



COMHAIRLE CONTAE CHIARRAÍ
KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL

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11th July 2008.

Ms. Chris Gavigan/
Mr. Matt Merrigan,
Joint Chairs,
LANPAG,
C/O Local Government Management Services Board,
35-39 Ushers Quay,
Dublin 8.

RE: Performance Verification Under Towards 2016
(*March 2008 – August 2008*)

Dear Ms. Gavigan/ Mr. Merrigan

I am writing in relation to your letter of 28th May 2008 in relation to the verification requirements under Towards 2016 in respect of the next pay increase due with effect from 1st September 2008.

This narrative report and the attached checklist sets out the current position in the Kerry Local Authorities. This letter includes my recommendation as Deputy County Manager that the next phase of the pay awards may be paid to the Kerry Local Authority Staff.

General position.

The general position in the Kerry Authorities remains as outlined in previous progress reports. The traditionally strong commitment of staff to continuous improvement, change and modernisation is continuing. This commitment continues by and large without the need for detailed or difficult IR negotiation. At this stage in 2008 there has been ongoing progress in the continuing development and refinement of the corporate planning process. The development of the Corporate Governance agenda including the development of Risk Registers across all service areas has been strengthened with the embedding of mitigation measures into the operational planning process.



In previous contextual letters concerns were raised at the likely difficulties expected to be encountered in 2008 in attempting to advance agenda items scheduled for delivery during this year. Progress has been made on these items through further consultations through the Partnership Structures and the IR processes.

The staff side have articulated locally and within the PVG site visit process ongoing issues with the verification process generally and specifically issues surrounding the following

- Lack of benchmarking matrices across the sector on fundamental issues such as opening hours, demarcation and productivity
- Recognition of strong commencement positions on change and modernisation
- Agenda issues requiring progress where there may be no local service demand such as extension of opening hours

While these fundamental issues continue to exercise the process locally having reviewed with senior management here in Kerry and having considered the views and opinions articulated through our partnership structures I am satisfied at this stage that for this reporting phase that my considered opinion and decision is that the general position remains positive and that there is sufficient progress and cooperation with modernisation and change programmes to warrant positive recommendation by me on the payment of the upcoming 1st September increase.

Summary of principal achievements

I set out hereunder by way of summary a number of examples of achievement since the last progress report under the required headings.

Shared Services.

As previously outlined the focus in Kerry in the initial phase of initiatives under this heading is the examination of areas where a strengthening of the common approach to service delivery can be achieved across the four local authorities within the County – essentially shared local authority service within the County.

As part of the development of the national HR/ Payroll IT project (for which Kerry is a pilot site) the opportunity for the development of shared HR and Payroll systems and processes has been examined and is being pursued where clear improvements to existing systems will result in greater efficiencies and effectiveness.

We are progressing a shared HR model across the four authorities in the areas of manpower planning (including recruitment & selection), training and development, communications, Health and Safety and HR policy and procedures. This will give operational effect in a shared and common approach to the HR Strategy Framework recently launched for the sector. We are currently at an advanced stage of the testing of the new payroll module of the system with full integration with the Agresso Financial Management System and progress to date on a shared payroll process has been positive.

The shared services model in the areas of Financial Management and ICT Services is continuing successfully.

Cooperation with other agencies

A comprehensive presentation on two case studies of innovative cooperation with other agencies in the area of ICT and Energy projects was made at the PVG site visit.

In the ICT area an example of Wireless WAN partnership was demonstrated with significant and quantifiable savings. In the Energy Partnership area numerous examples of the promotion, implementation and delivery of green energy technology and energy cost savings were presented.

While this letter does not afford sufficient opportunity to restate the full detail of these particular initiatives given that they are new examples of continuous improvement not previously reported on outside of the most recent site visits a copy of the PVG Site Visit presentation is attached for your information.

PMDS and Staff training

The focus in this area continues to be the embedding of the PMDS within the overall corporate planning process and the linkage with key drivers such as Corporate Priorities and national drivers such as the T2016 Agreement. While the scale of the organisation, the large number of generic type employment (large direct labour force) and the large number of part time employees did cause initial implementation initiatives these difficulties have by and large been overcome.

The system has been mainstreamed within the Corporate Services/ HR Training function and is driven by the Senior Management Team. There continues to be ongoing refinement in the methodology, approach and implementation locally with significant emphasis on the development of an integrated model flowing seamlessly from the corporate objectives through to individual development focusing on a behavioural approach to performance.

The most significant challenges highlighted at the time of the last narrative letter has been the rapidly changing Health and Safety area with new regulation, new codes (in relation to Lighting signing and guarding at road works for example) and the expansion of the CSCS requirements generally. A significant training and development programme has been identified and is significantly advanced at this point. This programme is being delivered by appropriately qualified internal trainers. The assessment requirements of the formal training programmes are extremely onerous and to ensure that staff are properly prepared we have in place an additional preliminary training and development programme aimed at increasing competence and confidence. This area has been extremely challenging not only from the scale of the training and development programme needed but also from the significant resource investment in the delivery of this programme.

VFM/ Efficiency/ Effectiveness

As previously reported a number of sub committees of management staff have been established and continue to develop specific initiatives in this area.

The previous report outlined the considerable work which was completed in the development of the Corporate Governance agenda including Risk management. The development of this agenda has continued with the corporate risk register having been review earlier this year and this has informed the operational planning process through the inclusion of mitigating actions identified as necessary as part of the risk register work.

The statutory Audit Committee continues to meet and advance its work programme for 2008. As outlined in the last report Kerry County Council has implemented the new Costing Model for the budgetary process for 2008 and this will be expanded to the three Town Councils later in 2008.

Fire Services Change Programme

The Council had included in its local action agenda a detailed series of actions in the fire services area. Significant progress has been made on this agenda and it is highly likely that we will have full delivery on these actions during the lifetime of the current agreement.

Customer Service/ Organisation Change and Innovation

The reorganisation of the revenue collection function was one of the local action items. Following local discussions agreement has been reached on a comprehensive reorganisation of the collection services in Kerry County Council. This local agreement accords generally with the national framework and in addition has provided for a reorganisation of collection areas, accounts and boundaries, provides a basis for the new water metering billing regime and refocuses the service on debt management and generally positioning the Council to better respond to the developing economic climate.

In the Motor Tax area while the national online licensing system provides an efficient and effective customer service there continues to be a slow take up of this service with the majority of vehicle licensing being done directly through the local motor taxation office. In an effort to promote the online system and educate the public in its usage we have provided a dedicated computer terminal in our motor taxation office with staff assigned to demonstrate and guide customers through the online licensing process. It is hoped that this process will increase customer familiarity and confidence in the system and reduce the number of direct transactions through the motor taxation office.

Consultation with Partnership Committee

The process of providing the current progress report has been the subject of consultation with the Partnership Committee. Notwithstanding the concerns of employees outlined earlier the Partnership Committee have considered the Checklist and this narrative letter and have agreed and approved the content.

Summary and Recommendation

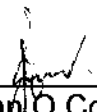
I have considered the current position on the level of cooperation with the ongoing implementation of change programmes across the Kerry Local Authorities.

I am satisfied that a stable industrial relations climate exists in the Kerry Authorities and that agreed procedures continue to be fully observed.

I am satisfied that there has been satisfactory co-operation with the implementation of the modernisation and change agenda provided for in the agreement.

I am satisfied to recommend at this stage that the next phase of the pay increase due on 1st September 2008 should be paid for the staff of the Kerry Local Authorities.

Yours sincerely



John O Connor
Deputy County Manager