



COMHAIRLE CHONTAE LONGFOIRT

Longford County Council

ARAS AN CHONTAE • GREAT WATER STREET • LONGFORD
Tel: (043) 46231 Fax: (043) 41233 Email: manager@longfordcoco.ie

Longford
County Council
Aras an Chontae
Great Water Street
Longford

Comhairle Chontae
Longfoirt

Co. Managers Office 43310



11th July 2008

**Ms. Chris Gavigan/Mr. Matt Merrigan,
Joint Chairpersons,
LANPAG,
C/O Local Government Management Services Board,
Local Government House
35-39 Ushers Quay
Dublin 2.**

Progress Report – Towards 2016

Dear Chairpersons,

I refer to the above mentioned and am pleased to report on progress in respect of commitments in the Action Plan for the Local Authorities for which I have responsibility. This Action Plan provides for a wide range of change initiatives aimed at delivering improved services, increased efficiencies, greater flexibility and enhanced learning and career opportunities for employees.

The attached completed checklist, endorsed by the Joint Chairpersons of the Partnership Committee, and narrative report outlines the ongoing co-operation in achieving progress in Longford Local Authorities delivering on the Commitments set out in 'Towards 2016' in respect of the reporting period.

I am satisfied that the attached checklist and the progress detailed in this narrative report demonstrates that payment of the pay increase from 1st September, 2008 is justified.

Yours sincerely,


**Tim Caffrey,
Longford County Manager.**

County Manager's Narrative Report Longford Local Authorities

Performance Verification under Towards 2016 September 2008 Pay Increases

Enhanced Customer Service

Longford County Council formally launched its Customer Services Desk and Centralised Cash Receipting Office in April 2008. These services are co-located, easily accessible and facilitate enhanced customer service. Employees providing the services work as a flexible team interchanging as demands require in response to customer needs. This cross-functional collaboration and centralised approach has enabled multi-service engagement with customers resulting in increased organisational efficiency and a more responsive customer service.

Employees working on the Customer Services Desk and in the Cash Receipting Office wear uniforms and name badges to promote the professionalism of Longford Local Authorities and to enable the customer to clearly identify them as a point of contact for customer queries. This practice was introduced in a spirit of partnership and in consultation with the employees involved.

A number of initiatives improving both external and internal communication and organisational responsiveness were introduced to provide more efficient and effective service delivery.

A dedicated e-mail service to handle all Media Enquiries was introduced. All enquiries received are electronically recorded and forwarded to the appropriate employee. Responses are drafted in a co-ordinated manner and issued speedily to the media outlets. This new service provides a structured accessible system to enable the submission and timely response to both local and national media.

An electronic method of submitting Customer Comments, Suggestions and Complaints was introduced to enhance the paper based system already in place. Both online and manual submissions are tracked and referred for appropriate follow up action. The key to the systems success is the electronic recording and monitoring ensuring that valuable customer feedback is acted on appropriately.

The manner of dealing with the receipt and issue of faxes by all council employees was recently revised. An electronic handling system for the receipt and distribution of faxes was recently introduced. Utilising ICT technology, faxes are now received centrally at the Customer Services Desk and forwarded electronically via e-mail to the relevant employees. Individual employees now send Faxes from their Desktop PCs. The introduction of these revised practices has led to increased effectiveness and efficiency with a consequential cost saving on direct and indirect costs associated with the sending and receiving of Faxes.

Introduction of Environmental Pollution Complaints System

An electronic Environmental Pollution Complaints System was developed with the objective of streamlining the recording, monitoring and reporting of the full range of Environmental Complaints that the Council receives. The operation of the Environmental Pollution Complaints System commenced earlier this year.

Details of each Environmental Complaint received are recorded centrally. This requires all employees in the Environment Department to work in close co-operation. Complaints received electronically or by telephone are recorded and referred to the relevant "employee investigator" via an e-mail alert.

Thereafter details of investigations carried out, correspondence relating to individual complaints, Enforcement Action details and any other relevant information is recorded electronically. When an investigation is carried out, details of the findings are entered and the "status" of the complaint is changed to either "closed" or "pending". This system enables relevant Line Managers to monitor the complaints referred to each employee and contributes to a more efficient processing of complaints. The system produces reports that provide much of the information required annually for the compilation of the National Environmental Service Indicator returns and the RMCEI (Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections) returns to the EPA. Details relating to complaints are recorded electronically, aiding the efficient identification of litter black spots and repeat offenders. This Environmental Pollution Complaints System has been introduced with the co-operation of employees involved and contributes to the delivery of a more responsive service to customers and other stakeholders.

Co-operation with Ongoing Change/Modernisation

The Partnership Committee continues to have direct input into policy development. The following policies were discussed and feedback provided to the management team during the period under review:

- Acting-up Policy
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Dignity at Work Policy

The Partnership Committee also examined the following issues and made recommendations to the management team with regard to:

- Changing the annual leave year
- Changes to mileage rates
- Development of Retirement & Long Service Function
- Health Screening for all employees

Longford Local Authorities have an established Handling Significant Change Committee, which addresses more difficult substantive issues. This committee is currently addressing the following areas of concern:

- Water & Waste Water Treatment Plant – DBO
- Modernisation of Machinery Yard
- Planned Plant Maintenance Contract

Training & Development

The training needs identified and agreed as part of the employee's Personal Development Plan (PDP) conversations form the basis of Longford Local Authorities' Training Plan for 2008/9. This process ensures that training delivered accurately responds to both employee and organisational needs.

Training offered during past year has covered the following areas of interest:

- Customer Service
- Legal (Courtroom skills, employment law)
- Finance Management (payroll administration, internal auditing)
- Public Procurement
- Staff Development (line management, interview board training, supervisory skills)
- Roadwork's and Technical
- Construction Skills and Certification
- Biodiversity
- Equality & Diversity
- Environmental Awareness
- Water Treatment & Safety
- Information Technology

In response to the Council's Retirement Policy, a Retirement Planning Seminar was delivered to employees approaching retirement. This seminar included managing the changes the employee can expect to encounter in retirement, pension and investment opportunities, social welfare entitlements and other relevant health and social activities. It is intended to offer further seminars to coincide with retirement dates.

Longford Local Authorities endeavor where possible to offer training programmes in conjunction with neighbouring Local Authorities. This cost efficient practice allows us to maximise the impact of training provided, facilitates networking and the sharing of expertise.

In addition to the training outlined above, a comprehensive programme of Health & Safety training has been rolled out to employees in response to legislative requirements. Completed H&S training courses include:

- Introduction to H&S Legislation
- ISOH Managing Safely for Construction Managers
- CSCS Locating Underground Services
- CSCS Site Dumper
- CSCS Signing, Lighting & Guarding at Roadwork's
- Manual Handling/ Safety Awareness Training
- Health and Safety at Roadwork's
- Safe Pass
- First Aid Training
- Safety Lectures
- Safety Representative Training
- Tool Box Talk Vaccinations

The personal development of employees was facilitated through the Council's Open Learning, Training and Development Support Scheme during 2007/8. This scheme demonstrates the organisation's commitment to developing both its employees learning and career objectives and the business needs of its corporate plan.

A total of fourteen employees were supported under this scheme and were encouraged to pursue part-time third level courses relevant to their role in the organisation.

Enhanced local community links/improved services to marginalised groups

The Community and Enterprise Department are working on a number of initiatives to enhance links with local Communities which are as follows:

- Organising and running a Pride of Longford Competition. The Competition is an initiative to acknowledge and support community groups involved in enhancing their local town and village. It provides an opportunity for groups to come together to showcase the different projects in their area, including the natural and built environment and the area's community spirit.
- Working with a number of communities and projects entering the National Pride of Place Competition. This competition provides an opportunity to link with communities and supports best practice, innovation and leadership in providing vibrant sustainable communities that improve the quality of life for all.
- Managing and supporting the work of a multi agency task group focused on building local communities.
- Providing support to communities wishing to access CCTV for their area.
- Leading the development of a Community Enterprise Centre in Granard.
- Developing a model of best practice in meaningful engagement with communities in small towns and villages.

The Community and Enterprise department through multi-agency initiatives are delivering a number of projects to marginalised groups across the County:

- Developing a Poverty Profile that will be used as a baseline for a Social Inclusion Strategy. This Strategy will enable agencies of the County Development Board to target services to the most marginalised groups in the County. The social inclusion strategy is scheduled for completion in December 2008.
- Leading the work of the Traveller Interagency Group in the development of services across education, health and employment.
- Managing a Smoke Alarm project which involves co-ordinating the supply and installation of smoke alarms to older people across the county.
- Supporting the implementation of Longford Intercultural Strategy which outlines specific themes and actions in relation to the integration of the new communities in County Longford.
- Managing and implementing an enhanced programme of activity for Youth. This involves a number of projects including the management of a Youth Council and facilitating the inclusion of the 'Hard to reach' young people. Developing and piloting a module on local government for use in transition year and working with Student Councils in post primary schools.
- Leading a multi-agency working group in developing a County Longford Tourism Strategy

Signed:



Tim Caffrey
Longford County Manager

Dated this 11th day of July 2008