



**Opening Statement of the CEO of the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory
Authority to the Committee of Public Accounts**

19th January 2023

I wish to thank the Chairman and members of the Committee of Public Accounts for inviting me here today to address the Committee on the 2021 Audited Financial Statements of the Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority (AHBRA).

I am joined by the Authority's Head of Communication and Performance, Mr. Steven Sheridan, and our Head of Finance and Corporate Services, Ms. Paula Nyland.

The Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Act 2019 provides for the regulation of Approved Housing Bodies (AHBs) for the purposes of protecting housing assets provided or managed by such bodies. Central to this was the establishment of AHBRA on the 1st of February 2021.

AHBRA is funded by the Exchequer through sub-head A.26 of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH). Our budget in 2021 was €1.05 million and our total spend was just over €985k. Payroll accounted for approximately 66% of our overall spend and non-pay amounted to approximately €331k or 34% of total expenditure.

AHBRA's Board is comprised of nine members, appointed in February 2021 following a process conducted by the Public appointments service. Our corporate governance arrangements are determined by our legislation, the Code of Practice for the Governance of state bodies and an oversight agreement with the DHLGH.

We have a number of statutory functions, including establishing and maintaining a register of AHBs, registering organisations as AHBs, the setting of standards, encouraging and facilitating better, governance, administration and management of AHBs, collecting and publishing information, assessing compliance with the standards, and undertaking investigations and enforcement actions, as appropriate.

AHBs are independent, not-for-profit organisations whose purpose includes the provision and management of housing. They play a central role in housing delivery as outlined in the Government's 'Housing for All' plan. AHBs reported own, lease and manage just over 53,000 dwellings. The sector is complex and layered, with a large number of AHBs differing in size, scale, delivery models, funding structure and risk profiles. Additionally, we have entered a multifaceted regulatory environment.

AHBRA's powers and functions were commenced on a phased basis throughout 2021 and 2022. One of our initial tasks was the development of our first Statement of Strategy (2021-2024) which was launched in October 2021. This sets out AHBRA's vision, mission and values and identified five strategic objectives and our approach to the regulation of the AHB sector. These are captured in your information packs.

We have spent considerable time on establishing our organisational structures, policies and procedures, and implementing an appropriate governance framework. The current staff complement is twenty. 13 staff transferred from the Housing Agency, and we also commenced a recruitment programme. This process remains ongoing.

In 2021, we drafted the Standards for AHBs. The Standards cover the areas of governance, financial management and reporting, property and asset management and tenancy management. When drafting the standards, we conducted extensive engagement with AHBs and a wide range of key stakeholders.

Also in 2021, we launched our website, hosted a series educational and information webinars and presentations to key stakeholders.

Initially the Housing Agency provided a range of shared services for AHBRA, enabling and supporting our early operations. These administrative services were governed by a service level agreement and were unwound throughout 2022.

In January 2022, **450 AHBs were** 'deemed registered'. From this date, we became responsible for registration of AHBs. We published the AHB Register and launched the registration programme. As part of this, there was an initial capture of information which helped inform the registration process.

We published the Standards for AHBs in February 2022, followed by guidance to support each Standard.

Our remaining functions and powers were commenced in July 2022, with AHBRA becoming fully operational.

We published our regulatory framework in September 2022. It sets out the framework that AHBs are subject to, and it outlines our risk-based approach for regulating the sector. The Notifiable Events and general concerns programmes were also put in place.

We launched our Annual Monitoring Programme, where AHBs were requested to provide a range of data. We are currently analysing and evaluating the information received. We will use it to inform our future planned assessment programmes, identify common risk areas and trends across the sector, develop education and guidance programmes and publish sectoral analysis. Additionally, we introduced a pilot assessment process which involves a small but diverse set of AHBs. This pilot will allow us to test and evaluate the effectiveness of our processes and to receive feedback from participating AHBs. We expect to roll-out our first formal assessment programme in the first half of 2023.

AHBRA remains at the early stages in our evolution. We have made significant progress in establishing the organisation and putting in place the required regulatory structure, but there is more to do.

We remain committed to working with all our key stakeholders in delivering effective regulation.

I am happy to respond to any questions that members of the Committee may have.

Thank you