



OIFIG AN BHAINISTEOIR CONTAE DHÚN NA nGALL
OFFICE OF THE DONEGAL COUNTY MANAGER

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COUNTY HOUSE

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Ms. Chris Gavigan,
Mr. Matt Merrigan,
Joint-Chairs,
LANPAG,
35-39 Ushers Quay,
Dublin 2.

December 14, 2007.

Towards 2016: Action Plan Progress Report

Dear Ms. Gavigan / Mr. Merrigan,

I refer to your letter of October 31 regarding the above. As requested, attached herewith is the completed checklist outlining progress in the Donegal local authorities since the submission of the agreed Action Plan in March of this year. The progress report has been agreed by the County Partnership Committee and is signed by the Joint Chairs. As requested, the completed checklist is accompanied by this brief narrative report which highlights areas of particular progress achieved since the last report and outlines area of ongoing work.

1. Customer Service

1.1 The operation of the network of Public Service Centres (which has been outlined in previous reports) continues to support an increasing volume of business with our customers. Details are set out in the tables below.

2006 Activity Levels

	Donegal	Dungloe	Carndonagh	Letterkenny	Milford	Total
In Person	8073	10844	7672	8121	3792	38502
By Telephone	29945	30163	33364	39745	20446	153663
No. of Receipts	7646	5191	7529	7714	4621	32701
Value	€5.39m	€2.73m	€5.37m	€4.39	€1.97m	€19.85m

2007 Activity Levels (projected)

	Donegal	Dungloe	Carndonagh	Letterkenny	Milford	Total
In Person	8783	11237	10084	9260	4894	44258
By Telephone	34580	29638	36357	41832	23096	165503
No. of Receipts	7095	4766	6175	7129	4183	29348
Value	€5.49m	€2.56m	€4.26m	€4.60m	€2.06m	€18.97m

Note: these figures relate to customer contacts handled by front line customer service staff. They do not include contacts made directly with individual services, nor do they include contacts made by customers with the Independent Information Units (estimated at 60,000 for 2007) or with representatives of other agencies located in these buildings).

1.2 The County Partnership Committee is putting together an ambitious programme of work for 2008 to achieve further improvements in the context of implementing a three year Customer Action Plan. The priorities for 2008 include:

- The preparation and publication of a Customer Charter
- Further development of outreach services (already available in Ballyshannon, with plans to provide improved access in Buncrana and Bundoran, in conjunction with the Town Councils)
- Review options for extended opening hours
- Completing the roll-out of the eDirect contact management system (this has already been implemented to support a number of areas, including the implementation of the Non-Domestic Water Metering project)
- Prepare proposals for the introduction of a formal customer complaints system
- Implementation of an Inter-Agency Events Tracking System to facilitate data sharing (subject to the provisions of Data Protection legislation) on common customers

- Complete implementation of the initial three year Action Plan for the provision of services through the Irish language and prepare a new Plan for the period 2009 –2011 (achievements in 2007 include the implementation of a bi-lingual website)
- Further enhancements to the range of services available through the website, including the availability of online payments for most services.

1.3 The key role played by elected representatives in their capacity as customer representatives has been underpinned by the preparation of a new Protocol which is intended to achieve improvements in the productive working relationship between members and staff. The protocol will be implemented on a trial basis in early 2008. This will be complemented by further development of the members' extranet.

2. Efficient and Effective Use of Resources

2.1 Good progress continues to be made on the implementation of the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) as outlined in previous reports. The recommendations contained in the recently completed evaluation of the system by Hay Management Consultants will provide the basis for consolidation of the process over the coming year. To support this, the Council has decided to retain the services of one of the PMDS facilitators for a further year to provide support to managers and staff in embedding the process.

2.2 Previous reports outlined details of an agreement on the introduction of an annualised hours / flexible rostering system for operative grades in Donegal County Council. The system was implemented in 2007. Management and staff representatives have agreed to review the operation of the system over the past year and to discuss options for 2008.

2.3 Donegal is one of three pilot sites for the implementation of an integrated human resource management, payroll and superannuation system. Following the selection of the software provider by the LGCSB earlier this year, work has now commenced on the project implementation. The initial focus is on the necessary data gathering. In addition to this, Donegal County Council has also decided to carry out a comprehensive overhaul of the major work processes in areas such as recruitment, attendance management and payroll, with a view to achieving significant improvements in performance. The initial modules of the new system will go live before the end of 2008, with the remaining elements of the system being rolled out in 2009.

3. Safety, Health and Welfare

Significant investment has been made in this area over the past eighteen months, including the employment of four full-time safety advisors. The process of electing a new Staff Safety Committee has commenced, with the level of staff safety representation to be doubled from 11 Safety Representatives to 23.

3.1 The Council's Improvement Plan for the safe management of traffic on incomplete road surfaces was accepted by the HSA in January 2007, the first local authority in the country to achieve this. The plan was prepared in response to an improvement direction from the HSA. The standard now required by the HSA has significantly raised the level of control required in the management of roadworks. The level of safety management at roadworks significantly improved in 2007. A safety manual for the safe management of non-notifiable minor and routine works was prepared in-house and issued to all roads overseer areas. A programme for the implementation of site-specific risk assessment was ongoing in 2007. This procedure requires managers and supervisors to pre-plan and document required controls and for operatives to receive an induction before construction work commences.

3.2 In 2007 the Council implemented a Council-wide incident reporting system that allows staff to report incidents, accidents and near-misses to a central database. The system allows the measurement of current incident rates in a consistent, coherent and coordinated way. The information on accidents can then be used to investigate control strategies.

3.3 The Draft Budget for 2008 includes provision for the continued strengthening the Council's safety management system. Provision is being made for the establishment of Council-wide safety metrics that can be used to audit performance across directorates and target improvements. Staff safety representation will be strengthened significantly and the development of policies and procedures will continue. Safety training will be a significant issue in 2008 with various new legislative training requirements that must be met before work can proceed.

4. Co-Operation with other agencies

4.1 In earlier reports and presentations to the PVG, we have outlined our approach to the development of a more-co-ordinated approach to public service delivery, using our Public Service Centres as a focal point. The agencies are continuing to collaborate on a range of projects, details of which were outlined in my letter to you of March 30, 2007.

4.2 Under the auspices of the County Development Board, the Donegal local authorities continue to play a lead role in the development of innovative, cross-agency initiatives. For example, a multi-agency Children's Services Committee has been established with the support of the Office of the Minister for Children. This Committee is one of four such pilots established in 2007 and Donegal County Council is playing an active role at both local and national levels in this regard.

4.3 In addition, Letterkenny Town Council is one of the pilot sites for the establishment of a Joint Policing Committee. The Committee has been established and will play a key role in the development of appropriate models in this area.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Because you have asked me for a concise note on key developments, I have decided to focus in this report on a number of specific areas of activity. In future reports, I hope to focus on additional areas of activity, with a view to ensuring that the picture presented is sufficiently comprehensive to provide a complete picture of the modernisation agenda in Donegal.

5.2 In your letter of October 31, you asked me to confirm that (a) there has been co-operation with implementation of the modernisation agenda as set out in the Towards 2016 Agreement and that (b) that a stable industrial relations climate exists in relation to the matters covered in the Agreement. I am pleased to report that all of the stakeholders remain fully committed to the modernisation agenda in the Donegal local authorities and that no significant industrial relations problems have been encountered to date.

I trust that the above is sufficient to meet the requirements of LANPAG for the preparation of the sectoral report.

Yours sincerely,



Michael McLoone,
Donegal County Manager