



Department of Defence Scheme 2007 - 2010

under Section 11 of the **Official Languages Act, 2003**



Department of Defence
An Roinn Cosanta



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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

This Scheme was prepared by the Department of Defence pursuant to section 11 of the Official Languages Act, 2003. Section 11 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme outlining the services they will provide:-

- Through the medium of Irish;
- Through the medium of English;
- Through the media of Irish and English;

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the Department through the medium of Irish will be provided in an agreed timeframe.

1.2 Preparation of the Language Scheme

Consultation Process

Under section 13 of the Act, the Department engaged in a public consultation process, which involved advertising in national newspapers. The advertisement invited members of the public and interested parties to submit their views on the Scheme. The advertisement was also circulated to staff within the Department and members of the Defence Forces. A total of five submissions were received from interested parties that consisted of both organisations and individuals.

The Scheme has subsequently been informed by the views and suggestions put forward by all parties who contributed to the process. The Department would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their interest and effort.



1.3 The Content of the Language Scheme

The Scheme builds on the principles of Quality Customer Service and on the commitments outlined in the Customer Service Action Plan and Customer Charter to ensure that customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish can do so. It also includes a commitment to assess, on an ongoing basis, the level of demand for services through Irish and to ensure that the Department continues to meet this demand in a planned way.

1.4 Commencement Date of the Scheme

The Scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs. The Scheme is commenced with effect from 26th February 2007 and will remain in force for a period of three years from this date or until a new Scheme has been confirmed.



Chapter 2

OVERVIEW OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

Mission and Mandate

2.1 Mandate

The Department has civil and military elements and was established by the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924, which assigns to it

“the administration and business of the raising, training, organisation, maintenance, equipment, management, discipline, regulation and control according to law of the military defence forces.”

The Act provides that the Minister is head of the Department and the Secretary General is the “principal officer” of the Department. As such, the Secretary General is the Minister’s principal policy adviser. The Secretary General is also the statutory Accounting Officer for all defence expenditure. The Department is responsible also for the administration of military pensions and has a range of responsibilities in relation to Civil Defence, the Irish Red Cross Society, Coiste an Asgard and the Office of Emergency Planning.

2.2 Mission Statement

The mission statement reflects fully the mandate given to the Department. That mission is:

To meet the needs of Government and the public by providing value for money defence and civil defence services and by coordinating and overseeing the emergency planning process.

Meeting the needs of Government and the public requires that the organisation, civil and military, develops and maintains a very broad range of capabilities and delivers a variety of services and other outputs, both at home and overseas. The mission statement also requires us to do this in a value for money way, that is, economically, efficiently and effectively.

2.3 Strategic Objectives

The Department currently focus on five strategic objectives, these are:

- To contribute to the security of the State principally against the threat of armed aggression and to provide other services as required, thus contributing to political and economic well being (the Security Objective);
- To promote the coordination of emergency planning functions across all Government Departments and other key public authorities and to oversee the emergency planning process in general (the Emergency Planning Objective);
- To continue Defence modernisation by implementing the White Paper on Defence and related modernisation initiatives (the White Paper Objective);
- To provide policy advice and support in respect of civil defence (the Civil Defence Objective); and
- To provide the Minister for Defence with the best policy advice and support in relation to the management of Defence and to provide the full range of corporate supports (the Policy Advice and Support Objective).

2.4 Branches in the Department

- Claims Branch
- Contracts Branch
- Defence Forces Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) branch
- Defence Forces Personnel Branch
- Executive Branch
- Finance Branch
- Internal Audit Branch
- Human Resources Branch
- Information Systems Branch
- International Security and Defence Policy Branch
- Legislation Branch
- Office of Emergency Planning
- Planning and Organisation Branch
- Property Management Branch



Claims Branch

This Branch has responsibility for the effective management of civil legal claims arising from accidents or injuries to members of the Defence Forces, civilian employees, and civilians injured in road traffic accidents involving military vehicles.

The Branch has extensive contact with a broad range of the Branches and other sections of the Department of Defence. Its main external contacts are the Office of the Chief State Solicitor, other Government Departments, solicitors and offices/agencies such as insurance companies. Enquiries from the general public are handled by providing the information requested or by referring the query to the appropriate authority.

Since December 2001 the State Claims Agency (SCA), established under the National Treasury Management Agency (Amendment) Act, 2000, has delegated responsibility for handling the majority of new claims lodged against the Minister for Defence.

Contracts Branch

This Branch supports the overall objective of ensuring that the Defence Forces are properly equipped and accommodated and participates with the military authorities in the formulation of policy in that regard. The Branch also provides a procurement function in relation to defensive equipment, building and engineering services and materials and certain Naval Service and Air Corps equipment and maintenance services.

Pursuant to the progressive delegation of financial responsibility to the Defence Forces, an extensive procurement function is provided by them in relation to goods and services more commonly associated with day-to-day operations e.g. food, clothing, transport, and the maintenance of equipment and premises.

Procurement by Contracts Branch is conducted in accordance with guidelines laid down by the Government and with the Directives of the European Union.

Defence Forces Conciliation and Arbitration (C&A) Branch

The Branch is responsible for the administration of a Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme, established in 1993, for the Representative Association of Commissioned Officers (RACO) and for the Permanent Defence Force Other Ranks Representative Association (PDFORRA). The Branch also deals with the Reserve Defence Force Representative Association (RDFRA) and with the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) which represents members of the Army Nursing Service.

Defence Forces Personnel Branch

The Branch is responsible for the administration and correspondence relating to a range of Defence Forces personnel matters including, commissioning officers to the Defence Forces, retirements of officers of the Defence Forces and promotions of Reserve officers. It also has responsibility for supporting the provision of a fair and effective

military Redress and grievance system and for processing applications to the Minister under the Redress of Wrongs provision of the Defence Acts.

The Branch processes legal cases relating to certain Defence Forces personnel issues and maintaining statistical information on the Defence Forces. It also has an oversight role in relation to Defence Forces training and related course undertakings.

Executive Branch

This Branch has policy and administrative functions in relation to many aspects of the roles performed by the Defence Forces. The Branch consists of the Security and Community Support Unit and the Maritime & Aviation Unit.

Security and Community Support

This unit's responsibilities include policy and administrative functions in relation to Air Corps and Naval Service involvement in air/sea rescue, Air Corps involvement in air ambulance services and island relief, the provision of the Ministerial Air Transport Service and the Defence Forces assistance in maintaining essential community services. It also deals with requests from the public for Defence Forces services e.g. Army bands, Air Corps displays, and the loan or hire of equipment to community groups, e.g. tentage, the award of service medals, e.g. the Distinguished Service Medal and the Military Medal for Gallantry and Ceremonial duties of the Defence Forces including the annual Arbour Hill 1916 commemorative ceremony.

Maritime & Aviation Unit

This unit's responsibilities involve policy and administration issues relating to Naval service operations, including its involvement in marine protection and control the management of EU support for enhanced fishery enforcement measures, the monitoring of fishery protection activities, visits of Naval Service vessels to Irish ports, and the Army Equitation School.

Finance Branch

The Finance Branch has an overall staff complement of one hundred and forty, one hundred and thirty five of these are located in the Department's offices in Renmore, Galway. The Branch is organised into four broad areas one of which is based in Dublin. The four areas are as follows Pensions, Payroll, Accounts/Payments, Management Accounts (Dublin). The Internal Audit Section is based in Renmore but is separate from and operates independently of the Finance Branch.



Internal Audit Section

The Internal Audit branch provides auditing and inspection services of Defence Forces stores and accounts and report on the adequacy of controls operating in the various areas of activity within the Department.

Human Resources Branch

This Branch is responsible for personnel administration and human resource matters relating to the Department's civil servants. The Branch consists of six sections: Civil Service Human Resources Section, Civilian Employee's Human Resources Section, Training and Development Section, Accommodation, Central Registry and Decentralisation.

Information Systems Branch

The Branch provides information and communications technology (ICT) services to the Department and comprises two units, Information Technology Unit (Dublin based) and Information Technology Unit (Galway based). In conjunction with the military Directorate of Communications and Information Systems, the branch provides services to the Department in the area of IT planning, development, and the implementation and maintenance of information and telecommunications systems.

International Security and Defence Policy Branch

This Branch has policy and administrative functions in relation to Formulation and Development of Defence inputs to European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) including policy commitments to EU Headline Goal and Management of implementation of Ireland's Individual Partnership Programme (IPP) for participation in Partnership for Peace (PfP).

Overseas Internal Security Unit

Overseas unit's responsibilities include policy and administrative functions in relation to the service of members of the Permanent Defence Force overseas with UN-led and UN-mandated missions, EU, and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to which the permanent Defence Forces contribute and Domestic security including the provision of aid to the civil power (ATCP) by the Defence Forces.

Legislation Branch

This Branch is responsible for the co-ordination of the Department's response to legislative proposals, including draft EU directives, sponsored by other Government

Departments that may impact on Defence policy and the work of the Department. The Branch is also to continue with the programme of Modernisation and Simplification of Defence Forces Regulations and to participate in formulating policy on other proposals for regulatory change.

Office of Emergency Planning

The Office of Emergency (OEP) was set up within the Department of Defence in 2001 to take the lead role in emergency planning to meet potential terrorist threats. To promote co-ordination across all Departments and public authorities involved in emergency planning and to oversee the process in general terms. The OEP provides a support role to the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning and, under its chairmanship, coordinates the work of the Inter-Departmental Working Group (IDWG) on Emergency Planning. It has extensive contact with Government Departments, other public authorities and public representatives at both National and International levels. It does not provide services directly to the public but deals with enquiries and requests for information when required.

Planning and Organisation Branch

The main focus of the Planning and Organisation Branch is on supporting the ongoing modernisation of the Department and the Defence Forces and assisting senior management and the branches in implementing the modernisation agenda. This agenda is set out in the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI), the White Paper on Defence, the Department's Strategy Statement and successive Social Partnership Agreements. The branch also provides media and information services through the Press and Information Office. The branch consists of three units, Planning and Organisation Unit, Press and Information Office Management and the Information Framework Unit.

This branch provides a range of services to senior management and other branches including the preparation of Strategy Statements and Annual Reports, supporting business planning, sponsoring the Quality Customer Service initiative, supporting organisational and human resources modernisation in the Defence Forces, providing business consultancy services to the Branches and the future Development of the Management Information Framework across the organisation.

Property Management Branch

This Branch is responsible for the Department's property portfolio, which comprises in excess of 8,500 hectares at 101 locations throughout the country, including 20 permanently occupied military barracks. The branch arranges for the disposal of surplus property, the renting of additional properties (mainly for use by the Reserve Defence Force), the letting of lands and also administers applications from groups and individuals wishing to make use of Defence properties for both commercial and leisure activities.



Ministers Office

The Minister's office provides a link between the Minister, the Department of Defence and the military authorities. It also provides advice and assistance to the Minister in relation to his ministerial functions. It supports the Minister by managing correspondence, representations, parliamentary business and enquiries and organising his diary for domestic and foreign engagements.

Minister of State's Office

The Minister of State deputises for the Minister for Defence as required and as such the Minister of State's Private Office provides a link between the Minister of State and the Department of Defence. It also provides advice and assistance to the Minister in relation to his ministerial functions. It supports the Minister by managing correspondence, representations, parliamentary business and enquiries and organising his diary for domestic and foreign engagements. The office also provides support service to office of the Government Chief Whip.

2.5 Customers and Stakeholders

The Department and the Defence Forces provide services to the community, mainly through other Government Departments and agencies and as such has limited direct contact with the general public. However members of the public do contact the Department for information or with queries that are handled by the appropriate branches within the Department. The Department's Press Office would also have an important role in conveying information to the wider public.

2.6 Assessment of the extent to which services are already available through Irish

Because this Department deals mainly with other Government Departments and Agencies the level of demand from the public for services to be provided in Irish is negligible. That said, the Department has been committed to the provision of services in Irish and this has already been outlined in the Department's previous Customer Service Action Plans and most recently in the Customer Charter. The Department will commit further through the implementation of this scheme to improve these services by developing a positive culture that encourages the use of Irish within the Department and also in dealing with our customers.

Chapter 3

PROVISION OF GENERAL DEPARTMENTAL SERVICES/ACTIVITIES

This chapter outlines the ways in which the Department currently provides its services through English, Irish and English and Irish only.

3.1 Means of communication with the public include the following;

- Telephone Services
- Websites
- Press Releases
- Information Leaflets
- Applications forms

3.2 English only Services

- Reports aimed at specialist groups which do not contain policy proposals and which have limited circulation.
- Section 15 Reference Book (under Freedom of Information Acts)
- Performance Verification reports under Sustaining Progress



3.3 Irish and English Services

Each Branch has access to a pool of Irish speakers who are available to them to provide services in Irish when requested to do so. This will ensure that a fully bilingual service is available from each Branch.

The Department's corporate documents are also available in both English and Irish these are as follows:

- Annual Report;
- Customer Service Action Plan;
- Customer Charter; and
- Strategy Statement.

3.4 Irish only Services

There are no Branches in the Department delivering services exclusively in Irish.

3.5 The Department's Website

The Department's Website is www.defence.ie. The current policy is to ensure that all corporate documents (outlined above) available in Irish are also available on the website.

3.6 Speeches and Statements

Speeches and statements including those made by the Minister, Minister of State or senior officials will continue to be made available in the language(s) in which they are delivered.

3.7 Points of contact with the Public

Reception and Switchboard staff are generally the first point of contact with the public. Staff are familiar with the basic greetings in Irish and answer telephones by giving the name of the Department in Irish. Arrangements are also in place to ensure that they can put members of the public in contact quickly with the relevant officer to deal with their queries in Irish.

The Department operates a direct dial facility that has helped to reduce the number of calls to the Department's switchboard allowing queries to be forwarded directly to the relevant staff. The Department is satisfied, given the limited contact with the general public and the impact of the direct dial facility, that we are meeting the quality customer service standards in relation to all of our services including Telephone, Written Correspondence, and web-based services as outlined in our Customer Charter.

Chapter 4

ENHANCEMENT OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED BILINGUALLY

In this chapter the Department will outline the measures it will take within the life of this scheme to enhance our services in Irish.

4.1 Fully Bilingual Services

- The Department's website will be navigable in both Irish and English. The Department will ensure that where new websites to which the general public have access are being introduced or when sites are being upgraded they will be navigable in Irish and English. The text and graphics on the Department's Home Page and About Us Page and the relevant links will be available in both English and Irish. If interactive services are provided, they will be introduced simultaneously in both languages.
- A generic e-mail address for queries in Irish will be established. Queries will be dealt in accordance with current quality customer service standards.
- All new and existing information forms and leaflets will be fully bi-lingual (within the same cover, except where it is not feasible because of the size, nature or layout of the material) as current stocks expire and new leaflets are printed.
- Section 15 of the Reference Book (Freedom of Information) will be available in Irish and English.
- Documents which do not set out public policy proposals, internal policy documents and documents of a technical nature with limited circulation will not be published in Irish unless there is a specific prior demand for their publication in Irish.
- The Department will by the end of the scheme issue 20% of press releases in Irish, these will also be made available on the Department's website.
- The question of amending our existing computerised Financial Management system, so that we can produce selected reports in both languages will be considered in the context of upgrading work planned during the life of the current scheme.
- The Department will set up an Irish Language Network to assist with the implementation of the scheme.



4.2 Oral Announcements

- Individual staff members will be free to leave telephone voice mail announcements in language (s) of their choice.
- Reception and Switchboard staff will be offered training to enable them to enhance their use of Irish to ensure that they will continue to be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.

4.3 Recruitment and Placement

The Department of Defence is due to decentralise to Newbridge Co. Kildare and is oversubscribed in terms of numbers volunteering to transfer. This will result in a substantial turn over in staff over the next two years. The Decentralisation Unit is currently transferring staff into the Department from the Central Applications Facility (CAF). Irish speakers are not identified as such on the (CAF) and there are no procedures in place to determine the level of proficiency in Irish of incoming staff. It also appears that many of the current Irish speakers in the Department will not be moving to the new decentralised location and will transfer to other Government Departments. Notwithstanding these difficulties the Department will;

- Assess the Irish proficiency of new staff coming into the Department
- Continue to seek additional volunteers to provide Irish language services
- Continue to facilitate staff attending Irish Language classes
- Continue to facilitate staff attending Irish Language classes during working hours
- The Department will continue to ensure that a pool of proficient Irish speakers is available to branches. It is hoped that the agreement with unions offering 6% bonus marks for proficiency in Irish offered for internal and interdepartmental competitions will increase the numbers of staff undertaking proficiency examinations.

4.4 Training and Development

Training and Development unit are committed to providing training to all staff in accordance with PMDS to enhance the general development of staff within the Department and to ensure that staff have the capacity to meet the changing customer requirements in this case the provision of Irish services to our customers

- Advertise all Irish courses available to staff including those provided by Gaeleagreas
- Assess all Irish Language courses on a regular basis to ascertain how effectively they meet the Departments need.
- Include language awareness in induction and customer service training to ensure that staff are aware of the importance of implementing a bi-lingual policy in the Department.

4.5 Gaeltacht Placenames

The Department will use the official version of Gaelteacht placenames as declared in the Placenames (Ceantair Ghaeltachta) Order 2004.



Chapter 5

MONITORING AND REVISION

The Management Advisory Committee will review the operation of this scheme. Our Customer Services Office, Line Managers and Irish Language Network will assist them in this.

Individual line managers as part of their overall responsibilities under the modernisation programme through their representatives on the Irish Language Network will monitor the day-to-day implementation of the scheme within their own areas.

The Customers Service office will include questions regarding the satisfaction of the provision of services in Irish in future customer surveys, and with the assistance of the Irish language Network monitor the demand for services in Irish over the life of the scheme.

Chapter 6

PUBLICISING OF AGREED SCHEME

The scheme will be publicised to the General Public by the following means:-

- Press Release
- Circulation to the appropriate agencies, public bodies and parties who made submissions to the Department.
- Department's Website

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



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