

## Councils praised for Croke Park Agreement savings

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DUBLIN'S four local authorities have been praised for making savings of tens of millions of euro under the provisions of the Croke Park Agreement on public sector costs and pay.

Dublin City Council, Fingal County Council, South Dublin County Council and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council have contributed more than €1.3 million of the €162 million in savings made to date by local government under the provisions of the deal that was made with trade unions last year.

The figures were presented recently to the national body overseeing the implementation of the agreement, which is carrying out the first official review of the deal for the Government.

The Implementation Body has said all claims relating to savings made by Government departments will be verified independently as part of the review.

The Department of the Environment submission to the Implementation Body said the €162 million in savings was divided equally between pay and non-pay.

Figures released by Fingal County Council recently show that it has saved some €16.5 million in the 15 months since the agreement on pay was made.

That total savings made by the local authority comprise payroll savings and other savings accruing from what the council calls 'operational efficiency'.

Payroll costs in terms of salaries and wages have been slashed at the council since 2008 and 251 staff who have left the council for a variety of reasons since the beginning of 2009 have not been replaced.

A spokeswoman for Fingal County Council said it had also reduced its energy costs by over half a million euro through a series of energy-saving initiatives that have been carried out in the local authority over the last four years.

In 2010, electricity consumption in Fingal County Hall in Swords was down by 24 per cent compared to 2007, while gas consumption was down six per cent.

Electricity use in Grove Road in Blanchardstown dropped by 11 per cent between 2008 and 2010, while gas consumption dropped by 25 per cent.

There was a reduction of almost 15 per cent in electricity use for both Blanchardstown and Balbriggan libraries, while gas consumption dropped 12 per cent.

A spokesman at the Department of the Environment said Dublin City Council has made total savings of €44 million to date.

The figure includes some €9.6 million saved as a result of the introduction of more competitive procurement in the area of waste disposal.

Gina Quin, chief executive of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, said it was "proud" to see that local authorities in Dublin were leading the way in making savings under the agreement.

"The cost of inefficient Government is a burden that neither businesses nor taxpayers can afford during these times," stated Ms Quin.

"We believe by tackling this issue, the cost of doing business in Dublin can be reduced.

"A lower cost of doing business, such as a reduction in commercial rates, supports the creation of enterprise and jobs and is only possible if there is tighter cost management by local government."