

What does Local Government do?

The Local Government Acts 1925-2014 set out the powers of local authorities. “Reserved functions” are those that must be carried out by elected representatives.¹

In brief, local government has functions in relation to business and economic activity, licencing of activity, planning and development, arts and culture, libraries and other facilities, environmental controls and protection, waste management and recycling, creating bye-laws and providing leadership for the local area.

Local Council Reserved Functions

In detail, the local Council as a whole can do the following:

- Make integrated local economic and community plans, and implementing the economic part
- Adopt the draft local authority budget (presented by the chief executive for approval)
- Decide in relation to local commercial rates
- Approve the corporate plan (presented by the chief executive)
- Adopt the draft local authority service delivery plan
- Appoint the chief executive
- Make special amenity area orders and landscape conservation area orders
- Nominate candidates for the Presidency
- Make housing decisions, including the order of priority for local authority housing and affordable housing, local authority house purchase schemes, Traveller accommodation programmes, differential rent schemes and homelessness action plans
- Make decisions on local and regional roads, including the imposition of tolls on such roads
- Set special speed limits for roads in its area instead of the speed limits set out in the Road Traffic Acts for ordinary roads, built-up areas, national roads and motorways
- Control skips on public roads
- Make Development plans and development contribution schemes
- Make planning schemes for strategic development zones
- Make decisions in relation to fire services
- Create air quality management plans and pollution control orders
- Make various decisions in relation to water supply and water quality management
- Control harbours
- Organise waste collection

¹ Most of the information in this document comes from http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/downloads/relate/relate_2014_05.pdf

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- Develop libraries
- Provide school meals
- Control dogs, horses and other animals
- Vary the rate of Local Property Tax by up to 15%
- Appoint members of a local community development committee
- Approve a local and community development programme
- Adopt of a Framework for Public Participation in Local Government
- Delegate additional functions to Municipal District members

The following decisions can be made by either Municipal District members or the full local authority:

- Give civic honours
- Make twinning arrangements with other areas
- Approve a proposal of the chief executive to grant permission for the development of land which would contravene materially the development plan or local area plan
- Make local area plans
- Protect structures
- Create special planning control schemes
- Create a public right of way
- Make housing services plans
- Provide assistance for the promotion of the interests of the local community
- Make flood risk management plans

Municipal Districts

Local authority areas are now divided into Municipal Districts. The local councillors from one or more electoral areas inside each Municipal District meet as a sub-committee of the whole council, and they have some things they can do as a group.

Municipal District members can:

- Adopt statements regarding the economic elements of the local economic and community plan for the consideration of the full county or city and county council
- Make amendments to a draft budgetary plan
- Adopt an annual schedule of proposed works to be carried out in the district
- Establish a community fund for the support of community initiatives (for amenity, recreation, culture, heritage, environment, social inclusion and/or community development). They can accept contributions to such a fund
- Adopt a scheme for the making of an annual contribution by residents to particular community initiatives
- Delegate a function (including maintenance) in respect of the management and control of dwellings

- Make arrangements for school wardens
- Declare a road to be a public road or abandon a public road
- Extinguish a public right of way
- Specify the places in which vehicles may be parked either indefinitely or for a specified period
- Make bye-laws for the control and regulation of parking on public roads, including parking fees
- Decide on traffic calming measures
- Decide on taxi stands
- Make tree preservation orders
- Control casual trading
- Extinguish a market right
- Control litter and make litter management plans
- Make submissions to a fire authority regarding a proposed indoor event that requires a licence
- Set the expiry times of a special exemption order for liquor licences
- Make bye-laws in respect of the use of temporary dwellings and orders in relation to the creation and retention of temporary dwellings
- Make bye-laws in relation to national monuments of which the local authority is the owner or guardian
- Propose to change place names, and decide whether or not a vote is to be held on the issue
- Set charges for local authority amenities, facilities and services
- Decide (subject to the approval of the Minister) that a particular function of the municipal district members should be performed only by the local authority

Central Government's Role

The Local Government Act 2014 allows for the functions of a number of government departments and State bodies to be devolved to local authorities. As of March 2019, no further functions have been devolved to local authorities, despite an intention of the previous government to devolve functions in relation to tourism, ports, national parks, and rural transport at an early date.

Many of Labour's policies on local government can be advanced using the existing "reserved functions" of local councils. However, Labour recognises the need for local government reform to be championed at national level too, and Labour seeks to legislate to achieve its vision for stronger local democracy that delivers greater equality and fairness.

Labour's **Local Manifesto** is here:

<https://www.labour.ie/manifesto/serving-the-community/>