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**Ms. Chris Gavigan/Mr. Matt Merrigan,
Joint Chairs,
LANPAG,
c/o Local Government Management Services Board,
35 – 39 Ushers Quay,
Dublin 8.**



11th July 2008

RE: Performance Verification Report – March to August, 2008.

Dear Ms. Gavigan/Mr. Merrigan,

I wish to update you on Galway City Council's progress to date on our commitments under Towards 2016 and the Local Authority Sectoral Plan. Once again I am pleased to report that we have made significant progress across many areas with a particular emphasis over this period on:

- **1. Customer Service delivery and quality;**
- **2. Organisational Change and Innovation;**
- **3. Development of Shared Services;**
- **4. Staff Training/PMDS;**
- **5. Co-operation with other agencies;**
- **6. Value for money/efficiency/effectiveness.**

I would like to take this opportunity to look at each of these areas in detail in order to outline specific progress to date.

1: Customer Service Delivery and Quality

1.1 Establishment of a Customer Services Centre

As previously outlined to the PVG Galway City Council set up a dedicated project team to carry out a review of customer driven processes in City Hall with a view to

- Maximising efficiencies in work processes
- Relieving pressure on staff and
- In the process, identifying, agreeing and implementing improvements in Customer Service.
- Development of Procedural Documents

Cuirfear fáilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge / Correspondence in the Irish Language is welcomed

It was agreed that the initial focus would be on the following three areas Planning, Housing and examination of the amalgamation of four existing public counters (reception, cashiers, traffic and refuse)

The project team was also required to examine different customer services models and make recommendations regarding a model that would best suit our organisation.

Customer Services Model

One of the key findings of the review was that over 80% of our customers are engaging with us by phone rather than in person. Currently we are receiving over 3,000 calls per week.

The team has undertaken extensive consultation with the relevant staff over the past few months. A final model was presented and agreed with the Senior Management Team on 23/05/08 having had discussions in advance with the Consultative Group and other key staff.

The Customer Services Centre will be built around a centralised approach to the delivery of services via counter, telephone and web which will focus more on the Customer and the delivery of a consistent high quality service.

The key elements of the model are as follows:

- Establishment of a Customer Services Centre (CSC) to incorporate a call centre and the main switch board
- Amalgamation of the three existing public counters i.e. refuse, traffic and reception. The refuse and traffic counters will be closed and the front counter will operate at the current reception area. The cash office will continue to operate in its current status.
- The model to be implemented on a phased basis, phase 1 to deal with the customer queries in relation to – Traffic and Bulky Goods, Phase 11- Refuse
- It is envisaged that 70% of the customer queries will now be dealt with at first point of contact in the Customer Services Centre. This target to be increased post implementation
- Introduction of Service Level Agreements that will outline clearly the responsibilities and hand-offs of both the CSC and the relevant department.
- The CSC will operate under the Corporate Services directorate.

The staffing requirements for the CSC have been identified and will include redeployment of staff from certain departments across the organisation following an analysis of the savings expected from the originating departments.

The Customer Services Manager is currently being recruited and it is expected that the successful candidate will be on site in the coming weeks.

All staff of the CSC will receive an intensive six-week training programme prior to go-live date. There will be full integration of staff within CSC i.e. between Call Centre and front counter and the CSC Manager will be responsible for rostering the staff.

The model as outlined above is being implemented on a phased basis and will be expanded to other areas of the organisation based on further analysis and review.

The review will be carried out by the CSC Manager by the end of December 2008 and future expansion of the CSC will be in consultation and agreement with the relevant Directorates.

1.2 Review of primary work processes in Planning & Housing

1.2.1 Planning

A review has been carried out on the major Planning processes, which identified that there are a number of significant improvements that can be made, which will benefit the customer, staff and the organisation. One of the major changes that has been introduced is the Planning Validation process. Since early 2008, we have been offering pre-validation of Planning Applications at the public counter with full validation, including site inspection notice, within 24 hours. Prior to this the validation process took on average five no. weeks. This involved changes of work practice within the area and full co-operation and flexibility of the staff involved.

The project team is still working with Planning staff in relation to improvements of other processes such as

- Planning decision making including internal reports
- Unauthorised development
- Part V process

1.2.2. Housing

In relation to Housing the major processes have also been reviewed and a number of improvements were made:

- Introduction of a weekly translation service facility for French & Polish speaker;
- Scanning system for all paper files;
- Introduction of checklists & enhancements to Application forms & information packs;
- Greater use of existing IT systems.

Work is still ongoing in relation to enhancements to the HOME system and to some internal I.T. systems. We are also examining the possibility of automation of Job Cards and the Wages Timesheets.

Our customer base has changed and this has had a major impact on delivery of housing services. To address this issue the following has been proposed and discussed with the key staff in Housing:

- Need to devise a new strategy in relation to delivery of Housing services (holistic approach to housing)
- Need to carry out a review of counter and telephone services in the Housing Section
- Review of existing staff structure in Housing Section

2: Organisational Change and Innovation

Galway City Council has prioritised the provision of high quality basic essential services to our customers as our key priority objective. In this regard the Council has established two Forward Planning Units in the area of Water Services and Transportation.

The Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) Unit was established in 2006 and since then, significant progress has been made in the roll-out of the WSIP projects and also in

achieving the targets set out in the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013. The current WSIP 2007 – 2009 highlights that there are eight schemes included for Galway City with a total estimated cost of approximately €114.5M. The Unit also manages and prepares Final Accounts for a number of other schemes from previous Water Services Investment Programmes, which have a total cost of €110M.

In addition, the City Council with the support of the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, is currently establishing the Galway Transportation Unit (GTU), which will be operational in September 2008. Work is currently underway recruiting the relevant specialised personnel in the area of Transport Planning and Traffic Management. The purpose of establishing the dedicated unit is to accelerate the delivery of public transport infrastructure within the City and implement strategic traffic management initiatives that will improve traffic management for all road users in the City. The establishment of the GTU is an essential requirement in the implementation of existing strategies and plans and in the preparation of on-going plans to cater for the continued development of the City and its hinterland. The Unit is being established for an initial five-year period and the timescale will enable significant delivery of existing plans such as the Strategic Bus Study, transport aspects of the Gateway Innovation Fund and actions identified in the Galway Transportation & Planning Study including Park & Ride.

The City Council has just developed a business website for Galway City called eGalway.Biz. The new www.eGalway.Biz web portal was officially launched on 8th July 2008 in City Hall and its aim is to encourage the people and businesses of Galway to get online and embrace all that broadband and the Internet have to offer. The website will simplify the e-launch process for businesses and will empower e-entrepreneurs with the basic tools, information and resources necessary to launch a product or service on the World Wide Web.

3: Development of Shared Services

Galway City Council continues to work closely with Galway County Council in the delivery of services on a shared basis. Services which are currently provided on a shared basis include higher education grants, water safety, pollution control, recruitment, library services and the fire services.

Senior management teams of both Councils have met recently to discuss the shared services generally and further consideration is being given to the area of training and development. The Training Officers of both organisations are progressing joint training programmes. In addition to the financial savings, this also provides opportunities for networking of staff & sharing of experiences. Senior Management training was also undertaken on a shared basis.

Within the transport area, both authorities are working on joint transport initiatives including park and ride facilities, and the development of commuter rail services on the Athenry / Galway City rail line.

4: Staff Training / PMDS

The City Council's Training & Development Policy objective is to utilise our resources to maximum effect in training and upskilling of our staff. Galway City Council has a dedicated Training Officer who provides advice and support to line managers within each Directorate. In order to increase our capacity to develop an effective staff-training programme, an In-House Training Committee, comprising of the Training Officer and a nominated person from each department has been established. The function of the Training Committee, which meets every second month, is to oversee and approve the Training Programmes and to ensure that all discussions in relation to training are inclusive.

The Continued Professional Development (CPD) of our staff is one of the Council's objectives in our Training Plan for 2008. We are currently working towards achieving the CPD Accreditation through Engineers Ireland which is designed to support lifelong learning, by stimulating and recognising good organisational practice in the area of professional development. We will also be working with other professionally qualified staff across the organisation in relation to their own individual requirements.

The Partnership Facilitator who now holds the brief also for PMDS implementation continues to monitor progress in this regard. PMDS has now been rolled out across all departments and the training element of each PDP is returned to the Training Officer, which in turn assists in compiling the training programme for the year. Following on from the rollout of the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) across the organisation Galway City Council is now working towards achieving the Excellence Through People Award in 2008 on a phased basis, initially commencing with the Corporate Services department.

All Senior Team Development Plans were completed in the first quarter of 2008. Following on from the completion of the Training Programme for 2008, expenditure on the Corporate Training budget is at 57%, which is on target for the year. A significant number of courses are being planned for the last quarter of the year, which includes admission into the IPA Certificate and Diploma in Local Government Studies and Degree programmes commencing in September 2008. The average number of training days per staff member is currently 1.5 days.

Galway City Council continues to surpass the 3% target in relation to expenditure on Training and Development as a percentage of payroll costs.

5: Co-operation with other Agencies

5.1 Planning and Economic Development:

The Planning Department continue to work closely with other agencies in relation to planning and economic development issues for example:

- Ongoing meetings with external stakeholders in relation to the Gateway Innovation Fund. A decision is awaited from the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government.

- A number of meetings have been held with external stakeholders involved in the preparation of the city for the Volvo Ocean Race in May 2009. Co-operation from the major agencies is essential in order for the race to be a success for Galway. This will be the largest sporting event in Europe next year.
- Meetings have been held with external stakeholders in relation to local area plans, e.g. The Headford Road Framework Plan, Small Crane.
- Galway City and County Councils commissioned Consultants to prepare Strategic Development Concepts for lands at Ardaun, east of the built up area of Galway City. Following the Consultants recommendations, the joint local authorities are advancing agreement on the implementation of the Concepts Study.

5.2 Major Emergency Planning

Galway City Council through the Major Emergency Planning Frameworks meets on a regular basis with the Fire Service, An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive, Defence Forces, Galway Harbour Authority and the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

In addition, Council staff have been involved in training at Roscrea Civil Defence Head Quarters pertaining to the new framework for Major Emergency Management (MEM). This training involved staff from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and other Local Authority staff from Connacht and Munster.

5.3 Environment:

Galway City has the most successful green schools programme in the country, with 100% of secondary schools and 96% of primary schools registered for this environmental education programme. The Environment Education Officer (EEO), through school visits, talks, workshops and provision of materials, provides support and assistance to all participating schools. In addition, the EEO carries out green school assessments and organises green flag ceremonies within each school.

Galway City Council continues to encourage and promote waste minimisation and recycling in the city through the provision of first-class waste management services, combined with innovative education campaigns and effective enforcement activities. Our household recycling rates exceed national targets and, at > 50%, are significantly higher than the national average of 21%. Consequently, the amount of waste diverted from landfill in Galway city is among the highest in the country.

These impressive recycling rates are due, predominantly, to the innovative waste collection service operating in the city, a unique system that combines a three-bin segregated kerbside collection with a pay-by-weight charging facility. This system, which is the first of its kind in Ireland, directly incentivises waste prevention and minimisation, the preferred options for waste management, as outlined in national policy. The charging structure in place also encourages recycling, with landfill waste charged at a higher rate per kg than recyclable and compostable waste. Households are, therefore, rewarded for reducing, reusing and recycling and, on average, refuse costs in the city are less than in previous years. In addition, the generation of detailed customer and waste arising data through operation of the service provides an excellent opportunity to investigate waste trends in the city. This directs development

and optimisation of the service, ensuring that the people of Galway are continually provided with an equitable, sustainable and competitive service.

Galway City Council was chosen to participate in Phase I of the Local Authority Prevention Demonstration (LAPD) Programme, an EPA-funded project through the National Waste Prevention Programme.

Galway City Council, in conjunction with Galway County Council, is working with businesses and communities throughout Galway on waste prevention, focusing specifically on the areas of energy conservation, water conservation, waste reduction and recycling.

For this project, the EEO is undertaking certified training in waste and resource use prevention, to provide her with the knowledge and technical skills necessary to develop, conduct, lead and manage waste prevention and minimisation strategies within organisations and communities.

Throughout the summer months, Galway City will participate in the Gum Litter Taskforce (GLT), an anti-litter campaign aimed at reducing the amount of gum litter on our streets. The GLT is a joint initiative between representatives of the chewing gum industry, DOEHLG, Food and Drink Industry Ireland, Department of Education and Science, ENFO, ECO UNESCO, Foroige, local authority representatives and Retail Ireland.

Galway City launched the national campaign last year and in 2008, Galway City Council will continue to support and promote the GLT.

5.4 Transportation & Infrastructure:

The Transportation and Infrastructure Directorate works closely with the relevant stakeholders on a daily basis in the provision and enhancement of its services. Procedures are in place to co-operate with other Agencies as required:-

- Galway County Council, Health Service Executive & the Environmental Protection Agency in relation to the to the quality of water and any other relevant issues.
- The Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, Department of Transport – both on an ongoing basis with regard to development of roads & infrastructure.
- Co-ordinating with “Lets do it Galway” group (set up to facilitate the Volvo Ocean Race Stopover) in the context of Traffic Management, Park & Ride and enhancement and upgrading of relevant works.
- Affiliated to the Integrated Transportation Co-Ordinating Group (of the Galway City Development Board)
- Ongoing co-operation with the Garda Siochana.

5.5 Community & Enterprise:

The Community & Enterprise section continues to lead, reinforce, promote and guide local authority activity related to community activity in its broader sense. The Council is currently establishing its Social Inclusion Unit, which will be located in the Community & Enterprise section. The creation of this unit will formalise and support the process of social inclusion into a policies and procedures context for Galway City Council. The Council will play a lead role in developing strategies and advancing

work programmes aimed at assisting communities to improve their quality of life. The Unit will liaise and work both with internal departments of the City Council and with other agencies to support the Council in tackling social exclusion in a focused and cohesive manner.

This role with regard to tackling social exclusion is further reflected in the implementation of the RAPID Programme. Galway City Council, in conjunction with An Garda Síochána, Health Service Executive, and family support groups has developed its Strategic Plan which aims to promote the five RAPID areas of Galway city within the context of the overall development of the city through engaging with all agencies on the Area Implementation Team (AIT) and the Galway City Development Board (GCDB).

The Galway Healthy Cities project is part of an international initiative by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The project continues to advance its aim of enhancing the health of the city, its environment and its people. The core themes of this initiative are Health Impact Assessment, Health Ageing, Healthy Urban Planning and Active Living. These core themes are being advanced through the work of the sub-groups of the Galway Healthy Cities Forum whose membership comprises of Galway City Council, HSE West and the Community Forum.

6: Value for Money / Efficiency / Effectiveness

- With the introduction of validation of planning applications at the public planning counter, there has been a reduction in the number of refunds of invalid planning application fees. Planners are no longer dealing with validation of planning applications and have more time to focus on planning decisions. The introduction of online viewing of planning applications creates a more efficient service to our customers and maximises staff resources in the Planning Office.
- A number of environmental awareness campaigns will take place from March-September 2008, including a joint anti-litter campaign with Galway County Council, a cigarette litter campaign and a 'be a responsible dog owner' campaign. The Environmental Education Officers of both authorities regularly work jointly in the management of these campaigns to raise awareness across a range of environmental initiatives.
- The Recruitment Departments of Galway City Council and Galway County Council continue to work jointly in relation to the recruitment of Clerical Officers and Assistant Staff Officers. The County Council create Clerical Officer joint panels for the use of both authorities and the City Council create Assistant Staff Officer joint panels for the use of both authorities. The departments work closely in the development of appropriate competencies and the selection of interview boards etc. There are significant financial savings resultant from this process on an annual basis to both authorities.
- In March 2008, following the implementation of PMDS and a number of BPR exercises across the organisation; the City Council undertook an analysis of its staffing resources across each Directorate. The review identified that there

was over reliance on contract staff and a requirement for additional permanent posts. The outcome of this review was presented to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

- Galway City Council is constantly examining our processes to ensure that we are making the best use of our limited resources. The establishment of the Customer Services Centre, incorporating a call centre, is intended to maximise efficiencies in work processes, relieve pressure on staff and, in the process, identify, agree and implement improvements in customer service.
- The City Council works closely with Galway Energy Agency in the sourcing & installation of reduced energy solutions. Low energy bulbs are currently being sourced for public lighting and currently 5% bio-fuel is being used in all Galway City vehicles. A pilot project is currently being advanced to use 100% bio-fuels for the running of five vehicles and it is expected that this will be operational by year-end.

Conclusion:

As can be seen from the above and the additional information provided on the checklist attached, Galway City Council continues to make sound progress on all of our commitments under the national and local plans.

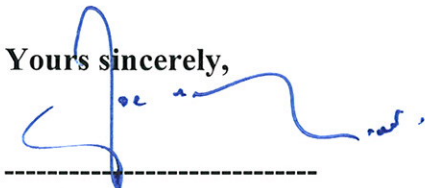
The continued enhancement of Customer Service is at the heart of our work and this is clearly evidenced from our plans to completely re-energise our modus operandi for direct customer contact. The City Council is now re-organising our internal processes to meet the demands and preferences of our customers.

The establishment of the WSIP and the planned establishment of the GTU will ensure that Galway is well provided for in relation to critical infrastructure for our future. The enhancement of our transport options will also make Galway City and its environs an even more attractive place to live, work and visit into the future.

All of the above developments have been possible due to the dedication of the staff of the City Council. There has been no disruption to service provision over the period in question and therefore I am pleased to recommend to the PVG that the staff of Galway City Council warrant the payment of the 2.5% increase from September, 2008.

If you require any further information or assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me or Ms. Eileen Ruane, Senior Executive Officer, Human Resources Department on (091)536443 or by email at eileen.ruane@galwaycity.ie.

Yours sincerely,



**Joe MacGrath,
Galway City Manager.**