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Mo Thag:

BD/JM

Do Thag.

10th July, 2008



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COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE
GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL

Ms. C. Gavigan/ Mr. M. Merrigan
Joint Chairs,
LANPAG,
Local Government House,
35/39 Ushers Quay,
Dublin 2.



Re: Performance Verification under TOWARDS 2016 (March 2008 – August 2008)

Dear Ms. Gavigan and Mr. Merrigan,

I refer to your letter of 28th May, 2008 in relation to the above and outline hereunder Galway County Council's progress in, and commitment to, achieving the objectives of the Local Authority Sectoral Action Plan. My Report pays particular attention to initiatives and actions that demonstrate progress in relation to the six headings highlighted in your letter. I also attach the Indicator Checklist signed by the Chairpersons of the Workplace Partnership Committee.

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

Enhanced Customer Service

The Social Inclusion Unit was established in February 2008 and has commenced its co-ordination work with other Units of the Council to ensure an integrated approach to addressing social inclusion on current initiatives such as the delivery of the Social and Affordable Housing Plan, the implementation of the Traveller Accommodation Programme, co-ordination of the Community Warden Scheme, provision of Disability Awareness Training as well as giving support to the County Galway Community Forum and RAPID Programmes. The Social Inclusion Unit will enable us to implement actions contained in the Social Inclusion Strategy published in 2006 and very importantly provide us with a dedicated support to promote social inclusion in our day to day work and enhance our capacity to research social issues and plan accordingly. On 16th June, 2008 the Social Inclusion Unit launched in bilingual and accessible formats "Your Guide to Our Services". The Guide contains a comprehensive list of services offered by County Galway Local Authorities giving a brief, easy to read, summary of each service, direct contact details for the person dealing with each particular service, opening hours for all our public library services and offices and other useful contact numbers for Services such as Citizens Information Centres, HSE, Hospitals, Gardaí, Fás etc.

The Library Services continues to enhance its service to our customers with a new Branch Library opened on 19th May, 2008 in Dunmore and Structural Drawings have been prepared for the development of a new library in Ballinasloe. Work is well underway on the construction of new Regional Offices in Tuam, which will also include a new Library.

The review of services for all our Regional Offices is almost complete and it is intended to provide additional services including Motor Tax at these offices when the required additional facilities identified have been provided.

A review of all Council Application Forms has been completed and user-friendly, accessible, plain language forms have now been developed. The translation of these to

Iasachtaí/Deontais Tithfochta

(091) 509 301

Housing Loans/Grants

Iarratais Tithfochta

(091) 509 300

Housing Applications

Comhshaoil

(091) 509 302

Environment

Acmhainní Daonna

(091) 509 303

Personnel

Mótarcháin

(091) 509 099

Motor Taxation

Ceadúnais Tiomána

(091) 509 305

Driving Licences

Seirbhísí Uisce

(091) 509 306

Water Services

Pobal & Fiontar

(091) 509 066

Community & Ent.

Pleanáil

(091) 509 308

Planning

Innealtóireacht

(091) 509 309

Engineering

Clár na dTogthóirí

(091) 509 310

Register of Electors

Deontais Ard Oideachais

(091) 509 310

Higher Ed. Grants

bilingual format is now well advanced. A Customer Survey has been conducted on our Motor Tax Service and awareness raising has been undertaken regarding payment options available to customers. The development of the Library Blog has facilitated customer feedback on our library services and has become one of the most widely used sections of our Website. A range of assistive technology aids in a number of libraries in line with the Disability Action Plan have been installed and include screen readers, electronic magnifiers and Braille printers. Browsealoud Software to enable readers to have the web pages of our website read aloud has been introduced.

The Disability Action Plan 2007-2015 work programme continues and Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government funding of €470,000 has been secured this year. Galway County Council has entered the NDA Excellence Through Accessibility Awards 2008. Access improvements have been completed including power automated doors, the installation of induction loops, lowered counters, improvements to accessible toilets, audio and Large Print books for Branch Libraries, continuation of our Disability Awareness Training Programme for staff, the installation of an accessible information Kiosk in the Planning Department and evacuation chairs for use in County Hall and Centrepont Offices have been installed.

I very much welcome the agreement of staff through Workplace Partnership to the opening of our offices during Race Week, given the long standing tradition of closing the Council's offices at 11:00am on the Wednesday & Thursday of that week.

The introduction of CCTV in both rapid towns of Ballinasloe and Tuam has now been completed and is operational.

Co-operation with other agencies

Galway County Council continues to develop its linkages and co-operation with other agencies. As I mentioned earlier contact details for many agencies are included in our document "Your Guide to our Services". A key area of linkage for the Council is with Galway City Council and Joint meetings of the Management Teams from Galway City Council and Galway County Council are now taking place on a regular basis. Galway County Council is working with Údaras na Gaeltachta and LEADER in relation to the development of the Spiddal library. We are working with Údaras na Gaeltachta, the Department of Community Rural and Gealtacht Affairs, NUI, Galway and local community groups in relation to a Swimming Pool proposal for An Cheathrú Rua. Work is continuing with the O.P.W in relation to the provision of a one-stop-shop office accommodation in Clifden and it is expected that the planning process will be finalised this year with tentative plans to commence the construction phase next year. As part of a series of new innovative tourism initiatives Galway County Council launched the 'Wayfinding Project' creating six new walking trails in town centres in East Galway focused on the 'architectural' features of the towns and the development of two new driving trails to promote the ecclesiastical heritage of East Galway. The project was co-funded by Fáilte Ireland and developed in co-operation with external partners, Galway East Tourism, Local Heritage Groups and Loughrea, Tuam and Ballinasloe Town Councils. All of the Arts Programmes are run in conjunction with other agencies and we roll out a series of programmes in conjunction with Galway City Council to ensure minimum spend with maximum impact. Galway County Council will also work with other agencies and make a valuable contribution to the Galway Transportation Unit.

Work has commenced on the establishment of an Interagency Recreation and Amenity Sub-group of Galway County Development Board and a Hub Town Development Committee for Tuam has been established as recommended in the report published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government under the Chairmanship of the Director of Community & Enterprise. This Committee will also function as a sub-committee of Galway County Development Board.

Under the RAPID Programme the Dublin Road Neighbourhood Park and Playground in Tuam was delivered utilising many funding streams. With input from local school children a public artwork and piece of natural interactive architecture "Maritime Shell" was created on a disused road opposite Oran Town Centre.

Development of Shared Services

Galway County Council and Galway City Council continue to work closely across a range of functions with Galway County Council leading on many of these services, which I outlined in my last report of

December 2007. The issue of shared services is under discussion between the Management Teams of Galway City and County Councils, specific areas are being earmarked for examination including Training. The sharing of in-house expertise in Galway County Council with Ballinasloe Town Council on the development of the Ballinasloe Town Development Plan is also underway.

Staff Training\PMDS

The expenditure incurred to date as a % of Total Payroll Costs up to the end of June 2008 was 5.5% exceeding the national average of 3%. A total of 1794.50 training days have been provided for the period Jan – June 08, incorporating 802 training days attended by GO & Related Grades. The area of Health and Safety continues to receive major prominence and the National Induction Programme for Outdoor Staff is planned for roll-out in the Autumn.

Galway County Council focused strongly on the roll-out of new courses, such as, Advanced Surface Dressing, C2 (Supervisory) Confined Spaces, Adult School Warden Training and the newly developed CSCS Signing, Lighting & Guarding at Roadwork's during period Jan - June 2008. Dignity at Work Policy Awareness Training has been provided on an ongoing basis and at this point in time we have reached almost 75% of Staff with 242 staff engaging in the training this year to date with further sessions planned for October 2008.

Galway County Council facilitated the piloting of the Line Manager/Supervisory Skills Programme with ten participants undertaking the course and feeding back in relation to the course structure and content which is informing the next phase of the roll out of this course nationally.

The half yearly PMDS Review is currently being undertaken across all Directorates and is targeted for completion by 31st July, 2008.

Organisational change and innovation under T2016

In achieving balanced and sustainable development and as part of its ongoing commitment to maximizing energy efficiency, Galway County Council has employed an Energy Programme Manager to implement a structured internal Energy Management Programme for the Council. The programme will lead the way in addressing energy use strategically through best practice energy management leading ultimately to decreasing dependence on fossil fuels and energy use. The Council's Green Team was established in May 2008 to help *Green* our workplace as part of the Galway Waste Prevention Project. The Green Team has now launched their intranet and initiatives such as reducing the energy consumption of computers, staff now using reusable envelopes for internal post etc. are being put in place.

The Time and Attendance System is continuing to be embedded in Galway County Council with Technical and Administrative staff using the system to clock their working time and make leave applications on-line. Roll-out of the system is scheduled for completion by December 2008 and in the interim we are focusing on introducing the system to the Area Engineering Offices and Full-time Firefighters by September 2008 and to the Library Service by December 2008.

The Workplace Partnership Committee continue to play a pivotal role in achieving organizational change with a broad range of topics discussed and issues agreed since January 2008 including the opening of Council offices during the Galway Races as mentioned earlier. A second meeting of the Handling Significant Change Forum took place and a comprehensive list of issues has been agreed as being appropriate for initial consideration by the Local Partnership Committee.

Galway County Council is continuing to develop local service indicators with a view to creating efficiencies at local level while at the same time achieving national service indicator targets, Galway County Council has recently been audited in respect of its national service indicator returns.

Galway County Council has begun working on the development of a HR Strategy for the Council based on the HR Strategy Framework developed by the Local Government Management Services Board. The development of a HR Strategy will allow us to achieve very clear objectives in relation to (i) Planning and Recruiting our Workforce; (ii) Achieving through people; (iii) Creating an equitable, consultative and

supporting work environment and (iv) Creating a positive and safe working environment for our highly valued staff.

Value for Money/Efficiency/Effectiveness

As previously indicated Shared Services with Galway City Council in relation to Training provision/delivery is actively being considered. An on-line payment facility has been introduced for Fixed Charge Notices, Litter and Traffic fines, Housing Rents and Loans. A billing system for road opening licences to facilitate individual connection to An Bord Gais Network is being implemented. Staff have co-operated with the Design, Build and Operate model for the Headford Sewerage Scheme and the DBO Model is being pursued in other projects while being discussed at Partnership. The introduction of Handhelds for the issuing of Fixed Charge Notices (FCN's) by Community Wardens came into operation in April 2008. Finetracker has been introduced in relation to the processing of and facility to pay on-line for FCN's and the issue and renewal of Residents' Parking Permits. There is ongoing co-operation to facilitate the introduction of the new Costing Budgetary Model and roles in the Income Department have been reassigned as a result of increased use of on-line payment options. The Department of Finance – Capital Works Management Framework for Public Works Contracts has been implemented.

Revised work practices and procedures as identified through a structured approach to Risk Assessments have been undertaken in the context of Safety, Health and Welfare at Work legislation.

Three meetings of the Audit Committee have taken place and the Audit Committee Charter, Internal Audit Charter and the Audit Plan for 2008 have being agreed. The Communications Focus Group Report was completed in May 2008 with recommendations currently being advanced through Workplace Partnership. An invitation seeking tenders for the provision of cash collection, auditing and banking of cash from on and off street pay and display parking machines has been made. Pre-Qualification of Contractors to undertake Works including construction of walls, fences, footpaths, kerbing, ducting and minor drainage works throughout the County and Pavement and Minor Improvement Works for National, Regional and Local Roads is in place. There is ongoing redeployment of technical and administrative staff in a number of areas as required.

Seeking to maximise output and responding to perceived needs Galway County & City Arts Offices instituted a series of joined-up strategies in targeted fields to stimulate a collaborative and co-operative process resulting in complementary and integrated projects, thus improving value for money through shared programming for the following: Combined residencies in dance, literature and architecture; Community film-making collaboration; Integrated Arts and Education Programme; Standardised grant application forms with joint funding principles; City and County arts newsletter and information sharing; Integrated programming and advisory supports.

Conclusion

I wish to advise that discussions have taken place with unions on a number of issues and where agreement has not been reached at local level the matter has been progressed through the Labour Relations Commission and the Labour Court in accordance with the Code of Practice on dispute procedures.

I am satisfied that the progress achieved by this Council warrants payment of the increase due under *Towards 2016* for the period March – August 2008 with the exception of staff who have not joined Paypath.

Yours sincerely,



Martina Moloney,
County Manager.