



LABOUR
SERVING THE
COMMUNITY



LABOUR'S LOCAL 20
GOVERNMENT MANIFESTO 19

Contents

	Foreword (Brendan Howlin)	5
	Getting the Basics Right.....	6
	Leadership on the Environment and Climate Action	9
	Building Housing and Supporting Tenants	13
	Improving Quality of Life for All	17
	Supporting Workers' Rights, Jobs and Enterprise.....	21
	Delivering Labour's Vision of Equality and Fairness.....	24
	Strengthening Local Democracy	28

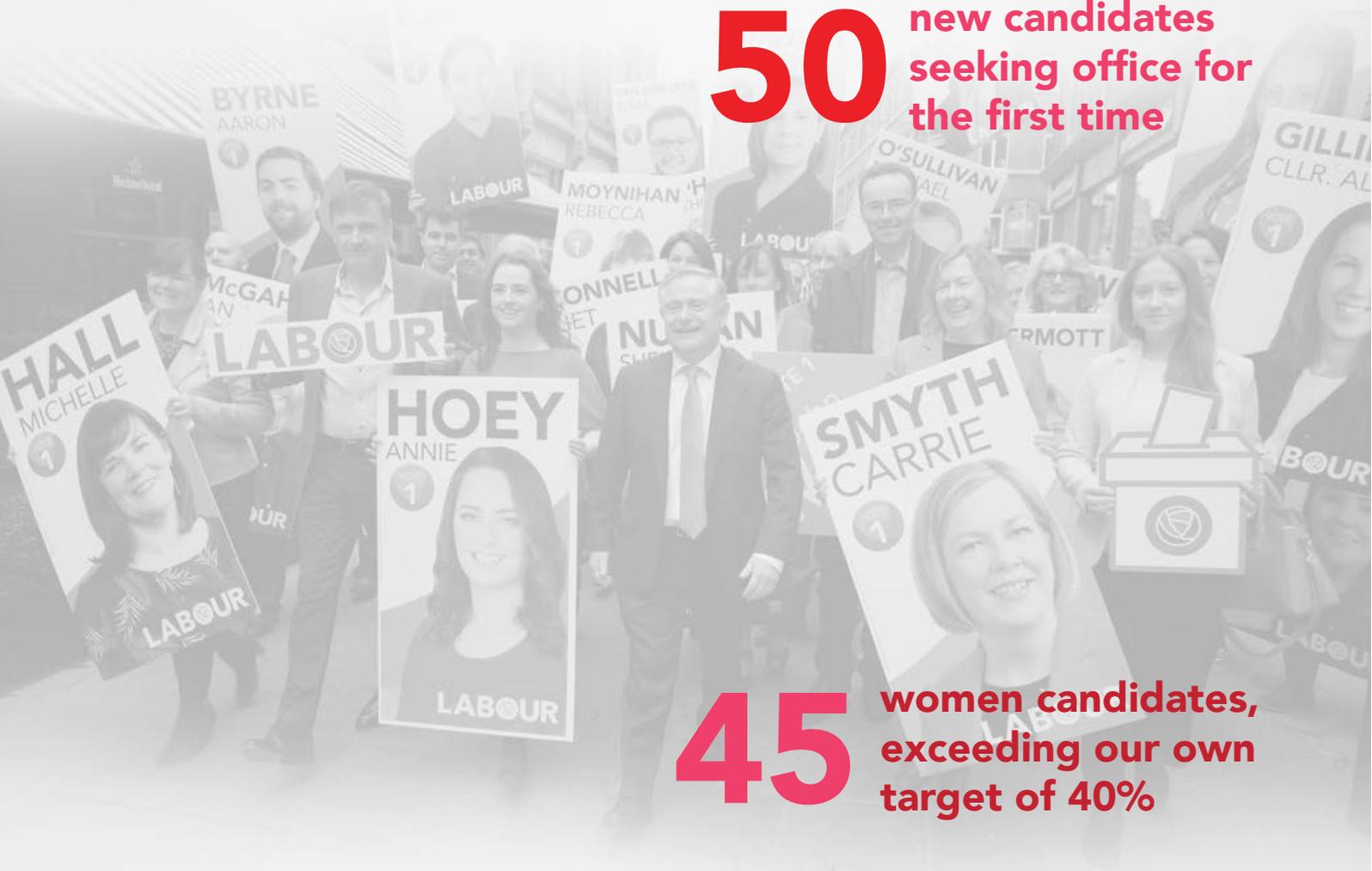
111 Local Election Candidates

36 Labour Councillors seeking re-election

50 new candidates seeking office for the first time

45 women candidates, exceeding our own target of 40%

14 candidates aged 30 or younger



Foreword

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 know how to make local government work for the benefit of people and communities. Labour has delivered 107 years of public service in local government: 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, to ensure higher quality services and better working conditions.

Some of Labour's ambitions for strong local government require legislation that we are striving to achieve at national level. Not least, we have advanced a law in the Dáil 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 be part of the solution to provide affordable, accessible housing for everyone who needs it.

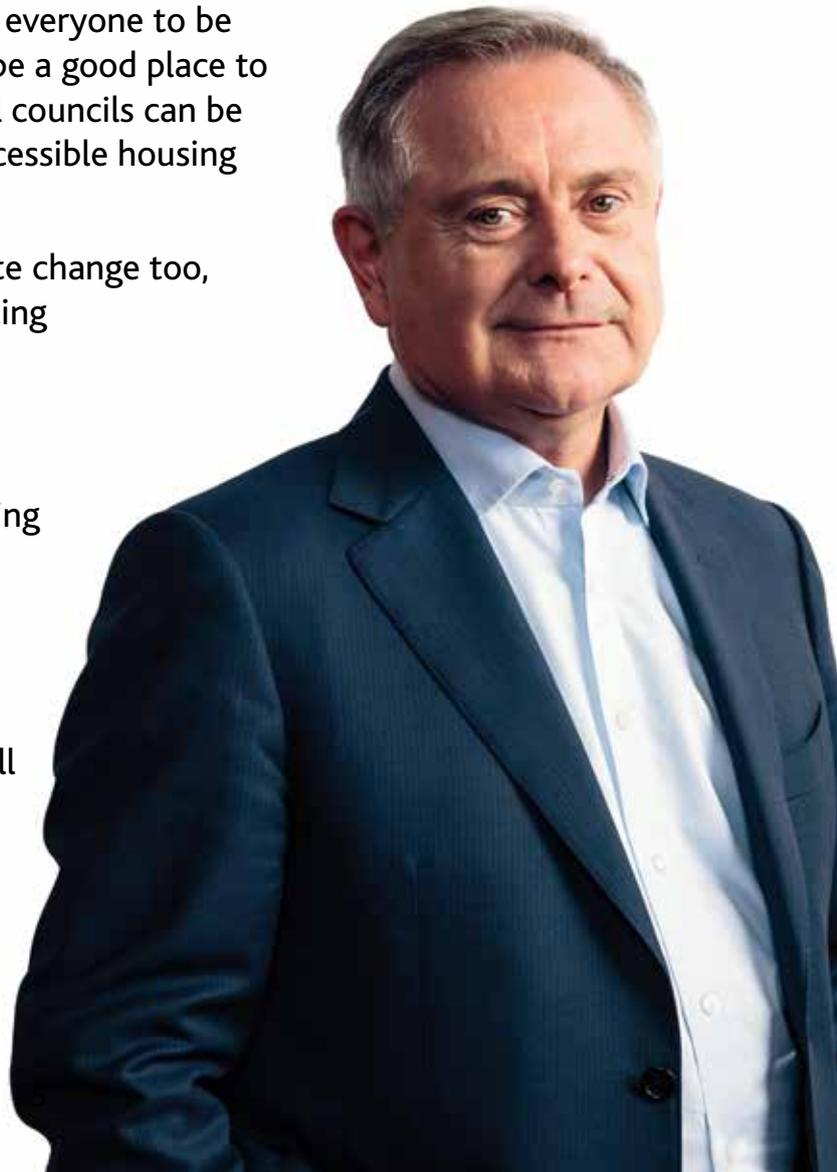
Local government must lead action on climate change too, from insulating council buildings and promoting the local generation of electricity, through to building cycling infrastructure and improving recycling facilities.

I am personally delighted that Labour is putting forward so many excellent candidates to serve their communities, with a great mix of experienced councillors and new candidates.

Local government matters to everyone's quality of life. And voting Labour this May will help ensure that local government truly serves the whole community.



Brendan Howlin TD



1. Getting the Basics Right



Labour Councillors understand the job of local government, and we get it done well.

Local councils deliver the basic things that matter to people, like clean streets and parks, road repairs, street lighting and recycling facilities.

Labour believes local councils should provide local services, to provide better quality services and better value to the public. We will return control of local services to our local councils because outsourcing and privatising vital services often does not deliver value for money or good quality, and workers' pay and conditions are very often worse. Labour will fight for decent pay and conditions, and the right to trade union representation, for any worker working directly for local councils or contracted by them.

HOW WE WILL GET THE BASICS RIGHT:

- **We will demand that a larger portion of your local council budget is allocated to the basics, so that they are delivered for everyone, in every community**
 - ◆ With proper investment we can see improvements in public lighting, street furniture, and the design and upkeep of paths and roads to cater for cyclists and pedestrians as a priority, including for buggies and people using mobility aids
- **We think that it is important that we see quality standards and continuous improvement across everything local councils do. We think it is important that our local councils are meeting key targets**

We will:

- ◆ Call for ambitious performance improvement targets for each local council
 - ◆ Call for a greater exchange of know-how between local councils, so that councils can learn from best practice
- **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 that local councils provide services directly rather than contract them out to private companies**
 - ◆ We'll improve the quality of waste collection by direct employment by local councils where possible, and strong enforcement of regulations on private operators
 - **Labour councillors know the importance of having someone respond to local concerns. We will seek to establish a new role of Community Warden to be a familiar face in every locality. Community Wardens would keep an eye out for anti-social behaviour and be quick to respond to issues like illegal dumping, dog fouling, persistent noise or anti-social behaviour, with the power to issue fines**
 - ◆ We will increase the number of people working as litter wardens, traffic wardens or dog wardens
 - ◆ We'll call for zero tolerance on dog fouling and introduce intensive enforcement "brown zones" for streets and roads where persistent offending occurs

- **We'll make sure local council services are accessible to all**
 - ◆ If you want to deal with your local council in Irish, we will make sure that there is someone able to help you with your request
 - ◆ We'll encourage local councils to produce materials in Plain English to meet the needs of people who do not have strong English or who have literacy problems
- **We will work with local council officials to ensure that their websites are fully accessible for people with additional needs**

We will:

- ◆ Work with local council officials to ensure that council websites meet the standards of the EU accessibility directive (guaranteeing that persons with sight, hearing or dexterity needs can use local council websites as two-way communication portals)
- ◆ Advocate for mandatory disability equality training for all local council staff, to include understanding of autism, mental health issues and learning difficulties, for example to simplify application forms
- ◆ Seek for more weekend services for people with disabilities, especially in rural areas where many supports are only available on weekdays

2. Leadership on the Environment and Climate Action



Labour is committed to real change to Ireland's economy so that we are less reliant on fossil fuels. This is incredibly ambitious but failure is not an option.

The climate emergency is now, but we can meet the 60 million tonne challenge: the challenge of reducing our collective greenhouse gas emissions from 60 million tonnes every year to net zero in just 30 years. Labour gets it, and we understand how local government can promote action on the environment and provide leadership for communities and businesses to become sustainable.

HOW WE WILL LEAD ON THE ENVIRONMENT:

- **It is time for greater local council leadership on climate change. That's why we are calling for there to be Climate Action Committees on every council to drive an ambitious agenda to reduce carbon emissions and to ensure sustainability**
- **We'll call for specific Climate Action Funds to be allocated in each Council budget, to finance practical ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions**
 - ◆ We want an ambitious State-led programme to insulate over 100,000 homes a year, including existing council housing. Insulating homes helps reduce energy poverty as people save money on their energy costs. A national insulation programme also has the benefit of reducing Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions
 - ◆ We will seek more investment in flood protection for Irish cities and towns that need protection against extreme weather events
- **We'll make sure that local councils improve their recycling facilities. We need to make it easier for people to recycle plastic items. We will explore the option of setting up local deposit schemes on certain bottles and containers**

We will:

- ◆ Help our citizens reduce their reliance on single-use plastic bottles by ensuring that there are water fountains available in Council buildings such as libraries and community centres
 - ◆ Take action on food waste at local level, to minimise food spoilage and to encourage the redistribution of surplus food by producers and retailers
 - ◆ Promote an expansion in the collection of organic waste from people's homes
- **Councils need to have Just Transition plans for every local area to show how new good jobs will be created to replace jobs that are linked to fossil fuels. There needs to be a Green New Deal to support new sustainable jobs, to reduce energy poverty and to increase access to sustainable public transport**
 - ◆ Apprenticeships and training schemes should be established so more workers have the skills for jobs linked to environmental sustainability
 - **Energy poverty can affect older people and people with disabilities who may need to use more home heating. We will set up schemes to combat this**

- **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 be ambitious when it comes to their role in renewable energy uses. It is possible for council properties and land to be used to generate wind and solar power**
 - ◆ Communities should be given access to the national electricity grid, to enable them to generate renewable energy such as wind and solar as a contribution to meeting local electricity needs and reducing Ireland's carbon emissions
 - ◆ We'll seek strict planning guidelines to overcome concerns about wind farms
- **Labour Councillors will make sure that city and county development plans include initiatives that improve our infrastructure for public transport, cycling and walking in order to reduce our reliance on cars**
 - ◆ Greater investment is needed to improve and promote walking and cycling facilities. We'll call 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 believe that 10% of the national transport budget should go into improving our cycling infrastructure. Councils should appoint dedicated cycling officers to promote cycling and insist in the planning and improvement of new cycling and existing routes
 - ◆ Labour has delivered the public Dublin Bike scheme and extended similar schemes to Cork, Limerick and Galway. We believe that these schemes should be extended to all parts of Dublin, not just within the city boundaries. The catchment areas should also be widened in Cork, Limerick and Galway, and the scheme extended to other urban areas
 - ◆ More people than ever are using electric cars. We need to make sure charging points are more widely available, particularly in rural Ireland
 - ◆ We will work with local councils and An Garda Síochána to seek to regularise the responsible use of electric scooters
 - ◆ We support a strategic overhaul of bus transport in Dublin, while we will also advocate for revisions to the BusConnects plan where it has failed to take legitimate local concerns into account

- **We believe that any contractor receiving public funds should be kept to high environmental standards. All local councils should insist on stronger environmental conditions as part of any contract they issue**
 - ◆ The Labour Party will insist that all water services remain in public ownership

- **Local councils have a role in protecting public land and must do more to protect against illegal dumping and pollution, and enhancing the lands through cultivating a balanced range of native species**
 - ◆ Members of the public should be able to access public land for leisure activities
 - ◆ We'll call for local councils to implement mixed species afforestation and peatland restoration on lands in their control, which will support the direct and indirect creation of sustainable jobs in rural areas
 - ◆ Local councils should report on species diversity in their areas in their annual reports and outline how they plan to protect and enhance habitats to ensure that the populations of native species are sustainable
 - ◆ Modern technology allows us to use forensic science to find out who is responsible for dumping, littering, dog fouling and pollution. Illegal dumping is a scourge on many communities. We think more effective enforcement is needed to help stamp out these problems
 - ◆ Local councils should have more powers to control air pollution, as councils are best placed to restrict the activities that cause air pollution
 - ◆ Local councils should work in tandem with local farmers and Education and Training Boards to make land available for allotments and community gardens
 - ◆ We will support the development of more greenways and blueways to support leisure activities and tourism

3. Building Housing and Supporting Tenants



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

Labour has developed a new model of public housing that is open to everyone, based on what people can afford to pay, in order to solve the problem of housing costs. In addition to the scandal of homelessness, lack of access to decent, affordable housing is a slow moving crisis that leaves hundreds of thousands of people unable to move ahead with their lives. House prices and private rents have increased at a much faster rate than people's take home pay. Many young people are living in the family home or else they are renting for more than they can really afford. In previous generations, they would have bought their own homes.

Labour's solution is the same as what Labour parties have delivered throughout European cities for decades: good quality housing, built by local councils, and rented out at a fair, affordable rent to people from a wide range of backgrounds. More than two-thirds of people living in Vienna rent publicly-provided housing ("cost-rental housing") and this is a normal housing option right across Europe. The great State-led house-building programmes of the 1940s, 1950s and 1970s owe a lot to the role of Labour, and this can be done again to deliver affordable public housing in our towns and cities.

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 will fight for good quality planning and development, and to restore planning powers to local government.

HOW WE WILL PROVIDE HOUSING FOR ALL:

- **Labour representatives in both local and national Government will continue to campaign for proper investment in housing. If the Government followed Labour's plan for housing, there would be an investment of €16 billion, over five years. This would deliver 80,000 homes under a new model of public housing open to all**
 - ◆ Labour Party Councillors will push for a mixture of traditional council housing and affordable public housing under the cost-rental model to a wide range of people on different incomes, operating under new rules, with opportunities for affordable home ownership
 - ◆ More one- and two-bedroom units of public housing need to be made available
 - ◆ We will introduce binding social housing building targets for councils to respond to local housing needs, and to reduce inefficient spending on Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) tenancies
 - ◆ There needs to be more homes available to those who have additional needs. All new public homes provided by local councils should be built according to universal design principles and accessible by people who use mobility aids. Older buildings need to be brought into compliance with accessibility standards
 - ◆ Higher-rise apartment developments need to have high minimum standards of build quality, services and maintenance. Local councils should have the responsibility to enforce these standards
 - ◆ The turnaround time to bring back vacant housing and voids needs to be improved in many local councils. Labour councillors will ensure that funds are allocated to help shorten turnaround times
- **We recognise that 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**
 - ◆ Many people with disabilities and additional needs are currently living in inappropriate accommodation. Labour will provide supports for people with disabilities moving out of congregated institutional settings
- **It's time for local councils to launch an ambitious programme of retrofitting for council homes and buildings**

- **Labour Councillors will work with local councils to ensure repairs to council homes are carried out within three months**
- **There needs to be stronger democracy for tenants and owner-occupiers of apartment buildings and housing estates, to give them control over management companies and a greater say in the management of 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. Stronger rent control legislation is needed
 - ◆ 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 decision by Fine Gael to alter the planning powers of local councils was shameful. The Labour Party wants to see planning powers back where they belong, in local government. Labour councillors have always and will continue to fight for good planning decisions that benefit the whole community, not the narrow commercial interests of the few**
 - ◆ Labour Councillors will properly engage with local communities when development plans are being drawn up
 - ◆ Large-scale housing developments should not be granted planning permission without proper services around them, that is why Labour representatives will insist on the provision for schools, public transport, health care, community facilities and other services
 - ◆ Commercial developments must have public transport provision before they are granted planning permission
 - ◆ Labour Councillors will fight for the preservation of sufficient green space and public parks in urban areas, and advocate for the preservation of green belts between existing urban areas

- **Local councils need to have stronger compulsory purchase powers for the development of housing. Councils should be empowered to impose large fines on those who leave buildings and land vacant for unacceptable periods of time**
 - ◆ 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 promote schemes to enable the temporary use of empty shops by artists and community groups
 - ◆ Funds are needed from central Government to offset the additional cost of development of housing in brownfield urban sites as opposed to greenfield sites
 - ◆ We'll extend the rules on preventing dereliction to include occupied buildings as well as derelict ones
 - ◆ When it comes to solving the housing crisis, we should innovate. Labour will explore options for new forms of home building, especially where this provides additional homes in areas with few remaining sites
- **Labour will lead a national conversation about how we can plan for old age in a way that maximises people's independence in sheltered housing and ensures their access to local shops and services**
 - ◆ A growing percentage of public housing needs to be dedicated to older people
 - ◆ We will design housing and neighbourhoods to support the growing number of people likely to be affected by dementia in future
 - ◆ Labour will seek the expansion of "empty nester" schemes to assist older people to sell their homes to the council, in exchange for housing that is easier for them to manage

4. 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.

In most of our communities, local councils provide and look after parks, beaches, playgrounds, sporting facilities, libraries and art centres. Their quality, safety and accessibility can be life-enhancing for people in terms of physical and mental health. The lack of these facilities can also diminish people's quality of life.

We have a vision of how local government can raise the quality of life in every town, city, suburb and rural area, by providing access to good quality facilities.

WE WILL PROMOTE LOCAL SERVICES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL:

- **Our cities and towns should not be overly focused on commercial concerns. Vibrant cities and towns need to be focused on people's needs. We will promote liveable towns and cities, and advocate for a European-style culture of comfortable urban living and quality urban housing**
 - ◆ We'll explore schemes for the retrofitting of multiple above-the-shop dwellings in town and city centres into single, integrated housing projects that can have proper access, operating independently of owners/occupiers of ground floor retail premises
- **Everyone deserves to have 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 sports**
 - ◆ Young people need to have places to go. We will create spaces such as recreation areas, community buildings and youth cafés in council buildings, with the aim of encouraging community leadership and social participation by young people
- **It is common sense for local councils to have responsibility for the delivery of rural public transport. Labour will push for local councils to be able to fund these types of services, 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. Making more rural hackney taxi licences available will help to reduce the incidence of drink driving
- **We believe libraries and arts centres should have longer opening hours, especially at evenings, weekends and on bank holidays**
 - ◆ We are passionate about the promotion of literacy programmes, that's why we will heavily promote outreach initiatives by libraries and arts centres targeted at marginalised and disadvantaged groups, including people with literacy or learning difficulties, to encourage their use of these facilities
 - ◆ We'll enhance the role of libraries as resource hubs for people seeking training or work, or seeking to set up their own businesses

- ◆ Library programmes that promote computer and Internet literacy are really beneficial to people in our communities, especially for the oldest and youngest in our society. These types of programmes can help people avoid being caught by Internet scams while also promoting safety online
- ◆ Libraries are a great resource for students, especially those doing exams. Labour councillors will promote funding for homework clubs to take place in libraries and community centres, run by community development workers
- ◆ We'll support the use of mobile libraries, especially in rural areas
- **All Councils should be empowered to work with the communities they serve. Labour Councillors will ensure that your local council is co-operating meaningfully with community, voluntary and neighbourhood groups that work to enhance people's lives**
 - ◆ We will work with local councils to make it easier for community groups to overcome barriers like insurance costs and accessing event permits
 - ◆ We want all neighbourhoods to have access to affordable, and where possible free-of-charge, public spaces for use by community groups. Labour will promote the use of public buildings after hours by non-profit community groups
 - ◆ There needs to be more opportunities for people to be active citizens, especially for people from minority groups, people with disabilities and others who are under-represented in public life
 - ◆ 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
 - ◆ We fully support traditional Irish festivals and parades, including promotion of the Irish language
- **The benefits of local policing forums when it comes to combating crime cannot be denied. Labour will work to improve the relationship between local councils and the Gardaí, and to promote community policing**
 - ◆ More Home Security schemes need to be put in place to help people, especially older members of our community, upgrade the locks and security systems on their homes

- ◆ Rural crime is on the rise, and many communities are rightly extremely worried. Labour funded the rural CCTV scheme, and we want to see it developed further to deter crime and speeding
- ◆ The Community Graffiti Reduction Programme needs to be re-established. Labour will provide funding and assistance for public bodies, community groups and/or businesses to remove graffiti, to improve landscapes and to divert young people into community arts activities including graffiti art zones, while also calling for a minimum age to purchase spray paint
- **Make Way Days are brilliant for highlighting the challenges people with disabilities have to overcome while living in our towns and cities. However, we cannot just have one specified day a year where we are made aware of these problems. Labour will work towards making all shared spaces designated as safe travel areas for older people, children and persons with disabilities**
 - ◆ We need to make our roads safer for pedestrians and cyclists. That's why we will continue to advocate for policies to maximise road safety for pedestrians and cyclists, including more pedestrian crossings, with a particular focus on disability access on all footpaths and crossings
 - ◆ Town and city centres should be designed to be walkable spaces, not dominated by cars
 - ◆ Working with local councils and An Garda Síochána we will come up with solutions to controlling the unlawful and dangerous use of scrambler motorcycles on public roads and on public land
- **Ireland is a vibrant multi-faith country. While upholding the principle of State secularism and pluralism we will support religious communities when they wish to hold festivals in line with their faiths**
 - ◆ We will support religious communities in attaining planning permission for churches, synagogues, mosques, temples and other religious buildings
 - ◆ We'll call for all local councils to ensure appropriate burial grounds are available for people of all faiths and for people who are not religious, including those who wish to build new forms of burial ground such as walls for interring the remains of those who have been cremated

5. Supporting Workers' Rights, Jobs and Enterprise



Working in partnership with trade unions and local businesses, Labour will enhance the economic role of local councils, to provide decent and sustainable local jobs. We will insist on good employment practices and environmental protection.

Local government provides the necessary building blocks for enterprise and job creation: good planning; roads; control of waste and recycling; permits and authorisation; and by implementing local economic plans. Good quality jobs are the best way to reduce poverty and to improve workers' wages.

Local councils purchase a large amount of goods and services from the private sector, including major construction contracts. We want to see the full use of EU rules that permit social and environmental clauses to be put into contracts, to require: decent wages; local employment; more apprenticeships; good environmental protection; and other gains for local communities.

Labour has a vision for Ireland's economy post-Brexit, based on environmental sustainability and good quality jobs. Brexit has made it clear that Ireland's exporters need to move beyond reliance on the UK market alone. We want stronger indigenous Irish enterprise and better linkages with multinationals and with enterprises across the EU. We also must move away from fossil fuels, while replacing jobs that are affected by this transition.

HOW WE WILL SUPPORT WORKERS' RIGHTS, JOBS AND ENTERPRISE:

- **Labour will demand that all local councils provide decent pay and conditions to their employees and to anyone contracted to deliver goods or services**
 - ◆ There needs to be much stronger social clauses in all local council contracts and procurement, with requirements for decent pay and conditions, paying the Living Wage as the minimum. Council employees and contracted employees must have the right to trade union recognition and collective bargaining
- **We will work with local councils to ensure that their economic plans are focused on creating sustainable jobs, especially in rural areas and disadvantaged urban areas**
 - ◆ Labour councillors are extremely supportive of LoveLocal campaigns. We will support initiatives to ensure the viability of local towns and community shopping streets. There are many way we can do this such as making sure councils provide affordable parking, helping the establishment of local business associations and promoting farmers' markets
 - ◆ There needs to be better and more affordable public transport links to local shops and services in towns, as an alternative out of town shopping centres. Public transport must be accessible to all who wish to use it
 - ◆ It's time that public transport providers took their responsibility to local communities more seriously. There should be proper upkeep of transport shelters. Labour councillors will insist on disability-accessible bus stops and shelters, with correct timetables
 - ◆ We know that many businesses are running into difficulties with the levels of local council rates. We will review the effect of local council rates on the ability of local shops and services in order to allow local businesses to compete with online shopping
 - ◆ The rate at which the high-speed broadband is being rolled out in rural Ireland is far too slow. We will seek for local councils to advance the availability of broadband Internet in towns and hubs
 - ◆ We will improve roads and other transport infrastructure that are under local government control, and require harbour plans to be developed

- ◆ We will encourage all towns to develop local Fair Trade initiatives and Living Wage initiatives
- ◆ We'll promote the development of Nightlife Commissioners in urban areas to support the development of the night economy while ensuring public safety and noise control is kept in check. Night Commissioners could explore ways of financially supporting late night venues that are not viable on a purely commercial basis, as well as ensuring evening activities are available for teenagers as a socialising option, such as night time sports
- **Childcare can be completely unaffordable for so many families. Local councils could and should have a greater role in the provision of affordable childcare facilities**

6. Delivering Labour's Vision of Equality and Fairness



Labour Councillors in local government have always used their powers to advance 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.

Decency, equality and justice are made real whenever local government ensures everyone is securely housed and when every neighbourhood is a good place to live, to raise children and to grow older.

HOW WE WILL DELIVER EQUALITY AND FAIRNESS IN ALL OF OUR COMMUNITIES:

- **The Labour Party fully stands behind the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. These goals include eliminating poverty, hunger and inequality. 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
- **At all levels of local and national government, Labour has always been the strongest advocate for greater gender equality**
 - ◆ It is time for local councils to adopt gender budgeting practices in their annual budget processes
 - ◆ Labour TDs and Senators will push for statutory quotas for more equal representation of both women and men as candidates for election at local level
 - ◆ Local councils should be leaders when it comes to reporting on gender pay gaps. We will call for each council to publish statistics on its own workforce in terms of the gender of employees at every grade, the gender pay gap, the employment of ethnic minorities, the employment of people with disabilities, and the employment of people from other minorities
 - ◆ We'll seek a greater proportion of women to be employed at management level in local government
 - ◆ Labour councillors will continue to advocate for local councils to show leadership by actively encouraging breastfeeding by mothers in all their premises
 - ◆ Labour councillors have been leading the charge when it comes to convincing local councils to provide free sanitary products in their buildings. In the next council term, we will continue this work

- ◆ It is critical that every local council has adequate provision of refuge accommodation to support people, mostly women and children, fleeing domestic violence
- ◆ We will make sure that that local councils show flexibility and sensitivity towards victims of domestic violence (some of whom may have tenancies or joint ownership of a home) so that they are not barred from local council housing and then forced to choose between homelessness and returning to an abusive home
- **Support families and children**
 - ◆ Children and families must have access to community-based arts and cultural activities
 - ◆ Local Councils should support schools to provide meals at lunchtime. This will ensure that every disadvantaged child has a hot nutritious meal every school day
- **Support LGBT+ communities**
 - ◆ We will continue to support LGBT+ Parades held in local areas and ensure that their routes are visible
 - ◆ We will ensure that more local councils are LGBT+ friendly places to work or use services, and use the leadership role of local government to combat discrimination or bullying
- **Support Ireland's ethnic minority communities**
 - ◆ Local councils should reach out more to new communities, through information and education initiatives, in order to foster social inclusion and intercultural understanding
 - ◆ We will make sure the necessary support is there for people from minority communities to hold festivals and other events celebrating their culture and traditions, and support access to public buildings for community activities
 - ◆ We'll collaborate with local communities to support the successful integration of refugees
 - ◆ We will encourage local councils to use their enterprise role to support shops and other businesses set up by people from ethnic minorities

- ◆ It's important for a greater number of ethnic minorities, including Travellers, to be employed by local councils, and we'll push councils to work with Travellers to ensure better job opportunities
- ◆ We will demand all funds for Traveller housing are drawn down and used at local level
- **Support people with disabilities**
 - ◆ We will demand that all new local council policies, developments and services are disability proofed, meaning that the effects on people with disabilities should be clearly identified and given due consideration during the planning phases
 - ◆ We'll seek safe and unimpeded access for people with disabilities on all footpaths and to all public buildings, and we'll advocate for a greater number of people with disabilities to be employed by local councils

7. Strengthening Local Democracy



Labour wants to strengthen every elected Council's ability to decide important matters at local level.

Too much power has been centralised in Government Buildings. Only 8% of public spending is under the control over local government here, compared to a European average of 23% and more than half of all spending in some countries. Many smaller European countries have much stronger local government than Ireland, and give local representatives a greater say over education, health, policing, social services and transport.

Labour wants more public money to be under the control of local government rather than being controlled from the centre. With greater financial autonomy comes greater responsibility, and we will promote transparency and greater accountability to local people.

Stronger local democracy also means ending the situation where public agencies by-pass elected local councils when making decisions that impact on local people. Labour wants both local council management and the management of other public agencies to be required to answer the questions of elected local Councillors, to ensure accountability to residents for all public services provided locally.

HOW WE WILL MAKE LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRONGER:

- **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**
 - ◆ Up to 20% of public spending should be under the control of local government, with the relevant powers over education, social care, employment affairs, policing and transport to be devolved to local government
 - ◆ Too often, central government and its agencies create unnecessary delays for local councils, such as for council housing projects. We will seek to reduce these delays
- **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 the areas not covered by Town Councils
 - ◆ Coherent town plans must recognise the centrality of towns as social and economic hubs. To do this we will restore the role of town architects, and seek special status and supports for the largest towns, such as Drogheda, so that they can develop into well-planned cities
 - ◆ We'll research the possibility of establishing smaller-scale Borough Councils in Dublin, to replace the existing four local councils in the event of a Greater Dublin Council being established for County Dublin under a directly-elected mayor, with these borough councils having functions and powers analogous to Town Councils
- **Labour representatives will continue to speak truth to power and to seek greater accountability of public bodies**
 - ◆ We believe that public agencies that make decisions that impact on local people should be accountable to local councils
 - ◆ It is vital that local council Chief Executives are held accountable for their actions. We would reduce the range of decisions that Chief Executives can make without reference to elected representatives
 - ◆ We will encourage and support Labour Councillors to use Freedom of Information requests and other mechanisms to hold to account the management of local HSE, ETBs, Gardaí, etc. for the delivery of services affecting local people

- **The financial independence of local councils needs to be strengthened. It is time to reduce interference by central government and other public agencies in deciding annual council budgets**
 - ◆ Labour Councillors will continue to ensure that the public are getting the best value for money
 - ◆ We believe in the need to look at other countries to see how local councils deal with funding. For example, other countries allocate some tax revenue from income tax or VAT directly to local government
 - ◆ We will call on government agencies to pay local commercial rates as they did until the 1980s, but provide an exemption to local council archives
 - ◆ 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 would call for a review of Site Value Tax (SVT) and its consideration as an alternative to Local Property Tax (LPT) that could promote the development of affordable housing
 - ◆ We need to explore options to keep 100% of LPT or SVT tax locally while creating national schemes to support poorer local council areas
 - ◆ We'll advocate for councils to have the option of introducing tourist levies, to fund local arts, culture and heritage facilities and festivals
 - ◆ We'll seek transparency to residents and local businesses through a Plain English annual statement about local government revenue and spending, to demonstrate value for money for commercial rates, Local Property Tax and other local taxes and charges
- **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**
 - ◆ Voters in the relevant areas need to be given clear information about the proposed powers and functions of these mayors, as well as information about how elected councils will function alongside them

- ◆ The Labour Party supports a Yes vote for directly-elected mayors in local votes being held in Cork, Limerick and Waterford, on the basis of voters being given adequate information on what powers will be held by these mayors
- ◆ Chief Executives should be renamed Chief Operating Officers in local councils with directly-elected mayors
- **As we have always done, Labour councillors will support active citizenship and participation in all communities**
 - ◆ Local people need to be given a real chance to discuss and propose ideas for the communities they live in, that's why we will promote "town hall" style public meetings and other productive forums that give local people a voice
 - ◆ We will reform Public Participation Networks to ensure they provide real benefits to local communities
 - ◆ Local people should get a say in how their money is spent locally. We fully support the development of participatory budgeting at local level
 - ◆ Meetings of the Council should rotate through different towns to increase visibility and accessibility of the Council's deliberations
- **We need to encourage more diversity in the political system. We need to make it easier for local people to get involved**
 - ◆ We will continue to encourage and support the election of candidates from different backgrounds, including to Town Councils, in order to develop the capacity of more people to consider a career in electoral politics
 - ◆ Labour councillors will continue to improve Maternity Leave and Paternity Leave for councillors to make the role more family friendly, and seek for substitute councillors to be co-opted during the time that a councillor is on extended Maternity Leave

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