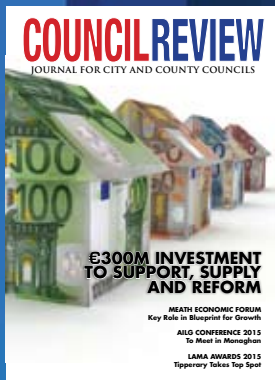


contents



EDITOR'S COMMENT

The new €300 million fund for investment in social housing, jointly backed by the Housing Finance Agency and the European Investment Bank, will target an additional 2,000 social housing units to be developed over the next three years.

The new programme, the first ever support for housing in Ireland by the European Investment Bank, will be available to approved housing bodies for the upgrade and delivery of social housing.

The investment programme is a key part of the Government's 'Social Housing Strategy 2020: Support, Supply and Reform', which aims to ensure that every household will have access to secure good quality housing suited to their needs at an affordable price and in a sustainable community.

Plans for the new strategy have elicited varied reactions from representatives of some of Ireland's leading social housing agencies. Donal McManus, Executive Director of the Irish Council for Social Housing, tells 'Council Review' that co-operative and solid working relationship between local authorities and housing associations is essential for the objectives set out in this new strategy to be achieved.

Meanwhile, Simon Brooke, Head of Policy at Clúid, points out that the local authority refers people to his housing association from its own housing waiting list. He candidly says that the local authority decides who moves into their houses, rather than the housing association itself, thereby eliminating any opportunity for Clúid to 'cherry-pick'.

Another issue of contention is the reluctance of housing associations to give their tenants the chance to buy their homes after a number of years. While such an initiative was wound up in 2012, under the social housing strategy a new tenant purchase scheme for council homes is set to be introduced later this year.

'Council Review' will closely monitor the situation and report on any developments due to be rolled out in 2015.

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COUNCIL REVIEW
JOURNAL FOR CITY AND COUNTY COUNCILS

5 NEWS UPDATES

19 EURO FOCUS

23 COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

A total of 18 local politicians from across Ireland have been formally appointed to the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) - the EU's political assembly of local and regional authorities from all 28 Member States.

25 ASSOCIATION OF IRISH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Reacting to the Government's recent announcement of an Action Plan for Jobs in 2015, the President of the Association of Irish Local Government, has welcomed the commitment to regional development, and said that local authorities are well placed to lead measures to boost employment in the Government's plan.

27 SOCIAL HOUSING

The Government's new plan to kick-start the development of social housing across the country places a renewed emphasis on both local authorities and housing associations to deliver.

35 MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

Meath County Council has developed a blueprint for long-term economic growth until 2022. Support from the council's elected representatives and advisory inputs from the Meath Economic Forum will be key to the delivery of this strategy, complemented by highly educated and skilled people in the Royal County.

39 LAMA AWARDS 2015

LAMA's 'Council of the Year' award for 2015 went to Tipperary County Council in recognition of its work in the development of a new website, which was launched in June 2014, following the merger of the county's councils north and south.

43 ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Following the energy efficiency upgrades carried out by Limerick City and County Council to 1,449 homes in 2014, in conjunction with Airtricity and funded by Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, a further 300 properties across the city's regeneration areas will receive thermal upgrades this year.

45 SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AUTHORITY

Communities, public bodies and private enterprise are being urged to work together to bring energy upgrades to local areas, following the Government's announcement that €13.2 million in funding is now available for this year's Better Energy Communities Scheme.

47 LIMERICK CITY & COUNTY

Limerick City and County Council looks forward to a busy 2015. This follows the successful merger of both local authorities, which culminated with it being crowned the 'Local Authority of the Year' Award by Chambers Ireland last year.

48 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

In the current climate of tighter budgets and pressure on resources, many public sector organisations, including local authorities, are outsourcing services to external organisations under Service Level Agreements or Service Level Contracts.



Committee of the Regions
Page 23



Action Plan for Jobs
Page 25



Social Housing
Page 27



Meath's Blueprint for Growth
Page 35



LAMA Awards 2015
Page 39

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53 OPEN LIBRARY PROJECT

Opening hours are no excuse for Sligo and Offaly residents missing out on the amenities available at their local libraries, as shown by the new 'Open Library' 12-month pilot scheme in both counties.

57 WATERFORD ARTS PROJECTS

The Office of Public Works (OPW) is setting aside over €90,000 on a number of arts projects for Waterford City, following the success of the Waterford 1100 celebrations in 2014.

59 AGE-FRIENDLY STRATEGY

Dublin City's Age Friendly Strategy is the latest step in making Ireland one of the first age-friendly countries in the world. To date, 26 local authorities have signed up and it's expected that by mid-2015 all 31 local authorities will have launched or committed to launch the initiative.

65 MUSIC GENERATION

2014 was an amazing year for Music Generation, Ireland's national music education programme that helps children and young people access a range of high quality vocal and instrumental tuition in their local area.

71 TOURISM PROJECT

A pilot project that has resulted in the development of a heritage trail on 60km of the Wild Atlantic Way is being hailed as a template for future similar developments along the West of Ireland coastal route from Donegal to West Cork.

75 CORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Cork Institute of Technology's Nimbus Centre for Research - centrally involved in the 'Cork Smart Gateway' initiative - has teamed up with co-sponsors Cork City and County Councils, and UCC's Tyndall Institute, to develop the 'Smart Agenda for the Cork Region'.

77 DUBLIN BUS TAX SAVER

The Dublin Bus Tax saver scheme has seen huge success since its roll-out within the last 15 years, with over 6,500 companies across a wide variety of sectors now participating in the scheme to avail of tax savings on Bus Éireann, Dublin Bus and Iarnród Éireann services.

81 ORDNANCE SURVEY IRELAND

Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSi), the national mapping agency, has developed a standardised, authoritative digital framework that enables the consistent referencing and integration of national data related to location.

83 ROSCOMMON CIVIC OFFICES

Stewart is currently constructing the new Roscommon County Council Civic Offices located on the site of the old fire station in the middle of Roscommon Town. The €13 million development is due for completion in the second quarter of this year.



SEAI Better Energy Scheme
Page 45



Open Library Project
Page 53



Age-Friendly Strategy
Page 58



Music Generation
Page 65



OSi Digital Mapping
Page 81



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