

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL CHAINNIGH



KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN



Kilkenny

2001-2004



C O N T E N T S

Introduction:

Message from Cathaoirleach:	3
Message from County Manager:	4
Background to Corporate Plan:	5

1 . O U R M I S S I O N S T A T E M E N T A N D M A N D A T E : 7

2 . R E C O G N I S I N G A C H I E V E M E N T : 8

3 . R E A L I Z I N G O U R G O A L S : 9

i Finance	9
ii Human Resources	9
iii Information and Communication Technology	10
iv Staff Consultation Process:	10
v Implementation and Assessment Review:	11

4 . M A K I N G I T H A P P E N 12

• Housing and Social Policy	12	• Fire Service	17
• Roads	13	• Civil Defence	17
• Water and Sewerage	14	• Motor Taxation	18
• Water Safety	14	• Kilkenny County Library	18
• Planning and Development	15	• Veterinary Services and Animal Welfare	18
• Environment	16	• County Development Board	19
• Recreation and Amenity	16	• Corporate	19
• Arts and Culture	17		

5 . S T R A T E G I E S 2 0 0 1 20

6 . C U S T O M E R A C T I O N P L A N 22



I welcome the publication of this Corporate Plan, which has given us the opportunity to focus on how best we can serve the needs of the people of County Kilkenny in a time of rapid development and change.

In Chapter 2 we see some of the achievements of the Council and staff in the past few years. I see our challenge, as we move into the future as being to develop and deliver services of the highest quality that are responsive to the identified needs and expectations of the wide range of customers served by this Council.

I am proud that the Council is at the forefront of this process of change and review. Improved customer service in its broadest sense is what we are continually striving for and I believe that this Council is well placed to do this in the challenging years ahead. This document contains a comprehensive Customer Action Plan which is a key development for the Council as we move into the future.

This Corporate Plan sets out the directions that we will be following in pursuit of the ambitious targets set out in the Plan.

This plan will facilitate the Elected Members, Management and Staff together with the newly formed Strategy Policy Committees to work in partnership for the betterment of the people of County Kilkenny.

I welcome the challenges outlined in the Corporate Plan and look forward to working with management to improve the services we provide and to continuing the process of making the Council a highly professional organisation committed to best practice.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Brennan". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Cllr. T. Brennan,
Cathaoirleach.

MESSAGE FROM COUNTY MANAGER

Mr. Patrick J. Donnelly



Much progress has been made in modernising Local Government since the publication by the Government of the Strategic Management Initiative and Better Local Government (May, 1996).

During this period of unprecedented growth we have a historic opportunity to make a lasting contribution to the development of County Kilkenny.

This Corporate Plan has been developed in partnership with the staff of the Council, Elected Members, Partnership Committee, the recently formed Strategic Policy Committees and Corporate Policy Group.

The Strategic Policy Committees will develop the policies of the Council under the various programmes such as Roads, Planning and Environment. These committees involve elected members, and representatives of sectoral interests relevant to the particular programme. They will be supported by a new and strengthened management structure.

This is the second Corporate Plan to be produced by the Council and one of the aims of the Plan is to improve the standard of service to the people of Kilkenny.

The Plan sets out policies and directions that the Council will pursue over the next four years in order to ensure the achievement of the highest levels of efficiency and effectiveness. A series of key objectives and supporting strategies are incorporated into the Plan, which will point the way to the achievement of these objectives.

In this regard the elected members with their democratic mandate will play a crucial role in the ongoing development of policies to improve the services to the public.

The Plan also incorporates customer service indicators, an annual operational plan which details the targets set for each year, and a customer action plan the focus of which is to improve customer service.

The people who work in the Council are its most crucial resource. It is their commitment, experience and professionalism that will contribute most to the delivery of a higher quality service and I am confident that Management and Staff will meet this challenge.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. J. Donnelly". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

P.J. Donnelly,
County Manager.

BACKGROUND TO CORPORATE PLAN

The environment in which the Council operates has a large bearing on the ability of Kilkenny County Council to fulfil its mandate effectively.

Internal and external factors, which will influence the extent to which the Council can achieve these objectives, can be summarised as follows.

- Local and Central Financial Resources.
- Information & Communications Technology.
- Partnership Policies.
- Strategic Policy Committees.
- County Development Board.
- Accommodation/One Stop Shop/Area Offices.
- National and E.U. Policies
- Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.
- National Development Plan (2000-2006).
- Democratic Mandate
- Human Resources.
- Geographical configuration and location

The preparation of the Corporate Development Plan has encompassed recent national policy, which has and will impact significantly on the Council over the coming years. These include the following policies and publications

- Better Local Government.
- Integration of Local Government and Local Development.
- Financial Management Systems/Agresso/Introduction of Euro
- National Development Plan (2000 -2006).
- Information Society/Information & Communications Technology
- Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.
- Public Private Partnership.
- Freedom of Information.
- Human Resources Policy.
- Planning and Development Act, 2000.
- Local Government Bill, 2000.
- Department of the Environment and Local Government Statement of Strategy 1998 - 2001.

CONSULTATION

MANAGEMENT CONSULTED WIDELY IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS PLAN, including the following groups: Staff, Strategic Policy Committees, Corporate Policy Group, Partnership Committee, County Development Board, Elected Members.



"Recent national policy will impact significantly on the County Council".

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

It is opportune that in the preparation of the Corporate Plan a full review of the County Development Plan has taken place. This review has highlighted important trends of population growth and demographic change. The Corporate Plan has sought to take these changes into account.

POPULATION OF KILKENNY

Projections indicate an increasing population and rate of household formation together with an aging population.

	County	City & Environs
1991	73,635	17,669
1996	75,336	18,696
2004*	80,202	20,050*

PREDICTED*

- With the exception of the City and Environs, all towns within the County have less than 2,000 persons.
- 68% of the population live in rural areas.

THIS GROWTH WILL INFLUENCE COUNCIL POLICY IN THE COUNTY

- Predicted increase in the size of the workforce.
- Predicted increase in the number of childcare facilities needed.
- Overseas tourists visiting the southeast region increased by 37% between 1992 and 1997.
- Further development of a number of existing population centres to encourage rural development.
- Establishment of a University for the South East Region is a priority.
- Major investment required to improve water and sewerage infrastructure.
- Major improvements to National Roads in Co. Kilkenny included in the National Development Plan (2000-2006).
- Implementation of the County Waste Management Plan.
- Development of commuter services from Kilkenny City to major urban centres including Dublin would radically improve Kilkenny's position as an urban growth centre.

"an increasing population and rate of household formation together with an aging population"

OUR MISSION AND MANDATE

MISSION STATEMENT

AS MEMBERS AND STAFF OF KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL TO WORK WITH THE COMMUNITY WE SERVE AND THEREBY PROMOTE THE CULTURAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY CONSISTENT WITH THE PRESERVATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

MANDATE

The activities of the Council have an impact on every citizen in County Kilkenny.

The Council provides an extensive range of services, which can be broken down between the provision and maintenance of infrastructure and the delivery of a wide range of services, which include: -

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Roads
- Housing
- Water
- Sewerage
- Waste management
- Amenities
- Environmental protection

SERVICES

- Making of development plans
- Assessment of planning applications
- Motor taxation
- Social housing
- Environmental protection
- Register of electors
- Library service



The Council also has an important role in the promotion of economic development in the county. It pursues its objectives in this area through the provision of infrastructure and by supporting initiatives to encourage both inward and indigenous investment.

The Council actively promotes and supports tourism, arts and cultural involvement within the County.

The partnership relationship which exists between the Council and local communities is extremely important and assistance is provided by the Council through its various grants schemes and through the community and enterprise unit of the Council headed by the Director of Community and Enterprise.

RECOGNISING ACHIEVEMENT

In planning for the future, everyone associated with Kilkenny County Council can reflect with pride on the contribution of the organisation to the development of County Kilkenny.

Kilkenny County Council makes an enormous and positive contribution to the lives of everybody in Kilkenny.

This is achieved through the provision of a wide range of services and the enhancement of the social, cultural and economic life of communities large and small, urban and rural throughout the county.

ACHIEVEMENTS IN RECENT YEARS HAVE INCLUDED:

INDUSTRY

Active involvement with major projects such as the Arcon mine in Galmoy, Louisiana Pacific and Belview Port as well as the establishment of the Business and Technology Park in Loughboy.

TOWN AND VILLAGE RENEWAL

Working in partnership with communities throughout the county of Kilkenny, the County Council is involved in facilitating a renaissance of the towns and villages of Kilkenny.

TOURISM

Funding and development assistance to a range of tourism projects and direct responsibility for projects such as the Woodstock Garden Restoration Project as well as the marketing of Kilkenny as an attractive holiday and leisure destination.

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND RECREATION

Through support of sporting, social and cultural organisations and events as well as the provision of a wide range of amenities Kilkenny County Council makes a significant contribution to the social and cultural lives of the people of Kilkenny.

MANAGING GROWTH AND DEVELOPEMENT

Since 1997 Kilkenny County Council has managed phenomenal growth in the development of Kilkenny with planning applications processed annually growing by 70% in the 4 years to the end of 2000.



Before Derelict Sites at Barrack Street, Goresbridge



After Barrack Street, Goresbridge

REALISING OUR GOALS

The Council proposes to implement its mission statement through a series of core objectives. These objectives cover the areas of:

- Finance
- Human Resources Development
- Information and Communication Technologies
- Staff Consultation Implementation and Assessment Review.

i FINANCE

Objective:

To promote sound financial management/responsibility throughout the organisation to ensure value for money.
To examine the resources available to the Council and to obtain the most efficient and effective use of these resources.

STRATEGIES

- Monitor and control all income and expenditure.
- Ensure efficient collection methods of all income and facilitate the introduction of new technology for payment of income.
- Provide financial information systems to enable service providers to evaluate and utilise resources in an efficient and effective manner and assist corporate decision-making.
- Provide appropriate staff training and other necessary resources for the complete implementation of the Agresso financial package.
- Prepare Estimates and Annual Financial Statements in accordance with the requirements of the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

ii HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Objective:

To retain and recruit a workforce committed to delivering the objectives of Kilkenny County Council efficiently and effectively.

STRATEGIES

- Ensure a safe and healthy work environment for all staff.
- Fully comply with the Equality Act, 1998 to ensure equality of opportunity.
- Ensure relevant training is delivered within the resources available.
- Give greater commitment to budget provision for staff training at estimates.
- Update and circulate equality policy including details of Employee Assistance Scheme.
- Ensure compliance with the terms of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness.

"Efficient
and Effective
Use of
Resources"

Objective:

To maximise the use of Information & Communications Technologies as an effective means of communicating with the customer and to use these technologies to improve the efficiency of internal communication and workflow.

STRATEGIES

- Use modern Information & Communications Technologies to assist front line staff in providing information and specific services to the customer.
- Provide information on all County Council activity through Web based technology.
- Develop an Intranet as a means of information sharing between all staff members of the Kilkenny Local Authorities
- Develop a system that facilitates the use of e-mail as an effective means of communication between staff, between staff and the Members and between Local Authorities and the Customer.
- Provide for a secure means of financial transactions through the Internet.
- Co-operate with other public service providers in County Kilkenny through the development of Extranets.
- Install the appropriate network systems and deploy the necessary hardware to support the systems.
- Establish a broad-based committee to monitor the system in operation and to incorporate new elements as technology develops.
- Provide appropriate training for the various levels of users.

iv STAFF CONSULTATION PROCESS

A consultation team was established and met with all members of indoor staff and a representative group of the outdoor staff to make recommendations on the delivery of Council services at local level. As a result of this process, the team recommended that management give serious consideration to the decentralisation of an agreed range of services to a locally based service delivery structure, operating through the Council's Area Office network.

However, in order to ensure the success of this decentralisation programme it is the consensus of the consultation team that the following factors/issues must be addressed in advance of the commencement of the programme.

- Information and Communications Technologies
- Office Accommodation and Security
- Geographical Considerations
- Staffing Structure and Levels
- Financial Considerations, Control and Value for Money
- Co-ordination of Decentralisation Programme

The consultation team will meet again following the implementation of Better Local Government to review progress on the decentralisation process.



IMPLEMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT REVIEW

AS THIS PLAN COVERS A FOUR-YEAR PERIOD it is important to be able to assess progress on an ongoing basis, especially in relation to implementation of the core objectives and strategies set out in the Plan. The strategies contained in the Plan have indicators where possible, so as to facilitate assessment of progress in meeting the objectives. The strategy indicators in respect of 2001 are set out in Chapter 5.

Management is committed to the decentralisation of a range of services to the Area Offices.

An implementation and assessment report will be prepared towards the end of 2001, which will be presented to the Elected Members and this report will also be included in the annual report of the Council.

Further strategy indicators will be set for each of the following years, which will form the basis of reports to the elected members towards the end of each year. These reports will act as the appropriate vehicle to signal changes in direction and emphasis.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

CORE OBJECTIVES AND SUPPORTING STRATEGIES

HOUSING & SOCIAL POLICY

Objective:

To enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and insofar as possible at the tenure of its choice.

OBJECTIVES:

- To promote home ownership and ensure the provision of good quality residential developments in both the public and private sectors.
- To provide appropriate assistance for those in need, especially vulnerable groups (travellers, elderly, disabled, ethnic minorities)
- To expand the Council's housing maintenance and upgrading programme and ensure the provision of good quality housing stock.
- To develop an integrated response, with the relevant agencies and voluntary bodies, to tackle homelessness and to combat poverty.
- To encourage and facilitate communities and tenants to manage, maintain and improve their housing environment.

STRATEGIES

- Provide good quality public housing under the Council's four-year multi-annual Housing Programme by means of construction, acquisition, maintenance and refurbishment.
- Implement the Scheme of Letting Priorities.
- Develop a planned programme of Land acquisition to accommodate housing needs into the future.
- Promote home ownership through all options available (purchase and loan schemes) for social and affordable housing (voluntary, public and private) as outlined in departmental housing policy documents.
- Formulate and implement strategy to counteract anti-social behaviour in Housing Estates.
- Develop estate management initiatives with residents of Council housing schemes.
- Deal with all routine and re-letting housing repair requests as efficiently and expeditiously as possible and encourage tenants to attend to their responsibility for repairs. Carry out a planned programme of improvement works as approved by the Department.
- Adopt a policy in relation to the registration and inspection of private rented accommodation.
- Implement the Five-Year Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- Prepare a three year integrated Strategy on Homelessness.
- Prepare six Year Housing Strategy to coincide with the County Development Plan.

"Every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality".

Objective:

To maintain, develop and improve existing roads, construct new roads and allow for the promotion of sustainable development. While acknowledging the need to preserve and enhance the level of safety, service and carrying capacity of the roads network in County Kilkenny.

STRATEGIES

- Facilitate early adoption and execution of the Annual Road Works Programme, maximise financial resources and undertake regular value for money assessments.
- Seek funding from the NRA and DOE in order to plan, design and implement major road improvement projects and construction utilising a combination of in-house design and outside consultants.
- Liaise and co-ordinate with other sections, Kilkenny Corporation, agencies and local communities in relation to such matters as road improvements, maintenance, road safety and traffic management.
- Inspect all roads regularly to assess condition and identify maintenance priorities for the various road categories in relation to pavement condition including potholes, drainage, signage, markings, public lighting, hedges and footpaths.
- Promote community involvement in repair of local roads and particularly encourage landowners, farmers, contractors and hauliers to discharge their obligations under the Roads Act, in areas such as cutting back roadside hedges, making safe dangerous trees and structures, preventing the spoiling of road surfaces and in the event of non-compliance, take appropriate action using the legal powers available.
- Ensure that road and footpath openings are reinstated in accordance with the County and City Engineers' Association manual entitled "Opening and Backfilling of Trenches in Public Roads".
- Update the Council's Emergency Plan for severe weather conditions on an ongoing basis.
- Avail of current Information Technology for financial management, design, reporting, analysis of accident data and other areas as appropriate.
- Develop major infrastructural improvements in accordance with the National Development Plan 2000 -2006, the National Roads Authority -National Roads Needs Study, the Department of the Environment and Local Government's Statement of Strategy 1998 -2001, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and future policy development generally.
- Avail of the devolved powers under the Road Traffic Act 1994, to adopt new and improved traffic management principles and implement traffic management systems to respond to the needs of disabled and mobility impaired people.
- Continue to seek funding for the improvement of road safety at accident sites on the road network under the Low Cost Accident Remedial Measurement Scheme.
- Provide traffic calming schemes on all towns and villages on the national road network.



"To maintain, develop and improve existing roads, construct new roads and allow for the promotion of sustainable development".

Objective:

To facilitate the provision of a quality and adequate water supply to all our customers and to achieve through conservation measures a reduction in water wastage levels.

To improve and extend the public sewerage networks thereby enhancing the quality of water in all our county rivers and ground water.

To work in partnership with the County Kilkenny Rural Water Monitoring Committee to create a viable group water and sewerage sector in the County.

STRATEGIES

- Provide drinking water of a quality that meets National and E.U. standards.
- Complete the approved capital programme for the period 2000 - 2002.
- Actively seek funding for the remaining sanitary services projects as contained in the Assessment of Needs Programme.
- Continue advanced planning of investment proposals for other sanitary services projects, i.e. Serviced Land Initiative and Strategic Rural Water Plan.
- Implement the Sludge Management Plan.
- Comply with Government policy on Public/Private Partnership, where appropriate, in the provision of major schemes.
- Provide effluent treatment facilities to comply with the Wastewater Treatment Directive.
- Encourage group water and sewerage schemes by giving advice and grant aid.
- Maximise grants to individuals and groups for improved water supply.
- Carry out a leak detection programme and metering programme of all non-domestic water supplies.
- Meet National and EU Standards and requirements for drinking water and wastewater quality.
- Monitor progress in relation to water services in accordance with Departmental service indicator guidelines and include details in Annual Report.
- Comply with the recommendations of the Value for Money Study on Water Distribution.

WATER SAFETY

Objective:

Promote Water Safety throughout the County.

Encourage safe use of water particularly in the summer months.

Support the Water Safety Programme, which is now part of the school curriculum.

Highlight any problem areas regarding water safety issues to the public.

OBJECTIVES:

- Continue lifeguard services throughout the summer months.
- Co-operate with local Area Water Safety Committee and Irish Water Safety in all water safety matters.
- Encourage in-service water safety course for primary school teachers each year.

STRATEGIES

- Ensure water safety signs are up to date and relevant.
- Meet with as many primary teachers as possible and promote use of primary school packs.
- Ensure Kilkenny maintains a high level of water safety and swimming classes.
- Report on all dangerous swimming locations as they arise.
- Use local media to ensure as wide a coverage as possible is achieved throughout the County.



“quality and adequate water supply to all our customers”.

Objective:

To provide for proper planning and sustainable development in County Kilkenny, in the interests of the common good.
To maximise public participation in the planning process.

STRATEGIES

- Prepare a Housing Strategy for insertion in the County Development Plan.
- Adopt the new County Development Plan in 2001.
- As appropriate, prepare new Village Plans and review existing plans for Urlingford, Freshford, Johnstown, Goresbridge, Ballyragget, Bennettsbridge, Inistioge, Clogh, Moneenroe, Gowran, Piltown, Fiddown, Slieverue, Glenmore, Ballyhale, Stoneyford, Knocktopher, Mullinavat, Kells, Paulstown, Kilmoganny during the Development Plan period (2001 -2007).
- Develop a Forestry Strategy in 2002.
- Carry out a Wind Farm Study in 2002.
- Complete a Retail Study in 2001 and implement agreed recommendations during the Development Plan period (2001-2007).
- Complete an Active and Recreation Open Space Study in 2001 and implement the agreed recommendations during the Development Plan Period (2001-2007).
- Carry out a Landscape Evaluation in 2001.
- Complete a Cycle Routes Study and implement the agreed recommendations during the Development Plan Period (2001-2007).
- Utilise the provisions of the Planning Acts to secure compliance with the conditions of planning permissions granted.
- Identify and implement a solution to the problem of private unfinished housing estates in the county.
- Prepare Design Guidelines for Housing in 2001.
- Produce Shop Front Guidelines in 2001.
- Provide a pre planning discussion/query service for proposed large scale commercial, industrial and housing developments.
- Arrange for Planners to be available in Area Offices at designated times.
- Publish new Planning Application forms and Guidance Notes before the end of 2001.
- Publish a guide to the requirements of the County Development Plan in relation to rural housing on adoption of the Plan. This guide will be in simple language and will assist applicants for rural housing.
- Provide a comprehensive range of Information Leaflets at each Council office during opening hours.
- All planning application files up to seven years old shall be available on request.
- All planning files over seven years old shall be available within one week of request.
- The County Development Plan and all Action Plans shall be available for inspection in each Council office.
- Planning applications, for the year 2002 and thereafter, shall be available on line.
- Engage with prescribed and other bodies in preparing Plans and formulating policies.



"Proper
planning and
sustainable
development".

ENVIRONMENT

Objective:

To promote sustainable development
To provide an efficient Waste Management infrastructure and implement the Waste Management Plan
To maintain proper regulatory and monitoring systems for environmental protection and control of pollution

STRATEGIES

- Operate and manage and extend Dunmore Landfill Site in accordance with EPA Waste Licence.
- Commence Site selection for new landfill.
- Implement Litter Monitoring Scheme and County Litter Management Plan
- Extend Litter Warden Service.
- Promote Anti Litter Awareness through school visits, Tidy Towns Awards, Local clean-up projects and Grant Schemes.
- Provide a street cleaning service in scheduled towns and other villages.
- Provide maintain and service standard type litterbins throughout the county.
- Develop a Regional Waste Management Plan in conjunction with other Local Authorities in the South-East Region.
- Increase number of Recycling Bring Centres by 20.
- Appoint Environmental Education Officer.
- Provide a Civic Amenity Centre in the Kilkenny City Area.
- Implement the Packaging Regulations.
- Prepare a County Sludge Management Plan.
- Provide a facility for Household and SME Hazardous waste.
- Licence Waste Activities.
- Maintain County Council Burial Grounds
- Complete the County Groundwater Protection Scheme.
- Combine with other Local Authorities in the South East Region to develop a River Basin Catchment Management system.
- Carry out measures to comply with the Phosphorous Regulations.
- Continue river water quality monitoring programmes.
- Issue and review trade effluent discharge licences.
- Provide for an environmental emergency response.
- Issue and review air pollution licences.
- Implement ban on sale of bituminous coal in Waterford city environs.



RECREATION AND AMENITY

Objective:

To develop recreational and amenity facilities for the enjoyable and constructive use of leisure time.

STRATEGIES

- Complete and implement the recommendations of the recently commissioned recreational needs study.
- Continue with the recently introduced policy of incorporating into planning permissions for new houses, an active recreational development charge to assist in local authority's funding of recommendations in the study.
- Provision of passive open space by developers in accordance with the County Development Plan.
- Assist local communities, by way of grants, in developing amenities in their areas.
- Promote the Tidy Towns Competitions.
- Continue with the restoration of Woodstock Gardens, subject to the availability of financial resources.
- Promote active involvement in sport and the use of facilities provided by the County Council.



ARTS AND CULTURE

Objective:

To create a climate in which arts and artists can flourish.
To create opportunities for people to experience a broad range of arts activities.
To promote the involvement of all sections of the community in the arts and to enhance the quality of the arts experience.

STRATEGIES

- Complete and implement the five-year Arts Plan for the County.
- Develop a new Arts Centre for the City and County.



FIRE SERVICE

Objective:

To improve the efficiency of the emergency service provided to the public, promote awareness of fire safety and ensure that building development conforms to Fire Safety Regulations.

STRATEGIES

- Implement the fire service's five-year plan (2000 -2004) with regard to the provision of new fire stations and fire engines subject to resources.
- Promote awareness of fire safety especially during National Fire Safety Week each year and through schools, by use of the local media and by talking to various local groups and associations at other times of the year.
- Enforce the Building Regulations to ensure the fire safety of new developments. Enforce the Fire Services Act, and associated regulations, to ensure the fire safety of existing buildings.
- Continue monitoring of the response time of the fire service to emergency calls with a view to improving them, if necessary.
- Set up a coherent strategy for the promotion of fire safety using the local paper, local radio, visits to schools, talks to civic/local groups, etc.
- Review and update the major emergency plan on a twice-yearly basis.

CIVIL DEFENCE

Overall Objective:

To support the Local Authorities response to emergencies in accordance with Government Policy.

STRATEGIES

- Assist the local authority and community during times of crisis and emergency and provide community support at major civic, social and cultural events.

MOTOR TAXATION

Objective:

Provide an efficient, cost effective and accessible service to the public in regard to motor taxation and driving licences.

STRATEGIES

- Encourage increased use of freepost service for motor tax applications. Highlight the advantages involved through the medium of press, radio and by means of promotional leaflets sent out with all tax reminders issued to the public.
- Implement the National Vehicle and Driver Licence File Project together with on-line links to Insurance Companies and National Car Testing centres and complete automation of office procedures.
- Simplify and streamline procedures in relation to the activities of the Motor Taxation Section in accordance with national standards.

KILKENNY COUNTY LIBRARY

Overall Objective:

To offer every person in Kilkenny City and County access to culture, education, information and recreation.



STRATEGIES

- Implement Kilkenny County Library's Project Priority list for Capital Development by the construction of a new Central Library for Kilkenny City, a new Public Library in Callan and a new Public Library in the Waterford environs of County Kilkenny, subject to provision of central finance.
- Review branch-opening hours to better facilitate our customers.
- Development of partnership with local communities in the range of services provided in the branch libraries.
- Implement the recommendations in "Branching Out", the Government strategy for the library service.

VETERINARY SERVICE AND ANIMAL WELFARE

Objective:

To fulfil the obligations of the Service Contract between Kilkenny County Council and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (F.S.A.I.) under the F.S.A.I. Act 1998

STRATEGIES

- Inspection of Abattoirs, Stand Alone Meat Manufacturing Premises, Meat Transport Vehicles and other specified functions included in the food safety contract
- Implement licensing regulations relating to dogs and improve facilities and security at County Dog Shelter



Objective:

To develop a "Shared 10 year Vision for County Kilkenny" with an agreed set of medium term objectives and to put in place measures to secure implementation.

STRATEGIES

- Develop a comprehensive report of total public service activity in the county.
- Create a Data Bank of information on all relevant Economic Social and Cultural activity in the county.
- Establish structures that will facilitate a broad sense of ownership of the strategy.
- Establish and support a Forum for Community and Voluntary activity in the County.
- Adopt a specific set of measures in pursuance of an agenda of Social Inclusion.

CORPORATE AFFAIRS

Objective:

To work in partnership with the Elected Members and Strategic Policy Committees, to develop policies for the betterment of the people of Kilkenny.

To communicate and work effectively with the community

STRATEGIES

- Provide regular policy briefings to the Elected Members and Strategic Policy Committees to assist and support them in their policy formulation and advisory roles.
- Work with the media, be available and responsive to their queries and utilise local radio and newspapers to explain Council Policies.
- Enhance the image of the Council through the provision of regular information to the public on the Council's activities including the publication of annual reports.
- Update staff by having regular staff meetings and encourage staff to bring forward new ideas and initiatives.
- Deal with complaints, Freedom of Information requests and Ombudsman queries in a fair and speedy manner.
- Undertake quality initiatives in key service areas.

STRATEGIES 2001

Strategy indicators for 2001 are summarised as follows:

HOUSING

- Prepare a three year integrated strategy on homelessness.
- Develop a planned programme of land acquisition to accommodate housing needs into the future.
- Implement the Five-Year Traveller Accommodation Programme.
- Adopt a policy in relation to the registration and inspection of private rented accommodation.
- Facilitate the development of the voluntary sector by way of the capital assistance and rental subsidy schemes.
- Promote all options available for social and affordable housing as outlined in the departmental housing policy documents.
- Develop estate management initiatives for the residents of Council housing schemes.

ROADS

- Develop major infrastructural improvements in accordance with the National Development Plan, 2000 -2006.
- Plan design and implement major road improvement projects utilising a combination of in-house design and outside consultants.
- Promote community involvement in particular in the repair of local roads.

SANITARY SERVICES

- Complete the approved Capital Water Services Programme for the period 2000 -2002.
- Continue advance planning of investment proposals for other sanitary services projects (i.e.) Service Planned Initiative and Strategic Rural Water Plan.
- Complete preparation of the Sludge Management Plan.
- Provide effluent treatment facilities to comply with the Waste Water Treatment Directive.
- Standardise procedures for consumers seeking water and sewerage connections.

PLANNING

- Prepare a Housing Strategy in accordance with the Planning Act, 2000.
- Complete the preparation of the new County Development Plan.
- Carry out a landscape evaluation in 2001.
- Prepare and revise where necessary of a number of village plans which are proposed in the period 2001 -2007.
- Provide of a comprehensive range of planning information leaflets at head office and in each area office during and outside of office opening hours.
- Prepare of design guidelines for housing.
- Prepare of shop front guidelines.

ENVIRONMENT

- Extend Dunmore Landfill and commence Site Selection for new landfill.
- Increase number of bring centres by 20.
- Appoint Environmental Education Officer.
- Commence development of Civic Amenity Centre in the Kilkenny City Area.
- Provide full-time litter warden.
- Promote anti-litter awareness through school visits, tidy-town awards, local Clean-ups and grant schemes.
- Combine with other local authorities in the South East to develop a river basin catchment system.
- Carry out measures to comply with the phosphorous regulations.
- Complete the County Groundwater Protection Scheme.

PLANNING

- Complete the recently commissioned Active and Recreational Needs Study and commence the implementation of its agreed recommendations
- Complete the Retail Study and commence the implementation of its agreed recommendations.
- Complete the Cycle Routes Study and commence the implementation of its agreed recommendations.

LIBRARY

- Implement the national strategy for the library service -"Branching Out".
- Continue progress with the development of a new central library service in Kilkenny City.

STRATEGIES 2001 contd.

ARTS

- Complete the new Five Year Arts Development Plan and commence its implementation.

FIRE SERVICES

- Develop a number of new fire stations as approved by the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- Develop an Intranet system.
- Develop a system that facilitates the use of e-mail as an effective means of communicating with the customer.
- Provide information on all County Council activity through web-based technology.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- Ensure relevant training is delivered within the resources available to the staff of the County Council.

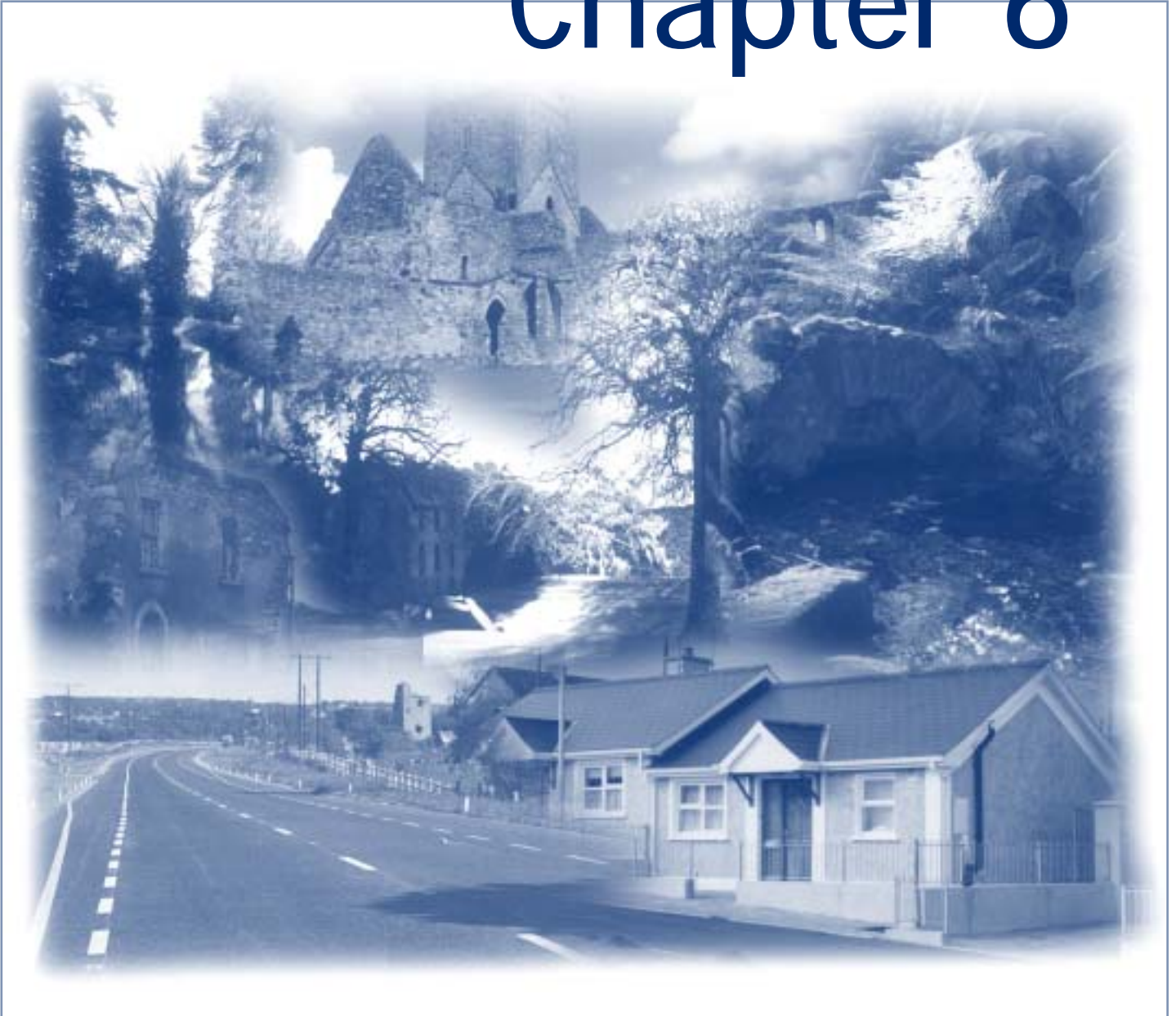
FINANCE

- Implement new financial management system.

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

- Participate in the development of a 10-year vision for County Kilkenny through the County Development Board system and adopt the Council's own plans and strategies to correspond with this vision.

Chapter 6



CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN

CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN

The Government's Quality Customer Service Initiative has been extended to all sectors of the Public Service, including Local Authorities. As part of this initiative, Kilkenny County Council has prepared a Customer Action Plan, which incorporates a statement of principles, the Action Plan itself (including a series of statements of what the Council wants to achieve with regard to improving customer service and how it is planned to achieve it) and a yearly review.

In their dealings with the public the Council is committed to taking a number of 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.

Kilkenny County Council is committed to the following:-

QUALITY SERVICE STANDARDS:

Publish a statement that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

EQUALITY/DIVERSITY:

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community).

Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

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 specific needs.

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 needs. 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 AND 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 an 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 AND 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 choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES EQUALITY:

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

BETTER CO - ORDINATION:

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

INTERNAL CUSTOMER:

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

Kilkenny County Council has committed itself 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 and achieve our service targets over the next four years. 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?

Kilkenny County Council is committed to delivering an efficient courteous and quality service to its customers. We will treat all our customers equally ensuring that there is no discrimination on any grounds. We will be sensitive to the different needs of all our customers.

WHEN PROVIDING SERVICE BY TELEPHONE WE WILL AIM TO:

- General office staff will be available to take your call from 9.00 p.m. -1.00 p.m. and from 2:00 p.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:

- Offices will be open to the public from 10.00 a.m. -1.00 p.m. and from 2:00 p.m. -4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. (Due to work commitments, it may be necessary to make an appointment in advance to meet with some members of staff).
- 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.

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 arrangements to ensure that letters do not go unanswered when individual staff members are absent.
- Some correspondence requires considerable research before a full reply can issue and when this happens we will send you an interim reply explaining the position.
- 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.
- Data supplied on forms will only be used for the purpose for which it is given.

COMPLAINTS:

- If you are not happy with the quality of service we provide you are entitled to make a complaint to the section head of that service.
- If you are not satisfied with the response received, you should contact the County Secretary in writing, who will respond to your complaint in writing within twenty working days.
- 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 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 the Council including the telephone system will be significantly upgraded.

STAFF:

- The Council will ensure that staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.
- A comprehensive customer service-training programme for our staff will be implemented throughout the plan period.

CO-ORDINATION OF SERVICES:

- The Council will foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivering of services.
- The Council will provide during the plan period one-stop shop facilities for the public.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE EQUALITY:

- The Council will provide in so far as possible quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

CHOICE:

- The Council will provide choice, where feasible, in service delivery including payment methods, location of contact points, opening hours and delivery times.
- The Council will use available emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

CONSULTATION AND EVALUATION:

- The Council will provide a structural approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to development, delivery and review of services.
- The Council will use the Strategic Policy Committees as one of the approaches to evaluating our service delivery.

REVIEW OF CUSTOMER ACTION PLAN:

- The Council will review the customer action plan on a yearly basis and will take into account feedback from its customers and the strategic policy committees.

CUSTOMER SERVICE INDICATORS AND STANDARDS:

The following service indicators and standards will be used by the Council over the period of the plan and will be reviewed annually.

- Litter.
- Roads.
- Housing.
- Motor Taxation.
- Environmental Services.
- Revenue Collection.
- Planning.

LITTER:

- (i) Number of on-the-spot fines.
- (ii) Number of prosecutions.
- (iii) Number of litter wardens.
- (iv) Number of school visits carried out.
- (v) Number of community groups involved in anti-litter measures.
- (vi) Number of meetings with local business groups, Chambers of Commerce, REPAK.

ROADS:

- (vii) Percentage of local and regional roads surface dressed.

HOUSING:

- (viii) The percentage of dwellings that are empty:
 - (a) Available for letting or awaiting minor repairs.
 - (b) Others.
- (ix) Average time taken to re-let dwellings available for letting or awaiting minor repairs.

MOTOR TAXATION :

- (x) Average number of postal applications and percentage of overall postal applications which are dealt with from receipt of the application:
 - (a) On the same day.
 - (b) On the third day or less.
 - (c) On the fifth day or less.
 - (d) Over five days.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES :

- (xi) Percentage of drinking water samples in compliance with statutory requirements.
- (xii) Time in minutes to mobilise fire brigades.
- (xiii) Bring facilities.
 - (a) Number and type of facility.
 - (b) Number of locations per 5,000 of population.

REVENUE COLLECTION :

- (xiv) House Rent -Amount collected at year-end as a percentage of amounts due.
- (xv) Percentage of arrears 1 to 3 weeks old, 4 to 6 weeks old and more than 6 weeks Old.
- (xvi) House Repayments -Amount collected as a percentage of amounts due.
- (xvii) Percentage of arrears 1 month old, 2 to 3 months old and more than 3 months old.
- (xviii) Rates -Amount collected at year-end as a percentage of amounts due.

PLANNING :

- (xix) Number of applications determined.
- (xx) Percentage determined within 8 weeks.
- (xxi) Average time taken.



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