



Ms. Chris Gavigan,  
Mr. Matt Merrigan,  
Joint Chairs,  
LANPAG,  
Local Government House,  
35-39 Ushers Quay,  
Dublin 8.

12<sup>th</sup> December, 2007

**Performance Verification under Towards 2016.**

Dear Joint Chairs,

I refer to your letter of 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2007.

Previous reports have highlighted the fact that progress reports on the Fingal County Council area cannot be viewed without consideration of the background of the phenomenal growth in population and development in this county in recent years.

The one significant fact that I should mention is that, by our own reckoning, our population has increased by a further 12,000 approximately since the 2006 census. This represents an increase of over 28% in the past five years, as against 22% in four years as per the Census of '02 to '06.

Given this level of growth and the current embargo on creation of additional posts, it is obvious that it places considerable pressure on this council even to maintain services at existing levels and to extend existing services to our new residents. Nevertheless, I consider that we have managed to make significant progress in several areas since I last reported. I will now comment under the headings suggested in your letter.

Co-operation with other agencies.

It goes without saying that a local authority does not function in a vacuum and that co-operation with other agencies, statutory and others, is an essential part of our method of operating. In particular, I wish to draw attention to two initiatives on which substantial progress has been made in recent times, neither in traditional core local authority areas of activity.

The Fingal Schools Initiative, as it has come to be known, has now been adopted by the Department of Education and Science for national implementation. Under this

COUNTY MANAGER'S OFFICE  
P.O. Box 174,  
County Hall,  
Swords,  
Fingal,  
Co. Dublin

Bosca 174,  
Áras an Chontae,  
Sord,  
Fine Gall,  
Contae Átha Cliath

Telephone  
01 890 5151  
Facsimile  
01 890 5159  
Email  
manager@fingalcoco.ie  
www.fingalcoco.ie



system the Council uses its local knowledge to acquire sites from developers and other at favourable prices and then, without any additional charge, make those available to the Department of Education and Science for provision of schools. As a wider community gain, the school buildings will be available for community uses outside of school hours. To date, 3 sites, accommodating 6 schools, have been acquired and approved for transfer to the Department and we are at an advanced stage in acquiring a further 6 sites. In light of the controversy surrounding school place shortages at the beginning of the current school year this is a very significant measure.

In the area of sports development, the Council has arrangements with the FAI, IRFU, Tennis Ireland and the Irish Cricket Union for co-funding of Sports Development Officers. In particular, we have developed close co-operation with the FAI in furtherance of our Football Development Plan. We are now at a stage where a decision has been made, subject to independent ratification, to grant a licence to a club, in which the Council is a substantial share-holder, to compete in the Eircom League of Ireland next season. The share-holding is at no cost to the Council. Again, in co-operation with the FAI, plans for our Fingal Football Academy, as a resource and centre of excellence for the clubs in our county are well advanced with a site on Council-owned land having been identified in recent months.

#### Development of Shared Services.

There is already a range of shared services in the Dublin Region. Two very significant services, Motor Taxation/Driver Licensing and the Fire Service are provided by Dublin City Council for the 4 Dublin Authorities. The Veterinary Service for Fingal is provided by South Dublin County Council.

The areas of Water Services and Waste Management are operated in large measure on a regional basis. Seven local authorities are involved in the Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study Area. The Non-Domestic Water Metering Project was handled on a shared basis by the four Dublin Authorities with Fingal County Council as the leading authority. Significant developments in recent months include the Strategic Environmental Assessment for Regional Waste Water Treatment, for which this Council is the leading authority, going to public consultation and continuing work on identification of water supply sources for the years post - 2016.

The 4 Dublin authorities are currently working on amending the Regional Waste Management Plan.

As regards shared services being proposed at national level, this council supports the establishment of a national centre to manage the superannuation system.

#### Staff Training/PMDS.

The Performance Management and Development System has been fully in operation throughout the organisation for some time but there have been some further developments in recent months. I had some concerns that the range of training courses that were being sought by staff, as part of the process, were such that the organisation would not have the capacity to deliver on expectations. With a view to developing a more focussed approach, the Workplace Partnership Committee has been working on producing an agreed syllabus of courses, in each Department. This exercise has been completed in respect of outdoor staff.

In relation to monitoring implementation of PMDS, I had been receiving regular reports from the HR Department. In order to emphasise the fact that implementation of PMDS is primarily the responsibility of every Department Head, I now require reports from each of them at my monthly meetings with them.

As regards staff training generally, much of it is now dictated by the PMDS process. However, external factors also have a strong influence on our training programme. In the past 6 months most training has been directed to the areas of IT, Cultural Diversity and Health and Safety. Much of the Health and Safety Training is dictated by legislation and we are in a position to deliver most of it through our own team of certified part-time trainers. Twenty courses on Cultural Diversity have been delivered in the past 6 months. Given the high proportion of non-Irish nationals in this county, this is an area to which we must pay particular attention.

#### Citizen Service.

The most significant advance in service to our citizens in recent months is the completion of a pilot programme of what we call Team Fingal. This is a multi-disciplinary, cross-departmental team with a brief to improve service delivery to residents in some selected Council housing estates. The team provides a single point of contact for inquiries or complaints from residents, regardless of what area of the Council's operations is involved. The staff members concerned are delegated authority to have appropriate action taken in response to the public's requirements.

We intend to have further roll-out of the scheme in the coming year and we also have plans to extend this model to the wider community. In future reports, I expect to be able to confirm progress in that regard.

Significant progress has been made on a computerised Correspondence Tracking System and we expect to be in a position to pilot it in one department early in 2008.

Organisational Change/Efficiency, etc.

A review of the operations of the Parks Division was completed in October. Arising from this process, a revised area-based management structure has been put in place. This will lead to clearer lines of responsibility and delegated authority resulting in quicker response times to the needs of the public. Further outcomes of the review process require detailed negotiations with the staff side and this process is about to commence.

In the area of Water Services Maintenance certain inefficient practices in relation to overtime have been identified and eliminated. Further efficiencies in relation to this area of operations are currently under discussion with the unions.

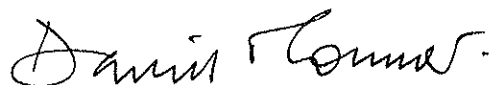
We have recently commenced, with the assistance of a consultant, a complete review of the operations of our Housing Department including all procedures, staff deployment, etc. with a view to equipping ourselves to deliver the best possible service in this important area.

On a wider note, I would repeat what I and my predecessors have said in previous reports. This Council is now providing services to approximately 56,000 more people than was the case 5 year ago with, essentially, the same number of staff. It is axiomatic that we would not be able to do this without the co-operation of staff in the introduction of modernisation and efficiencies, whether by way of internal change or outsourcing.

Finally, I am pleased to confirm that there has been co-operation with implementation of the modernisation agenda set out in the Agreement and that a stable industrial relations climate exists in relation to any matters covered by the Agreement.

I am attaching the check-list, the hard copy of which has been duly signed by the Joint Chairs of the Workplace Partnership Committee and which is being posted today.

Yours sincerely,



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**DAVID O'CONNOR,**  
County Manager.