

# CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT



Comhairle Cathrach  
& Contae **Luimnigh**

**Limerick City**  
& County Council

March 2020

## COVID-19



MESSAGE FROM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

COVID-19 COMMUNITY RESPONSE

ESSENTIAL SERVICES & BUSINESS SUPPORTS

## Message from Chief Executive

Limerick City and County Council will continue to provide essential services to the people of Limerick despite public offices being closed. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in us all seeing a seachange in how our society works and how we all interact.

It is very heartening to see how well the people of Limerick and indeed the whole country has reacted to this new way of life, and the resilience we have and continue to show.

Further changes were announced by An Taoiseach on 27 March, which has had a further impact on the way people live their lives. It also had an impact in the way Limerick City and County Council does its business as we continue to play an essential role in this effort providing frontline and essential services. In light of national guidance, Limerick City and County Council will, presently, only provide those

services deemed essential and critical as defined by the Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government. All local authorities nationally are operating in the same manner as directed by central government.

Limerick City and County Council's main priorities are to its staff and then provision of services to the people of Limerick, while also supporting the HSE in its work.

Working with the Mayor we will continue to plan for and work for the people of Limerick during this crisis period. Our public offices are closed until further notice, following direction from the government. This is to help in the prevention of the spread of Covid-19 (Coronavirus). All our departments are providing essential services at this time.

### We are still open for business and we can be contacted by:

- Telephone: 061 556000
- Email: [customerservices@limerick.ie](mailto:customerservices@limerick.ie)
- Online: Through 'My Limerick' on [www.limerick.ie](http://www.limerick.ie)
- For Area Offices, please telephone your local office
- For Homeless Services, please telephone 061 481212 (Out of Hours 1800 606060)



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### Impact on Service Provision

The guidance and direction of the government and health experts has resulted in changes to the way businesses are operating. Limerick City and County Council is no different.

The extent of these changes on service provision, means they must be communicated properly both to staff and the wider public. Different channels are being used to get the message out to our customers. Our digital platform, Limerick.ie is the primary source of news from the Council, while the Council's social media channels are also being used. Print and Radio Ads and editorial pieces, mean our message is getting a further reach.

For staff/internal communications, emails and department meetings are still crucially important, as are the toolbox talks for outdoor staff. Our Crisis Management text alert system has been used informing staff of decisions, while one of the main innovations brought forward by Covid-19 and the communications response is the roll out of a new Staff App. The development and roll out of a staff app has been accelerated due to the Covid-19 crisis and the need to keep staff informed.

Among the issues that need to be communicated were:

- Housing Maintenance – Essential maintenance only
- Housing Aid Grants – Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme, Mobility Adaptation Grant Scheme and Housing Aid for Older Persons Grant Scheme – New procedures implemented
- Thermal Upgrades – Work has been deferred until a later date.
- Gortadroma Civic Amenity site open to the public on Wednesdays only (regular hours of 9am to 3pm (closed for lunch 1pm - 1.30pm) from 1 April 2020.
- Reduced rosters for Street Cleaning to reflect reduced usage and demand
- Dog Control as required on a call-out basis. Horse Control remains in place.
- Road Maintenance - Emergency and Winter Maintenance Only.
- Flood Defence Maintenance – as required

- Housing Matters such as Allocations, RAS, Leasing– Emergency situations only
- Parks remain open but playgrounds and skate parks are closed (you must obey social/ physical distancing and other guidance including only being 2kms from home)
- Restrictions at Lough Gur (certain narrow walkways and toilet facilities are closed. You must obey social/ physical distancing and other guidance including only being 2kms from home).
- Planning – Applications are still being accepted by Limerick City and County Council by post or hand delivered to our office in Dooradoyle following an appointment. Please ring 061 556 556 for an appointment. By government directive, an additional 23 days has been added to the statutory time period for processing of applications.
- Motor Tax services can be accessed online or applications that are posted to our offices will be processed.

The Civic Amenity sites in Kilmallock, Mungret and Newcastle West remain open to the public, operating their normal opening hours.

Burials in the Council-operated cemeteries of Mount St Lawrence, Mount St Lawrence Extension and Mount St Oliver are continuing as normal. However, strict physical distancing precautions are in place around open plots, staff are wearing the required PPE gear and access during burial is restricted. The Government has indicated that no more than 10 people should attend funerals of loved ones.

All of these measures are being put in place to ensure that essential services are provided and that we are helping to minimise the spread of Covid-19.

### Limerick Covid-19 Community Response

Covid-19 Community Response Forum has been established and is chaired and co-ordinated by the Chief Executive, Dr. Pat Daly. The elected members are represented by the Mayor of Limerick City and County, Councillor Michael Sheahan. Limerick City and County Council in conjunction with An Garda Síochána manage the day to day operations of the Community Response Helpline.



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The Community Helpline was set up with effect from Saturday, 28 March to provide a dedicated community support helpline. Limerick City and County Council in partnership with the HSE, An Garda Síochána, Limerick GAA, Munster Rugby, FAI, Liveable Limerick, the Catholic and Church of Ireland and multiple sporting and volunteer groups have collaborate to support the people of Limerick during the crisis.

The official response will tap into the personnel rich network of volunteers across Limerick as they respond to individual asks to the helpline. It will be anchored on the ground by the GAA's 66 clubs across Limerick, who will provide up to 300 volunteers alone. They will be augmented by volunteers from other sporting and community organisations.

A freephone number has been established 1 800 832 005 and all calls for assistance of any kind come through on that line. The calls are recorded by our Operations Centre team, located at Munster GAA Headquarters, Castletroy, and assessed by the Garda Sergeant in charge at the Ops Centre. The request is then dispatched to our network of 400 volunteers located across Limerick City and County for action. Where a caller is seeking advice, we are signposting them to an organisation who can assist them further. There is also now a dedicated email address [covidsupport@limerick.ie](mailto:covidsupport@limerick.ie) for those seeking assistance to log their request. The Operations Centre is open every day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. with the potential to expand as the need arises.

The Ops Centre can provide access to or direct to a range of services including:-

- collection and delivery of food, essential household items, fuel, medication in line with HSE guidance.
- Social Isolation, supports, engagement
- Garda Related
- Other medical/health needs

For those wishing to volunteer their time or services we have set up a registration pathway. Anyone who is already volunteering or is interested in doing so, is asked to email [volunteer@limerick.ie](mailto:volunteer@limerick.ie). A link contained in the return email will take them to an online registration platform, where they input relevant details. On completion they will receive a further email confirming they have concluded the process.

Additionally, the Government has authorised Limerick City & County Council with supplying travel permits to volunteers to allow them travel to partake in these volunteering activities,. However, they must be registered through [volunteer@limerick.ie](mailto:volunteer@limerick.ie), in order to receive the permit.

### Housing Related Services

In the current phase of the Covid-19 pandemic response, the majority of housing-related services are considered essential/critical. On that basis, the work of the Single Point of Contact for Housing Returns has seen a fast-tracking of works for Category 1 and 2 houses (small-scale repairs) – these have been assigned to a number of contractors and will see the return of more than 20 houses next month.

In parallel the allocation of the houses is advancing at present and should allow for a significant number of homes to be occupied in the coming months- SPOC House Returns will report on progress as part of our Monthly Housing Newsletters.

While inspections of rental properties has had to cease for now, teams have been redeployed to carry out inspections on vacant property in our ownership and properties under the leasing programme. This action will ensure that the supply of new housing can continue.

In relation to Homeless services, the Limerick Homeless Action Team is working to reduce the occupancy levels in a number of our homeless facilities so that, where necessary, they can be used by Limerick City and County Council or the HSE for isolation, treatment or recovery purposes.

Limerick has seen a large numbers return to Ireland in recent weeks. We are monitoring the situation closely and keeping the matter under review, including the purchasing of a number of mobile units which may be required for isolation purposes.



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Our Rents/RAS/HAP Teams are taking calls regarding accounts and are reviewing files as necessary. Rent supplement is available immediately for persons who have lost their job due to the crisis. For people who have housing loans with Limerick City and County Council the Housing Loans Team is available to review accounts as necessary.

The delivery of Disabled Persons Grants is severely curtailed as a result of the current restrictions. However, if the completion of the works results in a person being discharged from hospital and the works can be carried out in a safe manner, then such applications will be facilitated where possible.

We are putting in place a process to review Social Intervention Fund grant applications received for 2020. Under the current restrictions, some projects cannot progress, e.g. Easter Camps. Our priority, therefore is to ensure that important community related services continue where possible, such as Meals on Wheels.

Our Regeneration Teams are also liaising with the various Area Committees and School Principals to ensure services such as School Meals can continue, albeit in a different form and per HSE guidelines. The important point that children continue to benefit from the scheme while the schools remain closed.

### Business Supports

Limerick City and County Council recognises the financial pressures being experienced by certain sectors and encourages any ratepayers experiencing difficulties in paying their commercial rates to get in contact. There is a variety of supports available to help firms, such as Small and Medium Business Support and Tourism Sector Support Schemes.

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Limerick is there to support local businesses and help ensure they are in the strongest position possible in the face of this unprecedented and continuously evolving crisis.

The expert staff at LEO Limerick are there to advise and support any small business experiencing difficulties at this time. Business Advisors will offer a discreet one-to-one discussion by phone or other means to suit the business owner. Among the supports which can be accessed with LEO Limerick are cash flow supports, business continuity supports as well as virtual training and mentoring.

To discuss with a Business Advisor contact the LEO Office at 061 557499.

