The District Court

The high incidence rate of Covid 19 has resulted in unprecedented numbers of Courts Service staff, Judges, practitioners and witnesses unable to attend at Courthouses. This position is reflected across the justice sector. The President of the District Court, has decided, in consultation with the other Court Presidents and Courts Service that as a consequence the Courts Service will be unable to support all Courts scheduled for the 2 weeks beginning the 10th January 2022 until 24th January 2022.

The Courts Service and Judiciary recognise that this is an evolving situation which will be kept under review on a regular basis, having regard to staffing levels, Judicial availability, Government announcements, and public health guidance.

The President of the District Court has decided the following additional measures concerning the business of the Court will be implemented until the 24th January 2022:

The District Court will continue to hear the following matters only in all District Court Districts throughout the country:

1. **Criminal Law**

Cases where the accused is in custody and cases where people are charged with new offences. An accused if legally represented is excused from attending. Un-represented accused should attend in person.

Hearings in Criminal Cases will not proceed and will be remanded/adjourned unless the case involves Domestic Violence offences,or where there is a plea, the accused is not in jeopardy, and the case can be dealt with by a Court Presenter.

In relation to regulatory or RTA matters, the accused, if represented, can produce documents or plead via a solicitor, if they are not in jeopardy.

All remands where the accused is in custody should be dealt with by video-link. pursuant to s.23 (3) and (14) of the Civil Law and Criminal Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020 and I have issued a Practice direction with effect from the 31st December 2021 in that regard.

1. **Family Law**

All family law business will proceed as normal until further notice although some cases may have to be adjourned due to absence of persons described in the opening paragraph hereof.

1. **Child Care Law**

All Child Care cases will proceed as normal until further notice. If the parties have reached agreement then a consent order may issue in accordance with Practice Direction DC14 which can be found on the Court Service website.
Consent adjournments can be notified to the relevant court office by email and new dates will be provided by return email to the parties.

1. **Civil and Licensing Matters**

All District Court Civil and Licensing matters will be adjourned to a date assigned by the Court. Where a party is legally represented they need not attend court, and their solicitor or barrister will inform them of the new court date; otherwise the office will inform the parties.

1. If your case is not included in the descriptions above, then parties do not need to attend court.
2. Solicitors are to inform clients that they do not need to attend where their case is not listed above.
3. Unless listed above, all cases will be adjourned, and parties will be told of their new court dates by ordinary post or by their solicitor or barrister where one is present.

**Exceptions**

1. A case which does not come into the defined category above, it can be treated as urgent if a good case can be made. A party can email the relevant court office setting out the reasons why the case should be considered urgent. This should be on notice to the other side who must be given an opportunity to set out their position.

**NOTICE**

Those attending court are requested to observe public health guidance regarding social distancing, hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette and use of face coverings while in the court building and the court room.

The Courts Service has set out guidance on how to access the courts safely and we expect all court users to observe this guidance. The Courts Service has put measures in place to help people safely navigate their way through court buildings and again we ask for your cooperation. **In the event that courts cannot be conducted safely Judges may have to suspend cases until a safe environment can be achieved.**

These measures will come into effect from Monday 10th January and will be reviewed on Wednesday the 19th January 2022 and will remain in place until Monday 24st January 2022.

Judge Paul Kelly

President of the District Court.