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**South Dublin County Council**

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT 2003

LANGUAGE SCHEME

2019 - 2022

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

## Introduction

The Official Languages Act 2003 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a language scheme detailing the services which they will provide:

* through the medium of Irish,
* through the medium of English, and
* through the medium of Irish and English

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not currently provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

In accordance with section 14(3) of the Act, language schemes remain in force for a period of 3 years or until such time as a new scheme is confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, whichever is the later.

## 1.2 Preparation and Content of the Scheme

In the preparation of this scheme, due regard has been given to the Guidelines issued by the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

South Dublin County Councilis guided by the principle that the provision of Irish language services should be based on:

* the level of demand for specific services in the Irish language,
* the importance of a proactive approach to the provision of such services, and
* the resources, including human and financial resources, and the capacity of the body concerned to develop or access the necessary language capability.

This scheme complements the principles of Quality Customer Service and our Customer Charter. It has been formulated with the intention of ensuring that all relevant obligations under the Official Languages Act by the South Dublin County Council will be fully addressed on an incremental basis, through this and future schemes.

This Scheme is predicated on all of the commitments in any previous scheme having been implemented. In the event of commitments in earlier schemes not having been fully implemented to date, this matter is the subject of discussion with the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

The time and effort put in by all concerned in this process is acknowledged and appreciated.

## 1.3 Commencement date of the Scheme

This Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It commences with effect from date to be confirmed on acceptance of Scheme and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years or until a new scheme has been confirmed, whichever is the later.

Chapter 2: Overview of South Dublin County Council

South Dublin County Council was established in 1994. It covers an area of 222.7 sq km. South Dublin County has a population of approximately 278,749 (census 2016) and comprises over 92,000 households. The county has over 7,000 businesses. We provide services to a wide range of stakeholders including the residents of South Dublin, commercial businesses, government departments and state agencies, social partners, local development organisations and community groups. South Dublin County has a young population with an average age of 35.5 years.

## 2.1 Mission and Objectives

South Dublin County Council’s Corporate Plan 2015 – 2019 is a five-year document that sets out the corporate mission, core values, themes and key objectives for that period.

**Mission Statement :**

“To make our county the best possible place in which to live, work and do business. “

The main themes under which the Council operates are:

* Economic Development
* Quality of Life – health and wellbeing
* Social Inclusion
* Citizen Engagement
* Collaboration with others

## 2.2 Main Functions

The Council provides and funds a broad range of services including, but not limited to, housing, roads, walking and cycling routes, parks and playgrounds, libraries, sports facilities, litter control, art centres, enterprise units and community infrastructure and financial supports.

## 2.3 Key Services

The Council is organised into five Directorates for the purpose of delivering services as follows:

* Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Development (including Libraries and the Arts Office)
* Land Use, Planning and Transportation
* Housing, Social and Community Development
* Environment, Water and Climate Change
* Corporate Performance and Change Management

## 2.4 Customers and Clients

There are numerous methods through which the public can contact the council and receive an Irish response, including by phone, letter, email, web, social media, and at public counters.

The primary service points for the Council are located at County Hall, Tallaght and Civic offices Clondalkin. In addition, there is a wide network of community centres and libraries located throughout South Dublin County.

Chapter 3: Details of services currently being provided in English only, in Irish only or bilingually

Please indicate which language your services are provided through, including services in Gaeltacht areas.

|  |
| --- |
| **Provision of Services** **(Please tick the relevant box)** |
| Name of Service | **In English Only** | **In Irish only** | **Bilingually** |
| Council stationery |  |  | ✓ |
| Signage in County Hall , Civic Offices Clondalkin and South Dublin Libraries |  |  | ✓ |
| Replies to letters and emails sent by customers in Irish |  |  | ✓ |
| Telephone recorded messages |  |  | ✓ |
| One to One customer services |  |  | ✓ |
| Press releases and advertisements relating to Irish Language |  |  | ✓ |
| Replies to Council business submitted by elected members in Irish |  |  | ✓ |
| All new place name signage |  |  | ✓ |
| Static content on the Council’s website |  |  | ✓ |
| Static content on the libraries’ website |  |  | ✓ |
| Interactive self-service points in South Dublin Libraries |  |  | ✓ |
| www.fixyourstreet.ie |  |  | ✓ |
| All new commemorative plaques |  |  | ✓ |
| Information materials circulated to schools |  |  | ✓ |
| Annual Reports |  |  | ✓ |
| Corporate Plan |  |  | ✓ |
| Citizen’s Newsletter | ✓ |  |  |
| County Development Plan |  |  | ✓ |
| Standard email disclaimer |  |  | ✓ |
| Applications for dog licenses |  |  | ✓ |
| Parking ticket receipts |  |  | ✓ |
| Static content on the SOURCE website, an online digital archive |  |  | ✓ |
| Irish Classes to adults in library branches |  | ✓ |  |
| Annual Seachtain na Gaeilge Ātha Cliath Theas - a celebration of Irish language and culture |  |  | ✓ |
| Rents App | ✓ |  |  |
| Mindmindr 2019 App | ✓ |  |  |

Chapter 4: Enhancing the provision of Irish Language Services

**The provisions shaded in grey in the table below are mandatory requirements under the Official Languages Act 2003.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Means of communication** **with the public** | **Commitment** |  |
| **Recorded Oral Announcements** |  | **The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingual:** **(a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed;** **(b) Recorded oral announcements transmitted by a public address system;** **(c) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system.****This provision relates to 'recorded' announcements rather than 'live announcements'.****Where a Placenames Order is in force, a public body is required to use the Irish language version of the placename specified in that Order in recorded oral announcements made by it or on its behalf.** | **Mandatory** |
| **Written Communication** | **Letters and Electronic Mail** | **All written communication will be responded to in the official language in which it was received.** | **Mandatory** |
| **Stationery** | **Headings of stationery, including notepaper, compliment slips, fax cover sheets, file covers and other folders, labels and envelopes are provided in Irish or bilingually.** | **Mandatory** |
| **Signage** | **Signage** | **All signage placed by South Dublin County Council or on its behalf must be in Irish or bilingually, in accordance with the regulations (S.I. No.391/2008).** | **Mandatory** |
| **Publications** | **Publications** | **Documents setting out public policy proposals, audited accounts or financial statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English.** | **Mandatory** |
| **Circulars/Mailshots** | **Where a public body communicates in writing or by electronic mail with the general public or a class of the general public for the purpose of furnishing information to the public or the class, the body shall ensure that the communication is in the Irish language or in the English and Irish languages.** | **Mandatory** |
| South Dublin County Council will also undertake the following lists of actions under each service.  |
| **Means of communication with the public** | **Commitment** | **Timeline** **By end Yr 1/** **Yr 2 / Yr 3** |
| **Oral / Written Communication** | [**Reception**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/reception.docx) | Customer Care staff will be given appropriate training and encouraged to participate further in an Irish Language workplace training programme in order to enhance their Irish Language skills so they can be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish. | **Year Two** |
| South Dublin County Council will put up signage welcoming the use of Irish by the public in their business with the Council and in particular the Council will ensure that such signage is clearly displayed to the public at every public counter. | **Year One** |
| [**Face to Face/Counter Service**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/face-to-face-communication.docx) | Customer care agents will also be in a position to acknowledge a request for a service in Irish and be able to direct the caller to an Irish-speaking officer in the relevant service area. Where there is no Irish speaker available in the relevant service area, the answer will be obtained from an officer in the relevant service area by an Irish - speaking agent within the Council who will then inform the customer. | **Year One** |
| [**Switchboard**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/switchboard.docx) | Customer care agents will be in a position to acknowledge a request for a service in Irish and be able to direct the caller to an Irish-speaking officer in the relevant service area. | **Year One** |
| An Irish voicemail service is available for customers. | **Ongoing** |
| [**Telephone communications with the public**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/telephone-communications-with-the-public.docx) | Customer care agents will be in a position to acknowledge a request for a service in Irish and be able to direct the caller to an Irish-speaking officer in the relevant service area. | **Year One** |
| [**Recorded Oral Announcements**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/pre-recorded-messages.docx) | All recorded phone greetings and out of hours messages will be bilingual and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure compliance. | **Ongoing** |
| [**Live announcements**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/live-announcements.docx) | Where appropriate and possible, live announcements will be made bilingually. | **Year Two** |
| **Written Communication** | Written communication received by post or email from the public, other organisations or elected representatives will be responded to in the official language in which it was received. The service in Irish should not be of a lower standard than the service in English. The council has a system in place to record all correspondence received in Irish | **Ongoing** |
| [**Information Leaflets/ Brochures**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/information-leaflets.docx) | Where brochures or information leaflets are provided as separate Irish and English versions, equal prominence will be given to both versions at public locations. | **Ongoing** |
| [**Application Forms**](http://www.ahg.gov.ie/en/Irish/OfficialLanguagesAct2003/FileLinks/Application%20Forms.pdf) | Where applications are provided as separate Irish and English versions, equal prominence will be given to both versions at public locations. | **Ongoing** |
| **Public Meetings** | The Council will conduct its public meetings in both English and Irish. Agendas will be published in English. However, all motions and questions submitted in Irish are replied to bilingually on the Council’s meeting administration system (CMAS) and available to the public. | **Ongoing** |
| **Media** | [**Press Releases**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/press-releases.docx) | Press notices and releases relating to the Irish Language will be issued bilingually as a matter of course. | **Year One** |
| Notices and advertisements published in local/national newspapers where the subject matter relates specifically to Irish language issues will be published bilingually.  | **Ongoing** |
| [**Media Spokespersons**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/media-spokesperson.docx) | South Dublin County Council will endeavour to put forward a native Irish speaker for any relevant media requests. | **Year Two** |
| [**Speeches**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/speeches.docx) | South Dublin County Council will include the Irish language in speeches given by representatives of the Mayor’s Office. | **Ongoing** |
| **Social Media** | Irish language posts will be used to promote any area or event related to the Irish language. | **Year One** |
| **Information Technology** | [**Email**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/email.docx) | A generic email address for Irish queries is available gaeilge@athcliaththeas.ie. The Council will ensure that such queries are addressed in accordance with the Council’s Customer Care Policy. | **Ongoing** |
| [**Websites**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/websites.docx) | The Council will continue to update the static content on the Council and library websites. | **Ongoing** |
| [**Computer Systems**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/computer-systems.docx) | The Council’s staff intranet will include an Irish Language Resource Section for staff. | **Year Two** |
| [**Interactive Services**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/interactive-services.docx) | Any new online interactive services will be assessed and, where appropriate, introduced simultaneously in Irish and English. | **Ongoing** |
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## Chapter 5: Improving Language Capability

## 6.1 Recruitment

The recruitment of staff with the appropriate level of competence in the Irish language in each area of work of South Dublin County Council will be the primary means of optimising the availability of services through Irish. Our recruitment policy, which is subject to the framework of agreed national recruitment procedures, will have regard to the need to improve Irish language capability on an incremental basis.

All new staff will be provided with an induction pack containing a copy of our agreed scheme in order to ensure that they are made aware of our commitments under the legislation.

## 6.2 Training and Development

South Dublin County Council, is committed to making available opportunities for staff to attend appropriately accredited Irish language training courses, as resources permit. All staff will be advised of facilities/opportunities to improve their competency in Irish.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Commitment** | **Timeline** **By end Yr 1/** **Yr 2 / Yr 3** |
| **Improving Irish Language Capability** | [**Recruitment**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/recruitment.docx) | South Dublin County Council will continue to review which posts require competency in Irish (both written and oral) throughout the organisation. Where required, the Council will allocate staff competent in the Irish language across departments to support the delivery of services through Irish. | **Ongoing** |
| [**Training**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/training.docx) | South Dublin County Council is committed to improving the knowledge and skills of employees to ensure that all staff are actively encouraged and given the opportunity to improve their Irish language competence. Audits of the demand for services through Irish will be carried out on a regular basis by the Corporate Performance and Change Management Directorate and will inform our Training Plan. | **Ongoing** |
| [**Participation in language promotion activities /Provision of resources**](http://www.ahrrga.gov.ie/app/uploads/2017/01/language-promotion-activities.docx) | Irish language materials will be made available to staff through South Dublin County Council’s staff intranet to facilitate the development and delivery of services through Irish.    | **Year Two** |
| Recognise staff undertaking Irish language training so as to encourage and promote the development of services through Irish by staff, and to recognise the endeavours of staff.  | **Ongoing** |
|  | Support for staff who wish to undertake training courses in the Irish Language through the Scheme of Financial Assistance provides support. | **Ongoing** |

Chapter 6: Monitoring and Review

The implementation of the scheme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by South Dublin County Council’s Communications Unit. The contact person for the scheme will be the Communications Manager.

A formal system for monitoring requests for services through Irish will be available and recorded in our Annual Report.

Chapter 7: Publicising of Agreed Scheme

This scheme will be publicised both internally and externally, through a press release initially. A bilingual version of the scheme will be made available on our website and circulated to all staff and appropriate agencies. Other means to publicise the scheme may also be used.

In addition, we will take every opportunity in our day to day interaction with customers to promote and publicise the services we provide in Irish through the following means:

* directly informing customers on a proactive basis of the option of conducting business with us through Irish, for example, by the display of notices at reception areas indicating the Irish language services that are available;
* prominently listing these services on our website;
* signifying on selected guidelines, leaflets and application forms that these documents are also available in Irish, unless presented bilingually;
* giving equal prominence to Irish and English language materials.

 A copy of the agreed scheme will be forwarded to the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

Appendices

The following performance statistics will be monitored and delivered to elected members at each monthly Council meeting.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Indicator | Frequency  | Responsibility |
| The number of staff who are able to speak Irish so as to maintain a central directory of Irish speaking staff on the staff intranet | Monthly | Corporate Performance and Change Management |
| Monitor the number of Customer Care Queries received in Irish | Monthly  | Corporate Performance and Change Management |
| The number of visitors to the Irish language version of the Council’s website | Monthly | Corporate Performance and Change Management |