

Irish Language Scheme 2009 – 2012

Cavan Local Authorities
Scheme under Section 11 of
the Official Languages Act
2003

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Background

Introduction

The Official Languages Act 2003 provides a statutory framework for the delivery of services through the Irish Language. The scheme sets out the measures Cavan Local Authorities will implement under section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003.

Preparation of Scheme

In preparation of this scheme the Cavan Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2004-2009 Strategic objectives were to the fore. They are:

Corporate Objective 1: “Achievement of sustainable growth”

Corporate Objective 2: “To develop/enhance local democracy and maximise the involvement of the people of County Cavan”

Corporate Objective 3: “To develop and promote a positive image for Cavan”

Corporate Objective 4: “To ensure the delivery and effective management of services to the people of Cavan”

Corporate Objective 5: “To grow the competence and capacity of Cavan County Council”

Commencement

The scheme, having been confirmed by the Minister of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs pursuant to Section 15 of the Act, became effective on 4 August 2009. This scheme will remain effective for three years or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister, whichever is earlier.

Mission Statement

The mission statement of Cavan Local Authorities Corporate Plan is:

“We will be the best at what we do”.

Strategic Objectives

Under Section 11 the Official Languages Act, the Cavan Local Authorities must provide in the scheme details of the services they will provide through:

- a) the medium of Irish
- b) the medium of English

- c) The medium of English & Irish and also what measures will be adopted to ensure that any services that are not provided through the medium of Irish will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

Cavan Local Authorities have taken cognizance of the guidelines under section 12 of the Official Languages Act 2003 provided by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Nothing in this scheme will contradict any Act or statutory instrument of the state or any regulations made under the Official Languages Act 2003.

Under section 13 (2) (c) of the Official Languages Act 2003 Cavan Local Authorities have a duty to ensure that an adequate number of staff are competent in the Irish language.

In order to invite submissions from interested parties for preparation of the scheme under Section 13, advertisements were placed in the following:

- a) The Anglo Celt (Local Press)
- b) Fonise (The Irish language Newspaper)
- c) On the Cavan County Council internet www.cavancoco.ie

Glór Bhréifne is a group comprising of Glór Na nGael and Comhaltas Uladh/Conradh na Gaeilge, that is active in the growth and development of the Irish Language in County Cavan. It is the aim of this voluntary organisation to expand the Irish language and the Irish language community in County Cavan. Glór Bhréifne has won national awards through Glór Na nGael in 2003, 2004 and 2005. Glór Bhréifne received a written request for submissions to the scheme. In total 121 submissions were received by the due date i.e. 11 May 2007.

As part of Cavan Local Authorities commitment to provide a quality Customer Service we surveyed customers as part of a broader customer survey (including a section on the Irish languages services) was undertaken by Council.

The Cavan Local Authorities will continue to gauge, through regular assessments and reviews the levels of queries for services received in the Irish language. It is the commitment intention of our Local Authorities to develop services available in Irish during the lifetime of the scheme.

Cavan Local Authorities stakeholders

The stakeholders of Cavan Local Authorities are the following:

- The people of County Cavan (64,003 - 2006 census)
- Community & Voluntary Sector
- Government Departments/Regional Authorities and other Local Authorities
- State Agencies
- Business
- Private Sector Service providers
- County Development Board Structure
- Local Development Agencies
- National Audience i.e. Local and National Media
- Leader and Local Partnership Groups
- Local Authorities and development bodies in Northern Ireland
- Elected Representatives and Staff of Cavan Local Authorities
- Socially excluded groups
- The Irish Diaspora abroad

Functional Areas

- a) Cavan County Council (25 members)
- b) Town Councils: Belturbet (9 members); Cootehill (9 members); Cavan (9 members)

Directorates of Cavan Local Authorities

- a) Corporate Affairs, Housing & Cultural Affairs
- b) Environment & Water Services
- c) Roads, Infrastructure, Planning & Economic Planning
- d) Community & Enterprise, Social Inclusion & Emergency Services
- e) Finance

Roles

Corporate Affairs, Housing & Cultural Affairs

Corporate

- Administration of County Council Meetings
- Elected and Oireachtas Members support
- Register of Electors
- Civic Awards

- Development & Implementation of General Policy
- Communications/Public Relations
- Freedom of Information
- Freedom of Information & Ombudsman Correspondence
- Superannuation Awards
- Human Resources
- Recruitment & Retention of Staff
- IR Issues
- Staff Training & Development
- Employee Assistance Programme
- Workplace Partnership
- Development and implementation of projects on County Council properties generally and on courthouses in conjunction with the Courts Service.
- **Higher Education Grants Scheme:** Process and approve grants for students under the Higher Education Grants Scheme.

Housing

- **Local Authority Housing:** Assessment of Housing need. Process applications for Social housing and all other housing options. Allocate new Local Authority housing units and allocate vacant units. Complete Business Process Improvement in respect to Housing Applications.
- Design and delivery of Housing Construction Programme
- Carry out house Improvements under Remedial Regeneration works Schemes and Planned Maintenance Programme.
- Purchase of land and housing units.
- Provision of Affordable Housing Units under Part V of the Planning & Development Acts.
- Service of Housing Strategic Policy Committee and Traveller Consultative Committee
- Carry out functions of Cavan County Council with regards to Tax Relief Schemes
- Delivery of Urban and Village Renewal Programme.
- **Grants:** Process and approve Essential Repair Grants in accordance with Council's Policy and Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government Regulations.

- Process and approve Disabled Persons Grants in accordance with Council's Policy and Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government Regulations.
- **Rental Accommodation Scheme:** Implement Rental Accommodation Scheme
- **Training:** Implement appropriate training for Housing Tenants, Resident Associations, Travellers and Housing Personnel.
- **Residents Associations:** Support existing Resident Associations and establish new Resident Associations.

Cultural Affairs

- Library Services
- Arts Office
- Ramor Theatre
- Cavan County Museum
- Social & Cultural Development

Environment & Water Services

- Implementation of the Regional Waste Management Plan 2005 – 2010
- Providing Recycling Infrastructure: Bring sites & Recycling Centres
- Waste Management Enforcement
- Awareness and Education
- Maintenance of closed graveyards
- Dog warden service
- Corranure Landfill Facility
- Provide an adequate water supply to drinking water standards for domestic, industrial, agricultural and other users.
- Provide wastewater facilities for the safe and adequate disposal of sewage and other waterborne wastes.
- Provide the infrastructure to support the above objectives
- To meet the expanding demand for these services
- Investigating pollution incidents
- Monitoring the water quality of Cavan's rivers and lakes
- Monitoring the effluent quality of our waste water treatment works

- Monitoring drinking water quality, and complaints
- The licensing and monitoring of wastewater discharges to surface waters and sewers.
- Inspections of commercial properties and farms and enforcing corrective action
- Implementing various environmental legislation such as Water pollution act, Air Pollution Act and including environmental bye-laws
- Evaluating planning applications which have consequences for the environment and produce recommendations

Roads, Infrastructure, Planning & Economic Planning

- Planning & Development
- Building Control
- Economic Rural Development & Planning
- Roads & Transport
- Health & Safety

Community & Enterprise, Social Inclusion & Emergency Services

- Community & Enterprise
- Social Inclusion
- Peace III Partnership
- Research
- Cross Border Funding
- Cavan County Development Board
- Cavan Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID) Youth Project
- Youth Active Citizenship Project
- Community and Voluntary Forum
- Enhancing Community Capacity Project
- The Fire Service
- Civil Defence
- Building Control – Fire Safety Certificates
- Major Emergency Planning

Finance

- Finance
- Rates
- Internal Audit
- Motor Tax

Location of Cavan Local Authorities Offices

Courthouse, Cavan.

Area Offices

- Belturbet
- Bailieborough
- Ballyconnell
- Ballinagh
- Cootehill
- Virginia
- Cullies (Laboratory)

Libraries

- Cootehill
- Ballyconnell
- Bailieborough
- Belturbet
- Ballyjamesduff
- Arva
- Kilnaleck
- Ballinagh
- Kingscourt
- Virginia
- Killeshandra

Also offer services in Loughan House

Fire Stations

- Belturbet

- Bailieborough
- Ballyjamesduff
- Ballyconnell
- Cavan
- Cootehill
- Virginia
- Dowra
- Kingscourt
- Killeshandra
- Shercock
- Arva

Cavan Local Authorities written communications methods

Cavan Local Authorities written customer services are generally available in English only. However in certain cases, for example the Annual Report, it is provided in Irish and English.

Written Communications methods:

- Statutory/Internal Policies
- Brochures and information leaflets
- Application forms
- Press Releases
- Publications
- Research Documents
- Advertisements
- Reports
- Agendas and Minutes of Meetings
- Website/Intranet/E-Mails
- Signage

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

Cavan Local Authorities have always been aware of the need to provide a service in Irish to its customers. This has been highlighted in our recently published Customer Action Plan which states:

“If you wish to communicate verbally with the Local Authority through Irish, we will arrange that a member of staff will speak to you in Irish. If this cannot be done immediately we will take your details and contact will be made with you as soon as possible.”

In order to adhere to its Customer Action Plan members of staff are being trained by the provision of:

- a) academic training in Irish to staff who wish to avail of same
- b) Conversational Irish through informal meetings
- c) Seachtain na Gaeilge through the Library service
- d) Bilingual signage already in place throughout the Courthouse and Farnham Centre
- e) Letters and notices in the papers have been in Irish when relevant to an Irish group/interest.

As part of this scheme, further training of our staff will be pursued in an effort to expand the availability of our services in Irish to our customers.

While catering for the existing demand of our customers for services through Irish to date, we are committed to promoting and developing a positive interest in the Irish language by our staff and our customers.

Enhancement of Services to be provided bilingually

Promotion and development of the Irish Language in Cavan Local Authorities through our Customer Charter recognize the right of any citizen to transact their business with the Local Authorities through the medium of Irish if they so wish.

The quality of service through Irish provided to its customers will be further developed by the delivery of the following steps during the lifetime of the scheme.

Guiding Principles

Cavan Local Authorities recognize that people have the right to choose either of the two official languages in their dealings with Cavan Local Authorities.

Cavan Local Authorities accept that a person can express their needs and requirements most effectively in their chosen language.

Cavan 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.

- a) All customer front line staff will be trained to welcome the customer to the Cavan Local Authorities in Irish. This will be implemented within the first year of the scheme.
- b) If a customer chooses to converse with us in Irish we will:
If the/an Irish speaker able to deal with the caller is not available, the person dealing with the customer will explain the situation courteously and inform the customer of when an Irish speaker, able to give the service, will be available, (this will only be done if an Irish speaker will be available in a reasonable amount of time e.g. 45 minutes) or alternatively will be offered various options:
 - i. arrange a certain time when an Irish speaker will be present,
 - ii. continue the conversation in English

In an effort to maximise the usage of Irish in the library (see further below), members of the public will be made aware of the bilingual nature of the promotion and will be encouraged to use the service on an ongoing basis. This will be done through the placement of notices in appropriate locations and on the county council's website advising of the availability of Irish Language services.

The same procedure exists for those wishing to converse in English and this is due to staff available.

Members of staff will be identified, where available, to carry out interviews with the Irish language media, particularly Raidio na Gaeltachta and TG4.

A list of such staff, including their contact details, will be provided to the Irish language media by one year of the commencement of this Scheme. This list will be updated and provided on an ongoing a basis.

From the commencement of the scheme, at least 2 press releases will be published in both English and Irish in each year of the scheme.

Written Communications

All correspondence received by Cavan Local Authorities in Irish will be responded to in Irish in accordance with the provisions of section 9(2) of the Official Languages Act 2003 and will be subject to the response considerations of our Customer Action Plan. (Appendix III).

Information Systems

Cavan Local Authorities website will provide an Irish page for our customers which will identify what services are available in Irish and also what forms can be completed through the medium of Irish and English.

Staff will be encouraged to avail of the medium of the website to develop more Irish.

By the end of this scheme a minimum of 5 pages from Cavan Local Authority's website will be made available in Irish. Future websites for Town Councils, Library service etc will be reviewed in the second scheme.

By the end of this scheme, language compatibility requirements will be included when introducing new internal IT systems and upgrading new internal systems and upgrading existing systems. Given the major technical and resource issues this is an issue to be tackled in the long term.

We will support LGMSB in their efforts to make the following services bi-lingual. Current interactive services are:

- Motor Tax
- Planning
- Register of Electors

Any on-line interactive services introduced in the future will be introduced bilingually simultaneously. The interactive services in respect of Motor Tax and the Register of Electors are the responsibility of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The interactive service in respect of Planning will be upgraded so that it is available bilingually in conjunction with the next suitable planned maintenance or upgrade work and as soon as resources and pressures on other work in the IT area allow. A generic email has been set up for all Irish queries. eolas@cavancoco.ie

Application Forms

By the end of the first two years of the scheme all new planning, community & enterprise and housing application forms will be available in bi-lingual format within the one cover. All existing Planning, Community & Enterprise and Housing application forms will be available in bi-lingual format within the one cover on renewal of stock. As Cavan County Council is committed to ensuring that all documents are in accessible format as requested under the Disability Act (Section 28), a review will be carried out at the end of this scheme, to examine if having both Irish and English under one cover poses any issues regarding accessibility.

Telephone Services

It is recognised that the majority of our customers make their initial contact with Cavan Local Authorities through the phone system. All front line staff will be trained to deliver their initial greeting in Irish as a first step to promote the use of Irish and to show Cavan.

Local Authorities support and encouragement for the use of Irish on a daily basis. This will be initiated within 15 months of the scheme.

In addition, by the end of this scheme, it shall be the policy of Cavan Local Authorities to ensure that standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice applies in this area, which is that:

- Reception / switchboard staff 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.

Public Meetings Policy

In a further effort to promote and develop the use of Irish the opening and closing address of the Cathaoirleach of Cavan Local Authorities will be delivered in Irish. This is to commence and be promoted in the first year of the scheme.

Brochures & Information Leaflets

By the end of the scheme, at least 5 new brochures and/or information leaflets are to be made bilingual within the one cover. By the end of the scheme, at least 5 of all existing brochures and/or leaflets will be made bilingual over time or on the renewal of stock.

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).

One-to-One Services

As Cavan County Library has gone some way to promoting the Irish Language within its service and bearing in mind the nature of its user friendly and assessable facilities Cavan County Library Services has been selected as the pilot department. This promotional development will be rolled out during the lifetime of the scheme and completed in year three.

The following are the specific areas that the Library Services will develop and promote the Irish Language

- a) A member of staff will be delegated to conduct library business through the medium of Irish on a continuous basis at Johnston Central Library.
- b) The Local Gaelscoil will be invited to conduct their business in Irish and their story time will be conducted in Irish.
- c) A stock of Irish titles both for adult and children, will be maintained, developed and promoted
- d) In house training will be made available to staff to improve their levels of Irish
- e) Johnston Central Library will have two Irish language reading groups meeting monthly, one for adults on Saturday mornings and one for children's group to meet on Thursday evenings (this to run in tandem with the school year).

- f) Johnston Central Library will promote an Irish language group which meets weekly on Monday during lunch hour (this to run in tandem with the school year).

Johnston Central Library will run and promote a Seachtain na Gaeilge Festival over two weeks on an annual basis.

Corporate Services will provide one-to-one service or counter service through Irish from the beginning of the scheme.

Training & Development

The training and development of the staff in both Official Languages will be included as part of our ongoing customer service training within the 1st year. Staff undergoing induction training will be made aware of the our scheme and:

- that the Councils implement a bilingual policy and
- encourage staff to partake in training in Irish if they so wish
- available online Lá Nua at main reception and on intranet
- language tapes to promote the lifelong learning for staff

Cavan Local Authorities undertake to deliver on the following steps to enhance the level of services in Irish during the lifetime of this initial scheme.

- a) A survey of staff in Cavan Local Authorities will be undertaken to identify the level of written and oral Irish of the staff. The survey will also identify which members of staff are willing to communicate with our customers in Irish and to receive training to enhance their capability to do so.
- b) A training scheme for staff members who agree to develop their competency in written or oral Irish will be prepared and implemented over the lifetime of the scheme subject to budgetary considerations.
- c) Staff will be encouraged and assisted in developing their ability to communicate in Irish with our Customers

Customer Relations

Any customer who has a complaint during the lifetime of the scheme should use the procedure that is laid out in our Customer Service Action Plan. If customers are not satisfied, with the authorities response they may submit their grievance to the Ombudsman, whose address is also recorded in the Customer Service Action Plan.

Implementation, Monitoring & Revision

Once the Scheme has been approved, the County Manager will lead the preparation of a three 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 the Elected Members via the Annual Report.

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

Cavan County Council will carry out an inventory of supply and demand for Irish language services across all its services.

Cavan County Council may initiate further development activities not covered in this Scheme. Public awareness campaigns will be advertised on Northern Sound, Local Newspapers and Irish language media.

A copy of this scheme has been forwarded to Oifig an Choimisinéir Teanga.

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