

Planning and Economic Development

This function deals with the physical planning and sustainable development of the county and the promotion of economic and tourism activity.

Strategic Objective

To operate a system of physical planning within sustainable patterns of settlement which facilitates and provides the impetus for economic development in County Meath, whilst at all times fostering protection of the natural and built environment of the County.

Supporting Strategies

Planning

- To facilitate and encourage development within sustainable patterns of settlement while having regard to National and Regional policy documents towards fostering protection and management of the archaeological and built heritage, thereby promoting the efficient use of land and infrastructure.
- To deliver a high quality, effective and efficient service through skilled and motivated staff, using the most up to date integrated Information Technology packages.
- To review and prepare all Development Plans and Local Area Plans and other statutory documents including the Meath Housing Strategy, Retail Strategy and Development Contributions Scheme in line with the principles of sustainable development.
- To fulfill our statutory duty to decide on all planning applications and other matters within specified timescales, and as expeditiously as possible, while at all times having regard to the principles of sustainable development and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- To use our statutory powers in ensuring that all development is carried out in conformity with planning permission and the Building Control legislation and to take appropriate enforcement action against unauthorised development.
- To give advice on planning matters to the public and to other bodies including the continuation of pre-planning clinics at area level in respect of one-off housing or domestic extensions' proposals.

Economic Development

- To work in partnership with other Government agencies and the private sector to promote the sustainable, economic and industrial development of the County and to promote employment opportunities for people resident in the County.
- To continue to proactively promote County Meath as an attractive location for inward investment opportunities; to take advantage of its strategic location within the fastest growing region in Ireland and its proximity to Dublin Metropolitan Area and the Dublin Belfast corridor.
- To work with the County Development Board, the Meath County Enterprise Board and other agencies in achieving an integrated approach to the delivery of economic, social and cultural infrastructure to enable the identified primary development corridors to become the primary growth area for the County.
- To ensure that there is sufficient serviced land available for industrial and commercial purposes in the designated centres to enhance economic activity and to meet the employment needs of the County.
- To enhance transport infrastructure in order to improve access for jobs, recreation, tourism, facilities and services in County Meath.
- To promote wider access to job opportunities for our most disadvantaged communities.

Tourism

- To promote County Meath as a tourist destination in both the domestic and overseas markets and to move its ranking into the top 10 tourism counties in Ireland.
- To work in association with other state agencies who are charged with improving Meath as a Tourism destination.
- To seek new and high quality investment in the tourism industry in County Meath, with specific reference to accommodation and leisure activities such as Golf, Equestrian, Walking, Cycling and Angling.
- To obtain maximum economic and social benefits from the County's designation as the Heritage Capital of Ireland and achieving an increase in visitor numbers.
- To achieve an appropriate balance between development of tourist facilities and the protection of the environment and sensitive landscapes.
- To provide for improved signage to the existing tourist attractions and enhanced parking facilities.



Infrastructure

One of the major challenges facing Meath Local Authorities is to ensure that the development of infrastructure keeps pace with and facilitates economic growth. Infrastructure provision must be consistent with our land-use policies, identified in the Development Plans, as well as meeting environmental considerations, In recent years, there has been significant development in both the roads and sanitary water and wastewater services infrastructure. While this has helped to support the economic growth of the county, it also has had a major impact on the Council's financial resources. With the greater emphasis on local contributions under the capital investment programmes, together with the ever increasing costs of running modern water and wastewater treatment plants, a major challenge faces the Council to continue to meet the costs of infrastructure in the future. In spite of these challenges, Meath Local Authorities is well placed to cater for current and future growth.

Strategic Objective

To maintain and further develop the Infrastructure of the County and to ensure that infrastructural investment facilitates the physical, economic, social and cultural development of the County.

Supporting Strategies

To plan and implement infrastructural improvements consistent with land-use planning.

To work closely with neighbouring Authorities and other agencies to ensure that infrastructural planning is both complementary and consistent.

To develop and implement in consultation with the National Roads Authority a programme for the upgrading, improvement and maintenance of the National Road network within the County.

To develop and implement in consultation with Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government a programme for the upgrading, improvement and maintenance of the Non-National Road network within the County.

To implement the Water Services Investment Programme 2004-2006.

To advance the projects identified in the Assessment of Water Services Needs, as adopted by the Council, to ensure they are included in future investment programmes.

To implement the measures under the Rural Water Programme so as to improve the quality, reliability and efficiency of water supplies for rural dwellers.

To upgrade existing water and wastewater facilities, where deficient, in order to meet the Drinking Water regulations and the Urban Wastewater Directives/Regulations.

To advance the planning and the development of the continuation of the rail link to Navan.

To investigate with a view to reducing our dependency on the infrastructure of other Local Authorities.

To co-operate with public transport providers in the development and improvement of these services to and from the county.



Environment

Our objectives focus on strategic goals across 6 core areas of Environmental activity which comprise Waste, Water, Education, Fire & Emergency, Regulation, and Effective Service Delivery

Strategic Objective

To support and promote the clean, safe and healthy environment, for present and future generations.

Supporting Strategies

To manage waste in an integrated and sustainable manner in accordance with best practice.

To improve water quality in line with the requirements of the Water Frame-Work Directive.

To raise Environmental awareness and encourage sustainable actions.

To maintain excellence in the delivery of emergency services.

To ensure compliance with Environmental standards.

To adopt and implement the Waste Management Plan for the North-East Region.

To minimise the impact of development on receiving waters by implementing a comprehensive monitoring regime, and identifying and eliminating potential pollution threats.

To provide resources for on-going Environmental Awareness and Action Campaigns, targeting all sections of the Community.

To implement the Fire and Emergency Services Development Plan.

To implement the Council's Environmental Enforcement Plan.

To implement a wide range of activities to curb and abate litter pollution through the use of Litter Pollution Monitoring System.



Housing

Strategic 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 participate with the multi-agency Social Inclusion working group, set up under the auspices of the County Development Board, to enhance the role of Local Government in tackling the disadvantaged and promoting social inclusion.
- To pursue the measures outlined in "A Plan for Social Housing and Social Housing – The Way Ahead".
- To ensure, through the operation of development plans and public utility services programmes, that sufficient serviced housing land is made available in suitable locations throughout the county.
- To pursue an ongoing program of housing land acquisition to facilitate public housing construction programmes.
- To ensure that all persons are treated equally in the allocation and management of public housing, regardless of origin, race, or creed, and that all marginalised groups such as Travellers and the homeless are catered for adequately.
- To ensure that proper structures are in place for the efficient and effective management of public housing through appropriate estate management initiatives.
- To promote the highest possible standards in the planning and design of both public and private housing, while adhering to the principles of sustainable development.
- To convert and maintain existing housing stock.
- To develop and expand the estate Management Schemes in existing council housing estates and in new developments as they come on stream.



9.0 CAPACITY AND RESOURCES

Introduction

Meath Local Authorities have identified and are committed to providing the Financial, Human and ICT 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 realisation of the corporate objectives.

Meath Local Authorities have put in place an Economic Development Officer dedicated to the role of identifying business and stimulating investment opportunities, which will facilitate targeted financial investment into the county with a view to strengthening the rate base .

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

Future budgets will be prepared having regard to the objectives of this plan. The new financial management system allows Meath Local Authorities to identify the costs of the provision of individual services in a far more systematic way. It will also be possible to relate input costs to outputs. Value for money reviews and audits will also underpin this process. There will be regular assessments of expenditure programmes in Meath Local Authorities. These developments will provide a more rational and informed basis on which to make decisions for allocating available resources in the light of the priority objectives identified.

Human Resources

We need to build on the achievements of area-based management and decentralised delivery of services. We have a flexible approach to the deployment of staff so that adequate resources are available on a countywide basis

The recruitment and retention of skilled and highly motivated staff at a time of severe competition in the labour market is especially challenging, and it is critical that Meath Local Authorities' Human Resources Department meets these challenges in the development of its policies.

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 capacity to take on future tasks and responsibilities. There will be a provision in the annual budgets towards the ongoing development and training of staff.

ICT

The development of information and communications technologies in the County is vital for the successful implementation of many of the Council's goals and objectives. Investment in e-Commerce and communications infrastructure and services is fundamental to the success of any organisation. During the lifetime of this plan, Meath Local Authorities will address the Broadband deficit, thereby increasing our capacity to take advantage of the Information Society.

10.0 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Meath Local Authorities are committed to an ongoing strategic management process. The Corporate Plan was formulated and will be implemented in the following manner;

- It will be promoted and circulated to all relevant stakeholders to achieve clarity, common purpose and widespread ownership.
- A series of annual operational plans, detailing the specific activities to give effect to the Plan, will be prepared.
- A systematic method of performance analysis and review will be put in place so that progress can be recorded and the necessary adjustments made as circumstances change.

This process is set out diagrammatically below in fig xxx and can be explained as follows;

The Executive and the Corporate Policy Group will identify priorities from the Plan for implementation. These will be screened and matched to resources by the Corporate Policy Group in the context of annual budget preparation. The Corporate Policy Group will highlight and promote the need for funding and seek it from the relevant Government Departments. The Strategic Policy Groups will formulate policy to facilitate implementation of the priorities identified. The appropriate Council will approve the necessary funding in the revenue and capital budgets. These in turn provide for the required staffing levels and the harnessing of external resources, as required, such as matching funding and Public Private Partnerships (PPP).

Following the allocation of resources by the full Council the annual organisational plan will be drafted. This in turn will be broken down between the relevant supporting departments resulting in a series of annual operation (business) plans. Where issues cross department boundaries, coordinating responsibility will rest with the Management Team.

Ongoing monitoring will facilitate the formulation of biannual progress reports, which will be prepared for the Management Team, the Corporate Policy Group and in turn reported to the full Council. Integral to this monitoring regime will be the development of suitable local performance indicators to complement the new national service indicators.

The biannual progress reports will inform the annual review process. The review will include a validation of the annual operational plans measured against the Corporate Plan. This may involve a review of priorities and the reallocation of resources. The findings of the annual review will be published in the Annual Report.

