



Údaráis Áitiúla Chill Mhantáin

Wicklow Local Authorities

Irish Language Scheme

2009 - 2012

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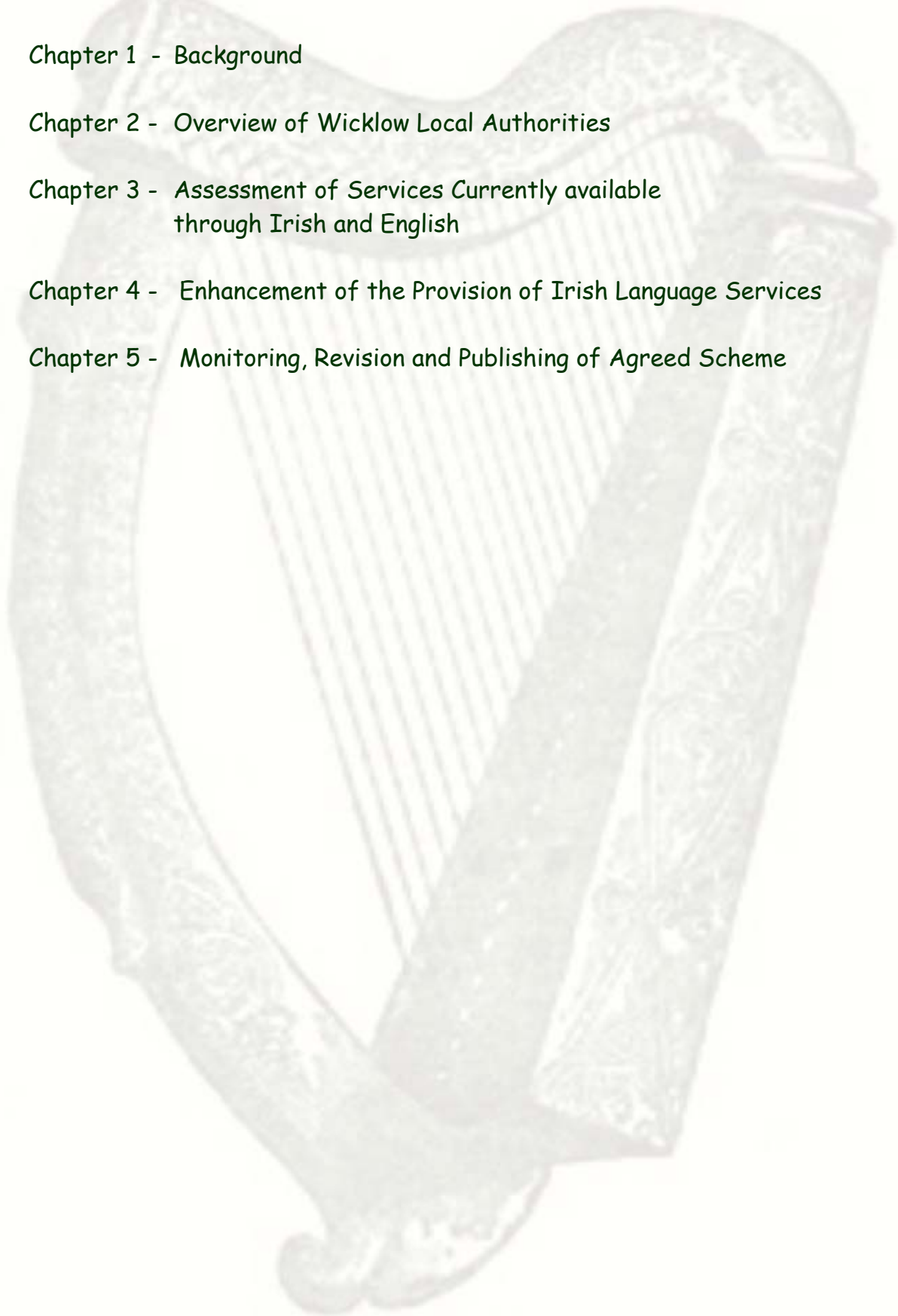
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## **Chapter 1 - Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This Irish Languages Scheme is prepared under Section 11 of the Official Language Act, 2003 by Wicklow Local Authorities.

The Official Language Act, 2003 provides a statutory framework for the delivery of public services through the Irish Language.

Section 11 provides for the preparation by a public body of a statutory scheme specifying the services it proposes to provide:

- Through the medium of Irish
- Through the medium of English
- Through the medium of English and Irish and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the public body through the medium of the Irish Language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

This scheme was prepared in accordance with the Guidelines under Section 12 of the Official Languages Act, 2003.

Wicklow Local Authorities published notice in March, 2007 of its intention to prepare a Draft Scheme under Section 13 (1)(a) of the Official Languages Act in local newspapers circulating in the area. No responses were received in response to the advertisement.

### **1.2 Commencement Date**

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The scheme is commenced with effect from 11 May 2009 and shall remain in force for a period of three years from this date or until a new Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to section 15 of the Act, whichever is the later.

## Chapter 2 - Overview of Wicklow Local Authorities

County Wicklow has an estimated population of 126,000 and is one of the most rapidly growing counties in Ireland. As part of the Greater Dublin Area, the county is subject to many of the pressures emanating from the expansion of the capital city.

There is a strong and vibrant Irish language community in County Wicklow. There are currently 7 Gaelscoileanna and 2 second level Gaelcholáistí in the County.

The Bray-based group, An Béal Binn supports and promotes the use of the Irish language through drama, singing, poetry reading and social events for families. There are also a number of Coistí Glór na nGael throughout the county promoting the use of the Irish language.

### Vision Statement

*Our vision is for County Wicklow to be a cohesive community of people enjoying distinct but interrelated urban and rural environments; where natural surroundings and important resources are protected; where opportunities abound to live and work in a safe atmosphere, allowing people to enjoy the benefits of well paid jobs, a variety of housing choices, excellent public services, ample cultural and leisure opportunities, and a healthy environment.*

### 2.1 Core Values

In fulfilling our mission our decision will be underpinned by the following core values:

- Customer Orientation - to develop a culture of customer service and continually monitor customer expectations against achievements and resources.
- Honesty/Accountability/ Openness - to adhere to the highest standards of integrity, transparency and accountability in the performance of various functions.
- Staff - we value our staff and are committed to their personal and professional growth.
- Partnership - we believe that working with others, especially our staff, yields the best results.
- Quality/Value for Money - aiming to deliver cost-effective, efficient services to the highest quality.



- Respect for cultural and ethnic diversity - to ensure that each citizen is treated properly, fairly and impartially.
- Innovation and continuous improvement - we value innovation and team work and will use the benefits of new technologies to enhance the quality of our work.

## 2.2 Services

Services are provided by Wicklow Local Authorities under the following five Management Sections which are standard to all Local Authorities:

- **Housing and Corporate Estate**

*Goal:* To plan, provide for and facilitate the provision of sustainable, high quality social, affordable and cost effective housing accommodation, to meet the existing and likely future needs responsive to the requirements of all categories of persons in the county.

- **Transportation and Roads Infrastructure**

*Goal:* To promote and facilitate the provision of all modes of transport in an integrated manner and so to foster social and economic development, having due regard to environmental considerations, sustainable development and social inclusion.

- **Planning and Economic Development**

*Goal:* To provide for proper and effective planning, balancing the need for sustainable development, the rights of individuals, the protection of the environment and the social and economic needs of each area.

- **Water and Environmental Services**

*Goal:* To protect and enhance the natural environment of County Wicklow in accordance with the principles of sustainable and balanced development, in partnership with all sections of the community, having regard to national and EU policies and programmes.

- **Community Cultural and Social Development**

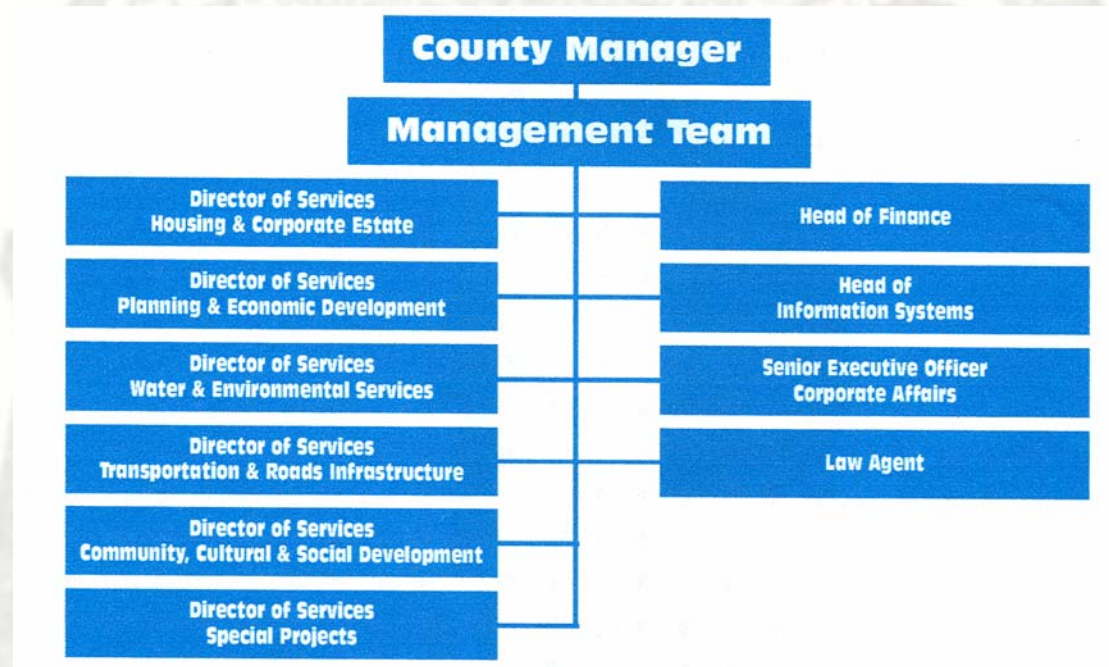
*Goal:* To provide a quality service to the community by identifying, developing and implementing policies and objectives which will aid in initiating and expanding the role of the local authority in the social, cultural and community development fields.

## 2.3 Support Services

- Human Resources
- Motor Tax
- Finance
- Corporate Services
- Information Systems

➤ Civil Defence

2.4 Organisational Structure



**Committees of the Council**

Wicklow County Council Members (24)

Corporate Policy Group

Strategic Policy Committees

**Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs)**

The role of the Strategic Policy Committee is to formulate, develop and review policies which are then presented to the elected members of the Council. Wicklow County Council has five SPCs:

- Community, Cultural and Social Development
- Housing and Corporate Estate
- Planning and Economic Development
- Transportation and Roads Infrastructure
- Water and Environmental Services



### **Customers/Clients**

- The Minister and Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Other Government Departments and Ministerial Offices
- The general public
- Community Groups
- Social Partners
- Local and Regional Authorities
- Organisations of the EU
- Private Sector Service Providers
- Local Private Businesses

## **Chapter 3 - Assessment of level Services currently available through Irish**

### **Equality**

As far as practicable, communications services are conducted bilingually. The major documents are printed in Irish and English simultaneously

### **Public Interface**

Several staff members are available and competent in Irish to assist Reception and front line staff, to allow customers conduct their business in Irish when requested.

### **Complaints and Appeals**

Complaints and Appeals systems are currently being upgraded and cognisance is being taken to making them available bilingually.

### **Translation**

Major documents are translated using Translator services on the list of accredited translators issued by Foras na Gaeilge. However, day to day translation of correspondence is carried out in-house.

### **Training**

Training of staff in Irish Language skills is available for staff as part of Staff Training and Development programme.

### **Website**

Where documents are available in Irish and English both versions are posted to the Website i.e. [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie)

### **Public Notices**

Where applicable, notices issued to the public are being issued in both Irish and English.

### **Information Leaflets**

Leaflets which are available bi-lingually from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government are available in Wicklow Local Authorities, i.e. Motor Tax and Environmental Information Leaflets from ENFO.



### **Signage**

New signage is being produced bilingually in accordance with the provisions of Official Languages Act 2003 (Section 9) Regulations 2008.

### **Assessment of Services provided in English only**

- Some Departments within Wicklow County Council have no forms available in Irish.
- Pre-recorded oral announcements have to date been in English only
- Receptionists/switchboard operators give the name of the Council in English only
- eMail messages and disclaimers go out in English only

## Chapter 4 - Enhancement of the Provision of Irish Language Services

Over the lifetime of this scheme, Wicklow Local Authorities will;

- Establish an Irish Language working Group to promote the language objectives and review the scheme on a regular basis.
- Establish a placenames group which will liaise with the Planning and Housing sections regarding the naming of new, or renaming of existing developments.
- Produce a bilingual data base of place names in County Wicklow by the end of 2010.

Receptionists/switchboard operators are the first points of contact with the public. It shall be the policy of Wicklow Local Authorities to ensure that standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice applies in this area, which is that by end 2009:

- Reception/public counter staff are able to give the name of the public body in Irish.
- They are at least familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.
- Suitable arrangements are in place so that they can put members of the public in touch, without delay, with the office or officer responsible for offering the service required through Irish, where available.
- From the beginning of the scheme, all written press releases in relation to the Irish language will be issued bilingually and circulated to both the English and Irish language media. 10% of other press releases, increasing to 15% from the beginning of 2011, will be issued bilingually and circulated to both the English and Irish language media.
- The standard disclaimer which accompanies all e-mails will be bilingual.
- The Local Authorities will conduct a survey of language capabilities of staff and a list of those competent to deal with queries through Irish will be made available.

*Target: End 2009*

### Training and development

- Language awareness will be included in induction courses for new employees and customer care training.
- High profile/cultural events will have some element of bilingualism
- All staff and Councillors will be encouraged and given opportunity to use and improve their Irish language skills for example through
- making a Gaeleagras scholarship available to staff each year.
- Staff will be made aware of the services available through both English and Irish languages, by way of regular email updates.

### Publicising of Irish language services

- The existing Countywide newsletter which is circulated to every household in the County will be used as a means of advising the customer of the availability of Irish language services.
- Notices of availability of Irish language services will also be published in prominent locations on [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie) website.

*Target: End of 2009*

### IT Services

- Existing computer systems will be made compatible with bilingual requirements in accordance with National IT strategies and policies and as soon as resources and pressures on other work in the IT area allow.
- Any new computer software purchased will be compatible with the Irish and English Languages in line with national IT strategies.
- Existing interactive on-line services available in English only will be upgraded to be made bilingual during the lifetime of this scheme.
- Any new interactive on-line services will be introduced bilingually simultaneously.

### Written documentation

- All new application forms, information leaflets and brochures produced by Wicklow Local Authorities will be made available bilingually from the end of the scheme. These documents will be made available within the one cover except in cases where this is not practicable because of the size or nature of the document.
- Existing application forms, information leaflets and brochures produced by Wicklow Local Authorities in English only will be made available in both languages on renewal of stock from the end of 2011. These documents will be made available within the one cover

except in cases where this is not practicable because of the size or nature of the document.

#### One-to-one services

- From the end of the scheme, Wicklow Local Authorities will provide a one to one counter service from the library service and from the planning public counters in Council buildings.
- In the event that no member of the library staff is available to deal with a request for service through Irish, the caller will be transferred to a member of staff at another library branch.

#### Website

The following sections of the Wicklow.ie website will be made available bilingually by the end of the scheme : Contact Us, Recruitment, Council members, Finance and Staff pages.

- An Irish webpage will be developed to bring together links to all Irish language content on [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie) website.
- Wicklow Local Authorities will address other websites for which it is responsible, for example town council websites, in its second and subsequent language schemes.
- Should Wicklow Local Authorities introduce any new websites during the course of the scheme, these will be bilingual.

*Target: End of the scheme*



## **Chapter 5 – Monitoring and Revision and Publishing of Agreed Scheme**

### **5.1 Monitoring and Revision**

The Management Team of Wicklow Local Authorities, together with the Working Group will be responsible for monitoring the effective operation of this scheme.

The daily monitoring will be undertaken by those who are responsible for the scheme in their own areas with the assistance of the Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge.

### **5.2 Publishing of Agreed Scheme**

The contents of this scheme, along with the commitments and provision of the scheme, will be published to the general public by means of:

- Press Release
- Official Launch of the Scheme
- Advertising of provisions of the Scheme
- Circulating to appropriate agencies and public bodies
- Publishing on [www.wicklow.ie](http://www.wicklow.ie) website

A copy of this Scheme has been forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.