



Financial Services
Ombudsman

*Strategy Statement
and Business Plan
2005 – 2006*

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Council's Approval and Chairperson's Foreword

The Financial Services Ombudsman's Council was appointed by the Minister for Finance with effect from 1st October 2004. Its main functions are:-

- To appoint the Financial Services Ombudsman and each Deputy Ombudsman;
- To prescribe guidelines under which the Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau is to operate;
- To determine the levies and charges payable for the performance of services provided by the Ombudsman;
- To keep under review the efficiency and effectiveness of the Bureau and to advise the Minister for Finance on any matter relevant to the operation of the Bureau;
- To approve the Strategic Plan of the Bureau.

At today's Council's meeting the first Strategy Statement of the Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau was approved.

The Bureau only commenced on 1 April 2005. While this is a relatively short period it is nevertheless opportune for the Bureau to set out now in detail how it intends to operate in the coming years. I acknowledge that while much has been achieved in the relatively short six months period, as a Council we are conscious that it takes time to get a new organisation operating to its full potential.

I want to pay tribute to the Ombudsman Joe Meade and his staff for the commitment and zeal they have displayed in this short period. The relationship with me and the other Council members has been excellent and we look forward to continued progress in the year ahead.

We recognise that the Bureau has set itself ambitious targets but we have come to expect this approach from the Bureau.

Dr. Con Power

Chairperson

Financial Services Ombudsman Council

12 October 2005

Foreword from the Financial Services Ombudsman

Background to Our Establishment

An Ombudsman is an independent and impartial means of resolving disputes outside of the courts system. He¹ investigates matters after a complaint has been made to the relevant body and has not been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

There have been voluntary ombudsman schemes in Ireland both for the credit institutions and the insurance sector since the early 1990s. **However, not all providers of financial services were covered by these schemes.** While the voluntary schemes worked well, the McDowell Report, 1999, recommended as part of the overall enhanced regulatory framework for the financial services sector, the establishment of both the Financial Regulator and a Statutory Ombudsman for Financial Services. On foot of the Report, the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland Act 2004 and in particular section 16 and Schedules 6 and 7 provide for the establishment of the Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau.

The Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau in Context

The Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau (the Bureau), came into existence on 1 April 2005. It is a statutory body providing a **free** service to consumers funded by levies from the financial service providers. **It deals independently with complaints from consumers about their individual dealings with all financial service providers that have not been resolved by the providers.** Broader issues of consumer protection are the responsibility of the Financial Regulator and, in particular, its Consumer Director. Close cooperation exists between the Bureau and the Financial Regulator and, in matters relating to pensions, the Pensions Ombudsman.

As Ombudsman I am independent in my role. I am empowered to mediate, adjudicate, and resolve disputes and, where appropriate, make awards up to €250,000. My decisions are binding on both parties subject only to appeal to the High Court.

The pre-existing voluntary Ombudsman for the Credit Institutions and the Insurance Ombudsman of Ireland schemes are incorporated into the Bureau. The Bureau's remit now covers members of credit unions, customers of brokers, moneylenders and all other regulated financial service providers. All personal customers, limited companies with a turnover of €3,000,000 or less, unincorporated bodies, charities, clubs, partnerships and trusts can now complain to the Financial Services Ombudsman.

¹ The use of the masculine pronoun in this text denotes both genders.

The Bureau's Organisational Environment

While the Bureau is a new organisation, it is a merger of two pre-existing organisations with an expanded remit. Sound administrative foundations existed in both organisations and in that regard I want to pay tribute to Caroline Gill and Gerry Murphy, - the ombudsmen of the pre-existing voluntary schemes, who are now my deputies - and their respective staff who now form the staff of the Bureau for the excellent work they have done, not alone since 1 April 2005, but also in their former roles. Additional staff are being appointed on an ad hoc basis to meet the increased workload.

I acknowledge with gratitude the work that Caroline Gill undertook as Acting Ombudsman from 1 April until 16 May 2005 when I assumed the role. I also wish to acknowledge Dr. Con Power, Chairman of the Financial Services Ombudsman Council and his fellow council members for all the work they have done, and continue to do, since September 2004 in getting the Bureau operational on the statutory date of 1 April 2005 and in carrying out their other statutory roles.

Strategy Statement Considerations

In considering drawing up our combined Strategy Statement and Business Plan for 2005/6 we were conscious of the ever changing environment in which we operate:-

- We are only in existence since April 2005 and as yet a clear indication of our work load cannot be properly measured as complaints from the expanded areas are being taken on board on a gradual basis during 2005.
- ***Our workload is dictated by the number of complaints we receive and is therefore indeterminate.*** The new statutory regime has posed challenges for all concerned. While we have embraced these changes, all of the challenges have not and could not have yet been fully met.
- Since April 2005, therefore, emphasis has been placed on reviewing systems; drawing up and distributing information leaflets; meeting organisations; disseminating information to consumers and financial service providers via our new website; establishing a profile in the marketplace and implementing sound administrative practices from the outset. The initial increase in our workload demanded an effective response. ***The staff of the Bureau are striving to deliver the optimum possible in this transitional phase.*** A new appeals process to the High Court, a vital component of the Bureau's statutory remit, demanded that revised working methods be successfully implemented at an early date.

- The merger and expansion of the two pre-existing organisations required a unified approach. The staffs of the former schemes were, and still are, located in different buildings as they could not be accommodated in either of the existing offices from the outset. Different systems and procedures, relevant to their respective areas of work apply. ***Therefore the securing of a central office for all staff of the Bureau is a high priority and is being progressed as such.*** In that regard change to a unified working system while desirable will only be attained over a period of time and where it can be demonstrated that it is essential to the effective running of the Bureau.
- ***The scope and limitations of my functions as Ombudsman and my statutory remit may not be fully appreciated by many organisations and consumers, therefore, public awareness programmes will be necessary.***
- The respective roles of, and interactions with, the Department of Finance, the Financial Regulator, the Pensions Ombudsman and the Bureau play a major part in ensuring that ***consumers and financial services providers view the Bureau not as another layer of state interference but as an organisation which enhances the financial services sector.***
- While we want to ***work in a spirit of cooperation and harmony with all concerned over the coming years, this wish is predicated upon parties acting in good faith and in an open and cooperative manner.***

The Process of Devising the Statement

In drawing up this document we have taken the foregoing factors into account with all staff participating in the process. An outside facilitator was engaged to help consideration of our various duties and I compliment him on how he made our task that much easier.

Irrespective of the statutory requirement to produce a Strategy Statement by 30 September 2005, we debated whether now was an appropriate time to draw it up given that we are only five months in operation. However, we all came to an early conclusion that it was a necessary and worthwhile exercise to assist us in carrying out our statutory function and to set clear and attainable goals in the coming year.

We reviewed our organisational structure so as to achieve maximum benefit from our current resources. Our aim is to build and improve upon our level of service to the general public, to increase awareness of our role amongst the general public and providers and to be proactive in relation to our statutory activities. At the same time, we seek to ensure that the Bureau continues to be sufficiently resourced to deliver its mandate in a professional and efficient manner.

What We Aim To Achieve

Our key objective is to work in a transparent, fair, effective and independent manner.

We have many dealings with the public, with state organisations but above all with many large private concerns whether in Ireland or overseas. It behoves us all to provide an efficient public service. In this document, we set out how we propose to work towards this in the year ahead. We may have set ourselves challenging objectives but I am confident that the Bureau, through the dedication of its staff and the support of the Financial Services Ombudsman Council, can deliver.

Ultimately, by our work, we will be a major part of an enhanced financial services environment for all sectors but above all for the consumer.

Joe Meade

Financial Services Ombudsman

6 September 2005

1. Role of Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau and Council

The Role of the Bureau

The Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau² was established under the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland Act, 2004 (the Act).

The legislation provides for an independent, impartial investigation and resolution of disputes between consumers and Financial Service Providers.

The Bureau is financed by means of levies on the Financial Services Providers as prescribed by the Financial Services Ombudsman Council.

The Act delineates the scope and functions of the Bureau in the investigation of complaints by consumers and the accountability of the Bureau, both financial and administrative, to the relevant bodies.

Further to its duties under the Act, the Bureau exercises functions arising out of Ireland's obligations under EU legislation. The Bureau has an obligation under the cooperation network FIN-NET (the Cross-Border Out-of-Court Complaints Network for Financial Services) to ensure efficient exchange of information between European ombudsmen and other comparable schemes.

The Role of the Financial Services Ombudsman

The principal function of the Financial Services Ombudsman is to deal with complaints made under the Act to the Bureau by mediation, by investigation and by adjudication.

The Ombudsman has a duty under the Act to prepare an annual estimate of income and expenditure and to ensure that accounting records are kept that properly record and explain the financial transactions of or relating to the Bureau. The Ombudsman is also obliged to arrange for the preparation of an annual statement of accounts, an annual report, a summary of all complaints made and a review of trends and patterns for each financial year.

The Role of the Council

The Financial Services Ombudsman's Council was appointed by the Minister for Finance in September 2004. The Chairperson is Dr. Con Power and the other members are:

John Colgan, Deputy Chairperson, Crozier Deane, Dermott Jewell, Paul Joyce, Paddy Leydon, Paul Lynch, Paddy Lyons, Jim McMahon and Caitriona Ni Charra.

² The Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau is the corporate entity of the new statutory scheme and consists of the Financial Services Ombudsman, each Deputy Ombudsman and the staff.

The main functions of the Council as laid down in the Act are:

- To prescribe guidelines under which the Ombudsman is to operate;
- To determine the levies and charges payable for the performance of services provided by the Ombudsman;
- To keep under review the efficiency and effectiveness of the Bureau and to advise the Minister on any matter relevant to the operation of the Bureau;
- To advise the Ombudsman on any matter on which the Ombudsman seeks advice.

The Council also approves the annual estimates of the Bureau and determines in a general way the staff conditions and remuneration of the Bureau staff.

The Council has no role whatsoever in relation to complaints resolution.

2. The Bureau's Mission

The Financial Services Ombudsman's Bureau will:

- Be efficient, fair, impartial and practical in its dealings with Financial Service Providers and complainants.
- Be open and communicative to the general public and place a high emphasis on communicating its role to everyone.
- Deal with complaints in a timely manner and be confident to reject those which are outside its remit or are not relevant.
- Engage in dialogue with the providers and consumers and try to solve matters in an amicable manner. Be proportionate in its findings and award compensation accordingly.
- Liaise with the Financial Regulator and the Department of Finance when regulatory issues come to notice.
- Publish complaints trends on a regular basis.
- Be supportive of the Council.
- Develop staff to the optimum.
- Be a unified office with an effective and efficient approach at the earliest opportunity.

The Bureau's Mission Statement

To adjudicate on unresolved disputes between complainants and financial services providers in an independent and impartial manner thereby enhancing the financial services environment for all sectors.

3. High-Level Goals

1. To ensure the Bureau operates effectively since 1 April 2005 through the amalgamation of the two pre-existing voluntary schemes, the Credit Institutions' Ombudsman and the Insurance Ombudsman of Ireland.
2. To incorporate the expanded sectors of Financial Service Providers into the Bureau's remit by set target dates. These dates have been set as follows:

Credit Unions	1 August 2005
Insurance & Mortgage Intermediaries	1 October 2005
Money Lenders	1 November 2005
All other Financial Service Providers	1 December 2005

3. To ensure systems are in place and staff are trained to handle complaints in respect of the expanded sectors of Financial Service Providers by the target dates.
4. To provide an accessible service to both consumers and Financial Service Providers.
5. To disseminate information on the role of the Bureau to various interested bodies such as the Media, Money Advice Bureaux, Citizens' Information Bureaux, Comhairle, Solicitors, Industry Representative Bodies, Educational Bodies and to the general public.

4. Analysis of Our Environment

In achieving the Bureau's Mission and its High-level Goals, we must devise a strategy of what we aim to deliver in the coming year. The Bureau's environment, and the strengths, challenges and opportunities we face therein will necessarily inform that strategy.

Strengths

The Bureau is in the unique and privileged position of being able to draw on the vast experience of the staff of the pre-existing voluntary schemes, the Credit Institutions' Ombudsman, and the Insurance Ombudsman. The extensive knowledge base and commitment of the staff of the pre-existing schemes in regard to the handling of complaint investigation from initial contact through to final decision is an invaluable asset. This experience covers not only investigative matters, but also administrative and reporting functions as they apply to this particular line of work.

The staff of the respective voluntary schemes bring with them varied and relevant educational and professional qualifications which equip them well as a team in their new roles as staff of the Bureau. Another strength brought forward by the existing staff is their sense of initiative, focus and shared goals.

The sense of discretion and confidentiality in the handling of complaints continues with the work of the Bureau.

Challenges

One might have assumed that the two pre-existing voluntary schemes, both being ombudsmen schemes and both dealing with complaints about financial services would have developed similar cultures. The schemes however had different styles, values, characteristics and different systems. It is not surprising, in light of these differences, that the creation of a single culture will take time to emerge. It will also require subtlety in management.

Another challenge faced by the Bureau, due to the expansion of sectors of Financial Service Providers under the remit of the Bureau, is the consequent gap in skills and experience necessary to deal with these sectors. The Bureau is confident that this challenge will successfully be overcome by further staff education and training.

The staff of the Bureau did face some challenges due to the fact that there was no lead in period between the operation of the old voluntary schemes and the coming into effect of the new statutory scheme. It was often the case that some complaints were handled under the Terms of Reference of the pre-existing voluntary schemes, while other complaints which came into the Bureau after April 1 2005 were being processed under the terms of the governing Act. These "teething problems" have since been overcome.

Opportunities

Drawing on the strengths of the Bureau as mentioned above, the staff look on the challenges it faces as a team and see these more as opportunities than obstacles. We view the advent of the expanded sectors of financial service providers to the Bureau as an opportunity for the staff to take on extra roles, acquire added expertise and multi-task functions.

The provision of the Act allows for appeals to the High Court. We view this as an opportunity to have our investigative and adjudicative procedures reviewed by higher judicial authority and we would also welcome any constructive criticisms such an authority would make. Any such experience can only be a positive one from which we can all learn.

Because the Bureau is a creature of statute, we feel that this gives the work of the Bureau stronger powers than were accorded to the two pre-existing voluntary schemes. We see this as an opportunity to advance the work of the Bureau.

5. Our Guiding Principles and Objectives for 2005/2006

1. To successfully amalgamate the two pre-existing voluntary schemes.
2. To locate suitable premises to house the Bureau by mid 2006 at the latest.
3. To adapt effective IT and case management systems comprising the best elements of the pre-existing systems and to develop accounting practices to ensure compliance by the Bureau with its reporting obligations under the Act to Government bodies.
4. To devise a system for the levying and monitoring of fees from the Financial Service Providers.
5. To facilitate the change of the status of staff from private sector to public sector employees in respect of pensions, entitlements etc.
6. To revise our existing for the handling of complaints in respect of the expanded sectors of Financial Service Providers.
7. To develop staff competencies and skills to ensure continued improved performance thereby ensuring that all staff comprehend the provisions of the Act and the scope functions of the Bureau as set out thereunder.
8. To ensure that the expanded sectors of Financial Service Providers are informed of their obligations under the Act.
9. To devise performance indicators to ensure highest implementation of the services provided by the Bureau.
10. To ensure wide awareness of the Bureau and its role by the general public, the media and all other interested parties.
11. To draw up and implement Memoranda of Understanding between the Bureau, the Financial Regulator and the Pensions Ombudsman and to liaise with them on a regular basis.
12. To support the Council in its work and to liaise with Oireachtas Committees, the Department of Finance and any other relevant bodies, to certify inter alia with Government aims for better regulation.

6. The Bureau's Business Plan

The Bureau is at present in a transitional phase with no central location. Different operating systems are due to be integrated and the work load is indeterminate. Accordingly, specific Key Performance Indicators are not possible at this point for all of our operations. That said, it is our aim to provide comprehensive, definitive, clear and prompt information to the consumer and the Financial Service Provider.

The Bureau's Mission requires that consumers be aware of their rights under the Act. Therefore when consumers seek information from the Bureau, they should receive a professional response. This means that the information given should be:

- **Comprehensive:** Any questions about the functions and remit of the Bureau can be answered in full.
- **Definitive:** The information given is precise and reliable.
- **Clear:** The information provided is easy for the consumer to understand and act upon.
- **Prompt:** The response to enquiries is timely.

The provision of a professional and efficient service to all of our customers is our primary objective. The Bureau accordingly considers the following to be an appropriate business plan over the next twelve months. Circumstances however will dictate necessary changes to it and it will be kept under constant review for its effectiveness.

Objective 1

The provision of a professional and efficient service to the Bureau's customers³ is the cornerstone of this Business Plan.

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
Telephone Service: To provide an efficient, knowledgeable and courteous telephone service	<p>All new staff in a position to deal with routine enquiries within a month of commencement of their employment</p> <hr/> <p>Improved guidelines in place to deal with standard complaints handling procedures by March 2006</p> <hr/> <p>Improved guidelines in place to deal with matters which are outside the remit of the Bureau by March 2006</p> <hr/> <p>Written response to all telephone and written enquiries within 3 working days</p>

³ The term 'customers' encompasses the consumer, the Financial Service Provider, the general public and all other persons who contact the Bureau.

Objective 2

To develop strategies and materials aimed at improving levels of awareness by both consumers and Financial Services Providers about rights to complain, dealings with Financial Service Providers and the dispute resolution procedure of the Bureau.

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Website: Develop our website to maximise access to the Bureau and dissemination of information on complaints procedures</p>	<p>Development of website information outlining the role of the Bureau, its scope and functions</p> <hr/> <p>Electronic access to the Bureau by the online Complaint Form</p> <hr/> <p>Continuous review and updating of the website</p> <hr/> <p>Use of website as a platform to disseminate information of interest and use to consumers of financial services</p>
<p>Presentations: To deliver informative and authoritative presentations</p>	<p>Drawing up of presentation template to be delivered by December 2005 in conjunction with audio/visual material to be developed</p> <hr/> <p>Development of presentation skills by staff by March 2006</p> <hr/> <p>Identification of groups/bodies to whom presentations will be offered by June 2006</p>

Objective 2 continued

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Reporting Protocols: To develop the reporting protocols in compliance with the Act</p>	<p>Drawing up of Memoranda of Understandings with the Financial Regulator and the Pensions Ombudsman by March 2006</p> <hr/> <p>Development of IT and accounting procedures to facilitate the furnishing of financial and statistical reports to the relevant Government bodies as set out under the Act</p> <hr/> <p>Publishing case studies and trends on our website in fulfilment of our obligations under the Act by the statutory date</p> <hr/> <p>Publishing quarterly updates by March 2006</p>
<p>Liaison Protocols: Liaisons with the relevant sectors</p>	<p>The Ombudsman to meet with the Financial Regulator and the Pensions Ombudsman every quarter, with regular staff meetings with both bodies</p> <hr/> <p>The Ombudsman to meet with Department of Finance officials every quarter to discuss matters of mutual interest</p>

Objective 3

To resolve complaints in accordance with best practice and the highest standards of customer service.

The key function of the Bureau is to deal with complaints from members of the public. Clearly, where a consumer feels so strongly about his rights that he makes a formal complaint to the Bureau, this matter must be given the highest priority. People do not complain unless they feel that they are not in a position to exercise control over their personal affairs - helping them is at the heart of our Mission. Since tackling complaints is the Bureau's fundamental public service function, it must be ensured that such matters are treated with the highest standard of customer service - including courtesy, timeliness, confidentiality and impartiality. The approach of the Bureau in this area must be to seek to investigate and reach a resolution to the problem at issue.

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Timeliness: To address complaints as promptly as possible in order to facilitate their speedy and effective resolution; having regard to the varying complexity of some cases, which can have significant implications for time scales</p>	<p><i>While each case will determine its resolution time period due to its individual complexities, the following general targets aim to be achieved by June 2006:</i></p> <p>When a complaint is received it is initially reviewed as to whether it comes within the Terms of the Act. If the matter is deemed to be outside the remit of the Bureau, the Complainant will be so informed as to why it cannot be investigated. If the matter is within remit then the Complainant is directed to the Internal Complaints Procedure of the Financial Service Provider complained of. This will generally take place within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint</p> <hr/> <p>If the Complainant is not satisfied with the response from the Financial Service Provider and the Deputy Ombudsman feels the complaint merits further investigation, the complaint will be investigated by the Bureau upon receipt of documentation from both the Complainant and the Financial Service Provider</p>

Objective 3 continued

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>This investigation should in general take at the most 60 working days subject to receipt of all necessary documentation within the Bureau's set time limits (maximum 30 working days). However, for certain cases supplementary information will be necessary which may cause the 60 working days to be extended</p> <hr/> <p>The Bureau initially tries to reach a settlement between the parties. Failing this, the Deputy Ombudsman issues a Finding on the matter. Each party is given 25 working days to accept or appeal the Finding. Where the 25 working days have lapsed and no appeal has been submitted by either party, the Finding becomes a Final Decision and is binding on both parties</p> <hr/> <p>Where an appeal is submitted by either party, the Financial Services Ombudsman will review the Finding of the Deputy Ombudsman and the appeal submission and then issue a Final Decision on the matter</p> <hr/> <p>The Final Decision of the Ombudsman will in general be issued within 15 working days after the expiration of the appeal period. This Final Decision is binding on both parties subject to further appeal to the High Court</p> <hr/> <p>The Bureau expects that the Ombudsman's Final Decision will be implemented within a maximum of 30 working days and will take appropriate steps to ensure that this is effected</p>

Objective 3 continued

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Effective Organisation: To maintain and develop an effective casework management system</p>	<p>Cases prioritised where necessary</p> <hr/> <p>Research meetings held every week to report on case status to the relevant Deputy Ombudsman</p> <hr/> <p>Monthly review of case statistics by the Ombudsman and the Deputy Ombudsmen</p>
<p>Staff and Systems Review: To ensure that any arrears in complaints handling are kept to a minimum</p>	<p>Extra skilled staff to be recruited when necessary</p> <hr/> <p>Task force set up in September 2005 to review the system to report by December 2005 at the latest with any recommendations for improvement to be implemented by April 2006</p>

Objective 4

To develop the abilities, skills and competence of staff so as to ensure continued improvement in organisational performance.

The quality of the Bureau's service to the public is crucially dependent upon the capacity, performance and motivation of its staff. Moreover, if the staff are to give commitment to the work of the Bureau, the Bureau must show commitment to the development of its staff. In particular, the Bureau must make sure staff have opportunities to participate in training and development on a regular basis, both inside and outside the Office.

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
Human Resource Management: To manage the human resource functions of the Bureau in a professional manner	Staff briefings held every week keeping staff informed of general developments <hr/> Quarterly staff strategy meetings <hr/> Partnership Committee to be established by February 2006 <hr/> Management committee meetings every month <hr/> Working party set up in September 2005 to review overall structure to report by December 2005 and recommendations for improvement to be implemented by April 2006
Training and Development: To support and encourage continued staff training and development	Induction and support programmes in operation, including access to external courses <hr/> One workshop per month on Financial Service Providers topics, driven by guidance material produced for website and complaints procedure reviewed <hr/> Development of library and resource materials for internal use

Objective 4 continued

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Making PMDS happen: To incorporate the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) as a core element of the Bureau's business development strategy</p>	<p>PMDS to be initiated by December 2005</p> <hr/> <p>All Role Profile Forms agreed and completed by July 2006</p> <hr/> <p>All Role Profile Forms reviewed by June each year</p>

Objective 5

To perform the Bureau's role and independent functions in a manner that is transparent and accountable and to lead by example as a model of best practice.

The Bureau is established by law, and it must carry out its functions in a fair and independent manner. We are public servants, and the requirements of accountability and transparency are essential if the Bureau is to retain the confidence of the public. The Bureau's organisational structure will be continuously reviewed to ensure that it supports good internal and external communications, and co-ordination of our activities to achieve effective and optimal outcomes. Robust, reliable and efficient internal operations are needed in order to (i) support our key public service objectives, and (ii) maintain effective working relationships with our stakeholders.

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
Timely Accounts: To prepare annual financial accounts in a timely manner	Estimates of expenditures and levy calculations to be prepared for Council by end September each year <hr/> Management accounts to be prepared and submitted to the Ombudsman on a monthly basis <hr/> Draft annual accounts to be submitted to the Council by end February each year <hr/> Accounts to be submitted to Comptroller & Auditor General within four months after the end of each financial year at the latest
Annual Report: To prepare a timely, concise and informative Annual Report	Draft Annual Report to be completed by the end of February in any year <hr/> The Annual Report to be completed within six months after the end of the financial at the latest. <i>(The report will then be submitted to Council and once approved be submitted to the Minister for Finance who will lay it before both Houses of the Oireachtas. The Ombudsman shall thereafter arrange for its publication at an early date)</i>

Objective 5 continued

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Transparency and Openness: To pursue efficiency in the Bureau's operations which will be open to public scrutiny</p>	<p>Statistics detailing volume and timeliness of the Bureau's processing of complaints and enquiries to be compiled and published in our Annual Report and submitted to the Council as required</p> <hr/> <p>Website to be enhanced by publication of relevant decisions, trends and FAQs</p>
<p>Efficient Administration: To maximise the efficiency of the general administrative functions of the office</p>	<p>Respond to requests from Council, state offices and Oireachtas Committees in a prompt fashion and in any event no later than 5 working days</p> <hr/> <p>Constantly to review office administration</p>
<p>Sound Financial and Office Management: To manage the office and its financial transactions in a timely, efficient manner</p>	<p>Corporate governance rules for the Council and the Bureau to be agreed and implemented by December 2005</p> <hr/> <p>Internal audit function and Audit Committee to be operational by end October 2005 at the latest</p> <hr/> <p>Risk analysis to be carried out annually with internal audit assistance</p> <hr/> <p>Budget to be allocated to the various areas of expenditure and a monthly expenditure projection produced for the year by December 2005</p> <hr/> <p>Monthly projections to be updated at the end of each month and submitted to the Ombudsman by the middle of the following month</p> <hr/> <p>Monthly general ledger accounts to be reconciled</p>

Objective 5 continued

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
	<p>All monies incoming to the office to be lodged immediately but within 48 hours of receipt at the latest</p> <hr/> <p>A new levy allocation costing system to be developed for implementation by the end of 2006</p> <hr/> <p>Petty cash accounts to be reconciled monthly</p> <hr/> <p>All invoices to be approved for payment within 5 days of receipt while payments will adhere to the time provisions of the Prompt Payments Acts</p>

Objective 6

To move to a new centralised office with the assistance of the Office of Public Works as early as is practically feasible or by early 2006 at the latest.

Key Deliverables	Key Performance Indicators
<p>Relocation: To effectively manage the move to a new office</p>	<p>Task force of staff and Council to be established by September 2005 to effectively manage the relocation and liaise with Office of Public Works</p> <hr/> <p>Move to be conducted without major disruption to service</p>



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