



# Minutes: 32nd Meeting of the Retail Forum 20 September 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. 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:

- *Research is showing that customers are seeing the difference in the decrease in prices.*
- *The sector is continuing to keep a strong focus on value and passing reductions on to customers.*
- *A grocery retailer mentioned their food security initiative that is supplying 3,000 families with fruit and vegetables per week and that they hope to increase this to 5,500 families by next year.*
- *A grocery retailer mentioned their savings programme.*
- *The Consumer and Competition Protection Commission's (CCPC) report, A High-level Analysis of the Irish Grocery Retail Sector doesn't consider small grocery retailers.*
- *Stronger message needed to encourage customers to shop local.*
- *Retail planning guidelines may need to be revised.*
- *The reputational damage to the sector has been significant. The CCPC Report did not find any evidence of excessive pricing in the grocery retail market. Cost of doing business for retailers has increased.*
- *Inflation impacting the grocery sector.*
- *Cost of doing business is significant e.g. energy costs, security costs (Dublin City), labelling post Windsor Agreement, Deposit Return Scheme, insurance, employee costs.*
- *Requested that the cost pressures on retailers be included as an agenda item at Retail Forum meetings.*
- *NPC report scheduled to be completed by end of the year.*
- *Meetings will be held with stakeholders to share the details.*
- *Requested that preliminary report be available before Budget 2024.*

- *A retailer mentioned that as a result of the increase in cumulative costs being imposed on their business that they're being forced to consider options such as making employees redundant or to close the business.*
- *Another retailer agreed and stated that their only option was to reduce employee work time, in particular, on Sundays.*

**Action:**

- Minister agreed to include the cost pressures on retailers as an agenda item at the next Retail Forum meeting.

### **Item 3: Community Policing**

The Chair invited Superintendent Sean Fallon, An Garda Síochána to update the Retail Forum on retail theft, and Laura Nagle, Assistant Principal, Department of Justice on the Department of Justice to present on Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill 2023 & community safety policy.

Comments arising:

- *Need to increase visibility of Gardaí.*
- *There may be underreporting of retail crime.*
- *Increase in the number of staff on sick leave because of assaults etc.*
- *Problem with juveniles 13-15 years. Tulsa needs to engage more in prevention measures.*
- *Grateful for the €10m overtime allocated to Gardaí in Dublin City.*
- *There appears to be an imbalance between criminals and civil society.*
- *There needs to be extra prison places.*
- *Defamation laws don't go far enough.*
- *There is no victimless crime.*
- *Levels of criminality must be taken seriously, incidents happening every single day by organised gangs.*
- *It is impacting on recruitment and retention in the retail sector.*
- *The social contract is broken.*
- *Issues with on street drinking and drug use and vacant properties.*
- *Shopping Centres need to employ security staff.*
- *Impacting retail careers.*
- *UK/NI share their crime data with retailers.*
- *Retail staff being videoed in store.*

**Actions:**

- Copy of the presentation made by Ms Nagle to be forwarded to the Retail Forum members.

#### **Item 4: Disability Supports**

The Chair invited Ms Emma Morrissey and Ms Eimear Hayes Department of Social Protection to update the Retail Forum on employment disability supports. This presentation was followed by a presentation from Ms Christabelle Feeney, Director of Employers for Change about *'Supporting Employers to Create Inclusive Workplaces'*.

Department of Social Protection advised the Retail Forum that Intreo are hosting a series of Work and Skills recruitment fairs from 6 October 2023. Further information can be found on gov.ie.

#### **Actions:**

- Copy of the presentation made by the Department of Social Protection and Employers for Change to be forwarded to the Retail Forum members.

## Appendix 1 – Attendees – Retail Forum members

<b>Company</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>
Chambers Ireland	Shane Connelly	Director of Policy
CSNA	Vincent Jennings	CEO
D/Enterprise, Trade and Employment (D/ETE)	Pauline Mulligan	Assistant Secretary, Indigenous Enterprise Division
Department of Social Protection (D/SP)	Eimear Hayes	Assistant Principal
Dublin Town (BID)	Richard Guiney	CEO
Fishers of Newtownmountkennedy	Rebecca Harrison	
ISME	Neil McDonnell	Chief Executive
Sligo BID	Finbarr Filan	
Musgrave	Edel Clancy	Director of Communications & Corporate Affairs
Primark	Emma Ormond	Head of Government Affairs
Retail Excellence	Jean McCabe	Interim CEO
Retal Ireland	Arnold Dillon	Director
RGDATA	Tara Buckley	Director General
Small Firms Association	Elizabeth Bowen	Public Affairs Lead
Technological University Dublin	Damian O'Reilly	Senior Lecturer - Retail Management
Tesco Ireland	Rosemary Garth	Corporate Affairs Director
Irish Pharmacy Union	Jim Curran	Director of Communications
LEO Network	Padraic McElwee	Head of Enterprise, LEO Clare
D/Rural and Community Development	Tara Taheny	
Enterprise Ireland	Teri Smith	Manager of Retail, Consumer/ Online & ICT Technologist Team
Waterford City and Co Council (LGMA)	Michael Quinn	Director of Service
Digital Business Ireland	Robert Babos	Head of Communications

## Attendees for Agenda Item 2 only

Company	Name	Title
ALDI Ireland	John Curtin	Group Buying Director
Dunnes Stores	Tom Sheridan	Company Secretary
Dunnes Stores	Brendan O'Callaghan	
Lidl	J P Scally	CEO
Marks and Spencer	Eddie Murphy	Country Director Ireland & Northern Ireland

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Name	Title
Maedhbh Cronin	Principal Officer, Retail and Locally Traded Unit
Marian Cassidy	Assistant Principal, Secretary to the Retail Forum
Mary Cullen	Assistant Principal, Retail and Locally Traded Unit
Brian Walsh	Principal Officer, Ministers Office
Fiona Campbell	Minister's Advisor
Tom McLoughlin	Assistant Principal, Communications Unit

## Presenters

Department of Justice	Laura Nagle	Assistant Principal
An Garda Síochána	Seán Fallon	Superintendent
An Garda Síochána	Marie Scott	Sargeant
Department of Social Protection	Emma Morrissey	Assistant Principal
Department of Social Protection	Eimear Hayes	Assistant Principal
Employers for Change	Christabelle Feeney	Director

## Apologies

Retail Ireland Skillnet	Sean Carlin	Network Manager
Clydeville Investments (Kilkenny Design)	Marian O'Gorman	Chair
D/Rural and Community Development	Andrew Forde	