

**Public Spending Code:
Quality Assurance Report for 2020
Offaly County Council**



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

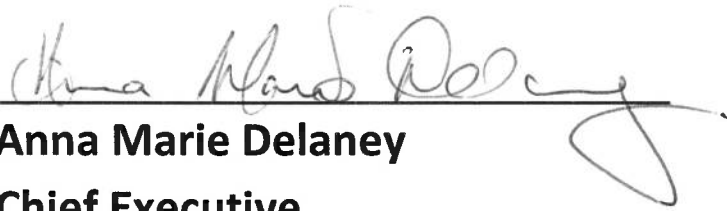
Submitted to the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) in
Compliance with the Public Spending Code

Certification

This Annual Quality Assurance Report reflects Offaly County Council's assessment of compliance with the Public Spending Code. It is based on the best financial, organisational and performance related information available across the various areas of responsibility.

QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT FOR 2020

2020-2021



Anna Marie Delaney
Chief Executive
Offaly County Council

25 May 2021

QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT FOR 2020

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1. Introduction

Offaly County Council (OCC) has completed this Quality Assurance (QA) Report as part of its on-going compliance with the Public Spending Code (PSC).

The Quality Assurance procedure aims to gauge the extent to which Public Bodies are meeting the obligations set out in the Public Spending Code. The Public Spending Code ensures that the state achieves value for money in the use of all public funds.

The Quality Assurance Process contains five steps:

1. Drawing up Inventories of all projects/programmes at different stages of the Project Life Cycle (appraisal, planning/design, implementation, post implementation).

The three sections are expenditure being considered, expenditure being incurred and expenditure that has recently ended and the inventory includes all projects/programmes above €0.5m.

2. Publish summary information on website of all procurements in excess of €10m, whether new, in progress or completed.

3. Checklists to be completed in respect of the different stages.

These checklists allow the organisation to self-assess their compliance with the code in respect of the checklists, which are provided through the PSC document.

4. Carry out a more in-depth check on a small number of selected projects/programmes.

Revenue Projects selected must represent a minimum of 1% of the total value of all Revenue Projects reported on the Project Inventory.

Capital Projects selected must represent a minimum of 5% of the total value of all Capital Projects reported on the Project Inventory.

These minimums are an average over a rolling three-year period.

5. Complete a short report for the National Oversight and Audit Commission

This report should include the inventory of all projects, the website reference for the publication of procurements above €10m, the completed checklists, the organisation's judgment on the adequacy of processes given the findings from the in-depth checks and the organisation's proposals to remedy any discovered inadequacies.

This report fulfils the fifth requirement of the QA Process for Offaly County Council for 2020. This is the 6th year in which the QA process has been completed by Local Authorities.

2. Expenditure Analysis

2.1 Inventory of Projects/Programmes

This section details the inventory drawn up by Offaly County Council in accordance with the guidance on the Quality Assurance process. The inventory lists all of the Council's projects and programmes at various stages of the project life cycle that amount to more than €0.5m. This inventory is divided between current (revenue) and capital expenditure (capital grant schemes and capital projects) and between three stages:

- Expenditure being considered
- Expenditure being incurred
- Expenditure that has recently ended

Table 1 lists a summary of the Council's compiled inventory.

Table 1: Summary of Number of Projects/Services and Expenditure by Category				
Projects of total value	Current Expenditure	Capital Expenditure		
	>€0.5m	€0.5m - €5m	€5m - €20m	Over €20m
Expenditure Being Considered	N/A	14	4	N/A
Expenditure Being Incurred	33	6	2	N/A
Expenditure Recently Ended	N/A	9	1	N/A
Total Value (€202,797,433)	€82,269,519	€63,527,394	€57,000,520	

Expenditure Being Considered

Table 1 provides a summary of the inventory of expenditures above €0.5m being considered by OCC. As the table identifies, there were no programme/service areas where expansion of existing current expenditure of over €0.5M was being considered in 2020

There were eighteen capital projects under the category of 'Expenditure Being Considered' in 2020, four of which are in the €5 - €20M category.

Expenditure Being Incurred

Table 1 provides a summary of the inventory of expenditures above €0.5m being incurred by OCC. There are thirty-three projects or services, which are currently incurring current (revenue) expenditure of over €0.5m. The majority of these services are routine annual

expenditure e.g. Housing and, Road Maintenance programmes. There are six capital projects incurring expenditure of €0.5m - €5M, with two further projects incurring expenditure of between €5m - €20m.

Expenditure Recently Ended

Table 1 provides a summary of the inventory of expenditures above €0.5m recently ended by OCC. There are ten capital expenditure projects under this category and no current expenditure projects within this category. One of the capital expenditure projects recently ended falls into the €5 - €20M category, with the other nine between €0.5 - €5M.

The inventory of projects/programmes for OCC is set out in Appendix 1.

2.2 Published Summary of Procurements

As part of the Quality Assurance process Offaly County Council was required to publish summary information on its website of all procurements in excess of €10m.

OCC did not engage in any procurement in excess of €10m in 2020. Therefore, there were no publications on its website www.offaly.ie.

3. Assessment of Compliance

3.1 Checklist Completion: Approach Taken and Results

The third step in the Quality Assurance process involves completing a set of checklists covering all expenditure. The Council, in respect of guidelines set out in the Public Spending Code, bases the high level checks in Step 3 of the QA process on self-assessment.

There are seven checklists in total:

Checklist 1: General obligations not specific to individual projects/programmes.

Checklist 2: Capital projects/programmes & capital grant schemes under consideration.

Checklist 3: New current expenditure under consideration.

Checklist 4: Capital projects/programmes & capital grants schemes incurring expenditure.

Checklist 5: Current expenditure programmes incurring expenditure.

Checklist 6: Capital projects/programmes & capital grant schemes discontinued and / or evaluated.

Checklist 7: Current expenditure programmes that reached the end of their planned timeframe or were discontinued.

Checklists 1,2,4,5 and 6 were completed by Offaly County Council (OCC). OCC did not record any expenditure under the category of checklist 3 & 7 during 2020; therefore, all responses to these checklists are recorded as non-applicable.

The set of checklists completed by OCC is set out in Appendix 2.

Checklists completed are representative of a 10.8% sample of the Inventory. The following Departments completed checklists: Housing, Roads, Community & Culture, Economic Development & Promotion, Special Projects, Environment, Finance, Arts, Corporate Services and Management.

Each question in the checklists is assessed by a 3-point scale 1-3:

a score of 1 = Scope for significant improvements

a score of 2 = Compliant but with some improvement necessary

a score of 3 = Broadly compliant

3.2 Main Issues Arising from Checklist Assessment

The completed checklists show the extent to which Offaly County Council believe they comply with the Public Spending Code. Overall, the checklists show a good level of compliance with the Code.

Checklist 1 demonstrates that the Council has been proactive in implementing the QA process by ensuring that an independent unit (Internal Audit) oversees the process in line

with Public Spending Code recommendations. Internal Audit Staff attended training on the updated Public Spending Code at the beginning of 2021. Process guidelines were prepared and circulated to Offaly County Council's Senior Management.

With regard to post project reviews, all revenue expenditure is continually reviewed to highlight areas for improvement. This is a key feature of all team meetings, and Management Reports.

In keeping with the requirements of the Public Spending Code organisations are required to undertake an in depth check of at least one project from each of the following expenditure categories; 1. Under Consideration 2. Incurring Expenditure and 3. Recently Ended. In order for OCC to meet these requirements it was necessary to conduct an in-depth check of a project or programme from the Expenditure Recently Ended Category for 2020. This provided an opportunity for OCC to examine how a sample of projects had adhered to the Public Spending Code guidelines through full project life cycle process. The Council recognise the importance and benefit of post project reviews and are satisfied that the sample examined had fully adhered to the PSC guidelines.

Evidence was prevalent among the sample that Post Project Reviews were being undertaken and the process of implementing the findings into planning for future projects and programmes had already commenced. OCC will also continue to regularly review revenue spend for improvements in unison to developing a formal process to conduct post project reviews of significant capital projects.

Checklist 2 for revenue and capital expenditure under consideration suggests good levels of compliance with the PSC in general with regard to areas such as appraisal and planning and the setting of clear objectives.

Checklists 4 & 5; for expenditure being incurred, highlights good levels of compliance are evident in checklists responses. Current expenditure programmes are primarily rolling, year-to-year programmes such as the Housing Maintenance and Road Maintenance programmes and are subject to ongoing performance monitoring, rather than once off reviews.

Checklist 6 & 7; for expenditure discontinued, there were 10 capital projects that ended in 2020 and no current (revenue) expenditure under this category at year end Checklist 6 was completed for a recently ended capital project, with a high level of compliance to guidelines evident.

Of all the responses recorded through the checklists, the majority indicated a compliance level of 3 '*broadly compliant*' with the requirements of the PSC. Trends in responses to checklists will be monitored from year to year and responses indicating compliance levels of

2 'compliant but with some improvement necessary' and under will be followed-up and monitored as part of the quality assurance process in future years.

3.3 In-Depth Checks

The following section details the in-depth checks, which were carried out in OCC as part of the Public Spending Code. The Internal Audit Unit of OCC undertook these reviews.

The following projects were selected for in-depth review:

- Current Expenditure Programme: 'Being Incurred' 'Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement, €930,654
- Capital Project: 'Recently Ended' 'Blundell Wood Edenderry, Social Housing Scheme.

An overall 'Satisfactory Assurance' rating of compliance with the Public Spending Code was assigned following the reviews.

The report from the in-depth reviews is set out in Appendix 3.

The Guidance Document issued for the Local Government Sector sets out the criteria for in-depth checks as follows:

- Capital Projects: Projects selected must represent a minimum of 5% of the total value of all capital projects on the project inventory.
- Revenue Projects: Projects selected must represent a minimum of 1% of the total value of all revenue projects on the project inventory.

This minimum is an average over a three-year period (2018-2020).

Table 2 below outlines the percentage of projects subjected to in-depth review over the previous three years. As per the table Offaly County Council is compliant with the rolling percentage requirements.

Table 2: OCC In-depth Checks 2018 - 2020					
		2018	2019	2020	Overall Total
Capital	Total Reported	€59M	€69M	€120.5M	€248.5M
	In-depth Check	€2.3M	€9M	€7.97M	€19.27M
	% of total	3.89%	13.04%	6.61%	7.75%
Revenue	Total Reported	€66.7	€69.2	€82.7M	€218.6M
	In-depth Check	€0.9	€1.45	€0.93M	€3.28
	% of total	1.3%	2.09%	1.12%	1.5%
(All figures in Millions)					

4. Next Steps: Addressing Quality Assurance Issues

The compilation of both the inventory and checklists for the 6th year of this QA process was a significant co-ordination task in terms of liaising with divisions within the Council and collation of relevant information for the inventories and the checklists.

As discussed in Section 3, in-depth checks carried out for one Current Programme 'Being Incurred' and one Capital Project 'Recently Ended' was useful in terms of setting out the controls, which are place to ensure compliance with the PSC.

However, the PSC also requires that in-depth checks take a broader evaluation of project/programmes assessing project management, project appraisal and post project reviews.

Now that an inventory of projects and programmes is in place, the Internal Audit Unit is better positioned to select an appropriate sample of programmes for further assessment via the in-depth check process.

5. Conclusion

The inventory outlined in this report clearly lists the current and capital expenditure being considered, being incurred and recently ended in 2020. The Council had no procurements in excess of €10 million in 2020; therefore, there was no requirement for publication on its website, this information was confirmed by OCC Procurement Officer during the 2020 PSC process.

The checklists completed by the Council show a high level of compliance with the Public Spending Code.

The in-depth checks carried out on the selected projects indicated a 'satisfactory assurance' rating on the Council's compliance with the Code. Recommendations from the in-depth reviews will be addressed and implemented.

This Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Report for 2020 will be published on Offaly County Council's website www.offaly.ie.

Appendix 1: Inventory of Projects and Programmes over €0.5M

The following contains an inventory of Expenditure on Projects/Programmes with a value above €0.5m, categorised by Expenditure being considered, Expenditure being incurred and Expenditure recently ended. Only projects with Total Project Expenditure matching these criteria are included in the Inventory table.

Expenditure being Considered - Greater than €0.5m (Capital and Current)									
Project/Scheme/Programme Name	Short Description	Current Expenditure Amount in Reference Year	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Non Grant)	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Grant)	Project/Programme Anticipated Timeline	Projected Lifetime Expenditure	Explanatory Notes		
Circular Road Housing Scheme Daingean (9 Houses)	Housing Builds	€ -	€ -	€ 6,813	Completion 2022	€ 2,770,420	Received part 8 in 2020 and due to start construction in 2021. Status: Stage 3 approved to go tender on March 2021		
Kylebeg Banagher Phase 2(Construction)(0116249C)	Housing Builds	€ -	€ -	€ 20,553	Completion 2022/2023	€ 5,341,744	Published to e-tenders April 2021		
Sr. Senan Avenue, Edenderry (4 no OPDs)	Housing Builds	€ -	€ -	€ 20,112	Completion 2022	€ 868,403	Stage 3 to be submitted April 2021		
Elderberry Drive Moneygall	Housing Builds	€ -	€ -	€ 16,561	Completion 2022	€ 963,885	Stage 3 to be submitted April 2021		
Beechgrove Belmont	Housing Builds	€ -	€ -	€ 18,293	Completion 2022	€ 2,045,255	Stage 3 to be submitted April 2021		
Clara Raheen Lands 38 Units	Housing Build	€ -	€ -	€ 198,466	Completion 2023	€ 11,453,962	Stage 2 approved currently seeking planning permission		

Midlands Retrofit Project	Retrofit scheme for existing housing stock	€	€	€	Completion 2021/2022	€	Completion 2021/2022	€
Main Street Daingean Turnkey	Housing builds	€	€	€	Completion 2022	€	Completion 2022	€
Clonminch Oaklee AHB 19 Units	Housing Builds	€	€	€	Completion 2023	€	Completion 2023	€
Clonmore Sophia	Purchase of former hotel premises to repurpose for homeless services	€	€	€	Completion 2022	€	Completion 2022	€
Kearneys Field, Tullamore CAF funding (AHB) Oaklee - 41units	Housing Build	€	€	€	Completion 2023	€	Completion 2023	€
Clara Fire Station	Provision of new premises	€	€	€	To Be Confirmed	€	To Be Confirmed	€
Tullamore Training Centre	Development of new Fire Services Training Centre	€	€	€	2022	€	2022	€
Update Fire Service Fleet	Purchase of new vehicles	€	€	€	To Be Confirmed	€	To Be Confirmed	€
Grand Canal Greenway	Daingean - Edenderry	€	€	€	2022	€	2022	€
Edenderry Community Library	Provision of new Community Library & Arts Base	€	€	€	TBA (Possibly Qrt 1 2025)	€	TBA (Possibly Qrt 1 2025)	€
Edenderry Swimming Pool	Upgrade of existing premises	€	€	€	To Be Confirmed	€	To Be Confirmed	€

URDF_R2					2023	€2,993,876	€2.25m URDF ; €0.75m OCC
Banagher Regeneration Project	€	-	€	-	To Be Confirmed	€	
Totals	€	-	€	2,298,003	€	67,868,285	

Expenditure being Incurred - Greater than €0.5m (Capital and Current)								
Project/Scheme/Programme Name	Short Description	Current Expenditure Amount in Reference Year	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Non Grant)	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Grant)	Project/Programme Anticipated Timeline	Cumulative Expenditure to-date	Projected Lifetime Expenditure (Capital Only)	Explanatory Notes
A01 Maintenance / Improvement of LA Housing		€ 3,297,471	€ -	€ -		€ -	€ -	
A03 Housing Rent & Tenant Purchase Administration		€ 781,887	€ -	€ -		€ -	€ -	
A05 Administration of Homeless Services		€ 813,613	€ -	€ -		€ -	€ -	
A06 Support to Housing Capital & Affordable Programme		€ 1,351,868	€ -	€ -		€ -	€ -	
A07 RAS Programme		€ 4,475,837	€ -	€ -		€ -	€ -	
A09 Housing Grants		€ 1,390,978	€ -	€ -		€ -	€ -	
B02 NS Road - Maintenance & Improvement		€ 4,034,862	€ -	€ -		€ -	€ -	
B03 Regional Road - Maintenance & Improvement		€ 5,939,219	€ -	€ -		€ -	€ -	

B04 Local Road - Maintenance & Improvement	€ 7,733,460	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
B05 Public Lighting	€ 1,061,001	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
B07 Road Safety Engineering Improvement	€ 1,843,408	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
B010 Support to Roads Capital Programme	€ 541,317	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
Machinery yard vehicle replacement programme								
	Purchase of 3No. 3.5t Trucks €116,340 & 2No. 7.5t Trucks €115,940 in 2020 and 2 No. 32T Trucks in 2023	€ -	€ 243,474	€ -	€ -	€ 2021	€ -	€ 5,000,000
B11 Agency & Recoupable Services	€ 1,891,233	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
C01 Operation & Maintenance of Water Supply	€ 2,236,821	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
C02 Operation & Maintenance of Waste Water Treatment	€ 1,625,163	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
C05 Admin of Group & Private Installations	€ 1,285,510	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
D01 Forward Planning	€ 975,673	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
D02 Development Management	€ 1,619,913	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -
D06 Community & Enterprise Function	€ 3,398,364	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -

D09 Economic Development & Promotion	€ 13,291,080	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
Heritage & Conservation Services	€ 524,951	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
E01 Operation, Maintenance & Aftercare of Landfill	€ 956,987	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
E02 Operation. Maintenance of Recovery & Recycling Facilities	€ 610,235	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
E04 Provision of Waste to Collection Services	€ 1,300,286	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
E07 Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement	€ 930,654	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
E11 Operation of Fire Service	€ 2,931,986	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
F02 Operation of Library & Archival Service	€ 2,665,680	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
F05 Operation of Arts Programme	€ 852,634	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
H01 Profit & Loss Machinery Account	€ 986,828	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
H03 Administration of Rates	€ 8,105,619	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	
																				This is an annual revenue budget activity, increased in 2020 by the COVID

	Covid 19 waivers(€4.47m funded) , CMC									19 waiver for ratepayers.
H09 Local Representation & Civic Leadership	€ 1,414,775	€	€				€		€	
H10 Motor Taxation	€ 739,095	€	€				€		€	
H11 Agency & Recoupable Services	€ 711,111	€	€				€		€	
Birr Macgregor (Turnkey) 12units	€ -	€ 140	€ 352,615	May-21			€ 2,177,276		€ 2,195,000	
Jacksons Hill (AHB Calf project)	€ -	€-	€ 585,000	Feb-22			€ 585,000		€ 6,873,333	
Birr Distributor Road R439	€	€	€				€		€	
Banagher Road to N52 Tullamore	€ -	€	19,598				-		1,800,000	
Edenderry Inner Relief Road	€ -	€	€				€		€	
Edenderry Regen Phase I - Link Street	€ -	€	396,464				-		4,300,000	
Tullamore URDF/ERDF/Greenway Round 1	€ 1,942,837	€ 64,250	€ 1,878,587				€ 5,855,157	2022	€ 7,000,000	€1.5M- ERDF €3M- URDF €2.5M OCC
Tullamore Community Arts Centre	€ 1,000,096	€	€				€	2022	€	Funding model: SLA €2m, OCC Funds €2.5m, TCAC €5m. 2020
Totals	€ 85,262,452	€ 339,987	€ 3,328,632				€ 10,531,215		€ 32,864,609	

Projects/Programmes Completed or discontinued in the reference year - Greater than €0.5m (Capital and Current)

Project/Scheme/Programme Name	Short Description	Current Expenditure Amount in Reference Year	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Non Grant)	Capital Expenditure Amount in Reference Year (Grant)	Project/Programme Completion Date	Final Outturn Expenditure	Explanatory Notes
Blundellwood, Edenderry (Construction) (33 units)	33 social housing units		€526	€708,773	10th January 2020	€7,972,461	final account not yet completed
Chancery Lane, Tullamore (Construction)	14 social housing units and 4 traveller accommodation units		€582	€1,022,823	21st September 2020	€4,178,980	final account not yet completed
Cloghan - Cluain na Spideoga Turnkey	6 social houses purchased through turnkey process	€ -	€ -	€ -	14th June 2019	€1,040,400	no exp or claim in 2020
Scurragh ,Birr (CAS/AHB) (6 units)	6 social housing units delivered by Cluid Housing Association through CAS funding	€ -	€ -	€ -	20th December 2019	€1,164,199	no exp or claim in 2020
Mount Bolus (CAS)	4 social housing units delivered by Mid Offaly Housing Association	€ -	€ -	€226,709	27th November 2020	€820,000	

	through CAS funding								
Frankford, Kilcormac, Turnkey (12 Units)	12 social houses purchased through turnkey process	€-	€1,773		21st December 2018	€2,298,607	legal fees claim only in 2020. purchase costs claimed in 2019		
Cluainn na Greine, Cloneygowan (turnkey 4 units)	4 social houses purchased through turnkey process	€-	€886,950		29th November 2019	€897,600	€235,988 exp CALF in 2020, €149,339 CAS exp 2020. CALF grant claim of €637,742 - claim related to payments made in 2019/2020. CAS claim not received until 2021 so not included		
Killane Drove (CAS/CAF funding) (AHB-Tuath) 27 Units	27 social housing units delivered by Tuath Housing Association - 2 units through CAS funding, 25 units through CALF funding	€-	€385,327		14th April 2021	€1,501,721			
Sliabh Bloom Mountain Trail		€-	€-			€1,260,349			

Clara Swimming Pool	€	€-	€-	€-	€-	€1,654,578
Totals	€	€1,108	€3,232,355	€22,788,895		€22,788,895

Appendix 2: Self-Assessment Checklists

Checklist 1 – To be completed in respect of general obligations not specific to individual projects/programmes

General Obligations not specific to individual projects/ Programmes	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Discussion/Action Required
1.1 Does the local authority ensure, on an on-going basis, that appropriate people within the authority and its agencies are aware of the requirements of the Public Spending Code (incl. through training)?	2	Communication with Management Team / Senior Management Group and Procurement Policy
1.2 Has training on the Public Spending Code been provided to relevant staff within the authority?	2	Internal Audit Section underwent training on updated PSC in 2021. A National Training Programme for the Local Authority Sector is required. Briefing Sessions for Project Managers in Offaly County Council are planned.
1.3 Has the Public Spending Code been adapted for the type of project/programme that your local authority is responsible for? i.e., have adapted sectoral guidelines been developed?	3	QA Process adapted for LAs. PSC applied as per guidelines.
1.4 Has the local authority in its role as Sanctioning Authority satisfied itself that agencies that it funds comply with the Public Spending Code?	3	Compliance with procurement monitored, regular meetings, transparency. Templates are in use and specific required documentation is requested from applicants for funding.
1.5 Have recommendations from previous QA reports (incl. spot checks) been disseminated, where appropriate, within the local authority and to agencies?	2	Project Brief now a requirement for all capital projects. Internal Audit completes follow-ups on implementation of recommendations.
1.6 Have recommendations from previous QA reports been acted upon?	2	As Above.

<p>1.7 Has an annual Public Spending Code QA report been certified by the local authority's Chief Executive, submitted to NOAC and published on the authority's website?</p>	3	Yes. Compliant in years 2015-2019.
<p>1.8 Was the required sample of projects/programmes subjected to in-depth checking as per step 4 of the QAP?</p>	3	Yes.
<p>1.9 Is there a process in place to plan for ex post evaluations/Post Project Reviews?</p> <p>Ex-post evaluation is conducted after a certain period has passed since the completion of a target project with emphasis on the effectiveness and sustainability of the project.</p>	3	All revenue expenditure is subject to ongoing review. Issues are highlighted, reviewed and addressed at team meetings. A process is being put in place for evaluations / post-project reviews.
<p>1.10 How many formal Post Project Review evaluations have been completed in the year under review? Have they been issued promptly to the relevant stakeholders / published in a timely manner?</p>	3	Internal Audit as part of the In-depth check process examined a recently ended project. IA can confirm that the project in question developed a PPR which was sent to the sponsoring agency in a timely manner.
<p>1.11 Is there a process to follow up on the recommendations of previous evaluations/Post project reviews?</p>	3	Lessons learned noted and implemented across all departments.
<p>1.12 How have the recommendations of previous evaluations / post project reviews informed resource allocation decisions?</p>	3	Projects managed more efficiently as a result of reviews. Decisions were made on increases in match funding. Staffing resources examined for future projects.

Checklist 2 – To be completed in respect of capital projects/programmes & capital grant schemes that were under consideration in the past year

Special Projects Banagher RRDF

	Capital Expenditure being Considered – Appraisal and Approval	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
Q 2.1	Was a Strategic Assessment Report (SAR) completed for all capital projects and programmes over €10m?	N/A	
Q 2.2	Were performance indicators specified for each project/programme which will allow for a robust evaluation at a later date? Have steps been put in place to gather performance indicator data?	N/A	
Q 2.3	Was a Preliminary and Final Business Case, including appropriate financial and economic appraisal, completed for all capital projects and programmes?	n/a	
Q 2.4	Were the proposal objectives SMART and aligned with Government policy including National Planning Framework, Climate Mitigation Plan etc?	3	
Q 2.5	Was an appropriate appraisal method and parameters used in respect of capital projects or capital programmes/grant schemes?	n/a	
Q 2.6	Was a financial appraisal carried out on all proposals and was there appropriate consideration of affordability?	n/a	
Q 2.7	Was the appraisal process commenced at an early enough stage to inform decision making?	n/a	
Q 2.8	Were sufficient options analysed in the business case for each capital proposal?	n/a	
Q 2.9	Was the evidence base for the estimated cost set out in each business case? Was an appropriate methodology used to estimate the cost? Were appropriate budget contingencies put in place?	n/a	
Q 2.10	Was risk considered and a risk mitigation strategy commenced? Was appropriate consideration given to governance and deliverability?	n/a	

Q 2.11	Were the Strategic Assessment Report, Preliminary and Final Business Case submitted to DPER for technical review for projects estimated to cost over €100m?	n/a	
Q 2.12	Was a detailed project brief including design brief and procurement strategy prepared for all investment projects?	3	Currently in progress
Q 2.13	Were procurement rules (both National and EU) complied with?	3	Will be
Q 2.14	Was the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF) properly implemented?	n/a	Services only
Q 2.15	Were State Aid rules checked for all support?	3	
Q 2.16	Was approval sought from the Approving Authority at all decision gates?	3	Haven't reached a decision gate as yet
Q 2.17	Was Value for Money assessed and confirmed at each decision gate by Sponsoring Agency and Approving Authority?	n/a	
Q 2.18	Was approval sought from Government through a Memorandum for Government at the appropriate decision gates for projects estimated to cost over €100m?	n/a	

Checklist 3 – To be completed in respect of new current expenditure under consideration in the past year. No applicable project or program for 2020

Current Expenditure Being Considered – Appraisal and Approval	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
3.1 Were objectives clearly set out?	N/A	
3.2 Are objectives measurable in quantitative terms?	N/A	
3.3 Was a business case, incorporating financial and economic appraisal, prepared for new current expenditure?	N/A	
3.4 Was an appropriate appraisal method used?	N/A	
3.5 Was an economic appraisal completed for all projects exceeding €20m or an annual spend of €5m over 4 years?	N/A	
3.6 Did the business case include a section on piloting?	N/A	
3.7 Were pilots undertaken for new current spending proposals involving total expenditure of at least €20m over the proposed duration of the programme and a minimum annual expenditure of €5m?	N/A	
3.8 Have the methodology and data collection requirements for the pilot been agreed at the outset of the scheme?	N/A	
3.9 Was the pilot formally evaluated and submitted for approval to the relevant Department?	N/A	
3.10 Has an assessment of likely demand for the new scheme/scheme extension been estimated based on empirical evidence?	N/A	
3.11 Was the required approval granted?	N/A	
3.12 Has a sunset clause (as defined in section B06, 4.2 of the Public Spending Code) been set?	N/A	
3.13 If outsourcing was involved were procurement rules complied with?	N/A	
3.14 Were performance indicators specified for each new current expenditure proposal or expansion of existing current expenditure programme which will allow for a robust evaluation at a later date?	N/A	

3.15 Have steps been put in place to gather performance indicator data?	N/A	
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Checklist 4 – To be completed in respect of capital projects/programmes & capital grants schemes incurring expenditure in the year under review Edenderry RRDF

	Incurring Capital Expenditure	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
Q 4.1	Was a contract signed and was it in line with the Approval given at each Decision Gate?	3	Decision Gates approval given
Q 4.2	Did management boards/steering committees meet regularly as agreed?	3	Still ongoing
Q 4.3	Were programme co-ordinators appointed to co-ordinate implementation?	2	Existing staff resources
Q 4.4	Were project managers, responsible for delivery, appointed and were the project managers at a suitably senior level for the scale of the project?	2	As above SSE supervising construction and AO liaison with DRCD
Q 4.5	Were monitoring reports prepared regularly, showing implementation against plan, budget, timescales and quality?	3	Still ongoing
Q 4.6	Did projects/programmes/grant schemes keep within their financial budget and time schedule?	3	Budget on track Time delays due to Covid construction restrictions
Q 4.7	Did budgets have to be adjusted?	n/a	still ongoing
Q 4.8	Were decisions on changes to budgets / time schedules made promptly?	n/a	
Q 4.9	Did circumstances ever warrant questioning the viability of the project/programme/grant scheme and the business case (exceeding budget, lack of progress, changes in the environment, new evidence, etc.)?	n/a	
Q 4.10	If circumstances did warrant questioning the viability of a project/programme/grant scheme was the project subjected to adequate examination?	n/a	

Q 4.11	If costs increased or there were other significant changes to the project was approval received from the Approving Authority?	n/a	
Q 4.12	Were any projects/programmes/grant schemes terminated because of deviations from the plan, the budget or because circumstances in the environment changed the need for the investment?	n/a	

Checklist 5 – To be completed in respect of current expenditure programmes incurring expenditure in the year under review

Rates administration and write offs

	Incurring Current Expenditure – H03 Rates administration and write offs	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 -3	Comment/Action Required
Q 5.1	Are there clear objectives for all areas of current expenditure?	3	Amounts approved in annual budget
Q 5.2	Are outputs well defined?	3	
Q 5.3	Are outputs quantified on a regular basis?	3	Annually
Q 5.4	Is there a method for monitoring efficiency on an ongoing basis?	2	% spend depends on vacancy/bad debts – efficiency difficult
Q 5.5	Are outcomes well defined?	3	
Q 5.6	Are outcomes quantified on a regular basis?	3	Annually
Q 5.7	Are unit costings compiled for performance monitoring?	N/A	Not applicable
Q 5.8	Are other data compiled to monitor performance?	3	Yes – decisions on write offs informed by other data
Q 5.9	Is there a method for monitoring effectiveness on an ongoing basis?	1	Write offs subject to review – effectiveness not relevant.
Q 5.10	Has the organisation engaged in any other 'evaluation proofing' of programmes/projects?	1	No -write offs part of a statutory process

Checklist 6 – To be completed in respect of capital projects/programmes & capital grant schemes discontinued and/or evaluated during the year under review

Sliabh Bloom Cycle Trails

	Capital Expenditure Recently Completed	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
Q 6.1	How many Project Completion Reports were completed in the year under review?	2	The project concluded in 2019 with two progress reports submitted in 2019.
Q 6.2	Were lessons learned from Project Completion Reports incorporated into sectoral guidance and disseminated within the Sponsoring Agency and the Approving Authority?	3	All progress reports submitted over the lifetime of the project were reviewed by DRCD during audit of project.
Q 6.3	How many Project Completion Reports were published in the year under review?	2	2 reports submitted to ORIS section of DRCD (2019)
Q 6.4	How many Ex-Post Evaluations were completed in the year under review?		Local Government Auditor reviewed project in 2019. DRCD commenced audit in 2020 and concluded in 2021.
Q 6.5	How many Ex-Post Evaluations were published in the year under review?	1	Audit report issued by DRCD in 2021.
Q 6.6	Were lessons learned from Ex-Post Evaluation reports incorporated into sectoral guidance and disseminated within the Sponsoring Agency and the Approving Authority?	3	All observations made by DRCD Audit have been considered and management of additional phases of the project reflect lessons learned in Phase 1 of the SB MTB
Q 6.7	Were Project Completion Reports and Ex-Post Evaluations carried out by staffing resources independent of project implementation?	3	Yes - LG Auditor and DRCD Auditor

Q 6.8	Were Project Completion Reports and Ex-Post Evaluation Reports for projects over €50m sent to DPER for dissemination?		N/A
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Checklist 7 – To be completed in respect of current expenditure programmes that reached the end of their planned timeframe during the year or were discontinued N/A

	Current Expenditure that (i) reached the end of its planned timeframe or (ii) was discontinued	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
Q 7.1	Were reviews carried out of current expenditure programmes that matured during the year or were discontinued?	N/A	
Q 7.2	Did those reviews reach conclusions on whether the programmes were efficient?	N/A	
Q 7.3	Did those reviews reach conclusions on whether the programmes were effective?	N/A	
Q 7.4	Have the conclusions reached been taken into account in related areas of expenditure?	N/A	
Q 7.5	Were any programmes discontinued following a review of a current expenditure programme?	N/A	
Q 7.6	Were reviews carried out by staffing resources independent of project implementation?	N/A	
Q 7.7	Were changes made to the organisation's practices in light of lessons learned from reviews?	N/A	

Notes:

The scoring mechanism for the above checklists is as follows:

Scope for significant improvements = a score of 1

Compliant but with some improvement necessary = a score of 2

- o Broadly compliant = a score of 3

For some questions, the scoring mechanism is not always strictly relevant. In these cases, N/A is marked and appropriate comments are provided.

**Appendix 3: Summary Report Arising from In-depth Check of Two
Projects**

Public Spending Code

**Quality Assurance 2020: Step 4 In-depth Check,
completed by Internal Audit,
Offaly County Council.**



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

May 2021

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Introduction and Summary of Findings

Step 4 of the Public Spending Code QA process requires all Local Authorities to 'Carry out a more in-depth checks on a small number of selected projects/programmes'.

The Guidance Document issued for the Local Government sector sets out the criteria for in-depth checks as follows:

- Revenue Projects: Projects selected must represent a minimum of 1% of the total value of all revenue projects on the project inventory.
- Capital Projects: Projects selected must represent a minimum of 5% of the total value of all capital projects on the project inventory.

This minimum is an average over a three-year period.

Internal Audit was appointed by the Chief Executive of Offaly County Council to complete step 4.

The purpose of the review was to provide an independent professional opinion on compliance with the Public Spending Code and, more specifically, the quality of the appraisal, planning, and implementation of work done within each programme. The projects were examined in order to assess if the practices implemented are of a high standard.

The following projects were selected by the Internal Audit Unit for In-depth Review:

Project Name	Project Category (2020)	Project Budget / Expenditure
Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement	Current Expenditure – Being Incurred	€930,654
Blundell Wood Social Housing Scheme	Capital Expenditure – Recently Ended	€7,972,461

The total value of Offaly County Council's Inventory listing for 2020 was €202,797,433 (includes Current (Revenue) and Capital Expenditure). Therefore,

the above two projects represent a sample of approximately 4.39% of the total inventory.

The audit related to the stage at which these projects were identified as being at during the year 2020.

Summary of Findings

Given the outcome of the reviews summarised individually below, it is our opinion that there is, overall, 'Satisfactory Assurance' (see Appendix 1) that there is compliance with the Public Spending Code within Offaly County Council.

Project 1: Current (Revenue) Expenditure Programme €930,654

A Review at the 'Implementation Stage' of the Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement expenditure programme took place as part of this in – depth check. This programme was categorised as 'Current Expenditure Being Incurred' in the 2020 Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Inventory listing. Based on review of documentation/data this programme provides 'Satisfactory Assurance' that there is compliance with the Public Spending Code.

At the 'Implementation Stage' of the current expenditure the following is required:

- Assigned responsibility for delivery
- An appropriate structure to monitor and manage the implementation phase
- Regular meetings
- A means of measuring if the project/programme is delivering on its expectations.

Offaly County Council's Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement Programme has a management structure in place for the programme delivery and co-ordination. The Director of Services for Environment has overall responsibility for the programme. The A/Senior Executive Engineer has responsibility for management and oversight of the programme, including Technical and Clerical staff management. Data base systems are utilised for monitoring Income and Expenditures and recoupments from available Grants. To enhance compliance and for future evaluation, some recommendations have been made in relation to income collection processes, improving the means for measuring programme delivery, performance indicators and

reporting on the programme performance and outcomes. The Environment Department have noted the recommendations and confirmed these will be implemented. Internal Audit will complete a follow-up on recommendations at a later date.

Project 2: Capital Expenditure Programme €7,972,461

The following section presents a summary of the findings of this In-Depth Check on the Blundell Wood Edenderry Social Housing Scheme

Summary of In-Depth Check

The Housing Development at Blundell Wood Edenderry was found to be compliant with the Public Spending Code at all stages of the Project Life Cycle. An initial economic assessment and preliminary business case was carried out and approved as part of the DECLG's, CWMF Stage 1 approval process. The final business case including design procurement strategy and tendering Implementation plans was approved as part of the final Stage four approval through the same CWMF process. The project under went continual review throughout its implementation and all decisions taken at key junctures (decisions gates) were documented and approved at the appropriate levels. The projects Ex-post evaluation provides key performance learnings and detailed steps that will be taken on for future projects to ensure cost over runs are prevented.

Internal Audit has as part of this in-depth check examined; the initial appraisal report, and further correspondence and claims to the DHPLG detailing project approval stages, tendering processes and project costs and payments, Chief Executive's Report on the Part 8 process, all recorded project expenditure and the procurement processes for consultants and the main project contractors. All data and documents relevant to the project are readily available and would assist any future review of the project. In my opinion, based on this in-depth review, Offaly County Councils delivery of the Blundell Wood Housing scheme is in compliance with the Public Spending Code at post project delivery stage. However, Internal Audit have recommended some improvements that will assist in ensuring compliance with Procurement requirements and the Public Spending Code.

Appendix 4: In-depth Check Reports

Public Spending Code Quality Assurance – In Depth Check

Section A: Introduction

Programme or Project Information	
Name	Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement 2020
Detail	Revenue Programme regarding the annual administration of Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement
Responsible Body	Offaly County Council
Current Status	Expenditure Being Incurred
Start Date	January 2020
End Date	December 2020
Overall Cost	€930,654

Project Description

Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement

Offaly County Council is responsible for the administration, monitoring and enforcement of waste regulations. Regulations come from the Waste Management Act 1996, as amended. Under this act there are facility permit regulations which were brought into effect in 2008 (these are the issuing of waste facility permits (WFP's) or certificates of registration (COR's) for scheduled activities). In 2020 there were 21 WFP's/COR's. The local authorities issue waste facility permits and certificates of registration and enforces the regulations. When it comes to waste LAs have 2 strands 1) unauthorized and 2) authorized. Unauthorized would be for example illegal disposal of waste (dumping) and authorized would be facility permits or certificates of registration. In 2020 there were 3 recycling centres (Derryclure, Birr, Edenderry) and 1 closed landfill (Derryclure).

Offaly County Council has several Litter Wardens whose responsibility it is to enforce the Litter Pollution Act 1997, and the Waste Management Act 1996, as amended. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure that Offaly is litter free and remains a clean environment in which to live. Under Section 10 of the Litter Pollution Act 1997, Local Authorities are required to adopt Litter Management Plans for their areas. The legislation prescribes the specific minimum components of a Litter Management Plan, requiring information on litter prevention and control activities and the setting of appropriate objectives and targets for a 3 year period. The current Litter Management Plan 2016-2018 was extended for a further three-year period to December 2021 by reserved function as per the Council meeting dated 15th April 2019.

In relation to the procedure for fines –

- A litter fine is issued to a person who has or is suspected of committing a litter offence. The amount is €150 as set out in the legislation, the Litter Pollution Act, 1997 as amended. Local Authorities have the option of not issuing a fine and instead taking a person straight to court as a direct prosecution and this is normally done if a person is a repeat offender or if the amount of waste dumped was significant. If a judge orders the person to pay a fine/costs, that income is received by the Council.
- All fines are recorded in a fine book (triplicate fine book) which each litter warden has in their possession and each fine has its own unique fine number. Full details of the offence are also captured in the fine book
- The person has 21 days to pay the fine.

It should be noted that under the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations, 2007 and Waste Management (Collection Permit) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, those intending to carry out waste collection activities in a Local Authority area must apply for a waste collection permit. This requirement applies to individuals, companies and partnerships. On the 1st of February 2012, Offaly County Council was designated as the Nominated Authority for the processing of all new Waste Collection Permit applications and review applications received on or after that date, on behalf of all Local Authorities in Ireland. This single Nominated Authority is known as the National Waste Collection Permit Office (NWCPO). The NWCPO are certified by the NSAI in accordance with ISO 9001 since 2014, and sits as a standalone office with no interaction between it and the Environment Section of Offaly County Council.

The NWCPO administers the Waste Collection Permitting System on behalf of all Local Authorities. In addition, The NWCPO maintains the Waste Facility Register and the Annual Returns system on behalf of all Local Authorities

- There are currently over 2000 active Waste Collection Permits on the NWCPO register.
- Approximately 300 waste collection permit applications are processed annually.

Offaly County Council's expenditure for administering the service; Waste Regulations, Monitoring and Enforcement in 2020 was €930,654. An increase of €177,383 in expenditure for the programme in 2019. These costs included a settlement for a legal case, costs for dumping from litter clean up and wages and salaries. In 2020 Offaly County Council recouped €200,927 from the Local Authority Waste Enforcement Grant Scheme 2020. The grant is to go towards wages and salaries. Litter Income of €10k was also reviewed for completeness but this income is not reflected in the above figures.

Section B - Step 1: Logic Model Mapping

As part of this In-Depth Check, Internal Audit have completed a Programme Logic Model (PLM) for Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement. A PLM is a standard evaluation tool and further information on their nature is available in the [Public Spending Code](#).

Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the requirements of the Regional Waste Management Plan and Waste Management Act Protect, enhance and develop our county's built and natural resources Prevent water, waste, air and noise pollution through public awareness and education, monitoring and enforcement having regard to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget Allocation of €739,735 in 2020 Staff resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out enforcement inspections and monitoring as required under Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections RMCEI Plan 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste Complaints Litter Complaints Illegal dumping Consult with EMWERLA and key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective and efficient waste management throughout Offaly Annual Report on Annual RMCEI Plan Implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a Waste Management infrastructure in accordance with National and Regional Waste Management Policy. Completion of inspections outlined in RMCEI Plan A cleaner environment, allowing for an improved quality of life and living

<p>environmental legislation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the policies of the Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan 2015 - 2021 through waste management and enforcement and the management and development of the waste acceptance facility at Derryclare and three Civic Amenity Facilities in Birr, Derryclare and Edenderry. Offaly County Council will continue its role as the 		<p>standards for the people of Offaly</p>	<p>standards for the people of Offaly</p>
<p>stakeholders in implementation and monitoring of the Regional Waste Management Plan to include National and Local Waste Enforcement Priorities for 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate environmental complaints received for Noise and Odour issues Management of budget/expenditure. 			

<p>National Waste Collection Permit Office in 2020 in the administration of Waste Collection Permits and management of the Waste Collection Permits & Waste Facility Permits Annual Return process.</p>				
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Description of Programme Logic Model

Objectives: The objectives of the Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement is to implement the requirements of the Regional Waste Management Plan and Waste Management Act. In doing this OCC aim to protect, enhance and develop the county's built and natural resources, prevent water, waste, air and noise pollution through public awareness and education, monitoring and enforcement and also via development of the waste acceptance facility at Derryclure and three Civic Amenity Facilities in Birr, Derryclure and Edenderry.

Inputs: The primary input to the programme was Offaly County Councils revenue expenditure budget of €739,735. This funding is utilised to partially pay staff salaries, support services and legal case settlement. Primarily the Waste Enforcement Grant is used to fund salaries and wages.

Activities: There were a number of key activities carried out throughout 2020 including:

- Carry out enforcement inspections and monitoring as required under RMCEI Plan2020. This included reviewing waste and litter complaints and illegal dumping
- Consultations with EMWERLA and key stakeholders in implementation and monitoring of the Regional Waste Management Plan to include National and Local Waste Enforcement Priorities for 2020
- Investigate environmental complaints received for Noise and Odour issues
- Management of budget/expenditure and processing of grant application

Outputs:

Having carried out the identified activities using the inputs, the outputs of the project include effective and efficient waste management throughout Offaly and the implementation of the annual RMCEI report.

Outcomes: The outcomes of the programme are the continued offering of a Waste Management infrastructure in accordance with National and Regional Waste Management Policy. The completion of inspections outlined in RMCEI Plan. On a whole the programme helps improve the environment.

Section B - Step 2: Summary Timeline of Project/Programme

The following section tracks the Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement programme from inception to conclusion in terms of major project/programme milestones.

The Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement is an annual revenue expenditure.



- 1996
 - The Waste Management Act 1996 represented the first step as it introduced new regulations and new powers to public services. Regional waste management plans were also started. Waste management in Ireland historically got little attention from central government and exchequer funding, as it was seen as a local authority function. The problems included little regulatory framework and no external regulation of local authority waste activities. Low-technology options were widely used and it was clear by the mid-1990's that Ireland's recycling rate was among the lowest in the EU. Ireland overused the landfill network, had no biological treatment capability and no means of recovering energy from waste

- 1998
 - The Government policy document - "Waste Management: Changing our Ways" - was the first look at the state of our waste management sector. Recycling and recovery targets were set out, to be achieved over a fifteen-year timeframe
 - National Spring Clean is an anti-litter initiative that was set up in 1998. Communities organise a clean-up of their local area during the month of April. Photography competitions are also run for the participants of the clean-up. Another initiative is Tidy Towns. A step-up from the original National Spring Clean Campaign which ran between 1953 and 1957, Tidy Towns rapidly developed its own identity and has gone on to become Ireland's most well-known and popular local environmental initiative.

- 2001
 - Waste Management Planning Framework**
 - The waste management planning framework was initiated. Twenty-nine local authorities were involved in six regional waste management plans. There was also an introduction to the problems of waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)

- 2002
 - Waste prevention and recycling came to the fore with a Government policy document entitled - "Preventing and Recycling Waste: Delivering Change". New Producer Responsibility rules were introduced



2003

- The Protection of the Environment Act 2003 introduced a number of important strategies to further enforce the provisions of the waste code.

2005

- Annual reports from the National Waste Prevention Programme (NWPP) kept the country informed on its need to prevent waste. An important feature of the reports was its focus on the extent of unauthorised waste activity in Ireland.

2008

- The management of hazardous waste was added to by the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2008-2012. The Environmental Protection Agency's WEEE enforcement also became more prominent.

Anti-Litter Awareness Initiatives: Local Authority Grant Scheme

- Each year local authorities receive a grant to fund anti-litter awareness initiatives. Each authority develops anti-litter campaigns to increase public awareness of litter pollution. Since 2008, local authorities have also been awarded a grant for anti-graffiti awareness activities. A particular focus is placed on developing voluntary initiatives working with the community, environmental groups and schools.

2011

- New measures were introduced in relation to waste policy, including the significant reduction of waste in landfills. This included the requirement for phased increases in the landfill levy over the following two years and the finalising of analysis on the introduction of services for segregated household food waste collection.

2018

- European Union legislation, the Circular Economy Action Plan and EU roadmaps remained the current platforms for implementing measures regarding waste management practices in Ireland

2020

- Publication of the A Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy: Ireland's National Waste Policy 2020-2025. However, the EPA's Ireland's Environment 2020 - An Assessment suggests that given that Ireland has reached a plateau in terms of waste management in recent years, delivering necessary waste prevention and circular economy ambitions will be a challenge in the coming years.

Section B - Step 3: Analysis of Key Documents

The following section reviews the key documentation relating to appraisal, analysis and evaluation for the Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement 2020.

Project/Programme Key Documents	
Title	Details
Waste Management Acts 1996 & amendment	Overarching legislation governing activities within the environment section and stakeholders in both public and private sector
Litter Pollution Act 1997 as amended	Offaly County Council have the responsibility to enforce the Litter Pollution Act 1997
Eastern and Midlands Waste Management Plan	This sets out targets and objectives for the management of waste within the region. The current plan will be implemented over the period 2015-2021.
Litter Management Plan 2016-2018 (Extended to December 2021)	This document sets out how OCC plan to deal with the prevention and management of litter in the county of Offaly.
Key Document 5: S.I. No. 250/2019 - Waste Management (Facility Permit And Registration) Regulations 2007 and amended	Outlines the requirements for the granting of waste facility permits and/or certificates of registration by the local authorities.

Key Document 1: Waste Management Acts 1996 & amendment

The Waste Management Act is the overarching legislation governing activities of the environment section and stakeholders in both public and private sector. It is an act to establish provisions to prevent, manage and control waste. Prior to Ireland's membership into the European Community in 1973, Waste Management was provided for in the following pieces of legislation

- Public Health (Ireland) Act, 1878
- The Public Acts Amendment Act, 1907
- Local Government (Sanitary Services) Acts 1978 - 1964
- Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts 1963 - 1993

These pieces of Legislation remained effective until the Waste Management Act, 1996, was imposed. The above Acts provided no guidance on waste management or the disposal of waste and also relevant definitions were not provided. As a result of this lack of guidance,

95% of municipal waste was land filled in some 300 relatively small and poorly operated dumps. The only recycling measures in place were a small number of glass and can “bring banks”, scattered throughout the country. It was the introduction of The Waste Management Act, 1996 that signalled the start of a new era in Waste Management. This Act overhauled the previous legislation.

Key Document 2: Litter Pollution Act 1997 as amended:

Offaly County Council has 3 full time Litter Wardens based in Environment & Water Services and 4-part time Litter Wardens (whose main duty is Traffic), who are based in the Municipal District areas. The 3 full time litter wardens work only on litter and/or waste enforcement. In addition, they also support and participate in community events, environmental projects such as the Green Schools, recycling projects and litter awareness initiatives.

Key Document 3: Eastern and Midlands Waste Management Plan

The Waste Management Plan for the Eastern-Midlands Region is the framework for the prevention and management of wastes in a safe and sustainable manner. The scope of the waste plan is broad and ultimately it needs to provide policy direction, setting out what we want to achieve and a roadmap of actions to get us there. The waste management plan is a statutory document prepared by the local authorities of the region and it covers the period from 2015 to 2021, after which time it will be revised or replaced.

Key Document 4: Litter Management Plan 2016-2018 (Extended to December 2021)

The obligation of a local authority to produce a Litter Management Plan is set out in Section 10 of the aforementioned Act. Each Local Authority are responsible for the prevention and control of litter and have the power to take enforcement action against people who break or ignore these laws. This Plan sets out 8 objectives to achieve this

- Education and Awareness
- Street Cleaning
- Events in County Offaly
- Develop a Policy on Advertising
- Enforcement
- Local Participation
- Develop partnerships with various voluntary, public and commercial bodies
- Encourage the use of recycling infrastructure

Key Document 5: S.I. No. 250/2019 - Waste Management (Facility Permit and Registration) Regulations 2007 as amended

These regulations outline the requirements for the granting of waste facility permits and/or certificates of registration by the local authorities. These regulations amend the Waste Management (Facility Permit and Registration) Regulations 2007 (No.821 of 2007) to increase the total maximum quantity of waste which may be recovered at a Class 5 activity facility as specified in Part 1 of the Third

Schedule from less than 100,000 tonnes to less than 200,000 tonnes on foot of a successful application for a waste facility permit.

Section B - Step 4: Data Audit

The following section details the data audit that was carried out for Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement. It evaluates whether appropriate data is available for the future evaluation of the project/programme.

Data Required	Use	Availability
Financial.	Expenditure Monitoring.	Available.
Offaly County Council's Environment Department Team Development Plan 2020	This plan includes priorities & actions for 2020	Available
Eastern and Midlands Waste Management Plan	The Waste Management Plan for the Eastern-Midlands Region is the framework for the prevention and management of wastes in a safe and sustainable manner.	Current regional plan available
Litter Management Plan 2016-2018 (Extended to December 2021)	The legislation which governs the management of litter is the Litter Pollution Act, 1997.	Available on website
DCCAE -Grant Payment Invoices	Match expenditure recorded on Agresso for grant subsidies with funding received from Department	Available
Internal procedures	Procedures for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Litter fines ➤ Issuing waste facility permits 	Partially available

Data Availability and Proposed Next Steps

Data requirements listed above as 'Financial' were available and can be extracted from 'Agresso' Financial Management System, the Council's budget book and Annual Financial Statement. This information can be used to monitor ongoing expenditure, reporting and to budget for future costs Waste Management.

Data on Waste Permits/Packaging Permits and the legal settlement was available to review on the shared drive. Back up pertaining to the Grant received from the Department was also readily available.

The Offaly County Council's Environment Department Team Development Plan 2020 was made available for Internal Audit to review. This plan includes priorities & actions for 2020 which included:

- Compliance with all EU Directives and National Legislation in Water Services and Environmental Management
- Implementation of the priorities identified in Offaly County Councils Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections (RMCEI) plan for 2020.

The Environment team have confirmed that the above actions and priorities were implemented.

Other key documents included the Eastern and Midlands Waste Management Plan and Offaly County Council Litter Management Plan 2016-2018 (Extended to December 2021). The Waste Management Plan for the Eastern-Midlands Region is the framework for the prevention and management of wastes in a safe and sustainable manner. The scope of the waste plan is broad and ultimately it needs to provide policy direction, setting out what we want to achieve and a roadmap of actions to get us there. The waste management plan is a statutory document prepared by the Regional Waste Management Offices. This waste plan covers the period from 2015 to 2021 and is required to be revised or replaced every six years. There is currently 1 national waste management plan being prepared for the entire Country, which will replace the 3 existing regional plans, once this has been finalised.

For the 'Implementation Stage' of current expenditure the following data is required:

- Performance Reports / Performance Indicators
- Minutes of meetings

During the review, data relating to reporting on the programme's performance and reports to management were not all found on file. The following are recommendations for improvements:

1. It is recommended that programme priority objectives & targets/performance indicators, measurements are included, monitored and reviewed as part of the Environment Services Team Development Plan' or a programme plan.
2. Performance Indicators:
 - Should be compiled on a quarterly basis e.g. no. of litter fines issued, no. of waste permits paid etc.
 - It was noted during the in-depth check that the Waste Permit fees for 2019 were not issued until late 2020 and that many of these Permits are still outstanding (this was partially due to COVID 19). It was also noted that the 2020 Waste Permits have not yet been issued. This process would be carried out by administrative staff. Internal

Audit were advised that currently administrative staff resources are limited in this area. It is recommended that a follow up process is created to allow for efficient and effective collection of all outstanding permits. It is also recommended that the 2020 Waste Permits are issued as soon as possible. This data should be used in performance reports.

- When Internal Audit were reviewing the Litter Fines that were issued in 2020 they identified that approx. 160 Litter fines were issued in 2020 but the Litter Fine income only equated to approx. €10k, a number of the fines are still being processed. This follow up process would be carried out by administrative staff. Internal Audit were advised that currently administrative staff resources are limited in this area. It is recommended a rigid follow up process is implemented which provides more detail on why Litter Fines have not been collected, extensions were given and why a fine may have been cancelled.
- It is recommended that the 'Litter fine collections and Waste Permit Collections be included regularly on Agenda of Meetings, e.g. Environment Dept., Management Meetings. Minutes of meeting should be maintained
- It is recommended that the new national waste management plan being prepared for the entire Country be made available on OCC website once it has been finalised and approved.

Section B - Step 5: Key Evaluation Questions

The following section looks at the key evaluation questions for Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement based on the findings from the previous sections of this report.

Does the delivery of the project/programme comply with the standards set out in the Public Spending Code? (Appraisal Stage, Implementation Stage and Post-Implementation Stage)

At the 'implementation stage' of the current expenditure the following is required:

- *Assigned responsibility for delivery*
- *An appropriate structure to monitor and manage the implementation phase*
- *Regular meetings*
- *A means of measuring if the project/programme is delivering on its expectations.*

The Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement was reviewed at 'Implementation Stage' Offaly County Council's Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement has a management structure in place for the programme delivery and co-ordination. The A/Senior Executive Engineer has responsibility for the management and oversight of the Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement.

The Environment team has access to data on 'Agresso' Financial System for review of income from Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement

Other performance indicators milestones may be developed as a means of gathering data to support performance indicator measurement. These performance indicators can then be issued as part of monitoring and management at 'Implementation Stage'.

Milestones including review of permit income or number of Litter Fines collected and closed off can be used by the manager to ensure that the programme is on schedule and within budget for the year in question.

No regular meetings on the 'Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement are documented.

Overall the programme at 'Implementation Stage' was found to comply with the Public Spending Code, however, there are some recommendations for improvements which are outlined above and below.

Is the necessary data and information available such that the project/programme can be subjected to a full evaluation at a later date?

Electronic records of data are available on the 'Agresso Financial Management' System.

Financial data is available in the Council's Budget 2020 and Annual Financial Statement 2020. Data from 'Agresso' can be used to record and monitor ongoing expenditure and recoupment Invoices can be extracted for review and checking.

Most relevant regulations, procedure manuals (partial), service delivery plan are available to review.

What improvements are recommended such that future processes and management are enhanced?

1. Monitoring & Reporting

As part of the Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement Department Team Development Plan additional: priority objectives, targets, performance indicators, measurement and review dates of Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement should be prepared annually. This will assist in analysis of operational performance and reporting.

It is recommended that for Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement, performance indicators be prepared & reported on a regular basis e.g. number of litter fines issued, yearly & half yearly progress on collection of waster permit income and litter fines.

It is recommended that a follow up process is created to allow for efficient and effective collection of all outstanding permits. It is also recommended that the 2020 Waste Permits are issued as soon as possible. This data should be used in performance reports.

It is recommended a rigid follow up process is implemented which provides more detail on the status of all outstanding litter fines.

It is recommended that the 'Litter fine collections and Waste Permit Collections be included regularly on Agenda of Meetings, e.g. Environment Dept., Management Meetings. Minutes of meeting should be maintained.

2. Documented Policies & Procedures for the management of the programme

The RMCEI document is in place. However, Internal Audit would recommend a more specific procedure manual be created outlining the process for the annual monitoring and reporting on Litter fines or Waste Permits within OCC.

Section: In-Depth Check Summary

The following section presents a summary of the findings of this In-Depth Check on the Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement.

Summary of In-Depth Check

A Review at the 'Implementation Stage' of the Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement expenditure programme took place as part of this in – depth check. This programme was categorised as 'Current Expenditure Being Incurred' in the 2020 Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Inventory listing.

Based on review of documentation/data this programme provides 'Satisfactory Assurance' that there is compliance with the Public Spending Code.

At the 'Implementation Stage' of the current expenditure the following is required:

- Assigned responsibility for delivery
- An appropriate structure to monitor and manage the implementation phase
- Regular meetings
- A means of measuring if the project/programme is delivering on its expectations.

Offaly County Council's Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement Programme has a management structure in place for the programme delivery and co-ordination. The Director of Services and the Senior Engineer for Environment have overall responsibility for the programme. The A/Senior Executive Engineer has responsibility for management and oversight of the programme, including Technical and Clerical staff management. Data base systems are utilised for monitoring Income and Expenditures and recoupmets from available Grants.

To enhance compliance and for future evaluation, some recommendations have been made in relation to income collection processes, improving the means for measuring programme delivery, performance indicators and reporting on the programme performance and outcomes. The Environment Department have noted the recommendations and confirmed these will be implemented. Internal Audit will complete a follow-up on recommendations at a later date.

Section: Reporting Summary

Report Prepared by: Mrs Edel Finn, Internal Auditor, Internal Audit Unit

19.05.2021: Final Report Issued to Mrs. Mary Hussey, Senior Engineer & Mr. Mark Maken-Finlay Administrative Officer, Environment and Water Services,

21.05.2021 Final Report Issued to Mr Tom Shanahan Director of Service Climate Action, Environment, Water, Transportation, National Waste Collection Permit Office, and the Municipal District of Tullamore

25.05.2021: PSC Quality Assurance Report 2020 (including in-depth Report) certified by the Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive.

25.05.2021: PSC Quality Assurance Report 2020 published on www.offaly.ie and submitted to NOAC.

Quality Assurance – In Depth Check

Section A: Introduction

Programme or Project Information	
Name	Blundell Wood Edenderry (Co Offaly) Social Housing Scheme
Detail	The construction of 33 Residential Housing Units and associated site works at Blundell Wood, Edenderry, Co Offaly.
Responsible Body	Offaly County Council
Current Status	Capital Expenditure Recently Ended
Start Date	2015
End Date	January 2020
Overall Cost	€7,972,461

Project Description

Local Authorities have the key central role in the identification of social housing need within their areas and developing and nurturing projects for new social housing construction to meet that need.

Offaly County Council as one of its many objectives, strives to implement national housing policy to ensure that every household that needs it has access to quality, affordable housing in an acceptable environment. Individual housing needs are met through a number of different schemes and initiatives. Offaly's target under 'Rebuilding Ireland' 2018-2021 for build, acquisition and leasing is 437.

The 2020 target for Offaly County Council under the Rebuilding Ireland programme for build has been rolled in with the 2021 target to give a combined total of 111 new build units.

In February 2015 the Department of Environment Community & Local Government (DECLG) contacted local Authorities requesting proposals for the delivery of new social housing units under the Department's Capital building programmes for the period 2015-2017.

In March 2015, OCC made an application to DECLG for funding to build 33 Social Housing of mixed type in Blundell Wood Edenderry. A preliminary application with capital appraisal and design including initial proposed project costings and analysis of demand and alternative options in the area, was submitted with the funding application with an estimation of €5.7M for project costs. There were 285 applicants on the housing list for the Edenderry area at the time of the initial application.

After an assessment of the priority construction proposals submitted by all local authorities was concluded by the Department a list of those projects given approval in principal was announced on the 7th of May 2015. Offaly County Council received approval to proceed to stage 2 of the Departments four stage Capital Works Management Framework. All publicly-funded construction works are required to follow the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF) as required by Department of Finance Circular 06/2010.

The housing units at Blundell Wood were granted Part 8 planning approval in October 2015.

The project sought to provide 33 social housing units at Blundell wood, Edenderry on a site in the ownership of Offaly County Council. Ancillary work included site surveys boundary walls and fencing, roadways, footpaths, site services, surface water attenuation, public lighting, cut and fill of ground and landscaping.

Offaly County Council provided full architecture and design services for the project and tendering process. The project was tendered on the E-Tenders platform and 14 tenders were received before the tender return deadline on 30th August 2017. Leamore Construction Ltd. submitted the most economically advantageous tender, with a tender sum of €5,747,177.77 excluding VAT.

The second most economically advantageous tender submitted was for the sum of €6,656,675.66 ex VAT. Considering the significant difference between these two tender sums, the quantity surveying consultants, Kane Crowe Kavanagh, reviewed Leamore Construction Ltd.'s tender, obtained all relevant post tender clarifications and recommended that Offaly County Council accept the tender. Offaly County Council accepted Leamore Construction Ltd.'s tender on 22nd December 2017 and the Contractor started working on site on 16th January 2018. The Date for Substantial Completion was 21st July 2019. As a result of OCC accepting Leamore Construction's tender, the final stage 4 approval amount sought from the Department was significantly lower than the previously approved stage 3 amount. Giving evidence to the fact that OCC sought Value for Money at all stages through the social housing approval process, for Blundell Wood works.

Due to the nature of the site, in particular its topography and ground conditions, a number of variations to the initial specification were required, resulting in compensation and delay events. In addition, Offaly County Council discovered during the tender process that there was Japanese Knotweed present on the site and on land owned by the Council outside the site boundaries. While the tenders submitted included the removal of the Japanese Knotweed within the site boundaries. It did not include the extent of the area outside the site that required treatment/removal, in order to mitigate future problems that would be caused by the spread of this invasive species into the site of completed housing.

Offaly County Council also revised the surface treatment to the front of the houses. This revision was costed and discussed with the Department QS and Architect prior to instruction to the Contractor. In total, 58 Change Orders were approved throughout the project and these were assessed and determined by the Employer's Representative. Kane Crowe Kavanagh completed negotiations with Leamore Construction Ltd., and both parties agreed on a final account sum to the value of €6,490,904.92 excluding VAT. Internal Audit is satisfied that despite the changes from the original contract costs approved, that the new contract value agreed was in order and would note that the final contract sum was still approx. €166,000 ex. VAT lower than the second most advantageous tenderer's tender. Therefore, proving the project as having provided Value for Money on preliminary completion, in spite of challenges presented by this site regarding layout, ground conditions and topography. While simultaneously dealing with project staffing challenges presented due to the Re-commencement of LA build activity – following a significant period of non-activity.

Section B - Step 1: Logic Model Mapping

As part of this In-Depth Check, Internal Audit have completed a Programme Logic Model (PLM) for the Blundell Wood Project. A PLM is a standard evaluation tool and further information on their nature is available in the [Public Spending Code](#).

Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To construct 33 houses, including site development works in order to assist in meeting the social housing and recreational needs of the Edenderry town centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offaly County Council land bank Funding / Capital Assistance of approx. €7.9m from DHPLG. Full design drawings and specification prepared by Offaly County Council as the Architect; Offaly County Council staff resources: architecture, engineering, technical, and administrative Archaeological surveys Tender competitions for Quantity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-construction land surveys including archeological for Blundell castle and geological for disused mines system in local area. Construction of 33 social housing units of mixed type, and associated site development works. Landscaping within the park creating an improved setting for Blundell Castle and diverting ESB lines Provision of landscaped screening area for existing residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 33 social housing units of mixed type Car Parking Increased Public Lighting & improved lighting for existing Multi Use Games Facilities New pedestrian path and provision of area for future cycle way Children's play area's ESB lines diverted overhead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 33 families and or individuals have been provided with social housing in the new development Assisted Offaly County Council in achieving Social Housing Targets 2015 - 2020 33 families and or individuals have been removed from Offaly County Council Housing List from the Edenderry area. Increased rental income for Offaly County Council

<p>Surveyors, Mechanical/Electrical Engineering and Civil Structural Engineering contractors and Architect Led Multi- Disciplinary Design Team Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved connections through upgrading of existing entrance points, new park and housing access road and lighting design for improved security around park. Two new pedestrian access points linking other housing areas and play areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved health for local residents availing of recreational facilities Reduction in anti-social behaviour around Blundell castle and park area Increased usage of the park and castle as public amenity area for town centre and visitors
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Description of Programme Logic Model

Objectives: The objective of the project was to construct 33 new houses on a site in the ownership of Offaly County Council. Ancillary works also include fencing, roadways, footpaths, site services, surface water attenuation, public lighting, percentage for art piece and landscaping. The provision of further housing for the Blundell area would act as a catalyst for further regeneration of the park and castle area and complement the objectives of the Blundell master plan which is a regeneration plan aiming to rejuvenate the back lands of the town centre for social, economic and recreational purposes.

Inputs: The primary inputs to the project include Offaly County Council land bank at Blundell wood, staff resources including technician, design, engineering, procurement and administration a proportion of costs for which was claimed from the overall project costs. Funding of € 7.9M from the Department of Environment Community & Local Government once the project had received approval through the 4 stages of the Capital Works Management Framework.


Activities: The activities included developing applications for approval through the Departments 4 stage Capital Works Management Framework. Staff also progressed the Part 8 Planning process for the development of the site. Architectural design of site and 33-unit layout for tender of construction contractor. Tendering for consultancy services to run the construction tendering process. The tender documentation for the project was prepared by the design team and collated and published on E-Tenders by Kane Crowe Kavanagh, Consulting Quantity Surveyors. Project management/overview of contractors assigned responsibility with construction process of 33 new houses, provision of car parking, erection of public lighting, foul and surface water drainage, mains water supply, utilities and creation of recreational space and amenities.

Outputs: The outputs included 33 houses, car parking for tenants, new public lighting, a recreational space, water and sewerage facilities and utilities, screened area to protect existing resident's privacy, enhancement of lighting for existing leisure facilities, provision of area for future new leisure facilities, new cycling and pedestrian routes through the park and new entrance road with enhanced linkages to town centre and other amenities such as the Grand Canal.

Outcomes: The obvious outcome was 33 applicants from the Offaly County Council housing waiting list were provided with appropriate social housing. The construction of 33 houses assisted OCC in achieving its Social Housing Targets 2015 -2020. The housing list for Offaly County Council has been reduced by 33 and the rental income has increased since the houses have been occupied. The entire park area has been enhanced with amenities planned for users and enthusiasts of all ages, enhancing the town center as a public amenity for locals and tourists.

Section B - Step 2: Summary Timeline of Project/Programme

The following section tracks the Blundell Wood from inception to conclusion in terms of major project/programme milestones



1980	Offaly County Council purchase land bank at Blundell Edenderry by private treaty.
2015	In February 2015 the Department of Housing Community & Local Government contacted Offaly County Council requesting proposals for the delivery of new social housing units under the Department's Capital building programmes for the period 2015-17.
2015	In March Offaly County Council conduct an initial project appraisal for the proposed construction of 33 units in Blundell Edenderry and submitted same to the Department.
2015	After an assessment of the priority construction proposals submitted by all local authorities was concluded by the Department, a list of those projects given approval in principal was announced on the 5 th of May 2015. Offaly County Council application for Blundell Wood received approval to proceed to the 2nd stage of the Departments Capital Works Management Framework
2015	Offaly County Council Advertise notice in June 2015 proposing to carry out development at Blundell Park, Edenderry. Under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regulations, of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended. Chief Executives Report on Part 8 submission approved at Council meeting in October 2015
2017	Stage 3 Approval through CWMF Received March 2017 - Department of Housing Planning and Local Government
2017	The Housing section advertised for the construction of 33 houses at Blundell, Edenderry on 29th June 2017, Etenders reference: 120297. This process was managed by KCK surveyors on behalf of OCC. This was an EU threshold tender and an open procedure was used. There were 14 responses to the advertisement.



2017

The contract was awarded to Leamore Construction Ltd

Stage 4 Approval subject to conditions Received 11th December 2017 - Department of Housing Planning and Local Government

2020

Project construction concluded in January 2020, final full project appraisal commenced in 2021 to allow for one year retention period

Section B - Step 3: Analysis of Key Documents

The following section reviews the key documentation relating to appraisal, analysis and evaluation for the Blundell Wood.

Project/Programme Key Documents	
Title	Details
Department of Environment Community and Local Government Capital Works Management Framework Initial Applications and approvals Stage 1	Provides details of initial project proposal and design submitted to Department of Environment Community and Local Government.
Part 8 - Chief Executive's Report	Report from Chief Executive to the members of OCC recommending that the project proceed, having considered the proper planning and development of the area and all submissions.
Stages 2- 4 Capital Works Management Framework Approval from DECLG	Stages 2- 4 Approval in Principal from DECLG for which final approval was granted in December 2017. With a costing of €7,128,331.05
KCK Construction costs consultancy tender report	Full tender report from consultancy firm appointed to manage tender process for construction through to recommendation.
Post project review	Comprehensive full project review carried out one year after project completion and submitted to the Department along with Certification of substantial completion and completed PR07A form.

Key Document 1: Original Business Case

In 2015 OCC made an application to the DECLG for approval to support the construction of 33 social housing units of mixed type in Blundell Wood Edenderry. The application included an initial project appraisal including a preliminary schedule of accommodation, statement of need outlining that there were 285 people of the waiting list for housing in Edenderry at the time. Justification for the proposed development including existing demand and comparisons against alternative options, site & location suitability, detail on cost, value for money and preliminary design and costings were included as part of the application. Stage 1 Approval in principal including stipulations from the Department to proceed to the next stage of the Capital Works Management Framework process was also on file.

Key Document 2:

Report from Chief Executive presented to the members of Offaly County Council in October 2015 in accordance with Part 8 Legislation, recommending that the project proceed. Having considered the proper planning and development of the area and responses to all submissions both for and against the proposal, from local community groups, individuals, businesses, agencies and other interested parties.

Key Document 3:

All further correspondence between Offaly County Council Project Manager and the Department throughout the CWMF process from 2015 - 2017 were available on file. This allowed Internal Audit to track the significant documentation and revised stage costings submitted to the Department, with updated clarifications on changes from stage 3 to Stage 4 costings. On 1st March 2017, Stage 3 Approval was received for funding in the amount of €7,989,659. As Offaly County Council deemed they had received a very competitive tender, significantly below the previously approved amount, the fees sought at Stage 4 relating to architectural services were adapted to significantly lower than those at Stage 3. This was due to two factors. Firstly, the administration costs that can be claimed in accordance with Circular: Housing 35/2015 were not claimed separately at that stage and were instead included in the architectural services fee. This amount was included separately. Secondly, the architectural services fee had been re-calculated based on the reduced tender figure in accordance with Department Circular.

Consultancy fees were higher than those sought at Stage 3, because the consultants had each sought an uplift in fees since Stage 3 approval was secured. Each consultant separately sought the uplift, at different times, but the general case put forward by each included: prolongation of the project; significant revisions required in order to reduce costs; significantly higher contract value than was envisaged; significant design costs associated with the particular site. The final tender report and recommendation issued by Quantity Surveying consultants, Kane Crowe Kavanagh, was also included with the application to further justify revised stage costings, due to lowest tender received.

Key Document 4: KCK Consultants Tender Competition Report

Report recommended the acceptance of lowest tender from Leamore Construction Ltd, amounting to €5,747,177.77 exclusive of VAT or €6,517,653 inclusive. The following observations arose from the examination of Leamore Constructions Ltd.'s submission:

- There were no arithmetical errors.
- The whole of the works were to be carried out and completed in the proposed contract programme as set-out in the Tender Schedule.
- The Pricing Document (Bills of Quantities) was not priced consistently, and the rates indicated are reasonable and competitive.

The following items were priced low or not priced in the Pricing Document:

- Preliminaries are extremely low at 2.8%.
- Electrical installations are low.
- Mechanical installations are low.
- Knotweed not priced.
- Tarmacadam rates are low.
- Removal of excavated material off site is low.
- General rates are extremely competitive and some are at cost.

Key Document 5: Post Project Review

A Compressive Post Project Review was conducted in March 2021. The review document provides a very clear and concise description of the project from concept through to delivery and examines if the objectives of the project were met. The document gives a clear picture of the Project Management structure and performance from initial design through to completion. Detailing how the project progressed through the stages of the Social Housing Approval Process at a slower than expected pace, with commencement of the contract not being achieved until December 2017 after initial approval being received in 2015. All key project decisions are outlined in clear description and details are provided for project over runs including exact figures of excess expenditure over contract amount initially agreed, in attached appendices. The review examines the project costs against the initial design and construction estimations and highlights where and why overruns occurred and also what lessons will be implemented into future projects to ensure similar cost over runs do not reoccur.

Section B - Step 4: Data Audit

The following section details the data audit that was carried out for the Blundell Wood Project It evaluates whether appropriate data is available for the future evaluation of the project/programme.

Data Required	Use	Availability
Agresso - MS4 Reports	Identification of all income and expenditure posted to the project	Yes available on Agresso - MS4 Financial Management System
All documentation relating to submissions to DOHPLG during 4 stage CWMF process	Assisted with overall evaluation of the projects compliance with Public Spending Code Guidelines	Available
All data relating to tender submissions and awarding of contracts	Assist with any future evaluation of the procurement elements of the project	Available on ETenders and tender reports including recommendation and scoring available on file.
Documentation/Validation of Key Decisions.	Governance. Record Keeping. Audit Trail.	Available Assessment of related correspondence with DECLG and four stage applications to same were available. Approval to proceed to each of the four stages including Departments stipulations and approved amendments were on file. Internal correspondence and correspondence with professional Services were on file.
HCAF Grant Recoupment application forms	Availability allows for tracking of project expenditure and expected cost divergences from May 2017 – November 2020	15 HCA4 Recoupment application forms with cover letter sent to DECLG available on file
Chief Executive Orders	Required to track project was approved at appropriate level and recording of awarding of key contracts	Available, all contracts, Chief executive Orders and back up memos and recommendations for contracting awarding on file

<p>Application by Local Authority to The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage for agreement of Final Account under the Social Housing Approval Process – Blundell Wood, Edenderry, Co. Offaly.</p>	<p>To assess final project costing, and details of exact over expenditure amounts</p>	<p>The Certificate of Substantial Completion for the project issued on 10th January 2020 with completed PR07A form issued to the Department, which details increased costs incurred on the budget amounting to €932,616.65 over contract amounts inclusive of VAT</p>
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Data Availability and Proposed Next Steps

All relevant project data was found to be on file, including documentation of approvals at key decision gates, changes to project design and costs, Managers orders, Planning permission records and project invoices and expenditures. Written approval from the DECLG for Stage 2 of the CWMF was not on file at the time of audit, it was subsequently located and provided to Internal Auditor on request.

Section B - Step 5: Key Evaluation Questions

The following section looks at the key evaluation questions for the **Blundell Wood** based on the findings from the previous sections of this report.

Does the delivery of the project/programme comply with the standards set out in the Public Spending Code? (Appraisal Stage, Implementation Stage and Post-Implementation Stage)

Internal Audit found that the project was in compliance with PSC standards through appraisal, implementation and post implementation stages, and the following were in place:

1. Detailed Project Brief including multi criteria analysis and Procurement Strategy submitted by Sponsoring Agency to DECLG and Approval in Principle' including OCC responses to required amendments for stages 1- 4 of Capital Works Management Framework.
2. The sources of funding have been clearly documented throughout the project appraisal stage, with any changes to project cost estimations and final expenditure also detailed and approved by project sponsors and project team.
3. The process through project implementation including copies of all correspondence with KCK Quantity Surveyors, Leamore Construction Ltd, DECLG, OCC planning department were all on file. All correspondence and decisions relevant to site construction stakeholders including ESB, Irish Water, archaeological consultants and on site contractors were available.

4. Further evaluation of the other 13 tender submissions evaluated by Kane Crowe Kavanagh through a Most Economical Advantageous Tender (MEAT) process were available on file. The assessment determined that Leamore Construction were the lowest tender and demonstrates that value for money was achieved at contract awarding stage.
5. Full post project review evaluation was available which compared project delivery against pre project business case objectives such as value for money and societal benefit. Evaluation also provides detailed analysis of cost over runs and expenditure amounts concerned, whilst also highlighting how lessons learned throughout the project delivery can be transferred to the planning of future similar projects.

The Blundell Wood scheme progressed under the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF) four stage process, the requirements of which ensured the project was in compliance with the Public Spending Code, at the 31st December 2020

Is the necessary data and information available such that the project/programme can be subjected to a full evaluation at a later date?

Internal Audit found that all necessary data and information was readily available in order to complete the in-depth check for the PSC process and for future evaluations. A percentage evaluation of all tender contracts awarded was conducted as part of this in depth check. Offaly County Council under took restricted procedure, tender competitions to create panels for establishment of multi operator framework agreements of four years' duration for some contract works. In order to achieve value for money and time and resource savings for future projects, it was not possible to examine these tender processes as part of this check. Internal Audit did examine the Councils details of the procurement processes undertaken in relation to each external consultant appointment as part of their submission to the CWMF STAGE 4 approval process. This submission outlined in detail the tender process undertaken for the appointment of the Quantity Surveyors, Mechanical/Electrical Engineering and Civil Structural Engineering contractors, and was approved by the Department at that stage.

What improvements are recommended such that future processes and management are enhanced?

Considering the significant additional costs incurred, the project did not deliver on its objective to produce the units within the approved budget or time frame. The final cost means the project is 12.39% over the initial contract sum. This Post Project Review and the P.R.07A form clearly outline how and why these costs were incurred, while also outlining measures Offaly County Council have taken to ensure cost increases like this do not occur on future projects.

While clear evidence is provided to show that the Council undertook all possible precautions and investigations during the design and tender awarding process to ensure there were no project over runs. It is recommended that greater weighting is considered on tender scoring criteria for future competitions, to previous project delivery experience of tenderers. Prudence in examination of project delivery costings should be demonstrated in future instances where contractors are seen to show a strong desire to secure a contract. Future project design processes should include in depth

consultation with Irish water technical staff to alleviate potential for hidden costs and delays. In house expertise should also be utilised at design stage to assess potential problems in eradication of invasive species.

Section: In-Depth Check Summary

The following section presents a summary of the findings of this In-Depth Check on the Blundell Wood, Edenderry Housing Scheme.

Summary of In-Depth Check

The Housing Development at Blundell Wood Edenderry was found to be compliant with the Public Spending Code at all stages of the Project Life Cycle. An initial economic assessment and preliminary business case was carried out and approved as part of the DECLG's, CWMF Stage 1 approval process. The final business case including design procurement strategy and tendering Implementation plans was approved as part of the final Stage four approval through the same CWMF process. The project under went continual review throughout its implementation and all decisions taken at key junctures (decisions gates) were documented and approved at the appropriate levels. The projects Ex-post evaluation provides key performance learnings and detailed steps that will be taken on for future projects to ensure cost over runs are prevented.

Internal Audit has as part of this in-depth check examined the initial appraisal report, and further correspondence and claims to the DHPLG detailing project approval stages, tendering processes and project costs and payments, the Chief Executive's Report on the Part 8 process, all recorded project expenditure and the procurement processes for consultants and the main project contractors.

All data and documents relevant to the project are readily available and would assist any future review of the project. In my opinion, based on this in-depth review, Offaly County Councils delivery of the Blundell Wood Housing scheme is in compliance with the Public Spending Code at post project delivery stage.

However, Internal Audit have recommended some improvements that will assist in ensuring compliance with Procurement requirements and the Public Spending Code as outlined above.

Section: Reporting Summary

Report Prepared by: Mr Colm Kelly, Staff Officer, Internal Audit Unit.

14.05.2021: Final Report Issued to Ms. Sharon Kennedy Director of Services Housing, Community, Culture, Emergency Services and Edenderry Municipal District, Mr John Cunningham Senior Executive Engineer Housing, Brian Keenaghan Assistant Engineer Housing, Ms Monica Cleary Administrative Officer Housing

25.05.2021: PSC Quality Assurance Report 2020 (including in-depth Report) certified by the Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive.

25.05.2021: PSC Quality Assurance Report 2020 published on www.offaly.ie and submitted to NOAC.

Appendix 5: Assurance Category

ASSURANCE CATEGORY	ASSURANCE CRITERIA	
SUBSTANTIAL	Evaluation opinion:	there is a robust system of risk management, control and governance which should ensure that objectives are fully achieved, and/or
	Testing opinion:	the controls are being consistently applied.
SATISFACTORY	Evaluation opinion:	there is some risk that objectives may not be fully achieved. Some improvements are required to enhance the adequacy and / or effectiveness of risk management, control and governance.
	Testing opinion	there is evidence that the level of non-compliance with some of the controls may put some of the system objectives at risk.
LIMITED	Evaluation opinion:	there is considerable risk that the system will fail to meet its objectives. Prompt action is required to improve the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, control and governance.
	Testing opinion:	the level of non-compliance puts the system objectives at risk.
UNACCEPTABLE	Evaluation opinion:	the system has failed or there is a real and substantial risk that the system will fail to meet its objectives. Urgent action is required to improve the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, control and governance.
	Testing opinion:	significant non-compliance with the basic controls leaves the system open to error or abuse.