

# COMHAIRLE CHONTAE PHORTLÁIRGE □ WATERFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

OIFIG AN BHAINISTEORA,  
OIFIGÍ CATHARtha CHONTAE PHORTLÁIRGE  
DÚNGARBHÁN



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY MANAGER  
WATERFORD COUNTY CIVIC OFFICES  
DUNGARVAN

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My Reference:  
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Date:  
Dáta

13<sup>th</sup> June, 2008

**Ms. Chris Gavigan**  
**Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group**  
**Cumberland House**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor**  
**Fenian Street**  
**Dublin 2**



Dear Ms. Gavigan

**Re: Towards 2016**

I refer to yours of 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2008 regarding the above and set out hereunder, in narrative format, details of the Council's progress on delivery of commitments under *Towards 2016* for the period March, 2008 to September, 2008.

#### **Enhanced Customer Service**

The Council continues to focus on improving delivery of public services throughout County Waterford.

The Council has Civic Offices in Dungarvan, Tramore, Lismore, Kilmacthomas and Portlaw to provide a presence in the main population centres and allow for personalised service delivery at local level. A dedicated Customer Care Centre is being provided in the Civic Offices in Dungarvan, which will be fully operational by September, 2008, and expectations are that 50% of personal / telephone callers will be able to complete their business at first point of contact.

As a Gaeltacht county, a special emphasis is placed on service delivery through the medium of the Irish language. Irish-speaking staff have been assigned to all departments and training programmes are in place to facilitate improvement in employees' Irish language skills. The Council has recently delivered its first ever full Irish educational programme - the Primary Schools Energy Awareness Programme - to Gaelscoileanna in the county

Access to services and facilities has been addressed in accordance with the Disability Acts and is monitored and improved on an ongoing basis. The Waterford County Council and Waterford County Library websites have been fully redesigned, have been disability proofed and are fully bilingual. The 'Waterford Studies On-Line' project has created a huge database of local social and cultural history. This service allows the public to have 24 hour access to all research and archival resources without the need to visit a public library or archive. It is estimated that the on-line facility has reduced 'in person' queries by 80% thus freeing up staff resources.

#### **Co-operation with other agencies.**

The Council routinely works with a variety of voluntary and statutory bodies including Waterford County Development Board, W.I.T., FÁS, Voluntary Housing Bodies, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Waterford Leader Partnership. In addition, major private sector groups are actively engaged in supporting Council activities - Riverdeep, Treasury Holdings, GlaxoSmithKline, Glanbia, Clancy Construction and Flahavans are among the private partners who have come on board as sponsors for a number of the Council's Community and Tourism initiatives.

**Efficiency, Effectiveness and VFM.**

As part of the ongoing review of service delivery, the Council's Machinery Yard / Stores operation is being restructured to meet changing business needs. Many of the traditional services provided from the Yard / Stores can now be delivered more efficiently by the private sector, while there are opportunities to use the existing resources for more focussed activity in areas of deficit. The Working Group set up to examine, has already made significant progress on areas of restructuring.

Conscious of the need to ensure the highest design standards for new developments in the county, a panel of independent Architectural Consultants has been set up to assess the merit of the various major developments proposed. The Council does not directly employ an Architect, so this is seen as an effective method of obtaining best advice at reasonable cost. Several projects have been referred to those on the panel to date.

Following the review of electoral areas due to conclude on 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2008 it is expected that local electoral areas in Waterford will be reduced from 5 to 4. When a definite decision is announced, the Council will engage in the process of redrawing the engineering areas to match these. The matter has already been notified to the Partnership Committee, and will be listed as an Agenda item for the HSCTP Committee.

**Organisational Change and Innovation.**

A formal review of business processes (BPR) is continuing throughout the organisation. This was successfully piloted in the Planning Department in 2007, leading to resource efficiencies and streamlined delivery of service, and is currently being implemented in the Environment Department, with a similar outcome anticipated.

The Council has been proactive in addressing the need for sustainable energy to combat climate change and sustain economic growth. A Climate Change Strategy has been adopted and was recently launched by Mr. John Gormley T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government. 47 direct actions have been identified and assigned to specific individuals for delivery. The commitments included in the Strategy will result in an annual Carbon saving of 4,000 – 6,000 tonnes. In partnership with FÁS and the CIF, Waterford County Council has developed an Energy Efficiency & Renewable Technologies Training Programme. The programme is designed to meet the training and certification needs of staff involved in improving energy efficiency and evaluating renewable/alternative energy options for industrial and commercial premises. This training has already been piloted and has a waiting list of in excess of 100 individuals, from both the public and private sector.

**Staff Development / PMDS.**

The Council continues to focus on staff development both in areas directly concentrated on service needs and on the broader personal development / management skills area. A formal Training Plan is in place, which incorporates training for elected members, and higher level courses such as MBA, Management Development. The Council also offers opportunities such as The Young All Ireland Programme for developing talent in the workplace and the Leadership in Local Government Programme.

Originally introduced as part of the IEI accreditation for Continuous Professional Development, the in-house Mentoring Programme has now been rolled out to all staff.

FÁS has concluded an initial assessment of the Council's application for the *Excellence Through People* (Gold Star standard). Feedback has been positive and a favourable outcome is anticipated.

**Community Involvement/Social Inclusion.**

The Community Forum has 264 affiliated community groups who participate fully on local decision-making bodies. The local authority and local communities work effectively in partnership and have had notable success in a number of areas.

*Pride of Place competition* – County Waterford’s communities have a history of successful participation in this competition. In 2007, as well as the Ballyduff Community Council winning a category award, Waterford Council Council was named as Best Local Authority. In recognition of its contribution to date, Waterford County Council has been selected to host the 2008 Awards Ceremony.

*Tidy Towns Competition* – Gold, Silver, Bronze and Endeavour awards were presented to Lismore, Stradbally, Dungarvan and Portlaw respectively, in 2007. Lismore was also named as regional winner. It is anticipated that the 2008 competition will be equally fruitful.

The success of the partnerships which exist between the county’s communities and the local authority is further evidenced by the significant volunteer numbers who participate in events such as the Sean Kelly Cycling Tour.

The posts of Social Worker and Tenant Liaison Officer have been mainstreamed and are now counted among the Council’s permanent staff complement. An additional Tenant Liaison Officer is employed to service the needs of the Dungarvan urban area. The Council has provided a Community Development Centre in Dungarvan, on a site shared with Focus Ireland sheltered housing. The facility includes: Dungarvan Day Care Centre, Dungarvan Scouts, Sesame Playschool, Community Based Childcare Facility, HSE Disability Centre and offices for organisations such as Focus Ireland, Citizens Advice, Dungarvan Community Development Project and various other community groups who rent meeting rooms.

#### **Shared Services.**

The Council continues to operate a variety of shared services, as follows:

*Internal* – Cross-departmental teams dealing with disability, BPR, Land Management, Economic Development, Procurement, GIS, Major Emergency Management, Event Management and Senior Management Forum

*Dungarvan Town Council* – H. R., Part V, Payroll, I.T., Financial Management

*Waterford City Council* – Water Services

*Waterford City/South Tipperary/Cork L.A.’s.* – Fire Services

*All L.A.’s* - Recruitment Interviewing, Bullying/Harassment/Disciplinary Investigations.

#### **Economic Development.**

The Council, via the County Development Board, continues to lead the work of the Inter-Agency Sub-Group and Economic Think Tank. Focussing on partnerships with other Agencies and business interests, the Council has been successful in fostering growth of tourism, retail, light industrial and service industries in the county, thereby increasing both the rate base and employment opportunities. In addition, the Council’s delivery of strategic road projects in 2008, such as the Airport Road and Clonea Strand access road, support the development of the county’s business infrastructure.

The Work in Waterford website continues to prove popular. Statistical data from the site is being shared, not only with the Development Agencies, but also with private industry looking to expand or recruit. GlaxoSmithKline has recently announced the creation of 50 new jobs and Microchem Laboratories, recently taken over by Lancaster Laboratories, has announced the creation of 100 new jobs.

Waterford County Council is advancing development of a ‘Knowledge Campus’ on strategically zoned land in the Waterford City Environs. The land in question is primarily in public ownership and the objective of the designation is to strengthen and elevate the profile of the Gateway. The designation is aimed at encouraging:

- Foreign Direct Investment
- Indigenous Enterprise
- 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Level Education & Research
- Entrepreneurship

A trade delegation to the U.S.A. in 2007 served to strengthen relations with Trans-Atlantic partners. This relationship has now been formalised as the U.S. Enterprise & Community Development Project, geared towards encouraging economic and social networks. The Council continues to support development of the county's network of Community Enterprise Units. Delivery of the co-funded Enterprise Centre in Dungarvan is progressing well and will be located on Council owned lands. Tourism products have been promoted both by development of amenities and delivery of niche events. Preparations for the 2008 Sean Kelly Tour of Waterford, are well under way, with an expected 50% increase in participant numbers. The 2008 Imrama Travel Writing Festival has been increased from 3 to 4 days and the inaugural Waterford Festival of Food was successfully delivered in April.

I confirm that a stable industrial relations climate exists within the Council in relation to all matters covered by the Agreement and that there is full co-operation with implementation of the modernisation agenda as set out.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ray O'Dwyer', written over a horizontal line.

*Ray O'Dwyer,  
County Manager.*