



# Opening Statement

By Mr. Conn Murray

Chief Executive of Limerick City and County Council

to

Joint Committee on Housing, Planning, Community & Local  
Government

on

‘Funding and Delivery of Public Housing under Rebuilding  
Ireland’

6<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

## INTRODUCTION:

My name is Conn Murray and I am the Chief Executive of Limerick City and County Council. I would like to introduce the members of my Team here with me today. Aoife Duke, Director of Service for Housing Development and Seamus Hanrahan, Senior Architect in Housing Development. We are pleased to be in attendance, to provide a briefing and update to the Committee on the Rebuilding Ireland programme for Limerick, and answer any questions that may arise during our time with you today.

## CONTENT:

For today, I would like to outline Limerick's approach to the housing issues we currently face. I will go through our targets, actions to date and finish by outlining our key priorities for 2019 and beyond.

## BACKGROUND:

The delivery of Housing and responding to Homelessness is a key priority for Limerick City and County Council. We have structured our Organisation to bring greater focus to the area of Housing. Since 2015, our Housing List has been reduced by 35% to 2,674 applicants. From 2015-2017 Limerick City and County Council allocated 2,694 homes. A co-ordinated cross- Directorate strategy on the issue of Homelessness resulted in a 93% reduction in the number of families using emergency accommodation at the end of 2017. We are working closely with the Department and other key stakeholders to delivery the targets set under Rebuilding Ireland for Limerick. Our efforts will continue for as long as the challenge remains.

## OUR TARGETS:

Limerick City and County Council have a delivery target of 1,365 homes under Rebuilding Ireland.

The target blend is divided between New Build at 67%, Acquisitions at 20% and Leasing at 13%. The overall targets include the actions contained in the Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan, which focuses on some of the countries most disadvantaged communities by addressing not just the physical environment, but also by investing in the social and economic regeneration of the areas.

In actual homes, the target numbers are set out as follows;

<b>Housing Targets 2018-2021</b>					
	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	
<b>Build</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>848</b>
<b>Buy</b>	98	119	80	40	337
<b>Lease</b>	71	54	30	25	180

	302	303	427	333	1365
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While Build, Buy and Leasing are the primary delivery mechanisms, Limerick City and County Council have agreed actions and key priorities across all five pillars of Rebuilding Ireland, summarized as follows;

**FIVE PILLARS- ACTIONS BY LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL:**



**PILLAR ONE- ADDRESS HOMELESSNESS:**

At present, we have 51 families, including 113 children and 137 individuals in homeless services. In Limerick, we have experienced unprecedented levels of homeless presentations in the last three years. Similar to the national picture, the numbers are high because of family separations, the increased level of Notices to Quit being served and personal difficulties of the individuals concerned.

Our primary response to Homelessness is provided by the Limerick Region Homeless Action Team. This multi-disciplinary team is made up of HSE clinical staff, support staff from AHB’s, welfare staff from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and case managers from our Authority.

In the changing Homeless environment, prevention of homelessness has become as critical as the delivery of accommodation services. In this regard engaging with those who are at risk of becoming homeless is critical. The roll-out of family hubs, the Place Finder Service and Housing First has added to the service options available and our ability to respond to the issue of homelessness in the Region.



## **PILLAR TWO- ACCELERATE SOCIAL HOUSING**

As mentioned we have a delivery plan based on the overall target of 1,365 homes- it is important to state that it is our intention to exceed the targets under all delivery streams. Working with Approved Housing Bodies not only expands delivery options but also provides additional wrap around supports to vulnerable tenants.

### **New-Build**

From January 2018 to September 2018, 104 homes have been completed with 33 homes in progress with an expected total by year-end of 137 homes. Projecting forward, based on current approved projects:

- 130 homes will be delivered in 2019;
- 317 homes will be delivered in 2020;
- 216 homes will be delivered in 2021.

Appropriate Limerick City and County Council lands for housing are finite and to ensure a continuous pipeline to meet targets, Limerick City and County Council are actively looking at land rezoning, small infill sites, in addition to purchasing land on the private market in suitable areas.

### **Acquisitions**

Housing Acquisitions has proven to be an effective housing delivery mechanism. Given the time lag with the delivery of new projects, the acquisition programme is a key element of facilitating delivery of homes in the short-term.

From January 2018 to September 2018, 56 homes have been completed with 56 homes in progress with an expected total by year-end of 112 homes. Projecting forward, and understanding that new-build will become the primary delivery stream:

- 119 homes will be delivered in 2019;
- 80 homes will be delivered in 2020;
- 40 homes will be delivered in 2021.

### **Leasing**

From January 2018 to September 2018, 42 homes have been completed with 29 homes in progress with an expected total by year-end of 71 homes. Projecting forward, and understanding that new-build will become the primary delivery stream:

- 54 homes will be delivered in 2019;

- 30 homes will be delivered in 2020;
- 25 homes will be delivered in 2021.

**PILLAR THREE: BUILD MORE HOMES:**

As a Local Authority, we are uniquely positioned to act as a catalyst in the market to facilitate the building of more houses. In Limerick, construction is underway but not at the levels we would like to see. The phased approach to delivery of existing permissions by developers will not bring the level of disruption required in relation to the balance of supply and demand.

Limerick City & County Council are particularly interested in the provision of owner occupied affordable housing on certain Limerick City & County Council owned landbanks to address the affordability gap for prospective purchasers and ensure an appropriate tenure mix for certain sites. We await the announcement of an Affordable Scheme that includes Limerick.

In addition, Limerick City & County Council are progressing the activation of Council-owned lands for affordable and mixed tenure housing under the Public Land Activation Programme.

Limerick City and County Council will continue to obtain Part V homes as developments come to market and are keen to work with developers in relation to the purchase of Turnkey developments.

The Rebuilding Ireland Home Loan is a critical borrowing mechanism for first time buyers and something we will continue to promote.

**PILLAR FOUR: IMPROVE THE RENTAL SECTOR:**

The inspection of private rented properties, including the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and the Housing Assistance Payment scheme (HAP), are undertaken by the Private Rented Inspections Unit, in Limerick City & County Council.

Inspection rates will increase incrementally to achieve the Departments inspection target of 25% of private rented properties by 2021 and onwards.

Inspections are a critical component of improving standards in our rental sector.

<b>Rental Inspection Targets</b>			
<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>
1,420	2,130	2,840	3,550
10%	15%	20%	25%



## **PILLAR FIVE: UTILISE EXISTING HOUSING:**

Limerick City and County Council look to create safe and sustainable communities of opportunity where people of all ages enjoy a good quality of life. As casual vacancies arise, we endeavor to have works completed and a new tenant in place as a priority.

In addition, we are keen to ensure all long-term vacant properties are brought back into use. We do this through the VOIDS programme. In 2018 we will complete 70 homes at a cost of €1.4m.

Our Councillors have approved the taking out of a €15m loan to carry out a four-year Planned Maintenance programme. This work will be completed in conjunction with our general maintenance programme, which has responded to over 13,000 calls to our Customer Service Department so far this year.

Unoccupied, vacant and derelict properties on the private market are on our radar. We have set up an Urban and Village Renewal Department with a Vacant Property Officer. We have achieved great success to date on returning both commercial and private properties back into in our towns, villages and City.

Housing Adaptation grants are a critical stream of funding to allow people to age in their homes, and remain in the communities in which they have lived and raised their families. To date in 2018 a total number of 293 grants have been issued, with total monies paid amounting to €1,842,390.

## **KEY PRIORITIES FOR 2019:**

We are determined to ensure that the housing challenge continues to be addressed, in a focused and concerted manner, under the policy framework of 'Rebuilding Ireland- Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness'. To that end, I have established a Housing Development Directorate whose sole focus is on Housing Delivery.

During 2019 Housing Development will bring a strategic focus to the maintenance of our housing stock. A Planned Maintenance Programme will see significant, targeted investment in the homes of our tenants through investment of a €15m loan over a 4-year period, as mentioned. Our programme will also bring greater focus on voids, dereliction and vacant houses.

The introduction of a Single Differential Scheme throughout the City and County is an important step in achieving fairness and consistency in terms of the calculation of rents. We are very aware also of the importance of ensuring that the charges levied are based on our tenants ability to pay.

The management of existing tenancies is a critical piece of work in which we continue to engage. While we have various powers to take action in relation to issues such as Anti-Social Behaviour, we have learned in more recent times, the importance of engaging with new tenants before they are given the keys of their new home. Pro-active and positive engagement with new residents allows us to foster a sense of community and responsibility. 2019 will see an increase in resources in this area of work allowing this model of engagement to be replicated throughout communities in Limerick City and County.

Consultation and communication with our Elected Representatives, our tenants and the wider community is critical. We are committed to working collaboratively to achieve a solution to the housing challenges we face. 2019 will see a greater emphasis on the facilitation of workshops with key stakeholders, allowing us to tailor our response to meet the specific needs of those key stakeholders.

Housing delivery through building, buying and leasing will continue at pace in 2019, based on the targets under 'Rebuilding Ireland- Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness'. Our build programme is on track.

Strong collaboration with Approved Housing Bodies will continue, as a means of enhancing delivery mechanisms while also providing additional services to our tenants who face significant challenges in their daily lives. The continued roll-out of a Housing First model will allow us to work with families and individuals, who have experienced homelessness, by providing the continuing support they need to build stable, permanent homes for themselves and their families.

#### **CONCLUDING REMARKS:**

Much like the Rebuilding Ireland Programme, the Housing Development programme in Limerick is ambitious, but, by actively and constructively working together, we will accelerate supply and transform housing in a way that will be to the benefit of all who live, work and invest in this country and in particular in Limerick for generations to come. Thank you.