



SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

ICLRD Fifth Annual Conference:

Preparing for Economic Recovery: Planning Ireland – North and South, out of recession

1

SERVICE DELIVERY FOR CITIZENS IN CHALLENGING ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

NEW ATTITUDES AND APPROACHES IN PROVISIONS OF SHARED SERVICES

Hubert Kearns
Sligo County Manager
21/1/2010

2

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

INTRODUCTION

- Shared Services in Local Government
 - Sligo Local Authorities
 - Regional Level
 - National Level
- Scope for savings/efficiencies
- How to ensure progress
- Conclusions and future possibilities

3

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

COUNTY SLIGO

- Context**

Population 2006	60,900
Area	1,829 sq. kms
Pop. density per sq km	33.3
Length of Coastline	195 kms

4

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

- Two Local Authorities – Separate Legal Entities**

	Est.	Pop.	El. Members
Sligo Borough Council	1612	17,900	12
Sligo County Council	1899	60,900	25

- 8 Members serve on both Councils**
- Sligo Borough responsible for a limited range of local government functions within Sligo Town Principally Housing, Roads, Planning, Parks and Burial Grounds.**

5

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

SOME FINANCIALS

	Budget 2010	Est. income from Comm Property/Rates	Dependency on State Funding
	€M	€M	
Sligo County Council	96.3	4.51	57.4%
Sligo Borough Council	37.9	6.88	25.0%
	134.2	11.39	

Service Stats end '09	Housing No. of rented	Roads KMs public	Planning No. apps '09
Sligo County Council	1,047	2,516	605
Sligo Borough Council	1,003	72	83
	2,050	2,588	688

6

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES

HISTORICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONTEXT

- ▶ Strong sense of separate identities - particularly strong in the Borough
- ▶ Very little joint working or interaction
- ▶ Significant differences in organisational culture between the two authorities
- ▶ The decline in relative importance of Sligo Town since circa 1870
- ▶ To some extent an urban/rural divide
- ▶ The priorities and the perspective many local government issues are quite different in large urban areas as opposed to rural areas
- ▶ Much greater dependency culture in Urban Area

7

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES



SHARED SERVICE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 00s

Finance

Both County and Borough Finances under County Head of Finance

- ▶ Operate at two locations (County Hall and Town Hall) but work as a single department

County Hall:

- All Payments, Payroll and Pensions (including printing of cheques)
- Budget and Annual Accounts preparation
- Treasury Management and operation of Financial System and Bank reconciliation

Town Hall:

- Income - Billing, Accrual collection and enforcement
- Commercial Rates Management

- ▶ Benefits include better use of specialist staff and sharing of knowledge
- ▶ Change gradual but smooth, retaining part in Borough assisted in the process
- ▶ Income collection is operated from Town Hall where most small transactions, parking fines etc. occur and location of largest rates operation

8

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES



Shared Services in Sligo Local Authorities

Finance	-	Shared
Information Technology	-	Shared
Human Resources	-	Shared
Health and Safety Services	-	Shared
Architects Department (mainly urban based)	-	Shared
Parks Department	-	Shared
Corporate Services	-	Mostly shared
Community Services	-	Mostly shared
Planning and Land Use Services	-	Mostly shared
Roads	-	Mostly shared
Housing	-	Partly shared
Burial Grounds	-	Separate

9

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES



Shared Services in Sligo Local Authorities

Roads

- County based Road Design Office prepares all major design for both authorities
- Roads department operates through separate geographically based work units
- Borough Council Roads Engineer is also District Engineer for the Sligo-Strandhill Local Electoral Area in the County

10

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES



Shared Services in Sligo Local Authorities

- **Housing**
 - Policy and Certain Specialists Shared
 - Most operations managed separately
- **Burial Grounds**
 - Borough - Direct Provision
 - County - Joint Ventures with local Communities
- **Water Services**
 - Section 83 of Local Government Act, 2001 transferred all Borough Water Services to the County
 - Implementation was completed in 2004

11

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES



CHANGE ISSUES

What facilitated Change:

- Single Manager (since 1940s)
- The Sligo Local Authorities concept Section 71 of Local Government Act, 2001 'unified local government service'
- Staffing and Organisational Arrangements - Section 159 of Local Government Act, 2001 Staff required to work for all Councils in the county and for any other body where we have an arrangement

12

SLIGO LOCAL AUTHORITIES



SHARING WITH OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

National

- **Local Government Management Agency** - National IT and HR Shared Services Agency)
- **National Building Agency** – specialist building services
- **Office of Local Authority Management (OLAM)**
- High Level of policy co-ordination at National Level eg. Public Lighting
- Non Principal Private Residence Charge (€200)
 - Single national collection system for all local authorities. Law passed July 2009 €58m collected to date with no additional staff

13



SHARING WITH OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Regional

- **CAMP** - Regional Emergency Services contact and call out system
- **Regional Emergency Management Committee** - includes Police and Health Authorities
- Connaught Waste Management Plan
- Issuing of Waste Permits for the region by Mayo County Council
- Administration of Home Choice Loans
- Regional Water Laboratory Castlebar

Other

- Cross border road improvement projects with contiguous counties
 - Curlew Mountain Road Project N4
- Supplying Water
- Charlestown/Bellaghy Local Area Plan with Mayo County Council County Council
- River Basin Management Plans
- Shared procurement in some instances

14



Factors which assisted in achievement of Shared Service delivery

- Having the mandate and authority
- General Staff support
- Political support would have helped

15



Benefits of Shared Services

- Good use of specialist services
- Achieving economies of scale
- Co-ordination of services to customers
- Achieving efficiencies and avoiding duplication

16



Some conclusions

- Within **Sligo Local Authorities**
 - High Level of Sharing
 - Work is ongoing
- At **Regional Level**
 - Very limited sharing
- At **National Level**
 - Sharing at National policy level
 - Some sharing at back office level
 - Little sharing at front-line
 - NPPR could show the way forward
 - Domestic Water Charges/Property Tax will be a big test

17



So where do we go from here?

- McCarthy Report (not really sharing)
 - 22 Councils instead of 88
 - Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon Councils sharing/joined?
 - Population of three Council areas still less than 150,000
- Local Government White Paper due 2010

18



- Across whole of Government there exists a multiplicity of Agencies
- Problem even bigger at this level
- No common IT Platform or Systems
- Examples
 - Council Rents/Welfare Payments
 - Motor Tax enforcement

19



Concluding Remarks

- Shared Services offer considerable scope for savings/efficiency gains
- But we need
 - Clear Legal Mandate
 - Strong Political Support
 - Leadership by Management
 - Trust
 - Good information systems to monitor progress
- Pressure on Public Finances should ensure progress
- Level of local democracy and willingness to pay

20

