

**KILKENNY COUNTY AND CITY
COUNCILS
IRISH LANGUAGE SCHEME
2009-2012**



Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

This scheme was prepared under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act. Section 11 provides for the preparation by a public body of a statutory scheme specifying the services it proposes to provide:

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

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

1.1 Content of the Language Scheme

The scheme has been developed by the Corporate Services department in association with other senior staff.

Responsibility for ensuring implementation of the scheme as well as monitoring and reviewing the scheme will rest with senior management within Kilkenny County and City Councils.

The scheme builds on the extent to which services are currently available through Irish as a starting base.

This scheme was drafted having regard to the contents of the statutory guidelines issued by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs under section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003.

1.2 Commencement Date of Scheme –

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs. The scheme is commenced with effect from the 10 August 2009 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 Official Languages Act, whichever is earlier.

1.3 Overview of Kilkenny County and City Councils

Kilkenny County and City Councils are the statutory authority for the provision of local services to the people of Kilkenny County and City.

Our mission statement is as follows:

“Kilkenny Local Authorities aim to work in partnership with ALL the people of Kilkenny and relevant agencies to deliver quality services and to promote sustainable economic, social and cultural development for current and future generations.”

Kilkenny County and City Councils provide a multiplicity of services, which touch the lives of every citizen in the County and City. The principal functions and services are as follows:

- Housing management and provision
- Roads including traffic management and safety
- Water Services including sewerage
- Development Incentives and Control
- Environmental Protection and Education
- Recreation and Amenity including libraries, arts, parks and playgrounds
- Miscellaneous services

The main functions and activities of the County and City Council are underpinned by a number of core corporate objectives that include:

“In supporting the democratic process and the mandate of the Elected Representatives as well as recognising the need for a safe, healthy, and a supportive environment for staff, Kilkenny Local Authorities subscribe to the following core values:-

- Participation and Equality
- A high quality of service delivery.
- Ongoing service improvement (including value for money and use of indicators).
- High standards of conduct and probity.
- Openness and accountability
- Mutual respect and support for Members, Staff and the general public
- An effective and caring focus on people.
- Ongoing development of Staff

These are identified in the council’s current Corporate Plan 2004-2009 which sets out challenging targets for improvements to County and City services and for the enhancement of local democracy.

1.4 Customers and Clients

Kilkenny County and City Councils’ customer base includes the residents of Kilkenny County and City, the business community and the thousands of visitors to the County and City on a daily basis.

In addition the County and City Council has a working relationship with a variety of statutory and non-statutory groups.

1.5 Assessment of the extent to which services are already available through Irish

The County and City Council currently publishes its statutory documents and other policy statements in Irish and English in accordance with the provisions of section 10 of the Official Languages Act 2003. Public signage generally in the County and City and at council offices is also bilingual. A significant number of our website pages are bilingual.

The Council has the capacity to communicate through Irish where requested by a member of the public.

Chapter 2

Provision of General Council Services/Activities

2.1 Methodology and Research Undertaken

In the preparation of this Scheme, Kilkenny County and City Councils undertook a consultation process, which involved:

- seeking submissions from the public on the preparation of a draft scheme
- seeking submissions from senior staff

2.2 Means of Communication with the Public

The Council uses the following methods to communicate with the public

- Brochures & Information Leaflets
- Application Forms
- Publications
- Press releases
- A fortnightly page in one of the local newspapers.
- Website
- Public Advertisement
- The local radio.

2.3 Written Documentation

The following policies in relation to the various categories of written documentation produced by Kilkenny County and City Councils shall be enacted during the lifetime of this scheme:

(i) Brochures, Information Leaflets & Application Forms

All new public Application Forms and associated documentation produced by the County and City Council shall be available in Irish and English from the beginning of the scheme.

New brochures and information leaflets will be made available in both Irish and English either electronically or by way of hard copy. Both official languages will be treated equally to ensure that the same quality of customer service is provided in both languages.

The Council will over the lifetime of the scheme make available all existing public application forms in both Irish and English from when they are restocked. Brochures and information leaflets will be made available in both Irish and English either electronically or by way of hard copy. Both official languages will be treated equally to ensure that the same quality of customer service is provided in both languages.

The Council will ensure that the above will be available bilingually within the same cover except where it is not feasible because of the nature, size or layout of the material.

(ii) Publications

Kilkenny County and City Councils are committed to ensuring that during the lifetime of the scheme policy documents approved by Council for publication will be available in Irish and English within the same cover except where it is not feasible because of the nature, size or layout of the material.

(iii) Press releases

Press releases are currently available in English only. The Council will by the third year of the scheme publish 10% of its press releases per annum in both Irish and English.

(iv) Website

Kilkenny County and City Councils will continue to have information bilingually on its own website and on the other websites for which it has responsibility e.g.

Kilkenny Borough Council, Woodstock Gardens which by the end of June 2010 shall contain, excluding technical information, at least 10% of the information contained on the English language site increasing to 25% by the end of the Scheme.

(v) The local Authority will endeavor to encourage utilisation of the fortnightly page to promote the use of the Irish language. Notice of this policy will be advertised on the page.

2.4 Oral Communication

Staff on the customer services desk / switchboard operators are the first points of contact with the public. By the end of this scheme, it shall be the policy of Kilkenny County and City Councils to ensure that standard Customer Service practice applies in this area, which is that:

- Front desk / switchboard staff are able to give the name of the Local Authority in Irish.
- They are at least familiar with the basic greetings in Irish
- Suitable arrangements are in place so that they can put members of the public in touch without delay, with the office or officer responsible for offering the service required through Irish, where available.

High profile public events shall incorporate an element of bilingualism into the proceedings as part of the Council's efforts to positively promote Irish in the community.

Chapter 3

Services/Activities provided by Sections

3.1 Introduction

This Chapter sets out the position in relation to service provision/activities by individual Sections within the County and City Council and the official language regime operated in each case.

3.2 Operating Language of Each Section

No department currently provides a service exclusively through Irish.

English is the operating language across all Council services listed as follows

- Housing Provision and Management
- Roads and Traffic Management
- Water Services
- Planning
- Accounts payable and receivable
- Environment Regulation, Education and Enforcement
- The offices of Kilkenny Borough Council
- Library branches throughout the County
- The Arts Office
- All Area Offices
- Swimming Pool
- Fire Service
- Civil Defence
- Corporate Services and Information Systems

During the lifetime of this scheme the Council will implement a training programme to enable the departments listed below to have at least one staff member available to provide a bilingual counter service by the end of the scheme.

- At designated service points in County Hall, i.e. one staff member on each floor of County Hall will be designated as being capable of providing counter service through Irish
- At designated service points within the Library Service, i.e. in HQ, our City Branch and within one of the County Branches
- Corporate Services
- At least one designated person for City Hall
- At least one staff member designated for Johns Green House.

The public will be made aware of this service through public signage and by notification in our fortnightly page in a local paper, the Kilkenny People

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

3.2.1 Sections that provide a service in Irish and English

The County and City Library HQ can provide a counter service in Irish and English to members of the public. During the lifetime of the scheme training will be provided to ensure that this position is maintained with existing and new staff.

3.2.2 Summary

The aim will be to create and foster an atmosphere of bilingualism in the sections listed above so that Irish speaking customers feel welcome and are encouraged to do their business in Irish and so that both customers and staff feel comfortable in conducting their business through the Irish language.

Chapter 4

Enhancement of Corporate Services in respect of the Irish language

4.1 Information Systems

In relation to electronic communication, Kilkenny County and City Councils will ensure that the following policies will be implemented:

- Any standard disclaimer or message on e-mail correspondence will be bilingual by the end of November 2009 .
- The County and City Council shall ensure that any new computer systems/software being purchased by the County and City Council is fully capable of handling the Irish language.
- Existing systems will be made compatible at the next suitable planned maintenance or upgrade work.
- Establish a generic e-mail address for queries 'as Gaeilge'. The County and City Council will ensure that such queries are addressed promptly in the same manner as English language queries.
- The intranet will be used as an internal resource to promote Irish and assist with general queries
- Any new interactive systems that the public use to access services will be made bilingual by the end of the Scheme. Existing interactive systems will also be made bi-lingual at the next suitable planned maintenance or upgrade work.

4.2 Recruitment & Placement

The Corporate Services department will address the issue of the Irish language in relation to recruitment and training.

The County and City Council will have regard to the requirements of this scheme when considering issues relating to recruitment and placement/deployment.

4.3 Training & Development

Having regard to this scheme, the Corporate Services department will:

- Ensure that all staff are given equal encouragement and opportunity to improve their Irish language skills through training and development courses.

Arrange courses for staff to ensure that departments can meet the requirements set out in this scheme.

Chapter 5

Monitoring, Revision & Publication of Agreed Scheme

5.1 Monitoring & Revision

The Corporate Services Department will review on a regular basis the operation of the scheme. These reviews will be forwarded to the Council's Senior Management Team.

Line managers in each of the departments will be responsible for the day to day operation of the scheme. Details of progress in the implementation will be published in the Council's Annual Report.

5.2 Publicising of Agreed Scheme

The public will be able to view the scheme on the Council's website and at its offices. It will also be circulated to statutory and non-statutory groups working in the County and City. The existence and availability of the scheme will be publicised on the local authorities page in the Kilkenny People. Staff of Kilkenny County and City Councils will be made aware of the scheme through an enclosure in the wages/salaries and on the intranet

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

The English language version is the original text of this scheme