

Public Accounts Committee

Opening Statement by John O'Connor,

Chief Executive Officer of the Housing Agency

In relation to Housing Agency Financial Statements 2017

Introduction

Chairperson, members, thank you for the opportunity to present to the Public Accounts Committee today on the 2017 Financial Statements of the Housing Agency, and the work of the Housing Agency.

The Housing Agency works with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, local authorities, approved housing bodies and others in the public and private sectors in meeting the current and future housing needs and demands. For example, in the last few weeks the Housing Agency has provided an apartment building to one of the homeless charities; has concluded an agreement to deliver a large housing project for Dublin City Council; and has finalised an agreement to deliver 155 housing and apartments for social and affordable rental housing on Housing Agency land in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council.

The Housing Agency supports direct delivery initiatives centrally, such as:

- The acquisition of vacant properties from banks through the use of a €70m revolving fund; 487 no. properties acquired to date.
- The sourcing of properties and potential developments for local authorities and approved housing bodies.
- Addressing homelessness by the acquisition and refurbishment of vacant properties for permanent accommodation, including suitable homes for families and for the Housing First initiative. The sourcing of properties for Family Hubs and for supported temporary accommodation.
- Working with NAMA and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government for the acquisition of properties from NAMA's loan portfolio. A total of 2,475 houses and apartments have been delivered to date.
- The provision of procurement services to local authorities and approved housing bodies.
- The management and development of sites owned by the Housing Agency.
- Centrally supporting the implementation of the Housing Strategy for People with a Disability.

The Agency undertakes a significant amount of work in Research and in supporting Policy Development. Specifically, the Agency prepares the annual Summary Assessment of Housing Need report and the National Statement on Housing Supply and Demand.

The Agency works on supporting Affordability measures. This is done through the central management of specific schemes such as the Mortgage to Rent Scheme; the underwriting of Local Authority Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan applications; supporting the Department in developing affordable housing purchase arrangements and a cost rental scheme.

The Agency provides the Interim Regulatory Function for Approved Housing Bodies and is working in partnership with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government towards the transition to a Statutory Regulation.

Finally, the Housing Agency remediates homes under the **Pyrite Remediation Scheme** and has remediated 1,237 homes to date.

The primary objective of the Housing Agency is to promote the building sustainable communities. Ones that last, places that are well planned, with good quality housing, where people want to live and where they have opportunities. Good housing has four key features – security, quality, affordability and appropriateness. Our housing stock needs to be appropriate in size, accessible and the location should meet current and future needs.

The Housing Agency has taken on much additional work over the last two years to assist with the significant housing challenges that face us. We are committed to ensuring there is financial probity, good governance structures and efficient measures in place to meet the remit and objectives of the Housing Agency.

Finally, I would to thank both the Comptroller and Auditor General and his staff for their assistance and courtesy during the conducting of this audit. I thank the Committee and Chairperson for your attention and will answer any questions you may have.

Ends

Appendix 1

Key Achievements in 2017

- 243 financial assessments (Payment and Availability Agreements with CALF loans) undertaken to provide 4,102 homes.
- Development of Housing Assistant Payment (HAP) Toolkit for local authorities and a HAP information website.
- 365 vacant properties bought for social housing.
- 426 homes sourced through NAMA in 2017.
- 1,289 House Purchase Loan applications underwritten.
- Completion and handover of 29 homes in Knocknaheeny, Cork.
- Management of tenders and appointment of consultants for local authorities and approved housing bodies for over 20 housing projects throughout the country.
- Drafting User Guide for PW-CF2 Public Works Contract for Building Works.
- Development of Strategic Development Plan for Agency lands, with 17 sites progressed towards development for housing.
- A total of 252 AHBs signed up to the voluntary regulation code, annual assessments of these AHBs completed and with Governance Standard rolled out to larger AHBs. The Financial Standard is now fully implemented.
- Review and expansion of Mortgage to Rent Scheme. The Agency co-ordinates the implementation of the scheme and has provided an information website www.mortgagetorent.ie.
- Pyrite Resolution – 392 homes remediated in 2017, bringing the overall total to 945 by the end of 2017.

Key Research Completed in 2017

- National Statement of Supply and Demand and Outlook for 2017-2018 published.
- Construction Comparison Costs report published.
- Summary Assessment of Housing Need 2017.
- Review of Traveller Specific accommodation and implementation of Traveller accommodation programmes.