



**Preliminary Mayoral Programme,
Limerick City and County Council**

Dr Laura Keyes, Mayoral Candidate

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1. Forward

The newly appointed Directly Elected Mayor will need to produce and agree a Mayoral Programme within 16 weeks of taking office. The Mayoral Programme will set out the key priorities and objectives for their five year term of office.

To support people in having an informed vote, I have developed this preliminary mayoral programme. It is positioned as preliminary as it is subject to formal input from key stakeholders in Limerick and, debate and agreement once the new council is elected. It is also a living document as it evolves as I speak to people and groups, bring back their priorities and ideas and integrate them into the plan.

This preliminary mayoral programme is written as mission statements. These mission statements will be converted into strategic objectives and deliverables to form a full Mayoral Programme, if I were elected as Limerick's first Directly Elected Mayor.

Accessibility is hugely important to me. I know from my work and from my own experience of living with multiple sclerosis that if you design for the least able and the furthest from power, everyone benefits.

My overarching aim, if I were elected, is to facilitate the co-design of Limerick, with the people of Limerick. I believe in the philosophy of "with us not for us". This is about, not making decisions for people but with them. The people of Limerick know best what is needed and how to solve the problems Limerick faces. Approaching leadership from a, with us not for us perspective gives agency to people and places the voice of the people of Limerick at the heart of everything we do.

I cannot achieve this vision alone. We need to work hand in hand to co-create a brighter future for ourselves and generations to come. With your support and trust, we can make Limerick the shining beacon of progress and prosperity that she deserves to be.

Laura Keyes

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2. Réamhrá

Beidh ar an Méara nuacheaptha atá tofa go díreach, Clár Méara a tháirgeadh agus a chomhaontú laistigh de 16 seachtaine tar éis dó dul i mbun oifige. Leagfaidh Clár an Mhéara amach na príomhthosaíochtaí agus cuspóirí dá dtéarma oifige cúig bliana.

Chun tacú le daoine vóta eolasach a bheith acu, tá an Réamhchlár Méara seo forbartha agam. Tá sé suite mar réamhobair mar go bhfuil sé faoi réir ionchur foirmiúil ó phríomhpháirtithe leasmhara i Luimneach agus, díospóireacht agus comhaontú nuair a bhíonn an chomhairle nua tofa. Is doiciméad beo é freisin de réir mar a fhorbraíonn sé agus mé ag labhairt le daoine agus le grúpaí, ag tabhairt a dtosaíochtaí agus a gcuid smaointe ar ais agus iad a chomhtháthú sa phlean.

Scríobhtar an réamhchlár méara seo mar ráitis mhisin. Déanfar na ráitis misin seo a thiontú ina gculpóirí straitéiseacha agus ina spriocanna inghnóthaithe chun Clár Méara iomlán a chruthú, dá dtoghfaí mé i mar an céad Mhéara Tofa go Direch, i Luimneach.

Tá inrochtaineacht thar a bheith tábhachtach domsa. Tá a fhios agam ó mo chuid oibre agus ó mo thaithí féin ar chónaí le scléaróis iolrach, má dhearann tú do na daoine is lú cumas agus iad siúd is faide ó chumhacht, go mbainfidh gach duine leas as.

An aidhm uileghabhálach atá agam, dá dtoghfaí mé, ná éascú a dhéanamh ar chomhdhearadh Luimnigh, le muintir Luimnigh. Creidim san fhealsúnacht “le linn, ní ar ár son”. Séard atá i gceist leis seo, gan cinntí a dhéanamh do dhaoine ach leo. Is fearr a thuigeann muintir Luimnigh cad atá ag teastáil agus conas na fadhbanna atá roimh Luimneach a réiteach. Nuair a théann muid i dtreo na ceannaireachta ó pheirspictíocht a, “le linn, ní ar ár son”, tugtar gníomhaireacht do dhaoine agus cuireann sé guth mhuintir Luimnigh i gcroílár gach a ndéanaimid.

Ní féidir liom an fhís seo a bhaint amach amháin. Ní mór dúinn oibriú as láimh a chéile chun todhchaí níos gile a chruthú dúinn féin agus do na glúnta atá le teacht. Le bhur dtacaíocht agus bhur muiníne, is féidir linn Luimneach a dhéanamh ar an bhfeadóg mhór dul chun cinn agus rathúnas atá tuillte aici.

Laura Keyes

3. Remit of the Directly Elected Mayor

The Directly Elected Mayor (DEM) will take on executive functions, at a strategic and policy level, in areas including:

- strategic development, that is, proposing the development plan for the City and County and driving the economic and spatial development of Limerick
- housing and building, for example, developing a housing strategy for Limerick and ensuring its delivery
- road transport and safety, that is, road maintenance and improvement, and traffic management
- environmental services, that is, the services that help to protect and enhance the environment in Limerick

The role covers, among other areas, economic, social and cultural matters, employment, coordinating initiatives, services and funding to support rural areas and measures concerning the regeneration of towns, including agricultural matters.

The Mayor will have a role in the delivery of Project Ireland 2040 via a Limerick Project Ireland 2040 Delivery Board and a specific delivery board for Transport under the 2040 Framework. They will prepare and present the Corporate Plan, prepare service delivery plans and prepare a report on the capital programme.

The role of DEM is to enhance local authority accountability, visibility, democracy and responsiveness. DEM will be legally responsible for implementing council policy. They will have a duty to prepare and present the council budget.

Executive functions are responsibilities that relate to the running of the Local Authority. They are similar to the type of responsibilities that a CEO of an organisation would have. For example, when framing and implementing the local authorities strategy (Mayoral Programme), the DEM has responsibility for proposing the overall model and the strategic objectives, and the elected council is responsible for overseeing and approving these objectives and the plan necessary to achieve the objectives. The DEM will be responsible for determining how the Local Authority will meet these strategic objectives and for delivering on the approved plan.

The current model in Ireland is a council-manager model of local government, whereby, the elected council sets the policy framework and the budget, and a professional manager is responsible for implementing it and for the day-to-day management of the local authority. The appointment of a DEM in Limerick moves away from this model. The DEM will in many ways replace the professional manager. As such, they need to

have the skills and experience to do so. The skill set required for DEM includes experience in strategic planning, policy development, implementation, financial management, leadership, change management, board experience, chair experience, stakeholder engagement, communication. They will be legally responsible for a range of functions and should have experience of the requirements and ramifications of that. They will also have powers of delegation and should have worked experience of such models.

4. Development of a Full Mayoral Programme

Once the DEM is in office, a Limerick mayoral advisory and implementation committee will be convened. This committee will assist in the preparation, and support the implementation, of the Mayoral Programme.

The mayor must present a draft of their Mayoral Programme for consideration by the elected council and must consider comments or observations made by members of the council in the final Mayoral Programme.

The Full Mayoral Programme must be completed and agreed within sixteen weeks of the Mayor taking Office.

5. Preliminary Mayoral Programme

This Mayoral Programme has five central themes. These are listed and expanded on below.

Mission: Accessibility for all

People with disabilities make up a quarter of the population of Limerick. If we add to that older people and people with children in buggies, we have an enormous proportion of people in Limerick that would benefit from more accessibility.

Improving accessibility brings about increased quality of life, creates more independence and better social integration. Developing everything from public spaces and houses to forms and webpages for the least able in society, means they are accessible to all. It requires a culture shift. A culture shift that the Mayor can lead and champion across all council actions and plans.

Workers and carers, whether they are elderly, disabled, parents or in other ways reliant on accessible public spaces, must be able to enjoy a safe and healthy city. There are many ways to do this in homes, workplaces and communities. Solutions as simple as benches, public toilets, the provision of public space and reliable public transport can make a huge difference to people's lives.

The business and decisions of council, its resources, services and assets must be accessible to the least able, and the furthest from socio-economic power, to be accessible to all.

The concept of accessibility is not simply about catering for people with disability. It is about catering for all people. Accessibility crosses into inclusivity, transport options, access to services and feeling safe to participate wholly in one's community and use public amenities. We need to build an accessible environment to support inclusive communities. One that ensures that everyone is treated equally and with dignity and respect.

Mission: Transparent governance, open democracy

People face closed doors when dealing with the Council all the time, while the doors are routinely flung open for corporations' and developers' plans like, Limerick 2030. The Mayor can use existing levers such as Local Area Committees to ensure that developments in the city are open and transparent to all.

As the city grows, transparency and evidence-based decision-making are essential to ensure that social and ecological objectives are prioritised to reflect peoples' everyday needs. The Mayor can ensure open democracy through a co-design approach that empowers communities by involving them throughout the decision-making processes.

Co-design is when people most impacted by a decision, a policy, an intervention or a change, are involved in the whole process, from conception to delivery. It is the opposite of one time public consultation on already near complete plans. It is an iterative and ongoing process.

Good governance is when decisions made by bodies are done in direct conversation with those affected by those decisions. Where it is done out in the open, for all to see, in the spirit of fair play. Processes around decision making should be accessible, so everyone gets to have their say. That means that processes should be pro-active, and easy to participate in.

Decision-making processes should be easy to understand. How many times have we seen decisions get made that appear to be devoid of common sense? By listening carefully to workers and carers affected by decisions we can improve on public projects as well as reduce delays that come about through lack of consultation.

Evidence-based decision making that draws on sound sources and removes biases. It can increase civic engagement and public trust as it encourages decision makers to consider the thoughts and feelings of those impact. It also saves money and improves efficiency as it reduces the need for experimentation and increases the likelihood of successful outcomes. Evidence-based decisions ensure policies and actions are grounded in reliable data rather than intuition or ideology.

Mission: Social justice

Regional development and urban regeneration have failed in Limerick. Limerick needs a new approach that generates value through robust future-oriented economic planning, which the Mayor's office is mandated to coordinate. Voices from the health and education sectors, trade unions, industry and communities need to be at the centre of decisions.

The new office of the Mayor can foster cooperation to establish the Council as an anchor institution for Limerick with the ability to attract economic activity which is durable and valuable to the community. The office can also be used to build relationships internationally, especially in the research sector. If this is what we want, then public services need to reflect the real needs of workers and

carers, the people who generate value and are the backbone of Limerick's economy.

Limerick City and County can be a prosperous place for everyone, with the right supports. Currently the only people who can take risks are those who already have their own networks to support them. Limerick can provide an even better opportunity for everyone if the local authority takes a more proactive role in creating an environment for innovation. What this means is a focus on rejuvenating our villages, towns and city as urban hubs for the development of entrepreneurialism to benefit all workers and carers. This will be supported through a focus on education and developing centres of research excellence.

Mission: Housing, education, health care for all

Limerick should be an excellent place to live where housing moves from being simply an issue of accommodation to an issue of building homes and community, where there are education options for everyone, and health and social care services meet need.

In terms of housing, we need to address the pressing issue of not enough availability for rent, to buy or in terms of public and social housing. One action that would benefit Limerick in dealing with the housing crisis is to build more public housing. Public housing provides secure, affordable, long-term accommodation. It takes pressure off the private rental market, reducing competition for properties thus curtailing spiralling rents.

The continued overcrowding situation at University Hospital Limerick requires a regional health plan for the Mid-West region that alleviates the pressure on Limerick health services through provision of acute services in one of the other hospitals in Limerick's hospital group. University Hospital Limerick's overcrowding problem is a result of a lack of suitable community-based care services, and its staffing problem is in part a result of the housing crisis affecting workers and carers more generally.

While the Mayor has no direct remit over the hospital, a housing action plan that uses existing local government powers to procure and produce public housing to meet demand is entirely within the remit of the Mayor. The Mayor can also leverage for more funding for construction and expansion of schools to address the gap between the growth of Limerick and the number of school places.

Air and water quality in Limerick are public health issues. Air and water pollution lead to avoidable health problems, which in turn puts pressure on our health services, including our hospital. These fall into the environmental remit of the

Mayor who can take urgent action to improve the overall health and wellbeing of the people of Limerick.

Housing, education and health care services are prerequisites for a thriving Limerick. The Mayor can use the Consultative Forum to coordinate these plans between local and national agencies. The Mayor can coordinate agencies, locally and nationally, to address these related concerns towards a more robust and joined-up thinking approach to housing, education and health.

Mission: Climate action for the benefit for all

Limerick already has a Climate Action Plan that the Mayor can build upon and expand. Far too often climate action is reduced to individual action rather than forcing systemic change. There is an alternative to an eco-austerity approach to climate action. The Mayor is in a position to advance a programme of climate projects that are potentially transformative and move beyond a siloed project based approach.

We can have a bottom-up approach rather than the current top-down approach to climate action. A bottom-up approach is one that begins in homes, workplaces and communities, and is led by workers and carers. Co-operative renewable energy schemes, biodiversity initiatives and community gardens are just some examples of bottom-up climate action.

Green public spaces can be both climate action initiatives and recreational spaces that foster inclusive communities. There is a World Health Organization recommendation that all people reside within 300m of green space. Health benefits of green spaces include improved physical, mental and social wellbeing. Co-designing green spaces with local communities has been found to foster a sense of ownership and promote use.

Even though halting climate change and slowing it is an urgent priority, we must acknowledge that the impact of climate change has already reached us. As such, we need to take action to fortify and protect Limerick against the negative effects. The biggest climate change risks to Limerick are pluvial flooding¹ and destructive winds. These need to be addressed urgently.

¹ Pluvial flooding is caused when rainfall cannot be absorbed by the ground or drainage system. It is most usually the result of high-intensity or prolonged periods of rainfall and is characterised by overland flow and ponding. (Source: <https://hydrologyireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/7-An-innovative-approach-to-pluvial-flood-risk-assessment.pdf>)

6. Final Remarks

This preliminary Mayoral Programme takes a holistic view of the potential of Limerick rather than a project-based approach. The mission statements are interdependent and will cover numerous programmes and projects. We have an urgent need for system level, joined up thinking and a move away from the current siloed, project-based approach to change.

The project-based approach which is the norm has a tendency to solve a problem here but create a bigger problem over there. Systems thinking is a holistic approach to analysis that focuses on the way that a system's constituent parts interrelate and how systems work overtime and within the context of larger systems. Systems thinking can be defined as a holistic and integrated approach to understanding complex problems and situations. It is a way of thinking that emphasizes the interconnections, relationships, and feedback loops between different elements of a system. Unlike linear thinking, which tends to focus on cause and effect relationships in a linear sequence, systems thinking takes into account the dynamic and nonlinear nature of systems.

Co-design harnesses the power of collective intelligence. It has the potential to change Limerick for the better. We have become used to thinking of intelligence as the private skill of individuals, vying against one another in a neoliberal world of relentless competition. What is needed, especially in this age of climate disaster, is a greater emphasis on our ability to work together.

The voices of the people of Limerick need to be at the centre of all decision making. This is people-centred politics.

7. Dr Laura Keyes



Dr Laura Keyes (BSc, PhD, FHEA)

Public Health Epidemiologist

Candidate for Directly Elected Mayor, Limerick

Rabharta – The Party for Workers and Carers

Dr Laura Keyes is a public health scientist and works in a senior research management role in the public sector. Her current work involves strategic planning, co-ordinating national level projects and working with the public, national organisations and government departments. She is from Limerick City and is a mother and a disability rights advocate.