



An tSeirbhís Chúirteanna
Courts Service

COURTS SERVICE
ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY REVIEW
ACTION PLAN

Building for
our Future

April 2019

Foreword by the Chief Executive Officer

This Action Plan follows a review of the organisational capability of the Courts Service, to serve the public through delivery of its' mandate. It was carried out pursuant to the commitment in Action 20 of the Civil Service Renewal Plan, which sets out to *"embed a culture of regular and objective assessments of the capacity and capability of Departments to achieve. on objectives and take the necessary action to close any gaps"*

It is informed by the findings and recommendations of the Organisation Capability Review Report and it also reflects the commitment of our management and staff to ensure that we continue to serve effectively. This Action Plan was drafted by reference to the recommendations made within the Capability Review report across four key themes; leadership, strategy, delivery and corporate capability. The Plan contains measures that seek to build on the capability and capacity of the Courts Service into the future

The Report identifies a number of challenges in terms of the current capability of the organisation and identifies four key themes;

- Developing strategic capability,
- Engaging in common purpose with the Department of Justice and Equality and justice agencies,
- Delivering Customer Service and
- Creating an e-Court environment.

The Organisational Capability Review Report sets out recommendations in relation to these challenges and this Action Plan addresses each of these recommendations, many of which have already been identified by the Courts Service and indeed work has already commenced on their implementation. The actions set out will be delivered within a maximum period of 2 years and there will be regular reviews internally in addition to an annual review of progress with the Civil Service Management Board.

Brendan Ryan

Chief Executive Officer

April 2019

Action Plan – Building for our Future

LEADERSHIP – Recommendations	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Courts Service Board should exercise a stronger role than at present on matters relating to strategic oversight. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Board will build on the work already started by reviewing key strategic issues on a periodic basis. This will be in addition to the current review of the annual corporate business plan, which underpins the implementation of the strategic plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All individual members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) should report to the Board on plans, progress and risks, thereby strengthening the accountability line between the Board and the Executive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This commenced in 2019 with individual members of the SMT reporting to the Board in respect of their areas of responsibility.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Formal arrangements should be put in place to facilitate regular and structured engagement between the SMT and the PO and AP cohorts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Senior Managers Forum has been established (comprising SMT and Principal Officers) The P.O Chair of this network has been appointed to the Change Board. This model will be used to develop engagement with AP grades.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Amend the Terms of Reference of the Change Advisory Board (CAB), provide clarity on the CAB’s role in the post-approvals processes, and lead responsibilities for the implementation of projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Change Board has been established and a Change Programme Governance Framework has been developed and approved to underpin all evaluation and prioritisation of change projects, and to ensure effective implementation of the change programme.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A clear vision for the Courts Service should be developed by the SMT and approved by the Board as a critical first step to improving strategic capability. Subsequently, a new strategic function should be established, devoted solely to the development of strategy and organisational development and reform, between the various internal business strategies. ▪ This new function may require the establishment of a new office or the incorporation of the functions of strategy and change into the current Change Management Office. In establishing the new function, it would be necessary to review the Terms of Reference of the CMO so that there would be full clarity and maximum awareness regarding its roles and responsibilities in contributing to strategic reform. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It was considered that external experts in this area were required to develop a longer term vision. A tender process was undertaken to engage external Consultants to support the development of a long-term strategy for the Courts Service. This is expected to be completed in Q2 2019. The establishment of a new strategic function will be considered as part of the development of the long-term strategy. • A review of the Change Management Office has been undertaken and its’ role and responsibilities has been clarified as part of the new change governance structures.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The relationship between the Courts Service and the Department of Justice and Equality should be strengthened at a senior level to set agreed priorities, review their appropriateness as deemed necessary, assess progress on their implementation, and gain a better mutual understanding of respective challenges and constraints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further work is required by the Department and the Courts Service to ensure that the structures already in place, including a governance framework, operate effectively.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The informal relationships between the Courts Service and its principal stakeholders, particularly the justice agencies, should be supplemented by formal face-to-face engagements with the SMT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is recognised that more work is required to improve communication and stakeholder engagement generally. The consultation and engagement process to develop the long-term strategy will address this recommendation and will be continued afterwards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ While continuing to respect its special governance relationship with the Department of Justice and Equality, the Courts Service should pursue a more direct relationship with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on centrally ordained budgetary policies: with the Office of Public Works on estates management, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer on ICT strategy, and Revenue and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport on matters of bilateral interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is linked to the previous recommendation. Good progress has been made recently in establishing a relationship with DPER on budgetary matters. The Courts Service will seek to build on existing relationships with the offices identified.

STRATEGY – Recommendations	ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Courts Service needs to plan more strategically for the future, starting with the articulation of a long-term vision, which should extend beyond the 3 years’ timeframe of the Strategic Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of a long-term strategy for the Courts Service is underway and is expected to be completed in Q2 2019.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to the annual meeting between the SMT and the Association of Judges, the SMT should also meet formally once a year with the Chief Justice and the Presidents of the Courts to review strategy and priorities, both their development and implementation, by reference to the Courts Service’s three-year Strategic Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arrangements will be made for these meetings to be scheduled.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Courts Service should produce and implement a written formal framework for engagement with stakeholders when developing strategic plans and proposing significant reforms to ensure maximum input to their development and appropriate cooperation with implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be progressed within the limitations of available resources. The consultation and engagement process to develop the long-term strategy will address this recommendation in part.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building on the increased usage of appraisals and business cases for project proposals, the Courts Service needs to embed post-project evaluation as a corporate norm, to apply lessons learned and determine realised benefits against expected gains. That is especially necessary for large-scale infrastructure investments such as the PPP programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is incorporated into the new change governance structures and into the practices and methodologies identified for project and programme management. As the Court Service lacks the requisite analytical skillset, this expertise will be drawn from an external project management support contract which has been awarded. <p>Following the successful completion of the PPP projects, a review of the PPP projects will commence in 2019 when a period of operation of the new facilities can be included in the review.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of recommendations in the recently concluded review of the Combined Office Review should be followed through by reference to a comprehensive implementation plan overseen by the SMT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implementation of the Combined Office Review recommendations are being implemented and will be overseen by the new change governance structures. It is expected that they will be fully implemented by Q3 2019.

DELIVERY – Recommendations	ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A programme of regular surveys should be put in place to measure the experiences of court users by jurisdiction, distinguishing separately the public and legal practitioners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will require the development of appropriate capabilities and assignment of resources the consultation and engagement process to develop the long-term strategy will address this recommendation in part.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Customer Service Charter needs to be reviewed and updated with an emphasis on the services provided and the quality of service which court users can expect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Customer Service Charter is being reviewed and updated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A programme of regular engagement on customer service matters should be developed with other justice agencies and key stakeholders to improve service planning and delivery, supplemented by a stakeholder engagement framework when developing strategies and major reform proposals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is part of a wider communications and engagement issue referred to above. We will build on existing cross justice sector collaboration and we will also address this as part of the engagement with the Department of Justice and Equality and other justice sector agencies.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given that some court venues have either poor holding facilities or none, the Courts Service should work with the Irish Prison Service to review venues with a view to giving this matter greater priority than at present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A condition survey of Court Venues has commenced and work on a new Estates Strategy will commence in 2019 which will include a review of venues, their usage and facilities available in them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The website needs to be redeveloped to make it user friendly and easy to navigate. The new website should be guided by best practice design and be informed by consultations with key internal and external stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive work has already been undertaken as part of the planned upgrade of the Courts Service website. Work on developing the new website has commenced with an initial release date in Q3 2019 .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As follow-up to the recent appointment of a Customer Complaints Co-ordination Officer and the introduction of new customer complaints procedures, a corporate leader or sponsor for corporate services should be appointed in order that a greater emphasis would be placed on ascertaining the needs and measuring the experiences of customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has been noted as part of SMT review and will require the development of appropriate capabilities and assignment of resources.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Courts Service should ensure that its high quality Corporate Governance Framework Document should be updated on a regular basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Courts Service reviews its corporate governance framework on a regular basis. It was last updated December 2018.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Courts Service should refine its risk management model so that non-financial risk would be given greater attention than it is at present - an example in that regard is the absence of a plan for managing large scale retirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These points have been incorporated into a comprehensive review of the risk register in January 2019.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Courts Service should continue its programme on the standardisation of processes and procedures in the Circuit and District Courts involving the application of LEAN process methodologies and led by an appropriately resourced Business Support Unit. The application of LEAN should be embedded as a standard change management methodology across the organisation including the Superior Courts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LEAN programme, will be launched in 2019, subject to the availability of suitably skilled resources.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Courts Service should implement the series of recommendations set out in the review of the combined court offices to ensure that this change initiative becomes fully embedded at Circuit and District court levels. To that end, the SMT will need to exercise strong and continuous oversight of the implementation process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A project to oversee the implementation of these recommendations is due for completion Q 3 2019. The SMT have full oversight of this project.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Ex-post</i> evaluations should be conducted on the Combined Court Office and e-Licencing projects when they have reached full maturity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As part of the new change governance structures and assignment of resources to the Change Programme Office this will be a normal part of good practice in change and project management. Evaluations will be conducted on the Combined Court Office and e-Licencing projects and completed by Q4 2019.

I.C.T – Recommendations	ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Given the significant problems being encountered recently around the reliability of systems and speeds of networks, the Courts Service as a priority should develop an ICT Stabilisation Programme, for review and approval of the OGCIO, to ensure that users would receive high levels of service and would have confidence in the general ICT state. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Review of ICT is underway. This will review the current resourcing and structuring of the ICT Unit. This will be done in consultation with the OGCIO and will be completed in Q 2 2019.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A robust regime for business continuity and disaster recovery needs to be developed by the SMT whereby agreed business priorities would continue to be delivered, should a critical ICT event such as a sustained outage occur. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further progress has been made on programmes to improve cyber security and disaster recovery. This work will be continued in the light of available funding in 2019 and the recommendations from the ICT review.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of a revised structure for ICT planning and delivery, a new unit dealing with strategic ICT and focusing initially on the development of a Digital Transformation Programme should be established and be supported in its work by external facilitation and assistance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be addressed as part of the ICT review referred to above.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Courts Service should develop a vision for the organisation, stretching out to 2030, that would encompass an ideal future e Court state that would be modern, fit-for-purpose and service oriented. An external partner would be required to help map out the vision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have partnered with external contractors to support the development of a long-term strategy for the Courts Service. This is expected to be completed in Q2 2019. The establishment of a new strategic function will be considered as part of developing the long-term strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The future state should be transformative and be such that the capability of the Courts Service would be significantly enhanced in terms of improving access to justice and supporting the operation of an effective courts system. The state should encompass services that are fit-for-purpose, built in partnership with internal and external stakeholders be considered key enablers of business for both the judiciary and other users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have partnered with external contractors to support the development of a long-term strategy for the Courts Service. This is expected to be completed in Q2 2019.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separately the Courts Service should develop a comprehensive e Court strategy that would consider the 5 pillars of the government’s strategy for ICT as set out in the report of the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), Public Service ICT Strategy: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be addressed as part of the ICT review and in the development of future strategies including the development of the long-term strategy for the Courts Service.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The governance model for ICT projects needs to change so that the commissioning business unit would exercise lead responsibility for delivery, and provide all necessary support to the ICT Unit throughout the various project phases. To that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has been addressed as part of the new change governance structures and the governance of other ICT functions will be considered as part of the ICT review.

<p>end, senior management needs to put in place a new policy on the partnership arrangements to apply between the ICT Unit and the business side.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As the ICT function is not appropriately resourced to meet the demands placed upon, in terms of both new development and business-as-usual (BAU) activities, it needs to be restructured to best manage and organise the required transformation agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This will be addressed as part of the ICT review referred to above.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Courts Service needs to strengthen the arrangements by which ICT projects are prioritised, especially proposals for new development. As a counterbalance to external pressures for alternative choices to be pursued, they should be agreed in the first instance with the Department of Justice and Equality and the OGCIO. Progression of the priorities, covering a 3 to 5 years' timeframe, should be overseen by a strong governance structure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This has been addressed as part of the new change governance structures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Based on an assessment of statistical reporting needs, the Courts Service should ensure that all new ICT solutions would have facilities for the automated production of statistical outputs, thereby eliminating manual intervention and improving statistical reliability and timeliness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is being incorporated into all new developments.

ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITY – Recommendations	ACTIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Courts Service should conclude the work currently underway on developing a HR strategy which would deal with many organisational and staff development issues such as succession planning and staff mobility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work is continuing the development of a HR Strategy and will be completed in parallel with the development of the long-term strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subject to approval by the Board, the senior management team and the HR manager should develop a comprehensive plan for managing the impacts arising from a very significant scale of retirements over the next 5 – 7 years. In that respect, attention will need to be given to business continuity and knowledge retention matters, involving as required, the Business Support Unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This has been addressed as part of the Workforce Plan 2017-2020 and is also being addressed in the HR Strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As part of the process to improve skills matching with job vacancies, a skills audit should be undertaken and incorporated into wider workforce planning considerations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This has commenced in Q1 2019.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To mitigate the risks associated with the departure of experienced court registrars, a standardised upskilling and handover policy should be developed for the new replacement, involving many internal units particularly the HR unit, the L&D unit and Business Support Unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is being addressed in the HR Strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Courts Service should put in place a support programme for staff to assist them in dealing with disturbing and harrowing cases arising in the course of their day-to-day work. The programme might cover both training and access to psychological supports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A Health and Well Being Policy has been approved. Several training programmes have been rolled out along with Well Being events and activities. A new post has been approved for the H.R Unit, with specific focus on Health and Safety.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The HR Unit should take some steps to raise its profile across the organisation and provide clarity on roles and responsibilities within the Unit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This is underway and will be developed further with the launch of the HR Strategy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A model should be developed and put in place to ensure a standardised approach would be adopted by all managers to holding and conducting divisional and team meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This being addressed in the HR Strategy and as part of the implementation of the Combined Office Review recommendations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Courts Service should develop a preventative maintenance programme for its entire property portfolio except for the PPP facilities which are subject to separate arrangements. A critical first step in that respect would be a ‘condition survey’ to determine the requirements and costs of the programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A review of the condition of court venues will commence in 2019 which will address this recommendation.