2020. The EPA expect these targets will pose a challenge in Ireland, as household recycling has remained 'relatively static' since 2012. Local Authorities and waste collection providers are currently also working on a public education programme to prevent contamination of dry waste in public bins. Three regions, Connaught-Ulster, Southern and Eastern-Midlands are implementing 'A Resource Opportunity' waste management policy, with each region publishing a plan to address waste management between 2015-2021. Local Authorities have set targets under each of these waste plans. In the Eastern-Midlands plan 12 Local Authorities aim to achieve a 1% reduction in the quality of household waste production per annum, reduce to 0% the direct disposal of unprocessed municipal waste to landfill, and achieve a recycling rate of 50% of managed municipal waste by 2020. In its second Annual Report (2016/2017), this Region lists Brexit, Plastics, Waste Capacity, Participation and the roll out of the brown bin as presenting 'key challenges'. Rolling out initiatives to promote recycling, especially among younger people, a brown bin campaign to encourage composting, establishing national and European partnerships to share practices and to include principles of the circular economy in infrastructural development are just some of the proposals aimed at addressing these challenges.

Policy Priorities

- Develop open consultation on ambitious waste management plans beyond 2021.
- Adopt the principles of a circular economy, particularly for construction and demolition waste.

Recreation and Amenity

Chart 8.1: Expenditure on Recreation and Amenity, by Local Authority Area, 2018



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018

Recreation and Amenity

In 2018, expenditure on recreation and amenities was highest in Dublin and urban centres such as Cork, Galway, Waterford and Limerick, with relatively low spending in areas such as Leitrim, Longford, Offaly and Roscommon. As a proportion of overall expenditure, Outdoor Leisure Areas received the most funding, followed by Community Sport & Recreational Development (Chart 8.1).

Sports and Recreation

According to the CSO report '*Wellbeing of the Nation*' participation in sport declined from 47.2 per cent in 2013 to 45 per cent in 2015, while the average weekly expenditure of a household on sports and leisure increased from €14.40 between 2009-2010 to €17.85 in the period 2015-2016. The report notes that participation in sport has many positive effects on a person's wellbeing, both physical and mental. While higher spending on these

activities is reported as a good sign, increased costs may also act as a barrier to participation, particularly in low income households. It is therefore important that public funding be maintained, and increased where necessary, to promote participation and wellbeing regardless of ability to pay.

The Irish Sports Monitor Annual Report (Sports Ireland, 2018) reported that only 43% of the population had participated in sport in the previous seven days, a decrease of 0.1 percentage points on 2015. The most popular type of sport was 'Exercise' (12.4%), followed by swimming (8.5%) and running (5.1%). Participation by women in every age group from 35-44 and upwards increased between 2015 and 2017. The proportion of men in most age groups from 35-44 and onwards also increased, with the exception of those aged between 45-54, but the rate of increase was less than that of women. Participation rates remain lower for people in lower socio

economic groups. Those classified as ‘unable to work’ had the lowest participation rate, at just 21.2% (although a slight increase from 20% in 2015), while students and employees had the highest participation rates (67.7% and 47.1% respectively). The unemployed and homemakers had participation rates of 36.3% and 34.6%, while those in self-employment had a participation rate of 39%.

‘Growing Up in Ireland’, the National Longitudinal Study of Children, reported on the frequency with which participating 13 year olds were participating in hard exercise for at least 20 minutes in a day. This study found that boys were more likely to exercise than girls, with girls more likely to report exercising for two or fewer days in the previous two weeks and boys more likely to report exercising in nine or more days in that period. Boys were also found to be more likely than girls to spend more than 3 hours watching TV and playing video games, while girls were more likely than boys to spend more than 3 hours reading or using a computer. The study also found that 20% of 13 year olds were overweight and 6% were classified as obese, with girls more likely to be overweight or obese than boys.

The National Physical Activity Plan, published in 2016 as part of the Healthy Ireland framework, contained ambitious targets for eight key action areas including children and young people, work places, public awareness, and sport and physical activity in the community. *Social Justice Ireland* recommends continued investment in physical activities for a range of ages and lifestyles and calls on Government to encourage children and adults, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds to increase their participation in sports through the further development of playgrounds and subsidised sports centres.

Libraries

Every Local Authority in Ireland had some expenditure line for libraries in 2018 (Chart 8.1). Libraries provide an important social outlet and educational role in Ireland, with 17.2 million visits recorded in 2016 by 754,748 members across 330 branch libraries and 31 mobile libraries. Operated by Local Authorities, they play an important role in ensuring access to information, reading and learning material. In recent years, libraries have greatly expanded their offering, with a rollout of digital services including e-books, and access to journals and catalogues online. They also provide affordable internet access and support for people who may not own a computer.

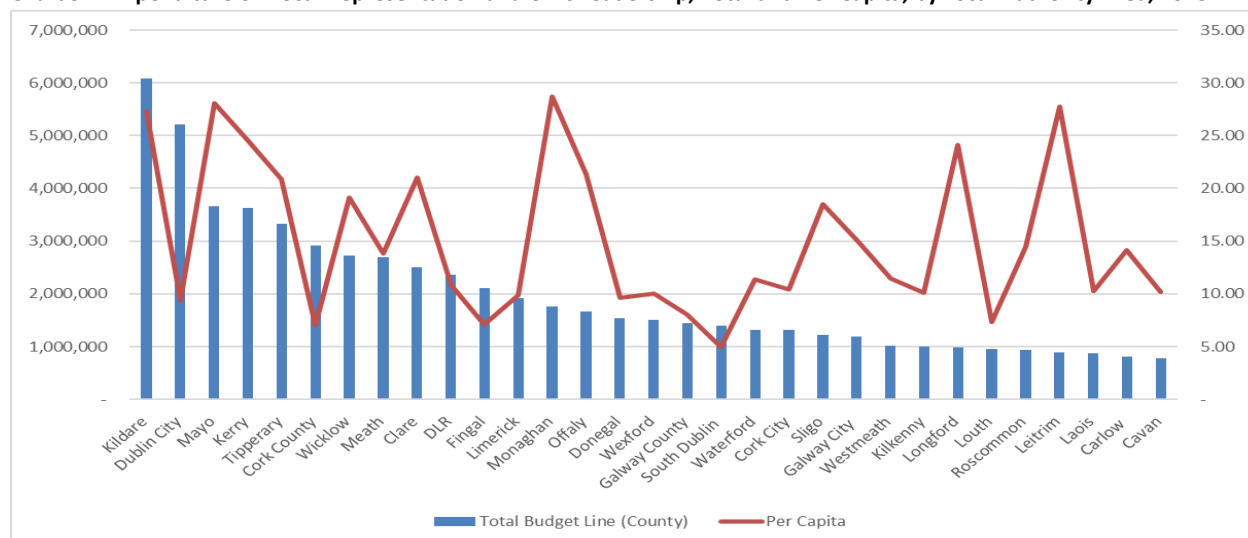
Many libraries also offer exhibition and meeting spaces, specific activities such as book clubs, parent and child reading events, local history lectures and act as an information hub within a community. In addition to the fixed venues they offer a mobile service for schools and in rural areas. As part of their commitment towards equity of access, library membership is now free for core services. *Social Justice Ireland* welcomes the broadening of the scope of the library service, the introduction of Libraries Ireland, the availability of e-learning and electronic resources etc. However, it is important that these developments do not result in a closing or downgrading of smaller branch libraries, which play a significant role in supporting local communities.

Policy Priorities

- Ringfence continued funding to encourage sports participation and active lifestyle programmes.
- Ensure the implementation of the Libraries Strategy is inclusive and supportive of smaller branch libraries as a hub for local communities.

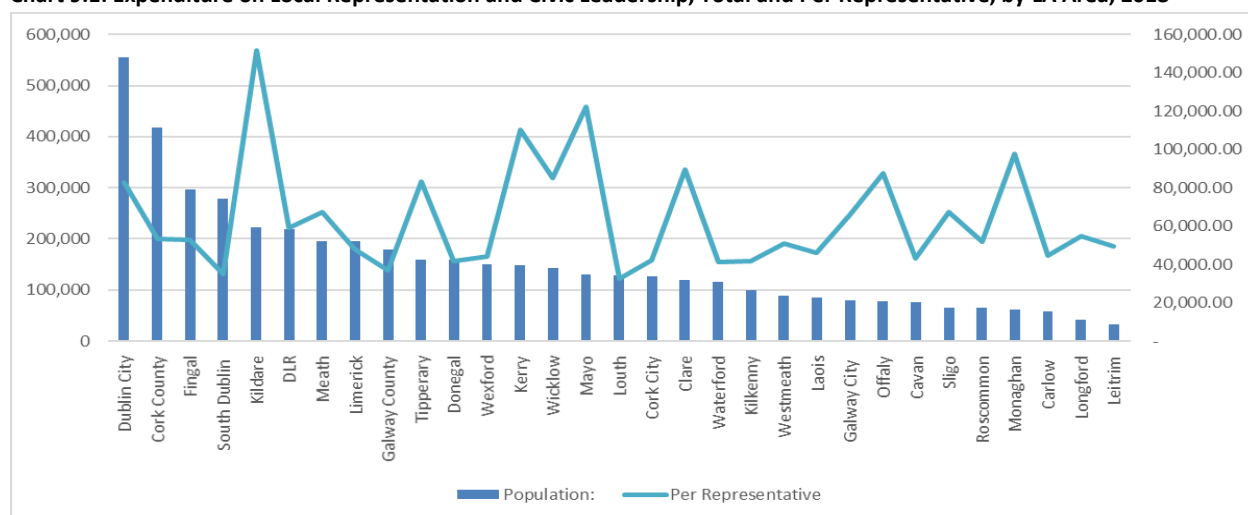
Local Representation and Civic Leadership

Chart 9.1: Expenditure on Local Representation and Civic Leadership, Total and Per Capita, by Local Authority Area, 2018



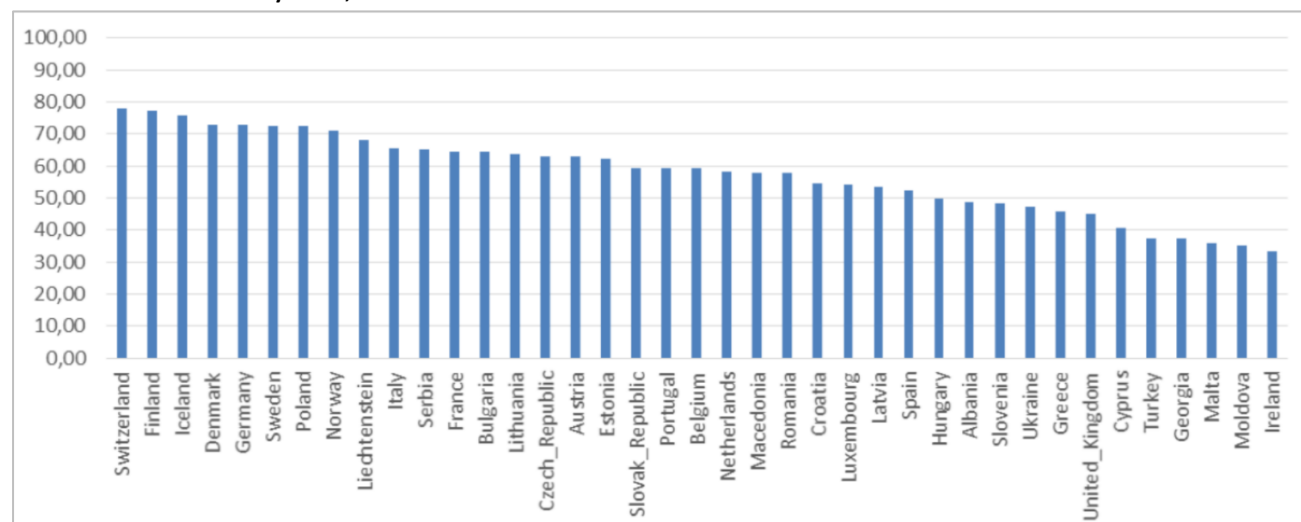
Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018; Population Statbank [E2004]

Chart 9.1: Expenditure on Local Representation and Civic Leadership, Total and Per Representative, by LA Area, 2018



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018

Chart 9.3: Local Autonomy Index, 2014



Source: Self-rule Index for Local Authorities (2015) cited in Reidy, T (2018): *Power Monopoly: Central-local relations in Ireland*, Social Justice Ireland Policy Conference 2018

Local Representation and Civic Leadership

There are 31 Local Authorities in Ireland – three city councils, two city and county councils, and 26 county councils. All counties, with the exception of Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, Fingal and South Dublin, Dublin City, Cork City and Galway City were divided into municipal districts (95 in total) with councillors representing both the municipal district and the Local Authority. There are currently 949 councillors across the 31 councils, with council membership ranging from 18 to 63 councillors. As can be seen from Charts 9.1 and 9.2, expenditure on ‘Local Representation and Participation’ is seemingly unconnected to either population of the area or the number of representatives. Kildare County Council spends the most overall and per representative in this area (€6 million total, €151,863 per each of its 40 representatives), while the lowest overall spend is in Cavan (€774,565).

Monaghan spends the most per capita (€1.76 million total spend, €28.67 per capita), while the lowest per capita spend is in South Dublin (€1.4 million overall spend, €5 per capita).

Autonomy and Participation

In her paper delivered at the *Social Justice Ireland* Social Policy Conference in November 2018, Dr. Theresa Reidy discussed the centralised nature of government in Ireland. As can be seen in Chart 9.3, taken from Dr. Reidy’s paper, Ireland ranked lowest on the Local Autonomy Index 2014, so what does that mean for participative democracy? The 2014 Local Government reforms included the establishment of Public Participation Networks (PPNs) as a mechanism for local and community organisations to input into local government policy. The PPNs represent a move from mere representative democracy, where engagement ends with a vote, to deliberative democracy – a form of active participation. They are non-political, which means they are not affiliated with any

particular party but can engage with all in support of their communities. PPNs bring together all the volunteer-led organisations within their area. On average each PPN has almost 500 member groups, comprising environmental, social inclusion, and community and voluntary activities. PPNs have a flat structure with no designated leaders, which means that it operates in an open and accessible way. The overall decision-making body of the PPN is the Plenary - the meeting of all member groups. PPNs are also mandated to actively engage and include groups representing people whose voices are not generally heard in policy making.

PPNs elect representatives to sit on various Local Authority policy and decision-making bodies. Their structure maximises involvement from member groups, and ensures that representatives bring forward the views of the PPN, and not their personal opinions. It also stimulates member groups to make submissions in their own right on matters that they feel are important to them. However, this input will only be meaningful if Local Authorities are sufficiently autonomous, thereby having the ability to have a real impact in their communities and to work collaboratively with PPNs in furtherance of community objectives.

PPNs are established within their communities as both an information hub for member groups and as a mechanism for facilitating policy change. Their funding model now needs to be revised to ensure their continued development and engagement.

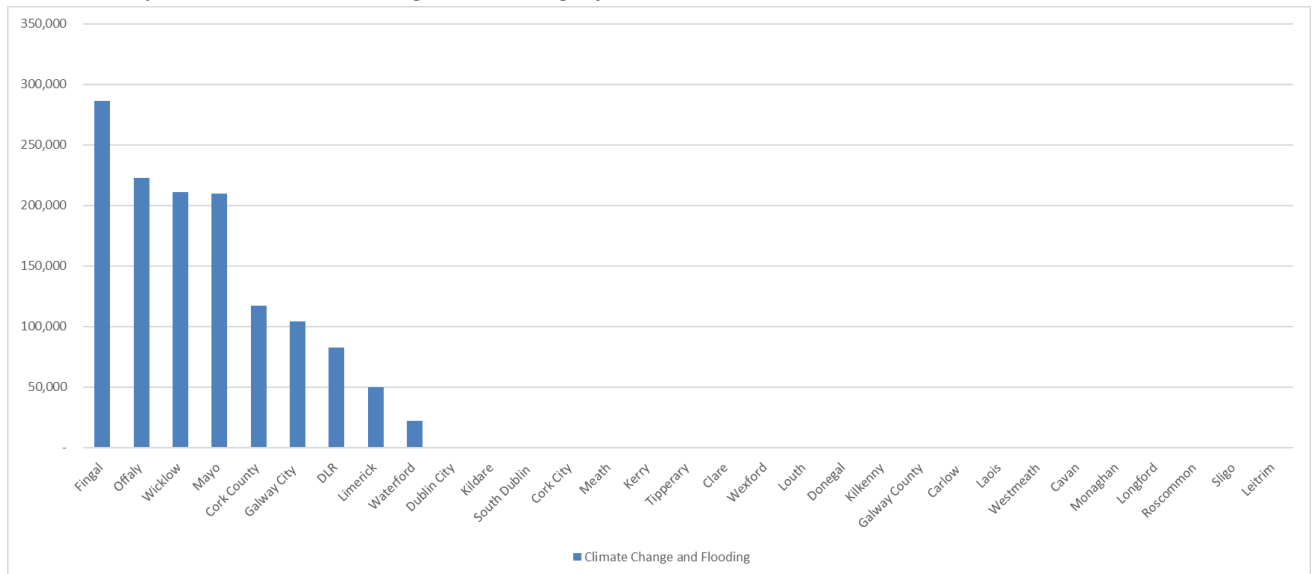
Policy Priorities

- Develop a sustainable strategy for public participation, to include medium and long-term objectives and associated budget commitments; and a move from an annual funding

model for PPNs to a 3-5 year renewable commitment.

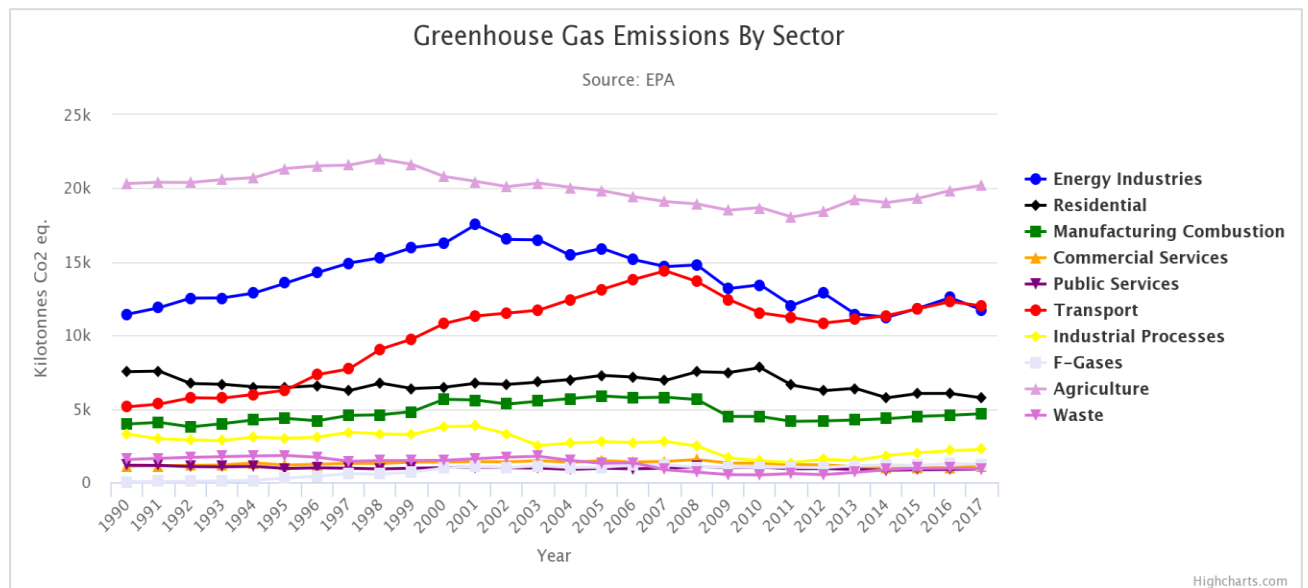
New Initiatives – Focus on Climate Change

Chart 10.1: Expenditure on Climate Change and Flooding, by Council, 2018



Source: Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, Local Authority Budgets 2018

Chart 10.2: Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Sector, 1990 to 2017



Source: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Environmental Indicators

New Initiatives – Focus on Climate Change

Only nine of the 31 Local Authorities provided a specific budget line for ‘Climate Change and Flooding’ in their 2018 budgets. These were Fingal (€286,159), Offaly (€222,693), Wicklow (€210,760), Mayo (€209,780), Cork County (€117,440), Galway City (€104,273), Dun Laoghaire Rathdown (€82,500), Limerick (€50,000) and Waterford (€21,925) (Chart 10.1). While the remaining 22 Local Authorities may have made provision elsewhere in other budget lines, it is disappointing to note that such a high proportion did not use this dedicated budget line to clearly signal their intent to address this pressing issue.

The Agriculture sector has consistently been the largest contributor to Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in Ireland since 1990, representing 33.2% of national GHG emissions in 2017. Both the Transport and Energy Industries sectors represent 20% and 19% respectively, of total GHG emissions in that year, with the Transport being the fastest growing source of GHG, showing a 133% increase between 1990 and 2017 (Chart 10.2).

According to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Local Authorities will play a ‘key role’ in helping the country to adapt to climate change, given its already ‘pivotal role’ in planning for, and responding to, emergency situations. Under the National Adaptation Framework each Local Authority will develop their own adaptation strategy in line with the Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines issued by the Department in December 2018. These Guidelines provide a five step process for Local Authorities when drafting their adaptation strategies, from convening an ‘adaptation team’ (Step 1) to identifying future risks and vulnerabilities (Step 3) and drafting, implementing and monitoring the strategy (Step 5). One of the most important steps in this process is Step 4, assessing the

current adaptation baseline. Without developing a profile of climate hazards and assessing climate vulnerabilities in a Local Authority area, the Local Authority cannot project future events with any accuracy in order to mitigate against them.

The development of ambitious targets, and key performance indicators to meet them, will be critical to the success of these strategies. These strategies will also require medium- and long-term funding packages to see their implementation through. The National Development Plan established a Climate Action Fund with an allocation of at least €500 million to support public and private sector initiatives that will help Ireland to meet its climate and energy targets in a cost-effective manner, and to facilitate projects that contribute to ‘support innovation and capacity building towards the development of climate change solutions capable of being scaled and delivering benefits beyond a once off impact; generate wider socio-economic benefits such as job creation, air quality improvements, reduction in fuel poverty, biodiversity and community resilience and development; and leverage non-exchequer sourced investment’ (Local Authority Adaptation Strategy Development Guidelines, 2018). A proportion of this funding should be ring-fenced to support Local Authorities to both adapt to and mitigate against the effects of climate change and to support the development of real solutions at local level.

Policy Priorities

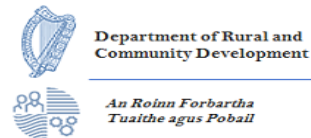
- The development of Climate Change Adaptation Strategies in each Local Authority area, with the collaborative input of local communities and Public Participation Networks, supported by dedicated sustainable funding in the medium to long-term.

Social Justice Ireland is an independent think-tank and justice advocacy organisation of that advances the lives of people and communities through providing independent social analysis and effective policy development to create a sustainable future for every member of society and for societies as a whole.



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