

As a result of legislative changes introduced in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Town Council structure in Ireland is being abolished from June 1st 2014.

As a result, the three Town Councils in Kerry, those in Tralee, Killarney and Listowel, will cease to exist on June 1st. All activities, operations and functions that were previously carried out by the Town Councils will be merged into Kerry County Council. Similarly, any assets owned by the Town Councils and any debts and liabilities of the Town Councils will be assumed by Kerry County Council.

And, any debts owed to the Town Councils will now be owed to the County Council and will be followed up by Kerry County Council's Finance Department.

All pending legal proceedings will continue in the name of Kerry County Council from June 1st. All agreements, leases, wayleaves, licences and permissions made with the Town Councils will be preserved after the dissolution of the Town Councils

Are there any major changes?

For the majority of the public, there will be very few significant changes, especially at the start of the merger.

The majority of the changes will take place behind the scenes in terms of administration, particularly the role of Town Clerk, which will no longer exist.

Again though, there will not be a significant impact on the customer, who will be able to access the majority of the services they previously did at the Town Hall.

The main areas which will see changes will be Planning, Revenue and Housing. Kerry County Council will be the sole planning authority for the county and all applications will be dealt with centrally in Áras an Chontae, Tralee

Commercial businesses/Ratepayers who have dealings with the Town Councils will now be dealing with Kerry County Council's Revenue Section in the Ashe Memorial Hall, Tralee

Additionally, in the coming months, the Housing Departments will come together and while housing rents can still be paid at and basic Housing queries can be dealt with at the Area Offices, housing applications and their processing will be dealt with centrally in Áras an Chontae, Tralee.

Will the three towns suffer without the Town Councils?

Given the number of people who live in the three urban areas of Tralee, Listowel and Killarney, and their importance to the local economy, the three towns will continue to be strongly supported to ensure that they remain strong, vibrant urban communities.

At the start of the year, each Town Council passed a budget for the 12 months of 2014. As a result, activities like maintenance of roads, parks and public places, street cleaning, traffic wardens, litter picking etc will continue as before. There will be no reduction in this activity. All commitments made to organisations and festivals for 2014 will be honoured.

In future years, budgets passed by Kerry County Council will recognise the importance that Tralee, Killarney and Listowel have to the county, both in terms of the county's economy, and ability to attract visitors and business to Kerry.

What will happen to the Town Halls?

The Town Halls will continue to operate and will serve as the Operational Headquarters for the Municipal Districts of Tralee, Killarney and Listowel.

The name will change. They will now be known as the Tralee, Killarney or Listowel Municipal District Headquarters, but many of the services they previously offered will continue to be available there. This is the same with the Area Offices around the rest of the county.

Persons will still be able to carry out most of the transactions they had carried out before June 1st. This includes :

- Payment of Housing Rents,
- Payment of traffic fines,
- Parking permits,
- Applications for road opening licences, hoarding or scaffolding licences.
- Housing Repairs (A request can be lodged in the Municipal District Office, but you will be contacted by Kerry County Council's Housing Department).

Additionally, the majority of the outdoor/operational/maintenance works which take place in the towns, will be managed from the Municipal District Headquarters.

This includes:

- Street Cleaning
- Public Lighting
- Road Maintenance
- Litter Control
- Parks & Playground maintenance

Outlined below is a sample of questions, may assist with any queries

Frequently Asked Questions in relation to Local Authority Services

Housing

- *As a town council tenant, can I still make cash payments at former Town Council offices after June 1st?*

Yes, Town Council tenants who up to now make rent payments by cash can continue to make cash payments at former town council offices.

The Town Councils are currently writing to housing tenants informing them that from June 1st that all exiting Town Council rent customer accounts will transfer to Kerry County Council who will then be responsible for the collection and management of same. Payments after the 1st of June must be made payable to Kerry County Council, cash payments can be made at the former Town Council offices or directly to your revenue collector. Tenants who pay by standing order or Electronic Fund Transfers (EFT) are currently being written to by the Town Councils.

- *Who do Town Council tenants contact about housing repairs from June 1st?*

You can call into the Area offices in the three main towns, which will be located in the former Town Halls and log a maintenance request or you can contact the Housing Department by phone using existing contact numbers.

- *I have a social housing application with Killarney Town Council, where do I go if I have a query regarding my application?*

Kerry County Council will be taking over the assessment and management of all social housing applications from June 1st. If you have a query regarding a social housing application, you should contact the Housing Department in Tralee. Applications forms for social housing will still be available at former Town Council offices but, on completion, will have to be submitted to the Housing Department in Kerry County Council for processing.

- *If I have a complaint to make in relation to a property or tenant of Tralee Town Council, who do I contact after June 1st?*

Members of the public and tenants can continue to contact the existing Housing Liaison Officers and Tenancy Enforcement Officers with complaints using existing contact numbers.

- *I am currently in the process of purchasing a house from a Town Council – will the abolition of the Town Council's affect the legal status of this?*

No. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 allows for the preservation of all legal agreements made by the Town Councils.

Planning

- *Can I still lodge a planning application at the former Town Council offices?*
NO. From June 1st all planning applications must be sent to the Planning Department in Kerry County Council. All planning applications and decisions, will, from June 1st be transferred to Kerry County Council.
- *Can I still view planning files in the former town council offices?*
No, you will have to call to the Planning Department in Kerry County Council to physically view a planning application. On line access to Planning files will still be available through the Council website.
- *Will all planning files be stored in County Buildings in Tralee from June 1st?*
Yes.
- *Derelict site files and planning enforcement files are currently being dealt with by the Planning office in Town Councils – who deals with these from June 1st?*
Derelict sites and planning enforcement files will be dealt with by the new 'Operations' section of Kerry County Council. All files associated with these should be sent over to the SE or AO in Operations from June 1st.
- *Will there be any issue where applications are received and processed by the Town Councils but notification of a decision and final grants will be issued by KCC?*
All outstanding processing of the file (issuing of decisions, requests for further information etc) will be dealt with by Kerry County Council from June 1st.
- *If a planning application is received by post to a Town Council after June 1st – is it date stamped by the operations office and forwarded onto KCC or is the received date deemed the date it is received in KCC?*
It cannot be received by the operation office – it will be transferred to Kerry County Council and the date received will be the date it is received in the Planning Office. Planning agents will have been advised of this and public information will also have been published advising of this.

Traffic Fines

- *Can I still pay a parking fine in the former offices of the Town Council?*
Yes, parking fines can be paid in all the Area Offices including the area offices located in the three main towns.
- *If traffic fines can be paid in the area operations office, will the operations office also accept appeals?*
YES, but the final decision will be made centrally based on recommendations from the Area Offices as is the case currently in Kerry County Council.

- *If I am issued with a traffic fine by Killarney Town Council before the abolition of the Town Councils, will it still be valid when the Town Council's are abolished?*
Yes, all outstanding traffic fines will be payable to Kerry County Council from June 1st and all pending legal proceedings will continue in the name of Kerry County Council.
- *Will traffic permits be dealt with at area level or centrally?*
These will be dealt with at area level as is currently the case in existing Kerry County Council area offices in compliance with existing council criteria.
- *Will traffic wardens still have a base at the Municipal District Area Operations office for example to upload tickets?*
Yes, existing arrangements with Traffic Wardens will remain in place.
- *Will Kerry County Council have to introduce new Traffic bye-laws from June 1st?*
NO.

Other

- *What services will be available at former Town Council offices?*
The Area Offices in the three main towns will be located at former Town Council offices. Frontline services such as street cleaning, housing maintenance, maintenance of public parks, traffic wardens, school wardens etc. will continue to be provided in the Towns by our outdoor teams and managed by the Operations Section of Kerry County Council.

Cash payments, routine queries on Council services and the full range of services currently provided by Kerry County Council Area offices will continue to be provided through the new operation offices in the three main towns.
- *As a ratepayer with a Town Council who do I contact if I have a query regarding my rates?*
Money due in respect of rates becomes due and payable to Kerry County Council from June 1st. All rates queries will be managed by the Revenue Department in Kerry County Council.
- *I am a customer of Killarney Town Council's refuse service; can I still make payments at the former offices of Killarney Town Council?*
Yes, customers can continue to make payments at the former offices of Killarney Town Council and other designated outlets in Killarney Town after the dissolution of the Town Council.

- *In the new organisation where do I go if I have a query regarding burial grounds?*
In the new Organisation, burial grounds will be managed by the Community Services and Engagement Unit which will be located in Tralee. If you have a query, please contact the section by using existing contact numbers.
- *Can I still pay my Motor Tax in Killarney Town Council Offices?*
Yes, you can continue paying Motor Tax in the former Killarney Town Council offices after June 1st.
- *Are the Motor Tax Offices located in County buildings moving to Princes Quay?*
Yes, plans are underway to relocate Motor Tax to the former Tralee Town Council Offices in Princes Quay. In the meantime, you can continue to pay Motor Tax at the Motor Tax Building in Tralee, Killarney Town Council offices, by post and on-line.
- *Where do I go in the new organisation if I need to apply for a licence such as a scaffolding licence, road opening licence etc?*
Application forms will still be available at former Town Council offices and at County Buildings, Tralee.

If you have any further detailed queries or questions please email: Re-organisationqueries@kerrycoco.ie