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Leitrim County Council

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County Library
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Office
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Environment
Hotline
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Water Services
Hotline
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THIS MATTER IS BEING DEALT WITH BY _____ TEL. NO. _____ EXT. NO. _____

Date: _____ Our Ref: _____ Your Ref: _____

13th December 2007

Ms. Chris Gavigan / Mr. Matt Merrigan,
Joint Chairs,
Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group
C/o Local Government Management Services Board,
35 – 39 Ushers Quay
Dublin 8



Re: Performance Verification under Towards 2016
June 2007 – February 2008


A chairde

I refer to the Performance Verification Process and enclose herewith completed reports outlining progress and achievements on various measures outlined in Leitrim County Council's Action Plan under Towards 2016 for the period June 2007 to February 2008 (Appendix 1).

Leitrim County Council continues to implement the modernisation agenda across the entire organisation in accordance with sectoral obligations and aspirations. I am happy to report that progress has been made in the reporting period in critical areas underpinning the modernisation agenda including customer service; co-operation with other agencies; PMDS and staff training; development of shared services; organisational change and the efficient use of available resources. Details of progress and specific achievements in these areas and on other relevant matters are elaborated upon in my report at Appendix 2.

In the context of reports submitted, I recommend that progress on the implementation of the modernisation agenda in Leitrim County Council as detailed in the aforementioned reports be accepted as a basis for payment of the next round of pay increases under the National Pay Agreement - Towards 2016.

Yours sincerely



Jackie Maguire
County Manager



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Beidh Fáilte roimh freagra tre Ghaeilge



Leitrim County Manager's Report
Performance Verification under Towards 2016
Reporting Period - June 2007 to February 2008

Leitrim County Council is committed to delivering on commitments under the National Pay Agreement Towards 2016. I am satisfied that this Local Authority is making verifiable progress in relation to the implementation of the modernisation agenda as set out in Towards 2016 and sectoral action plan.

At the outset, I am pleased and honoured to report on Leitrim County Council's success in winning the title of "Local Authority of the Year" at the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards in November 2007. In winning the overall award, Leitrim County Council was commended for its "progressive stance in such areas as forward planning, physical and social infrastructure, aesthetic improvement, tourism promotion, customer service and community participation".

Progress made to date in advancing the modernisation agenda has been facilitated through proactive workplace partnership and a stable industrial relations climate. In regard to the nine month reporting period (June 2007 - February 2008), I am pleased to be in a position to report on verifiable progress in relation to specific commitments detailed in our Action Plan and the Sectoral Plan. This report details the specific achievements and progress made under the following headings:-

- Enhanced Customer Service
- Co-operation with other agencies
- Development of Shared Services
- Staff Training/PMDS
- Organisational change and innovation under Towards 2016
- Value for money/efficiency/effectiveness

Enhanced Customer Service

Leitrim County Council is committed to the delivery of quality customer services and has continued its efforts in the reporting period under review to further enhance services. Initiatives of particular relevance in this context are as follows:-

- Further enhancements to the Customer Contact Management System including the development of a facility to allow Elected Representatives online access to their enquiries
- Development and publication on the Council intranet of work profiles and areas of responsibility for all office based staff.
- Delivery of effective communication skills training to front line staff in relation to communicating with non English speaking customers and the translation of a range of information leaflets and applications forms into Polish
- Implementation of Action Plan under the Official Languages Act 2003
- Review of signage in Council buildings in light of requirements under the Disability legislation and the Official Languages Act 2003

- Draft Implementation Plan under the Disability Act 2005 developed and consultation process undertaken with disability groups. Further public consultation will take place in January 2008 and the plan will be agreed by the Council following this process. Works were further progressed to improve accessibility to buildings and public spaces and services.
- While generally the level of customer and ombudsman complaints remains low, the Council actively reviews complaints received on an ongoing basis with a view to addressing any deficiencies highlighted
- Enhanced area office facilities and improved Council presence throughout the County as a result of the proposed re-alignment of our engineering work areas on an electoral area basis

Co-operation with other agencies

The Council actively engages with other agencies in the delivery of many of its services. In 2007 the Council placed a strong emphasis on the economic development of the County and in this regard worked very closely with the County Enterprise Board and the Local business community. One of the highlights was the Leitrim Expo held in Croke Park in June and this initiative was shortlisted for the 2007 Chambers Ireland "Partnership with Business Award". The Council also worked in collaboration with Failte Ireland and the Regional Fisheries Boards in the implementation of a €750,000 Investment in tourism infrastructure programme.

We also actively engage with other local authorities and state agencies on a cross border basis in regard to the development of a programme of work under Interreg IV and Peace III.

In regard to sport and recreation the Council have developed a partnership with the FAI and are also completing the establishment of a Local Sports Partnership which involves working with a variety of local agencies and in particular the Irish Sports Council.

The Council established a new partnership project with NUI Galway which yielded the first ever John McGahern International Seminar in July 2007, an event for the local community and interested readers / students of McGahern's work (attendance 200+). This project was also extended to a unique partnership which saw the two local newspapers co-operating on the publication of a series of reviews of John McGahern's work - using mass media to bring his work to a wider audience, and make the event and the importance of McGahern (within the establishment of a Leitrim identity) more apparent.

Since June 2007 the Council has also consolidated and enhanced *TRADE* - a partnership project between Leitrim and Roscommon County Councils. *TRADE* aims to recognise and develop the community of artists living and working in the two counties through seminars, provision of information and resources and direct developmental residencies, at home and abroad.

The Council has also worked closely with Leitrim Partnership and LEADER in progressing a volunteering project. The aim of the project is to encourage and develop volunteering as a key cornerstone in the continued development of Leitrim at local community level.

Development of Shared Services

While the development of shared services is being pursued at national level, Leitrim County Council has pursued a number of initiatives in this regard.

- Implementation of an archiving project on a shared basis with Longford County Council.
- Sharing of customer contact management system and experience to date in managing customer contacts with other local authorities, presenting opportunities for Leitrim County Council to benefit from any system enhancements undertaken by such other local authorities
- Participation in review on potential for shared services e.g. superannuation

Staff Training/PMDS

PMDS has been successfully implemented across the organisation. The 2008 Team Development Plans will be prepared in January 2008 and it is expected that Personal Development Plans will be completed by all staff and agreed by mid March 2008. The training needs identified in this process will form the basis of the 2008 training programme.

Training and development is to the forefront of the Council's human resources activities and in this context the percentage spend of payroll on training at the end of September was 4.32%. It is expected that the percentage spend on training at the end of the year will exceed this figure in view of the high level of training activity in the latter quarter of 2007.

Health and safety was specifically targeted in this years training programme and will continue to be a priority in 2008. There was also a particular requirement to up-skill staff in relation to the new public procurement framework. Two further phase 1 "Return to Learning" programmes commenced in December 2007. In addition to specific organisational training delivered during the year, training activity also reflected individual needs identified through the PMDS process.

An application has also been submitted to FAS to renew the Council's "Excellence Through People" Accreditation and it is expected that the audit will take place early in 2008.

Organisational Change and Innovation under Towards 2016

In 2007, the Council undertook a re-organisation of departmental structures involving the re-constitution of two directorates. The second stage of this re-organisation involving the re-alignment of engineering work areas on an electoral area basis commenced mid year. The matter was considered by the Partnership Committee who recommended a series of consultation workshops with staff.

Following the general consultation process the unions requested that the matter be dealt with in the industrial relations arena and discussions are currently ongoing in this forum. It is proposed that the new work areas will be operational from the 1 January 2008.

While there has been a certain level of resistance to the proposed changes, it is envisaged that any issues arising will be addressed through further consultation and discussion with staff and union representatives.

Value for money/efficiency/effectiveness


It is an objective of the Council to deliver efficient and effective services and demonstrate value for money and in this context organisational structures, processes and procedures are subject to ongoing review.

Particular issues addressed in the current reporting period include

- Risk Management
- Enhanced procurement procedures
- Establishment of audit committee
- Re-organisation of engineering work areas
- Implementation of costing project
- Introduction of new procedures regarding financial management and control

In the context of the foregoing, the maintenance of stable industrial relations, ongoing co-operation with previously agreed modernisation and change programmes, and notwithstanding some resistance encountered to date in relation to the re-organisation of work areas, I am happy to submit this report together with progress report in accordance with nationally agreed reporting templates, and recommend that same be accepted as a basis for payment of the next round of pay increases under the Towards 2016 agreement.

Signed:


Jackie Maguire
County Manager

Date: 13 December 2007