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Longford County Council

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Our ref.: TC/jk
Date: 14th December, 2007

Ms. Chris Gavigan/Mr. Matt Merrigan
Joint Chairs LANPAG
Local Government Management Services Board
Local Government House
35/37 Ushers Quay
Dublin 8



Performance Verification under Towards 2016

Dear Chairpersons,

I wish to refer to the above mentioned and enclose herewith completed checklist and narrative report in respect of Longford Local Authorities. The enclosed checklist outlines and confirms progress in respect of quite a number of the commitments and the narrative report highlights particular areas where significant progress was achieved.

I can confirm that a stable industrial relations climate was maintained and that employees have fully co-operated with implementation of the modernisation programme.

I am accordingly satisfied to recommend payment of the next phase of the pay increases due under Towards 2016.

Yours sincerely,


Tim Caffrey
Longford County Manager

County Managers Narrative Report Longford Local Authorities

Performance Verification under Towards 2016

I am pleased to report on progress in respect of commitments in our Local Authorities action plan to ensure we continue to deliver enhanced services to customers and achieve changes in work practices improving organisational efficiency.

Enhanced Customer Service

Creating a customer focused organisation requires an outward focus and a strong commitment to respond to the public's needs. The introduction and opening of the Council's Customer Services Desk in October with a dedicated team of trained staff provides customers with improved access to all Council services at a single point of contact. The introduction of the desk co-coincided with extended opening hours greatly enhancing the organisation's service to the public.

Organisation Change and Innovation

As part of continuing organisational change to consolidate work practices and reduce duplication of activities, a centralised Cash Receipting Office was opened at the end of October. The development of the Cash Receipting Office adjacent to the Customer Services Desk provides Customers with the facility to pay for multiple services at one location. The operation of the Cash Receipting Office consolidates a number of existing work practices, reduces duplication of activities in individual sections, improves connectivity between functional areas and facilitates the extension and reassignment of duties and responsibilities of employees.

The possibility of introducing an electronic recording system for queries and customer complaints is being explored. Arrangements are being made to facilitate customers who may wish to submit complaints on line.

In the context of an increasing Customer Base and the evolution of work practices contributing to duplication of functions leading to inefficient customer engagement in the Water Services and Rates Departments, it is proposed to consolidate these distinct separate teams into a single multi-disciplinary Commercial Accounts Receivable Team particularly focused on the commercial customer base. The planned commencement date for the operation of the new team is 1st February, 2007. Consultation with employees and their representatives is now at an advanced stage.

The recent establishment of the Communications Office focuses on improving communications both internally and externally and is an innovative approach to serving the customer better. The Communications Office proactively manages the dissemination of relevant information on all areas of the Council's activities.

The Local Authorities have made considerable progress through the funding available to the provision of improved access to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

A variety of physical and technological improvements are now in place following the conducting of Disability Access audits including hearing loop system in all Branch Libraries.

Environmental Initiative

Longford Town Council developed and implemented a project using bio-diesel as an environmentally friendly alternative fuel. Extensive research was carried out through the use of the internet and Teagasc Crop Research Centre in Carlow provided advice and contacts for a number of producers of bio diesel. Longford Town Council accordingly identified the use of bio-diesel in all of their fleet as something that could be achieved in a short period of time without the need for any significant set up cost. While the project in itself does not need day to day management ongoing feedback from drivers and operators of vehicles is very important. This feedback has already been provided to a number of local authorities throughout the country. It is hoped that the results of this project will have knock-on effects in the transport sector and public service right throughout the country.

The implementation of this project is an example of efficiency and effectiveness as there is a significant value for money aspect. The foresight of the local authority in developing and implementing this project illustrate the benefits that can be gained in examining work practices and carrying out improvements to the systems and practices. This was recognised at the recent Chambers of Commerce 'Excellence in Local Government Awards'.

Training and Development

Implementation of the Local Authorities Training Plan continues with structured training provided to employees in line with the business needs of the organisation. These training opportunities ensure that employees increase their knowledge, respond to new challenges and develop to their full potential. The PMDS process ensures that employees have a major input into the Training Plan and targets training at the business needs of the organisation and at the employees personal development needs. A number of employees are pursuing life long learning supported through the organisation's revised Open Learning and Training and Development Scheme. The Council continued to promote the Leadership Programme and currently have one employee participating in this Programme.

Co-operation with other Agencies

The Community and Enterprise Department through the Social Inclusion Measures Group has collaborated with different agencies in delivering enhanced community development. Through funding secured a Volunteer Co-ordinator was appointed to assist local communities in facilitating increased community participation in the Pride of Longford Competition. This competition recognises community co-operation and inclusiveness. Funding secured to assist the development and support of a Youth Council is a critical element in enriching local democracy.

Improved services delivered to marginalised groups include supporting access for Lone Parents to education, funding for Disadvantaged Youth (sixteen sports clubs supported), participation in EQUAL project supporting female entrepreneurs. Lead the local traveller interagency group in delivering specific initiatives facilitating integration and developed a referral service to assist in the area of substance abuse. The local library service provides a

front line interaction with a diverse range of customers. This level of interaction enables innovative responses such as LARED (Longford Against Racism Embracing Diversity) an interagency approach to delivering services and specific supports for language teachers in schools.

Signed:



Tim Caffrey
Longford County Manager

Dated this 14th day of December, 2007