



Kilkenny County Council Corporate Plan 2014-2019

As Adopted by Kilkenny County Council at its Monthly meeting held on 17th November 2014.

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Foreword –Chief Executive.

This Corporate Plan outlines Kilkenny County Councils Strategic Objectives and supporting strategies for the period 2015-2019, in relation to our Mission Statement and Core Values.

In keeping with Government Policy and in implementing the many strands of the Council's Economic Development Strategy it is critical that job creation and sustainable economic development forms a mainstream objective in the years ahead.

Equally our strategies in relation to upholding human rights, in providing for social inclusion and equality are integral to policy development underpinning the Corporate Plan.

At the same time it must be acknowledged that the continuing difficult economic climate both at national and local levels will have a defining influence on the extent to which our services are delivered. Reforms at Local Government level have taken place in Kilkenny during the period of the last Corporate Plan and this process will continue. The abolition of Kilkenny Borough Council, the realignment of electoral areas and the establishment of Irish Water are some examples. The challenge in the period ahead will be to achieve further efficiencies in the delivery of services and to continue to improve customer service delivery.

As we enter 2015 we have already experienced considerable reductions in staff and financial resources. The external and internal environments will continue to shape and influence the allocation and provision of resources and the strategic direction of Kilkenny County Council in the coming years.

It must be stated also that there are new opportunities unfolding. The establishment of Local Community Development Committees provides grounds for optimism that communities throughout or county can position themselves for improved local development in collaboration with the Local Authority.

For our achievements to date I wish to thank the Elected Members for their support and the staff of Kilkenny County Council for their continuing dedicated hard work and commitment. It is through this successful ongoing co-operation that we can endeavor to meet the challenges ahead and deliver our services to the citizens of the County in the best possible manner that meets our Corporate Plan commitments.

John Mulholland
Acting Chief Executive

Foreword- Cathaoirleach

As Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, I wish to welcome this Corporate Plan covering the period 2014 to 2019. Kilkenny County Council is both the local democratic body representing the interests of the people of Kilkenny and the provider of services to the population of Kilkenny. These services which we provide including housing, roads, planning, and environment amongst others, are essential to economic development and social wellbeing in Kilkenny. Everyone benefits from our efforts. The existing infrastructure of Kilkenny is largely the product of the work of Kilkenny County Council over the decades.

Kilkenny is the green heartland of the South East. This is evidenced in the phenomenal output of our countryside. This productivity is seen in terms of abundant harvests and outputs of raw materials such as grain, milk and meat. These bounties translate into strong local processing industries of international repute and providing much local employment. Each of these aspects of human enterprise and endeavour reflects the commitment and strength of character of the people of Kilkenny. Kilkenny County Council aims to match these qualities by facilitating the ongoing growth and development of Kilkenny City & County. New technologies and business opportunities are embraced with enthusiasm. This is internationally recognized as inward investment locates here.

Out towns and City are perfect examples of local enterprise, history and local geography combining to meet the requirements of local people. They are local service centres, meeting the needs of their hinterland. Whether small or large in terms of population they are well suited to the settlement and business needs of the local inhabitants and will continue to receive the ongoing support of Kilkenny County Council.

Kilkenny City & several of its rural settlements have a rich historical legacy with a well preserved medieval character and fine ecclesiastical heritage throughout all of which provide a unique visitor experience. This opportunity is matched by a large and highly regarded hospitality sector in Kilkenny. The associated returns to the local economy in terms of incomes, jobs and all related spending provides another vital pillar of the local economy. The name Kilkenny is synonymous with the best in terms of accommodation and culinary excellence. We can and do add value to local resources at every opportunity.

Kilkenny has a distinguished sporting heritage which is evident from the success of its teams in different sports over many years and the ongoing high participation rate in sport. The black and amber which waves proudly every year. People enjoy Kilkenny, native sons and daughters and visitors alike support Kilkenny. It feels good to be of Kilkenny as it feels good to be in Kilkenny.

Pat Millea

Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council.

Profile of Kilkenny

County Kilkenny is situated in the South East of Ireland. It has a land area of 2,062 sq.

kilometres and a recoded population in the 2011 Census of 95, 419. The County has a an area of 2062 square kilometres (206,200 hectares).

The main urban centre is Kilkenny City and Environs. The next largest urban areas in the County are the Ferrybank area, adjacent to Waterford City, and the district towns of Callan, Castlecomer, Graiguenamanagh and Thomastown.

Kilkenny boasts a strong indigenous industry in sectors such as food and drink as well as the craft sector. The city has developed a strong profile as a services centre and is an administration centre for a number of state and semi-state agencies. Kilkenny has high profile nationally and internationally as a centre for tourism, festivals, heritage and the arts.

Census 2011 records the population of County Kilkenny as 95,419 which is an increase of 7,861 over the population recorded in 2006. This is a 9% population increase for the county over the period and compares well with the State which averaged an increase of 8%.

Kilkenny City (environs and borough area combined) recorded a population of 24,423 in 2011 which is an increase 2,244 (10.1%) over the population recorded in 2006

Recorded population 1996 - 2011

| | 1996 | 2002 | 2006 | 2011 |
|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Kilkenny County | 75,336 | 80,399 | 87,558 | 95,419 |
| Kilkenny City ¹ | 18,696 | 20,735 | 22,179 | 24,423 |

The City of Kilkenny has played an important role in the history of Ireland since its foundation in the 6th century by St. Cainneach (St.Canice). It is essentially a medieval town of the thirteenth century: a product of the Norman Conquest. Kilkenny was constituted as a City by a Royal Charter of James I in 1609. The City , in 2009 ,celebrated its 400th anniversary of City status.

The medieval character of the city has been maintained, particularly by the preservation of such historic buildings as Kilkenny Castle, St. Canice's Cathedral, Rothe House and Shee Alms House.

Kilkenny City is highly dependent on the hospitality trade and its unique attraction to tourists.

Background to the Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan serves as the local authority's strategic framework for action in the future. The Corporate Plan is a strategy to attain high-level organizational goals. It presents the local authorities' vision. In legislative terms, Section 134 of the Local Government Act 2001 requires Corporate Plans for the lifespan of the new Councils (2014-2019).

The Corporate Plan identifies objectives for the timeframe of the plan within the context of the operating environment for the Council. The strategic planning process has had regard to the resources and constraints impacting on the delivery of the Corporate Plan objectives. Kilkenny County Council has also established reporting arrangements to monitor progress annually.

The plan takes account of a series of cross-cutting themes permeating the Council. It also reflects a range of cross-departmental issues. As a strategic framework, the Corporate Plan will steer the preparation and implementation of Operational Plans by each service area. The Operational Plans will detail how each directorate /service area will deliver on the objectives herein.

Consultation Process

The preparation of this corporate plan is based on the outcomes from the extensive consultation processes which were carried out previously and which involved elected members, staff and community representatives which were aimed at obtaining a collective consensus in relation to the overall mission and core objectives for the organisation and against the backdrop of the Organisations' internal & external operating environment which is broadly described in the latter part of this plan.

Mission Statement:

Kilkenny County Council aims to work in partnership with 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."

Core Values and Principles:

In supporting the democratic process and the mandate of the Elected Representatives as well as recognizing the need for a safe, healthy, and a supportive environment for staff, Kilkenny County Council subscribes to the following core values and principals:-

- Efficient & Good Value Customer Service
- Service Improvement & Measurement

- Supporting an Enhanced Local Democratic process & Governance
- Building Capacity
- Community Leadership & Citizen Engagement
- Transparency & Openness
- Accessibility,
- Participation and Equality
- Recognition of Employees
- Trust & Integrity
- Responsiveness & Efficiency
- Accountability
- Budgetary Control
- Maximize use of Scarce Resources.
- Adopting a Regional Approach and or multi agency approach, where appropriate
- Mutual respect and support for Members, Staff and citizens.

Cross Cutting Themes.

A number of cross cutting themes emerged from the consultation process which serve to underline the strategic objectives in the Corporate Plan

- **Improved Communication**

Kilkenny County Council will strive to improve communications within its own structures, with relevant agencies and with the general public to ensure better service delivery.

- **Customer Service**

The improvement in customer services is seen as a vital part of our role. A Customer Charter and Action Plan has been developed, which needs to be read in conjunction with this Corporate Plan. This Customer Action Plan sets out concrete proposals for improving customer service.

- **Focus on social inclusion**

There is a commitment to ensure that an improved quality of life impacts on all people living in Kilkenny, through the promotion of socially inclusive measures that will underpin the plans and actions of the Council.

- **Policy proofing**

All plans will be proofed against poverty, exclusion, inequality and spatial planning issues.

Additionally Kilkenny County Council will make an assessment of the equality and human rights issues that may be relevant to the functions and purpose of our organisation and the policies, plans and actions in place or proposed to be put in place to address those issues.

- **Sustainable development**

All plans & actions will reflect the agenda for sustainable development with specific reference to Regional, National and E.U. objectives.

- **Equality**

There is a commitment to securing equality both as employers and service providers.

- **Partnership & Citizen Engagement**

Kilkenny County Council will work in partnership with, local communities and other service providers to ensure that our services are delivered in an effective and efficient manner to meet the ever changing needs of society.

The engagement of citizens is vital to ensuring that all voices are heard, that all concerns are considered & addressed not just those of the majority, that all are informed of the decisions made and the considerations & reasoning behind decisions.

- **Best Use of Resources**

Kilkenny County Council will strive to deliver its services in the most efficient and cost effective manner, through a number of service delivery mechanisms including direct service provision, shared service arrangements & multiagency arrangements.

Core Objectives and Supporting Strategies

Corporate:

Core Objectives:

To support the mandate of the elected representatives.

To develop and manage the capabilities of staff so as to deliver organisational objectives.

To deliver quality services to the citizen.

Supporting Strategies

- To ensure that a clear recognition and understanding of the policy and representational roles of the elected representatives permeates the Council.
- To support and facilitate the democratic structures and fora of both authorities including all of its committees.
- To provide the appropriate structures, people, strategies and systems, as resources permit, to deliver timely and quality services to the people of the County across the full range of services.
- To ensure that staff are supported through appropriate leadership, motivation, appraisal and empowerment strategies.

Economic Development & Job Creation

Core Objectives:

To support and promote the expansion and development of the economy of Kilkenny through measures to facilitate long term strategically sustainable investment with significant employment, income and growth potential.

Supporting measures:

- To strategically develop the economic infrastructure through projects and measures to improve the attractiveness of Kilkenny as a destination for business.
- To support the evolution of targeted investment and job creation initiatives.
- Work with state agencies and other bodies to attract foreign direct investment into Kilkenny.
- Market Kilkenny as a location to conduct business, nationally and internationally.
- Develop a creative quarter in Kilkenny City.

- Co-ordinate economic development activities of the Council in conjunction with the Local Economic and Community Development Plan which will be prepared by the Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development and Enterprise and the Local Community Development Committee

Local Enterprise Development

Core Objectives:

In partnership with Enterprise Ireland to promote entrepreneurship, foster new business start-ups and develop existing small business to drive job creation through the provision of high quality supports

Supporting strategies:

- Co-ordinate the delivery of services to small and micro-enterprises through the Local Enterprise Office (LEO).
- Promote the LEO as the first stop shop for local enterprise.
- Work with the relevant stakeholders in the County to foster entrepreneurship.
- Deliver appropriate enterprise training and mentoring to small business owners and potential entrepreneurs.
- Provide funding options to entrepreneurs, early stage promoters and viable businesses to support start-up, growth and development.
- Develop progression pathways for small businesses to access supports from Enterprise Ireland (e.g. assistance to export)
- Promote Kilkenny as a high quality location for indigenous enterprise.
- Provide advice on Local Authority supports or activities that affect enterprise including, rates, procurement, environmental licensing and the planning system.

Tourism

Core Objective

To work with key stakeholders -public and private, voluntary and professional - to implement Kilkenny Tourism's Strategy and maintain Kilkenny's position as the finest Cultural and Heritage destination in Ireland.

Supporting Strategies

- To work with Failte Ireland to progress the 'Medieval Mile' plan and increase the economic impact of continued investment in Kilkenny's heritage proposition.
- To maximize the audience reach for Kilkenny's rich festival calendar through marketing and PR programmes and by member participation in national trade shows and conferences.
- To embed the new festivals and visitor activities such as Medieval Week and the Smithwick's experience on Kilkenny's events horizon and to grow visitor numbers, delivering real economic value to Kilkenny city and county.
- To engage with the public, members of Kilkenny Tourism and all stakeholders to maintain the world class visitor experience established in recent years and continue to strive for tourism awards.

- To grow the ' Destination Kilkenny' ambassador programme and increase graduate numbers and their engagement with visitors.

Housing:

Core Objective

To ensure that all our citizens enjoy an adequate standard of housing accommodation appropriate to their needs and, as far as possible in a location and tenure of their choice and to provide a responsive and supportive housing service for those in need of assistance.

Supporting Strategies:

- To maximise the availability of accommodation to meet different categories of need.
- Implement a planned programme of maintenance and refurbishment of our existing housing stock in Kilkenny, subject to available resources.
- Foster estate management and tenant participation.
- To provide loans and incentives for people housing themselves.
- Provide for marginalised groups such as persons with disabilities, travelers and homeless within agreed Housing Accommodation Programmes.
- To increase the availability of accommodation in association with the Private and Voluntary Sector.

Transportation:

Core objective

To plan for and facilitate the transportation needs of the people residing in and traveling through County Kilkenny by developing and improving infrastructure including the formulation of public transport policy for the City & County.

Supporting Strategies

- To engage pro-actively with the National Roads Authority & the Department of Transport in the planning and execution of the identified transportation objectives for County Kilkenny.
- To improve the standards of the county's national and non-national road network in order to meet the current and anticipated needs.
- Through the Strategic Policy Committee to develop policies aimed at meeting the various transportation needs of the county.
- To promote community involvement in the repair and upgrading of local tertiary roads.
- To prepare traffic management plans for the principal towns in the County and make provision for the implementation of such plans.

- To engage with relevant agencies in the promotion of traffic safety, particularly by targeting the younger members of the community.
- To prepare and implement a County Kilkenny Road Safety Plan covering the period 2014-2020
- To promote a shift to environmentally sustainable modes of transport through the improvement and development of pedestrian, cycling and public transport infrastructure and services
- To make adaptations for climate change and increased rainfall in the planning and maintenance of the county's road network
- To encourage resource sharing and pooling of utilities amongst private sector transport operators
- To consider national and international carbon reduction commitments in the design of new road infrastructure and in the provision and operation of public lighting services.
- To maintain and improve the public road related bridge stock of County Kilkenny

Water Services

Core Objectives

Public Water & Waste Water:

By working in partnership with Irish Water, to implement the provisions of the Service Level Agreement, agreed between Kilkenny County Council & Irish Water.

Rural Water:

To achieve high quality water & waste water services for the people of rural County Kilkenny by maximizing and allocating effectively the funding available for the Rural Water sector in the County,

Supporting Strategies

- To ensure that the Annual Service Plans agreed between Irish Water and Kilkenny County Council provide adequate finance and personnel to deliver a high quality water & waste water service throughout the County.
- To use the budgets provided for water services in a manner which best serves the people of Kilkenny.
- To assist Irish Water to efficiently implement plans under their Capital Investment Programme.
- To assist Irish Water in the provision of water services infrastructure which supports economic development in County Kilkenny
- To promote water conservation and maximum efficient use of resources
- To assist Irish Water to minimize energy consumption in delivery of water and waste water services
- To assist Irish Water to carry out the following in order to comply with National Regulations, Guidelines and good practice:
 - Monitor drinking water, surface water, waste water etc. to ensure compliance with appropriate regulations

- Further develop and comply with the drinking water quality protocol, agreed between the Council and HSE.
- Prepare and develop Water Safety Plans for each water supply zone.
- Maintain and upgrade the DWIRP (Drinking Water Incident Response Plan), already established by Kilkenny County Council.
- Report water and waste water quality results to the EPA and the public in a transparent, timely manner.
- To act in partnership with the Group Sector and thereby maximise the potential of the Department's Rural Water Programme in order to further improve and maintain water and wastewater facilities in the rural areas of the County.
- To advise and inform the Rural Water Monitoring Committee of Kilkenny County Council and to effectively implement the policies of that committee.
- To Act in the capacity of Water Services Authority for the Group Water & the Group Waste Water sectors, to effectively assist, supervise, regulate and oversee these sectors.

Broadband:

Core Objective

To co-operate with Government initiatives to maximise the potential of having broadband connectivity available throughout the county.

Supporting Strategies

- To work with the managed services entity e|net to maximize the use of the Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs) in Kilkenny and Thomastown.
- To facilitate where possible the laying of ducting for broadband on new infrastructure projects.
- To ensure that our IT infrastructure and staff are sufficiently resourced to maximize the potential of broadband and other emerging technologies for the benefit of the Local Authorities and the County as a whole.

Emergency Planning

Core Objective:

To prepare a major emergency response capability in line with the Framework for Major Emergency Management publication.

Supporting Strategies:

- Produce (and update as necessary) a Major Emergency Plan in line with the Nationall agreed *Framework for Major Emergency Management* .Test the Major Emergency Plan with a Major Emergency Exercise.

Kilkenny Fire and Rescue Service

Core Objective.

To utilize our available resources and work together for a safer Kilkenny.

Supporting Strategies

- To Engage with the community to inform and educate citizens in how to reduce the risk of fires and other emergencies.
- To influence and regulate the built environment to protect people, property and the environment from harm.
- To plan and prepare for emergencies that may happen, and making a high quality, effective and resilient response to them.
- To work together to deliver the highest quality services within a safe and positive environment for all in the organization.

Planning & Sustainable Development

Core Objectives

To achieve balanced sustainable development while affording protection of the natural and built environment of the county so as to ensure

- enhanced physical and socio-economic infrastructure,
- enhanced quality of life for the County's residents and,
- a sound economic base on which to deliver local sustainable employment in both rural and urban locations throughout the county.

Supporting Strategies

- Regularly review plans and policies and ensure a flexible response to the county's changing needs and providing for the strategic planning of:
 - Kilkenny County
 - Kilkenny City & Environs as a designated Hub.
 - Ferrybank/Belview promoting the Waterford Gateway
- Plan and provide for the development of sustainable neighborhoods
- Protect the built and natural environment with policies and practices to secure their conservation and protection.
- Provide an effective and efficient high quality planning service encompassing pre-planning consultations, planning assessment, decision making and enforcement processes.
- To work in partnership with key stakeholders in the implementation of all National and Regional Plans and Guidelines.

Environmental Protection

Core Objective

To promote and protect the environment of County Kilkenny in a sustainable manner for the benefit of current and future generations.

Supporting Strategies

- **General**

- To communicate relevant EU, national, regional and local environmental objectives to the public and to promote community involvement.
- To ensure the effective amalgamation of relevant former urban functions into the Environment Section.
- To co-operate with the development and operation of shared services in the areas of waste collection, waste enforcement, veterinary service provision and other areas as may be developed nationally over the lifetime of the Plan.

- **Water Quality**

- To facilitate the development and implementation of the River Basin Management Plan, in co-operation with the EPA and lead Local Authority.
- To pursue, in the interests of public health, suitable source protection for public drinking water supplies and to co-operate with Group Water Supplies in their development of suitable source protection measures.

- **Energy Efficiency**

- To co-ordinate the provision of an organizational Energy Management Action Plan through the Energy MAP process.
- To source funding for relevant projects.

- **Waste Management**

- To participate in the development and implementation of the Joint Waste Management Plan for the Southern Region.
- To enforce environmental standards.
- To provide an urban street-cleansing service.

- **Education & Awareness**

- To develop community programmes in order to facilitate environmental objectives.
- To promote environmental education awareness.

- **Consumer Protection**

- To implement consumer protection measures in co-operation with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

Community & Culture

Core Objectives:

Through the Local Community Development Committee to work towards the development, co-ordination, implementation of a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development.

To put in place mechanisms by which citizens and communities will be encouraged and supported to participate in the decision making process of the Local Authority.

To promote and foster civic leadership and participation across the community, culture, arts, heritage, recreation sectors.

Supporting Strategies

Community Development & Inclusion

- To actively facilitate and support the Local Community Development Committee in the preparation of, implementation, monitoring and review of the community element of the 6 year Local Economic and Community Plan for Kilkenny
- Coordination, management of and overseeing the implementation of local and community development programmes that have been approved either by the Kilkenny County Council or by agreement between the LCDC and a relevant public authority (e.g. government department, State agency etc)
- Improving the coordination of public funded local and community development programmes and reduce duplication
- Coordinating generally the local and community development programmes within the operational area of the LCDC
- To support the development of a strong, inclusive Public Participation Network in Kilkenny to ensure that Social Inclusion, Community & Environmental Sectors in County Kilkenny are enabled to articulate and give voice to a diverse range of views, issues and interests within the local government system.
- To actively promote community participation and organisation aimed at achieving valued improvements in quality of life, quality of services and quality of environment for identifiable groups such as children & young people, ethnic groups, older people & travelers
- To form working partnerships internally as well as with other service providers, agencies and groups to develop integrated responses to identified economic and social issues.

Arts:

- To develop and implement a Strategy for the Arts.
- To develop, co-ordinate, motivate, inspire and empower artistic activity throughout the city and county. To promote the arts as a worthwhile activity for all, Working to further strengthen Kilkenny's position as a centre of excellence for the arts and ensure a successful and prosperous arts environment within the region.

Sport & Recreation:

- To guide the process in the planning and development of sporting, recreational, play and amenity facilities and activities for the enjoyable and constructive use of leisure time, in conjunction with the Kilkenny Recreation & Sports Partnership and other relevant agencies and groups.
- To review and revise ,as considered necessary, the Kilkenny County Play Policy & Imp-lementation Plan 2007-2012.

Heritage:

- To provide advice and information on heritage issues; develop policies and priorities for the identification, protection, conservation and enhancement of Kilkenny's heritage; collect and collate heritage data and promote heritage awareness & education throughout the county.
- To work with the Kilkenny Heritage Forum in the preparation and implementation of the County Heritage Plan and the County Biodiversity Plan, funded in partnership with the Heritage Council.

Library Services.

Core Objective

To continue to be a key resource in local communities, delivering a broad range of services to meet a diversity of needs in information, learning, literacy, employment skills, business and leisure.”

Supporting Strategies

- To avail of , subject to resources, the capital development programme to develop library infrastructure
- To pro-actively build partnerships and networks across the community, to serve the widest possible audience.
- To deliver enhanced services and efficiencies through cooperation and resource sharing with other library authorities and organisations.
- To continue to use IT as a tool to improve and enhance library services including communications, accessibility & information sharing, utilizing and embracing new technologies where feasible and appropriate.
- To strategically position services and library collections to reflect community and individual needs, expanding the service on offer where feasible.
- To provide a structured annual cultural programme, incorporating events across the library network:
- To develop a pro-active marketing strategy and to be part of a national promotional strategy for libraries

Risk Management

Core Objective:

To support the organisation in delivering its objectives through minimizing associated identified risks and providing guidance and assurance accordingly with a risk adverse appetite.

Supporting Strategies:

- Operate an independent appraisal function for the review of the internal controls as a contribution to the proper economic, effective, and efficient use of resources.
- Operate a risk assessment process for the ongoing identification of internal and external threats to the organisation and operate a controlled response system to manage these threats.
- Review the operations of the Council and ensure that Value for Money is achieved, while openness, accountability, and probity are paramount to the delivery of a high quality service.

Procurement

Core Objective

To further advance the purchasing and procurement of goods and services in a more cost effective manner and to pursue a policy of environmentally friendly procurement throughout the organization

Supporting Strategies

- To continue to seek savings in the procurement of goods and services both locally & through any collaborative approaches in the Local Government & wider Government Sectors.
- To include in contracts and supporting documentation specifications regarding lowering carbon emissions
- To continue to examine current and future procurement policies

Health and Safety

Core Objective

- To manage health and safety so as to prevent injuries and occupational illnesses of employees and those affected by any council work activities.

Supporting Strategies

- To ensure that the council complies with all Safety Legislation and other related statutory requirements.
- Implement requirements of The Health and Safety Action Plans
- Implement the Annual Health and Safety Training Plan

Internal Capacity and Resources

Kilkenny Local Authorities have identified and are committed to providing the Financial, Human and Information Technology resources required to realise the objectives and strategies outlined in this plan.

Financial

Our capacity to raise finances and generate economic activity will be fundamental to the realization of the corporate objectives. The Economic Development Strategy is being updated with the primary objective of supporting business and stimulating investment opportunities which will facilitate targeted financial investment into the county.

The strategic management of our assets is an on-going activity, which will enable the organization to progress the objectives in the plan.

Future budgets will be prepared having regard to the objectives of this plan. Value for money reviews and audits continue to underpin this process. Kilkenny Local Authorities have a debt collection unit in place and reviews of income received will take place on a monthly basis.

The capacity of Kilkenny Local Authorities to realize all our objectives is greatly influenced by external factors. The improving economic situation will generate additional income in the coming years. There will be regular assessments of expenditure programs in Kilkenny Local Authorities. These developments will provide a more rational and informed basis on which to make decisions for allocating available scarce resources to meet objectives.

Human Resources

We need to build on the achievements of shared delivery of services. We have a flexible approach to the deployment of staff so that adequate resources are available on a countywide basis. The current embargo on recruitment is especially challenging, and it is critical that the Councils human resource has the capacity to meet these challenges in the development of its policies. Notwithstanding current shortages, the aspirations, training and career development needs of the staff must be adequately addressed so that the attainment of skills and knowledge are in line with our business strategies and corporate objectives.

Development of our human resources will focus on the enhancement of employee efficiency & performance and on the development of staff through the implementation of the Councils performance management , appraisal & development system and competenancy framework. There will be a provision in the annual budgets towards the ongoing development and training of staff, with a special priority being given to meeting the necessary Health and Safety requirements set down in legislation and those needs identified through the Staff Performance Management Development System.

Information Technology

The Council recognised the need for the provision of relevant information in a timely manner that supports effective service delivery and informed decision making by members, management and staff. The Council will continue to use information and communications technologies to assist in the implementation of the Council’s goals and objectives and it will modernize its systems where required. The Council will continue to implement and co-operate with shared information technology systems. The Council will continue to encourage its customers in the use of e business.

Our Operating Environment

In examining our organisational context we acknowledge that we operate in a multidimensional environment. There are both internal and external factors that have to be considered by us in implementing this plan and realising our core objectives.



External Environment

National and EU:

Local Government operates with in a highly regulated environment. Directives, Acts of the Oireachtas, Regulations , Guidelines and Circulars define our daily operations. Legislation is the aegis of the people. Legislation provides the system of guarantees that safeguard the people. The Council is constrained by legislation. Equally the law offers the opportunities to develop our County in the best interests of the people of Kilkenny.

The Oireachtas and particularly the Departments of the Environment, Community, Heritage and Local Government, Transport, Public Expenditure and Reform, Finance and Jobs and Enterprise serve to influence many of our policies and activities. National & local pay and productivity agreements allied to performance management systems have been introduced in order to ensure efficiency in the delivery of public services to the People of Kilkenny. It is our task to ensure that County Kilkenny operates within statute but also achieves all that is possible for its People.

Regional:

Regionalism underpins the principle of subsidiarity. This is the ultimate expression of the value of the local communities within the greater body that is the National State and European Union. The emphasis is clearly on the individual person as the foundation stone of all of our institutions. Our Regional Authorities facilitate the expression of these values. We contribute to regional policy and then adhere to the agreed templates for success and prosperity. Regional policies and plans form much of our co-operative work with other local authorities in the region including the role of the Regional Authority. Important issues such as Regional Waste Management and Spatial Planning play a significant role in the determination of future policy and practice.

Local:

People are at the core when it comes to the concerns of Local Government. Local communities across County Kilkenny reflect the realities of social viability. The population of Kilkenny is large enough to sustain a vibrant socio economic structure. It also has the critical mass to ensure social cohesion and strong community spirit. The Elected Members supported by the staff of Kilkenny County Council provide the necessary forums for local policy development and implementation.

Demographics, changing demands and a much more dynamic and recovering economy coupled with changing information technology also influence how our business is done. The social, cultural, political and economic context in which we operate is an ever changing environment to which we must adapt if our people centred approach and our commitment to sustainable development is to be realised.

In our attempts to co-ordinate service delivery much of our local work is undertaken in collaboration and partnership with other key agencies. There is a series of local plans and strategies that have also been considered in developing the Corporate Plan to create synergy at local level.

The following National, Regional & Local policies, and legislative measures are of relevance:

- **The National Spatial Strategy (NSS)** which sets out Government policy in relation to achieving balanced regional development over a twenty year time frame up to 2020. Kilkenny is part of the South East Region which is identified for “reinforcing” and “strengthening”. Waterford is identified as the Gateway for the region with Kilkenny and Wexford acting as Hubs which will support the national and international role of the gateways and in turn energize smaller towns and rural areas within their sphere of influence. A review of the NSS was announced by Government in Feb 2013 and the implications of that will be monitored and amendments will be made to the Council’s relevant policy documents when the review is published.
- **The South East Regional Planning Guidelines**, which expand on the National Spatial Strategy and identify critical enabling investment priorities for the region. The Guidelines are designed to achieve a better spatial balance of social, economic and physical development throughout the region. A settlement typology was established identifying six classifications of urban centres based on size and function.

- **Waterford Planning and Land Use Transportation Study (PLUTS)** which sets out a strategy that aims to provide guidance as to the general scale and location of growth in Waterford City so that the City and its environs can be developed in a balanced, sustainable, transport-friendly and attractive way to provide a high quality of life and opportunities for all its citizens over the next 20 years.
- **The South East River Basin Plan** sets out a strategy for the counties within the region to meet their legal obligations to achieve at least good status for waters by 2015. Kilkenny faces considerable challenges if it can bring this plan to realisation, especially in the area of meeting the cross policy requirements and investment needs to achieve the Plans stated objectives. The final plans which will be presented to Members for adoption in coming months will contain details of Pressures, Status of Waters, Objectives & Measures..
- **National Climate Change Adaptation Framework** The National Climate Change Adaptation Framework provides a strategic policy focus to ensure adaptation measures are taken across different sectors and levels of government to reduce Ireland's vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change. It provides for climate change adaptation to be addressed at national and local level. As set out in the County Development Plan 2014-2020 it is an objective of the Council to prepare a Climate Change Adaptation plan for the County. The Council has had regard to the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework in framing the development plan and has already sought to introduce planning and development measures in the overall approach to adaptation to climate change, for example by ensuring that risks of flooding are identified and integrated into the planning process. The local authority recognizes that a pro-active approach, in which the challenges posed by climate change are integrated into the development of policies, plans and programmes is essential.
- **Ministerial Guidelines and Directives** including those on Housing Strategies, Retail Planning, Childcare Facilities, Development Plans, Residential Density, Architectural Conservation, Landscapes, Sustainable Rural Housing, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment, and Water Pricing. The Council will have regard to all future amendments and new Guidelines published during the plan period and will vary the Plan as appropriate in carrying out its work programmes.
- **EU Policies and Guidelines** which places greater pressures on local authorities to comply with Environmental standards particularly in the areas of Water, Environmental Protection.
- **Kilkenny County and City Development Plans 2014 – 2020** The Kilkenny County & City Development Plans provide the framework for the proper planning and sustainable development of the county. The ethos behind the preparation of the Development Plans, from the public consultation through to the formulation of policy and the objectives in the Plans is based on the Council's mission statement. The Kilkenny County and City Development Plans 2014 – 2020 were adopted in April and May 2014 respectively following two years of consultation and debate and contain the planning policy framework to guide development of the County and City until early 2020. The Development plans put a particular emphasis on economic growth and employment generation through five identified sectors of third & fourth level education, Agri food, Services development, Tourism Arts & Leisure & Life sciences, whilst protecting the environment and heritage to position the county for sustainable economic growth and employment

- **Compliance with statutory requirements** places increasing responsibilities and challenges on local authorities. The carrying out of work programmes have to take cognizance of stringent Health and Safety requirements. Furthermore, we are answerable to third parties such as the EPA who require that we comply with standards set at National and EU levels.
- **The national and international economic situation** which influences Central Government policy, funds available to local authorities through the Local Government Fund and local income sources. The current difficulties also require a refocusing to prioritise essential services and places greater pressure on the resources required (both financial and human) to respond to social need

Internal Environment

The Council is implementing the Action Programme for Effective Local Government which has been given legislative effect in the Local Government Reform Act 2014.

The Action Plan is the blueprint for democratic enhancement and reinforces Local Government as the primary means of public service at local level harnessing the commitment of elected members and officials and supports them as they enhance local democracy, serve the customer better, be more responsive, seek efficiencies and deliver good value services.

The Council has in place a number of key political, managerial & staffing structural measures to assist it to fulfil its mandate as follows:

The **Corporate Policy Group** has proved to be a positive forum for overseeing the implementation of policy initiatives as adopted, and the business of Kilkenny County Council.

The **Strategic Policy Committees** have created huge potential to enhance the role of elected members and the wider community in developing policy..

The **Municipal Districts** which provide a forum for elected members to address needs in their own Electorate Areas,

Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee which provides primary responsibility for co-ordinating, planning and overseeing local and community development funding and implementation of local and community development programmes and interventions.

Committees have been established by the Council to address specific areas of need or issues as they arise.

Services are delivered & functions are performed by the **County Manager** through **Directors of Services** and their staff with specific responsibilities .

Our people focused approach has also improved with the role of the **Local Area Offices, Customer Services points, business units and the on-line delivery of services.**

Staff re-structuring has taking place over the last ten years to meet the challenges brought about by the economic downturn and the need to reduce the public service pay bill. Further restructuring is now required to respond to customer needs, and to address the key reforms of Local Government including the abolition of Kilkenny Borough Council, the establishment of Municipal Districts, the Local Government Sectors programme of Shared Services, the privatisation of some services and the difficulties caused by the financial pressures on the Organisation .

A staff training programme has also been developed to ensure that staff are skilled, motivated and effective in their roles.

A performance management & development system is in place for all staff of Kilkenny County Council and proposals are in hand to implement a suite of competencies for staff at all levels.

Our Information, Technological & Communication systems will continue to develop and modernise so as to meet the needs of our customers and facilitate the efficient delivery of services .

Implementation and Monitoring

As an accountable and transparent organisation it is necessary to measure the performance of the local authority against the objectives set in the Corporate Plan. This will occur on a frequent and structured basis. Kilkenny County Council is committed to an ongoing process of Strategic Planning and Management. Part of that commitment involves the implementation of this plan. This implementation will involve many factors at the core of which is the organisations' commitment to the management of an ever changing environment, our internal capacity and our ability to maximize scarce resources.

Mechanisms for Implementation & Review

Service Delivery Plans

Service Delivery Plans will be prepared in consultation with members in respect of each financial year of the Corporate Plan period. The Annual Budget will be a key factor in driving the preparation of the service delivery plans.

Operational (Business) Plans

An annual operational plan will be prepared by each relevant department and will be used internally as a planning , reporting & information source by all staff involved in the delivery of the relevant service.

Service Indicators

The service indicators initiative developed for local authorities has introduced a suite of key Performance Indicators. These indicators are across the range of local authority functions. The national indicators together with local performance indicators will be inform the content of the service delivery plans. Indicators are focused on results and can act as signposts towards full achievement of the Corporate Plan's objectives.

Monthly Report of Chief Executive.

Under the provisions of the Local Government Reform Act 2014 the Chief Executive will be submitting a monthly report to the elected Council. The Report will cover the Councils performance across many service areas.

Annual Report

Section 134 of the Local Government Act 2001 requires that the local authority forward a progress report on the Corporate Plan to Council each year. The Annual Report of Kilkenny Local Authorities will specifically report on the implementation of the Corporate Plan. This will be achieved by providing a summary report on progress achieved and by assessing implementation against the agreed set of performance indicators

Corporate Policy Group

There will be regular reporting to the Corporate Policy Group on the Corporate Plan. This will ensure ongoing assessment and review. The Corporate Policy Group will determine a method to undertake an independent mid-term review of the Corporate Plan. Corrective action measures will be adopted in response to the review and assessment process.

Intranet / Extranet / Kilkenny Local Authorities Website

The continued development of the Intranet / Extranet / Kilkenny Local Authorities Websites will be a further mechanism to communicate with our stakeholders on the implementation and monitoring of the Corporate Plan.



Customer Charter

Our Commitment To You

To deliver high quality services to you in an effective and caring manner.

Courtesy & Consideration

You are at all times entitled to be served:

- Promptly and in a courteous manner
- With due regard to privacy and confidentiality
- By helpful staff

Openness & Impartiality

We undertake to:

- Deal with you in a fair and open manner
- Discuss any aspect of your dealings with us.
- Explain how a decision was reached

Access

We endeavour to:

- Provide clean, accessible public offices
- Facilitate customers who wish to conduct their business through the medium of the Irish language.
- Facilitate access for people with disabilities and special needs.

Review

Our services will be continually reviewed and improved upon where necessary.

You Can Help Us To Help You

- By providing full and accurate information
- By letting us know when we do something well.
- By making comments, complaints or suggestions about the services you receive.

Kilkenny County Council has in place a Complaints Procedure for Customers dissatisfied with the quality of service received. A Copy of same can be obtained

at our Customer Services Desk or by e-mailing us at info@kilkennycoco.ie Kilkenny County Council

In their dealings with the public Kilkenny County Council is committed to taking a number of significant steps over the next number of years to improve our services. Some of these will yield immediate improvements at certain points of contact such as improvements in information technology, improvements to public offices and improved quality of the telephone service.

Kilkenny County Council is committed to the following:-

Quality Service Standards:

Publish a Customer Charter that outlines the nature and quality of service which customers can expect, and display it prominently at the point of service delivery.

Equality/Diversity:

Ensure the rights to equal treatment established by equality legislation, and accommodate diversity, so as to contribute to equality for the groups covered by the equality legislation (under the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller Community).

Identify and work to eliminate barriers to access to services for people experiencing poverty and social exclusion, and for those facing geographic barriers to services.

Physical Access:

Provide clean, accessible public offices that ensure privacy, comply with occupational and safety standards and, as part of this, facilitate access for people with disabilities and others with special needs.

Information:

Take a proactive approach in providing information that is clear, timely and accurate, is available at all points of contact, and meets the requirements of people with specific needs. Ensure that the potential offered by Information Technology is fully availed of and that the information available on public service websites follows the guidelines on web publication.

Continue the drive for simplification of rules, regulations, forms, information leaflets and procedures.

Timeliness & Courtesy:

Deliver quality services with courtesy, sensitivity and the minimum delay, fostering a climate of mutual respect between provider and customer. Give contact names in all communications to ensure ease of ongoing transactions.

Complaints:

Maintain a well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of dealing with complaints about the quality of service provided.

Appeals:

Similarly, maintain a formalised, well-publicised, accessible, transparent and simple-to-use system of appeal/review for customers who are dissatisfied with decisions in relation to services.

Consultation & Evaluation:

Provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to the development, delivery and review of services. Ensure meaningful evaluation of service delivery.

Choice:

Provide a range of choices, where feasible, in service delivery. Use available and emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

Official Languages Equality:

Provide quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

Better Co-Ordination:

Foster a more coordinated and integrated approach to delivery of public services.

Internal Customer:

Ensure staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.

Kilkenny County Council is committed to the principles of Quality Customer Service approved by the government and has introduced this Action Plan which sets out how we will implement these principles and achieve our service targets over the next four years. In addition we will integrate training on customer service issues into general training courses and council procedures and practices. Improvements in service delivery are expected to arise from increased utilisation of information and electronic technologies. These include the new financial management system. A customer service ethos will be promoted throughout the organisation and customers and staff will be encouraged to comment and improve upon existing practices.

What you can expect from us?

Kilkenny County Council is committed to delivering an efficient courteous and quality service to its customers. We will treat all our customers equally ensuring that there is no discrimination on any grounds. We will be sensitive to our customers needs and take into account their age, their capacity to understand often complex rules and procedures and any disabilities they may have.

When providing service by telephone we will aim to:

- Staff will be available to take your call from 9.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. Monday to Friday.
- Be helpful and provide you with clear and accurate information.
- Always give you a contact name and telephone number.
- Respond properly and courteously.
- Take details and call you back if we cannot answer your query immediately.

Indicate when you can expect to hear from us if we have to call you back.

- Provide an improved telephone system for our customers.
- Keep internal telephone directories up-to-date.

If you visit our offices we will aim to:

- Meet with you punctually if you have an appointment
- Respect your privacy.
- Deal with you in a polite, courteous and fair manner.
- Deal with your enquiry and provide any relevant information that we have as quickly as possible.
- Keep our offices clean and safe.
- Continue to improve accessibility for all our customers including people with a disability and special needs.

Note: Due to work commitments it may be necessary to make an appointment in advance to meet with some members of staff.

In corresponding with you we will aim to:

- Use clear and simple language and keep the technical terms to a minimum.
- Include a contact name, telephone and extension number, e-mail address and reference number on all correspondence that we issue.
- Make arrangements to ensure that letters do not go unanswered when individual staff members are absent.
- Some correspondence requires considerable research before a full reply can issue and when this happens we will send you an interim reply explaining the position.
- Ensure that service departments are allocated an e-mail address.
- Ensure that all payments are made in accordance with provisions of the Prompt Payments Act, 1997.

In producing forms and leaflets we will aim to:

- Ensure that leaflets and forms are freely available, including in electronic format.
- Use clear and simple language.
- Explain exactly what information is required on application forms.
- Request only relevant information on application forms.
- Ensure that data supplied on forms will only be used for the purpose for which it is given.
- Produce all documentation in a range of accessible formats suitable to the needs of people with disabilities.

Complaints:

- If you are not happy with the quality of service we provide you are entitled to make a complaint to the section head of that service.
- If you are not satisfied with the response received, you should contact the Complaints Officer, Corporate Affairs, in writing, who will respond to your complaint in writing within twenty eight days of receipt of complaint.
- You may also have a statutory right to complain to the Ombudsman whose role is to investigate complaints about administrative actions, delays or inaction adversely affecting persons or bodies that are dealing with the Council.
- All complaints will be dealt with properly, fairly and impartially.

Information and Communications Technology:

- New technology will be availed of to the greatest possible extent to make services more accessible and improve service delivery.
- Over the period of the plan the information technology systems within Kilkenny Local Authorities will continue to be upgraded.

Staff:

- Kilkenny County Council will ensure that staff are recognised as internal customers and that they are properly supported and consulted with regard to service delivery issues.
- A comprehensive customer service-training programme for our staff will be implemented throughout the plan period.

Co-Ordination of Services:

- Kilkenny County Council will foster a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to delivery of services.

Official Language Equality:

- Kilkenny County Council will provide in so far as possible, quality services through Irish and/or bilingually and inform customers of their right to choose to be dealt with through one or other of the official languages.

Choice:

- Kilkenny County Council will provide a range of choices, where feasible, in service delivery.
- The Council will use available emerging technologies to ensure maximum access and choice, and quality of delivery.

Consultation and Evaluation:

- Kilkenny County Council will provide a structured approach to meaningful consultation with, and participation by, the customer in relation to development, delivery and review of services.
- Kilkenny County Council will use the Strategic Policy Committees as one of the approaches to evaluating our service delivery.
- Kilkenny County Council will provide a comment sheet on our website [www.kilkennycoco.ie] to facilitate customers who may wish to make suggestions or comments on the services which we provide.

Appendices

Local Authority Political, Management & Staffing Structures

These will be inserted when All Political Structures and Staffing Re Organisation are complete.