

# Organisational Reform Proposals



73ú Ard Fheis • 2nd-3rd March 2012

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For the first time since its foundation, Fianna Fáil has held a full national consultation with members about the reform of the party. Initial proposals were circulated to all members and units of the organisation in 2011. These proposals were discussed at meetings all over the country and close to 1,000 submissions were received from members and cumainn. The final proposals contained in this booklet directly reflect the inputs of thousands of members. They are significantly enhanced and clarified – based on members’ feedback – from those contained in the initial consultation booklet. Please study this booklet carefully – it contains the complete set of proposals which will be for discussion and adoption at the Ard Fheis on Saturday 3rd March 2012.

Feedback during the consultation process can be summarised as follows:

- The vast majority of members accepted that Fianna Fáil must **radically change the way it operates** and must increase its on-the-ground activities.
- The cumann must remain the **foundation stone** of the party. Members want it to be the key connection between the organisation and the community and wish it to be opened up and empowered.
- **Individual members must be the driving force of Fianna Fáil** and there must be an end to the ‘top-down’ approach.
- Members strongly support empowering members through the introduction of **one-member, one-vote (OMOV)**.
- Reforms are required in the work of the **Ard Chomhairle, Headquarters** and the **Parliamentary Party**. These reforms must result in improved communications at all levels and must give members a greater say in the running of the Party.
- Members want to have a role **in the election of the Party Leader**.
- Members want to be **consulted in advance of the party entering government**.
- Members want Fianna Fáil to have a strong **ethics code** which leaves no doubt that conduct which brings the party into disrepute will not be tolerated.

- Once the main proposals are implemented, members felt that there should be a further ***opportunity to review*** their operation, after a three-year period, and to propose modifications, additions or further reforms, should they be deemed appropriate.

The proposals for this Ard Fheis have been simplified to fit into four core groups of amendments which will be appended to Corú & Rialacha. These are:

- 1. Measures to implement a One Member One Vote (OMOV) proposal;***
- 2. Measures to increase political activity;***
- 3. Measures to increase activities and accountability of the Parliamentary Party, Ard Chomhairle and Party Headquarters;***
- 4. Measures to ensure high ethical standards.***

In addition, there are some technical measures which must be adopted to enable the organisation to transition to the new system. These are outlined below.

Members' feedback is reflected in each proposal presented in this booklet, which replaces the initial booklet, circulated late last year.

## 1. Proposals to Implement One Member One Vote (OMOV)

From the close to one thousand submissions received, it is evident that there is overwhelming support for the idea of individual members being empowered within Fianna Fáil. Most submissions were about how to make OMOV work; not whether it should be introduced.

The two big themes of the submissions were *simplicity* and *flexibility*. Members wanted the scheme to be operationally *simpler* than originally proposed, setting easily measurable activity requirements for members that could be administered by each unit of the organisation. In addition, some large and highly active constituencies wanted the *flexibility* to retain delegates in their regular organisation work. Both of these are addressed in the proposal.

In a major addition to the original proposal, it is proposed that following the introduction of OMOV, a special commission will be established to propose how to further involve members in fundamental decisions which the Party takes, including the election of the Party Leader and a decision to enter a coalition government. This commission, which shall represent members at different levels of the organisation, will report back to the Ard Chomhairle and the Ard Fheis. A formal rule requiring the commission to be established, along with it reporting to the next Ard Fheis, is included here.

The revised proposal involves:

- Individual membership of Fianna Fáil.
- The retention of the cumann.
- An annual subscription of €20. This subscription fee has been set by the Ard Chomhairle. (Individuals may remain members of their

cumann/Ógra unit without paying the subscription fee. However, they will not have voting rights. Such members will be classified as associate members).

- Constituencies outside of Dublin, Limerick City and the Cork City constituencies may implement a revised delegate voting system at Comhairle Dáil Ceantair level with the current Comhairle Ceantair delegates being augmented by a representative from each Cumann. This would only apply in constituencies with greater than 400 members.
- Members who are up to date with their subscription will be entitled to vote in OMOV conventions for candidate selection, to attend and vote at the Ard Fheis and to participate fully in their Cumann and Comhairle Ceantair (Comhairle Dáil Ceantair in Dublin).
- The establishment of a special commission to examine how members can be involved in a much more participative way in the workings of the party, particularly in relation to the election of the Party Leader and any decision on whether the party enters a coalition government. The commission will report to the Ard Chomhairle and will make a report to the Ard Fheis.

Under this proposal, members will, for the first time, have a real stake in their party. Members will:

- Have a direct say in who represents them, as their candidates;
- Be invited to attend Cumann, Comhairle Ceantair and, where applicable, CDC meetings;
- Participate in a constituency policy conference, on an annual basis;
- Be invited to attend the annual Ard Fheis;
- Be invited to attend the new annual policy conference;
- Receive regular communications on political and party matters.

In addition, a commission will be established to determine how members can be involved in a more participative way in significant decisions, such as the election of the Party Leader and entering into a coalition government.

## Motion For Decision – 1. Introduction of OMOV

A member, of at least 12 months standing, having paid their annual subscription, shall be entitled to attend, speak and vote at meetings of the Ard Fheis, their Cumann, their Comhairle Ceantair (CDCs in Dublin) and to a vote in all Candidate Selection Conventions in their local electoral area and constituency. Such members shall be classified as *voting members*.

Individuals may remain members of their cumann/Ogra unit without paying the subscription fee. However, they will not have voting rights. Such members will be classified as *associate members*.

To become a voting member of Fianna Fáil, a person must pay their annual subscription and, when first joining, submit a signed application form. The application form shall include an acceptance of the aims and rules of Fianna Fáil and such other matters as shall be specified by the Árd Comhairle following consultation with Chomhairli Dáilcheantair. Each unit of the organisation shall certify its membership list each year, returning the complete roll of members for that unit, along with the appropriate membership subscriptions, to party headquarters. Members will have the choice of registering – and renewing – their membership through their local organisation or with party headquarters annually.

The Árd Comhairle shall consult with the members and officers in a constituency before reaching any decisions relating to the organisational structure of the CDC. The Comhairle Dáil Ceantair (CDC) shall consist of all registered voting members in a constituency. However, outside of Dublin, Limerick City and the Cork City constituencies, and where its membership exceeds 400, a CDC may continue to operate with the existing five delegates from each Comhairle Ceantair and an additional representative from each registered cumann, should it so wish. This additional delegate will empower cumainn with a direct say in the running of the organisation in their constituency.

Each member must be a member of his/her cumann, or where such is not in existence, the next higher unit. Outside of Dublin, each voting member would also be a member of his/her Comhairle Ceantair, with the same membership rights as per the cumann. In Dublin, each voting member would be a member of his/her CDC, again with the same membership rights as per the cumann.

Selection conventions shall be by OMOV.

An up-to-date Register of Members shall be maintained at Party Headquarters. A copy of this will be available to each Cumann, Comhairle Ceantair and CDC Secretary and to all public representatives and election candidates on an ongoing basis for inspection.

Following the introduction of OMOV, a special commission will be established to propose how to further involve members in fundamental decisions which the Party takes, including the election of the Party Leader and a decision to enter a coalition government. The Commission, which shall represent members at different levels of the organisation, will report back to the Ard Chomhairle and the Ard Fheis.

As a condition of membership, members will commit to an enhanced ethical code with effective sanctions for anyone who is deemed to bring the organisation into disrepute.

The operation of OMOV shall be subject to review after three years and such review will be presented to the Ard Fheis.

## 2. Proposals to Increase Political Activism

During the consultation, all members agreed that we need to increase the level of political activism within Fianna Fáil. It was felt that new rules had to be **simple** and **credible**, leaving it up to local organisations to develop their agenda. Members also called for **improved communication** at all levels of the organisation.

The main proposal is that every Comhairle Ceantair and Comhairle Dailceantair will work to an **annual activity plan** which shall include social activities, policy meetings, canvassing, campaigning, membership drives and public events. New provisions requiring the Ard Comhairle and Parliamentary Party to actively consult with, and inform, members about their work will help this. Headquarters will be obliged to implement mechanisms to support the organisation in informing members of events and activities.

In addition, it is proposed to promote cooperation within regions. It is intended that this will involve locally-relevant campaigns, with participation by relevant national spokespeople.

## Motions for Decision –

2. a. Every Comhairle Ceantair and Comhairle Dailceantair shall adopt by the end of each calendar year an annual Political Action activity plan which shall include political activities and performance targets for the following year and a review of activities already undertaken.
- b. The Constituency Director of Organisation shall be responsible for preparing a draft of the annual activity plan following consultation with public representatives, candidates, officers and members.
- c. The Constituency Delegate to the Ard Chomhairle shall make regular reports on the activities of the Ard Chomhairle at Comhairle Dailceantair meetings and shall also submit regular reports to the Party's Joint Honorary Secretaries outlining progress in implementing the Constituency Political Activity Plan.
3. Each Constituency shall appoint a Deputy Constituency Organiser responsible for the recruitment of new members, supporting the activities of Ógra Fianna Fáil and promoting increased participation of women at all levels of the Organisation.
4. Each member will be required to attend at least two meetings of the organisation per annum.
5. Each year there shall be at least one meeting of the Directors of Organisation, Chairpersons and Secretaries of each Comhairle Dailceantair in each region to coordinate campaign activities.
6. Each CDC shall host an annual Constituency Policy Conference attended by members of the Parliamentary Party Front Bench, Seanad Spokespeople and MEPs, affording all Party members within the constituency an opportunity to engage in policy formulation.

### 3. Proposals to Increase Responsibilities of the Parliamentary Party, Ard Chomhairle and HQ

A consistent message from members during the consultation was the need for the party at national level to show the same commitment to reform and increased activity that is being shown locally. Members also want their role in national policy recognised. It was felt by many that the composition of the Ard Chomhairle should be examined.

The Ard Chomhairle will henceforth work to an ***annual plan of activities*** which will be drawn up in consultation with constituencies. The Ard Chomhairle will circulate an ***annual review of its work*** undertaken.

As an added part of this increased connection between the Ard Chomhairle and constituencies, each Constituency Delegate will be obliged to report to the CDC on the work of the Ard Chomhairle. Similar reporting responsibilities are being proposed for the Parliamentary Party together with increased service commitments by Headquarters.

Consultation with members on policy will be required to include ***a new national policy conference*** to be held in the autumn of each year.

## Motions for Decision -

7. Following consultation with each CDC, the Ard Chomhairle shall adopt and publish an annual plan of activities before the end of each calendar year which shall include proposed activities for the following year and a review of the previous year's activities.
8. a. Party Headquarters shall put in place a set of service commitments concerning its interface with the organisation.  
b. Party Headquarters shall establish support facilities to enable officers of the organisation to effectively inform all members of Party events and other relevant matters in each constituency.
9. a. The Parliamentary Party shall prepare regular reports on its activities. It shall report to each Ard Chomhairle meeting and make written reports available to all members at a minimum twice in each year.  
b. The Parliamentary Party and Party Headquarters shall put in place procedures for regularly consulting Party members in relation to policy development.  
c. Each year there shall be, in addition to the Ard Fheis, a national policy conference which each member shall be entitled to attend.
10. A full review of the Ard Chomhairle is being undertaken at present. This Ard Fheis directs the Ard Chomhairle to expedite this review, consulting with the organisation, and implementing immediate, radical reform, to take effect at the next Ard Fheis.

## 4. Proposals Concerning Ethical Standards

Throughout the consultation process, members stressed that there should be ***no toleration of low standards*** at any level of the party. Members asked that the Córú be revised to be very clear on this.

These new provisions reinforce the duty of all members and representatives to uphold the highest ethical standards. The Ard Comhairle will now be required to assist unit Treasurers and Secretaries in meeting their obligations under political legislation.

In the ***candidate selection process***, a new provision will require candidates to give the party a declaration of interests along the lines of the one they would have to provide to the Standards in Public Office Commission if they were elected.

## Motions for Decision -

11. a. It shall be the duty of all members of Fianna Fáil to uphold the highest ethical standards in their work as members of the party and as public representatives and they shall seek to avoid any actions which would damage the standing of the Party.
  - b. Every holder of an office within the Party and every party public representative and candidate shall have the duty to inform themselves of, and comply with, statutory requirements governing the regulation of political activity.
  - c. The Árd Comhairle Rules and Procedures Committee shall be responsible for developing and overseeing compliance with the Coru & Rialacha and statutory requirements governing the regulation of political activity. This committee shall be empowered to impose sanctions where breaches of standards are proven.
  - d. The Rules and Procedures Committee shall make available to every Treasurer and Secretary a detailed statement of the actions which they are required to take to comply with the Coru & Rialacha and statutory requirements governing the regulation of political activity.
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12. All persons selected to stand as candidates for Fianna Fáil shall, before being ratified, save in exceptional circumstances approved by the Ard Chomhairle, furnish to the Party a declaration of interests similar to that which they would be obliged to publish if elected.

## Ongoing Reform Initiatives and Implementation of Ard Fheis Decisions.

Over the past year, reform initiatives have been undertaken at all levels of the party. Members have participated enthusiastically and energetically in these from attending meetings with the leader, establishing renewal committees in each constituency and nationally, establishing a taskforce on gender equality and reforming the structures of Ógra Fianna Fáil. In addition, there has been a comprehensive renewal project underway which is looking at the working of the parliamentary party, party communications, the core aims and values of the Party and establishing mechanisms to ensure the Party's policies are reflective of its aims and true to the values of our Party. This work is ongoing and the continued support of all members is greatly appreciated.

Technically, it is necessary to adopt a number of provisions which ***reconcile new measures with the current rules.***

To avoid doubt, every member currently registered through their Cumann will be automatically registered as a member, when the new rules come into effect.

As mandated by the last Ard Fheis, it is also proposed to clean-up the Coru which has had many overlapping amendments added during the last 30 years. The consolidated copy will be made available to members before the new membership provisions become active.

## Motions for Decision -

13. All persons registered as members of Fianna Fáil on April 30th, 2012 shall automatically be entered as voting members on the register of members, subject to payment of their subscription fee.
14. Requirements relating to voting rights shall become effective on July 1st 2012.
15. The Árd Comhairle shall prepare a revised version of the Coru & Rialacha which shall renumber provisions sequentially while removing redundant or duplicate provisions. This revised version shall be made available to members by July 1st 2012 and shall be the definitive version as of that date.
16. A full review of the OMOV rules will be undertaken after three years of adoption and such review will be presented to the Ard Fheis.
17. Any or all of the above motions (1-16), passed at this Árd Fheis, shall take precedence over any provisions in the Coru & Rialacha which may conflict with them.

