



Ibec
For Irish Business

Ibec the voice

An Ibec campaign

Local Elections, Friday 24 May 2019

Local government that delivers for business

The performance of our regions and our localities will have a defining impact on the wider success of the country. Who we elect to local government and what they stand for matters.

Better functioning, sustainable and dynamic cities and towns will drive economic growth and improve the quality of life of citizens. However, new thinking and assertive action is required.

In the last ten years local government has been transformed. It is now more centralised than anywhere else in the EU, with less local authorities and fewer staff. It is crucial that the needs of local businesses are not overlooked.

Each local authority must articulate a new vision, one that is rooted in long-term strategic planning and reflects the needs of the regional economy and local enterprise. At its core must be the delivery of quality local infrastructure and services, such as housing, transport, education and broadband.

We need strong, thriving communities in which to live, study, work and invest. On May 24 lets elect public representatives who can make that happen.

Local government matters

Local business, not central government, is the primary source of income for local authorities. As a rates-payer, employer and contributor to economic growth, business has a massive stake in how local government works.

Currently, there are 31 local authorities involved in licensing, inspections and planning. Regulations, timelines and service levels can vary from one authority to another. This can cause confusion and adds an unwelcome layer of complexity, uncertainty and cost for business.

Exercising its spatial planning mandate is a core function of your local authority. All local development plans are to be reviewed for consistency with the National Planning Framework by 2020. Decisions taken will determine economic and social development in your area for the next six years.

Local authorities also have a formal role in promoting enterprise and entrepreneurship. This stretches from creating attractive town centres, road maintenance, improving accessibility and connectivity, promoting tourism and enhancing cultural and sporting life.

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Priorities

1
Good planning is key to
our quality of life

Sustainable economic growth and demographic change must be planned locally as well as nationally. An immediate priority for the next local authorities will be to oversee the local implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF).

- The NPF must be implemented effectively through the local development plan process. Local plans must deliver attractive areas to live, with an adequate supply of commercial and residential property.
- New housing strategies are needed to urgently deliver quality and affordable homes. Local authorities must champion higher density housing, a sensible approach to building height and prioritise urban development.
- Local authorities must ensure the delivery of key infrastructure projects and encourage new investment through local development and economic strategies, including zoning decisions, local charges and regulations.



2 Doing business locally should be less taxing

Local authorities have a significant impact on business conditions and cost competitiveness in their locality through commercial rates and other charges. Commercial rates are a form of local taxation, mostly to fund services that businesses do not consume. Reducing the burden of commercial rates would make it easier for business, particularly SMEs, to create jobs.

- Local authorities must be transparent and fair when determining the annual commercial rates bill. All local authority charges should be reviewed in the context of impact on local business competitiveness.
- New commercial rates incentive schemes are needed to encourage regeneration, entrepreneurship and productive investment. Securing a wider revenue pool would also reduce the burden on local businesses.
- Central government, local property tax and service charges must make a larger contribution to local authority finances. Current funding practices must be overhauled.



3 Reform and new thinking must be embraced

Local authorities must work together to deliver quality, cost-effective services. Reforms are often imposed by central government and local authorities must work to make them a success.

- Economies and communities do not stop at the local authority boundary. Greater collaboration is needed in local, regional and metropolitan spatial and economic planning.
- Local government reform should be reinvigorated. This should include the pooling of staff and specialist expertise, using shared services to cut duplication, improved public procurement practices and greater use of digital technologies.
- Directly elected mayors are being proposed for three areas. Internationally, mayors play a key role in economic development and can do so here. However, first we need to get our existing local government structures right.



**Make
24 May
Your
Business**



**Find out more about the
work of local authorities
and how their decisions
affect your business.**

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Encourage voting
by your staff.





Share these
priorities with
the local business
community.

Inform your
employees of
the importance
of good local
government to
your business.





Join the conversation.
Tell the candidates
how creating the
right conditions for
business can improve
living standards,
generate tax
revenue and create
exciting new job
opportunities.

Ibec is Ireland's largest lobby group representing business regionally, nationally and internationally. Our membership is home grown, multinational, big and small, spanning every sector of the economy.

For more information contact:

Arnold Dillon

Head of Strategic Campaigns
email: arnold.dillon@ibec.ie

Aidan Sweeney

Senior Public Sector and Regulatory Executive
email: aidan.sweeney@ibec.ie

