

Manager's Narrative Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council

While progress is ongoing in respect of many of the Council's assigned roles, the slowdown in national economic growth is expected to have an adverse impact on the Council's financial situation. This will compound the difficulties the Council is already experiencing as a consequence of increased competition in the household waste sector. This occurs at a time when increasing demands are being made on the Council for infrastructural and service provision.

Within this context, the "Towards 2016" Agreement should enable a more flexible approach to working practices to be achieved. This flexibility includes the removal of demarcations, more modern approaches to work, innovation and the facility to adopt new practices to respond to changing circumstances. Employee flexibility will be most important for the Council in a potential era of reduced revenue. Employee flexibility should provide scope for efficiencies, value for money and provision of better services within the Council's finite resources.

Examples of how the Council is pursuing these general objectives and turning them into action are given under the following headings.

Enhanced Customer Service

A new digital telephone system has been successfully installed in the organization, featuring enhanced voice mail and features to facilitate better customer interface and internal communication. A Broadband (Fiber Optic) programme has commenced linking all of the Council's public offices for communication, including data, upgrade.

The Customer Relationship Management pilot project in the Environment Department continues, with updated software, and it is proposed to introduce a similar pilot project in the Communications Office.

Following on from the extended opening hours in the Council's Library Service the Partnership Committee was requested to examine the appropriateness of existing opening hours in the County Hall and other office locations. A sub group of the Committee is reporting on the matter.

The Economic Development and Planning Department has introduced a trial "same day validation" for small to medium planning applications. Applications can be validated immediately, or minor discrepancies rectified, leading to a quicker and more efficient process and improved customer service.

Inter Agency Involvement/Co-operation with Community Groups/Better service to marginalized Groups

The work undertaken by the Community and Enterprise Department is built on inter-agency activity. For example, its Social Inclusion Unit consistently works with other agencies on joint projects, such as World Refugee Day. This year the partners were Southside Partnership, Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown Institute of Art, Design and Technology and the Dun Laoghaire Refugee Project. The R.A.P.I.D. programme continues to deliver better services through inter-agency actions. Work continues on the delivery of actions under the Inter-agency Traveller Action Plan, Anti-Racism and Diversity Plan and the mapping of services provided to people with disabilities.

The Draft Accessibility Plan has been presented at consultation sessions and the Council's Access Officer was supported through the process of preparing the Plan by the Disability Consultation Group, which includes representatives from agencies such as

P.W.D.I.,I.W.A., Community Forum, Disability Interest Group and Southside Partnership. Certain projects within the Plan have progressed with the assistance of the National Disability Strategy Fund to the value of € 1.2 million.

Organisational Change and Innovation

A new Communications Office has been established which is responsible for internal and external communications, including the handling of all press queries, promoting positive publicity, website development, staff bulletins, brand management and responsibility for corporate publications. A joint Management Team/Senior Executive/Senior Professional Group has recently developed a Corporate Communications Plan and a Communications Strategy is currently being developed. There is scope to use this expanded team resource to consider other major corporate issues.

In the area of Human Resources a Human Resource Strategy Framework template has recently been developed by the LGMSB. The overall objective is to ensure that all core HR processes are aligned to, and support actions in the Corporate Plan. The Board facilitated seminars covering development and implementation of the Strategy in June 2008.

The setting up of DLR Leisure Services by the County Council represents a significant organizational change. When established as a separate legal entity it will provide a professional framework for delivery of quality leisure services to the citizens of the County operating at arms length from the Council.

Value for Money/Efficiency /Effectiveness

The Council has a major programme of depot rationalization, which involves replacing a number of old depots with a smaller number of modern depots. This programme is being implemented in tandem with rationalization of major direct labour services.

As previously reported to the P.V.G. the Council has identified areas where there is significant scope for efficiency improvements namely, Housing Maintenance and the Mechanical Section. The proposals in relation to the latter are scheduled for hearing in the Labour Court - local negotiations and the intervention of the LRC having failed to achieve agreement. Detailed proposals are being prepared in relation to Housing Maintenance for negotiation with the unions.

Despite the fact that agreement in principle has been achieved with the unions in relation to the rationalization of the waste collection service detailed discussions in relation to implementation have broken down. The failure to reform the Council's direct labour household waste collection service in response to the entry of a private competitor over 18 months ago offering a superior service at a significantly lower cost is especially disappointing.

The Council continues with the general outsourcing of services. For example, the design of new roads infrastructure is now almost completely outsourced. Senior engineering staff will be primarily employed in project managing the delivery of new infrastructure with support staff provided by design consultants.

The Council proposes to proceed with integrated facilities management procurement and contract agreement to replace existing direct and contracted services. This would cover security, cleaning, maintenance and repairs for the main Council offices.

Much of the Council's efforts to achieve and maximize efficiency are I.T. driven and some examples of recent projects undertaken by various Departments in this area are described in the following section.

Increased use of Information Technology

G.I.S. are now applied in many areas of the Council, including management of Planning Applications, Property Register, and Transportation datasets, Water, Drainage and other Environmental data. Ongoing GIS projects include the capture of Public Lighting records and management of the Roads Schedule. The production of the County Development Plan in GIS format, with interactive on-line maps and database will significantly enhance public participation in the process. It is intended that WEB technologies will facilitate the sharing of key CAD and GIS datasets, improving upon current business processes and services.

The Metered water billing/EMA billing system provides for drive by technology to reduce the need for manual readings. The introduction of the remote keying of payroll from depots has increased efficiency and eliminated paper trails.

The Library service system upgrade provides for online renewal of loans. Public Internet PCs are available in libraries together with Wi-Fi access for members of the public. A computerised Council Meeting administration system has been introduced and Web casting of the County Council Meetings is now taking place every month.

A SMS messaging facility is currently being evaluated which could enable the development of a customer mobile phone database to facilitate text messages on a wide variety of topics, such as changes in bin collection days, football pitch closures, events etc.

Shared Services Model

The Dublin Local Authorities have a long tradition of the shared services model. The following examples are provided on this basis in the area of waste management: Dublin Region landfill at Kill, Green Bin Contract/procurement, operation of Materials Recycling facility, baling stations at Ballyogan/Ballymount, procurement of composting facilities at Ballyogan/Kilshane, procurement of Waste to Energy plant and Awareness campaigns for litter and recycling.

In the water services area the following examples are provided on this basis: Greater Dublin Regional Drainage Study, Eastern River Basin Project, Regional water storage project, New water sources study, Telemetry and regional network maintenance, Dublin Region drainage GIS project, Water Conservation Awareness Programme, Dublin Region Non-Domestic Water Metering Project and Regional Watermain Rehabilitation Project.

Workplace Partnership

The Handling Significant Change Through Partnership Steering Group has now been set up and has held three meetings, to date. Among the items referred to the local Partnership Committee for investigation and report include the Evaluation of PMDS in the organization, Working in Inclement Weather Arrangements and Review of Opening Hours in Council offices.

It was hoped that items of significant change could be channeled through the Partnership process. However, in this instance, the union representatives on the Steering Group decided that the Housing Maintenance restructuring would only be dealt within an I.R. context. A Partnership approach to the restructuring of the Mechanical Section had also been rejected previously by the unions.

The Steering Group has agreed to set up an Industrial Relations Forum which will meet on a scheduled basis where line managers and unions can meet to discuss and negotiate issues of mutual concern.

Outside the area of Handling Significant Change Trough Partnership the local Partnership Committee has working groups engaged on, Commercial Water Metering, Water Billing and Revenue Action, Depot Upgrading, Water Rehabilitation and County Tours (staff integration).

The Return to Learning programme, under the auspices of the Committee has been running since 2002. In the region of 161 staff have completed the course and 46 staff are currently engaged in the programme. This programme is important in the development of our staff who have literacy difficulties and who wish to improve their skills. The feedback from participating staff has been very positive and facilitated participants exploring other areas of adult education, such as computer courses.

Staff Training /PMDS

The Council continues to carry out its training programme in areas such as Health and Safety, Customer Service, I.T. Skills and has continued to ensure that at least 3% of payroll cost is used for training purposes. Specific Courses in 2008 included Health and Safety Induction, First Aid, Safepass, Stress Management and Chainsaw courses. The Council also administers a Scheme of Assistance to staff who wish to pursue formal educational courses in their own time.

In relation to PMDS 117 Team Plans (97%) have been completed, 64% of personal conversations have been completed and 87% of staff awareness training has been completed.

The Partnership Committee at the request of the H.S.C.T.P. Steering Committee is carrying out an evaluation exercise on the PMDS and has issued questionnaires to the staff involved to ascertain their views. The potential of linking PMDS to business planning in the future will be important in the context of the implementation of the Corporate Plan.

I confirm that a stable industrial relations climate exists regarding matters covered by the Agreement and, with the exception of the Council's major direct labour service rationalization programme, there has been co-operation with implementation of the modernisation agenda.

Following rejection by the unions of the Partnership option to pursue major direct labour service rationalisation issues the Council has been left with no option but to pursue significant change issues through the I.R. machinery, This has proved a very time consuming and confrontational process and not within the spirit of Workplace Partnership.



Owen P. Keegan
County Manager

11 July 2008