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EDITOR'S COMMENT

Councillors urgently need improved resources to continue to deliver and develop their roles as public representatives, in return for the high level of service which they give to the public.

So says the new President of the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG). Cllr John Crowe will no doubt place this issue high on his agenda at the AILG annual conference, which takes place on 5-6 May in Buncrana, Co. Donegal.

The Clare councillor has been quite vocal in recent times about the need to revise the pay scales for our public representatives, considering the drastic reduction in the number of councillors instigated by local government reform before the Local Elections in May 2014.

With just one councillor for approximately every 4,500 people, the workload has increased dramatically, and councillors are now seeking a 40 per cent increase in their basic salaries (from €16,565 to €23,188). These findings follow the detailed survey of 949 elected members across all local authorities, undertaken by the AILG in July and August last year.

With a 59 per cent response rate, the overwhelming conclusion was that councillors' workloads have greatly increased, since new local government structures were introduced. The AILG says that a similar survey conducted by the Department of the Environment earlier this year reached broadly similar conclusions to their own.

The local government reform proposals created an uproar at last year's AILG Conference in Carrickmacross, Co. Monaghan. And this is very likely to continue this year, especially in light of news that the Department now plans to review those very reforms, which saw the abolition of town councils and a subsequent reduction in the number of local authorities from 114 to 31.

And whilst the department claims that this review is "merely procedural" and a timely exercise after two years of change, just how close to the truth can this be, considering that there are signs that these very structures and reforms are creaking and unwieldy already.

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5 NEWS UPDATE

17 FIRE SAFETY

Fatal house and apartment fires could happen at any time in any part of the country due to poor construction standards and hardly any enforcement of building regulations. That's according to a leading fire expert who is organising an international sustainable fire engineering conference in Dublin in September.



Fire Safety
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19 ENVIRONMENT

As part of a new creative music learning resource designed for children of all ages to lay waste to litter through music, more local authorities are now tuning into an environmental awareness musical to help promote the green agenda in their communities.

21 PLANNING AWARDS

Dublin City Council received the overall National Planning Award for its North Lotts and Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme, in addition to winning the 'Responsive Urban and Rural Design' category.



Planning Awards
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29 LAMA AWARDS

Integrating access and accessibility issues into every aspect of its range of services was the winning formula for Wexford County Council, as it scooped the 'Council of the Year' title at the LAMA Awards 2016.

EASTER RISING REMEMBERED

The majority of 1916 programmes are taking place in Dublin City, while a number of other councils around the country have also organised their own events.

34 Dublin City Council

A comprehensive programme to commemorate the 1916 Rising includes a major exhibition in Pearse Street Library, while the mobile exhibition will visit all libraries in the suburbs.

39 Fingal County Council

The 2016 Centenary Programme encompasses over 50 lectures, film screenings, performances, re-enactments, talks and exhibitions.

40 Richmond Barracks

One of the most significant events of the Easter Rising celebrations will be the official opening of Richmond Barracks at Inchicore on Monday 2 May.

45 Dublin Fire Brigade

Dublin City Hall is the setting for a free exhibition entitled 'Citizens in Conflict' on the role of the DFB and other Dublin-based fire brigades, which runs until July.

46 Cavan County Council

Whilst there was no armed unrest in the Breffni County, a number of individuals from Cavan who had connections to the county played prominent roles.

47 Meath County Council

A number of commemorative events are taking place across the Royal County, such as the '1916-2016 Exhibition', the 'Meath 1916 Symposium' and a Reconciliation Conference.

49 Limerick City & County Council

Limerick's many significant links with the Easter Rising is highlighted through a programme of events and activities during the year.

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53 DUBLIN PORT

RPS has successfully secured planning permission for the €230 million Alexandra Basin Redevelopment Project on behalf of Dublin Port Company. This will enable Ireland's premier port to double its trade capacity to 60 million tonnes per annum by 2040.



Flood Management
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57 FLOOD MANAGEMENT

The €106 million funding announcement by central government for local authorities to assist with road repairs in the wake of the flooding disaster, late last year will be fully utilised by councils once all applications have been submitted and approved. But when?



Innovate Limerick
Page 62

63 E-GOVERNMENT

Public sector organisations are looking to a future where citizens have seamless access to services, with the creation of smart cities by modernising internal business processes.

65 LOUTH ECONOMIC FORUM

Louth is the first county in Ireland to produce a county broadband strategy in response to the National Broadband Plan, and by the end of this year, it is hoped that 85 per cent of premises there will have access to high-speed broadband.



E-Government
Awards
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69 INNOVATE LIMERICK

Limerick is already ahead of targets for its own ambitious 2030 Economic Plan, Conn Murray, CEO of Limerick City and County Council, told business leaders at the International Clusters Conference.

69 DIGITAL INNOVATION

A website detailing how Irish local authorities source and spend public funding has won a prestigious international digital innovation award. Localauthorityfinances.com was a winner in the 'e-Government and Open Data' category of the UN-based World Summit Awards.

75 PRIMARY EDUCATION

A number of local authorities are in talks with BizWorld Ireland to look at ways of provide entrepreneurship education to primary-school children, in a bid to foster and nurture an entrepreneurial culture from a young age.



Louth Economic
Forum
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79 RESEARCH COUNCIL

The Irish Research Council is encouraging local authorities to take part in the #LoveIrishResearch initiative over the coming year, to increase public awareness of Ireland's research achievements.

81 SMART DUBLIN INITIATIVE

Dublin's four local authorities and Enterprise Ireland have launched the €100k Small Business Innovation Research Challenge (SBIR) as part of the Smart Dublin initiative. The aim is to push towards a healthier and more liveable city, through innovative and low-cost solutions to increase the number of people cycling in Dublin.



Smart Dublin Initiative
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