



## **AILG and See Her Elected welcome funding for establishment of regional female caucuses**

The Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) and See Her Elected (SHE) have jointly welcomed the announcement by Peter Burke, Minister of State for Planning and Local Government, to allocate funding of €62,000 to support women councillors to establish caucuses in their areas.

Funding has been approved for 16 proposals shared between twenty-four Local Authorities and a joint application from the Association of Irish Local Government (AILG) and See Her Elected (SHE) to establish female caucuses. AILG and SHE have been allocated funding of €5,000 to establish a regional caucus in counties Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Galway County, Galway City, Roscommon, Cavan, Monaghan, Longford, Westmeath, Laois and Offaly.

President of the AILG, Cllr Mary Hoade explained that AILG and SHE collaborated on the idea for a Regional Caucus for women councillors because it brought their complementary aims together.

“Any initiative that improves the working environment for councillors and can be identified as structural support for women entering politics speaks to objectives of both organisations. As a national representative body for councillors across Ireland, one of AILG’s priorities is to support

and retain the women councillors that are currently elected & to promote better gender equality & diversity in our local government system.

“The objective of the pilot project is to test the concept of a Regional Caucus structure for women councillors within the Irish local government system.

“We are delighted to have secured funding of €5,000 to establish a regional caucus and that funding will be used to engage the services of an independent facilitator over the duration of a 12-month period. The role of the independent facilitator will be to help manage, plan and guide the group of women councillors to work together better, understand their common objectives, and plan how to achieve these objectives. The independent facilitator will also help to formulate an evaluation and recommendations report at the end of the pilot project which will create a blueprint on how to roll out other Regional Caucuses across Ireland,” said Cllr Hoade.

Programme Manager with See Her Elected (SHE) Dr Michelle Maher said that the purpose of a Regional Caucus structure is to facilitate peer support among women councillors, to enable sharing of experience and knowledge and to enable women councillors to identify supports specific to their needs.

“We believe that the idea and practice of caucuses will be better understood, and the benefits appreciated in a regional group. This maximises the number of councillors seeing for themselves what does and does not work, and how the idea of a caucus might transfer to either their own county or in collaboration with neighbouring counties

“This pilot study hopes to create learning for smaller caucuses in the region and other regional caucuses,” said Dr Maher.

“Only 25% of county councillors throughout Ireland are female and we have a much lower percentage of female councillors in rural counties compared to more urban centres such as Dublin. We would like to see a marked increase in the number of female councillors by 2024 and the establishment of regional caucuses will help promote gender equality at Local Government level,” said Dr Maher.

The pilot regional caucus will cover the following counties (number of women councillors): Donegal (4), Leitrim (3), Sligo (3), Mayo (2), Galway County (7), Galway City (5), Roscommon (4) Cavan (4), Monaghan (3), Longford (2), Westmeath (4), Laois (5), Offaly (1). The total across the 13 counties is 47.

President of the AILG, Cllr Mary Hoade said that while there certainly may be challenges, “AILG and SHE believe that ultimately a Regional Caucus for Women Councillors has the opportunity to bring women councillors together to unite around goals that transcend their political differences and to steer the caucus toward decisions that better respond to the needs and interests of women, as well as men.”

ENDS