

Annual Report

Tuarascáil Bhliantúil
2008



Offaly Local Authorities

Údaráis Áitiúil Úibh Fhailí



Offaly Local Authorities Annual Report 2008

JOINT ADDRESS BY THE CATHAOIRLEACH AND COUNTY MANAGER



**Councillor Barry Cowen
Cathaoirleach**



**Pat Gallagher
Bainisteor Chontae**

We are very pleased to present the 2008 Annual Report for Offaly Local Authorities. The report details services provided by the Council, its elected members, staff and departments.

None of our readers will need to be reminded that 2008 saw a dramatic change in the prevailing economic climate. As a consequence, the revenue available to local government in order to deliver its services has come under increasing pressure, necessitating a reduction in costs (including payroll). In circumstances such as these it becomes even more important that management, staff and elected members in the local authorities focus on delivering cost effective services and on the prudent deployment of available resources to ensure that acceptable levels of public services continue to be provided to all the Council's customers.

The scale and diversity of work carried out by the various departments is evident in the report. Some of the more noteworthy projects undertaken or commenced in 2008 include:

- The construction of the N52 Tullamore By Pass commenced in March 2008. The scheme consists of 13.5kms of carriageway. It is anticipated that the works will be completed prior to the contract completion date of August 2010.
- The delivery of a County Development Plan which sets out the overall strategy for the proper

planning and sustainable development of County Offaly over the next six (6) years. It sets out the land use and amenity objectives and policies of the Council. The Draft County Development Plan went on display in February 2008. Over four hundred (400) submissions were received. The County Manager's Report on these submissions was circulated to the members in July 2008 and a number of Council meetings on the plan were held. Amendments to the draft plan were put on public display and submissions were invited on the amendments. At the end of 2008 the adoption of the County Development Plan was imminent. The preparation of the Tullamore and Birr Town and Environs Development Plans also commenced.

- The assumption of responsibility, in April 2008, by Offaly County Council for the Water Service function of Tullamore and Birr Town Councils.

- The hosting of a civic reception to honour the new Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen, T.D., on 20 May 2008 at Áras an Chontae.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the elected members, management and staff for their commitment, co-operation and valuable contribution to the delivery of the Council's services in 2008. Over the coming years, we look forward to the implementation of the County Development Plan and ensuring the future development of the economic, social and cultural life of County Offaly.

Barry Cowen
Cathaoirleach

Pat Gallagher
Bainisteoir Chontae



Tullamore Leisure Centre opened October 2008

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ROAD TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY

NATIONAL ROADS

The 2008 allocation for National Primary Roads Maintenance was adequate following ongoing pavement improvements of recent years.

No allocation was received for pavement/overlay/improvements on National Primaries in 2008. The National Primaries in the county, N6 and N7, have been improved over the years with successive widening/overlay projects and are presently in a satisfactory condition.

The NRA continued their allocation (€50,000 in 2008) towards structural pavement assessments to be carried on the N52, N62 and N80. These assessments help to identify and prioritise the sections of the National Secondary road network that require improvements. The results of the study form part of the submission by Offaly County Council to the NRA requesting funding of the following years National Road Improvement Schemes.

Construction of the **N52 Tullamore By Pass** by Graham/PT McWilliams JV commenced in March 2008. The scheme consists of 11.0 Kms of standard single carriageway, 2.5 Kms of non standard wide single carriageway and 12 principal structures. Contract completion date is August 2010.

Construction of the **M7 Castletown to Nenagh Motorway** scheme by Bowen Somague JV commenced in January 2008. The scheme is 36 Kms long with 54 structures including 3 river crossings. The expected completion date is September 2010. The opening of this scheme will result in approximately 13.00 Kms of the present N7 National Primary road that passes through County Offaly, being by-passed.

Stage 2 of the **M6 Kilbeggan to Athlone Motorway** was constructed by Ascon Civil Engineering Ltd and opened in July 2008. The scheme involved 29.0 Kms of Motorway, 19 principal structures and 3 grade separated junctions. Approximately 7.00 Kms of this motorway passes through County Offaly and resulted in the old N7 being re-classified as a non-national road.

National Secondary Major Schemes

Route	Description of Works	2008 €
N52	Tullamore Bypass	30,000,000
N52	Kilbeggan to Tullamore	200,000
	TOTAL	30,200,000

Tullamore By-Pass

Construction of the Tullamore By-Pass by Graham/PT McWilliams JV commenced in March 2008. Despite the poor weather conditions throughout the year, progress to-date has been reasonable and the target completion date under the Contract of Q3 2010 is unaffected. Disruption to motorists and the general public on the existing road network has been kept to a minimum.

N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link

In March 2007 the NRA approved the recommendation of the Route Selection Report that the Green Route be adopted as the Preferred Route Corridor. An allocation of €200,000 was received from the NRA towards progressing this scheme to the next stage in 2008. During the year, Offaly County Council sought expressions of interest for the provision of Engineering Consultancy services for the progression of this scheme through the planning, CPO and preliminary/detailed design stages towards Construction Phase. This process was completed and resulted in Offaly County Council making a recommendation to the NRA for the appointment of the successful Consultancy firm to progress the scheme in 2009.

National Secondary Pavement and Minor Improvement

The following table indicates the percentage of Minor Improvement Works (Overlays) carried out over the past 3 years on the National Secondary Network: -

Year	Length (Km)	% of N.S. Network
2006	6.50	5.00
2007	9.60	8.00
2008	4.55	3.76

The allocation for minor improvement works in 2008 of €970,000 was down significantly on the 2007 allocation of €2,523,000 and this resulted in a substantial drop in length of National Secondary road improved.

Road Improvement Works carried out on the National Secondary Network in **2008** include the following schemes: -

Road No.	Location	Length (Km)
N80	Killeigh to Tullamore at Derryclure	1.50
N80	Clara to Tullamore - Ashfield	1.00
N62	Woodfield Birr	0.75
N62	Doon to Ballinahown	1.30
	TOTAL	4.55

All the above schemes involve elements of road improvements such as: -

- Widening
- Pavement strengthening and overlay

The Pedestrian Bridge over the river Brosna in Ferbane is due to proceed to construction in early 2009. Planning, design, land acquisition and tendering procedures were completed in 2008.

National Primary and Secondary Safety Measures

The National Primary and National Secondary Safety Measures allocations allowed for the following works to be **completed in 2008**: -

- Improved road markings at the N80 Moate Road Clara
- Reinstatement of road markings at N52 Arden Road Tullamore.
- Alterations to slow lane at N62 Corr Hill
- Safety Barriers at N62 Mooneys Bridge Derrinlough
- Design of Traffic Calming schemes at Scrubb Cross Killeigh, Doon & Egligh.

All these schemes will have positive safety implications for both motorists and pedestrians using the National Secondary Road network in County Offaly.

NON-NATIONAL ROADS

The 2008 Estimates included a figure of **€1,535,000** from the **Council's own resources** for maintenance of Non-National roads, an increase of approximately €30,000 over the 2007 figure.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ROADWORKS

The Council is allowed to spend up to 7½% of the total allocation for restoration maintenance/reconstruction on 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. A number of cul-de-sac roads will be considered under this programme at the Area Committees. The allocation for this category of work was €300,000 in 2008 and is expected to be approximately €300,000 for the County or €75,000 per Area in 2009. A limited number of schemes were completed under this heading in 2008.

NON-NATIONAL ROADS-SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS & SPECIAL GRANTS

The following works were carried out in 2008 under the Specific Grant Allocation: -

- Land Acquisition negotiations completed for Phase 2 of Banagher Link Road from Lusmagh Road to Crank Road in Banagher.
- Land acquisition completed and Part VIII planning procedure commenced for a section of the Inner Relief Road in Edenderry.
- Pavement improvements carried out on sections of the Kinnity to Roscrea Road R421
- Feasibility Study completed on the Cloneygowan By-Pass and forwarded to the Department of Transport for approval to proceed to next stage.
- Progressed Design and Planning of the Clara Relief Road.
- Completed Bridge Strengthening works to Digby Bridge Tullamore and Corcorans Bridge Rahan.

ACCIDENT IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

The following schemes were carried in 2008: -

AREA	LOCATION	2008 €
All Areas	Junction Definition Posts	20,000
Ferbane	Lumcloom Cross – Warning Signs	15,000
Birr	Mt. St. Josephs–Junction Improvement	30,000
Ferbane	Corcorans Bridge – Warning Signs and Safety Barriers	20,000
All Areas	Six Narrow Bridges – Warning Signs	18,000
Birr	Barna Junction – Roadmarkings and warning signs	15,000
Tullamore	St O’Hara’s R421 – Warning Signs	5,000
Edenderry	Kilcappagh Junction – Warning Signs	5,000
Ferbane	Rath Junction – Design & Construction	30,000
Birr	Anglers Rest – Warning Signs	15,000
	Total	173,000

MULTI-ANNUAL ROADS RESTORATION PROGRAMME

During 2007 the DOEHLG requested all Local Authorities to submit a 3-Year programme from **2008 to 2010**. Offaly County Councils submitted a list of schemes under the 3-Year programme with an estimated yearly expenditure of **€5,369,000**. This indicates an increase in excess of €1.0 M per annum on the **2006 to 2008 Plan** of **€4,392,003**. The 2007 and 2008 allocation under this grant was €5,369,000. The substantial funding under this programme allowed for significant road improvement schemes to be carried out in 2008. Delays did occur in the tendering process as a result of familiarity with the new Fixed Price Contract Documents introduced by the Department of Transport/Finance in 2008. This resulted in some road improvement schemes being started and completed late into the year.

PARKING BYE-LAWS

Parking Bye-Laws were adopted by the elected members for the towns of Kilcormac, Banagher, Ferbane and Edenderry and these were brought into force at the end of 2008.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Health and Safety in relation to road-works remained high on the agenda of the County Council executive in 2008 and will continue to do so in 2009. Compliance with Health and Safety Legislation can add as much as 15% onto the cost of a road-works scheme. This resulted in a reduction in the improved section of road completed. Health and Safety training is mandatory for all staff (indoor and outdoor) and is a continuous part of Offaly County Council’s training programme. This training is organised by the Health and Safety Officer and is a strain on scarce financial resources.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

Allocation in 2008 was **€200,900**. This allowed seven schemes to be completed in 2008.

CLAR/DOELG - ROADS AND BRIDGES PROJECTS CO-FUND 2008

An allocation of €50,122 was received under this scheme in August 2008 works on Local Secondary and Local Tertiary Roads and Bridges in CLAR areas. Five road schemes were completed as follows:

- Broughal, Ferbane - 750 metres of local secondary road.
- Hinds, Ferbane - 250 metres of local secondary road
- Templeharry – Birr 400 metres of local tertiary road
- Cangort/Barna – Birr – 200 metres of local tertiary road
- Croghan – Edenderry – 500 metres of local tertiary road.

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Four meetings of the Roads and Infrastructure SPC were held during 2008. A policy document on unauthorised vehicles on public roads was presented to the Strategic Policy Committee. The 2005 Taking in Charge of residential developments policy was revisited and updated in accordance with recommendations from the Department of the Environment.

During the year other issues discussed at the SPC Meetings were:-

- Public Lighting
- 2020 vision – sustainable travel and transport.
- Canal Bridges
- Traffic Calming
- Local Improvement Schemes
- Access Audit
- Major Emergency Plan.

ROAD SAFETY

Two meetings of the 2008 Traffic and Safety sub-committee were held in 2008. Items discussed as follows:-

- Production of a Road Safety Strategy for the County.
- Distribution of high visibility clothing to vulnerable categories such as elderly and school going children.
- Promote road safety education in primary schools. Placing road safety messages in local papers and local credit unions.

Quarterly meetings between the Gardai, Area Engineers and Road Design Staff commenced in 2008. Two meetings were held to date and issues discussed related to the following: - Traffic Management and Low Cost safety schemes proposed by Offaly County Council, Signs and lining, Accident reporting, Winter Maintenance, Safety at Schools, Road Works Speed Limits, Parking By-Laws, Tullamore By-Pass, any other issues common to Gardai and County Council staff.

The following **specific road safety initiatives** were undertaken in 2008.

- Road Safety Calendar 2009 organised in conjunction with Garda Siochana Tullamore District. It involved twelve primary schools and over 80 children. The calendar was made up of art entries from the schools.
- Continuing to support **Junior School Warden Scheme** in four primary schools in the County.
- Promoting a '**Drive for Life Programme**' in transition year students in secondary schools.

NOTABLE EVENTS IN 2008

- Commencement of construction of the M7 Castletown to Nenagh Scheme by Bowen Somague JV in January 2008
- Commencement of construction of the N52 Tullamore By-Pass by Graham/PT McWilliams JV in March 2008.
- Opening of the M6 Kilbeggan to Athlone Motorway scheme in July 2008.
- Introduction of Parking By-Laws in Banagher, Edenderry, Ferbane, and Kilcormac.
- Major Flooding throughout the County in August.
- Recommendation to the NRA, in October, for the appointment of Consultants for the progression of the Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link Road.
- Land Acquisitions completed for Phase 2 of Banagher Link Road and Edenderry Inner Relief Road.
- Pedestrian Bridge over River Brosna in Ferbane ready to proceed to construction in 2009.



Aerial view of Mucklagh Roundabout & S02: Clodiagh Underbridge

• **FIRE SERVICE**

The aim of the Offaly County Council Fire Authority is to protect the public from fire and to preserve life and property. The Fire Service is an organisation established and maintained in accordance with Sections 9 and 10 of the Fire Services Act, 1981.

Offaly County Fire and Rescue Service provides a total fire service to the community 24 hours a day every day of the year.

FIRE SERVICE ACTIVITY IN 2008

In 2008 Offaly County Fire and Rescue Service attended 763 incidents, made up of 599 fire calls, 71 road traffic accidents, 77 special service calls and 16 false alarms. The response to these calls came from 8 stations located throughout the county.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

In 2008 the following vehicles were delivered with funding from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Offaly County Council:

- A new Class B Fire Appliances, located at Tullamore Fire Stations.
- A new Midi Fire Appliance, located in Daingean.
- A new Water Tanker located in Tullamore.

Requests are made on an on-going basis to the Department of the Environment for funds to replace existing appliances. Approval was sought and received in 2008 for a further fire appliance which is currently under construction and delivery is due in 2009.

Approval in principal was received from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government for a new fire station in Ferbane

TRAINING

It is the policy of the Fire Service to ensure that all fire fighters and officers receive the most up to date and comprehensive training to enable them to perform their duties in an effective, efficient and safe manner. The Courses / Training attended in 2008 included:

- Breathing Apparatus refresher training for each fire-fighter
- Specialist Driver Instructor Training
- Pump Operation and Maintenance
- Incident Command System
- Major Emergency Awareness
- Junior Officer Courses
- Senior Officer Fire Engineering & Command Courses
- Compartment Fire Behaviour

Defibrillators have been procured for the majority of fire stations, and training in their use provided. These have been provided in conjunction with the HSE as part of the Community First Responder Program.

During 2008 a Breathing Apparatus Training Facility was completed and was operational for training during the year. Ancillary accommodation and equipment is now in place to support the facility.

FIRE PREVENTION

PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS OF QUALITY SERVICE

There is a perceptible change in the expectations of the public for a quality service. Fire Safety/Prevention has grown in recent years with the introduction of new legislation and building control regulations. This work is mainly carried out by the Senior Officers of the Service. The Fire Service is particularly pre-eminent in this regard due to advertising campaigns, increased fire safety awareness and progressive legislation. More and more we receive requests for advice and assistance from the public. During 2008 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.

In 2008 all 3rd classes in primary schools in the county were visited and fire safety information given to students as part of the national community fire safety program.

FIRE SERVICES ACT 1981

Section 18 of this Act places specific responsibility on Fire Authorities to carry out inspections, list defects and remedial works required, assist in staff training programmes and tendering advice to the owners of premises. In 2008 239 inspections were carried out in 173 different premises.

FIRE SAFETY CERTIFICATES

Fire Safety Certificates have become a predominant part of the Service workload due to the increasing number and complexity of applications. There were 104 Fire Safety Certificate Applications referred to the Fire Service for appraisal and report in 2008. A significant amount of time spent is spent with consultations and pre-submission discussions with designers and applicants.

MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Along with local authorities in the Midland Major Emergency Management region, the Garda Siochana and Health Service Executive Offaly County Council was involved in the delivery of a Regional Major Emergency Plan prepared in 2008.

The Offaly Local Authorities Major Emergency Plan was prepared in accordance with the National Framework for Major Emergency Management, and adopted and published in September 2008.

SERVICE INDICATORS: For 2008		
F.1	Fire Service Mobilisation	
A	Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in full time stations in respect of fire	n/a
B	Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in part time stations (retained fire service) in respect of fire	5.71
C	Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Full-Time Stations in respect of all other emergency incidents	n/a
D	Average time taken, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in Part-Time Stations (retained fire service) in respect of all other emergency incidents	5.84
F.2	Percentage of Attendances at Scene	
A	Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance is at the scene within 10 minutes	47.66 %
B	Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance is at the scene after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	38.49%
C	Percentage of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance is at the scene after 20 minutes	13.85%
D	Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance is at the scene within 10 minutes	37.78%
E	Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance is at the scene after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	49.63%
F	Percentage of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance is at the scene after 20 minutes	12.59%
F.3	Fire Prevention	
A	Total number of fire safety certificate applications received	104
B	Total number of fire safety certificate applications processed (including cases deemed invalid)	114
C	Total number of applications deemed invalid	4



OFFALY CIVIL DEFENCE

Civil Defence in Offaly continued various aspects of training in 2008. Volunteers studied for and successfully took C.F.R. (Cardiac First Responder) courses, and are at the moment preparing for their exams in O.F.A. (Occupational First Aid) with a very high class attendance. During the year each member will re-sit their Defibrillator exams, in order to maintain their relevant qualification, so they can continue Medical/First Aid duty during the current year.

One of our A.F.S. (Auxiliary Fire Service) team members undertook his course, as Instructor in A.F.S. This course took place in Cork for a two weeks duration, and is certified by the Fire Council of Ireland, and achieved a very high mark.

Our Civil Defence teams provided cover to numerous duties, and logistical support to many community events throughout the County during the year, some of which were Kilcormac Ramblers New Year walk; St. Patrick's Day parades in Clara, Kilcormac and Tullamore; Tullamore Phoenix Festival; Birr Vintage Week; Annaharvey Pony Trials; Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann. A large amount of resources were put in place for An Taoiseach's homecoming both in Tullamore and Clara.

Civil Defence were also on duty for two days during the flooding, working in close co-operation with the Fire Service, and received letters of thanks from various bodies.

Members of Offaly Civil Defence also took part, and provided duty cover for the International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes, a highlight was duty cover for President Mary Mc.Aleese, and a letter of appreciation was delivered from her office thanking all personnel involved.

Anybody interested in joining the Civil Defence can contact the Civil Defence Officer, at the Central Fire Station, Tullamore.



Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen, T.D., Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, 10th May 2008

CORPORATE SERVICES

FUNCTIONS

The functions of the Corporate Services Section include:-

- 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 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 Section is the provision of a secretarial service for meetings of the County Council. The Annual Meeting of the Council took place in the Ferbane Heritage and Arts Centre on 16 June 2008. Councillor Barry Cowen was elected Cathaoirleach and Councillor John Carroll 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 (C.P.G.)

Cllr. Barry Cowen, 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 11 occasions during 2008.

Strategic Policy Committees (S.P.C.)

There are four Strategic Policy Committees 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.

PAYMENTS MADE TO MEMBERS IN 2008

Name	Representational Payment €	Monthly Allowance €	SPC Chairman's Allowance	Conference Expenses €	Chairman's Allowance €	Foreign Travel €
Noel Bourke	17,604	6,233.88		3,287.64		
Molly Buckley	17,604	4,987.04		5,022.36		
Johnny Butterfield	17,604	4,987.04		3,316.54		
John Carroll	17,604	6,545.60		4,620.22		
Percy Clendennen	17,604	5,818.27		5,913.36		
Marcella Corcoran-Kennedy	17,604	6,545.60		6,504.07		
Barry Cowen	17,604	4,987.04		Nil	15,315.01	3923.24
Dervil Dolan	17,604	4,987.04		Nil		
Eamon Dooley	17,604	5,818.27		4,592.45	13,089.95	7039.72
Thomas Feighery	17,604	5,298.75		3,624.63		
Eddie Fitzpatrick	17,604	5,402.65		5,189.31		
John Foran	17,604	6,233.88		Nil		
Michael Fox	17,604	4,987.04		4,020.63		
Connie Hanniffy	17,604	5,818.27		4,301.91		
Gerard Killally	17,604	6,129.98		4,512.33		
Fergus McDonnell	17,604	6,441.69		3,405.55		
Tommy McKeigue	17,604	4,987.04	6,000	2,411.97		
Tony McLoughlin	17,604	6,337.79	6,000	Nil		
Sinead Moylan Ryan	17,604	7,272.92	6,000	3,015.43		
Peter Ormond	17,604	7,584.64		3,844.69		
Danny Owens	17,604	4,987.04	6,000	4,763.20		
TOTAL	€369,684	€122,391.47	€24,000	€72,346.29		

CONFERENCES APPROVED FOR ATTENDANCE BY COUNCILLORS IN 2008

Conference	Date of Conference	Number of Delegates
Presentation of Atlantic Way	25 th January 2008	1
Failte Ireland East & Midlands Regional Indust. Briefing	5 th February 2008	1
Planning for Renewable Energy	7 th /8 th February 2008	1
AMAI Seminar	15 th /16 th February 2008	2
Antrim Tourism – 40 Shades of Green	1 st /2 nd February 2008	1
LAMA Annual Spring Seminar	27 th /28 th March 2008	8.
TASC & National Women’s Council Seminar	5 th /6 th March 2008	1
A.C.C.C.	6 th /8 th March 2008	5
LAMA Annual Spring Seminar	27 th /28 th March 2008	8.
National Planning Conference	2 nd /4 th April 2008	1
Future of the Irish Midlands, threats and opportunities	4 th April 2008	1
Where to now for Rural Housing	9 th April 2008	1
1916 Revolution on Betrayal	19 th April 2008	3
Planning Seminar for Councillors	25 th /26 th April 2008	1
Launch of National Network of Local Sport Partnership	23 rd April 2008	1
BMW Seminar	1 st May 2008	2
Local Gov. & the Environment	16 th -18 th May 2008	2
Integrated Area Planning Seminar	26 th May 2008	4
Local Government Housing Service Seminar	6 th /8 th June 2008	1
Bioenergy Conference	19 th June 2008	3
NYCI Consultation	24 th June 2008	1
JFK Symposium	28 th /29 th June 2008	1
6 th National Tourism conference	29 th June/4 th July 2008	1
Local Government Planning	4 th /6 th July 2008	1
The Baltimore Training Seminar for Councillors	4 th /5 th July 2008	2
Galway Film Festival	10 th /13 th July 2008	1
McGill Summer School	12 th /19 th July 2008	1
William Carlton Summer School	4 th /8 th August 2008	2
Parnell Summer School	10 th /15 th August 2008	3
The Local Government & Sustainable Economic Dev.	23 rd /25 th Aug 2008	2
AMAI Conference	10 th /13 th Sept 2008	5
Folklife Studies Annual Conference	18 th /21 st Sept. 2008	4,
Getting a Grip 2008	2 nd /3 rd October 2008	4
La Touche Legacy Seminar	3 rd /5 th October 2008	4
Local Government in Protecting our Water Services	9 th /11 th October 2008	1
The Blascaid Commemoration	10 th /12 th October 2008	1
Freedom of Information Seminar	10 th /11 th October 2008	1
Local Authority Financing	16 th /18 th October 2008	5
21 st Douglas Hyde Conference	17 th /19 th October 2008	6
Atlantic Corridor	23 rd October 2008	1
The Good Friday Agreement	24 th /25 th October 2008	1
Local Government Budget	31 st Oct/1 st Nov. 2008	2
Ceifin Conference	4 th /5 th November 2008	1
Public Relations & Communications	14 th /17 th November 2008	1
RIA Annual Conference	20 th /21 st Nov. 2008	1
Local Gov. Protecting our Water Services	21 st /23 rd Nov. 2008	2
LAMA Winter Conference	25 th /27 th Nov. 2008	6
National Tourism Conference	28 th /30 th Nov. 2008	1
Clare Tourism Conference	27 th /29 th Nov. 2008	6
Homelessness in Ireland	5 th /6 th Dec. 2008	1

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The numbers of applications received in 2008 under the Freedom of Information Acts 1997 - 2003 were as follows:

- 23 applications were received by Offaly County Council.
- No applications received by Birr Town Council.
- No applications received by Tullamore Town Council.
- No applications received by Edenderry Town Council.

THE OMBUDSMAN

10 complaints were received by the Ombudsman in 2008 in relation to Offaly County Council.

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

The Register of Electors was produced on the 1st February and came into force on 15th February 2008.

The total electorate for County Offaly for the 2008/2009 Register of Electors was 55,392 broken down over the local electoral areas as follows:

Birr	10,233
Edenderry	14,719
Ferbane	11,781
Tullamore	18,659
<i>Total on the Register</i>	<i>55,392</i>

HIGHER EDUCATION GRANTS

The total number of new Higher Education Grant awarded in the 2007/2008 academic year was 155, with a further total of 266 students qualifying for grant renewal.

€2,128,117 was spent on Higher Education Grants totaled in the 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 the Council to students and parents in County Offaly.

COUNTY CORONER

The total expenditure in 2008 was €71,001.42 (including salary) in respect of coroners inquests.

INTERNAL AUDIT FUNCTION

In March 2008 the Audit Committee was established by resolution of the Council. The external members were approved by the Council on the nomination of the Manager. Appointments to the committee are for the duration of the elected Council, with subsequent committees to be established within three months of the first meeting of the new Council. The Audit Committee in Offaly County Council consists of five members: Mr. Peter Scully, Chairman of the Committee; Mr. Brian Gunning; Mr. Paddy Hughes and Cllrs. Tom Feighery and Connie Hanniffy.

The Audit Committee has a role in promoting good accounting practices, ensuring better and more informed decision-making and improving the focus on value for money throughout the organisation. It also supports the work of the internal Audit Unit and advises the County Manager in relation to the operation and development of that Unit.

SERVICE INDICATORS

Corporate Services co-ordinate the annual return of data to the Local Government Management Services Board on the 42 Service Indicators for 2007. The section also facilitated a visit in June by a member of the Independent Assessment panel to verify returns on a number of the indicators from Housing, Planning, and Environment and data from the Town Councils.

PRESENTATIONS:

OIREACHTAS MEMBERS

The Management Team met members of the Oireachtas in April and September 2008. The presentation was co-ordinated by the section.

PERFORMANCE VERIFICATION GROUP

Staff also participated in, and helped to prepare, the presentation to the Performance Verification Group.

ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Access Audits for towns, villages and public building throughout the county were completed in late 2007. Recommended works arising from these audits were prioritised in 2008 and a number of works classified as *Priority 1* works have been completed. An Access Implementation Plan was completed by the Access Team. An Audit of our Information and Services was also completed. A consultation committee consisting of people with disabilities was formed with the assistance of staff from Community & Enterprise and the committee met twice while preparing the Access Plan.

SUPPORT WORKPLACE PARTNERSHIP

The Workplace Partnership Committee met 12 times in 2008. The membership of the committee changed as follows during the year:-

Ms. Geraldine Flattery, was replaced by Ms. Bridget Nee, as IMPACT representative on the Committee in March 2008;

Mr. Brendan Clarke, retired from the Committee in November 2008 to be replaced by Mr. Joe Coleman, as SIPTU – LAPO representative on the Committee. Brendan was one of the founder members of the Partnership Committee in Offaly Local Authorities and had served on the Committee since its inception in January 2000.

Mr. Paul Devaney joined the committee as a management nominee.

The Partnership Committee continued their discussion on the Reports of two Working Group's delivered to the Committee in December 2007, namely **Review of Work Life Balance Policies** and **Review of Public Opening Hours**. Offaly Local Authorities introduced the new Public Opening Hours on 3rd June 2008.

The Partnership Committee established a further Working Group to conduct a **Review of the Flexitime Scheme** which met 8 times between May and July 2008 and is continuing its work with Human Resources Section in establishing the **Employee Support Service** with a view to launching

the Service in early 2009.

Members of the Committee were involved in preparing the presentation to the Performance Verification Group in April 2008.

Two meetings of the High Level Group under the '**Handling Significant Change through Partnership**' protocol were held in April and October 2008.

The Partnership Committee endorsed the **Training and Development Plan 2008**; the Plan was developed in conjunction with the *Training and Development Strategy 2007 - 2009*.

The Partnership ethos in the organisation was highly commended by the assessors for the **Excellence Through People Award** awarded by FÁS to Offaly Local Authorities in June 2008.

CIVIC RECEPTION

A Civic Reception to honour the Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen, T.D. was held on 10 May 2008 at Áras an Chontae.



Taoiseach , Mr. Brian Cowen, T.D., Council Chamber, Áras an Chontae, 10th May 2008

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

During 2008 The Information systems department progressed a number of important elements of the Council's ICT Strategy. The most significant of these were:-

- Development of a comprehensive Implementation Plan for the rollout of the National HR/Payroll/Superannuation application which will be implemented during 2009.
- Securing of Government funding of €1.6m approx, under the Regional Broadband Scheme, to complete the Edenderry Metropolitan Area Network. A contractor was appointed in 2008 and the project is due for completion in early 2009.
- Completion of a Green Energy audit of our own ICT facilities, the results of which will form the basis of a proposed Server Virtualisation project and the introduction of Power Saving technology in 2009.
- Completion of Phase 1 of an ICT Disaster Recovery facility at the Fire HQ, which houses up to date copies of all the organisation's critical database applications.
- Implementation of the G-Plan mapping facility on www.offaly.ie
- Pilot implementation of OffalyEYES, an internal fault logging system which was conceived and developed in-house.



Sculpture in Lough Boora Parklands created by Patrick Doherty

HUMAN RESOURCES

FUNCTIONS

The Human Resources Section functions include staff recruitment and retention, workforce planning, staff welfare, staff leave, employee relations, industrial relations, training and development, performance management. The aim of the section 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.

In October the Management Team met with the local Trade Unions to discuss and outline the implications of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government circular advising that all Councils were to reduce payroll costs by 3%. Human Resources liaised with individual staff members and the unions while implementing the required measures.

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 2008, 18 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 2008	18
Number of applications received	662
Number of staff appointed	55

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Excellence Through People

Offaly Local Authorities successfully attained the FÁS *Excellence Through People* standard accreditation on its first attempt in June 2008. The FÁS assessors met with over seventy employees during the process and the Council was awarded an overall mark of 87%. Eight business areas were examined in detail:-

- Business Planning and Quality Improvement
- Effective Communication and People Involvement
- Leadership and People Management
- Planning of Learning and Development
- Training and Life Long Learning
- Review of Learning
- Recruitment and Selection
- Employee Wellbeing

The *Excellence Through People* application process helped embed the Performance Management Development Systems (PMDS) which was introduced into the Authority in 2007.

In excess of 250 training and development courses were delivered during 2008. 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

The Human Resources Section encouraged and assisted 45 employees to pursue further relevant third level education courses.

The 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.

An Employee Assistance Programme was established in co-operation with the Workplace Partnership Committee. Two Employee Support Advisors were appointed and it is anticipated that the scheme will be officially launched in 2009.

RETIREMENT

The following staff retired during 2008 after many years of dedicated service to the people of Offaly:

Ray Kennedy, Ganger/Semi Skilled 11	John Mellsop, Retained Firefighter
Ray Carroll, Senior Executive Officer	Anne Coughlan, County Librarian
Michael deForge, Town Foreman, Birr	Patrick O'Neill, Revenue Collector
Denis Cunningham, Chief Fire Officer	Joseph Rabbette, Water & Sewerage Caretaker
Liam Hennessy, Senior Staff Officer	

SERVICE INDICATORS

C.1 Percentage of working days lost to sickness absence through certified and uncertified sick leave	5.05%
C.2 Expenditure on Training and Development as a % of Total Payroll Costs	6.75%

ACCESS

Access to library services was enhanced with the extension of opening hours at Daingean Library from 12 hours to 15 hours. This raised the number of opening hours per week at libraries countywide to 201.5 hours.

Clara Library

Work began on the refurbishment of Clara Library and on the new Clara Bog Interpretative Centre in August. Temporary library facilities have been provided at The Square, Clara.

Libraries On-Line

Usage of computer applications increased 53% on the 2007 figure. There was widespread use of the broadband internet access available in all libraries countywide, although usage was not as high as in 2007. With a network of 53 public internet points countywide, the County Library Service is well positioned to support delivery of on-line services including e-government.

Schools Library Service

The Department of Education and Science contributed over €43,000 for the purchase of stock for primary schools. The County Library Service's Schools Department provides library services to over 9,500 children in the 68 primary schools. Each school was visited by library staff to promote and provide services. 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 selecting books during a visit by Offaly County Library's Schools Service to their school.

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 authors visits was organised. Ten published Irish authors met over 1,000 children from 35 schools in the course of 33 visits countywide. The visiting authors were: Ann

Carroll, Aubrey Flegg, Jon Berkeley, June Considine, Pauline Devine, Peter Regan, Maeve Friel, Tom McCaughren, Kate McMahon and John Quinn.



Internationally published author and illustrator Jon Berkeley holds a captive audience from Pullough and Mountbolus National Schools during his visit to Tullamore Library, 22nd April 2008, as part of Offaly County Library's 2008 Cultural Programme.

The *Mo Chéad Leabhar* reading initiative was launched in September by Councillor Barry Cowen, Cathaoirleach, Offaly County Council, providing a book for each of the 1,200 pupils starting junior infants in the county, at a cost of €10,000. There was a very enthusiastic response to this project, the aim of which is to foster a love of books and libraries in the young person.

(“ we think this a wonderful project ... the joy and delight on the faces of our Junior Infants was a joy to see when they received their books”)

(“ we believe that it will encourage and help our children to have a positive exposure to books and to help in developing their reading skills”)

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 Festival T-Shirt” competition was held as part of the festival celebrations, and almost 600 entries were received. The winner in the 10 years and under category was Emma O'Connor of Tullamore, and the winner in the 11 years and over category was Emily Carroll of Tullamore. Each winner received €50 book tokens, and were presented with their prize at their local library.

EXHIBITIONS HELD THROUGHOUT OUR BRANCH LIBRARY NETWORK

- Community Art exhibitions took place at Banagher, Birr, Daingean, Edenderry, Ferbane, Kilcormac and Tullamore

PUBLICATIONS LAUNCHED IN 2008 IN ASSOCIATION WITH OFFALY COUNTY LIBRARY

- *Caulfield* by Philip Lumley launched at Tullamore Library by Mr. Brian Cowen, TD, Tánaiste and Minister for Finance, in February 2008
- *Drinking the Colour Blue* by Eileen Casey launched at Birr Library in August 2008

CULTURE & OUTREACH EVENTS

- Broadcaster Ryan Tubridy visited Birr Library in January and subsequently praised the library on his radio programme
- The successful Birr Library Lecture series took place. Lectures were as follows:
George Cunningham *For the love of books: A bookman in Ely O'Carroll*
Paul Rouse *The first All-Ireland final*
- Meetings of Offaly Writers Group at Tullamore and Birr libraries
- Bookclubs organised by library staff at Tullamore, Edenderry and Birr libraries
- 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

Official naming of Violet Doolin Room

This room was officially named at Birr Library on 30th May 2008 in memory of Violet Doolin, Birr Librarian 1942-1991. The Doolin Room is the centre for children's storytelling at Birr Library.

ANNUAL STATISTICS 2008

Membership – 10,854

Loans (books and media) – 214,357

PC and Internet hours – 17,995

Number of school visits to branch libraries – 125

Exhibitions and Activities– 146

SERVICE INDICATORS 2008

Indicators (Population figure used is 70,868)	2008
Library Public Opening Hours	
A. Average number of opening hours per week for full-time libraries	34
B. Average number of opening hours per week for part-time libraries (where applicable)	14
C. Percentage (%) of full-time libraries that have lunchtime openings.	33%
D. Percentage (%) of full-time libraries that have evening openings.	100%
E. Percentage (%) of full-time libraries that have Saturday openings.	100%
Number of full-time libraries that have lunchtime openings.	1
Number of full-time libraries that have evening openings.	3
Number of full-time libraries that have Saturday openings.	3
Number of visits to full-time libraries per 1,000 population	1,387
Total number of visits to full time libraries	98300
Library Stock	
A. Annual expenditure on stock per head of population (county/city wide)	3.42
Number of items issued per head of population (county/city wide) for:	
B. Books	3.1
C. Other items	0.16
Raw Data required to be submitted to LGCSB	
Annual expenditure on stock	€242,448
Total number of books issued	219117
Total number of other items issued	11213
Internet Access through Libraries	
Number of internet sessions provided per 1,000 population	162.9
Total number of Internet sessions provided	11547

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 – 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 out citizens".

THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2008 CAN BE SUMMARISED AS:



Launch of FilmOffaly

Launch of FilmOffaly

Offaly County Council's Film Commission aims to promote Offaly as a location for film and TV production. The impact of the Film Commission is to create a national profile of Offaly to influence regeneration, tourism and the economy. The main tool of the Film Commission is a website www.filmoffaly.ie

Lough Boora Sculpture in the Parklands

The Council funded Sculpture in the Parklands to develop a programme in collaboration with The International Peat Congress in Tullamore. American sculptor Patrick Dougherty created a piece using 100 tonnes of willow with 20 artists assisting him over a three week period. *Peatlands* an exhibition of work inspired by the Peatlands by Irish and International artists, was launched by Prof. David Bellamy in Áras an Chontae in June. The programme received much national media attention inc. RTE, Irish Times etc.

Public Art

An Offaly Local Authorities Public Art Working Group assessed the per cent for art scheme in Offaly and presented Management Team with a draft public art policy and recommendations for development of the *Per Cent for Art* scheme in Offaly.

The per cent for art scheme in relation to the Tullamore Bypass was progressed and applications were sought from artists to create an innovative response to Offaly's rich monastic heritage. The budget was €85,000 and 34 applications were received. 4 were shortlisted and their models went on display for public comment. The winning applicant was Maurice Harron who proposed 4 X 5m high steel figures each holding aloft a symbol of Offaly's heritage. The sculptures will be placed on the

Durrow end of the bypass in September 2009.

Birr Theatre and Arts Centre

The Arts section worked in partnership with the centre on developing the **Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival** and supporting **Legitimate Bodies Dance Company** to deliver a community dance programme for young people and adults. **Offaly Youth Dance Company** performed at the Wexford Festival of Youth Dance in November.

Belmont Mills

Funding went to Belmont Mills towards 4 artist's bursaries, 2 international and international, Eoin O'Connail, Laura Fitzgerald (Dublin) and Justin Waldstein and Karen Weiner (US).

Arts in Health

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

1. Postcard packs circulated nationally of images created by participants
2. Arts Council Funding to create a short film on the project which will be circulated nationally and internationally on the film festival circuit.

Support to Artists Scheme

21 artists received financial support under this scheme to assist them with materials purchase, exhibition costs or research time. Writer Jean O'Brien received the Tyrone Guthrie Bursary to spend two weeks at Annamacarrig and artists Brendan Fox, Jock Nichol and Siobhan Bulfin received solo exhibitions in Áras an Chontae.

Drama Awards

10 drama groups and musical societies received funding for productions or equipment. Lisa Byrne (Birr Stage Guild), Patrick Brodder (Tubber Drama Group) and John Rossiter (Eden Drama Group) received bursaries to attend the Drama League of Ireland Summer School. Funding went to Birr Stage Guild to celebrate their 50th anniversary with a unique collaboration between Birr Boys School and Opera Theatre Ireland on a premier entitled Bug Off!

Festival Support

The Arts Office facilitated with funding, advice and promotional assistance to:

- The Shannonbridge Midsummer Music Festival
- Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival,
- The Phoenix Festival,
- Slievebloom Storytelling Festival
- Hullabaloo Children's Arts 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.

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.
- Kindermusic continues to develop in 9 centres as a music education programme for toddlers and parents, in conjunction with the VEC.
- Midlands Youth Orchestra collaborated with a Youth Orchestra from Bremen Germany.

Midland Master Classes were piloted as professional development opportunities for artists in the Midlands

ARTS IN EDUCATION



Floating Theatre in Daingean

Floating Theatre Company

In 2008 the Council continued a funding partnership with Waterways Ireland to increase the number of schools which could be visited by the floating theatre company. Daingean NS.

Tullamore Educate Together, Charleville NS, Ballinamere NS, Belmont, Highstreet N.S., Clonmacnoise N.S., and Banagher N.S participated with 360 students took part and approx 1000 people saw the performances.

Cups and Crowns Theatre Company

The Arts section subsidized this educational theatre company to facilitate workshops and performances in 5 primary schools in Offaly: Monasteroris NS, Birr Boys School, Geashill NS, Scoil Bhríde Clara and Scoil Mhuire Tullamore.

ARTS ACT GRANTS

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

YOUNG NOVELISTS

Novelist Caroline Barry worked with a youth creative writing group (14 to 18 years) in Edenderry 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 **The Idea and its Shadow** was launched in December.

SUPPORT AND INFORMATION SERVICE

The Arts Office provides support and information 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 2008

Total Population 70,604

Arts Act Grants

Number of Grants Paid	60
Total Budget	€17,895
Total value of grants per 1000 population	€253.45

Other Grants (Theatre, Festival, Awards Schemes etc)

Number of Grants Paid	48
Total Budget	€128,091
Total value of grants per 1000 population	€1,814.00

Programme Funding (Projects run by the Arts Service)

Total Budget	€103,013.80
Total value per 1000 population	€1,459.00

Other Arts Service Expenditure by OCC

(Salaries, office admin, publications, equipment etc)

Total Budget	€115,842
Total value per 1000 population	€1,640.72

Total Expenditure for the Arts in 2008 per 1000 population

Total Budget	€364,841.80
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Total value per 1000 population	€5,167.43
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Opening of the Open Submission Exhibition featuring works from Offaly Artists

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 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

Offaly County Council had a total housing stock of 914 units at the end of 2008. 119 allocations of social housing units were made to persons in need of housing in 2008 through a combination of our direct building programme, acquisition of Part V social units in private developments and turnkey developments, the purchase of second hand units and the allocation of casual vacancies.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Part V affordable units were acquired during 2008 in private housing developments in Clara and Cloghan. Output from this process reduced substantially with the economic downturn and this trend is expected to continue in 2009.



Affordable Houses: Glen Cumin, Shinrone and Heather Grove, Clara

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. 8 houses were sold under this scheme during the year

GRANTS FOR OLDER PERSONS AND PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY

The disabled persons grant scheme was discontinued at the end of 2007 and replaced by two new schemes, the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme and Mobility Aid Grant Scheme. However it was agreed by the council that the funding allocation in 2008 should be fully assigned to clearing the backlog of DPG's on hand. As a result all approved applications on hand had been cleared in full by the end of 2008. Over €1.2m was spent on the scheme and 92 grants were paid out. Approximately €40,000 was paid out to 14 older persons under the Essential Repairs Grant Scheme in 2007 also. This scheme was replaced during the year with the Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme which is an amalgamation of the ERG and the HSE Housing Aid for the Elderly scheme which has also been terminated. The new schemes incorporate means testing for the first time provide for increased grant amounts coupled with increased central government recoupment to the local authorities.

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

19 Residents Associations were assisted under our estate management grants scheme in 2008 at a cost of €10,000. Pre-tenancy training programmes were organised for all new tenants during the year. A community cabin was provided by the council during the year for the residents of Churchview Heights and Greenwood Park in Edenderry. The management of the facility is shared between the Council and OAK Partnership and has a management committee that meet regularly to agree on an activities programme. The facility is used by a number of local groups and state and voluntary agencies.

RENTAL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME (RAS)

RAS is increasingly becoming a realistic alternative to social housing allocations. The economic downturn has had a positive impact on this scheme with increased availability of high quality modern accommodation at lower costs than had previously been the case at the height of the property boom. Tullamore was the priority area for 2008 and will continue to be in 2009 as this is where the majority of eligible clients are situated. 80 clients had been signed up the scheme at the end of the year.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION

The Council meets the accommodation needs of the Travelling community in a number of different ways and these objectives are set out in an approved Traveller Accommodation Programme. 2008 saw the end of the current programme for the period 2005 – 2008 during which time 74 families were accommodated. During the year a new accommodation programme was drafted for the period 2009 – 2013 and underwent a public display process. The final adoption of the programme is scheduled for April 2009. The main objectives in the programme are the provision of three accommodation facilities in Tullamore environs and the extension of the existing halting site in Milbrook Park, Birr to incorporate a number of group houses. The balance of housing need will be met through a combination of standard social housing allocations, private rented accommodation and RAS.

HOUSING, SOCIAL & CULTURAL STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

This committee met 6 times during 2008 with an average attendance rate of 58%.

Policies, Programmes & Initiatives Reviewed & Discussed by SPC

- Playground Site Selection & Funding
- Timber Purchasing Policy (transferred to Environment SPC by CPG)
- Library Development Programme
- Rental Accommodation Scheme
- Sale of Private Sites Policy
- Application of amenity element of development levies
- Updating of Housing Tenancy Agreement
- Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended in 2002)

Policy Recommendations Made by SPC

- Establishment of an Offaly Film Commission
- Anti-Social Behaviour Policy
- Offaly Homeless Strategy
- Affordable Housing Points Scheme

Standing Items Considered and Discussed by SPC

- Homeless Forum
- Social Inclusion Measures Working Group
- Tullamore Library Project
- County Arts Facility

SUMMARY OF KEY ACTIVITIES IN 2008 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	6
No. of policy recommendations made	4

Making Offaly A Pleasant, Safe And Enjoyable Place To Live And Work

No. of grants approved for local authority residents associations	19
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Building Social Cohesion And Inclusion Within And Across The County

No. of homeless persons assisted with emergency accommodation	74
No. of DPG's paid	92
No. of ERG's paid	14
No. of social housing allocations	119
No. of Part V social and affordable units acquired	20
No. of tenant purchase transactions completed	8

Developing And Delivering Quality Services

Customer initiatives	Introduced housing assessment clinics on designated days for housing applicants enabling customers to make appointments
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Develop And Promote Effective Internal And External Communications Strategies

Initiatives to enhance communications	Participated in working group to update council's website and re-designed the housing element of same
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ENVIRONMENT AND VETERINARY

WASTE MANAGEMENT

DERRYCLURE LANDFILL

During 2008 the Council completed the capping and restoration of the old historical element of the landfill and this has had a significant impact on reducing emissions to the environment. The Council also commenced the installation of a temporary gas extraction system to reduce our gas emissions from the active cell. This work will be ongoing and should result in a decrease in the number of odour nuisances affecting local residents. Income targets were exceeded for the year

In November 2008 the Council submitted an application to the E.P.A. and to An Bord Pleanála to allow an increase in the annual tonnage intake. A decision is due in the second quarter of 2009. This increase will allow the Council to continue to operate the facility to the highest environmental standards in what has become a very competitive marketplace.

Pay-by-Weight facility for domestic customers was introduced in 2008; this initiative has reduced the cost of waste disposal for those who minimise the amount of waste sent for disposal.

RECYCLING FACILITIES

They are currently 47 bring banks in the County for glass and can recycling on private and public sites. Some private sites also have textile banks in place. In June 2008, new Civic Amenity Facility was opened in Syngefield in Birr and in Derryclure. These accept a wide range of materials for recycling and compliment our existing civic amenity facility in Edenderry.

As there is no mobile collection service for household hazardous waste, both of the new facilities make provisions for this type of waste. Charges apply for all waste brought to these facilities, with the exception of electrical items, glass packaging and batteries.

The Council continues to promote home composting through the sale of composting units as well as supporting local Tidy Towns and community initiatives through local grant aid.

WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN

In October 2008, the Council produced a report on our progress to date in implementing the plan. In November 2008, we published draft bye-laws on the "*Storage, Presentation, Segregation and Collection of Household Waste*". The adoption of these bye-laws will assist the Council in meeting its obligations under the Landfill Directive through the provision of a three bin collection system.

WASTE ENFORCEMENT

The Council continued to investigate all illegal waste activities and instigate legal proceedings as appropriate. A total of 179 on-the-spot fines for littering were issued to date. The new national waste permit regulations were implemented in June, these provide an all Ireland permitting facility and links waste permits to a grant of planning permission.

AWARENESS PROGRAMME

Offaly County Council has continued to actively promote environmental awareness both in the

community sector and schools. At present, there are 32 schools which have been awarded the Green Flag for environmental awareness. At a local level, information meetings for various community groups continue to be held and workshops on composting and recycling are facilitated for schools, which have proved to be very successful with positive feedback.

Contact with the Business Sector was initiated in 2008 with the publication of a regional booklet on waste management practices, titled 'Business guide to Wise Waste Management'. This will be used as the first step on promoting green business within the county.

PROTECTION OF NATURAL WATERS

WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

Offaly is affiliated to three River Basin Districts; namely the Shannon International River Basin District, Eastern River Basin District and South Eastern River Basin District, and have been involved in an extensive operational monitoring programme of the rivers and groundwater within the county.

The Council have identified point and diffuse source pressures within each river basin districts that may be contributing to the quality status of the surface waters. These pressures will be the basis of the Programme of Measures (POMs) set out in the Draft River Basin Management Plans to be issued for public consultation 22nd December, 2008.

PROTECTION OF GROUNDWATER

Percolation Site Suitability Assessments for domestic effluent treatment systems for proposed rural dwellings was undertaken by council staff, each application was processed within three weeks of the initial application.

Investigations of Zone of Contributions of Public Water Supply boreholes were carried out and prepared Aquifer Protection Plans; based on the perceived risk from agricultural, domestic, commercial and industrial activities to the groundwater quality.

DERELICT SITES

A review of all derelict sites on record was undertaken in 2008.

BURIAL GROUNDS

Following the agreement of the Members, the fees were increased to €400 for a single plot. The Council continue to implement the five-year programme with plans for new burial grounds in Lusmagh, Killeigh and Raheen being progressed.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Council participated in a number of initiatives with other counties in the region in the newly-formed Midlands Energy Agency to measure the carbon footprint of various activities for example the energy use of a number of water plants and Area offices.

ANIMAL CONTROL & WELFARE

STRAY ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICE

Offaly County Council's Veterinary section operates its dog and horses control service. This service aims to promote responsible animal ownership by taking the following initiatives:

- Collecting stray dogs / Taking in surrendered dogs
- Investigating sheep kills.
- Investigating nuisance caused by dangerous dogs or dogs not under proper control.
- Collecting stray horses on public or private land.

DISPOSAL OF FALLEN ANIMALS

These are becoming an increasing problem in the county. It is however, the statutory responsibility of Offaly County Council to dispose of animals dumped on public land.

FOOD SAFETY

Offaly County Council's Veterinary Department is responsible for carrying out functions in relation to Food Protection and Disease Control. It implements the terms and conditions of a Service Contract between the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and Offaly County Council in relation to the slaughter of food animals, and imposes statutory controls on the production of meat, meat products and poultry. Its principal functions in relation to food safety relate to small Slaughtering Premises, Slaughter House Approvals and Slaughter Man Licensing; approval and supervision of small meat manufacturing premises; and supervision and inspection of dairy production holdings.



Comhairle na nÓg: Knowing your Local Authority, Schools Initiative, Derryclure Landfill

WATER SERVICES

The delivery of Water Services throughout the county continues to expand, matching growth in demand due to high levels of economic activity. In addition, drinking water quality monitoring is ensuring positive improvements with the overall quality of drinking remaining above the National Average in Offaly.

The maintenance costs of Water Services continue to increase. The estimate for 2008 takes into account costs associated with:

- Increasing demand on both drinking water supplies and wastewater treatment.
- Increasing Energy costs. Offaly is very energy dependent because of the large number of small groundwater sources, compared with large regional schemes, which have better economies of scale. The large development in the group scheme area where connected to Council supply.
- Phosphate removal.
- The development of new Sewage Treatment Plants, where previously a lower standard, if any, treatment existed.
- Disposal of water treatment and wastewater treatment sludges. This continues to be major cost because of transport and strenuous environmental regulation of disposal options. In 2008, it will no longer be possible to dispose of any sludge in the landfill. Alternative disposal options are being sought with a consequent risk of further cost increases as other LA's compete for the same disposal options.
- Sampling of drinking water supplies to comply with Drinking Water Regulations.
- The expanded role of the Local Authority as a Regulatory Authority for Group Schemes and Small Private supplies under the new Drinking Water Regulations.
- Sampling of the wastewater treatment plants to comply with relevant environmental legislation.

Water Services maintenance has a high element of "fixed costs" in the form of power, chemicals and payroll and the degree of flexibility in expenditure is limited. Offaly has a large number of small water sources and treatment plants, long lengths of Rural watermain, and small Village Treatment Plants. Consequently, the provision of Water Services is relatively expensive due to the lack of Economies of Scale which could be achieved through having larger Regional Schemes. This issue can only be addressed through Infra-Structure Development.

In April 2008, Offaly Co. Council took over the Water Services Function of Tullamore and Birr Town Councils.

NEW LEGISLATION

In 2007, three major pieces of Legislation in the Water Services area were introduced, and implementation of the all the legislation was commenced in Offaly during 2008 as required.

1. S.I. 278 of 2007- European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulations 2007

These regulations have bestowed additional duties on Local Authorities, and will potentially

cost €450,000 per year from 2008, if fully implemented. Local Authorities are now required to act as Regulatory Authorities for Group Schemes and Small Private Supplies (SPS). There is now more onerous reporting of non-compliances to the EPA, and Local Authorities may be directed by the EPA to take corrective actions. Local Authorities will be prosecuted for breach of the Regulations.

Implementation in 2008:

- (i) Monitoring of known Small Private Supplies commenced.
- (ii) All non-compliances on public schemes notified to the EPA, and remedial action commenced as required.
- (iii) Non-Compliances on Group water schemes are being investigated and monitored.

These activities will be continued in 2009.

2. S.I. 684 of 2007- Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007

Under these regulations, all discharges from Sewerage Schemes have to be licenced by the EPA. The licence application fee ranges from €3000 for schemes less than 500PE, to €30,000 for schemes greater than 10,000PE. These regulations are being introduced on a phased basis from 2007 to 2010, beginning with plants greater than 10,000 PE. The licensing process will cost OCC €1.3m over the next three years, and subsequent licensing conditions are likely to cost a further €1m, bringing the total cost of these regulations to €2.3m.

Implementation in 2008:

- (i) Licence Applications for Discharges from 6 treatment plants made to the EPA; Tullamore, Birr, Edenderry, Clara, Ferbane and Banagher. No Licences have been granted to date.

3. Water Services Act 2007

The Water Services Act was commenced during 2008 and provides a single piece of legislation which unifies the two elements of Water Services, Drinking Water and Wastewater. Among other things, the 2007 Act provides for the licensing of Group Water Schemes and the making of Water Services Strategic Plans. Both these provisions will enacted through Regulations in 2009.

The making of Water Services Strategic Plans will be a Reserved function and will have to made every six Years. While the 2007 Act will provide welcome measures for the provision of water services, it will nonetheless add to the cost of providing Water Services

HEALTH & SAFETY

The 2005 Health & Safety Act and 2006 Construction Regulations have placed further requirements and in particular responsibilities, on the Local Authority with regard to Health & Safety in the workplace. Implementation of rigorous Health & Safety procedures to all aspects of work and providing adequate and regular training is adding to the cost of providing services and constructing works.

Consultants were appointed in 2007 to provide Safety Statements and Risk assessments for all water services workplaces, and ensure procedures meet the requirements of the Legislation. These statements and procedures have to be reviewed and updated annually. This was done in 2008 and the 2009 estimates include for the next annual review.

In 2008, €150k was spent to provide equipment and systems for working in Confined Spaces, Lone worker protection, certification and upgrading of lifting equipment and gas detectors. These systems require ongoing maintenance and calibration and the 2009 estimate takes account of this.

WATER SERVICES CAPITAL SCHEMES

The Capital Schemes Programme consists of new or substantial upgrades to existing Water Supply and Wastewater schemes in the County. Schemes are generally funded through either the

- (i) Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP)
- (ii) Rural Water Small Schemes Programme (RWP)
- (iii) Special Development Contribution Schemes (SDC).
- (iv) The DEHLG also allocated funding under The Remedial Action List Scheme (RAL) in 2008. This scheme provided funding to carry out remedial works listed under the Remedial Action List of the 2006 EPA Drinking Water Report.

The Major Capital Schemes are set out in the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) 2007-2009. The Polluter Pays Principle applies to these schemes, which means that the Local Authority pays for the non-domestic and future domestic portions of the cost of these schemes.

The current WSIP in County Offaly is valued at €130,000,000 and a conservative estimate of the Councils contribution to these schemes is €35m. The Assessment of needs submitted to the DEHLG in 2006 includes further projects to a value of €92m

Small Schemes are schemes costing no more than €1m, and are funded 75% by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and 25% by the Local Authority. Small Schemes are dealt with under the Rural Water Programme.

Central Government introduced new forms of contract for public schemes in 2007, which transfer more risk to the Consultants and Contractors. The implementation of the new Procurement Forms has slowed down progress on these schemes due to the learning process and caution being exercised by the private sector, particularly Consultants, due to risk transfer.

Construction of the following Schemes were completed in 2008:

Scheme	Cost	Source of Funding
Kinnity Sewerage Scheme Interim Upgrade	€460k	SDC
Birr SS: Provision of Storm Water Storage at Crinkle Pumping Station	€50k	
Kilcormac Water Supply: (i) Scheme Watermains & Link to Rath GWS (ii) Source Protection & Upgrade of plant.	€500k	RWP
Shannonbridge To Shannonharbour Watermain	€460k	RWP
Kinnity Water Supply Scheme: Upgrade of Plant & Source Protection.	€80k	RWP
Birr RWSS: Kinnity Road Water Main	€200k	RWP
Edenderry-Rhode WSS Rising Main	€300k	RWP
Geashill Sewerage Scheme: Upgrade of Mechanical Plant & Inlet Works:	€75k	RWP
Improved Chlorination Monitoring & Alarms: All Water Treatment Plants now have chlorine monitors and alarms.	€300k	RWP
Portarlinton Sewerage Scheme; Upgrade of Rising Main from Avondale Pumping Station.	€120k	RWP

The following schemes commenced in 2008:

Scheme	Cost	Source of Funding
Edenderry Advance Works Trunk Sewer & Watermain	€1.5m	WSIP
Edenderry Water Main (in conjunction with Broadband)	€700k	WSIP

Shinrone Sewerage Scheme Interim Upgrade	€300k	SDC
Interim upgrade of Clonaslee Water Treatment Plant	€270k	RAL
Upgrade of Clara Water Treatment Plant	€100k	RAL
Shinrone/Brosna & Dungar Scheme	€40k	RAL

RURAL WATER PROGRAMME

The Allocation for 2008 was:

Upgrade to Group Schemes	€500,000
New Group Schemes	€900,000
Takeover of Group Schemes	€63,000
Small Schemes	€800,000
	€2,263,000

The Small Schemes allocation was matched with a further €266,000 from Offaly Co. Council as required by the DoEHLG.

GROUP WATER SCHEMES ACTIVITY 2008

A total of 7 new group water schemes, were grant aided in the current year and a further 6 schemes have been grant aided in respect of refurbishment works. The works consisted of, source improvements, new Reservoirs, and pipeline extensions.

A total of 21 applications have been processed for private well grants and the sum of € 24,058.94 has been paid in grants in 2008.

A total of 14 group water supply schemes have applied for subsidy payments in 2008 and the sum of € 521,465 has been paid out to date.

All payments in respect of well grants and subsidy payments are recouped from the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government on a quarterly basis.

WATER CONSERVATION PROJECT

The first phase of the Offaly Water Conservation Project was completed, and Phase 2 commenced in 2007.

Phase 1 of the project reduced Unaccounted For Water by 3000m³ per day and greatly improved management of the Water Distribution System. This has facilitated the supply of new developments, without expanding capacity and prevented the need for water rationing since 2005. The water conservation project, together with the introduction of the area based management system, has greatly improved customer service and it is hoped to maintain these improvements against a background of increasing demand for water.

Phase 2 of the project commenced in 2007 and will be completed in 2009. It is anticipated that savings of approximately 2,000m³ per day will be achieved. Phase 2 will also provide improved telemetry, pressure management and metering on the water distribution network. This will further improve efficiencies in the management of the network and will greatly improve the level of service to our customers.

The network management systems introduced under the Water Conservation Project will have to be maintained from the Revenue Budget.

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 and Village and Sraid Plans. Planning Control involves the processing of planning applications of up to 1,500 per annum, and the taking of appropriate enforcement action, where necessary.

REVIEW OF THE COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2003 – 2009.

The review of the County Development Plan is at an advanced stage of finalization. The draft plan went on public display in February 2008. Over 400 submissions were received. The County Manager's Report on the submissions was circulated to Members in July 2008. Following Council meetings, the amendments to the Draft were put on public display and submissions invited on the amendments. The County Manager's Report on the submissions received, on the amendments, is being prepared and it is hoped to have the plan adopted at the Council meeting in January 2009. Four weeks after its adoption, the plan comes into effect.

The County Development Plan will set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of County Offaly over the next 6 years. It sets out the land use and amenity objectives and policies of the Council.

REVIEW OF TULLAMORE TOWN & ENVIRONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2004 - 2010

During 2008, the review of the Tullamore Town & Environs Development Plan 2004 – 2010 and the preparation of a new Tullamore Town & Environs Development Plan for the period 2010 – 2016, commenced. A report on the submissions was prepared and circulated to the members of Tullamore and Offaly County Council in December 2008. It is hoped that the Draft Plan will go on public display in mid July 2009.

REVIEW OF BIRR TOWN & ENVIRONS DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2004 - 2010

The review of the Birr Town & Environs Development Plan 2004 – 2010 commenced in April 2008. The Draft Plan is being prepared and will be on display in January 2009 for public consultation.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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

Year	No of Applications	No. Granted	No. Refused	Total Decided
2004	1828*	891	273	1165
2005	1462*	859	217	1055
2006	1894*	1120	212	1332
2007	1785*	1421	250	1671
2008	1069*	854	185	1039

(*This figure includes applications which were invalid)

STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS/AREA MEETINGS

During 2008, nine meetings of the committee were held and the Committee considered the following matters:

- Draft House Design Guidelines
- Draft Housing Strategy
- Tourism Projects
- Review of the Draft Development Contribution Scheme
- Draft Wind Strategy
- Draft Retail Strategy
- Variation to Tullamore Town & Environs Development Plan 2004-2010

Throughout the year, all stages of the Review of the County Development Plan 2003 - 2009 were considered by the SPC. This has facilitated the timely progression of the review of the Plan, through its various stages.

REGIONAL PLANNING GUIDELINES

The review of the Regional Planning Guidelines will commence in 2009.

Regional Planning Guidelines are now an established feature of the legislative and policy framework for spatial planning in Ireland. The Council, in preparing its Development Plans must have regard to the objectives and policies included in the Midland Regional Planning Guidelines.

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

Development Management control ensures that development complies with statutory provisions e.g. the Development Plan, the Planning Development Acts and Regulations.

Planning permission is required for any development of land or property unless the development is exempted development. Development includes the carrying out of works (building, demolition, alteration) on land or buildings and the making of a material change of use on land or buildings.

STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE

An Bord Pleanála has notified the Council of their decision on a pre-planning consultation on one major infrastructure project at Derrygreenagh. The Council is awaiting lodgement of the application to the Bord. Thereafter the Council will carry out an assessment of the application, similar to the process involved in making a planning decision and will prepare a report for submission to the Council and An Bord Pleanála.

RURAL HOUSE DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Rural House Design Guidelines were launched during the year and they are available free to the public.

These Guidelines look at the various aspects to consider, when building a house, from choosing the right site to deciding the finished materials.

The guidelines are also used by planning officials in the local authority and by agents submitting

planning applications. Their purpose is to be helpful and to give an understanding of the issues concerned in achieving good siting and design.

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 was extended to 31st July 2008.

CONSERVATION GRANTS

In 2008, Offaly County Council received an allocation of €113,000 grant assistance from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The objective of the scheme is to assist the owners or occupiers of a structure, which is protected because of its architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, social or technical interest, to undertake conservation works on such structure.

Grants varying from €1,500 to €16,000 were allocated to 19 applicants, subject to matching funding of 50% of the cost of the works.

COMPLIANCE/ENFORCEMENT

In accordance with Part VIII of the Planning & Development Act 2000, the following details relate to enforcement proceedings in 2008:

- Warning Letters: 255
- Enforcement Notices: 85
- Circuit Court Cases Prosecutions: 35

DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTION SCHEME

The revised Development Contribution Scheme was approved by Council, during the year. A Draft Supplementary Development Contribution Scheme for Clara is on display for the upgrade of the Sewerage Plant in Clara.

Details of amounts received and disbursed as circulated to members with the Budget 2008, are as follows:

Development Contributions-Receipts and Application of Development Funds for the period from May 2008-Nov 2008.

Receipts	€000's
Balance Available – May 2008	10,251
Contributions Received May 2008 to Nov 2008	470
Disbursements May 2008 – Nov 2008 (see below)	1,472
Balance Available – November 2008	9,249

Allocation of Development Funds

2008 RAL CLARA/FERBANE PWS	26
2008 RAL DUNGAR PWS	3
2008 RAL SHINRONE/BROSNA PWS	8
2008 SS CRYPTO RISK RED MEASURES & WATER QUAL, ALARMS	35
BANAGHER PLAYGROUND	40
DCS08 RE-ALIGNMENT OF N52D BIRR (TESCO)	220
EDENDERRY RELIEF RD PUR LAND FROM GLANBIA	780
FERBANE PLAYGROUND	40
FOUL PUMPING MAIN INST CARRICK RD RISING MAIN	20
NAT DEV PLAN PROJECTS 2008 LOUGH BOORA CYCLE TRACK	29
SS COOLDERRY WATER	33
SS EDENDERRY-RHODE WSS RISING MAIN	50
SS GEASHILL STP MECHANICAL UPGRADE	15
SS KILCORMAC WATER TREATMENT PLANT UPGRADE	18
SS KINNITTY RD WATERMAIN BIRR WS SCHEME	38
SS KINNITTY WATER SUPPLY SOURCE UPGRADE	37
SS MOUNTBOLUS SEWERAGE SCHEME UPGRADE	35
WATERMAIN UPGRADE TULLAMORE (ARBOUR LANE)	47

TOTAL

1472

Offaly County Council Development Contributions available for Disbursement as at November 30th 2008.

<u>Job Description</u>	<u>Funds Available €000's</u>
Dev. Cont. Scheme – Amenities	2,329
Dev. Cont Scheme – Infrastructure	524
Dev. Cont Scheme – Wastewater	3,060

Dev. Cont Scheme – Water	2,609
Spl. Dev. Cont. 2004 – E’derry Sewerage Scheme	357
Spl. Dev. Cont. 2004 – Car Parking	276
Spl. Dev. Cont. Scheme ‘04– Crinkle Booster Pump	16
Spl. Dev. Cont. Scheme ’04-Daingean Upgrade Sewerage	8
Spl. Dev. Cont. Scheme – Prov of Signage Drumcraw, Mt. Lucas	6
Spl. Dev. Cont. Scheme – Road Impr. & Main Drumcraw, Mt. Lucas	45
Spl. Dev. Cont. Scheme – Communication Masts	20
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>9249</u>

During 2008, Development contributions totalling €2,812,314 were received .

SERVICE INDICATORS

P: Planning and Building Control		
P.1	<i>Planning Applications - Decision Making</i>	
	No. of applications determined for individual houses	657
	(% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for individual houses	57.68%
	number requiring further info	276
	number where ext of time agreed	1
	Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for individual houses	75.76 days
	% of grants for individual houses	81.28%
	% of refusals for individual houses	18.72%
	% of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for individual houses	40%
	(% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for individual houses)	6.66%
	% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for individual houses	53.33%
	No. of applications determined for housing development	50
	(% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for housing development	42% 21 no.
	number requiring further info	29
	number where ext of time agreed	0
	Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for housing development	81.28 days
	% of grants for housing development	50%
	% of refusals for housing development	50%

	% of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for housing development	72.73%
	(% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for housing development)	0%
	% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for housing development	27.27%
	No. of applications determined for other categories: not requiring EIA	326
	(% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for other categories: not requiring EIA	57.36% 187 no.
	number requiring further info	137
	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	76.89 days
	% of grants for other categories: not requiring EIA	89.26%
	% of refusals for other categories: not requiring EIA	10.74%
	% of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: not requiring EIA	55.56%
	(% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: not requiring EIA)	5.55%
	% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: not requiring EIA	38.89%
	No. of applications determined for other categories: requiring EIA	6
	(% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for other categories: requiring EIA	33.33% 2 no.
	number requiring further info	4
	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	148 days
	% of grants for other categories: requiring EIA	66.67%
	% of refusals for other categories: requiring EIA	33.33%
	% of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: requiring EIA	0%
	(% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: requiring EIA)	0%
	% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: requiring EIA)	100%
P.2	<i>Planning Enforcement</i>	
	Total number of cases subject to complaints that are investigated	122
	Total number of cases subject to complaints that are dismissed	29
	resolved through negotiations	52
	Number of enforcement procedures taken through warning letters	255
	Number of enforcement procedures taken through enforcement notices	85
	Number of prosecutions	18
P.3	Average number of public opening hours per week	32.5
	number of pre-planning consultation meetings	120
P.4	Average length of time from request for consultation with local authority planner to actual formal meeting for pre-planning consultation	8 DAYS

MIDLANDS GATEWAY

During 2008 Tullamore Town Council and Offaly County Council adopted a Variation of the Town and Environs Development Plan which will provide the planning framework for the development of Tullamore as part of the Midlands Gateway. This planning framework supports the application for funding to the Gateway Innovation Fund. A Gateway Implementation Forum established by both Westmeath and Offaly County Councils includes representatives of both Councils in addition to the various state agencies, Athlone IT and the Midland Regional Authority. The Gateway Implementation Forum has established three sub-groups as follows:

- Competitiveness Sub-Group
- Midland Ambassadors Sub-Group
- Branding Sub-Group

A skills audit is being undertaken on behalf of the Forum by Athlone IT to establish the skills needs and deficit across the midlands. The Forum will continue to identify areas where, through inter-agency actions, the recommendations of the Indecon Report can be implemented.

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

In accordance with the recommendations in the Indecon Review of County & City Development Boards an Interagency Economic Development Committee was established in 2008. This committee is being led by the County Enterprise Board and is progressing a number of actions for 2009 including the development of an Information Pack on the Supports available to businesses in hard copy and through an portal website.

COUNTY DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2009-2015

The County Development Plan adopted in early 2009 lays down the policies, objectives and zoning of land to facilitate the development of the County's overall economy, enterprise and employment. Key objectives include the development of the Midlands Gateway; the development of industrial clusters; and the development of small to medium scale indigenous industries and services.

CO-OPERATION WITH STATE AGENCIES

One of the key elements of the Council's approach to economic development in the county is collaboration and partnership between the various state and semi-state agencies such as IDA, Enterprise Ireland and the County Enterprise Board. The Council meets on a regular basis with all agencies to progress joint initiatives and to pre-empt and eliminate any potential barriers to progress.

The Council is currently in discussion with IDA Ireland regarding a joint venture for the development and marketing of a Business Technology Park at Clonminch, Tullamore.

The Council is also in discussion with Shannon Development regarding the development of an e-Town Project at Banagher. Other collaborative projects with Shannon Development include the redevelopment of Shannon Harbour with NDP Funding through Failte Ireland.

PARTNERSHIP COMPANIES

The Council participates and provides secretarial support for both the West Offaly and North Offaly

Development Partnerships. The development of Rhode Business Park commenced in November 2008 and is scheduled to be completed in August 2009. Demand for sites at Ferbane Business Park has decreased in recent times due to changed economic circumstances however the Council will continue to upgrade and promote the sites in collaboration with State Agencies and Community Groups. The Council continues to support local community groups, such as Kilcormac Development Association, to help them develop local enterprise in their areas.

The Council is supportive of the Shannon Tax Incentive Scheme launched during 2008. The Scheme covers an extensive area of County Offaly. To date there have been a number of pre-planning enquiries in relation to specific projects and a small number have materialised into full planning applications. The Council will continue to offer advice and assistance in any way it can to maximise the benefits of this scheme for County Offaly.

TOURISM

Offaly County Council continues to be an active member of the Tourism Inter-Agency Group which was established as a sub-committee of the County Development Board. The Group comprises representation from Fáilte Ireland East and Midlands, Shannon Development, the County Enterprise Board and formerly Leader +.

The Inter-Agency Group is working to develop the eight pillars for Tourism in Offaly as identified in the McIvor Tourism Report. The group continues to identify appropriate tourism products for the County, particularly in relation to areas such as Lough Boora Parklands, Slieve Blooms and the canals to increase the overall tourism product available in the county.

Tullamore hosted Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in 2008 and will do so again in 2009. This gives a significant boost to the local economy and generates a new awareness of the attractions of County Offaly for visitors.

Tullamore also hosted the World Peat Congress during 2008. Feedback from the organisers of the Conference was very positive. In 2009 Tullamore will host the Heritage Council National Conference for the first time in a number of years.

Tullamore is recognised as one of the major conference centres in the country. Ease of access and the host of attractions both in the town and around the county make for a very pleasurable experience for those attending conferences.

OFFALY HERITAGE SERVICE

The Offaly Heritage Plan 2007 - 2011 is delivered in partnership with the Offaly Heritage Forum which is an invaluable resource for the county. The Forum meets four times a year with working groups meeting as needed for specific projects throughout the year. The membership of the forum is as follows.

Cllr. Danny Owens	Chairperson of Strategic Policy Committee and Representative for County Development Board
Maura Allen	Community Forum
Michael Roche	Directory of Infrastructure, Offaly County Council
Alex Copland	Birdwatch Ireland
Perpetua McDonagh	Offaly Leader+
Stephen McNeill	Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society
Christine Byrne	Slieve Bloom Rural Development Association
Fiona Devery	Botanical Society Recorder for Offaly
Tom Egan	Bord na Mona Ltd.
Richard Wheelan	Coillte
William Dooley	Teagasc
Val Swan	National Parks and Wildlife Service
Caimin O'Brien	National Monuments Service
Padraig Brazil	Irish Farming Association
Gordon Daly	Senior Planner, Offaly County Council
Louis Byrne	Waterways Ireland
Amanda Pedlow	Heritage Officer, Offaly County Council

2008 WORK PROGRAMME

BIRR PUBLIC REALM PROJECT

This project is being carried out in partnership with Birr Town Council, Shannon Development and the Heritage Council. It examines the public realm of Birr, the streetscapes and open areas, and makes recommendations for future works and projects to enhance these areas. There has been considerable public consultation and the report is in draft at year end.

BIRR WORKHOUSE REPORT

Howley Hayes Architects have been commissioned to examine and prepare a report on Birr Workhouse and to set it in the context of workhouses nationally. They will make recommendations for the future care and use of the site.

CARVED STONE RECORDING PROJECT – PHASE 1

The high cross at Durrow, Tihilly, Sier Kieran (base) and Kinnitty have been scanned using 3d laser and stripe light scanning along with all of the carved stone at Rahan, some of the Gallen graveslabs, the glass house at Shinrone and the bridge at Cadamstown. This data will be processed and made available on the web in 2009.

DISCOVERING OFFALY WILDLIFE WORKSHOPS

Nine workshops were held on Saturday mornings, from 10.00 am to 1.00pm, with most taking the format of a presentation from the speaker for about 45 minutes, followed by an outdoor fieldtrip. The workshops were delivered in two "seasons", in May-June and September - October. The workshops

brought in a new audience that will be notified of new Field Club events in the coming year.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR RAHAN MONASTIC SITE

Rahan is one of the key monastic sites in the county. It has been identified as being of international significance. The Conservation Plan for this site was launched during . the year and work continues on its conservation under the care of James Howley of Howley Hayes Architects.

HERITAGE AWARENESS

Nine days of heritage events were co-ordinated for Heritage Week in August and September. On 29th November, over 90 people attended the day long Annual Heritage Seminar in Birr which provides an update on heritage projects in the county and facilitates contact among interested parties.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Conservation works continued at Blundell castle, Edenderry and Syngefield Gates in Birr.
Community Groups and Individuals

The Heritage Office continues to provide advice and support to groups and individuals planning heritage projects.

Community and Enterprise support Offaly Local Authorities goals and strategies as follows:

PROVIDING CIVIC LEADERSHIP FOR OFFALY AND ALL ITS PEOPLE, WHATEVER THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES OR

BACKGROUNDS

SUPPORTING OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD

The Indecon Report on the Review of the County Development Boards was published in January 2008 and has been accepted by Government. An Inter-Departmental Group has been established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Indecon Report. The County Development Board looks forward to implementing these recommendations to ensure that the County Development Board becomes more effective and plays a more meaningful role in the co-ordination of the provision of public services in County Offaly.

The County Development Board is currently in the process of preparing an Action Plan for 2009-2012, i.e. the remaining years of its ten year Strategy (2002-2012) "Bringing the Future into Focus 2009 - 2012. It is anticipated that a limited number of actions will be identified for this period and will concentrate on those actions which require crossagency co-operation and support. Priority areas to focus on for 2009-2012 are economic development & employment support, social inclusion, education assistance and sustainable development. This plan will be approved by the County Development Board in early 2009

At a Meeting of Offaly Integrated Local Development Company held on 1st November 2008 the last two of the total of 23 nominees were appointed to the Board. The new company brings together the four existing companies of Offaly Leader+, Tullamore Wider Options, OAK Partnership Ltd. and West Offaly Partnership. The Community and Enterprise Section have been facilitating the establishment of the new company and managed the electoral process for the community and voluntary sector to the new company. At the 31st December the process of the appointment of a Chief Executive Officer of the company is in hand. It is envisaged that formal arrangements will be made after the local elections for representation s by OILDC on Offaly County Development Board replacing the nominees of the existing local development companies.

The new company will be responsible for the delivery of the Rural Development Programme and Local Development Social Inclusion Programme in a co-ordinated and integrated manner in the years ahead throughout all of County Offaly. The company will also be responsible for the delivery of other programmes from time to time.

COMHAIRLE NA NÓG

One of the key developments in Community & Enterprise this year has been Comhairle na nÓg. 2008/2009 elections were held in November 2008 and since then there has been unprecedented interest in Comhairle na nÓg both from young people and youth workers. The Comhairle executive meet monthly and work on projects that have been identified by the young people as matters concerning the youth of Offaly that need to be highlighted and supported. Comhairle na nÓg membership 2008/2009 has a wide representation of young people both geographically and socially with huge commitment & dedication from all youth workers and youth agencies in the County.

The implementation of the enhanced programme of Comhairle na nÓg will continue in 2009. To date

the Know your Local Authority Initiative has been delivered to nine schools in the county.

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY FORUM TO PARTICIPATE IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

During the year the Council appointed a Community Forum Support Worker to it's staff. The main responsibilities of the Community Support Worker is to assist the Community Forum to develop it's structures to ensure that the community voice is heard at decision making level in Offaly.. The Community Forum played a key role in the election of its representatives to Offaly Local Development Company The C & E Department will continue to assist representatives of the Community Forum in local decision making, advice & support, Training Workshops and will inform communities through the website www.offalycommunityforum.com and newsletters. Membership of Offaly Community Forum now stands at 350 groups – an increase of 100 over the 2007 figure.

MAXIMISING PRODUCTIVE INVESTMENT THEREBY FACILITATING THE CREATION OF GOOD, SUSTAINABLE JOBS IN THE COUNTY

The recommendation of the Indecon Report on the establishment of an Economic Development Sub-committee has been acted upon with the establishment of a sub-committee co-ordinated by Offaly County Enterprise Board and feeding back through Community & Enterprise Department to the full County Development Board

MAKING OFFALY A PLEASANT, SAFE AND ENJOYABLE PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK

SPORT

The Offaly Sports Partnership operates under the aegis of the County Development Board. During 2008 the Partnership Strategic Plan 2008-2010 was launched by Mr. John Treacy, Chairman of the Irish Sports Council.

Sports programmes have been delivered to over 50 Primary Schools in the county. A fulltime Disability Officer has been appointed and is funded from the Dormant Accounts.

Over the year more than one hundred people with varying disabilities have been reached through the implementation of physically active sports programme and newly established sports clubs in the county.

The Partnership also delivers programmes to Sports Clubs and supports clubs in making applications for capital funding to the National Lottery.

The inter-agency group of the County Development Board has prepared a draft Play Strategy for the county. This draft Play Strategy is now with the various constituent bodies for approval by them before returning to the County Development Board for adoption.

BUILDING SOCIAL COHESION AND INCLUSION WITHIN AND ACROSS THE COUNTY

On 22nd February 2008 the Social Inclusion Measures Group launched their Anti-Poverty Strategy for the county. The Social Inclusion Measures Group is an inter-agency group of the County Development Board. The key priorities of the Social Inclusion Measures Group are:

- the implementation of the Local Anti-Poverty Strategy,
- the implementation of the Work Plan Supporting the Minority Communities,
- implementing the Traveller Employment Initiative and the provision of integrated services to Travellers,
- continuing the support for the long-term unemployed.

The Interagency Project in relation to the Traveller Community funded by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform through the County Development Board/Council operated for the period December 2007 to December 2008. Under this Project a Traveller Information Officer was employed by Offaly co. Co and was engaged in the production of quarterly newsletters for distribution to the Traveller Community and agencies working with them. Other aspects of the project involved the employment of an education Support Worker by Tullamore Traveller Movement and work on the provision of a Conflict Resolution/ Mediation service for the Traveller Community in the midlands coordinated by the HSE. Overall co-ordination of the Project was undertaken by FAS.

During the year the Council organised training for trainers in relation to voter participation. These trainers will now organise workshops in the various electoral areas throughout the county to deliver information in relation to the Local Elections and the European Elections in 2009 to targeted groups, particularly migrant workers and new communities. It is hoped that this new initiative will increase voter turnout in the forthcoming Local/European Elections in June 2009.

During 2009 the C & E Department will continue to support other initiatives such as Offaly County Council Chairman's Awards, developing a volunteer centre for Offaly Pride of Place, Promoting best practice and community enhancement, continued participation in the Offaly Outreach Education Programme and participation in the Inter-Agency Group of the County Development Board in relation to disability.



Offaly Comhairle na nÓg Election, November 2008

FUNCTION

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.

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.

SERVICES

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:

FINANCIAL AND MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING

Financial reporting is the preparation of the Annual Financial Statements and other statutory returns and dealing with the Local Government Audit process. Management Accounting is the preparation of monthly management reports to assist with budgetary control and the decision-making process within each directorate. The Annual Budget process is co-ordinated by this section. This section provides variance analysis, costing information and other financial information required from both internal and external customers.

CENTRAL REVENUE COLLECTION

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 the central processing of invoices. Completion of the Purchase to pay cycle with the weekly cheque payment run.

PAYROLL

Processing of weekly wages and the fortnightly payment of salaries and pensions. Completion of all Statutory returns to Revenue Commissioners.

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.

FIXED ASSET REGISTER

Recording and maintaining all fixed assets acquired (created or purchased) and disposed of throughout the year. Compliance the accounting policies relating to assets and work-in-progress such as asset categories, capital flags, capital job set-ups etc.

RISK MANAGEMENT

Coordination of the Risk Management function within Offaly County Council.

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 the year. 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.

**DRAFT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT STATEMENT
FOR YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2008**

The Income and Expenditure Account Statement brings together all the revenue related income and expenditure. It shows the surplus/(deficit) for the year.

	Gross Expenditure Expenditure	Income	Net Expenditure	Net
	2008	2008	2008	2007
Expenditure by Division	€	€	€	€
Housing and building	7,121,765	6,032,826	1,088,939	1,160,132
Road transport & safety	16,718,857	12,577,624	4,141,232	5,299,920
Water services	11,506,901	3,538,505	7,968,396	6,941,021
Development management	4,693,190	1,130,949	3,562,241	2,077,083
Environmental services	10,652,989	7,731,369	2,921,620	96,481
Recreation and amenity	3,339,915	576,148	2,763,767	2,171,824
Agriculture, education, health & welfare	4,795,859	4,505,523	290,336	637,416
Miscellaneous services	7,629,460	4,221,141	3,408,319	3,746,024
Total Expenditure/Income	66,458,935	40,314,085		
Net Cost of Divisions to be funded from Rates and Local Government Fund			26,144,850	22,129,902
Rates			7,668,669	6,817,009
Local government fund / general purpose grant			17,661,400	16,512,029
County charge			2,012,391	1,856,102
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year before			1,197,610	3,055,239
Transfers from/(to) Reserves			(1,217,165)	(3,072,084)
Overall Surplus/(Deficit) for Year			(19,555)	(16,845)
General Reserve at 1st January			(64,991)	(48,146)
General Reserve at 31st December			(84,546)	(64,991)

**OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL
DRAFT BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2008**

	2008	2007
	€	€
Fixed		
Operational	214,264,554	201,691,074
Infrastructural	1,220,116,961	1,220,116,961
Community	51,000	51,000
Non-Operational	-	-
	1,434,432,515	1,421,859,035
Work-in-Progress and Preliminary Expenses	115,469,185	85,219,198
Long Term Debtors	33,488,107	30,427,360
Current Assets		
Stock	878,232	657,582
Trade Debtors and Prepayments	19,142,717	17,068,790
Bank Investments	1,386,937	7,606,096
Cash at Bank	1,153,845	-
Cash on Hand	13,296	46,655
	22,575,027	25,379,124
Current Liabilities		
Bank Overdraft	-	670,877
Creditors & Accruals	6,621,821	8,243,717
Urban Account	-	-
Finance Leases	-	6,833
	6,621,821	8,921,428
Net Current Assets / (Liabilities)	15,953,206	16,457,696
Creditors (Amounts greater than one year)		
Loans Payable	70,100,039	69,184,678
Finance Leases	13,559	6,726
Refundable Deposits	934,048	777,950
Other	-	-
	71,047,646	69,969,354
Net Assets / (Liabilities)	1,528,295,367	1,483,993,935
Financed By		
Capitalisation Account	1,434,432,515	1,421,859,035
Income WIP	109,376,838	78,328,515
Specific Revenue Reserve	1,026	1,026
General Revenue Reserve	(84,546)	(64,991)
Other Balances	(15,430,466)	(16,129,649)
	1,528,295,367	1,483,993,935

Extract from The Unaudited Annual Financial Statement for the Year ended December 31, 2008

DRAFT SUMMARY OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND INCOME

	2008	2007
	€	€
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Payments to Contractors	39,398,276	34,275,020
Purchase of Land	3,182,951	11,496,098
Purchase of Other Assets	6,547,609	10,161,927
Consultancy & Professional Fees	4,218,784	3,919,720
Other	11,791,424	14,892,461
Total Expenditure (Net of Internal Transfers)	65,139,044	74,745,226
Transfers to Revenue	13,562	323,419
Total Expenditure (Including Transfers) *	65,152,606	75,068,645
<u>INCOME</u>		
Grants	50,787,410	37,584,358
Non Mortgage Loans	2,147,021	5,146,250
Other Income		
Development Contributions	4,090,901	4,640,754
Property Disposals - Land	1,022,000	456,500
- LA Housing	2,113,388	3,955,790
- Other	-	-
Tenant Purchase Annuities	33,160	42,503
Car Parking	-	-
Other	5,733,800	7,656,839
Total Income (Net of Internal Transfers)	65,927,680	59,482,994
Transfers from Revenue	242,083	2,431,463
Total Income (Including Transfers) *	66,169,763	61,914,457
Surplus/(Deficit) for year	1,017,157	(13,154,188)
Balance (Debit)/Credit @ 1st January	11,545,422	24,699,610
Balance (Debit)/Credit @ 31 December	12,562,579	11,545,422

- Excludes internal transfers, includes transfers to and from Revenue account

Analysis of Projected Capital Project Expenditure and Funding /Development Contribution funds available by Division 2009-2011

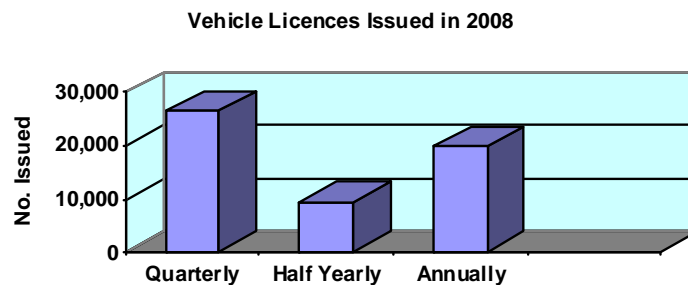
Division	Expenditure	Phasing of Expenditure				Proposed Funding		Dev Cont. Funds Available		
	Projected Capital Expenditure 2009- 2011	2009	2010	2011	2012+	Estimated DoEHLG/ NRA/Other Funding	Dev Cont. Funding Requirement	Cash Available	Projected Receipts 2009- 2011	Shortfall in Development Contribution
A - Housing & Building	19,220	10,220	5,000	4,000	0	19,220	0	0	0	-
B - Road Transport & Safety	90,504	32,904	26,200	31,400	0	80,704	9,800	850	689	(8,261)
C - Water Services	157,162	10,377	28,841	41,621	76,323	113,551	43,611	6,050	4,906	(32,655)
D - Development Management	3,925	725	625	625	1,950	1,700	2,225	0	0	(2,225)
E - Environmental Services	11,880	2,125	4,950	4,605	200	11,780	100	0	0	(100)
F - Recreation & Amenity	23,840	4,260	12,810	5,560	1,210	12,820	11,020	2,329	1,889	(6,802)
J- Corporate Services	100	100	0	0	0	0	100	20	16	(64)
Grand Total	306,631	60,711	78,426	87,811	79,683	239,775	66,856	9,249	7,500	(50,107)

MOTOR TAXATION

Motor taxation receipts for 2008 were €12.61 million, an increase of 4.3% on 2007.

This office issues vehicle and driving licences and processes other transactions such as change of ownership for pre-1993 vehicles, certificates of roadworthiness, vehicle registration certificates vehicle licensing arrears. 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	26,496	€3,141,760
Half Year	9,332	€2,123,881
Annual	19,806	€6,687,859
Duplicates	220	€1,320



Driving Licences	Number Issued	Value
Three Year Licence	1,102	€3,015
Ten Year Licence	4,627	€115,675
Provisional Licence 1 Year	1,102	€16,305
Provisional Licence 2 Year	2,851	€44,055
One Year Licence	122	10
Duplicates	897	€8,970

The Motor Taxation Office is open to the public from 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 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 – 28% of motor tax transactions (excluding Driver Licenses) in Offaly were dealt with online in 2008 (compared 20% in 2007)

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 2008:

M: MOTOR TAXATION	
M.1 Number of motor tax transactions (excluding Driver Licences) which: Are dealt with over the counter Are dealt with by post	56,668 (82%) 12,323 (18%)
M.2 Number of post9999999al applications (excluding Driver Licences) which are dealt with from receipt of the application: (a) On the same day (b) On the third day or less (c) On the fifth day or less (d) Over 5 days	9,855 (80%) 2,195 (18%) 78 (1%) 197 (1%)
M.3 Number of Driver Licences which are dealt with from receipt of the application: (e) On the same day (f) On the third day or less (g) On the fifth day or less (h) Over 5 days	5,384 (49%) 2,505 (23%) 1,437 (13%) 1,607 (15%)
% of Driver Licences which are dealt with from receipt of the application: (a) On the same day (b) On the third day or less (c) On the fifth day or less (d) Over 5 days	7.85 % 33.02 % 25.65 % 33.48 %
M.4 Public Opening Hours	29
Revenue Collection Rev.1 House Rent Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due Percentage of arrears 4 – 6 weeks old 6 – 12 weeks old more than 12 weeks old	87.85 % 5.53 % 8.40 % 86.08 %
Rev. 2 Housing Loans Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due Percentage of arrears 1 month old 2 – 3 months old more than 3 months old	77.20 % 1.94 % 11.29% 86.77 %
Rev.3 Commercial Rates Amount collected at year-end as a percentage of amount due	92.13 %
Rev.4 Refuse Charges Percentage of households paying refuse charges at year end	N/A - do not provide service
Rev.5 Non-Domestic Water Charges Amount collected at year end as a percentage of amount due	44.22 %

BIRR TOWN COUNCIL

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

Members of the Council are:

Councillor Michael Loughnane, 13 Meadowville,

Councillor John Carroll, The Ring, Birr.

Councillor Tony McLoughlin, Main Street, Birr

Councillor Sean Doorley, 3 Meadowville, Birr. (Chairperson)

Councillor Timmy Molloy, 11 Mooney Tce, Kilcormac

Councillor Ann Hynes-Spain, Corr na Meala, Birr (Vice-Chairperson)

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 7pm on the second Monday of each month.

Representatives to Various Bodies: Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland:

Councillors N. Russell and D. Sheils

Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurance Ltd:

Councillor M Campbell.

Offaly Vocational Education Committee:

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

Oxmantown Hall Committee:

Councillors A. Spain and S. Doorley

Birr Town Council/Chamber of Commerce:

Cllr. J. Carroll, 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: William Ryan

Town Clerk: Mary Gaughran

SERVICES PROVIDED**HOUSING AND BUILDING**

As at 31 December 2008 there are 210 rented houses in Birr together with a six bay residential caravan park at Croghan Road, Birr. Forty-seven of these dwellings are Special Category (for Elderly or Disabled Persons).

The construction of 23 dwellings at Scurragh was completed and tenancies allocated in April 2008.

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.

40 valid planning applications were received in 2008.

The Review of the Development Plan for Birr & Environs commenced in 2008.

Birr Town Council in conjunction with OCC Heritage Office, the Heritage Council & Shannon Development commissioned a plan for Birr Public Realm. The plan was prepared by the Paul Hogarth Company & its purpose is to review the quality of the existing public realm (streets, squares, paths, parks, car parks etc.) & propose ways in which it can be enhanced & supplemented for the wider benefit of the town.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Recycling facilities have been provided by Offaly County Council at Syngesfield, Birr. A Traffic/Litter Warden is 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 2008:

Christmas Lights	€2,000
Ely O'Carroll	€1,500
Birr Swimming Pool	€5,500
Heritage Towns of Ireland	€2,315
Vintage Week	€1,500
Birr Theatre and Arts Centre	€3,500
Shannon Development Promotional Brochure	€1,500
Meitheal Bhiorra Events Calendar	€ 200

CIVIC RECEPTIONS/SPECIAL EVENTS

During the course of the year presentations were made to Birr Stage Guild, Mr Brian Whelehan, The O'Donohue Family & John & Mary Lawlor.

RETIREMENTS

Mr. Michael DeForge, Town Foreman retired from Birr Town Council after over thirty five years of loyal service.

Cllr Seamus Fanneran retired from the Council and was replaced by Cllr T. Molloy.

EDENDERRY TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN COUNCILLORS

Councillor Patricia Brady, Fine Gael
Councillor Brian Carroll(Cathaoirleach), Fianna Fáil
Councillor Noel Cribbin(Leas Cathaoirleach), Fianna Fáil
Councillor John Foley, Fianna Fáil
Councillor Liam Hogan, Fine Gael
Councillor Fergus McDonnell, Non-Party
Councillor Jim Murrin, Non-Party
Councillor Finian O'Neill, 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 Offaly County Council of €10,000 towards special footpath grant for Edenderry Town and as a result upgrading and repairs took place in various areas in the Town. Plans for a promotional brochure for Edenderry Town are in the early stages but it is hoped to get this produced and printed in 2009.

A historic meeting took place in Edenderry with all agencies associated with employment and development for the town of Edenderry. This meeting was called by Edenderry area committee members and Edenderry Town Council members and both committees were represented at this meeting by Cllr Noel Bourke, Chairman Edenderry area committee and Cllr Brian Carroll, Chairman of Edenderry Town Council. The aim of this meeting was to highlight Edenderry's needs with the recent loss of jobs in the area and update councillors on efforts of all agencies to secure and support future jobs in Edenderry and surrounding areas.

The Joint Policing Committee carried out a series of meetings to correlate the data submitted by the general public through questionnaires in relation to all agencies and the general public working together to improve the quality of life in Edenderry Town. A significant work plan was devised for 2009.

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. A collective approach from Edenderry Business Association, Edenderry Credit Union and Offaly County Council organised and constructed a new steel Christmas tree this year which looked spectacular.

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



Offaly Sports Partnership

TULLAMORE TOWN COUNCIL

Tullamore is the capital town of Offaly with a population of over 10,000. The Council is involved in a broad range of service provision including Housing, Roads and Car Parks, Planning and Recreation, Leisure and Amenity facilities.

ELECTED MEMBERS OF TULLAMORE TOWN COUNCIL

Councillor Molly Buckley
Councillor Laurence Byrne
Councillor Joe Coughlan
Councillor Sinead Dooley
Councillor Richard Egan
Councillor John Flanagan
Councillor Tommy McKeigue
Councillor Sean O'Brien
Councillor Paddy Rowland

Monthly Meetings

Meetings of the council are held on the second Thursday of the month at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber

SUB-COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

HOUSING COMMITTEE: Councillor Tommy McKeigue
Councillor Molly Buckley
Councillor Laurence Byrne
Councillor Joseph Coughlan
Councillor Sean O'Brien

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE: Councillor Paddy Rowland
Councillor Laurence Byrne
Councillor Richard Egan
Councillor Joseph Coughlan

REPRESENTAIVES TO VARIOUS BODIES:

**VOCATIONAL
EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE:** Councillor Sean O'Brien

	Councillor Laurence Byrne Councillor 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
OFFALY STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE	Councillor Paddy Rowland Councillor Richard Egan
TULLAMORE LEISURE LTD	Councillor Molly Buckley Councillor John Flanagan Councillor Sean O'Brien
OFFALY COUNTY DEVELOPMENT BOARD	Councillor Sean O'Brien

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2008

- Opening of new Swimming Pool and Leisure facility at Cloncollig
- Completion of Lloyd Town Park which includes a Skateboard Park, Lawn Bowling Green and Children's playground
- 146 housing applicants were accommodated during the year
- Supported the Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann for the second year in a row
- The Town Council's Water Services function transferred to Offaly County Council on the 1st April, 2008
- The Council adopted a new protocol for conferral of Civic Honours
- Supported Earth Hour 2008 initiative
- 15 projects were financially supported under the Tullamore Town Council community Fund
- Decisions issued on 98 planning applications during the year