

Dublin's progress towards becoming an e-city

'Dublin will be a city where communities, agencies, businesses, citizens and decision-makers will have easy access to manageable information and have the means and ability to communicate with each other. Dublin will be a city that harnesses the power of communications technology to connect and inform people, create opportunities and tackle social exclusion,' says the city's mission statement.

Creating a Connected and Informed City requires connecting people to one another.... These connections are the bedrock upon which individuals engage meaningfully in family, community, career and civil society.'

Among Dublin's 'connected and informed city' strategies are

- ✓ developing [www.dublin.ie](http://www.dublin.ie) as a focal point for directing people to existing information, providing relevant neighbourhood information, facilitating the community and voluntary sector to use the web/digital media etc.
- ✓ developing a comprehensive database of community and voluntary activity through [www.dublin.ie](http://www.dublin.ie) so that people who wish to join groups in the City, keep in touch with their network or find voluntary work in their neighbourhood can do so through this site.
- ✓ Making free web space and email services to groups on [www.dublin.ie](http://www.dublin.ie). In time, much of our strategy will be realized through this channel. Information about consultation will be made available, protected chat rooms for service providers working on shared caseloads and a learning market place where people can plan their learning journeys for life will be developed.

Within this shared virtual space it should also be possible to develop theme 'marketplaces' which allow all stakeholders to shape and share information, agree policy, build statistical data, participate in decisions, and "trade" in goods, opportunities and services.

3rd extract chapter 8

### **A Dublin Case Study**

Such a pre-planning exercise is useful to clarify the why, what, where, when, who, how and how much questions that inevitably arise. But it is only the beginning. In order to explore the processes involved we will examine the Dublin experience, an exercise in taking the pulse of a city and the region around it. 'In 2012 Dublin will be a vibrant city with an array of communities of interest that reflect the true diversity and interests of our citizens, thus contributing to a more participative democracy,' says its a vision statement for 10 year plan starting in 2002, and the starting point was a 2 year consultation process that was as thorough as any taken anywhere in the world.

The Dublin process worked within a vision framework of city development strategies comprising:

**A Heart Theme** - City of Neighbourhoods – creating and sustaining self-sufficient neighbourhoods within the city which develop 'local identity, vibrancy and spirit, ' deliver integrated services and develop bottom up participative structures.

### **Four Enabling themes**

**A Diverse and Inclusive City** – recognizing and celebrating diversity and difference within the City and its neighbourhoods, while ensuring at the same time that everyone, (regardless of circumstance, belief, ethnic origin, or economic status, is supported

**A Connected and Informed City** - acknowledging that information is the key to empowerment and promoting the use of the City's web portal [www.dublin.ie](http://www.dublin.ie) as a single focal point for integration of service delivery, consultation, information exchange and research in the City..

**An Integrated City** - encouraging collaborative action at neighbourhood, city and regional levels and strengthening the linkages between local government and agencies

**A Democratic and Participative City** - enhancing democratic accountability in the City through effective consultation procedures and participative structures enabling fully informed citizens and communities to share in decision-making..

### **And ten outcome themes**

**A Safe City** - tackling crime at neighbourhood level in an integrated and community-based manner through prevention, detection and rehabilitation.

**A Greener City** - exploring sustainable ways of putting the environment at the centre of the City's, and the peoples', agenda

**A Family-Friendly City** - recognising the value of family in all its forms and seeking effective and integrated ways to support it.

**A Healthy and Active City** - creating a culture of health and fitness in the City and providing accessible sports and recreational facilities and supports.

**A Cultural and Enjoyable City** – integrating culture and the arts into the social and economic priorities of the City.

**A City of Homes** - ensuring that everyone has access to a home, facilitated through effective governance of the housing sector..

**A Learning City** - increasing co-ordination and partnership amongst learning providers and users, ensuring that all types of learning experiences and intelligence are recognised and equally valued, and promoting the concept of life-long learning.

**An Enterprising City** - supporting a co-ordinated approach to sustainable economic development and developing Dublin City as a world-class centre of excellence, entrepreneurship and Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility

**A Community-Friendly City** - promoting and developing a comprehensive and sustainable range of community facilities and supports as channels for participation and social cohesion.

**A Moving and Accessible City** - encouraging debate about sustainable and accessible transport and seeking to reduce the negative environmental impacts of transport.

It will be seen that none of the above exist in its own compartmentalized vacuum. Each is related to the other in a symbiotic relationship that contributes to the overall development of the city. Equally several of the themes act as coordinating themes for many others in their own right. Learning, for example is self-evidently a component of every other theme as are the environment, the primacy of communication and the need to obtain the consent of the people through consultation. Figure xx in chapter xx puts learning at the centre of the strategy and this works as a template for the concept of the learning city.

However, devising a consultation process to satisfy Dublin's key principles of good governance - Openness, Participation, Accountability, Effectiveness and Coherence – within such a large and eclectic set of strategies is evidently a labour of considerable importance and complexity. It meant reinventing the systems, structures and level of governance in the City and expanding its remit to account for all services delivered to the citizens and local communities. Peter Finnegan and his team at the Dublin City Development Board divided the task into a variety of actions, including:

- ✓ Consulting local community organisation directly about its learning region policies?
- ✓ Consulting individual citizens directly about its learning region policies?
- ✓ Including representatives of community groups on a lifelong committee or board?
- ✓ Consulting local SME's about their learning needs?
- ✓ Promoting active citizenship in the development of a participative, caring society?
- ✓ Including local schools in the Learning Region Consultation process?
- ✓ Harnessing energies by creating new channels of participation at neighbourhood and city level.
- ✓ Carrying out a region-wide Neighbourhood Mapping Exercise to determine new neighbourhood participative structures
- ✓ Facilitating the availability of information to citizens through the use of the web
- ✓ Empowering individuals and communities to make decisions mindful of the local, regional, national and global impacts.
- ✓ Ensuring greater accountability of service providers in the City to the communities they serve.
- ✓ Developing innovative methods of consultation and participation that ensure the inclusion of all groups in decision making processes, especially older people, people with disabilities and young people.
- ✓ Establishing a Good Urban Governance Audit and Excellence Mark.
- ✓ Promoting examples of national and international best practice of good participation.
- ✓ Providing an on-line directory of community & voluntary organisations active in the City
- ✓ Developing a volunteers register
- ✓ Increasing the number of Community bulletin boards
- ✓ Supporting the development of a Community TV Channel for the region
- ✓ Facilitating the development of a support secretariat for each Neighbourhood
- ✓ Developing a Consultation Resource Pack to advise statutory service providers, businesses, community organisations, agencies and individuals on consultation and channels of participation.

The process of ensuring that everybody had the opportunity to participate in the development of the strategic vision started in 2000 As the Board says, 'Participation in the early stages of Strategy development is desirable, as it is often the outcome of decisions made at this stage that have the greatest effect on peoples needs and chances to benefit. It provides the greatest opportunity to develop a sense of ownership and opportunity to make a difference.' There were three phases, respectively - Developing the Strategy Working Papers, Developing the Draft Strategy, and Refining the draft Strategy

For phase 1 five Strategy Development Groups were established to address five initial areas of strategy interest, viz:

\_ Citizens Shaping the City - Culture, Communications & Participation

- \_ Putting People First - Social Inclusion
- \_ Living Learning City - Human Resources
- \_ Business Making the City work - Economic Development
- \_ Living Breathing City - Built and Natural Environment

Ninety individuals and organizations from key stakeholders were represented in the groups, which drafted a number of Strategic Working Papers published under the title "Capital Vision". Made available in hard copy or through the web ([www.dublin.ie](http://www.dublin.ie)), these working papers generated discussion and debate, highlighted options and helped develop consensus. The results of this first phase of the participation process led to the preparation of the Draft Strategy.

In phase 2, eight major initiatives were developed to gather responses to the draft strategy. These were:

- 1. An information and awareness campaign** – raising awareness and encouraging participation in as wide a spectrum of stakeholders in the City as possible. It included advertisements in local and national newspapers, a Freephone Information Number, articles in newspapers, journals, newsletters and on websites, information on television, radio interviews and a video
- 2. Using the Dublin web-portal [Www.dublin.ie](http://www.dublin.ie)** - acting as a central point for information about Dublin's community and voluntary organisations and encouraging people to provide feedback via the online feedback form.
- 3. Consultation brochure** - sent to over 70,000 households, businesses, schools, libraries, organisations and agencies around the City. 1000 people/organisations replied to the survey contained in the brochure.
- 4. Let's talk circles** - the ripple approach, comprising focus group meetings targeted at agency staff and specific interest groups with a view to discussing policy priorities for the City. People involved undertook to go back and talk to the teams, clients and work organisations back home.
- 5. A Consultation pack including a Video presentation** - made available to generate debate within a wider audience. Over 300 participants attended 10 focus group sessions from City Council, FÁS, Health Boards, Third Level Institutions (students), Ethnic Minority Groups, Economic Focus Group etc.
- 6. Five civic fora** - involving Councillors public servants, community organisations, local business and residents invited randomly from the electoral register from within each of the five areas of City Council . The events attracted some 198 participants across the City.
- 7. Three consultation seminars (integration, participation and social inclusion)** - attended by 250 participants including voluntary groups, businesses, statutory organizations, city councilors, citizens who had responded to newspaper advertisements and registered with the Citizens panel
- 8. Schools and youth** – comprising a Video highlighting the key issues and distributed along with copies of brochures to secondary schools in Dublin.

The results of phase 2 were analysed, and phase 3 saw the publication of a revised strategy based on the responses. This led to a further round of consultation opportunities using 3 methodologies.

**Information and awareness campaign** – reaching out to as wide a spectrum of people as possible, especially those that may not have been reached in phase two of the consultation, It included exhibitions in libraries and other public places, radio and TV interviews, brochures, press articles and advertisements. The latest Draft Strategy was posted up on [www.dublin.ie](http://www.dublin.ie) from which online feedback was welcomed and the Irish Times published a full supplement describing the strategy in order to also attract a wider audience in the surrounding region..

**23 Stakeholder Meetings** - to obtain support for the Strategy from senior management in relevant agencies and government Departments. Meetings were held with Area-based Partnerships; City Council; FÁS; Department of Justice; Garda Síochána; Department of Education; Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation; Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment; Department of Health; and City Councillors..

**Listening to youth through comhairle na nÓg (Youth Council)** - to gain the views and opinions of young people and to elect members to represent Dublin in Dáil na nÓg. All 300 secondary and primary schools in Dublin City were invited. Youth groups and special interest groups were also invited. 160 students (aged 7 to 17) from 45 schools in Dublin City participated and formulated their views on the issues young people felt needed to be addressed.

The above processes demonstrate a determined attempt by the Dublin City Development Board to involve as many of Dublin's citizens in the planning of its strategy for the next ten years. Further, there is an equally serious intention to maintain the consultation and empowerment process as the strategy develops through the effective use of the web portal for accessible information giving and receiving, a continuing social research commitment, community media, sustainability proofing and the development of an infrastructure focused entirely on the strengthening of the human bonds and connections that make civic

society work. Although Dublin does not describe the complete set of strategies as a formal learning city policy development, that is exactly what it has done within the wider understandings of the term contained within this book.