

**Joint Oireachtas Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government
meeting to discuss the nomination to the position of Chair of the Residential**

Tenancies Board

15th October 2019

Opening Statement

Introduction

I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before the Joint Committee in the capacity as designate chairperson of the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB).

If acceptable to the Committee I would first like to highlight my Career which is relevant to the role as chair of the RTB.

Personal Profile

I qualified as a chartered surveyor in the late 1970s and worked for 10 years in one of Ireland's leading firms of surveyors, valuers and estate agents gaining experience across a wide range of property consultancy including property management, valuations and investment.

In the 1980s I joined the DIT Bolton St. (now TU Dublin) as a lecturer in Urban Economics and Property Valuations where I have spent the bulk of my career

retiring recently as the Head of the School of Surveying and Construction Management. This is a large school with up to a thousand students across fourteen academic programmes from degree to postgraduate levels including PhD students. This was a senior appointment in the University and required an active role in public sector management including participation in committees, boards and councils at the highest levels.

During my career I lectured in a variety of areas related to property, including property valuation techniques and housing. My research interests included property taxation, urban economics and housing and particularly in later years the private rented sector.

During my career I also engaged in professional and commercial organisations including Dublin Chamber of Commerce, the Society of Chartered Surveyors Ireland, the Irish Property and Facility Managers Association. Such engagements gave me a wide range of experience in the management and governance of organisations with a public service remit and an active membership. This involved chairing many important committees of those organisations and included a term as President of the Society of Chartered Surveyors.

Internationally I served for eight years on the Governing Council of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, a very large professional body with members in a wide range of countries around the world and based in London.

Of particular importance in terms of consideration of my role as Chair of the Residential Tenancies Board is my lead role in the Commission for the Private Rented Residential Sector. In 1999, I was asked by the then Minister for Housing and Urban Renewal, Robert Molloy, to chair the Commission, which reported in the year 2000. The purpose of the Commission included examining the working of the landlord and tenant relationship in respect of residential tenancies and to consider key issues such as security of tenure, the supply of accommodation, investment return and market considerations and constraints on the development of the sector. The Terms of Reference were deliberately wide as the private rented sector had been neglected for many years and was in need of reform.

The Commission's Report informed the Residential Tenancies Act of 2004 which provided for the creation of the Private Rented Residential Tenancies Board now the RTB. From 2004 to 2009, I chaired the PRTB during the period when it was established. Also of note in the context of my experience across housing is my role in 2003, in assisting The All Party Oireachtas Committee on the Constitution in the preparation of its Ninth Report on Property Rights.

It is 15 years since the (P) RTB was first established and 19 since the Commission on the Sector reported. The sector has changed significantly in this time and the remit of the RTB has also expanded and evolved considerably. I believe I will be able to contribute positively to supporting change. The important changes I oversaw as Chair of the Commission, and subsequently as Chair of the PRTB, created a new regulatory framework and a quasi-judicial service to replace the courts for landlords and tenants. The implementation of the recommendations from the Commission was significant at the time and I believe this experience gives me a particular understanding and insight to bring to the RTB.

Priorities

In terms of my approach as Chair of the RTB, there are core tasks in terms of the leadership and effectiveness of the Board. I have summarised a number of key priorities.

- 1. Oversee effective implementation of considerable programme of change on foot of recent legislation.**

Recent legislation expands the remit of the RTB to all student specific accommodation, and also gives the organisation extensive new powers, which give the RTB the ability to proactively investigate and regulate the sector. This is an important development in terms of the regulation of the overall rental market but also important is that the approach to do this is sensitive and that we focus on supporting and informing people in complying with regulations as well as empowering people with knowledge. The ultimate goal is compliance, not punishment, and we need to support landlords in fulfilling their obligations.

2. Work to create a deeper understanding of the sector.

The RTB have an important role in using and developing data and research to provide evidence and intelligence on the rental sector. We will continue to grow and invest in this area.

3. Ensuring an effective board and an organisation that is fit for purpose.

It is important in such a challenging environment that as an organisation the RTB can deliver. The organisation is supporting a significant proportion of the population and demand for its services continues to increase. Maintaining existing services, organisational supports and adequate resources for effective delivery is a core priority.

4. Support and inform the RTB Strategy with experience and expertise

The RTB has an ambitious five-year Strategic Plan underpinned by the vision to support and develop a well functioning rental sector that is fair, accessible and beneficial to all. I believe in this vision and will work with the Board, Director, Executive and our stakeholders to support delivery of the Strategic priorities of the RTB.

5. Governance and effective performance

If appointed, I intend to strive for the highest standards of good governance through adherence to best practice, consistent with the RTB position as a public body and our important mandate. I will support the organisation and monitor our performance and delivery in achieving the planned outcomes within the Strategy.

Conclusion

There are significant challenges affecting the rental sector with restricted supply alongside increasing demand for accommodation, affordability issues with rents at an all time high, significant legislative and regulatory change and uncertainty. The RTB plays a critical role in working to resolve the crisis. It does this through its enhanced regulatory function, education and awareness, which

empowers people with knowledge on their rights and responsibilities, and through our data which provides a robust evidence base to inform policy.

I would again like to thank the Chair and Committee Members for inviting me to meet you today. I want to assure the Committee that I have a genuine interest in this role and believe I can make an effective contribution to the important work of the RTB . I look forward to engaging with you again in the future if appointed to this important role.