

Cllr. Deirdre Heney

30 Collins Avenue East, Killester, D5. [e.mail heneydm@gmail.com](mailto:heneydm@gmail.com) Phone 8512031/6183793 Summer 2013

Austerity not a long term solution

A successful economy is one where the maximum number of citizens are working, earning, paying their taxes, spending, saving and investing in matters of their choice, whether that's home improvements, a new car, children's education or whatever. Whether running a home, a business or a country, you need to carry out an occasional deep analysis of all revenue and expenditure in order to balance the books and manage future commitments.

We are now three to four years into this round of austerity and while understandable at the start, I'm wondering if Government has lost its way and is now so locked into their austerity strategy, that they can't see how to get out of it.

Following the recent introduction of the Property Tax, I have heard of 2 people who had house extensions approved and ready to start this Spring but who have now cancelled out or at least deferred their plans because of worries for the future. When I think of the employment that would have been generated, the purchases from builders' providers and indeed the VAT payable. I think this austerity has run into a cul-de-sac.

It's time for Government and indeed the entire E.U. to start investing in our economies in a sustainable way, to start creating jobs, restoring hope, belief and confidence so that people and businesses with resources can start spending and investing again.

We need to move away from austerity and plan for a future with hope and confidence. There's no magic wand but a few encouraging signals from Government to those with the ability to provide or raise cash would help. Yes some people have dreadful debts, but others through hard work, good fortune and wise decisions survived the recession and need to be given the confidence to spend rather than taxed out of existence.



New website

I recently launched my new website. I hope you find it helpful in keeping you up to date on my comments on all local and national issues.

website www.deirdreheney.ie

email heneydm@gmail.com

home; 30 Collins Avenue East, Killester, Dublin 5.

Phone; 6183793 or 8512031

Crime 2012

The report of crime statistics as recently published shows an overall drop in the crime rate of 5.5% with reductions in 10 of the 14 crime categories. The number of homicides at 78 was 18% up on 2011 with gang warfare mainly responsible for the increase. Other categories of crime showing an increase included, fraud & deception offences, sexual offences and burglaries.

Property tax

In recent weeks you should have received details of the Government's new property tax from the Revenue Commissioners. It will apply from July at an annual rate of 0.18% for residential properties up to a market value of €1m, with a higher rate for properties above this level. The tax liability, which is self-assessed, is calculated by applying the 0.18% to the mid-point of the relevant band.

Valuation Band	Mid-Point	Annual Tax
0 - 100,000	50,000	€90
100,001 - 150,000	125,000	€225
150,001 - 200,000	175,000	€315
200,001 - 250,000	225,000	€405
250,001 - 300,000	275,000	€495
300,001 - 350,000	325,000	€585
350,001 - 400,000	375,000	€675
400,001 - 450,000	425,000	€765
450,001 - 500,000	475,000	€855
500,001 - 550,000	525,000	€945
550,001 - 600,000	575,000	€1,035
600,001 - 650,000	625,000	€1,125

The bands continue on the same basis up to a value of €1m. The portion above €1m is calculated at 0.25%. The tax bill for 2013 is 50% of the annual tax. The very few exemptions include homes purchased in 2013 by first time buyers; some dwellings in 'ghost estates', dwellings affected with a significant level of pyrite and other very limited cases. A system of 'deferral' is available subject to very tight and limited income levels. Interest at 4% per year is due on any deferred payments and all monies due are legally 'attached' to the dwelling and must be paid before the property is sold/transferred.

The tax is blatantly unfair, particularly on Dubliners who are badly hit due to the high value of their homes relative to other towns and cities. It is very harsh on pensioners & the unemployed, indeed it contains all the worst elements of the old 'rates system' and even the income limits to consider full or partial deferral are low.

Wad River - Clanmoyle

Progress on planning the Clanmoyle Road Flood Alleviation Scheme continues. Project teams of the City Council, Clontarf Golf Club, Irish Rail and the OPW are all involved. Part 8 Planning Permission has been granted. Approval of the full project is essential from Clontarf Golf Club and Irish Rail. While we all want the work to commence as soon as possible, it may be well into late 2014 before all matters are in place for commencement.

Dogs

Minister for Agriculture has announced his intention to introduce mandatory micro-chips for dogs by 2016. The move has been welcomed by groups dealing with dog welfare including Dogs Trust. At a local level, I very much welcome the recently opened Dog Park in St. Anne's. This dedicated dog park allows owners to enjoy letting their dogs off the lead.



476 Howth Road

The process of adding 476 Howth Rd to the City Council's Record of Protected Structures is on-going. Built in the 18th Century and known over the years as "Ballyhoy", "The Cottage" and "Raheny House". It's had many interesting owners including John Darcy, Lord Mayor in 1852, Jane Barlow, the novelist and more recently Frank Gallagher, the first editor of the Irish Press. In 1986 it became the Garda Retirement Home.

Local Elections

The next Local Elections are due in June 2014. In recent months the Minister for the Environment has set up a committee to review local electoral boundaries and this report is due in late May early June.

For Dublin City Council, the number of Councillors will increase from the present 52 to 63. This is a strange decision but the more significant change is to increase the size of each electoral area with 6 to 10 Councillors in a Ward, whereas currently it's usually 3 to 5. All Councillors await the recommendations with great interest. We can only wait to see what if any changes are made to the Clontarf Ward.

Child Benefit

Following budget reductions, the current rates are;

	2012 Monthly Rate	2013 Monthly Rate
1 Child	€140	€130
2 Children	€280	€260
3 Children	€428	€390
4 Children	€588	€530
5 Children	€748	€670

Additional children €140 a month per child.

Drumcondra Road

St. Patrick's College, as part of its campus development, is constructing 3 new buildings with a pedestrian access at the northern end of the grounds. Dublin City Council at the same time is improving the flow of the outward bus lane. This will include the part demolition and re-build of the St. Patrick's College Wall. When the wall is moved back, the existing stone will be saved and re-used. Work has started and will take some 6 months to complete.

Sports Grants

Grants announced over the Winter for local sports projects under the Government lottery funded Sports Capital Programme include;

Club	Grant
Whitehall Colmcille GAA Club	€150,000
Stella Maris FC	€295,000
Sutton Lawn Tennis Club	€296,750
St. Paul's Artane F.C.	€55,500
Grange Woodbine Residents Assoc/FC	€44,556
East Wall Water Sports Group	€98,360
Dublin City Council	
Edenmore Park	€17,500
St. Anne's Park	€21,540
St. Vincent's GAA	€96,577
Whitehall Rangers AFC	€4,675

Budget Cuts

- The PRSI allowance was abolished resulting in all workers over €352 a week having to pay over €5 a week extra in tax. The extra tax was the same for workers whether they were on €20,000 a year or €400,000 a year. It's hard to see the fairness in that decision.
- Back to school clothing & footwear allowance reduced by €50 per child.
New rates
€100 children 4 – 11 years
€200 children 12 – 17 years
- **Carers Respite Grant**
This is paid every June but has now been reduced by €325 per year to €1375.
- For those with medical cards, prescription charge increases from 50 cent to €1.50
- Income limits for medical cards for over 70s reduced to €600 per week single /€1,200 couple. Those with incomes of between €600/€700 and €1200/€1400 couple will qualify for GP Visit Card.

Planning

I attach details of some recent applications which may be of interest. Full details are available at Dublin City Council Planning Dept., Civic Offices during normal office hours or at www.dublincity.ie.

2926/12; application from Ayrfield United FC for 3 new all weather playing pitches including flood lighting, fencing etc now approved;

3521/12; Application for 12 three storey semi-detached houses with entrance between 50 & 52 Dollymount Avenue, Clontarf now approved by DCC;

2226/13; new single storey extension of 127 sqm at Springdale National School, Lough Derg Rd. Raheny.

3638/12; permission granted by City Council for 68 dwellings - height from 2 to 3 storeys on site bounded by Beaumont Rd/The Crescent and Collinswood.

2046/13; demolition of existing 2 storey Martanna house and construction of 8 apartments in 2 storey building at High Park, Gracepark Rd with 10 car parking spaces.

2865/12; 3 storey primary care centre application with retail unit at St. Monica's youth club site, Tonlegee Rd to incl 26 space car park, entrance from Woodbine Rd at rear, new all weather pitch, floodlights and refurbishment of youth club now referred to An Bord Pleanála.

2401/13; application for 17 houses on site between 28/34 Vernon Ave bounded by part Belgrove Rd, Kincora Road, St. Joseph's Sq. and Vernon Wood.

Mobility Allowance Cut

Following the recent cut to the mobility allowance I learned from a colleague in the Dáil that over 180 people in the Dublin North Central Region who are in receipt of the mobility allowance will have their income dramatically reduced as a result of this cut. We have seen unfair treatment of people with disabilities over the last 2 years by this Fine Gael Labour Government. They cut the disability allowance in their first Budget, cut home help hours and personal assistants last Summer and they cut the domiciliary care allowance as well as the respite care grant. These cuts are deeply unfair in my opinion.

Inheritance/Gift Tax

Capital acquisition tax, also known as inheritance/gift tax increased in the last Budget from 30% to 33%. In addition the thresholds below which people are not liable to the tax were further reduced from -

- €250,000 to €225,000 for son/daughter from a parent.
- €33,500 to €30,150 for siblings, grandchildren, nephews, nieces
- €16,750 to €15,075 for other

The rate of DIRT on savings also increased from 30% to 33%

Hollybrook Road/Park

Phase 1 of the north City Water Supply Scheme is still at pre-tender stage and it is expected this project will start in the Autumn and take up to 12 months to complete. The project involves the laying of 2.25 km of watermain from Fairview Park along Alfie Byrne Rd, Clontarf Promenade up Hollybrook Road and Park to Howth Road.

Pensioners

While Government representatives like to emphasize that basic pension rates have not been reduced in the past few years, it's important to recall the frequent reductions in Household Benefit and Fuel schemes.

Telephone allowance;

from January 2013 reduced from €22.50 to €9.50 per month.

Fuel allowance;

Spring 2012 – fuel season reduced by 6 weeks from 32 to 26 weeks

Sept 2011 – smokeless fuel allowance of €3.90 per week abolished.

Electricity/Gas Units;

Sept 2011 – number of free units reduced from 2400 to 1800 per year.

I welcome however the Minister's statement to extend the current fuel season by one week due to the cold weather in late March. I'm sure people in receipt of the fuel allowance appreciated this decision.