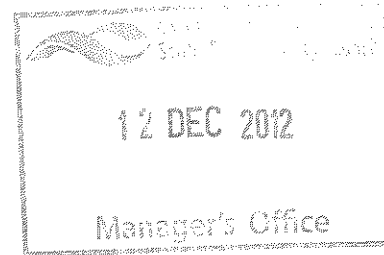


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OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND LAW REFORM

Ms. Emer O'Gorman
South Dublin County Council
County Hall
Tallaght
Dublin 24



Reference: M3/1112
Minister Reference: 1121104236

10 December 2012

Dear Ms. O'Gorman,

I refer to your recent correspondence regarding South Dublin County Council's resolution concerning prostitution in Ireland.

In June of this year, the Minister published a discussion document on the future direction of legislation on prostitution. The purpose of the discussion document is to facilitate a public consultation process. On its publication, the discussion document was referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality. The joint committee is conducting the consultation process and will report back to the Minister when it has completed its work.

In addition, the Department hosted a conference on 13 October to discuss the consultation paper.

The report of the joint committee and the views expressed at the October conference will be fully considered in the framing of any necessary legislative proposals to be submitted to Government in due course.

For further background, I am appending the text of the Minister's statement of 22 June last when publishing the discussion document.

Yours sincerely,

Private Secretary

Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge

Shatter Announces Publication of Discussion Document on the Future Direction of Legislation on Prostitution

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence today published a discussion document on the future direction of legislation on prostitution. Publication of the discussion document follows the Minister's announcement that he would be arranging a public consultation process as part of the current review of prostitution legislation. Announcing publication of the discussion document, Minister Shatter said:

"The criminal law in this area is being reviewed primarily because of the changed nature of prostitution in Ireland. Prostitution was once mainly a street-based phenomenon. That is no longer the case. The organisation of prostitution is now much more sophisticated, highly mobile and is easily facilitated by the use of mobile phones and the internet.

There is, of course, already a clear consensus on the great evils of child prostitution and trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. However, I am aware that there are differing and genuinely held views on the approach the criminal law should take to other aspects of prostitution. While there is a significant amount of criminal legislation in this area already, there is always scope for change and improvement. It is important to review the law periodically to ensure it is up to date and comprehensively responds to altered circumstances."

The Minister added that: **"Prostitution is an issue which affects individuals, communities and society as a whole. It is important that I facilitate the expression of all views on this subject and that those views are examined in due course. Public debate should therefore, be open to the widest possible audience and I want to ensure that everyone who wishes to make a contribution to this important debate is given the opportunity to do so. It is for that reason I have decided on a consultation process before charting the way forward.**

My Department will hold a conference in the autumn to discuss the document. The widest possible participation will be encouraged in order that we have an open and transparent discussion on all aspects of this very important issue.

This discussion document will now be referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence. Interested groups and members of the public, I expect, will be invited to make submissions to the Committee which will hold such hearings as it deems appropriate. I am asking Mr. David Stanton T.D., Chairman of the Joint Committee, that it publish its report and recommendations by the 30th November 2012 and that the report be furnished to me together with any submissions received. I expect it is likely that the Committee's report will also be lodged in the Oireachtas Library and that a debate on it will subsequently take place in both the Dáil and the Seanad. The report received by me from the Joint Oireachtas Committee will be fully considered in the framing of any necessary new legislative proposals to be submitted to Government in due course.

I look forward to the results of the consultation process."

The discussion document is attached below and will be made available on the Department's website, www.justice.ie

This discussion document does not favour any particular approach but simply tries to assist reflection. The arguments contained in the document are not exhaustive and the questions posed are not intended to limit in any way the range of questions readers might want to consider.

22 June, 2012