

**Addressing issues of Social Exclusion in Moyross
and other disadvantaged areas of Limerick City**

Report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion

John Fitzgerald

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1. Introduction

In November 2006 I was requested by the Government to lead an initiative aimed at addressing social exclusion, crime, and disorder issues in Moyross in Limerick, and to report back to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. Specifically I was asked to

- Work with senior representatives in relevant public sector and community organizations in Limerick City and County
- Identify actions which can be implemented in co-operation with relevant agencies to help address the identified problems
- Propose steps that can be taken to drive regeneration in Moyross and other disadvantaged areas within Limerick City over a 5-year period.

Over the past three months I have met with representatives of statutory agencies, voluntary agencies, local community groups, church representatives, local business people, residents, Gardai, the National Drug Strategy Group, HSE, local Oireachtas members and councillors, and senior management in Limerick City Council and adjacent local authorities. I have also visited the Moyross, Southill, Ballinacurra/Weston, and St Marys Park areas of the city (see map at Appendix 1) on a number of occasions to observe at first hand some of the problems. Through this process I have been able to get an understanding of the background, nature, and scale of the problems affecting these areas and some of the obstacles that are currently there to addressing them.

I have concluded that there are three strands to dealing with the problems in these estates. No one strand is sufficient on its own to deal with the issues in the longer-term, and therefore all three strands must be progressed together. The details of each of these strands are set out in Section 3 of this Report. In summary they involve:

- Dealing with the issue of criminality. This will be fundamental to creating the conditions for other interventions to be successful, and for restoring the confidence of local communities
- Economic and infrastructural regeneration, to create employment, unlock value, improve access, and create a better commercial and housing mix
- Developing co-ordinated responses to social and educational problems, in order to break the cycle of disadvantage.

While in Section 3 below my detailed recommendations are set out for dealing with each of these strands, it is first useful to set out my understanding of the nature and scale of the problems in the affected areas, based on my discussions and observations over the past few months.

2. The nature and scale of the problems

2.1 Background

In recent times Moyross in particular has been the focus of intense negative publicity. In more general terms, Limerick city and its environs has been the subject of negative publicity because of a number of high profile incidents in these estates. However, based on my observations, Moyross is in many respects a fine estate served by a good community centre, and by the activities of the Moyross Development Company. In this respect it is better served than the Southill area. Limerick too enjoys many natural advantages, including the river-based amenities, sites of historical and cultural interest, a strong commercial and business life, and a record of sporting success. Undoubtedly the reality of serious criminal activity, and the resulting negative perception of the city, is inhibiting these communities, the city, and surrounding areas from reaching their full potential. This potential can only be realised if the issues raised in the remainder of this report are dealt with as a matter of urgency.

The Moyross and Southill areas of Limerick suffer from some acute problems of disadvantage. In particular they have a high unemployment rate (5 times the national average), a high proportion of one-parent families, significant educational disadvantage with educational attainments well below the national norm. In terms of socio-economic status, CSO analysis shows that these estates are among the most deprived in the country. They also have the lowest scores in terms of socio-economic status in Limerick city (see map at Appendix 2). There is a high rate of crime, particularly violent and drug-related crime, which has come to particular public attention in the past 12 months as a result of a number of high profile incidents. Criminal elements in certain parts of these estates exert a highly negative influence on young people, and cause fear and intimidation among residents. The situation with regard to drug use is also serious. The National Drugs Strategy Team has identified Limerick city as the area of most concern with regard to problematic drug use combined with indicators of social deprivation.

It is important to note, particularly in the context of proposing solutions, that the problems in these estates have developed over some considerable time. Limerick is a city with a population of 90,000 and the City Council administers the centre with a population of 50,000, while the County Council administers the suburbs with a population of 40,000. Of the approximately 18,900 houses in the City Council area, 8,000 were constructed as social housing. Limerick is unique in having such a high concentration of social housing within the city boundary, and this in turn poses certain unique problems and challenges for the city and the region (see Appendix 3 on social housing by city). The construction of large social housing estates in such a confined area undoubtedly helped to create the conditions for problems to develop (see Appendix 4 for map of social housing in Limerick City).

The conditions described above are stark, but on their own cannot fully bring home what I found to be the everyday reality faced by these local communities. The picture that emerged during visits to these estates, and discussions with

residents and community workers, was in many respects quite shocking. The quality of life for many people is extremely poor. In the following Section I set out some of the various dimensions to the problem, all of which will have to be addressed.

2.2 Crime and Disorder

Serious criminal activity has been a problem in Limerick city for a long time. Traditional feuding between local families/gangs has, in more recent times, been further fuelled by drug-related crime. Violent crime, related both to gang rivalry and drugs, is now a very serious issue and is gradually extending over wider areas. There are particular difficulties in this regard in Moyross, O'Malley Park, Ballinacurra/Weston, and St Marys Park. Families have been intimidated and houses have been burnt out making it difficult to re-let them. Low-level criminality and anti-social behaviour is also a major concern, with joyriding, stone throwing, and intimidation regularly occurring on these estates. Staff of voluntary and statutory agencies have been intimidated when trying to go about their business, and trades people and other services are frequently unwilling to enter the areas at certain times. Some people who have tried to stand up to the criminals have been intimidated, and there is some evidence that elderly people are being intimidated out of their homes. It has been suggested to me that criminals use young children to support their criminal activities because they cannot be prosecuted. This situation has made life difficult for the majority of responsible citizens living on the estates who can often become marginalized, frustrated, and demoralised.

The problem of serious criminality appears to be spreading. Previously settled areas such as Keyes Park have, in the past 12-18 months, become the target for criminals who have started to intimidate residents and buy up property. In recent times there has been an increase in police resources, including community policing. However, there is a perception that policing needs to be more consistently concentrated and regular. The intensity and nature of criminality and antisocial behaviour is destabilising, not just for these estates, but also for the city more generally.

As is the case with the interventions from other agencies, standard approaches to policing are simply not sufficient to cope with the nature and level of the problems being experienced. Yet dealing with the serious (although relatively small in number) criminal elements operating in these areas will be fundamental to creating the conditions for real progress to be achieved on all other fronts and to facilitating the majority of ordinary citizens trying to live their lives in peace and safety. The situation must be changed, and the message sent out that serious criminal behaviour is as unacceptable in Moyross, Southill, parts of Ballinacurra/Weston, and St Marys Park, as it is any other area of the city or country.

2.3 Investment and Infrastructure

There are few local employers in Moyross and Southill. For example, most businesses that operated in the Galvone Business Park adjacent to O'Malley Park left because of security problems. The infrastructure is extremely weak with poor transport links to the rest of the city. Access to both areas is limited, with boundary walls cutting off these estates from the more affluent areas of the city. In some cases roads are deliberately blocked with boulders, and are poorly lit. This also creates a problem for effective policing. The access problem, together with the aforementioned problems of criminality, makes it impossible to attract investment to these areas. It is more difficult for young people with addresses in Moyross or Southill to get employment because of negative perceptions of these areas. Yet some local employers like Speedline Engineering Ltd. in Moyross, and LEDP in Southill, have demonstrated great persistence, ingenuity, and dedication in creating opportunities for local employment.

2.4 Living Conditions

The overall appearance of Moyross, Southill, St Marys Park, and parts of Ballinacurra Weston, is very poor. There is extensive illegal dumping and littering. The appearance of the estates is made worse by the number of burnt-out houses, which are often the result of criminal activity. The state of the housing stock is poor, particularly in O'Malley Park (see Appendix 5). Much of the refurbishment work that has been carried out has not achieved the results hoped for. (See examples of the current state of previously refurbished houses at Appendix 6). Families with long standing links to these areas have described great difficulties in getting mortgage finance from the financial institutions. A number of those who purchased their local authority houses have not seen an increase in the value of their investment as might have been anticipated and as enjoyed elsewhere throughout the country. Unfortunately, the result is that many people who should be staying are leaving while criminal elements remain.

2.5 Educational Disadvantage

There is a serious problem of educational disadvantage. Truancy is a problem, and it is not unusual to see young people, often of primary school age, wandering the streets during school hours. The numbers in the local schools are dropping because children are being sent to school outside the area. For example, the numbers in the primary schools in O'Malley Park and Moyross are approximately 25% of the levels of 10 years ago. There is a need for greater support for families, including improved levels of remedial teaching/psychological services. While some initiatives have been successful, more support and resourcing for crèches, before and after-school clubs, and activities for youths, is clearly required. For example, one of the great challenges facing these schools is that of generating the "local contribution" towards school costs compared with schools in less disadvantaged areas. Educational opportunities for young adults and adults are often not viewed as being relevant by the intended target audience.

2.6 Negative Impacts on Limerick City

Local community representatives are frustrated with the negative image portrayed of their areas as a result of the activities of a minority. In Limerick more generally there has been a shift in the focus of commercial activity away from the city centre to outlying shopping centres. For example, retail rents in the city centre are uniquely, for a city of its size, below the levels in outlying shopping centres (see Appendix 7). The scale of the criminal, social, and economic problems in areas such as Moyross, Ballinacurra/ Weston and Southill, and their spread, is not only a blight on the communities that have to live there but, left unchecked, could pose a real threat to commercial and social life in Limerick city as a whole.

2.7 Coordination of services and initiatives

Although there is a plethora of agencies, both statutory and voluntary, operating in these areas, it would be hard to conclude that public funding is achieving an acceptable, let alone optimum, level of direct benefits to the communities concerned or that coordination between agencies is sufficient or effective. While the existing structures and processes for delivery may work well for the generality of situations, they are clearly not nearly sufficient for dealing with the scale of problems being experienced in the areas that are the subject of this report. The activities of the various agencies can be fragmented, and in some cases the actions of one agency may be counteracted by those of another. It is also the case that a number of the services are only available on a 9 to 5 basis and this is simply not satisfactory given the nature of the problems. Funding for projects often has to be re-applied for on an annual basis (even though approval frequently appears to be a formality), thus frustrating attempts at longer-term planning.

2.8 Resources and assets

On the positive side, there is a very active and committed community engagement, and although not as evident in O'Malley Park, this is an asset that should be leveraged as a significant element of any solution. I have met many committed individuals who are interested in making a real difference to these communities. There are positive examples of local employers supporting the rehabilitation of young offenders, and supporting regeneration. There are unused, and under-used, lands, much of it in public ownership, adjacent to these areas that should be used to create investment opportunities as part of an overall process of regeneration. There is interest from sporting bodies, investors, educational institutions, and employers in committing resources to these areas if they see evidence of real change in terms of dealing with the problem of serious criminality, and the creation of a safe and stable environment. The campus of Limerick IT is adjacent to the Moyross area, providing the potential for outreach and adult education. There is also a proposal to extend LIT into the proposed Moyross 'Village Centre', and for the location of primary health care facilities in this complex. While there are many difficulties, there is every reason to believe that an intensive focus on solving the problems can deliver in the short to medium term.

There are precedents for dealing with problems of poor economic and social infrastructure through dedicated and co-ordinated action. However, in my experience, while the general principles from other regeneration projects may be

relevant, the needs of different areas need to be addressed differently. A response that takes significant account of local factors and that is 'bottom-up', involving local community representatives, agencies, and business people, is most likely to be successful.

3. The Way Forward

The situation described above that applies to Moyross, Southill, St. Marys Park, and Ballinacurra/Weston is extremely serious, and must be dealt with as a matter of urgency both in the interests of the communities and areas concerned, and to prevent these problems spreading to other parts of the city.

In overall terms the interventions by statutory and voluntary agencies in these areas are geared to meet the needs of more normal situations. However, they are not sufficient to meet the chronic and concentrated nature of criminality and disadvantage in these communities. This requires a different type of intervention. The intervention must be highly intensive, focused on the needs of these specific areas and the people living in them, deal directly with the problems, be multi-faceted, and co-ordinate the involvement of all the key agencies and groups.

As noted at the outset, the interventions may be grouped under three strands. Fundamentally, and as a matter of high priority, early intervention is required to deal with the problem of serious criminal activity. This problem needs to be dealt with as a matter of urgency so that a stable environment is created where other initiatives can take effect. Failure to do so is likely to lead to the frustration of other efforts to address social and economic problems. The other strands of intervention must be geared towards dealing with both the longer-term economic and infrastructural issues, as well as the short to medium-term social and educational issues. Solutions must be tailored to meet local circumstances. They should involve significant engagement and involvement by the local community, particularly those who have been working 'on the ground' and understand the problems. While the interventions proposed below are intensive, and will require both re-targeting of existing resources and additional resourcing, all of the evidence suggests that failure to tackle these problems now will lead to further instability, more violent incidents, and ongoing social costs. On the other hand, a set of intensive and well-targeted interventions can fundamentally change the dynamics of the current situation.

Recommendations

3.1 Put in place intensive policing arrangements

As a result of my consultations it has become clear that, although policing on its own cannot solve the problems in the long term, intensive policing intervention is required in the short to medium term to allow the other interventions an opportunity to work. This cannot happen against the continuing backdrop of serious crime and intimidation. While the specific approaches to be adopted are

ultimately policing decisions, I am convinced that dedicated police resources to support a sustained and intensive policing intervention need to be made available to fundamentally change the dynamics of the current situation. This will be in the context of a five-year programme to normalise and stabilise these areas.

This will involve extensive targeting of those criminals who have amassed assets of any significance from criminal activity. This can be pursued, if not by the establishment of a local CAB operation, by significantly intensifying the asset profiling of these individuals augmented by more targeted use of national resources and appropriate follow-up action by CAB. In addition to intensively targeting the relatively small number of individuals engaged in serious criminal activity, there needs to be a highly visible Garda presence at all times in these estates in order to restore confidence and stability in the communities. A policing structure, headed by a Superintendent, should be established that is exclusively dedicated to the policing of these areas. This will involve a minimum of 100 additional Gardai, with appropriate management structures, whose sole function will be the policing of these areas. Their efforts should be geared towards restoring public order and safety in these communities, dealing with criminal activity, and with anti-social behaviour. In relation to the latter, their efforts need to be supported by the City Council, who should make full use of all legal remedies available to it to deal with tenants engaged in criminal and/or anti-social behaviour. The impact of these intensive policing operations must be monitored to ensure that the conditions are being created for the other interventions described in this report to take hold.

As a result of these policing efforts, and the overall process of regeneration of housing stock, the problem of concentration of criminal elements in these areas can be addressed. This will be critical to changing the reality that people in these estates have to deal with, and the negative perception created by serious criminal incidents. However, it will also be important to manage the impact of this process in a strategic and structured way to ensure that the problems are simply not displaced. This will require a longer-term policing strategy, supported by the strategies of other key agencies, including the local authorities.

3.2 Establish structures for regeneration

As described earlier, the efforts of state and voluntary agencies, including the use of funding, need to be better co-ordinated and focused. It is clear to me that a medium to long-term strategy will be critical to really addressing these problems. The key to such a strategy lies in the wholesale regeneration of the Moyross and Southill areas of the city.

Regeneration of disadvantaged areas cannot succeed without the strong support of all relevant agencies, but in particular of the local authorities concerned who are responsible for key planning, housing, and infrastructural interventions. Nonetheless, in certain circumstances in Ireland and other countries, special purpose agencies have been given a time-limited mandate to focus and drive urgent regeneration programmes within defined areas. This model does not dispense with, or by-pass, local government. On the contrary, it provides a necessary support to local government on a temporary basis and allows local authorities better to exercise their ongoing wider brief. The establishment of such

regeneration entities has been given particular recognition in the Government's housing policy statement, 'Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities'.

I believe that to realise the wholesale regeneration of the Moyross and Southill areas, including strands two and three as described in this report, supplement and assistance should be provided to Limerick City Council and Limerick County Council, as well as to the other public agencies concerned. To achieve this, I am recommending that two Corporate Bodies that will act as development agencies be established, one dealing with the regeneration of defined areas of the North City, to include Moyross and the lands within, and adjacent to, Moyross (Limerick Northside Regeneration), and another dealing with regeneration in the defined areas of the South City, to include O'Malley Park, Keyes Park, the Galvone Industrial Estate, and some adjacent lands (Limerick Southside Regeneration). Limerick Northside Regeneration might also embrace St Marys Park, although Limerick City Council is already drawing up plans for the wholesale regeneration of this area. Similarly, Limerick Southside Regeneration could also take responsibility for the smaller, though seriously troubled area, of Ballinacurra/Weston, which also needs urgent and focussed attention. These Agencies should be established under existing Corporate Bodies legislation, which can be done quickly, and for which there are a number of precedents. In addition, there is statutory power to enable bodies created under this legislation to perform services for the local authorities, the health services, and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Each Agency will be headed by a Chief Executive, supported by a small executive team. The purpose of these Agencies will be to drive economic and infrastructural development in the defined areas, and to direct and co-ordinate intensive action to deal with social and educational disadvantage. It is important that separate entities be established for the Northern and Southern parts of the city because, as described earlier, the nature of the problems are somewhat different, and this structure will facilitate the engagement of people on the ground who understand the issues.

While the two Development Agencies will provide the engine for regeneration, they will also co-ordinate and focus all interventions directed to the areas within their remit. As a matter of priority, the Development Agencies should identify all current projects and agencies involved in these areas, with a view to deciding how these can be configured to best effect for the planned regeneration. The two Agencies will also engage with educational institutions, the Gardai, and other key stakeholders. Plans, including timescales, resources, and targets will be set out in a Regeneration Strategy to be developed as a matter of priority by the Agencies. These Agencies will have an initial term of operation of five years, subject to review at the end of that period. Progress in relation to all three strands must be monitored on a regular basis during the initial five years, and at the end of that period a major review should be undertaken to establish the ongoing need for the structures, or perhaps the need for structures in a different form.

It is also important that the work of both Agencies be co-ordinated, and that they have ready access to all of the key decision makers in the relevant statutory bodies and Departments. It is proposed therefore that each Agency will report to a Board of Directors, membership of which will be drawn from the local authorities and all

relevant Departments and other bodies, including an Garda Síochána, community representatives, and representatives of the business community who have a demonstrated track record in the target areas. In each case the representation should be at a most senior level and the nominated representatives should have overall responsibility and decision-making power for the areas affected. The options of establishing a single board to oversee the work of both Agencies, or of having separate boards for each Agency, should be explored. However if separate boards are to be established there should be significant common membership in order to avoid duplication and ensure co-ordination of effort. It is important that all of the key organisations, including a number of Government Departments, the Garda Síochána, HSE, and local authorities, recognise that they now each have a responsibility in contributing in practical ways, through their senior representatives on the Board of Directors, to the resolution of the problems in these areas.

The Board (or Boards) will oversee the preparation, resourcing, and implementation of the Regeneration Strategy, while responsibility and accountability for implementation will rest with the two Agencies. Local decision-making and flexibility of action will be critical to the successful operation of these bodies. Appropriate reporting relationships to central government should be put in place, including availability of regular reports on progress to the Cabinet Subcommittee on Social Inclusion. Such structures, with decision-making powers and resources, have in my view the potential to be much more effective than a task force or other alternative arrangements.

3.3 Establish dedicated teams under the auspices of the Development Agencies, to address Social and Family Problems in the designated areas, including issues of educational disadvantage

As I have outlined earlier, there are serious problems of truancy, poor parenting skills, juvenile crime, anti-social behaviour, and drug abuse. While there are a number of agencies providing supports there are problems of co-ordination, a 'one size fits all' approach, and the general lack of an 'out of hours' service. Special dedicated teams need to be established within Limerick Northside Regeneration and Limerick Southside Regeneration to co-ordinate the efforts of the relevant bodies and groups to provide an intensive and focused intervention in the targeted areas, and to provide full service integration. The teams will need to be multi-disciplinary, each led by a key worker with an overall case management role, and would also include an Educational Welfare Officer, a family support worker, a representative of the local drugs task force and of the HSE, a community development worker, and a Community Garda. They will need to target families in the 'high risk' and 'at risk' categories. They would provide intensive family supports, address the problem of truancy, develop the system of 'after school' and 'in-school supports', and provide respite resources for families in difficulty.

The teams must also give attention to providing activities and amenities for young people, particularly in the evenings and during the summer holidays. This will involve liaising with local sports clubs, the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, and the ongoing work of the local community needs to be supported, and extended to attract more parental involvement in out of school activities.

Initiatives to address educational disadvantage should be prioritised in the 5-year Strategy. The Department of Education and Science should be requested to identify how local schools can be supported, not only in developing their facilities, but also in providing a comprehensive range of services to pupils both during and outside school hours. This would include giving consideration to how a variety of educational activities to suit different learning needs can be encompassed within the curriculum. The local schools also need to be supported in developing their infrastructure and increasing numbers. The local school principals should be involved in planning such interventions. As part of their longer-term strategy the teams need to address how educational welfare, before and after-school activities, and psychological and counselling services can be provided in a focused way to those who need it.

Attention also needs to be given to outreach and adult education schemes. The LIT and other third level Institutes and Colleges should be asked for proposals to provide educational opportunities and advice available to these communities. This could be given physical expression by progressing the proposed Moyross extension of the LIT.

3.4 Improve access and infrastructure

Experience with other regeneration projects has shown that a key element in developing economic activity, and ending the isolation of deprived areas, is through putting in place a sound roads and transport infrastructure. Moyross is currently a cul de sac with some of the major problems being experienced at the furthest end of the estate. A new road is currently planned to the north of the city linking the N7 to the Coonagh roundabout (see map at Appendix 1). The planned link road from the Coonagh roundabout to the Moyross Interchange should be 'frontloaded' and progressed as a matter of urgency. This will open up potential for mixed-use development in lands in, and adjacent to, Moyross and attract investment, allow for improved transport links, and facilitate greater linkage between the local community and other parts of the city. It will also facilitate policing of the area. It has been agreed with the relevant local authorities that the portion of the road that links Moyross to the Coonagh roundabout will be progressed through the design stage as a matter of urgency. Funds to do so have already been allocated by DoELHG.

3.5 Attract inward investment

A number of problems have arisen from the difficulty, over many years, in resolving issues related to the Limerick City/County boundary. For example, the most troubled part of Moyross is within the County and the major part within the City. The boundary issue creates difficulties in making effective use of public and private lands to support regeneration and investment. I am recommending that a limited extension of the City boundary up to the Clare County boundary in the northern part of the city (see map at Appendix 1) be put in place. While this will require consultation and agreement at local level, in my view this change is critical in facilitating the intensive development and regeneration of the North city area. Lands suitable for development for private housing and commercial use adjacent to the target areas must be identified as part of the planning process, and the Development Agencies should attract investment to develop these areas. This

should be achieved by agreement between the local authorities, and without prejudicing any other boundary issues, in the interests of securing more rapid development in this part of the city. There is recognition that this limited extension of the boundary is in the long-term interests of the region as a whole.

3.6 Create incentives for development and prioritize state interventions

Economic regeneration, the creation of employment opportunities, and the development of mixed housing use will be crucial to the longer term resolution of current problems. I would therefore recommend that serious consideration be given by the Departments of Finance and Environment, Heritage and Local Government to utilising the scope currently available under the Regional Aid Guidelines 2007-2013 to establishing fiscal incentives to attract private investors to develop these areas and other marginal lands that have development potential in these areas of chronic social disadvantage. Consideration of establishing development incentives should also be linked to an overall strategy for the Gateway of Limerick-Shannon and the development of strategic sites throughout the Gateway. In addition, the prioritising of these areas for investment and development by relevant State Agencies, including Shannon Development, would help to accelerate the process of regeneration.

3.7 Develop the Region

There is a clear need for the development of regional strategies, particularly for housing and retail shopping. Limerick city has little further capacity for social housing within the boundary, and so regional approaches must be progressed with a view to putting an agreed strategy in place to be implemented by the relevant authorities in the region. This will be critical to ensuring that the problems now being experienced are not repeated. All adjacent local authorities have a responsibility in this regard. Visionary plans for the Limerick region and the Limerick-Shannon Gateway rely on the long- term well being and protection of Limerick city centre.

3.8 Address Drugs Problem

A Regional Task Force for the Mid West Region has been established as part of the National Drug Strategy and at present covers the Limerick City area. However it has been recognised that the problems of drug abuse in Limerick City are particularly acute. A local focus for intervention should be immediately established for Limerick City and should work closely with the Development Agencies to identify interventions appropriate to the needs of these communities. These should include prevention and educational initiatives.

3.9 Regenerate the housing stock

There are approximately 1100 houses in Moyross, of which more than a third are not suitable for further remediation work. There are also approximately 1000 houses in Southill, over half of which are in a similar state. Overall then, excluding St. Marys Park, there are approximately 1000 houses that need serious attention, which is significant for Limerick city but relatively small in national terms. Remedial work on social housing costs almost as much as complete rebuild and, as noted earlier, to date remediation work has not addressed the problem in these estates. Indeed the state of the housing stock has degenerated to such an extent that remediation is not anymore a realistic option in O'Malley Park and certain other areas, and funds set aside for remediation work should be redirected to 'frontload' regeneration of these areas. Regeneration of the O'Malley Park area will almost certainly involve extensive demolition, including of some purchased houses. At reasonable density levels, the footprint of the land area involved could provide between 2000 and 3000 housing units. About 25% of these units would provide for existing local social housing needs. The remainder should be developed for private housing and related uses including shopping and other community facilities. Part of Moyross, mainly that which is currently in the Limerick County Council area, will almost certainly require a similar approach. Land with development potential adjacent to Moyross can provide up to 2500 additional housing units as part of a mixed development.

This process will require intensive consultation with the local community on the basis that the vast majority are law abiding citizens who will wish to remain, and can therefore be guaranteed secure, good quality, housing within the regenerated areas. There is evidence that the provision of social housing in these areas, within a framework of total regeneration that involves mixed development (including commercial), could be cost neutral, given the existing costs of remediation and the potential for unlocking value through new development.

It is also proposed that local teams of City Council officials be based in the Moyross and O'Malley Park areas. This will allow the City Council to take immediate action, including the enforcement of sanctions relating to anti-social behaviour. The Gardai also need to have a local base in these areas. Also, and as an interim measure, these offices can serve the Development Agencies.

4. Resourcing

It is not appropriate, nor indeed is it possible, in a report of this nature to give detailed costings for all of the initiatives proposed. However many of the initiatives proposed in this report were either already planned in the longer term (such as the remedial works on housing and the development of roads infrastructure), or require a refocusing and re-targeting of the use of existing resources (which should be a priority for the new Development Agencies). The cost of regeneration of the housing stock can be set against the considerable funding already allocated for remedial works on houses in these areas. Limerick City Council has already developed costings for establishing strong local offices in Moyross and Southill. It is also my belief that the confidence generated by the various initiatives set out in this report will unlock the value of lands, all of which are within short distance of the city centre. Implementation of these

recommendations will clearly require some additional exchequer funding. However the short-term costs of additional policing and the measures needed to address social and educational disadvantage must be set against the considerable ongoing drag on the resources of the state, the considerable longer-term social costs that will arise from a failure to address the problems, and the human costs, which cannot be calculated.

The Development Agencies, once established, should put in place the Regeneration Strategies for these areas with full associated costings.

5. Conclusions

In my experience, based on precedents from this country and abroad, local government on its own cannot deal with the exceptional type of problems described in this report. The statutory and voluntary agencies have not so far been coordinated to the extent necessary to deal with these extremes. As noted earlier, the three strands of intensive police intervention, the economic and infrastructural regeneration of the areas under discussion, and a co-ordinated response to social and educational disadvantage, are all critical to achieving progress both in the short and longer-term.

While the intervention of the Garda Siochana and related agencies will be critical to dealing with the first of these, the establishment of the Development Agencies will provide the necessary mechanism to co-ordinate and monitor all strands of intervention, and take charge of the considerable resources targeted on these areas. They will be responsible for outcomes, have strong decision making powers and a visible presence on the ground, and can operate with the local discretion and flexibility needed to get to grips with the development of longer term strategies that will avoid a recurrence of the problems experienced by these communities for far too long. They can also encourage and facilitate initiatives from private and voluntary bodies who have shown an interest in providing support and expertise, but who cannot easily be facilitated within existing mechanisms.

The interventions recommended in this report across all three strands can be put in place very quickly, allowing implementation to begin within a number of months.

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John Fitzgerald

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