

Department-Agency Relations - Formalising Relationships and Accountability

Thursday, 12 March 2020, 8.00am – 10.30am

Institute of Public Administration, 57-61 Lansdowne Road, Dublin D04 TC62

An important pillar of good governance is effective relationships with key stakeholders. Within the public, state and non-profit sectors, there can be a myriad of key stakeholders upon which an organisation will rely for support and delivery. Some relationships are ‘vertical’ in nature (e.g. Department and its aegis state body, state body and a funded non-profit entity, local authority and its subsidiary company) and some are more ‘horizontal’ in nature (e.g. two state bodies or public benefit entities working in unison with one another). In the context of all these relationships there can be issues around clarity of roles and responsibility, autonomy, resourcing, performance and accountability. This has resulted in an increasing emphasis in recent years on formalising relationships through, for example, memorandums of understanding, oversight agreements, service level agreements and performance delivery agreements.

With the help of three experienced speakers, this Forum session will focus on what makes for good and effective relationships with key stakeholders, considering questions such as:

- What impact do formal agreements have on relationships, performance and accountability?
- What has been the experience of these agreements in recent times?
- What are the key sources of assurance from a Departmental or ‘lead agency’ perspective and how is the quality and nature of these assurances assessed?
- What makes for a ‘good’ relationship between an Agency and Department and vice-versa?
- What is the right balance in terms of autonomy and accountability?



Katherine Licken is Secretary General at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, a position she has held since January 2017. The Department has a broad range of functions relating to the arts and culture, the national cultural institutions, film, the built and natural heritage and the Irish language, the Gaeltacht and the offshore islands. It has 13 aegis bodies and 3 North-South bodies under its remit. Katherine was previously an Assistant Secretary in the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.



Anne Graham is Chief Executive Officer of the National Transport Authority (NTA), having been appointed in January 2015. She had previously served in the NTA as Director of Public Transport Services. Given its role in providing for a high quality, accessible and sustainable transport across Ireland, the NTA works with numerous public and private stakeholders. Prior to the NTA, Anne worked with the Dublin Local Authorities as a civil engineer, project manager and area manager.



Danny McLoughlin is Chief Executive of South Dublin County Council, one of the largest local authorities in the country. Danny was previously Chief Executive in Leitrim and Westmeath and has over 35 years’ experience in local government, also serving in counties Sligo, Wicklow, Offaly and Meath. As the remit of local authorities has and is evolving, South Dublin County Council, like many peer authorities, is actively engaged in collaborative working with public, not-for-profit, community and voluntary bodies and other stakeholders.

Time & Location

The briefing will take place on Thursday, 12 March 2020 at the IPA, 57-61 Lansdowne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin D04 TC62.

A light breakfast will be served from 8.00am. The presentations and open forum discussions will commence at 8.30am and conclude at 10.30am.

Cost and Bookings

Members of the Forum may nominate up to two participants to the briefing without charge. The cost for additional nominees is €100 per person. The cost for non-forum members is €250 per person but subject to availability. Bookings can be made using the attached booking form or by contacting Jane Greer (jgreer@ipa.ie)