

## **Report to Councillors on the Facts pertaining to the Crumlin Office**

- 1) **City Council structures and services are not organised by Postcodes.** There are four postcodes within the Area , Dublin 8, Dublin 10, Dublin 12, and Dublin 20. In addition it should be noted that Bluebell is in Dublin 12 and has never related to or been supported by the office in Crumlin.
- 2) **City Council Structures are organised around local electoral boundaries.** Within the Administrative Area of South Central there are two Local Electoral Areas; **Ballyfermot/Drimnagh and Crumlin/Kimmage**. The primary office for Ballyfermot/Drimnagh is in Ballyfermot and the primary office for Crumlin/Kimmage is in the Liberties. From these offices a number of shared services support the entire Area.
- 3) **I have stated that it is not my intention to close the secondary office in Crumlin .**
- 4) **The Crumlin Office remains open** and provides the base for the Housing Manager, the Project Estate Officer, and the Sheltered Housing Liaison Officers/wardens. It also provides a base for the operation of the Social Worker Service and the Community Development Service. Staff attached to these services are not permanently based in the Crumlin Office. **The nature of their work does not require that they be based in this office.** In the case of the Social Worker the clinic is held on a specific morning and appointments are made. In the case of Community Development their work requires that they are out of office 80% of their time (on average) and engaged with local communities and initiatives.
- 5) **The Crumlin Office also provided a public counter interface with members of the Public.** The issues raised varied and included Housing maintenance, street lighting, rubbish and litter, dog poop bags, enquires about the housing waiting list, and general queries. These issues are logged on the CRM .

It should be noted that any contention that the public counter serves the entire population of Dublin 12 is not correct. Some Citizens from Drimnagh are served by Ballyfermot and Bluebell is entirely served by Ballyfermot. Because of the Crumlin Office's geographic location and transport connections the most significant number of callers to the Public Counter come from the immediate area of Crumlin itself.

**We cannot maintain this Public Counter service from this Office at present on a five day week basis.** The opening hours since October have been erratic. It has been also difficult for elected members and the public to get through by phone to this office. This is completely down to staffing issues. The fact is that when I came into this management role there were **four administrative staff in the Crumlin Office**. The current position is that from close of business on Friday March 3rd there was one administrative staff member. I cannot, from a health and safety perspective alone, have one administrative staff member as the only consistently present staff member in an office.

I was already concerned at the fact that we had two staff members only up to that point . I had sought to hire an external security/porter to ensure that there would always be two people on the premises but a member of staff referred this to the Union.

The staffing difficulties arose for a number of reasons. Firstly there were internal staff conflict/challenge issues that resulted in a member of staff requesting a move. A Staff member, at her request was moved out of the South Central Area, a replacement was sought but none was forthcoming. A second staff member retired. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> a third staff member went on maternity leave. Since I took Office no staff member has been re-deployed from Crumlin to Eblana until March 3<sup>rd</sup> when health and safety considerations made it imperative. We cannot operate the public counter with one staff member. To leave the one person in place in Crumlin would not be an efficient use of resource and would not fulfil my obligations under health and safety.

It should also be noted that erratic opening hours of a public counter serve neither the interests of City Council nor of citizens. **To maintain a public counter with full opening hours requires at least three and preferably four administrative staff in an office.** This allows for unplanned absence due to illness and planned absence due to holidays. We have requested critical vacancy recruitment/deployment to reach this staffing level in Crumlin. We have not been granted same.

It should also be noted that as of this week the staff member who was in Crumlin has been promoted to the position of Housing Advisor and will be reassigned. This in practise would mean that had she been left in the Crumlin Office it would have been for no more than a few weeks. If she is transferred out of South Central however it will result in yet another reduction in Staffing numbers in this Area.

**As of today (March 14<sup>th</sup> ) a invitation has been circulated to all staff under the management remit of the Deputy CEO seeking volunteers to fulfil administrative duties in Crumlin.**

6) **My responsibility is to the entire Area of Dublin South Central.** In that respect I have significant staffing and resource challenges.

Firstly the **Public Domain Team covers** the entire South Central Area and the staff complement here fell from four to one as a result of long term illness , staff transfers made by HR, and staff promotion. The Public Domain function is important and again I cannot have one staff member alone in delivering this function. The recent allocation of a Clerical Officer enabled me to provide a co-worker and administrative support to then Acting Public Domain Officer. It is my management position that this was a more critical need for the entire South Central Area than reinforcing the single administrative staff member in Crumlin.

7) The consolidation of the **Community Development** teams was necessitated by a reduction in staff and a reduction in team managers. It was our decision that having two teams in two base locations would allow for greater flexibility in service delivery, and enable the repositioning of the community development service. As stated above the nature of Community Development work requires that individuals work outside of the office for most of the working week. The location of their base station does not in any way reduce their availability to local groups. **The Crumlin Office remains open for use by Community**

**Development and can be an asset for local meetings.** I can confidently assure you that there has been no reduction in the activity or presence on the ground of Community Development staff since we consolidated the Community Development Teams.

We do face increased challenges in this area however with staff numbers and roles. The recent decision to move the only full time team leader, taken by the Deputy CEO, to fill the position of Grade 7 in Travellers will have implications for the continuing delivery of Community Development. Despite our application to fill this as a Critical Vacancy we are advised by the Deputy CEO that it is not a vacancy that can be filled as it is merely an internal move within the management line of the Deputy CEO. While we can create an Acting Grade 7 the net effect is that our Community Development Staff numbers are reduced again resulting in a net decrease of two full time staff. The staff complement is 8.5 staff so the reduction is almost 25%.

**So what have I done and what will I do in respect of Crumlin :**

- **I have provided that there will be administrative staff on site in Crumlin every Wednesday to facilitate the Social Work Clinic and to have the public counter open.** Phone calls pertaining to issues will be routed to Eblana and logged and handled from here. This provision however may not continue when the staff member promoted to Housing Advisor moves.

I will also revisit the issue of contracting a Security staff member to staff the entry/exit of the Crumlin Office. This would allow for the current clinics held there to happen and for people to access leaflet information and poop bags.

- I will , if I receive the staff sought for critical vacancies across all functions, allocate staff to the Crumlin Office. **In this regard my priority is to fill critical vacancies where the work by nature serves the entire Area and requires interface with the public and our services , beyond that of a fixed administrative base.** To make this clear and I am unapologetic about this my order of priority is to secure a full Public Domain Team, Secure a full Community Development team and only after this to allocate a full administrative team to the Crumlin Office.

Naturally if the invitation to staff to volunteer to work in Crumlin produces at least three individuals so inclined then they will be so assigned and Crumlin Public Counter will open on a full week basis.

In the event that only three staff are allocated, I believe it is necessary to engage a security presence.

- I will also begin a process to identify and measure the real need for continuing a public counter service in the Crumlin Office. Because this service was there is of itself no reason for maintaining it. The staff costs for four administrative staff exceed €185K . This is a considerable resource to tie up on effectively logging issues on the CRM which can be done from anywhere and dealing with

general counter queries. The front office staff do not resolve issues but rather act as the “post box” for forwarding issues. This results in the responsibility for ensuring that an issue is resolved and the citizen is provided with service being removed from the operational responsible department.

The continuing provision of a public counter and administrative staff in Crumlin can only be ultimately justified if the workload requires it. This would mean that if we do manage to reopen I would as Manager be obliged to undertake a work study to establish the volume, nature and priority of the work undertaken by Staff in this Office. This evidence based evaluation should inform future decisions on the viability of this Office.

- **We live in changing times , and are faced with a Public Sector where staff resources and finances are not as readily available as before. In this context there is a need for Dublin City Council to evaluate it’s service delivery functions, assess recruitment needs, and challenge existing structures and locations for service delivery.**

**In respect of the provision of a public counter for members of the Public it is possible that using technology to enable citizens interface with staff around issues, could help make better use of the limited staff resource available.**

**I will commission research and seek a proposal to open a Public Counter Interface Booth in Crumlin as a pilot which could be extended to other localities and operate from a variety of locations.** Such a facility could be made available in a community hall, residential complex, or indeed in a shopping centre. This facility would utilise technology to allow for face to face interactions between the public and staff.

**The proposal would identify options , identify costs and operational security , and identify a methodology for feedback to the citizen.** It is also feasible that such a facility could be made available through an App on a mobile phone or tablet.

The staff on duty for this interface would be based in Eblana. This would ensure that a public counter is provided in a five day 10am to 4pm basis for anyone wishing to call into Crumlin office while avoiding the need to have a significant staff resource tied up waiting on callers and handling phone calls for one local area alone. In fact this pilot could provide a solution to the staffing challenge for the future and release more staff from general administrative work.

**Peter Finnegan**

**Area Manager**

**March 15<sup>th</sup> 2017**