



*Sligo County Council*  
*Comhairle Chontae Shligigh*

**Sligo County Council**  
**Corporate Plan**  
**2010 - 2014**

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## CATHAOIRLEACH'S INTRODUCTION



The *Corporate Plan 2010 – 2014* sets out the core interest of your local authority to delivering a quality service in a time of rapidly diminishing resources.

The Local Authority is committed to providing a quality service. In order to achieve this, the active participation of the community and local agencies is required.

There is a need recognised in the plan, for the reappraisal and prioritising of services, in accordance with the resources available.

I believe that there is in the community and among the elected members, management and staff the determination and the skills to overcome the many challenges of the immediate future.

**Councillor Michael Fleming**  
**Cathaoirleach, Sligo County Council**

## MANAGER'S FOREWORD



All local authorities are entering an unprecedented era of challenge and change, and Sligo County Council has to face the prospect of managing our services at a time when our income is significantly reduced. We remain committed to delivering a quality service to the people we serve, but these services will have to be re-appraised and prioritised in accordance with available resources.

From a national perspective, if the country is to regain its international competitiveness, there is an urgent need for greater efficiencies at every level of service delivery. We have to recognise the benefit of shared services, to liaise in active partnership with other local authorities, and to work with key local agencies to deliver on agreed objectives.

While Sligo County Council can take the initiative in a number of areas, significant legislative changes are required to underpin our actions in a rapidly changing social and economic environment. I believe the various communities we engage with have the resolve and ambition to work with us to overcome the many challenges that lie ahead.

The transformation of every level of the public service in the coming years will impact on every level of society, and will have major implications for the way we do our business. Against this back-drop, it is vitally important that we are strategic, focused and candid about the scope and quality of services we propose to provide over the life of this plan.

**Hubert Kearns**  
**County Manager**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*'To provide a process for democratic decision making at a local level and to enhance the lives of the people.'*

### **CORE VALUES**

- **Democracy:** Our democratic mandate governs all our decisions and actions.
- **Public Service:** The public service is central to all activities.
- **Inclusion:** All people are valued equally.
- **Fairness:** All decisions are made in a fair, equitable and impartial manner.

## ***BUDGETARY CONTEXT***

The estimated expenditure of €56.7million in Sligo County Council for 2011 is a significant reduction on the 2010 figures and reflects the reducing fund-base and the very serious economic challenges facing the Authorities. The reduction in economic activity will impact severely in the Council's ability to generate income from commercial rates, planning fees etc. The Local Government Fund is the Council's largest source of discretionary income, and its reduction by 17% over the last three years presents great difficulties in terms of managing and delivering our various services.

Measures will be introduced over the life of the Corporate Plan to further reduce payroll costs and to introduce organisational efficiencies which will enable us to maintain our services at an appropriate level. Financial planning at local level will be informed by the provisions of National Recovery Plan, which includes reductions in public expenditure in both revenue and capital areas.

A difficulty faced by all Local Authorities is to oversee the prudent management of scarce financial resources while having regard to the many statutory obligations imposed on them.

## ***OBJECTIVES & STRATEGIES***

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY**

Sligo County Council will prioritise available resources to work with local communities to oversee a programme of regeneration and enhancement of our towns and villages, and to provide transport and service infrastructure to attract sustainable investment to Sligo.

#### **Objectives**

To promote and encourage urban and rural development, and to ensure that development is carried out in a structured and planned manner to sustain the vitality of our communities.

#### **Strategy**

The National Development Plan and the National Spatial Strategy set out the national and regional context for the economic development and planning policy of Local Authorities. At local level the Sligo & Environs Development Plan and Sligo County Development Plan provide the framework for future planning and development with the objective of achieving balanced regional development.

#### **Key Documents**

-  [Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017](#)
-  [Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016](#)
-  [County Sligo Heritage Plan 2007-2011](#)
-  [County Sligo Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2015](#)

## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Sligo County Council is committed to providing a clean living environment for the people of Sligo and plan to deliver a range of policies to encourage awareness and protection of our environment and conservation of our quality water supplies.

### Objective

A number of important environmental protection measures will be implemented over the course of the plan, including waste management, water quality and conservation, pollution control, litter management, noise and air pollution and climate change/energy efficiency.

### Strategy

To work with consumers on the planning and delivery of water conservation measures to eliminate wastage and to ensure treated water is regarded as valuable resource, and will produce information programmes in the critical areas of environmental awareness and climate change/energy efficiency.

### Delivery

- ⇒ Provide a clean living environment for the citizens of Sligo.
- ⇒ Promote the conservation of areas of areas of natural environmental value.
- ⇒ Protect and improve water and air quality in Sligo.
- ⇒ Reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.
- ⇒ Prepare and implement a ‘Climate Change & Energy Efficiency Strategy’ for Sligo County Council.

### Key Documents

- 📄 [Sligo County Development Plan 2011-2017](#)
- 📄 [Sligo and Environs Development Plan 2010-2016](#)
- 📄 [County Sligo Water Conservation and Network Management Project](#)
- 📄 [National Climate Change Strategy 2007-2012](#)
- 📄 [Local Authority Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Measures: Best Practice & Current Initiatives.](#)
- 📄 [Maximising Ireland’s Energy Efficiency: The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2009-2020](#)



## **TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY**

Sligo County Council is responsible for the provision and maintenance of a modern and efficient transport network and to facilitate the delivery of a service infrastructure to attract sustainable investment and enterprise.

### **Objective**

Subject to available resources, a number of important environmental protection measures will be implemented over the course of the plan, including waste management, water quality and conservation, pollution control, litter management, noise and air pollution and climate change/energy efficiency.

### **Strategy**

To work with consumers on the planning and delivery water conservation measures to eliminate wastage and to ensure treated water is regarded as valuable resource, and to produce information programmes in the critical areas of environmental awareness and climate change/energy efficiency.

### **Delivery**

- ⇒ Provide a clean living environment for the citizens of Sligo.
- ⇒ Promote the conservation of areas of natural environmental value.
- ⇒ Protect and improve water and air quality in Sligo.
- ⇒ Reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.
- ⇒ Prepare and implement a 'Climate Change & Energy Efficiency Strategy' for Sligo County Council.

### **Key Documents**

- 📄 Roads Act, 1993
- 📄 Sligo & Environs Development Plan 2010-2016
- 📄 Sligo County Development Plan 2005-2011
- 📄 Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2012
- 📄 County Sligo Water Conservation and Network Management Project

## **HOUSING POLICY, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Sligo County Council is responsible for meeting the housing needs of people who are unable to do so from their own resources, and work with other agencies to provide a range of accommodation and other housing services. Sligo County Council is committed to fostering a social inclusive society and to promote Sligo's status as a centre for cultural tourism.

### **Objective**

Sligo County Council will provide and maintain public housing, deliver a traveller accommodation programme, and encourage home ownership and community focused estate management. The authorities will also work with the arts community to enhance Sligo's reputation at national and international level as a popular cultural destination.

### **Strategy**

To work with voluntary housing organisations and other agencies to plan and deliver a housing programme to reflect current and predicted demographics and available resources. Sligo County Arts Service will work in partnership with key stakeholders to deliver a high quality arts service for the people of Sligo and to promote greater public involvement in the arts in a wide range of social and community settings.

### **Delivery**

The Sligo County Council will foster a closer partnership with local development bodies to deliver a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to housing, social and cultural agendas and to monitor and review the Sligo County Development Board's Social Inclusion Strategy.

### **Key Documents**

- 📄 [Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013](#)
- 📄 [CDB Integrated Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy for County Sligo 2002-2012](#)

- ☞ Review of Performance – Economic, Social and Cultural Development  
2006-2008 and Priorities for mid 2009-2012
- ☞ County Sligo Interagency Traveller Strategy Group Strategic Plan  
2007-2012
- ☞ RAPID Area Plan 2008-2012
- ☞ NW Regional Homelessness Framework Plan
- ☞ Sligo Arts Plan 2007-2012
- ☞ Arts & Health Strategy for Sligo 2007-2012

## ***TRANSFORMING PUBLIC SERVICES***

In April 2008 the OECD review of the Irish Public Service ‘Towards an Integrated Public Service’ outlined the potential for increasing value for money and achieving better quality and more efficient services for citizens. This review formed the context for the Government’s Task Force on the Public Service, which was set up with the specific remit of developing a plan to respond to the findings and recommendations of the OECD report.

Delivery of a more efficient, effective and integrated public service will focus on a number of areas:

- Clarity of purpose
- Performance
- Citizen Engagement
- E-Government and shared services
- People and leadership
- Governance

### **Growing Expectations**

The public expects a public service that performs to best international standards, is responsive, fast, flexible, efficient and innovative. They also expect it to be cost-effective, compliant with demanding governance and accountability requirements, and true to the values of an independent public service providing evidence-based policy advice and ensuring the delivery of public services in a fair and accountable manner. Increasingly, they expect it to tackle complex and interconnected and sometimes conflicting cross-public service policy objectives. (Report of the Task Force on the Public Service).

### **Efficiencies**

Sligo County Council is committed to delivering an efficient service, and an ‘Efficiency Working Group’ has been established to consider value for money potential in the areas of:

- ***Waste Management***

Review disposal and recovery methods, develop an organisation policy on each waste type, promote and implement best practice techniques.

- ***Building Maintenance***

Review costs for electrical services, cleaning and general maintenance.

- ***Stationery***

Develop a co-ordinated approach to orders, prepare terms and conditions for suppliers, review expenditure.

## **Water Conservation**

Sligo County Council delivers 38 million litres of water a day to homes, schools, businesses and farms. This supply is delivered from 10 public water supply schemes, distributed through a network of 1,500 Kilometres.

Safeguarding our treated water supplies is one of the key challenges facing local authorities. Treated drinking water is a very valuable resource, and we have to do all in our power to ensure that treated water is used respectfully and protected against wastage. There are two basic ways to achieve this aim – to conserve water and to eliminate waste. This is important not just for the present generation but also for future generations. It has to be a combined effort to preserve our largest natural resource.

## **Working with Consumers**

Sligo County Council is supporting the ‘County Sligo Water Conservation and Network Management Project’, which is being co-ordinated by Dr Tom Curran UCD and Dr John Bartlett of UCD. One of the aims of the initiative is to instil the practice of water conservation in all consumers across the County.

The fines under the Water Services legislation are quite severe, and are a reflection of the critical importance of this issue.

## ***HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT***

### **Staff Mobility**

Staff mobility is a feature of Sligo County Council. The policy has many benefits which include staff having an opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of different areas. Staff can benefit from being re-assigned to other operational areas in terms of personnel development and growth. The introduction of new personnel into an area can help to bring a new perspective and a fresh look with the potential benefits for service delivery.

It is the policy of the Sligo County Council that the practice of staff mobility be continued. In implementing this policy the following safeguards will be applied:

- The avoidance of an unacceptable level of turnover among staff to ensure that sufficient continuity will apply;
- Ensure that a high level of skills and knowledge are retained in an area.

### **Recruitment & Selection**

All positions within Sligo County Council are publicly advertised and filled following competition. Responsibility for the filling of a number of senior positions however rests with the Public Appointments Service. It is the policy of Sligo County Council to give careful consideration to the filling of vacancies by determining the purpose and deliverables of each position.

### **Training & Development**

It is widely accepted that Training & Development is key to a successful organisation. The Council is committed to helping all staff gain the knowledge, skills and attitudes to achieve the goals set out in the Corporate Plan. The Council is also dedicated to providing relevant Health & Safety training to all staff.

### **Performance Management**

A performance management and development system (PMDS) was rolled out nationally in 2005. The development of this system facilitated line managers and staff to work together to identify employees duties, work objectives and any areas for development. Work is presently being undertaken by the Local Government

Management Services Board on the re-design of the Performance Management Development system.

## **Managing Performance**

Managing Performance (formerly referred to as PMDS) is concerned with ensuring that strategic objectives contained in the County Council's Corporate Plan are translated into operational objectives for teams and individual employees throughout the organisation. The Corporate Plan is used a foundation to generate Team Development Plans within every department and this in turn leads to the creation of Personal Development Plans for every employee. These plans will contain goals, targets and timeframes that are designed to ensure that staff in the organisation contribute effectively to delivering a quality service to the public.

## **Industrial Relations**

Regular meetings take place between HR staff and Union representatives/officials where IR issues arise. The Council is committed to resolving IR issues as soon as possible once an issue arises and thus avoid escalation of the issue.

## **Superannuation**

Pension and lump sum calculations are carried out on a regular basis by the HR department. Once an employee is nearing retirement age or indicates their intention to retire from the Council, their lump sum and pension entitlement is calculated and arrangements are made for the payment of the relevant sum. Work is at an advanced stage on the implementation of a system where Superannuation statements will be readily available to all employees.

## **HR, Payroll & Superannuation System**

The Council is committed to the continued roll out and maintenance of the new integrated HR, Payroll & Superannuation system. The following modules have been implemented:

- Organisational Structure
- Time & Attendance
- Payroll
- Recruitment

- Central Statistics Office Returns

Work is at an advanced stage on the implementation of the Superannuation module and work is progressing on the implementation of the Training module.

### **Human Resources Policies & Procedures**

Sligo County Council has the following Human Resources policies and procedures in place:

- Annual Leave
- Flexi Leave
- Parental Leave
- Study Leave
- Force-Majeure Leave
- Adoptive leave
- Paternity leave
- Carers Leave
- Sick-Pay scheme
- Shorter Working Year
- Work-sharing
- Policy on Attending Courses/Conferences/Seminars
- Staff Education Scheme
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Non Smoking Policy
- Grievance & Disciplinary Procedures



## ***KEY DEVELOPMENT FACTORS***

County Sligo encompasses a total land surface of approximately 1,837.11 km<sup>2</sup>, bordered by Counties Leitrim, Roscommon and Mayo, and flanked to the west by almost 200 km of Atlantic coastline.

### **Landscape Setting**

The County has a varied natural landscape with spectacular limestone mountains, such as Benbulbin and Benwisquin, other interesting upland terrain (e.g. the Ox and Bricklieve Mountains), numerous picturesque lakes (Loughs Gill, Arrow, Glencar, Easkey, Gara and Talt), enclosed farmland and a diverse coastline comprising low-lying cliffs, indented shoreline and sandy beaches. These topographical attributes combine to give Sligo an outstanding landscape setting.

### **Heritage and Culture**

Sligo possesses unique archaeological and historical remains, with more than 5,000 recorded archaeological sites dating back over 6,000 years, including the prehistoric sites of Carrowmore, Carrowkeel and Creevykeel.

The beauty of the countryside coupled with a rich cultural and historical past has inspired musicians, artists and poets alike, including the Yeats family, St. Colmcille and Michael Coleman. This has provided Sligo with strong international recognition on which to base a thriving tourism industry.

In recent years, County Sligo has benefitted from the development of a range of cultural facilities such as the Coleman Music Centre, The Folk Museum, The James Morrison Teach Ceoil and Teach Laighne, Tobercurry Community Library, and the redevelopment of the Model Arts Gallery in Sligo. The character of the county has been enhanced through public art commissions, which have been integrated with village renewal schemes.

### **Economic Trends**

The Gateway City of Sligo has developed as an important industrial, commercial and residential centre supporting a regional airport, a railway terminus, a port, two third-level colleges and a general hospital. Sligo serves as the administrative, commercial, service, health and educational centre for a large hinterland. It also acts as an important distribution centre in the North-West.

As in other Western counties, employment in Sligo tended to be in sectors that are lower-skilled, lower-value-added and more vulnerable in the recession (e.g. construction, retail), with lower shares in the higher-skilled and high-value-added sectors (e.g. information and communications technology, financial services). These factors will have implications for the County's ability to respond and adapt to the decline.

### **Economic and Regional Policy**

According to the Western Development Commission (*Work in the West: The Western Region's Employment and Unemployment Challenge*, December 2009), the current tendency for economic and regional policy to focus on the role and potential of the major cities may further exacerbate the difficulties, as the Western Region, particularly its northern part, is predominantly rural, with small towns and villages where the decline in construction had a profound impact in employment terms. In the context of this employment profile, the Western Development Commission has identified three key employment challenges facing the Western Region.

### **Recent Trends and Implications for the County Development Plan**

Taking account of recent policy developments, economic and demographic trends, the major implications for the formulation of a renewed development strategy for County Sligo to 2017 and beyond are as follows:

- County Sligo should strive to retain and increase its population, building on its strategic location in the North-West, its quality of life and its natural and cultural heritage attributes, in order to realise the vision for balanced regional development presented in the NSS. Employment creation, education, training and investment in critical infrastructure are essential in retaining and growing the County's population.
- To support national efforts towards balanced regional development and achieve important regional and local benefits, there is a need to focus on the Gateway City of Sligo, by taking a strategic approach to the planning and development of Sligo and its environs and aiming to deliver a compact,

accessible, physically attractive, public transport-based and business-friendly city with cohesive communities and a strong cultural identity.

For balanced development to take place within County Sligo, the role of the Gateway needs to be partnered with a focus on specific development roles for other urban areas in the County, such as:

- The larger towns of Ballymote, Enniscrone and Tobercurry
- The Gateway satellites
- The smaller villages

Rural areas in Sligo have experienced significant economic, demographic and physical changes:

- Some areas have grown rapidly in population, pointing to the need to carefully manage overspill development associated with Sligo reaching outwards;
- Extensive areas of upland and marginal agricultural land present new opportunities for diversifying the rural economy;
- The County's coastline, uplands, rivers together with its cultural heritage give it a recognisable national and international identity and are a resource to be wisely managed in sustaining the development of the County into the future.
- County Sligo has benefited from investment in critical enabling infrastructure, such as the Sligo Inner Relief Road, upgrading of the Sligo-Dublin rail line, improvements to Sligo Regional Airport, extension of broadband services, upgrading of energy and telecommunication networks, construction and upgrading of water supplies and wastewater treatment infrastructure. This process should continue. However, to capture the maximum gain, there is a continued need for focused investment to help develop the Gateway and consolidate the towns in the County as local economic engines.
- As we move forward, Sligo's cultural offering must become stronger and more diverse if the County seeks to attract increased visitor numbers and an internationally mobile workforce. By making it a priority in the

development plan, the County Council intends to protect and develop Sligo's character and culture for the future wellbeing of the County.

### **Gateway Population**

The population of the Gateway is defined in this Plan as the total population living inside the SEDP boundary. This figure includes the population of the Borough and Environs as enumerated by the Census, plus the population living in the suburban fringes and in the rural areas within the Plan limit.

As detailed Census, figures for the entire Plan area are not available, the Gateway population is approximated by the total population of the Borough and the five adjoining Electoral Divisions (Calry, Drumcliff East, Drumcliff West, Kilmacowen and Knockaree) minus the population of Strandhill, Rosses Point, Ballincar, Rathcormac and Drumcliff (for the last two settlements, estimates were used). Thus, the population of the Gateway was estimated at 24,755 in 2006 (a fall of 492 persons compared to 2002).

### **Socio-Economic Trends**

As a significant regional centre for employment, retail, healthcare, education and recreation, Sligo serves a hinterland extending far beyond the County boundaries. There is an important manufacturing base in Sligo City, particularly in IDA's business park at Finisklin, with names such as Abbott, Fort Dodge and Stiefel Laboratories, all pharmaceutical companies. Indigenous firms like Loftus Automation, Avenue Mould solutions, Garmore and Infacta are engaged in tool-making, precision engineering and information technology.

While the number of manufacturing jobs has been constantly falling, employment in retail and professional services has seen a rapid expansion. Public-sector jobs also continue to represent a sizeable proportion of the City's employment, due to employers such as Sligo Regional Hospital, Sligo County Council, primary and secondary schools, third-level institutions, and several sections of central government departments.

Over the decade 1996 to 2006, there have been substantial changes not only in the local economy but also in the social fabric of Sligo City. The following two subsections outline the main features of these changes as reflected in statistical data collected by the Censuses of 1996, 2002 and 2006.

### **Social Change: Number of People**

The Census reports of 1996, 2002 and 2006 provide figures for Sligo Borough and Sligo Environs, which is a smaller area than that covered by the Sligo and Environs Development Plan. However, the main trends for the Plan area can be discerned from examining the available Census figures.

Having grown by 6.62% (1226 persons) between 1996 and 2002, the population of (Census-defined) Sligo and Environs then fell by 1.69% (333 persons) between 2002 and 2006. It is not clear from the CSO statistics whether this “lost” population moved just outside the enumeration boundaries, yet remained in the SEDP area, or went further away.

### **Spatial Mobility**

Census data indicates an increasing mobility of Sligo’s population, in particular residential mobility. While in 2002 the Census counted 982 persons who moved to Sligo City from the County and 587 who came from the rest of Ireland during the year before the Census, in 2006 the number of people in the same situation was 1306 and 690 respectively.

It must be added that in 2002 there were 380 persons who had an address abroad one year before the Census, while in 2006 there were 858 such people. It appears that Sligo’s core population – i.e. those who were enumerated at the same address in successive censuses – consists of just over 15,800 residents, and there has been significant in- and out-migration between 1996 and 2002, in the range of 12-14% of the total number of residents. As a proportion, the number of Sligo-born residents has fallen slightly between 1996 and 2006, by 96 people (2.49%). At the same time, the number of Sligo residents who were not born in the city has grown constantly during the decade 1996-2006: 12.37% more residents born in Northern Ireland; 26.22% more people born in England, Scotland or Wales; 14.43% more persons born in the rest of

the EU (excluding the UK); and almost three times more (+ 202.35% or 535) persons born in countries outside the EU.

### **Better Education**

A positive trend has been noticed in the field of education, with fewer people ceasing their education at primary or secondary level and more enrolling in third-level education. Between 1996 and 2006 the number of persons with primary education only has fallen by 836. In the same period, the number of those educated to degree level has grown from 1250 to 1949. The number of students aged over 15 and engaged in full-time education was 3315 in 2006 compared to 2156 in 1996 – a rise of over 50%.

### **Social Mobility**

Social classes, as defined by the Census, bring together people with similar levels of occupational skills. In determining social class, no account is taken of the differences between individuals on the basis of other characteristics such as education. Social class ranks occupations by the level of skill required.

In social class terms, upward social mobility has become apparent in Sligo and Environs. A fall of 43% (533) in the number of unskilled manual workers between 1996 and 2002 has been accompanied by significant rises in the numbers of semi-skilled, technical and professional workers (419, 351 and 186 respectively). There was also a noticeable growth in the number of persons who cannot be precisely allocated to one of the six other classes. Those gainfully occupied but not readily categorised grew in numbers from 2647 in 1996 to 4290 in 2006 (increase of 62%).

## *EQUALITY*

On foot of the Equality, Equal Status & Disability legislation a tremendous amount of work has been carried out in Sligo County Council. The orientation and emphasis from an equality perspective has broadened to a major focus on equality in disability areas and from there to expanding and delivering on equality inclusive measures, policies and codes of practise which reflect the Equal Status Act and take into account the need to address intercultural issues in delivery of services, accessibility and public service.

Another current focus in the equality brief of policy review and proofing is the Dignity At Work Policy and more recently also our Child Protection Policy.

The equality brief is one where although specific emphasis on particular issues overtime may change , the overall objective is to build on the areas already being developed and one of actively encouraging and promoting equality both in the workplace and the public services we deliver to the communities we serve.

## **LIFELONG LEARNING**

### *Library Service Mission Statement:*

*“To provide a responsive, accessible and inclusive library service for all our customers, which fosters reading, stimulates the imagination and contributes to lifelong learning and cultural recreation”.*

Sligo County Library has a long and distinguished tradition of service to the citizens of Sligo and plays a major role in the development of the cultural and artistic life of Sligo. Sligo County Library is one of the longest established public libraries in Ireland, being the fourth county service in Ireland and the first to be established in Connacht. Today, Sligo Central Library is the busiest Cultural venue in County Sligo with on average 480 visits per day.

Sligo Library services are provided through a countywide branch network which includes, Tubbercurry, Ballymote, Enniscrone, Central Library and the Reference and Local Studies Library. Alongside the branch network, Sligo Library service provides a Mobile library service and schools service to over 65 primary schools.

Under the Local Government Act 2001, all County Libraries were required to prepare and adopt programmes for operation and development. The Act sets down the broad content of such plans, which must include:

- An outline of existing services
- The objectives and priorities for the future
- The measures needed to meet the objectives
- The financial implications of the programme as a whole

The Library Development Plan 2006 – 2010 provides a framework for action that allows the Library to meet its obligations under the Act and provide a strategic framework for developing its services. The library development Plan will be reviewed in 2011.

### **National Policy Context**

In 2008, the Government published their second comprehensive review of public library policy in the report “Branching Out: Future Directions”. The report took



regard of two wider national policies, ensuring that Ireland embraces the opportunities of the “Information Society” and the establishment of an inclusive society.

“Branching Out: Future Directions” identified key issues for Irish public libraries, including the following;

- Delivering better services through the continuation of the multi annual infrastructure programme.
- Uniquely in the cultural sector the measurement of the quality of services delivered, through the use of service indicators, with an emphasis on opening hours, collection development and staff training.
- Improvement in the primary School Library service.
- The affirmation of Libraries as Centres of Culture through the provision of cultural programmes and the continued development of libraries as community cultural spaces.
- Co-operation within local authorities in areas of education and broader cultural areas.
- Marketing and research.

## ***CONTEMPORARY CULTURE***

Sligo's contemporary culture, along with its unique cultural heritage, is a defining feature of our identity, a vital component of our quality of life, and a key differentiator of Sligo as a cultural tourist destination.

In Sligo a significant level of creativity has been nurtured and developed since the arts were introduced to the range of public service provisions in 1997. *Space for Art Sligo Arts Plan 2007-2012* was published after feedback from local artists & arts organisations and in response to extensive county-wide public consultations. The plan sets out an overall strategy for the development of the arts in the city and county, in accordance with the Arts Act 2003. Through the publication of the arts plan Sligo County Council supports the arts for the betterment of artists, arts organisations and the practice of the arts in a wide range of social and community settings across the generations in both the city and county. Sligo's large population of artists and creatives are valued members of our community and a vibrant sector which can bring innovative thinking to the challenges and complexity of local planning and development. The Arts Plan identifies strategic action areas which will be the key areas of focus for the development of the arts, and development through the arts, in Sligo over the coming years.

Implementation of the Arts Plan coincides with a period of significant physical, social and environmental change. Sligo County Council and Sligo County Development Board will continue to develop Sligo's long standing reputation as a cultural county through delivery of a Creative Sligo initiative to develop Sligo's rich cultural assets into sustainable jobs and new cultural products & services.

## ***MANAGING & PROTECTING OUR HERITAGE***

Sligo has an exceptionally rich and diverse heritage, and the Heritage Forum and the County Sligo Heritage Office work to provide a positive mechanism for the Council to engage with the community in relation to heritage. This process highlights the importance of heritage in the economic, social and cultural development of the county.

Four strategic themes are identified in the County Sligo Heritage Plan 2007-2011 to facilitate structured heritage development over five years. These themes are:

- Heritage information
- Best practice in heritage conservation and management
- Awareness and education
- Promoting partnerships and participation

The Heritage Plan was produced by Sligo County Council in partnership with the Sligo Heritage Forum. The Plan sets out 63 actions to be delivered within the lifetime of the plan to support the implementation of the strategic themes. Implementation of the Plan is overseen by the Heritage Forum with appropriate working groups and will be supported and co-ordinated by the Heritage Office. During 2011 a new Heritage Plan will be developed for County Sligo through consultation with all stakeholders. In addition, a Biodiversity Action Plan has also been developed for County Sligo, and as a subset of the Heritage Plan will be the mechanism for taking action for biodiversity in the County into the future.

The Plan is funded by Sligo County Council in partnership with The Heritage Council. In supporting the implementation of the plan, Sligo County Council aspires to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Sligo.

## ***RENEWAL THROUGH PARTNERSHIP***

### **Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems**

A key objective of the Government's Programme for Local Government Renewal is closer partnership between local authorities and local development bodies (Area partnerships, LEADER Groups and County/City Enterprise Boards) operating at local level. While these agencies were each doing good work, they had, to a certain extent, been operating in parallel. This reduced their effectiveness and led to duplication and overlap in some areas.

Against this background, the Government in June 1998 established an Interdepartmental Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems, chaired by the Minister for the Environment and Local Government. The Report of the Task Force on the Integration of Local Government and Local Development Systems (August 1998) was approved by Government and the Task Force has been mandated to continue in order to oversee implementation of the Report's recommendations.

One of the principal recommendations of the Task Force Report was the establishment of County/City Development Boards (CDBs) in each of the 29 county councils, and in each of the 5 major cities to bring about an integrated approach to the delivery of both State and local development services at local level. Each CDB is required to prepare and oversee the implementation of a ten year county/city Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development, which will provide the template guiding all public services and local development activities locally; in effect, bringing more coherence to the planning and delivery of services at local level. All thirty four Strategies for Economic, Social and Cultural Development have now been published.

### **Sligo County Development Board**

Sligo County Development Board (CDB) had its inaugural meeting on the 27th March, 2000. Membership of the Board is drawn from Local Government, Local Development, State Agencies and the Social Partners including the Community and Voluntary Sector. By adopting this partnership approach it is intended that Sligo will

develop in an integrated and cohesive manner with efforts being channelled to co-ordinate the provision of quality services. The Board's primary task was to prepare a Strategy for Economic, Social and cultural development for County Sligo for the period 2002-2012. The Strategy is the framework within which all agencies operating at local level agree to work together for more effective delivery of public services.

The main functions of Sligo CDB are to:

- Encourage constructive co-operation and active participation by all members of the Board based on a partnership approach.
- Identify gaps and duplication in local service delivery.
- Oversee the implementation of the Integrated Economic, Social and Cultural Strategy for County Sligo (2002-2012) and revised priorities for the period mid 2009 – 2012.

Key goals of the CDB process include:

- The development of a critical mass of infrastructure.
- Developments in enterprise, industry, agriculture, retail and tourism that maximise opportunities and employment potential in an environmentally sustainable way.
- The development of a co-ordinated and multi-agency approach in tackling the structural and attitudinal barriers surrounding social inclusion.
- The promotion of Sligo's cultural life whilst balancing accessibility and development with the need to protect and preserve the County's heritage and unique environment.

**Member Agencies of Sligo County Development Board Include:**

**Sligo County Council, Sligo Borough Council, HSE Northwest, FAS, Teagasc, Co Sligo VEC, Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, Institute of Technology Sligo, St Angela's College, Western Development Commission, Dept. of Education and Science, Dept. of Social & Family Affairs, An Garda Siochana, Failte Ireland Northwest, Sligo County Enterprise Board, Sligo Leader Partnership Co, Sligo County Childcare Committee, Sligo Chamber of Commerce, ICTU, Sligo County Community Forum, ICMSA, Environmental Representative.**

## **Social Inclusion**

The Social Inclusion Measures Group is a sub-group of the County Development Board (CDB). The functions of the group are to:

- Provide a forum for co-ordinating the delivery of social inclusion activities in Co Sligo.
- Develop Integrated target group plans in line with DEHLG Circular LG04/04
- Monitor the implementation of the County Development Board Social Inclusion Strategy 2002-2012 and subsequent action plans.
- Monitor Sligo RAPID Programme

## **SIM Membership**

The membership of the SIM Working Group is determined initially by the County Development Board (CDB). The CDB identified organisations in Co. Sligo that are involved in delivering social inclusion work.

## **Economic Development**

The role of the Economic Development Sub-Committee is to provide a focal point for Economic Promotion of County Sligo and to monitor the implementation of the County Development Board's Economic Development Strategy. The following is an outline of the role of the Economic Development Sub-Committee:

- To maintain a positive attitude in the economic downturn;
- To develop an influencing role at local and regional levels;
- To remain strategic and influential and not become only another mechanism for service delivery;
- Co-operation/Co-ordination re: economic developments, including sharing between other County Development Boards and their respective economic sub-committees.
- Acting as the locally based inter-agency Task Force constituted in response to significant issues (e.g. closure of major businesses or development of specific economic initiatives) in line with any advice/guidelines from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.
- Provide a focal point for economic promotion in the county.
- Provide a consultative mechanism to facilitate economic input to the drafting of the county/borough council development plan.

- Carry out such other relevant tasks as requested by the County Development Board, or national body.
- Have lead agencies for particular initiatives/actions as identified by the committee.

## ***CREATIVE SLIGO***

One of the overarching objectives of the Board is to develop Sligo's profile to ensure that the County is profiled as an attractive place to visit, live, work and invest in raising the profile of Sligo. The Board played an integral role in the development of the [www.sligo.ie](http://www.sligo.ie) portal which provides targeted on-line information on services and events in Sligo for the interest of people sourcing details on business and enterprise, education, tourism, public services and current events in Sligo.

The site contains topical information on tourism, business & enterprise, education and public services, and will be an important resource in promoting Sligo to a global audience.

Sligo's attractive location and its pool of creative talent are highlighted by the Board as unique assets of the County. Recent research from the Western Development Commission shows that Sligo has the second highest percentage of people working in the Creative Sector in the Western Development Commission Region at 4.2% of the county's total employment. With this in mind, the County Development Board is looking at the role that creativity can play in the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the County and has adopted the development of the Creative Sligo Initiative as one of its strategic priorities. The planning and implementation of this initiative on behalf of the county involves collaboration between the Department of Community and Enterprise and the Arts Service on behalf of the County Development Board.



## **WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES**

### **Community & Enterprise**

The Community and Enterprise Department is mainly concerned with supporting the community and voluntary sector, enterprise development and with managing inter-agency co-operation and strategic planning for the County, through the County Development Board (CDB). The services of the Department have a direct connection with the communities of Co. Sligo and the partnerships made with other agencies seek to promote social inclusion and active citizenship in the County.

### **Providing Supports**

Communities are supported to enhance their areas through various initiatives, these include the Tidy Towns competition, Community & Voluntary Grant Scheme and Pride of Place Competition.

There has been a steady increase, year on year in the number of *Tidy Towns Committees* entering the National Tidy Towns competition and in the marks awarded to Sligo groups in recent years. The provision of information, support and grant aid is met through the *Community and Voluntary Grant Scheme* along with providing support to the County's Burial Ground Committees to help maintain burial grounds albeit with reduced resources.

Pride of Place is an all-island Competition and since the inception of the competition Sligo entries have been highly commended and shortlisted at national level.

### **The Community Forum**

This is a representative structure for more than 600 community and voluntary groups in Co. Sligo and is supported by the Community and Enterprise Department where its office is located.

### **Voluntary Sector**

Support is also provided for the *Volunteer Centre*. The Department of Community & Enterprise aims to develop the natural synergies which exist between it and the community and voluntary sector.

## **Targeting Disadvantaged Areas**

The RAPID Programme provides supports to specified disadvantaged areas in Sligo town and the Coordinator with the Area Implementation Team directs the work of RAPID on an interagency and community basis.

## **Tourism Development**

The Community and Enterprise Department plays a lead role within the County Council and as a member organisation of the CDB in tourism development for County Sligo. Some of the projects delivered by Community and Enterprise in conjunction with other agencies include the provision of new car-park facilities, the development of new walk-ways and upgrading of existing routes.

Support is also provided for unique events and various festivals which take place annually along with funding for Marketing Sligo Forum and Failte Ireland's marketing programme for Sligo. We are currently working in partnership through the County Development Board structure to develop a unique Co Sligo Tourism Strategy to attract significant additional visitors to Sligo.

## **Social Inclusion and Equality**

The Board's Social Inclusion Measures Sub Group coordinates a range of initiatives dealing with early school leaving, domestic violence, childcare, children's services and new communities as well as services to Travellers, Older People, People with Disabilities and unemployed people.

## **Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Partnership Committee**

The Sligo Peace and Reconciliation Partnership Committee is a sub-committee of the County Development Board and is managed by the Department of Community & Enterprise. It secured €1.9m under the EU Peace III Programme for the delivery of the Sligo Peace Action Plan 2008-10. This funding is being used to deliver an extensive programme of activities in communities across the county addressing sectarianism, racism and conflict resolution and includes projects dealing with sport and peace, a churches initiative, women and peace, new communities, diversity work, urban and rural peace building to name some. A plan for phase II of Peace III has been developed with the hope that further funding will be made available in 2011.

## ***ACCESS & PARTICIPATION***

Sligo County Council recognises the importance of delivering on the Disability Act 2005, regarding persons with disabilities. The Authorities are also committed to meeting the needs of persons with disabilities, as described in the Barcelona Declaration. The Declaration supports the rights of disabled persons to participate as equal citizens. It is a priority of Sligo County Council to continuously improve disability access within all areas of their remit.

In 2007, a Disability Implementation Plan was published for the period 2008 to 2015. This conforms to Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOELG) policy documents, and guidelines of the Local Government Management Services Board. The plan was based on audits on accessibility for disabled persons. Priority has been given to local authority buildings and other facilities to which access is most frequently required, as well as accessible public footpaths, streets and crossings in urban areas. Organisations representing persons with disabilities were consulted in the preparation of the Plan, and cost estimates were also carried out.

Regarding disability access, significant improvement work has been undertaken to date. It is intended that this will continue to 2015 and beyond, subject to sufficient National Disability Strategy funding from the DOEHLG. This will greatly enhance disability access for all areas within our remit. It is proposed to carry out a review of the current plan, for the years 2011-2015. This will identify any new items of work to be carried out, and will re-prioritise all work items.

The Access Team (Access Officer, Inquiry Officer, Disability Liaison Officer, SEO and Director of Services) also have other direct and indirect roles regarding ongoing delivery of the 2005 Disability Act. They include the following:

- Motivating of staff.
- Identifying actions and targets to improve accessibility.
- Examining areas such as access to: Customer Services, built environment, and information / communications technology.

- Guiding of activities within SLA, including the optimal spending of disability funding.

Sligo County Council has delivered disability awareness training to its staff, including Disability equality training, universal access auditing, and complaints handling procedures. It is anticipated that this training will be continued through to 2014 and beyond, subject to sufficient funding.

## ***CLIMATE CHANGE & ENERGY EFFICIENCY***

Sligo County Council believes it can make a meaningful contribution to Climate Action and are committed to achieving an overall reduction of 33% in energy consumption by 2020.

The *National Climate Change Strategy 2007 – 2012* maintains that the Public Sector must lead with mandatory programmes of energy efficiency measures. This means adopting specific targets for reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and measuring and reporting on progress annually. Local Authorities aim to achieve their targets in a direct manner by reducing emissions through their own energy use and procurement activities, and indirectly through their statutory functions in the areas of housing, planning and transportation etc.

The National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2009-2020 ‘Maximising Ireland’s Energy Efficiency’ identifies the extent of the challenge facing our society; ‘Improving Ireland’s energy efficiency is an essential component of our sustainable energy policy. Energy efficiency is internationally recognised as the most cost-effective means of reducing dependence on fossil fuels.’

In December 2008, the County & City Managers’ Association published a paper on Climate Change ‘Best Practice and Current Initiatives’ which stated that “In developing climate change policy, local authorities should consider all aspects of their functions, identify their energy usage and appropriate action to reduce that usage, specify targets and timeframes by which reductions can be achieved, outline the savings that will accrue and outline a plan for implementation. That plan should also indicate the structures in place and procedures being pursued by the local authority to ensure appropriate monitoring of progress on an annual basis.”

Climate Action and Energy Efficiency within Sligo County Council are championed by a cross-departmental Climate Change/Energy Efficiency Working Group and supported by dedicated staff in the Environment Section. Energy usage data are being gathered against which to measure progress and key actions are underway across a

range of services to reduce energy consumption. These and other measures will play a major role in the ongoing delivery of improved efficiencies.

Preparing and implementing a comprehensive Climate Change & Energy Efficiency Strategy is a corporate priority and will position the organisation to meet its formal public sector energy-efficiency targets.

## **MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

The approach to Major Emergency Management involves a five-stage systems approach including:

- Hazard Analysis / Risk Assessment
- Mitigation / Risk Management
- Planning and Preparedness
- Co-ordinated Response; and
- Recovery

Hazard Analysis / Risk Assessment is a process where the hazards facing the community are identified and assessed in terms of the risk which they pose. Initially, Sligo County Council is responsible for undertaking the risk assessment process from its own perspective.

The information from each Principal Response Agency was provided to the North West Region Major Emergency Regional Working Group who undertook to produce a regional risk assessment from an inter-agency perspective. The relevant outcomes from the regional process were then incorporated into Sligo Local Authority's **Major Emergency Plan**. The primary purpose of the Risk Assessment is to establish priorities for Major Emergency Planning.

### **Framework Requirement**

The Framework for Major Emergency Management requires that:

*“Each Principal Response Agency shall, in association with its partner principal response agencies, carry out a risk assessment in accordance with the procedures set down in Section 2 of the Framework for Major Emergency Management and The Guide to Risk Assessment in Major Emergency Management. The initial risk assessment shall be reviewed and updated annually, or as circumstances require.”*

### **Establishing the Context**

The characteristics of County Sligo will influence both the likelihood and impact of a major emergency. Establishing the context enables a better understanding of the vulnerability and resilience of the area to emergencies. The context of the County Sligo is summarised in four main areas: Social context, environment, infrastructure, hazardous sites.

## ***CIVIC LEADERSHIP***

### **Substance Abuse Strategy – A Multi-Agency Approach**

#### **Background**

Many of the complex cross-cutting problems facing citizens, communities and governments (**e.g.** financial austerity; care for an ageing population; alcohol and drug misuse; crime and the fear of crime) cannot be resolved simply by more legislation, finance or public services, but demand innovative changes in attitudes, behaviours and responsibilities by citizens, and the co design of solutions with the public.

The effects of excessive alcohol consumption and substance abuse are creating a major public health, societal and environmental problem that is common to every County in Ireland. Sligo County Council intend to work with those charged to address these issues and support their drive for a local leadership process that will promote public value and adaptive leadership to tackle tough problems that include alcohol and other substances.

Mobilising a collaborative advantage will endorse and support a multi-agency approach to changing the alcohol and substance abuse culture in Sligo that will impact positively on all citizens' lives.

#### **Proposed Strategic Objective**

Sligo County Council will support the development and facilitation of a civic process by the relevant agencies, to protect Sligo from the negative impacts of alcohol culture on our citizens and visitors, and will encourage all stakeholders to play a key role in developing socially acceptable alcohol behaviour.



# APPENDICES

Appendix 1.....Sligo County Council Organisational Chart

Appendix 2.....Elected Members

Appendix 3.....Strategic Policy Committee Membership

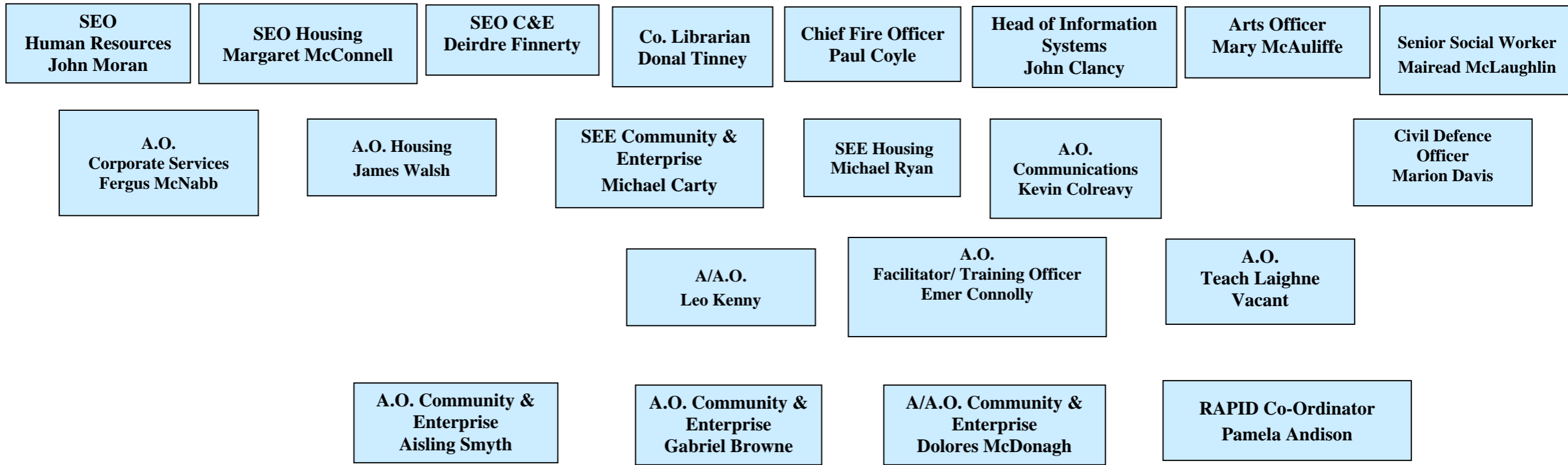
Appendix 4 .....Customer Action Plan

Appendix 5 .....Customer Charter

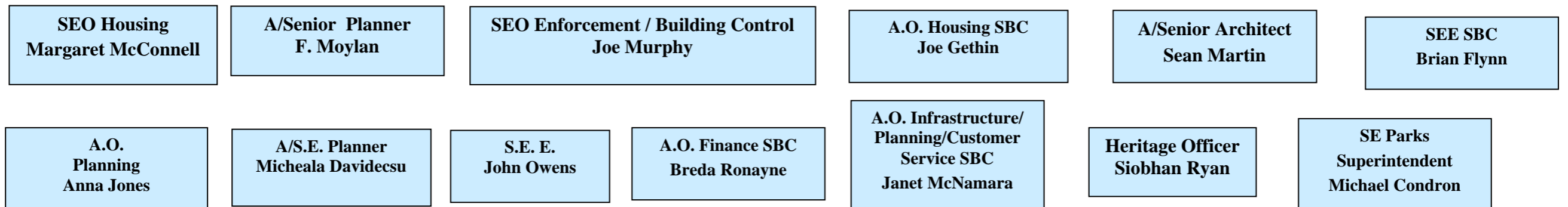
**Appendix 1**  
**SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES ORGANISATIONAL CHART**

**County Manager**  
**Hubert Kearns**

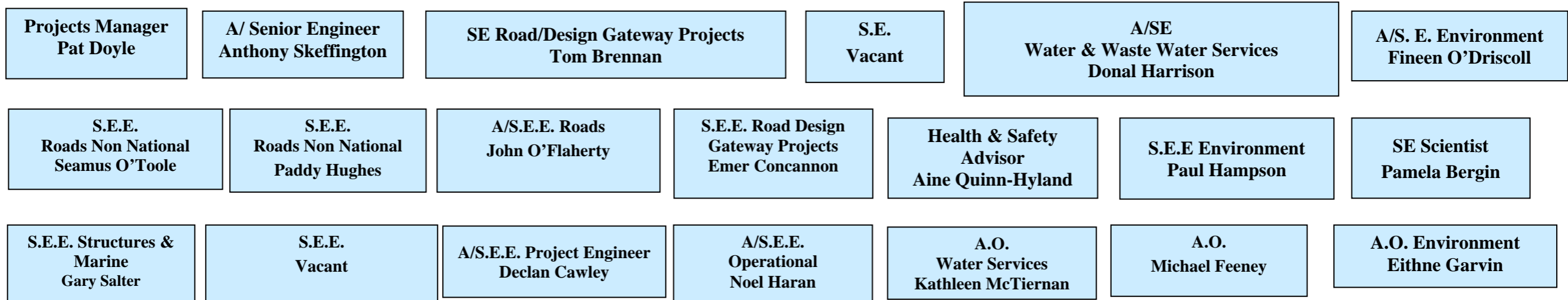
**Director of Services ~ Housing, Social, Cultural & Corporate Affairs, Emergency Services,  
Community & Enterprise and Arts**  
**Dorothy Clarke**



**A/Director of Services Planning & Sligo Borough Council**  
**Paula R. Gallagher**

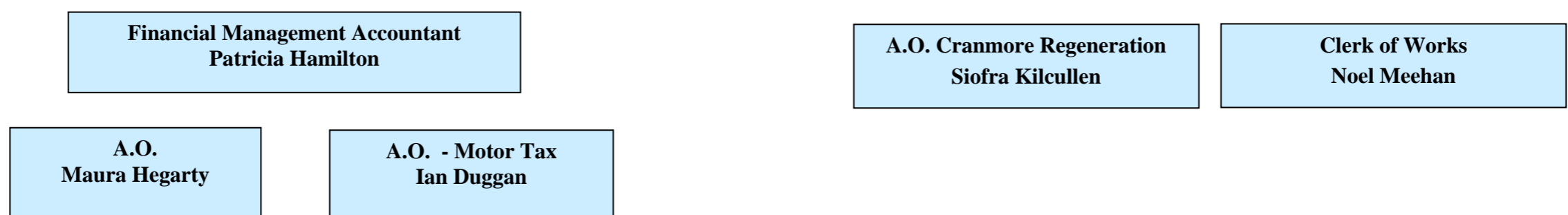


**Director of Services Infrastructural Services & Environment**  
**Tom Kilfeather**



**Head of Finance**  
**Marie Leydon**

**A/ Director of Services Cranmore Regeneration, Sligo Harbour & Project Management**  
**Bartley Gavin**



S.E.O. Senior Executive Officer  
S.E. Senior Engineer  
A.O. Administrative Officer  
S.E.E. Senior Executive Fire Officer  
A.C.F.O. Assistant Chief Fire Officer  
SBC Sligo Borough Council  
C&E Community & Enterprise

Appendix 2  
Elected Members Details

*Members of Sligo County Council*

NAME	ELECTORAL AREA
<b>Councillor Patrick Barry</b>	<b>SLIGO/DRUMCLIFFE</b>
<b>Councillor Veronica Cawley</b>	<b>SLIGO/DRUMCLIFFE</b>
<b>Councillor Jude Devins</b>	<b>SLIGO/DRUMCLIFFE</b>
<b>Councillor Hubert Keaney</b>	<b>SLIGO/DRUMCLIFFE</b>
<b>Councillor Joe Leonard</b>	<b>SLIGO/DRUMCLIFFE</b>
<b>Councillor Matt Lyons</b>	<b>SLIGO/DRUMCLIFFE</b>
<b>Councillor Imelda Henry</b>	<b>SLIGO/STRANDHILL</b>
<b>Councillor Deirdre Healy McGowan</b>	<b>SLIGO/STRANDHILL</b>
<b>Councillor Sean MacManus</b>	<b>SLIGO/STRANDHILL</b>
<b>Councillor Jim McGarry</b>	<b>SLIGO/STRANDHILL</b>
<b>Councillor Declan Bree</b>	<b>SLIGO/STRANDHILL</b>
<b>Councillor Tony McLoughlin</b>	<b>SLIGO/STRANDHILL</b>
<b>Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady</b>	<b>TUBBERCURRY</b>
<b>Councillor Jerry Lundy</b>	<b>TUBBERCURRY</b>
<b>Councillor Michael Fleming</b>	<b>TUBBERCURRY</b>
<b>Councillor Margaret Gormley</b>	<b>TUBBERCURRY</b>
<b>Councillor Gerry Murray</b>	<b>TUBBERCURRY</b>
<b>Councillor Martin Baker</b>	<b>BALLYMOTE</b>
<b>Councillor Pat McGrath</b>	<b>BALLYMOTE</b>
<b>Councillor Gerard Mullaney</b>	<b>BALLYMOTE</b>
<b>Councillor Thomas Collery</b>	<b>BALLYMOTE</b>
<b>Councillor Mary Barrett</b>	<b>DROMORE WEST</b>
<b>Councillor Michael Clarke</b>	<b>DROMORE WEST</b>
<b>Councillor Dara Mulvey</b>	<b>DROMORE WEST</b>
<b>Councillor Joseph Queenan</b>	<b>DROMORE WEST</b>

## Appendix 3

### Strategic Policy Committees' Membership

#### **SPC 1 - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING POLICY**

1. Councillor Jim McGarry – Chair
2. Councillor Veronica Cawley
3. Councillor Thomas Collery
4. Councillor Deirdre Healy McGowan
5. Councillor Matt Lyons
6. Councillor Rosaleen O'Grady
7. Councillor Sean MacManus
8. Mr Gerard Queenan – Farming Pillar
9. Mr Tom Currid – Business Pillar
10. Ms Tracy Godfrey – Environmental Pillar
11. Mr Francis Flanagan – Community Representative
12. Ms Maura McCormack – Community Representative

#### **SPC 2 – ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

1. Councillor Pat McGrath - Chair
2. Councillor Mary Barrett
3. Councillor Hubert Keaney
4. Councillor David Cawley
5. Councillor Dara Mulvey
6. Councillor Marcella McGarry
7. Ms Kathleen Henry – Farming Pillar
8. Mr John Cawley – Trade Union Pillar
9. Mr Guy Marsden – Environmental Pillar
10. Mr Brendan Queenan – Community Representative
11. Ms Kathleen McGuinness – Community Representative

### **SPC 3 – TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE POLICY**

- 1.** Councillor Patsy Barry - Chair
- 2.** Councillor Michael Clarke
- 3.** Councillor Jude Devins
- 4.** Councillor Margaret Gormley
- 5.** Councillor Gerry Lundy
- 6.** Councillor Gerry Murray
- 7.** Mr Tom Ford - Business Pillar
- 8.** Mr Chris Davis – Community Representative
- 9.** Mr Michael Rochford – Community Representative

### **SPC 4 – HOUSING POLICY, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 1.** Councillor Gerard Mullaney - Chair
- 2.** Councillor Martin Baker
- 3.** Councillor Declan Bree
- 4.** Councillor Michael Fleming
- 5.** Councillor Imelda Henry
- 6.** Councillor Joe Leonard
- 7.** Councillor Joe Queenan
- 8.** Mr Trevor McDaid – Business Pillar
- 9.** Mr Joe McDonagh – Trade Union Pillar
- 10.** Ms Sharon Boles – Community Representative
- 11.** Ms Helen Rochford Brennan

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN**

In their dealings with the public, Sligo County Council is committed to taking significant steps over the next number of years to improve its services. Some of these will yield immediate improvements at certain points of contact such as improvements in information technology, improvements to public offices and improved quality of the telephone service.

Sligo County Council is committed to the following:-

#### **QUALITY SERVICE STANDARDS:**

A Customer Charter has been published that outlines the nature and quality of service which Customers can expect.

#### **PHYSICAL ACCESS:**

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with special requirements.

#### **INFORMATION:**

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific requirements. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication.

Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

#### **TIMELINESS & COURTESY:**

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and Customer.

Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

#### **COMPLAINTS:**

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

#### **APPEALS:**

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for Customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

### **CONSULTATION & EVALUATION:**

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the Customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

### **CHOICE:**

Provide a range of choices, where feasible, in service delivery. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

### **BETTER CO-ORDINATION:**

Foster a more coordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

### **QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICES:**

Sligo County Council is committed to the principles of Quality Customer Service approved by the government and has introduced this Action Plan which sets out how we will implement these principles. In addition we will integrate training on Customer service issues into general training courses and council procedures and practices. Improvements in service delivery are expected to arise from increased utilisation of information and electronic technologies. These include the new financial management system. A Customer service ethos will be promoted throughout the organisation and Customers and staff will be encouraged to comment and improve upon existing practices.

### **CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN:**

#### **What you can expect from us?**

Sligo County Council is committed to delivering an efficient courteous and quality service to its Customers. We will ensure that each Customer has equal access and opportunity. We will be sensitive to our Customers needs and take into account any special requirements. We will, at all times, be aware of the difficulties that can arise with complex rules and procedures and will make every effort to clarify and respond to any requests for information.

#### **When providing service by telephone we will aim to:**

- Staff will be available to take your call from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday.
- Be helpful and provide you with clear and accurate information.
- Always give you a contact name and telephone number.
- Respond properly and courteously.
- Take details and call you back if we cannot answer your query immediately.
- Indicate when you can expect to hear from us if we have to call you back.
- Provide an improved telephone system for our Customers.
- Keep internal telephone directories up-to-date.



**If you visit our offices we will aim to:**

- Meet with you punctually if you have an appointment
- Respect your privacy.
- Deal with you in a polite, courteous and fair manner.
- Deal with your enquiry and provide any relevant information that we have as quickly as possible.
- Keep our offices clean and safe.
- Continue to improve accessibility for all our Customers including people with a disability and special requirements.

Note: Customers need to be aware that, due to work commitments, it may be necessary to make an appointment in advance to meet with some members of staff.

**In corresponding with you we will aim to:**

- Use clear and simple language and keep the technical terms to a minimum.
- Include a contact name, telephone and extension number, e-mail address and reference number on all correspondence that we issue.
- Make every effort to ensure that correspondence is replied to where possible when individual staff members are absent.
- Some correspondence requires considerable research before a full reply can issue. Where appropriate, correspondence will be acknowledged. Ensure that service departments are allocated an e-mail address.
- Ensure that all payments are made in accordance with provisions of the Prompt Payments Act, 1997.

**In producing forms and leaflets we will aim to:**

- Ensure that leaflets and forms are freely available, including in electronic format.
- Use clear and simple language.
- Explain exactly what information is required on application forms.
- Request only relevant information on application forms.
- Ensure that data supplied on forms will only be used for the purpose for which it is given in compliance with the Data Protection Act.
- Produce all documentation in a range of accessible formats suitable to the needs of people with disabilities.

**Complaints:**

- If you are not happy with the quality of service we provide you are entitled to make a complaint.
- If you are not satisfied with the response received, you should contact the Complaints Officer, Corporate Services, in writing, who will respond to your complaint in writing within twenty eight days of receipt of complaint.
- You may also have a statutory right to complain to the Ombudsman whose role is to investigate complaints about administrative actions, delays or

inaction adversely affecting persons or bodies that are dealing with the County or Borough Council.

- All complaints will be dealt with properly, fairly and impartially.

#### **Information and Communications Technology:**

- New technology will be availed of to the greatest possible extent to make services more accessible and improve service delivery.  
Over the period of the plan the information technology systems within Sligo County Council including the telephone system will continue to be upgraded.

#### **Co-Ordination of Services:**

- Sligo County Council will foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivering of services.

#### **Choice:**

- Sligo County Council will provide a range of choices, where feasible, in service delivery.
- Sligo County Council will use available emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

#### **Consultation and Evaluation:**

- Sligo County Council will proactively support meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the Customer in relation to development, delivery and review of services.
- Sligo County Council will use the Strategic Policy Committees as one of the approaches to evaluating our service delivery.
- Sligo County Council will provide a comment sheet on our website [[www.Sligococo.ie](http://www.Sligococo.ie)] to facilitate Customers who may wish to make suggestions or comments on the services which we provide.

#### **Review of Customer Action Plan:**

- Sligo County Council will review and monitor the Customer Action Plan on a regular basis and welcomes feedback from its Customers and the Strategic Policy Committees.

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **CUSTOMER CHARTER**

#### **Our commitment to you**

- To deliver high quality services to you in an effective and caring manner.

#### **Courtesy and Consideration**

You are at all times entitled to be served:

- Promptly and in a courteous manner
- With due regard to privacy and confidentiality
- By helpful staff

#### **Openness and Impartiality**

We undertake to:

- Deal with you in a fair and open manner
- Discuss any aspect of your dealings with us
- Explain how a decision was reached.

#### **Access**

We endeavour to:

- Provide clean, accessible public offices
- Facilitate access for people with disabilities and special requirements.

#### **Review**

Our services will be continually reviewed and improved upon where necessary.

You can help us to help you

- By providing full and accurate information
- By letting us know when we do something well
- By making comments, complaints or suggestions about the services you receive.

Sligo County Council has in place a Complaints Procedure for Customers dissatisfied with the quality of service received. A copy of same can be obtained at our Customer Services Desk, by e-mailing us as [info@sligococo.ie](mailto:info@sligococo.ie) or on our website – [www.sligococo.ie](http://www.sligococo.ie)