Lacey elected Cathaoirleach of the EMRA

Former Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Dermot Lacey was elected as the Labour Party Cathaoirleach of the Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly.

The Regional Assembly is made up of representatives from each of the four Dublin local authorities, Kildare, Laois, Longford, Louth, Meath, Offaly, Westmeath, and Wicklow.

It was established by the enactment of the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Its main duties include maintaining Regional Planning Guidelines and preparing and implementing Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies. The total population covered by the Assembly is 2.21m citizens.

The election of Councillor Lacey was unanimous by councillors from all the main political parties and independents. His fellow Labour colleague, Councillor Lettie McCarthy of the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council was elected Leas Cathaoirleach.

€9m allocated for local authority taking in charge

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government, Simon Coveney TD, announced last week (Friday 8 July) that his department would be allocating €9m to assist local authorities with taking in charge over 17,000 households in 356 developments.

The Minister noted the housing crisis, and said the funding would “map a path towards all residential developments being taken in charge by local authorities.” Under which leadership, he assured, residents could be confident that their houses were finished to the highest standard and would be safe to live in.

This move is part of the forthcoming Government Action Plan for Housing; it will be supported by the investment of local authorities in infrastructure that will ensure “high quality homes for all”.

The new system of Taking in Charge is provided for by the Minister’s new National Taking in Charge Initiative (NTICI). A statement by the Department said, “Prior to the construction boom and subsequent crash, local authorities usually would either take an estate in charge (including roads, footpaths, water services etc) or could be requested by residents to do so once a residential estate was complete” This, it said, led to work not always being completed to a high standard, or delays in the service provision. This will be reformed under the new scheme.

In addition to the €9m allocation, €4.5m in funding will be sourced by the local authorities through bonds and other sources.
Student loan model proposed

The Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education has recently released its report, in which they recommend a student loan system. This is in an attempt to tackle the college funding crisis. The Group was set up by the Minister for Education and Skills in 2014.

The report found that the funding arrangement for higher education were not sufficient, and that the deficiencies could not be dealt with by small measures such as capping student numbers of use of IT. It is expected that one-third more college spaces will be needed over the next fifteen years.

The student loan scheme proposed is similar to the model employed in the UK: Students would repay the loan once they were in employment and earned above a certain threshold. One recommendation of the Group is that employers should take on some of the cost of third-level education, as they would be the beneficiaries of the outcomes.

It is estimated that this scheme would see students leaving college with an approximately €20,000 debt burden. Alternative to introducing a student loan scheme would be a significant increase in Government spending in the sector. This would also see the undergraduate student contribution staying at €3,000 and postgraduate fees also staying the same.

It says an extra €1bn would be needed to restore the cuts made since the economic crisis. This would account for a 50% increase in current spending.

Centralisation of trauma care recommended by Steering Group

The health service has just released news that, under a new plan currently being drafted, nine hospitals across the country would see their emergency trauma services cut. The hospitals that would be affected would be:

- Cavan Hospital,
- Mercy University Hospital (Cork),
- Mullingar Hospital (Westmeath),
- Naas Hospital (Kildare),
- Portiuncula Hospital (Galway),
- Portlaoise Hospital (Laois),
- South Tipperary Hospital,
- St Luke’s Hospital (Kilkenny), and
- Wexford Hospital.

This proposal will be made in a report by the Trauma Steering Group. While it means that patients will inevitably receive treatment in a bigger and better-equipped hospital, it means an increase in travel times for patients with acute injuries, such as broken limbs, head injuries, or other major wounds. According to the forthcoming report, there is a strong clinical case for the centralisation of trauma care.

It is expected that this centralisation will feed into plan to reduce the number of emergency rooms in hospitals across the country. These hospitals may still treat minor injuries, and will focus on the elected surgeries that they can perform.
This week at Public Affairs Ireland

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**Who Governs Ireland?**  
Michael Williams  
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Martin McTaggart  
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**Upcoming Training**

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Tuesday 12 July

2.00 p.m.
Leaders' Questions

2.32 p.m.
Order of Business:
Motion re: Standing Order changes re: Establishment of a Petitions Committee, Allocation of Ombudsman functions to sectoral Committees and Technical Standing Order amendment re: Chair of the Working Group of Committee Chairs (without debate)

3.02 p.m.
P.Q.s: Oral - Minister for Health

4.32 p.m.
Topical Issues

4.32 p.m.
Private Notice Question (if any)

5.20 p.m.
Government Business:
Water Services (Amendment) Bill 2016 - Order for Report, Report and Final Stages
(Department of Environment, Community and Local Government)

8.00 p.m.
Private Members Business (Social Democrats - Green Party Group) - Motion re: Regulation of Charities

10.00 p.m.
Dáil Adjournmens

Wednesday 13 July

12.00 p.m.
Leaders' Questions

12.30 p.m.
Questions on Promised Legislation

12.47 p.m.
Taoiseach’s Questions

1.32 p.m.
P.Q.s: Oral - Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

3.02 p.m.
Topical Issues

3.50 p.m.
SOS

4.30 p.m.
Private Members Business (Fianna Fáil) - Au Pair Placement Bill 2016

6.30 p.m.
Government Business:
Water Services (Amendment) Bill 2016 - Order for Report, Report and Final Stages (resumed)
(Department of Environment, Community and Local Government)
Paternity Leave and Benefit Bill 2016 - Order for Report, Report and Final Stages
(Department of Justice & Equality)
Motion re: Citizens Assembly

10.00 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

Thursday 14 July

12.00 p.m.
Leaders' Questions

12.30 p.m.
Questions on Promised Legislation

12.47 p.m.
Weekly divisions

1.30 p.m.
Government Business:
Paternity Leave and Benefit Bill 2016 - Order for Report, Report and Final Stages (resumed)
(Department of Justice & Equality)
Motion re: Citizens Assembly
Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2016 - Order for Second Stage, Second and Remaining Stages

5.30 p.m.
P.Q.s: Oral - Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

7.00 p.m.
Topical Issues

7.48 p.m.
Committee Report
Report of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness (resumed)

9.48 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

Friday 15 July

10.30 a.m.
Commissions of Investigation (IBRC) Bill 2016 - Committee and Remaining Stages (Department of Finance)
Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Bill 2016 - Second Stage (Department of Justice & Equality)
Statements re: FEMPI (resumed)
### Tuesday 12 July
- 2.30 p.m. Commencement Matters
- 3.30 p.m. Order of Business
- 5.30 p.m. Statements on Social Protection (Minister for Social Protection)
- 7.00 p.m. Statements on Public Procurement (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform)

### Wednesday 13 July
- 10.30 a.m. Commencement Matters
- 11:30 a.m. Order of Business
- 12.45 p.m. Seanad Bill 2016 – Second Stage (Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government)
- 4.30 p.m. Private Members Business Motion re Housing
- 6.30 p.m. Seanad Adjourns

### Thursday 14 July
- 10.30 a.m. Commencement Matters
- 11.30 a.m. Order of Business Motion regarding the arrangements for the sitting of the House on Friday 15th and Tuesday 19th July, 2016 - without debate
- 1.30 p.m. Statements on the Summer Economic Statement (Department of Finance)
- 3.00 p.m. Health (Amendment) Bill 2016 – All Stages (Department of Health) Motion re Section 44 of the Criminal Justice Act 1994 (to conclude within 40 minutes) (Department of Justice & Equality)

### Friday 15 July
- 10.00 a.m. Water Services (Amendment) Bill 2016 – Second Stage (Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government) Motion regarding the establishment of the Citizens Assembly (Department of the Taoiseach)
- 2.00 p.m. Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2016 – All stages (Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government)
- 3.30 p.m. Paternity Leave and Benefit Bill 2016 – Second Stage (Department of Justice & Equality)
- 5.30 p.m. Seanad Adjourns
This week’s Committee Meetings

Tuesday 12 July

No committee meetings scheduled

Wednesday 13 July

Future of Healthcare
CR3, LH 2000 9 a.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Social Protection (Select)
CR2, LH 2000
(i) Session A: 10.30 a.m.
(ii) Session B: 11 a.m.
AGENDA: 10.30 Private
11.00 Engagement with the Department of Social Protection regarding rent supplement increases

Dáil Reform (Sub)
Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 3 p.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Thursday 14 July

Communications, Climate Change and Natural Resources (Select)
CR1, LH 2000 9 a.m.
AGENDA: Energy Bill 2016 [Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources]

Public Accounts
CR3, LH 2000 9 a.m.
AGENDA: (i) Business of the Committee
(ii) CAG Special Report No. 92: Strategic Planning for Flood Risk Management [Representatives from the Office of Public Works]

Health (Select)
CR2, LH 2000 9.30 a.m.
AGENDA: Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Bill 2016 [Minister of State for Communities and the National Drugs Strategy]

Business Committee
Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 10.30 a.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting

Friday 15 July

Public Accounts
CR3, LH 2000 10 a.m.
AGENDA: HSE Financial statement 2015, focussing on:
(i) Internal Financial Control and the governance of grants to outside agencies under Section 39 such as Console.
(ii) An update as regards payment of specified remuneration and allowances to senior managers (top-up payments) in the Section 38 Agencies such as St John of God’s and the requirement to comply with Government pay policy
[Representatives from the Health Service Executive]

This week’s Committee Meetings