

NEW CHAIR OFFERS SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT!

The Housing Agency's newly-appointed chairman says he may be regarded as an outsider to the housing sector, having spent most of his working career in the food industry. However, Michael Carey believes his outsider's perspective will be an advantage in making a meaningful contribution to the challenges facing the Agency and the people it serves.

As the new Chair of the Housing Agency, I am very much looking forward to working with all stakeholders in the housing sector to help address the challenges facing many Irish families as they struggle to secure a home. I am very aware that there is no quick fix and that only through working together will we make the necessary progress over the coming years.

As a housing sector outsider I might be, to some, a curious choice for this important position.

Whilst I've spent most of my working career in the food industry, I believe my outsider's perspective will be an advantage in making a meaningful contribution to the challenges facing the Agency and the people it serves.

I come to this role without baggage or any conflict of interest, allowing me to engage credibly with all stakeholders and hopefully with some fresh thinking.

SENIOR MANAGEMENT

I spent much of my career working in senior management roles in large multinational food groups (such as Managing Director of Fox's Biscuits and Managing Director of



"I intend to focus the organisation on getting the job done" – Michael Carey, newly-appointed Chairman of the Housing Agency.



Carey says that the large number of families in mortgage arrears continues to be major challenge.

Kellogg's UK and Ireland).

In the second half of my career, to date, I have been an entrepreneur and investor; owning and managing a number of food businesses. I am currently Executive Chairman of 'The Company of Food' a specialist food sector investment business, and I chair the boards of a number of our investments.

Aside from my day job in the food sector, I have recently completed two terms as chairman of An Bord Bia, playing a leadership role in building An Bord Bia into one of the most respected state agencies in the country.

I have also been chairman of the Grow Dublin Tourism Alliance, and a member of the Advisory Board at Smurfit Graduate School of Business in UCD.

CURRENT HOUSING SITUATION

The following challenges, facing our society in relation to housing, are all fundamentally significant issues which must be addressed.

- The recent increases in number impacted by homelessness,
- The large numbers of families in mortgage arrears,
- The challenges of cost and affordability of housing (both rental and for purchase),
- The rate of supply of both social and private housing, and
- The need for optimum use of vacant homes

It is clear that all of the key stakeholders share a desire to fix these problems, although there seems to be some fundamental differences in views on how best to ensure such problems are addressed. Furthermore, there are many barriers in the way of making the desired progress.

As Chairman of the Housing Agency I will seek to ensure that this organisation plays its full part in delivering the solutions and overcoming those barriers.

I believe that the Agency is well placed to be a world-class knowledge base for housing policy and practice, working closely with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, the local authorities and the Approved Housing Bodies, to develop and implement policies that will achieve the right results.

IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES OF NEW CHAIRMAN

In taking up his new role, Michael Carey says he has no simplistic belief that there are easy solutions, adding "I do not come with fixed views on how the Housing Agency should act to meet its objectives." So, his initial priorities in this role are as follows:

1. *To initiate and oversee a review of the role and purpose of the Housing Agency, to refresh its Statement of Strategy, to clarify its key priorities and ensure its resources are being optimised, so that the Housing Agency becomes one of the most respected state agencies. The output of this review will be very clear in terms of intended deliverables.*
2. *To seek to ensure that the Housing Agency has a high level of engagement with all of its key stakeholders, and that the views and inputs from all perspectives of the issues are captured in the thinking behind the programmes of the Agency. Achieving a clear understanding of the roles of, and relationships with, each of these stakeholders and sister agencies will make the efforts of the Housing Agency more effective and will avoid duplication of effort.*
3. *Finally, to ensure that the metrics used by the Agency are appropriate and that the data being used is robust. He will aim to focus on specific deliverable outputs of the Housing Agency, ensuring clarity of what it aims to achieve and clarity of its performance against those targets.*

GETTING THE JOB DONE

In short, I intend to focus the organisation on getting the job done. As I become fully briefed on all of the current issues and challenges facing the Housing Agency, and as we finalise a revised Statement of Strategy, I look forward to engaging closely with all stakeholders over the coming months.

Conor Skehan, the outgoing chairman, has done an excellent job leading the Agency over the past five years. I look forward to playing my part to build on that foundation to help enable people to live in good quality, affordable homes in sustainable communities.