Press Release

March 15, 2019

Additional services should be devolved to Irish local authorities from central government – Fingal Chief Executive

Fingal County Council Chief Executive Paul Reid has stated that the debate surrounding Local Government in Ireland needs to extend from just the focus on who runs the sector to a debate about what services could be further devolved from Central Government.
Addressing a conference organised by the Centre for Local and Regional Governance in University College Cork on Thursday evening (March 14), Mr Reid said compared to other countries from around the world, Irish local authorities had fewer services devolved from Central Government.

In his presentation entitled “Who Runs Local Government”, Mr Reid said councils currently had responsibility for areas such as Housing, Planning, Roads and Transport, Waste Management and Water Services.

However, other nations such as Canada and Denmark also controlled sectors such as Education, Healthcare/Hospitals and Social Services, he said.

Mr Reid said: “The question as to who runs Local Government is not the only one. We should also be asking what Central Government services should be devolved to Local Government.”

In terms of funding, Ireland is below the OECD average, ranked behind other European nations such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland, Mr Reid pointed out.

Mr Reid added that despite the lower level of fiscal autonomy compared to other OECD countries, one of the core strengths of Irish Local Government was “implementation” at local level.

“The drivers and skills of our sector are very different to others,’ he stated. “While the private sector has a relentless focus on cost and customer experience and the civil service prioritises policy development, Local Government in Ireland is focused on investing in local communities and enabling business.”

He added: “Another key strength in the Local Government sector was the collaborative approach on many issues between the management and the elected representatives in terms of economic development, community development, FDI attraction, tourism and libraries.”

Concluding his presentation, Mr Reid reiterated the key point that the debate needs to extend from who is in charge to also what further services should be devolved.

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Caption: Fingal County Council Chief Executive Paul Reid addressed a conference organised by the Centre for Local and Regional Governance in University College Cork on Thursday evening

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