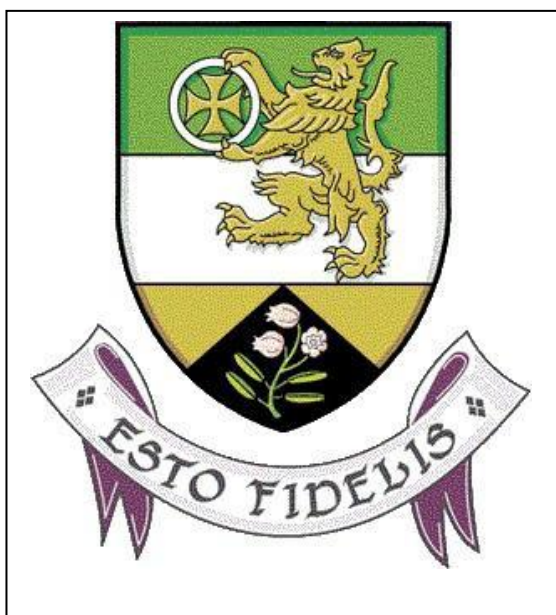


COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL



SCEIM TEANGA

2017 – 2020

LANGUAGE SCHEME

2017 – 2020

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CHAPTER 1
Introduction and Background

This Scheme applies to Offaly County Council and to the Municipal Districts of Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore.

Offaly County Council recognise that our customers have the right to choose to do business with us in their preferred language and they will be facilitated in their dealings with us as far as practicable, whether that is through Irish or through English. One of the main objectives of this Language Scheme is to ensure that higher standards of public services are available through the Irish Language as the national language and the first official language of the Country.

This Scheme includes a brief overview of the services provided by Offaly County Council and the level of services already available through Irish, English and bilingually.

There are certain services to which each customer is entitled to in accordance with the directly-applicable provisions of the Official Languages Act, 2003, i.e. response to correspondence in Irish through Irish, publications available in Irish, etc.

These rights are protected in the above mentioned Act, and are not repeated in this Scheme. The Scheme sets out to improve the delivery of services through Irish.

Commencement Date of Scheme

The Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It will commence with effect from 10th April 2017 and it shall remain in force for a period of three years from that date or until a new Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Official Languages Act, whichever is the later.

Overview of Offaly

County Offaly is 493,985 acres (199,981 hectares) in area and the population of the county according to the last census is 78,003 (2016 Census). Offaly County Council has 19 elected members. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 established three Municipal Districts, namely, the Municipal District of Birr, the Municipal District of Edenderry and the Municipal District of Tullamore.

Corporate Strategy

The Corporate Strategy is set out in *Offaly County Council Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019*.

Mission Statement

“To make Offaly the best place possible to Live, Work, Visit & Invest”

Core Values

Our core values are derived from the principles of good local government and are at the heart of all our activities. They underpin our mandate to provide leadership and an efficient, cost effective service to our customers. The following core values are of relevance to the promotion of the Irish language by Offaly County Council:

- **People** Our services are delivered for people, by people, respect for people, individuals and communities are at the heart of Offaly County Council.

- **Democracy** We support informed decision making by our elected representatives and encourage engagement and participation in the democratic process.

- **Integrity** We will carry out our work with honesty and integrity, protecting the good name of Offaly County Council and make decisions in the public interest.

- **Quality** We will deliver to the highest standard possible with the resources available.

- **Partnership** We will work in genuine partnership to deliver for Offaly.

Principal Activities of Offaly County Council

The Council operates under eight service divisions:-

- Housing & Building
- Road, Transport & Safety
- Water Services
- Development Management, Economic Development & Community
- Environmental Services
- Recreation & Amenity
- Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare
- Miscellaneous Services

Principal Points of Customer Contact

The primary service points for Offaly County Council are in Áras an Chontae, Tullamore and in the Municipal District Offices at Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore. There is also a network of libraries around the County which have extensive customer contact.

The Council interacts with a wide range of Government Departments, State Agencies, Social Partners, Local Development Organisations, Business and Community Groups. Resident Associations, etc. Extensive and growing use is made of the Internet and social media in the Council's dealings with its customers. This will be an important medium in terms of our future promotion of the Irish Language in Offaly.

CHAPTER 2

Summary of Services provided by Council Departments and levels of Irish language proficiency

Introduction

This Chapter sets out the position in relation to service provision by individual departments within Offaly County Council and the level of Irish proficiency in each of these.

There is a minimum level of competence in our departments to transact business through Irish. Currently, no department of the Council is capable of delivering its service comprehensively through the medium of Irish and English.

Initiatives presently in place in Offaly County Council

- The Notice of Meeting is circulated to our elected members in Irish and English.
- Training in conversational Irish has been provided.
- There is a strong commitment to the support of the Irish language in our Library service.
- Seachtain na Gaeilge is also actively supported each year by Scéalaíocht and Irish poetry readings in our local libraries. Seachtain na Gaeilge is also supported by the Arts and Corporate Services Departments.
- There is a bilingual element to our Civil Receptions and citations.
- Our stationery, including notepaper, compliment slips, etc are bilingual.
- Offaly County Council seeks to promote the use of Irish Language.
- Our Customer Charter is displayed in both Irish and English.
- Irish Language book stock continues to be maintained.
- A number of our application forms for services are bilingual.
- Involvement in Dáil na nÓg nationally, which conducts its business through Irish and English.

CHAPTER 3

Commitments made under the Offaly County Council's Irish Language Scheme

An implementation team will be established which will be representative of the functional areas of the Council. An implementation plan will be developed by the team together with a schedule of the actions necessary to realise the commitments contained in the Scheme.

1. Written Documentation

1. By the end of this Scheme all new application forms and associated leaflets produced by the Offaly County Council will be available in both Irish and English. Existing application forms and associated leaflets will, when updated, be available bilingually. Documents of a technical nature will continue to be published in English only.
2. By the end of Scheme, any individual requesting annual Dog Licence Renewal Notices will be able to receive them in Irish and English.
3. By the end of this Scheme, all correspondence will contain an opening salutation and closing remarks in Irish.
4. From the commencement of the Scheme all future press releases and statements to the media, which relate to the Irish language will be bilingual.

2. Information Technology

1. From the commencement of this Scheme, a bilingual e-mail disclaimer will be inserted at the end of each email.
2. Offaly County Council has responsibility for the www.offaly.ie website which contains information in relation to Tullamore, Birr and Edenderry Municipal Districts. By end of this Scheme all static content of these home pages of the website will be available bilingually.
3. Additional pages of the website, including the Consultation & Feedback section, will be available bilingually by the end of this Scheme.
4. In the event that any new website is introduced by the Offaly County Council during the course of the Scheme, it is agreed that the new site will be partly bilingual.
5. Offaly County Council, similar to most other local authorities, are dependent on the LGMA for the provision of many of its systems. We will request the LGMA to provide new systems that can cater for the Irish language. In addition, the Council will also request the LGMA to ensure that where upgrades are proposed for any existing computer system, that it will be ensured that the revised system will cater for the Irish language.

6. Existing interactive services will be upgraded as soon as resources and pressures on other work allow. At least one existing interactive service i.e. “Contact Us” page will be upgraded to bilingual status by the end of this Scheme.
7. An Irish Language section of the Intranet will be established as a support and resource for staff. The possibility of use of electronic Irish dictionaries within the organisation will be examined.

3. Communications

1. All headers and footers on our advertising to be in Irish.
2. Reception is the first point of contact with the public. In keeping with the high standard of customer service offered to the public by Offaly County Council, the following commitments will be in place after one year from the commencement of this Scheme:
 - a. Reception and switchboard staff will greet our phone customers in Irish, also giving the name of the organisation in Irish.
 - b. They will be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.
3. Elected members who wish to speak in Irish at Council Meetings will be encouraged to do so.
4. By the end of the Scheme, the greeting and opening address at all Council public events and official openings will contain an element of Irish. Anyone wishing to speak in Irish at such events or public meetings will be facilitated.
5. The opening address at all future Comhairle na nÓg Meetings will contain an element of Irish.
6. All future Council initiated youth programme award ceremonies will have a welcoming address in Irish and English.
7. We will investigate the possibility of the recruitment of an Irish Officer to Offaly County Council.
8. The Council will continue to work with, and seek agreement with staff competent in the Irish language to provide services in the Irish language across a range of services. With their consent, staff will be identified for our customers on our website.

4. Training and Development

- Council staff and elected members, subject to the necessary resources being available, will be generally encouraged and offered training to improve their skills, leading to increased usage of Irish throughout the organisation.
- Irish language awareness will be included as part of both Induction and Customer Service training.
- The Council will seek to support the improvement of Irish language conversational skills in cooperation with Gaelchultúr, subject to the necessary resources being available. Local

tutoring of officials and/or members who wish to improve their conversational Irish speaking at public events will be facilitated subject to the necessary resources being available. Irish language phrases will be used in the Council's staff newsletter "*Inside View*" and it is anticipated that it will update staff on progress by way of regular articles etc.

5. Specified Irish Language Posts

- Having regard to Government policy for enhanced provision of services in Irish, the Council will, by the end of year one of the scheme, identify any posts for which Irish language competency is an essential requirement. Every effort will be made to fulfil these requirements by the end of this scheme having regard to recruitment, promotion and training policies, as appropriate. This will enable the Council to plan and prioritise the incremental improvement of services in Irish in a more strategic manner.

6. Place names

- Bilingual nameplates will be erected at a selection of Townland boundaries, to raise awareness of traditional names subject to the necessary funding being available.
- When considering proposals for naming developments, e.g. housing estates, streets, shopping centres, etc the Council will promote the use of the Irish language, culture and heritage.
- The Council will use the official Irish version of Gaeltacht placenames that are to be found on www.logainm.ie for official business.

CHAPTER 4

Publicising, Implementing and Reviewing the Scheme

Publicising the Scheme

The Scheme will be advertised by means of:

- The Council's website and intranet
- Circulation to appropriate agencies, public bodies and individuals who express an interest in same.

A copy of the Scheme will be forwarded to the office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

Implementing and Reviewing the Scheme

Offaly County Council will review progress of the Scheme's commitments annually. The Council's Management Team will be advised of progress and our Annual Report will also contain details of the year's performance.

The English language version is the original text of this scheme.