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THE PERSON DEALING WITH THIS MATTER IS:
DEREK O'GORMAN, TELEPHONE 021 4285758

OUR REF: PERS/AB

3rd July, 2008

F.A.O.: Ms Chris Gavigan and Mr Matt Merrigan

Dear Ms Gavigan and Mr Merrigan,

I wish to refer to your letter dated 28th May, 2008 requesting details of progress achieved by Cork County Council from March, 2008 to August, 2008 in respect of commitments made under Towards 2016 Action Plans.

As requested, my report concentrates on the following areas:

Enhanced Customer Service

(a) Customer Contact Centre

The Customer Contact Centre was set up in September 2005 and currently handles telephone and e-mail contacts for seven Council services, i.e. Motor Taxation, Driver Licencing, Non-Domestic Water Charges, Waste Management Service Charges [South Cork], Waste Management Operations [South Cork], Recruitment, and Higher Education Grants.

In 2006 and 2007 the Customer Contact Centre was awarded the Contact Centre Association (CCA) Standard following a 2 day Audit by the British Standards Institution.

In its role as a primary point of contact the Customer Contact Centre is now seen as a fundamental part of Cork County Council's strategy of providing quality customer service. The principal focus over the next 3 years is the continued expansion and development of the Customer Contact Centre, while at the same time maintaining and improving the quality of service delivery to internal and external customers.

The 3 Year Plan sets out the road map up to December 2010 for this proposed growth and development of the Customer Contact Centre.

Listed below are key factors outlined in the 3 Year Plan which will enhance our customer service and focus on meeting our customer expectations;

- (i) Assessing of service areas in the Council for possible integration into the Customer Contact Centre
- (ii) Modifying the existing processes in Service Departments
- (iii) A unified Corporate approach to dealing with customers
- (iv) Training of Customer Contact Centre Advisors
- (v) Developing and maintaining strong relationships with Service Departments, with both areas operating to agreed SLAs
- (vi) Reviewing of performance on a regular basis with a view to creating efficiencies and enhancing service to our customers
- (vii) Setting up appropriate systems and processes to help advisors give the correct information to customers

(viii) Access to identical systems by both the Customer Contact Centre and Service Departments

(b) (i) Web Site

With Corporate affairs we are doing a review of our website to reflect and embed our recent reorganisation and to ensure it is a service oriented and customer friendly site in addition to being accessible.

(ii) On-Line Services

We are in the final stages of installation of full online payments through our new Corporate Debtors system with the first service to go live on NonDomestic water metering. Future online payments for services will be available as these services are changed over to the new corporate debtor system. In addition we are looking at on-line HEGS applications and submissions to development plans, LAP's and SLAP's

Co-operation with other Agencies

(a) Community and Enterprise

The Cork County Development Board has 41 members from the following sectors – local government, local development, state agencies and social partners.

The Office of Community & Enterprise also support the Community & Voluntary Fora and the Social Inclusions Measures Group. The present CDB Priority Projects are Tourism Co-Ordination, Marketing for Inward Investment, Full Social Inclusion Coverage, Traveller Interagency Group, Integrated Target Plan for Farm Families North Cork, Mallow Hub, Dunmanway, Muscraí Gaeltacht and Carrigaline.

(b) CASP

The Cork Area Strategic Plan which is being updated at the moment involves Cork County Council, Cork City Council, Elected Representatives, Consultants (Indecon/Savills HOK, RPS), Port of Cork, Cork Airport, building groups and transport providers.

(c) MEM

The Major Emergency Management plan involves Cork County Council, Cork City Council, Kerry County Council, H.S.E. and the Gardai.

(d) County Development Plan

The Planning Policy Unit (PPU) is in the process of reviewing the 2003 County Development and as part of this process has consulted widely with a range of stakeholders, including the public, developers, government departments, statutory agencies, other local authorities and other stakeholder groups. In order to inform the review of the plan a series of stakeholder workshops was held in the autumn of 2006. Following this an Issues Paper was published in December 2006 and an eight week period of public consultation followed during which over 900 submissions were received. Following publication of a Draft Plan in December 2008, and an eight week period of public consultation commenced, during which the PPU went to various venues throughout the county with a public exhibition, presentation on key provisions of the Plan and planning staff were available to answer questions. 467 submissions were received from the public, developers, government departments, statutory agencies, other local authorities and other stakeholder groups.

Housing Strategy

A review of the Joint Housing Strategy commenced in 2007 and a Draft Joint Strategy was published with the Draft Development Plan in December 2007. As the Strategy is a Joint one, it was prepared in consultation with Cork City Council and with the nine Town Councils. Following publication of the Draft Strategy, a Stakeholders workshop was held in January 2008 which was attended by

representative of the CIF, developers, the voluntary and co-operative housing sector and other stakeholders with an interest in housing issues.

(e) I.C.T. Co-operation between Local Authorities

To date Cork County Council has delivered a number of systems and has led the setting up of shared services in the form of user groups for these systems with a number of other local authorities including the following.

Property Interest Register – Cork County, Fingal County Council, Dunlaoighre Rathdown, Galway City, Louth County Council, Waterford City and South Tipperary.

Higher Education Grants – Cork County, Cork City, Fingal County Council, Dunlaoighre Rathdown, Wexford County Council and South Dublin County Council.

Joint Procurement of Encryption Software – Cork County Council, Cork City, Kerry County Council, Limerick County Council and Limerick City Council. Other initiatives in this group are currently being examined to reduce cost and increase shared services between the authorities.

GIS Technology for planning and other functions – Cork County Council developed, led the way and made available the GIS software now in use in 12 other local authorities. This has delivered a cost effective, efficient and robust solution for these authorities showing a real VFM from the shared service and user group.

Development of Shared Services

Following on from the introduction of new Senior Management Team structures in early 2008, the advancement of 'Shared Services' has formed a significant element of the agenda for the Senior Management Team - Organisational Development group in particular. Considerable work has been done in relation to the development of criteria for the selection of further services for sharing. Services deemed suitable for sharing from the organisation's perspective, including the planning function in Town Council areas which has commenced, are currently being prioritised for implementation.

Cork County Council, Cork City Council, Kerry County Council, Limerick County Council and Limerick City Council are advancing a regional shared services initiative as outlined above to see which elements of ICT in the respective authorities could benefit from shared services. As already mentioned this will result in a joint procurement of encryption software for laptops and mobile equipment to safeguard information on them in the event of loss or stolen equipment. Other area of shared services already active and mentioned above includes, Higher Education Grants, Property Interest Register, GIS for Planning and Part V systems.

As part of the restructuring of the Council, the Housing Capital Sections have been centralised from the three Divisions. These Sections have been incorporated into the new Property and Housing Capital Department. There is now one contact with the DOE, versus three before.

Staff Training / P.M.D.S.

The area of 'PMDS and Operational Planning' has been the focus of much attention in Cork County Council since March 2008. In particular, a strong emphasis has been placed on linking PMDS to the Business Planning process. Feedback throughout the organisation on the use of common templates for operational/team plans using key themes and the synchronisation of the timing of operational planning and PMDS has been favourable. A programme for the provision of Performance Management Training, as part of an overall initiative for Managers and Team Leaders to successfully carry out PDP interventions, is now underway. In addition, Cork County Council made a presentation at the National PMDS Seminar on 9th May 2008 entitled '*Cork County Council's Experience of Linking PMDS to the Business Planning Process*'.

Organisational Change and Innovation under T2016

There continues full cooperation by staff with Health & Safety initiatives and training programmes as required. This is evident in the attendance by staff at the Signing, Lighting and Guarding at Roadworks training programme.

There has been major progress in the development and implementation of new technology in the C.I.T. area.

The Business Process Improvement initiatives continue, with the commencement of the implementation of the recommendations from the Planning B.P.I. Area staff are inputting the planning reports on line to help the process.

There is ongoing work on embedding the new Directorates within Cork County Council. This has included the reorganisation of South Cork (Rural & Hinterland) to 2 Directorates on a functional basis. This involved in excess of 900 staff.

Value For Money / Efficiency / Effectiveness

The OEC was established at the end of 2007. It is a cross functional group, comprising senior staff from various disciplines. OEC has responsibility for advancing the efficiency agenda, including such matters as Business Process Improvement, Shared Services, Customer Service, Branding, Corporate image etc

A total of 4,353 refuse accounts have been referred to Cash Flow Services, a Debt Collection Agency. The Agency has collected €870,000 from a total of €2.4m of arrears referred to them.

The adoption of a Corporate Procure Plan and a Treasury Management Policy has taken place.

Other Initiatives

Dunmanway Integrated Strategy.

Dunmanway was prioritised by the County Development Board for a three year period (2006-2008) which gave the mandate for the establishment of an Interagency Committee in the town.

Its aim is to develop the social, economic, and tourism potential of Dunmanway by way of an integrated approach to development.

There are 21 Members on the main Interagency Committee, which is led by Cork County Council, representing a very broad cross section of state, semi-state and community groups.

The completed Strategy was launched in January 2008.

Implementation of the Strategy

It was agreed there was a need for a short term and long term approach to the implementation of the Strategy.

The Interagency Committee and the Working Groups will be the main implementation structure in the short term and the Working Groups will deliver action throughout 2008.

Two Community representatives will be included in each Working Group.

The chairs of the six Working Groups will hold regular meetings to consider the longer term structure and the mechanisms that will be required to ensure the continued sustainable partnership approach to the implementation of the Strategy.

Integrated Strategy for West Cork Islands & Castletownbere.

The Council proposes to apply the model applied to the establishment of the Dunmanway Integrated Strategy to develop similar Integrated Strategies for the West Cork Islands and Castletownbere which represent the most peripheral parts of the county.

Conclusion

There has been co-operation with implementation of the modernisation agenda set out in the Towards 2016 Agreement.

Partnership continues to function very effectively across the organisation. It is operating in all Directorates, incorporating all work groups and grades. The County Manager and the full time Union Representatives will attend 2 meetings of the Corporate Group during 2008. It has also been used to discuss the content of the T2016 return, and has facilitated the signing of the Checklist.

There has been a stable industrial climate in Cork County Council. This is typified by the partnership approach to many of the challenges facing Cork County Council at the present time.

Yours sincerely,



Martin Riordan
Cork County Manager