



South Dublin County Council

**OFFICIAL LANGUAGES
ACT 2003
LANGUAGE SCHEME
2020 - 2023**

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

1.1 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 Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, whichever is the later.

South Dublin County Council is committed to implementing an Irish Language Scheme that will offer quality services for our Irish speaking citizens and visitors to our County. Since the introduction of the first scheme, the Council has made significant progress in the provision of services in Irish. A summary of these achievements are set out in Chapter 3. However, we also recognise that there are areas which we need to improve on and these are set out in Chapter 4. The implementation of this scheme and the use of the Irish language will be measured against performance indicators which are set out at the end of the scheme.

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 Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. In addition, there has been a comprehensive process of consultation with relevant stakeholders.

South Dublin County Council is 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 Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. It commences with effect from **21 December 2020** 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.

The Council operates six Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), including the Arts, Culture, Gaeilge, Heritage and Libraries SPC. The purpose of Strategic Policy Committees (SPC) is to formulate, develop, monitor and review policies which relate to the functions of South Dublin County Council and to advise the Council accordingly.

2.1 Mission and Objectives

South Dublin County Council's Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 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 a vibrant and inclusive place for the people who live, visit, work, and do business here, now and for the future.”

The main themes under which the Council operates are:

- Economic development
- Quality service delivery
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Social inclusion, equality and human rights
- Citizen engagement
- Health and well-being

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

At present the vast majority of all written and oral communication between the public and South Dublin County Council is provided mainly through the medium of English. The Council currently provides the following services/information listed below bilingually or in Irish to the public:

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			✓
A directory of staff available to conduct business in Irish is available on the staff intranet.			
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 (www.deisighdoshraid.ie)			✓
All new commemorative plaques			✓
Information materials circulated to schools			✓
Annual Reports			✓
Corporate Plan			✓
Irish Language Section in the Council’s citizen newsletter ‘South Dublin County Today’			✓
Irish articles included in the staff newsletter ‘South Circular’			✓
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 Átha 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		<p>The following recorded oral announcements will be in Irish or bilingual:</p> <p>(a) Recorded oral announcements provided on the telephone when the offices of the public body are closed;</p> <p>(b) Recorded oral announcements transmitted by a public address system;</p> <p>(c) Recorded oral announcements created and transmitted by means of a computerised messaging system or a computerised telephone answering system.</p> <p>This provision relates to 'recorded' announcements rather than 'live announcements'.</p> <p>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.</p>	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	Mandatory

		statements, annual reports and strategy statements will be published simultaneously in Irish and English.	
	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
An Ghaeltacht	Gaeltacht Placenames	The official placenames of Gaeltacht areas will be used by the public body in accordance with the legislation.	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	The telephone/public counters are the main method by which Irish-speaking members of the public communicate or initiate business with the Council. Enquiries in Irish are welcome and encouraged through the Council's Customer Care Unit, where there are different phone numbers to dial depending on whether the caller wishes to speak English or Irish.	Ongoing
		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.	Ongoing
		South Dublin County Council will continue to 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	Customer care agents will also be in a position to acknowledge a request for a service in Irish and be able to direct the	Ongoing

		customer 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.	
		The Library Services will ensure that there is at least one member of staff in each library available to provide a bilingual service (subject to personnel availability).	Ongoing
	Switchboard	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. 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
		All customer care agents will answer external callers on the telephone with a bilingual greeting (where appropriate).	Ongoing
		An Irish voicemail service is available for customers.	Ongoing
	Telephone communications with the public	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. 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
		All customer care agents will answer external callers on the telephone with a bilingual greeting as a minimum (where appropriate).	Ongoing
	Recorded Oral Announcements	All recorded phone greetings and out of hours messages will be bilingual and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure compliance.	Ongoing

	Live announcements	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	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
		Information leaflets will contain a short introduction and summary in the Irish language (where appropriate).	Ongoing
	Application Forms	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
		Irish Language training will be made available to Councillors interested in improving their competency in the use of the Irish language.	Year One
		Irish language materials/resources will be available to elected members through membersnet to facilitate the development and delivery of services through Irish.	Year One
	Publications	In relation to the mandatory commitment given above regarding publications to be published simultaneously in Irish and English - the normal practice of the Council is that the Irish and English versions will be produced together in one document.	Ongoing
		It may be necessary in some cases, such as when the original document is very large, to issue separate Irish and English versions for a	

		particular publication. If separate Irish and English versions are produced, each document will contain a statement that a version is available in the other language.	
Media	Press Releases	Press notices and releases relating to the Irish Language will be issued bilingually and simultaneously as a matter of course.	Year One
		The Council will increase the number of press releases issued through the Irish language by 10%.	Ongoing
		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	South Dublin County Council will put forward a person competent in the Irish language for any relevant media requests.	Year Two
	Speeches	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	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	The Council will continue to update the static content on the Council and library websites in both Irish and English.	Ongoing
		The Council will promote the use of the Irish version of the Fix Your Street website www.deisighdoshraid.ie .	Ongoing
		The Irish Information Page which is available on the Council's website www.sdcc.ie will be regularly updated to promote services and events available to the public in Irish.	Ongoing
	Computer Systems	The Council's staff intranet will include an Irish Language Resource Section for staff.	Year Two
	Interactive Services	Any new online interactive services will be introduced simultaneously in Irish and English (where appropriate).	Ongoing

Signage	Signage	The Council's public image and corporate identity is bilingual. The Council's title, corporate image and any related design will also be bilingual on all signs and notices on or in its property and publications. The text in Irish shall be as prominent, visible and legible as the text in English in accordance with the legislation.	Ongoing
		All newly provided and replacement public information signs for which the Council is responsible, including road signage, external and internal signs at buildings owned by the Council, will be bilingual in accordance with the legislation.	Ongoing
Placenames	Placenames	Planning for all new developments is approved by South Dublin County Council. Both the Irish and English Place names are registered on the Chief Executive Order as the official names.	Ongoing
		The Councils Land Use, Planning and Transportation Strategic Policy Committee are currently examining a protocol for the naming of bridges/parks/plazas in South Dublin County. The committee will take into consideration the importance of Irish Language placenames which are a link to the history and heritage of an area.	Ongoing
		The Council has produced a database of South Dublin Placenames and Streetnames and has published a document that provides a list of bilingual placenames and streetnames. The Council will continue to update this database with all new developments.	Ongoing
		The Council will seek advice from the Placenames Branch of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media who provide an advice service on place names if required.	Ongoing
Gaelscoileanna and Other Irish Language Organisations in South Dublin County	Gaelscoileanna and Other Irish Language Organisations in South Dublin County	South Dublin County Council continues to recognise and acknowledge the use of Irish/bilingualism in Gaelscoileanna and other Irish Language Organisations including Áras Chrónáin, Ionad Cultúrtha and Gaelphobal Thamhlachta.	Ongoing

Chapter 5: Improving Language Capability

5.1 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.

5.2 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	<p>South Dublin County Council will continue to review which posts require competency in Irish (both written and oral) throughout the organisation. The Council will allocate staff competent in the Irish language across departments to support the delivery of services through Irish.</p> <p>Contact details for Irish language services will be provided on the Council's website and intranet.</p>	Ongoing
	Training	<p>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.</p>	Ongoing

		<p>The Council will include language awareness as part of both the induction process and ongoing training so as to ensure that new and existing staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. understand why the Council implements a bilingual policy b. understand the context and background to the policy; and c. are fully informed about how the policy will affect their work. 	
	Participation in language promotion activities /Provision of resources	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.

Guidance and a summary of this scheme will be issued to all staff on the nature and purpose of the scheme and its requirements and on operating its measures, including the uses of translation services, good practice, and ways in which both Irish speaking and non-Irish speaking officers can help the public to obtain a good service.

Progress reports on the Irish Language Scheme will be provided to the Council's Arts, Heritage, Gaeilge and Libraries Strategic Policy Committee.

Complaints

The Council values comments from members of the public and would wish to know if things go wrong or if they can be improved. The Council would wish to do everything it can to meet genuine concerns and it has an official complaints procedure.

Complaints received in Irish or concerning the standard of Irish language services are processed as part of the Council's corporate complaint procedure. The procedure outlines our standards for dealing with complaints promptly and efficiently as part of our commitment to provide quality customer services to all members of the public.

Complaints can be sent by email to Gaeilge@athcliaththeas.ie or by post to –

**Corporate Performance and Change Management,
South Dublin County Council,
County Hall,
Tallaght,
Dublin 24.**

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.

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	Strategic Policy Committee	Corporate Performance and Change Management
Monitor the number of Customer Care Queries received in Irish	Monthly Council Meeting	Corporate Performance and Change Management
The number of visitors to the Irish language version of the Council's website	Strategic Policy Committee	Corporate Performance and Change Management