

# LABOUR SERVING THE COMMUNITY

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM LABOUR'S LOCAL MANIFESTO 2019

GETTING THE **BASICS RIGHT**

LEADERSHIP ON **THE ENVIRONMENT** AND **CLIMATE ACTION**

BUILDING **HOUSING** AND **SUPPORTING TENANTS**

IMPROVING **QUALITY OF LIFE** FOR ALL

SUPPORTING **WORKERS' RIGHTS**, JOBS AND ENTERPRISE

DELIVERING LABOUR'S VISION OF **EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS**

STRENGTHENING **LOCAL DEMOCRACY**

## FOREWORD (BRENDAN HOWLIN)

Labour's pledge is to achieve stronger, better local government that serves the whole community and improves everyone's lives. Local government can and should help everyone to be active in shaping and improving the place where they live.

Our Councillors have delivered 107 years of public service in local government for the benefit of people and communities: we have provided housing, maintained roads and street lighting, and managed waste and recycling, and we have given everyone access to parks and green spaces, provided libraries and cultural centres, and helped promote local jobs and businesses.

Labour wants to make local public services genuinely public again by bringing them back under the direct control of elected councils.

At national level, we are striving for local government reforms, such as our proposed law to restore Town Councils.

Labour's vision of a fairer, more equal society begins in towns, cities and rural areas across Ireland. We want everyone to be securely housed, and we want every area to be a good place to live, to raise a family and to grow older. Local councils can help provide affordable, accessible housing for everyone who needs it.

Local government must lead action on climate change too, from insulating council buildings and promoting the local generation of electricity, through to building cycling infrastructure and improving recycling facilities.

I am personally delighted that Labour is putting forward so many excellent candidates – experienced councillors and new candidates – to serve their communities.

Voting Labour this May will help ensure that local government truly serves the whole community.



## GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT

Labour Councillors understand the job of local government, and we get it done well, delivering the basic things that matter to people like clean streets and parks, road repairs, street lighting and recycling facilities.

- We will demand a larger portion of your local council budget is allocated to the basics, and ensure local councils are meeting key targets
- Many European countries are taking back control of basic services – like waste collection and road repairs – or never privatised them in the first place. We'll insist local councils provide services directly rather than contract them out
- We will seek a new role of Community Warden, to keep an eye out for anti-social behaviour and to be quick to respond to issues like illegal dumping, dog fouling or persistent noise, with the power to issue fines
- We will work with local council officials to ensure that their websites are fully accessible for people with additional needs

## LEADERSHIP ON THE ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

Labour understands how local government can promote action on the environment and provide leadership on sustainability.

- We are calling for a Climate Action Committees on every council for ambitious leadership on sustainability
- We'll call for Climate Action Funds in council budgets to finance practical ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

We want a State-led programme to insulate over 100,000 homes a year, including existing council housing, to save people money on their energy costs.

- We'll ensure improved recycling facilities, including for plastic. We will explore setting up local deposit schemes on bottles and containers

We'll put water fountains in Council buildings to reduce people's reliance on single-use plastic bottles.

- Just Transition plans for every local area will promote a Green New Deal for new sustainable jobs in the low carbon economy of the future, with reduced energy poverty and increased access to public transport
- We will set up schemes to combat energy poverty, especially for older people and people with disabilities who need more home heating
- Labour will call for councils to publish their carbon emissions as part of their annual reports and for local Carbon Budgets to be aligned with the National Carbon Budget
- Local councils should use council properties and land to generate wind and solar power

Communities should be given access to the national electricity grid, to enable them to generate renewable wind and solar energy to meeting local electricity needs.

We'll seek strict planning guidelines to overcome concerns about wind farms.

- Labour Councillors will make sure that city and county development plans improve our infrastructure for public transport, cycling and walking, to reduce reliance on cars

Greater investment (10% of the national transport budget) is needed for continuous and segregated bike lines through urban centres, safe counter-flow cycle lanes, secure cycle stands in towns and at schools, and safe routes for schoolchildren cycling to school.

We will work with local councils and An Garda Síochána to regularise the responsible use of electric scooters.

- Any contractor receiving public funds should be kept to high environmental standards, through strong environmental conditions in local council contracts

The Labour Party will insist that all water services remain in public ownership.

- Local councils must do more to protect against illegal dumping and pollution, and to cultivate a balanced range of native species

Members of the public should be able to access public land for leisure activities.

Forensic science should be used to find those responsible for illegal dumping, littering, dog fouling and polluting. More effective enforcement is needed.

### **BUILDING HOUSING AND SUPPORTING TENANTS**

The Labour Party will give local councils the resources they need to end the homelessness crisis.

Labour's new model is good quality public housing, built by local councils, rented out at a fair, affordable rent and open to everyone. This is a normal housing option across Europe. The great State-led house-building programmes of the 1950s and 1970s owe a lot to Labour, and this can be done again to deliver affordable public housing.

Labour has a proud record of ensuring planning decisions that benefit the whole community, not narrow commercial interests. Labour Councillors were to the forefront of exposing corruption and campaigning against land speculation and developer-led planning.

- **Labour representatives in both local and national Government will continue to campaign for proper investment in housing. In Labour's plan, there would be an investment of €16 billion, over five years, to deliver 80,000 homes**
- **A higher percentage of social housing allocations need to urgently go to people with high needs, including people who are homeless, people with health problems and families with children**
- **Local councils should launch an ambitious programme of retrofitting for council homes and buildings, and ensure repairs to council homes are carried out within three months**
- **Stronger democracy for tenants and owner-occupiers of apartment buildings and housing estates, to give them control over management companies and common areas**
- **Stronger regulation of the private rented sector is needed in order to give more rights and protection to the thousands of people who rent**

Labour believes in rent control. For many older tenants, security of tenure can be a cause of great anxiety. Labour wants to increase the certainty of tenure for older people in private rented housing.

Labour wants to support those single-property landlords who comply with the laws that are in place. We will provide incentives to landlords who provide long-term tenancies and fair rent.

- **The Labour Party wants to see planning powers back where they belong, in local government. We'll fight for good planning decisions that benefit the whole community, not narrow commercial interests**

Labour representatives will insist on the provision for schools, public transport, health care, community facilities and other services for large-scale housing developments before planning permission.

We'll fight for the preservation of green space and public

parks in urban areas, and green belts.

- **Local councils need stronger compulsory purchase powers for developing housing. Councils should be empowered to impose large fines on those who leave buildings and land vacant for years**

The Labour Party supports legislation for the compulsory purchase of lands at existing use value, building on the 1973 Kenny Report proposals.

Vibrant main streets should be the centre of all activity in towns and villages.

- **Labour will lead a national conversation about planning for old age to maximise people's independence and access to local shops and services**

We will design housing and neighbourhoods to support the growing number of people likely to be affected by dementia in future.

### **IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL**

Labour wants every place to be a good place to live for everyone, with a special focus on the needs of children and older people.

Parks, beaches, playgrounds, sporting facilities, libraries and arts centres are typically provided for and maintained by local councils. Their quality, safety and accessibility can be life-enhancing for people in terms of physical and mental health.

- **Vibrant cities and towns need to be focused on people's needs, not commercial interests. We will a European-style culture of comfortable urban living and quality urban housing**
- **Everyone deserves easy access to clean, healthy environments like parks, outdoor gym equipment sports grounds, swimming pools, children's playgrounds, hill walks, beaches and woods; including for dog owners and for people practising**

Young people need to have places to go. We will create spaces such as recreation areas, community buildings and youth cafés in council buildings.

- **Local councils should have responsibility for the delivery of rural public transport, building on the Local Link pilot**
- Subsidies need to be made available for rural hackney/taxi schemes, to ensure people in rural areas can access shops and services in neighbouring villages and towns, and for socialising without driving.

- **We believe libraries and arts centres should have longer opening hours, especially at evenings, weekends and on bank holidays**
- **Labour Councillors will ensure that your local council is co-operating meaningfully with community, voluntary and neighbourhood groups**

We want all neighbourhoods to have public spaces for use by community groups, including use of public buildings after hours by non-profit community groups.

Labour has a track record of supporting our community arts organisations and promoting inclusive community cultural activities. We will continue to do so right across the county.

- Labour will work to promote local policing forums and community policing
- Make Way Days are brilliant for highlighting the challenges people with disabilities have to overcome while living in our towns and cities. Labour will work towards making all shared spaces designated as safe travel areas for older people, children and persons with disabilities

Town and city centres should be designed to be walkable spaces, not dominated by cars.

- We will support religious communities when they wish to hold festivals in line with their faiths

We'll call for all local councils to ensure appropriate burial grounds are available for people of all faiths and none, including new forms of burial ground such as walls for cremated remains.

### SUPPORTING WORKERS' RIGHTS, JOBS AND ENTERPRISE

Labour will enhance the economic role of local councils, to provide decent and sustainable local jobs through the full use of EU rules that permit social and environmental clauses in contracts, for good employment practices and environmental protection.

- All local councils must provide decent pay and conditions to their employees and to contracted workers
- We will ensure that local economic plans are focused on creating sustainable jobs, especially in rural areas and disadvantaged urban areas

There needs to be better, affordable and accessible public transport links to local shops and services in towns, as an alternative out of town shopping centres.

We'll promote Nightlife Commissioners in urban areas to support the development of the night economy while ensuring public safety and noise control. They could support late night venues that are not viable on a purely commercial basis, while providing evening activities for teenagers as a socialising option, such as night time sports.

- Local councils could and should have a greater role in the provision of affordable childcare facilities

### DELIVERING LABOUR'S VISION OF EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS

Labour will push local councils to meet their public sector duty to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights in their daily work.

- The Labour Party fully stands behind the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, such as eliminating hunger. We will make sure they are all included in councils' long-term strategies, budgets, performance indicators and reports
- The powers of local government must be used to improve the lives of people in the most disadvantaged areas

Local Councils need to publish statistics on poverty, deprivation, unemployment, disability, age profile and the number of households on low fixed incomes as part of their annual reports and strategies.

- Labour will support families and children, LGBT+ communities, new communities and people with disabilities

### STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Labour wants to strengthen every elected Council's ability to decide important matters at local level, with more public money under the control of local government, not controlled from the centre. With that comes greater responsibility, and we'll promote transparency and accountability to local people. We want local council management and other public agencies to answer the questions of elected local Councillors, to ensure accountability to residents for all local public services.

- We will call for a Citizens' Assembly to be set up to discuss a new model of stronger local government, and how to fund it
- We will restore Town Councils to every urban area with a population over 5,000 and 1,000+ dwellings

We will reconfigure existing Municipal Districts to cover areas not covered by Town Councils.

- Labour representatives will continue to seek greater accountability of public bodies

We believe that public agencies that impact on local people should be accountable to local councils. We would reduce the range of decisions that Chief Executives can make without reference to elected representatives.

Labour Councillors will continue to ensure that the public are getting the best value for money. We will call on government agencies to pay local commercial rates as they did in the 80s. Labour Councillors will support the principle of a fair taxation of property/assets at local level, and seek for local councils to have greater flexibility to modify the level of Local Property Tax (LPT). We want to avoid a sudden spike in LPT due to the revaluation of properties, for example by lowering the rate from 0.18%.

We'll advocate for councils to have the option of introducing tourist levies, to fund local arts, culture and heritage facilities and festivals.

- Ireland's cities need to have directly-elected mayors with adequate resources so they can take on the executive powers currently held by council officials

The Labour Party supports a Yes vote for directly-elected mayors in local votes being held in Cork, Limerick and Waterford, if voters are given adequate information about the proposed powers and functions of these mayors.

- Labour councillors will support active citizenship and participation in all communities

We will promote "town hall" meetings so people can discuss and propose ideas for the communities they live in. We'll reform Public Participation Networks.

Local people should get a say in how their money is spent locally, through participatory budgeting at local level.

- We need to encourage more diversity in the political system. We need to make it easier for local people to get involved

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