



Minutes: 33rd Meeting of the Retail Forum 6 December 2023, 11.00-13.00

*(via video / tele conference and Room 110, Kildare St)
Meeting held under Chatham House Rules*

Chair: Neale Richmond TD, Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail
Attendance at Appendix 1.

Item 1: Welcome and Opening Comments

The Chair welcomed Retail Forum members to the meeting and provided an overview of the Agenda. He also welcomed members of the Grocery Sector in attendance for agenda item 2 of the meeting.

Item 2: Retail Grocery Prices

The Chair welcomed the representatives from the Grocery Sector.

Comments arising:

- Retailers have a duty of care to their employees and would welcome renewed efforts to keep Dublin Safe along with other cities and towns following the events of 23 November.
- Footfall in the capital is still down.
- Retailers have increased costs in relation to security.
- Continuing to implement price drops where possible. One retailer commented that they have reduced prices on 100 products in the last six weeks.
- Cost pressures are still very real for retailers.
- Big shift in the labour force seeking higher pay rates.
- Welcome the reduction in general inflation, particularly reductions in grocery inflation.
- Millions of meals donated through Food Cloud.

Item 3:

The Chair invited Mr Dermot Coates, Principal Officer, Economic and Tax Policy Unit, Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment to update the Retail Forum on the Impact of Changes to Working Conditions Workshop held on the 22 November 2023.

Comments arising:

- Retailers highlighted the impact that the cumulative effects of the increases in the cost of doing business has on businesses. Retailers feel frustrated that costs are continuing to increase.
- The cumulative effect on increases in business costs is pushing prices up.
- Small businesses are doing their best to pay staff wages.
- The cumulative cost of doing business is the issue that is consuming business owners and they are extremely concerned about it.
- The Increased Costs of Business (ICOB) scheme does not go far enough to support businesses.
- Impact on the viability of towns due to businesses closing on Monday and Tuesdays due to cost pressures.
- There were no specific retail supports in budget 2024.
(The Chair advised that no measure in the budget is aimed directly at a sector. Measures to support businesses will not address all business costs).
- Overall objective is to make retail a career of choice. There is a fine balance between the needs of employees and the needs of businesses.
- A member asked what can be done to support the three sectors of Retail, Hospitality and Childcare due to their significant contribution to the economy and employment.
- There was a failure in the budget to adjust the 11% PRSI threshold.
- Retail Forum member asked when the report will be published.

Item 4:

The Chair invited Ms Orla O'Brien, Assistant Principal Officer, Company Law Audit and Accounting Policy & Legislation Unit, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to update the Retail Forum on the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

Comments arising:

- A Member was surprised at the number of retailers in scope and advised Ms. O'Brien that they would be keen to collaborate with the Company Law Audit and Accounting Policy & Legislation Unit to share communications regarding CSRD.

Action: Copy of the presentation to be forwarded to the Retail Forum members.

Item 5: AOB

1. Late Payment Regulation

This matter was added to the agenda at the request of a Retail Representative body in advance of the meeting. Ms Anne-Marie Finlay, Assistant Principal, Access to Finance Unit attended the meeting.

Comments arising:

- Regulation will be directly applicable to the Sector.
- Debate starting at Council Working group level.
- There is a competitiveness council in May 2024.
- Retail representative body has input into the Government consultation.
- The Department has met with other stakeholder groups to raise awareness.
- The Department was thanked for the update.

2. Deposit Return Scheme

The Chair invited Ms Bernie Kiely, Principal Officer, Department of Environment, Climate and Communications to update the Retail Forum on the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS).

Comments arising:

- The DRS communications campaign needs to ensure that consumers are aware that not all shops are participating in the Scheme.
- Concern that there may be frustration amongst consumers in relation to the final price that they will have to pay for an item as the DRS deposit will be added at the till.
- Member asked for an update on the use of civic amenity sites.
- Retail Forum member asked if the Minister would enquire why a suggested inclusion of Reverse Vending Machines into the Accelerated Capital Allowance Scheme was rejected by the Department of Finance.

Action: Copy of the presentation to be forwarded to the Retail Forum members.
Members to be advised why the Department of Finance rejected the inclusion of the Reverse Vending Machines into the Accelerated Capital Allowance Scheme.

3. Retail Security and Crime

The Chair advised members that he, Minister Coveney and Minister Calleary chaired a meeting on 28 November with Dublin City Council and other stakeholders following the events of 23 November.

The Chair invited members to provide an update on their experience surrounding the events of 23 November.

The Chair advised that retail crime will be an Agenda item at the next meeting of the Retail Forum.

Comments arising:

- Dublin City Council in collaboration with Stakeholders will undertake a marketing campaign to include on street engagement to encourage and reassure the public to visit and enjoy Dublin City Centre.
- Issues around dwell times, particularly in the Night-Time Economy, raised.
- Calls for specific legislation to address attacks on retail staff. Scotland and Australia were provided as examples of countries that have such legislation.
- Retail crime not just a Dublin City Centre issue. Need to address retail crime nationwide.
- Members thanked the Minister and the Government for their support.

Appendix 1 – Attendees – Retail Forum members

Company	Name	Title
Chambers Ireland	Shane Hughes	Policy and Research Executive
CSNA	Vincent Jennings	CEO
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (D/ETE)	Maedhbh Cronin	Principal Officer
Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage	Áine Friel	Planning Policy and Legislation Section, Planning Division
Department of Social Protection	Eimear Hayes	
Department of the Taoiseach	Fiona Curran	Economic Policy
Digital Business Ireland	Robert Babos	Head of Communications
Dublin Town (BID)	Richard Guiney	CEO
Eason	Liam Hanly	Managing Director
Enterprise Ireland	Teri Smith	Manager of Retail, Consumer/ Online & ICT Technologist Team
ISME	Neil McDonnell	Chief Executive
Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU)	Gerry Light	ICTU rep
Irish Pharmacy Union	Ailbhe O'Briain	
Hardware Association Ireland	Martin Markey	CEO
Sligo BID	Finbarr Filan	
Musgrave	Edel Clancy	Director of Communications & Corporate Affairs
Primark	Emma Ormond	Head of Government Affairs
Retail Excellence	Jean McCabe	CEO
Retal Ireland	Arnold Dillon	Director
RGDATA	Tara Buckley	Director General
Small Firms Association	David Broderick	Director
Technological University Dublin	Damian O'Reilly	Senior Lecturer - Retail Management
Tesco Ireland	Rosemary Garth	Corporate Affairs Director
Waterford City and Co Council (LGMA)	Michael Quinn	Director of Service

Attendees for Agenda Item 2 only

Company	Name	Title
Aldi Ireland	Aoife Sweeney	National Buying Ireland Communications Manager
Dunnes Stores	Tom Sheridan	Company Secretary
Dunnes Stores	Brendan O'Callaghan	
Lidl	Eimear O'Sullivan	
Marks and Spencer	Eddie Murphy	Country Director Ireland & Northern Ireland

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Name	Title
Marian Cassidy	Assistant Principal, Secretary to the Retail Forum
Mary Cullen	Assistant Principal, Retail and Locally Traded Unit
Fiona Campbell	Minister's Advisor
Aideen Fitzgerald	Assistant Principal, Communications Unit
Anne-Marie Finlay	Assistant Principal, Access to Finance Unit

Presenters

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Dermot Coates	Principal Officer
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Orla O'Brien,	Assistant Principal Officer
Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	Bernie Kiely	Principal Officer

Apologies

D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment	Pauline Mulligan	Assistant Secretary
Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Network	Padraic McElwee	Head of Enterprise, Clare, LEO
Enterprise Ireland	Anne Lanigan	Divisional Manager, Technology and Services