



dublinchamber
of commerce

Submission:
Directly Elected Mayor for Dublin

Dublin needs a strong Mayor

All over the world, Mayors with strong executive powers and real vision are transforming their cities. For many years the Dublin Chamber of Commerce has been a strong supporter of a Mayor for Dublin with real executive powers and accountability.¹ A properly-structured role of a directly elected Mayor could be the catalyst behind Dublin's future economic growth. Without that catalyst, Dublin will not grow at its full potential.

Business has an innate self-interest in the efficiency and effectiveness of local government; as business provides the single biggest source of its funding, through commercial rates and other business charges. To improve the Dublin business environment, a revitalised local Government structure is necessary with a directly elected Mayor playing a pivotal role. The Government's Action Programme for effective local government, *'Putting People First'*, puts forth a local Government system that aims to deliver more, be more accountable and build a stronger relationship with the community it serves. It sets out that a directly elected Mayor for Dublin should not be just an additional layer of governance and administration. Dublin Chamber agrees wholeheartedly with this, however the Programme has to go further in its aims. The Government has an opportunity to frame the role of the directly elected Mayor to reduce the cost of local government, coordinate public service delivery and drive efficiencies between the four Dublin local authorities. Ultimately our test for the role of Mayor will be their ability to effect real and positive change for the business environment in Dublin and for the welfare of its citizens. This opportunity is too important for Dublin to miss.

International Competition between City Regions

International best practice highlights the importance of effective regional Government as an enabler of economic growth and employment.² Competition amongst City Regions is intensifying and the competition for investment and employment in high value added activities is no longer primarily between countries – it is between City Regions.

City Regions, not nation states, are now at the level at which competition for investment and jobs occur. Cities are the engines of their national economies, typically generating

¹ Response to The Local Government (Mayor) Bill 2010; The Local Government Bill 2010 – Commentary on Bill; Local Government Reform in Ireland; Democracy Now – Submission on the Green Paper for Local Government Reform; Submission to the Local Government Efficiency Review Group; 'Mayor with Budget and Authority' – Response to the Green Paper on Local Government.

² Benjamin Barber, 2013, *If Mayors Ruled the World*, Yale University Press; Tom Gash and Sam Sims, 2012, "What can elected mayors do for our cities?", Institute for Government (UK). W.F. Lever, 2001, "Charismatic Urban Leaders and Economic Development: Good Mayors and Bad Mayors in Europe" in *Space and Polity*. Schumpeter, 2013, "Mayors and mammon: City leaders are increasingly adopting business methods and promoting business" in *The Economist*.

above-average wealth, employment and productivity growth. The Dublin City Region has been identified in by the OECD Report as the only Region of sufficient size in Ireland to be able to successfully compete internationally as a City Region.³ Forfás, in its report *Our Cities: Drivers of National Competitiveness* concluded that "Cities are increasingly seen as the drivers of national competitiveness and of economic and social developments...Successful countries and regions must have successful cities at their core."⁴

Competitive Dublin

The economic importance of Dublin as a City Region quickly leads to questions around responsibility and accountability. At present, many multiplies of bodies are responsible for a variety of functions in the Dublin area, and there is no single overall accountable authority.

Forfás goes so far as to say that city governance is "*the key issue* (our emphasis) for managing urban growth and implementing policy actions to achieve competitiveness objectives... Local governments make a significant impact on the enterprise environment and directly influence economic growth through the provision of services and infrastructures, the planning of the local environment and the strategies and policies they implement."⁵

Strategic guidance and coordination from one single, accountable point is needed to compete effectively and take full advantage of the opportunities available to the city. Forfás continues: "City leadership is critical to the development of competitive cities. To achieve and retain competitiveness, key policy decisions need to be made for the City Region by a strong leader or leaders." Dublin Chamber contends that such a responsibility should be assigned to a directly elected Mayor but the office needs to have the power to make the key decisions. Dublin Chamber believes that an *appropriately-structured* Mayoral office can improve competitiveness in Dublin by:

- Providing a stronger voice for Dublin
- Promoting Dublin internationally
- Driving co-ordination, efficiency and better public services within the four local authorities in Dublin
- Being accountable for decisions made in Local Government

³ OECD Territorial Reviews: Competitive Cities in the Global Economy, 2006

⁴ Forfás "Our Cities: Drivers of National Competitiveness", April 2009

⁵ Ibid.

Dublin Chamber will not support a purely ceremonial post, or one that simply adds another layer of bureaucracy to local government. Dublin Chamber will not support an office that has very little power devolved to it. Dublin Chamber will not support an office that does not prioritize driving efficiency and cost saving measures.

Role and Powers of a Mayor

The role of the directly elected Mayor, if properly framed, could affect real change in the city and make Dublin a better place to live, work and do business. The Dublin Chamber has considered the models outlined in the consultation process and assessed them against the objectives outlined above. We propose that the directly elected Mayor should appoint a board to assist them in achieving their objectives. This board could consist of elected Councillors or people from outside politics as required. This is an opportunity to get the best people to work for the city, to give their expert advice and opinion to make Dublin a better place to live and do business.

The legislation for a directly elected Mayor must be crystal clear about the role of the Mayor within the decision-making process of Dublin's local government structure. We believe that a directly elected Mayor should be responsible for:

- The management and delivery, at regional level, of transport infrastructure, housing and waste management facilities;
- Planning and land use;
- Economic planning;
- Greater coordination and efficiency in the operation of Dublin's local authorities (e.g. shared services);
- Budgetary oversight of the four Dublin local authorities. This role is currently held by the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government.

In considering the devolution of these powers, the question of revenue raising powers arises. We believe that no such new revenue raising powers are warranted. The question of local taxation powers is a national one, and should be considered in that context.

Conclusion

The potential exists to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of local government in Dublin and thereby stimulate growth and employment. The existing proposals for a directly elected Mayor envisage the role to be introduced from 2019. We believe that this target is insufficiently ambitious, given the importance of the role. The Dublin Chamber

of Commerce fervently supports a directly elected Mayor for Dublin. This opportunity to effect real change for the city of Dublin should not be wasted.