



Carlow Local Authorities

Irish Language Scheme

2008 - 2011

Irish Scheme

Introduction and Background

Carlow local authorities under section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 has developed this language scheme which is an opportunity to continue to support and strengthen the growth of the Irish Language in County Carlow. Under this scheme we have made many commitments over the three year period to enhance the provision of services through Irish, one of which is to ensure that 15% of documents (excluding technical documents) on our websites will be bilingual. We are also reviewing all our Road signs and Place names.

There is a vibrant and energetic Irish Speaking Community in County Carlow and the Council will work as partners in initiatives to give Irish/Gaeilge an enhanced visible presence in the County and will encourage the use of Irish.

The Scheme will come into effect on the 1st October 2008.

The scheme was prepared with regard to guidelines under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act 2003 issued by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Section 11 of the Act provides that Public Bodies have a duty to prepare a Statutory Scheme specifying the services they will provide:

- through the medium of Irish
- through the medium of English *and*
- through the medium of both English and Irish

This scheme sets out the measures to be adopted to ensure that any services not provided by the Local Authorities through the medium of the Irish Language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

Carlow Local Authorities published a Notice of Intention to Prepare a Scheme in accordance with Section 13 (1) (a) of the Act in the local newspapers on the 23rd February 2007 and under the Public Consultation Process an open meeting was held to discuss the preparation of the scheme on the 26th April 2007.

Carlow Local Authorities recognises that our Customers and the Public have the right to choose to do business with us in their preferred language i.e. Irish or English and will be facilitated in this regard. One of the main objectives of this Language Scheme is to ensure higher standards of public services are made available through the Irish Language as the First Official Language of the country. Carlow Local Authorities wishes to develop and encourage a bilingual culture in the organisation so that our customers feel comfortable and confident to deal with us in the language of their choice for example English or Irish.

The scheme includes a brief overview of Carlow Local Authorities, services provided and the level of services already available through Irish, English and bilingually.

There are certain services which each customer is entitled to in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003, i.e. responses to correspondence in Irish through Irish, publications, any document setting out public policy proposals i.e. The Annual Report, Corporate Plan.

These rights are protected in the above mentioned Act and these rights are not repeated in this scheme. The scheme sets out to improve other services in Irish and the above are legally required of us irrespective of this scheme.

Commencement Date of Scheme

The Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The Scheme shall commence on the 1st October 2008 and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years from that date or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Act, whichever is the earlier.

Overview of Carlow Local Authorities

Corporate Strategy

Carlow Local Authorities Corporate Strategy is set out in the Corporate Plan 2004 – 2009. Its principle elements are as follows:

Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a quality local government service for the people of County Carlow, through the protection and enhancement of the environment and improvement in the quality of life. We will achieve this by fostering a partnership between the elected members and staff of Carlow Local Authorities and all sectors of the community. In a spirit of mutual trust, we will work in an open, effective and participative way, to ensure that County Carlow becomes an environmentally sustainable county, which is economically, culturally and socially inclusive and vibrant, where everybody can live and work in a healthy and safe community and where Carlow Local Authorities earn a reputation for the quality and efficiency of our services.

Core Values

We consider that we must serve our community by ensuring that all our customers, whether they live, work or visit County Carlow, receive the quality service to which they are entitled. To achieve this, the culture of our organisation will be based on the following values:

Democracy

We will listen and work with the community to ensure that our democratic role is fully discharged.

Community

We recognise the cultural diversity of our community. We will work with voluntary and community groups to ensure that all members of the community, including those who are disadvantaged and those with special needs, can play their full part in the life of our community.

Service

We will serve all members and sectors of the community in an open, responsive, accountable and fair way.

Quality

We are committed to the delivery of excellence in service provision to all our customers.

Efficiency

We will strive to deliver the best possible service from the resources available to us.

Environment

We will work to conserve, develop and enhance the natural and built environment of the county, to ensure that it can meet both the present and future needs of our community.

Staff

We will strive to ensure that staff are given every opportunity to develop to their full potential and to enable them to contribute to the greatest extent to the development of this County and corporate objectives of Carlow Local Authorities.

Culture and Leisure

We will cherish, conserve and seek to promote the cultural and leisure amenities of this County.

The key thematic areas in the Corporate Plan are as follows:

- **Social Inclusion/Housing & Community Development**
- **Economic/Cultural Development**
- **Sustainable Development/Heritage**
- **Transport & Infrastructure**
- **Environmental Protection**
- **Customer Relationship/Quality Customer Service**

The Chart below sets out the Structure of Carlow Local Authorities:



Carlow County is 943 sq kilometres in area. The principal towns in the County are Carlow, Tullow, Muinebheag, Hacketstown and Borris. The Population of County Carlow, according to the Census 2006 is 50,349.

The three principle units of Local Government within the County are:

Carlow County Council
Carlow Town Council
Muinebheag Town Council

21 Elected Members
9 Elected Members
9 Elected Members

There is a vibrant and energetic Irish Speaking Community in County Carlow. There is one Gaelscoil and a Secondary Gaelcholaiste Carlow Town and many Naoinrí for pre school children. There is an Irish Society in the Carlow Institute of Technology and Diploma Irish Courses are provided in Carlow College, in conjunction with NUI Galway. There are Irish Language Drama Groups, Lunch Groups GRADAM and a Parents and Family Group Comhluadar in operation in Carlow together with Gaeilge le Chéile – an Irish Conversation Group which meets on a regular basis in Carlow Town. Irish Music and Dancing Classes and Seisúin are held on a weekly basis in County Carlow.

Carlow promotes Irish Culture and its Heritage through two vibrant festivals, Éigse which has been running since 1979 and Féile an Fhomhair.

The huge success of these activities offers testimony to the interest of the public, our Customers, in the Irish Language and their efforts to keep the language alive in County Carlow. Carlow Local Authorities in partnership with these groups and organisations will support and develop the Irish Language.

In preparing this scheme Carlow Local Authorities undertook a five-pronged consultation process which involved:

- Seeking submissions from the public on the preparation of a draft scheme.
- A Customer Survey was carried out at the Council's offices i.e. Carlow County Council Offices, Carlow Town Council, Library Network and Éigse Offices, Carlow. The results are outlined in Appendix 1.
- A survey of staff was carried out to determine their proficiency of Irish both oral and written. This survey will inform our Training, Learning & Development Programme.
- An open public meeting which was attended by Elected Members, Members of the Public and Staff.
- An internal Audit of Services provided/capable of being provided through Irish by each department

Summary of Services/Activities provided by Carlow Local Authorities and Levels of Irish Language Proficiency

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the services provided by Carlow Local Authorities and the level of Irish Proficiency in each of these.

Departments operating through the medium of both Irish and English.

Currently no department of Carlow Local Authorities is capable of delivering its services comprehensively through the medium of Irish and English.

Departments operating with limited Irish Language capability.

In the following Departments there is a number of staff who are capable of providing a Bilingual Service to customers. However the provision of services is dependent on these individuals being present and available to do so in addition to their normal assigned duties. This work through the medium of Irish has been unstructured and voluntary.

These staff have been extremely accommodating in the past and remain so in the present.

- Community & Enterprise
- Infrastructure, Water Services & Environment
- Libraries
- Carlow Town Council

Community & Enterprise

The main functions of this department are:

- Supporting the activities of the Council and Carlow County Development Board to implement Cumhlucht Comhoibriú – the 10 year strategy for the Social Economic and Cultural Development of County Carlow 2001-2012.
- Enhance & Promote Local Service Co-ordination
- To promote and support Economic, Social and Cultural Development Initiatives in the County and to co-ordinate the Council's activities in this context.
- To Strengthen and Support Community Development, Promote Social Inclusion by working collaboratively with the community to improve Statutory and Voluntary Service Delivery in the target areas.

There is a fluent Irish speaker available and willing to deal with the public in Irish when requested

Infrastructure, Water Services & Environment

Roads & Transportation

The objectives of the Roads & Transportation Department is to develop the Physical Infrastructure and Service Network in accordance with existing and future requirements for the safe, efficient and cost-effective movement of persons and goods by roads, Road Signage and Directional Information is also the responsibility of the Roads & Transportation Department as well as Traffic Management including Road Safety and the operation of School Warden Service.

Libraries

The Council's Library Service has its headquarters and County Library at Tullow Street, Carlow. There are Branch Libraries at Tullow and Bagenalstown. The Library Service is very involved in the promotion of arts and raising public awareness by providing information on all art forms and the use of Library Facilities for arts activities and exhibitions – promotion of Irish Cultural, Language and Educational events for example Seachtain na Gaeilge & Heritage Week which is also promoted by other departments and groups.

The Painting Library Project was established in 2006 in conjunction with Irish Artist, Mairéad Ó hEogha.

The Ask-About-Ireland website www.askaboutireland.ie provides a large volume of information relating to the heritage of County Carlow, some of which is in the Irish Language.

The Library Service holds 1,814 books in Irish for adults and 991 books in Irish for children.

Carlow Town Council

Carlow Town Council has 9 elected members and is the principal unit of Local Government for Carlow Town.

Carlow Town were winners of Glór na nGael on two occasions the most recent one being in 1995 and endeavour at all times to facilitate persons and groups wishing to conduct business through Gaeilge. Staff members have varying levels of competency in Irish and encourage communications through Irish.

Departments currently not in a position to provide a one-to-one service in Irish:

1. Finance
2. Planning
3. Water Services
4. Environment
5. Corporate Services & Human Resources
6. Fire Services
7. Information & Communication Technology
8. Motor Taxation
9. Housing

Finance

The Finance Department is responsible for both the short and long term financing of all the Council's operations, both of a Revenue and Capital Nature. Its overall objective is to maximise the resources available to the Council and apply such resources in an economic and efficient manner and ensure value for money.

The Council's day to day expenditure is funded from its Revenue Budget. Revenue fund sources includes Commercial Rates, Rents from Local Authority rented dwellings, Government grants, Planning fees, Non-domestic Water Charges etc.

Capital Funding for Capital Projects in the areas of Housing, Roads and Water is available from Government Allocations and Development Contributions.

The current Annual and Capital Expenditure for Carlow Local Authorities is €130 million.

The Finance Department is also responsible for the Internal Audit.

Planning & Development

The primary objective of the planning and Development Departments is the promotion and development of the County in a manner which facilitates Sustainable Economic and Social progress.

The key objectives of the Department are:

- To promote orderly development and ensure the availability of serviced suitably zoned lands for commercial, industrial and residential development in towns and villages throughout the County.
- To ensure that the planning control function operates efficiently and effectively promoting balanced sustainable development.
- To maintain and enhance the quality and diversity of our natural and cultural heritage.
- To promote good construction standards.

- To facilitate and support infrastructural and amenity development throughout the county.

Water Services

The primary objective of the Water Services Section is to provide Drinking Water, Sewerage Systems and Storm Drainage Disposal Facilities in order to meet the needs of existing and future development in the county. Water Services is also responsible for Water Conservation and the Monitoring and Testing of Water Quality.

The Council operates and maintains twenty Water Supply Schemes and thirty four Wastewater/Drainage Schemes.

Environment

The primary objective of this section is to protect, conserve and enhance the environment in County Carlow.

The key activities of the Environment Section are Waste Management, Recycling, Pollution Control, Environmental Awareness & Enforcement

Corporate Services/Human Resources

Corporate Services

The principal services provided by Corporate Services include supporting the role of the Elected Members and the democratic process.

Ensuring the delivery of a quality, customer focused service

Register of Electors, Higher Education Grant Scheme, Twinning, Performance Management, Disability.

Human Resources

The Human Resource section has responsibility for Manpower Planning, Recruitment & Selection, Training, Learning & Development, Industrial Relations, Staff Wellbeing, Equality & Diversity and Work life Balance.

The Training, Learning & Development Programme will play an integral role in the successful implementation of this scheme.

Fire Services

The primary objective of the Fire Service is to protect & save lives, provide comprehensive Fire Safety Control and provide information and assistance to the public on Fire Safety matters.

There are four Fire Stations in county Carlow – Carlow Town, Muinebheag, Tullow and Hacketstown.

The Fire Service also has responsibility for Building Control.

Information & Communications Technology

The primary aim of the ICT Department is to ensure efficient and effective use of the most up to date technologies to support and expand the use of Information Technology in the Council's activities and in the provision of Customer Services. ICT will play a key part in promoting and facilitating information and service provision through the medium of the Irish Language.

Motor Taxation

The primary function of the Motor Taxation Section is the processing and collection of Vehicle Licence and Driving Licence fees.

Housing

The main objectives of the Housing Department are:

- Enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and as far as possible at a tenure of their choice.
- Promote home ownership with a thriving, diverse and well-managed rented sector, both public and private.
- Maintain the living environment and construction standards of all local authority housing units to a high standard.
- Encourage opportunity for vulnerable groups, i.e. travellers, the elderly and disabled.
- Continue to implement strategies in relation to antisocial behaviour.

Customers and Clients

Carlow Local Authorities have offices at the following locations:

County Buildings, Athy Road, Carlow.
Carlow Town Council, Centaur Street, Carlow.
Assembly Rooms, Dublin Street, Carlow.
Civic Offices, Tullow, Co. Carlow.
Civic Offices, Muinebheag, Co. Carlow
Libraries - Carlow Town, Tullow and Bagenalstown.
Fire Services, Carlow Town.

Staff of Council Depots and Civic Amenity Sites have contact with our customers both in their homes and in the public realm.

Carlow Local Authorities also interact with a wide and diverse range of Government Departments, State Agencies, Community Groups, Social Partners, other Local and Regional Authorities, Residents Organisations, Leader Groups, Business Groups and Local and National media.

The increasing use of ICT Technology in the provision of Customer Services will be an important medium in the promotion of the Irish Language in Carlow Local Authorities.

Proposals for Enhancement of Service Provision through the Irish Language

Carlow Local Authorities welcomes and encourages its customers who wish to conduct their business in Irish to do so and will ensure that an adequate number of staff are competent to provide services through Irish in all areas of Council activities dealing regularly with the public.

Carlow Local Authorities are also committed to developing a corporate image which embraces bilingualism across all our services.

By the end of the scheme, a one-to-one counter service will be available from the Planning Division, the Community & Enterprise Division and from Carlow Town Council in Irish.

Information & Communications Technology

- Standard Disclaimer on message and email correspondence will be bilingual by the end of 2008.
- A generic email address for queries “As Gaeilge” will be established. The local authorities will ensure that such queries are replied to promptly in the same manner as English language queries as outlined in the Council’s Customer Services Action Plan by the end of 2008.
- Provide an online listing of staff contacts who are available to provide services as well as providing an updated list of the services which are available bilingually in the lifetime of the scheme.
- Any new computer systems being installed **during the lifetime of this scheme** will be fully capable of handling the Irish Language .
- Existing computer services and any new or existing interactive services will be available through Irish **by the end** of this scheme subject to the provision of the necessary systems from the LGCSB.
- All Irish Language Forms will be made available on our website for online submission or download by the end of 2009.
- 15% of documents (excluding technical documents) on all Carlow Local Authorities websites will be bilingual within the lifetime of the scheme
- By the end of the lifetime of this scheme, 10% of the static material on Carlow Local Authorities' website will be made bilingual. Any other websites for which the Local Authorities are responsible will be addressed in the Authorities' second and subsequent schemes.

Written Documentation

Brochure, Information Leaflets, Application Forms & Council Agendas.

- All new application forms and any associated accompanying Information Leaflets produced by Carlow Local Authorities will be available bilingually. **Existing application forms and associated Information Leaflets, when updated, will be available bilingually.**

All bilingual application forms, brochures and leaflets will be made available bilingually within the one cover except where this is not practicable because of the size or nature of the document. In such cases, separate Irish and English language versions shall be provided and the Irish version shall be as readily available as the English version.

- Council Agendas major headings will be bilingual by end of 2008.

Major Policy Documents will be published on our websites in both English and Irish simultaneously and will be available on CD.

All new Brochures, Publications and Information Leaflets produced will be bilingual by the end of the scheme. **Existing Brochures, Publication and Information Leaflets, when updated, will be available bilingually.**

Press Releases

Press releases relating to Irish Language issues will be produced bilingually and circulated to the Irish language and English language media simultaneously.

Oral Communications

Staff at Customer Services are the first point of contact with the public. Our policy is to pursue excellence in service provision which is responsive to the needs of all our customers – that is

- To give the name of the Local Authorities in Irish and English
- To be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.
- Suitable arrangements will be made so that they can put members of the public in touch with the appropriate staff member who is responsible for offering the service required through Irish where available.
- The Customer Care Desks in each section will display notices inviting the public to use Irish.
- Efforts will be made to introduce an element of bilingualism during all Council Meetings.

- There will be a Symbol and Search Capability on the staff listing on the Intranet indicating members of staff who are capable and willing to deal with the public in Irish.
- The Local Authorities will promote Irish in the community during high profile corporate and community events which shall incorporate an element of bilingualism in the proceedings.
- Staff will be encouraged to work towards achieving various levels of Fáinne Nua.
The wearing of the Fáinne will indicate the level of conversational Irish the staff member has.

The above commitments will be implemented during the lifetime of the scheme.

Recruitment & Selection of Staff

Carlow Local Authorities in the context of the Official Languages Act will review its existing recruitment and staff mobility policies having regard to proficiency and competence in the Irish language. These issues will be discussed through the Partnership Process.

Training, Learning & Development

Carlow Local Authorities acknowledge the importance of having a highly trained workforce to ensure efficient, effective and quality delivery of services.

- All staff and Elected Members will be encouraged and given equal opportunity to improve their Irish language skills through training and development courses which will be facilitated during office hours.
- The Induction Training Programme will be reviewed to include language awareness initiatives.
- Staff who work at Customer Service Counters – Irish Language training will be provided which focuses on Customer Service needs.
- Irish Language materials and resources (dictionaries, publications, computer software) will be made available to staff to facilitate the delivery of services through Irish.
- Seek volunteers to provide Irish Language Services in relevant sections across the Local Authorities. (Such staff will be identified at Customer Service Counters, on phone lists and through email.

Roads & Road Signage

All incorrect road signs will be replaced on a phased basis by the end of this scheme.

Any new residential developments will be named in Irish and English or in Irish only as a condition of the planning permission. The Council will have responsibility for vetting and selecting appropriate names in consultation with the placenames commission if required and having consideration for the existing placenames, history and local heritage of the area.

Monitoring, Revision & Publicity of Agreed Scheme

Monitoring and Review

Responsibility with regard monitoring of progress of the implementation of the scheme as well as reviewing the scheme will be effected through the Management Team.

Day to day monitoring will be carried out primarily by Line Managers in each of their Service Areas. Workplace Partnership will also play an ongoing role in the monitoring and assessment of progress under the scheme.

Details of progress will also be published in **Carlow Local Authorities Annual Reports**.

Publicising of Agreed Scheme

The contents of this scheme will be advertised to the general public by means of:

- **Press Release**
- **Official Launch**
- **Publication on the Council's Intranet and Web Site**
- **Circulation to appropriate Agencies and Public Bodies**

A copy of this scheme will also be forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.

Appendix

Results of Customer Survey carried out at Carlow County Council Offices, Carlow Town Council, Library Network and Éigse Office.

This survey was conducted over a period of weeks.

1. 84% of those surveyed claimed to have some knowledge of Irish.

Of those:
10% professed fluency in the language
24% claimed their knowledge was Intermediate/Conversational
50% said they had Beginners/Basic Irish.
2. 54% of all those surveyed said they would like Carlow Local Authorities to provide their services through Irish.
3. 46% of all those surveyed would use services provided through Irish.
4. 66% of all those surveyed would like to see more information signs/notices in the Council's Civic Offices in Irish.
5. 86% of all those surveyed would like to see signs in the Council's Civic Offices to say Irish is welcome.
6. 91% of all those surveyed said Carlow Local Authorities should be more involved in promoting Irish Social and Cultural Events.
7. 38% of all those surveyed are interested in Irish Culture, Music or Art
Including Gaelic Games, Irish Dancing, Traditional Music, Irish Crafts etc.
8. 72% of all those surveyed would like to see an Irish or bi-lingual version of the Council's website.