

MAYO MAKES ITS MARK WITH GREATER EFFICIENCY STRATEGY

The vision of Mayo's Efficiency Strategy, which is the first initiative of its kind for the local authority sector, is to make the council a leading exemplar organisation in efficiency to help promote best practices whilst focusing on new and innovative ways of service delivery, according to Tom Gilligan, Director of Services, Mayo County Council.

Efficiency is critical in times of limited resources, and local authorities do not have unlimited funds, and especially now with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, there is a need to maximise and make use of the resources that they operate.

Mayo County Council's Efficiency Strategy, which has been in operation for over a year now, is proving very useful in helping to focus the council on areas where efficiencies and savings can be made. Areas where the strategy has focused on have centred mainly on procurement, buy-versus-hire, motor tax payments online, efficiency reporting and housing stock.

To highlight the need and awareness for greater efficiency, Mayo County Council renamed its Procurement Unit (established in 2009) the Procurement & Efficiency Unit.

With the establishment of the new unit, which comprises four team members and is located within the Housing, Roads, Services Development Directorate, the ultimate vision is to make Mayo County Council an exemplar organisation in efficiency that helps promote best practices, whilst focusing on new and innovative ways of service delivery.

ENERGY EFFICIENCIES

When people think of efficiencies, an obvious reference point is energy efficiencies. Under the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan, the public sector was mandated to improve its energy efficiency by 33% by 2020.

In addition, the Climate Action Plan 2019 provided more stringent targets on

public sector organisations, whereby energy efficiencies of 50% must be achieved by 2030.

When it comes to energy efficiencies Mayo County Council is not to be found wanting. The council has installed an 84kW solar PV array at its headquarters at Aras an Chontae in Castlebar. The 301 PV panels will provide over 11% of the building's electricity usage and will offset more than 30,000 kg of CO₂ per annum.

Mayo County Council is the lead authority for managing the roll-out of the Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project (PLEEP) for the Connacht/Ulster region. The project involves 21 local authorities across the country upgrading their public lights to LED and will cut energy usage in half and significantly reduce carbon emissions.

The upgrade to LED lighting involves circa 220,000 public lights and the project, once complete, will reduce CO₂ emissions annually by 22,000 tonnes and will provide for an annual €12 million savings in energy and maintenance costs.

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

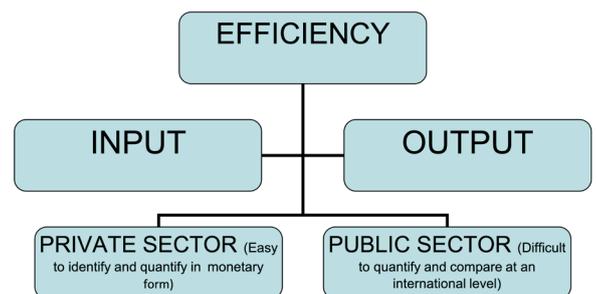
The Public Sector Reform Plan 2014-2016 published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform provided for a focus on efficiency. It stated that strong progress has already been made on reducing costs and enhancing productivity in the public sector. It also stated that there must now be a renewed focus on these and further areas to reduce costs with some particular priorities such as procurement and shared services.

Mayo County Council adopted its

innovative Efficiency Strategy in 2020.

The strategy, which is a first for the local government sector, sets out key elements around efficiency and what it represents. Efficiency is the (often measurable) ability to avoid wasting materials, energy, effort, money and time in doing something or in producing a desired result.

In a more general sense, it is the ability to do things well, successfully and without waste. Efficiency is doing things right and effectiveness is getting things done. In the public sector it can be difficult to quantify efficiencies and to compare at an international level. The Efficiency Strategy Diagram outlines the difference between the private and public sectors.



EFFICIENCY STRATEGY DOCUMENT

The creation of Mayo's Efficiency Strategy also allowed the council to examine ways the council does things and to help to remove barriers for change. Some of the opportunities for change include the following:

- An opportunity to collect and collate data, across the local authority and use the information for better decision making.
- An opportunity to secure a consensus on a set of must have and should have services across the local authority.

EFFICIENCY STRATEGY



Tom Gilligan, Director of Services with Mayo County Council.

- Services that are delivered by all Municipal Districts, but in different ways and ultimately present an opportunity for realignment, value for money and best practice. Examples of these included, Housing (Maintenance), Roads, (Parking) and Motor Tax (District Offices).
- Greater opportunities for citizens to access our services in ways and means that better reflect the lives they lead, whether at home or at work. In essence the creation of a 24/7 organisation.

'EIGHT STEPS TO GREATER EFFICIENCY'

1. To develop a Service Catalogue.
2. Business Process Improvement (approach used to identify and evaluate efficiencies within an organisation).
3. Data Collection.
4. Creation of a suite of Key Performance Indicators.
5. Staff Plan/Workforce Planning.
6. Elimination of Duplication.
7. Staff Buy-In and Champion Ambassadors.
8. Development and Review of an Efficiency Strategy.



EFFICIENCY ACTION PLAN

As part of the Efficiency Strategy, an action plan was developed to provide a framework to complete the project efficiently. Some key points of the action plan include the following:

Action Item	Action Plan
LA Housing Stock	Reduce the number of vacant housing stock to less than 30, which is approximately 1.5% of the Council's total housing stock.
Buy Versus Hire	Eliminate the need for long term hire of vehicles.
Out of County Travel	Review travel undertaken and determined if a more efficient method can be delivered such as Skype or Teams meetings (Note, this has happened, primarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the restriction in movement).
Efficiency Metrics	Develop a suite of efficiency metrics which will provide a greater measure of efficiency throughout the organisation.
Motor Tax Online	Promote and encourage a greater uptake of users of motor tax online.
Moving and migrating Mayo County Council services on-line	Seek new opportunities to migrate services online. (A recent example was the online registration for the Defective Concrete Block Grant Scheme).
Procurement	Ensure consistency and value for money across all Municipal Districts, for example the creation of a framework whereby one Municipal District can tender and procure goods and services on behalf of all Municipal Districts.

A key deliverable of Mayo County Council's Efficiency Strategy is to quantify efficiency savings linked to a review of service operations. Some of the savings in both time and money have also led to the creation of a better customer experience. Examples of efficiency successes to date include the following:

- **Managed Print Service:** A new managed print service within Mayo County Council has generated savings of €200,000 and has reduced the number of printers from 350 to 73.
- **Buy Versus Hire:** The purchase as opposed to long time hire of several crew cabs will generate savings of €240k over the lifetime of the vehicles.
- **Motor Tax Online:** An increase of nearly 5%, up to 85% overall for online transactions in 2021, compared to 2020.
- **eParking App:** The successful pilot and rollout of an eParking App.
- **Housing Stock:** In January 2022, the Ballina Municipal District recorded a significant reduction in its vacant housing stock and had just 0.42% vacant.
- **Manage Engine Helpdesk:** Streamlined the helpdesk ticket process.
- **Review of Cloud Services:** Lower monthly costs and a saving in 2021 of nearly €10,000 as opposed to 2020.
- **Move to Single Device Policy:** Desktops retired to date generated a saving circa €13,000.