



# FIGHTING FOR YOU

AG TROID AR DO SHON



*Sinn Féin*

SINN FÉIN LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
MANIFESTO 2019



*Sinn Féin*

**FIGHTING**

**FOR YOU**

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**We in Sinn Féin are leaders.  
We stand up for what is right,  
we take risks for peace and we  
hold the powerful to account.  
We fight, in local councils and  
in Europe, for ordinary working  
people and families.**

**We keep our word and when  
we say we are going to do  
something, we do it.**

**The Fine Gael government,  
supported by Fianna Fáil, has  
overseen an unfair recovery  
which has been to the benefit of  
a privileged few and left many  
behind. For many working  
people wages have stagnated  
and job insecurity increased  
while the cost of living continues  
to escalate.**

**The stress of making ends meet  
is putting those on low and  
middle incomes under increased  
pressure and leaving many with  
little or no reserve for a rainy  
day.**

**Families and young people  
cannot access affordable  
housing and the health service  
is in crisis while public money  
continues to be wasted by  
incompetent government  
ministers.**

**Team Sinn Féin will fight to  
increase incomes and reduce  
the cost of living, to build  
houses and protect homeowners  
from vulture funds, to make  
communities safer by tackling  
crime, to deliver better local  
services and to oppose punitive  
carbon tax hikes.**

**Sinn Féin wants to see a fair and  
prosperous Ireland.**

**Nobody who goes out to work  
every day, or is forced to stay  
at home through disability or  
because they are caring for  
others, should struggle to pay  
their bills or keep a roof over  
their head.**

**No older person should be faced  
with the indignity of lying on a  
hospital trolley when seriously  
ill.**

**Nobody should have to go to the  
courts to fight for their rights.**

**No one should live in fear in  
their home or community.**

**We will not stand for it.**

**We are fighting back.**

**We want better paid  
and secure jobs.**

**We want affordable homes for all.**

**We want communities free from the fear of crime.**

**We want strong action on climate change but oppose carbon taxes.**

**We want support for rural Ireland with no community left behind.**

**We will stand up for Ireland's interests in the Brexit negotiations and believe that now is the time for Irish Unity.**

**Sinn Féin will fight for you.**

**Sinn Féin will fight for your community.**

**Sinn Féin will fight for Ireland.**

A portrait of Mary Lou McDonald, a woman with dark hair, wearing a green blazer over a black top, smiling. She is positioned on the left side of the image.

*Mary Lou McDonald*

**Mary Lou McDonald TD**  
**UACHTARÁN SHINN FÉIN**





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## SINN FÉIN PRIORITIES

### RAISE INCOMES AND TACKLE THE COST OF LIVING

Fine Gael, backed by Fianna Fáil, has burdened Irish citizens with some of the highest basic living costs in the developed world.

This is not fair. Childcare which costs the same as a second mortgage, historically high levels of rent, and soaring energy charges, which are among the highest in Europe, are not normal costs for families to have to deal with. For all of these basic necessities, and more, Irish citizens are forced to pay much more than our European neighbours.

This is the result of government policies and an unwillingness to deliver high-quality and affordable public services required by citizens.

In contrast, Sinn Féin is driven by a commitment to world-class and universal public services which are already available to citizens in almost every other high-income European country. We are committed to ensuring that every worker in the state is paid a good wage for their efforts.

#### SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:

- A three-year freeze on rents and renter's tax relief equivalent to one month's rent
- The abolition of the property tax by government and councils use their power to set it at the lowest rate possible
- Rolling out affordable, high-quality childcare
- Introduction of a real living wage for all workers
- Use of social clauses to ensure local authority expenditure promotes quality employment and decent pay
- Promoting trade union membership in pursuit of better pay for all

### DEMAND SECURE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil have taken turns creating crisis after crisis in housing. They aided and abetted the banks and developers in driving house prices through the roof. Now they watch as countless citizens are gripped by a housing and homelessness crisis. This is a disgrace.

Fine Gael's housing policy serves only to enrich landlords, Vulture Funds and international land hoarders and investors through tax hand-outs. This government has not delivered a single affordable home, and failed miserably to build enough social homes; missing target after target. Meanwhile more and more Irish citizens fall into homelessness, and countless more see their wages gobbled up by historic rip-off rents, unable to save for a home or plan for a family.

Sinn Féin says enough is enough. Renters need a rent freeze and relief. Those in mortgage distress need compassion and assistance, not the sight of more Vulture Funds hovering overhead. Ireland's homeless need a new approach - we all do.

#### SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:

- Continuing to progress Pearse Doherty TD's 'No Consent, No Sale' bill, to give families the power to keep their homes out of the clutches of unscrupulous Vulture Funds
- A major public house building programme across the state including social homes and affordable homes for purchase and to rent
- Ensuring planning processes are transparent, fair, and timely to prevent delays and blockages to home building



## OPPOSE THE CARBON TAX & FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

The threat posed by climate change is unique in scale and in nature. Never before has the island of Ireland, and the international community, faced such a profound threat to our livelihoods, our society, and our natural environment.

Unfortunately for us as Irish citizens, and our neighbours around the world, Fine Gael has one of the worst records in the developed world. Our legally binding target was 20% reduction in emissions by 2020 – Fine Gael have delivered just 1% reduction. Now they want to pass the buck for this utter failure by hiking the carbon tax on ordinary people.

We all have a responsibility to stand up for a safe climate future for our children and the coming generations of Irish citizens. Sinn Féin is rising to that responsibility, putting forward clear, direct, and effective proposals to prevent further unravelling of the climate. Our recent Climate Action Committee alternative report went further than the establishment parties in many areas. Sinn Féin proposed to invest to make the climate transition just and a real benefit for people's lives, and by making the corporations and big polluters pay.

### SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:

- Opposing hikes in the carbon tax
- Introducing a Local Authority Climate Obligation Bill to ensure councils makes best use of land for renewable energy generation, charging points for electric vehicles, park and ride facilities and public transport
- Ensuring all public housing is built to the highest energy efficiency ratings
- Building on our record of delivering public bike schemes
- Each council to establish an ambitious target of kilometres of cycle-lanes for delivery
- Planting more broad leaf trees in parks, green spaces and on streets

## MAKE COMMUNITIES SAFER BY TACKLING CRIME

We cannot expect to tackle crime and anti-social problems in our communities when successive governments have cut the heart and soul out of community safety and crime prevention initiatives.

Drug Task Forces have had their budgets slashed, and then asked to do more with less. Youth programmes and probation services have been cut too. At the same time, cuts have been inflicted on policing, causing a reduction in frontline gardaí and local Garda stations.

No community or police service can expect to overcome complex problems such as crime when their crucial supports have been ripped away from them. Worse still, the ability of citizens to scrutinise and support community policing has been undermined by inadequate Local Policing Forums and Joint Policing Committees.

### SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:

- Empowering citizens to support and scrutinise local policing, strengthening and building better links between Local Policing Forums, Joint Policing Committees and the communities they serve
- Investing directly into keeping communities safer through more Gardaí on the beat, and equipping them with the best technologies and resources
- Rooting out the causes of crimes with more funding towards prevention initiatives, community awareness, youth programmes, Drug Task Forces, and addiction services

## DELIVER BETTER LOCAL SERVICES AND AMENITIES

Traditionally, local councils provided essential services that improved people's lives. Successive Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil governments' privatisation and outsourcing agenda has starved local authorities of the vital funding required to deliver services. This has diminished essential council services.



The privatisation of bin collections has led to the end of waiver schemes, increased costs for householders and more illegal dumping. This should return to being a core local authority service.

Councils also need to provide residents with the basic facilities to keep their communities clean and tidy. We need more public bins and dog litter bins, as well as more recycling centres that allow people reduce their waste outputs.

There are many further areas where local authorities can help relieve cost of living pressures. Whether permanent amenities or occasional events, both outdoor and indoor, the various free to use and affordable services offered by local councils can be invaluable, especially for hard-pressed parents seeking to keep their kids entertained.

Essential services such as roads, footpaths, public lighting, traffic-calming measures should be delivered as a priority. Likewise emergency services such as fire services and winter gritting require greater resources.

The Fine Gael Government, supported by Fianna Fáil, continues to underfund flood relief schemes throughout the State. The Office of Public Works, which is responsible for flood risk management, requested an additional €49 million in funding in order to implement vital programmes to up to 300 communities at significant risk of flooding. Despite this, Government has failed to provide additional funding and has cut flood relief schemes by €3 million in 2019. Sinn Féin would ensure that flood risk management is adequately funded, protecting communities and responding to a key challenge of climate change. In Government we would provide an additional €50 million to flood relief schemes in the years to 2021.

### **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Bringing waste collection back under the control of local authorities**
- **More recycling centres, public bins and dog litter bins**
- **Joined-up planning and delivery of playgrounds, bmx and skate parks, gym facilities, modern libraries and many more amenities in conjunction with residential and commercial developments**
- **That central government provide the funding identified as necessary by the OPW for the protection of communities from flooding**

## **PROTECTING AND GROWING THE ECONOMY – BREXIT AND A UNITED IRELAND**

Brexit poses a unique and historic threat to politics and prosperity on the island of Ireland. For Sinn Féin, defending the interests of the Irish people is paramount. This means protecting the Peace Process and the Good Friday Agreement, and the integration of our island community.

If the DUP and the British government refuse to lift the threat of a Brexit the people of Ireland overwhelmingly oppose, and which the people of the north democratically rejected, then the only solution is to allow the people of this island to determine their future – Ireland united and prosperous in the EU, or an Ireland further divided with the north linked to the sinking Brexit ship.

As the only all-Ireland party standing in the local elections with councillors in all border councils, Sinn Féin is uniquely placed to take effective all-Ireland and cross-border action to mitigate against any form of Brexit and to promote Irish unity.

### **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Establishing a €2bn Brexit Stabilisation Fund, €1bn of which will be delivered through ISIF-Council investment partnerships, to protect our island economy from a crash-out Brexit**
- **Encouraging further all-Ireland political and economic co-operation**
- **Government deliver a white paper on Irish Unity and establish a forum on the issue**
- **A referendum on the reunification of Ireland**

# SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS OF SINN FÉIN COUNCILLORS

Sinn Féin councillors have used their positions effectively to fight for their communities locally and, working with our team of TDs, Seanadóirí, MEPs, MLAs, MPs and councillors from right across the whole island, they have fought on the big political issues of the day.

Sinn Féin councillors fight to ensure a progressive, republican agenda is pushed in every council chamber to which they are elected and help deliver local, regional, national and international change.

## FOUGHT RISING LIVING COSTS AND SUPPORTED QUALITY EMPLOYMENT

- The only councils to deliver the maximum reduction to the Local Property Tax were ones where Sinn Féin was the largest party
- Introduced an apprenticeship scheme
- Supported socio-economic development projects and social clauses to harness potential of local talent and employment
- Initiatives to promote localities as tourist destinations
- Used council chambers as a platform to oppose the introduction of water charges
- Supported workers' rights through improving council procurement policies and standing with workers fighting for their rights

## HELPED DELIVER SOCIAL HOUSING AND NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

- Pushed for innovative solutions to maximise delivery of public housing, despite being starved of funds by central government and resistance from conservative parties
- Supported the delivery of new roads and improved infrastructure in rural and urban areas
- Supported area regeneration projects

## IMPROVED ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN YOUR COUNCILS, SUCH AS

- Achieved the appointment of a Disability Access Officer
- Returned control and responsibility for Dún Laoghaire Harbour to the local authority
- Extended library services and maintained operational swimming pools and local leisure centres
- Launched mental health awareness schemes

- Fought for additional school places to reduce waiting lists
- Fought to secure extension to school transport schemes

## INVESTED IN CLEANER AND SAFER COMMUNITIES

- Set up community gardens, parks and river upkeep projects
- Secured investment into play areas, public parks, greenways and other crucial public amenities
- Opposed a major polluting waste incinerator project in Limerick
- Expanded the Dublin bikes scheme across Dublin City
- Improved road safety by supporting the introduction of traffic calming measures
- Supported better pedestrian protections on dangerous rural roads and footpaths with a special focus on schools
- Supported community festivals across the country

## PROMOTED CULTURE AND HERITAGE

- Campaigned to prevent the demolition of the historic Moore Street terrace, preserving this crucial national monument
- Supported and delivered 1916 and other centenary commemorative events across Ireland to honour our patriot dead
- Promoted the Irish language through local language committees and cultural events throughout Ireland



# LIVING WAGE AND BETTER PAY

Sinn Féin is determined to ensure that every worker earns at least enough to live a good life, free from financial worries.

It is a scandal that some large employers in Ireland pay their workers so poorly that they must seek additional financial help from the state, while these companies post huge profits. The State subsidised low wage employers to the extent of €431m in 2018 alone.

Sinn Féin has called on the government to introduce a Living Wage of €11.90 to be immediately payable by every employer that can afford it.

To date the government has refused to ensure fair pay for workers.

In the absence of the necessary government action, Sinn Féin councillors will do what they can to encourage a fair share for workers at local level and for those employed as a result of public contracts.

Learning from the successful experience of 'fair trade' certificates, Sinn Féin proposes to introduce a Council accreditation scheme with Local Living Wage Employer Certificates awarded to local businesses that demonstrate the minimum wage they pay is the living wage.

Sinn Féin will also continue to work towards Social Clauses being central to any public procurement processes. This will ensure that companies who successfully win public contracts will be required to provide decent pay and conditions. These conditions include a living wage, apprenticeships, community gain, local economic benefit through local contracts, trade union recognition and quality employment opportunities for people with disabilities. These and other social criteria should be put into the core specifications of contracts put out to tender by local authorities.

Where trade unions are strong, wages are better. Sinn Féin propose councils roll out local public awareness campaigns highlighting the value of trade union membership.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:**

- **Use of Social Clauses for all public contracts**
- **Local Living Wage Employer Certificates accredited by councils**
- **Inclusion of social criteria such as decent pay and trade union recognition in council procurement contracts**
- **Public promotion of trade union membership by council advertising campaigns**

# RENT FREEZE, RENT RELIEF AND MAJOR PUBLIC HOUSING PROGRAMME

Having a suitable and secure home is increasingly out of the reach of ordinary people. Social housing waiting lists grow ever longer. The number of adults and children in emergency accommodation has reached historic highs. The cost of renting or buying a home is now out of reach for tens of thousands of people.



Households up and down the country live with the worry that they are only ever a few pay cheques away from losing the place they call home.

For those in the private rented sector there is the additional fear of rent increases or the landlord deciding to sell.

According to government figures there are 71,858 households on waiting lists for local authority housing in this state.

But in reality there are an additional 45,000 households in insecure HAP tenancies, 18,915 households on RAS, 24,303 Rent Supplement tenancies and 5,400 households in long-term private leased properties on the Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme.

These families are all in need of real social housing. That's more than 140,000 households in need of real social housing.

Many of these people are living in cramped and unsuitable conditions and, in the current system, will be waiting a very long time to be housed appropriately.

The traditional role of Local Authorities as the main providers of social housing has been undermined. Widespread use of subsidised private rental alongside low levels of investment in public housing has been the policy of choice for decades.

The government's housing plan Rebuilding Ireland is failing.

Numbers experiencing homelessness or who are at threat of homelessness have risen starkly.

According to figures from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in February 2019 there were 10,264 people in emergency accommodation, this figure includes 3,784 children.

Social Housing output remains slow. According to the Department of Housing's own figures just 6,861 real social houses owned and managed by Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies were delivered in 2018.

Not one affordable home has been delivered via any government scheme to date.

Sinn Féin remains committed to the delivery of cost rental affordable homes and affordable homes to purchase.

Sinn Féin would push for the delivery of over

10,000 social homes per year. This government has delivered no affordable houses. Sinn Féin would initially push for the delivery of over 4,500 affordable rental and sale units per year and greatly expand this sector of the housing share.

Estate management and maintenance is a traditional area of local authority competency which has been neglected. The appearance of communities adds to people's quality of life, so this is an area we would like to see more resources directed to.

Sinn Féin would prioritise the taking into hand of private estates where this has not been done.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Government introduce an emergency rent freeze lasting three years across the state and introduce tax relief for renters equivalent to one month's rent**
- **Local authorities be funded by government to deliver a major public house building programme on public land to meet social and affordable housing need**
- **Council-led mixed income public housing estates with social, cost rental and affordable purchase homes**
- **Reducing the time for the approval, tendering and procurement process for public housing from 18-24 months to 6-9 months**
- **Protecting homeless funding, ending long-term homelessness and the need to sleep rough.**
- **Ensuring full and timely delivery of local Traveller Accommodation Plans**
- **Prioritising funding of domestic violence emergency and step down accommodation and supports**
- **Demanding of central government increasing funding for disability and wheelchair accessible adaptation grants for council tenants and private home owners to meet need and eliminate waiting lists**
- **Prioritising delivery of one bed apartments for single households and older people looking to downsize within their own community**
- **End to hotels and B&Bs being used for emergency accommodation**
- **Greater investment by councils in estate management and maintenance**
- **Ensuring an adequate supply of homes for people with disabilities and wheelchair users**



# COUNCILS PROVIDING AFFORDABLE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES

## WASTE COLLECTION

Essential household bills are crippling hundreds of thousands of ordinary people and adding to the financial insecurity of countless more. The actions and failings of government parties, both past and present, have driven these costs up.

As was predicted by Sinn Féin councillors and activists who campaigned against charges from the outset, the introduction of bin charges was followed by local authorities exiting the service.

This has led to an upsurge in illegal dumping. A recent report by the Consumer Protection

Commission in September 2018 showed that 23% of householders do not avail of a domestic waste collection service. Local authorities are having to foot the bill for cleaning up the illegal dumping.

Once upon a time bin collection was a core service provided by your local Council - now it is a lucrative industry, with the cost being borne by the householder. Beuparc Utilities Ltd, operators of Panda Waste and Greenstar enjoyed a 49% jump in pre-tax profits in 2017. This resulted in a profit of €18.4m. Meanwhile the average cost per householder has increased by 11%, to €228 since 2012. Private companies have also disregarded the waiver system that was in place. Forcing vulnerable households and those on low income to pay the full charge for waste collection.

We are now the only state in Europe with a completely privatised waste collection service. We are also the only EU state persisting with 'side by side' competition for waste collection. Leading to multiple companies driving through residential communities adding to pollution and traffic jams.

Our privatised system is expensive, bad for the

environment and severely lacking controls and regulations.

Sinn Féin is committed to putting waste collection back under the control of local authorities. Sinn Féin would introduce the successful franchising model, already operating in several countries across Europe and eliminate the 'side by side' model. This would be an important first step towards a return to waste collection directly by local authorities.

This model would give power to local authorities to contract a single waste collection service for their area. The council could insist on operating standards including affordable prices for householders and waiver schemes. And the company would be accountable to the local authority on whose behalf it is operating.

This would be the first step in returning the operation of waste collection services wholly into the hands of the local authorities.

The model would also enable local authorities to better take advantage of the renewable energy potential offered by organic waste.

Sinn Féin introduced a Waste Reduction (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill in the Dáil in an effort to minimise waste, further promote recycling and provide for greater penalties for littering. In the absence of this necessary government action, more can be done by local authorities to tackle fly-tipping, illegal dumping (on a private and industrial scale) and dog fouling.

## SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:

- **Putting waste collection back under the control of local authorities**
- **End the 'side by side' waste collection system**
- **Introduction of franchise model of waste collection so that councils can insist on standards of delivery including affordable prices for households and waiver schemes**
- **Increasing the number of recycling centres and the range of items accepted, more public bins including dog litter bins**



## LEISURE AND RECREATION

There are further areas where local authorities can do more to relieve cost of living pressures. Whether permanent amenities or occasional events, both outdoor and indoor, the various free-to-use services offered by local councils can be invaluable especially for hard-pressed parents seeking to keep their kids entertained.

It's vital that services are planned and delivered in a joined-up way.

Playgrounds, public parks, swimming pools, bmx parks, skate parks, arts centres, theatres, community centres, linear parks along waterways, greenways, blueways, dog parks, gym facilities (indoor and outdoor), community gardens, forestries, walkways, biodiversity parks, libraries etc. should be delivered in conjunction with residential and commercial development - to create healthy and sustainable communities.

Sinn Féin is eager to see much more of this.

Local authorities have worked successfully with Local Sports Partnerships to promote participation in sport at all levels through the promotion of mass participation events.

However, during the recession funding for local amenities such as parks, swimming pools and libraries were cut, Sinn Féin councillors have been to the fore in working with local communities to oppose these cuts and have services reinstated.

Sinn Féin will advocate the full exercise of all local powers and use our collective strength to lobby for additional resources to ensure that each community has equal access to basic public arts, sports, cultural and recreational services and amenities as a right.

### **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Joined-up planning and delivery of sports and recreational services and amenities**
- **Increased funding for Sports Capital Grants, and additional weighting for clubs and organisations based in disadvantaged areas, including increased support for applicants applying for grants**

## ESSENTIAL AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Essential services such as roads, footpaths, public lighting, traffic calming measures (especially in built up areas and at schools) should be delivered as a priority and as standard.

Many local and secondary road networks are crumbling and the countryside in particular is beset by accident black spots that regularly claim lives.

Most cities and towns also lack adequate provision for pedestrians making it dangerous to even cross a road, particularly for the elderly, people with disabilities and those with prams or small children.

Resources and consideration at local authority level can contribute to improving all of this.

Sinn Féin see the potential for Local Authorities to assume a 'Lead Planning' role whereby they could co-ordinate local development with other state agencies to ensure co-ordinated development of areas e.g. school places, public transport routes, Garda resources, etc.

Provision of emergency services is a key function of local authorities. Local authorities have responsibility for fire services (and ambulances in parts of Dublin). Increased investment in fire services and personnel is urgently needed. Ultimately, Sinn Féin would establish a National Fire Authority across the 32 counties that is adequately resourced to ensure adequate cover for the entire country. Having a national authority would also allow for investment to be made in the frontline services which save lives while also freeing up existing local authority money for other services.

Winter gritting is another important responsibility of local authorities. Additional investment in sand boxes, snow ploughs, gritters, etc. is needed and additional gritting routes should be added.

### **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Increased funding from central government for local authority essential and emergency services including fire services and winter gritting**
- **The creation of an all-Ireland National Fire Authority**
- **Improving infrastructure for cycling and walking in both urban and rural areas to ensure people can travel safely.**
- **Initiating local road network accident black spot audits and ensure that councils take appropriate measures.**



# CLIMATE ACTION AND OPPOSING CARBON TAX INCREASES

We need to tackle the catastrophic reality of climate change in a way that delivers justice and fairness to all. Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Labour Party have suggested increasing the carbon tax from €20 per tonne to €80 per tonne. This could increase the cost of the tax for middle income households to €750 per year.

Sinn Féin believe the bills faced by ordinary people are already too big. If carbon emission reduction targets are to be achieved fairly, there must be a broad suite of effective policy measures that make climate friendly alternatives truly accessible and affordable to all.

The switch to renewable and low cost alternatives energy sources should be a benefit to households, not a burden. Measures must be taken such as allowing for households to generate their own energy through wind or solar power to be able to sell excess power back to the grid as provided for by Sinn Féin's micro-generation Bill.

There is also massive potential to allow for community ownership of energy production.

Fairly raised Government investment is needed to reduce people's bills and enable behaviour change eg through free insulation and retrofits, through making electric cars affordable and by developing the charging infrastructure as well as through public transport expansion and fare reductions.

We must clean up after Fine Gael's climate failures. Greater public investment in transport, energy efficiency, renewable energies and in sustainable growth in local communities is the way forward.

In the Dáil, Sinn Féin are introducing a Local Authority Climate Obligation Bill to ensure each local authority takes stock of all their land that can be used for the generation of renewable energy, to create electric vehicle charging points, to create supply lines of organic waste material for the production of biogas and to develop public transport and cycle lanes. It would also ensure that local authorities seek to produce their own energy, build homes of the highest energy standards, and facilitate the collection of organic waste and compost.

Local authorities should learn from exciting initiatives undertaken overseas, for example urban forests created in Barcelona.

All of this would help to ensure local authorities play their part in pursuit of a carbon neutral society.

Sinn Féin recognises that there is an urgent need to prevent flooding in Cork City, such as the devastating floods of 2009, and are committed to providing a Flood Relief Solution. We acknowledge the significant research done by Save Cork City in identifying the potential impact on Heritage and disruption to city centre business, and in providing an analysis of the OPW proposals. In government, we would instigate an Independent Review of the current OPW plans, conducted by an independent Internationally recognized expert.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:**

- **No carbon tax hikes**
- **Greater public investment in transport, energy efficiency and renewable energies**
- **Councils to identify land available for renewable energy projects, electric vehicle charging points, public transport and cycle lanes**
- **All local authority housing to be built to highest energy standards**
- **Local authorities to plant more broad leaf trees in parks, green spaces and on streets to improve air quality, aid carbon sequestration and make urban settings more beautiful.**

# BUS SERVICES

Commuting times, accessibility and affordability of public transport all impact directly on the cost of living and quality of life of ordinary people.

Sinn Féin is deeply concerned by the government's ham-fisted efforts to redesign the Dublin bus network. Under the BusConnects route culling proposals thousands of Dubliners living in the suburbs stand to lose their direct bus to the city centre, to their schools, colleges and hospitals.

There are also potential problems with service frequency reductions and moving bus stops from residential areas and no guarantee that the necessary investment to enable improvements will be forthcoming. These changes have the potential to hit vulnerable transport users hardest, such as the elderly and people with disabilities.

Sinn Féin have called for a further round of consultation on the plan and believe that a formal standing mechanism to ensure input from all stakeholders including representatives of the NTA, Dublin Bus, bus users, drivers and local councilors should be established.

It is unacceptable for any community to be left behind by BusConnects. It must be about providing an excellent bus service for all who need it, including the elderly, people with disabilities and commuters.

In the Dáil and in councils across the state, Sinn Féin will continue to oppose the privatisation of bus routes and demand the very best of transport services for the public and owned by the public.

Council Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) on Transportation are tasked with preparing and debating policy alternatives for transport and traffic. Sinn Féin councillors will ensure these SPCs reflect the views and needs of ordinary people when it comes to advocating reform of public transport.

Many people living in or around smaller towns have no or only limited bus services and are denied access to decent and affordable public transport. Sinn Féin propose additional bus services for small towns and their hinterlands to address their transport needs.

We need so much more than the Local Link service, important as that is for social inclusion to people who do not drive. We also need services that can act as a genuine alternative for greater numbers of daily commuters.

The SPCs on transportation should play an advisory and facilitation role supporting local communities to get the best out of the additional bus supports proposed.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:**

- **Council SPCs on Transportation work pro-actively to ensure changes to public transport provision only ever enhance delivery and serve the needs of the people**
- **More bus services for rural Ireland**



# BROADBAND

For small businesses in rural areas, talking about Brexit supports and ambitious growth plans means little if communities don't even have access to quality broadband and local businesses can't even process debit card payments.

It's time for a new beginning in rural Ireland.

The National Broadband Plan has been mired in controversy and offers bad value for money for the taxpayer, with no guarantee of it ever being delivered. The Government's plan to privatise broadband represents an historic transfer of public wealth to private hands that will deprive rural Ireland of crucial public services in the future.

Sinn Féin have called for the National Broadband Plan to be delivered through ESB, ensuring broadband infrastructure is delivered to homes, farms and businesses without delay, under public ownership and through a trusted and experienced public enterprise.

This would ensure that existing infrastructure could be leveraged to deliver high-speed broadband with greater public value and under greater democratic control. It means having broadband delivered through a trusted and experienced company with a track record of delivery. It means vital infrastructure being under public control to ensure future investment for future generations.

In addition, the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund should partner with local authorities to invest in the creation of broadband hubs with work spaces for local businesses and to facilitate greater remote working.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:**

- Using ESB-owned infrastructure to roll-out broadband to rural Ireland
- ISIF partner with local authorities to deliver broadband hubs and work spaces

# EDUCATION

The education sector in the state is underfunded and disjointed. Educational attainment varies greatly from area to area, with various problems arising from the unique circumstances in those areas.

Local communities know what the local issues are, whether it is lack of school places, lack of choice for parents, problems with school transport, lack of opportunities for further education or skills training. These local problems are best fixed with a properly informed local perspective. Local representatives therefore need a greater input in solving the problems identified by local parents, students and educators combined.

Sinn Féin want to see an integrated, cradle-to-grave approach to education, which ensures that everyone reaches their potential and guarantees everyone an equal opportunity to attain their educational goals.

To this end, Sinn Féin want to see the strong use of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) in local councils to have input into the education sector in their local authority areas. This should ensure that there is adequate engagement with appropriate local, regional and state-wide agencies and bodies to ensure that early years, primary, secondary, third level, apprenticeship and lifelong learning opportunities are realised for all our citizens.

Sinn Féin would see this as an important first step in a radical reorganisation of our education sector that is focused on delivery of education as a right for all.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- Ensuring the coordination of education and training services are incorporated into the SPC schemes of all local authorities
- That SPCs would prioritise ensuring there are adequate school transport facilities available for all those in need of transport, particularly those with additional needs or those who must travel lengthy distances in order to access education
- That local representatives would be well placed to work with the Department of Education and Skills, the NCSE and parents to ensure appropriate and adequate provision of Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) classes and other special educational services in the locality according to the level of need

# CHILDCARE

Sinn Féin believes that high-quality, affordable childcare must be readily accessible to all who wish to avail of it.

We do not believe any parent should have to pay the equivalent of a second mortgage for childcare.

In our Alternative Budget Sinn Féin demonstrated to the government that it is possible to halve the price of childcare for parents while increasing pay levels across the sector through increased public investment.

Investment in early years services not only benefits children educationally and socially, but it has benefits to society as a whole – including allowing skilled and experienced workers return to the workforce, and employing thousands of citizens in the sector. Studies have also showed that investment in Early Childhood Education and Care now has long-term economic returns down the road.

Sinn Féin believes the provision of childcare should be treated as a public service. We believe a model that is publically subsidised, of high quality and universally accessible is achievable if the sector is given the respect and funding it deserves. This includes fair wages for early years educators.

If operated in a progressive way, our childcare system can be a significant employer itself and facilitate further employment growth.

While local government does not have direct control over childcare at present, local councillors can ensure developers and planners include provision of childcare facilities as part of their planning permission. Sinn Féin has recently argued that provision for childcare facilities should be included in all future IDA Business Park developments.

Ensuring that childcare is available to all who need it is a common sense move that benefits local communities both socially and economically, and Sinn Féin councillors will stand with parents and providers to ensure these demands are met.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:**

- **Rolling out affordable high-quality childcare for all those who wish to avail of it**
- **Increasing public investment in order to halve the price of childcare for parents and increase pay for childcare workers**
- **Ensuring continued support to the Community Childcare Subvention scheme which allows low-income families to avail of quality childcare at a reduced rate and keep community creches open**
- **Supporting provision of core funding to all local community-based creches to ensure equal access for all who need it**

# HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

While councils themselves have little direct input to health services rolled out by the HSE, Sinn Féin councillors have played an important role in protecting local services and advocating for their expansion where needed. Sinn Féin representatives will continue to fight to ensure your local health services are fit for purpose, accessible and available.

## **PRIMARY CARE**

Primary Care Centres were heralded as a one-stop shop for people's basic health needs outside of a hospital and in the community. The centres should include a GP and other health professionals such as



nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and counsellors.

However, despite government announcements and fanfare one in five primary care centres have no GP and are lacking in other essential staff. This completely defeats the purpose of Primary Care Centres and transferring staff from other areas in the community to the centres will only further stretch already low staff in certain areas in our communities.

The provision of primary care centres, without the provision of the necessary services within them does not equate to primary care provision. Properly resourced primary and community care can and should play a huge role in delivering healthcare directly to people in their communities and also relieve the pressure on hospitals.

Improved access to GP and other services in the community is proven to deliver better diagnostics and early interventions for patients and it also reduces pressure on hospitals, particularly if there is an increased focus on preventative care in the community.

Strong and effective primary care is fundamental to overall health system performance, delivers improved public health and shifts more towards disease prevention and early intervention, alongside the traditional 'diagnose and treat' model.

This can only be done through effective primary care in the community.

A strong Sinn Féin team on your council will fight for the delivery of proper healthcare for our community.

Providing free car parking zones for patients around hospitals

Car parking charges are an additional burden on sick patients and their families. We need to take a brave step to deal with what is a serious concern.

Sinn Féin support the removal of car parking charges at hospitals and will continue to fight for it on a state-wide level. We have seen in Wales how the NHS there abolished all car parking charges, and it offers a blueprint as to how it can be done here.

Car parking charges are an unfair expense on people frequently attending hospitals, whether they are patients, staff, or visitors. We need to work towards free parking so as to provide a fairer and more consistent approach to parking policy.

A strong Sinn Féin team on your Council will work with hospitals and stakeholder groups in order to

provide free parking for patients and their families in the vicinity of hospitals where they are able to do so.

## **THE ROLE OF SPORT IN PREVENTATIVE HEALTHCARE**

Sport plays a huge role in our communities and for people right across the State. Unfortunately, for many sport and physical activity can be out of reach due to a lack of accessible facilities.

Sinn Féin believe we need to harness the benefits of sport and physical activity in order to help people improve their physical and mental health. We know that physical activity, including regular exercise and sporting activity, is the best way of staying physically and mentally fit. It helps to tackle weight and obesity issues, and plays an important part in preventing or reducing the impact of many other physical and mental health-related conditions.

Apart from the individual health benefits, there is evidence on the positive direct and indirect social benefits of participation in sport and physical activity.

However, research at a European level has shown that the proportion of those who say they never exercise or play sport has increased. Indeed, the figure in Ireland is 31%. Too many people across Ireland are not physically active enough, which in turn has a serious impact on physical and mental health generally, as well as the frequency of certain preventable diseases, and contributes to a number of premature deaths.

In order to make physical activity more accessible, we need to make sure sporting facilities are more generally available.

A strong Sinn Féin team on your council will fight for the delivery of proper sporting facilities for our community.

### **SINN FEIN PROPOSES:**

- **Fighting for fully staffed primary care centres in your communities.**
- **Working with hospitals and stakeholder groups in order to provide free parking for patients and their families in the vicinity of hospitals.**
- **Fighting for the delivery of proper sporting facilities for our community.**



# MENTAL HEALTH

Despite much greater awareness of mental health issues among the general public, the services which many people depend on in their most vulnerable moments remain under staffed, underfunded and too hard to access.

The failure to deliver adequate services has had a devastating effect on countless people, their families and communities. Mental health is an essential ingredient in the development of a better society where everyone can achieve their potential.

Mental health care is a human right and must be free, accessible and effective in an Ireland which respects its people.

The local election represents an important opportunity to highlight what can and should be done at local level to improve people's mental health and wellbeing.

Sinn Féin has been a driving force in putting mental health issues on the agenda at local and national level. We played an instrumental part in the development of Mental Health proposals under Sláintecare and in the Report of the Oireachtas Committee on the Future of Mental Health. In councils across the island we have fought for better services, against cuts and for new approaches to meet the needs of communities hit by mental health, suicide and addiction.

Sinn Féin will continue to work to develop effective local strategies to address mental health and suicide prevention by supporting community initiatives and demanding better from the HSE.

Sinn Féin recognise that gambling, drug and alcohol addictions are first and foremost public health issues. We support a holistic approach to prevention, rehabilitation and recovery.

Sinn Féin supports the development of wellbeing quarters, urban development in line with the cutting edge academic research on how our spaces impact our wellbeing. For example, landscaping, colours, lighting & noise, access to nature and environmentally friendly design have been all found to impact societal wellbeing. A wellbeing quarter aims to be an example of best practice in delivering on the findings of this research, in order to inspire more wellbeing strong community spaces.

## **SINN FEIN PROPOSES:**

- **Demanding improved community-based mental health services locally for children and adults and the implementation of A Vision for Change, Sláintecare and the Future of Mental Health Report**
- **Supporting and promoting community-led mental health initiatives**
- **Protecting and expanding specialist mental health services for those in homelessness**
- **Mental Health proofing all council budgets**
- **Supporting development of Wellness Quarters in our towns and cities**
- **Working with communities and services to develop Local Response Plans for all areas for suicide prevention and mental health promotion**
- **Improving communities services and facilities which promote mental wellbeing such as mens' sheds and youth cafes**
- **Supporting the establishment of Jigsaw Youth Mental Health services in all localities appropriate**
- **Putting a focus on the wider needs of those undergoing treatment for addiction including accommodation, education, vocational training, employment and childcare needs**



# EQUALITY FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND OLDER PEOPLE

## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

There are over 650,000 persons with disabilities living in the south of Ireland according to census 2016. Ireland ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2018. We now need its implementation and with it a rights based, inclusive and accessible society for everyone. Local authorities have a role to play in delivering this society. In local government Sinn Féin councillors will consider the abilities and different abilities of everyone when making decisions.

In local government Sinn Féin councillors will consider the extra cost of having a disability when making decisions. These costs are substantial and have been estimated to represent 35.4% of disposable household income. Addressing the extra economic costs of disability is a logical step towards alleviating elements of social exclusion for people with disability.

For people with disabilities money is not the only barrier to living a truly equal life, free from worry. Further barriers arise from the built environment and the design and style of services – private and public. By taking an All-of-Authority multi-departmental approach and disability proofing all of its own work local councils can promote greater inclusion and significantly improve the lives of their residents with disabilities.

In local government Sinn Féin will prioritise the development of inclusive and accessible communities. To achieve this, we will ensure that all plans are in line with the National Disability Strategy (NDSIP) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCPRD)

## SINN FÉIN PROPOSES THAT;

- It is ensured that each local authority would promote and work towards disability proofing all of their work including annual budgets and ensure their areas are disability friendly and accessible. There should be a multi-department and all of Authority approach to disability issues eg Transport / Environment / Finance etc in all local authorities
- All local authorities would employ a Disability Liaison/Access and Equality Officer to whom disabled persons can contact and meet if they need specific access supports and to whom they can address any problems they encounter when accessing services
- Persons with disabilities should be encouraged and accommodated to take up positions on decision making bodies at local level.
- Independent living should be promoted at all times in line with government de-congregation policy and also to allow persons with disabilities to move on from their family home settings where sought.
- We ensure all new builds social and private meet universal design standards. Engagement should happen also with Approved Housing Bodies to ensure provision of housing for people with disabilities.
- In line with the National Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities, the Housing and Disability Steering Committees in every local authority should regularly update local government representatives on the work of their groups to oversee the drive to improve the provision of social housing to people with disabilities.
- Every local authority maintain a register of all wheelchair accessible social housing in their area and occupancy status
- All local authorities should ensure that at least 7% of all new social housing is fully wheelchair accessible housing, for the purposes of living, which would increase based on the approved housing list and the demand in the area.
- All local authorities would develop a strategy to include and promote the use of Irish Sign Language in the



authorities work where possible

- We demand of central government adequate funding for all local authorities to meet need as demanded for Housing Adaptation Grants and to eliminate current waiting lists
- All local authorities would employ Autism awareness training with staff and work towards developing local autism empowerment strategies
- All local authorities would promote and support the employment of persons with disabilities and reach and ideally surpass the statutory targets in place. Disability experts should also be in place within Education Training Boards to assist students towards further education and/or employment.

## OLDER PEOPLE

Urban and rural Ireland is a more isolated place for older people than it has been at any time in the past. Sinn Féin recognises the vital role of local authorities working with other agencies and stakeholders to promote inclusion for all people in society and especially the most marginalised including older people. Social participation for all older persons should be actively encouraged in all civic and local authority events. Sinn Féin proposes a number of measures which can be rolled out at Local Authority level to assist older people financially, socially and culturally.

### SINN FÉIN PROPOSES THAT WE;

- Demand of central government adequate funding for all local authorities to meet need as demanded for Housing Adaptation Grants and to eliminate current waiting lists
- Promote measures of inclusion for Older Persons to end social isolation and look at setting up an Older Person's forum in all local authorities
- Work with other agencies and stakeholders to hold annual awareness campaigns at local level to eliminate elder abuse
- Engage other social care providers along with local authority to promote Independent living in all cases where possible
- Provide user friendly information on all supports and services available from local authorities
- Encourage social participation for all older persons in civic and local authority events
- Engage with local dementia service providers to identify opportunities for collaboration, specifically with regards to accessing appropriate local facilities to extend the range of services available to people with dementia and their families
- Provide opportunities at local council meetings for people impacted by dementia to share the issues and challenges they face and ways that the local authorities can support them to address these.
- Create dementia inclusive communities by growing and developing the involvement of local authorities in the Dementia: Understand Together campaign



# COMMUNITY SAFETY TACKLING CRIME

We have to work together to ensure our communities are welcoming safe places to live, work, study and visit. Unfortunately some of our communities have recently seen an increase in serious anti-social behavior and crime. It is essential that we tackle the causes and consequences of this.

However probation services, Gardaí, youth services and drug task forces have all seen their budgets slashed. This has had a hugely negative effect. It is unacceptable to expect services to tackle a growing problem with fewer resources.

Drug related intimidation is now a daily challenge for many people and their families. A recent report by City Wide Drug Crisis Campaign and the Health Research Board exposed the depth of the intimidation. 74% of those suffering intimidation did not report incidents to Gardaí. 37% of people experienced physical injury, 67% reported mental health problems as a result of the intimidation. But 90% reported incidents to community groups and family members.

Sinn Féin councillors have been to the fore in working with others to demand an end to cuts and increased investment in local services and standing with local communities in the face in intimidation from criminal and anti-social elements.

Structures that were put in place are no longer fit for purpose. There is little connection between Joint Policing Committees, Local Policing Forums and the very communities they were established to represent. Regional and Local Drug and Alcohol Task Forces have had their funding cut and Government agencies are noted by their absence. This must change. With the correct political leadership this can change.

We also need to ensure that those who continue to make life hell for their communities are adequately tackled and imprisoned when necessary. Too often people see serious criminals

with multiple convictions walking free from court with non-custodial or suspended sentences. This undermines confidence in the justice system and leads to a sense of helplessness in communities affected. Sinn Féin recently secured the inclusion of sentencing guidelines in legislation – a landmark in criminal justice reform - which will ensure more consistency and transparency in sentencing.

When farmers and tradespeople lose valuable tools and machinery to theft, it can impact on their ability to make a livelihood. Sinn Féin have introduced legislation to set up a Valuable Items Register that will ensure all such items are uniquely marked and can be tracked when criminals attempt to sell them on.

Rural Crime Task Forces should be formed in all Garda Divisions to ensure resources are adequately focused on the problems affecting those areas, relentlessly targeting the gangs and individuals that are widely known to be involved in crime and anti-social behaviour. Taking an approach that is community led, and adapts as required in consultation with local communities, adopting a more pro-active approach to policing in rural areas.

## **SINN FEIN PROPOSES:**

- **Restore funding for youth services and drug task forces to 2008 levels as a first step to meeting the current funding deficit**
- **Re-establish the Emerging Needs Fund & the Young Persons Facilities and Services Fund**
- **Prioritise community-based Garda services**
- **Mandate Government departments and state agencies to reengage with Drug Task Forces**
- **Greater coordination between Joint Policing Committees, Local Policing Forums and local communities**
- **Increase Garda numbers in areas of greatest need**
- **Open more Garda stations in rural Ireland**
- **Ensure sentencing guidelines are put in place without further delay**
- **Introduce a valuable items register for tools and machinery to prevent their resale**
- **Establish Rural Crime Task Forces in each Garda Division**

# AN GHAELIGE – THE IRISH LANGUAGE

Sinn Féin is committed to the promotion and use of the Irish Language in public and private life. We are committed to its protection in legislation and to the implementation of an Irish Language Act in the 6 counties.

Sinn Féin is also committed to using our political strength to ensure local government councils deliver services and protections to fulfil the rights of Irish speakers.

Local Authorities need to live up to their statutory responsibilities with regards the language eg council business should be possible through Irish, in planning - new estates should be named in Irish, the Council should lead out on Seachtain na Gaeilge.

Local councils should deliver Irish Language provision in a planned and strategic way; in co-operation and consultation with the Irish Language Community and Irish Language agencies.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **All local authorities should have an Irish Language Officer and a Coiste na Gaeilge**
- **Councils to promote Seachtain na Gaeilge**
- **New estates to be named in Irish and tied to the culture, heritage or history of the locality**

# THE ARTS

Sinn Féin believe that designers, musicians, dancers, visual artists, web developers, emerging film makers and performers can and should be offered insulation from the commercial business rental market, and that such security of tenure can be provided through affordable, local authority owned cultural spaces, rented to creative tenants for short and long-term tenancies that ensure fairness in access.

Sinn Féin believes that creativity is an essential input into the emerging economy.

This is the start of a process that would see each Local Authority (31) appoint an artist in residence, for twelve-month periods each year, to work in a collaborative fashion with staff, in developing an active understanding and awareness of creative thinking and processes and to create work based on their observations and experiences within the public libraries, museums, theatres and community centres of the local authority. They should also have a role in increasing awareness of climate issues through their art to assist in raising public consciousness of one of the greatest challenges of our generation.

Local Authorities have a major responsibility in enabling and empowering work and activity in the culture, arts and heritage spheres.

In 2018 the combined local authority arts programme spend was €67.2 million – almost on a par with the Arts Council’s investment. It is important to note that the distribution of this spend varies from council to council, from €1.89 per head of population at the low end to €75 per head of population at the high end. While this disparity reflects the resources and priorities of each local authority it also represents a potential democratic deficit: the right of access to cultural activities is not equal across the state.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Local authorities re-purpose and refurbish existing vacant buildings for use as state owned artist spaces**
- **Each local authority appoint an artist in residence**
- **Local authorities on the lower end of the ‘per head’ spend on culture seek to resolve this over the next five years**



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Sinn Féin is committed to the abolition of the Local Property Tax. The property tax is a totally unjust tax which will only increase and increase. We have, where possible, reduced the LPT by the maximum of 15% every year since 2014. We ensured this did not affect any public service or jobs being operated by local authorities.

In the past 5 years in Dublin City Council, Sinn Féin secured the maximum reduction of 15%. By contrast Longford County Council, the only council currently without a Sinn Féin councillor is the only council to have raised it by the maximum amount.

The government have frozen the tax at 2013 prices but this cannot go on forever and big increases are inevitable unless it's scrapped. This would save 1.9 million homeowners an average of €278 per year.

A Sinn Féin led government would relieve families of the unfair Local Property Tax, while at the same time replacing funding to local councils to ensure that the funds they need to deliver for communities are not reduced.

Sinn Féin would press hard against land hoarders and those blockading the housing market to drive up prices by introducing a Vacant Property Tax, and increasing the Vacant Site Levy.

Local councils rely on business rates collection for a large portion of their annual funding, with which they provide local services and amenities.

However, small businesses often justifiably cite an inconsistency in both the level at which rates are levied, and in how they are collected. This creates a sense of unfairness and difficulty in planning for the time ahead.

Some estimates point to at least €220m in commercial rates which are not collected annually, depriving local councils and communities of essential funding. In fact, collection rates vary between councils within a range of 74% to 96%.

This is a missed opportunity. Local Councils are best placed to drive economic activity and support

for small and medium enterprises which are community based and provide essential local employment. Councils should be resourced and empowered to support these firms and local communities in regenerating ailing town centres and levelling the playing field with out-of-town retail parks and internet shopping providers.

By way of reform, Sinn Féin supports the centralisation of rates collection to ensure more consistent compliance. This could be carried out through designation of a lead council to administer, and by appointing existing staff members in all local councils as a point of reference. This will be aided by the creation of a database of ratepayers to further provide consistency of collection.

We would also empower councils to pursue targeted economic strategies in their areas by encouraging targeted rates rebates, which would allow councils to provide assistance to struggling high streets and town centres to bring vibrancy and activity back to small population centres.

Local Councils are often held back as a result of inconsistent or inadequate funding. The heart of Irish society lies in local communities, and Sinn Féin is committed to a plan of economic and cultural regeneration of our urban centres, small towns and rural communities. Local councils provide the best vehicle to do this.

Sinn Féin propose that local councils should have stability and certainty when it comes to state funding. Government should provide central funding on the basis of multi-annual budgets, instead of forcing Councils to ask for funding if and when they need it. This will provide more predictable and better quality council projects and services. Indeed if councils themselves were afforded the consistency and stability of multi-annual budgets then this benefit could be passed on to SMEs by way of greater certainty on rates – allowing them to plan ahead more effectively also.

Private Public Partnerships have proven to be a financial and social disaster. PPPs must never be relied upon as the means to provide homes or regeneration for local authorities. They have left communities in Dublin and Limerick decimated through the collapse of redevelopment plans. Sinn Féin believes the redevelopment plans in Limerick and Dublin need to be prioritised and completed.



## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:**

- **Abolishing the local property tax and until such time as this happens, to reduce it to the lowest possible amount in annual council budgets**
- **Root and branch review of the current local government funding model which is unfair and inefficient**
- **Targeted rates rebates aimed at reviving activity in struggling areas**
- **Government should provide local councils with stable and certain funding**
- **Oppose the use of PPPs and joint ventures**
- **Seek the power for local authorities to access independent sources of income for instance from the European Investment Bank for building programmes and regeneration projects**

# LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Since the financial crash, and the relentless austerity years that followed, many communities and town centres have been hollowed out. Family shops that have served their community for generations have been forced to close their doors, and town centres are a shadow of their vibrant and thriving past.

The Irish Strategic Investment Fund is used for investing in overseas and domestic opportunities. However, in recent years, overseas investments have been underperforming.

Sinn Féin believes in using the money of the Irish people to invest in the potential of communities across the state.

We propose that €1bn of the Irish people's own sovereign investment fund should be put to use regenerating and reviving struggling town centres, and Sinn Féin propose to do this in a number of ways.

This will be delivered in partnership with local councils across the island to ensure communities have the biggest say in how the state should invest in their communities. The use of Town Centre Health Checks can determine how the economy in your community has changed in recent years, and what can be done to allow it to reach its potential.

Investment would be directed towards vacant business units, investing in small businesses (with a focus on those delivering environmental and social value), and setting up remote work centres to give more workers the option of remaining in their communities instead of needless and congesting commutes.

Sinn Féin recognise the critical role played by Local Enterprise Offices in driving economic development. We also see a significant opportunity to grow the co-operative sector in Ireland, which would provide both a counterbalance to the somewhat volatile multinational sector and give greater control of indigenous industries to local workers. Through legislation, Sinn Féin propose giving workers the right to request employee ownership during business succession. Any such initiatives should have access to the full range of supports in their local authority area.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:**

- **ISIF partner with local authorities to invest €1 billion regenerating town centres and creating work centres equipped with highspeed broadband to enable greater remote working**



# OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORMS

## DIRECTLY ELECTED MAYORS

Sinn Féin supports the concept of directly elected Mayors – it has the potential to put more powers into local, electorally accountable hands.

We welcome the Plebiscites that are being held in Cork, Limerick and Waterford as a positive first step.

We are disappointed that the proposals announced by government for the role do not devolve any powers downwards from government departments or state agencies.

We are also disappointed that a plebiscite is not being held in the four Dublin local authorities in order to ascertain people's views on whether they want to have directly elected mayors also.

There is no value in a purely symbolic office of Mayor. To be successful it is essential that it has the powers and resources to make a real difference. Key functions related to transport, major roads, waste management and tourism could be vested in the Mayor's office. There could also be a strategic coordination function in partnership with other local authorities in areas including housing, planning and economic development.

Sinn Féin are opposed to the salary for the mayors that has been recommended by government. It is far too high.

## MATERNITY LEAVE FOR COUNCILLORS

Sinn Féin believes that councillors need to be able to avail of maternity leave when in office. Under current legislation, a councillor who is absent from council meetings for more than 6 months is deemed to have forfeited their seat. This acts as a major barrier for many women who may otherwise seek election to local government, particularly young women.

There also needs to be provision made to ensure that adequate representation is provided for constituents of a councillor availing of maternity leave. This would require a form of cover to be provided by allowing for a temporary co-option or through allowing for proxy votes in council chambers and committees.

## SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:

- **The introduction of directly elected mayors pending the outcome of plebiscites**
- **Extension of the D'hondt method of selecting mayors, SPCs and committees during the term to more councils**
- **Decentralising power and restoring Town Councils**
- **The achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and Equality Budgeting should be brought to the heart of the budgetary process. All budgetary decisions should be equitable, fair and just, protect the vulnerable, address structural inequalities and promote the well-being of this and future generations.**

# SOCIAL PROCUREMENT – ADDED SOCIAL VALUE FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY EXPENDITURE

Procurement by local authorities has tremendous potential to lift local economies while providing socially and environmentally responsible employment in local communities.

Sinn Féin propose local wealth building strategies to bring this about. This involves local authorities working closely with the community and with small local businesses and others to maximise economic potential for the benefit of all.

In essence, this involves Local Authorities using their procurement and spending power to invest in, and secure contracts with, good local employers.

First local authorities must carry out an examination of how much investment and economic potential is leaking out of the community to the detriment of small businesses and local supply chains.

The next step requires forming a database of local employers and providers with a strong commitment to their community, to creating quality employment opportunities for people with disabilities, to decent and living wages and strong at-work protections, and to the local environment.

Local authorities should work with anchor institutions, such as government departments, universities, colleges and employers with a long-term presence in communities to create the database and an online portal for easy-to-use submissions for contract work.

Local authorities should strengthen the ability of these local businesses to bid successfully for contracts through the portal and by hosting events to learn how tendering processes can be made even more user-friendly. This can also be done through the use of Social Clauses. Whereby companies who are successful in getting large public contracts will employ local companies to provide local services, with preference given to those with Living Wage Employer Certificates that demonstrate the minimum wage they pay is the living wage.

The living wage, decent pay, trade union recognition, quality employment opportunities for people with disabilities and other social criteria should be included wherever possible in the core specifications of contracts that are put out to tender by local authorities.

In this way, Sinn Féin is committed to building economic strength and capacity, while securing quality jobs and decent wages, for people in their own local communities.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:**

- **Councils develop local wealth building strategies to maximise the social value of their expenditure by encouraging the awarding of contracts to good local employers who prioritise decent pay, trade union recognition, quality employment opportunities for people with disabilities and environmental responsibility.**



# TRANSPARENT AND ETHICAL PLANNING

Planning affects many aspects of our lives. It effects where and how we live. It effects where we work, socialise and how we travel. There is a need for strong local input into the planning of roads, transport, infrastructure, homes and recreational amenities.

The Mahon Tribunal issued damning findings on corrupt payments for land rezoning and planning permissions in Dublin. Findings of corruption were made against councillors from Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Labour. A former Chair of Dublin County Council and an Assistant Dublin City and County Manager served time in prison. Judge Mahon concluded that planning corruption had become entrenched because no one was prepared to stop it. Unfortunately Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael colluded to prevent Sinn Féin attempts to introduce an office of an Independent Planning Regulator as recommended by Mahon.

Sinn Fein elected representatives will do whatever it takes to root out malpractice and corruption in planning once and for all – whether among elected representatives or council officials.

The inclusion of communities in the process of planning is critical to ensure successful outcomes. There should be independent checks at various stages of the City & County Development Plans process to ensure community involvement up to that point. Failure to achieve this independent accreditation should see the reversal of that stage of the plan's development with that part of the process having to be undertaken again in order to achieve proper community involvement objectives.

Years of planning scandals and corruption have allowed the planning process to be brought into disrepute. However rather than reform the planning process and make it more accountable, consecutive governments have simply stripped powers away from elected councillors.

Recent changes to the planning system have not been positive. Strategic housing development changes now allow developments of 100 units or

more go straight to An Bord Pleanála, bypassing local scrutiny. It is the same for student bed spaces of 200 beds or more.

Fine Gael Minister Eoghan Murphy's recent changes in terms of apartment guidelines, including heights, minimum size and car parking requirements have further eroded the local development plans.

The planning process must be accountable, democratic, open, equally accessible and transparent. Sinn Féin aims to create a more meaningful role for communities in planning and decision making processes and will push for primacy to given to the local area and county development plans.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSE:**

- **Councillors take an ethics pledge linked to an Elected Representatives Code of Conduct**
- **Exercising vigilance against malpractice and corruption in planning in every council area, rigorously pursuing any evidence of same, adequate sanctions against those found guilty of corruption, including prison sentences and advocating on behalf of Whistleblowers that may come forward to defend the public interest**
- **Reversing the planning reforms on apartment sizes and strategic housing developments introduced by Alan Kelly, Simon Coveney and Eoghan Murphy**
- **Making the Planning Regulator fully independent of the Minister and Department of Housing**
- **Holding developers accountable by systematically imposing substantial, index-linked bonds refundable in the event of full compliance with planning conditions**
- **Ensure meaningful community involvement in drawing up local development plans**
- **Primacy for local area and county development plans**
- **Maximising the potential of Public Participation Networks which Sinn Féin will encourage to adopt the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**



# RURAL AREAS NEED A BOOST AND A NEW BEGINNING

Communities in rural Ireland have experienced neglect and decline under successive governments, despite lip service to our rural base as a nation.

Investment, jobs and infrastructure have been focused on some of Ireland's urban centres while services, jobs, infrastructure and communications are absent in rural areas and so, our young people have left.

Many small towns and villages have been hollowed out by the austerity imposed on them following the 2008 crash and are yet to recover. The post offices, the small shops and petrol stations remain closed, while the age profile grows older and those who receive their secondary education locally must travel for college and never come back. There are simply no jobs for graduates in rural areas.

There is no reason why young people should be forced to move to cities or abroad for decent work. There is no reason why half a million Irish homes should be forced to live without access to adequate broadband. There is no reason why Garda stations have been moved farther and farther away from your home, or that the public transport has been cut back to uselessness.

Sinn Féin recognises the place of Ireland's rural communities in our society, and we propose a new beginning for rural life to end the neglect and forced isolation of increasingly vulnerable rural areas.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Setting up partnerships between local government bodies and the Irish Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) to invest around €1bn in the coming years in ailing town centres and directly into your local economy**
- **ISIF partner with local authorities to deliver broadband hubs and work spaces to enable remote working and cut down on commutes**
- **Using ESB-owned infrastructure to roll-out broadband to rural Ireland**
- **Opening more Garda stations in rural areas, hiring more Gardaí and improving the technology and resources available to them**
- **Channelling additional state services through post offices to ensure their future**



# REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT – REBALANCING IRELAND’S ECONOMY

Huge sections of our island economy have not benefitted from a meaningful share of economic growth in recent years. In fact, the West of our island, the border region, and many parts of the South East are still struggling with the legacy of the bankers’ crash of 2008.

Foreign Direct Investment and the associated high-skilled, well-paid employment centres on Ireland’s big cities. This acts as a magnet for investment and talent from the rest of our island, depriving Ireland’s diverse regions and communities of much-needed investment. As a result, many domestic small businesses are in decline.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael are foolishly expecting against all the evidence that foreign investment will begin to flood into the border corridor and the west of Ireland. But why would it, when they have refused to even provide broadband and basic infrastructure?

Fine Gael will point to Project Ireland 2040 as their strategy to address their own failed legacy of huge regional imbalance. But, like all Fine Gael plans, it is little more than a glossy PR stunt – lacking time-framed specifics, formed without any real input from communities across the island, and unsurprisingly neglecting the border and North West of our island in favour of Dublin.

Sinn Féin believes that the time for waiting and hoping that others do the job of the Irish government is over. It’s time to invest, to use our wealth to lift the fortunes of communities across the island, and rebalance our economy more towards deprived regions and domestic SMEs. This will provide high-quality employment rooted in communities, and in doing so will stabilise our public finances.

The people living and working in regions across Ireland know better than anyone else what is needed, and Sinn Féin will empower local communities to decide how their government should invest in their potential.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Setting up partnerships between your local Council and the Irish Strategic Investment Fund (ISIF) to invest around €1bn in the coming years in ailing town centres and directly into your local economy**
- **Creating a new and cutting edge government strategy for domestic SMEs, enhancing their role in the economy, preparing them for technological change, and providing them with equivalent support and focus to that provided to international investors for decades**



# BREXIT – DEFENDING IRELAND’S INTERESTS

Brexit poses a unique and historic threat to politics and prosperity on the island of Ireland.

For Sinn Féin, defending the interests of the Irish people is paramount, and protecting the Peace Process, the Good Friday Agreement, and the integration of our island community is non-negotiable.

For border communities, those who have had to endure the impact of partition for generations, they remain the most exposed to a reckless, crash-out Brexit imposed on them by a right wing Tory-DUP axis.

Ultimately, the solution to this real threat of economic decline and further division of communities on our island is an end to partition and a referendum on the reunification of Ireland.

If the British government and Brexiteers in London refuse to lift the threat of a Brexit the people of Ireland overwhelmingly oppose, and which the people of the north democratically rejected, then the only logical and appropriate solution is to allow the people of this island to determine their future – Ireland united and prosperous in the EU, or an Ireland further divided with the north linked to the sinking Brexit ship.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Creating a €2bn Brexit Stabilisation Fund to invest in ports and infrastructure, €1bn of which will come from the Irish Strategic Investment Fund in partnership with local councils to support SMEs and vulnerable sectors after Brexit**
- **Investing in public services to protect living standards for Irish citizens and support SMEs**



# A UNITED IRELAND

Sinn Féin want to build a new, agreed and united Ireland based on justice, fairness and equality. In an Ireland of equals, Sinn Féin is committed to building a prosperous and inclusive society.

Across Ireland, the work of all Sinn Féin councillors will be guided by the drive toward Irish Unity.

Sinn Féin will promote cooperation across councils north and south through enhancing existing cross border agreements and arrangements and pushing for new ones.

Sinn Féin will press forward with the campaign for a Unity Referendum, lead and promote national and international conversations on Irish unity and begin the practical planning for the final reunification of our country. We will push councils to pass motions in support of unity and making adequate preparations at council level as well as nationally.

A partitioned economy has not served the people of Ireland well. Sinn Féin is committed to the development of an all-Ireland economy in which we will build upon existing cooperation and integration of services across the islands, in particular in the areas of health, education, transport, agriculture and tourism.

All-Ireland planning for health will produce better outcomes as services are shared and developed in an efficient manner. An all-Ireland education system will allow the sharing of resources and expertise across the island, strengthen research and development and contribute to the growth and sustainability of the all-Ireland economy. A united Ireland with a modern and efficient transport system will move people, goods and services across the island building political, economic and social capital among all citizens. An all-Ireland agricultural industry will reduce the obstacles and red tape of working within two separate jurisdictions. As a world-class tourist destination, a united Ireland will see all regions, north and south, reach their full potential by creating employment and economic opportunity.

Presidential voting rights for all citizens of Ireland will be high on the agenda for all Sinn Féin activists. Sinn Féin will continue to lobby the Irish government to hold a 2019 referendum on the extension of Presidential voting rights to citizens living in the north (and abroad), so that we grant a voice to all Irish citizens as we work together to influence and shape the character of a united Ireland.

## **SINN FÉIN PROPOSES:**

- **Enhanced co-operation between local authorities North and South**
- **Planning be undertaken at all levels for a united Ireland**
- **Referendums be held on Irish Unity and in the interim to extend voting rights to Irish citizens in the North**

**TIME FOR IRISH UNITY**



Aontacht na hÉireann

**FIGHTING FOR YOU**