



10th July, 2008.



Ms. Chris Gavigan,
Assistant Chief Executive,
Local Government Management Services Board,
Local Government House,
35-39 Ushers Quay,
Dublin 8.

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

Dear Ms. Gavigan,

I refer to your recent letter in the above, and enclose herewith the completed checklist, with comments against the indicators listed.

The present economic climate coupled with the continued growth of Kildare provides challenges and opportunities for Kildare Local Authorities in the delivery of a multitude of services to a growing and increasingly diverse public, and the potential for increased social inclusion issues. Clearly there is an obligation to be efficient and cost effective, and many of the initiatives, while in their own right delivering specific benefits, also reflect a more efficient organisation.

Flexible Work Practices

1. A major revamp of outdoor staffing structures in relation to wastewater services has been undertaken, including the gradual phasing out of general operative and caretaker grades and replacement with two man crews, i.e. highly skilled and trained plant operatives. This will provide full mobility and flexibility between areas to area, area to plants, reporting for duty outside core hours, etc. It should be stated that many of the changes to work practices have been done in the spirit of Partnership, with projects being agreed through "Handling Significant Change through Partnership" consultation meetings.

2. A new dedicated street sweeping unit established in Eastern Engineering area on a pilot basis, based at the Civic Recycling Centre. The team will be interchangeable with other environmental staff – six towns involved in pilot scheme. There has been active consultation with Tidy Towns Groups regarding routes, priorities, etc. Levels of cleanliness in these towns will in turn be reflected in tidy towns results, service indicators (levels of litter) as well as community cohesion. There has been a very positive response to this initiative by the public and the elected members.

3. Technical staff complement in Environment unit also restructured to include a greater focus on the assistant/graduate Scientist grades as being a more cost-effective and appropriate means of responding to new legislation and procedural requirements.
4. New Corporate Risk Management initiative introduced and rolled out in all Departments, including urban authorities. Ongoing review mechanisms established, with linkage to PMDS system and subject to overview by Management Team.
5. Currently undertaking the implementation of new environmental noise regulations jointly by Roads Section and Environment Section, with specific specialised training to be provided.
6. A range of initiatives have been undertaken to enhance accessibility to affordable housing including: advance sales and promotion of product through “private sector” style approach - show apartment, full brochure and programme advertisement, weekend working by staff to show apartments and present mortgage options

Social Inclusion.

1. The Social Inclusion Measures Working Group have completed a Poverty Profile of the County based on the 2006 Census. Following completion of the profile a process was initiated to develop a Local Anti Poverty Profile. A series of thematic workshops were held throughout the month of May 08 which were based on the framework set out in the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016. The Strategy is now in draft format and the completed Local Anti Poverty Strategies when approved by the SIM group will be presented to the County Development Board for ratification and will be used to inform policy, planning and implementation of various actions by the member agencies of the County Development Board.
2. **Rapid Programme.** *The Youth Café* in the Centre of Athy town will be open in the next month. The Café will be used in the morning for the age action group and in the evening for the youth. Funding for this project came from Dormant Accounts. *Allotments scheme:* This involves providing small plots of ground to allow people to grow fruit, vegetable or flower on. We have a wide variety of groups interested in getting involved with this scheme. The groups involved are Choices Mental Health Group, Kare, St Vincent’s Hospital, Age Action Athy, and the Disabled Access Group. We have sourced a piece of ground on a 2 year lease and this will give us time to see the full interest in the scheme and analyse the full benefits of the scheme. This is a very therapeutic and holistic way of getting people out into the community and it gives them a sense of purpose.
3. **Community Smoke Alarm Scheme.** The 2007 Community Smoke Alarm Scheme was very successful in Kildare County Council. In addition to providing 250 with smoke alarms the Community and Enterprise section used it as a tool to further develop the relationship with the Community and Voluntary Forum. The forum assisted in the dissemination of information, identification of vulnerable households and general promotion of the scheme. Similarly some of the local community development projects and the family resource centre are this year using the scheme as a tool for engaging with unemployed men and women’s groups and involving them in the installation process and promoting general fire safety awareness. This is in turn in addition

to the upgrading of our own housing stock, particularly in the context of facilitating more efficient and effective use of fuel resources and providing safer dwellings for the elderly.

Economic Development.

1. **County Development Board.** The recent launch of the Councils Economic Development Strategy has resulted in a renewed focus on Economic Development within the CDB. A working group is now established representative of the Economic, Business and Education partners and a series of brainstorming sessions have taken place to examine potential strategies for economic development based on the CDB ethos of interagency collaboration.

2. **County Research and Statistics Office.**

The County Research and Statistics Office continues to be one of the most valuable resources of the County Development Board. With core funding provided by Kildare County Council the CRSO has made significant contributions to the collation and analysis of data both in house and externally, among our CDB partners. Some of the key achievements to date include:

Kildare County Profile

Kildare Poverty Profile

Geocoding of all housing data sets

Mapping of affordable housing, waiting list etc

Kildare County Childcare Committee – Mapping of Childcare Services / Analysis of Census Data for future planning

Lone Parent Profile

Skills Register for Co. Kildare – using “Itsyourtime.ie” website.

The following pieces of work are planned for future (2008/2009):

Preparation of new County Profile using POWCAR (Place Of Work Census of Anonymised Records) Data and census 2006.

Collaborative research piece with South West Regional Drugs Task Force

Automating geo-coding of in-house datasets

Local area population projections

Mapping and Analysis of public and private transportation in County Kildare

Supporting Communities.

1. Kildare County Council have four entries in the Pride of Place Competition in 2008. Significant support and capacity building is provided to the communities concerned. The competition is used as a tool to develop and build sustainable, strong communities the County and also acknowledge the ongoing work of the residents and community groups.

2. 2008 saw a record number of applications for community, festival and amenity grants. These schemes provide vital funding to a significant number of community groups throughout the County. This year 43 festival grants were awarded, 53 community grants and 41 amenity grants, and combined with other Housing and Recreational Grants are in excess of €600,000.

3. Community and Enterprise Department continue to provide funding to a number of groups specifically working in the area of Social Inclusion, these include Kildare Volunteer Bureau, Kildare Newbridge Interculturalism Today, the Curragh Family Resource Centre and Kildare Community Education Partnership. These groups also receive support from staff of Community & Enterprise on an ongoing basis.

4. The Housing community development Team have re-organised their support services offered to council housing estates by categorising service levels into three grades. This focuses scarce resources through prioritisation, giving communities most at risk the highest levels of support.

5. A cross departmental team has been established through the Equality Action Team to undertake a project in conjunction with the Equality Authority, on "RACE", and focussing on the external customer.

Serving the customer better.

In response to customer demand, refuse collection service revamped and reorganised (26,000 customers), new contract to encompass 2 + 2 arrangements, e.g. domestic refuse and recycling on alternative weeks. The new contract for service incorporates specific performance criteria in relation to customer service, collection protocols, etc., and all bins to be microchipped. New brown/organic bins to be rolled out later this year as a pilot initiative.

Induction loops have been provided at all public counters to assist persons with hearing difficulties, and customer care packs provide aids for persons with visual impairments. The council have also made wheelchairs available for use by the public in accessing services

The council's Customer Charter has been reviewed and improved comment cards are available to encourage comments on our services, thereby assisting us in making improvements. These cards are available at all public counters, libraries, area offices and outreach facilities. An information Contacts list for all sections, including email, telephone and fax numbers are available at all of the aforementioned locations.

Public Private Partnerships

Major DBO schemes agreed, through Partnership process, in respect of the following water/wastewater projects: River Barrow Abstraction: Kildare Town Sewerage Treatment: Kildare Wellfields, and full compliance with Department of Finance Guidelines.

Outsourcing.

In order to deliver a very ambitious programme that will involve installation of heating systems to 900 existing local authority houses, 1250 smoke alarms and insulation in a similar number of dwellings, a number of steps were taken: cross department team established, outsource of work involved, project management control managed by council between council, contractor, consultants and tenants.

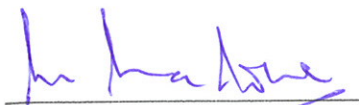
Ongoing delivery of parking control in major towns by external company, who are now issuing litter fines in some of the major towns, i.e. Kildare and Newbridge.

Conclusion

The foregoing is an indication of the modernisation and change programme being pursued in Kildare Local Authorities. The examples outlined also reflect a commitment towards a more efficient utilisation of resources and reflects the fact that staff at all levels are positively disposed to the ongoing programme of service delivery improvement. It is evident that Partnership is a positive influence on the change management process.

I am satisfied to recommend the payment of the final phase of the pay increases under the Social Partnership Agreement -Towards 2016.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Malone.
County Manager.