

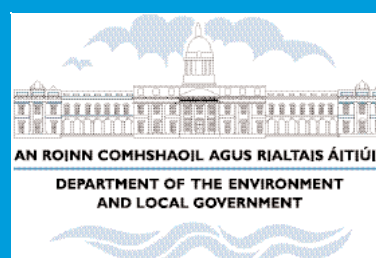
GUIDELINES FOR THE OPERATION OF LOCAL TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES (LTACCs)

RECOMMENDED BY THE NATIONAL TRAVELLER
ACCOMMODATION CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

April, 2001



National Traveller Accommodation
Consultative Committee
An Coiste Comhairleach Náisiúnta
um Chóiríocht don Lucht Siúil



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INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines arise out of consideration by the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee of a report on the results of research (carried out in 2000) into the operation of Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees and the Code of Practice suggested in that report. The National Committee expanded the Code of Practice and recommended that it be issued to and adopted by local consultative committees with a view to addressing some of the issues highlighted in the report.

It has been decided to issue the suggested code of practice in the form of Guidelines with a recommendation that the local committees adopt them.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF LTACCS

The appointing local authority should:

- decide on the terms of reference of the LTACC which should be drafted within the framework of Section 21 (2) and (3) of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998;
- ensure that each member is notified of his/her appointment, the aims and objectives of the LTACC, as laid out in the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, the terms of reference of the Committee and the provisions of Section 21(2) and (3) of the 1998 Act;
- make every effort to ensure an appropriate gender balance within each strand of the membership.

TRAVELLER REPRESENTATIVES SELECTION

It is important that Traveller representatives on the LTACC are in a position to adequately represent the overall Traveller population in the local authority area. The selection procedure for Traveller representatives should be designed to meet this objective. To this end local authorities should:

- undertake proactive measures to inform the Traveller community of the LTACC process, and their role on the committee. Local Traveller support groups should be consulted about, and actively involved in, the dissemination of information relating to the committees.
- where an appropriate Traveller organisation or group of organisations exists or are otherwise available, agree a selection procedure to be administered by such organisation(s).

COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING

Committees will operate more effectively if all the members have a common understanding of the necessary procedures for the conduct of committee meetings and meetings are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect. It is important that individual members of the committee are familiar with and understand the culture, way of life and traditions which impact on Traveller participation in the committees. Committees should give particular consideration to methods of communication, and should:

- have regard to such issues as literacy levels, equality, lack of familiarity with jargon (including administrative jargon) and technical terms;

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- ensure language used is as clear as possible in both the written and spoken word;
 - consider identification of appropriate approaches (such as joint workshops, training or presentations) which would facilitate the operation of the committees;
 - put in place a format for procedures at meetings acceptable to the various strands involved. This format may be an adapted version of the local authority standard operations or may be a different format.

METHODS OF OPERATION

While each committee should determine its own methods of operation the committee should

- agree a regular schedule of meetings, the frequency and regularity of which should be agreed at the start of each calendar year,
- consider different days, times and places for meetings to facilitate its members,
- decide on a quorum for its meetings having regard to the requirements in relation to membership of committees as set out in Section 22 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998;
- agree on basic matters such as a prohibition on the use of mobile phones at meetings;
- decide on a minimum period of formal notice of each meeting to members. While the period of notice should be not less than one week longer periods of notice should be the norm. The notice of a meeting, which should be accompanied by the minutes of the previous meeting, the Agenda etc, should specify the date, time and venue for the meeting;
- while recognising that consistency of attendance is desirable, allow substitutes where members may not be in a position to attend;
- conduct a proportion of meetings away from Council buildings. The committee should consider site visits and field trips in conjunction with its meetings with a view to gaining first hand knowledge and experience of a wide spectrum of conditions of Traveller accommodation;

The appointing local authority should, make adequate resources, including staff, available to service the committee and, having regard to the exigencies of the local authority, should:

- as far as is practicable designate specific staff for this purpose, and
- avoid frequent changes of staff assigned this function.

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

The chairperson of the Committee has a key role to play in ensuring that all members of the Committee exercise their right to contribute to the business of a meeting by fostering a spirit of inclusiveness. The Chairperson should ensure that:

- representatives discuss issues relevant to the meeting agenda only,
- members are afforded the opportunity of contributing to discussions on any item of business and that the contributions are noted,
- meetings are conducted on the basis of the agreed agenda. The agenda should set out clearly the individual items of business to be dealt with at the meeting. The items on the agenda should be specific and the use of vague language should be avoided. It should be open to any member to propose an item to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting;
- meetings are structured along a definite length of time, and that this is adhered to;
- decisions arrived at by the committee in exercising its role have broad support within the committee and that such decisions are clearly understood by all members and are noted in the minutes along with any dissension from such decisions;
- the agenda for the following meeting is agreed subject to the right of members to have items added if necessary.

USE OF SUB-GROUPS

Each committee should consider the appointment of sub-groups to carry out specific functions such as assisting the authority in site identification. Functions assigned to a sub-group should be suitable for carrying out on a team basis. The sub-group should

- consist of members from each of the various strands, and
- have specific terms of reference from the Committee.

APPENDIX

Relevant extracts of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998

- 21.—(2) Without prejudice to subsection (1), a local consultative committee—
- (a) may advise the appointing authority concerned
 - (b) may, when requested by a local authority other than the appointing authority concerned, advise that local authority where the functional area of that local authority adjoins the functional area of the appointing authority, and,
 - (c) may, where it is appointed by a council of a county, advise any relevant housing authority where the functional area of such relevant housing authority is within the administrative area of the county concerned.
- (3) Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) or any other provision of this Act, a local consultative committee may—
- (a) advise in relation to the preparation and implementation of any accommodation programme for the functional area of the appointing authority concerned
 - (b) advise on the management of accommodation for travellers, and,
 - (c) provide a liaison between travellers and members and officials of the appointing authority concerned.
- 22.—(1) An appointing authority shall, in accordance with any directions issued by the Minister under section 21(5), appoint a chairperson of the local consultative committee and the membership of such committee which shall comprise the following—
- (a) members of the appointing authority concerned
 - (b) officials of the appointing authority concerned
 - (c) representatives of local travellers and traveller bodies, and
 - (d) where a local consultative committee has been appointed by the council of a county, one member from each relevant housing authority (if any) within the administrative county concerned, and the number

of members referred to in paragraphs(a) and (d) shall not exceed one half of the membership of the local consultative committee and the number of representatives referred to in paragraph (c) shall not be less than one quarter of the membership of the local consultative committee.

- (2) A local consultative committee may regulate, by standing order or otherwise, its procedure and business.
- (3) The making of an appointment under this section shall be a reserved function.



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