

# ***OFFALY LOCAL AUTHORITIES***

## ***ANNUAL REPORT 2007***



*Our mission is to work with the people of  
Offaly to provide a quality Service*

*Offaly Local Authorities Annual Report 2007*

**JOINT ADDRESS BY THE CATHAOIRLEACH  
AND COUNTY MANAGER**



**Councillor Eamon Dooley  
Cathaoirleach**



**Pat Gallagher  
Bainisteor Chontae**

We are very pleased to present the Annual Report of Offaly Local Authorities for the year 2007. This report contains information about the services provided by the Council, its elected members, staff and departments.

We look forward to working with the elected members and staff of the Councils and the wider community in furthering the development of County Offaly at this time of both opportunity and challenge.

This was an eventful year for the Council as it seeks to deliver quality and cost effective services. The scale and diversity of the activities for the year reflect the ongoing development of Offaly as a vibrant and attractive county.

**Midlands Gateway**

Offaly's important location within the Midlands region coupled with Tullamore's designation as part of the ATM (Athlone, Tullamore, Mullingar) - Midlands Gateway means that the County has a pivotal role in the achievement of the development aspirations of the region. An application for funding was made to the Gateway Innovation Fund which would greatly assist Tullamore to develop its role in the Gateway and in County Offaly.

### **New National Costing Systems - Budget 2008**

In late June 2007, the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government implemented a new costing system for local authorities. Better Local Government highlighted the need for a costing system which could produce service costs for the local Government Sector and this was further supported by the Indecon Report on the Financing of Local Government. The new costing system aims to provide transparency in the cost of services, particularly, in the area where there is a requirement to charge for services provided. It is being introduced for the County Council budget for 2008 and the Town Council budgets for 2009.

### **Planning & Economic Development/Gateway**

Preparation of the Draft County Development Plan 2009-2015 is well advanced. It has been circulated to the elected members for their consideration. This plan is very important for the future development of the county particularly in the context of delivering a successful linked gateway in the Midlands region in conjunction with other key stakeholders, and using the opportunities presented by the Gateway to ensure balanced development across the county. This has been reflected in the Draft County Development Plan.

### **Capital Programme**

In June 2007 a full report was brought to the elected members highlighting the Capital Expenditure Development Programme for the next three years. The report also included details of development contributions collected during the previous year and indicated future demands on development contribution income resulting from the Capital Expenditure Development Programme.

A draft revised development Contribution Scheme was brought to the members in November 2007. It has now been issued for public consultation. It is essential that this county has sufficient development contributions to continue necessary capital works. These works are vital in the context of the Draft County Development Plan 2009-2015 and the Development of the Midland Gateway.

### **Housing Maintenance**

A review of our processes was initiated for managing housing maintenance. The review will take into consideration methodologies for tracking and dealing with housing maintenance requests and effective use of resources. In addition, the relative responsibility of Housing HQ and Areas is being reconsidered, as well as the option of dividing housing maintenance into two sub-programmes - (i) urgent/emergency and (ii) planned maintenance. The objective is to have consistent countywide approach to the service (including how we respond in the context of what is outlined to tenants in their handbook), and ensure, over time, that the planned maintenance programme reduces the need for urgent maintenance and pre-letting repairs.

We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to former Cathaoirleach Gerard Killally and to the elected members, management and staff - both indoor and outdoor, for their commitment, co-operation and support, in the delivery of the services of the Council during 2007.

**Eamon Dooley**  
Cathaoirleach

**Pat Gallagher**  
Bainisteoir Chontae

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## ROADS

**Goal:** To provide for the safe and efficient movement of persons and goods by road.

**Strategies:**

Implementing a programme for the improvement and maintenance of the County's road network, including public lighting and signage.

Incorporating sustainable development considerations into our road policies.

Implementing a fair and efficient Local Improvement Scheme.

Promoting Community Participation of roadworks schemes.

**Strategic Policy Committee Meetings.**

Four meetings of the Roads and Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee took place in 2007. A policy document on road signage at schools was presented and approved by the Strategic Policy Committee in May 2007. The Elected Members at the July monthly meeting of Offaly County Council approved this policy. During the year other issues discussed at the SPC meetings were: -

- Canal Bridges
- Public lighting
- Review of Traffic Calming Policy
- Unauthorised vehicles on public roads.

Offaly county council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of 2,064 km of roadway in the County. The road network is broken down as follows:-

|                    |             |
|--------------------|-------------|
| National Primary   | 19.76 km    |
| National Secondary | 120.91 km   |
| Regional           | 346.13 km   |
| Local              | 1,577.15 km |

In 2007 Offaly County Council received a total allocation of €35,145,271 in respect of National and Non-National roads in the County. Of this €1,486,647 was financed from Offaly County Council's own funds with the remainder coming from the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government and the National Roads Authority.

Non-National Roads Specific Improvement and Special Grants of €1,940,000 were provided by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government for the following works:-

- Banagher Link Road - Phase 2
- Rhode/Rochfortbridge
- Feasibility Study for Cloneygowan By-Pass
- Clara Relief Road - design
- Spollanstown Bridge, Tullamore
- Edenderry Inner Relief Road

Funding to the value of €21,983,000 was provided by the National Roads Authority (NRA) for National Secondary Major Schemes and Pavement and Minor Improvement Works for the following projects:-

- Tullamore By Pass
- Pavement Improvement on N52 from Birr to Riverstown
- Pavement Improvement at Kilcormac Village.
- Pavement Improvement at Mucklagh
- Pavement Improvement at Killeigh Village.
- Pavement Improvement at Clara Town.
- Pavement Improvement on N62 Birr to Roscrea.
- Pavement Improvement at Doon.
- Pavement Improvement at Cloghan.



National Primary and Secondary Safety Measures funded by the National Roads Authority (NRA) to the value of €680,000 were planned and installed at the following locations:-

- N52 Mucklagh Traffic Calming
- N52 Kilcormac Traffic Calming

- N62 Cloghan Traffic Calming
- N62 Route treatment Blackbull to Fountain Cross
- N7 Route treatment Dunkerrin to Tipperary Boundary
- N80 Scrub Cross Killeigh
- N80 Cox's Bridge
- N80 Curragh Road Junction Clara
- N62 Derrinlough to Galross
- N62 Killowney, Ferbane

Low Cost Accident Improvement Schemes funded by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to the value of €200,500 were designed and installed at the following locations:-

- Junctions improvements Ballycumber
- Cloneygowan Bridge
- Killina, Rahan
- Streamstown, Banagher
- Rhode Village
- Fahy, Rhode
- Derrygreenagh
- Cloneyquinn
- Garryhinch Cross
- Rath
- The Hill, Banagher
- Signage at level crossings.
- 

### **Local Improvement Schemes**

This scheme allows for the improvement of roads not in charge of Offaly County Council which provide access to at least two parcels of land owned or occupied by different persons engaged in agricultural activities or for harvesting purposes. The allocation from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in 2007 was €418,140. This allowed, with the assistance of the CLAR allocation, for 19 schemes off the 2007 priority list of 71 to be completed.

### **Community Involvement in Roadworks Scheme**

The Council is allowed to spend up to 7.5% of the total allocation for restoration maintenance/reconstruction roads on which there would be an input of resources from local communities. Local communities are

required to contribute a minimum of 25% either in money or in kind towards the project. The allocation of €286,000 (€71,500 per area) allowed Offaly County Council carry out a number of schemes in each area.

### **Health and Safety**

Health and Safety in relation to roadworks was an ongoing issue in 2007. In order for Offaly to comply fully with current Health and Safety legislation, significant additional costs in the region of 10% to 15% onto the cost of roadworks schemes were encountered.

### **Road Safety**

The inaugural meeting of the Road Traffic and Safety sub-committee was held in March 2007. The committee was set up under the auspices of the Joint Policing Committee.

The following specific road safety initiatives were undertaken in 2007.

Road safety art competition organised in conjunction with Tullamore/Edenderry Garda District. It involved twelve primary schools and over 80 children submitted entries.

Continuing to support Junior School Warden Scheme in five primary schools in the County.

Promoting a "Drive for Life Programme" in transition year students in secondary schools.

### **CLAR/DOEHLG - ROADS AND BRIDGES PROJECTS CO-FUND 2007**

An allocation of €39,346 was received under this scheme in May 2007 for works on Local Secondary and Local Tertiary roads and bridges in Clar areas. Four road schemes were completed as follows:-

- Mounterin Birr - 600 metres of local tertiary road
- Crogan, Edenderry - 640 metres of local tertiary road
- Clonmacnoise, Ferbane - 625 metres local secondary road
- Derryad, Ferbane - 630 metres local secondary road



|     |   |         |
|-----|---|---------|
|     | Offaly Local Authorities                            |         |
|     | SERVICE INDICATORS                                  |         |
| R.1 |   | 2007    |
|     | Local and regional surface dressed/annum (sq.m)     | 559,400 |
|     | % of local and regional roads surface dressed/annum | 5.519   |

## Water Services

### ***Goal:***

To provide water and wastewater services necessary for social, economic and local development purposes in conformity with quality standards.

### ***Strategies:***

- Continue to improve water services infrastructure to the highest water quality standards.
- Provision of water and sewerage infrastructure to cater for future development
- Operate and maintain existing public Water Supply and Sewerage schemes to a high standard, using modern and efficient work practices
- Implementation of Rural Water Programme through the administration of Group Scheme Grants and Subsidies and through the assistance of the Group Scheme Sector ; provision of Small Schemes; administration of the Individual Water Supply (Well Grant) Scheme.
- Provision of serviced land to support residential development.
- Implement programmes in relation to water conservation and wastewater collection and treatment.
- Implement best practice in design, planning and management of water and wastewater services.

### ***Water Quality:***

The quality of drinking water remains of paramount importance. Continuous monitoring of public water schemes and group water schemes was carried out in order to ensure that the high quality of the water in the county is maintained. Monitoring was carried out in accordance with the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulation, 2007 (S.I. 278 of 2007)).

Constant monitoring of public sewerage schemes was carried out in accordance with the requirements of Urban Wastewater Regulations and EPA requirements.

***Service Indicators:***

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b><i>E.2 Percentage of drinking water analysis results in compliance with statutory requirements with regard to</i></b></p> <p>Public Schemes<br/>Private Schemes (where appropriate)</p> | <p>(not available)<br/>(not available)</p> |
|---|--|

*(Overall rate of compliance: 99%)*

***2007 saw progress on the following major projects***

***Tullamore Sewerage Scheme***

Contract Documents for the upgrade of the Wastewater Treatment Plant to 30,000 PE were submitted to DEHLG for approval. Tendering process commenced and contractors were shortlisted.

An EIS for an additional upgrade to the Wastewater Treatment Plant of 15,000 P.E was submitted to an Bord Pleanala for approval.

***Tullamore Water Supply Improvements - Stage 5***

Design Review for the upgrade of Clonaslee water treatment plant submitted to DEHLG for approval.

***Rhode Sewerage Scheme***

Preparation of Contract Documents ongoing.

***Rhode Interim Sewerage Scheme***

Construction of scheme completed.

***Sludge Management Plan***

The construction of the Tullamore hub centre will be undertaken as part of Tullamore Sewerage Scheme.

***Water Conservation Project.***

Stage 2 of Water Conservation ongoing.

***Non-Domestic Water Metering Project***

Contract for meter installation ongoing.

***Birr Water Supply Scheme***

Preliminary Report submitted to D.E.H.L.G. for approval.

***Birr Water Supply Emergency Works***

Emergency works completed.

***Birr Sewerage Improvements Scheme***

Preliminary Report received and reviewed.

***Birr Sewerage Scheme (Pipelines)***

Contract completed

***Edenderry Sewerage Scheme***

Approval received for the Preliminary Report. Construction commenced on the Edenderry Sewerage and Water Supply Improvement Scheme - Advance Works commenced.

***Edenderry Sewerage Scheme - Design Build Operate***

Scheme commissioned.

***Edenderry Serviced Land Initiative (Surface Water Scheme)***

Scheme completed.

***Edenderry/Rhode Regional Water Supply Scheme***

EIS approval for upgrading of scheme received in December, 2006. Preliminary report submitted to DEHLG for approval.

## ***Offaly Group Towns & Villages Sewerage Scheme No. 1 - Feasibility Study***

(Ballycumber, Banagher, Belmont, Daingean, Kinnitty, Moneygall, Shannonbridge, Shinrone and Kilcormac)

Preliminary Report in preparation.

## ***Offaly Group Towns & Villages Water Supply Scheme - Feasibility Study***

(Rahan, Dunkerrin/Moneygall, Mountbolus, Geashill, Kinnitty, Coolderry, Clonbullogue, and Walsh Island)

Preliminary Report in preparation.

### ***2007 saw progress in the Group Scheme Sector as follows:***

A Block Grant allocation of €1,669,800 was received in 2007 under the Rural Water Programme.

The following Group Water Schemes were connected to public main:-  
Corndarragh/Ballydaly

The following new group water schemes were under construction in 2007:-

Endrim G.W.S.

Rath G.W.S. Stage 2&3

White Forge G.W.S.

Ballyclare G.W.S.

Kilcrow G.W.S

The following group water schemes were upgraded in 2007:-

Bracknagh G.W.S., Reservoir

Ballinagar G.W.S., Reservoir

Killeigh G.W.S., Pipeline up-grade

The following new or upgrade works which have advanced to design approval/tender stage for 2007:-

Boher GWS, disinfection plant upgrade underway.

Tubber GWS, upgrade source and pipelines. Contractor appointed.

Mount Lucas GWS, upgrade source and pipelines underway.

Bracknagh GWS, upgrade pipelines. No design submitted.

Ballyboy GWS, upgrade pipelines. Design approved.

Killeigh Cloneygowan GWS, develop new source. Design approved.

Ballycommon GWS, Stage 1. Design approved.

Rath GWS Stage 4, new pipelines. Contractor appointed.

Mile Tree GWS, new pipelines. Contractor appointed.

### ***Well Grants/Domestic Water Supply***

The Council assists households to provide a piped domestic water supply or to remedy deficiencies in an existing supply of water used for domestic purposes in houses, which are seven years old or over, up to a maximum of €2,031.58 or 75% of the cost of the works, whichever is the lesser. In 2007, 12 grants were paid out at a cost of €24,058.94.

## HOUSING DEPARTMENT

### *Role of Department*

The housing department plays a number of very important roles in terms of accommodation provision and enhancement for those unable to do so from their own resources. The department works to the specific objectives contained in our 5 year plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004 - 2008 which is reviewed annually and targets adjusted in line with changing trends and demands.

The main activities within the department are the direct provision of social and affordable housing, facilitation of the voluntary housing sector, promotion of home ownership through housing loans and grants to individuals including those with special needs, implementing the Rental Accommodation Scheme as an alternative to social housing, providing a range of Traveller accommodation options, tackling homelessness issues and the promotion of estate management in local authority housing estates.

### **Social Housing**

91 units of accommodation were made available for persons in need of housing in 2007 through a combination of our direct building programme, acquisition of Part V social units in private developments, the purchase of second hand units and the allocation of casual vacancies.



### **Affordable Housing**

27 Part V affordable units were acquired during 2007 in private housing developments in Clara and Edenderry. 6 affordable houses and 10 serviced sites were also completed by the council during the year in Phase 1 of a development at Gallen, Ferbane. An affordable show house in the development was also open to the public over a number of weekends. These units represented very good value for money and sold at €135,000 for the basic unit and €145,000 for the show house.

### **Tenant Purchase Scheme**

The Council's tenant purchase scheme offers local authority tenants an option to purchase their houses subject to certain criteria. Tenants of the local authority with certain exceptions can apply to purchase their house after one year's tenancy. Houses are purchased outright from the council at their market value with discount given for each year of tenancy subject to a maximum of 10 years. 21 houses were sold under this scheme during the year

### **Disabled Persons Grants**

The disabled persons grant is available to eligible applicants to carry out improvements to their house to facilitate the needs of a family member with a disability. The council spent over €1.5m in administering this scheme in 2007 and assisted 103 applicants.

### **Homelessness**

The Council along with our neighbouring midland counties work closely with the Midland Simon Communities and provide funding towards the cost of employing Outreach Workers/Settlement Officers who specifically work with clients referred from the local authorities who are experiencing homelessness issues and finding it difficult to source accommodation themselves.

### **Estate Management in Local Authority Estates**

A total sum of €5,400 was allocated to 11 Residents Associations under our grants scheme in 2007. Pre-tenancy training programmes were organised for all new tenants during the year.

The Housing Department in partnership with Tullamore Town Council, Tullamore Wider Options, Respond Housing Association and Offaly Outreach Education Project organised and funded a Fetac Level 5 Community Development and Leadership for Estate Management training programme during the year. 12 participants from all over the county completed the training.

Participants are pictured below receiving their certificates at a presentation ceremony in Clonamore on November 12<sup>th</sup> 2007. Some of the participants have since progressed onto third level degree programmes.





### **Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)**

Offaly is one of 8 local authorities that piloted this new government initiative which is aimed at ensuring security of tenure and better quality accommodation for long term rent recipients (i.e. generally those in receipt for 18 months or more). Over 60 tenants had signed up to the scheme in Offaly at the end of 2007.

### **Housing, Social & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee**

This committee met five times during 2007 and recommendations were made on a number of policies during the year including :-

- Play ground policy
- Establishment of a Film Commission for Offaly
- County Offaly Arts Plan
- Promoting best practice in Voluntary Housing
- Disabled Persons & Essential Repairs Grants Scheme
- Affordable Housing Points Scheme
- Customer Service
- Designated Local Authority Tourism Officer

### **Summary of Key Activities in 2007 under Corporate Plan Strategic Objectives**

***Providing civic leadership for Offaly and all its people, whatever their circumstances or backgrounds***

|  |   |
|--|---|
| No. Housing, Social & Cultural SPC meetings held | 5 |
| No. of policy recommendations made               | 8 |

***Maximising productive investment thereby facilitating the creation of good, sustainable jobs in the County***

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>No. of Local Authority direct built units completed in 2007</i> | 23 |
| <i>No. of Part V social units acquired</i>                         | 16 |
| <i>No. of casual vacancies</i>                                     | 22 |
| <i>No. of second hand acquisitions</i>                             | 30 |
| <i>No. of affordable houses acquired/completed</i>                 | 33 |
| <i>No. of housing/reconstruction loans paid out</i>                | 8  |
| <i>No. of tenant purchase transactions completed</i>               | 21 |
| <i>No. of mortgage allowance scheme approvals</i>                  | 5  |

***Making Offaly a pleasant, safe and enjoyable place to live and work***

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <i>No. of estate visits by CLO for estate management purposes</i>        | 54       |
| <i>No. of grants approved for local authority residents associations</i> | 11       |
| <i>Housing Maintenance Expenditure</i>                                   | €646,000 |

***Building social cohesion and inclusion within and across the County***

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <i>No. of homeless persons directly assisted by the local authority</i> |     |
| <i>No. of Traveller families accommodated</i>                           | 23  |
| <i>No. of pre-tenancy courses held</i>                                  | 21  |
| <i>No. of DPG's paid</i>  | 103 |
| <i>No. of ERG's paid</i>  | 28  |

***Developing and delivering quality services***

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <i>New customer initiatives</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Held special customer service review meetings with four area committees</li> </ul> |
|---------------------------------|---|

***Develop and promote effective internal and external communications strategies***

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b><i>New initiatives to enhance communications</i></b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Revamped housing element of councils website</li></ul> |
|---|--|

***Managing the Council to be a good and effective place in which to work***

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b><i>Staff Training</i></b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Manual Handling</li><li>• Safety Training</li><li>• HOME training</li><li>• Dignity at Work</li><li>• Literacy Awareness</li><li>• Probationary Training</li><li>• PMDS</li><li>• Team Building</li><li>• Supervisory &amp; Management Development</li><li>• Excellence through people</li></ul> |
|------------------------------|--|

**Expenditure associated with receptions and presentations to distinguished persons and in connection with the holding of special events relevant to the functions of the section**

None

**Details of Gifts accepted by Housing Department during the year**

None

# Offaly County Council

## ARTS SERVICE

The Arts Service of Offaly County Council aims to be a facilitator and catalyst for the development of a vibrant arts environment in the county.

The Arts Service works under

Offaly County Council's 'Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002-2012', to 'facilitate the creativity, imagination, talent and traditions of all people in Offaly and the modes through which they are expressed'

And Offaly County Arts Plan 2007 to 2011: "*to provide leadership in quality inclusive and innovative experiences of the arts for all and to demonstrate through best practice and partnership the benefits of increased access to and involvement in the arts for all our citizens.* "

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Our main achievements in 2007 can be summarised as:**

#### **€2m Grant aid for Tullamore Arts Centre**

An application was made to the Department of Arts Sports and Tourism under the ACCESS II capital programme and €2m grant aid was announced in April.

#### **Offaly Arts Plan Published**

Offaly County Council published its first Arts Plan in May which was launched by the Arts Council which was preceded by a joint meeting with the members of the Arts Council.

#### **Dance Company establishes in Birr**

In collaboration with Birr Theatre and Arts Centre we supported the establishment of the first professional artistic production company to locate in Offaly. Legitimate Bodies Dance Company aims to provide wide community access to dance as well as touring nationally and internationally with their own programme.

#### **Music in Churches Series**

We established a new **Music in Churches** series to promote high quality, classical, contemporary and world music in churches around the county.

Performances were by Juana Muzika (a Lithuanian Choir), the Bester Quartet (a Polish Jazz band) and 3epkano (Dublin classical ensemble) We also supported initiatives in 2007 that were actively pursuing the development of music in the county such as **Tullamore International Summer Organ Series**, **Tullamore Gramophone Society** and **Tullamore School of Rock**.

### **Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival**

In collaboration with Birr Theatre and Arts Centre we established Offaly's first Children's Arts festival in venues around Birr. The festival takes place in the autumn mid term break and was a resounding success with many workshops and productions sold out.

### **Arts in Health**

*Anam Beo* the partnership Arts in Health programme with the HSE had two notable achievements:

1. Age and Opportunity selected two images from the exhibition for their national Billboard campaign for Bealtaine 2007 (Tullamore and Dublin)
2. Irish Rail funded the reproduction of 12 images from the exhibition for a long term display in Tullamore Train Station.

### **Support to Artists Scheme**

25 artists received financial support under this scheme to assist them with materials purchase, exhibition costs or research time. Writer Geraldine O'Toole received the Tyrone Guthrie Bursary to spend two weeks at Annamacarrig and artists Peter McMorris and Louise O'Brien received first solo exhibitions in Aras an Chontae.

### **Drama Awards**

11 drama groups and musical societies received funding for productions or equipment. Lisa Byrne (Birr Stage Guild), Jim Lawlor (Eden Drama Soc) and Claire Lynch (Banagher Drama Group) received bursaries to attend the Drama League of Ireland Summer School.

### **Festival Support**

The Arts Office facilitated funding and advice to:

- The Shannonbridge Midsummer Music Festival
- Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival,
- The Phoenix Festival,
- Slievebloom Storytelling Festival

### **Bealtaine, Festival of Arts for Older People**

A county wide programme of events in May was coordinated and developed by the Arts Office including concerts by the Tullamore Gospel Choir, exhibitions, creative writing workshops, story telling and music.

### **Floating Theatre Company**

In 2007 we established a funding partnership with Waterways Ireland to increase the number of schools which could be visited by the floating theatre company.

**Scoil Mhuire B.N.S. Edenderry, Rhode N.S., Croghan N.S., Belmont, Highstreet N.S., Clonmacnoise N.S., and Banagher N.S**

360 students took part and approx 1000 people saw the performances.

### **Arts Act Grants**

59 community groups received funding under this scheme to organise and participate in arts events. Funding amounts ranged from €300- €800.

### **Midlands Collaborative Projects (the Arts Offices of Offaly Westmeath Laois and Longford)**

- Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine a 32 page magazine highlighting the diversity and quality of arts projects across the four counties and aims to create a greater cultural identity in the Midlands published as a free copy 3 times a year.
- A musician and residence project with 2 musicians working in the 9 residential care settings in the Midlands, developed in conjunction with the HSE and Music Network.
- Kindermusic continues to develop in 9 centres as a music education programme for toddlers and parents, in conjunction with the VEC.

### **Young Novelists**

Novelist Caroline Barry worked with a youth creative writing group (14 to 18 years) in Tullamore for a full year teaching them the skills of composition, character and plot development. The majority of the participants worked on writing novels and an anthology of novel excerpts called a **Murder of Crows** launched in December.

### **Film Commission**

The working group continued to investigate how to attract further film production into the county and how to encourage a greater interest in film development within the county. The group was chaired by Cllr. Marcella Corcoran Kennedy and is made up of the Arts Officer, local film

professionals and others who have an interest in film development. A report was submitted in December 07.

### **Support and information service to professional, amateur, voluntary and community groups and individuals**

The Arts Office is a resource for artists and arts organisations that require advice, direction and information on developing and promoting their arts practice. This element of the service is based on best practice principles in all forms of arts development and is intended to give rise to increased confidence in quality methods and professional approaches.

#### Service Indicators for the Arts Office 2007

#### Total Population 70604

##### Arts Act Grants

|  |                |
|--|----------------|
| <u>Number of Grants Paid</u>                     | <u>46</u>      |
| <u>Total Budget</u>                              | <u>€17,130</u> |
| <u>Total value of grants per 1000 population</u> | <u>€242.62</u> |

##### Other Grants ( Theatre, Festival, Awards Schemes etc)

|  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <u>Number of Grants Paid</u>                     | <u>50</u>        |
| <u>Total Budget</u>                              | <u>€152,282</u>  |
| <u>Total value of grants per 1000 population</u> | <u>€2,156.85</u> |

##### Programme Funding (Projects run by the Arts Service)

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <u>Total Budget</u>                    | <u>€97,932.65</u> |
| <u>Total value per 1000 population</u> | <u>€1,387.07</u>  |

##### Other Arts Service Expenditure by OCC

(Salaries, office admin, publications, equipment etc)

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <u>Total Budget</u>                    | <u>€111,513.74</u> |
| <u>Total value per 1000 population</u> | <u>€1,579.42</u>   |

##### Total Expenditure for the Arts in 2007 per 1000 population

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <u>Total Budget</u>                    | <u>€378,857.59</u> |
| <u>Total value per 1000 population</u> | <u>€5,364.9</u>    |

## County Library & Archives

### Access

Access to library services was enhanced with the extension of opening hours at Edenderry Library from 27 hours to 34.5 hours. This raised the number of opening hours per week at libraries countywide to 198.5 hours.

### Libraries On-Line

Provision of public internet access via broadband was completed at all branch libraries. Internet usage increased 7% on the 2006 figure. There was also an increase in usage of other computer applications. These facilities are widely used by the immigrant population. With a network of 55 public internet points countywide, the County Library Service is well positioned to support delivery of on-line services including e-government.

### Changing Libraries project

Back issues of newspapers are an important source for historical research. The Irish Times Digital Archive is a joint project between the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, The Irish Times and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna. The archive is an exact reproduction of every edition of the newspaper from 1859 to 2007. This facility was successfully rolled out in all branch libraries in the county in 2007.

### Schools Library Service

The Department of Education and Science contributed over €41,000 for the purchase of stock for primary schools. The County Library Service's Schools Department provides library services to the 67 primary schools in the county. Online accounts were introduced in 2007 and each school was visited by library staff to demonstrate and promote this facility, whereby schools can monitor their own library accounts. Books are carefully selected by staff of the Schools Department to meet the needs of the individual school. Many teachers also visit the Schools Library Department where they are facilitated in making their own selection and are advised on the range of resources available.





*Children from Scoil Bhríd enjoying a visit to Edenderry Library*

### **Culture and Outreach Programmes**

Staff of the County Library Service initiated, managed and participated in numerous cultural programmes. These events reached across all sectors of the community, with emphasis on outreach to young and old.

A comprehensive programme of author's visits was organised, with eight authors conducting 28 visits to over 900 children countywide. The visiting authors were Kate Thompson, Jon Berkeley, Tom McCaughren, Maeve Friel, Oisín McGann, Mary Arrigan, Ann Carroll and Aubrey Flegg. The programme proved very successful with teachers and pupils alike, and feedback included;

" the pupils found it [authors visit] very interesting, informative and educational,"

" they particularly liked excerpts from his books and the illustrations he drew."



*Internationally published author and illustrator Oisín McGann holds a captive audience from Mucklagh National School during his visit to Tullamore Library, 25<sup>th</sup> October 2007, as part of Offaly County Library's programme for Children's Book Festival celebrations*

Offaly County Library also participated in the annual Children's Book Festival programme. The promotion of the library service and of the Book Festival was aided by the purchase and distribution of specially designed promotional material. A countywide "Design a Bookmark" competition was held as part of the festival celebrations, and almost 1,000 entries were received. The winner in the 10 years and under category was Tara Flynn of Ferbane, and the winner in the 11 years and over category was Hilary Newcombe of Banagher. Each winner received €50 book tokens, and were presented with their prize at their local library.

### **Exhibitions held throughout our Branch Library Network**

- RTE photographic exhibition at Tullamore Library 14<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> September 2007.
- Community Art exhibitions took place at Birr, Edenderry, Ferbane and Kilcormac.

### **Gospel Book of Macregol of Birr**

The official handover of the facsimile of the Gospel Book of Macregol of Birr from Birr Historical Society to Offaly County Council took place on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007 at Birr Library.



*At the official handover of the facsimile of the Gospel Book of Macregol of Birr from Birr Historical Society to Offaly County Council: Reverend Irene Morrow, President of Birr Historical Society; Bridget Sullivan, Treasurer, Birr Historical Society; Councillor Tony McLoughlin, Birr Town Council and Offaly County Council; Teresa Ryan-Feehan, Production Coordinator, Birr Historical Society; Ruth McNally, Acting Director of Services, Offaly County Council.*

## Publications launched in 2007 in association with Offaly County Library

- *Tullamore Workhouse: the first decade, 1842-1852* by Michael Murphy and published by Offaly County Council was launched at Áras an Chontae in October 2007.
- *Edenderry County Offaly and the Downshire Estate 1790-1800* by Ciarán Reilly launched at Edenderry Library in August 2007.
- *An Island Road* by Dr Philip Brady launched at Edenderry Library in December 2007.

## Culture & Outreach Events

- The successful Birr Library Lecture series took place. Lectures were as follows:-
  - Paul Barber *Birr Past and Present*,
  - Sean Cooke *History of the Leinster Regiment* and launch of special collection of books and media relating to the Leinster Regiment,
  - Magaret Hogan *Local Manuscripts*.
- Bookclubs organised by library staff at Tullamore, Edenderry and Birr libraries
- A series of storytelling sessions for children took place throughout libraries as part of the Offaly Childminding initiative
- Storytelling in Polish took place at Birr Library
- Music recitals by Karin Leitner at Birr Library
- Talks by local historians Paddy Heaney and Paddy Lowry to Active Retirement Group at Birr
- Numerous events took place countywide as part of Bealtaine, the nationwide festival that celebrates creativity in older age, including free introduction to the internet at all libraries
- The County Library Service continues to support the annual Slieve Bloom Storytelling Festival
- Arts and crafts sessions at libraries



*Edenderry-a photographic memory exhibition by local historian Ciarán Reilly at Edenderry Library, August-September 2007*



*An enthusiastic young reader at Tullamore Library*

### **Annual Statistics 2007**

Membership - 10,846

Loans (books and media) - 200,937

PC and Internet hours - 22,995

Number of school visits to branch libraries - 223

Exhibitions - 31

Activities - 92

## SERVICE INDICATORS 2007

|   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| Library Services<br>L.1<br>Average number of opening hours per week for full-time libraries<br>Average number of opening hours per week for part-time libraries | 35<br>18                  |
| L.2<br>Number of registered library members of the local population   | 10,846                    |
| L.3<br>Number of items issued (countywide) for:<br>(a) Books<br>(b) Other items   | (a) 187,501<br>(b) 13,436 |
| L.4 Number of libraries that offer Internet access to the public  | 9                         |
| L.5 Number of Internet sessions provided  | 18,802                    |

### Community & Enterprise

#### Based on the Strategic Objectives of the Corporate Plan

#### *1. Providing civic leadership for Offaly and all its people, whatever their circumstances or backgrounds*

##### 1.1 Supporting Offaly County Development Board

In 2007 the County Development Board continued the implementation of its Action Plan 2006-2008. The CDB Steering Group and the full CDB met in March and October 2007. Community & Enterprise staff also provided induction sessions for new Board members.



C&E continued to support and facilitate the Interagency Sub Groups of the County Development Board to deliver the Priority Actions from its 3 year plan. The achievements of the Interagency Groups in 2007 are outlined under relevant headings below.

## **1.2 Comhairle na nÓg**

Comhairle na nÓg met at County level in October to decide on the themes for the Dáil na nÓg. Facilitated workshops were held to discuss the themes. The Comhairle met again in November in Áras An Chontae. The young people met their Local Elected Representatives and posed questions to them on issues that concern young people in a debate chaired by the Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council. Six delegates were elected to represent Offaly at the annual national Youth Parliament - Dáil na nÓg in February 2008.

Community & Enterprise was awarded €13,980 under the Enhanced Programme for Comhairle na nÓg to expand their activities in 2007 and 2008.

## **1.3 Supporting the Community Forum to participate in policy development**

Offaly Community Forum continued the implementation of the recommendations of the Community Forum Review 2006. The Community Forum Steering Group met on a monthly basis and representatives continued their roles on such bodies as the County Development Board, County Enterprise Board, Offaly LEADER+, the Heritage Forum, the Regional Drugs Task force and the Strategic Policy Committees of the County Council. The Forum also met regularly at electoral area level with the support of the Local Development Companies in the county and the Community & Enterprise Department.

The Community Forum launched its website  
[www.offalycommunityforum.com](http://www.offalycommunityforum.com)



## 2. Maximising productive investment thereby facilitating the creation of good, sustainable jobs in the County

The Tourism IAG met 5 times in 2007. In December they completed the production of an Interagency Brochure highlighting the collaborative work on Tourism which is taking place in the County. The Brochure will be distributed to all households in Offaly in early 2008.



C&E continued to facilitate the Enterprise Inter-agency subgroup of the County Development Board and continued its participation and contributory funding to the Life Long Learning sub-group of Offaly County Development Board for the Offaly Outreach Education Project.

3. Making Offaly a pleasant, safe and enjoyable place to live and work
- 4.

### Sport

In 2007 the Offaly Local Sports Partnership continued the roll-out of its programmes including Buntus. In July the Sports Partnership held an International Games Festival which was the culmination of activities to promote the integration of minority communities into sporting organisations. This project was funded (€69K) by the Department of Justice Equality & Law Reform.



*Lithuanian Basketball Team*

The Sports Partnership completed the development of its Strategic Plan 2008 - ?????? in December 2007.

**Play**

C&E facilitated and supported the Inter-agency subgroup of the CDB working on the development of a County Play Strategy. Community consultations were carried out by members of the group and individual consultations were held with member agencies regarding their role and possibilities around providing opportunities for play in the county.

C&E in association with the Sports Partnership, the County Childcare Committee and the Arts Office organised a County Play Day on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July which coincided with the International Games Festival. The event was held in the Tullamore Harriers and was attended by approximately 400 people. Events on the day included sporting activities, make-and-do, storytelling, puppets and bouncy castles among others.



**Pride of Place**

C&E facilitated 3 communities to participate in the National Pride of Place Competition. The communities were Rhode Parish Enterprise, Rhode; Churchview Heights & Greenwood Park, Edenderry and Tullamore Housing Association, Tullamore. C&E supported the projects in the preparation of



their presentations to the visiting judging panel and throughout the judging process in preparation for the National Awards event held in Westport, Co. Mayo in November 2008.

### ***Smoke Alarm Project***

C&E facilitated Offaly County Council's role as part of a Pilot Project to distribute smoke alarms to 250 homes in Offaly. Priority was given to older people/couples living alone in rural areas. The project was mainstreamed in 2007 and C&E continue to facilitate the installation of smoke alarms in another 250 homes in Offaly.

## **4. Building social cohesion and inclusion within and across the County**

C&E continued to participate in the Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network to share learning and best practice.

C&E continued to facilitate and support the Offaly Social Inclusion Measures (SIM) Group and its sub-groups. Key achievements in 2007 were:

- The development of a Local Anti-Poverty Strategy for Offaly. Development of the Strategy included a strong consultation element with over 100 stakeholders. The Local Anti-Poverty Strategy was adopted by the CDB on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007.
- The Supporting Minority Communities Sub-Group met 6 times during 2007 and a number of activities were supported and funded by the group including: International Food Festival in Edenderry; translation of the Edenderry Community Directory into 3 languages; organisation of an information evening for migrant workers attended by 72 people; participation in the Midlands Community Interpretation Project; supported the establishment of a Migrant Workers Women's Group in Tullamore. These actions were supported by the funding of €5000 allocated from Westmeath Employment Pact for the actions of the Supporting Minority Communities Group.
- Continued support for the implementation of the Integrated Services to Travellers Programme funded by the Department of Justice, Equality & Law Reform. C&E are hosting the Traveller Information Officer Internship for a period of 1 year to implement the activities of the

Social Inclusion Working Group to change negative attitudes towards Travellers.

### ***5. Developing and delivering quality services***

Community & Enterprise supported the Local and Rural Development Cohesion Process throughout 2007 including administration of the funding (€207,500). This process aims to create a single over-arching structure for the delivery of local and rural development funding and services.

At the April meeting of the CDB the plans of the Local & Rural Development Organisations were presented as part of the annual Endorsement process. Submissions were compiled into a report forwarded to the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government. Agencies from the other 3 pillars of the CDB also presented their plans as part of a widening of the process to include the presentation of plans by all agencies on the CDB.

### ***6. Develop and promote effective internal and external communications strategies.***

C&E continued to collate the information on the progress of the CDB Priority Actions and to produce quarterly progress reports.

The section collaborated with other sections within the Directorate on a regular basis through Directorate meetings. The Community and Enterprise team also participated in the Internal Customer Care plan exercise - 'Delivering Better Services' and supported the administration of this project.

### ***7. Managing the Council to be a good and effective place in which to work***

C.E organised Literacy Awareness training for staff in Offaly County Council in November 2007. The session was attended by 15 staff.

C&E in partnership with Tullamore Travellers Movement and the HSE supported the organisation of Traveller Cultural Awareness Training as part of the Integrated Services to Travellers Programme. This training

was open to all member agencies of the Integrated Services to Travellers Programme and was attended by 6 staff from Offaly County Council.

The aim of these training workshops is to increase awareness among staff of Offaly County Council of the barriers and issues people with literacy difficulties and from different cultural backgrounds face when accessing services.

C&E facilitated the development of an Internal Social Inclusion Plan and participated on the Equality Action Team.

C & E participated fully in the Performance Management Development System (PMDS) and PDPs were completed for all staff at the beginning of 2007. The 2008 TDP was completed at the end of 2007.

Staff in C&E participated in development and training opportunities including: Biodiversity, Agresso, Certificate in Local Government Studies, the Leadership in Local Government Programme and other relevant information seminars.

## ***Planning Department***

The Planning Department is responsible for land use policy, control of development including the protection of the natural built heritage and amenity of the County.

Land use policy is implemented by means of the County and Town Development Plans Local Area Plans, Village and Sraid Plans. Planning Control involves the process of planning applications up to 1,800 per annum, and the taking of appropriate enforcement action where necessary.

The following table sets out the trend in the number of planning applications received and decided by the Council over the past five years.

| <b>Year</b> | <b>No of Applications</b> | <b>No. Granted</b> | <b>No. Refused</b> | <b>Total Decided</b> |
|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 2003        | 1486*                     | 748                | 238                | 986                  |
| 2004        | 1828*                     | 891                | 273                | 1165                 |
| 2005        | 1462*                     | 859                | 217                | 1055                 |
| 2006        | 1894*                     | 1120               | 212                | 1332                 |
| 2007        | 1785*                     | 1421               | 250                | 1671                 |

(\*This figure includes applications which were invalid)

### **Strategic Policy Committee Meetings/Area Meetings**

A total of 11 meetings of the Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee took place in 2007. This committee comprises of 6 members of Offaly County Council and 5 members from the community including, Trade Union, Business/Commercial, Tourism and Agricultural/Farming sectors.

### **Variations of Offaly County Development Plan 2003-2009**

The following Variations to the County Development Plan 2003 - 2009 were made in 2007.

#### **Variation No 6**

- Village Plans for Kinnitty, Moneygall & Rahan
- 'Sraid' Plans for Cadamstown, Clareen & Roscomroe

***Adopted on 19th February 2007***

### **Variation No 7**

- The variation amended table 20 which contains car-parking requirements for certain classes of development.

*Adopted on 15th January 2007*

### **Variation No 8**

- 'Sraid' Plans for Boher, Boora-Leabeg, Clonfinlough, Doon, Fivealley, Killina, Rath

*Adopted on 19th February 2007*

### **Variation No 9**

-Village Plans for Geashill, Killeigh & Mucklagh

*Adopted on 17th September 2007*

### **Town Renewal Scheme 2000**

The following towns are included in the Town Renewal Scheme, 2000:

Banagher  
Ferbane  
Edenderry  
Clara

The central aim of the scheme is to bring about the restoration, consolidation and improvement of the built fabric of Irish towns, to promote sensitive infill and, in the course of this, to revitalise the centres of small towns. Both residential and commercial properties are included under the scheme, which has been extended to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2008.

### **Urban and Village Renewal Programme 2000-2006**

Under this programme, environmental improvement works were carried out in the following towns in 2007:

| <b>Location</b> | <b>Project</b>  |
|-----------------|---|
| Geashill        | Creation of a focal point at amenity park to include improvements to the set-down /picnic area with trees, landscaping and seating. |

Tullamore Environmental improvements to enhance the town park and the area around the river by introducing public lighting, street furniture, landscaping, stonework, decorative railing and surface works.

*Also included in this years scheme was the undergrounding of overhead ESB Cables at Clara, Kilcormac, Edenderry and Birr.*

### **Conservation Grants**

In 2007, Offaly County Council recouped €116,000 grant assistance from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Grants varying from €1,500 to €16,000 were allocated to 15 applicants subject to matching funding of 50% of the cost of the works.

### **Enforcement**

In accordance with Part VIII of the Planning & Development Act 2000, the following details relate to enforcement proceedings in 2007:

|                      |     |
|----------------------|-----|
| Warning Letters:     | 171 |
| Enforcement Notices: | 94  |
| Circuit Court Cases  | 0   |
| Prosecutions:        | 35  |

### **Development Contribution Scheme**

The Development Contribution Scheme was updated in January 2007 in accordance with the wholesale Price Index for Building and Construction published by the Central Statistics Office. It provides for contributions in respect of the following:

**Table 1 - Level of Contribution - Residential & Industrial/Commercial Development**

|   | Class of Infrastructure   | € per residential Unit | € per m <sup>2</sup> of floor area industrial/commercial development |
|---|---|------------------------|--|
| A | Open Spaces, Cultural recreational and community facilities, amenities and landscaping works, town and village improvement - including land acquisition       | €590                   | €8.60  |
| B | Roads, car parking, infrastructure to facilitate public transport, cycle and pedestrian facilities and traffic calming measures - including land acquisition. | €590                   | €12.90   |
| C | Wastewater treatment facilities, sewers and drains - including land acquisition.  | €2360                  | €7.00  |
| D | Water Treatment Facilities & Water Mains - including land acquisition   | €1760                  | €7.00  |
|   | <b><u>TOTAL</u></b>   | <b>€5300</b>           | <b>€35.50</b>  |

**Note A: Floor Area**

The floor area of the proposed development shall be calculated as the gross floor area. This means the gross floor area determined from the external dimension of the proposed buildings, including the gross floor area of each floor including mezzanine floors.

**Note B: Use of Service**

Contributions in respect of C & D above apply only to developments availing of the infrastructural services provided or to be provided.

**Note C: Water Services Pricing Policy**

The Government water services pricing policy provides for the recovery of the marginal capital costs of water services: from the general non-domestic customer on the basis of either a consolidated metered charge using the water in/water out principle or through individual contracts

with significant, generally larger, customers; and for residential development through development contributions. Pending the full introduction of the water services pricing policy, commercial/industrial development will be levied for water and wastewater at the above rates.

**Table 2 - Levels of Contributions - Other Categories of Development**

|   | <b>Category</b>  | <b>Amount of Contribution</b>   |
|---|--|---|
| A | Shortfall in provision of car-parking space :<br>(i) Urban<br>(ii) Rural                       | €4,700 per space<br>€2,360 per space  |
| B | Shortfall in provision of open space<br>(i) Urban<br>(ii) Rural                                | Special Contribution<br>Special Contribution  |
| C | Agricultural Development   | <500m <sup>2</sup> = nil<br>500 m <sup>2</sup> - 1000 m <sup>2</sup> = €2.70 per M <sup>2</sup><br>> 1000 m <sup>2</sup> = €5.90 per M <sup>2</sup> |
| D | Initial afforestation/replacement of broad-leaf high forest by conifer species/peat extraction | €590 per hectare of site area, only where planning permission is required.  |
| E | Land use for: (a) the winning and working of minerals (b) deposit of refuse or waste           | €1,180 per 0.1 hectare of site area subject to a minimum charge of €11,760  |
| F | Storage and Warehousing(not for retailing)   | €17.80 per M <sup>2</sup>   |
| G | <b>Golf/Pitch &amp; Putt</b>   | Special Contribution  |
| H | <b>Windfarms</b>   | Special Contribution  |
| I | <b>Swimming Pools</b>  | Special Contribution  |

Note A: Shortfall in Provision of Car Parking Spaces / Open Space

The term urban in this case refers to Tullamore Environs, Birr Environs and Edenderry and environs Boundary.



During 2007, Development contributions totalling €5,364,328 were received.

|   |  |                 |
|---|--|-----------------|
|   | <i>Offaly Local Authorities</i>  |                 |
|   | <b>SERVICE INDICATORS</b>  |                 |
| <b>P: Planning and Building Control</b> |  |                 |
| <b>P.1</b>                              | <b><i>Planning Applications - Decision Making</i></b>  |                 |
|   | No. of applications determined for individual houses   | 669             |
|   | (% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for individual houses   | 45.5%           |
|   | number requiring further info  | 363             |
|   | number where ext of time agreed  | 0               |
|   | Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for individual houses   | 73.64 days      |
|   | % of grants for individual houses  | 79.22%          |
|   | % of refusals for individual houses  | 20.78%          |
|   | % of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for individual houses      | 43.48%          |
|   | (% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for individual houses)                                 | 5.2%            |
|   | % of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for individual houses                                 | 56.52           |
|   | No. of applications determined for housing development   | 106             |
|   | (% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for housing development                                       | 54.7%<br>58 no. |
|   | number requiring further info  | 48              |
|   | number where ext of time agreed  | 0               |
|   | Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for housing development | 79.83 days      |
|   | % of grants for housing development  | 52.83%          |
|   | % of refusals for housing development  | 47.17%          |
|   | % of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for housing development    | 70%             |
|   | (% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord   | 8.8%            |

|  |  |                |
|--|--|----------------|
|  | Pleanala for housing development)  |                |
|  | % of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for housing development   | 30%            |
|  | No. of applications determined for other categories: not requiring EIA   | 881            |
|  | (% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for other categories: not requiring EIA                                       | 71%<br>626 no. |
|  | number requiring further info  | 255            |
|  | number where ext of time agreed  | 0              |
|  | Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for other categories: not requiring EIA | 74.22<br>days  |
|  | % of grants for other categories: not requiring EIA  | 93.19%         |
|  | % of refusals for other categories: not requiring EIA  | 6.81%          |
|  | % of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: not requiring EIA    | 73.68%         |
|  | (% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: not requiring EIA)                               | 19.3%          |
|  | % of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: not requiring EIA                               | 26.32%         |
|  | No. of applications determined for other categories: requiring EIA   | 15             |
|  | (% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for other categories: requiring EIA   | 53.3%<br>8 no. |
|  | number requiring further info  | 7              |
|  | number where ext of time agreed  | 0              |
|  | Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for other categories: requiring EIA     | 78.86<br>days  |
|  | % of grants for other categories: requiring EIA  | 93.33%         |
|  | % of refusals for other categories: requiring EIA  | 6.67%          |
|  | % of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: requiring EIA        | 33.33%         |
|  | (% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: requiring EIA)                                   | -              |
|  | % of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: requiring EIA )                                 | 66.67%         |

|            |  |       |
|------------|--|-------|
| <b>P.2</b> | <b><i>Planning Enforcement</i></b>   |       |
|            | Total number of cases subject to complaints that are investigated  | 129   |
|            | Total number of cases subject to complaints that are dismissed   | 24    |
|            | resolved through negotiations  | 48    |
|            | Number of enforcement procedures taken through warning letters   | 119   |
|            | Number of enforcement procedures taken through enforcement notices   | 73    |
|            | Number of prosecutions   | 35    |
| <b>P.3</b> | Average number of public opening hours per week  | 23.45 |
|            | number of pre-planning consultation meetings   | 474   |
| <b>P.4</b> | Average length of time from request for consultation with local authority planner to actual formal meeting for pre-planning consultation | 12    |

## HERITAGE

*In the context of the Heritage Act, 1995, the term heritage is considered to encompass monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways.*

2007 was the first year of the Offaly Heritage Plan 2007 - 2011. This second heritage plan was launched in the spring and is a 5 year work programme. The delivery of the Plan is the primary driving force for the work programme of the heritage office. I would like to thank all members of the Heritage Forum, for their contributions over the year. The support of the Heritage Council towards the heritage officer post and the delivery of the Heritage Plan is very much appreciated.

The following is a summary of the main projects delivered in 2007. In addition, a considerable amount of time was spent on in house projects and liaising with communities and helping them plan, fund and deliver appropriate projects. For more information call the office on - 057 9346839 or see [www.offaly.ie/offalyheritage](http://www.offaly.ie/offalyheritage).

### **1. Launch of Offaly Heritage Plan 2007 - 2011**

#### **2. Castles**

##### **(a) Offaly Book**

Surveying is very nearly complete.

Research and ordering of images is progressing.

Photography is 99% complete.

Six reconstruction drawings have been commissioned and drafts prepared.

DoE have agreed to fund 50% of the book.

##### **(b) Scanning of Castles**

The 3d laser scanning of Dungar, Ballymooney, Ballycowan, Monasterorois, Clonmacnoise, Esker and Ballinlough has been carried out by Gridpoint Solutions who are now processing the data.

### **3. Biodiversity Training**

Woodrow Wildlife carried out the training of all council staff in October. All staff received training in one or more of the following:

Introduction to biodiversity, targeted technical training and training in ecological assessments.

#### **4. Launch of the State of the Wild Report**

Launch was held on Tuesday 8th May 2007 in Teach Lea with approx 60 in attendance. John Feehan launched the report it at the same time as launching the Offaly Naturalist Field Club. Both have been circulated widely since.

#### **5. Biodiversity Summer School - Theme Plants and Insects**

The summer school was held from Monday 2 July to Friday 6th July with 20 local participants. It was led by John Feehan with assistance from members of the Offaly Heritage Forum and Field Club members at no charge.

#### **6. Survey of Bridges for Bats and Birds**

Bridges were selected in Slieve Bloom area. Birdwatch Ireland carried out the survey of birds and Brian Keely carried out the bat survey. The report was submitted in October 2007.

#### **7. Conservation Plan for Rahan Monastic Site**

Howley Hayes Architects are undertaking this project. Caimin O'Brien has submitted the archaeological information. The Heritage Officer addressed the AGM of C of I Tullamore Parishes to update them on the project. Friday 4th May meetings were held on site with lead stakeholders. A public meeting was held on Monday 14th May - St Carthage's day, after an ecumenical service to report on progress made and to hear public's view. The final plan going to print 2008.

#### **8. Oral History Recordings**

This year the focus was on the industrial heritage with emphasis on Salts, Tullamore Dew and Goodbody's in Clara. Maurice O'Keefe has undertaken the work. 72 hours have been recorded and edited. It will be launched Friday 31 August of Heritage Week 2007.

#### **9. Support Community Groups Undertaking Projects**

- Working with the Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society on the conservation of the friary chapter house dating to the 1300's in Killeigh, owned by Ken and Janet Mathews. Arranged for conservation architect Margaret Quinlan to draw up report. A bat report is completed.

- Shinrone Heritage Group - Attended site meeting to ascertain priorities for work in the area. First one is to prepare an interpretative board for Kilcomin monastic site. Draft text has been prepared, edited and sent to the group for comment. Meeting attended to discuss sign types and funding.
- Clara Oral History Project - March - met to discuss progress and direction.
- Advise Methodist Church on care of premises in Church Street.
- Met with Cadamstown Tidy Towns to discuss an interpretive panel for the village. Drew up draft panel.
- Met with Helen Hanlon of the Kilbride Church Committee to discuss conservation of same.
- Provided advice to the Vestry of Church of Ireland in Edenderry working on the conservation of the damaged Lord Downshire's statue.
- Organised for Finola Reid, historic landscape consultant, to draw up a report to advise Geashill Tidy Towns on appropriate projects.
- Working Killoughey group to plan for next phase of medieval church conservation.
- Visited Kilcomin, Blackbull, to provide advice on care of graveyard and medieval church.
- Visited Newtown Fortified House with Department Archaeologist and Architect to examine possibilities for conservation / restoration.
- Working with Lemanaghan management group delivering the Conservation Plan. An information board is being prepared in 2007 with a Heritage Council grant. Preparing a similar board for Rathlihen monastic site.

#### **10. Co-ordinated Events for Biodiversity Day and Heritage Week**

Biodiversity day was celebrated as part of the Field Club programme. Co-ordination of events for Heritage Week.

#### **11. Host Annual Seminar**

Offaly Heritage Seminar held in autumn 2007

#### **12. Deliver Cherished Places**

Launched on Tuesday 1st May 2007. Environment agreed to pay for this project through their budget. 21 settlements entered and were judged by Jack Carter.

### **13. Carry out Geophysical Research at Monastic Sites**

A grant of €6,000 has been received from the Heritage Council for work at Rahan. Paul Gibson has carried out the field work and processing the data. Report submitted.

### **14. Assist OCC Departments**

- Input into the County Development Plan and LAPs - ongoing
- Conservation Plan for Blundell Castle in Edenderry is in. Grant of €11,000 offered from the DoE grants - Site visit has been held with Dept. to discuss appropriate works.
- Report on landscaping at Syngefield in Birr has been completed by Finola Reid, historic landscape consultant. Worked with Michael Roche on archaeological surveys etc. Preparing specifications for the conservation of the gates at Syngefield which are owned by OCC. Assisting Environment with advice for the recycling depot on site.
- Conservation Plan for Kilmachonna church has been completed.
- Preparation and submission of grant for Bord Failte funding for '50 sites to see in Offaly'.
- Preparation of information panels for Pullough and Geashill under the Urban and Village Renewals programmes.
- Review of Waterways Corridor Study 2002 with Heritage Council
- Interviews for the Shannonharbour Public Realm project
- Prepared document for Offaly / N. Tipp County Councils on heritage sites in Birr Roscrea area
- 

### **Artifacts in National Museum collection from Offaly**

Additional work has been commissioned to extend the audit of archaeological artifacts in the National Museum to include the art and industry division. Jackie Mc Dermot is currently undertaking this work and should be complete by July.

### **'50 sites' submission to Bord Failte for tourism funding**

Waterways Ireland - Maps of the Offaly Grand Canal Section 1807

One copy has been made and bound for the Library service.

Launch is being planned with the Library Service for Thursday 30th August during Heritage Week.

### **Web site**

Update website on ongoing basis.

Launch of Stories Photo Exhibition - January 07

Launch of Lemanaghan Conservation Plan - January 07



## Environment Section

This Directorate is responsible for a diverse range of functions and services. The principal divisions within the Section are as follows:

1. Waste Management.
2. Litter Management.
3. Pollution Control and Water Quality Management.
4. Derelict Sites and Dangerous Buildings.
5. Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Act.
6. Veterinary Services.
7. Percolation Testing.
8. Burial Grounds.
9. Water Safety.

### 1. WASTE MANAGEMENT

As lead Authority for the implementation of the Midlands<sup>[1]</sup> Regional Waste Management Plan 2005 - 2010, Offaly County Council co-ordinates all waste management practices in the Region.

The Plan sets out clear and ambitious targets including a new integrated approach to waste management over a 15 to 20 year period. Our future strategy is based on the waste hierarchy i.e. prevention, reuse, recycling and energy recovery ahead of over-reliance on landfill disposal. Our long-term targets for 2013 are to achieve rates for the combined household, commercial and industrial, and construction and demolition waste streams of:

Recycling 46%      Energy recovery 37%      Landfill disposal 17%

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<sup>[1]</sup> Laois, North Tipperary, Westmeath, Longford and Offaly County Councils

Other highlights of the Plan include:

- The provision of brown bins for household & business organic waste
- Minimisation of construction & demolition waste
- Examining the commercial viability and siting of a waste-to-energy plant for the Region
- Awareness information campaigns to reduce waste at home and at work.
- Increased investment in recycling initiatives e.g. Civic Amenity Facilities, Bring Banks and household dry recycling expansion
- 

The Section processes Waste Collection Permit applications for the region. To date, a total of 566 have been received, 467 of which have been granted. It has responsibility for reviewing Annual Environmental Reports submitted in respect of "waste movements". The Section also co-ordinates waste enforcement in the region in conjunction with the EPA's Enforcement Network and plays a key role in implementing the various regulations.

Significant progress has been made in the following areas in 2007: -

- **Derryclure Landfill:** - Waste is being deposited in the new extension costing in excess of €4m, completed in 2006. We have also completed the full Environmental Restoration and Capping of the old unlined landfill cell at Derryclure at a cost estimate of €5.5million.
- **Civic Amenity Sites:** - We continue to ensure the operation of the facilities at Tullamore and Edenderry to best standards. An additional facility in Birr was completed in 2007.
- **Recycling Bring Banks:** - A total of 47 bring banks are now in operation throughout the county.
- **Historical landfills:** - The Council has compiled a list of historical landfills throughout the county. We now propose to carry out a risk assessment of each individual site to determine the most appropriate action required to deal with these sites.

- **Waste Enforcement:** - The Council has a team of nine people involved in Waste Enforcement, including four full time Litter Wardens. They provide an effective and visible presence to tackle illegal waste and litter activities, which involve the staff in operation on the ground and on patrol out-of-hours. In conjunction with the EPA Office of Environmental Enforcement and An Garda Síochána, a series of road checkpoints were arranged during 2007, to check on illegal waste movements.
- The Council administers the requisition of producers / distributors / retailers in respect of the free take-back of the End-of-Life Vehicles (ELVs) and Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (the producer responsibility principle). The Council also issues Waste Permits for the provision of Authorised Treatment Facilities (ATFs) for processing the ELVs.
- **Packaging Regulations:** - The Council continues to inspect major producers of Packaging Waste in order to assess compliance with the Packaging Regulations. One company has opted for self-registration with the Council. The remaining major producers are members of REPAK.

## **2. LITTER MANAGEMENT**

Offaly County Council continued to implement its multi-faceted approach to tackling the problem of indiscriminate littering throughout the county. A combination of awareness, enforcement and other measures were adopted to promote behavioral changes among all sectors of the population towards littering and illegal dumping. The four Litter Wardens were actively engaged in enforcing the provisions of the Litter Pollution e.g., investigating litter complaints, abandoned vehicles, backyard burning, etc. In 2007, the Litter Wardens were assigned 121 complaints and all of these were resolved or closed off within this period. Council staff issued a total of 205 on-the-spot litter fines in 2007.

In 2007, the Council commenced the procedure of Statutory Review of its Litter Management Plan.

The Council's Environment Department has worked in tandem with the Areas to eliminate a number of black spot areas throughout the county.

### **3. POLLUTION CONTROL AND WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

The Pollution Control Team is responsible for the implementation Environmental Legislation in the following areas: air, water, noise and nuisance. It also has a general water quality monitoring and management role. Specific activities undertaken by the section include the investigation of water pollution incidents, licensing of discharges to waters and sewers, licensing of significant emissions to air, monitoring of urban wastewater plants, rivers and lakes.

- ***Water Pollution and the Phosphorous Regulations, 1998:*** - Water Pollution is a major concern in County Offaly. Therefore, much of the work of the Pollution Control Team is devoted to this matter. Only 37% of rivers in County Offaly are classed as unpolluted, compared to a national figure of 70%. In addition, the Tullamore, Philipstown and Figile Rivers are the most polluted rivers in the County in terms of Phosphorous loading. Under the Phosphorous Regulations, 1998 the Council is obliged to achieve a significant improvement in river water quality. To this end, the Council has established a team to undertake a comprehensive programme of Farm Inspections, Discharge Licensing and General Pollution Investigations.
- ***Water Framework Directive:*** - The purpose of the directive is threefold:
  1. To maintain high status of water where it exists.
  2. To prevent any deterioration in the existing status of waters.
  3. To achieve at least good status of all waters by 2015.

Ireland has been divided into eight River Basin Districts (RBDs) covering the whole of the island of Ireland, in accordance with new EU and Irish Environmental Legislation. Offaly County Council is involved in three RBDs, The Eastern, The South Eastern and The Shannon RBD. The initial phase of the project will culminate with the production of a draft River Basin Management Plan for the districts in 2008.

Offaly County Council has implemented the designated monitoring programme agreed under the Water Framework Directive for all surface waters in its functional area. We participated in a number of public consultation forums on the implications of the directive.

#### **4. DERELICT SITES AND DANGEROUS BUILDINGS**

The Council continued to identify additional sites for entry on the Register, and owners have been directed to carry out the necessary works on derelict black spots.

#### **5. HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE AT WORK ACT**

To meet our responsibilities in the area of Health, Safety and Welfare at Work, the Council employs a Health and Safety Officer to advise management and staff on all Health and Safety matters and to foster a Health and Safety culture throughout the organisation. The role includes:

- Review of the management of Health, Safety and Welfare issues within Offaly Local Authorities, both at corporate level and within each operating section.
- A review and update of Safety Statements for all Council premises.
- Safety Audits / Inspections.
- Participation in the NISO Safety and General Knowledge Quiz in the Midland Region.
- Participation in European Safety Week.

#### **6. VETERINARY SERVICE**

One of the main responsibilities of the Veterinary Department is the delivery of services in connection with the Council's role as an Agency of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. In this regard, the Council's team of Veterinary Inspectors, to ensure compliance with food safety legislation and hygiene standards, supervises Low Throughput Abattoirs, Small Meat Manufacturing Premises and associated food vehicles in the county. Procedures and conditions governing the slaughtering of animals / animal welfare in licensed premises were monitored. During the year a total of 2304 cattle, 9651 sheep and 201 pigs were processed for human consumption in Low Throughput Abattoirs in County Offaly.

- **Control of Dogs**

The Council's Dog Warden Service is operated by the ISPCA, which also provides the Dog Warden. The Council provides the Dog Pound, the vehicle and the Veterinary Officer.

In 2007, the Council continued to concentrate on re-homing stray or unwanted dogs where possible.

Dog Control Kennels admitted 465 stray / unwanted dogs during the year. Of these, 49 dogs were reclaimed by their owners, 110 dogs were re-homed and the remainder were put to sleep.

Dog owners purchased a total of 2,127 individual Dog Licenses during the past year.

- **Control of Horses**

The Council has no facility for impounding horses and avails of a service provided by Local Authority Services in Kilkenny. Under the Control of Horses Act, 1996, the Council seized / impounded 4 horses in 2007. Horses are only released in accordance with the Council's Control of Horses Bye-Laws and on payment of the fees due.

## **7. PERCOLATION TESTING**

Percolation Testing of sites for houses in unsewered rural areas is carried out as a link to the Planning Process and also in conjunction with Pollution Control mentioned above.

The Environment Section carried out 708 Percolation Tests in 2007, this figure includes 78 re-visits to sites. Following approval by the Members in mid 2006, a dedicated team has now been appointed to deal with all percolation tests. As a result we are currently 'turning around' all applications within an average time span of three weeks.

## **8. BURIAL GROUNDS**

As part of its 5-year plan for the provision of new burial grounds and the extension of existing cemeteries in the county, adopted by the members

of the Council in 2003, the Council completed the extension of cemeteries at The Island, Rahan and at Edenderry during 2007.

## **9. WATER SAFETY**

### **• Swimming Pools**

2007 saw the completion of the upgrading of the swimming pool in Birr at a total cost of €2.27 million, of which Offaly County Council is providing funding of €280,000.00. The Council made a submission to the Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation in support of an application by Birr Swimming Pool Committee for funding of €1.3 million to refurbish the pool at Birr and the Department approved same in 2005. The Council also approved funding assistance in the sum of €500,000 for the new Tullamore Swimming Pool.

### **Environment Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meetings**

The Environment Section held four SPC meetings in 2007.

During 2007, Offaly County Council supported, by way of advice and financial assistance totalling €125,000.00, environmental initiatives including: Environment Grants, Tidy Estates Competitions, Anti-Litter Grants, Green Schools, Local Agenda 21 Grants and Media Campaigns.

| <i>SERVICE INDICATORS</i>        |   | <i>2007</i> |
|----------------------------------|---|-------------|
| <b>E: Environmental Services</b> |   |             |
| <b><u>Waste Management</u></b>   |   |             |
| <b>E.6</b>                       | % of households provided with segregated waste collection         | n/a         |
| <b>E.7</b>                       | % of household waste recycled                                     | 20.37       |
|                                  | Tonnage   |             |
| <b>E.8</b>                       | % of household waste going to landfill                            | 79.63       |
|                                  | Tonnage   |             |
| <b>E.9</b>                       | Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for glass         | 47          |
|                                  | Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for glass | 3           |

|  |  |      |
|--|--|------|
|  | Total number of recycling facilities for glass                                     | 50   |
|  | Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for glass     | 4    |
|  | Tonnage of waste collected for recycling glass per 5000 of population              | 87.5 |
|  | Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for cans                           | 47   |
|  | Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for cans                   | 3    |
|  | Total number of recycling facilities for cans                                      | 50   |
|  | Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for cans      | 4    |
|  | Tonnage of waste collected for recycling cans per 5000 of population               | 4    |
|  | Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for textiles                       | 6    |
|  | Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for textiles               | 2    |
|  | Total number of recycling facilities for textiles                                  | 8    |
|  | Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for textiles  | 0    |
|  | Tonnage of waste collected for recycling textiles per 5000 of population           | 10   |
|  | Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for batteries                      | 0    |
|  | Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for batteries              | 2    |
|  | Total number of recycling facilities for batteries                                 | 2    |
|  | Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for batteries | 0    |
|  | Tonnage of waste collected for   | 0.14 |



|   |   |      |
|---|---|------|
|   | recycling batteries per 5000 of population  |      |
|   | Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for oils                                  | 0    |
|   | Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for oils                          | 2    |
|   | Total number of recycling facilities for oils   | 2    |
|   | Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for oils             | 0    |
|   | Tonnage of waste collected for recycling oils per 5000 of population                      | 0.48 |
|   | Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for other categories                      | 0    |
|   | Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for other categories              | 2    |
|   | Total number of recycling facilities for other categories                                 | 2    |
|   | Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for other categories | 0    |
|   | Tonnage of waste collected for recycling other categories per 5000 of population          | 4    |
| <b><u>Litter Prevention and Environmental Enforcement</u></b> |   |      |
| <b>E.10</b>   | <b><i>Litter</i></b>  |      |
|   | Total number of full time litter wardens  | 4    |
|   | Total number of part time litter wardens  | 1    |
|   | Number of litter wardens (both full and part time) per 5000 of population                 | 0    |
|   | Number of on the spot fines   | 205  |
|   | Number of prosecution cases taken because of non payment of on the spot fines             | 11   |
|   | Number of prosecutions secured  | 7    |
|   | % of areas within the local authority that are unpolluted (i.e. litter free)              | 8    |

|             |   |     |
|-------------|---|-----|
|             | % of areas within the local authority that are slightly polluted with litter  | 29  |
|             | % of areas within the local authority that are moderately polluted with litter  | 46  |
|             | % of areas within the local authority that are significantly polluted with litter   | 13  |
|             | % of areas within the local authority that are grossly polluted with litter )   | 4   |
| <b>E.11</b> | <b><i>Environmental Complaints and Enforcement</i></b>  |     |
|             | Total number of cases subject to complaints concerning environmental pollution (relating to waste, litter, water pollution, noise pollution, air pollution) | 285 |
|             | Number of complaints investigated   | 285 |
|             | Number of complaints dismissed  | 20  |
|             | Number of enforcement procedures taken )  | 255 |
| <b>E.12</b> | % of primary schools participating in environmental campaigns   | 44% |
|             | % of secondary schools participating in environmental campaigns )   | 41% |

## Fire Service

### Calls

| No. of Turnouts | No. of Incidents | No. of Fires                               | No. of Chimney                      | No. of R.T.A.s      |
|-----------------|------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 939             | 844              | 613<br>(incl. 54 outside<br>county Offaly) | 256<br>42% of fires<br>27% of calls | 138<br>14% of calls |

The above shows the incidents attended by Offaly's fire brigades in 2007. There was no increase in incidents compared to 2006. There have been signs of improvement in the historical problem of chimney fires, while it was static last year, there is a 10% drop for 2007. While road traffic accidents have become a significant part of brigade activity in recent years, there has been a 4% drop in 2007, (from 1 in 5 in 2006, to 1 in 7 in 2007).

While sadly, there were a number of fatalities and serious injuries as a result of road traffic accidents, there were no fatalities due to fire in 2007.

The Fire Service continues to work closely with the Ambulance (HSE) Service, and the Gardai in training and preparing for emergencies, and took a full part in a Major Emergency Management exercise at the airfield in Birr last May.

### Capital Projects

Edenderry new fire station was completed in 2007, and has been in service since the second quarter of the year. A new appliance was also completed in 2007, and located in Edenderry. Edenderry has also put an emergency tender, mainly for road accidents, into service. The County has also appointed an Assistant Chief with particular responsibility for Major Emergency preparedness, and he is working with colleagues in the Midland counties in the development of a regional plan.



**Birr Fire Station and Class B Appliance at McCauley Drive, Birr**

## Fire Prevention

The Fire Service carries out inspections mainly under the Fire Services Act 1981 and 2003, and the Building Control Act 1990. They are also carried out under Planning Acts, Dance Halls Act 1935, Gaming and Lotteries Acts, Explosives Act (Fireworks Displays and Gun Licences), Dangerous Substances Act (Filling Stations), and Health Acts (Assemblies for plays and concerts).

Planning: In 2007, 346 premises (an 18% increase on last year) were inspected under planning legislation (including 15 for Birr Town Council and 52 for Tullamore Town Council). 132 Fire Safety Certificates were processed, a decrease of 14% on last year.

Fire Safety advice was given to schools, assembly managers and their staff. Industrial and commercial premises managers and staff were also assisted in setting up safety procedures. The Service also took advantage of the "seminars" held at the hand-over stage of local authority housing to deliver a fire safety message to new home owners. Community Activity Groups were met and safety advice given.



**Major Emergency Exercise at Birr Airfield,  
May 2007**

### **Finance totals 2007**

Expenditure amounted to..... € 3,482,093  
Income amounted to..... € ...181,105\*  
Income Fire Safety Certs .....€.. 327,246

\*Invoiced = ..... €412,556  
Waivered/written off .....€13,685  
Outstanding.....€217,765(53%)

| <u>SERVICE INDICATORS: For 2007</u> |   |        |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------|
|                                     | Fire Service  |        |
| <b>E.3</b>                          | Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in full time stations       | n/a    |
|                                     | Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in part time stations )     | 7.63   |
| <b>E.4</b>                          | % of attendances at scenes where first attendance is at scene within 10 minutes | 44.61% |
|                                     | % of attendances at scenes where first attendance is at scene within 20 minutes | 30.25% |
|                                     | % of attendances at scenes where first attendance is at scene after 20 minutes  | 25.14% |
| <b>E.5</b>                          | <b>Fire prevention</b>  |        |
|                                     | Total number of fire safety certificate applications received                   | 254    |
|                                     | Total number of fire safety certificate applications processed )                | 256    |
|                                     |   |        |

Note deterioration in the Service Indicators. As advised, these indicators reflect the road traffic impact on travel, and are of minimal use as a specific fire service indicator.

## Civil Defence

Civil Defence in Offaly were again extremely busy and active during the year, under the leadership of Denis Canty, (now attached to the Fire Service A.C.F.O. ) 2007 saw a very high degree of training and specialist courses, one new Heights Rescue Instructor qualified in Wales and is a great addition to our Service in Offaly. A total of thirty-five members qualified in the use of A.E.D.'s (Automated External Defibrillator) under the watchful eye of our four A.E.D. Instructors. Mike Hogan: Tracey Canty: Noel Smyth: Stephen Lloyd.



*Larry Mooney receiving his First Officer Rank Insignia from Raphael Fallon C.D.O.*

The Civil Defence were involved in a large scale County exercise in June, this took place in Birr Airfield where a simulated Air crash took place. This exercise involved all the Leading Emergency agencies:- Gardai, Ambulance Service, Defence Forces .Dept of Environment: Civil Defence took a very active and lead role in providing two Ambulances, Fire Appliance, Radio Communications, Several First Aid teams and also carried out the Triage of the casualties involved in the Multi-Service Exercise. The scenario commenced in the early afternoon, and culminated in a search of the crash site, for the flight recorder and other item of interest, to the investigating team from the Air Accident Unit

Civil Defence responded to a "Stand-By" call from Ambulance Control during the Christmas period owing to icy road conditions, and provided two 4 x 4 Jeeps. We were stood down after forty eight hours. We are becoming more involved in the M.E.P. for the County, as our role increases in the ever changing area of Rescue, Emergency Service back up etc.

Our training classes continued apace during the year and five new volunteers joined the service, and they will complete their basic First Aid course by years end. Auxiliary Fire Service members completed their training also, with the presentation of certs by the Civil Defence Officer (C.D.O.).

Following a growing trend in Offaly Civil Defence, several members participated in the Annual Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes, and the team enjoyed and took part fully in all the ceremonies and parades etc. This is a way in which Offaly Civil Defence, can "Fly the Flag" as it were, and portray a very positive image indeed, while on service overseas.

2007 saw a very busy duty schedule, Civil Defence provided Ambulance cover, First Aid cover and various other logistical support, to the various events throughout Offaly. E.g.: Kilcormac Ramblers New Years Day walk: St.Patrick's Day festivities in Tullamore, Clara, Kilcormac. Birr Vintage Week

Tullamore Phoenix Festival, and perhaps the biggest event countrywide, Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann. Civil Defence members worked from early Friday afternoon, to late into Monday morning. I received quite an amount of praise afterwards, at the Fleadh de-brief in the Garda Station, thanking my team for their work commitment, and professional attitude to the duties, and dealing with the public.

In 2007 Offaly Civil Defence provided cover to a total of sixty one duties, plus assisting local schools, and special needs children in different projects.

It is my wish as the Civil Defence Officer, to assist our community in any way that our resources can allow. And we look forward to 2008 with the same enthusiasm and professional attitude, as we did in previous years.

New members are always welcome and I may be contacted at the Central Fire Station, or on my Mob: 087/1273869.

## Corporate Services

### Our Goals

- To support the democratic mandate of the elected members.
- To maintain a satisfactory franchise and electoral system at local level.
- To ensure best practice is applied in securing value for money in the management and maintenance of corporate property.
- To implement our Higher Education Grants in a fair and efficient manner.
- Develop initiatives to increase cross departmental awareness and input to the development of corporate policies.
- Improve communications internally and externally on Local Authorities activities.

### Support Services

An important function of the Corporate Services Department is the provision of a secretarial service for meetings of the County Council. The Annual Meeting of the Council took place in the Town Hall, Edenderry on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2007. Councillor Eamon Dooley was elected Cathaoirleach and Councillor Barry Cowen was elected Leas Cathaoirleach. There are 21 Councillors on Offaly County Council. The Council normally meets on the third Monday of each month, excluding August. In addition an Annual Budget Meeting and An Annual Meeting are held.

### *Corporate Policy Group (CPG)*

- \_ Cllr. Eamon Dooley, Cathaoirleach (Chair).
- \_ Cllr. Danny Owens, Chairperson - Economic Planning & Development SPC.
- \_ Cllr. Tony McLoughlin, Chairperson - Roads & Infrastructure SPC.
- \_ Cllr. Thomas McKeigue - Environment SPC.
- \_ Cllr. Sinead Moylan-Ryan, Chairperson - Housing, Social & Cultural SPC.

The Corporate Policy Group met on 12 occasions during 2007.



## **Strategic Policy Committees**

*There are four S.P.C.'s in Offaly comprising of the following members:*

***Environment (9 members):*** Cllrs. Thomas McKeigue (Chairperson), Percy Clendennen, Gerard Killally, Eddie Fitzpatrick, Eamon Dooley, Michael Loughnane, Mr Joe Gaffey, Ms Anne Fahey, and Ms Teresa Ryan-Feehan.

***Transportation & Infrastructure (9 members):*** *Cllrs. Tony McLoughlin (Chairperson), Noel Bourke Michael Fox, Constance Hanniffy, Peter Ormond, Paddy Rowland, (Vacant), Mr Noel Healion, Mr Hugh Farrell.*

***Housing, Social & Cultural (9 members):*** Cllrs. Sinead Moylan-Ryan (Chairperson), John Carroll, Molly Buckley, Marcella Corcoran-Kennedy, Fergus McDonnell, Richard Egan, Ms Susan Ryan, Ms Barbara Daly, Ms Anne Starling.

***Economic Development & Planning (11 members):*** Cllrs. Danny Owens, (Chairperson), Thomas Feighery, Dervill Dolan, Barry Cowen, , Johnny Butterfield, John Foran, Noel Cribben, Henry O'Shea, Mr Sean Loughnane, Mr Dominic Doheny, Mr Aidan Larkin.

| Conferences Attended by Members in 2007                                   |                       |   |
|---|-----------------------|---|
|   |                       |   |
| Details of all Conferences approved for attendance by Councillors in 2007 | Date of Conference    | Details of Councillors who attended   |
| Local Government Planning Seminar   | 1/2/3 February 07     | F.McDonnell   |
| Antrim Tourism Conference   | 2/3 February 07       | M.Corcoran-Kennedy  |
| Assoc of Municipal Authorities Spring Seminar                             | 9/10 February 07      | C.Hanniffy  |
| TJK Conferences - Planning Seminar For Councillors                        | 16/17th February 07   | E.Dooley  |
| Wicklow Co Tourism Conference   | 21/22 February 07     | P.Clendennen  |
| 18th Colmcille Winter School 2007   | 23-25 February 07     | M.Corcoran-Kennedy  |
| Assoc of County & City Councils - Annual Conf                             | 8-10 March 07         | M.Corcoran-Kennedy, T.McKeigue, C.Hanniffy, N.Bourke<br>T.Feighery, E.Dooley      |
| 15th Annual Ratoos Conference   | 28 Mar - 1st April 07 | T.Feighery  |
| Institute of National Fund Raising Conference                             | 27th March            | F.McDonnell   |
| LAMA Spring Conference  | 12th-13th April 07    | P.Clendennen, M.Corcoran-Kennedy, N.Bourke<br>T.Feighery, E.Dooley, E.Fitzpatrick |
| IRDA Planning Conference  | 18-20th April 07      | J.Butterfield, J.Carroll  |
| Local Government Anti-Poverty Learning Network                            | 30th April 07         | J.Butterfield   |
| BMW Regional Assembly   | 13th June 07          | M.Buckley, J.Butterfield  |
| Effective Communications for Councillors                                  | 8-10 June 07          | M.Fox, M.Buckley, F.McDonnell   |
| Leitrim Enterprise Board  | 20-21st June 07       | J.Carroll   |
| Your Place or Mine Conference   | 21st June 07          | E.Fitzpatrick   |
| MacGill Summer School   | 15-20 July 07         | C.Hanniffy  |
| General Humber Summer School  | 23-26 August 07       | C.Hanniffy, M.Fox, D.Owens  |
| William Carlton Summer School   | 6-10 August 07        | D.Owens   |
| The Parnell Summer School   | 12-17 August 07       | M.Buckley, P.Ormond   |
| Rural Tourism 2007 -2013  | 7th Sept 07           | T.McKeigue, M.Fox, M.Buckley, J.Carroll<br>E.Fitzpatrick, E.Dooley, F.McDonnell   |
| Battle against Substance & Alcohol misuse                                 | 3-5th Sept 07         | D.Owens   |
| Assoc. of Municipal Authorities - Annual Confe.                           | 13-15th Sept 07       | M.Buckley, J.Carroll, E.Fitzpatrick, F.McDonnell                                  |
| Midland Gateway Conference  | 14th September 07     | J.Butterfield, T.Feighery   |
| Benedict Kiely Literary Weekend   | 14-16 Sept 07         | M.Buckley   |
| A Journey of Remembering  | 5-8 Oct 07            | M.Buckley   |
| 2007 La Touche Legacy Seminar   | 28-30 Sept 07         | M.Fox, M.Buckley  |
| Time to React   | 17-18 Sept 07         | M.Fox   |
| Active Citizenship  | 2-3rd October 07      | C.Hanniffy  |
| Planning Seminar For Councillors  | 12-13 October 07      | J.Butterfield   |
| Douglas Hyde Conference   | 26-28 October 07      | N.Bourke  |
| Getting a Grip - Battle against substance & alcohol abuse                 | 4-5 October 07        | J.Carroll   |
| Challenge of Climate Change - 10th Annual Conference                      | 19th October 07       | F.McDonnell, N.Bourke   |
| International Conference - Film, TV, Tourism                              | 15th November 07      | M.Corcoran-Kennedy  |
| Tourism for Changing Lifestyles   | 22-24th November 07   | P.Ormond, J.Carroll, M.Fox, N.Bourke, T.Feighery, C.Hanniffy                      |
| LAMA - Winter Conference  | 9-10th November 07    | E.Fitzpatrick, M.Fox, T.McKeigue, P.Clendennen, S.McDonnell                       |
| Effective Communications for Councillors                                  | 16-18 November 07     | M.Fox, F.McDonnell  |
| E-Towns Beyond 2007   | 14th November 07      | J.Carroll, M.Fox, P.Clendennen, F.McDonnell                                       |
| Assos. Of Irish Festival Events   | 9-10th November 07    | F.McDonnell   |
| Confederation of European Councillors                                     | 7th December 07       | T.Feighery  |

|                                  |                     |                     |  |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--|
| Local Government Budget 2008     | 1st December 07     | D.Owens             |  |
| 2nd Neil T. Blaney Winter School | 30 Nov - 1st Dec 07 | M.Fox, P.Clendennen |  |

### PAYMENTS MADE TO MEMBERS IN 2007

| NAME                | Representational Payment | Monthly Allowance | SPC Chairman's allowance | Conference Expenses | Chairman's Allowance | For<br>Tro  |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| NOEL BOURKE         | 16,419.71                | 6,020.45          | 2,800.00                 | 4,193.81            |                      |             |
| MOLLY BUCKLEY       | 16,419.71                | 4,864.09          |                          | 4,456.48            |                      |             |
| JOHNNY BUTTERFIELD  | 16,419.71                | 4,925.09          |                          | 2,132.88            |                      |             |
| JOHN CARROLL        | 16,419.71                | 6,327.16          | 2,800.00                 | 4,097.07            |                      |             |
| PERCY CLENDENNEN    | 16,419.71                | 5,611.27          | 2,800.00                 | 3,651.42            |                      |             |
| M. CORCORAN KENNEDY | 16,419.71                | 6,327.16          |                          | 4,429.61            |                      |             |
| BARRY COWEN         | 16,419.71                | 4,638.19          |                          | 0.00                |                      |             |
| DERVILL DOLAN       | 16,419.71                | 4,794.09          |                          | 0.00                |                      |             |
| EAMON DOOLEY        | 16,419.71                | 5,611.21          |                          | 3,747.96            | 14,852.22            | 5,65        |
| THOMAS FEIGHERY     | 16,419.71                | 5,100.45          | 2,800.00                 | 3,133.32            |                      |             |
| EDDIE FITZPATRICK   | 16,419.71                | 5,171.67          |                          | 4,208.02            |                      |             |
| JOHN FORAN          | 16,419.71                | 5,485.63          |                          |                     |                      |             |
| MICHAEL FOX         | 16,419.71                | 4,429.72          |                          | 3,847.12            |                      |             |
| CONNIE HANNIFFY     | 16,419.71                | 4,429.72          |                          | 4,488.33            |                      |             |
| GERARD KILLALLY     | 16,419.71                | 5,644.84          |                          |                     | 12,996.70            | 3,4         |
| FERGUS McDONNELL    | 16,419.71                | 6,224.93          |                          | 5,616.51            |                      |             |
| TOMMY McKEIGUE      | 16,419.71                | 4,794.09          | 3200.00                  | 1,752.47            |                      |             |
| TONY McLOUGHLIN     | 16,419.71                | 6,253.57          | 3200.00                  |                     |                      |             |
| SINEAD MOYLAN RYAN  | 16,419.71                | 7,042.93          | 3200.00                  | 574.90              |                      |             |
| PETER ORMOND        | 16,419.71                | 7,349.93          |                          | 1,866.76            |                      |             |
| DANNY OWENS         | 16,419.71                | 4,794.09          | 3200.00                  | 3,760.51            |                      |             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>344,813.91</b>        | <b>115,840.28</b> | <b>24,000.00</b>         | <b>55,957.17</b>    | <b>27,848.92</b>     | <b>9,14</b> |

## Freedom of Information

### Statistics:

In 2007 under the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 & 2003, the total number of applications were as follows:

- ◆ 16 applications were received by Offaly County Council.
- ◆ There were no applications received by Birr Town Council.
- ◆ There were no applications received by Tullamore Town Council.
- ◆ There were no applications received by Edenderry Town Council.

### *The Ombudsman*

Ten complaints were received by the Ombudsman in 2007 in relation to Offaly County Council.

### *Register of Electors*

The Register of Electors was produced on the 1<sup>st</sup> February and came into force on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2007.

The total electorate for County Offaly for the 2006/2007 Register of Electors was 53,707 broken down over the local electoral areas as follows:

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Birr                         | 11,566        |
| Edenderry                    | 13,632        |
| Ferbane                      | 9,384         |
| Tullamore                    | 19,125        |
| <i>Total on the Register</i> | <i>53,707</i> |

### Higher Education Grants

In the 2006/2007 academic year the number of Higher Education Grant new awards totalled - 149 and a further - 240 students qualified for grant renewal.

Expenditure on Higher Education Grants totalled €1,773,742.05 in that period. This money is recoupable from the Department of Education & Science, except for a fixed contribution made by Offaly County Council. The administration of the scheme is a service provided by this Council to students and parents in County Offaly.

### **County Coroners**

The total expenditure in 2007 was €71,069.12 (including salary) in respect of coroners inquests.

### ***Publications***

Annual Yearbook and Diary 2007

### ***Chairman's Charity Ball***

The Chairman's Charity Ball was held in the Tullamore Court Hotel on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2007.

Fundraising from the event totalled €30,000 and €10,000 each was presented to Offaly Hospice Foundation, Saplings (Midlands School for children with Autism), and Dóchas - Offaly Cancer Support Group.

### **Retirement of former County Manager - Niall Sweeney**

Members and Staff united in paying tribute to Niall Sweeney at a function in the Tullamore Court Hotel on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2007 to mark the occasion of his retirement as County Manager of Offaly Local Authorities from 1997 to 2007. Niall, a native of Tullamore was educated at the local St. Columba's Christian Brothers School and subsequently at University College Dublin. Early on in his career he worked in the private sector, as a Consulting Engineer, before pursuing a career in Local Government. He worked in Laois and Offaly County Councils at Executive Engineer and Senior Executive Engineer levels. He was County Engineer in Clare for seven years prior to his appointment as Offaly County Manager in January 1997.

He has been a keen amateur artist and photographer for many years.



## *Human Resources Department*

Offaly County Council recognises that its success in providing a high quality service to the community has been built on a loyal, dedicated and committed workforce. The Human Resources Department functions include staff recruitment and retention, workforce planning, staff welfare, staff leave, employee relations, industrial relations, training and development, performance management and workplace partnership.

The aim of the Department is to assist all Offaly Local Authorities in the delivery of organisational objectives, while at the same time developing the potential of every staff member.

### **Recruitment**

The H.R. Department oversees the recruitment of employees in Offaly County Council and in the Town Councils of Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore. In 2007, 51 competitions were held to interview candidates to fill permanent and temporary vacancies in the authorities. Independent interview boards were selected to recommend the most suitable candidates for employment or promotion in accordance with national regulations.

| Recruitment Statistics                          |      |
|---|------|
| Number of recruitment competitions held in 2007 | 51   |
| Number of applications received                 | 1734 |
| Number of staff appointed                       | 76   |

### **Training**

Performance Management Development Systems (PMDS) was introduced into the Local Authority sector in 2006. The principle of PMDS is to manage performance more effectively and to ensure that all members of staff have a systematic and verifiable personal development plan. PMDS is also a critical input into the organisation's business planning processes and promotes an inclusive approach to strategic planning. Many of the training needs identified through the Team Development Plans (TDP) and Personal Development Plans (PDP) were delivered during 2007. In excess of 150 training and development courses were delivered. Health and Safety training was prioritised and all training is developed and delivered

with customer care and service delivery at its core. Training for staff concentrates on:

- Customer Care and Service Delivery
- Job Specific Skills
- Organisational Requirements
- Personal Development

During 2007 the Council prepared its *Excellence Through People* application, which was submitted to FÁS. Formal assessment is awaited.

The Human Resources Section encouraged and assisted 37 employees to pursue further relevant third level education courses.

During 2007 Offaly County Council continued its operation of a Work Placement Scheme for students in schools and colleges with students being given the opportunity to work in various areas of the local authorities. This scheme benefits students by assisting them in achieving their course needs by gaining relevant work experience.

### **Staff Welfare**

Offaly County Council recognises staff as its most important resource and continues to promote work/life balance initiatives through the provision of: Career Break Scheme; Work Sharing Scheme; Parental Leave Scheme; Term Time Leave Scheme; Flexitime.

During 2007 a large number of staff received training on a number of Council policies, e.g., Dignity at Work, Grievance and Disciplinary Policy.

The Council advertised for an Employee Assistance Programme and this will be advanced in 2008.

### **Retirement**

The following staff retired during 2007 after many years of dedicated service to the people of Offaly:

|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Niall Sweeney, County Manager               | Frank Sugrue, Revenue Collector       |
| Stephen Doyle, General Operative            | William Comerford, Lorry Driver       |
| Michael Delaney, Water & Sewerage Caretaker | Chris Glennon, Administrative Officer |



|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| Christy Kilroe, General Services Supervisor | Sean Murphy, Lorry Driver  |
| Therese Abbott, Clerical Officer            | Tommy Hanlon, Craftsman    |
| Robert Walsh, Weighbridge Operator          | Thomas McGlynn, Ganger RIP |

### Local Workplace Partnership

The Partnership Committee held twelve (12) meetings in 2007. Mr. Joe Dwyer, SIPTU Shop Steward was co-opted onto the Committee during the year.

The Partnership Committee established Working Groups to examine and report on the following issues:

- Move to Ballydrohid Complex, Tullamore [Phase II]
- DBO Projects in Offaly Local Authorities including Tullamore Sewerage Works
- Review of Communications Strategy
- Review of Work Life Balance Policies
- Review of Opening Hours

The Partnership Committee adopted the following Human Resources policies:

- Training and Development Strategy 2007 - 2009
- Acting-Up Policy
- Employee Mobility Policy
- Leave Policy Guidelines for Office-based Staff

In accordance with the National Agreement *Towards 2016* the Partnership Committee discussed and endorsed Action Plans and Progress Reports, which were submitted to the Performance Verification Group (PVG). Members of the Committee played an active role in the PVG Site Visit, which took place in June 2007.

Other areas of activity included: presentations to staff on the final Report on the Workplace Review; consultant interviews in respect of a corporate Employee Assistance Programme; launch of the General Operative Induction Programme; LANPAG Educational Grant Scheme 2007-2008; and LANPAG Apprenticeship Scheme.

Two meetings between the Management Team and Trade Union Officials were held to progress issues in accordance with the **Handling Significant Change through Partnership Protocol**.

|            |   |       |
|------------|---|-------|
|            | <i>Offaly Local Authorities</i>                                       |       |
|            | <b><i>SERVICE INDICATORS</i></b>                                      |       |
| <b>C.1</b> | % of working days lost to sickness absence                            | 5.1%  |
| <b>C.2</b> | Expenditure on training and development as a percentage of amount due | 6.76% |

## **Information Systems**

In 2007 Offaly Local Authorities Information Systems department progressed a number of significant strategic projects. Among these were the following:-

### ***Strategic Planning for ICT***

In 2007 an Information Systems Strategy for the period 2007-2010 was developed and published. This document outlines the strategic direction

for Offaly Local Authorities' Information Systems department up to the end of 2010. It can be downloaded from [www.offaly.ie](http://www.offaly.ie) .

### **Broadband Technologies**

Following a procurement exercise in the Autumn of 2006 broadband connectivity was established for four of our sites on the Tullamore MAN. This significant investment in our ICT infrastructure will enable us to provide better service delivery options to all our offices in Tullamore. We also used the MAN to establish broadband links to Central Government Networks.

Extensive Advance Works have been completed on ducting for the Edenderry MAN. Final departmental approval is expected in 2008 to complete this project.

### **Telecommunications**

As part of our strategic plan to standardise telecommunications systems across the organisation a new telephone system was implemented in the Town Hall at Edenderry. This continues a project begun in 2006 to standardise phone systems at Birr, Ferbane, Tullamore Town Council and Edenderry Town Hall. The project will be completed in 2008 with the Ferbane implementation.

### **Geographic Information Systems**

During 2007 the PlanIGIS digital mapping application was implemented in the Planning department. This will be followed in 2008 by the introduction of e-mapping on [www.offaly.ie](http://www.offaly.ie) .

### **Mobile Computing**

Facilities using Citrix technology were expanded in 2007 to allow remote network connectivity for staff and as backup/contingency for the larger sub offices in the county. Approximately 40 staff now use mobile ICT facilities for some portions of their work.

### **Internet Services**

The redeveloped [www.offaly.ie](http://www.offaly.ie) was launched in 2007 and Content Management software was introduced to improve management and updating of the site.

## **Network Development**

Following requirements specifications carried out in 2007 an off-site ICT Disaster Recovery facility was established in 2007. This facility allows for the secure backup of the Council's major corporate databases and has failover procedures which can be used in the event of a major problem or malfunction in the Main ICT Server Room. This site is a crucial element of the Council's Business Continuity capability.

## ***Finance***

### **Our Goals**

To plan the strategic financial management of Offaly Local Authorities and deliver the services of the finance function in an efficient, effective and professional manner.

### **Our Strategies**

- Develop accounting and management information systems that deliver the best possible basis for future planning, budgeting and decision making in order to maximise financial resources available.

- Promote and direct Value for Money concepts and foster a culture of effective use of resources.
- Prepare an annual financial budget that reflects our corporate objectives.
- Enhance the Financial Management System and in particular, the provision of more meaningful financial management information.
- Ensure prompt payment to suppliers.
- Promote a value for money culture in the organisation.

### **Our Services**

The expenditure for 2008 for Offaly County Council will be approximately €130million between Revenue and Capital jobs.

The Finance Department deals with both the short and long term financing of all the Council's operations, both of a Revenue and Capital nature. This involves:

- Monitoring and controlling income and expenditure.
- Arranging borrowing/leasing requirements.
- Treasury Management.

The Department also ensures compliance with all statutory and financial accounting principles, which apply to all monies paid by or to the Council.

The Council's revenue and day-to-day expenditure is defrayed from sources such as:

- Commercial Rates;
- Local Government Fund;
- Government Grants;
- Housing Rents, Planning Fees, Commercial Water Charges and other Fees.

### **The Main Sections within Finance are:**

#### **Central Debt Collection and Revenue**

Recovery of Commercial Rates, administration of Housing Loan accounts, debt collection and receipting of all monies due to the Council.

#### **Accounts Payable**

Registration of all suppliers invoices received and central processing of invoices. Completion of Purchase to Pay cycle with weekly cheque payment run.

#### **Payroll**

Payment of weekly wages and Fortnightly payment of salaries and pensions. Other periodic payments, to Firemen, etc. Statutory returns to Revenue Commissioners.

**Fixed Asset Register**

Recording and maintaining all fixed assets acquired (created or purchased) and disposed of throughout the year.

**The Main Reports Produced by Finance are:**

**The Annual Budget**

The Finance Department:

- prepares the overall Revenue Budget in consultation with the County Manager and the Management Team;
- presents it to the Corporate Policy Group;
- presents it to the Elected Members for adoption at the Annual Budget Meeting.

**The Annual Financial Statement (AFS)**

The AFS is produced annually and brings together all the revenue-related income and expenditure for the year, resulting in a surplus or deficit for the year. The Balance Sheet shows the assets and liabilities of the County Council at the end of 2007. A report on Income and Expenditure on Capital jobs is also prepared. Accounts are presented to members at Council Meeting and audited by the Local Government Auditor.

**Monthly Management Reports**

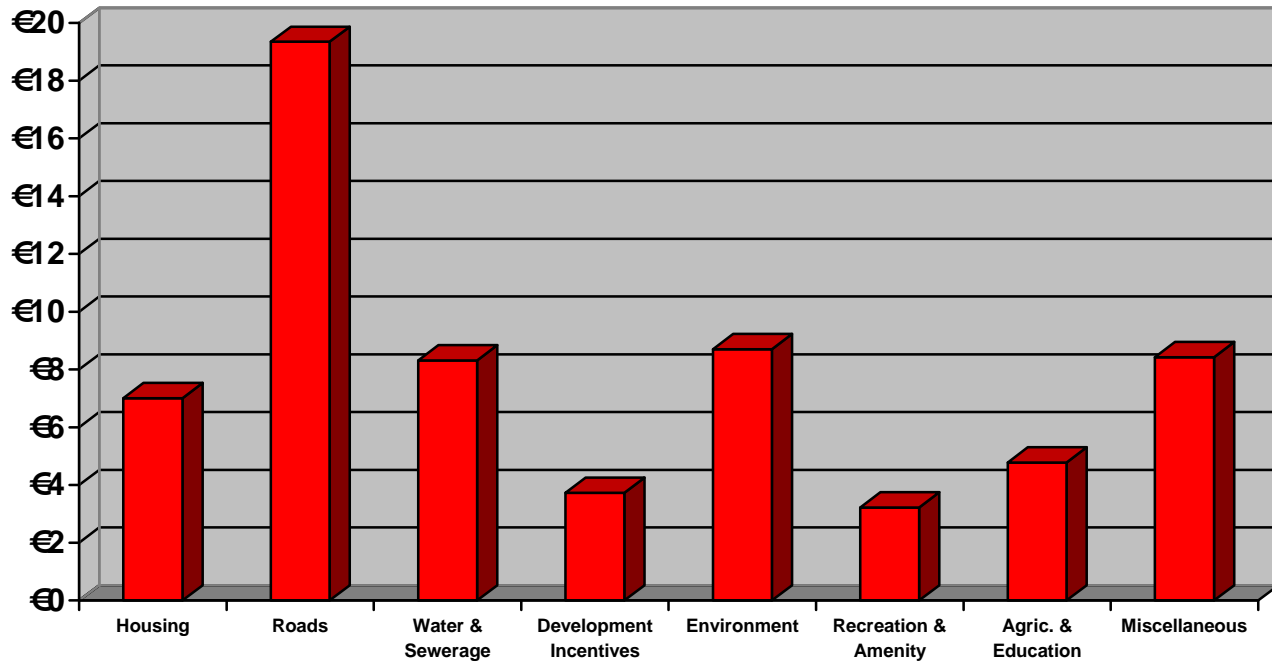
The monthly management report provides details of the income and expenditure for the various services provided by the council. The actual results are compared to Budget and all variances investigated to assist with the monitoring and control of the Budget. The report is distributed and discussed with the management team at the monthly meeting.

**Income and Expenditure Account Statement 2007 - Unaudited**

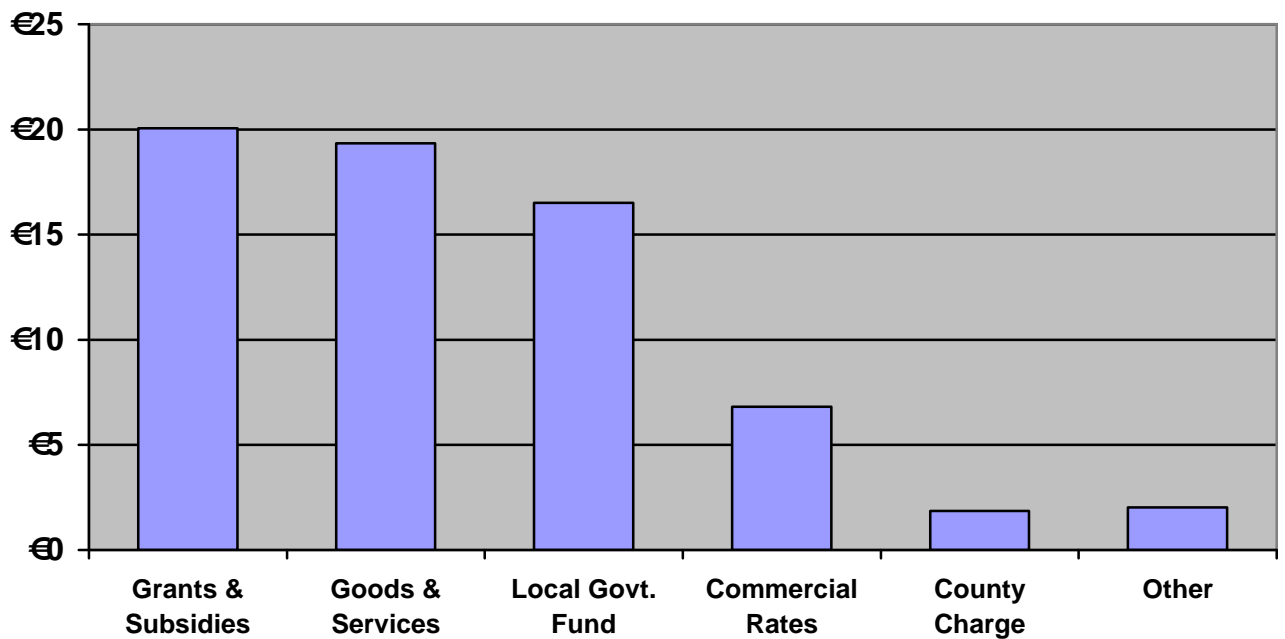
|  | Gross       |        | Net         | Net         |
|--|-------------|--------|-------------|-------------|
|  | Expenditure | Income | Expenditure | Expenditure |
|  |             |        |             |             |

| <b>Expenditure by Programme Group</b>  | <b>€<br/>2007</b> | <b>€<br/>2007</b> | <b>€<br/>2007</b>  | <b>€<br/>2006</b>  |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Housing & Building   | 7,012,371         | 5,852,239         | 1,160,132          | 1,076,102          |
| Roads Transportation & Safety  | 19,343,626        | 14,043,706        | 5,299,920          | 5,637,862          |
| Water & Sewerage   | 8,314,116         | 1,373,095         | 6,941,021          | 5,454,332          |
| Development Incentives & Controls  | 3,727,755         | 1,650,673         | 2,077,083          | 1,668,322          |
| Environmental Protection   | 8,700,447         | 8,603,967         | 96,481             | 739,667            |
| Recreation & Amenity   | 3,221,798         | 1,049,974         | 2,171,824          | 1,750,283          |
| Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare   | 4,779,971         | 4,142,555         | 637,416            | 543,162            |
| Miscellaneous  | 8,430,226         | 4,684,202         | 3,746,024          | 3,330,662          |
| <b>Total Expenditure\Income</b>  | <b>63,530,311</b> | <b>41,400,410</b> |                    |                    |
| <b>Net Cost of Programmes to be funded<br/>From County Rates &amp; Local Government Fund</b> |                   |                   | <b>22,129,902</b>  | <b>20,200,392</b>  |
| Rates  |                   |                   | 6,817,009          | 6,666,452          |
| Local Government Fund  |                   |                   | 16,512,029         | 14,891,887         |
| Charges to Town Councils   |                   |                   | 1,856,102          | 1,659,737          |
| <b>Surplus\ (Deficit) for Year before Transfers</b>  |                   |                   | <b>3,055,239</b>   | <b>3,017,681</b>   |
| <b>Transfers to/from Reserves</b>  |                   |                   | <b>(3,072,084)</b> | <b>(3,048,011)</b> |
| <b>Overall Surplus/(Deficit) for Year</b>  |                   |                   | <b>(16,845)</b>    | <b>(30,331)</b>    |
| <b>General Reserve @ 1st January 2006</b>  |                   |                   | <b>(48,146)</b>    | <b>(17,816)</b>    |
| <b>General Reserve @ 31st December 2006</b>  |                   |                   | <b>(64,991)</b>    | <b>(48,146)</b>    |

## 2007 Revenue Expenditure by Programme (€Million)

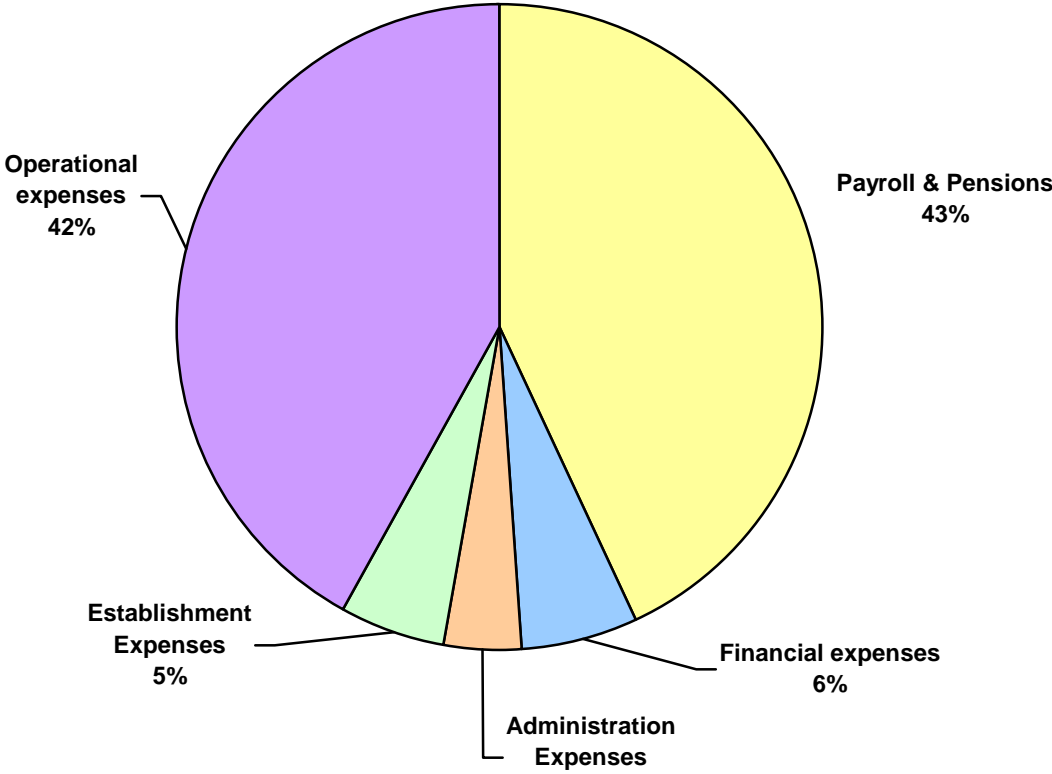


## 2007 Revenue Income Analysis (€Million)

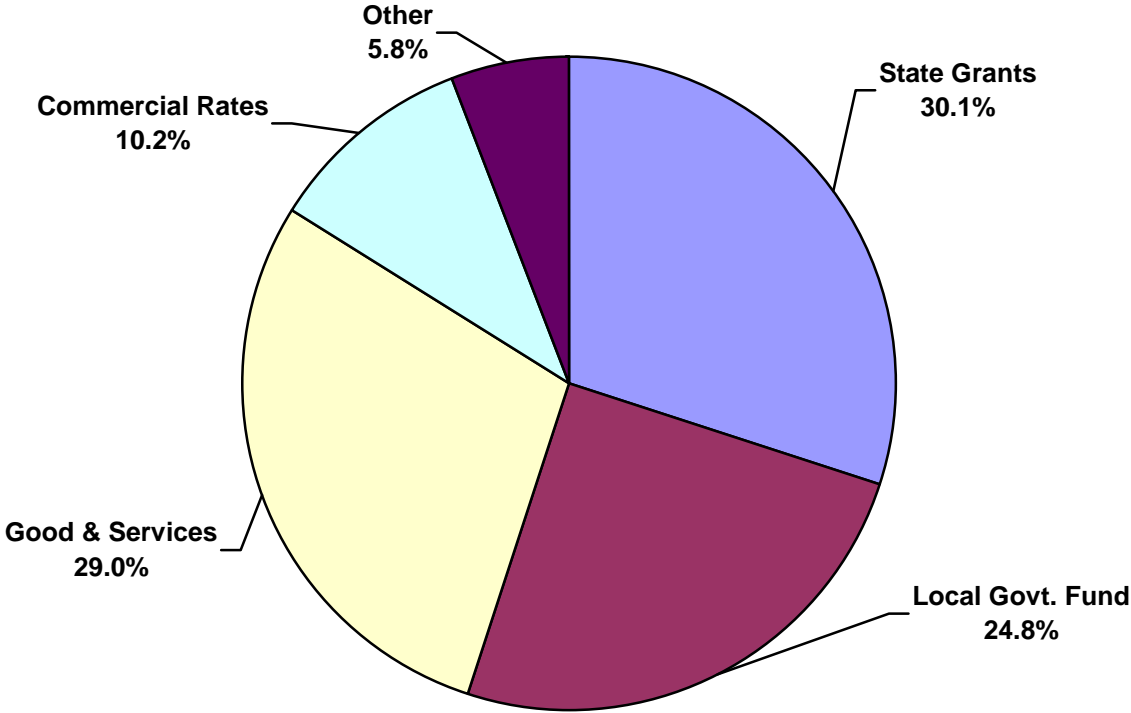




# Analysis of 2007 Expenditure



# Sources of Income 2007



**Balance Sheet at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2007 - Unaudited**

|  | 2007                 | 2006                 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|
|  | €                    | €                    |
| <b>Fixed Assets</b>  |                      |                      |
| <b>Operational</b>   | 201,691,074          | 180,874,050          |
| Infrastructural  | 1,220,116,961        | 1,227,192,078        |
| Community  | 51,000               | 51,000               |
| Non Operational  | -                    | -                    |
|  | <b>1,421,859,035</b> | <b>1,408,117,128</b> |
| <b>Work in Progress and Preliminary Expenses</b>                 | <b>85,219,198</b>    | <b>66,897,991</b>    |
|  | <b>30,427,360</b>    | <b>27,931,243</b>    |
| <b>Long Term Debtors</b>   |                      |                      |
| <b>Current Assets</b>  |                      |                      |
| Stocks   | 657,582              | 300,605              |
| Trade Debtors and Prepayments                                    | 17,068,790           | 17,367,133           |
| Bank Investments   | 7,606,096            | 16,445,676           |
| Cash at Bank   | -                    | 4,709,884            |
| Cash on Hand   | 46,655               | 720,905              |
| Urban Account  | -                    | -                    |
|  | <b>25,379,123</b>    | <b>39,544,203</b>    |
| <b>Current Liabilities (Amounts Falling due within one year)</b> |                      |                      |
| Creditors & Accruals   | 8,243,717            | 9,862,835            |
| Urban Account  | -                    | 125,657              |
| Finance Leases   | 6,833                | 6,899                |
|  | <b>8,921,427</b>     | <b>9,995,391</b>     |
|  | <b>16,457,696</b>    | <b>29,548,812</b>    |
| <b>Net Current Assets / Liabilities</b>                          |                      |                      |
| <b>Creditors ( Amounts falling due after More than one year)</b> |                      |                      |
| Loans Payable  | 69,184,678           | 70,674,344           |
| Finance Leases   | 6,729                | 13,559               |
| Refundable deposits  | 777,950              | 833,178              |
|  | <b>69,969,354</b>    | <b>71,521,082</b>    |
| <b>Net Assets/(Liabilities)</b>                                  | <b>1,483,993,936</b> | <b>1,460,974,092</b> |

| <b>Financed By:</b>      |                      |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Capitalisation Account   | 1,421,859,035        | 1,408,117,128        |
| Income WIP               | 78,328,514           | 65,743,750           |
| Specific Revenue Reserve | 1,026                | 1,026                |
| General Revenue Reserve  | (64,991)             | (48,146)             |
| Other Reserves           | (16,129,648)         | (12,839,665)         |
| <b>Total Reserves</b>    | <b>1,483,993,936</b> | <b>1,460,974,092</b> |

| Summary of Capital Expenditure and Income - Unaudited                        |                     |                   |
|--|---------------------|-------------------|
|  | 2007                | 2006              |
|  | €                   | €                 |
| <b>EXPENDITURE</b>   |                     |                   |
| Housing & Building   | 31,069,576          | 18,155,188        |
| Roads Transportation & Safety  | 18,896,301          | 26,613,837        |
| Water & Sewerage   | 10,982,293          | 9,909,747         |
| Development Incentives & Controls  | 3,773,304           | 530,910           |
| Environmental Protection   | 5,722,992           | 5,407,517         |
| Recreation & Amenity   | 1,793,584           | 550,331           |
| Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare                                     | -                   | -                 |
| Miscellaneous  | 2,830,595           | 2,992,495         |
| <b>TOTAL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</b>   | <b>75,068,645</b>   | <b>64,160,025</b> |
|  |                     |                   |
| <b>INCOME</b>  |                     |                   |
| Housing & Building   | 26,650,900          | 19,135,286        |
| Roads Transportation & Safety  | 16,830,096          | 25,876,881        |
| Water & Sewerage   | 5,603,880           | 5,498,839         |
| Development Incentives & Controls  | 5,862,109           | 11,777,640        |
| Environmental Protection   | 2,737,933           | 2,872,760         |
| Recreation & Amenity   | 1,333,486           | 76,019            |
| Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare                                     | -                   | -                 |
| Miscellaneous  | 2,896,052           | 1,010,035         |
| <b>TOTAL CAPITAL INCOME</b>  | <b>61,914,457</b>   | <b>66,247,460</b> |
|  |                     |                   |
| <b>Surplus\ (Deficit) for year</b>   | <b>(13,154,188)</b> | <b>2,087,435</b>  |
|  |                     |                   |
| <b>Balance (Debit)\Credit @ 1 January</b>                                    | <b>24,699,611</b>   | <b>22,612,177</b> |
|  |                     |                   |
| <b>Balance (Debit)\Credit @ 31 December</b>                                  | <b>11,545,423</b>   | <b>24,699,612</b> |
|  |                     |                   |
| <b>Includes internal transfers and transfers to and from Revenue account</b> |                     |                   |

## Motor Taxation Office

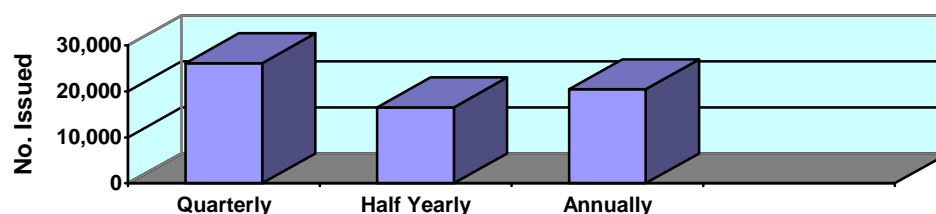
The Council collects vehicle licence duties and issues driving licences (provisional, full and duplicate) within its functional area on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Motor taxation receipts for 2007 were €12.09 million, an increase of 2.7% on 2006.

During 2007 a total of 88,713 vehicle licences and 9,201 driving licences were issued. Other transactions, including change of ownership for pre-1993 vehicles, certificates of roadworthiness, vehicle registration certificates and processing vehicle licensing arrears totalled 13,530. The Section also produces information to Gardai and other Local Authorities, e.g. penalty points, traffic fines, parking fines, etc.

| Vehicle Licences | Number Issued | Value             |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Quarterly        | 26,113        | €2,838,706        |
| <i>Half Year</i> | <i>16,518</i> | <i>€2,154,677</i> |
| Annual           | 20,468        | €6,281,492        |
| Duplicates       | 186           | €1,098            |

Vehicle Licences Issued in 2007



| Driving Licences           | Number Issued | Value   |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Three Year Licence         | 977           | €2,550  |
| Ten Year Licence           | 2,998         | €74,950 |
| Provisional Licence 1 Year | 1,059         | €15,885 |
| Provisional Licence 2 Year | 3,515         | €52,530 |
| One Year Licence           | 100           | 1,00    |
| Duplicates                 | 865           | €4,505  |

The Motor Taxation Office is open to the public from 9.30 a.m. to 3.15 p.m., including lunchtime, Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays.

Electronic payment is available at the counter and through the postal applications.

An online vehicle taxation service is now available - 19.96% of motor tax transactions (excluding Driver Licences) in Offaly were dealt with online in 2007.

Transaction costs per transaction = €6.09.

The transactions included in the calculation of this indicator are tax discs issued, VLCs processed, changes of ownership, CT 53s, Driving Licences issued and other miscellaneous fiscal transactions.

**Finance/Motor Taxation Department Service Indicators 2007:**

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| <b>M: MOTOR TAXATION</b>  |        |
| M.1 Number of motor tax transactions (excluding Driver Licences) which:   |        |
| Are dealt with over the counter   | 61,471 |
| Are dealt with by post  | 18,732 |
| Are dealt with in other ways (e.g. online, by telephone)  | 17,711 |
| Percentage of motor tax transactions (excluding Driver Licences) which:   |        |
| Are dealt with over the counter   | 63%    |
| Are dealt with by post  | 19%    |
| Are dealt with in other ways (e.g. online, by telephone)  | 18%    |
| M.2 Number of postal applications (excluding Driver Licences) which are dealt with from receipt of the application: |        |
| (a) On the same day   | 11,353 |
| (b) On the third day or less  | 4,510  |
| (c) On the fifth day or less  | 1,427  |
| (d) Over 5 days   | 1,442  |
| % of overall postal applications (excluding Driver Licences) which are dealt with from receipt of the application:  |        |
| (a) On the same day   | 75.72% |

|   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| (b) On the third day or less  | 21.55 %                      |
| (c) On the fifth day or less  | 2.49 %                       |
| (d) Over 5 days   | 0.24 %                       |
| M.3 Number of Driver Licences which are dealt with from receipt of the application: |                              |
| (e) On the same day   | 326                          |
| (f) On the third day or less  | 1,371                        |
| (g) On the fifth day or less  | 1,065                        |
| (h) Over 5 days   | 1,390                        |
| % of Driver Licences which are dealt with from receipt of the application:          |                              |
| (a) On the same day   | 7.85 %                       |
| (b) On the third day or less  | 33.02 %                      |
| (c) On the fifth day or less  | 25.65 %                      |
| (d) Over 5 days   | 33.48 %                      |
| M.4 Public Opening Hours  | 29                           |
| Revenue Collection  |                              |
| Rev.1 House Rent  |                              |
| <b>Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due</b>                   | 87.31 %                      |
| Percentage of arrears   | 4.90 %                       |
| 4 - 6 weeks old   | 6.33 %                       |
| 6 - 12 weeks old  | 81.51 %                      |
| more than 12 weeks old  |                              |
| Rev. 2 Housing Loans  |                              |
| <b>Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due</b>                   | 80.23 %                      |
| Percentage of arrears   | 6.54 %                       |
| 1 month old   | 4.83 %                       |
| 2 - 3 months old  | 83.48 %                      |
| more than 3 months old  |                              |
| Rev.3 Commercial Rates  |                              |
| <b>Amount collected at year-end as a percentage of amount due</b>                   | 91.85 %                      |
| Rev.4 Refuse Charges  |                              |
| <b>Percentage of households paying refuse charges at year end</b>                   | N/A - do not provide service |
| Rev.5 Non-Domestic Water Charges  |                              |
| <b>Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due</b>                   | 51.10 %                      |

## TULLAMORE TOWN COUNCIL

Tullamore is the capital town of Offaly with a population of almost 10,000. The town has experienced tremendous growth in the past ten years. Tullamore Town Council is involved in a broad range of services and in particular, Housing, Roads, Sanitary Services, Planning and Infrastructural Development.

### Main features during 2007

#### Civic receptions were held for the following:

National Union of Journalists Biennial Delegate Conference

Davitt Street 100 th Anniversary

Tullamore G.A.A. Senior Football Champions

56<sup>th</sup> Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann in Tullamore.

Tullamore Rugby Club Towns Cup Winners.

#### Section 85 Local Government Act, 2001 Resolution with Offaly County Council re. Performance of water functions in the town of Tullamore.

Section 85 Local Government Act, 2001 resolution unanimously agreed.

#### Swimming Pool.

Tullamore Town Council secured funding from the Department of Arts Sport and Tourism and established Tullamore Leisure Ltd. to oversee the project. P.J. Elliott and Co. were appointed contractors.

#### Social Housing.

36 Social Housing units and 4 Group Houses at Chancery Lane completed Temporary Halting Site, Kilcruttin completed and opened.

#### Disabled Persons Grant:

6 No. Disabled Persons Grants were commenced.

#### Temporary Halting Site:

Major refurbishment work on Temporary Halting Site, Kilcruttin completed and opened.



### **Lloyd Town Park.**

In consultation with Local Community and sectoral interest groups Tullamore Town Council in partnership with Murray and Associates drafted a unique design for Lloyd Town Park. Funding was scoured from the Dept. of Arts Sport and Tourism and Internal Reserves. Part 8 Planning was granted by the members of the Town Council.

### **Skateboard Park.**

In consultation with the Skateboard Action Group Tullamore Town Council successfully constructed a skateboard Park in Lloyd Town Park.

### **Lawn Bowling Green:**

The Tullamore Lawn Bowling Green was identified as a key project from the consultations over the past two years. Tullamore Town Council has worked with a number of local groups in designing a facility for both competition and family use.

### **Youth Council:**

Tullamore Youth Council conducted extensive research into youth needs and published "youth expectations" this was followed by the establishment of a working group for a youth café. They have now sourced €3,000 to conduct a feasibility study.

### **Planning**

Decisions to Grant 94 in 2007 were

Decisions to Refuse 19 in 2007 were

There were Appeals 6 to An Bord Pleanála

### Elected Members:

The following is a list of the Elected Members in Tullamore Town Council

| <u>Name</u>                      | <u>Address</u>                      | <u>Party</u>   |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| <i>Councillor Laurence Byrne</i> | <i>15 O'Brien Street, Tullamore</i> | <i>Labour</i>  |
| Councillor Tommy McKeigue        | Spollanstown, Tullamore.            | Fine Gael      |
| Councillor Sinead Dooley         | Rahan Road, Sragh, Tullamore.       | Fianna<br>Fáil |
| Councillor Molly Buckley         | Moylena, Tullamore.                 | Non-<br>Party  |
| Councillor Joe Coughlan          | 252 Ardan View, Tullamore.          | Non-<br>Party  |
| Councillor John Flanagan         | New Road, Tullamore.                | Fianna<br>Fáil |
| Councillor Sean O'Brien          | 83 Whitehall Estate, Tullamore.     | Labour         |
| Councillor Richard Egan          | 73, Clonminch Wood, Tullamore,      | Fine Gael      |
| Councillor Paddy Rowland         | Knockowen Road, Tullamore.          | Fianna<br>Fáil |

### REPRESENTATIVES TO VARIOUS BODIES:

#### VOCATIONAL

EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE: Councillor Sean O'Brien  
Cllr Laurence Byrne  
Cllr Sinead Dooley

A.M.A.I.: Councillor Tommy McKeigue  
Councillor Sean O'Brien

#### IRISH PUBLIC BODIES

MUTUAL INSURANCES LTD.: Councillor Molly Buckley

#### BOARD OF

#### TULLAMORE DEW HERITAGE CENTRE:

Councillor Sinead Dooley  
Councillor Tommy McKeigue

#### HOUSING COMMITTEE:

Councillor Tommy McKeigue  
Councillor Molly Buckley  
Councillor Laurence Byrne  
Councillor Joseph Coughlan

**CONFERENCES COMMITTEE:** Councillor Paddy Rowland  
Councillor Laurence Byrne  
Councillor Richard Egan  
Councillor Joseph Coughlan

**OFFALY STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE** Cllr Paddy Rowland  
Cllr Joseph Coughlan

## **LIST OF MEETINGS OF TULLAMORE TOWN COUNCIL HELD in 2007**

|                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| January Monthly Meeting   | 4 <sup>th</sup> January 2007    |
| February Monthly Meeting  | 7 <sup>th</sup> February 2007   |
| March Monthly Meeting     | 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2007      |
| April Monthly Meeting     | 11 <sup>th</sup> April 2007     |
| May Monthly Meeting       | 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2007       |
| June Monthly Meeting      | 14 <sup>th</sup> June 2007      |
| July Monthly Meeting      | 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2007      |
| September Monthly Meeting | 11 <sup>th</sup> September 2007 |
| October Monthly Meeting   | 11 <sup>th</sup> October 2007   |
| November Monthly Meeting  | 8 <sup>th</sup> November 2007   |
| December Monthly Meeting  | 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2007  |

## **THE TOWN COUNCIL WAS REPRESENTED AT THE FOLLOWING CONFERENCES:**

AMAI (Letterkenny)  
Local Government & Arts (Donegal)  
Getting A Grip (Killarney)  
National Tourism Conference (Clare)  
Chambers Ireland Awards  
Kerry Life Education Ltd.  
Clare Tourism Conference  
Sport & Leisure Development  
AMAI (Cavan)  
Ireland Community Awards (Dublin)  
LAMA (Arklow)  
Planning Seminar (Waterford)  
ACCC Conference (Dundalk)  
Local Housing Service (Leitrim)  
LAMA (Kilkenny)  
Liable & Slander Conference (Tralee)

Ant-Social Behavior (Carrick-on-Suir)  
Modern Building Conference  
Substance Abuse (Killarney)  
Seminar For Councillors (Waterford)  
The Regional Authority NDP 2007 (Ennis)  
Colmcille Winter School (Donegal)  
Infrastructure Summit (Dublin)

**Performance Indicators:**

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

# BIRR TOWN COUNCIL

## COMHAIRLE BHAILE BHIORRA

The Urban District of Birr comprises approximately 1,500 acres and has a population of approximately 3,355.

**Members of the Council are:** Councillor Michael Loughnane, 13 Meadowville, (Chairman 2007)  
Councillor John Carroll, The Ring, Birr.  
Councillor Tony McLoughlin, Main Street, Birr  
Councillor Sean Doorley, 3 Meadowville, Birr.  
Councillor Seamus Fanneran, Whiteford, Birr  
Councillor Ann Hynes-Spain, Corr na Meala, Birr  
Councillor Michael Campbell, Woodlands Park, Birr  
Councillor Denis Sheils, Ely Place, Birr  
Councillor Noel Russell, 30 Pound Street, Birr

**Monthly Meetings:** Monthly meetings of the Council are held at 7.00pm on the second Monday of each month.

**Representatives to Various Bodies:** *Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland:*  
Councillors N. Russell and S. Fanneran.

**Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurance Ltd:**  
Councillor M Campbell.

**Offaly Vocational Education  
Committee:**

Sr. Anne, McAuley Drive, Birr  
and  
Councillor J. Carroll

**Oxmantown Hall Committee:**

Councillors A. Spain and S.  
Doorley

**Birr Town Council/Chamber of  
Commerce:**

Cllr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach;  
Cllr. S. Doorley and Cllr. M.  
Loughnane

**Environmental Policy SPC:**

Cllr. Michael Loughnane

**Transportation &  
Infrastructure SPC:**

Cllr. Tony McLoughlin

**Offaly County Council  
Conference Committee:**

Cllr. John Carroll

**Offaly County Enterprise  
Board:**

Cllr. John Carroll

**Offaly County Development  
Board:**

Cllr. Tony McLoughlin

**Senior Staff:** Director of Services:  
Michael Roche  
Town Engineer: John Cunningham  
Town Clerk: Mary Gaughran

## **SERVICES PROVIDED**

### **Housing and Building:**

As at 31 December 2007 there are 187 rented houses in Birr together with a six bay residential caravan park at Croghan Road, Birr. Forty-six of these are Special Category (for Elderly or Disabled Persons).

The construction of 23 dwellings at Scurragh is near completion.

### **Road Transportation and Safety:**

Birr Town Council is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of approximately 10 km of urban roads and streets, including footpaths. Offaly County Council is responsible for the provision and maintenance of the National Secondary and Regional Routes through the town.

### **Development Incentives and Controls:**

The Council's Development Plan sets out a framework for the physical development of the town to ensure that growth may take place in a coordinated and orderly manner, while at the same time conserving the intrinsic character and amenities of the town. The Council adopted the Development Plan for Birr and Environs 2004 on 31 May 2004.

The Council received 38 valid planning applications during 2006.

### **Environmental Protection:**

Waste Disposal Facilities for County Offaly are located at Derryclure, Tullamore only. The domestic refuse collection service is operated by private contractors.

A Traffic/Litter Warden has been employed to deal with the enforcement of the provisions of the Litter Pollution Act.

### **Recreation and Amenity:**

The Council maintains a considerable area of open space in Birr & manages the playground at Wilmer Road.

**Welfare:**

The Council funds the provision of school meals in conjunction with the Department of Social Welfare.

**Details of Expenditure on promotion of interests of local community.**

Birr Town Council sponsored the following special events/initiatives in 2006:

|                              |        |
|------------------------------|--------|
| Christmas Lights             | €1,500 |
| Ely O'Carroll                | €1,000 |
| Birr Swimming Pool           | €4,00  |
| Heritage Towns of Ireland    | €1,500 |
| Vintage Week                 | €4,460 |
| Birr Theatre and Arts Centre | €3,000 |

**Civic Receptions/Special Events**

In September 2006, Birr Town Council in conjunction with the Birr Historical Society held a reception to celebrate the acquisition of the facsimile of the *Macregol Gospels*.

**Retirements:**

Mr. Jackie Cahill, Town Foreman retired from Birr Town Council after over forty years of loyal service.



## EDENDERRY TOWN COUNCIL

### **Town Councillors:**

Councillor Patricia Brady, Fine Gael  
Councillor Brian Carroll, (Leas Cathaoirleach), Fianna Fáil  
Councillor Noel Cribbin, Fianna Fáil  
Councillor John Foley, Fianna Fáil  
Councillor Liam Hogan, Fine Gael  
Councillor Fergus McDonnell Progressive Democrats  
Councillor Jim Murrin Non-Party  
Councillor Finian O'Neill, (Cathaoirleach), Fianna Fáil  
Councillor John Quinlan, Fianna Fáil

Monthly meetings of the Councillors are held on the second Wednesday of each month in the Town Hall, Edenderry.

Edenderry Area Manager/Director of Services - Frank Heslin

Senior Executive Engineer/Town Engineer - Damien Grennan

Town Clerk - Olwen Cooney

### **Representatives of Various Bodies:**

Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland - Councillor Brian Carroll and Councillor Liam Hogan

Edenderry Town Commissioners became known as Edenderry Town Council with effect from 1st January, 2002. Edenderry is the second largest town in Offaly and has experienced huge growth in the last five years. Edenderry Town Council is involved in a broad range of services.

The Urban District of Edenderry encloses an area of 1,959 acres. The town's proximity to the greater Dublin area and recent improvement in road connections has encouraged people to settle here, resulting in a significant growth in the population.

As part of the restructuring under the Better Local Government Programme the Town Hall, Edenderry has become a focal point for the delivery of all County Council services to the people of Edenderry and it's hinterland.

During the year the Councillors were actively involved in the promotion of all aspects of life in Edenderry. To this end, a contribution was given to Edenderry Tidy Towns of €5,000 from Edenderry Town Council for the May street festival activities. This festival marked the official opening of the new Edenderry Street Scape which Edenderry Town Council contributed €27,300 from their special project fund which had accumulated from successive years. This festival was a tremendous success and provided professional street entertainment, local artist who performed on the day were Coral Group, local Edenderry drama group, local Irish dancers, local Secondary schools who won All Irelands in football paraded their cups and medals, European food fair took place, a bucket collection was held and all contributions given to local Lourdes fund, Radio 3 broadcast live from Edenderry on the day. Reception held at Edenderry Town hall where refreshments were served.

The traditional lighting of the Christmas lights and tree occurred at the Town hall in December with a magical Santa and sleigh for all the children with gifts for all.

Disclosure of Donation Statements and Declarations of Interest Returns were made by all members of Edenderry Town Council.