

Offaly Local Authorities



Annual Report 2009

Our mission is "To improve the quality of life for people in Offaly"

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Annual Report 2009

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

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Our Mission

To improve the quality of life for people in Offaly.

Offaly Local Authorities Annual Report 2009

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



**Noel Bourke
Cathaoirleach**



**Pat Gallagher
Bainisteor Chontae**

We are very pleased to present the Offaly Local Authorities' 2009 Annual Report, detailing the many services provided by the Council, its elected members, staff and departments to the people of Offaly.

2009 proved to be a year of significant challenges for Offaly County Council. March saw the introduction of a moratorium on Public Service Recruitment, an intervention which severely limited the scope of the Authorities to fill employment vacancies. In July we were

advised that the Local Government Fund was being reduced as a consequence of the economic downturn. Allied to a dramatic decline in local revenue, our initial budgetary predictions for the year were no longer valid and a re-adjustment became necessary. A supplementary budget was adopted by the Council which placed the emphasis on the delivery of cost effective services and on the deployment of resources to the areas of greatest need, thus ensuring that acceptable levels of public services continued to be provided to the Council's

customers.

Notwithstanding the very difficult strategic and operational environment in which we found ourselves, the scale and diversity of work carried out by the various departments are evident in this report. Some of the more noteworthy projects undertaken or commenced in 2009 included: the completion of the N52 Tullamore by-pass; major flood relief works in towns and villages affected by the severe weather conditions last November; prolonged salting of roads during the coldest winter experienced for many decades; the commencement of reviews of town development plans for Tullamore and Birr; review of Regional Planning Guidelines; the development of a Fire and Emergency Operations plan by Offaly Fire Service; the progression through tender stage of the project to upgrade Tullamore Wastewater Treatment Plant under the Water Service Investment Programme; the operation of local elections; the adoption of Offaly Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2010 – 2014; the drafting of the County's first Library Development Plan 2010-2014 (commenced in 2009); the re-opening of Clara Library following extensive refurbishment (now located at Clara Bog Visitor centre).

The Council was also very pleased to recognise the great sporting achievements of the Offaly Junior Camogie Team and of golfer Shane Lowry and both received civic

receptions in their honour.

In closing, we would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to former Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Barry Cowen, and to the elected members, management and staff, indoor and outdoor, for their commitment, co-operation and support in the delivery of the Council's services during 2009. It may have been a difficult year, and there may be difficult years ahead, but we will always strive to deliver our services with efficiency and courtesy and we will continue in our duty to improve the quality of life for all the people of Offaly.

Noel Bourke
Cathaoirleach

Pat Gallagher
Bainisteoir Chontae

SPC Chair: Molly Buckley MCC

Members:

Cllr. Barry Cowen
Cllr. Sinead Moylan-Ryan
Cllr. John Carroll
Cllr. John Leahy
Cllr. Finian O'Neill

Sectoral:

Ms. Susan Ryan
Ms. Tessy Doyle
Mr. Joe O'Brien

Director Of Services: Seán Murray

Senior Executive Officer: Dermot Mahon, Housing

Senior Executive Engineer: Martin Quinn, Housing

County Librarian: Mary Stuart

Arts Officer: Sinead O'Reilly

HOUSING DEPARTMENT

Achievements and Constraints

There was a significant increase in the number of applications for social housing supports in 2009 due to the ongoing economic downturn. Increasing demand for social housing together with capital budget restrictions made it more difficult for the Council to fully respond to the housing needs in the County.

Significant achievements during 2009 were the completion and allocation of 39 houses at Killane Edenderry and progression of a number of capital projects to approval stage. An additional €1m was secured from the Department for the capital programme to progress a number of schemes to completion. The number of RAS transfers achieved in 2009 was 3 times that achieved in 2008. In addition,

the waiting time for housing assessments was kept to a minimum due to the ongoing commitment of staff in providing quality customer services. 115 tenancy allocations were made in 2009 and 25 long-term voids were brought back into stock.



8 units in Fairgreen St. Kilcormac

Due to the resource restrictions it was necessary to amend our approach and preferred options in relation

to Part V agreements with developers. As a result of poor take up of Affordable Housing units, 20 unsold units were transferred to RAS and a refinancing of existing debit balance was necessary.

Meeting customer demands for housing adaptation and mobility grants continued to be a challenge. Revised procedures were introduced to speed up the waiting period and assessment process and almost 200 grants were issued with final approval during the year. Tenant purchase and private site sales were negligible in 2009 and the 2nd hand house acquisition programme was suspended.

The suspension of Estate Management grants made it more difficult to engage with residents groups or to discuss any significant estate improvement works. Despite this, considerable progress was made in dealing with anti-social behaviour complaints and estate management issues in a number of locations. Plans for the provision of emergency homeless facilities in Tullamore were further progressed. Despite the completion of 62 new voluntary housing units, funding for new CLSS schemes for the voluntary sector will be severely limited for the coming years. The funding of voluntary housing is undergoing significant change at present and has created uncertainty as to available funding sources.



8 Units at Kyleboher, Kilcormac

Social and Voluntary Housing Output

The housing stock in the county stood at 1,034 at the end of the year with an average occupancy rate of 96%.

2009 Capital Programme	2009 No of Units/Status
Kilcormac Kyleboher	8 units allocated January
Downshire Place Edenderry (Part V)	6 units allocated January
Kilcoursey Clara (Part V)	3 units allocated February
Kilcormac Farigreen St.	8 units allocated August
Killane Edenderry Phase 1	39 units allocated September
2nd Hand acquisitions	6 units acquired and allocated
Total	70

2009 Voluntary Programme	2009 No of Units/Status
Tullamore Hsing. Association Lann Elo	15 units completed October
R.O.T.E Tullamore	16 units completed October
Mid-Offaly Housing Association Mountbolus	31 units completed February
Cluid Grove St, Crinkle	1 unit completed September
Total	63

Under Construction in 2009	2009 No of Units/Status
Shinrone	6 units substantially complete
Cloghan Turnkey / Social (Part V)	12 units substantially complete
Frankford Kilcormac (Part V)	3 units substantially complete
Total	21

133 house completions and acquisitions in 2009 are comprised of 70 local authority social units and 63 voluntary units with 21 social houses pending completion in early 2010. The largest scheme completed and allocated was 39 units at Killane, Edenderry. 6 houses were acquired during the year

together with 9 Part V Social houses at various locations. 62 voluntary housing units were constructed in Tullamore and Mount Bolus providing accommodation for older people and clients experiencing homelessness.

A Shared Services agreement was drafted for the amalgamation of capital programmes on a county-wide basis on behalf of the Town Councils in 2010. This process will facilitate increased efficiencies and savings.

Housing Maintenance and Pre-Let Repairs

Over 1,100 maintenance repairs were completed in 2009 while significant progress was achieved in restoring homes that were void for considerable periods. A panel of small works contractors was set up in 2008 and houses in need of major refurbishment continue to be contracted out to speed up turnaround time. This panel will be reviewed in 2010 to reflect shared service agreement with the Town Councils. Significant funding was expended on pre-let repairs to 50 houses that in some cases required considerable renovation prior to re-let.

A new housing maintenance logging system was developed to be piloted in the Birr Area and Birr Town Council using the ihouse computer system. This system will standardise the maintenance request format and procedures and will be implemented

across all areas during 2010. A revised Housing Maintenance Policy was drafted for SPC consideration in 2010.

Regeneration and Remedial Works Programmes

Proposals for the redevelopment of Greenwood Park and Churchview Heights estates in Edenderry were submitted to the Department in November 2009. The proposed works include upgrading open spaces, laneway closures, providing additional car parking and traffic calming areas. In addition, approval for the demolition of 6 derelict apartments at Churchview was achieved. Part VIII approval was agreed for a remedial works programme in Ballyvora Grove, Ferbane and preliminary discussions with local residents were conducted to establish priorities for 2010.

DPG's / Demountable Dwellings / Improvement Works Scheme

One IWS commenced in 2009 while the Council provided funding for six demountable dwellings and four DPG projects at various locations around the County.

Building Energy Rating (BER) / Energy Efficiency Programme

Training was provided for a number of staff and a programme to complete BER assessments of our housing stock will commence in 2010. Funding for energy efficiency works was announced during the year and four units in Grove St Crinkle were initially selected

for improvement works. A comprehensive proposal for radon measurement of social housing in the County was agreed with the RPII and it is anticipated that 500 local authority houses will be tested in 2010.

Affordable Housing and Part V

The ongoing downturn in the economy resulted in a further reduction in the number of units coming on stream during the year. By the end of 2009 a total of 139 units have been provided under the Part V process to date, of which 75 are Affordable units. Five Affordable house sale transactions were completed during the year. 20 unsold Affordable units in Clara and Edenderry were transferred to RAS in partnership with Helm Housing Association under a 5 year lease agreement. 9 Social Part V's were acquired during the year with a further 9 nearing completion. Revised Guidelines on the Implementation of Part V were adopted by Council in December 2009 to amend the Councils preferred options in negotiating Part V agreements in the future.



Affordable houses in Edenderry transferred to RAS Housing

Assessment and Allocations

115 tenancy allocations were made during the year. Changes to the procedures for the Assessment of Housing Need for Rent Supplement were introduced in July 2009. An updated and revised housing management system (ihouse) was implemented during the summer to facilitate enhanced management of customer details, allocations and tenancies. The Social Housing waiting list stood at 500 at the end of the year with the greatest demand from the Edenderry area. A housing needs assessment update was completed in March 2009 and revisions and amendments to the Council's Scheme of Letting Priorities adopted by SPC in October 2009. Revised tenancy agreements were also introduced during the year to provide for an initial probationary tenancy of 6 or 12 months.

Tenant Purchase

While Tenant Purchase applications peaked in 2006 with almost 40 houses sold, the outturn for 2009 was just one tenant purchase completed during the year. The reduced level of activity under this scheme in recent years has had severe implications on the level of funding available to deliver programmes across a range of areas. The major impact in 2009 was the discontinuation of 2nd hand house acquisition programme.

Housing Loans

Revised housing loan criteria were introduced including

the standardization of application forms, the adoption by Council of a Credit Policy in July 2009 and establishment of a Credit Committee in line with the Housing (Local Authority Loans) Regulations 2009. One Shared Ownership Loan was approved in 2009.

Adaptation, Mobility and Older Persons Grants

Almost 450 applications have been received under the three grants schemes since their introduction in November 2007. The overall budget available in 2009 was €2m with €408,000 coming from own resources. Applications under the various schemes continue to be assessed and prioritised on a continuing basis with almost 200 eligible applications receiving final approval to date. Revised guidelines for the assessment and approval of applications under the schemes were considered and approved by the SPC in October 2009 which should result in a reduction in waiting time for applicants.

Private Sites

There was little activity in the sale of private sites and a considerable debit balance remains on lands acquired over the last number of years for this purpose. Four private site sales were agreed during the year.

Rental Accommodation Scheme / Leasing Scheme

A total of 160 customers had signed up to RAS by the

end of the year with 79 transfers completed in 2009. Tullamore continued to be the priority area as it represented the area of greatest need. 20 unsold affordable units were transferred to RAS in Clara and Edenderry in December 2009. A review of landlord contracts and rental agreements was completed during the year which resulted in considerable rent savings. The Council also provided a regional support service for RAS for six neighbouring local authorities.

A new Leasing Scheme was introduced during the year providing the opportunity to acquire long term leases on suitable accommodation in order to house persons on the local authority's waiting list. Lease agreements were under negotiation for 17 units at year end. There is increasing priority to progress the Rental Accommodation Scheme / Leasing as a viable social housing option in 2010.

Private Rented Accommodation – Enforcement Of Standards

Offaly County Council continued to manage this function on a countywide basis during the year. Revised Building Regulations and standards and a revised system of Enforcement were introduced in 2009 requiring a more detailed level of assessment, inspection and compliance. 118 inspections were conducted during the year.

Traveller Accommodation and Supports

Considerable progress was made in a number of key areas including the adoption of a 5 year Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013. The new Plan aims to provide 78 units of accommodation over its lifetime. Targets for 2009 were met in this regard. The new Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee held its first meeting in October 2009 and will meet quarterly to co-ordinate delivery of the Plan. Proposals for a number of accommodation schemes in the Tullamore were progressed and a revised Caravan Loan scheme was adopted by SPC in October 2009. Following consultation with residents, a programme of improvement works was completed at the Millbrook Park halting site in Birr in October 2009. Over 350 liaison supports were provided to members of the travelling community during the year.

Anti-Social Behaviour

The Anti Social Behaviour Policy adopted in 2008 has proven to be effective and further links were established with the Community Gardaí and Joint Policing Committees. Pre-tenancy supports were provided for 145 tenants together with ongoing support for residents associations. 49 anti-social behaviour complaints were received and investigated.

Homeless

The Offaly Homeless Forum met quarterly to co-ordinate the response of the various statutory

agencies. Tullamore Housing Association developed 15 new units in 2009, 4 of which will be provided as emergency homeless units operated in conjunction with the Midlands Simon Community. 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. 48 adults and 23 children presented as homeless during 2009.

Estate Management

The community cabin provided for Greenwood Park and Churchview Heights in 2008 continued to be used by a number of groups including local residents and state and voluntary agencies. Broadband was installed in the cabin during the year and a Graffiti Art project was completed in November 2009 which involved local youth designing and painting the exterior of the cabin. Due to resource restrictions the Estate Management grant scheme was suspended for the year.

Proposals for the ongoing management of the Grove Street estate in Crinkle were considered by the Birr Area Committee and an inter-agency group to address social issues on the estate was proposed. This group will meet in early 2010 to develop an estate action plan. An Estate Management Policy which aims to improve the relationship between the Council and its residents was adopted by the Housing SPC in October 2009.

*Churchview
Graffiti
Art Project*



Playgrounds

A Joint Playground Policy between the Council and Offaly Local Development Company was drafted and discussed by the SPC. The Housing Unit also progressed a number of playground proposals in partnership with local playground action groups.

Efficiency and Customer Service Initiatives

A revised housing claims procedure was introduced during the year. The computer based Housing Programme Management System (HPMS) will facilitate more efficient capital approvals and financial claims with the Department and facilitate enhanced project management capabilities.

Works were completed on the housing meeting room to provide enhanced customer service and health and safety for staff. The Housing section undertook a review and update of maintenance contracts for Aras an Chontae during the year and identified a number of savings and efficiencies, including energy savings and accessibility.

Housing, Social & Cultural S.P.C.

The SPC met 5 times during 2009 and the following issues were addressed:

SPC Policies, Programmes and Initiatives adopted

- ❖ Caravan Loan Scheme 2009
- ❖ Scheme of Letting Priorities (Amendments and Additions)
- ❖ Estate Management Policy 2009 Affordable houses in Clara
- ❖ Revised Assessment Procedures for Housing Grants

SPC Policy Recommendations approved by Council

- ❖ Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009 – 2013
- ❖ Revised Guidelines for the Implementation of Part V
- ❖ Revised Housing Loan Criteria and Offaly Local Authorities Credit Policy 2009

Other Items considered and discussed by SPC

- ❖ Homeless Forum
- ❖ Tullamore Library and Arts Facility
- ❖ Library Development Plan 2010 -2014
- ❖ Joint Playground Policy 2009 – 2014
- ❖ Offaly Film Commission
- ❖ Public Arts Protocol
- ❖ Proposals to deal with Unsold Affordable Housing

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Catch up on latest news and events in County Offaly.

COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE & ARCHIVES



Clara Library

membership was also introduced ensuring that a member could use any library in the County.

Library Events

Clara Library re-opened in September 2009 following a refurbishment and is now located with Clara Bog Visitor centre. The library was upgraded to a full time library opening 31 hours a week with 2 staff. Since opening we have increased our membership, issues and internet use. 2000 people visited the library in the first month of opening. Capital funding for the project was sanctioned by the DoEHLG for the project. The provision of a shared AV/Training room has allowed the library to host events including the author visit of Oisín McGann.



Clara Library

Delivering Quality Library Services

In 2009 a draft Library Development Plan 2010-2014 was prepared and presented to the Housing, Social and Cultural Services Strategic Policy Committee. Consultation with the stakeholders will take place in January 2010 and the plan will be presented to the members in February 2010.

In September 2009 the Council introduced revised opening hours to all of our libraries increasing opening hours per week from 190.5 to 205.5. Lunch time opening was introduced in our four full time libraries. County wide

Shinrone Library closed in July 2009 due to budgetary constraints and staffing cuts. The provision of a library service in Shinrone is under review as part of the Library

Development Plan process. Interim arrangements have been put in place with a service to the schools on a monthly basis.

A new learning programme was launched in the 4 full time libraries in September. The programme is a joint initiative between FAS and Offaly County Library Service aimed at providing people with opportunities to up skill for free in their local library with the assistance of a facilitator. Some of the courses available are ECDL, Health and Safety, Finance fundamentals etc. We currently have 107 online learners on the programme and there is a waiting list of the libraries. In 2010 we will be rolling out this programme to our 4 part time libraries.



Cllr. Noel Bourke, Cathaoirleach Offaly County Council, launches FAS e-learning initiative at Tullamore Library

A refurbishment proposal for Tullamore Library and HQ was submitted to DoEHLG in 2009 for approximately €2m. This proposal is currently under examination. It is

expected that a decision on the funding will be made in 2010.

The Council continued with a programme of **outreach activities in 2009**. Tullamore Library held 11 exhibitions as well as events e.g. Drug Awareness night, Fleadh Cheoil events e.g. Ceol sa Leabharlann. Children's activities included World Book Day events, Seachtain na Gaeilge art competition, poetry reading, author visits and Summer reading challenge.

Author and illustrator, Oisín McGann visited Clara Library. Other events in Clara Library included a Christmas Carol reading event and Scary Stories competition.

Edenderry Library held computer classes for the over 55's during the month of May and the festival of **'Bealtaine'**. The classes were facilitated by a staff member and focused on the beginner covering Microsoft word, email and searching the web. Author visits included Tom McCaughren and Peter Cunningham. The two library bookclubs – one for adult and one for children continue to attract huge interest.

Birr library continued to facilitate children's book clubs throughout 2009. The Birr lecture series, all Ireland poetry day, Children's Book Festival events and Science week events were further developed and promoted during 2009.

In September 2009 Offaly County Library Service and the Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI) received the prestigious **European Award for Languages** (EAL), also known as the European Language Label for a

joint language project which involved the participation of four Offaly primary schools (Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Eoin - Rath, Mercy Convent NS - Birr, St. Cronan's NS- Lusmagh & Shinrone Mixed NS.)

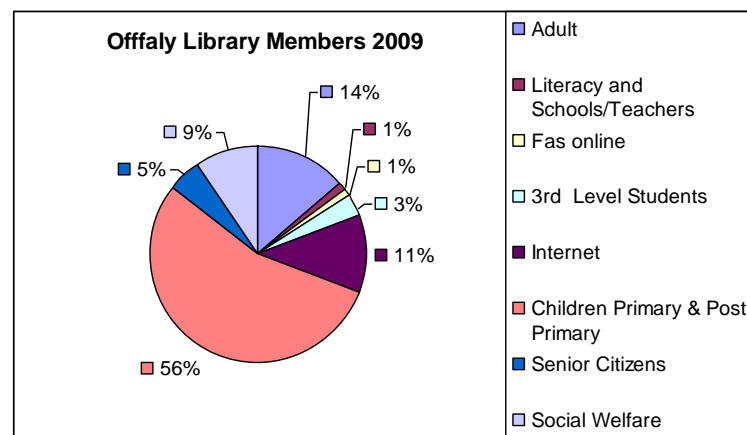
Use of the Offaly Library service continues to grow every year. Many users are coming to the Library to use high speed connections that allow them to access web-based information more quickly; for others the library may be

their only source of Internet access.

For the year ending 2009, there were:

- ❖ 178,884 visits to Offaly Library Service
- ❖ 199431 items were borrowed
- ❖ 11065 people renewed their membership (15% of the population are members of our libraries)
- ❖ 38564 internet sessions

		Tullamore	Birr	Edenderry	Clara	Banagher	Ferbane	Kilcormac	Daingean	Shinrone	Totals
Issues	2008	66249	42815	29523	11025	12585	11121	6739	7926	7720	195703
	2009	72869	40405	31056	15650	12241	9590	5739	7455	4426	199431
		10%	-6%	5%	42%	-3%	-14%	-15%	-6%	-43%	2%
Members	2008	3460	2718	1601	698	820	415	316	349	207	10584
	2009	3262	2675	1978	1042	855	435	279	407	149	11065
		-6%	-2%	24%	49%	4%	5%	-12%	17%	-28%	5%



ARTS SERVICE

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

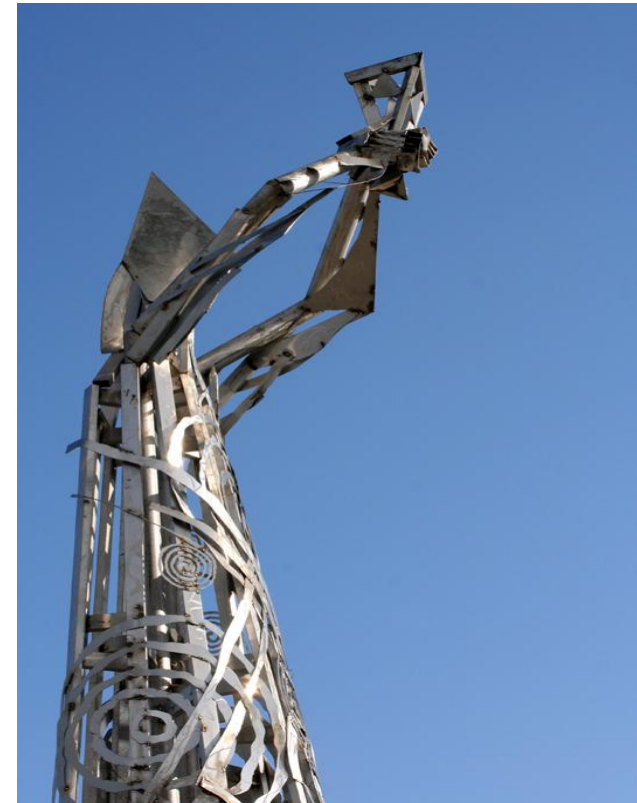
Offaly County Arts Plan, 2007 to 2011 recognises that the Council can assist the Arts by "... **provide leadership in quality inclusive and innovative experiences of the arts for all and to demonstrate through best practice and partnership the benefits of increased access to and involvement in the arts for all our citizens.** "

Main Achievements in 2009:

Public Art

A Public Art Protocol was adopted in February 2009. Offaly Local Authorities Public Art Working Group work to source available funding and prioritise areas for commissioning. The sculpture *Saints and Scholars*, by artist Maurice Harron, was installed on the north end of the Tullamore Bypass to much local and national acclaim. His four impressive figures present symbols of learning and sanctity reflecting the rich monastic heritage of Offaly. Approaching the features from the north, the first holds up a chalice, the second a book, the third a crozier and the fourth shows a flock of birds/souls. The features

are located on an esker, Eiscir Riada the ancient route to Clonmacnoise. Eskers are long understood to have been used as communication routes.



Saints and Scholars by Maurice Harron commissioned by Offaly County Council in 2009 under the Per Cent for Art Scheme arising out of the N52 Tullamore Bypass

FilmOffaly Award 2009

Offaly County Council's Film Commission, FilmOffaly, in partnership with Filmbase established the FilmOffaly Award. The Award was designed to support and encourage filmmakers to undertake innovative, creative projects in Offaly. It was also envisaged that the winning production would showcase the county on a national and international stage. The award was won by El Zorero Films and the short film *Noreen*, starring Brendan Gleeson, was produced and shot on location in Shannonbridge and Mucklagh during December 2009 and January 2010.



Brendan Gleeson stars in 'Noreen'

Anam Beo Arts In Health

The Council in partnership with the HSE facilitated Anam Beo to become an independent arts organisation. They are now a limited company limited with an independent board.

Arts Act Grants

77 community groups received funding under the Arts Act Grants. The grants provide support to assist individuals and/or groups to organise and participate in arts events. The total budget of €20,000 was allocated in grants that ranged from €800 to €300.

Support To Artists Scheme

17 artists received financial support under this scheme. The scheme seeks to assist the artists with purchasing materials, exhibition costs or research time. Artist Rowena Keaveny and Dancer Nick Bryson received the Tyrone Guthrie Bursary to spend two weeks at Annamacarrig and artists Claire Guinan, Carolina Gustavsson and Mairead Dunne received solo exhibitions in Aras an Chontae.

Drama Awards

10 drama groups and musical societies received funding for productions or equipment and 3 people received bursaries to attend the Drama League of Ireland Summer School.

Staff Photography Project

This new initiative was aimed at providing an energetic and creative focus for staff, across all sections, in 2009. 12 staff members attended a photography course and 14 staff members participated in an exhibition which was shown in Áras an Chontae and then was shown throughout our branch library network.

Bealtaine, Festival of Arts for Older People

A county wide programme of events was coordinated and developed by the Arts Office for the Bealtaine Festival. The festival included the publication of a book of stories and memories by older people in Offaly, called *Open Doors*.

Festival Support

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

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

Cups and Crowns Theatre Company

A grant to this educational theatre company facilitated workshops and performances in 7 primary schools in Offaly, namely Monasteroris, Kinnitty, Croghan, Lumcloon, Birr Boys School, Geashill and Gaelscoil Tullamore.

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 participants worked on writing for the stage and their work was dramatically

read by members of the Eden Drama Society and recorded on CD called *Terra Incognita*.

Lough Boora Sculpture in the Parklands

Sculpture in the Parklands is a community recreational facility that is open 365 days of the year from dawn to dusk. It provides an opportunity for visitors to interact with contemporary works of art by internationally renowned artists in a relaxed environment.



Lough Boora Sculpture in the Parklands receives its Business to Arts Award

Sculpture in the Parklands received the Corporate and Cultural/Social Responsibility Award at this year's Business to Arts award ceremony. The award was presented by President Mary McAleese at Castletown House on May 20th. Offaly County Council's ongoing partnership with Bord na Móna and the Crafts Council has helped Sculpture in the Parklands to

secure world-renowned artists for residencies. In 2009 artists Julian Wild and Alan Counihan were commissioned to create new works in the Parklands.

Birr Theatre and Arts Centre

The Arts Section worked in partnership with the Birr Theatre and Arts Centre on developing the Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival and supporting Legitimate Bodies Dance Company to deliver Offaly Youth Dance Company, a community dance programme for young people.

Midlands Collaborative Projects (The Arts Offices of Offaly, Westmeath, Laois and Longford)

- ❖ There were 3 publications of the Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine. This free, 32 page magazine, highlighted the diversity and quality of arts projects across the four counties and aims to create a greater cultural identity in the Midlands.
- ❖ Kindermusic continues to develop in 9 centres as a music education programme for toddlers and parents. It is run in conjunction with the VEC.
- ❖ Midlands Youth Orchestra collaborated with a Youth Orchestra from Bremen Germany.
- ❖ Midland Master Classes were delivered as professional development opportunities for artists in the Midlands.

Support and Information Service to Professional, Amateur, Voluntary and Community Groups and Individuals

The Arts Office is a resource for artists and art 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.



Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival 2009

Housing, Social & Cultural Services

Planning, Economic & Local Development

Roads & Emergency Services

Environment & Water Services

Internal Services

Town Councils

SPC Chair: Cllr. Eamon Dooley

Members:

Cllr. Dervill Dolan,
Cllr. Peter Ormond,
Cllr. Liam Quinn,
Cllr. Sinead Dooley,
Cllr. Johnny Butterfield,
Cllr. Michael Loughnane

Sectoral:

Mr. Ray Kennedy
Mr. Dominic Doheny
Mr. Tom Finnerty
Mr. Dominic Carroll

Director Of Services: Declan Kirrane

Senior Planner: Andrew Murray

Administrative Officer: Phyllis Hughes, Planning

Architect: Rachel McKenna

Heritage Officer: Amanda Pedlow

Administrative Officer: Jackie Finney, Economic Development

Administrative Officer: Seamus Corrigan, Community & Enterprise

Administrative Officer: David Minton, Community & Enterprise

Sports Partnership Co-ordinator: Eamon Henry

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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

Land use policy is implemented by means of the County and Town Development Plans, Local Area Plans, Village and Sraid Plans. Planning Control involves the process of planning applications up to 1,500 per annum, and the taking of appropriate enforcement action where necessary.

County Development Plan 2009 – 2015

The County Development Plan 2009 – 2015 was adopted by the Council at its meeting in January 2009.

The County Development Plan sets 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.

The County Manager is required to prepare a report two years after the making of the Development Plan on the progress achieved in securing the objectives of the Plan. Work on this report will commence towards the end of 2010 and will be presented to the members in January 2011.

Review Of Tullamore Town & Environs Development Plan 2004 - 2010

The Draft Development Plan for the town of Tullamore for the period 2010 to 2016 went on public display in July 2009. Over forty submissions were received during the public consultation period and the Manager’s report on these submissions was presented to the members of Tullamore Town Council and Offaly County Council in mid-December 2009. The preparation of the revised Development Plan will be completed in June 2010.

Review of Birr Town & Environs Development Plan 2004 – 2010

The review of the Birr Town and Environs Development Plan commenced in April 2008. The second consultation stage of the Draft Plan has now taken place and the revised Plan for the period 2010 to 2016 must be completed by February 2010.

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

	No of Applications	No. Granted	No. Refused	Total Decided
2005	1462*	838	217	1055
2006	1894*	1120	212	1332
2007	1785*	1421	250	1671
2008	1069*	854	185	1039
2009	557*	418	69	487

(*This figure includes applications which were invalid)



Oxmantown Mall Birr – Georgian doorway and magnolia

Strategic Policy Committee Meetings

During 2009, four meetings of the committee were held and the Committee considered the following matters:

- Review of Offaly County Development Plan 2009 - 2015
- Review of Birr and Tullamore Town Plans and Environs 2010 – 2016
- Review of Regional Planning Guidelines
- Planning Conditions in relation to Noise/Operational Hours for Quarries/Construction Sites
- Overview of Economic and Local Development
- Work Programme 2010

Regional Planning Guidelines

The review of the Regional Planning Guidelines commenced in 2009. A member of the staff of the Offaly County Council Planning Department was assigned for a period of time to the Midland Regional Authority to assist in the preparation of the guidelines. Regional Planning Guidelines are 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 Regional Planning Guidelines.

Development Management

Planning permission is required for any development of land or property unless the development is exempted development. Development management ensures that these developments comply with the statutory provisions

in the County Development Plan, the Planning Acts and the Regulations.

The downturn in the economic activity, particularly in the construction sector, has been reflected in the number of planning applications received in 2009. 557 planning applications were received in 2009 which compares with 1069 for 2008.

The downturn in the planning applications has afforded the opportunity to the Planning Department to focus on other areas of activity, derelict sites register, preparation of action plans for sraids and villages, the taking in charge of housing estates and a more consistent and concerted effort in relation to enforcement and compliance issues. To date sixty seven sites have been inspected as potential derelict sites, forty seven number of action plans for sraids and villages have been completed and eighty one number of housing estates have been inspected regarding Tullamore Town Council compliance issues.

Strategic Infrastructure

During 2009 the Council considered two applications to An Bord Pleanala, under the Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) Act 2006. These applications referred to the development of a Gas Fired Power Generation Station at Derrygreenagh and the Gas Fired Power Station at Lumcloon. The Council considered these applications and forwarded their submissions to An Bord Pleanala. Both applications were granted with conditions. There are a number of major projects that are under consideration by An Bord Pleanala at the pre-planning

stage and it is anticipated that further applications of this nature will be coming before the Council in 2010 for their consideration.

Conservation Grants

In 2009, Offaly County Council received an allocation of €123,000 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 €11,500 were allocated to 24 applicants subject to matching funding of 50% the cost of the works.



Church of St Carthage Rahan

Compliance/Enforcement

Additional staff resources have been allocated from the Planning Section to this area and the Area Planners are now involved to a greater extent than heretofore. During 2009 a greater focus on compliance issues was undertaken, particularly in relation to housing estates.

On average over one hundred complaints are received each year in relation to unauthorised development. While some of these initially can appear to be of a simple nature, they can develop into more serious issues and require a considerable amount of input from the staff, including the attendance at court. During the year, the Council had a number of significant successes in relation to a number of enforcement cases. Regular meetings are held with the Council's legal advisers to ensure that all cases are pursued in a timely manner.

In accordance with Part VIII of the Planning & Development Act 2000, the following details relate to enforcement proceedings in 2009:

- Warning Letters:	156
- Enforcement Notices:	63
- Circuit Court Cases:	2
- Prosecutions:	35

Development Contribution Scheme

A Supplementary Development Contribution Scheme for Clara was approved by the Council during the year for upgrade of the Sewerage Plant in Clara: the amounts approved were €1900 per house and €633 p.e.

Details of amounts received and disbursed as circulated to members with the Budget 2009, are as follows:

Development Contributions-Receipts and Application of Development Funds for the period from Dec 2008-Nov 2009.	
Receipts	€000's
Balance Available – November 2009	9,249
Contributions Received Dec 2008 to Nov 2009	
Development Contributions – Customers	993
Water & Sewerage: Dev. Contributions - Town Councils	2,629
Disbursements Dec 2008 – Nov 2009	502
(see below)	
Balance Available – November 2009	12369

Allocation of Funds – since last report to Council, November 2008	000's
Áras an Chontae Car Park Improvements	10
Clara Library Refurbishments	307
2009 SS Mucklagh Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade	50
SS Effluent Quality Measures	37
2009 Small Schemes Clonbullogue WSS Source Project	18
2009 SS Mountbolus Water New Source	25
Small Scheme W Supply Scheme Lehinch Extension 09	15
2009 SS Birr/Ferbane Water Scheme Improvements	25

**OCC DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS AVAILABLE
FOR DISBURSEMENT AS AT NOVEMBER 2009:**

Job Description	Funds Available €000's
Dev. Cont. Scheme – Amenities	2,229
Dev. Cont Scheme – Infrastructure	798
Dev. Cont Scheme – Wastewater	3,380
Dev. Cont Scheme – Water	5,168
Spl. Dev. Cont. 2004 – Edenderry Sewerage Scheme	213
Spl. Dev. Cont. 2004 – Car Parking	288
Spl. Dev. Cont. Scheme '04– Crinkle Booster Pump	16
Spl. Dev Cont. Scheme '04-Daingean Upgrade Sewerage	8
Spl Dev. Cont. Scheme – Provision of Signage Drumcraw, Mt. Lucas	6
Spl Dev. Cont. Scheme – Road Improvement & Main Drumcraw, Mt. Lucas	45
Spl Dev. Cont. Scheme – Communication Masts	80
Spl Dev Cont Rd Imp. Tullaroe Clareen	8
Spl Dev Cont – Imp & Const Acc Rd Banagher La Sainte	100
Spl Dev Cont Traffic Calming Kilcumber Bdg Edenderry	30
TOTAL	12,369



Fancroft Mill - before and during conservation works

HERITAGE SECTION

The work of the Offaly Heritage Office is outlined below for 2009. The Heritage Forum met four times a year, with working groups meeting as necessary for certain projects.

Birr Public Realm – Planning and Development Project

The Birr Public Realm plan was finalised and presented to Town Council who have adopted it as their work programme for the town. The first phase of delivery was initiated by the application to Civic Structures Grant for conservation of Chearnley Column in Emmet Square. This project was successful and work to the column was substantially completed in 2009. . In addition the Birr Town Trail was revised, revamped and published.

Birr Workhouse

This report was commissioned in 2008 with the final report submitted in early 2009. James Howley who wrote the report, gave a public talk on 19 November in Birr on the Workhouse and Chearnley Column.

Castles of Offaly Book

Work is progressing on a joint National Monuments Service and Offaly County Council project to record and document all of the castles in the county. A number of sites had been identified which it was felt

merited dendrodating. Application for licenses and owners permission was secured and David Brown of Queen’s University worked at a number of sites including Emmel, Boveen and Cloghan. Editing of the gazetteer entries was undertaken. Site visits continued to sign off on floor plans drawn.

Carved Stone Phase Two

Following the first year of this project in 2008, ArcTron were retained to complete the processing of 2008 data. This included

- Gallen wall and slabs
- Shinrone Glass House
- Tihilly High Cross
- Durrow Cross Slabs
- Cadamstown Ardara Bridge

In order to maximise this work for public benefit, interpretive text has been added to the Durrow high cross panel by panel. The text was prepared by Caimin O’Brien based on Peter Harbison’s work. This will be available on www.offaly.ie/heritage and on ArcTron’s website. An axometric view of the glass house in Shinrone was also requested in order to facilitate the publication of material on this unique structure.

Wildflowers of Offaly



The *Wildflowers of Offaly* by John Feehan was published in November 2009 by Offaly County Council. This is a landmark publication for Offaly and a superb reference point for all interested in the flora of the county. The launch was on 14 December 2009 by An Taoiseach, Brian Cowen TD. The book is being distributed through Mercier Press and is available worldwide. Michael Viney has referenced it twice in his column which is very beneficial in promoting it.

Stained Glass Window Survey

David Lawrence carried out a detailed survey and recording of windows in the Roman Catholic churches at Clara, Tullamore, Edenderry, Tubber, Birr and Birr Convent (now Birr Library) during October 2009. He has carried out research to complement the site visits in both Dublin and London. The resulting reports have been sent to the parishes involved and to the library service. This project was managed by the Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society as members of the Offaly Heritage Forum.

Offaly Field Club Programme

A full annual programme of 14 events over 20 days was developed and circulated. All bar one leader was a volunteer and there is a great resource of leaders in the county.



Geology Weekend

Heritage Week

Programming for the week was co-ordinated to plan a good range of events. For the first time Offaly published a 4pp DL which was very popular and productive. Also as a first was a number of private owners opening their properties during the week.

Annual Seminar – Saturday 7th November 2009.

A full day programme and with trips to Lough Boora Parklands and the Tullamore Dew Heritage Centre were arranged with the seminar based in Tullamore. Over 100 people attended the day which focuses on new projects being delivered in the county.



Viewing Toberdaly Castle - Heritage Week

Medieval Churches Programme

Maintenance and monitoring of work took place at

- Lemanaghan monastic site – work complete - maintain
- Roscomroe – work complete - monitor
- St Brendan’s Birr – work complete - maintain
- Kilbride, Clara– work complete - maintain
- Killoughey Church – work ongoing

- Worked with Church of Ireland on the conservation of Rahan church and implementation of the conservation plan.
- Ballymacwilliam Church - A report on works needed was drawn up with Edenderry Historical Society and sent to the Dept of EHLG for approval. Initial work trimming ivy was carried out.

Moneygall

The Heritage Officer liaised with the local community, County Councillors and Shannon Development to draw up an information board for Moneygall to mark President Barak Obama’s connection.

Japanese Knotweed

An awareness campaign was initiated with staff and public about this invasive species. Spraying of certain sites took place in September.

Tullamore Dew Heritage Centre

A number of Board Meetings were held throughout the year.

Tihilly Conservation Plan

Work commenced on preparing the Tihilly Monastic Site Conservation Plan in conjunction with Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society.

WEB

There was a major revamp and updating of the whole website.



Chearnley column– Emmet Square Birr, repair works by Howley Hayes with the Civic Structures Grant and Birr Town Council. Before and After.

COMMUNITY & ENTERPRISE

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 will concentrate on those actions which require cross-agency co-operation and support. Priority areas to focus on for 2009-2012 are:

- Education and Skills (Lifelong learning).
- Creation and retention of employment and enterprise.
- Sustainable development.
- Social Inclusion Measures action – developed by SIMS.

The Action Plan was approved by the County Development Board in July 2009.

Offaly Integrated Local Development Company is represented on the Offaly County Development Board by members of its Board and its Chief Executive Officer. The company is 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 is also responsible for the delivery of other programmes from time to time. Offaly County Council works closely with Offaly Local Development Company on a range of activities to the benefit of the people of Offaly.

The Community and Enterprise Department also provides a link between the County Development Board/Offaly County Council and the Offaly County Childcare Committee, Regional Drugs Task Force, Edenderry School Completion Programme, Big Brother Big Sister.

Comhairle Na nÓg

The purpose of Comhairle is to link young people to adult decision making bodies and ensure that young people can influence policy. This Year the Comhairle group identified two main issues that they wanted to address. These issues were teen suicide and mental health; focusing on bullying and pressures on young people.



Offaly Comhairle na nÓg at Dail na nÓg March 2009

These were the issues that were identified by the young people themselves as their areas of concern. Comhairle in 2009 worked towards responding to those issues through the projects the group undertook. Comhairle set up www.ohyp.ie which is a website to promote Offaly Healthy Young People

(OHYP). The group also ran a poster campaign and made a DVD to promote positive mental health in Young people in Offaly. 'Offaly Healthy Young People' the Comhairle project for Offaly in 2009 received a National Foróige Citizenship Award for their endeavors during the Year.

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 addressed. Comhairle has engaged with the HSE, Gardai and Councillors on their issues. The group is representative of young people aged 13-17 from a wide geographical area within the County. The Comhairle group is supported by the collaborative work of Youth workers in Offaly.

Supporting the Community Forum to Participate In Policy Development

Following on from the increased membership in Offaly Community Forum from 2008, the Forum now has almost 400 member groups.

The Forum has been active in a range of areas including networking, information sharing, training, and policy development. Projects for 2009 that the Forum engaged in were; developing a Volunteer Centre for Offaly in conjunction with Offaly Local Development Company. The Forum took a lead role locally in promoting the HSE/ Midland Regional Drug Taskforce Dial to Stop Drug Dealing Campaign that allowed the public to phone up a confidential

free phone number to report drug dealing in local areas throughout Offaly during the summer of 2009. Offaly Community Forum was the main instigator of ensuring that this campaign was delivered in Offaly. Offaly Community Forum also held an Information evening in conjunction with the Wheel on the newly enacted Charities Act and implications of this for registered charities and the implications of fundraising under the charities act for groups. Tracey Hannon from Clann Credo met with the Forum members to explain how Clann Credo Social funding for community & voluntary groups operates and the application process for groups.



St Brendan's Community School Birr, Winners of the Pauline Curley Relay Marathon October 09

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Maximising Productive Investment Thereby Facilitating the Creation of Good, Sustainable Jobs in the County

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 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.

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 2010 including the production of an enterprise support booklet and the hosting of Bright Start seminars aimed at helping people to cope with the stresses of redundancy, both personally and on a career level with

support from various agencies.

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 FAS, 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 current working in co-operation with Shannon Development regarding 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 Enterprise Fund and the North Offaly Development Fund, both of which are substantially funded by ESB. The development of Rhode Business Park commenced in November 2008 and there are now some serviced sites available. 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 number of project leads are being pursued . The Council will continue to offer advice and assistance in any way it can to maximise the benefits of this scheme for County Offaly. There is an amendment to extend the Mid-Shannon Scheme by two years both for applications (new date is 31 May 2012) and also for incurring the qualifying expenditure (now ends on 31 May 2015).However, the extension now requires state-aid clearance from the EU Commission.

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, Shannon Development, the County Enterprise Board and Offaly Local Development Development.

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 2009. This gave a significant boost to the local economy and generates a new awareness of the attractions of County Offaly for visitors.

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.

Making Offaly a Pleasant, Safe and Enjoyable Place to Live and Work

Sport

Offaly County Council continued to host the Offaly Sports Partnership in 2009. A sub group of the County Development Board and funded by the Irish Sports Council the Partnership has three core staff – a sports coordinator, an administrator and a sports inclusion disability officer.

Highlights from the work of the Partnership in 2009 included –

- The outreaching of disability sports programmes to over 300 people with a disability



Action from the Sports hall Athletics Competition December 2009

- The establishment of a regional power wheelchair soccer team with our counterparts in Westmeath which went on to take provincial and national titles
- The completion of the peer led Travellers in Sport tutor training programme
- The outreaching of Sports hall Athletics to over 1,800 children in 20 primary schools during the winter months and the hosting of inter school competitions in this discipline
- The completion of a sports facilities audit for the county and the mapping of the facilities
- The awarding 20 sports development grants to clubs in the county

In addition to the work of the Sports Partnership, the Council

acknowledged sporting achievement by hosting two civic receptions – one for golfer Shane Lowry to celebrate his successes in the Irish Open and one for the county’s camogie team which won the All Ireland Junior Final.

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.



Launch of Strategic Plan for increasing the development of people with disabilities in sport & physical activity

Building Social Cohesion and Inclusion Within and Across the County

With the support of Community and Enterprise, the

Social Inclusion Measures Group continues with the implementation of the Anti-Poverty Strategy for the county. 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 County Development Board has responsibility for the Traveller Interagency Group for the county under the direction of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Following on the work carried out under the project funded by the Department in 2007/2008, the County Development Board is now required to review its Traveller Strategy Plan with particular emphasis on issues such as education, employment, accommodation and drug abuse.

During 2010 the C & E Department will continue to support other initiatives such as Offaly County Council Chairman’s Awards, developing a volunteer centre for Offaly, Promoting best practice and community enhancement and participation in the Inter-Agency Group of the County Development Board in relation to disability.

Housing, Social & Cultural Services

Planning, Economic & Local Development

Roads & Emergency Services

Environment & Water Services

Internal Services

Town Councils

SPC Chair: Tony McLoughlin MCC

Members:

Cllr. Noel Bourke
Cllr. Connie Hanniffy
Cllr. Ger Plunkett
Cllr. Danny Owens
Cllr. Paddy Rowland

Sectoral

Mr. Hugh Farrell
Mr. Brian Kenny
Mr. Michael Kenny

Director of Services: Frank Heslin
Senior Engineer: Charles McCarthy, Roads
Chief Fire Officer: Eoin O’Ceilleachair
Civil Defence Officer: Raphael Fallon

ROADS DEPARTMENT



Opening of the Tullamore By-Pass by An Taoiseach Brian Cowen TD, 29th October 2009

National Roads

Due to the inclement weather conditions (flooding & winter maintenance) experienced in 2009 and over the winter/spring period of 2010 expenditure by Offaly County Council on National Primary/Secondary Road Maintenance were much greater than in recent years.

Temperatures as low as -10.00 degrees were experienced across the midlands resulting in sections of the pavement on national road network breaking out in potholes overnight,

due to frost heave. The repair cost to these sections of road was estimated at approximately €300,000.

Over the period from the beginning of November 2009 to the end of February 2010 Offaly County Council had to salt the roads in excess 65 nights. The cost of this operation alone is in excess of €500,000.

The following table indicates the percentage of Minor Improvement Works (Overlays) carried out between 2006 and 2009 on the National secondary Road Network: -

Year	Length (Km)	% of N.S. Network	Allocation €
2006	6.50	5.00	2,375,000
2007	9.60	8.00	2,523,000
2008	4.55	3.76	970,000
2009	Localised Repairs		500,000

Twelve Pavement and Minor Improvement Schemes at various locations on the N52, N62 & N80 were submitted to the NRA for funding in 2009. The total funding requested was €4,775,000. Unfortunately due to the economic downturn none of these schemes received funding. The allocation received from the NRA for Pavement and Minor Improvement Schemes in **2009 was €500,000** compared to **€970,000 in 2008** and **€2,523,000 in 2007**.

The allocations received from the National Roads Authority for 2009 were as follows:

National Secondary Major Schemes

Route	Description of Works	2008 €	2009 €
N52	Tullamore Bypass	30,000,000	29,250,000
N52	Kilbeggan to Tullamore	200,000	150,000
	TOTAL	30,200,000	29,400,000

Tullamore By-Pass

The Tullamore By-Pass was officially opened by An Taoiseach Brian Cowen on 23rd October 2009, ten months ahead of schedule.

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. Since the opening, the benefits to Tullamore Town and County Offaly are very noticeable. These can be summarised as follows: -

- Removal of through traffic from Tullamore and the village of Mucklagh improving the quality of life for the local communities.

- Improved facilities and reduced journey times for strategic national through traffic using the N52 and N80 routes.
- Improved economic opportunities and competitiveness for Offaly and the Midland Region.
- Improved safety levels for local residents and road users.
- Improved environmental quality through removal of road traffic noise and pollution from Tullamore and Mucklagh.

N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link

In March 2007 the NRA approved the recommendation of the Route Selection Report that the Green Route be adapted as the Preferred Route Corridor. The 2009 allocation of €150,000 allowed Offaly County Council commence work on Stage 4 – Preliminary Design. The NRA Regional Design Office in Mullingar is project managing the scheme on behalf of Offaly County Council. Procurement of EIS Consultants commenced in late 2009 and the contract is expected to be awarded in early 2010. It is programmed to have the preliminary design, the EIS and CPO documentation complete by the end of 2010.

National Secondary Pavement and Minor Improvement & Bridge Rehabilitation

Route	Description of Works	2009 €
N80/62/52	Pavement Grant	500,000
N62	Pedestrian Bridge Ferbane	500,000
	TOTAL	1,000,000

This years allocations enabled Offaly County Council carry out the following works: -

- The 2009 allocation of €500,000 allowed Offaly County Council to prioritise sections of the National Secondary network for repair work only. This involved awarding 2 fixed price contracts for works in Tullamore Town and Birr Town along with sections at various locations on the N52 and N62.
- The €500,000 allocation enabled Offaly County Council, in conjunction with the NRA, to appoint Civil Engineering firm Ward and Burke the contract for the installation of a **Pedestrian Bridge** over the River Brosna in **Ferbane**. The bridge was successfully completed and opened to pedestrian traffic prior to the commencement of the school year in September 2009.

National Secondary Safety Measures

Route	Description of Works	2008 €
N52	Safety measures at School in Kilcormac	15,000
N62	Signalising Seffin/Military road junctions in Birr	165,000
N80	Safety measures at Charlestown Bridge in Clara	10,000
N80	Safety measures at Tubber	10,0000
		200,000

The **2009 allocations** enabled Offaly County Council carry out the following works: -

- Installation of Traffic Light signals on the N62 at Seffin/Military junctions in Birr.
- Installation of appropriate safety measures at the school on the Tullamore Road (N52) in Kilcormac. (delayed - Right turning lane to be installed in March/April 2010)
- Installation of safety measures on the N80 at Charlestown Bridge Clara and Traffic Calming Design at Tubber.

NON-NATIONAL ROADS

The 2009 Estimate includes a figure of **€1,313,740** from the **Council's own resources** for maintenance of Non-National roads as compared to **€1,535,000 in 2008**.

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 were considered under this programme at the Area Committees. The allocation for this category of work was **€300,000 in 2008** and was again **€300,000 for 2009** (€75,000 per Area). A limited number of schemes were completed under this heading in 2009.



Tullamore By Pass

Non-National Roads-Specific Improvements & Special Grants

The allocation under this Grant for 2009 was **€2,140,000**. The projects undertaken were as shown in the table opposite.

The allocations allowed Offaly County Council progress the listed schemes as follows:

1. Planning/Design & Construction of Phase 2 of the **Banagher Link Road** from the Lusmagh road to the Crank Road.
2. Appoint Consultants to progress the Detailed Design for the **Cloneygowan By-Pass**.
3. Progress detailed design and planning process for the **Clara Relief Road**.
4. Completion of the widening, drainage, resurfacing and public lighting installation for **Chancery Lane Link Road Tullamore**.
5. Carry out **Bridge Improvements** at various locations in the County.

ROAD	SCHEME	2009
	Link Road Banagher – Phase 2	€600,000
	Clara Relief Road - Design	€100,000
	Cloneygowan By-Pass - Design	€100,000
	New Link Road Chancery Lane Tullamore	€150,000
	Strengthening/Improvements to Anglers Rest Bridge. (Birr Area)	€25,000
	Strengthening/Improvement to Castletown Bridge. (Birr Area)	€25,000
	Strengthening/Improvements to Drumcullen Bridge (Birr Area)	€25,000
	Strengthening/Improvements to Faheeran Bridge (Tullamore Area)	€25,000
	Strengthening/Improvement to Russagh Bridge (Tullamore Area)	€25,000
	Strengthening/Improvement to Newtown Bridge Killeigh. (Tullamore Area)	€25,000
R400	Strengthening/mprovements to Ballaghassan Bridge (Edenderry Area)	€30,000
R401	Strengthening/Improvements to Kilcumber Bridge (Edenderry Area)	€25,000
R419	Strengthening/Improvement to Borneiss Bridge. (Edenderry Area)	€25,000
	TOTAL	1,180,000

Low Cost Accident Improvement Scheme

AREA	LOCATION	2009 GRANT €
Birr	R356 Pedestrian Crossing Banagher	18,000
Edenderry	R402 Pedestrian Crossing Edenderry	18,000
Tullamore	R420 Safety Measures at Cross Keys (Sawmills Junction)	10,000
Edenderry	R402 Pedestrian Crossing Daingean	18,000
Birr	R439 Safety Measures at Oxmanstown School	25,000
Total		89,000

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 Restoration Improvement Grant in **2009** was reduced to **€3,648,000**. This allowed Offaly County

Council to carry out improvements on 23 Local Road Schemes with a total length of 30.0Kms (2.0% of Local Road Network) and 15 Regional Roads Schemes with a total length of 9.0Kms (2.6% of Regional Road Network).

Restoration Maintenance Grant

The Restoration Maintenance Grant (RMG) allocation in 2009 was €1,855,000. This grant refers to Surface Dressing on Regional and Local roads. 2009 was a particularly poor summer due the extremely wet weather conditions and resulted in a significant decrease in the length of road surface dressed. 81 schemes with a total length of 76 Kms (4%) of Non-National Roads were surfaced in 2009 under the Department of Transport grants.

Health & Safety

Health and Safety in relation to roadworks was an ongoing issue in 2008 and continued as a major concern in 2009. In order for Offaly County Council to comply fully with current Health and Safety Legislation additional costs in the region of 10% to 15% on the cost of the roadworks schemes were incurred. These additional costs had the effect of reducing the length of improvements carried out.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT SCHEMES

Allocation in **2009** was **€209,000**. This allowed twelve schemes to be completed in 2009.

Roads and Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee

Three meetings of the Roads and Infrastructure SPC were held during 2009.

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

- Major Emergency Plan
- Local Improvement Schemes
- Unauthorised sale of vehicles on public roads

Road Safety

Bi-annual meetings between the Gardai, Area Engineers and Road Design Staff continued in 2009. Two meetings were held and issues discussed related to the following: - Traffic Management & 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. It is proposed to continue with these meetings in 2010.

The following **specific road safety education initiatives** were undertaken in 2009.

- 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.
- Distribution of high viz vests to community groups such as Foroige, Boy Scouts and Retirement Groups

NOTABLE EVENTS IN 2009

- Opening of the Tullamore By-Pass by An Taoiseach Brian Cowen TD on the 29th October 2009
- Progressing the construction of the M7 Castletown to Nenagh Scheme by Bowen Somague JV
- Progressing the Preliminary Design of the Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link
- Completed the Planning and commenced construction of Phase 2 of Banagher Link Road.
- Completion of the construction of a Pedestrian Bridge over River Brosna in Ferbane by Ward and Burke Civil Engineering Contractors.
- Appointed Atkins Consulting Engineers to progress the Detailed Design of the Cloneygowan By Pass.
- Major Flooding in parts of Co.Offaly particularly in Shannonharbour, Shannonbridge and Banagher in the month of November.
- Severe Weather Conditions resulted in salting of roads from the end of November.
- Structural improvements to 9 bridges on Non National Roads

- The Regional Road Signposting programme resulted in improved signage on the R402 – Ballina Cross to Edenderry, R419 – Cushina to Rathdangan, R423 – Portarlinton to Mountmellick.



Tullamore By Pass

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 2009

In 2009 Offaly County Fire and Rescue Service attended 709 incidents, made up of 598 fire calls, 62 road traffic accidents, 37 special service calls and 12 false alarms. The response to these calls came from 8 stations located throughout the county.

Capital Projects

In 2009 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 Birr Fire Stations.
- A new Water Tanker located in Birr.

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 2009 for an Emergency Tender which is currently under construction and delivery is due in 2010.

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 2009 included:

- Compartment fire behaviour training for each fire-fighter
- Specialist Driver Instructor Training
- Pump Operation and Maintenance
- Junior Officer Courses
- Senior Officer Fire Engineering & Command Courses

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 2009 a Breathing Apparatus Training Facility was completed and was operational for training during the year. Other Local Authorities also used the centre for training.

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 2009 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 2009 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 242 inspections were carried out in 194 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 65 Fire Safety Certificate Applications referred to the Fire Service for appraisal and report in 2009. A significant amount of time spent is spent with consultations and pre-submission discussions with designers and applicants.

Section 26 Plan

Offaly Fire Service submitted a Section 26 Fire and Emergency Operations Plan to the Council in September 2009. This plan is currently before the Council.

OFFALY CIVIL DEFENCE

Offaly Civil Defence was extremely busy in 2009. The Unit attended in excess of fifty duties throughout the County, providing Ambulance/First Aid cover and logistical support to various events such as: 10k walks; Cycling races; Football matches; Charity events; Community activities; St. Patrick's day parades; Equestrian events; and the Tullamore Phoenix festival. The largest of the duties in terms of manpower and resources, were the All Ireland Fleadh Cheoil and the Tullamore Livestock show. Civil Defence worked in conjunction with other agencies such as the HSE Ambulance service, Gardai, Irish Red Cross, Order of Malta and Offaly Fire & Rescue Service. This interaction proved very beneficial to our members from an operational view point.

Quite an amount of new training was undertaken in terms of the Casualty service. The Civil Defence College introduced new training protocols, to come in line with PHECC and FETAC guidelines. A selection of casualty instructors also completed Up-skilling in order to deliver the new course protocols. New members joining the service were also trained in A.E.D. (Defibrillators) and C.P.R. Occupational First Aid courses were delivered during our training year also. These new guidelines will figure in all future Casualty courses.

One of our Instructors completed a search management course, which culminated in the delivery of a search conducted in the Tullamore area, members who took part were very pleased with the exercise, and found it very rewarding to their combined training skills. On two occasions Civil Defence provided members to act as casualties for Fire Service RTA courses, and this exposure to other elements of Emergency services was very worthwhile.

November 2009 saw unprecedented flooding and Offaly did not escape. Civil Defence was called out to the floods in Banagher to assist the Fire Service and the Gardai. Homes were sandbagged and residents were also evacuated by Civil Defence taking people to their next of kin. Houses around the Marina area were checked by members also. This operation lasted two days.

In 2009 new members were recruited to the service, and this will increase our numbers as people retire in the future, and this will enable us to maintain a good corps group, trained in the various disciplines.

People wishing to join our Unit may contact the Civil Defence Officer at Tullamore Central Fire Station, by phone at 057 93 27429

Housing, Social & Cultural Services

Planning, Economic & Local Development

Roads & Emergency Services

Environment & Water Services

Internal Services

Town Councils

SPC Chair: Cllr. E. Fitzpatrick

Members:

Cllr. Percy Clendennen
Cllr. Thomas McKeigue
Cllr. John Foley
Cllr. Nichola Hogan
Cllr. Brendan Killeavy

Sectoral:

Ms. Anne Fahey
Mr. Joe Gaffey
Ms. Teresa Ryan-Feehan

Director of Services: Seán Murray

Senior Engineer, Environment: David Hogan

Administrative Officer, Environment: John McGillicuddy

County Veterinary Inspector: Ciarán O'Sullivan

Senior Engineer, Water Services: Tom Shanahan

Administrative Officer, Water Services: Catriona Hilliard

ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

1. Waste Management

Derryclure Landfill

2009 proved to be a very difficult year in terms of landfill income with the collapse in both gate fees and tonnages. This has resulted in a substantial decrease in our budgeted income levels.

The Council has continued to improve our gas extraction infrastructure in the working cells and this has had a significant impact on reducing our emissions to the environment. This work will be ongoing and should result in a decrease in the number of odour nuisances affecting

local residents.

In July 2009, An Bord Pleanála refused the Council's application to intensify our waste intake. Having reviewed the Inspector's report, the Council is considering our options in what has become a very competitive marketplace.

In October, the EPA issued a 'proposed decision' on a new waste licence for Derryclure. The requirements of the new licence will have a substantial effect on the operating costs of the landfill and consequently the gate fees charged to our customers.

Recycling Facilities

There are currently 47 bring banks in the County for glass, aluminium and steel cans recycling on both private and public sites. The Council is continuing to expand its textile bank infrastructure in order to provide additional services to the people of Offaly.

The Environment Section now operate three Civic Amenity Facilities in Birr, Derryclure and Edenderry. These accept a wide range of materials for recycling and compliment our existing bring bank facilities.

As there is no mobile collection service for household hazardous waste, both the facilities at Birr and Derryclure 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 April 2009, the Council adopted waste 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.

In July 2009, the Environment Section brought our annual report to the Council on our progress to date in implementing the current waste Management Plan.

By year end, the private waste collectors have commenced rolling out a three bin collection service in the towns of Tullamore and Birr.

Waste Enforcement

The Council continued to investigate all illegal waste activities and instigate legal proceedings as appropriate. A total of 71 on-the-spot fines for littering were issued to date.



Inspections and audits of operations of Waste Collector Permit holders and Waste Facility Permit Holders in the functional area including vehicles and premises, based on a risk assessment of the operations continued to be undertaken. This approach has ensured an effective use of scarce resources.

Awareness Programme

Offaly County Council has continued to actively promote environmental awareness both in the community sector and schools. At present, there are 36 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.



Green Schools Programme - Coolderry National School is awarded their Green Flag

The Council have, in conjunction with the County Enterprise Board and the EPA, developed closer links with the Business Sector. In November, we launched a pilot programme to promote green business within Offaly.

2. Protection of Natural Waters

Water Framework Directive

Offaly is affiliated to three River Basin Districts; namely the Shannon International River Basin District, the Eastern River Basin District and the 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 has 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 were the basis of the Programme of Measures (POMs) set out in the Draft River Basin Management Plans. These Programmes of Measures are designed to maintain existing water status and improve where possible.

Environmental staff continue to investigate activities, such as agriculture, septic tanks, commercial, and industrial discharges to surface waters, within the catchment area of designated rivers with poor status and to identify and implement remediation measures.

As a result of the severe economic downturn the level of ambition in the original 2008 Draft River Basin Management Plans have been modified and reduced. It is now intend to bring the final river basin management plans to the Council in early 2010 for their consideration and approval.

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.

The Environment Section carried out investigations of Zone of Contributions of Public Water Supply boreholes and

prepared Aquifer Protection Plans; based on the perceived risk from agricultural, domestic, commercial and industrial activities to the groundwater quality. This reflects a comprehensive approach by the council to protect the raw water quality of our public supplies and by inference the health of the people of Offaly.

3. Burial Grounds

Following the agreement of the Members, the fees were increased to €450 for a single burial plot. The Council continue to implement the final stages of the current five-year programme with the development of new burial grounds in Killeigh.

In October, the Environment Strategic Policy Committee reviewed proposals for the future development of burial grounds within the county.

4. Climate Change

Offaly County Council participated in a number of initiatives with other counties in the Region through the Midlands Energy Agency. These included measuring the energy use of a number of water plants and council offices and implementing measures to reduce the energy consumption at these locations.



Council staff formed a Green Energy Team to implement the Climate Change Strategy adopted by the Council in May 2009.

5. Animal Control & Welfare

Stray Animal Control Service

Offaly County Council's Veterinary section operates its dog control service in accordance with the Control of Dogs Act, 1986 involving:

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

Under the [Control of Horses Act, 1996](#), all local authorities are responsible for the control of horses in their areas including the collection of 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. Every effort is made to trace the ownership of the fallen stock in order to recover the Council's costs.

6. **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 throughput Slaughtering Premises of which there are currently five operating in the county, to meat product and distribution premises of which there are three operating within the county. Two new meat cutting plants have submitted documentation and are undergoing an approval process. There is also a "seasonal" poultry slaughterhouse within the county.

The temporary veterinary inspectors (TVI's) who carry out meat inspection duties in our slaughterhouses have recently signed a new contract which represents significant cost savings, without compromising public health expectations.



WATER SERVICES

Introduction

The delivery of Water Services throughout the county continues to expand against a background of increasing statutory responsibility and Customer Expectation of 24hr/365 day service. The level of service expectation from our customers, continue to put pressure on Water Services costs and resources. There were no boil water notices or major interruptions to supply in 2009, and the operational cost of water services was carried out within budget in 2009.

Financial Management

The cost of operating the county's water and wastewater treatment plants and networks was within the allocated budget of €12.3m for 2009. The Water Services budget had increased substantially over the last 6 years due to:

- The development of new or upgraded Sewage Treatment Plants, where previously a lower standard of 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.

- The expanded role of the Local Authority as a Regulatory Authority for Group Schemes and Small Private supplies under the new Drinking Water Regulations.
- The licensing process for waste water discharges introduced under the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007.
- The large development in the group scheme area where connected to Council supply.

In 2009, electricity supply to three of our plants was transferred to another supplier following a Regional Energy Supply Tender, saving almost 20% in electricity costs. It is hoped to achieve similar savings across all water services plants in 2010.

Water Treatment

In 2009, the implementation of recently enacted Water Services legislation continued and placed a very considerable demand on resources. The Regulatory requirements for Drinking Water Quality and Wastewater

Discharges are enforced by the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA were given increased staff resources in 2009 to enable them to enforce the 2007 Drinking Water Regulations and the Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2007, while Local Authority staff numbers decreased. Notwithstanding this, Water and wastewater quality in Offaly continues to be above the National Average.

- **S.I. 278 of 2007- European Communities (Drinking Water)(No. 2) Regulations 2007**

These regulations, among other things, require the Local Authority to:

- (i) At least one EPA Audit of Water Supply Schemes Annually.
- (ii) Immediate Response and corrective action required by EPA in event of non-compliance
- (iii) Statutory Requirement to monitor and enforce regulations for Small Private Supplies and Group Water Schemes.

In 2009, the EPA audited the Clonaslee Water Treatment Plant and there were 23 notifications to the EPA. Most of these notifications related to exceedance of the THM parameter on one scheme. This recurring exceedance is being dealt with through modifications

to the Treatment Process.

There was 100% compliance with the Bacteriological Parameters.

The EPA have stipulated that All Drinking water monitoring results should be available on Local Authority web-sites. All 2009 Drinking Water Results for public schemes in Offaly are available on the Council web-site.

Wastewater Treatment

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

Under the above regulations, the following licence applications were made in 2009

- (i) 8 discharge licence applications were submitted to the EPA in June 2009, Rhode, Kilcormac, Daingean, Shinrone, Mucklagh, Cloghan, Kinnity, Ballinagar.
- (ii) 15 Discharge Licence Applications were submitted in December 2009: Clonbulloge, Walsh Island, Shannonbridge, Shannon Harbour, Rahan, Mountbolus, Moneygall, Leamonaghan, Killeigh, Geashill, Coolderry, Cloneygowan, Bracknagh, Belmont, Ballycumber

Six applications had been submitted in 2007 and 2008. In December, the EPA issued a licence for the Birr Wastewater Plant discharge, which had been applied for in 2008.

This was the first licence issued to Offaly under the regulations. In order to comply with the licence, there will be a requirement for additional monitoring, a detailed Annual Environmental Report and immediate reporting of incidents or non-compliances with the Quality Standards. As further licences are granted, there will be a requirement for a substantial increase in human and financial resources to comply with the licence requirements.

In July 2009, the DEHLG introduced SI No. 272 of 2009:

EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES (SURFACE WATERS) REGULATIONS 2009

These regulations directly impact on the emission standards which will be required under the discharge licenses and in many cases require wastewater discharges to be of a higher standard than previously.

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.

All formal safe work systems introduced over the last few years, such as Confined Spaces Equipment, Bi-Annual Certification of lifting equipment were maintained in 2009.

There were two unannounced formal inspections on Water and Wastewater facilities by the Health & Safety Authority in Offaly in 2009, and this is likely to increase in 2010. The potential for prosecution arising from non-compliance remains high and therefore adequate resources must continue to be made available for Health & Safety.

All Water Services Safety Statements were reviewed and updated in 2009.

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)

The period of the current Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) 2007-2009 has now run out. Consequently Water Services has carried out a new assessment of needs which was presented to the Council at the October meeting before submission to the Department on October 23rd. It is expected that a new WSIP will issue in January 2010.

The upgrade of Tullamore Wastewater Treatment Plant under the WSIP progressed through Tender Stage in 2009 and the Contract will be signed in early 2010. A number of WSIP Schemes are with the DEHLG awaiting approval

Construction of the following Schemes were completed in 2009:

Scheme	Cost	Source of Funding
Mucklagh Sewerage Scheme- Interim upgrade;	€230k	RWP
Effluent Quality Improvement Measures; Installation of Mechanical Screens at six STP's: Kinnity, Walsh Island, Mount Bolus, Shinrone, Killeigh, Bracknagh	€140k	RWP
Kinnity Water Supply Scheme: Upgrade of Castletown Rd. Watermain.	€65k	RWP
Shinrone Wastewater Treatment Plant Interim Upgrade.	€300k	SDC
Moneygall/Dunkerrin WSS Improvements	€100k	RWP
Clonbulloge WSS Improvements	€50k	RWP

Detailed Design and Contract Documents for the following WSIP Schemes will be progressed in 2010: (subject to DEHLG Approval)

- (i) Tullamore Sewerage Scheme Collection System
- (ii) Tullamore Water Supply Scheme-Clonaslee Upgrade
- (iii) Edenderry Sewerage Scheme
- (iv) Birr WSS

A number of improvements to Water & Sewerage Schemes will also be progressed under the Rural Water Programme. This will depend on the level of funding from the DEHLG, (usually notified in February), which will have to be matched with 25% funding from OCC.

Rural Water Programme

Capital

The RWP Capital Allocation for 2009 was:

	€
Upgrade to Group Schemes	1,200,000
New Group Schemes	300,000
Takeover of Group Schemes	20,000
Small Schemes (OCC)	<u>75,000</u>
	€2,395,000

The Small Schemes allocation was matched with a further €325,000 from Offaly Co. Council as required by the DEHLG. The Small Schemes Programme is

implemented under the Offaly County Council Capital Programme.

A total of 3 new group water schemes, were grant aided in the current year and a further 9 schemes have been grant aided in respect of refurbishment works. The works consisted of, source improvements, new Reservoirs, and pipeline extensions.

Group Water Schemes Activity 2009

There was a very significant improvement in Private Group Scheme Water Quality in 2009. At the start of the Year, 3 GWS were on "Boil Notices" because of non-compliance with Bacteriological Parameters, and one Scheme was on a "Do not Drink" notice due to nitrate levels. At the end of the year, all Private GWS were fully compliant with Drinking Water Quality Standards and all restrictions have been removed.

A total of 17 group water supply schemes have applied for subsidy payments in 2009.

A total of 13 applications have been processed for private well grants and the sum of €26,297.46 has been paid in grants in 2009.

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 2 will be completed in early 2010, and a strategy report for implementing Phase 3, Pipeline Rehabilitation, was submitted to the DEHLG in 2009.

Phase 1 of the project reduced unaccounted For Water by 3000m³ per day and greatly improved management of the Water Distribution System. Phase 2 provided improved telemetry, pressure management and metering on the water distribution network and further savings of approximately 2,000m³ per day were achieved. This improved efficiencies in the management of the network and greatly improved the level of service to our customers.

	2008	2009
Average Daily Inflow To System	29732m³	28637m³
Average Daily Unaccounted For Water	50.5%	48.8%

Under Phase 2 of the Water Conservation Project, a Pilot Study on the use of Water Conservation devices

in a Large School was conducted. The findings of the study were then used in an advice booklet produced on water conservation for schools. Further advice booklets for Farms and Business were also produced.

To achieve further improvements, it is vital that Offaly Co. Council get Capital funding under the new WSIP for Phase 3-Mains Rehabilitation. This will be included in the Water Services Investment Programme to be announced early in 2010.

Housing, Social & Cultural Services

Planning, Economic & Local Development

Roads & Emergency Services

Environment & Water Services

Internal Services

Town Councils

CORPORATE SERVICES

Director of Services: Seán Murray

Senior Executive Officer: Monica Cleary

Partnership Facilitator/Administrative Officer: Gerry Bruton

HUMAN RESOURCES

Director of Services: Declan Kirrane

Senior Executive Officer: Ann Dillon

FINANCE

Head of Finance: Declan Conlon

Financial Management Accountant: Marita Hanlon

Financial Management Accountant: Thomas Mawe

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Head of I.S.: Hugh O'Donoghue

CORPORATE SERVICES

Functions

The main functions of the Corporate Services section include:

- ❖ To provide an efficient and professional secretariat to the Council and their committees.
- ❖ To make information available to the members in a timely, convenient and flexible manner to allow for informed decision making.
- ❖ To maintain and updating the register of electors.
- ❖ To implement our Higher Education Grants in a fair and efficient manner.
- ❖ To develop initiatives to increase cross-departmental awareness and input to the development of corporate policies.
- ❖ To improve communications internally and

externally on Local Authorities activities.

- ❖ To ensure best practice is applied in securing value for money in the management and maintenance of corporate property.

Support Services

There are 21 Councillors on Offaly County Council. The Corporate Services Department provides a secretariat service for meetings of the 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 must be held. In all, 19 council

meetings were held in 2009.

Following the Local Elections in June 2009 the Annual General Meeting of the Council took place in Áras an Chontae, Tullamore on Friday, 19th June, 2009. Councillor Noel Bourke was elected Cathaoirleach and Councillor Barry Cowen was elected Leas Cathaoirleach. Members were elected to represent the Council on a number of committees and boards at the Annual Meeting.

Local Elections 2010

Local Elections and European Elections were held on Friday, 5 June 2009. 53 candidates stood for election to Offaly County Offaly.



Separation of votes during the Local Election Count 2009

Corporate Plan 2010 - 2014

Following an extensive consultation process the members adopted *Offaly Local Authorities Corporate Plan 2010-2014* in December 2009. The Corporate Plan provides the context and framework for the work of the local authorities

for the period 2010 - 2014, setting out our agreed mission, values and priorities in respect of our many functions and activities.

Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.)

The Chairpersons of the Strategic Policy Committees are elected members of the County Council. They, along with the Cathaoirleach of the Council, form a committee called the Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.), advised by the County Manager. The C.P.G. is essentially the Council's 'Cabinet'. Its main roles are consultation in preparation of budgets, dealing with corporate issues, modernisation and customer service.

Cllr. Noel Bourke	Cathaoirleach Offaly County Council
Cllr. Eamon Dooley	Chairperson - Planning, Economic and Local Development SPC
Cllr. Tony McLoughlin	Chairperson - Transportation and Emergency Services SPC
Cllr. Eddie Fitzpatrick	Environment and Water Services SPC
Cllr. Molly Buckely	Chairperson - Housing, Social and Cultural Services SPC

The Corporate Policy Group met on 12 occasions during 2009.



Offaly County Council Members, Annual Meeting 19th June 2009

(Back Row l-r)

Cllrs. Derval Dolan, Barry Cowen, Tony McLoughlin, John Leahy, Ger Plunkett, Sinead Moylan-Ryan, Nicola Hogan, Sinead Dooley, Peter Ormond, Liam Quinn, Eddie Fitzpatrick, John Carroll, John Foley.

(Front Row l-r)

Cllrs. Danny Owens, Connie Hanniffy, Johnny Butterfield, Eamon Dooley, Noel Bourke (Cathaoirleach), Percy Clendennen, Molly Buckley, Tommy McKeigue.

Strategic Policy Committees (S.P.C.s)

S.P.C.s have a key role in advising and informing the Council. Their purpose is to provide a forum for debate on policy issues and for the development of policy recommendations for the Council. They have a broad membership including sectoral and community interests working with elected members and council staff. There are four S.P.C.s in Offaly dealing with the following policy areas:

- ❖ Housing, Corporate and Cultural Services
- ❖ Planning, Economic and Local Development
- ❖ Transportation and Emergency Services
- ❖ Environment and Water Services

Register of Electors

The Register of Electors was produced on the 1st February and came into force on 15th February 2009. Two supplements to the Register of Electors were prepared in 2009. The total electorate for County Offaly for the 2009/2010 Register of Electors was 55,533 broken down over the local electoral areas as follows:

Birr	10,443
Edenderry	15,345
Ferbane	11,658
Tullamore	18,087
<i>Total on the Register</i>	<i>55,533</i>

Offaly County Council Members

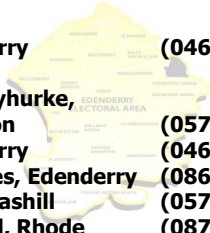
BIRR ELECTORAL AREA:

Carroll, John	The Ring, Birr	(057)9120976	cllrjohncarroll@eircom.net	Non-Party
Clendennen, Percy	Kinnitty, Birr	(057) 91 37076	percyclendennen@oceanfree.net	Fine Gael
Ormond, Peter	Kyleogue, Shinrone, Birr	(0505) 47079	ossiec@eircom.net	Fianna Fáil
McLoughlin, Tony	Main Street, Birr	(057) 91 21376	cllrtonymcloughlin@eircom.net	Non-Party



EDENDERRY ELECTORAL AREA:

Bourke, Noel (Cathaoirleach)	Killane, Edenderry	(046) 97 31295	noelbourke@hotmail.com	Fianna Fáil
Fitzpatrick, Eddie	Benfield, Cloneyhurke, Portarlington	(057) 86 23261	eddiefitzp@eircom.net	Non-Party
Foley, John	Killane, Edenderry	(046) 97 32332	info@johnfoley.ie	Fianna Fáil
Hogan, Nichola	8 The Sycamores, Edenderry	(086) 3840320	nhogan@lawlibrary.ie	Fine Gael
Plunkett, Ger	Ballycrystal, Geashill	(057) 9343854	gerardplunkett@hotmail.com	Fianna Fáil
Quinn, Liam	Edenderry Road, Rhode	(087) 9163066	liamig@gmail.com	Fine Gael



FERBANE ELECTORAL AREA:

Dooley, Eamon	Na Tullaig, Aughaboy, Fermoy	(090) 64 54510	eamondooley@eircom.net	Fianna Fáil
Hanniffy, Constance	Doon, Ballinahown	(090) 6430106	connieh@iol.ie	Fine Gael
Leahy, John	Glendine, Kilcormac	(087) 2073226	info@johnleahy.ie	Non-Party
Moylan Ryan, Sinead	Woodbank, Shannonbridge	(057) 9151113	sinead.moylan-ryan@oireachtas.ie	Fianna Fáil



TULLAMORE ELECTORAL AREA:

Buckley, Molly	Moylena, Clara Rd, Tullamore	(057) 93 41357	mollybuckley@eircom.net	Fine Gael
Butterfield, Johnny	Ballincanty, Blueball, Tullamore	(057) 93 54027	butterfield.iad@eircom.net	Non-Party
Cowen, Barry	Kilnacarra, Lahinch, Clara	(057) 93 23277	cowenauct@eircom.net	Fianna Fáil
Dolan, Dervill	10 Cormac Street, Tullamore	(057) 23530	dervilldolan@eircom.net	Non-Party
Dooley, Sinead	Rahan Road, Sragh, Tullamore	(057) 93 51828	sineadtdooley@gmail.net	Fianna Fáil
McKeigue, Thomas	Spollanstown, Tullamore	(057) 93 41519	tommymckeigue@eircom.net	Fine Gael
Owens, Danny	Lugamarla, Mountbolus, Tullamore	(057) 93 54814	dannyowens@eircom.net	Fianna Fáil



Payments Made to Members in 2009

Name	Representational Payment €	Annual Allowance €	SPC Chairperson's Allowance €	Expenses (Conference Fees, Travel & Comm.) €	Cathaoirleach Allowance €	Foreign Travel €
Noel Bourke	17,604.00	5,343.88		3,900.92	15,146.81	
Molly Buckley	17,604.00	4,407.48	3,200.00	4,847.16		
Johnny Butterfield	17,604.00	4,509.48		3,801.13		
John Carroll	17,604.00	5,591.74		3,006.87		
Percy Clendennen	17,604.00	5,013.41		3,577.56		
Marcella Corcoran-Kennedy	7,921.80	2,517.59		2,726.86		
Barry Cowen	17,604.00	4,352.48		3,646.63	13,333.60	3,192.12
Dervil Dolan	17,604.00	4,352.48		0.00		
Sinead Dooley	9,731.10	2,425.87		1,631.19		
Eamon Dooley	17,604.00	5,013.42	3,200.00	3,411.71		
Thomas Feighery	7,921.80	2,043.35		805.39		
Eddie Fitzpatrick	17,604.00	4,682.94	3,200.00	4,819.93		
John Foley	9,731.10	2,944.86		0.00		
John Foran	7,921.80	2,276.41		785.64		
Michael Fox	7,921.80	1,979.80		265.00		
Nichola Hogan	9,731.10	2,987.94		2,046.86		
Connie Hanniffy	17,604.00	5,055.36		3,777.55		
Gerard Killally	7,921.80	1,551.63		0.00		
John Leahy	9,731.10	2,600.06		1,310.56		
Fergus McDonnell	7,921.80	2,478.06		3,872.41		
Tommy McKeigue	17,604.00	4,352.58	2,700.00	315.00		
Tony McLoughlin	17,604.00	5,548.50	5,900.00	0.00		
Ger Plunkett	9,731.10	2,375.67		2,519.76		
Sinead Moylan Ryan	17,604.00	6,170.06	2,700.00	1,088.65		
Peter Ormond	17,604.00	6,417.90		2,875.26		
Danny Owens	17,604.00	4,352.48	2,700.00	4,318.67		
Liam Quinn	9,731.10	2,858.59		0.00		
TOTAL	€369,977.40	€104,204.02	€23,600	€59,350.71	€28,480.41	€3,192.12

Members supported and attended the following conferences in 2009:	Date of Conference	No. Delegates
Antrim Tourism Conference	23 rd /29 th Jan 2009	1
Effective Communications for Councillors Conference	30 th /31 st Jan 2009	1
Mid West Reg. Auth – Annual Conf. 2009,	19 th /20 th Feb 2009	1
Nth/Sth Confederation of Cllrs. Training Seminar	20 th /21 st Feb 2009	1
AMAI Spring Seminar	13 th /14 th Feb 2009	5
International Local Government Convention	3 rd /6 th March 2009	1
Local Sustainable Tourism Management in a Global Economic Slowdown Conference	6 th / 8 th March 2009	1
Building Energy Regulations Seminar	13 th /15 th March 2009	2
Planning & Dev. Control Seminar	20 th /22 nd March 2009	1
Civic Leadership & Local Government	27 th /28 th March 2009	2
Rural Dwellers – A Threatened Species	22 nd /23 rd April 2009	1
ACCC – Annual Conference	2 nd /3 rd April 2009	4
Environmental Management Challenges & Opportunities	4 th /5 th April 2009	1
LAMA – 29 th annual Conference	16 th /17 th April 2009	1
Respond National Conference	7 th May 2009	1
William Carlton Summer School	3 rd /7 th August 2009	2
AMAI 96 TH Annual Conference	9 th /12 th Sept. 2009	9
Delivering Housing Solutions for a New Era	14 th /17 th Sept 2009	1
Induction Training for Newly Elected Members	30 th Sept. 2009	3
21 st Annual La Touche Legacy Seminar	2 nd /4 th Oct 2009	3
IAS 13 th Annual Conference	1 st Oct 2009	4
Getting a Grip 2009	8 th /9 th Oct 2009	7
Douglas Hyde Conference 2009	16 th /18 th Oct 2009	6
Voluntary Housing & Sheltered Housing for the Elderly	23 rd /25 th Oct. 2009	2
Council Budgets 2010	20 th /22 nd Nov. 2009	4
LAMA Conference	6 th /7 th Nov 2009	5
National Tourism Conference 2009	26 th /28 th Nov. 2009	7

Civic Receptions

A Civic Reception to recognise Mr. Shane Lowry's remarkable achievement in winning the 2009 Irish Open Golf Championship at the County Louth Golf Club, Baltray was held in Áras an Chontae on Monday, 30th November 2009.

The Offaly Junior Camogie Team's outstanding achievement in winning the 2009 All Ireland Junior Camogie Championship was recognised by the Council at a civic reception, held on Friday, 11th December 2009.

Freedom of Information - Statistics:

In 2009 under the Freedom of Information Act, the total numbers of applications were as follows:

- ❖ 29 applications were received by Offaly County Council.
- ❖ There were 0 applications received by Birr Town Council.
- ❖ There were 0 applications received by Tullamore Town Council.
- ❖ There were 0 applications received by Edenderry Town Council.

The Ombudsman

8 complaints were received by the Ombudsman in 2009 in relation to Offaly County Council.



All Ireland Junior Camogie Champions, 2009

Higher Education Grants

In the 2008/2009 academic year the number of Higher Education Grant new awards was 154 and a further 257 students qualified for grant renewal. €2,303,428 was spent on Higher Education Grants during this period. This money is recoupable from the Department of Education & Science, except for a fixed contribution made by Offaly County Council. The administration of the scheme is a service provided by this Council to students and parents in County Offaly.



Cathaoirleach, Noel Bourke with Shane Lowry, Irish Open Champion 2009 and Deirdre Molloy at the Civic Reception held in Áras an Chontae.

Internal Audit Function

Internal Audit is an independent appraisal function which reviews the internal control system in operation within Offaly County Council. It objectively examines evaluates and reports on the adequacy of internal controls as a contribution to the proper, economic, effective and efficient use of resources.

During 2009 the Internal Auditor undertook a number of audits and the findings and recommendations from each audit were reported to management. The Internal Auditor also undertook follow up audits to assess the implementation of the recommendations from the previous audits.

The Audit Committee in Offaly County Council consists of five members: Mr. Peter Scully, Committee Chairman, Cllr. Connie Hanniffy, Mr. Brian Gunning, Mr. Paddy Hughes and

Mr. Tom Feighery. The Audit Committee met 3 times in 2009.

Service Indicators

Due to industrial action the Council is currently not in a position to publish the service indicators for 2009.

Presentations to Oireachtas Members

The Management Team met members of the Oireachtas in April 2009 and provided an update with regard to the operations of Offaly County Council.

County Coroners

The total expenditure was €111,127.85 (including salary) in respect of coroners' inquests in 2009.

Exhibitions held in Áras an Chontae

A number of exhibitions were held in Áras an Chontae during 2009 including:

Celebrating 90 Years of Dáil Éireann

An exhibition celebrating 90 years of Dáil Éireann was launched in Offaly County Council offices, Áras an Chontae, Tullamore on Monday 12th October 2009. The Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, Senator Pat Moylan and An Taoiseach, Brian Cowen attended the Launch. The exhibition featured historical election posters and memorabilia such as both pro and anti treaty posters, photographs of many of Ireland's leading political figures since the foundation of the State, political advertisements on the referendum to adopt Bunreacht na hÉireann and

also illustrations of the media coverage of these important events.

Bord na Mona Exhibition

Heartland, a Bord na Móna exhibition was held during November and December in Áras an Chontae. It recognised and celebrated 75 years of Bord na Mona and its contribution to Ireland and in particular the midlands. It charted the history of the company, current day activities and its plans for a sustainable future.



Heartlands, Bord Na Mona Exhibition

Partnership Committee

The Partnership Committee held 11 meetings in 2009. The Management Team nominated Ms. Ann Dillon and Mr. Dermot Mahon to replace Ms. Monica Cleary and Mr. James

Hogan on the committee. SIPTU-LAPO nominated Mr. Joe Coleman to replace Mr. Brendan Clarke on the committee.

In conjunction with the Partnership Committee meetings, the High Level Group (HLG) established under the *Handling Significant Change through Partnership* Protocol met on 4 occasions in 2009. Since this Group's meeting in early October 2008, the main focus of their discussions has been the Public Spending Measures and their implications for Offaly Local Authorities.

The Partnership Committee had agreed on the following Business Plan for 2009 and had noted that in light of the emerging economic conditions and the Public Spending Measures there might be a necessity for the organisation to review its priorities and revise the Business Plan accordingly.

- ❖ *Employee Support Service*
- ❖ *Human Resources Payroll and Superannuation Project*
- ❖ *Attendance Management Policy*
- ❖ *Communication Policy Action Plans*
- ❖ *Community Warden Pilot - Edenderry*

During the year a number of initiatives were advanced including

- ❖ the launch of the Employee Support Service in October 2009,
- ❖ 42 outdoor staff participated in the Return to Learning Programme, and

- ❖ the adoption of a number of Human Resources documents and Policies in 2009, e.g., *Training Plan 2009*, *Guidelines on the Protection of Children*, *Attendance Management Policy*, *Travel and Subsistence Policy* and *Fire Services Grievance and Disciplinary Policy*.



Seamus Griffin, Aoife Greenan Employee Support Advisors with Workplace Partnership Joint Chairpersons Joe Lambe and Michael Roche and County Manager Pat Gallagher

HUMAN RESOURCES

Offaly County Council is committed to the delivery of quality customer services through the effective and efficient management of its human resources. Outlined below is a brief summary of achievements and developments in 2009 in the context of significant reductions in human and financial resources for the human resource function and the organisation as a whole.

Strategic Workforce Planning and Recruitment

A local policy on staffing and recruitment was introduced in September 2008 in order to achieve a 3% saving on payroll costs in 2009 as required by Government. A Moratorium on Public Service Recruitment was introduced in March 2009 and amended in August 2009. The moratorium requires that if it is decided locally that a vacancy must be filled by recruitment, as opposed to reassignment of duties or transfer, then sanction must be sought and given in advance by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The staffing moratorium will be reviewed at the end of 2010.

Between September 2008 and December 2009, 13 permanent staff left the organisation and have not been replaced; 5 staff have availed of retirement and

career break schemes and have not been replaced; 19 staff have availed of maternity leave and have not been replaced and there are 40 fewer temporary staff as contracts have ended on their expiry date. The scheme of summer employment for third level students, which normally employs approximately 20 students annually, was not operated in 2009. Analysis of staff assignments is on-going and two rounds of staff transfers were implemented in 2009 in accordance with our mobility policy.

Supporting Staff to Reach Their Potential through Training and Development

A Training and Development Plan for 2009 – 2010 was developed this year based on feedback from individual staff members, section heads and the outcome of a training survey. Resources for training and education were significantly reduced in mid 2009. However, best use will be made of the budget available for training and education.

Creating A Positive and Safe Working Environment

Human Resource Management policies are continually under review. In 2009, our Dignity at Work Policy dealing with harassment, sexual harassment and bullying was reviewed and amended. Agreement was also reached on the introduction of an Attendance Management Policy and Guidelines on the Protection of Children were provided to all

staff and elected members. Management training and staff awareness training were provided on HR policies. The level of sick leave is one of the annual national service indicators for the human resource function within the local government sector.

An Employee Assistance Programme was developed and launched in 2009 through the Workplace Partnership Committee. Two members of staff were trained as advisors for colleagues experiencing personal or work-related concerns or difficulties.

Creating an Equitable, Consultative and Supportive Working Environment

Flexible working arrangements, such as Flexible Working Hours and Work Sharing, continued in 2009 in accordance with agreed policies subject to the operational needs of each section. A number of new schemes were also introduced nationally and administered locally including the Shorter Working Year, Incentivised Early Retirement and Incentivised Career Break.

Information Systems Solutions for H.R.

In 2009, significant progress was made on the introduction of a computerised system to assist in the management of HR records and policies. This system, called CORE, also assists in the administration of payroll for the four local authorities in the county. In 2009 both the organisation structure module and the payroll module of the system were implemented with the support of the local project team and colleagues in

Finance, Town Councils and Area Offices. Further targets have been set for the introduction of this computerised system in 2010 including the management and recording of leave and attendance, and the administration of superannuation.

Retirements in 2009

The following staff retired during 2009 having given many years of valued and dedicated service to the people of Offaly:

NAME	GRADE
Val Balfé	Senior Executive Technician
Stuart Burt	Executive Planner
Charlie Colgan	Clerk-of-Works
John Devery	Senior Staff Officer
Liam Gleeson	General Services Supervisor
Liam Hand	Light Equipment Operator
Michael Kealey	Labourer
Margaret Kneafsey	Staff Officer
Albert Moody	Labourer
William Owens	Craftsman
Padraig O Dowda	Site Technician II
Ambrose O’Gorman	Senior Executive Officer
Joseph Price	Staff Officer
Daniel Smith	Traffic Warden
James Stone	Director MRA
Sean Ryan	Senior Executive Officer

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Although, operating with reduced resources in 2009, the Information Systems department continued implementation of Offaly Local Authorities' ICT Strategic Plan.

The main projects that were progressed during the year were:-

- ❖ Implementation of the CORE HR/Payroll/Superannuation system. All modules of the application, scheduled for implementation in 2009, were completed on time.
- ❖ Completion of the construction phase of the Edenderry Metropolitan Area Network. The network is scheduled for handover to the centrally appointed MSE, E-Net, in early 2010.
- ❖ Development of a Green ICT policy which included:-
 - Completion of Phase 1 of the introduction of SAN and Virtualisation technologies to the Council's main ICT Server Room.
 - Implementation of Energy saving technology on all Council PCs attached to our main network
 - This will result in savings in communications, energy and maintenance costs and a reduction of the organisation's carbon footprint in the medium term
- ❖ Completion and implementation of new Mobile Telephony Agreements, delivering cost savings for the organisation
- ❖ Expansion of SCADA technology in Water Plants across the county, which delivers monitoring and control information to a centrally managed database
- ❖ Completion of preparatory work for the implementation of the online G-Plan mapping facility for Tullamore Town Council in 2010
- ❖ Implementation of Phase 1 of an ICT security project, incorporating Anti-Virus, Encryption and Device Management technologies
- ❖ Re-development and launch of the organisation's website www.offaly.ie. The highlight of this project occurred with the 'live' online publication of the 2009 Local Election results from the various count centres in Offaly. This initiative won an award at the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards 2009.

FINANCE

Our Goals

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

Our Strategies

- ❖ Develop accounting and management information systems that deliver the best possible basis for future planning, budgeting and decision making in order to maximise financial resources available.
- ❖ Promote and direct Value for Money concepts and foster a culture of effective use of resources.
- ❖ Prepare an annual financial budget that reflects our corporate objectives.
- ❖ Enhance the Financial Management System and in particular, the provision of more meaningful financial management information.
- ❖ Ensure prompt payment to suppliers.
- ❖ Promote a value for money culture in the organisation.

Our Services

The 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
- ❖ 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 funded from sources such as:

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

Main Sections within Finance:

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

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

Accounts Payable

The processing of suppliers invoices, payment run and the completion of statutory returns. We are extending the use of Low Value Purchase (LVP) cards in order to increase efficiencies in the processing of low value transactions.

Payroll

The processing of the wages, salaries, pensions and the completion of statutory returns to Revenue Commissioners and other agencies. The Core payroll system was implemented in late 2009.

Motor Taxation Office

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

Fixed Asset Register

The maintenance of the fixed asset master file that records fixed assets acquired (created or purchased) and disposed of throughout the year. Compliance with 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

Main Reports Produced by Finance:

The Annual Budget

The Finance Department prepares the overall Revenue Budget in consultation with the County Manager and the Management Team. The budget is presented to the Corporate Policy Group and to the Elected Members for adoption at the Annual Budget Meeting.

The Annual Financial Statement (AFS)

The AFS is produced annually and analyses the income and expenditure for the financial year for both revenue and capital expenditure. The Balance Sheet shows the assets and liabilities of the County Council at the end of the year. 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.

Motor Taxation Office

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. 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.

In 2009, this office generated €11.7m in revenue, handled 91,592 transactions (58% over the counter, 13% via post and 29% was processed online)

Revenue Collection Service Indicators

Amount collected as a percentage of the amount due at year end:

Rents	91%
Commercial Rates	88%
Housing Loans	74%
Non Domestic Water Charges	40%

Extract from the Unaudited Annual Financial Statement for the Year ended December 31, 2009

DRAFT INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT STATEMENT FOR YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2009

	Expenditure	Income	Net	Net
	2009	2009	2009	2008
Expenditure by Division	€	€	€	€
Housing and Building	7,527,530	6,766,618	760,912	1,290,442
Road transport & Safety	14,340,774	10,472,611	3,868,163	4,552,674
Water Services	12,640,621	4,194,956	8,445,665	8,307,123
Development Management	4,043,129	811,892	3,231,237	3,931,814
Environmental Services	8,995,676	4,681,890	4,313,786	3,341,525
Recreation and Amenity	3,161,177	510,273	2,650,904	2,885,336
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	7,009,137	6,524,697	484,440	270,402
Miscellaneous Services	<u>6,258,287</u>	<u>4,113,342</u>	2,144,945	2,012,490
Total Expenditure/Income	<u>63,976,333</u>	<u>38,076,279</u>		
Net Cost of Divisions to be funded from Rates and Local Government Fund			25,900,054	26,591,805
Rates			7,640,652	7,538,897
Pension Related Deduction			871,681	0
Local Government Fund / General Purpose grant			15,370,906	17,661,400
County charge			<u>2,083,800</u>	<u>2,012,391</u>
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year before Transfers			66,985	620,883
Transfers from/(to) Reserves			<u>(226,261)</u>	<u>(887,974)</u>
Overall Surplus/(Deficit) for Year			(159,276)	(267,090)
General Reserve at 1st January			<u>(332,081)</u>	<u>(64,991)</u>
General Reserve at 31st December			<u>(491,357)</u>	<u>(332,081)</u>

Capital Account Summary

Extract from The Draft Annual Financial Statement for the Year ended December 31, 2009

	2009	2008
Balance (Debit)/Credit @ 1st January	8,105,438	11,545,422
Total Expenditure (Including Transfers)	(56,906,412)	(66,018,796)
Total Income (Including Transfers)	<u>61,449,392</u>	<u>62,578,812</u>
Balance (Debit)/Credit @ 31 December	<u>12,648,418</u>	<u>8,105,438</u>

Housing, Social & Cultural Services

Planning, Economic & Local Development

Roads & Emergency Services

Environment & Water Services

Internal Services

Town Councils

Tullamore

Director of Services: Declan Kirrane

Town Clerk: Ruth McNally

Senior Executive Engineer: Paul Devaney

Edenderry

Director of Services: Frank Heslin

Town Clerk: Olwen Cooney

Senior Executive Engineer: Damien Greenan

Birr

Director of Services: Michael Roche

Town Clerk: Mary Gaughren

A/Senior Executive Engineer: Willie Ryan

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.

Local Elections took place in June 2009.

Newly Elected Members of Tullamore Town Council, June 2009

Councillor Molly Buckley

Councillor Laurence Byrne

Councillor Sinead Dooley

Councillor Declan Harvey

Councillor Brendan Killeavy

Councillor Tony McCormack

Councillor Tommy McKeigue

Councillor Sean O'Brien

Councillor Paddy Rowland



Councillor McKeigue was elected as Cathaoirleach for the first year at the first Annual Meeting of the Council.

Monthly Meetings

Meetings of the council are held on the second Thursday of the month at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Tullamore Town Hall.

Representatives to Various Bodies:

Vocational Educational Committee:	Cllr. Brendan Killeavy Cllr. Laurence Byrne
A.M.A.I.:	Cllr. Laurence Byrne Cllr. Sean O'Brien
Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd.:	Cllr. Tommy McKeigue
Board of Tullamore Dew Heritage Centre:	Cllr. Declan Harvey Cllr. Tommy McKeigue
Offaly Strategic Policy Committee:	Cllr. Paddy Rowland Cllr. Brendan Killeavy
Tullamore Leisure Ltd:	Cllr. Molly Buckley Cllr. Paddy Rowland Cllr. Sean O'Brien
Offaly County Development Board:	Cllr. Tony McCormack
Tullamore Sports Group Ltd.:	Cllr. Tommy McKeigue

- Approval to the €24m Tullamore Waste Water Treatment Scheme
- Hosting the All-Ireland Fleadh Ceoil
- Supporting the Tullamore Show
- Approval to the €2m Canal Corridor Project
- Significant improvement in both the IBAL Litter League and the Tidy Towns Competition
- Further streetscape improvements and undergrounding of cables at Harbour Street
- Organisation of the first 'Discover Tullamore Day'
- Co-ordination of the Positive Ageing Week activities

Highlights of 2009:

- Completion and official opening of the Tullamore By-Pass



Tullamore Town Park



Director of Services: Frank Heslin

Town Clerk: Olwen Cooney

Senior Executive Engineer: Damien Greenan

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 in Edenderry, resulting in a significant growth in the population.

EDENDERRY TOWN COUNCIL

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 its hinterland.

Local Elections took place in June 2009 and the following are the newly elected Members of the Council:-

Town Councillors

Cllr. Patricia Brady, Fine Gael

Cllr. Mary Breen, Fianna Fáil

Cllr. Noel Cribbin, Non-Party

Cllr. John Foley, Fianna Fáil

Cllr. Liam Hogan, Fine Gael

Cllr Fergus McDonnell (Leas Cathaoirleach), Non-Party

Cllr. Jim Murrin, Non-Party

Cllr. Finian O'Neill (Cathaoirleach), Fianna Fáil

Cllr. Declan Leddin, Labour

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

Representatives to Various Bodies

Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland	Cllr Fergus McDonnell Cllr Liam Hogan
Offaly Strategic Policy Committee	Cllr Finian O'Neill

Issues Developed and Progressed In 2009

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 €3,000 towards Christmas tree lights for Edenderry Town. Plans are in progress for Edenderry Town Council Awards for 2010 to promote community spirit and award life time commitments to communities and local people in the town.

Edenderry Town Council has a positive relationship with the Edenderry Area members and meets with them to discuss local joint issues. Both town and area members met the local business organisations and tidy towns to discuss street cleaning and all

Monthly Meetings

organisations agreed to cooperate to improve the appearance and to promote Edenderry. To this end weekly voluntary clean ups take place in the town and have proved very successful in cleaning littered areas, these clean ups are assisted by Offaly County Council Edenderry area and Environment staff.

The Joint Policing Committee carried out their 2009 work plan - this included the establishment of new residence and neighbourhood watch, improved lighting in O'Connell square to help prevent anti social behaviour, improved traffic calming measures in Blundell wood, worked towards securing old Tesco derelict site and cooperation between agencies to deliver a successful and safe Halloween.

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 Chamber of Commerce and Community, Edenderry Town Council members and Offaly County Council staff organised and constructed a well lit Christmas tree and Town Hall.

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

BIRR TOWN COUNCIL

Director of Services: Michael Roche
Town Clerk: Mary Gaughren
A/Senior Executive Engineer: Willie Ryan

Birr is the largest town in South-West Offaly. Birr, originally a monastic settlement founded by St Brendan in the 6th century has seen continuous habitation & development & is well known for its Georgian architecture. The urban district of Birr comprises approximately 1500 acres & has a population of approx 4,000.

The Town Council is involved in a broad range of service provision including Housing, Roads and Car Parks, Planning and Recreation, Leisure and Amenity facilities.

Local Elections took place in June 2009 and the following are the newly elected Members of the Council:-

Elected Members of Birr Town Council

Councillor Tony McLoughlin, Non-Party
Councillor Denis Sheils, Non-Party
Councillor Noel Russell, Fianna Fail

Councillor John Carroll, Non-Party
Councillor Michael Loughnane, Fianna Fail
Councillor Michael Campbell, Fine Gael
Councillor Denis Tierney, Fianna Fail
Councillor Brian Whelahan, Fine Gael
Councillor Bernadette Fanneran, Fianna Fail

Councillor McLoughlin was elected as Cathaoirleach for the first year at the first Annual Meeting of the Council held on 15th June, 2009.



Monthly Meetings

Meetings of the council are held on the second Monday of the month at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Offices & Library, Wilmer Road, Birr.

Representatives to Various Bodies:

Vocational Educational Committee:	Cllr. John Carroll Cllr. Bernadette Fanneran
A.M.A.I.:	Cllr. Michael Campbell Cllr. Noel Russell
Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd.:	Cllr. Michael Loughnane
Offaly Strategic Policy Committee:	Cllr. Michael Loughnane
Oxmanton Hall, Theatre & Arts Centre:	Cllr. Bernadette Fanneran Cllr. Denis Tierney
Meitheal Birr:	It was agreed that the sitting Chairperson represent the Council on the board of Meitheal Birr

Highlights of 2009

- Completion of traffic management at Seffin
- Adoption of the Birr Public Realm Plan
- Significant improvement in the Tidy Towns Competition
- Further footpath improvements
- Commencement of review of Birr Town & Environs Development Plan
- Improvement works at Birr Column & Syngefield Gates
- Support of festivals such as the Annual Vintage Festival, the Game & Country Fair & the Balloon Festival.