



A Longford Women's Link Programme



WOMEN'S MANIFESTO PROJECT



Gender Equality and Local Government

Accessibility, Opportunity & Balance

September 2017

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Thanks to all groups who participated in this research.

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Introduction

Longford Women's Manifesto Group

Longford Women's Manifesto Group (LWMG) is a flagship project of Longford Women's Link (LWL), a rural-based women's social enterprise in Longford, Ireland¹. LWMG is based on a model of positive engagement between women and local decision-makers. While women are actively involved in a range of organisations at a community level, for many reasons they are not engaged politically at a local level.

LWMG supports women to engage with local government structures in order to bring women's voices and perspectives to decision-making tables. Women's representation on councils has been consistently low over many decades. The 2014 local elections resulted in a small increase in women's representation at council level, going from 17% (2009) to 20.5%.²

LWMG engages with Longford County Council in a number of ways. Members are actively involved in policy committees such as SPCs (Strategic Policy Committees), make regular submissions and observe meetings at a county and Municipal District level.

Such activities, concerning active citizenship, reflect/resonate with the proposals outlined in 'Putting People First – the Action Programme for Effective Local Government'. Greater emphasis is placed on strengthening relationships between the community and local authorities. Measures proposed include to promote greater participation by women and to 'increase *understanding on the part of the public generally of local government, how it operates and what it does*'. (p.164)³

LWMG has supported the establishment of other Manifesto groups around the country who have adopted this model of engagement. These include groups from Westmeath, Cavan, Roscommon, Monaghan, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown, Donegal and Leitrim and are members of the Women's Manifesto Project

Women's Manifesto Model

The Manifesto model focuses on developing women's political understanding by supporting them to engage with local government processes to bring women's perspectives and voices to the decision-making table. LWMG are represented on several Council committees where they engage directly with Councillors to influence

¹ LWL is a dynamic social enterprise linking women with the resources to make their community safe and equal. LWL identifies and addresses key inequalities that prevent women in Longford achieving full social/ economic potential. We provide women-centred services (Childcare, DV, Counselling, Training, Female Entrepreneurship), capacity-building and local/national advocacy.

² McGing, Claire (2015) 'Voices & Views from Local Elections 2014. How women fared – reflections and lessons for the general election'. Paper from LWMG/5050 Group seminar, Longford 30.1.2015

³ Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (2012). Putting People First , Action Programme for Effective Local Government. P.164

policy decisions. Other activities include seminars on local government reform, training for women candidates in local elections, media work and policy submissions.

Women's Manifesto – Previous Research and Reports

The Women's Manifesto project has completed a number of research and seminar reports, most recently:

- *Making our Councils more open, accessible and representative – Experiences and observations of attending council meetings* (Women's Manifesto, September 2015)
- *Citizenship Engagement and Rural Communities – Seminar Report* (Women's Manifesto/Irish Rural Link, September 2016)

At the September 2016 seminar on Citizenship and Rural Communities, the focus was on the challenges facing rural communities, new local authority structures and the centralised nature of Irish policy making. In a discussion on decision-making structures in local authorities the issue of gender balance on LCDCs and SPCs was raised. As a result, it was decided to conduct a piece of research to ascertain the gender balance of the following committees – LCDCs, SPCs and JPCs in 11 counties where LWMG had Manifesto groups and links established with women's networks. The counties were: Longford, Westmeath, Cavan, Monaghan, Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon and Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown in Co. Dublin.

The survey is a compilation of the membership of the committees and data was gathered only on the gender balance of each committee. Information was gathered from websites and verified through contacts in the council.

Note: In the conducting of this research, LWMG relied on information received from its contacts. To the best of our knowledge this paper presents a true and accurate reflection of the gender balance of these committees as at April 2017.

The Policy Context

This report is informed by two specific policy areas pertaining to gender equality in local government:

1. Participation in Politics

It is noted that following the Local Elections of 2014 and the General Election in 2016, women's representation in local and national government experienced an increase, although female participation rates in political life in Ireland for women are still below the EU average. The *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012* has had an impact in relation to national representation, given that the Act requires political parties to ensure that 30 per cent of their candidates in the general election must be female, in order for the party to secure state funding⁴. Research has also shown that local government experience has more significance for women than men in terms of political career development⁵. The Women's Manifesto Programme along with many civil society organisations (IHREC, NWCI) have called for the gender balance requirements in the *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012* to be extended to local government elections.

2. Participation in Public Life

Civil society, particularly the women's sector, has been significantly impacted by the economic recession in the form of reduced funding, local government reform and reduced human resources. Between 2008 and 2014 alone, the funding to the women's sector was cut by 48.7 per cent⁶ and the impact of the *Local Government (Reform) Act 2014* has seen increased power within local structures and a radically changed community development sector. A case in point was the removal of the Local Community Development Programme (LCDP) which was replaced by the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), resulting in 'disadvantaged women' being removed as a target group. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) note that the framework document for these reforms did not

⁴ Fiona Buckley (2016) 'The implementation of gender quotas in Ireland: opportunities, challenges, controversies and success. Comments paper for "The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality. Women in political decision-making', Slovenia, 15-16 June 2016, available: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/genderquality/files/exchange_of_good_practice_si/ie_comments_paper_si_2016_en.pdf

⁵ Fiona Buckley, Mack Mariani, Claire McGing, and Timothy White (2015) 'Is local office a springboard for women to Dáil Éireann?', *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, Vol. 36, No. 3, pp. 311-335

⁶ Brian Harvey (2014) *Scoping of Need in Social Justice Sphere*. p. 27, available <http://www.philanthropy.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Scoping-of-Need-in-Social-Justice-Sphere-2014.pdf>

make any reference to gender equality⁷. In addition, guidelines published for the newly formed Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) and Public Participation Networks (PPNs) contain inadequate references to the need for gender balance on these structures, simply stating that every effort should be made to ensure an equitable gender balance⁸. In its 2017 submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the IHREC states that the LCDCs were established as the primary participative decision-making and coordinating bodies at local level for all local and community development interventions and activities in local government reform⁹.

National Strategy for Women and Girls

The newly published National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020 includes a number of strategy actions designed to support the participation of women in public life, specifically under Objective Four: Advance Women in Leadership at all Levels. Action 4.14 in particular looks at supporting 'women's community organisations to identify relevant local structures for participation and support the participation and progression of women within these structures locally, regionally and nationally'.¹⁰ LWMG note however that despite many organisations calling for the gender balance requirements in the *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012* to be extended to local elections, this was not included in the New National Strategy for Women and Girls.



Representatives of Manifesto groups from Longford, Cavan, Donegal, Westmeath, Roscommon and Dublin at a Networking session held in LWL

⁷ 293 Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (2015), *Our Communities: A Framework Policy for Local and Community Development in Ireland*, available: http://ildn.ie/files/page_files/Draft_Framework_Policy_Local_Community_Dev..pdf

⁸ Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (2014), *Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Local Community Development Committees*, p. 18

⁹ IHREC (2017) *Ireland and the Ireland and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women on Ireland's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports*, section 8.3. <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2017/02/Ireland-and-the-Convention-on-the-Elimination-of-All-Forms-of-Discrimination-Against-Women.pdf>

¹⁰ Department of Justice and Equality (2017) *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020: creating a better society for all*, p.61

Gender Balance and Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs)

LCDC's were established in all Local Authorities as part of the Local Government Reform process. The aim of the LCDCs is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development.

The main function of an LCDC is to prepare, implement and monitor the community elements of the six-year local economic and community plan. It must consider the economic elements of the plan in order to enhance co-ordination with the community elements and ultimately integrate the two elements but it does not have a role in deciding on the economic elements. It has a general role in seeking to ensure effectiveness, consistency, co-ordination and avoidance of duplication between the various elements of local authority activities in the community. The local economic and community plan must be consistent with the local development plans made by the elected members and with the regional spatial and economic strategies. The plan must be considered by the municipal district members and approved by the council.

The membership of LCDCs includes members of the local authority, local authority staff, representatives of public bodies which provide services in the area; representatives of local community interests; local community representatives; and representatives of publicly funded or supported local development bodies. The majority of members must be from the non-statutory sector.¹¹

General Policy Guidelines were issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government to create a common framework for the establishment and operation of LCDCs in each local authority area.

With regard to gender balance on LCDCs, the Guidelines states:

'every effort should be made to ensure an equitable gender balance among the local authority members on the LCDC, as well as across the broader LCDC membership'.¹²

¹¹ Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Community Division. (2014) Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Local Community Development Committees.

¹² Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, Community Division. (2014) Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of Local Community Development Committees. P.18

Analysis

An analysis of the gender balance of LCDCs below reveals that of the 11 surveyed, just one local authority, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown, has a majority of female members at 61% while only four have a representation of over 30% (Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim and Galway).

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Council breaks the mould with an over representation of female membership. Of the 14 women, two are councillors while the remaining 12 come from the public and private sectors.

The lowest representation of female membership on LCDCs are in Monaghan, Longford and Westmeath, all with less than 20% female representation.

LCDC chairs – of the 11 committees, there are three female chairs - Sligo, Roscommon and Monaghan while Dun Laoghaire Rathdown has co-chairs which includes one female.

Overall, however, of the 198 members of all 11 LCDCs, the representation of women is just under 30%.

GENDER BALANCE OF LCDCs

COUNTY	COMMITTEE SIZE	MEN	WOMEN	CHAIR
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	23	39% (9)	61% (14)	Co-chairs Female/Male
Cavan	17	65% (11)	35% (6)	Male
Donegal	18	66% (12)	34% (6)	Male
Leitrim	15	67% (10)	33% (5)	Male
Galway	19	68% (13)	32% (6)	Male
Mayo	18	72% (13)	28% (5)	Male
Sligo	17	76% (13)	26% (4)	Female
Roscommon	19	74% (14)	26% (5)	Female
Westmeath	17	82% (14)	18% (3)	Male
Longford	18	83% (15)	17% (3)	Male
Monaghan	17	88% (15)	12% (2)	Female
	198	71% (139)	29% (59)	

COUNCILS following LE2014	Council size	Men	Women
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	40	22 (55%)	18 (45%)
Sligo	18	14 (78%)	4 (22%)
Leitrim	18	14 (78%)	4 (22%)
Roscommon	18	14 (78%)	4 (22%)
Westmeath	20	16 (80%)	4 (20%)
Cavan	18	15 (83%)	3 (16%)
Mayo	30	26 (87%)	4 (13%)
Galway	39	34 (87%)	5 (13%)
Longford	18	16 (89%)	2 (11%)
Monaghan	18	16 (89%)	2 (11%)
Donegal	37	34 (92%)	3 (8%)

Source: County Council websites

Gender Balance and Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)

Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) are local authority committees in city and county councils whose membership includes elected councillors, representatives of business, farming interests, environmental/conservation groups, trade unions and community and voluntary members. The purpose of SPCs is to advise and assist the council in the formulation, development and review of policy, giving councillors and relevant sectoral interests an opportunity for full involvement in the policy making process.¹³

The number and type of SPCs varies from county to county. The majority of councils surveyed had 3-4 SPCs while bigger counties had 5-6. The combination of issues covered by SPCs also varies from council to council.

Guidelines on gender balance

Revised guidelines for the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees and Corporate Policy Groups were published by the Department in June 2014¹⁴ In establishing SPCs and determining sectoral representation on and across each SPC, the Guidelines highlight gender balance as one of the factors to be considered, stating:

'A stated commitment to working towards gender balance and to encouraging as full as possible gender balance in representation from the sectors'.¹⁵

So what is the reality and is gender balance a factor that is seriously considered in the composition of SPCs?

Analysis of data collected on the gender balance of SPCs.

- Of 11 councils surveyed they comprised 47 SPCs with representatives totalling 550 committee members.
- Of the 550 members, the majority 74% were male and 26% female.
- Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown leads the way – the only council that has a gender balance on one SPC and a majority of female representatives on another SPC.
- Three councils have reached the critical mass of 30% - Monaghan, Sligo and Longford.
- The majority of SPC chairs were all male, seven councils had one female chair of an SPC but no council had more than one female chair.
- The poorest performing council in terms of gender balance is Mayo with women accounting for 15% of SPC membership. Donegal is just ahead of Mayo with women accounting for 16% of its SPC membership.
- In some cases, where councils have poor gender balance in terms of Councillors – the gender balance is enhanced with representatives from the community and voluntary sectors in particular. For example in Longford there are just two female councillors yet there is a good representation from the C/V sector on SPCs.

¹³ DECLG

¹⁴ DECLG (2014) Entitled Corporate Policy Groups and Strategic Policy Committees: Guidelines for the establishment and operation of SPCs

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.18

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES - GENDER BALANCE					
COUNCIL	No. of SPCs	Total members	Men	Women	Chairs
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	5	96	50 (52%)	46 (48%)	1 woman
Monaghan	4	45	31 (69%)	14 (31%)	1 woman
Sligo	3	35	24 (69%)	11 (31%)	All men
Longford	4	36	25 (69%)	11 (30%)	All men
Roscommon	4	55	42 (76%)	13 (24%)	1 woman
Cavan	4	35	27 (77%)	8 (23%)	1 woman
Leitrim	3	30	23 (77%)	7 (23%)	1 woman
Westmeath	4	32	26 (81%)	6 (18%)	All men
Galway	5	59	48 (81%)	11 (19%)	All men
Donegal	5	81	68 (84%)	13 (16%)	1 woman
Mayo	6	66	56 (85%)	10 (15%)	1 woman
TOTALS	47	570	420 (74%)	150 (26%)	

Summary breakdown of SPC gender balance on each council

5 DUN LAOGHAIRE / RATHDOWN SPCs				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Of 96 members 50 (52%) are men and 46 (48%) are women. Of the 46 women, 18 are councillors, all of whom sit on 2 SPCs; the other 10 women represent the community/voluntary and environment sectors. The only Council with an SPC that has gender balance and another with a majority of women One female chair ❖ Dun Laoghaire has 40 Cllrs. - 22 (55%) men and 18 (45%) women 				
Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Community Development, Culture & Ageing	18	14	4	Female
Economic Development & Enterprise	20	8	12	Male
Environment, Climate Change & Energy	18	9	9	Male
Planning	20	8	12	Male
Social Housing	20	7	13	Male
	96	46	50	

4 MONAGHAN SPCs

- Of total membership of 45, 31 (69%) are men and 14 (31%) are women
- Despite having only 2 female Cllrs., of the 14 women, 12 represent the c/v sectors. One of the two Cllrs. sits on two SPCs.
- Two SPCs have a good representation of women and one has a female chair,
- ❖ Monaghan Co Co - 18 members - 16 (89%) are men and **2 (11%) are women.**

Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Economic Development & Enterprise Support	11	1	10	Male
Environment & Transport	10	3	7	Male
Social, Cultural & Community Development	13	5	8	Male
Housing, Fire & Civil Protection	11	5	6	Female
	45	14	31	

4 LONGFORD SPCs

- Of the 36 representatives 11 (30%) are women and 25 men (69%)
- Of the 11 women, two are Cllrs. who each sit on one SPC. 9 women represent the c/v and environmental sectors.
- No female chairs.
- ❖ Longford Co Co. - 18 Cllrs - 16 (89%) men and **2 (11%) women**

Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Planning, Development & Culture	9	3	6	Male
Infrastructure & Environment	9	2	7	Male
Housing Services	9	3	6	Male
Economic Development & Enterprise	9	3	6	Male
	36	11 (30%)	25 (69%)	

3 SLIGO SPCs

- Of 35 members on 3 SPCs, 24 (69%) are men and 11 (31%) are women
- Of the 11 women, 4 are Cllrs. two of whom sit on 2 SPCs. 4 women from c/v and environmental sectors.
- No female chairs.
- ❖ Of the 18 Cllrs. on Sligo Co Co 14 (78%) are men and **4 (22%) are women**

Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Housing and corporate	10	2	8	Male
Environmental & Infrastructure	12	5	7	Male
Planning, Community & Economic, Arts & Culture	13	4	9	Male
	35	11 (31%)	24 (69%)	

4 ROSCOMMON SPCs

- Of the 55 members there are 42 (76%) men and 13 (24%) women
- One female chair

❖ Roscommon Co Co: 18 Cllrs. 14 (78%) men and **4 (22%) women**

Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Planning	14	3	11	Male
Environmental and Emergency Services	14	3	11	Male
Economic Development & Enterprise Support (including Roads & Culture)	14	5	9	Female
Housing and Corporate	13	2	11	Male
	55	13 (24%)	42 (76%)	

4 CAVAN SPCs

- Of the 35 members, 27 (77%) are men and 8 (23%) are women.
- Of 8 females 3 are Cllrs., 1 represented on 2 SPCs; 4 women from c/v sectors.
- One female chair

❖ Cavan Co Co has 18 councillors; 15 (83%) are men and **3 (16%) are women**

Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Economic Development	9	3	6	Male
Housing, Social & Cultural	8	2	6	Female
Environment & Planning	9	1	8	Male
Transportation & Infrastructure	9	2	7	Male
	35	8	27	

LEITRIM 3 SPCs

- Of 30 committee members, 23 (77%) are men and 7 (23%) are women.
- Of the 7 women, 3 are councillors and 4 represent the c/v sectors
- One female chair

❖ Leitrim County Council has 18 members - 14 men (78%) and **4 (22%) women.**

Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning	10	2	8	Male
Environment, Transport & Infrastructure	10	1	9	Female
Housing Policy, Social & Cultural Development	10	4	6	Male
	30	7	23	

4 WESTMEATH SPCs

- Of 32 members, 26 (81%) are men and 6 (18%) are women.
- 3 are female Cllrs. & 3 from other sectors - 2 from C/V and 1 from Environment.
- One SPC has NO female representation and one SPC has only 1 female rep.
- No female chairs
- ❖ Westmeath Co Co: of 20 Cllrs. 16 (80%) are men and **4 (20%) are women.**

Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Economic Development, Enterprise & Community	8	2	6	Male
Environment, Water & Emergency Services	8	0	8	Male
Housing, Corporate & Culture	8	1	7	Male
Planning & Transportation	8	3	5	Male
	32	6	26	

GALWAY - 5 SPCs

- Of 59 members, 48 (81%) male while 11(19%) are female.
- All 5 female Cllrs. are on an SPC; 5 women from c/v; 1 from business/employment.
- No female chairs
- ❖ Galway Co Co. has 39 members - 34 (87%) men and **5 (13%) women.**

Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Economic Development & Enterprise	12	3	9	Male
Roads, Transportation & Marine	12	1	11	Male
Housing, Culture & Recreation	11	3	8	Male
Planning & Community	12	3	9	Male
Environment & Water Services	12	1	11	Male
	59	11 (19%)	48 (81%)	

5 SPCs in DONEGAL

- Of 81 members, 68 (84%) are men and just 13 (16%) are women.
- 13 women include 3 Cllrs. who sit on several SPCs; 7 women are PPN members. The most women members on an SPC are 4 and one SPC has only 1 woman.
- One female chair
- ❖ Donegal Co Co has 37 Councillors, 34 (92%) are men and 3 **(8%) are women**

Strategic Policy Committee	Total	GENDER BALANCE		CHAIRS
		Women	Men	
Economic, Enterprise & Planning Policy	21	4	17	Male
Roads & Transportation	15	1	14	Male
Housing & Corporate	15	3	12	Male
Community, Social & Cultural	15	2	13	Female
Environment & Emergency Services	15	3	12	Male
	81	13 (16%)	68 (84%)	

6 MAYO SPCs

- Of 66 members just 15% (10) women on SPCs and 56 (85%) men.
 - Of the 10 women 4 are Cllrs. 3 of whom sit on several SPCs; 3 women represent the v/c sector – total of 7 women representatives in total ..
 - One female chair
- ❖ Mayo Co Co has 30 Cllrs., 26 (87%) are men and there are **4 (13%) women**

Strategic Policy Committee	GENDER BALANCE			CHAIRS
	Total	Women	Men	
Housing	11	2	9	Male
Cultural, Education, Heritage, Corporate Affairs & Emergency Services	11	2	9	Male
Roads & Transportation	11	3	8	Female
Economic Development & Enterprise Support	11	1	10	Male
Planning, Environment & Agriculture	11	0	11	Male
Food & Tourism	11	2	9	Male
	66	10 (15%)	56 (85%)	

Gender Balance and Joint Policing Committees (JPCs)

Joint Policing Committees (JPCs) were established in 2008 under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 with the aim of developing greater consultation, cooperation and synergy on policing and crime issues between An Garda Síochána, Local Authorities and elected local representatives. JPCs also facilitate the participation of the community and voluntary sectors in this regard.

Following a review of the operation of JPCs, revised guidelines were issued in 2014 which allowed for the alignment of the JPCs with new local government structures. Key changes included Committees operating at a City and County level following the abolition of Town Councils; development of six year and annual strategic plans; an increase in the number of community representatives and the need for a proper communications strategy to support interaction with local communities and effective and efficient coordination with other local structures.¹⁶

Membership

The membership of JPCs includes local authority elected members and officials, Oireachtas elected members, An Garda Síochána and representatives from the community and voluntary sector. The membership of JPCs varies as it is determined by the size of each local authority.

In terms of gender balance, the Guidelines state:

'To the greatest extent possible, the objective of achieving a 40% gender balance in the making of appointments, as well as the need to foster social inclusiveness and equality when selecting membership should be adhered to'.¹⁷

Analysis

The table below reveals that no JPC has achieved a 40% gender balance. Dun Laoghaire JPC has the highest representation of women at 33% followed by Galway at 31%. Monaghan, Donegal and Roscommon JPCs have the lowest representation of women, all below 20%. Overall, of the 11 JPCs comprising 294 members, men account for the majority at 77% (226) while women account for just 23% (68). Just 3 of the JPCs surveyed have female chairs.

¹⁶ Garda Síochána Act 2005. Joint Policing Committees Guidelines – Amended August 201

¹⁷ Garda Síochána Act 2005. Joint Policing Committees Guidelines – Amended August 201 , p.15

COUNTY	COMMITTEE SIZE	MEN	WOMEN	CHAIR
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	27	67% (18)	33% (9)	Female
Galway	32	69% (22)	31% (10)	Male
Cavan	28	71% (20)	29% (8)	Male
Leitrim	25	72% (18)	28% (7)	Male
Sligo	25	76% (19)	24% (6)	Female
Westmeath	27	78% (21)	22% (6)	Male
Longford	20	80% (16)	20% (4)	Male
Mayo	29	79% (23)	21% (6)	Male
Monaghan	23	83% (19)	17% (4)	Female
Donegal	33	85% (28)	15% (5)	Male
Roscommon	25	84% (21)	16% (4)	Male
TOTALS	294	77% (226)	23% (68)	

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the research presented above and following a number of discussions at Women's Manifesto meetings seminars, the following recommendations are proposed:

- At present, LWMG/LWL and all of the groups participating in this research play an active role at all levels of local decision-making in their respective areas and are represented on LCDCs, SPCs and PPNs. We are concerned at the lack of accountability in relation to gender balance on these committees and believe that the published guidelines in relation to achieving this balance are weak. Therefore we recommend that Local Authorities be accountable in relation to their achievements on the issue of gender balance and that all committees (LCDC/SPC/JPC) should have a minimum of 40% of either gender. Local Authorities must be asked to report on the gender balance of their committee and specifically outline the reasons why balance has not been achieved. We urge Local Authorities to look at examples of good practice in other areas and adopt same e.g. the procedure at Roscommon County Council whereby if a position is vacant, both a male and female candidate are nominated.
- At least one representative of locally based women's groups should be member of the LCDC – This is of critical importance in relation to the Local Economic and Community plans and the monitoring the effectiveness of engagement by local authorities with marginalised and disadvantaged women.
- In order for a real and lasting commitment to gender equality to exist, targets must be monitored to ensure that there is sufficient gender balance on committees. The Department must issue clear guidelines to local authorities which highlight the necessity of promoting and embedding gender equality.
- Local Authorities need to address the issue of meeting times. Many LCDC meetings are held during the working day which has a significant impact on representatives from the C/V sector who must take time off work to attend. It is proposed that in order to facilitate local authority staff, as well as adopting a family-friendly approach that meetings be alternated between day and evening.
- LWMG/LWL welcomed the introduction of gender quotas for candidate selection at national level however we believe that the research on this issue, and the outcomes for female candidates at GE16 (increase from 16.3% representation in 2011 to 22% in 2016) supports the call for quotas for candidate selection to also be applied at local level. Women still account for just one in five out of every county and city councillor in Ireland, well below the EU average of 32%. Therefore we continue to recommend that the gender balance requirements in the *Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012* to be extended to local elections,
- Barriers to accessing both local and national decision-making structures are critical factors in preventing full and equal participation of rural women in their communities. LWL's Women's Manifesto Programme is a unique model of local

democratic participation which aims to support women in Longford and other counties to play an active and meaningful role in their local decision-making structures. Therefore we believe that investment in the Manifesto model would be one mechanism to addressing these barriers and would support women to play a full and meaningful part in their communities.

- Implementation of a comprehensive social impact assessment, including a specific gender impact assessment, prior to the implementation of all Local and Community Development policies. It is our experience that many women, especially in rural Ireland are reliant on the services provided by organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector and therefore any reductions to these services has disproportionate impacts on women and their families.

Appendix I

Women's Manifesto Project Members/PPN Research Participants

- ❖ Cavan Women's Network
- ❖ Donegal Women's Network
- ❖ Galway PPN
- ❖ Longford Women's Manifesto Group
- ❖ Mayo PPN
- ❖ Monaghan Women's Network
- ❖ North Leitrim Women's Centre
- ❖ Roscommon PPN
- ❖ Roscommon Women's Network
- ❖ Sligo PPN
- ❖ Westmeath Community Development
- ❖ Women's Community Projects, Mullingar
- ❖ Women4Women, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown

Appendix II

OBSERVING COUNCIL MEETINGS

Recommendations from 2015 research

Access to meetings

The public have a right to observe council meetings

- Ensure access of the public to attend council meetings and make the public aware of the process of how they can obtain admission.
- Organise live streaming of council meeting, making the recordings available on council websites.
- Post a 'calendar of meetings' on the website to keep the public informed of all the meetings that are scheduled.

Access to information

The public have a right to access information

- Post agendas for all meetings (plenaries and committees) online several days prior to meetings.
- Post minutes of all meetings along with all other information relevant to the meeting.

General conduct

- Adhere to the rules outlined in council's Standing Orders and the Code of Conduct.
- Use the party whips to limit comments from each party
- Provide training and ongoing support for the role of Cathaoirleach

Gender

- Lobby for implementation of gender quota legislation be extended for the next local elections in 2019. (organise debate on issue - presentation on rationale for local elections quotas - NGO/academic)

Rural Citizenship Engagement

Recommendations from 2016 Seminar report

- **Consistency and transparency** – Organisations need to provide feedback to the department as to what is working. If departments use a traffic light system for decisions this helps transparency as people can see how decisions are made.
- **Trust** is key and needs to be built up on all committees between all stakeholders
- **Funding** needs to be committed to recruit PPN Resource Workers in all counties
- **Voices** need to be heard and seen to be heard – volunteers need to see results.
- **Sharing good practice** saves time and resources
- PPNs need to feed into **real policy and decision-making** which leads to real change for communities.
- **Engage** people locally – in their own areas
- Make the **language more user-friendly**. Watch our use of jargon and acronyms
- Make it mandatory to have **information online** regarding all council meetings, agendas, minutes etc. All councils follow the example of Roscommon County Council and start planning to webcast council meetings.
- Start going to **observe meetings** of your council at county and Municipal District level – a great way to learn how local government works. Ring your own council to find out about accessing meetings.