

Dublin Citizens Assembly

Briefing Note on Submissions

10 September 2022

Introduction

The general public, stakeholders and interest groups were invited to make submissions to the Dublin Citizens' Assembly. This note gives an overview of submission made to date. Each of the submissions received to date is available to read online at <https://members.citizensassembly.ie/>. They have also now been made available publicly, on <https://citizensassembly.ie/en/dublin-assembly/submissions/dublin-citizens-assembly-submissions.html>.

Overview:

- 47 valid submissions received
 - 38 from members of the public
 - 7 from Councillors
 - 1 from a TD
 - 1 from an interest group/organisation
- Most submissions clearly state they are **in favour of a Directly Elected Mayor** (DEM) (29 for/9 against/9 didn't clearly state)
- Most believe the powers of **the Mayor should move away from being a ceremonial role**, with just five submissions indicating they would prefer this to remain.
- Only a small number of submissions expressed a preference in relation to the term (duration) of office. The consensus seemed to be in favour of a term **longer term than one year** (as it stands currently), but there was no clear answer as to how much longer.

Key powers to devolve to a Directly Elected Mayor

A clear message coming from the submissions is **that Central Government plays too much of a role in Local Government**, and that a number of powers should be devolved to a DEM.

12 submissions indicated that a DEM should have “a lot” more powers, while 17 suggest the DEM should have “some” additional powers. A number of submissions also highlighted the need for checks and balances, such as Deputy Mayor/s and/or Councillors having more powers.

Issues identified as powers to be devolved to a DEM include, in descending order of frequency:

1. Transport
2. Policing/Crime
3. Housing
4. Health
5. Climate Action

Extract of key points made in submissions

The following extracts or brief summaries of key points made in submissions give the reader a general sense of the range of ideas and opinions expressed in the submissions.

- “ Supportive of DEM
- “ DEM responsible for tackling crime. DEM to take charge of the housing situation in Dublin. DEM should have full responsibility for the transport system.
- “ DEM with full local gov term. Substantial reform of the structure of the four local authorities. New Dublin Regional Assembly.
- “ Lack of positive male role models for young people & link to anti-social behaviour. Expand/adapt the Defence Forces Employment Scheme & make applicable to 14-16 year olds.
- “ Coherence between council majorities and local executive positions. Against DEM - can lead to the so-called 'cohabitation' phenomenon.
- “ Promote a change in the Local Government Acts to allow Councillors to nominate the Lord Mayor by co-option.
- “ The time has come for Executive Mayors in Dublin & beyond. In favour of the proposal for a DEM in Dublin & beyond with the necessary checks and balances to be put in place to make it work effectively and efficiently.
- “ We need to make O’Connell St. and our city centre a place people would want to walk around and feel safe in (need higher police presence). Daughter (teacher) will never be able to buy a house in Dublin. This is not good enough. Most cities build up. Why not Dublin? We can’t keep spreading our city.
- “ Perception that Dublin is scruffy, neglected, dangerous and not a city that displays the best of Irishness. We are a multicultural society and our capital should reflect that. The lack of homes and multi-layered/ high-rise buildings scream lack of inclusivity. Anti-social behaviour making the city unsafe.

- “ Since COVID, the problems we have had before are multiplied. We have a considerable downturn in footfall and this in my view is directly related to a significant feeling of an unsafe City.
- “ SDCC's neglect of Clondalkin. The new mayor should have broad powers across housing and transport. The position should also come with powers across health & especially local health services in areas in Dublin as well as having the power to appoint the Garda lead for Dublin (the assistant commissioner). We need a metro link to the airport and a DART Underground now & more affordable and social housing (these two objectives can be achieved by a DEM with v defined & broad sweeping powers. Powers around the environment and Climate Action should also be devolved to the new mayor and the power to make legislation for the Dublin area should be devolved to the new position.
- “ Opposes DEM. May cause confusion with the establish separately elected councils, and may cause a focus on Dublin city while ignoring the greater Dublin area.
- “ DEM is badly needed to champion infrastructure & social issues such as the accommodation crisis in the city. Manchester model.
- “ In support of DEM - Manchester model. Greater Dublin Council to discuss & implement mutually beneficial cross council initiatives & coordinate efforts to get best outcomes. Possibly comprised of 5 nominees from each council.
- “ One overarching, elected city/county council (appropriate numbers to be defined), with one Mayor to act as 'Chair' for the views of the Citizenry.
- “ Super mayor only solution but what's the point of councillors then. Funds from Dublin property tax could fund Mayor and give them full decision-making powers to address decline of Dublin.
- “ Please have only one mayor for all of Dublin, and do not keep Ceremonial mayors. Ceremonial mayors in Dublin would cause widespread confusion and would soon be seen as pointless and probably inane. Elected Mayor or Super Mayor plus city council please.
- “ Mayor should be elected by the people for a term of 4years and no pension till retirement age. Council should take back control of all services. DEM to have veto on some matters.
- “ A Mayor must only act on the feedback from the community they serve. Each community must be allowed a voice as to their pressing needs, which could be communicated even via e-mail, allowing suggestions and ideas to be directed to the mayoral office, as so much information is filtered and watered down before it gets near the mayor.
- “ I would hope an elected Mayor would focus on issues associated with crime in the Dublin particularly in the city.
- “ Mayor should have veto and agenda setting powers. London model. An executive committee of representatives should funnel concerns and ideas on behalf of wider councillors. Active for 10 years with ring fenced funding to implement initiatives. Checks and balances should be in place by reputable private third party.
- “ Regional authorities are overdue, particularly in regions such as the Midlands and Northwest. Dublin is central to the state's economic activities, & therefore a Mayor may not be able to impact core issues. A singular body of oversight could improve finer details and make Dublin a more welcoming city for residents. A singular authority for Dublin would be positive, but would be weary as to the impact they could make on broader issues.

- “ DEM important but only if they replace the City manager. DEM needs to have all the executive powers the manager now possesses. Elected mayor for between four & seven years who has the power to run the city. Super mayor sitting above the Council.
- “ Get rid of all overpaid civil servants.
- “ Either reduce CEO of DCC powers and pay and share cost of DEM - will it be more bureaucracy? Share resources & less senior mgmt & focus on key issues like homelessness and housing and cost of living.
- “ Need a London style (two tier). Issues like transport in the greater Dublin area need coordination and local knowledge. There needs to be strategic planning of the whole city.
- “ Given the sheer size of the Dublin region as a % of the total population of the country, there are arguments for perhaps letting each of the four Dublin counties directly elect a mayor. In order to get the benefit of region-wide decisions in areas like region-wide transport, waste management, planning etc, there should be a provision for a Greater Dublin Council (GDC) made up of the four elected mayors, with a substantial part of their budget and EU structural funding being determined by that council with the consent of 3/4 mayors.
- “ The four councils are a strength. A continuous multi-year term of office & all appropriate powers that are currently dispersed across national agencies & government departments in the absence of such a leader. The Greater Manchester model may be the most attractive because it could easily plug into the existing local government structures in Dublin. There is potential for confusion if there are multiple mayors in Dublin, who would more appropriately be known as chairpersons of their respective councils.
- “ London model. Maintain four Councils with their own Cathaoirleach positions. New chamber of approx. 24 councillors, acting as delegates from the four councils (6 delegates per council) could be established. Greater emphasis should be on the transfer of central powers applicable to Dublin currently owned by Government and authorities.
- “ In favour of a DEM of each of the Dublin Local Authorities & for all Local Authorities in Ireland. Against DEM for all of Dublin. Against amalgamation of the four LAs.
- “ The position of Lord Mayor should be one of coordination of the four Dublin Authorities with each retaining their individual constituency and competencies. There should be no alteration to boundaries or interference in revenue matters. The Lord Mayor may function as an effective voice for Dublin by drawing representatives of the elected and executive from the established Local Authorities to form a Dublin Corporate Policy Group.
- “ We would have serious questions as to how a DEM would impact the lives of Fingal residents & if this would potentially make things better or worse. Against merging of 4 LAs. DEM should sit above the four Chief Executives & the existing Council structures should be retained as is in place underneath this. Each local authority should retain their ceremonial Mayor / Cathaoirleach. There is also the concern that the DEM election could become a popularity contest with someone being elected that does not have the experience required for such an important role.
- “ We should have a mayor for Dublin elected by all Dubliners within Co. Dublin. We need to dismantle the four Local Authorities. Instead we need to dive in local areas and have elected mayors representing them. For example, Dublin South Central Area Committee would have its own elected mayor. This citizen assembly should not be dismantled at the end of the 8

months. It should remain and follow the progress in order to review the situation when the process has started.

- “ In favour of DEM. Role of DEM must be considered first - form follows function. County/city development plans too short-term.
- “ Against DEM. A full-time paid mayor & political advisors in Dublin will not yield benefits to the city and county. It will be good money down the drain. It would make more sense to reduce our representation to normal European levels. Most of our local authorities pay out over a million euro per year in salaries to councillors who in reality have little or no powers.
- “ Few local elected representatives per head of population, compared to other EU countries. We don't have the layers of representation other countries have. If there are to be town councils they should be for Dublin towns also. Whatever is proposed does not take from powers councillors currently have.
- “ Present system OK. North inner city lacking police presence. O'Connell St area looks like Skid Row.
- “ In favour of DEM. DEM have a defined role and responsibilities, and not be a figurehead in name only. DEM could coordinate a food security strategy for the greater Dublin area to encourage a % of all Dublin food to come from local areas.
- “ Locally elected representatives are best placed to understand both the conditions & needs of local communities. DEM a chance for Dubliners and those with an interest in Dublin to have a say in the kind of Lord mayor they would like to have in our city of Dublin.
- “ Local admin could do with more structured evaluation of its performance against reasonable benchmarks. Few councillors have the time or capacity to exercise their nominal powers effectively.
- “ In areas like Housing, where the local government has nominal authority, councils can only act within quite tight constraints operated by the parent Department. Huge areas of public services are not being subjected to any local scrutiny in Dublin (e.g. Transport, Health, Higher Education, Community Development), even though they have a huge bearing on the local quality of life. It is not necessary to devolve delivery of these services to a local authority in order to make them more accountable. This is a weakness which could be remedied even within the existing structures. Land use is one of the few strategic areas which is devolved to local authorities, but the fact that it is divided between four different local authorities hampers its effectiveness and coherence, as well as its political accountability. Vital areas for the future like Waste Management and Climate Planning also fall into a sort of limbo between national, regional and local. A directly elected mayor could create a more integrated vision for the city. It would tilt the balance away from permanent executives and towards one politically elected leader. This would be a very powerful figure and with a direct mandate from one third of the country, he/she would rival even the Taoiseach in the strength of his/her mandate. It is worth considering whether those gains could be achieved in other ways.
- “ Outlines the role of the EMRA and how it is well placed to engage with the DCA.