Terms of Reference for
Expert Advisory Group on
Local Government Arrangements in Galway

The Minister for the Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government hereby establishes an Expert Advisory Group to carry out further detailed examination and planning arising from the report of the Galway Local Government Committee in relation to future local government arrangements for Galway which was submitted in November 2015 (referred to in this document as “the 2015 report”).

1. The main functions of the Group are to:
   a. undertake further detailed and rigorous examination and technical analysis in relation to the implications of the recommendations of the 2015 report;
   b. provide an assessment of the recommendations of the 2015 report, including likely costs and benefits, in light of the examination and analysis at (a);
   c. provide, in light of the assessment at (b), detailed information and recommendations regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the 2015 report and of any further recommendations at (d), the arrangements and measures necessary for that purpose and relevant timescales in that regard;
   d. in the event that the Group concludes, on the basis of its detailed and rigorous examination, that the recommendations of the 2015 report should be supplemented or varied, indicate the reasons for this and provide relevant recommendations in that regard;
   e. report to the Minister in relation to the foregoing matters as required by the Minister, or as the Group considers appropriate.

2. Without restricting the scope or flexibility available to the Group pursuant to paragraph 1, and subject to any additional matters that the Minister may require, the Group shall, in particular, address the following matters regarding future local government arrangements for Galway:

   a. Leadership of local government, at both political and executive levels, including the possible establishment of an office of directly elected mayor and associated authority to perform substantial local government functions;
   b. Governance and representational structures, including the approach to plenary council, municipal district and electoral area configurations;
   c. Local government powers and functions, including potential for devolution of functions to local authorities from central government departments or agencies, and the allocation of powers and functions as between plenary council and municipal district members;
   d. Resource implications of the recommendations in the 2015 report, and where relevant any further recommendations under 1(d), having regard to the income, expenditure, assets, liabilities, functions and services of the local authorities in Galway and to anticipated future trends and requirements in this regard, and to the requirements of addressing such implications;
   e. Metropolitan interests in respect of the city of Galway, and any specific measures or arrangements, including configuration and governance, required to safeguard or enhance such interests, and to maintain the civic status, identity, character and heritage of the city;
f. The potential of local government to further the economic and social well-being and sustainable development of Galway City and County, including the strategic role and impact of the city, in particular, as a regional and national growth centre, and the need to have regard to the respective characteristics and needs both of urban and rural areas;
g. Cohesiveness, co-ordination, co-operation and collaboration in the context of future local government arrangements, particularly with regard to strategic policy in areas such as housing, spatial planning, economic development, infrastructure, transport, and environment;
h. The strength and effectiveness generally of local government in Galway, including in the use of resources, the organisation of functions and operations, and the provision of services; and
i. Implications of the Group’s proposals or recommendations including anticipated costs and benefits (including potential savings and efficiency improvements).

3. To facilitate the effective performance of its functions the Group shall:
   a. have regard to the 2015 report and relevant provisions of the Terms of Reference of the Galway Local Government Committee;
   b. engage with other bodies, as necessary, and where the Group considers that it is necessary for the purpose of particular research, examination or analysis, the Minister may arrange for the provision of specialist services to the Group for that purpose.