



**GOVERNANCE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of Governance Strategic Policy Committee Meeting  
held via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday  
19<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at 11am**

---

**PRESIDING:** Councillor Mick Cahill, Chairperson.

**PRESENT:** Councillors – Seamus Butler, John Browne, Colin Dalton,  
P.J. Reilly.  
Brendan Murtagh, Pamela Martin.

**APOLOGIES:** Teresa Kearney, Fulton Grant and Karie Murray.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** John McKeon, Director of Services/Head of Finance  
Mary Gouldsbury, Senior Executive Officer.

**MEETINGS  
ADMINISTRATOR:** Ann Marie Mc Keon.

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES – circulated.**

On the proposal of Councillor John Browne, seconded by Councillor Colin Dalton, it was agreed to adopt the minutes of the Governance Strategic Policy Committee meeting held on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES.**

None.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.**

None.

### **LG 03/2021 - ELECTED MEMBERS EXPENSES AND PUBLIC REGISTERS.**

John Mc Keon, Director of Services, gave a detailed report on Circular LG 03/2021 which refers to Section 141 and 142 of the Local Government acts, as amended by the Local Government Report Act 2014 which issued on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2021 as follows:

Membership of outside Bodies

Statutory Obligation now on members to:

- Notify their local authority
- Within 15 days of the end of each 3-monthly period
- Of all attendances by that member at meetings of the body concerned, and
- Any payments made by or on behalf of that body to the member during that period.

Member must present a report to their Local Authority: -

- On the activities and operation of that body,
- Annually, or
- At any other time if so, requested by resolution or the Cathaoirleach.

Each local Authority must:

- Maintain a public register of all attendances and payments to which Section 141 relates.
- If member has not provided returns, then this should be noted on the public register for each 3-monthly period.
- 

Travel and Subsistence Expenses Travel

- Where it is practicable to travel by bus or rail, the allowance to be paid shall not be greater than the first class (or equivalent) fare payable in respect of the journey concerned.
- Where 2 or more members travel in the same car, an allowance is only payable to 1 member.
- A LA shall not pay more than 1 allowance to a member in respect of the same journey.
- A LA shall not pay any allowance to a member in respect of any journey, which is payable by, or is claimed from, another public authority, or any other person or body.
- Where a member attends more than one work related function on the same day, the distance in respect of which an allowance may be paid shall be the shortest overall route that they could reasonably be expected to travel.
- Where a member is attending a work-related function for more than 5 hours and where a meal is provided by the host then no subsistence is payable.
- Where meals have been provided, the following deductions will apply: -
  - Where lunch **or** dinner is provided - deduct a 5-hour rate.
  - Where **both** lunch **and** dinner is provided – deduct a 10-hour rate.
- An overnight domestic subsistence allowance will not be payable in respect of attendance at an event that is within 100km of a member's home or headquarters (whichever is lesser).
- Where a T&S claim includes a claim for recoupment of costs, it must be accompanied by all relevant receipts, tickets, or appropriate vouchers in respect of such costs.

- A Local authority shall not make any payment unless a claimant has submitted supporting documentation (proof of attendance).
- Additional requirements are in place, in respect of attendances at conferences and training events.
- Each LA must maintain a Public Register of all attendances and payments, and this should be updated at least quarterly. (Recommended publication on LA's website).

### Conferences and Training

- Regulation 10 of 2021 Regulations sets the maximum amount that can be provided by an LA for attendance at events by members at €700 per annum: -
- Longford County Council (€700 x 18 = €12,600 per annum)
- Individual members payments limited to €1,000 per member per annum.
- CPG should have a role in assessing the relevance and suitability of conferences for its members, account should be taken of: -
  - Size of Delegation – minimum necessary to represent the authority.
  - Members Attending – take into account membership of SPC's or other LA committees, areas of particular interest.
  - Any follow-up action proposed to be taken by an LA following the event.
- Submit a written report within 15 days to the Cathaoirleach, who in turn submits the report to the next ordinary Council meeting.  
The Report must: -
- Indicate the Nature of the Conference/Training.
- Contain a Summary of Proceedings.
- Made available free of charge on request to any member of the public.

### Requirements on members attendances at Conferences & Training

- The provision of allowances for expenses for training is separated from allowances for expenses for conferences (on the basis that training is of greater benefit than conferences).
- Local Authorities are required to adopt a Training & Development Programme for Councillors.

### Allowances for expenses for attendance at training events

- The provision of allowances for expenses for training is separated from allowances for expenses for conferences (on the basis that training is of greater benefit than conferences).
- Local Authorities are required to adopt a Training & Development Programme for Councillors.
- Attendance at the Annual Conference and specific training events provided by the AILG.
- Annual seminars and conferences of LAMA (limited to 2 per annum).
- Induction courses organized by the LA itself and by the LA.
- Events organized by national representative bodies for functions for which LA's have responsibilities e.g.
  - Irish Planning Institute (IPI).
  - Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland (RIAI).
  - Quality & Qualifications Ireland (formerly FETAC and HETAC) accredited courses for functions for which LA's have responsibilities.
  - Courses that would lead to qualifications of relevance which are recognized within the National Framework of Qualifications.

Training provided by the Institute of Public Administration (IPA).

- The LA should pay a proportion only of the course fees where these are in excess of €500 per annum and should in no case pay a contribution in excess of €1,500 per annum.
- Payment should be made annually in arrears following satisfactory evidence that all examinations have been passed.
- Best use should be made of the extension of in-house training to staff being also utilized by members

Councillor Seamus Butler noted that 100km was difficult if you were at an event that was late in the evening and public transport was not available. John Mc Keon noted Seamus's concern.

Councillor Mick Cahill requested a workshop for the members on this circular to ensure compliancy and John Mc Keon replied that it was intended to hold a workshop and provide a leaflet to all members on the Circular.

### **UPDATE ON RETURN TO OFFICES.**

Mary Gouldsbury briefed the members on the return to offices.

- Government Strategy - currently Reframing the Challenge, continuing our Recovery and Reconnecting
- Work Safety Protocol
- LGMA High Level Local Authority COVID-19 Work Safely Health and Safety Guidance
- CCMA LA Service Framework level framework document
- LGMA Local Authority Standard Operating guidance
- Longford County Council Protocols – Return to the Office
- COVID-19 Employee Updates
- 

Given the importance of keeping workplaces safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) was developed and is the forum for high-level dialogue between Government, Trade Union and Employer representatives on matters related to the labour force.

Services must continue to be delivered in accordance with the Standing Operating Procedures developed by the local authority sector.

In September, following the decision by Government in relation to return to the office, the Management Team has decided that attendance at the office will commence on a phased, staggered and managed basis from Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021. This will give Line Managers the opportunity to plan for employees returning to the office while allowing the current arrangements which are in operation in sections to continue to apply.

At a minimum, all employees will be required to work from the office during normal working hours on two days per working week.

Public Counters will continue to operate the opening hours issued on the website. The Management Team will continue to review opening hours, ensuring that the extension of opening hours is phased in in a managed and safe way. Consistent opening hours, across all sections, will apply in the future

- Blended working arrangements will be facilitated

- Schedules should be developed to ensure that all employees are rostered to attend the workplace on a minimum of two days per week.
- Working arrangements should be rotated, where possible, to ensure that employees are being treated with fairness and equity and to comply with Organisation of Working Time Act.
- Where possible, organise employees into teams who consistently work and take breaks together.
- Office space must be organised in such a way that physical distances are maintained, and free office capacity is used as much as possible.
- Shared workstations and hot desks should be identified in each section with cleaning taking place before and after use.
- A review of all workspaces should be carried out to ensure that physical distancing measures can be adhered to.
- Sanitisers and cleaning equipment should be made available.
- HR-F-10 (Rev 04) COVID-19 Pre-Return to Office form must be completed by employees in advance of returning to the workplace.

The members welcomed the update. Councillor Seamus Butler asked if any companies had completed a report on the productivity on working from home and Seamus also asked if employees were provided with mobile phones to deal with calls while working from home. Mary explained that she wasn't aware of any report but would definitely investigate if such a report existed. Mary informed the members that a certain number of employees would have mobile phones however, employees were provided with laptops and the laptop is linked to a system called Ciso Jaber which enables staff to answer calls on their laptops and employees also use the teams facility.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

The members noted the dates of the meetings for 2022.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

*Ann Marie Mc Keon*

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Ann Marie Mc Keon,**  
**Meetings Administrator.**

**Confirmed and adopted at the Governance Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on the 2 February 2022.**

*Mick Cahill*

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairperson.**