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An Comhchoiste um Choimirce Shóisialach, Forbairt Pobail agus Tuaithe agus na hOileáin

Tuarascáil: Aighneacht Réamh – Bhuiséid chuig
an Roinn Forbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail
Iúil - 2023

Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands

Report: Pre – Budget submission to the Department
of Rural and Community Development

July 2023



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**Joint Committee on Social Protection,
Community and Rural Development and the Islands.
Report: Pre – Budget submission to the
Department of Rural and Community Development
June 2023**

Committee Membership



Sen. Paddy Burke
Fine Gael



Jackie Cahill T.D.
Fianna Fáil



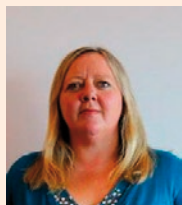
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Green Party



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John Paul Phelan T.D.
Fine Gael



Sen. Mark Wall
Labour

Cathaoirleachs Foreword



The Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands today publishes its Pre-Budget Submission to the Minister for Rural and Community Development in their deliberations during the negotiations on Budget 2024. The Committee publishes its report alongside a similar report submitted to the Minister for Social Protection.

Similar to the Committee's Pre-Budget Submission last year, a key focus of the Committee for Budget 2024 is tackling rural infrastructure development, rural town regeneration and social inclusion in communities.

The Committee is of the opinion that Oireachtas Committees should have the ability to inform and partake in the pre-budget process and publishes this report to that effect. During its investigation of the pre-budget, the Committee placed a public call for submissions and received 23 submissions from interested organisations and individuals, and on that note would like to thank everyone who made a submission to the Committee. All submissions were invaluable to the Committee and are attached in appendix 2.

Based on this the Committee have made 23 recommendations and are committed to ensuring these are implemented to ensure the continued development of rural Ireland and local communities through Budget 2024.

The Joint Committee will continue to engage with both the Minister and the Department of Rural and Community Development and seek regular updates on the implementation of the recommendations set out in this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Denis Naughten', followed by a horizontal line.

Denis Naughten T.D.,
Committee Cathaoirleach
12 July 2023

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Introduction

The Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands (the Committee) publishes this pre-budget submission which contains 24 recommendations regarding Budget 2024, with the aim of informing and effecting the budgetary process in a way that is beneficial for the State and its citizens.

In quarter two of 2023, the Committee published a public call for submissions from interested individuals and organisations to inform its Pre-Budget Scrutiny process. The Committee received 23 submissions from interested parties. The Committee has published this report based on its own knowledge, the information received through submissions and its engagement with stakeholders throughout the year. A copy of this report will be forwarded to the Department of Rural and Community Development for their consideration in advance of Budget 2024.

The Committee calls on the government and the shadowing department in particular to ensure that Budget 2024 includes economic, social and environmental measures to improve the welfare of those in both urban and rural areas.

The following organisations/persons provided submissions to the Committee;

| Name of organisation | |
|----------------------|---|
| 1 | Community Gardens Ireland |
| 2 | St. Vincent de Paul |
| 3 | Childrens Rights Alliance |
| 4 | Movement for change in Foster Care |
| 5 | National One Parent Family Alliance/ One Family |
| 6 | Irish Senior Citizens Parliament |
| 7 | Home and Community Care Ireland |
| 8 | Martin Lavelle |
| 9 | Treoir |

| | |
|----|-------------------------------|
| 10 | Family Carers Ireland |
| 11 | Rehab Enterprises |
| 12 | Epilepsy Ireland |
| 13 | Age & Opportunity |
| 14 | Mens Sheds Association |
| 15 | Age Action |
| 16 | SPARK Ireland |
| 17 | ALONE |
| 18 | Irish Rural Link |
| 19 | Irish Foster Care Association |
| 20 | Centre for Irish Towns |
| 21 | Brokers Ireland |
| 22 | Irish Wheelchair Association |
| 23 | Chime |

Priority Recommendations of the Committee

1. The Committee recommends an increase exchequer funding of the LEADER programme with emphasis on additional funding to support core activities in Local Development Companies.
2. The Committee recommends the expansion of Active Land Management Measures and provide funding to support Town Vision Plans and Local Area Plans that can consider the expansion of towns in a more holistic way, as provided for under the National Planning Framework.

3. The Committee recommends the increase in both current and capital expenditure for rural development to ensure actions and measures outlined in *Our Rural Future* are adequately resourced

4. The Committee recommends that provision should be made in Budget 2024 to resource a National Project for Public Spaces. This initiative would provide grant funding for community led development of enabling environments for physical activity and recreation and a showcase for examples of best practice.

5. The Committee recommends the expansion of the Croi Conaithe (Towns) Fund Scheme to include funding for the development of 'urban blocks' and provide for a 'living town initiative' which actively and strategically encourages people to live in town centres, rather than a focus on ad hoc, single buildings.

6. The Committee recommends investment in the Rural Transport Programme to increase the range of public transport options to support social inclusion in rural areas through increased public transport use. Focusing on frequency, reliability, connectivity and affordability would enable more households to reduce transport costs and use sustainable options, engaging with the National Transport Authority for this strategic expansion

7. The Committee recommends that Budget 2024 should be clearly rural proofed and ensure that social welfare measures introduced provide targeted responses to address poverty in rural areas.

8. The Committee recommends that the following regarding Mens and Women's Sheds:

- Provide for an Annual ringfenced Shed Maintenance Grant scheme be placed at the disposal of sheds nationwide;
- Provide for a once-off grant of €10,000 for each newly registered shed;
- Provide for an annual Shed Sustainability Grant to ensure that sheds can survive and thrive in a challenging environment.

- Carry out an audit of disused publicly owned buildings which may suit sheds' needs and take action to offer sheds secure leases.

9. The Committee recommends that financial assistance and training supports are provided in the first instance to support public and private sector employers to encourage staff to work from home or remote working hubs; and further recommends that each Government Department and Agency includes in its annual report a metric on remote working and actions to increase it thereafter.

10. The Committee recommends that €15 million be put in place to provide direct funding for major and minor capital development works on the islands as well as providing funding to co-finance or provide leverage funding with other State bodies and local authorities in providing vital infrastructure on the islands. This would help islands overcome the delay in prioritising projects due to cost benefit analysis favouring projects on the mainland.

Additional Recommendations of the Committee

Rural Public Transport

11. The Committee recommends that a travel allowance be given to those who hold a free travel pass but due to the lack of public transport services are unable to use it or get full use of it so it can go some way towards the cost of private transport.

12. The Committee recommends the establishment of a comprehensive demand-led transport service in rural areas, using electric vehicles.

13. The Committee recommend the provision of funding to examine the metrics of Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan, in terms of measuring its success e.g., a standard Level of Service.

Rural Infrastructure Development

14. The Committee recommend the establishment of a comprehensive programme to assist older people and others in rural areas to access digital services.

Social Inclusion in Communities

15. The Committee recommends that funding should be made available to establish a representative body for Women's Sheds.

Rural Town Regeneration

16. The Committee recommends that the Minister for Rural and Community Development engages with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage regarding provision of dedicated and supported independent living accommodation for older people separate to the current social housing need.
17. The Committee recommends that the Department of Rural and Community Development engages with Elder Home Share with the aim of piloting an expansion of this scheme in a range of communities.

Adequate and Sustainable Support for the Charitable and Voluntary Sector

18. The Committee recommends that multi-annual (three to five year) funding arrangements are established to facilitate and better enable long-term planning, assist effective staff recruitment and retention, and thereby deliver better and more sustainable services.

Develop a Framework for Collaborative Working and provide Resources and Supports for Mergers

19. The Committee recommends that a dedicated fund of €2 million is provided for in Budget 2024 that is earmarked for mergers between organisations.

Rural Enterprise

20. The Committee recommends that the definition of Rural Enterprise is expanded to ensure it is supporting as many business opportunities as possible and that the Department of Rural and Community Development develops a policy to repurpose existing agricultural buildings for rural enterprise.

Local Improvement Scheme

21. The Committee recommends that funding for the Local Improvement Scheme by the Department of Transport match that of the Department of Rural and Community Development and further recommends that the eligibility criteria for the Local Improvement Scheme is revised to ensure that it includes access to any road that serves more than two farms, houses, or a combination of both.

The Islands

22. The Committee recommends that current funding for the Islands air and ferry service are increased in Budget 2024 to cover increased costs and develop new and improved services to the islands; with the establishment of a new air service initially three days a week to Inisbofin.

23. Following the publication of the *Housing and Sustaining Communities on the West Cork Islands* report from University College Cork (UCC), and in advance of the pending National Housing report by UCC regarding housing on the Islands, The Committee recommends that the Department of Rural and Community Development in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage that a pilot will be delivered on Gateway housing in our Island Communities.

Context and Background of Recommendations

Poverty and Income Inadequacy in Rural Areas

Prior to the current cost of living crisis, it was well documented that income inadequacy continues to be higher in rural areas, especially for those in receipt of social welfare payments and those in low-paid or minimum wage employment when compared to urban counterparts.¹

Minimum Essential Standard of Living (MESL) research 2022, the most recent published data², has shown that the cost of a MESL had increased for all household types by an average of 5%. For low-income households in rural areas, this increase is higher at 14%³. With the continued increase in the prices of essential goods in the past 12 months, this figure is expected to be higher for 2023.

The higher rate of change in rural areas was due to increases in household energy and transport related prices. The net increase in MESL home energy costs was an average of 50% for rural households due to dependency on home heating oil. Likewise, the dependency on the car by rural households means higher transport

¹ Irish Rural Link Submission page 11 Available [here](#)

² Irish Rural Link Submission page 12 Available [here](#)

³ Irish Rural Link Submission page 12 Available [here](#)

costs. While the price of petrol and diesel decreased in the 12 months to April 2023, the restoration of excise duty on these fuels at the end of May, will increase the costs to rural households

Addressing poverty is more than just about financial support, it is about having access to public services, such as public transport, childcare, healthcare, and broadband. The reduction in cost of public transport, while welcome, has very little or no benefit for many low-income rural households who have no access to regular public transport services. Investment in services is as important as increasing income adequacy to lift rural households out of poverty and prevent pushing more households into poverty.

Recommendations

1. The Committee recommends that Budget 2024 must be clearly rural proofed and ensure that social welfare measures introduced provide targeted responses to address poverty in rural areas.
2. The Committee recommends an increase in exchequer funding of the LEADER programme with emphasis on additional funding to support core activities in Local Development Companies.

Rural Public Transport

The provision of robust public services must coincide with an adequate income to ensure people, regardless of where they live, have a minimum standard of living, and can fully participate in society. The continued cost of living crisis highlights the need for greater investment in public services, especially in transport so people can reduce their dependency on the private car.⁴

The lack of public transport in rural communities makes it very difficult for families to avail of public services, employment opportunities, healthcare and recreational

⁴ Irish Rural Link Submission Page 21– available [here](#)

activities and is recognised as a key contributor to social exclusion.⁵ A lack of transport particularly impacts on low-income households, and families with a disability who may not have access to a car and depend on public transport.⁶

Research shows that households in rural areas have different and additional needs to meet the same socially acceptable minimum standard of living as households based in urban areas. As well as increasing the risk of social exclusion, a lack of public transport can also hinder a family's ability to make ends meet. For Rural households', private transport is a minimum need as public transport options are limited and do not tend to offer an adequate level of service to rely on to meet all transport needs. Car related costs (fuel, maintenance, insurance etc) add an additional €83 per week.⁷

Ensuring that there is a sustainable, affordable, and comprehensive rural transport scheme could bridge this gap.

Recommendations

3. The Committee recommends investment in the Rural Transport Programme to increase the range of public transport options to support social inclusion in rural areas through increased public transport use. Focusing on frequency, reliability, connectivity and affordability would enable more households to reduce transport costs and use sustainable options, engaging with the National Transport Authority for this strategic expansion
4. The Committee recommends that a travel allowance be given to those who hold a free travel pass but due to the lack of public transport services are unable to use it or get full use of it so it can go some way towards the cost of private transport.
5. The Committee recommends the establishment of a comprehensive demand-led transport service in rural areas, using electric vehicles.

⁵ Society of St. Vincent de Paul Submission Page 13 – available [here](#)

⁶ Society of St. Vincent de Paul Submission, Page 13 – available [here](#)

⁷ Society of St. Vincent de Paul Submission, Page 13 – available [here](#)

6. The Committee recommends the provision of funding to examine the metrics of Connecting Ireland Rural Mobility Plan, in terms of measuring its success e.g., a standard Level of Service.

Rural Infrastructure Development

Our Rural Future: Rural Development 2021-2025 sets out a framework for improving rural and regional development, supporting remote working and sustainable rural communities. Ensuring that essential services and infrastructure, such as public transport, high-speed broadband, shops, roads, employment opportunities and access to community services, healthcare, training, and education are in place is vital to development in rural areas and the success of the new rural development policy.

The Census 2022⁸ on Ireland's population continued to see a high concentration of people living in the east of the country. While all counties showed an increase in population in the 5 years to 2022, population grew faster in the east of the country. The Dublin and Greater Dublin Area continue to attract most high-quality jobs. The current cost of living crisis and the lack of housing is continuing to put more pressure on people trying to live and work in the east of the country. The long commuting times people do to get to work shows that placing all development in the Greater Dublin Area is no longer sustainable.

Recommendations

7. The Committee recommends an increase in both current and capital expenditure for rural development to ensure actions and measures outlined in *Our Rural Future* are adequately resourced.
8. The Committee recommends the establish a comprehensive programme to assist older people and others in rural areas to access digital services.

⁸ CSO 2023 Census of Population 2022, available [here](#)

Social Inclusion in Communities

The Minister for Rural and Community Development should ensure that Budget 2024 provides for increased access to indoor spaces that have been built with public funds, safe, attractive outdoor places to meet and walk with public seating, picnic and toilet facilities that are not based around commercial or retail entities and, above all, consultation with local people of all ages about what their own locality needs to be more age friendly to young and old.

Men's and Women's Sheds

Increasing numbers of Men's and Women's sheds are opening around the country providing an essential space for social inclusion, particularly in rural areas. Many prospective new sheds are seeking to put down roots in deeply challenging conditions and deserve to be supported. The Irish Men's Sheds Association supports Ireland's network of over 400 Men's Sheds. Unlike Men's Sheds, Women's Sheds do not currently operate under a single national representative body. This makes it more difficult for them to avail of supports such as government funding. The Joint Committee welcomed Minister Humphrey's decision in October 2022 to launch a new fund to assist Women's Shed movement to grow and expand.⁹

In order to continue serving communities throughout the country, it is necessary that support is received in the following areas for both Mens and Women's sheds:

- After two years of disruption due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, many sheds require significant upgrades or repairs to their premises and equipment.
- The increased burden of running costs threatens sheds continues viability. As many as 70 men's sheds may be under threat of closure as a result.¹⁰
- Signature shed projects, such as the installation of benches for public parks, are now at risk from the spiralling cost of materials and energy.
- While sheds have made substantial efforts to acquire premises, many now fear having their premises sold or repurposed from beneath them.¹¹

⁹ Press Release, Our Rural Future: Minister Humphreys launches new initiative to support Women's Sheds, available [here](#)

¹⁰ Mens Sheds Association Submission – available [here](#)

¹¹ Mens Sheds Association Submission – available [here](#)

A national recruitment campaign is vital to ensure that sheds can continue to thrive, and to boost inclusion among groups for whom shed attendance would be hugely beneficial, such as younger men and women and refugees, and those isolated as a result of COVID-19. Shed sustainability and succession planning will also benefit.

Recommendations

9. The Committee recommends that provision should be made in Budget 2024 to resource a National Project for Public Spaces. This initiative would provide grant funding for community led development of enabling environments for physical activity and recreation and a showcase for examples of best practice.
10. The Committee recommends that the following regarding Mens and Women's Sheds:
 - Provide for an Annual ringfenced Shed Maintenance Grant scheme be places at the disposal of sheds nationwide;
 - Provide for a once-off grant of €10,000 for each newly registered shed;
 - Provide for an annual Shed Sustainability Grant to ensure that sheds can survive and thrive in a challenging environment.
 - Carry out an audit of disused publicly owned buildings which may suit sheds' needs and take action to offer sheds secure leases.
11. The Committee recommends that funding should be made available to establish a representative body for Women's Sheds.

Rural Town Regeneration

Irish Towns are integral to the economic, social, and environmental resilience of rural and urban Ireland. With two thirds of Ireland's population living either in rural areas or in towns, there is significant potential to facilitate thriving, sustainable communities that are walkable, sociable, and resilient, in line with UN Sustainable Development Goal

11. With appropriate support and investment, Irish towns have the potential to facilitate sustainable development in terms of social inclusion, environmental sustainability, economic development, and employment, as well as housing. They also present an attractive option in a post-pandemic era as remote working is normalised¹².

The Committee remains concerned that the housing needs of rural Ireland's older population are not fully considered in local development plans. The Committee is of the view that the true housing needs of older people are not fully documented as not all older people who may wish to downsize or avail of purpose-built accommodation to suit their needs are on the housing lists which often inform these developments. The Committee is of the opinion that a more detailed examination of the issue of housing for older people in rural Ireland is required to inform the plans of Local Authorities, Approved Housing Bodies and the relevant Government Departments. The Committee is also aware of initiative such as Elder Home Share, an organisation that matches older people who live alone with a reference checked tenant. The Committee is of the view that this often allows older people to remain independently in their homes for longer and provides companionship for both the homeowner and the tenant.

Recommendations

12. The Committee recommends the expansion of Active Land Management Measures and provide funding to support Town Vision Plans and Local Area Plans that can consider the expansion of towns in a more holistic way, as provided for under the National Planning Framework.

13. The Committee recommends the expansion of Croi Conaithe (Towns) Fund Scheme to include funding for the development of 'urban blocks' and provide for a 'living town initiative' which actively and strategically encourages people to live in town centres, rather than a focus on ad hoc, single buildings.

¹² UCD Centre for Irish Towns Submission Page 1 – available [here](#)

14. The Committee recommends that the Minister for Rural and Community Development engages with the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage with regard to provision of dedicated and supported independent living accommodation for older people separate to the current social housing need.
15. The Committee recommends that the Department of Rural and Community Development engages with Elder Home Share with the aim of piloting an expansion of this scheme in a range of communities.

Adequate and Sustainable Support for the Charitable and Voluntary Sector

There are approximately 33,000 organisations in the charitable and voluntary sector and 11,000 of these are registered charities. Research published by the Charities Regulator has shown that 70% of organisations surveyed reported that maintaining budgets was the biggest challenge they faced. Funding levels continue to be a challenge for the sector and the Committee is of the opinion that the sector must be sufficiently resourced to safeguard the essential role they play in a functioning society.

Cuts to the sector were on average 43% after the financial crash in 2008 and these cuts have not been fully reversed. This, along with the fact that the majority of funding is provided on an annual basis, makes long-term planning, including staff retention, difficult for the sector. The Committee calls for a multi-annual funding framework to be developed for the charitable and voluntary sectors to ensure sustainable long-term planning is possible.

Recommendations

16. The Committee recommends that multi-annual (three to five year) funding arrangements are established to facilitate and better enable long-term

planning, assist effective staff recruitment and retention, and thereby deliver better and more sustainable services.

Develop a Framework for Collaborative Working and provide Resources and Supports for Mergers

The Committee is of the view that collaboration and mergers can be good for the sector. Mergers are not necessarily about saving money but about providing a more effective service by streamlining services and avoiding duplication. However, the Committee acknowledges that while there are many benefits to mergers that are also additional costs associated with them. The Committee is also of the view that similar organisations should examine merging, where possible, their administration. It may be possible with the development of remote working for public bodies or the Office of Public Works to accommodate a clustering of organisations on such a basis.

Recommendations

17. The Committee recommends that a dedicated fund of €2 million is provided for in Budget 2023 that is earmarked for mergers between organisations.

Remote Working

In 'Our Rural Future', the State's rural development plan for the next five years, remote working is expressed as priority for the Government. The plan states the intention to provide funding to Local Authorities to bring vacant properties in town centres back into use as remote working hubs. Remote working is also part of the public service strategy, and it is the Government's intention to have 20% of work carried out by public servants working remotely. The Committee is of the opinion that additional financial assistance and training support should be provided for public and

private sector employers to support employees working from home and digital hubs/coworking hubs in local towns. Each Government Department and agency should include in its annual report a metric on remote working and actions to increase it.

Recommendations

18. The Committee recommends that financial assistance and training supports are provided in the first instance to support public and private sector employers to encourage staff to work from home or remote working hubs; and further recommends that each Government Department and Agency includes in its annual report a metric on remote working and actions to increase it thereafter.

Rural Enterprise

The Committee is of the opinion that the definition of Rural Enterprise within the county development plans needs to be expanded in order to support additional business opportunities for rural areas. Rural Enterprise has often been defined as businesses or small-scale industry projects or services which are related to normal rural activities. It is vital that the definition is expanded to include activities such as digital technology services, forestry services and forestry by products, woollen industry and by products, food & drink production, and associated retail activity in rural areas outside of towns and villages. There is also an opportunity to repurpose existing agricultural buildings for such uses and this should be Government policy. It is also important to recognise that there is a large number of substantial businesses located in rural Ireland and that the development of rural businesses and their location should be considered for planning on a case-by-case basis. The Committee feels that there is little point in having rural development policies and then stymying rural development through the planning process.

Recommendations

19. The Committee recommends that the definition of Rural Enterprise is expanded to ensure it is supporting as many business opportunities as possible and that the Department of Rural and Community Development develops a policy to repurpose existing agricultural buildings for rural enterprise.

Local Improvement Scheme

The Local Improvement Scheme (LIS) provides funding to help local authorities carry out improvement works on private and non-publicly maintained roads. The LIS is funded by the DRCD and is an important part of Our Rural Future: Rural Development Policy 2021-2025. The Committee is of the opinion that the funding provided by DRCD should be matched by a similar level of funding from the Department of Transport. The Committee is also of the opinion that the eligibility criteria should also be reformed to ensure that any road that serves more than two farms, houses or a combination of both would be eligible for the scheme.

Recommendations

20. The Committee recommends that funding for the Local Improvement Scheme by the Department of Transport match that of the Department of Rural and Community Development and further recommends that the eligibility criteria for the Local Improvement Scheme is revised to ensure that it includes access to any road that serves more than two farms, houses, or a combination of both.

Offshore Islands

There are around 30 islands off the coast of Ireland that are that are cut off daily by the tide, are not connected to the mainland by a bridge or causeway, have permanent year-round populations and are not in private ownership.¹³

The transport services to the islands air and sea, are the equivalent to roads on the mainland. Without good services to the islands, they will not realise their full potential. The Committee is of the opinion that the current funding to the Islands ferry, and air services is not sufficient to cover increased costs and leaves to possibility to create new and improved air and ferry services to the islands (including initiating an air service to Inisbofin, which already has an air strip, three days a week) as well as to fund other current expenditure on the islands.

The Committee recommends that the payment to the Community Organisations on the non-Gaeltacht islands be improved to ensure they can function properly as the main drivers of development on non-Gaeltacht islands. Infrastructure of many types, particularly piers and harbours are vital to island living. Attracting necessary capital investment from other state bodies can also be problematic because of the unit cost of building on an island and their small population.

It is essential that the Sustainable Development Goals are at the heart of Island policy, to ensure that the goal addressing the needs of those furthest behind first is reached.

Recommendations

21. The Committee recommends that €15 million be put in place to provide direct funding for major and minor capital development works on the islands as well as providing funding to co-finance or provide leverage funding with other State bodies and local authorities in providing vital infrastructure on the islands. This

¹³ Press Release, Our Living Islands, available [here](#)

would help islands overcome the delay in prioritising projects due to cost benefit analysis favouring projects on the mainland.

22. The Committee recommends that current funding for the Islands air and ferry service are increased in Budget 2024 to cover increased costs and develop new and improved services to the islands; with the establishment of a new air service initially three days a week to Inisbofin.

23. Following the publication of the *Housing and Sustaining Communities on the West Cork Islands* report¹⁴ from University College Cork (UCC), and in advance of the pending National Housing report by UCC regarding housing on the Islands, The Committee recommends that the Department of Rural and Community Development in conjunction with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage that a pilot will be delivered on Gateway housing in our Island Communities.

Conclusion

The Committee calls on the Government and the shadowing department in particular to ensure that Budget 2024 reflects the 23 recommendations by the Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands regarding Poverty and Income Inadequacy in Rural Areas; Rural Public Transport; Rural Infrastructure Development; Social Inclusion in Communities; Rural Town Regeneration; Adequate and Sustainable Support for the Charitable and Voluntary Sector; Collaborative Working and Provision of Resources and Supports for Mergers; Remote Working; Rural Enterprise; Local Improvement Scheme; and The Islands.

¹⁴ Housing and Sustaining Communities on the West Cork Islands report available [here](#)

The Committee has undertaken detailed Pre-Budget Scrutiny and would seek for the Minister to report back to the Committee on the implementation of the recommendations contained within this report.

APPENDIX 1 – Terms of Reference

Scope and context of activities of Select Committees (DSO 94 and SSO 70)

DSO 94

- 1) The Dáil may appoint a Select Committee to consider and, if so permitted, to take evidence upon any Bill, Estimate or matter, and to report its opinion for the information and assistance of the Dáil. Such motion shall specifically state the orders of reference of the Committee, define the powers devolved upon it, fix the number of members to serve on it, state the quorum, and may appoint a date upon which the Committee shall report back to the Dáil.

- 2) It shall be an instruction to each Select Committee that –
 - a) It may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders;
 - b) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil;
 - c) It shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 125(1); and
 - d) It shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by –
 - i. A member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
 - ii. The principal officer – holder of a state body within the responsibility of a Government Department or
 - iii. The principal officer – holder of a non – State body which is partly funded by the State,

Provided that the Committee may appeal any such request made to the Ceann Comhairle, whose decision shall be final.

- 3) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil after due notice to the Business Committee by a Chairman of one of the Select Committees concerned, waives this instruction.

SSO 70

- 1) The Seanad may appoint a Select Committee to consider any Bill or matter and to report its opinion for the information and assistance of the Seanad and, in the case of a Bill, whether or not it has amended the Bill. Such motion shall specifically state the orders of reference of the Committee, define the powers devolved upon it, fix the number of members to serve on it, state the quorum thereof, and may appoint a date upon which the Committee shall report back to the Seanad.
- 2) It shall be an instruction to each Select Committee that –
 - a) It may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders;
 - b) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Seanad;
 - c) It shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 108 (1); and
 - d) It shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by –

- i. A member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
- ii. The principal officeholder of a State body within the responsibility of a Government Department, or
- iii. The principal officeholder of a non-State body which is partly funded by the State,

Provided that the Committee may appeal any such request made to the Cathaoirleach, whose decision shall be final.

Functions of Departmental Select Committees (DSO 95 and SSO 71)

DSO 95

- 1) The Dáil may appoint a Departmental Select Committee to consider and, unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders or by order, to report to the Dáil on any matter relating to—
 - a) legislation, policy, governance, expenditure and administration of—
 - i. a Government Department, and
 - ii. State bodies within the responsibility of such Department, and
 - b) That performance of a non – State body in relation to an agreement for the provision of services that it has entered into with any such Government Department or State body.
- 2) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also consider such other matters which –
 - a) Stand referred to the Committee by virtue of these Standing Orders or statute law, or
 - b) Shall be referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.
- 3) The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance, expenditure and administration under paragraph (1) shall be –

- a) For the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and
 - b) To assess the performance of the relevant Government Department or of a State body within the responsibility of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.
- 4) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall not consider any matter relating to accounts audited by, or reports of, the Comptroller and Auditor General unless the Committee of Public Accounts –
 - a) Consents to such consideration, or
 - b) Has reported on such accounts or reports.
- 5) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann to be and act as a Joint Committee for the purposes of paragraph (1) and such other purposes as may be specified in these Standing Orders or by order of the Dáil: provided that the Joint Committee shall not consider –
 - a) The Committee Stage of a Bill,
 - b) Estimates for Public Services, or
 - c) A proposal contained in a motion for the approval of an international agreement involving a charge upon public funds referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.
- 6) Any report that the Joint Committee proposes to make shall, on adoption by the Joint Committee, be made to both Houses of the Oireachtas.
- 7) The Chairman of the Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also be Chairman of the Joint Committee.
- 8) Where a Select Committee proposes to consider –

- a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 133, including the compliance of such acts with the principal of subsidiarity,
- b) Other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes, and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,
- c) Non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, or
- d) Matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,

The following may be notified accordingly and shall have the right to attend and take part in such consideration without having a right to move motions or amendments or the right to vote:

- i. Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,
- ii. Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
- iii. At the invitation of the Committee, other members of the European Parliament.

9) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department consider –

- a) Such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and
- b) Such Ombudsman reports laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select: Provided that the provisions of Standing Order 130 apply where the Select Committee has not considered the Ombudsman report, or a portion or portions thereof, within two months (excluding Christmas, Easter or summer recess

periods) of the report being laid before either of both Houses of the Oireachtas.

SSO 71

- 1) The Seanad may appoint a Departmental Select Committee to consider and, unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders or by order, to report to the Seanad on any matter relating to –
 - a) Legislation, policy, governance, expenditure and administration of –
 - i. A Government Department, and
 - ii. State bodies within the responsibility of such Department, and
 - b) The performance of a non – State body in relation to an agreement for the provision of services that it has entered into with any such Government Department or State body.
- 2) A select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also consider such other matters which –
 - a) Stand referred to the Committee by virtue of these Standing Orders or statute law, or
 - b) Shall be referred to the Committee by order of the Seanad.
- 3) The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance expenditure and administration under paragraph (1) shall be –
 - a) For the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and
 - b) To assess the performance of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.
- 4) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall not consider any matter relating to accounts audited by, or reports of, the Comptroller and Auditor General unless the Committee of Public Accounts –

- a) Consents to such consideration, or
 - b) Has reported on such accounts or reports

- 5) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Dáil Éireann to be and act as a Joint Committee for the purposes of paragraph (1) and such other purposes as may be specified in these Standing Orders or by order of the Seanad: provided that the Joint Committee shall not consider –
 - a) The Committee Stage of a Bill,
 - b) Estimate for Public Services, or
 - c) A proposal contained in a motion for the approval of an international agreement involving a charge upon public funds referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.

- 6) Any report that the Joint Committee proposes to make shall, on adoption by the Joint Committee, be made to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

- 7) The Chairman of a Joint Committee pursuant to this Standing Order shall be a member of Dáil Éireann.

- 8) Where a Select Committee proposes to consider –
 - a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 116, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,
 - b) Other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,
 - c) Non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, or

- d) Matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant EC Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,

The following may be notified accordingly and shall have the right to attend and take part in such consideration without having a right to move motions or amendments or the right to vote:

- i. Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,
- ii. Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
- iii. At the invitation of the Committee, other members of the European Parliament.

9) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department consider –

- a) Such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and
- b) Such Ombudsman reported laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select: Provided that the provisions of Standing Order 113 apply where the Select Committee has not considered the Ombudsman report, or a portion or portions thereof, within two months (excluding Christmas, Easter or summer recess periods) of the report being laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Powers of Select Committees (DSO 96 and SSO 72)

Unless the Dáil shall otherwise order, a Committee appointed pursuant to these Standing Orders shall have the following powers:

- 1) Power to invite and receive oral and written evidence and to print and publish from time to time –
 - a) Minutes of such evidence as was heard in public, and
 - b) Such evidence in writing as the Committee thinks fit;
- 2) Power to appoint sub-Committees and to refer to such sub-Committees any matter comprehended by its orders of reference and to delegate any of its powers to such sub-Committees, including power to report directly to the Dáil/Seanad;
- 3) Power to draft recommendations for legislative change and for new legislation;
- 4) In relation to any statutory instrument, including those laid or laid in draft before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, power to –
 - a) Require any Government Department or other instrument-making authority concerned to –
 - i. Submit a memorandum to the Select Committee explaining the statutory instrument, or
 - ii. Attend a meeting of the Select Committee to explain any such statutory instrument: Provided that the authority concerned may decline to attend for reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil/Seanad, and
 - b) Recommend, where it considers that such action is warranted, that the instrument should be annulled or amended;
- 5) Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee to discuss –
 - a) Policy, or
 - b) Proposed primary or secondary legislation (prior to such legislation being published),

For which he or she is officially responsible: Provided that a member of the Government or Minister of State may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil: and provided further that a member of the Government or Minister of State may request to attend a meeting of the Select Committee to enable him or her to discuss such policy or proposed legislation;

- 6) Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee and provide, in private session if so requested by the attendee, oral briefings in advance of meetings of the relevant EC Council (of Ministers) of the European Union to enable the Select Committee to make known its views: Provided that the Committee may also require such attendance following such meetings;
- 7) Power to require that the Chairperson designate of a body or agency under the aegis of a Department shall, prior to his or her appointment, attend before the Select Committee to discuss his or her strategic priorities for the role;
- 8) Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State who is officially responsible for the implementation of an Act shall attend before a Select Committee in relation to the consideration of a report under DSO 197/ SSO 168;
- 9) Subject to any constraints otherwise prescribed by law, power, to require that principal officeholders of a –
 - a) State body within the responsibility of a Government Department or
 - b) Non-State body, which is partly funded by the State,

Shall attend meetings of the Select Committee, as appropriate, to discuss issues for which they are officially responsible: Provided that such an officeholder may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil/Seanad; and

- 10) Power to –

- a) Engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and
- b) Undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under DSO 120 (4)(a)/SSO 107 (4)(a).

APPENDIX 2 – Links to Submissions Received

| | Name of organisation | Links to Submissions |
|----|---|--------------------------------|
| 1 | Community Gardens Ireland | Available here |
| 2 | Society of St. Vincent de Paul | Available here |
| 3 | Children’s Rights Alliance | Available here |
| 4 | Movement for change in Foster Care | Available here |
| 5 | National One Parent Family Alliance/ One Family | Available here |
| 6 | Irish Senior Citizens Parliament | Available here |
| 7 | Home and Community Care Ireland | Available here |
| 8 | Martin Lavelle | Available here |
| 9 | Treoir | Available here |
| 10 | Family Carers Ireland | Available here |
| 11 | Rehab Enterprises | Available here |
| 12 | Epilepsy Ireland | Available here |
| 13 | Age & Opportunity | Available here |
| 14 | Mens Sheds Association | Available here |
| 15 | Age Action | Available here |
| 16 | SPARK Ireland | Available here |
| 17 | ALONE | Available here |
| 18 | Irish Rural Link | Available here |
| 19 | Irish Foster Care Association | Available here |
| 20 | Centre for Irish Towns | Available here |
| 21 | Brokers Ireland | Available here |
| 22 | Irish Wheelchair Association | Available here |
| 23 | Chime | Available here |

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