Mission Statement

To manage the Courts,
support the judiciary and
provide a high-quality and
professional service to all users
of the Courts.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword by the Chief Justice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message from the Chief Executive Officer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Board</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mandate of the Courts Service</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Structure of the Courts Service</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Strategic Process</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Environmental Analysis</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Mission</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Implementing the Mandates</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandate 1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandate 2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandate 3</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandate 4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandate 5</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Key Challenges</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile of the Courts Service</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of the Courts</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Courts System in Ireland</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courts Service Organisational Chart</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword by the Chief Justice

Our current economic success owes much to the initiative and resourcefulness of Irish people, coupled with an appreciation for the need to change and continued improvement on what has gone before. We in the Courts Service recognise this need, especially when faced with ever increasing demands from a more diverse society. For that reason, I am especially gratified to see the publication of this the first strategic plan of our new Courts Service.

The Courts Service is only recently established as an independent body following Government acceptance of the recommendations of the Working Group on a Courts Commission. The functions of the Service primarily relate to the management and administration of the Courts and supporting the judiciary in their work. The legislation establishing the Service specifically protects the independence of the judiciary and, of course, constitutionally that is as it ought to be. The Working Group expressed the view that it would be quite appropriate for Judges to work with staff of the Service in certain administrative areas. This is a view with which I concur. I am pleased that already a significant number of Judges are working with the management of the Service in a number of important areas including the development of the Information Technology and Courts Building programmes as well as in the preparation of information booklets, leaflets and videos.

The modernisation of the Courts is taking place on a number of levels. Firstly, of course, there has been the creation of the Courts Service itself as a new independent body and the putting in place of professional management structures.

Secondly, there is the development and implementation of a major Information Technology programme which has the potential to transform the way our Courts work. Thirdly, the Courts Building programme and the extra investment involved will continue and be intensified in the years immediately ahead and, fourthly, we will be examining our Court Rules with a view to updating them to ensure that they are compatible with modern technology and to ensure that the Service will be in a position to implement Government policy on the Information Society.

The concept and practice of Strategic Management is now well established across the Public Service. The need for planning and the development of a strategic approach to our work is essential in these days of rapid communications and decision making. The challenge for the new organisation will be to convert this Plan into action in such a manner that all those dealing with the Courts and the Courts Service will benefit.

I wish to thank the Chief Executive Officer and all the staff involved in the preparation of this Strategic Plan. I look forward, with my colleagues on the Courts Service Board and my colleagues in the Judiciary, to working with the Courts Service as it sets about achieving the ambitious targets set in this Plan.

Ronan Keane
Chief Justice and Chairman of the Board
September 2000
I am very pleased to introduce the Strategic Plan for the Courts Service for the period 2000 to 2003. This is the first such Plan for the Service and is the culmination of a lengthy process of consultation both with our own staff and with individuals and bodies who relate regularly with us or who have an interest in the administration of justice by the Courts.

The production of this Strategic Plan is very timely in that the environment in which we operate is undergoing a period of major change. In common with other public sector organisations, expectations in relation both to the quality of the service offered and the efficiency with which it is offered are increasing. This is at a time when the workload of the Courts is increasing both in volume and complexity. We are also operating in a time of rapid technological change which has, inevitably, implications for the Courts. These changes demand that the new Service be proactive and strategic in its approach.

The purpose of the Plan is to enable the Board, management and staff focus on the major goals for the organisation over the next three years. Its publication will allow for a common understanding among judges, staff, the various professions that operate in the Courts and the many interested groups and individuals of these major goals as well as the principles and values that will underpin our operation. The Strategic Plan is very much about creating and nurturing a unity of purpose in the Service and ensuring that sight is not lost of our important role in society. The Plan needs also to be sufficiently robust to embrace and positively respond to the pace of change which is now a feature of everyday life.

The Courts Service is very fortunate in the quality and commitment of its staff. Over the last number of years we have experienced unprecedented change and staff have responded to these changes in a highly positive manner. This augurs well for the future of the Service and offers confidence in our ability to implement the various changes incorporated in this Plan.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those who participated in and contributed to the preparation of this Plan. I would also like to thank the many professional groups working in the Courts and the many members of the public who made helpful submissions to the preparation of this Plan.

The preparation of the Plan is only the beginning of the process. The bulk of the work and the challenges lie with its implementation. The goodwill and assistance given to the new Service to date by judges, staff, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, his Secretary General and staff and the professional groups working in the Courts has been very reassuring. I have no doubt, given the level of goodwill of all concerned, that the new Service will develop and deliver the type of world class Courts Service envisaged by the Working Group on a Courts Commission.

PJ Fitzpatrick
Chief Executive Officer
September 2000
Board

The Hon. Mr. Justice Ronan Keane, Chief Justice & Chairman of the Board

The Hon. Mrs. Justice Susan Denham

The Hon. Mr. Justice Catherine McGuinness

The Hon. Mr. Justice Frederick Morris

The Hon. Mr. Justice Peter Kelly

The Hon. Mr. Justice Esmond Smyth

His Honour Judge Sean O’Leary

His Honour Judge Peter Smithwick

Judge William Early

*M. Liam McKechnie

Mr. Patrick O’Connor

Mrs. Elisha D’Arcy

Mr. Michael Mellett

Ms. Olive Braiden

Ms. Noirin Greene

Mrs. Elizabeth O’Neill

Mr. P.J. Fitzpatrick

*M. Liam McKechnie was nominated by the Government for appointment as a Judge - July 2000.
The effective operation of a courts system is a critical element of the well-being of any society. Courts, by virtue of their role, have a significant impact on lives and welfare. Their effectiveness is therefore of considerable importance. Effectiveness is not influenced solely by the manner in which cases are dealt with by judges in the courtroom environment, but also by the administrative and institutional framework which exists to support and facilitate the operation of the Courts in Ireland, this framework is provided by the Courts Service, which was established on 9 November 1999 with the enactment of the Courts Service Act, 1998.

The establishment of a new independent body to manage and administer court services is an historic move by the Irish Government. Our Constitution embodies the concept of the separation of powers and this is reflected in the decision to create a separate administrative infrastructure to support the judicial branch of Government.

The formation of the Courts Service had been recommended in the First Report of the Working Group on a Courts Commission, titled ‘Management and Financing of the Courts’, published in April 1996. The Working Group identified a number of shortcomings in the then existing institutional framework, including:

- The Irish Courts system had remained largely unaltered since its establishment in 1924
- There has been an enormous increase in civil and criminal litigation
- There was seen to be an unacceptable delay in the determination of cases
- There were instances of overworked and poorly organised staff
- There was evidence of a lack of adequate back-up and support services to judges
- There was an absence of adequate systems for communicating information and of modern computer and information systems to support the increasing workload of the Courts

In addition, the Working Group identified several factors as contributing significantly to the problems within the Courts structure and these included:

- Lack of clear management structures with accountability and responsibility
- Lack of clear reporting structures
- Lack of adequate performance measurements
- An absence of adequate planning, with the emphasis on day-to-day planning and procedures
- Fragmentation of the administrative systems within and between each of the Courts
- Minimum training and development of staff
- Lack of professional management support to any of the above requirements
- An absence of strategic planning
- No annual reports
- Inadequate information service to the public
- Limited statistical information in a meaningful format

The Working Group recommended the establishment of an independent Courts Service Board as an agency of the State. This recommendation was accepted by Government and the new Courts Service came into being with the enactment of the Courts Service Act, 1998.
2. Mandate of the Courts Service

The functions of the Service as set out in the Courts Service Act, 1998 are:

- To manage the courts,
- To provide support services for the judges,
- To provide information on the courts system to the public,
- To provide, manage and maintain court buildings, and
- To provide facilities for users of the courts.

These functions form the basic underpinning for this strategic plan and are reflected in the framework used. It is our objective that in each of these areas the very highest standards will constantly be aspired to and constantly sought to be achieved.
3. Structure of the Courts Service

THE BOARD

The Board of the Service consists of 17 people and is chaired by the Chief Justice or another judge of the Supreme Court nominated by him/her. The composition of the Board is:

- The Chief Justice or a Supreme Court judge nominated by him/her
- A judge of the Supreme Court elected by the ordinary judges of that Court
- The Presidents of the High Court, the Circuit Court and the District Court or judges of these Courts nominated by the respective Presidents
- A judge of the High Court, the Circuit Court and the District Court elected by the judges of the respective Courts
- A judge nominated by the Chief Justice in respect of expertise in a specific area of court business
- The Chief Executive Officer
- A practising barrister, nominated by the Chairman for the time being of the Council of the Bar of Ireland
- A practising solicitor, nominated by the President for the time being of the Law Society of Ireland
- An elected staff member
- An officer of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- A nominee of the Minister representing consumer interests
- A nominee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and
- A further nominee of the Minister of a person with relevant knowledge and experience in commerce, finance or administration.

The functions of the Board are to determine policy in relation to the Service and to oversee its implementation by the Chief Executive Officer.

In carrying out its functions, the Board must have regard to:

- The resources of the Service for the purposes of such performance and the need to secure the most beneficial, effective and efficient use of such resources, and
- Any policy or objective of the Government or a Minister of the Government insofar as it may affect or relate to a function of the Service.

The Chief Executive Officer is the accounting officer for the Courts Service and has responsibility for the management and control of the staff as well as the day-to-day administration and business of the Service and reports to the Board in relation to the performance of these functions.
THE MANAGEMENT

The Service, under the Chief Executive Officer, is organised in six Directorates as follows:

**Director of Operations and Chief Registrar for the Supreme and High Courts**

The responsibility of this Directorate includes:
- Planning for existing and future service requirements of all areas within the directorate
- The Supreme and High Court offices and support services to the judges of those Courts
- The business of the various offices of the Supreme and High Court including the Central Office, Examiner’s Office, General Solicitor’s Office, Official Assignee’s Office, Probate Office, Taxing Masters’ Office and Wards of Court Office
- General management of the Four Courts complex

**Director of Corporate Services**

Responsibilities here include:
- Information Office, media relations service, establishment and on-going development of website, Statistics Unit, Courts Service Newsletter, production of the Annual Report and the production and dissemination of information regarding Court Services generally
- Information Technology encompassing the provision of new information systems and a modern countrywide communications infrastructure to support the management and administration of the Service
- Internal Audit (for administrative purposes)
- Judicial support services including the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board and the Judicial Studies Institute, as well as other support services for the judiciary
- Freedom of Information
- Secretariat functions involving support to the Board and to the Chief Executive Officer
- Liaison with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and central coordination of the Courts Service

**Director of Estates and Buildings**

This Directorate has responsibility for:
- Capital projects involving planning, developing and carrying out capital and refurbishment works as well as arranging the lease or rental of accommodation
- Preparation and costing of capital building programme
- Transfer of courthouses currently in the ownership of Local Authorities and the Office of Public Works to the Service

**Director of Operations for the Circuit and District Courts**

Responsibilities of this Directorate include:
- Planning for existing and future service requirements of all areas within the directorate
- The 42 District Court offices and the 26 Circuit Court offices throughout the country
- Support services to the Circuit and District Court judges
- Accommodation requirements for all sittings of the Circuit and District Courts
- Constantly reviewing Areas and Districts
- Acting as a support and referral service to Court offices on procedural matters
• Fitting, equipping and maintaining courthouses and other court and office buildings to modern day standards
• Ensuring the ongoing application of best safety, health and welfare standards in all buildings and offices
• Ensure that all premises are adequately equipped to meet the communications needs of the Service e.g. phone, data and, where appropriate, video-link facilities

Director of Finance

Responsibilities here include:
• Financial accounting and control, including the production of annual financial statements in respect of all financial activities of the Service
• Developing and implementing financial controls and procedures that comply with best accounting practice
• Financial management and planning, including the provision and interpretation of financial management information
• Investment management of Court Service funds
• Overseeing the implementation of the Euro in all court offices

Director of Human Resources

Responsibilities of this Directorate include:
• Change management issues including business planning, performance management, internal communication and customer service
• Organisational strategy and development
• Partnership arrangements
• Training and development of staff
• Recruitment, promotion, competitions, pay and pensions, personnel administration, discipline, grievance, and other personnel functions

Industrial relations and the Conciliation and Arbitration scheme
• Developing and implementing policies in areas such as equality, bullying and sexual harassment
• Employee assistance support
• Judicial training in information technology

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM

Under the Courts Service Act, 1998, responsibility for the day to day management of the courts has been transferred to the Courts Service. The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform continues to be politically accountable to the Oireachtas in respect of the Service and has a formal role in certain areas. The Service is required to report to the Minister on its activities on a yearly basis and the Minister will lay a copy of this report before each of the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Service will also ensure that arrangements are in place to provide the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform with all necessary information to enable the Minister discharge his/her ministerial accountability and responsibility in relation to the Service. The relationship between the Minister and his Department and the Service is, thus, a vital one in the ongoing effectiveness of the new organisation.
4. The Courts Service and the Strategic Process

This Strategic Plan is being developed in accordance with Section 7 of the Courts Service Act, 1998 which requires the Service to prepare and submit to the Minister a strategic plan for a three year period. It has involved a comprehensive process of consultation with staff, a number of the key stakeholders and the general public. This process of consultation and discussion was intended to ensure that there was an opportunity for meaningful participation in and contribution to the plan. Twenty-four workshops were held with staff and a high percentage attended and contributed very positively to the process and to the final document. It is intended that this process of communication and participation will be continued in the development of operational Business Plans and beyond.

In early December 1999, submissions from the general public were invited by way of public advertisement in the national newspapers. Invitations to contribute were also extended to individuals and groups who interact most directly and on an ongoing basis with the Courts. The response was very encouraging and many of the views submitted are reflected in the Plan, while others will be relevant to the ongoing development of the Service.

**Purpose of the Strategic Plan**

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to enable the Board, management and staff to focus on the major goals to be achieved over the next three years in the context of the mandate assigned to the Service by the 1998 Act. It will also provide the underpinning for the Business Planning process which will be initiated shortly. The Plan takes into account a number of key factors:

- The Constitutional role, responsibilities and independence of the judiciary
- The six Reports and two Working Papers produced by the Working Group on a Courts Commission
- Government policy as set out in An Action Programme for the Millennium
- The role and position of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- Partnership 2000 and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness
- Government policy on bilingualism, particularly as set out in Section 7 of the Courts Service Act, 1998
- The Statement of Strategy of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- The dynamic and constantly evolving responsibilities and role of the Courts arising from new legislation, a changing environment, both internal and external, as well as the ongoing work and outcome of Bodies such as the Law Reform Commission and Committees established by the Oireachtas
- Government proposals on the Information Society and e-commerce
- The National Development Plan 2000 - 2006

In accordance with the underlying principles of the Strategic Management Initiative, this Strategic Plan will also seek to address:

- The contribution which the Service can make to national economic and social development;
- The provision of better, high quality, services;
- Ensuring the most beneficial, effective and efficient use of the resources of the Service.
5. Environmental Analysis

External Environment

The Courts Service is very conscious that it operates in a dynamic environment. This environment has altered dramatically in the past couple of decades and is currently undergoing shifts which are unprecedented in their pace and which require a vibrant and responsive organisation to keep pace. These changes have contributed to the establishment of the Service and a critical role for the Service will be to seek to anticipate changes in the environment and to proactively respond. During the course of preparation of this Plan an exhaustive analysis of the internal and external environments was conducted, seeking to take account of the trends and changes that are taking place or that are likely to take place. Such changes and trends cover political, social, economic and technological areas. Those impacting on the Courts Service include:

- An increasing emphasis on accountability right across the public service
- Continuing rapid developments in the Information Technology area and its capacity to impact on the operations of the Courts, most recently reflected in the Government’s e-commerce initiative
- Greater complexity in legislation and the consequent requirement for the Courts to be in a position to respond speedily
- An increasing awareness of rights and greater recourse to litigation
- An increase in legislation which impacts on the business of the Courts
- Increasing public expectation regarding the quality and timeliness of services provided
- Strong willingness on the part of the legislature to tackle crime and delays in the administration of justice
- Recent moves towards alternative means of dispute resolution

Internal Environment

The Courts Service, in tandem with other public service bodies, will need to be able to respond effectively to the dynamic environment referred to earlier. There have been a number of recent initiatives and developments which further emphasise this requirement:

- The creation of the unified staff structures and the requirement to develop a strategic approach to the business of the organisation
- The Freedom of Information Act, 1997 which increases access both internally and externally to information and which has implications for systems and procedures within the Service
- The Government’s Quality Customer Service Initiative which requires a renewed focus on the service offered by public service organisations
- Partnership 2000 and the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and the implications for increased involvement, consultation, partnership and flexibility at all levels within the organisation
5. Environmental Analysis continued

A number of factors have been identified as of particular importance in the context of the internal capacity of the organisation to meet its mandate and to be responsive to the ever-changing demands:

- The creativity, commitment and input from staff at all levels
- The development and nurturing of new specialist skills required as a consequence of the formation of the Service as a new independent organisation
- The development of a professional, highly-trained and motivated staff
- A willingness to be proactive in the identification of, and willingness to embrace, change
- The capacity of the organisation to acquire and retain the resources needed to reach the optimum efficiency and effectiveness
- The development and implementation of an information technology strategy which recognises the importance of developing modern information systems and communications infrastructures
- An awareness and appreciation of the role and involvement of stakeholders of the Service, including the entire community
- Examination and continuous review of internal systems and structures
- The necessity to place a premium on effective internal communication and involvement
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of the capacity and effectiveness of the Service in meeting its strategic objectives and responding to changing demands
- The active participation of judges with administrative staff in administrative initiatives which impact on their work. Examples of recent such involvement include the information technology programme, the court buildings programme, the website and the judges’ intranet project
Guiding Principles

To accomplish its mandate and to fulfill its Mission, the Service will be guided by certain fundamental principles which will underpin all its operations:

- highest quality service to the judges and the public
- prompt and effective service which is responsive to the needs of users
- public accountability and value for money
- equality, fairness and integrity and
- public trust and confidence.

The focus over the three years covered by this Plan will be on ensuring that the administration of justice, as effected in the Courts by the judges, is facilitated by the Service; seeking to consistently give top class service; developing a highly trained and motivated staff; having a collective sense of the organisation’s underlying purpose; consistently searching for improvement, while evaluating its own performance on an ongoing basis; and placing a strong emphasis on participation and collaboration with judges, staff and with the many professional and other bodies and individuals that interact with the Service.

Values

The Service is very conscious that there are certain shared values which are essential to its long-term success and which will need to be reflected in all its work and its interface with its users and with the wider community. These shape what the Service does, what it stands for and what it ought to be and include:

- **Commitment to excellence**
  We will seek to provide the very highest quality service in all areas of activity. The same quest for excellence will be reflected in our relationships both internally and externally.

- **Customer focus**
  The Service deals with a wide range of groups and individuals in the course of its work. These range from Government Departments such as Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Finance to bodies such as Local Authorities and the Office of Public Works, the Gardaí, Prison Authorities and Probation and Welfare Service, the legal professions and the media as well as a range of individuals including jurors, victims of crime, litigants, witnesses, accused and the general public. An essential shared value will involve a professional, consistent and sensitive approach to dealing with the expectations of all. This will involve considerable proactivity on our part.

6. Mission

**The Mission Statement**

To manage the Courts, support the judiciary and provide a high-quality and professional service to all users of the Courts
• **Valuing our staff as our greatest resource**
  
  None of the aspirations and demanding objectives set by this Strategic Plan will be possible without the continuing commitment of staff in every office and every location throughout the country. Maintaining this commitment and moving ahead demands increased empowerment through structures such as partnership. It will also involve devolving responsibility to the greatest extent possible, as well as addressing issues such as recognition for quality performance.

• **Unity of purpose**
  
  For the Service to be effective and to meet the high expectations attaching to the organisation on its formation, it is important that there be a shared appreciation of our role among all our staff, the outcome of which should reflect in a quality service and an appreciation of the important societal role vested in us.

• **Teamwork**
  
  Shared responsibility among all staff for progressing the Service and a participative approach will be essential in the years ahead. Teamwork will be the preferred means of working throughout the organisation.

• **Fairness and Transparency**
  
  We will operate in a manner which is open to scrutiny and which will be characterised by fairness and equity.

• **Professionalism**
  
  In all our dealings both internally and with our customers and the wider community, we will set and seek to maintain the highest professional standards. This places a premium on matters such as the procedures we operate, the standards we set, our efficiency and the training and career development programmes we put in place for our staff.

• **Willingness to change**
  
  We will constantly and honestly review the performance of the organisation and the quality of the service we provide and embrace and promote the necessary change to ensure our ongoing effectiveness.
This Strategic Plan sets the high level goals for the Service. The five core mandates for the Service as set out in Section 5 of the Courts Service Act, 1998 were outlined earlier. This section sets out the context within which the Service will seek to implement each of its mandates. It also sets out for each mandate the key outputs to be achieved and the strategies that will be employed to bring these about. Finally, for each of the strategies a series of performance indicators have been set which will be the measure of success in implementing this plan in the years immediately ahead. Following the finalisation of this Plan each Directorate and units within directorates will prepare their own detailed business plans which will, in turn, feed into these strategies.
Mandate 1:

Manage the Courts
In implementing this mandate the Service is required to provide the staff and other resources necessary to meet the needs of court users, to ensure that such resources will be provided in a professional and user-friendly manner that provides value for money.

**CONTEXT**
The Service is very conscious that we operate in an environment which, to a large extent, is influenced and often determined externally. The factors which impact on our workload include:

- The number of criminal cases initiated in any year
- The number of civil cases initiated
- The number of cases proceeding to trial or hearing
- The nature, length and complexity of cases
- Legislative initiatives and their impact on the range and type of criminal proceedings and civil actions
- Procedural changes such as alterations in jurisdiction or the manner in which remedies may be sought

The continuing increase in litigation and the increasing complexity of cases places ongoing pressure on the administration of justice and, consequently, on the Service. The capacity of the organisation to fulfill this mandate will be influenced further by issues such as our capacity to secure and retain the necessary resources and our ability to secure co-operation from the various parties with whom we interact.

Our objectives during the life of this strategy will be to seek to manage the Courts in a manner which facilitates to the greatest extent possible the effective and efficient running of the Courts and in a manner which is sensitive to the needs of all who interact with us.

**KEY OUTPUTS**

- Persons seeking a legal remedy are provided with an efficient and user-friendly court service with the minimum of delay
- Implementation of an Information Technology strategy, harnessing leading solutions, which will effectively meet the operational requirements of the Service and facilitate the provision of a high quality service to all Court users
- A proactive financial management system which will allow for full accountability in relation to court funds and which will incorporate effective external and internal controls
- A person-focused human resource management strategy which will seek to maximise the efficiency, effectiveness and competence of staff and the organisation and foster high performance with an emphasis on teamwork and partnership
Mandate 1 continued

**STRATEGIES**

**Put in place professional management and administrative structures at central, regional and local area levels**

Key Performance Indicators
- Put in place new support functions, including Finance, Information Technology, Human Resources, Corporate Services and Estates and Buildings
- Put in place regional management arrangements to facilitate the devolution of functions and budgets
- Ensure consistent and coherent management and organisational structures
- Put in place an effective means of reviewing performance at all levels

**Develop and put in place a Human Resources strategy which supports the organisational strategies set out in this Plan**

Key Performance Indicators
- In consultation with staff, develop a Human Resources strategy which supports the implementation of organisational strategies
- The Human Resources strategy to cover areas such as recruitment, retention of staff, career development, mobility, promotion, equality of opportunity, partnership, training and career development and performance management

**Devolve authority and responsibility to local managers to the greatest extent possible**

Key Performance Indicators
- Identify the appropriate functions and tasks to be devolved and formally assign responsibility and accountability
- Put in place monitoring and reporting arrangements that will ensure the provision of ongoing feedback on performance and accountability

**Develop and implement a structured approach to training and development for the Service**

Key Performance Indicators
- Conduct a Training Needs Analysis for all staff in the Service
- Develop a training strategy and programme covering the duration of this plan
- Allocate resources to the training function reflecting its importance to organisational development
- Put in place a Training and Development Steering Group within the Partnership process
- Adopt a regional and local approach to the delivery of training
- Develop a policy on further education and the refund of fees which will reflect both the needs of the organisation and personal development requirements of staff
- Explore the potential for a third level qualification in Courts Service Management
Review processes and practices in all offices

Key Performance Indicators
- Initiate a review of practices and processes in all offices
- Set criteria for ensuring consistency between and across offices
- Put procedures in place which will seek to ensure the ongoing availability of trained personnel
- Put in place a policy of documenting all office practices and procedures so as to ensure ongoing consistency and continuity
- Put in place a structure for ongoing reviews of processes and practices

Devise and implement a 5 year Information Technology strategy

Key Performance Indicators
- Provision of high quality, reliable and leading edge systems
- Implement Local and Wide Area Networks providing seamless integration of all Court sites into a modern communications infrastructure based on modern information and communication technologies
- Implement a Case Management System across all jurisdictions to manage criminal and road traffic cases
- Implement a Civil Case Management System across all Court jurisdictions to manage the processing of civil business including family law proceedings and the work associated with the various specialised offices of the Courts (i.e. Wards of Court, Examiners, Probate, Official Assignee, etc.)
- Implement systems to meet the accounting requirements of the Service
- Develop a Management Information System to support the administrative and management requirements of the Service
- Provide modern office productivity tools across all Court Service sites
- Develop the capacity of the Service to supply services electronically, consistent with the Government initiative for the development of e-commerce

Implement suitable accounting systems and procedures that will comply with best practice and facilitate effective and efficient management of resources

Key Performance Indicators
- Select and implement a financial accounting system for the management of funds allocated for the operation of the Service and that will facilitate improved resource allocation and value for money
- Select and implement a courts accounting system which will enable the Service to account for and manage all funds and financial activities generated through the operation of the Courts
- Implement procedures and practices that will ensure full accountability and audit of all Courts Service finances
- Establish practices and procedures for the management and investment of all Service funds in accordance with best practice
- Put in place an Administrative Budget agreement with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Finance that will facilitate greater delegation of authority and responsibility to the Service in the management of its remit
- Through the Courts Service Euro Action Group, plan and implement the necessary changes required for the single Euro currency changeover on 1 January 2002
Put in place processes and procedures which will ensure that the services provided by the Service are delivered in an efficient, effective and sensitive manner

Key Performance Indicators
- Develop a Courts Users Customer Service Action Plan which will detail the standards of service to be delivered
- Support the Rules Committees in updating and modernising rules, including the transaction of business electronically
- Continue the development of the Small Claims Courts
- Assess and examine the need for the establishment of a commercial court and advise the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform accordingly
- Initiate the provision of single court offices in provincial areas offering a full range of information on all court services

Review, and revise where appropriate, existing District Court Districts and Areas

Key Performance Indicators
- Establish a committee of the Board to review all existing District Court Districts and Areas having regard to population and demographic changes
- Ensure that modern day acceptable facilities are provided for users of the District Court in such number of venues that ensures users have access within reasonable distance

Develop and implement short, medium and long term plans for the provision of Family Law Court services

Key Performance Indicators
- Establish a Family Law Court Development Committee of the Board to examine and progress the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group on a Courts Commission
- Implement the in-camera pilot project for the recording and reporting of family law judgments in accordance with the recommendations of the Working Group on a Courts Commission
- Construct a purpose designed Family Law centre for all Family Law Courts (High, Circuit and District) in Dublin
- Provide modern-day Family Law and ancillary facilities in those locations outside Dublin where such cases will be dealt with in future

Put in place a pilot Drugs Court in the District Court in Dublin

Key Performance Indicators
- Ensure resources required are in place
- Put arrangements in place to enable the project to be externally evaluated
- Assess resource implications of extending the project outside Dublin
Ensure that an adequate number of staff are competent in the Irish language so as to allow for service to be provided in Irish as well as in English. Account also to be taken of those whose first language is neither English nor Irish.

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Develop a policy on bilingualism in the Service
- Ensure that service can be provided bilingually
- Offer training to staff to enable such service to be provided and also to enable a service to be provided to those who can speak neither language

**Foster a performance ethos with particular emphasis on partnership and teamwork to achieve this**

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Put in place central partnership structures with representation from unions, management and staff
- Extend partnership structures to regional and eventually, local level
- Ensure the widest possible input, geographical, grade and gender into the partnership process
- Work towards commitment at all levels, including senior management, to the ethos of teamwork and partnership

**Promote and develop good internal communication at all levels**

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Develop an internal communication strategy allowing for widespread staff input in the process
- Implement such strategy across the organisation and put in place a review process which will allow for the effectiveness of the strategy to be monitored and reviewed
- Continue to develop the Courts Service Newsletter and encourage widespread input from staff
- Ensure that intranet facility is available across all offices

**Promote a strong corporate identity and sense of unity of objective among all staff**

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Increase use of teamwork both within and across the organisation
- Promote lateral movement of staff within the Service
- Promote knowledge and understanding of all of the work of the Service among staff
Mandate 2: Provide Support Services for the Judges
Mandate 2: Provide Support Services for the Judges

A critical function for the Service is the provision of support services for the judiciary.

CONTEXT
The Constitution delineates the powers of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of Government and provides that judges shall be independent in their judicial function and subject only to the Constitution and the law. The Courts Service Act, 1998, which set up the Service, had full regard to this constitutional imperative. The functions of the Service do not include the administration of justice nor is the Service accountable for judicial decisions.

An effective Service is, however, critical to an effective system of administration of justice by the judiciary. The Working Group on a Courts Commission states that “an efficient management system is of the utmost importance to the Courts and the State...... The service which is provided in the Court system is the means by which the public obtain justice. An inefficient service impedes justice. In addition, the Courts Service is of importance in commerce and the business community. Commerce is at a disadvantage if the system is inefficient and ineffective”.

Our objective over the life of this plan and beyond is to ensure that the highest quality service is provided to the judiciary and thus contribute to a system where the administration of justice is efficient, speedy and accessible, sensitive to the environment in which it operates and one in which the public has confidence.

KEY OUTPUTS
- Through an effective working relationship with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Department of Finance, ensure that the Service has the resources to perform effectively
- An effective, productive and harmonious relationship between the judiciary and staff of the Service
- Ongoing training and development of staff to ensure that the most effective support is available to the judiciary

STRATEGIES
Develop a structured relationship with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and with the Department of Finance in which the needs of the Service can be determined and responded to in the context of the Constitutional imperatives of the judiciary and the objectives of this Plan

Key Performance Indicators
- Regular, structured meetings with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- Proactive and far sighted approach towards anticipating the needs of the Courts and the Service, particularly in areas such as the impact of new legislation and procedures
Develop an effective working relationship and communications system between the judiciary and the staff of the Service

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Support the work of the Rules Committees
- Enhance communication between judiciary and staff of the Service and support initiatives taken by the judiciary to optimise same

Ensure the judiciary are provided with the resources to conduct their work in an effective manner

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Provide improved library and research facilities to the judiciary
- Provide improved secretarial and research facilities to the judiciary
- Support the work of the Judicial Studies Institute
- Facilitate the provision of training to members of the judiciary in areas of Information Technology and such other administrative areas as identified by the judiciary as relevant and appropriate for provision by the Service
- Support the judiciary and resource the Courts in support of initiatives aimed at reducing waiting times in Courts where such waiting times exist

Continue to review and develop administrative case management procedures and support the judiciary in any initiatives undertaken by them in relation to judicial case management

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Put in place an effective management information system, including relevant statistical information, which will allow the identification of and scope for managing the workload of the Service in the optimum manner
- Implement all realistic and feasible means of better managing the administrative case work of the Service
- Support and assist the judiciary in initiatives undertaken by them in relation to judicial case management

Provide appropriate training, development and familiarisation to members of staff with a view to ensuring the most effective support for the judiciary

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Provide regular training and updating on relevant new legislation and procedural changes
- Develop mechanisms for feedback from members of the judiciary in relation to relevant and timely training and development initiatives for staff
- Share with members of the judiciary the core mission and values of the Service
Mandate 3:
Provide Information on the Courts System to the Public
Mandate 3: Provide Information on the Courts System to the Public

This mandate is a particularly important one in that it involves facilitating the understanding of the administration of justice through the Courts not alone for potential litigants and parties who may have a more regular interaction with the courts but also for the general public. A public that is well informed and that understands the working of the Courts is likely to have greater respect for the institution of the Courts and an appreciation of their critical role in society. This places an onus on the Service to adopt a structured and focused approach to the effective dissemination of information in accessible formats and in a manner that is capable of being easily understood.

CONTEXT
One of the most fundamental principles of our society and the manner in which it is governed is reflected in Article 34 of our Constitution which states that "Justice shall be administered in courts established by law ... in public". The reason for justice being administered in public is the assurance that not alone is justice being done but that it is seen to be done.

While one way of seeking to gain an understanding of how justice is administered is to attend court, the reality is that most members of the public do not have the time or the opportunity to attend a court hearing in person. Nonetheless, all elements of the media attach considerable importance to reporting court cases and, hence, the workings of the Courts tend to be in the public eye on an ongoing basis. This highlights the importance of ensuring that there are adequate and transparent channels and systems to enable communication of information to be transmitted in an effective manner from the Service to the public and the media.

The Working Group on a Courts Commission placed considerable emphasis on the provision of information as one of the primary tasks to be undertaken by the new Service and this function is explicitly provided for in the 1998 Courts Service Act. The first report identified a number of problems under this heading which need to be addressed including the absence of an information service to the public, the lack of annual reports and the absence of statistical information in an understandable format.

The Working Group recommended the creation of an Information Office within the new Service which would encompass:

- Public information services
- Media liaison services
- In-house Courts Service communication
- Training and instruction for staff
- Communication with the media
- Customer service

Because of the important role performed by the media in transmitting information on court proceedings, the Working Group considered that a media liaison service should be developed which would:

- Facilitate accurate coverage of court proceedings
- Assist the reporting of high profile trials
- Establish and maintain relations with media organisations and their employees
- Seek to accommodate the requests of court reporters
- Deal with the provision of court documents as appropriate
- Regularly interact with court reporters on matters of interest and concern
- Seek to facilitate proper journalistic standards in court reporting
- Point out errors of fact in media reports

During the period covered by this Strategic Plan the Service will place considerable emphasis on the preparation and provision of information to the public, the media and other
groups with which we interact. We will take a strategic and focused approach to this and, in so doing, ensure that this approach is open to wide scrutiny, monitoring and revision as necessary. We will be conscious that the effective fulfillment of this role has the potential to add considerably to an enhanced understanding of and support for the administration of justice in the Courts.

**KEY OUTPUTS**

- Set up an Information Office, including a media liaison service, which will be the focal point for contact with the media and which will be a resource for and support to the other offices of the Service
- Production and implementation of an information strategy for the Service covering the approach to be adopted in the preparation and dissemination of information and materials and the development of relationships with relevant groups and the public
- Development and production of material using various forms such as leaflets, booklets, videos and the web
- Ongoing development of the website as a means of disseminating information
- Production of an Annual Report on the business being transacted through the Courts and the Service
- Production of statistics which will assist the public, the media and professionals in understanding the range of cases being dealt with through the Courts, allow for the evaluation of changes evident from the statistics and enable policy makers as well as the Service to be proactive in dealing with such changes
- Ensure sufficient information is available to the Board of the Service to enable it to discharge its policy role
- Develop a relationship with the national and local media to enable its members carry out their work as effectively as possible

**STRATEGIES**

- **Develop an information strategy for the Courts Service which will coincide with the life of this Strategic Plan**

  **Key Performance Indicators**
  - Put in place an information strategy following consultation with relevant parties
  - The information strategy will include an identification of the areas on which information might be required, best methods of conveying such information, means of access to and dissemination of materials
  - Put in place a process which will allow for ongoing review of the effectiveness of such strategy and a process for revision of same

- **Establish an Information Office**

  **Key Performance Indicators**
  - Put in place an Information Office with a clear mandate, which will be the focal point for production and dissemination of information relating to the work of the Courts and the Service

- **Continue to develop the Courts Service website (www.courts.ie)**

  **Key Performance Indicators**
  - Put in place a process which allows for the updating of the website on a continuous basis
  - Further develop the website by adding judgments of the Courts and material relating to the work of various Court offices as well as Courts Service publications. A student information section will also be added to the site
  - Identify areas of Courts Service business which would be appropriate for the delivery of electronic services
Mandate 3 continued

- Put process in place which reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of the website with a view to ensuring that it continues to be user friendly
- In association with the Information Technology programme, seek to identify areas of Courts business which might be processed using a web enabled environment

**Produce an Annual Report reflecting the work of the Courts and the Service**

Key Performance Indicators
- Produce the first Annual Report for the Courts Service for the year 2000 by mid 2001

**Set up a statistical unit within the Information Office**

Key Performance Indicators
- Establish and resource the Information Office
- Identify the range of statistical information required for matters such as evaluation of work and trends within the Courts, for policy making as well as for the allocation of appropriate resources
- Put in place, both centrally and regionally, methods for collating relevant data and evaluating same

**Develop a high quality media liaison service**

Key Performance Indicators
- Put in place a media liaison service which will facilitate effective communication between the Service and the media
- Establish a structured approach to handling media queries in the most effective way possible

---

**Put in place systems and arrangements for dealing with all matters coming within the ambit of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997**

Key Performance Indicators
- Produce and publish the relevant booklets required by the Freedom of Information Act, 1997
- Examine the methods of records management within the Service to facilitate access to records for the purpose of the legislation
- Ensure where possible access to information is provided without recourse by the requester to the legislation
- Provide training of all staff dealing with Freedom of Information requests
Mandate 4:

Provide, Manage and Maintain Court Buildings
Mandate 4: Provide, Manage and Maintain Court Buildings

It is not sufficient that the administration of justice through the Courts is conducted in an efficient and effective manner by the judiciary with the support of the staff of the Service. It is also critically important that the administration of justice takes place in a physical environment and with an appropriate infrastructure which respects the dignity of those dealing with the Service and which reflects the sensitivity and importance of the business being transacted there. It is these principles which will underpin the approach of the Courts Service in fulfilling its mandate in relation to Court buildings.

CONTEXT
Prior to the establishment of the Service in November 1999, responsibility for the provision of court buildings and their maintenance resided with the Office of Public Works and the Local Authorities. Though much progress was made in recent years, the Working Group on a Courts Commission highlighted the seriously inadequate nature of much of the court accommodation and the facilities for people coming before the Courts. Over the past several decades, court building and maintenance programmes have been seriously underfunded. There is now a very urgent need for a major financial investment in new accommodation and refurbishment. The Working Group in its 1996 Report referred to the fact that despite some recent improvements, Courts accommodation is in a state of crisis. “There is an inadequate number of Courts in certain areas including the Four Courts, and Courts’ maintenance is grossly deficient in many areas. The structure and facilities of many Courts are deplorable”, stated the Report.

Under the 1998 legislation, the Service has now assumed responsibility for the provision, management and maintenance of court buildings. This also involves the vesting (or transfer) of court buildings, formerly owned or leased by Local Authorities and the Office of Public Works, in the new Service.

The extent of the work involved in bringing court accommodation to an internationally comparable level is very significant. Currently, there are some 240 premises used for Court purposes ranging from distinctive town centre buildings to premises leased or rented and which are quite clearly neither distinctive nor of a standard appropriate to the business being conducted. The Government has acknowledged the necessity to address this issue as a matter of urgency by agreeing to the provision of significant additional funding for the year 2000. Further major capital investment will be required during the coming years in order to implement the 7-year capital programme currently being prepared by the Service.

During the period covered by this Strategic Plan the Service will take a structured approach to the refurbishment, maintenance and provision of court accommodation. The objective will be to provide the highest quality buildings, accommodation and facilities consistent with and sensitive to the business being conducted. We will, of course, be conscious that the environment we operate in at present has changed dramatically over the past century and that the needs and requirements have changed in tandem with the environment.
We will also seek to take close account of the vast range of users served by the Courts or impacted on by the Courts, whether they be parties to an action, people involved in trials, legal practitioners, jurors, victims, witnesses, the media or the general public.

**Key Outputs**

- A strategic approach to the provision, refurbishment and maintenance of Court accommodation throughout the country
- Provision for the safety of persons and property in court accommodation throughout the country
- Emphasis on communication and consultation with judges, staff and interested parties in the provision, refurbishment and maintenance of court accommodation
- Have relevant Court buildings vested in or transferred to the Service

**Strategies**

- Produce and implement a capital development programme using identified criteria in relation to all courts accommodation

  **Key Performance Indicators**
  - Develop and put in place a 5 to 7 year new building and refurbishment programme
  - Develop criteria to assist in prioritising projects
  - Develop and implement a strategy for the provision of Technology Courtrooms to facilitate the provision of electronic courtroom proceedings

- Put in place a process whereby court accommodation is vested in or transferred to the Service

  **Key Performance Indicators**
  - Initiate discussions and develop effective working relationships with Local Authorities and the Office of Public Works
  - Put in place the necessary arrangements for the legal vesting or transfer of court accommodation in the Service

- Take account of the historical and architectural significance of some of our courthouses, particularly in the context of refurbishment

  **Key Performance Indicators**
  - Develop structured relationships with bodies such as Duchas and the Heritage Council and consult in relation to heritage aspects of courthouses

- Develop, in consultation with users, the essential requirements for court accommodation and aim for the provision of same in all courthouses

  **Key Performance Indicators**
  - Put in place a protocol for consultation with a range of parties, including judges, staff, legal practitioners, probation and welfare service, support groups, heritage bodies, local authorities and other public bodies who are major users of the Courts, the media, the Gardaí and Prison Authorities and the local community
  - Take account of international developments in relation to court accommodation
Delegate, to the greatest extent possible, responsibility for project management and local maintenance

Key Performance Indicators
- Using the planned regional management arrangements, assign responsibility for project management including consultation of building and other projects to the regional level and, if possible, to local level
- Assign responsibility and budgets for maintenance of individual Courts and offices to regional and, where possible, local levels

Address the health and safety requirements for all buildings and areas within the remit of the Courts Service

Key Performance Indicators
- Assess the health and safety requirements for all areas coming within the responsibility and remit of the Service
- Develop appropriate safety statements in compliance with relevant legislation
- Appoint safety officers and safety representatives, as appropriate, at each relevant location
- Put in place structured arrangements for review of safety and security issues
Mandate 5:

Provide Facilities for Users of the Courts
Mandate 5: Provide facilities for Users of the Courts

The provision and maintenance of buildings has been covered under Mandate 4. Directly associated with buildings is the provision of appropriate facilities in such buildings which reflects the reasonable expectations of users (including judges and staff) and also conveys an appropriate and sensitive environment in the context of the business being conducted.

CONTEXT

The environment in which the Courts operate has changed enormously during the course of the last century. As well as the increasing complexity and volume of cases coming before the Courts, the relevant changes that have occurred and that are occurring include:

- A more mobile population
- Greater expectations in relation to the service offered or provided to users, whether private or public
- A more educated population
- An environment that is influenced by and compared with other jurisdictions
- Vastly increased use of technology in all its guises
- A more customer focused workforce
- A greater customer focus and awareness within Government offices, Departments and other public bodies
- A more observant and critical media
- Considerable demographic changes

Despite these seismic changes the Courts have lagged behind many other areas in the facilities they have offered. Many Courts around the country have operated in facilities that were never intended as courthouses and whose primary use are functions considerably removed from the business of Courts. The consequence of this and the under resourcing of court services generally has led to widespread criticism. The Working Group put it thus: "The structure and facilities of many Courts are deplorable. Any review of the courts accommodation must also consider the issue of rationalisation of venues. This is of importance in an overall plan to improve the Courts themselves.

The administration of justice is a solemn act of government. It should take place in dignified, suitable and fully equipped buildings. The current deplorable state of many courthouses is the most striking visible manifestation of the absence of adequate funding over the last 70 years to provide the necessary resources for the administration of justice."

During the period covered by this Strategic Plan the Service will address the issue of facilities in all new court accommodation and will also take a structured approach to facilities in existing accommodation, all with a view to reflecting the standards which might be expected in Courts at the beginning of the 21st century. We will be particularly conscious of the special needs of certain groups, most notably in the area of Family Law facilities. We will also seek to acknowledge the critical role played by jurors in the administration of justice by improving accommodation, information and other facilities.

KEY OUTPUTS

- Develop a prototype of the optimum facilities to aim for in courthouses and seek to achieve these in all court accommodation
- Assess facilities currently available for disabled court goers and put in place a structured programme of bringing such facilities up to an acceptable standard
- Address facilities and conditions for jurors
- Take account of the particular needs of vulnerable users of the Courts, including children
- Provide proper facilities for the media in courtrooms
**STRATEGIES**

**Develop a prototype of the optimum facilities for courthouses**

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Take account of submissions from a range of sources and develop a prototype brief for the optimum courthouse.
- The brief will take account of matters such as accommodation for judges, staff, legal profession, probation and welfare, Gardaí, Prison Service, jurors, support groups and members of the public, facilities for the media and acoustics, health and safety requirements, building regulations as well as energy and eco-efficiency.
- Particular account will be taken of the needs of children and other vulnerable people involved in Court proceedings.
- Address the scope for information desks or kiosks being put in place in Court buildings.

**Provide adequate facilities and conditions for jurors**

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Produce user friendly information videos and leaflets for prospective jurors.
- Seek to improve facilities for jurors in courthouses.
- Extend the meal arrangements currently provided to jurors in criminal cases to those in civil cases.

**Provide adequate facilities for the media in courthouses**

**Key Performance Indicators**
- In consultation with representatives of the media put facilities in place in new court buildings which facilitate the reporting of court cases by the media.
- Seek to address shortcomings in existing accommodation in relation to facilities available to members of the media.

**Develop a programme, in consultation with representative groups, to provide appropriate facilities for disabled court users**

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Initiate consultations with relevant representative groups in relation to the criteria which should optimally be applied to ensure that disabled users have proper access to Courts.
- Ensure these criteria are applied in all new buildings.
- Put in place a programme of providing facilities for disabled users in existing accommodation.

**In developing a programme of providing and improving facilities emphasis will be placed on ensuring ease of access by Court users**

**Key Performance Indicators**
- Ensure that signage within courthouses and leading to courthouses will be visible and of a high standard.
- Address scope for information technology in providing user friendly facilities within courthouses.
A number of key challenges face the Courts Service as it seeks to implement this strategic plan. These challenges include:

**1 Resources**

The issue of resources, especially staff resources, is critical in terms of being able:

- To achieve the progress necessary to ensure that the objectives outlined in this Plan are realised;
- To anticipate, influence and respond in a flexible manner to change in the environment in which the Service operates; and
- To recruit staff at the level, with the requisite skills and at the time required and then to retain such staff.

Resources need to be subject to continuing examination in light of the ever-increasing demands both in the context of workload and the requirement for increased efficiency. This will require the Service to be proactive in identifying the impact of new or proposed legislation as well as new procedures to ensure that there is no diminution in the service provided. The Service will also review on an ongoing basis the workloads in, and the existing resources allocated to, all areas and will prioritise and reallocate resources where necessary.

We also operate in a labour market which is more mobile than previously and in which the Service is competing, with other Public bodies with an expanding private sector, and where the values and aspirations of potential employees have changed considerably. This places an onus on us to take steps to ensure that the work provides stimulating experience, adequate variation and opportunities for advancement for those deserving. A particular area of focus here will be training and development. We will also need to explore recruitment practices and arrangements in order to ensure that high quality candidates are sourced for and retained by the Service.

**2 Participation and Ownership**

In order for the Service to progress effectively in the years ahead and to implement the various objectives set out it will be critical that real ownership of the Plan and the process of implementation is taken on by staff. A good start has been made in the consultation process undertaken for the development of this Strategic Plan and the many other initiatives in the lead up to the establishment of the Service. We are committed to the deepening and widening of a participative approach in the years ahead consistent with similar initiatives across the Public Service. A major manifestation of this approach will be initiated during 2000, with the setting up of partnership structures, which will give staff a real voice and input into the manner in which the organisation is run. This partnership approach will be extended right down to local office level. There will be considerable devolution of responsibility and authority as well as delegation of further finance, human resource and other functions all of which should contribute to cementing the concepts of partnership and responsibility.

All of this requires a major cultural change on the part of both management and staff and will require good will and commitment on all sides.

**3 Business Plans**

The next step following the finalisation of the Plan is the initiation of Business Plans. This is an essential step in moving the Strategic Plan towards implementation. These plans will set out in some detail the steps required to implement the strategies. They will seek to:

- Reflect in operational terms the outputs and strategies detailed in the preceding sections
- Identify the appropriate work programme for individual Directorates and units
- Based on the work programmes, specify clear objectives for the Directorate and unit, for teams, individuals or groups
- Assign responsibility for the achievement of these objectives, based on appropriate performance indicators

Following on from this initiative, the Service will roll out the performance management system which has been agreed centrally between management and unions.

4 Communication within the Service

Good internal communication is universally recognised as essential to successful and effective organisations and, particularly, during a time of major organisational change. Already within the Service there have been a number of initiatives, most notably the introduction of a Courts Service Newsletter, the establishment of a website and a number of consultation programmes. We need, however, to build on this and take a structured approach to ensure there is clarity and understanding in relation to the objectives of the Service, that there are opportunities for regular feedback throughout the organisation and that there are mechanisms in place and an appropriate culture which allows input from all parts of the organisation. Information technology offers opportunities. So does the regular and systematic exchange of information. The greatest change will come, though, through a culture within the organisation where internal communication is valued and nurtured at every level.

5 Communication with Users

The complexity and changing nature of the environment in which the Service operates has already been outlined in some detail earlier. We are committed to taking a proactive approach to our interaction and relationship with those dealing with the Service.

The emphasis on and approach to consultation has already been articulated under the proposed strategies earlier in this document. These will be reinforced through a Customer Service Action Plan for users and structured interaction with relevant user groups at a central, regional and local level but will be realised fully only through the approach adopted by each and every member of staff.

6 Monitoring and Review

This is not a Plan which will gather dust. It is a Plan which, though very challenging, we are committed to implementing. Crucial will be the putting in place of a process which allows for ongoing monitoring and reviewing. Monitoring will be necessary to ensure that the Plan is being implemented at the pace envisaged. Reviewing is critical to take account of changes which may have occurred and which will impact on the organisation and which may call for amendments to the Plan. A structured approach to reviewing and monitoring will be put in place.
Expenditure Year 2000 (Projected)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>£ 000</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current Expenditure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and Wages</td>
<td>23,885</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Pay</td>
<td>14,920</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Current Expenditure</td>
<td>38,805</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capital Expenditure</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Equipment and Implementation of IT programme</td>
<td>6,912</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Works - Courthouse Building Programme</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Capital Expenditure</td>
<td>20,412</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Current and Capital Expenditure</strong></td>
<td>59,217</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriations-in-Aid</td>
<td>1,809</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total net Expenditure</strong></td>
<td>57,408</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of staff employed as at August 2000: 1002

Number of Offices
- Supreme Court: 1
- High Court: 9
- Circuit Court: 26
- District Court: 42

Number of Locations where sittings take place
- Supreme Court: 1
- High Court: 26
- Circuit Court: 56
- District Court: 216
The court of final appeal. Can decide on the constitutionality of a Bill if referred to it by the President. Can determine a question of the permanent incapacity of the President if it arises.

Supreme Court

Central Criminal Court

Court of Criminal Appeal

High Court

Supreme Court

High Court

Circuit Court

Central Criminal Court

The court of final appeal. Can decide on the constitutionality of a Bill if referred to it by the President. Can determine a question of the permanent incapacity of the President if it arises.

The court of final appeal. Can decide on the constitutionality of a Bill if referred to it by the President. Can determine a question of the permanent incapacity of the President if it arises.

Criminal Division of the High Court. Tries serious crime including Murder offences, Rape offences, Treason and Piracy.

Criminal Division of the High Court. Tries serious crime including Murder offences, Rape offences, Treason and Piracy.

Deals with appeals by persons convicted on indictment in the Circuit Court, Central Criminal Court or Special Criminal Court.

Deals with appeals by persons convicted on indictment in the Circuit Court, Central Criminal Court or Special Criminal Court.

Has full original jurisdiction in, and power to determine, all matter and questions, whether of law or fact, civil and criminal. Power to determine the validity of any law having regard to the constitution. Appeal court from the Circuit Court in civil matters.

Has full original jurisdiction in, and power to determine, all matter and questions, whether of law or fact, civil and criminal. Power to determine the validity of any law having regard to the constitution. Appeal court from the Circuit Court in civil matters.

Court of limited and local jurisdiction organised on a regional basis.

Civil Jurisdiction: Claims up to the value of £30,000.00

Family Law: Divorce, Judicial Separations, Nullity and other ancillary matters.

Criminal: Jury trial of offences other than those triable in the Central Criminal Court. Appeal Court from the District Court in all matters.

Court of limited and local jurisdiction organised on a regional basis.

Civil Jurisdiction: Claims up to the value of £30,000.00

Family Law: Divorce, Judicial Separations, Nullity and other ancillary matters.

Criminal: Jury trial of offences other than those triable in the Central Criminal Court. Appeal Court from the District Court in all matters.

Established for the trial of offences in cases where it is determined that the ordinary courts are inadequate to secure the effective administration of justice, and the preservation of public peace and order.

Established for the trial of offences in cases where it is determined that the ordinary courts are inadequate to secure the effective administration of justice, and the preservation of public peace and order.

District Court

Court of limited and local jurisdiction organised on a local basis

Civil Jurisdiction: Claims up to the value of £5,000.00

Family Law: Maintenance, Custody, Access and Domestic Violence

Criminal Jurisdiction includes: Non jury trial of offences including most Road Traffic offences.

The Small Claims Court operates within the District Court

The Small Claims Court operates within the District Court

= Denotes Appeal

Structure (Simplified for the purpose of this representation)
The Courts System in Ireland - Appendix 3

Legend:
- Blue line denotes District Court Districts
- Black line denotes County boundaries
- District Court Offices
- Circuit Court Offices
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Letterkenny District Court Office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Donegal Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Donegal District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sligo District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sligo Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ballina District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Castlebar District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mayo Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Derrynea District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tuam District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Galway District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Galway Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ballinashe District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Loughrea District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Clare Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Ennis District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Listowel District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Tralee District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Kerry Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Killarney District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bandon District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mallow District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Cork District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Cork Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Fermoy District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Youghal District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Limerick District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Limerick Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Cahir District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Tipperary District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Waterford District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Waterford Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Wexford Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Wexford District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Gorey District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Kilkenny District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Kilkenny Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Carlow District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Carlow Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Bray District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Wicklow Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Portlaoise District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Laois Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Athlone District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Tullamore District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Offaly Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Mullingar District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Westmeath Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Longford District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Longford Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Roscommon District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Roscommon Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Carrick on Shannon District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Leitrim Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Cavan District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Cavan Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Monaghan District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Monaghan Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Dundalk District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Louth Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>Drogheda District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62</td>
<td>Trim District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Meath Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64</td>
<td>Kildare Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>Naas District Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Dublin Circuit Court Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>Dublin District Court Office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Courts Service Organisational Chart - Appendix 4

Board

Chief Executive
P.J. Fitzpatrick

Chief Registrar
Director of Operations Supreme & High Courts
Nuala McLoughlin

Director of Operations
District & Circuit Courts
Diarmuid MacDiarmada

Internal Auditor
Richard McElligott

Director of Corporate Services
Brendan Ryan

Director of Estates
& Buildings
Jim McCormack

Director of Human Resources
Moling Ryan

Director of Finance
Sean Quigley

Board Secretariat
Information & Press
Judicial Services
Information Technology

Central Office
Office of the Supreme Court
Wards of Court
Examiners
Official Assignee
Probate
Accountant
General Solicitor
Taxing Masters Office

Capital Projects
Vesting and Maintenance Planning
Building Programme Planning

Recruitment & Personnel Administration
Change Management and Strategy
Training & Staff Development
Industrial Relations

Finance Accounting
Financial Management/Planning
Treasury Management

County Registrars
Chief Clerks
District Courts