

GOOD PRACTICE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT SPEAKERS

KILKENNY CASTLE

21 NOVEMBER 2017



**NATIONAL OVERSIGHT
& AUDIT COMMISSION**



Údaráis Áitiúla Éireann
Local Authorities Ireland



Cumann Lucht Bainistíochta Contae agus Cathrach
County and City Management Association

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Foreword

Local authorities in Ireland continuously strive to deliver top-class services. Over the recent past the local government sector has undergone a period of significant reform and budgetary contraction. Its ability to adapt to the evolving needs of citizens and policy priorities of national and local governments reflects the agility and commitment of the elected members and staff of City and County Councils throughout Ireland.

This Good Practice Seminar organised by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC), in partnership with the County and City Management Association (CCMA), is an opportunity to showcase some examples of solutions-oriented approaches to providing public services that are being implemented by local authorities in recent times. These case studies illustrate the sector's desire to improve efficiency in the delivery of services, engage meaningfully with citizens and regenerate urban and rural areas.

The objective of the seminar is to provide local authorities with an opportunity to learn from each other and build on innovative approaches to service delivery. It has to be acknowledged that the case studies presented here are a sample of a significantly larger range of equally impressive and important methods being adopted by local authorities to achieve their objectives. It is the intention of NOAC and the CCMA to continue to showcase good practice so as to build on successful initiatives and ensure that the local government sector is recognised as the most innovative public service in Ireland.



Pat McLoughlin
Chair NOAC



Peter Carey
Chair CCMA



CASE STUDY 1

Louth County Council: Derelict Housing

Project Name:

Use of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) Process for the Provision of Social Housing.

Local Authority:

Louth County Council.

Project Start Date:

December 2015

Problem Being Addressed:

Louth County Council was experiencing difficulties allocating units in a local authority estate where there was a prevalence of vacant, vandalised, privately owned dwellings. The prevalence of vacant dwelling houses in the community can become a nuisance to the community generally.

Approach Taken:

After reviewing various means, it was decided to use the Compulsory Purchase Order process to acquire these units with a view to refurbishing the units and bringing the units into social housing use, thus removing these “hotspots” from the community. This localised pilot was successful and it was decided that the methodology would be used to simply acquire additional social housing units at a time of housing crisis.

The logic deployed for this policy direction was based on the following factors:

- Units could be provided quicker than new construction
- Units could be provided cheaper than new construction or acquisition
- Generation of additional construction employment
- Units are not for sale, thus by acquiring the units the Council are not negatively influencing the local housing market.

Stakeholders

The immediate community, applicants on the social housing list and an Bord Pleanála.

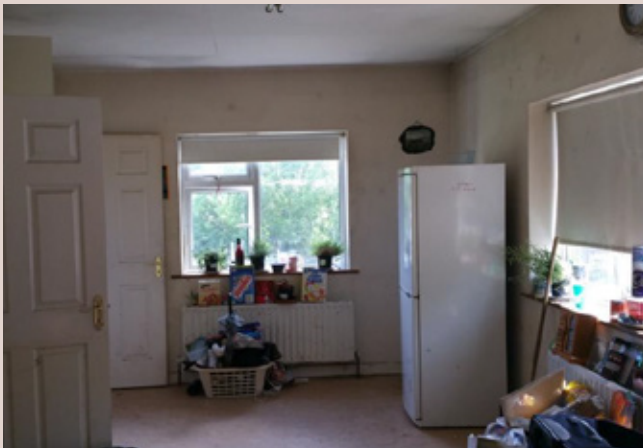
Outcomes:

Creating additional social housing units and the eradication of areas of anti-social behaviour. The policy in practice has resulted in the Council acquiring 49 dwellings to date, all requiring refurbishment works, with 21 dwellings now complete and tenanted by qualified social housing applicants. A further 50 units are in the planning, preparation and legal process.

Some consequences of this innovation are that:

- Some single-story units have been assigned for disability use; and
- Some property owners in the community have addressed vacancy by renovating and renting out their properties.

An Bord Pleanála in their determinations has now recognised that obvious non-use in high demand areas is a sufficient ground to rule in favour of housing authorities in some cases.



CASE STUDY 2

Monaghan County Council: Re-Letting Times Presented by Nuala Woods

Project Name:

Average Re-Letting Time in 2016.

Local Authority:

Monaghan County Council.

Project Start Date:

January 2016 to December 2016.

Problem Being Addressed:

Time taken to re-let council housing stock.

Approach Taken:

Monaghan County Council achieved “First Place in Ireland” in the NOAC Performance Indicators Category for the “AVERAGE RE-LETTING TIME” in 2016. In 2014 Monaghan County Council’s average re-letting time was 19.45 weeks. Due to changes in work processes and procedures; this has improved significantly in 2016 to 8.03 weeks.

This is partly due to the implementation of the Housing Framework Procurement Procedure. A framework for repair works has been established for the County. Under the housing framework, Monaghan County Council has appointed three main contractors, one for each Municipal District area to undertake all re-letting works. This combined with the use of smart technology has resulted in greater efficiency of processes, procedures and works.

Prior to the Local Government Act 2014, Monaghan Local Authority had four town councils and a County Council delivering housing services. Our housing service was centralised to one site which presented the challenge of physical storage and access to information for non-office based staff. A review of all our work-practises in the housing department took place, with the objective to uniform our service across the county and to improve our processes. This progressed to the introduction of a document management system which has eliminated all physical files from the housing department. Our technical and outdoor staff have mobile devices giving them instant access to required information.

Planned and response maintenance can be managed through the mobile devices capturing the work history of properties, photos, plans, quotations etc. contributing to a more efficient work practise. Access to instant and accurate information assists all sections in our housing department to improve our efficiency and customer service. Improving our re-letting time has been achieved by a combination of many small changes.

Stakeholders:

Monaghan County Council, housing tenants.

Outcomes:

Improvement achieved in time taken to re-let council housing stock.



CASE STUDY 3

South Dublin County Council: Citizen Engagement Presented by Niall Noonan

Project Name:

€300K – Have Your Say.

Local Authority:

South Dublin County Council.

Project Start Date:

January 2017.

Problem Being Addressed:

Local democracy and public engagement with budgeting.

Approach Taken:

For 2017, South Dublin County Council allocated an additional €300,000 for the Lucan, Adamstown and Palmerstown areas. Residents through a combination of locally facilitated workshops and an online consultation portal www.sdcc.ie/haveyoursay were invited to submit their ideas and spending priorities for this budget.

Proposals were then assessed by a steering committee in terms of their community benefit. This assessment was conducted by a panel of elected councillors and council staff. Selected proposals were then costed and re-presented to the public on the Have Your Say website. Residents were then able to vote for their priorities through a digital/paper ballot up to the value of €300,000. This was the first ever participatory budgeting process piloted in Ireland.

Stakeholders:

Citizens, Elected Members, Schools, Council Staff, Local Businesses, Volunteer Groups, Community Groups, Tidy Town Groups, Local Churches, Sports Clubs, Public Participation Network (PPN), Advocacy Groups, Residents Associations, Arts/Heritage Groups, Environmental Groups and the Media.

Outcomes:

160 project ideas were generated by the public at the proposal stage. These were eventually whittled down to 17 projects which went out for ballot. Over 2,500 ballots were cast online and in person, and eight winning projects were selected. The pilot initiative is to be rolled out to further areas in 2018.



CASE STUDY 4

Waterford County Council: GoDungarvan Presented by Paul Daly

Project Name:

Smarter Travel - Go Dungarvan.

Local Authority:

Waterford City and County Council.

Project Start Date:

2012.

Problem Being Addressed:

To assess the effectiveness of a number of different interventions on the travel mode choices of people in a medium sized town.

Approach Taken:

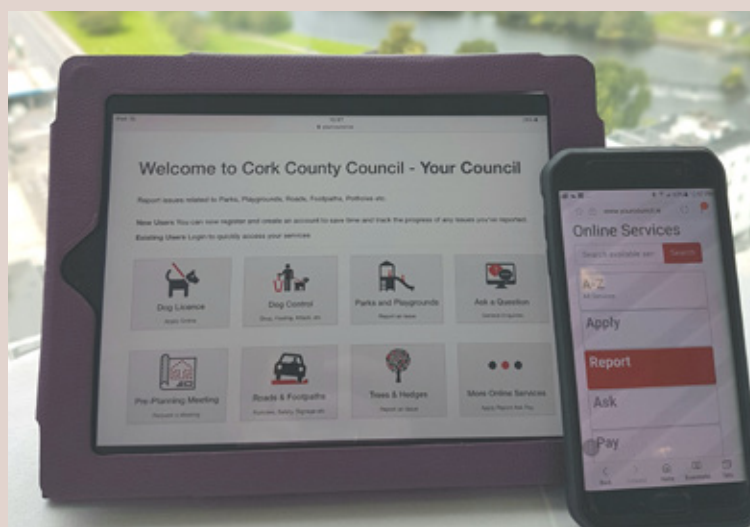
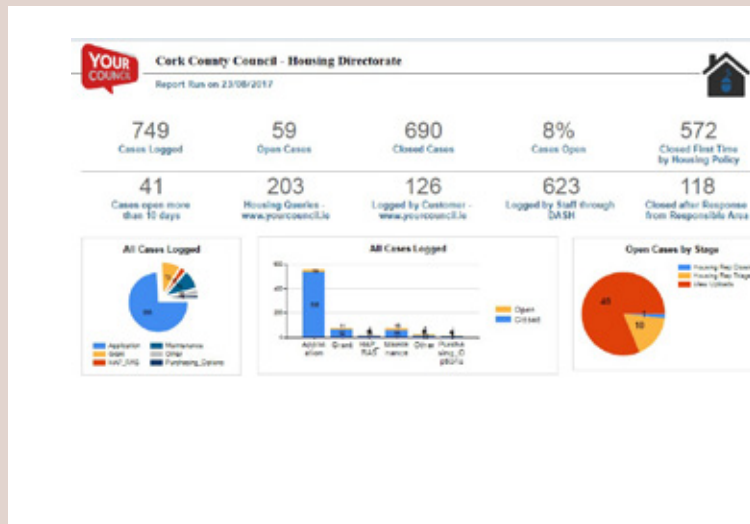
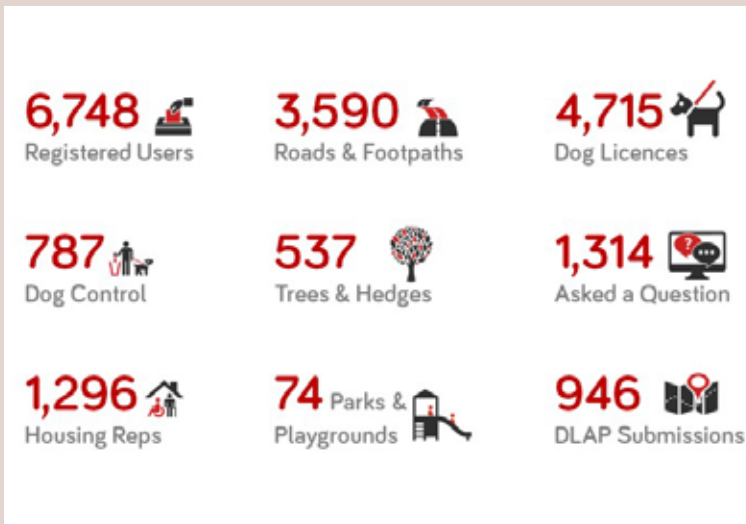
The project involved a wide range of 'hard' and 'soft' interventions across a wide spectrum of communities and organisations and a number of different types of physical infrastructure provisions. Independent surveys, commissioned by the Department of Tourism, Transport and Sport were carried out before and during the period of the project. These assessed the effectiveness of the different elements of the interventions as the project progressed.

Stakeholders:

The Local Authority, Businesses, Workplaces, Schools and the General Population.

Outcomes:

While the overall survey results were inconclusive, there were significant successes in some areas of intervention. Valuable lessons can be learned from the range of activities and the areas of success and failure that came with the project and these lessons can inform future Smarter Travel planning and general development objectives in local authorities. Results however indicate that the project changed general attitudes in the town to walking and exercise and helped reinforce a societal message around health and sustainability. The full outcome of the project will only become apparent over a very long timeframe.



CASE STUDY 5

Cork County Council: YourCouncil.ie

Presented by Julianne Coughlan and Noelle Desmond

Project Name:

YourCouncil – Cork County Council's Digital Services Platform: www.yourcouncil.ie

Local Authority:

Cork County Council

Project Start Date:

September 2016.

Problem Being Addressed:

A perceptions survey commissioned by Cork County Council in 2015, identified that customers (citizens and businesses) wanted access to more information about services and greater access to services (24/7) where possible. Customers expect feedback and information about their service requests during processing and with more services online everywhere, the opportunity existed for putting appropriate council service online as well.

Approach Taken:

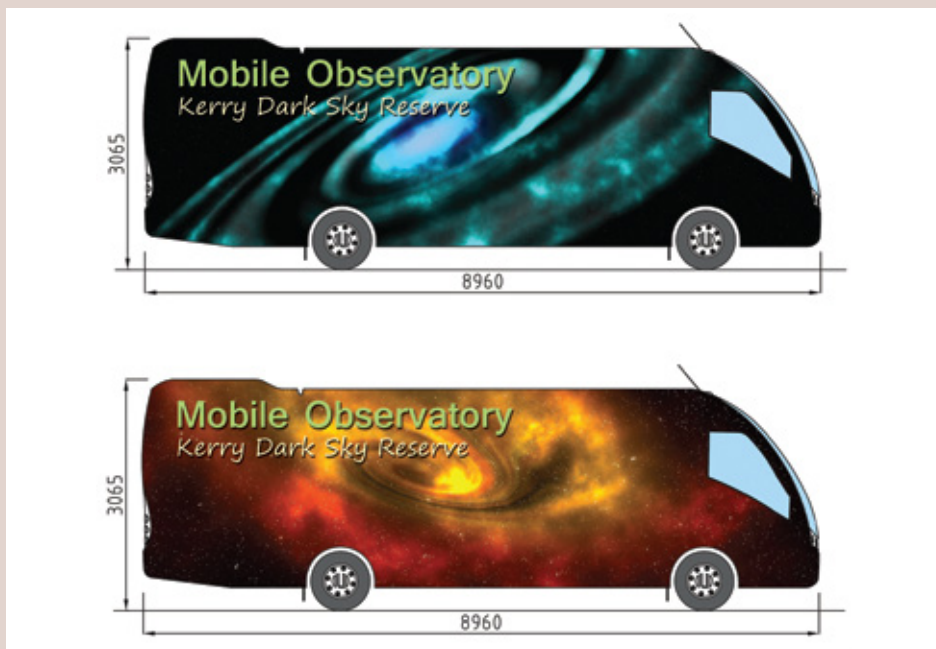
A tender was undertaken to commission a customer experience platform. Firmstep won the tender. A cross-departmental team of ICT and organisational development staff was formed to implement the platform and to review existing council services. A suite of services was identified for initial deployment on the online portal. The www.yourcouncil.ie site went live with 30 services at the start of December 2016.

Stakeholders:

Cork County Council customers – citizens and businesses, Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Services, ICT Department, Corporate Services, Personnel Department, Contact Centre Manager and the communications team.

Outcomes:

www.yourcouncil.ie digital services portal went live with 30 services on December 5th, 2016. Now 89 services are available through the portal. The rollout of digital services highlighted the need for more than a 'lift and shift' approach to putting them online. A programme of embedding service design practice into the transformation process was initiated in February 2017. Live projects were used to develop a service design unit and process for Cork County Council. In conjunction with service design expertise in Cork I.T., a dedicated centre called Service rePublic was established and based in Cork County Council. Existing customer service transformation staff were assigned to the unit with a view to taking an end to end approach to service transformation – beyond digital. Service rePublic was officially launched on May 29th, 2017.



CASE STUDY 6

Kerry County Council: Dark Sky Reserve

Presented by John Griffin

Project Name:

Kerry International Dark Sky Project.

Local Authority:

Kerry County Council.

Project Start Date:

January 2014.

Problem Being Addressed:

South-West Kerry is an area of outstanding natural beauty, cultural and built heritage but it is a region suffering from economic and social decline. One of the initiatives being undertaken to halt the decline and attract high-tech investment and year-round tourism is the Kerry International Dark Sky project.

Approach Taken:

Since 2014 the Skellig Region has been designated an International Gold Tier Dark Sky Reserve. This identifies it as one of the best places on Earth to view the night sky and as an ideal location for star gazing and astro-tourism.

- Step 1 The designation, branding and signing of the region.
- Step 2 Academic input to give varsity and weight to the project.
- Step 3 Buy-in of the local community and raising awareness and expertise.
- Step 4 A budget and funding stream was identified to promote the Dark Sky from a tourism perspective. The council enlisted the support of UCC, CIT and Blackrock Observatory to provide accredited astronomy and star gazing training courses for local guides. We work closely with Fáilte Ireland who also provide financial support to local Dark Sky festivals.
- Step 5 Kerry County Council has commenced an ambitious programme of retro-fitting public lighting in the Dark Sky Reserve with dark sky compliant LED lighting in the 700-sq. km reserve, to create even darker skies over South Kerry. This is being progressed in conjunction with the SEAI.

Stakeholders:

Local communities within the Skellig Coast region of South-West Kerry; Skellig Coast Tourism Network; Fáilte Ireland, South Kerry Development Partnership, Udarás na Gaeltachta, Third Level Institutions (UCC, CIT, ITT), Government Departments, International Dark Sky Association; local, national and international astronomical societies and space agencies, Kerry industry and tourism trade.

Outcomes:

- Up-skilling/training of team(s) of local star gazing guides
 - Increased visitor numbers and tourism revenue during the off-peak tourist season (October to April)
 - Increased number of permanent and part-time jobs
 - Provision of Mobile Observatory
 - Development of sustainable astro-tourism businesses
 - Establishment of South West Kerry as a global astro-tourism destination
 - Increased interest in astronomy and STEM subjects in local schools.
- Dark Sky Over Ballinskelligs, Co. Kerry.



CASE STUDY 7

Kilkenny County Council: Regeneration of Abbey Quarter Presented by Martin Prendiville and Tony Lauhoff

Project Name:

Abbey Quarter, Kilkenny (former Smithwicks Brewery Site).

Local Authority:

Kilkenny County Council.

Project Start Date:

2012.

Problem Being Addressed:

Following the decision in 2012 by Diageo to close the former Smithwicks Brewery in Kilkenny City, the elected members of Kilkenny County Council and the former Kilkenny Borough Council made the decision to purchase this strategic city centre site (approx. 11 acres) with a view to job creation and the provision of high quality public amenity areas. The location of the site, adjoining the medieval heart of the city, provides not only an opportunity to regenerate the city economically and socially but also provides an opportunity to repair the fabric of the city and to reinstate traditional streets and slipways. Given the scale of the site, funding of such a large development has presented a very significant challenge.

Approach Taken:

Various public consultation events were held including a colloquium of architects and town planners, town hall meetings, weekend workshops, information evenings and formal statutory and non-statutory public consultations. A number of funding options were considered. The identified preferred option was to enter into a partnership with the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), through the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund for the development of building plots on the site.

Stakeholders:

Kilkenny County Council and the NTMA (Ireland Strategic Investment Fund).

Outcomes:

Following extensive public consultations between 2013 and 2015, a masterplan for the redevelopment of the site was adopted by Kilkenny County Council in July 2015. This Masterplan has put in place an Urban Design Framework, providing for a mixed-use development with significant areas of public realm.

A Limited Liability Partnership has been established between Kilkenny County Council and the NTMA, with responsibility for the development of building plots on the site. A CEO has been appointed to manage the business on behalf of both partners. Kilkenny County Council will be responsible for the funding and development of the public realm areas of the site, with funding sources identified to date including the European Regional Development Fund, Fáilte Ireland and our own funds.



CASE STUDY 8

Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County: Smart Bins Presented by Tom McHugh

Project Name:

DLR Smart Bins.

Local Authority:

Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council.

Project Start Date:

2017.

Problem Being Addressed:

Inefficient litter bin service, limited capacity, finite resources for collections.

Approach Taken:

The introduction of solar powered compacting smart litter bins: In 2014 Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council installed 400 solar compacting smart bins across its administrative area. The total number of litter bins was reduced by 110 but the overall capacity of litter bins was increased from 45,000 litres to over 250,000 litres. The smart bins use web-based software to monitor real time capacity and litter levels are transmitted electronically to the Municipal Services Department. As a result, the number of litter bins collected during a working day has been reduced by over 85% which resulted in a reduction of 75% of fleet operation costs.

Stakeholders:

Elected members, public, staff and trade unions.

Outcomes:

Improved efficiencies, expenditure savings and income from advertising. As the bins feature an enclosed design the Council has experienced a dramatic decrease, and in most cases an elimination of overflowing bins. There has also been a significant reduction in the hours required for street sweeping and cleaning of litter.

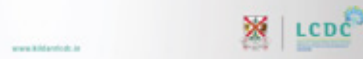
Since 2015 the Council has used the smart bins as a host platform for additional smart sensor services by installing footfall sensors in the compacting units. This provides data to the Council and local business community to measure the success of local initiatives. The smart bins are also used for advertisements and promotion. Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council has a contract in place for advertising on the bins providing a steady income stream.

The smart bins showcase Dún Laoghaire Rathdown County Council's strong commitment to reducing its environmental footprint and driving tangible efficiencies in its day-to-day work process through the medium of smart, analytic driven technology.

Socio-Economic Baseline Report
as part of the Kildare Local Economic & Community Plan
(LECP) 2016-2021
Prepared by the All-Ireland Research Observatory (AIRO),
Maynooth University



KILDARE
LOCAL ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY PLAN
2016 - 2021



CASE STUDY 9

Kildare County Council: LECP

Presented by Susan Bookle

Project Name:

Kildare LECP – An evidence based approach to informing decisions.

Local Authority:

Kildare County Council

Project Start Date:

2014

Problem Being Addressed:

It became evident at the initial Kildare Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) meetings in 2014, that senior stakeholders and key decision makers did not have access to high quality socio economic or service provision data. This data gap impacted on strategic and operational decision making. Anecdotal information of service gaps and issues emerging in communities were not supplemented by clear factual data. This impacted on the ability of service providers to present cases for additional resources or avail of funding opportunities as they presented.

Approach Taken:

Kildare LCDC led by Kildare County Council approached Maynooth University to discuss this challenge. The All Island Research Observatory (AIRO) of Maynooth University was identified as key partners and work commenced to develop a comprehensive socio-economic baseline report. Data from Census 2011 and information provided by LCDC members was used to provide a range of socio economic data indicators. These indicators were presented in a number of user friendly formats and provided an analysis of Kildare benchmarked to national and regional levels. This information was used to inform the consultation and strategic development of the Kildare LECP.

Stakeholders:

Kildare County Council, Maynooth University through AIRO, LCDC members – HSE, DEASP, Tusla, KWETB, McVerry Trust, South Eastern Drugs and Alcohol Task Force, CKLP, County Kildare Chamber of Commerce, LEO, Teach Dara, Community and Voluntary Forum, an Taisce.

Outcomes:

- A comprehensive baseline socio economic baseline report
- An LECP based on factual analysis which informed consultation
- An online data hub populated by the data collated
- A shared analysis of Kildare by all stakeholders
- Information is regularly used by all stakeholders to make applications, presentations and submissions
- Increasing service levels e.g. ETB Youth Officer for the county, mental health funding, allocation of Community Gardaí posts
- A greater use of evidence to inform plans and decision making.



For further information visit www.noac.ie or www.lgma.ie

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