

**Fingal Local Authorities Scheme**  
**2006-2009**  
under Section 11 of the  
**Official Languages Act 2003**

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# **Fingal Local Authorities Scheme**

**2006-2009**

under Section 11 of the  
Official Languages Act 2003

## **Chapter 1: Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This scheme has been prepared by Fingal Local Authorities under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003

The Official Languages Act 2003 was signed into law on 14 July 2003. The Act is the first piece of legislation to provide a statutory framework for the delivery of services through the Irish Language.

The primary objective of the Act is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish.

### **1.2 Preparation of the Scheme**

This scheme has been drawn up in accordance with the Guidelines Under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act 2003 issued to Fingal County Council by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in September 2004.

Fingal County Council, in conjunction with Balbriggan Town Council, published a notice under Section 13 in March 2006 inviting submissions in relation to the preparation of the draft scheme from any interested parties. All submissions made are available on the Council's website at [www.fingalcoco.ie](http://www.fingalcoco.ie)

For the purposes of this document, the above local authorities shall be referred to collectively as "The Authorities" or "Fingal Local Authorities" save as otherwise stated.

A working group within Fingal County Council, comprising representatives from relevant departments and from Balbriggan Town Council, has assisted in drafting the scheme. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing this scheme will rest with the senior management of Fingal Local Authorities.

The scheme sets out how Fingal Local Authorities intend to provide their services, as much as possible, through the medium of Irish and takes account of the various locations of the Fingal Local Authorities offices.

The scheme also includes a commitment to assess on an ongoing basis the level of demand for services through Irish and to ensure that the authorities continue to meet this demand in a planned, coherent and accessible way. The authorities will gauge the level of demand for their services in

the Irish language by annually commissioning independent citizen surveys. Continuous monitoring will also take place of all requests and queries received for services through the medium of Irish.

### **1.3 Commencement date of scheme**

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs. The scheme is commenced with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2006 and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to Section 15 of the Act, whichever is the earlier.

### **1.4 Overview, mission statement and core values of Fingal Local Authorities**

Fingal County Council was established on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1994. The county of Fingal covers an area of 452.7 sq. km and stretches from the River Liffey and the Dublin City boundary up to and including Balbriggan. The current population estimate is 220,000 and it is expected to grow to 260,000 by the year 2010.

A new Council was elected in June 2004 after which a partnership agreement was agreed between the three largest groupings, Fine Gael, Green Party and Labour.

The Council has its County Hall located in Swords, a large regional office in Blanchardstown, a smaller office in Baldoyle and an office due to open shortly in Balbriggan. The geographical spread of these offices is designed to assist the citizens of Fingal in accessing the Councils services from within the areas where they live and work.

## **Mission Statement**

**“To improve the quality of life for the people we serve”**

### **Core Values**

As a Local Authority Fingal County Council is:

- **Inclusive**
- **Progressive**
- **Efficient**

**We make these Core Values real through our work when we:**

Strengthen democracy

Work in partnership

Promote equality and justice

Provide community leadership and support the development of leadership within the community

Are open, honest and transparent and provide excellent customer service

Deliver value for money

Take the needs of future generations into account i.e. plan for sustainable development

Encourage vibrant, innovative and committed staff.

## **1.5 Citizens and clients of Fingal Local Authorities**

- Communities throughout Fingal
- Applicants for services under various schemes
- Government departments
- State agencies
- Commercial businesses
- Other local authorities and regional authorities
- County development board structures
- Social partners and sectoral interests
- Local development agencies
- Local and national media

## **1.6 Functional departments of Fingal Local Authorities**

1. Housing Department
2. Transportation Department
3. Water Services Department
4. Planning, Property and Economic Development Department
5. Environment Department
6. Community, Recreation and Amenities Department
7. Information Technology Department
8. Law Department
9. Human Resources Department
10. Finance Department
11. Corporate Affairs Department

## **1.7 Offices covered by this Scheme**

All Fingal County Council offices.  
Balbriggan Town Council offices

## **1.8 Assessment of extent to which services are already available through Irish**

The primary objective of the Act is to ensure better availability and a higher standard of public services through Irish.

Fingal County Council is supporting Irish language conversational groups for staff in the two main offices, Blanchardstown and Swords, as well as supporting staff who wish to pursue academic qualifications in Irish.

Certain branch libraries provide classes for both staff and members of the public. Blanchardstown library hosts classes two days a week for a period of ten weeks, twice a year, and an Irish language conversational group meet on Saturdays at noon. Baldoyle library also facilitate an Irish speaking conversational group on a weekly basis. All libraries in Fingal host a wide range of events for Seachtain na Gaeilge.

Fingal Local Authorities operates initiatives aimed at promoting and supporting the Irish language, including an Irish speaking recognition scheme, whereby members and staff wear a badge indicating their willingness to speak Irish and an annual Irish themed night for members and staff.

However, Fingal Local Authorities recognise that there are a range of services that are not currently available through Irish and welcome the opportunity provided by this scheme to further develop and enhance our service through Irish.

## **Chapter 2   Language Scheme**

(a) Section 11 of the Official Languages Act provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide:

- through the medium of Irish
- through the medium of English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

(b) Section 13 of the Official Languages Act 2003 provides that public bodies have a duty to ensure that:

- an adequate number of its staff are competent in the Irish language (section 13(2)(c).

## **Chapter 3   Summary of services provided by Fingal Local Authorities**

### **3.1 Overview of services**

This Chapter provides an overview of the services provided by Fingal Local Authorities.

#### **Architects Department**

- Housing Construction Programme
- Urban Design and Capital Projects
- Quantity Surveying Services

#### **Community, Recreation and Amenities Department**

The Community, Recreation and Amenities Department consists of three Divisions – Community Culture and Sports Division, Parks Division and the Public Libraries Division.

## **Community Culture and Sports Division**

- Community and Sports Development
- Arts Office
- Fingal Development Board
- RAPID – Blanchardstown

## **Parks Division**

- Regional Parks
- Sporting Facilities
- Skerries Mills Industrial Heritage Centre

## **Public Libraries Division**

- Branch Libraries
- Housebound Service
- Schools Library Service
- Mobile Library Service
- County Archives and Local Studies

## **Corporate Affairs Department**

The Corporate Affairs Department consists of two Divisions, Corporate Services Division and Citizen Services Division.

### **Corporate Services Division**

- Council Meetings
- Register of Electors
- Higher Education Grants
- Procurement of Goods and Services
- Tenders
- School Meals Scheme

### **Citizen Services Division**

- Freedom of Information
- Ombudsman's Queries
- Communications
- Media and Press
- Workplace Partnership
- Facilities Management

## **Environment Department**

- Waste Management Infrastructure
- Environmental Awareness and Recycling
- Enforcement of Waste Management Legislation
- Litter Control
- Abandoned/Unwanted Cars
- Air and Noise Pollution
- Burial Grounds
- Beaches and Bathing Water
- Control of Horses and Dogs
- Refuse Collection

## **Finance Department**

- Payments Office
- Rates
- Valuation of Properties
- Water Charges
- Annual Budget
- Annual Financial Statement
- Accounts Payable
- Payroll
- Insurances

## **Housing Department**

- Estate Refurbishment
- Housing Allocations
- Housing Construction
- Housing Maintenance
- Estate Management
- Loans and Grants
- Housing Revenue
- Traveller Accommodation

## **Human Resources Department**

- Recruitment and Selection
- Training and Development
- Staff Welfare including Conditions of Employment
- Industrial Relations
- Superannuation
- Health and Safety
- Equality

## **Information Technology Department**

- Developing local services
- Internet
- IMaps
- Helpdesk

## **Law Department**

- Legal Advice
- Litigation
- Conveyancing
- Contracts
- Title Deeds
- Compulsory Purchase Orders

## **Planning, Property and Economic Development Department**

This Department consists of two Divisions – Planning Division and the Property and Economic Development Division.

### **Planning Division**

- Development Plan
- Planning Permissions and Control of Development
- Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas
- Preservation and enhancement of Amenities
- Building Control

### **Property and Economic Development Division**

- Property Acquisition
- Property Management
- Industrial/Economic Development
- European Office/Projects
- Enterprise/Economic Development

## **Transportation Department**

- Road Design and Construction
- Traffic
- Management of Roads Network
- Building Control
- Road Safety
- Mechanical and Electrical

## **Water Services Department**

- Water
- Drainage Services
- Surface Water Management
- Water Pollution Control
- Emergency Response

## **Balbriggan Town Council**

Key services and functions provided by the Town Council in Balbriggan include:

- Council Meetings
- Annual Budget/annual financial statement
- Hire of conference facilities
- Media and press
- Website

### **3.2 Principal Means of Written Communication with the Public**

The Authorities' communications with its Citizens relating to its services are generally available in English only, and in certain cases in Irish and English including:-

- Brochures & information leaflets
- Application forms
- Publications
- Press releases
- Website
- Advertisements
- Minutes of Local Authority meetings
- Reports

## Chapter 4: Breakdown of current services in each Official Language

SERVICES OPERATING IN IRISH	SERVICES OPERATING BILINGUALLY	SERVICES OPERATING IN ENGLISH
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blanchardstown Library and Baldoyle Library</li> </ul>	<p><b>County Hall, Swords</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment Dept</li> <li>• Planning, Property and Economic Development Dept</li> <li>• Community, Recreation and Amenity Dept</li> <li>• Corporate Affairs Dept</li> <li>• Human Resources Dept</li> <li>• Information Technology Dept</li> <li>• Finance Dept</li> </ul> <p><b>Blanchardstown Office, Grove Road, Blanchardstown</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation Dept</li> <li>• Housing Dept</li> <li>• Water Services Dept</li> <li>• All services provided by Information Technology Dept., Community, Recreation and Amenity Dept., Planning, Property and Economic Development Dept., Environmental Health Division and Corporate Affairs Dept at this location</li> </ul> <p><b>Libraries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All services operating from five public libraries, the mobile library service and the housebound service.</li> <li>• The County Archive</li> <li>• The Local Studies office</li> </ul> <p><b>All services from Balbriggan Town Council</b></p>

## **Chapter 5: Enhancement of services to be provided bilingually**

### **5.1 Guiding principles**

- Fingal Local Authorities recognise that people have the right to choose which language to use
- Fingal Local Authorities accept that a person can express their needs and requirements most effectively in their chosen language
- Fingal Local Authorities appreciate that giving people real choice regarding the use of language in local authority services is the essence of good practice and leads to better outcomes in terms of quality of service.
- Fingal Local Authorities are also committed to developing a corporate image which embraces bilingualism across all our services.

### **5.2 Offices and service points**

Fingal County Council has two main service centres- one at County Hall, Swords and the other at Grove Road, Blanchardstown. The Council also operates eight branch libraries throughout the county. The greatest amount of direct contact with members of the public takes place at these locations and therefore they require the greatest concentration of resources in order to improve the level of Irish Language usage.

While Fingal Local Authorities are not in a position to provide a comprehensive service in Irish across a wide range of services the following are the steps which Fingal Local Authorities propose to take over the lifetime of this scheme to improve the level of services through Irish:

- An audit of the level of competency in the Irish language of all staff will be completed. The audit will identify 6 levels of competency: This audit will be completed within 3 months (from the commencement of the scheme).
- Staff with reasonable or good skills in Irish, but who are not yet fluent, will be identified in each service and offered training in the Irish language during office hours, over the duration of the scheme. This will be carried out with the consent of each member of staff.
- Within the lifetime of this scheme, either through recruitment, upskilling or deployment, and in consultation with staff and their representative organisations, Fingal Local Authorities will ensure that:
  - There shall be at least one members of staff, in each department, who will be competent in delivering the departments services through Irish to the public from County Hall, Swords and the Blanchardstown offices.
  - At least one member of staff shall be able to provide local authority services in Irish from each of the Public Libraries.

- Within the lifetime of this scheme preparatory work will be carried out within Balbriggan Town Council to begin the process of building a service through Irish. In particular, a staff audit will be carried out to ascertain the level of Irish of all staff and training will be provided to improve staff competence in the Irish language. This preparatory work will be carried out with a view to addressing the issue of the provision of a quality one-to-one customer service from this office in the second and subsequent Language Schemes.
- The recruitment and staff placement review outlined below will also have regard to the development of services through Irish from all offices.

### **5.3 Recruitment and placement**

- The Authorities in co-operation, where appropriate, with the Public Appointments Service, and through a consultative process with staff and their representative bodies, will review recruitment policy and staff mobility policies, with the objective of recruiting an adequate number of staff proficient to provide services in the Irish language. From the commencement date of the Scheme Fingal Local Authorities will begin a review to identify posts requiring competency in Irish (both written and oral) throughout the organisation.
- The Authorities 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 where a demand for services through Irish may arise. With their consent, such staff will be identified for our Citizens on our website, telephone directory etc.

### **5.4 Training and development**

The Authorities will continue their ongoing commitment to provide appropriate training and development for all staff, in both official languages, to meet the evolving needs of our Citizens and to develop the full potential of staff during their careers.

The Authorities will:-

- Continue to support the provision of a range of high-quality Irish language training courses to staff, both during and after normal working hours, through its Staff Education Scheme, as an integral part of the Authorities' overall training plan.
- Provide a range of courses through the medium of Irish for members of staff who are currently fluent in the language (e.g. simultaneous translation, media skills, use of Irish on computers, grammar and letter writing skills etc.).
- Irish language materials and resources (dictionaries, computer software, publications etc) will be made available to staff to facilitate the development and delivery of services through Irish.

- Continue to assess all courses, including Irish language courses and courses delivered through Irish, on a regular basis to ascertain how effectively they meet the Authorities' goals.
- Include language awareness as part of both Induction and Customer Service training courses so as to ensure that staff:
  - a. understand why the Council implements a bilingual policy
  - b. understand the context and background to the policy; and
  - c. are fully informed about how the policy will affect their work
  - d. gain an empathetic understanding of the needs and concerns of Irish-speaking Citizens
- The Authorities will also examine other mechanisms (e.g. award schemes) to encourage and promote the development of services through Irish by staff, and to recognise the endeavours of staff.

## **5.5 Information systems**

The Authorities shall:

- Establish a generic e-mail address for queries in the Irish Language. The Authorities will ensure that such queries are addressed promptly as with English language queries.
- Ensure that the Authorities' website layout will be bilingual, both in terms of navigation and content. (Navigation will be completed within 12 months of commencement of scheme and content and associated reports will be completed by the end of the scheme. Bilingual forms will be posted when the forms aspect of the scheme has been completed).
- Continue to promote the availability of the Irish language service in its various sections by listing contact details on the website for Citizens. As new services become available it is proposed to update this list on an ongoing basis. This will have the additional effect of promoting public confidence in the availability of a quality customer service in Irish and unlocking latent demand for services in Irish.
- The Council's intranet system will continue to be developed as a staff resource for the promotion of bilingualism: proper spelling of placenames, help on writing letters, phrases for receptionists, names of posts and services within Council, formal speeches etc.
- The potential for expanding the use of translation software within the organisation will be examined.
- Any new computer systems being installed will be fully capable of handling the Irish language, subject to availability.

- All existing systems will, where necessary, be made compatible with the Irish language in conjunction with the next suitable planned maintenance or upgrade work.
- Any new interactive services which allow the general public to make applications or receive benefits on line will be introduced simultaneously in both languages, subject to availability.
- The Local Authorities will ensure that the ability of all above-mentioned computer packages to handle the Irish language will be raised in all initial contacts and subsequent dealings with consultants, companies etc.

## **5.6 Application forms**

A list of application forms and the language in which they are currently available is set out in Appendix One.

Within 18 months of the commencement of the Scheme, all application forms and associated information leaflets will be available in bilingual format, or in separate Irish and English versions, from all Fingal Local Authorities' Offices throughout the County.

## **5.7 Public meetings policy**

The Council conducts all of its public meetings in the English language.

Training opportunities will be provided for elected members who wish to learn and use Irish.

## **5.8 Telephone services and oral announcements**

1. Receptionists / switchboard operators are the first points of contact with the public. At present this service is available principally in English. By the end of this scheme:
  - a dedicated telephone reception service will be developed in the Irish language, to enable Irish speaking Citizens across the entire county to access Local Authority services in the Irish language, and to have their first initial contact with the Local Authority dealt with entirely in Irish. (In place by end of scheme)
  - receptionist / switchboard staff in all offices shall be able to give the name of the Section in Irish, and
  - will be at least familiar with the basic greetings in Irish, and suitable arrangements will be in place so that they can put members of the public in touch

without delay with whatever office of officer is responsible for offering the service required through Irish.

2. It is the policy of the Authorities to work towards ensuring that all pre-recorded oral announcements to our Citizens shall be in the Irish language, or in the English and Irish languages. This objective will be achieved by the end of the current scheme.
3. Our current default telephone messaging system operates in the English language only. However, it is intended to offer this service in both official languages. This objective will be achieved by the end of the current scheme.

Individual staff members, however, can leave messages in the single language of their choice, or bilingually.

## **5.9 The media and press releases**

Authoritative staff in each Service will be identified, where available, to carry out interviews with the Irish language media, particularly Ráidió na Gaeltachta and TG4.

A list of such staff, including their contact details, will be provided to the Irish language media. This list will be updated and provided on an ongoing basis.

Within the lifetime of the scheme, all press releases will be issued bilingually from Fingal Local Authorities.

## **5.10 Brochures & information leaflets**

It is our intention that all brochures and information leaflets providing information to the public shall be fully bilingual by the end of this scheme.

Documents of a technical nature will continue to be published in English only, except where there is a wider interest to the public, or local significance, in which case a bilingual version or a summary in the Irish language will be made available. (By end of scheme)

## **5.11 Promotional measures**

The following are some additional proposals which the Council shall continue to provide and/or seek to develop over the life of the plan:

- Participation in Irish Language Week (e.g. events/exhibitions in library services)
- Increased promotion of voluntary Fáinne Scheme among staff so that Irish-speaking staff are readily identifiable to the public and to each other.

- Organisation of Irish language social events for staff through social club, including Irish language coffee mornings and lunch breaks
- Inclusion of substantial Irish language section/material in staff newsletter.

## **Chapter 6: Implementation, monitoring and revision**

Once the scheme has been approved, Senior Management will lead the preparation of a 3-year implementation plan. The implementation plan for each directorate will identify and set key milestones against which progress will be benchmarked, by way of an annual progress report from each directorate to the County Manager. Overall progress for the organisation will be made available to the public and elected members via the Annual Report.

The Senior Management Team will keep the effective operation of the scheme under review, principally through the mechanisms outlined above.

The ongoing review of the implementation of the scheme will be undertaken by a designated senior member of staff.

Fingal Local Authorities will carry out an inventory of Supply and Demand for Irish language services across all Local Authority Services.

The Authorities may initiate further development activities not covered in this scheme.

## **Chapter 7: Publicising of agreed scheme**

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

- Press Release
- Official Launch of Scheme
- Circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies
- Website

Wherever Fingal Local Authorities has established the capacity to provide a service in the Irish language, we will promote the availability of the service through our website, signage, information at Public Service Centres etc.







<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Approval form for the granting of Communications Licence</li> <li>• Licence Application form for tables and chairs outside a hotel, restaurant, public house or other establishment where food is sold for consumption on the premises , form granting of licence for tables and chairs outside a hotel, restaurant, public house or other establishment where food is sold for consumption on the premises</li> <li>• Form for granting renewal of licence for tables and chairs outside a hotel, restaurant, public house or other establishment where food is sold for consumption on the premises</li> <li>• Approval form for abnormal loads and permits to authorise the use of vehicles on public roads maintained by Fingal Co Co</li> <li>• Application for abnormal loads and permits to authorise the use of vehicles on public roads maintained by Fingal Co Co</li> <li>• Approval Form</li> <li>• Taking in charge certificate</li> <li>• School Warden Application form</li> <li>• Application for Residents Parking Permit</li> <li>• Application for Special Parking permit</li> <li>• Application for visitor Disc</li> <li>• The Road Traffic (Speed Limits) Bye laws 2002</li> <li>• The Road Traffic Speed Limits (amended) Bye-Law 2004</li> <li>• The Road Traffic Speed Limit Bye Law 2006</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Environment Department</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaflet Brown Bin Pilot Scheme.1</li> <li>• Leaflet Brown Bin Pilot Scheme.2</li> <li>• Leaflet household waste Charges</li> <li>• Exchange of tags form</li> <li>• Application for reduced charge replacement wheeled bin</li> <li>• Agreement for Sale of Environmental Charge Tags</li> <li>• Explanatory leaflet on Waste Management, Packaging Regulations 2003</li> <li>• Leaflet “Slim your Bins”</li> <li>• A Guide to home composting</li> <li>• Leaflet on available compost bins</li> <li>• Leaflet on Balbriggan Recycling Centre</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤</li> <li>➤</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magazine Green Scene</li> <li>• Application form for Fingal Cleaner Communities</li> <li>• Waste, Packaging Regulations 2005 Documentation</li> <li>• Control of Horses Act Documentation</li> <li>• Control of Dogs Act Documentation</li> <li>• Application for Casual Trading Licence</li> <li>• Application form for employment of Beach lifeguard</li> <li>• Application to operate stands on the public beaches in Fingal</li> <li>• Letting of trading concessions on public beaches</li> <li>• Headstone Applications-Guidelines</li> <li>• Transfer of Ownership of Grave Space – Guidelines &amp; Application Form</li> <li>• Exhumation Licence &amp; Application Form</li> <li>• Cancellation form for Litter fines</li> <li>• Abandoned Cars documentation</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤</li> </ul>	
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