



WESTMEATH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

“Putting People First”



Corporate Plan

2005 to 2009

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A Message from the Corporate Policy Group and Management Team

This is our third Corporate Plan and has been developed to guide the work of the Local Authorities in Westmeath over the next five years.

Our Mission Statement and Corporate Commitment are the foundations upon which we will deliver quality services to our Customers in the coming years and shape the future development of our County for the benefit of all people in Westmeath, whether they live, work, visit or invest here.

We have identified four Key Priority Themes, which form the strategic framework for future policy development and public service delivery across all the functional areas of the Westmeath Local Authorities:

- **Planning for and influencing the development of the County**
- **Building Communities**
- **Service to our Customers/ Citizens**
- **Organisational Capacity**

The strategic objectives for 2005-2009 set out in this plan have been built on these key priority themes and reflect the responses to the extensive consultation process that took place in the preparation of this plan. We want to acknowledge and thank all who contributed their thoughts and suggestions during the consultation process.

This Corporate Plan is our public statement of intent and we will now develop Operational Plans to give effect to the strategies set out in the Corporate Plan. These will be action-driven, achievable and measurable. We will report annually and publicly on progress and ensure that the Corporate Plan remains a living document and a benchmark against which the performance of the Westmeath Local Authorities is judged.

In taking a proactive and lead role in the process of shaping the future of our County and delivering quality services, the commitment and initiative of the elected representatives is critical to our success and we are also fortunate to have the support of a dedicated and excellent staff.

New initiatives at local, regional, national and indeed international level and the legislative framework within which we must operate will continue to provide us with many challenges and opportunities over the coming years.

We must face up to the challenges as they emerge and seize the opportunities presented, thereby meeting the needs and expectations of our Customers/Citizens, while ensuring that our County remains a place to be valued by our communities and a place for all of us to be proud of.

We look forward to working with all our stakeholders over the next five years, in the exciting and constantly changing economic, social and cultural environment within which the Westmeath Local Authorities operate.

Our Mission Statement

What matters at the heart of local communities is leadership....

Westmeath Local Authorities are responsible for the delivery of many vital services within the County. These services can be Local Authority initiatives or delivered in partnership with Central Government, the private sector or community & voluntary groups.

We have a fundamental responsibility to ensure the well-being of our communities in Westmeath. We are the only organisation in the County with the special “democratic mandate” to provide vision and leadership to our local communities.

Our Mission Statement gives a clear indication of the leadership role that Westmeath Local Authorities are taking in the development of County Westmeath.

It is this Mission Statement which will guide the work of the Westmeath Local Authorities over the next five years:

**“To Lead
the Economic, Social
and Cultural
Development
of County Westmeath
and to Deliver
Quality Services”**

Our Corporate Commitment

Our Corporate Commitment is a partnership undertaking by Elected Members, Management and Staff of the Westmeath Local Authorities, setting out our basic CORE VALUES in serving the interests of our customers/citizens.

Involving and encouraging greater participation by our customers/citizens in the decision-making processes, towards meeting the expectation and needs of our communities, is vitally important.

In our strategic role of providing vital public services and in addressing the needs and priorities of our local communities, we want to ensure that we communicate effectively with our communities, that we interact with our communities and that meaningful partnerships can be established and maintained, for the common good.

Our Corporate Commitment provides the basis upon which such quality engagement can continue to happen, in the interests of our communities and the quality development of the County:

WE WILL:

Strive to deliver Customer satisfaction:

Act with integrity:

Treat people with respect:

Respect the democratic mandate:

Take pride in our work:

Be open and responsive:

Be flexible and adaptable to change and constraints:

Work for the Common Good.

Westmeath - A Land of Lake & Legend

Situated in the heart of Ireland, Westmeath, “The Lake County”, is a very special place...

Westmeath is a historic County, steeped in mythology and folklore, including the legend of the Children of Lir, and the famous Hill of Uisneach, the seat of the ancient Kings of Meath.

It is a County valued by its community, boasting many beautiful lakes, tranquil canals and the majestic River Shannon. The County has a landscape of abundant archaeological heritage, fertile agricultural land, and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

The towns of Mullingar and Athlone are the principal commercial centres in the County and are set to ensure the potential for future development in the County given their status as Gateway Towns in the National Spatial Strategy.

The County also boasts many tourist attractions such as Belvedere House Gardens and Park, Athlone Castle, Lockes Distillery, Fore Abbey, Dún na Sí, to name but a few. Athlone is the home of the internationally renowned Tenor, John Count McCormack

Westmeath also has some fine literary connections, namely:

- Glasson, Athlone is the home of the renowned 18th century writer, Oliver Goldsmith.
- Characters and scenes from the epic “Ulysses” written by James Joyce were based in the town of Mullingar.
- Gullivers Travels by Jonathan Swift is said to have been inspired by Lilliput, on the shores of Lough Ennell.

Some Facts and Figures about Westmeath:

The population of Westmeath at the taking of the last Census in 2002 was **71,858**

- 50.04% of the population is male.
- 49.96% of the population is female.
- 13.5% increase in population since 1996.
- 38.91% of the population is under 25.
- 10.99% of the population is over 65.

Employment

- Over 3,200 registered businesses in Westmeath.
- 6.89% of the workforce employed in agriculture.
- 16.10% of the workforce employed in manufacturing.
- Less than 5% of the labour force is unemployed.

Education

- 89 National Schools and 15 Second Level Schools in the County.
- 6376 persons aged 15 years and over, listed as students.
- Athlone Institute of Technology is located in Co. Westmeath; it is one of the most progressive and dynamic Higher Education institutions in the Country. The Institute represents a key competitive strength for the County and the region.

Housing

- 23,360 Private households in the County.
- 1500 Local Authority houses.

Our Operating Environment

The following paragraphs demonstrate the influences at National, Regional and Local level, which inform and impact on our work.....

Central Government

As well as Acts of the Oireachtas, Local Authorities are directed by Central Government through Regulations and Guidelines.

This is the legislative framework within which the Local Authorities must operate and includes regulatory and enforcement powers in a number of areas, such as; roads, planning, environment, housing and sanitary services.

Local Authorities also have the legislative power to engage in activities to promote the social, economic, environmental, recreational, cultural, community or general development of the County.

National Development Plan (NDP) 2000-2006

The NDP puts Westmeath within the Border, Midlands and Western (BMW) Region.

The Plan directs and guides funding for the major infrastructural projects, essential to maintain the competitiveness of the County and the Country as a whole.

National Spatial Strategy (NSS)

The NSS is a new and visionary framework, designed to co-ordinate future development and planning in Ireland over the next 20 years, in a sustainable way. The towns of Mullingar and Athlone have been designated as a Gateway under the National Spatial Strategy, along with Tullamore in Co. Offaly, with a view to increasing the overall economic strength of the Midland Region.

The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS)

This Strategy was published in 1997 and is a ten-year strategy aimed at reducing and eliminating poverty in Ireland, through its implementation by Government Departments, Government Agencies and Local Authorities.

As a result of this and legislative provisions in the Local Government Act 2001, Local Authorities now have a greater role in fostering social inclusion and must work to embed the National Anti-Poverty in policies and actions.

The development of a Local Social Inclusion Strategy (LASIS) will underpin this Corporate Plan and indeed strengthen National actions.

Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG's)

The Regional Planning Guidelines have been drawn up and adopted by the Midland Regional Authority, to give effect at Regional level to the provisions of the National Spatial Strategy.

The Midland Regional Authority, comprises the four counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath. The Regional Planning Guidelines will have a major impact on the future development of the Region and our County.

County Development Plan and Athlone Town Development Plan

The County Development Plan 2002-2008, including the Town and Village Plans, and the Athlone Town Development Plan 2002-2008, are the statutory planning framework documents that set out a structure for development, while ensuring the protection and conservation of the natural and built environment.

The principal purposes of these Plans are:

- To provide a framework of acceptable land uses within the County, defining acceptable forms of development and where it should be directed, and
- To provide a comprehensive basis for the control of development.

Westmeath County Development Board (CDB)

Westmeath County Development Board is a statutory body, established by the Government in 2000, to address the need for greater co-ordination and integration of service provision at local level.

Members of the Board are drawn from four sectors: Local Government, State Agencies active at local level, Local Development Agencies and Social Partners. The work of the Board is co-ordinated and facilitated by the Director of Community & Enterprise and staff.

The Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002-2012 "Bringing Quality to Life", prepared by the CDB, provides an integrated framework within which public bodies in the County will deliver their range of services, over the ten year period of the Strategy.

Westmeath Local Authorities are a Lead Agency in the delivery of a wide range of services set out in the CDB Strategy.

Cross-cutting Principles

Cross-cutting Principles relate to broad issues which need to be taken into consideration, throughout the Westmeath Local Authorities, such as Sustainable Development and Social Inclusion.

Focusing on these principles will result in better decision-making, better policy formulation and better service delivery within the Westmeath Local Authorities.

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development means, that development which meets the needs of the present, should not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Westmeath Local Authorities are responsible for the Local Agenda 21 process, which is the practical application of the principle of sustainable development at local level. We are committed to the principle of sustainable development, in order to enhance the quality of life of people in Westmeath.

Our aim is to achieve the correct balance between economic, social and environmental issues while at the same time guaranteeing the same opportunities for future generations.

Social Inclusion

Building an Inclusive Society (2002), the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy, highlights the need for Local Authorities to develop Social Inclusion Strategies at local level.

Social inclusion is about ensuring that minority groups, people of different nationalities, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, people with disabilities, the elderly, children and young people are recognised as valuable members of the community.

Ensuring social inclusion is a primary challenge facing not just Westmeath Local Authorities but society in general, both now and into the future.

We must develop communities in which all people have equal opportunity to participate; a society where all people have access to the facilities and services they need to lead quality lives.

This includes access to quality housing, education and health service, as well as to employment, arts, culture, sport, recreation and play.

We are committed to the principles of social inclusion in the delivery of all our services. The Westmeath Local Authorities Social Inclusion Strategy (LASIS) will reflect this commitment.

Westmeath Local Authorities Principal Activities

Environment

Transportation

Physical Planning

Water Services

Fire / Emergency

Arts / Culture

Community

Heritage / Conservation

Planning & Development Control
Forward Planning
Village Design Statements
Local Area and Village Plans
Revision of Development Plan

Provision, Management and Maintenance of Water Supply Systems
Provision, Management and Maintenance of Waste Water Systems
Private Water Supply Grants
Provision of Group Water Schemes / Grants
Provision, Management & Maintenance of Surface Water Drainage Systems

Provision, Management & Maintenance of Fire Services
Civil Defence

Promotion of Arts
Provision of Arts Grants
Promotion of Irish Language
Provision of Library Service
Provision of Archives Service

Waste Planning & Enforcement
Refuse Collection
Provision of Landfill Sites
Provision of Civic Amenity Centres
Pollution Control
Environmental Promotion
Litter Control
Control of Horses & Dogs
Veterinary Service
Derelict Sites

Roads Maintenance
Roads Construction
Provision and Maintenance of Car Parks
Licencing of Taxis / Hackneys
Road Permits
Abnormal Loads
Public Lighting
Road Safety
Motor Tax / Driving Licences
Promote Development of Other Transport Facilities

CLÁR Programme
RAPID Programme
Social Inclusion Strategy
Community & Voluntary Forum
CDB Area Advisory Committees
Community Action Scheme
Active Citizenship Promotion
Area Delivery of Services
Conservation of Archaeological, Cultural & Natural Heritage

Housing

Leisure / Amenity

Human Resources

Finance

Food Safety

Information & Communication Technology

Building Control

Enterprise

Corporate Services

Refurbishment Programme
Voluntary &
Co-operative Housing
Traveller Accommodation
Housing Construction
Housing Maintenance
Homeless Services
Housing Allocations
Disabled Persons Grants
Emergency Repair Grants
Housing Loans
Affordable Loans

Provision of
Swimming Pools
Belvedere House and
Gardens
Parks and Open Spaces
Public Conveniences
Walking Routes
Waterside Amenity Areas

Enterprise Development
Tourism Promotion
Town Renewal Schemes
Urban Renewal Schemes

Higher Education Grants
Electoral Register
Elections
Ombudsman Queries
Public Relations
Property Management
Internal Audit
Casual Trading
Freedom of Information
Member Support

Staff Selection
& Recruitment
Staff Training
& Development
Change Management
Partnership

Budgetary Control
Cashflow Management
Stewardship of Assets
Map Sales

Regulation of Abattoirs
Regulation of Small Meat Plants
Regulation of Dairies

Provision & Support
of ICT Infrastructure
Provision & Maintenance
of ICT Applications
e-Business & Web Services
Geographical Information Systems
ICT Services to Elected Members
Online Services
to Customers/Citizens

Provision, Management
& Operation of
Building Control System
& Fire Safety
Certification

The Challenges facing Westmeath

Westmeath faces many challenges, both now and into the future. These are, and will be, the demanding realities for the Council, both elected members and staff and indeed all people who live, work, visit or invest in the County.

- **Our proximity to Dublin,**
- **The expected growth of Mullingar and Athlone in line with the National Spatial Strategy,**
- **The impact on the rural areas and on rural development, of changes in agriculture,**
- **The need both to protect the environment and provide for growth,**
and above all,
- **To secure a good and equitable quality of life for all people in Westmeath.**

It is our aim to turn these challenges into opportunities, to work in partnership with all our communities in shaping the future development of Westmeath for the common good.

By 2009, we want to ensure that Westmeath will be a County that:

- **Continues to deliver opportunities for enterprise development, including networks of business parks in the County.**
- **Protects the resources of our county, particularly our waterways and landscapes.**
- **Celebrates and promotes its unique history and culture.**
- **Has Mullingar and Athlone as key urban centres in the Midlands, providing a high quality living environment and services to a growing population.**
- **Has strengthened the network of towns and villages and continues to support the rural population and rural development initiatives.**
- **Provides key access links (including transportation, broadband etc..) and facilities, to support the county's continued development.**
- **Provides arts, cultural, sporting and recreational facilities, making it an attractive place for people to live, work, invest in, or visit the County.**
- **Has vibrant, sustainable and inclusive communities.**

Our Key Priority Themes

It is important to recognise that this Corporate Plan is not a stand-alone document. It is the starting point for the wider process of tackling strategic issues...

The needs and expectations of our Customers/ Citizens are particularly important in framing how we respond to the emerging issues. Our aim is to provide strong, effective, democratic, participative, cohesive and inclusive Local Government Systems and processes in Westmeath.

Our Corporate Plan will cover the five-year term of the current Council, 2005 - 2009 and is based on four broad **Priority Themes**, namely:

- **PLANNING FOR AND INFLUENCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY**
- **BUILDING COMMUNITIES**
- **SERVICE TO OUR CUSTOMERS/CITIZENS**
- **ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY**

These are the Themes that will inform all Local Authority activity in County Westmeath over the next five years.

Under each of the four Themes we have listed a Strategic Goal and several Objectives that are essentially statements of what is required to achieve the stated Goals.

Each Objective has various strategy statements listed beneath them, which gives an indication on a more practical level of what needs to be done, to achieve the Objectives set out in the Plan.

The Plan also sets out some of the desired outcomes under each Objective and lists some of the challenges and opportunities and key deliverables in measuring how well we are succeeding in our efforts.

The Corporate Plan will be the overarching Plan upon which the day-to-day activity and policy formulation of the Westmeath Local Authorities will, in future, be based.

Each year, from 2005 onwards, Operational Plans will be prepared for each functional area of the Local Authorities (e.g. Housing, Water Services, etc...). These Operational Plans will set out the activities to be undertaken towards achieving the overall Goals and Objectives of the Corporate Plan.

Key Priority Theme 1 Planning for and influencing the development of the County

Strategic Goal

“Planning for the economic, social and cultural development of the County.”

OBJECTIVES (How are we going to achieve our Goal)

1.1	Westmeath Local Authorities will shape the development of the County, through : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing public infrastructure and services • Planning and Development control • Promoting development • Seeking new ways of doing business • Engaging with our Customers/Citizens • Assessing the impact of policies and actions • Taking an active role on Westmeath County Development Board 	1.2	The principles of sustainability will be central to all planned development, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensuring that development takes place in the context of the National, Regional and Local strategic framework • working towards the achievement of a safe, clean and healthy environment 	1.3	Social and Cultural activities will be promoted in Westmeath, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a network of quality library service points throughout the County • Active involvement in the planning for Arts, Sports, Recreation, Leisure and Play.
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OUTCOMES (What is the expected result)

1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being leaders and providers in the Community • Better policies and decision-making • Social Inclusion Focus 	1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced Regional Development • A Sustainable Environment 	1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high Quality of Life • Quality Social and Cultural activities
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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapting/responding to change • Managing Information 	1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracting private investment • Obtaining investment and policy support of Government Departments, Agencies and Community Groups • Volume of Planning Applications • Water/Sewerage Resources • Environmental Awareness • Road Programmes Resources 	1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community & Voluntary Sector involvement in Social and Cultural developments • Resourcing enhanced services • Social Inclusion Focus
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KEY DELIVERABLES (in measuring our success)

1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact assessment of policies and actions • Integrated public service delivery • Effective local policies • Implementation of Local Authority Social Inclusion Strategy 	1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with National Spatial Strategy policy • Implementation of Regional Planning Guidelines • Having regard to the County Development Board Strategy • Implementation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Authorities Development Plans - Waste Management Plan - 5 Year Roads Programme - Housing Strategy - Capital Programmes - Library Development Plan including development plan for the Archives Service - Heritage Plan - Local Agenda 21 Plan - Litter Management Plan • Achieving Objectives in Town & Village Plans • Compliance with Building Control and Enforcement Legislation 	1.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementing the Arts Plan • provision of upgraded and/or new facilities
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..... BALANCED DEVELOPMENT

“Supporting, encouraging and facilitating an integrated, co-operative and targeted approach to community development.”

OBJECTIVES (How are we going to achieve our Goal)

<p>2.1 Meeting Customer/Citizens needs and expectations, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing and promoting better health, housing and access to services • Tackling the symptoms and causes of anti-social behaviour (e.g. litter, vandalism, graffiti , etc...) • Providing high quality community facilities • Collaborating with Government Departments, Development Agencies and the Business Community in a targeted, partnership approach • Ensuring Social Inclusion 	<p>2.2 Supporting and maintaining a vibrant local economy, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes of sustainable infrastructure with a commercial core • Promoting employment and prosperity for all 	<p>2.3 High quality public consultation and participation, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving the community in policy formulation and decision-making • Building working partnerships with other agencies
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OUTCOMES (What is the expected result)

<p>2.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers/Citizens satisfaction • Improved Quality of Life • Greater respect by the community for the community • More socially inclusive communities • Focussed management of resources • National Anti-Poverty Strategy embedded in policies and actions 	<p>2.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrant local economy • A high Quality of Life 	<p>2.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better decision-making • Integrated service delivery • Value for money
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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

<p>2.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs of a diverse population • Instilling respect for the community through education and integration • Engage Developers and Business Investors • Market Forces • Funding 	<p>2.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of all Customer/Citizens 	<p>2.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful involvement of all Customer/Citizens • Managing Information
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KEY DELIVERABLES (in measuring our success)

<p>2.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • level of Customers/Citizens/ Community satisfaction • Introduction of Pilot Programmes 	<p>2.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having regard to the County Development Board Strategy • Implementation of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Authorities Development Plans - Local Agenda 21 Plan - Waste Management Plan - Litter Management Plan • Achieving Objectives in Town & Village Plans 	<p>2.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of Community participation/involvement
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..... WE WILL HAVE STRONG COMMUNITIES

..... WE WILL HAVE SATISFIED CUSTOMERS

OBJECTIVES (How are we going to achieve our Goal)

3.1	<p>Quality interaction between Customers/ Citizens, Staff and Elected Representatives</p> <p>by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering services with courtesy, sensitivity and a minimum of delay Supporting the role of the Elected Representatives 	3.2	<p>Use of Information & Communications Technology in service delivery, that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure timely, concise and relevant information for Customers/ Citizens regarding services Allow our Customers/ Citizens ease of use of available information and communication technology 	3.3	<p>Provide clean, accessible public offices that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure privacy for Customers/ Citizens Cater for the requirements of people with special needs Offer “One-Stop-Shop” services. 	3.4	<p>Deliver “Unified Local Authority Services” to our Customers/Citizens</p> <p>by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinating the delivery of services spanning more than one Authority in the County.
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OUTCOMES (What is the expected result)

3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater understanding of Customers/Citizens needs Customers/Citizens satisfaction with service provided 	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater efficiency Ease of access to information and services Customers/Citizens transactions easier 	3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wider Customers/ Citizens satisfaction Integrated service provision 	3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinated quality services Best Practice Model in service delivery
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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for change mentality to enhance Customers/Citizens satisfaction To anticipate and meet Customers/Citizens needs and demands with mutual respect 	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and adaptability 	3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisational capacity 	3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced communication between Authorities Embracing change Staff Development
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KEY DELIVERABLES (in measuring our success)

3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Customer Service Action Plan Increased usage of Local Authorities services 	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Indicators and responsiveness standards Use of Information and Communication Technology in the community 	3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers/Citizens feedback/panel 	3.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers/Citizens feedback Service level agreements
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OBJECTIVES (How are we going to achieve our Goal)

4.1	Having well trained and highly motivated staff, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the Local Authorities Training Plan ensuring valuable staff consultation and participation processes 	4.2	Strong financial management systems, through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implementing the Financial Management System (FMS) maximising the use of available resources 	4.3	High quality management systems, through the use of : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and Communication Technology Performance Management Development Systems (PMDS) Best Practice Model in Management Systems
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OUTCOMES (What is the expected result)

4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New skills and knowledge A more approachable organisation Customers/Citizens satisfaction 	4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value for money service delivery Quality systems 	4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Readily accessibly information Quality service delivery Achievement of objectives
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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building trust Life-long learning 	4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of resources 	4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advances in Technology Customers/Citizens feedback
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KEY DELIVERABLES (in measuring our success)

4.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Training Plan 	4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Financial Management Systems Value for money audits 	4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved work environment Quality of service to Customers/Citizens
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..... A MOTIVATED ORGANISATION

Management Process

This section sets out the various factors and elements necessary to achieve success in implementing our Plan, including...

Critical Success Factors

We are aware of factors which are critical to the successful implementation of this Corporate Plan.

The increasing number of Environmental Directives from the European Union will place an added burden on both staff and financial resources.

Levels of funding from Central Government, in addition to an ability to raise our own revenue, will play an important part in the successful implementation of this Plan.

Our ability to engage and consult with communities, will also determine the success of the Plan.

Support and funding in the area of staff training will be critical to the delivery of cost effective and quality services.

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

Implementation, Monitoring and evaluation is central to the Corporate Planning Process.

These processes will provide indications as to how well we are doing in achieving the Goals and Objectives set out in the Plan.

More importantly, it will inform our customers/ citizens as to our progress.

There will be a number of different mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the progress of the Corporate Plan implementation. These will include:

- Operational Plans,
- Annual Progress Reports
- Annual Reports,
- Performance Management and Development System (PMDS),
- Local Authority Service Indicators,
- Operational Plans Management System.

Operational Plans

The Operational Plans, setting out the ongoing activities of the Local Authorities, will be prepared on an annual basis and will play a key role in the implementation of the Corporate Plan. The Operational Plans will provide real substance to the higher level Goals and Objectives set out in the Plan.

It will allow us to track our performance through internal management systems and the setting of targets. It will provide us with an effective method of managing our performance and in addition, will highlight where resources are being re-directed in order to achieve particular Objectives in the Plan.

Annual Progress Reports

Annual Progress Reports will be used to provide the Elected Representatives with information on the monitoring and assessment of this Plan, on an annual basis.

Annual Progress Reports will be presented to the Elected representatives, during the budgetary process.

In line with our commitment to provide an innovative and flexible approach, the Annual Progress Report will signal any change in direction or emphasis that may be required, in response to changing circumstances at National, Regional or Local level.

Annual Reports

Annual Reports will provide information on the monitoring and assessment of this Plan.

In accordance with the requirements set out in the Local Government Act 2001 (Section 134) details of the Annual Progress Report will also be included in the Annual Report.

Performance Management & Development System (PMDS)

Performance Management & Development is a broad term to describe the way an individual's work performance, career and development needs are managed.

The key features of Performance Management & Development, which are not linked to a reward system, are to:

- Help focus on change and modernisation.
- Provide a structure/process for reviewing performance and the development needs of staff.
- Link roles and efforts to the strategic goals of the organisation.
- Work towards a model of best practice in public service delivery.
- Recognise the key role of staff in achieving objectives.
- Provide a major focus on staff development.

In this regard, a key to the implementation of this Corporate Plan will be the commitment of the Westmeath Local Authorities to manage resources and thereby achieve more effective performance.

Local Authority Service Indicators

One of the cornerstones of the modernisation of Local Authorities has been the principle of value for money.

In this regard, service indicators provide us with a clear and unambiguous statement of how we are performing.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government document "Delivering Value for People – Service Indicators in Local Authorities" provides for 42 separate indicators across a wide range and varied list of headings.

These indicators will provide a complementary mechanism to evaluate the performance of the Westmeath Local Authorities.

In addition, they will provide an additional tool to target and as appropriate, redirect resources to meet the objectives set out in this Plan.

Operational Plans Management System (OPMS)

The Operational Plans Management System is a software application designed to facilitate the monitoring and evaluation of the Operational Plans that will support this Corporate Plan.

The OPMS will be used to monitor and track individual actions set in the Operational Plans. It will be an essential tool for those charged with responsibility for individual actions.

Customer Services Action Plan

Our Customer Services Action Plan sets out information on service areas important to the Community and allows us to concentrate our efforts on making necessary improvements in our service provision. The current Customer Services Action Plan has clear service and response standards (Service indicators) for each functional area, which are reported upon on an annual basis and detailed in the Council's Annual Report.

Appendices

WESTMEATH LOCAL AUTHORITIES REPRESENTATIVE STRUCTURE

At the core of the representative structures of the Westmeath Local Authorities, are the Elected Representatives of Westmeath County Council. Athlone Town Council and Mullingar Town Council (County Councillors and Town Councillors respectively).

The work of the local authorities essentially involves operational matters at Area level and Policy formulation within the Strategic Policy Committees of Westmeath County Council and the Municipal Policy Committee of Athlone Town Council.

Operational



Policy Formulation



AREA COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

Area Committees play an increasingly important role in the context of local authority service delivery at local level....

The Area Committees of the Council are made up of the Elected Representatives for each of the Electoral Areas in the County. They deal mainly with local issues, public service delivery in the area and detailed operational and representational matters. The Area Committees of the Council are supported and facilitated by the Area Directors and staff.

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEES

The establishment of the Strategic Policy Committees (of Westmeath County Council) and the Municipal Policy Committee of Athlone Town Council, puts Elected Representatives at the heart of Local Government policy formulation, implementation and review...

Strategic Policy Committees and the Municipal Policy Committee enhance local democracy by ensuring that local communities and their representatives on these Committees (Sectoral Representatives) can have a say in the provision of local services.

Policies are developed in the spirit of partnership, drawing on the valuable knowledge and expertise of both Elected Representatives and representatives of local sectoral interests, for the benefit of the wider Community.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE WESTMEATH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

A key element in the process of delivering quality public services is developing a well-managed, efficient and customer/citizen focussed organisation.

The Management structure of the Westmeath Local Authorities is such that the organisation can operate on a decentralised local area basis, delivering quality services.

County Manager

Directors of Services

Housing, Social & Cultural Affairs
(also Area Director for Athlone and Athlone Town Council)

Transportation & Infrastructure
(also Area Director for Mullingar and Mullingar Town Council)

**Economic Development, Planning and Environment
and Emergency Services**
(also Area Director for Kilbeggan and Coole)

Community & Enterprise
(Also Director of Westmeath County Development Board)

Head of Finance

AREA OFFICES AND CUSTOMER CARE

The programme of bringing quality services closer to customers/citizens involves the decentralisation of offices to local areas....

The provision of enhanced multi-functional Area Offices in Kilbeggan, Athlone, Castlepollard, and Mullingar, facilitates the delivery of integrated quality services to our customers/citizens at local level. Each Area is managed by an Area Director.

Westmeath Local Authorities are currently establishing a Customer Care Unit staffed in the four main office complexes located in Mullingar, Athlone, Castlepollard and Kilbeggan.

The role of the Customer Care Unit is to provide a “first point of contact” for all Council services.

The unit will represent the organisation in a professional manner, in accordance with the Local Authorities Customer Care Plan.

CO-ORDINATION OF SERVICES BETWEEN AUTHORITIES

Service delivery without boundaries...

The public in their dealings with relevant Local Authorities will receive a seamless Local Authority Service.

While recognising the separate identity and role of each Local Authority in the County, the three Local Authorities (Westmeath County Council, Athlone Town Council and Mullingar Town Council) will work together to ensure that all our customers and citizens will receive the benefits of a unified approach to service delivery.

CORPORATE SUPPORTS

Human Resources, Financial Management and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) are essential ingredients that ensure our capability to deliver quality services.

Human Resources

Having well trained and highly motivated staff is essential for our organisation to deliver the highest standard of services.

The Annual Training and Development Plan, prepared within the partnership process, in addition to the introduction of the Performance Management & Development System (PMDS), will provide staff with new skills and knowledge to deliver a cost effective and quality service to our customers.

Financial Management

The budgetary cycle for Westmeath Local Authorities, as with all Local Authorities, is set by Central Government. The elected representatives have the key role in adopting the annual budget for the Local Authorities.

Increased emphasis is being placed, in particular as part of the Better Local Government Initiative, in obtaining value for money in the delivery of all services provided by Westmeath Local Authorities.

The implementation of our Financial Management System (FMS) allows us to better manage our finances and to channel funding in accordance with the Annual Budget.

In facing the challenges of budgetary constraints and in order to meet the ever changing needs and priorities of the community we serve, we are committed to an innovative and flexible approach.

Information & Communication Technology (I.C.T.)

The use of I.C.T., enables the delivery of quality services, expected, not alone by our customers but also those who visit on business or as tourists.

The use of I.C.T. will provide us with a means of sharing information with our customers which was previously not possible due to the constraints of time, distance and location.

CHANGES SINCE THE LAST PLAN

Significant advances have occurred within Westmeath Local Authorities since the preparation of the last Corporate Plan most notably:

- ◆ The establishment of a Partnership Committee to co-ordinate and promote the development of a consensus approach within Westmeath Local Authorities.

The main objective of Workplace Partnership is to achieve joint ownership by Management, Unions and Staff and to replace the adversarial approach to change with an open and co-operative process, based on effective consultation and participation by all concerned.

Partnership allows management and staff to agree, in a constructive manner, on Action Plans and programmes for the future.

- ◆ The establishment of a Junior County Council that encourages young people to actively engage in the democratic process.
- ◆ The open and participative consultative process leading to the adoption of Town and Village Plans.
- ◆ The establishment of a Senior Management Group, comprising heads of functions and programmes within the Local Authorities, to act as a horizontal layer of Management, with a focus on policy and operational issues influencing the strategic direction of the Local Authorities.
- ◆ The establishment of the Community & Voluntary Forum in Westmeath, to facilitate the representation of and participation by representatives of the Community & Voluntary Sector, in matters relating to the Westmeath Local Authorities and Westmeath County Development Board.

INPUT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE PLAN

The process started on the 20th April 2004, with a joint Management Team/Corporate Policy Group meeting, at which the Draft Framework document for the Plan was presented, discussed and endorsed.

Following this, a Co-ordinator was appointed and a Steering Group established to oversee the development of the Plan.

Numerous briefing session and consultation meetings were held with all staff of the organisation and with external stakeholders, as follows:

Steering Group meetings were held as follows:

5th May 2004, 12th May, 17th May, 19th May,
26th May, 2nd June (Workshop), 9th June,
16th June, 23rd June, 30th June, 7th July, 21st July, 15th September, 13th December 2004

Briefing/Consultation meetings took place between April and December 2004, with the following Stakeholders:

Corporate Policy Group

Management Team

Senior Management Group

Partnership Committee

All staff in the Westmeath Local Authorities through postal contact and Intranet facility

Elected Representatives of Westmeath County Council, Athlone Town Council and Mullingar Town Council

Members of the Junior County Council

Westmeath County Development Board

Westmeath CDB Social Inclusion Measures (SIM) Working Group

Westmeath Community & Voluntary Forum

Steering Group for the Westmeath Local Authorities Social Inclusion Strategy (LASIS)

Westmeath Chambers of Commerce

All in all, over 50 meetings took place in the course of the Corporate Plan development.