

< Department for Local Government >

ORGANISATIONAL SET UP

The Department for Local Government has established a new organisational set up during 2011. The Director is responsible for the leadership of the Department with a management team that lead their respective units, composed of the Director, the Assistant Director (Planning and Policy), Assistant Director (Devolution), Head of Monitoring Unit and the Head of Training, Human Resources, Administration, EU and International Affairs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

For 2011, Local Councils received a direct allocation (under the funding formula) of € 30,010,000 from Central government. In addition to this, another €1,000,000 was voted towards the introduction of Public Private Schemes in connection with the resurfacing of roads in the localities. During this year, Local Councils also continued to benefit from various financial schemes which amounted to around € 985,000

Government also continued to assist Councils through the secondment of government employees. Since the salaries and wages of these workers are borne by central government, this deployment of workers scheme effectively means that Councils are making savings in wages. The Department for Local Government also provided financial assistance to the Local Councils Association (LCA) (€ 102,772.50) and to the Association of Local Council Executive Secretaries (ASKLM) (€ 9,318) as part of government's commitment to assist both associations. The table below illustrates central government's direct financial allocation to Local Councils since the setting up of Local Councils in 1994.

Central Government's Direct Financial Allocation to Local Councils: 1994 - 2011

1. Direct Financial Allocation (Funding Formula):			
<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Lm mill.</i>	<i>Euro mill.</i>	<i>Euro mill.</i>
1994-95	4.5	10.48	
1995-96	6.3	14.68	
1996-97	6.25	14.56	
1997-98	8.75	20.38	
1998-99	5.831	13.58	
1999-00	6.5	15.14	
2000-01	9.66	22.50	
2001-02	10.24	23.85	
2002-03	10.54	24.55	
2003-04	10.70	24.92	
2004-05	10.686	24.89	
2005-06	10.200	23.75	

2006-07	10.250	23.88	
2007-08	10.270	23.92	
2008-09	-	26.97	
2009-10	-	27.01	
2010		30.01	
2011	-	30.01	
Total Direct Allocation			395.08 mill.
2. Funds for Special Needs			
<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>Lm mill.</i>	<i>Euro mill.</i>	
1994/95	0.3	0.70	
1995/96	1.3	3.03	
1996/97	2.5	5.82	
1997/98	2.5	5.82	
1998/99	2.5	5.82	
1999/00	2.5	5.82	
2000/01	-	-	
2001/02	-	-	
2002/03	-	-	
2004/05	-	-	
2005/06	-	-	
2006/07	-	-	
2007/08	-	-	
2008/09	-	-	
2009-10	-	-	
Total Special Funds			27.01 mill.
Total Funds to Local Councils	(1994-2010)		422.09 mill.
Local Councils' Grant Schemes were introduced for the Local Councils' financial year 2009-10 for which € 1.59 million was voted. These Schemes were also made available in 2010 and 2011.			

Requests for Bank Loans

As part of its supporting role to Local Councils, the Department deals with requests by Local Councils for bank loans. This is quite a rigorous process since the Department has to ensure that the Council would be able to sustain such a loan and it would not affect negatively its operations. Moreover the approval for such bank loans is given after consultation with officials from the Ministry of Finance. In this regard, during the year under review, a series of meetings were held between the Department for Local Government officials and those from the Ministry of Finance wherein a new procedure for applications of bank loans was established and communicated to all Local Councils. During 2011, there were four such applications, three from the Local Councils of Marsa, I-Gharb and Pembroke and one from the Local Councils Association (overdraft). By the year end the application of the LCA had been approved and issued while those of Marsa and I-Gharb were also approved and are in the process of being issued. Pembroke's application is still being processed.

Other financial issues

The Department gives support to Local Councils on various financial matters. Besides taking care of the transfer of the quarterly financial allocation into the respective Local Councils' bank accounts, the

Department is also responsible for the vetting and processing of all claims in connection with the various Local Councils grants' schemes.

One other very important function of the Department is the continuous monitoring of Local Councils finances (see under separate heading). In this regard, the Department is in regular contact with the Auditor General in order to ensure that Local Councils retain a healthy financial position and are always operating within the law and regulations.

GRANT SCHEMES

Since the inception of schemes from the financing of projects to cultural activities in 2009, the Department for Local Government has noted that the Councils are embarking on even more ambitious projects, and actively participating in each scheme launched. Administrative Committees and even Regional Committees are following suit. During 2011, 16 schemes were launched

The Department was involved in the preparation, adjudication (through an official on the Adjudication Board) and payment of these schemes to the successful Councils. The schemes and the amounts allocated to each one are indicated in the table below.

List of Schemes Issued in 2011

Memo 1/2011 - Strengthening the Community - regeneration in government housing estates (Scheme under the responsibility of the Housing Authority)	€675,000.00
Memo 9/2011 - Scheme for Local Councils who have the responsibility of local libraries	€20,152.00
Memo 12/2011 - Contractual Agreement regarding maintenance works in government housing estates (Scheme under the responsibility of the Housing Authority)	€1,000,000.00
Memo 41/2011 -Training for Local Libraries Employees' (Withdrawn as only two persons applied)	
Memo 44/2011 - Scheme for the financing of Lifelong Learning courses	€20,000.00
Memo 55/2011 - Scheme for the financing of projects and initiatives by Administrative Committees	€320,000.00
Memo 58/2011 - Pilot Project -More employment in Local Councils for Disabled Persons (To be paid minimum pay from the social benefit for disability and the Department for Local Government)	
Memo 60/2011 - Scheme egov4u for Local Councils	€75,000.00
Memo 63/2011 - Scheme for the financing of special projects in small localities	

Memo 65/2011 - Scheme for Cultural Activities 2011/12	€335,900.00
Memo 66/2011 - Scheme for the financing of improvements in the existing playing fields	
Memo 71/2011 - Scheme for the financing of Regional Committees	€250,000.00
Memo 87/2011 - Scheme for the financing of special projects	
Memo 90/2011 - Scheme for the financing of Sport Initiatives	€60,000.00
Call for applications to provide surveillance in the morning and in the afternoon, before and after school hours in state schools	
Memo 120/2011 -Scheme for Local Councils who have the responsibility of local libraries *	€25,000.00
Memo 122/2011 - Scheme for the financing of restoration of small historical places*	€160,000.00

* Submission date of applications in 2012

Schemes Awarded in 2011

In 2011, the Department for Local Government, following the adjudication of the various schemes, each by their respective Adjudication Board. This is the respective list :

	No of applications received	No of Councils which applied		No of Adm Comm which applied		Regional Committees	Total grant for each scheme	No of Councils which benefitted		No of Adm Comm which benefitted		Regional Committees
		Malta	Gozo	Malta	Gozo			Malta	Gozo	Malta	Gozo	
Memo 1/2011 - Strengthening the Community - regeneration in government housing estates							€675,000.00					
Memo 9/2011 - Scheme for Local Councils who have the responsibility of local libraries	51	41	10	0	0	0	€20,152.00	32	10	0	0	0

Memo 12/2011 - Contractual Agreement regarding maintenance works in government housing estates	31	30	1	0	0	0	€1,000,000.00			0	0	0
Memo 44/2011 - Scheme for the financing of Lifelong Learning courses	38	34	4	0	0	0	€15,366.28	25	0	0	0	0
Memo 55/2011 - Scheme for the financing of projects and initiatives by Administrative Committees	14	0	0	11	3	3	€279,752.30	0	0	11	3	3
Memo 58/2011 - Pilot Project -More employment in Local Councils for Disabled Persons	5	3	2	0	0	0		3	2	0	0	0
Memo 60/2011 - Scheme egov4u for Local Councils	13	13	0	0	0	0	€25,000.00	5	0	5	0	0
Memo 65/2011 - Scheme for Cultural Activities 2011/12	78	55	14	5	3	1	€335,900.00	50	14	5	3	1

Follow ups in 2011

Since August, we have been following the Local Councils, Administrative Committees and Regional Committees in their progress, related to the schemes they have benefitted from. This has led to the schemes awarded in 2009, to be practically closed (just waiting to issue final payments in January 2012. Also schemes awarded in 2010 are nearly final completion. The follow ups have resulted in a screening process of Councils carry on for the execution of such works. It is noted that all necessary tenders or quotations are issued, they are vetted and followed, to follow up each Council in the progress of such works.

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT (TRAINING AND HUMAN RESOURCES UNITS)

The Training Unit

The Training Unit within the Department for Local Government was established in June, 2011 to conduct training courses according to current and future local government needs. The Unit collaborates with other units within the Department such as the Human Resources and the EU and International Affairs with the main aim to co-ordinate and maximise the use of its own resources in developing a training programme for both the elected and the executive arms of local government. Furthermore, the main goal of the unit is to establish a **national training strategy**.

The Unit organised a Certificate Course for Potential Executive Secretaries between August and November, 2011 with the collaboration of CDRT. This course consisted of 48 hours and served as an

induction course to approved Public Officers who are to perform duties as Executive Secretaries. The topics covered were the Role of the Executive Secretary and a Public Officer, the role of the Council Member, the Role of the Department for Local Government, Leadership, Teamwork, Performance Management, Operations Management, the Role of the Association of Local Councils, Customer Relations Management, Complaints handling system, the role of the Ombudsman, the National Environment Policy, The Local Councils Act, Corporate Social Responsibility, Data Protection Act, Strategic Human Resources Management, Recruitment and Selection of Employees, the Public Service Management Code, the European Charter of Local Self-Government, Effective Information and Communication Technology, Local Councils Financial Cycle, Budgeting and Business Plan, the principles of Good Governance, Public Procurement, Community Engagement and Communication, EU Impact on local government, Local Government Audit, assertive and professional communication, conflict resolution and collaborative negotiation, creativity and innovation, marketing and branding, public-private partnership and the management of public risks.

A pilot training prospectus commenced in November with a projected 159hours of training for Executive Secretaries and local councils staff covering these themes: Dynamic Communications, Critical/Reflective Thinking, Developing Personal Influence and Impact, Managing with Leadership, Skills towards a work-life balance, Managing Work Priorities, Coaching and Mentoring for Executive Secretaries, Dealing with Challenging co-workers, Managing and Improving Performance, Customer Care and telephone handling skills and 59 hours dedicated towards Mayors, Councillors and Administrative Committee Members. The topics covered by this programme were: Administrative Committee Members – Serving the Community, Assertive and Professional Communication, Conflict Resolutions and Collaborative Negotiation, How to manage the media, Recruitment and Selection, Developing Leadership Skills, Dealing with difficult people in the community, managing councils and personal priorities, and facilitation skills for Mayor/Chairperson and Deputy Mayor/Deputy Chairperson. During the month of February, 2012 a concluding session under the theme “Teambuilding for better Local Government Services” shall include all participants and close the training pilot project.

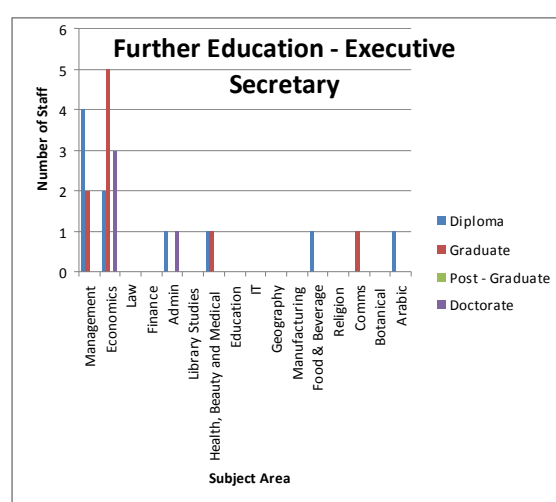
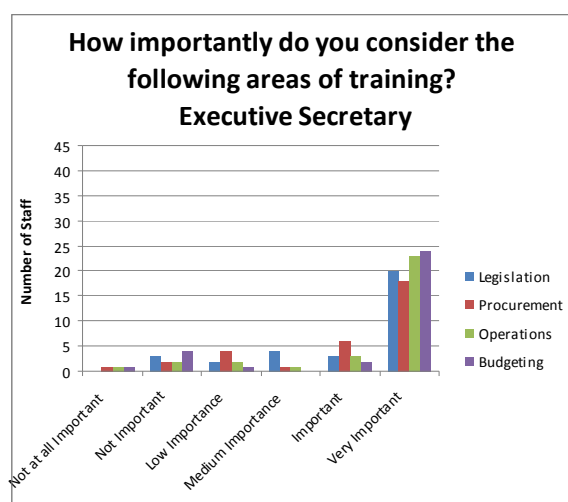
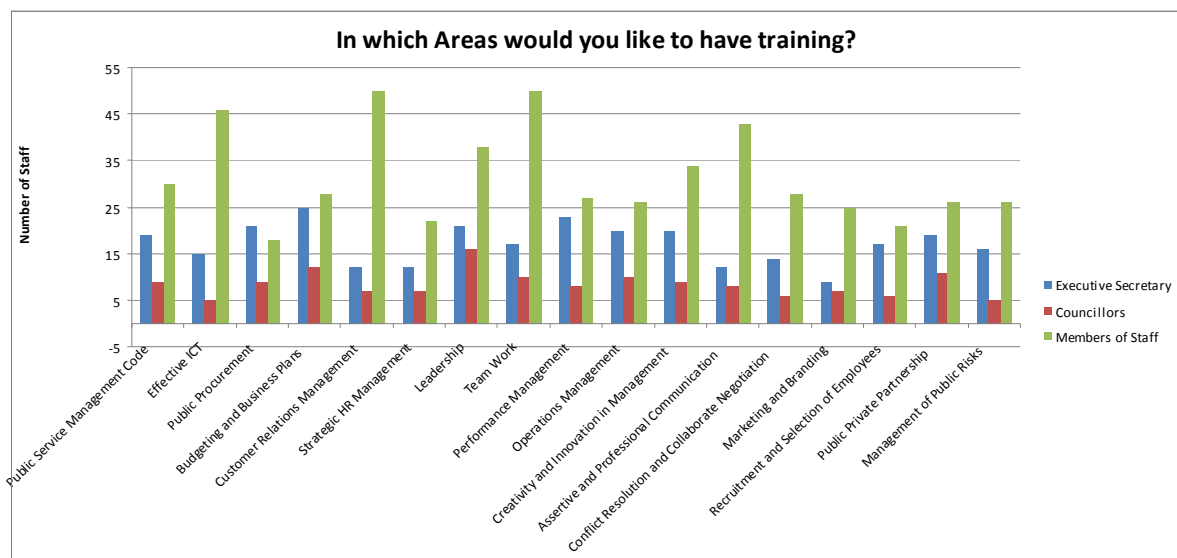
The Department also conducted an in-house training programme in December as part of the employees development in a team building exercise towards further the delivery of better public services to local councils and the public in general. Other training sessions were given to those interested in EU application to install creativity and innovation in applications.

Research and Development

June, July and August saw the first R&D in establishing a preliminary training needs analysis in Maltese local government. The research conducted by the Unit established important milestones to develop the national training strategy whilst the first scheduled training for local government in Malta (conducted

between November, 2011 and February, 2012). It has also managed to acquire foreign partners to training needs in Malta and the Unit started collaborating with the Centre of Expertise for Democratic Reform within the Council of Europe.

Locally the main partners are the Centre for Development, Training and Research within OPM. During October a questionnaire was distributed to all local government employees and elected councillors and administrative committee members to establish their point of view regarding training needs as a part of a consultation process to establish a national training strategy. Response was encouraging and more than 150 participated. Furthermore, two experts from the Council of Europe and the Unit conducted a two day consultation process with Mayors and Executive Secretaries in order to complete the R&D by the Department and prepare the first pilot scheduled training. Some of the results are reproduced hereunder:



Further research was conducted in the formulation of a Detailed Project Proposal under the Norway Grants funding resulting in the first concrete project awarded to the Department for training. The project “A

Partnership for Creative Governance” consists of a comprehensive training needs analysis (TNA) which will kickstart with the setting up of a national Steering Group representative of key stakeholders, the preparation and launch of a National Training Strategy (NTS) a key factor for change in the economic and social situation in local communities, a management programme consisting of the identification of key performance indicators in priority services, the setting of standards based on research, the establishment of performance management systems in selected local authorities within a national framework, performance reporting mechanisms, training and consultancy support., the development of a Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) for local leaders (both elected and executive) to provide a series of national (and if available resources, international) activities for senior elected representatives and officials to develop their leadership capabilities and to take leadership initiatives in their own authorities; a Strategy on innovation and good governance and finally a European Label of excellence, the Label is awarded nationally to local authorities who have achieved a high overall level of governance, as measured against the twelve European principles of Good Democratic Governance. The total funding guaranteed for this project is of **€371,461** and shall be implemented between 2012 and 2014.

HUMAN RESOURCES UNIT

The Human Resources Unit is responsible for 1062 personnel within local government bodies constituted as follows:

44 Public Officers at Department for Local Government in Malta and Gozo Offices

74 Public Officers serving as Executive Secretaries at the Local Councils Association, Regional Committees and Local Councils

141 Public Sector employees in various Local Councils

The Unit has also the responsibility of the 206 clerical employees in the 68 Local Councils, 33 public officers serving in the Pool of Potential Executive Secretaries, 444 Mayors and Councillors and 80 Administrative Committee Members. This renders the total human resource dedicated to local government in Malta and Gozo totals to 1022.

In 2011, 13 Executive Secretaries, 9 Acting Executive Secretaries 9 and 2 Deputy Executive Secretaries appointed according to the Local Councils Act. The Department had a net increase of 6 public officers and established an office in Gozo. One of the major projects undertaken by the section was the construction of a HR database as from the inception of local councils in 1993. This has enabled the Department to have an efficient system of data retrieving and communication method. The Department has also received a draft collective agreement for Executive Secretaries by their union, UHM and it is still under reconsideration stage. The Unit has also produced the “The appointment procedures for Executive Secretaries” and drafted the update of the “Local Councils Regulations (Human Resources).

EU AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS UNIT

The Department has embarked on various initiatives during the year related to better its communication with the European Union and the Council of Europe. Whilst the main aim of this important role for the Department remains the enhancement of its international network, the investment made in successful bids in the professional training and personal development for local government in Malta. The Department contributed to the Committee for Local and Regional Democracy of the Council of Europe by attending its meetings in Strasbourg and also for the Conference for Ministers Responsible for Local Government in Europe held in Kiev.

The Department is also the National Contact Point of the two EU programmes, namely “Europe for Citizens” and “URBACT”. In relation to the latter the Department attended to the European Conference in Europe debating the URBACT III Programme for the years 2014 – 2020.

Opinions from the EU Commission, the Committee of Regions, the Council of Europe and other institutions have been vetted by the Department and wherever necessary proposed amendments and/or forward comments to facilitate participation of Maltese Local Government wherever possible.

CUSTOMER CARE, ADMINISTRATION AND REGISTRY UNITS

The Customer Care Unit has registered 325 new cases apart from the hundreds of emails that have been handled with satisfaction to the public.

The Department has invested in its premises to provide a better service to the public, the local councils and its employees. Initiatives were taken to promote further the concepts of paperless office and made better use of its limited space.

One of the projects for the year saw the reorganisation of the Registry Unit with additional shelving so to enable the requested space to handle the filing system of the Department.

During this period, the Unit has also converted unused space in the Department for Local Government’s Annexe into a small training centre. This project made it possible for the delivery of all the in house training.

DEVOLUTION

During 2011 DLG received 22 new devolution applications. During the same period 7 sites have been devolved to Local Councils. During the same period the DLG concluded another 5 devolutions requests,

which will be devolved to Local Councils soon. Hence the DLG devolved 54.55 of the applications during 2011.

The following sites have been devolved to Local Councils this year.

LC	Site	Date
Ix-Xaghra	Site in Vjal it-8 ta' Settembru	Feb 2011
Il-Mellieha	Ta' Bragg National Park	April 2011
Hal Luqa	2 sites in Triq Hal Farrug	May 2011
Il-Birgu	Couvre Porte	May 2011
Hal Kirkop	10, Triq Danny Cremona	June 2011
Birkirkara	Torri Wejter	Sept 2011

The following are the sites which the DLG concluded by the end of 2011 and which will devolved soon.

LC	Site	Date
Iz-Zejtun	20, Triq San Girgor	Jan 2011
Is-Swatar	Site in Triq is-Sisla	Mar2011
Ix-Xaghra	Site in Triq Sant' Anton	April 2011
Ix-Xaghra	Site in Triq Gnien Imrik	April 2011
Marsaskala	Niche of San Spiridjun	Nov 2011

LOCAL ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM

All LCs form part of the LES across Malta and Goso.

During 2011 Government embarked on the reform of the LES implementing it gradually until the system was passed on to the 5 newly formed Regional Committees instead of the previous 9 Joint Committees on 1 Spetember 2011.

Following a wide holistic consultation exercise with all stakeholders concerned, this reform will introduce a warning ticket system and an incremental ticket system.

Board of Petitions

The LES will still allow the public to contest contraventions through an already established petitions system. During 2011, (1/1/2011 – 31/12/2011) the Board of Petitions received a total of 20,265 petitions.

During this same period the Board of Petitions decided 98.56% of all these received petitions, a total of 19,974. These were decided as follows:

- 13,319 petitions were accepted ;
- 642 petitions were partially accepted;
- 5,949 petitions were refused;
- 3 petitions were considered as abstentions; and
- 61 petitions were cancelled.

The rest which amount to 291 petitions were undecided.

MONITORING UNIT

During the year 2011 a complete review of the work process of the Monitoring Unit was undertaken. The offices of the Monitoring Unit were refurbished, and the filing system was totally organised. At the last quarter of the 2011 another three public officers were engaged with the unit, each officer being assigned a particular region to monitor. These officers are based in Gozo. Apart from that, the unit continued scrutinizing the various functions of the Local Councils, with particular emphasis on the financial aspect. Regular checks were made on the schedule of payments, reports, minutes and other related documents. In this respect special attention was given to ensure that the Councils abide by the Local Councils Act, Regulations and Procedures as well as the instructions which are given to them from time to time through various memos. The timely submission of reports was also scrutinized.

During this year members from this Unit were also asked to attend Council meetings and to submit reports on their findings.

The Monitoring Unit also investigated and reported on several allegations made against Councils. In fact during this year the unit monitored around 1500 cases. This is considered to have been a major improvement on past years.

In those cases where Councils were found to have made irregularities, they were asked to take corrective measures. In certain instances, deductions were effected from their financial allocation as punitive measures. During 2011, various Local Councils were penalised a total amount of € 329,836.58 for making payments not according to law or for not adhering to regulations.

Carmel Abela

Director