



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

9th July, 2008.

Performance Verification under Towards 2016.

Dear Joint Chairs,

I refer to your letter of 28th May.

The checklist which accompanies this letter identifies progress under the various headings since my last report. I will now comment on significant recent developments under the headings mentioned in your letter.

Citizen Service.

In my last report, I described the working of Team Fingal. This was a project that we had piloted in selected Council housing estates to improve service delivery to residents. It involves a cross-departmental multi-disciplinary team with a Team Leader as a single point of contact to receive inquiries or complaints from residents, regardless of what area of the Council's operations is involved. The Team Leaders are delegated authority to have action taken in response to the public's requirements. This system has been extended to four more estates. In the initial pilot phase the Team Leaders were drawn from staff of the Housing Department. In a good example of cross-departmental co-operation, Team Leaders are now also drawn from the Transportation and Environment Departments.

One of the fundamentals of good service provision to our citizens is to have good channels of communication with local communities. We have found, for example, that in the introduction of pay-parking in our towns, many of the problems that initially presented were overcome by having regular consultation between staff and the widest possible range of opinion in the towns concerned, with a particular staff member being identified as leading the project for the Council. We are currently, in consultation with the elected members, in the process of establishing new structures called Community Liaison Committees. The Committees will comprise elected members, residents'

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



representatives, business interests, the voluntary sector and other state agencies. The primary objectives are to promote local democracy by improving communication and increasing visibility of the Council, information exchange leading to better outcomes on local issues and improved response times on the Council's part to local needs. In keeping with the Team Fingal model individual senior staff members have been identified to have responsibility for the functioning of these committees and to be a single contact point.

We are engaged in a major research project in the Blanchardstown area in the area of service delivery, our own services and those which are the responsibility of other agencies to try to achieve optimum benefit for the citizen. We currently have 2 cross-departmental, multi-disciplinary teams working on analysis of transport requirements based on locations of shopping facilities, leisure facilities, industrial areas and, at a more micro level, service points such as banks, schools, bus-stops, etc.

Staff Training/PMDS

This is the third year of the operation of the Performance Management and Development System in this Council. As part of the monitoring process we have introduced a procedure where forms signed by supervisors in the process of certifying payment of increments contain questions relating to PMDS. I also receive reports from department heads on a monthly basis.

As regards training, much of the programme is now driven by PMDS. However, as I have said in a previous report, a substantial amount of training is still dictated by external factors such as legislation. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulations 2006 introduced the Construction Skills Certification Scheme. The Scheme requires that all relevant employees receive training leading to certification in Signing, Lighting and Guarding at roadworks. This Council is able to deliver this extensive training programme in-house. We have 7 FAS-approved part-time instructors, with 3 more in training. It is a credit to the staff concerned that they have volunteered to acquire the skills to enable them to be such an important resource for the Council. We can deliver this and other important training courses at much less cost than if it had to be out-sourced. In this context, it is unfortunate that the National Service Indicator for training measures only expenditure as a percentage of payroll, with no regard to output.

Development of Shared Services

I detailed in my last report the large extent to which services are shared among the 4 Dublin local authorities. When one considers that these 4 Councils are 4 of the 5 largest in the state, catering for 28% of the entire population, the level of existing shared services is quite significant. There has been no major move towards further sharing of services locally. The commitment to shared services, as set out in the Sectoral Action Plan, is being addressed at national level.

Co-operation with Other Agencies

In my last report, I gave details of the Fingal Schools Model, an innovative system whereby school sites are provided to the Department of Education and Science with a gain for the Council in terms of community facilities. We were delighted to receive a Taoiseach's Award for Excellence in Public Service for this project. Co-operation with the Department of Education and Science is continuing and, to date, we have met all of the Department's requirements of us. We have transferred 3 sites to the Department, a further 5 have been acquired and are close to transfer and another 5 are in the process of being acquired.

We have been working very closely in recent times with the Rail Procurement Agency, particularly in relation to the route alignment for Metro North and Metro West. It is vital that the alignment facilitates optimum development in the economic corridors along the routes and close co-operation between us is essential to achieve this. We are also engaging closely with Enterprise Ireland, IDA, the Chambers of Commerce and individual developers to maximise the economic benefit of the Metro developments.

Organisational Change/Efficiency, etc.

A review of the operations of the Housing Department, with the assistance of a consultant has been completed. The main focus of the review was to optimise the deployment of staff to provide optimum levels of service. Work has commenced on the implementation of several of the recommendations of the report in relation to reorganisation of aspects of the operations of the department. A Strategy Group comprising senior staff has been formed to drive the process and authority for most routine matters has now been delegated to the lowest practicable level to allow senior staff to concentrate on their more strategic role. Particular emphasis is also being placed on financial planning and management.

Reform of the operations of the Water Services maintenance is ongoing. Outdated practices relating to supervision and overtime working have been eliminated and

restructuring of supervision has taken place to improve capability to deal with emergencies. Further reforms are under discussion with the unions.

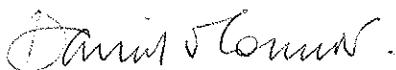
Re-organisation of the Parks Division is continuing and revised supervisory structures, involving a reduction in the numbers of supervisors, have been put in place. Discussions on elimination of other inefficient practices are ongoing.

In an organisation of the size of Fingal Co. Council there is always a danger of people operating within departmental silos. This is unhealthy from an organisational viewpoint but, more importantly, is detrimental to the interests of our citizens. I wish to draw attention to some important initiatives that we have taken to overcome this problem. There are in excess of 400 projects in this Council's Three Year Capital Programme. These projects span various departments and it is necessary to manage them on a collective as well as an individual basis. A number of the projects impinge on others and public value can be improved by optimising the scheduling. We procured a computer application, Project Vision, which has been implemented in all departments. As well as facilitating individual project managers with the planned delivery of their projects, the application includes spatial mapping and allows all relevant staff across all departments to view all projects.

The Workplace Partnership Committee was asked to consider means of further informing all staff of the work of the organisation so as to foster the culture of a corporate organisation with a common purpose. This has resulted in the production of a DVD in which the Directors of Services and I outline the major projects that are currently in the pipeline, giving a sense of the scale of the organisation and the part that individual staff members can play in enhancing our service to the public. This DVD, allied to Project Vision, will offer every opportunity for staff to be aware of the corporate goals of the organisation and their role in achieving them.

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

Yours sincerely



David O'Connor
Fingal Co. Manager