



# **OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT 2003 LANGUAGE SCHEME**

**2016 - 2019**

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This is South Dublin County Council's third language scheme. The Official Languages Act 2003 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a language scheme detailing the services which 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 currently provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

In accordance with section 14(3) of the Act, language schemes remain in force for a period of 3 years or until such time as a new scheme is confirmed by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, whichever is the later.

South Dublin County Council is committed to implementing an Irish Language Scheme that will offer quality services for our Irish speaking citizens and visitors to our County. Since the introduction of the first scheme, the Council has made significant progress in the provision of services in Irish. A summary of these achievements are set out in Chapter 3. However, we also recognise that there are areas which we need to improve on and these are set out in Chapter 4. The implementation of this scheme and the use of the Irish language will be measured against performance indicators which are set out at the end of the scheme.

### **1.2 Preparation and Content of the Scheme**

In the preparation of this scheme, due regard has been given to the Guidelines issued by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. In accordance with these guidelines, South Dublin County Council published a notice of intention to prepare a draft scheme in local newspapers, on [www.sdcc.ie](http://www.sdcc.ie), the Irish version of the Council website [www.athcliaththeas.ie](http://www.athcliaththeas.ie) and social media on 21st May, 2015. This notice was also circulated to the elected members of the Council. There was a four week consultation period ending on the 18th June, 2015. All submissions received were taken into account in the preparation of the draft scheme.

South Dublin County Council is guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

- the underlying level of demand for specific services in the Irish language,
- the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of such services, and
- the resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of South Dublin County Council to develop or access the necessary language capability.

This scheme complements the principles of Quality Customer Service and our Customer Charter. It has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Official Languages Act by South Dublin County Council will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.

In the event of commitments in earlier schemes not having been fully implemented to date, this matter will be the subject of discussion with the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga. The time and effort put in by all concerned in this process is acknowledged and appreciated.

### **1.3 Commencement date of the Scheme**

This Scheme has been confirmed on **17 October 2016** by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. It commences with effect from this date and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

## **Chapter 2: Overview of South Dublin County Council**

### **2.1 Profile**

South Dublin County Council was established in 1994. It covers an area of 222.7 sq km. South Dublin County has a population of approximately 265,174 (census 2011) and comprises over 97,000 households. The county has approximately 6,500 businesses. We provide services to a wide range of stakeholders including the Residents of South Dublin, Commercial Businesses, Government Departments and State Agencies, Social Partners, Local Development Organisations and Community groups. South Dublin County has a relatively young population compared with the rest of Ireland. People from 120 countries live in South Dublin County.

### **2.2 Council Structure**

The Council is comprised of 40 elected members representing 6 electoral areas in the County. The full Council meets monthly to agree policy and budgetary matters. These include adopting the annual budget, the county development plan and the corporate plan; deciding building programmes; making bye-laws; and setting commercial rates and local property tax. Four area committees also meet monthly to discuss local issues. The four area committees are:

- Lucan (Lucan Electoral Area)
- Clondalkin (Clondalkin Electoral Area)
- Tallaght (Tallaght Central and Tallaght South Electoral Areas)
- Rathfarnham (Rathfarnham and Templeogue-Terenure Electoral Areas)

Six Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) have been established where policy is developed before recommendation to the full Council for approval. Members of the SPC's include Council members and representatives of the business, farming, environment, community and trade union sectors. The Council has links with the community and voluntary sector through the Public Participation Network. It also facilitates the operation of the Local Community Development Committee which is responsible for governing and overseeing community expenditure from national sources.

The six SPCs are:

- Arts, Culture, Gaeilge, Heritage and Libraries
- Land Use, Planning and Transportation
- Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism
- Environment, Public Realm and Climate Change
- Social and Community
- Housing

The Corporate Policy Group (CPG) comprises of the Mayor and the chairs of the strategic policy committees along with a nominated member by an area committee that is not represented by the SPC chairs. As well as a co-ordination and monitoring role, the CPG has specific responsibilities in the preparation and monitoring of the Corporate Plan and the Annual Budget.

The day-to-day business of the Council is carried out by an Executive which is headed by the Chief Executive and operates within the policy framework laid down by the Elected Members.

### **2.3 Mission and Objectives**

South Dublin County Council's Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019 is a five year document that sets out the corporate mission, core values, themes and key objectives for that period.

#### **Mission Statement :**

“To make our county the best possible place in which to live, work and do business. “

The main themes under which the Council operates are:

- Economic Development
- Quality of Life – health and wellbeing
- Social Inclusion
- Citizen Engagement
- Collaboration with others

### **2.4 Main Functions and Key Services**

The Council provides and funds a broad range of services including housing, roads, walking and cycling routes, parks and playgrounds, libraries, sports facilities, litter control, arts centres, enterprise units, fire services and community infrastructure and financial supports.

The Council's intention is that each service area is able to provide services in Irish and will offer our customers the right to choose the Irish or English language in their dealings with the Council.

The Council is organised into five Directorates for the purpose of delivering services as follows:

- Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development (including Libraries and the Arts Office)
- Land Use, Planning and Transportation
- Housing, Social and Community Development
- Environment, Water and Climate Change
- Corporate Performance and Change Management

### **2.5 Principal Points of Contacts**

There are 7 different ways the public can contact the Council and receive response through Irish, including by phone, letter, email, web, social media, sms (text messaging) and public counters.

The primary service points for the Council are located at County Hall, Tallaght and Civic offices Clondalkin. In addition there is a wide network of Community Centres and Libraries located throughout South Dublin County. The Council also interacts with a wide range of Government Departments, State Agencies, Social Partners, Business, Community Groups and Resident Associations.

### Chapter 3: Council Services currently being provided through Irish/Bilingually

At present the vast majority of all written and oral communication between the public and South Dublin County Council is provided mainly through the medium of English. The Council currently provides the following services/information listed below bilingually or in Irish to the public:

- Council stationery ( notepaper, compliment slips and file covers) are provided bilingually
- Signage in County Hall, Civic Offices Clondalkin and South Dublin Libraries are provided bilingually
- Letters and emails sent by customers in Irish receive a reply in Irish and this is recorded on the Council's Customer Care Contact System
- Telephone recorded messages are provided bilingually
- One to One services: 19 staff are currently available to deal with the public through Irish at public counters
- A directory of staff available to conduct business in Irish is available on the staff intranet
- All press releases and advertisements relating to Irish Language are issued bilingually to the press and available on the Council website and social media accounts
- All Council business submitted by the elected members in Irish is replied through the medium of the Irish Language
- All new place name signage is available bilingually in accordance with the Official Languages Act 2003
- [www.athacliaththeas.ie](http://www.athacliaththeas.ie) provides Irish on all static content on the home page and main sub-sections of the Council website
- South Dublin County Libraries have developed an Irish website at [www.southdublinlibraries.ie](http://www.southdublinlibraries.ie) and contains the static information from this main website
- Irish is now available in all the interactive self service points in South Dublin Libraries
- The SOURCE website, an online digital archive is available in Irish, accessible from the English site and contains static information from the English version, [source@southdublinlibraries.ie](mailto:source@southdublinlibraries.ie)
- An Irish version [www.fixyourstreet](http://www.fixyourstreet) has been developed and is moderated nationally by South Dublin County Council at [www.deisighdoshraid.ie](http://www.deisighdoshraid.ie)
- The public can also apply for a dog licence on line in Irish at [Seirbhís um Cheadúnú Madraí ar líne](#)
- Provision of weekly Irish Classes to adults in library branches – free of charge
- Provision of six week Leaving Certificate level Irish classes to second level students and provision of Oral Irish practice at the end of the course

- Annual Seachtain na Gaeilge Átha Cliath Theas- a celebration of Irish language and culture held each year from the 1st to the 17th March
- Direct contact by email is available at [Gaeilge@athcliaththeas.ie](mailto:Gaeilge@athcliaththeas.ie) for Irish queries
- Standard Email disclaimer is provided bilingually
- Parking Ticket Receipts are issued bilingually
- Corporate Plan, County Development Plan and Annual Reports are available bilingually
- Irish articles included in the staff newsletter 'South Circular'
- Irish Language Section in the Council's citizen newsletter 'South Dublin County Today'
- All new commemorative plaques are available in both Irish and English
- Information materials circulated to schools is produced bilingually

## **Chapter 4: Enhancing the provision of Irish Language Services**

Communication with the public is carried out mainly through the medium of English. The Council is committed to implementing the following actions to improve the provision of services through the medium of Irish.

### **Oral Communication**

#### ***First Point of Contact***

The telephone/public counters are the main method by which Irish-speaking members of the public communicate or initiate business with the Council. Enquiries in Irish are welcome and encouraged through the Council's Customer Care Unit, where there are different phone numbers to dial depending on whether the caller wishes to speak English or Irish.

- All Customer Care staff will be given appropriate training and encouraged to participate further in an Irish Language work place training programme in order to enhance their Irish Language skills so they can be familiar with the basis greetings in Irish. All customer care agents will answer external callers on the telephone with a bilingual greeting as a minimum.
- Customer care agents will also be in a position to acknowledge a request for a service in Irish and be able to direct the caller to an Irish-speaking officer in the relevant service area. Where there is no Irish speaker available in the relevant service area, the answer will be obtained from an officer in the relevant service area by an Irish - speaking agent in Customer Care who will then inform the customer
- An Irish voicemail service is available for customers
- The Library Services will ensure that there is a least one member of staff in each library available to provide a bilingual service
- All recorded phone greetings and out of hours messages will be bilingual and reviewed on regular basis to ensure compliance
- The Council will continue to put up signage welcoming the use of Irish by the public in their business with the Council and in particular the Council will ensure that such signage is clearly displayed to the public at every public counter. This will be implemented by the end of the first year of the scheme.

### **Written Communication**

- All written communication received by post or email from the public, other organisations or elected representatives will be responded to in the official language in which it was received. The service in Irish should not be of a lower standard than the service in English. The council has a system in place to record all correspondence received in Irish.
- Where applications forms and information leaflets are provided as separate Irish and English versions, equal prominence will be given to both versions at public locations.

## **Public Meetings Policy**

- The Council will conduct its public meetings in both English and Irish. Agendas will be published in English. However, all motions and questions submitted in Irish are replied to bilingually on the Council's meeting administration system (CMAS) and available to the public. Irish Language training will be made available to Councillors interested in improving their competency in the use of the Irish language. Irish language materials/resources will be available to elected members through membersnet to facilitate the development and delivery of services through Irish.

## **Stationery**

- With the introduction of Eircode, the new smart location code for all Irish addresses in summer 2015, the Council will carry out a review of all stationery to ensure that standard information such as address and logo captions will be bilingual on all printed material such as letter headings, compliment slips, invitation cards and business cards.

## **Signage**

- The Council's public image and corporate identity is bilingual. The Council's title, corporate image and any related design will also be bilingual on all signs and notices on or in its property and publications. The text in Irish shall be as prominent, visible and legible as the text in English in accordance with the legislation.
- All newly provided and replacement public information signs for which the Council is responsible, including road signage, external and internal signs at buildings owned by the Council, will be bilingual in accordance with the legislation.

## **Placenames**

- Planning for all new developments is approved by South Dublin County Council. Both the Irish and English Place names are registered on the Chief Executive Order as the official names.
- The Councils Land Use, Planning and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee are currently examining a protocol for the naming of bridges/parks/plazas in South Dublin County. The committee will take into consideration the importance of Irish Language placenames which are a link to the history and heritage of an area.
- The Council has produced a database of South Dublin Placenames and Streetnames and has published a document that provides a list of bilingual placenames and streetnames. The Council will continue to update this database with all new developments.
- The Council will seek advice from the Placenames Branch of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht who provide an advice service on place names if required.

## **Publications**

- Documents setting out public policy proposals, audited accounts or financial statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English.
- The normal practice is that the Irish and English versions will be produced together in one document
- It may be necessary in some cases, such as when the original document is very large, to issue separate Irish and English versions for a particular publication. If separate Irish and English versions are produced, each document will contain a statement that a version is available in the other language.
- All information leaflets will contain a short introduction and summary in the Irish language.

## **Circulating Information to the Public /Mail Shots**

- Written information sent to the public by way of mail shots will be assessed in accordance with the criteria set out in Section 9 (3) of the Act to determine if there is a requirement to issue the documentation bilingually.

## **Media**

- Press notices and releases are the principal means by which the Council regularly provides information and views to the media. Press notices and releases relating to the Irish Language will be issued bilingually and simultaneously as a matter of course. The Council will aim to increase the number of press releases issued through the Irish language by 10%.
- Notices and advertisements published in local/national newspapers where the subject matter relates specifically to Irish language issues will be published bilingually.

## **Information Technology**

- South Dublin County Council recognises that Information Technology plays a key role in providing information to the public.
- The Council will continue to update the static content on the Council and library websites.
- The Council will promote the use of the Irish version of the Fix Your Street website [www.deisighdoshraid.ie](http://www.deisighdoshraid.ie)
- A generic email address for Irish queries is available [gaeilge@athcliaththeas.ie](mailto:gaeilge@athcliaththeas.ie) . The Council will ensure that such queries are addressed in accordance with the Council's Customer Care Policy.
- The Irish Information Page which is available on the Council's website [www.sdcc.ie](http://www.sdcc.ie) will be regularly updated to promote services and events available to the public in Irish.
- All new on line interactive services will be introduced simultaneously in Irish and English.
- The Council's staff intranet will be redesigned and will include an Irish Language Resource Section for staff.

### **The Living Language - An Teanga Bheo**

As part of the Centenary Programme of commemorative events in 2016, South Dublin County Council will celebrate the Irish language through a diverse programme of events by:

- Developing a bilingual webpage [Comoradh Cead Bliain 1916 in Ath Cliath Theas](#)
- Producing all promotion materials and invitations bilingually.
- Ensuring that the Irish Language is visible and celebrated across all the various programme strands of the Centenary Programme.
- Designing and producing a wallet card which includes every day Irish language phrases to encourage greater use of the spoken Irish Language. This card would be distributed to Public Sector Organisations, Local Businesses, Sports Clubs, Community and Voluntary agencies and the Public Participation Network.

### **Gaelscoileanna and Other Irish Language Organisations in South Dublin County**

South Dublin County Council continues to recognise and acknowledge the use of Irish/bilingualism in Gaelscoileanna and other Irish Language Organisations including Áras Chrónáin, Ionad Cultúrtha and Gaelphobal Thamhlachta.

## **Chapter 5: Improving Language Capability**

### **5.1 Staff Mobility**

South Dublin County Council will continue to review which posts require competency in Irish (both written and oral) throughout the organisation. The Council will allocate staff competent in the Irish language across departments to support the delivery of services through Irish. Contact details for Irish language services will be provided on the Council's website and intranet.

### **5.2 Training and Development**

South Dublin County Council is committed to improving the knowledge and skills of employees to ensure that all staff are actively encouraged and given the opportunity to improve their Irish language competence. The demand for services through Irish during the lifetime of the scheme will be a factor in determining the degree to which the Irish Language proficiency is enhanced. Audits of the demand for services through Irish will be carried out on a regular basis by the Corporate Performance and Change Management Directorate and will inform our Training Plan.

The Council will:-

- Make Irish language materials available to staff through South Dublin County Council's staff intranet to facilitate the development and delivery of services through Irish.
- Include language awareness as part of both the induction process and ongoing training so as to ensure that new and existing 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
- Examine other mechanisms (e.g. staff recognition and award schemes) to encourage and promote the development of services through Irish by staff, and to recognise the endeavours of staff.
- Provide support for staff who wish to undertake training courses in the Irish Language through the Scheme of Financial Assistance provides support. Priority will be given to frontline staff in the first instance.

## **Chapter 6: Responsibility, Monitoring and Review**

The Director of Corporate Performance and Change Management is responsible for ensuring that this scheme is implemented throughout the Council, while the management team have responsibility for implementing the scheme within their service areas. The Communications Unit will be the main point of contact for all enquiries.

Guidance leaflets and a summary of this scheme will be issued to all staff on the nature and purpose of the scheme and its requirements and on operating its measures, including the uses of translation services, good practice, and ways in which both Irish speaking and non-Irish speaking officers can help the public to obtain a good service.

South Dublin County Council will review effective operation of this scheme on an annual basis and provide a progress report in the Annual Report. Monitoring of the scheme will be structured according to the Council's performance management and improvement systems, the report will be made available in the Council's Annual Report for the elected members and members of the public to inspect.

Progress reports on the Irish Language Scheme will also be provided to the Council's Arts, Heritage, Gaeilge and Libraries Strategic Policy Committee.

### **Complaints**

The Council values comments from members of the public and would wish to know if things go wrong or if they can be improved. The Council would wish to do everything it can to meet genuine concerns and it has an official complaints procedure.

Complaints received in Irish or concerning the standard of Irish language services are processed as part of the Council's corporate complaint procedure. The procedure outlines our standards for dealing with complaints promptly and efficiently as part of our commitment to provide quality customer services to all members of the public.

Complaints can be sent by email to [Gaeilge@athcliaththeas.ie](mailto:Gaeilge@athcliaththeas.ie) or by post to -

**Corporate Performance and Change Management,  
South Dublin County Council,  
County Hall,  
Tallaght,  
Dublin 24.**

## **Chapter 7: Publicising of Agreed Scheme**

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

- Press Release
- Publication on the Council's Website, Intranet, Library website and Membersnet sites.
- Social Media
- Information and awareness sessions for staff

In addition, the Council will take every opportunity in its day to day interaction with customers to promote and publicise the services we provide through Irish by the following means:

- Directly informing customers on a proactive basis of the option of conducting their business with us through Irish, for example, by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available and prominently listing these services on our website
- Indicating on guidelines, leaflets or application forms that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually
- Giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials

The English language version of this scheme is the official version.

A copy of the agreed scheme will be forwarded to Oifig An Choimisinéara Teanga.

## Appendix 1 - Performance Indicators

Indicator	Frequency	Responsibility
To monitor the number and % of staff who have received training in Irish to a specific qualification level and the number and % of staff who have received Irish Language Awareness training.	Annually	Corporate Performance and Change Management
The number and % of staff who are able to speak Irish according to: i. directorate ii. grade iii. workplace location  Maintain a central directory of Irish speaking staff on the staff intranet	Annually	Corporate Performance and Change Management
Monitor the number and % of complaints in relation to the operation of the Irish Language Scheme dealt with in accordance with corporate standards	Monthly	Corporate Performance and Change Management
Monitor the number of visits to Council's Irish website	Monthly	Information and Communications Technology
Ensure that Council's title, corporate image and related designs are bilingual on: i. Property ii. Vehicles iii. Clothing iv. Publications v. All types of Public Display	Annually	All Departments
Ensure that all new and replacement (temporary or permanent) signs, including internal, external and road signs are fully bilingual	Annually	All Departments
Monitor the number of Customer Care Queries received in Irish	Monthly	Corporate Performance and Change Management