

PERFORMANCE VERIFICATION UNDER TOWARDS 2016 (March 2008 – August 2008)

I am pleased to report that there has been continued co-operation with implementation of the modernisation agenda in Clare Local Authorities.

Enhanced customer service

Progress continues in Clare Local Authorities in this area. Clare Local Authorities improved overall scoring in the FÁS Excellence Through People Accreditation, Continuing Professional Development Programme and, indeed, the EIQA Q-mark process. The inter departmental Customer Service Committee meets on a regular basis and is a useful forum for addressing issues that affect customers and service users across all departments and area offices in Clare Local Authorities.

An application has been made to the National Disability Authority for the Excellence through Accessibility Accreditation for the County Headquarters building. Improving access for our customers is a key objective for the organisation, and participation in such awards/accreditation programmes particularly focus our delivery to customers in terms of accessibility considerations. Clare Local Authorities have also engaged consultants to complete an accessibility audit on all public buildings. The interim report has highlighted a considerable amount of remedial works required to ensure compliance with legislation by 2015.

As anticipated, the opening of Áras an Chontae has proven to be a huge customer service success with positive feedback from customers and service users as well as good reaction from staff to a quality-working environment.

Co-operation with other agencies

Enhanced co-ordination and co-operation in tourism and environment initiatives by communities, state and local development agencies/ groups in various projects in this period resulted in the commencement of several initiatives e.g. Lough Derg Marina Development Strategy, Burren Connect Project, Heritage Office expansion. Clare Local Authorities have also successfully engaged with other groups including Clare Biodiversity Group, West Clare Economic Development Task Force, Kilrush Campus Facility, Clare Tourism Forum. The Limerick Clare Energy Agency continues to engage with many organisations in the region including Shannon Development, Chambers of Commerce, University of Limerick, Limerick Institute of Technology, County Enterprise Boards to name but a few.

The County Enterprise Strategy, although initiated and driven by the C&E directorate of Clare County Council is a product of committed inter-agency working. An Enterprise Steering Group was established to direct and inform the strategic process and comprises representatives from Clare County Council, Enterprise Ireland, Shannon Development, IDA, Clare County Enterprise Board, FÁS, Clare VEC, Chambers of Commerce, IBEC, Shannon Airport Authority, Rural Resource Development Ltd., NUIG, elected representatives and social partners. The success of the Strategy is dependant upon continued engagement of all partners to implement the agreed actions plans.

Clare County Council in conjunction with Clare Sports Partnership are the lead organisations in developing an Integrated Sports and Recreation Strategy for County

Clare. An inter – agency steering committee comprising all Clare Local Authorities, Health Service Executive, County Childcare Committee, Ennis Youth Centre and Clare Local Development Company are at this stage considering the draft strategy. There are also plans to involve SFADCo and Clare VEC in this initiative.

The training Unit have been very active in organising training programmes in collaboration with other local authorities. In conjunction with Limerick County Council, one particular initiative is investigating the feasibility of the Institute of Public Administration, University of Limerick and the Local Government Management Services Board collaborating in the provision of a third level programme for Local authority staff.

Pan Authority Co-operation and collaboration continues to strengthen with agreement reached on the preparation of the following regional strategies

- Regional Retail Strategy
- Mid West Strategic Plan
- Regional Recreational Strategy
- Regional Housing Strategy

Development of shared services

Further progress has been made in the delivery of training on a shared basis with other local authorities in the region. Emergency Management Training, EU Public Service Procurement Training, Manual Handling, Planning Enforcement Training, Designated Contact Person.... are all examples of such training delivered in conjunction with Limerick City and County Council in recent months. Other initiatives include Composting Workshops – this included the authorities involved in the Regional Waste Management Plan.

Staff training/PMDS

A Middle Management Training Programme commenced earlier this year. The purpose of this particular training is to strengthen the role and function of all the line managers across the organisation. This is the single most extensive training programme being rolled out by the Training Unit. Feedback from participants has been considered and adjustments made accordingly to the format and content. At this stage, 35 supervisors and line managers have fully completed the 5-day programme. It is intended that a further 35 staff will undergo this training before the end of the year including general service supervisors.

As mentioned above, the training unit has arranged and delivered training courses in conjunction with adjoining local authorities in a concerted effort to maximise efficiencies. Clare County Council's expenditure on training in 2007 amounted to 4.3% of payroll expenditure.

The IT section in Clare County Council has developed a PMDS Monitoring Database. This database will be made available to all team leaders in the coming weeks. Each team leader will be responsible for updating the database with information on team meetings, team development plans and personal development plans. The training unit will monitor progress on completion rates across the organisation. Last year Clare County Council introduced a reminder form regarding PMDS. This has proven particularly useful in improving completion rates for personal development plans.

Organisational change and innovation under T2016

The inaugural meeting of the High level Steering Committee was held on 6th June 2008. This committee comprises the county manager, senior management representatives, union officials and the joint chairs of the workplace partnership committee. The committee will meet 2/3 times per year and is intended as a forum in which to discuss and agree changes planned for the organisation.

A Voluntary Redundancy Scheme has been negotiated and agreed with the relevant unions in Clare Local Authorities. This will ultimately result in the suppression of a number of posts and require a significant change in management of the organisation.

Value for money/efficiency/effectiveness

As mentioned above, a number of Voluntary Redundancies have been agreed in this period and will be processed before the end of the year. Likewise, negotiations are nearing completion on the rationalisation of Revenue Collectors in Clare Local Authorities. While there are obvious costs associated with these voluntary redundancies and early retirements, they will result in efficiencies in the long term.

The Costing Project was completed in the first quarter. This will effectively result in a changed accounting format for the annual budget with the overriding aim of revealing the full cost of services. The new format has been rolled out to the sections (programme group 9) and the budgeting process for 2009 will be based on the new model.

Corporate Procurement and Purchasing Procedures are particular areas being examined by the Procurement Officer and, indeed, features strongly in the work programme of the Procurement Committee. Senior management have been appraised of proposals for an organisation - wide review of approved suppliers and contractors used by the various departments in Clare Local Authorities.

The Audit Committee has been established and held its inaugural meeting in April 08. As well as examining options to maximise efficiencies and value for money in the organisation, the committee will also consider areas such as Risk Management and Best Practise in internal audit function.

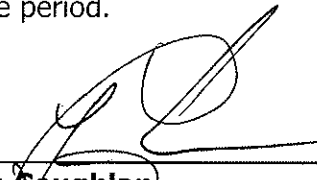
Industrial Relations

Engagement by all parties in the workplace partnership committee resulted in agreement on implementing the Attendance Management Policy and Professional Dress Code Policy.

In an effort to resolve outstanding industrial relations matters involving Firefighters and Administrative Staff, The Advisory Service of the Labour Relations Commission was utilised to assist in a review of the Grievance & Disciplinary Policy and Staff Mobility in Clare Local Authorities. This review was completed in April and all the negotiating unions were invited to participate. The outcome of the review was accepted by all parties, and the recommendations have been fully implemented.

Stable industrial relations were maintained in this period. Quarterly meetings between Human Resources and the main union officials and representatives resolved any issues that arose in the period.

Signed:



Tom Coughlan
Deputy County Manager
11th July 2008.