

Offaly Local Authorities Annual Report 2005

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



**Cllr. Peter Ormond
Cathaoirleach**



**Niall Sweeney
Bainisteor Chontae**

**Introduction by the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Peter Ormond and
the County Manager, Mr. Niall Sweeney.**

We are proud to put on record, in this Annual Report, the significant progress and achievements made by the Offaly Local Authorities throughout 2005.

A spend in excess of €15 million saw major improvements to the counties road network. An allocation from the National Roads Authority facilitated major improvements on the N52 at Blueball and the N62 at Kennedy's Cross and Ballyegan. The Tullamore By-Pass Project continues to progress with design and document preparation completed during the year. By year end, much of the land acquisition requirements had been resolved through the CPO process.

An ambitious Five Year Programme for Social and Affordable Housing was adopted by the Council in March, 2005 with a view to maximising the delivery and availability of the broadest range of housing measures and options to meet the diverse and growing needs of our customers. 52 additional units of accommodation were completed/acquired during 2005 and at the end of the year a further 104 social housing units were under construction.

In October, 2005, Mr. Dick Roche T.D., Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, announced funding for 13 Public Library Projects including a €5million allocation for the development of Library Headquarters and Branch Library in Tullamore.

The Community & Enterprise Section undertook a comprehensive review of the County Development Strategy during the year. This process involved a combination

of research and extensive consultation with County Development Board Members, various agencies, the Community Forum and the public in general.

A draft replacement Waste Management Plan was produced in July, 2005 reflecting change in population, waste arisings and infrastructural requirements. The revised Regional Plan will set the framework for the achievement of major advances in the Waste Management Programme throughout the midlands.

We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the elected members, the management and staff of the Offaly Local Authorities for their commitment, co-operation and support, in the delivery of services which impact so much on the quality of life of people in Offaly.

Cllr. Peter Ormond
Cathaoirleach

Niall Sweeney
Bainisteoir Chontae

Strategic Policy Committee Meetings.

Four meetings of the Roads and Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee took place in 2005. This committee comprises of five members of Offaly County Council and four members from the community including Tullamore Town Council, Business/Commercial, Development / Construction and Community/Voluntary/Disadvantage.

The following issues were discussed by the Committee in 2005

- Road signage at schools
- Group Water Schemes
- CIR schemes
- Policy for Taking in Charge of Private Developments.
- Public Lighting.
- Sight distances on non national roads.
- Water supply feasibility study.

A formal policy on taking in charge of private developments was adopted by the Council in July 2005.

Goal

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

Strategies

- Implementing a programme for the improvement and maintenance of the county's road network, including public lighting and signage.
- Incorporating sustainable development considerations into our road policies.
- Administering an efficient taxi and hackney licensing system.
- Implementing a fair and efficient Local Improvement Scheme System.
- Promoting Community Participation of Road Works Schemes.

Offaly County Council is responsible for the maintenance & upkeep of 2,064km of roadway in the County. The road network is broken down as follow:

National Primary	19.76km
National Secondary	120.91km
Regional	346.13km
County	1,577.14km

In 2005, Offaly County Council received a total allocation of €13,063,540.00 in respect of National & Non-National Roads in the County. Of this, €1,273,348.00 was financed from Offaly County Council's own funds with the remainder coming from the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government & the National Roads Authority. Specific Improvement Grants of €1,550,000.00 were provided for the following works:

- Ferbane Inner Relief Road
- R420 Tullamore/Geashill
- Banagher Link Road
- Edenderry Inner Relief Road

In addition to the allocation of €13,063,540.00 referred to previously an amount of €2,258,000.00 was received from the National Roads Authority in respect of the following projects:

- N62 Traffic Calming at Ferbane & Kilcormac
- National Secondary Improvements:
 1. N52 at Blueball
 2. N62 Kennedy's Cross
 3. N62 Ballyeighan
- N62 Millbrook Bridge: Structural improvements
- Tullamore Bypass: Continue Design and document preparation, progressing to CPO and beyond.

Low Cost Accident Improvement Scheme

Under the Low Cost Accident Improvement Scheme improvement works were carried out at the following locations:

- Ballina Crossroads
- Ballinowlart
- Canal Bank, Ballycommon
- Castlefield, Cadamstown
- Clononey Bridge
- Cushaling Bridge
- Derrygolan Bridge
- Killyon Crossroads
- Meelaghans Crossroads
- Shean



Local Improvements Scheme

This scheme allows for the improvement of roads not in the charge of Offaly County Council which provide access to at least 2 parcels of land owned or occupied by different persons engaged in agricultural activities or for harvesting purposes. A total of six schemes were carried out in 2005 at a €134,000.00.

Community Involvement in Roadworks Scheme

Expenditure on this scheme amounted to €14,315 in 2005.

Small Public Services Vehicles (Hackney Licences)

Offaly County Council, pursuant to the Road Traffic (Public Service Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations, process & issue applications for Hackney Licences in the County. A total of 60 licences were current in 2005, including 2 Limousine licences. Income received €1,049.00.

Casual Trading

The Council adopted Casual Trading Bye-Laws in 1996, pursuant to the Casual Trading Act, 1995. The Bye-Laws empower the Council to grant licences for casual trading & also to control, regulate & manage casual trading. Thirty-four casual trading licences are in force for the designated casual trading area in Edenderry. The Market takes place on the first Tuesday of each month.

<i>Offaly Local Authorities</i>		
R: Roads	<i>SERVICE INDICATORS</i>	
R.1		2005
	Local and regional roads surface dressed / annum (square meters)	265,490
	% of local and regional roads surface dressed / annum)	2.6

Water Services

Goal:

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

Strategies:

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

Water Quality

The quality of drinking water remains of paramount importance. Continuous monitoring of public water schemes and group water schemes was carried out in order to ensure that the high quality of the water in the county is maintained. Monitoring was carried out in accordance with the European Communities (Drinking Water) Regulation, 2000 (S.I. 439 of 2000).

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

Service Indicators:

E.2 Percentage of drinking water analysis results in compliance with statutory requirements with regard to	
Public Schemes	98.82%
Private Schemes (where appropriate)	98.98 %

2005 saw progress on the following major projects

Tullamore Sewerage Scheme

Approval for Preliminary Report part 2 (treatment plant) received from DoEHLG.

Tullamore Water Supply Improvements – Stage 5

Silloogue well scheme substantially completed.

Signing of Contract for Tullamore Water Supply Improvement Scheme



L to R back row: Brian Mahon , Council Solicitor, David Hogan, Offaly County Council, Ray Carroll, Offaly County Council, Tom Shanahan, Offaly County Council.

Front Row L to R: Una Harvey, Offaly County Council, Padraig Burke, Ward & Burke Construction Ltd., Dervill Dolan, Cathaoirleach, Offaly County Council, Michael Roche, Offaly County Council.

Collins Lane Sewer Serviced Land Initiative

Project completed in 2005

Rhode Sewerage Scheme

Preliminary Report completed and approved. Consulting Engineers appointed to prepare contract documents.

Rhode Interim Sewerage Scheme

Contractor appointed to construct scheme.

Sludge Management Plan

Preliminary Report has been approved by the DOEHLG. The construction of the Tullamore hub centre will be undertaken as part of Tullamore Sewerage Scheme. Construction of the Ferbane and Edenderry satellite centres substantially completed.

Water Conservation Project

Phase 1 substantially completed.



Signing of contract for the Water Conservation Project.

Back Row: L to R. David Hogan, Offaly County Council; Ger Gibney, Ryan Handley, Consulting Engineers; Brian Mahon, Council Solicitor; Maureen Whelan, Offaly County Council; Ray Carroll, Offaly County Council.

Front Row: Gerry Fahy, Coffey Construction; Tom Coffey, Coffey Construction; Dervill Dolan, Cathaoirleach, Offaly County Council; Niall Sweeney, Offaly County Manager

Non-Domestic Water Metering Project

Contract for Meter Installation advanced to tender stage.

Birr Water Supply Scheme

Preliminary Report prepared.

Birr Water Supply Emergency Works

Approval to proceed to tender received from DoEHLG.

Birr Sewerage Improvements Scheme

Preliminary Report finalised. EIS approved by An Bord Pleanala

Birr Sewerage Scheme (Pipelines)

Scheme advanced to Tender Stage.

Edenderry Sewerage Scheme

Preliminary Report finalised and submitted to DoEHLG for approval. EIS approved by An Bord Pleanala.

Edenderry Sewerage Scheme - Sludge Acceptance Facility

Construction substantially completed.

Edenderry Sewerage Scheme - Design Build Operate

Scheme advanced to Tender Stage.

Edenderry Serviced Land Initiative

Contract for Surface Water Scheme advanced to Tender stage.

Edenderry/Rhode Regional Water Supply Scheme

Preliminary Report received and under review.

Edenderry/Rhode Water Supply Emergency Works

Scheme commenced construction.

Clara Sewerage Scheme

Scheme officially opened in June.

Ferbane Sewerage Scheme

Scheme officially opened in September.

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

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

Procurement procedure initiated for Engineering Consultancy Services

Offaly Group Towns & Villages Water Supply Scheme - Feasibility Study

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

Procurement procedure initiated for Engineering Consultancy Services

Clonbullogue Sewerage Scheme

Scheme commenced construction.

Signing of contract for Clonbullogue Sewerage Scheme



L to R: Back Row: David Hogan, Offaly County Council; Jim Fitzpatrick, White Young Green, Consulting Engineers; Maureen Whelan, Offaly County Council; Brian Mahon, Council Solicitor; Ray Carroll, Offaly County Council.

Front Row: Noel Hanley, Response Engineering, Joy Twohig, Response Engineering; Dervill Dolan, Cathaoirleach, Offaly County Council; Niall Sweeney, Offaly County Manager

2005 saw progress in the Group Scheme Sector as follows

A Block Grant allocation of €1,543,400 was received in 2005 under the Rural Water Programme.

The following new group water schemes were under construction in 2005:

Rath Eglishe – Stage 2
Ballycosney
Kilcolgan
Broughal
Kilbride
Kilnacarra
Endrim & Bishopswood

The following group water schemes were upgraded in 2005:

Ballyboy
Clareen
Killeigh
Tubber

The following schemes were connected to Public Main:

Ballydaly Wood of O
Corndarragh

Well Grants/Domestic Water Supply

The Council assists households to provide a piped domestic water supply or to remedy deficiencies in an existing supply of water used for domestic purposes in houses, which are seven years old or over, up to a maximum of €2,031.58 or 75% of the cost of the works, whichever is the lesser. In 2005, 20 grants were paid out at a cost of €36,125.85.

HOUSING DEPARTMENT

Key Areas of Activity in 2005

The housing department plays a number of very important roles in terms of accommodation provision and enhancement for those unable to do so from their own resources. These include the direct provision of social and affordable housing, facilitation of the voluntary housing sector, promotion of home ownership through housing loans and grants to individuals including those with special needs, providing a range of Traveller accommodation options, tackling homelessness issues and the promotion of estate management in local authority housing estates and traveller accommodation.

5 Year Programme for Social & Affordable Housing

In March, 2005, the council adopted a five year programme for social and affordable housing. The aim of this plan was to maximise available resources to ensure the delivery and availability of the broadest range of housing measures and options to meet the diverse and growing needs of our customers. New arrangements at central government level which guaranteed a reasonable level of exchequer resources to local authorities for a five year period now allows local authorities to adopt a coherent and co-ordinated response across all housing services and plan in a more focussed and holistic manner.

Social Housing

52 units of accommodation were completed/acquired in 2005. This included 8 units of accommodation acquired from developers under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2002. 104 units of social housing were under construction at the end of the year. 5 units of accommodation were also completed by the voluntary sector in Tullamore. It is the policy of Offaly County Council to work closely with voluntary housing bodies in planning and developing schemes in the areas of greatest need, with funding provided by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government through the Capital Assistance Programme and Rental Subsidy Scheme.

Cluain Fia Housing scheme under construction in Clara



Affordable Housing

The development of 22 units of affordable housing by Offaly County Council in Clara, Ferbane and Kilcormac were well advanced during 2005. 15 units of affordable accommodation under Part V of the Planning and Development Acts 2000 – 2002 were acquired during the year in Edenderry and Clara. 5 units were also acquired by Birr Town Council during the year.



Affordable Housing under construction in Kilcormac

Housing Loans

The council provides annuity, shared ownership and home improvement loans to eligible applicants. In excess of €1.8m was spent on 21 loans paid out in 2005. Loans and grants are provided by the council on a county wide basis as the two Town Councils are not lending authorities for these purposes

Tenant Purchase Scheme

The Council's tenant purchase scheme offers local authority tenants an option to purchase their houses subject to certain criteria. Tenants of the local authority with certain exceptions can apply to purchase their house after one year's tenancy. Houses are purchased outright from the council at their market value with discount given for each year of tenancy subject to a maximum of 10 years. 20 houses were sold under this scheme during the year

Mortgage Allowance Scheme

This scheme applies to tenants and tenant purchasers of council dwellings who surrender their houses to the council and acquire a private house. The allowance of €1,450 is payable directly to the lending agency on a graduated basis over five years. 9 such applications were approved during the year.

Disabled Persons Grants

The disabled persons grant is available to eligible applicants to carry out improvements to their house to facilitate the needs of people with disabilities. The council spent over €1.3m on this scheme in 2005, enabling the payment of 110 grants during the year.

Traveller Accommodation

The council adopted a new four year traveller accommodation programme covering the period 2005 – 2008 which was drafted in conjunction with the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee. This programme aims to meet the accommodation needs of this community through a combination of standard housing, group housing schemes and halting sites. The target for this four year period is to accommodate 110 families. 13 out of a target of 43 families were accommodated by

the Offaly local authorities in 2005. A further 16 families were supported in acquiring private rented accommodation. The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee met a number of times during the year and also had a number of meetings with the elected members from the Ferbane electoral area to discuss proposals for a group housing scheme in Kilcormac. A temporary halting site to accommodate 16 families at Kilcruttin and a 4 unit group housing scheme also commenced during the year in Tullamore.

Homelessness

The Council's Outreach Worker provides a support service to progress people out of homelessness. This officer's role entails working with existing service providers and operating an appropriate system of referrals. Close links have been fostered with the prison, probation and mental health services to ensure that a properly planned approach is undertaken with regards to meeting the accommodation needs and the re-integration into the community of those most vulnerable in society. This officer's role also involves assessing the level of need in the county and working with various homeless organisations to develop and foster an appropriate continuum of care for people who experience homelessness. The Outreach Worker also supports members of the travelling community, particularly in relation to sourcing rented accommodation and working with families who have been housed by the local authority in standard housing and may be experiencing integration difficulties.

Estate Management in Local Authority Estates

A new Community Liaison Officer (CLO) dedicated to this programme was appointed during the year. There are three distinct elements to this role – Pre-tenancy support and facilitation for new tenants, initiating and supporting residents associations in established estates and dealing with anti-social behaviour. A policy statement to tackle anti-social behaviour was adopted by the council on the recommendation of the Housing, Social & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee during the year. A new grants scheme to support the work of residents associations was also introduced.

Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)

Offaly was one of eight local authorities selected to pilot this new government initiative which aims to put in place over a four year period new arrangements for accommodating long-term rent supplement recipients (of 18 months plus) through the sourcing by housing authorities of accommodation primarily from the private rented market. The scheme aims to offer greater security of tenure for tenant through the use of medium to long term leases with landlords, a better social mix through providing a wider geographical spread of social housing options, improvements in the quality, suitability and range of private rented accommodation available and achieve better value for money.

Housing, Social & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee

This committee met four times during 2005 and held an annual review day in January. Recommendations were made on a number of policies during the year including :-

- Five Year Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Tullamore Arts/Cultural Facility
- Developing a Play Strategy and Play Policy for County Offaly
- Playground grant aid

- Birr Theatre & Arts Centre
- Housing of Private Home Owners
- Representation on Local Sports Partnership
- Review of the Homeless Forum

	Offaly Local Authorities	2005
H: Housing	<i>SERVICE INDICATORS</i>	
H.1	<i>Housing Vacancies</i>	
	Total number of dwellings in local authority stock	1344
	Overall % of dwellings that are let	97.60%
	Overall % of dwellings that are empty	2.40%
	% of empty dwellings subject to major refurbishment schemes	41%
	% of empty dwellings unavailable for letting	21%
	% of empty dwellings available for letting	79%
H.2	Average time taken to relet dwellings available for letting (Weeks)	2
H.3	Number of repairs completed as a % of the number of valid repair requests received	93.5
H.4	Average time taken to inform applicants of LA's decision on applications for the shared ownership housing scheme	8 days
	Average time taken to inform applicants of LA's decision on applications for housing loans scheme	8 days
	Average time taken to inform applicants of LA's decision on applications for L.A. housing	13 days
H.5	Total number of traveller families accommodated as a % of the target set in L.A. accommodation programme	30

ARTS SERVICE

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

The Arts Service operates in conjunction with Offaly County Council's 'Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002-2012', to

'facilitate the creativity, imagination, talent and traditions of all people in Offaly and the modes through which they are expressed"

The work of the arts office can be divided into two categories

- **Arts programming**
Arts programming can be described as facilitating projects to increase access to and participation in the arts and to support the work of artists and arts organisations in Offaly
- **Arts development**
Arts development can be described as work that will facilitate the capacity for the arts to grow within the county.



Marianne Jorgenson (centre) with Paddy and Danny from Bord na Mona who assisted the Danish artist in her creation of a temporary installation at **Lough Boora Sculpture in the Parklands** in 2005. Paddy and Danny painstakingly cut the letters with a slean.

Our main activities in 2005 can be summarised as

- Development of an arts and cultural facility in Tullamore
- Lough Boora Sculpture in the Parklands
- Dancer in Residence and Offaly Youth Dance Company
- Support and Development of Birr Theatre and Arts Centre
- Arts in Health Mentoring Programme
- Offaly Drama Project
- Support to Artists Schemes
- Drama Awards
- Festival Support
- Artists in Primary School Scheme
- Bealtaine, Festival of Arts for Older People
- Belmont Mills Bursaries
- Arts Act Grants
- Partnership Programmes
- Per Cent for Art Schemes
- Arts Planning and Policies
- Midlands Collaborative Projects
- Support and information service to professional, amateur, voluntary and community groups and individuals

ARTS PROGRAMME

Lough Boora Sculpture in Parklands

Lough Boora Sculpture in the Parklands is a most unusual and stimulating arts environment, so much so it has gained national recognition through its Arts Council funding and the Business2Arts award in 2003.

In 2005 two international sculptors were invited to create temporary works at the parklands. Johan Seitzma from Denmark and Marianne Jorgenson from Holland stayed for 2 weeks in September and created quite a stir with their interpretation of the bog into temporary contemporary art works.

Also it was confirmed that the renowned environmental artist Patrick Dougherty would visit the parklands to create a piece in 2008 in conjunction with the World Peat Conference which will be held in the same year.

Belmont Mills Studios

In 2005 the Arts Office began to work closely with the owners of Belmont Mills who are restoring the old Perry Flour Mills into artists studios, to seek way in which to promote the space and encourage a greater vibrant usage of the studios as it continues to develop.

Two bursaries were developed to encourage artists to use the space. One was for an Offaly based artists (6 months, studio only) and a national artist (3 months + accommodation).

This has raised the profile of the studios and has attracted greater interest among the arts community in the space, both locally and nationally. Part of the attraction to Belmont is the unique setting, variety of spaces available, the accommodation, location and the growing arts community surrounding it.

Dancer in Residence and Offaly Youth Dance Programme

Anita Cahill began her dance residency in May. The aims of the residency were to:

- To establish Birr Theatre and Arts Centre as a centre for contemporary Dance development.
- To directly invite the Artist as a professional dancer from the county to develop her practise in tandem with seeking to establish a Youth Dance Company based in Birr Theatre and Arts Centre.
- To find ways to sustain the development of Contemporary Dance in the region through research, evaluation and best practise.

An important factor in this residency was allowing the artist to choose an aspect of the community she wanted to work with in order to inform her in the making of a new piece of work. She had equal amounts of studio time to begin to create a new piece. Then followed a focus period on Youth Dance and the Offaly Youth Dance Company was formed in September.

In addition to this she has also made herself available to

- The Offaly Drama Project for master classes in movement and choreography
- Clara Youth Theatre for contemporary dance workshops
- 4 secondary schools for workshops (developing interest for the Offaly Youth Dance Company)
- The Irish Wheelchair Association
- WOP Womens Group



Support to Artists Schemes

There are circa 50 professional or semi-professional artists (those who are supplementing their income with another in the field of the arts) in Offaly and until 2005 had not had the opportunity to apply for funding for projects, materials or to further develop their career with educational opportunities.

Offaly County Council recognises the key role artist's play in creating a vibrant creative environment and the need to support the artist in the community. One of these ways is to provide financial support. In 2005 we launched a Support to Artists Scheme and 12 artists received assistance including a Tyrone Guthrie Bursary awarded to **Jock Nichol** and an exhibition opportunities in Offaly County Council HQ awarded to **Emma Barone**. Proposals were independently assessed using Arts Council criteria, which were circulated with application forms.

Drama Awards and Bursaries

In 2005 under our Drama Awards Scheme, we offered awards and bursaries to individuals and local drama groups for the development of their art form.

- 4 groups received funding to develop training and master classes
Clara Youth Theatre, Tullamore Amateur Drama Society, Clara Musical Society
- Offaly Drama Project 2005, master classes leading to the production of Tartuffe
- 2 places were offered on the Drama league of Ireland Summer School **Fiona Breen** from Birr Georgian Players and **Maeve O'Donovan** from Tullamore Amateur Dramatic Society
- Darragh McKeon received funding to direct the production Liliom at the Dublin Fringe Festival.

Midlands Collaborative Projects

In 2004 in a response to a call by Directors of Service in the Midlands area to create a project that would draw focus to the notions of identity and sense of place in youth particularly in relation to being from the Midlands.

This resulted in a collaborative project between the arts offices of Laois, Offaly, Westmeath and Longford to appoint a writer/editor to work with one youth group in each county for a period of eight weeks in order to collate material, written and visual for publication in a book. The appointed writer was Heather Brett who worked with VEC Youthreach groups in Edenderry, Mountmelick, Granard and Castlepollard. Writers of renown from each area were asked to contribute to the publication with inclusions by Eugene O'Brien, Noel Monaghan and Pat Boran. The result was a book called ID. This is one of a growing number of collaborative projects by these 4 local authorities who recognise a need for strengthening and at times consolidating arts in this region in order to generate a greater cultural identity.

Arts in Health Mentoring Programme

In 2004 the Arts Office initiated a visual arts residency, which focused on the resident artist working in health care settings. Tom Meskell was and the evaluation of this programme yielded a call for further development, particularly in relation to establishing a mentor to local artists in order to keep the programme sustainable. It also identified the potential partnering of a programme between the Irish Wheelchair Association and IMMA.

In 2005 we initiated a response to this and invited Tom Meskell back to continue the work as per the recommendations in the evaluation. 4 artists have been successfully placed in different health care settings across the county, Riada House (Mary Culleton) Birr Community Nursing Unit (Jackie Lynch) Offalia House (Rowena Keaveney) and the Irish Wheelchair Association (Julie Spollen). Each artist work with 10-12 participants in facilitating them to realise their own artistic voice in a studio environment.

In addition the IWA are worked on a project with the Irish Museum of Modern Art, each organisation will host an exhibition of each others work.

Arts Development

Music Development

We supported initiatives in 2005 that were actively pursuing the development of music in the county. **Winter Chamber Music Series, Tullamore International Summer Organ Series, Tullamore Gramophone Society and Kindermusic**

Festival Development

As one of the main ways that a broad audience base can access the arts, the support of festivals to develop quality arts programming is important. Festivals are ideal opportunities for audiences to access and participate in the arts in innovative and informal ways and the arts office supports, facilitates and funds their quality arts programming. Festivals are also run on a voluntary level and supporting these groups is vital to sustaining each festival.



There are a number of festivals in Offaly.

Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival, Shinrone Poetry Awards, Phoenix Festival, Bealtaine, Slieve Bloom Storytelling Festival, Kinnitty Fleadh Ceoil

The Glue Factory Opera, which took place in the Old Workhouse as part of Birr Vintage week and Arts Festival in August 2005

Arts Plan

During 2005 a new county arts plan was begun, based on the report “Developing the Arts in Offaly” which was compiled by Susan Coughlan and Assoc in 2002. This is an extensive research document that surveys arts activity, outlines where the needs exist and makes recommendations on the work of the arts office, a summary document of which exists on www.offaly.ie

Facilities and Venues

Facilities and Venues are important focal points for access and participation in the arts. They provide a main point of access to visiting artists and local arts initiatives, and provide space and a supportive environment for participation in the arts. They are integral to audience building. In 2005 the Arts Office worked in a developmental way to support and advise the promotion and development of existing and new facilities, including the development of a facility in Tullamore and seeking an increase in funding for Birr Theatre and Arts Centre.

Information and advice

The arts office is a resource for artists and arts organisations that require advice, direction and information on developing and promoting their arts practise. 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.

Per cent for art schemes

Per cent for art is a government initiative which allows for a percent of capital costs on a public infrastructure project to go towards the commissioning of a unique piece of art work. In 2005 a number of percent for art schemes were activated, each are in different stages of development. The arts office works to facilitate the best practise use of these schemes. These are;

- Birr Community Nursing Unit,
- Midlands Regional Hospital Tullamore,
- Ballinamere National School,
- Curragh Road Housing Scheme, Clara.

OFFALY LOCAL AUTHORITIES		
Service Indicators		
A&C:	Arts and Cultural Services	
A&C.1	Number of arts grants allocated	90
	Total value of arts grants allocated per 1000 population	1094

Service Indicators for the Arts Office 2005

Total Population 63,663

Arts Act Grants

Number of Grants Paid	30
Total Budget	€12340
Total value of grants per 1000 population	€193.84

Other Grants (Theatre, Festival, Awards Schemes etc)

Number of Grants Paid	60
Total Budget	€86 109.69
Total value of grants per 1000 population	€1 352.59

Programme Funding (Projects run by the Arts Service)

Total Budget	€38714.37
Total value of grants per 1000 population	€608.11

Other Arts Service Expenditure by OCC (Salaries, office admin, publications, equipment)

Total Budget	€111767.47
Total value of grants per 1000 population	€1755.61

Total Expenditure for the Arts in 2005 per 1000 population

Total Budget	€248931.53
Total value of grants per 1000 population	€3910.14

County Library & Archives

Among the key objectives and priorities of the Council are the development of new library at Birr, the provision of extended and improved facilities at Tullamore Branch Library and County Library HQ.

In addition, it is the objective of the Council to complete the automation of the County Library System, thereby facilitating greater public access to its resources and to other library and information networks. Furthermore, it is a stated objective to improve access and utilise the resources of the Local Studies and Archives Department for the development and promotion of heritage, culture and tourism.

Considerable progress was achieved in the development and delivery of library services during the year under review. The development of the new library at Birr is in progress and is due for completion in 2006, which will be a major information and cultural resource for the south Offaly area.

In October 2005, Mr Dick Roche, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government announced funding for 13 public library projects including funding of €5m. for the development of Library HQ and Branch Library at Tullamore. Capital building projects are grant-aided to a maximum of 75% of the approved cost of the development, which would require a sum of €1.6m to be provided from Council's resources.

Grants of €122,287 were drawn down in respect of libraries on-line. Almost €100,000 was claimed in respect of expenditure on the library management ICT infrastructure (Horizon), which was completed in December 2005. The Historic Mapping Project was announced in October 2005. Under the title 'Changing Libraries Project' this project will develop and provide for the public, a comprehensive online local studies, genealogy, reference and general interest service through partnership with public and private bodies. These will include free public access to historical maps in partnership with the Ordnance Survey Ireland, the Census of Ireland 1901 and 1911 working with the National Archives, national newspaper archives and selected commercial resources. The project will enable the marketing and promotion at national level of a uniform, progressive service. Grants in sum of €26,600 were secured in December 2005, under this initiative to provide one additional PC and colour printer at each branch library in the county.

LIBRARIES ON-LINE

The Horizon Library Management System was extended to all libraries in the county. The “virtual library”, whereby individuals can renew and request items online via a PIN (personal identification number) facility, is a major achievement. This enables greater public access to the resources of the County Library service, whereby individuals can request items from stock, and if necessary, items can be electronically requested from external sources.

Public internet access via Broadband is available in 5 of our 9 libraries. Broadband will be installed at the remaining branches at the earliest possible date. This facilitates the delivery of e-government at local level e.g. Online Motor Taxation. Since the introduction of Online Motor Tax in March 2004, use has risen to 30% by those eligible. With a network of forty seven public internet points countywide, Offaly County Library is in prime position to support delivery of e-government.

SCHOOLS LIBRARY SERVICE

Children’s services are given priority by Offaly County Library. Crucial to this is the Schools Library Service. Reflecting the importance of the Schools Library Service, the Department of Education and Science contributed an additional €10,000 to supplement our original allocation of almost €29,000. Of further benefit to the Schools Library Service was the grant of €7,206 received for primary schools in disadvantaged areas. The County Library Service’s Schools Department provided books for library services to the 68 primary schools in the county. Books are carefully selected by staff of the Schools Department to meet the needs of the individual school. Many teachers also visited the Schools Library Department where they are facilitated in making their own selection and are given advice on the range of resources. Approximately 15,000 books were issued to schools countywide from the Schools Department in 2005.

CULTURE AND OUTREACH PROGRAMMES

- **CHILDREN’S BOOK FESTIVAL:** Offaly County Library again participated in this key national annual event, which emphasises the importance of the written word to young people. The key event in Offaly was the comprehensive visit by well-known children’s writer Mary Arrigan to our libraries, where she met with local children and their teachers. She is the author of over thirty books for children, and her talk on the world of writing, followed by a question and answer session, gave all present a fascinating insight into the world of the writer. The promotion of the library service and of Book Festival was also aided by the purchase and distribution of specially designed promotional material to all library branches. The Library Service also participated in the national Children’s Book Festival Art Competition, with over 200 children in Offaly participating.



Well-known children's author Mary Arrigan at Birr Library with local children as part of Children's Book Festival celebrations.

- Staff of the County Library service initiated, managed, organised and participated in numerous cultural programmes. These events reached across all sectors of the community, with particular emphasis on outreach to children. Such events included:
- visit by renowned biologist and president of An Taisce Éanna Ní Lamhna to Kilcormac and Ferbane libraries, where she addressed local children and their teachers
- Edenderry: a Leinster Town (Offaly County Council, 2004) by retired County Secretary Michael Murphy, launched at Edenderry Library
- Community Art exhibition at Edenderry Library, launched by Fr Liam Lawton
- Various art and photography exhibitions countywide. These included “Chasing Rainbows in the Slieve Blooms” by Tullamore photographer Michael McGrath, which is a rich collection of images from this important midlands natural amenity. It was launched at Birr Library by well-known environmentalist Dr John Feehan.

"Chasing rainbows in the Slieve Blooms"



Photographer Michael McGrath discussing his exhibition of photographs, at Birr Library as part of Birr Vintage week.

- ◆ Staff of Offaly County Library provided library module for County Offaly VEC adult literacy tutors. Libraries are used as venues for one-to-one literacy tuition and special collections are provided in selected libraries.
- ◆ A selection of maps from the publication *An atlas of Birr (Dublin, 2005)*, by John Feehan and Alison Rosse, was also exhibited at Birr and Kilcormac Libraries. It is planned that this exhibition will visit other libraries in 2006.
- ◆ Various cultural events took place at Tullamore Library as part of Phoenix Festival celebrations, including popular storytelling session with Pat Speight. The RehabCare Art Exhibition was launched at Tullamore Library, in conjunction with County Offaly VEC Adult Learning Centre.
- ◆ To celebrate 150 years since the Public Libraries Act of 1855, An Chomhairle Leabharlanna (Library Council) launched its “Rediscover” programme nationwide. Libraries all over the country took part in the week-long campaign, which emphasised the positive role that the local library can play in the community.
- ◆ The County Library staff organised the visit of Irish author Noreen Mackey to Tullamore Library as part of the celebrations. Noreen read extracts from her book *The secret ladder: a spiritual adventure (London, 2005)*, with a question and answer session following afterwards, providing the audience with an insight into the world of the author.
- ◆ Major promotional materials for the public library service were produced for countrywide use, including posters, bookmarks and cotton bags. These were widely distributed via the County Library Service to raise public awareness of the public library service.
- ◆ Offaly County Library liaised with a Cloneyhurke residents group, and supported the establishment of a reading group by providing advice and appropriate books.
- ◆ Offaly County Library arranged training for staff in the “Lifesteps” project through An Chomhairle Leabharlanna. This project is an initiative of Irish public libraries and is funded by the Information Society Fund, through the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The “Lifesteps” project consists of 17 guides/booklets, which explain how to achieve various life steps using the Internet. These guides are also available on the project website <http://www.lifesteps.ie/>
The guides cover a range of subjects, selected and prepared by expert library staff. The subjects were chosen in response to queries handled by library staff in their daily interaction with members of the public. Each guide provides lists and descriptions of important and useful websites relating to the subject in question, together with step by step, jargon-free instructions on using these websites to find some specific piece of information, or to complete an action.

- ◆ Kilcormac Library initiated and organised the recording of The Angelus by Kairos Production Team for RTE. The production was filmed in Kilcormac Library, and other sites around Kilcormac.
- ◆ Clara Library hosted the AGM of Offaly County Council, June 2005, where many county councillors acknowledged the positive role that the county Library Service makes to the community in Offaly.
- ◆ The County Library Service continued to support the annual Slieve Bloom Storytelling Festival.
- ◆ Publication: The County Library and Archives Service published *School, Community and Nation: The papers of R.H. Moore, N.T. 1899-1956 (Offaly County Council, 2005)* by Mary Fitzpatrick, Archivist. The publication gives an important insight into the social and cultural life of Banagher in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was launched at Banagher Library on 14th December 2005 by Mr Peter Ormond, M.C.C., Cathaoirleach, Offaly County Council, with members of the Moore family in attendance.



Mr Peter Ormond, M.C.C., Cathaoirleach Offaly County Council, launches *School, Community and Nation: The Papers of R.H.Moore, N.T. 1899-1956*, by Archivist Mary Fitzpatrick, at Banagher Library.

Annual Statistics 2005

Membership	8,374
Loans (books and media)	185,024
Reference and information enquiries	11,007
Request for specific items	3,042
Users of PCs and Internet	13,204
Adult Literacy Service – users	88
Number of school visits	88
Exhibitions	15
Activities	34

SERVICE INDICATORS

L: Library Services		
L.1	<u>Public Opening Hours</u>	
	Average number of public opening hours per week for full time libraries	35
	Average number of public opening hours per week for part time libraries (where applicable)	18
L.2	Number of registered library members as a % of the local population	13
L.3		
	Number of items issues per head of population (county / city wide) for books	3
	Number of items issues per head of population (county / city wide) for other items	0
L.4	% of libraries that offer internet access to the public	100%
L.5	Number of internet sessions provided per 1000 population	230

Community & Enterprise

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

1.1 County Development Strategy Review

In 2005 Community & Enterprise undertook a comprehensive review of the County Development Strategy as per LG 2/05. The Review process took 11 months from March 2005 until January 2006 and involved a combination of research and extensive consultation with County Development Board (CDB) members, Interagency Group members, member Agencies of the CDB, members of the Community Forum, and the inhabitants of Offaly.

A major part of the Review was a consultative conference held in September 2005. The Growing Offaly Together Conference brought together 120 Stakeholders to have a key input to the prioritisation of actions for the CDB Action Plan for 2006-2008. The Growing Offaly Together Conference succeeded in significantly raising the profile of Offaly and Offaly CDB through both the local and the national media. The Review and the CDB Action Plan for 2006-2008 was completed at the end of January 2006.



1.2 County Development Board 2005 Priority Actions

C&E continued to work with the Interagency Sub Groups of the County Development Board to deliver on the targets for the 2005 Priority Actions. The achievements of the Interagency Groups in 2005 are as follows.

- Current implementation of 71% of actions in the published Strategy.
- Production and dissemination of the CDB Newsletter 2005.
- Child Poverty Study - *Equally Cherished*.
- *Audit of existing industrial and enterprise facilities* – Property listing now available for potential investors in Offaly and available on County Enterprise Board website www.offalyceb.ie
- *Review tourism provision, marketing and development and recommend a suitable county structure* – Tourism study currently underway, which will inform the development of a Strategic Plan for Tourism in Offaly.
- *Prepare document on key infrastructure* – Infrastructural summary document prepared and available. Agencies sharing and documenting information on infrastructure.

- *Implement Third Level Education Outreach Programme* - Third Level Outreach Education Project established to address the third level attainment rates in Offaly. In early 2006 awarded one of only two national pilots for the HEA Office for Equity of Access.
- *Hold two Policy Development Workshops with Community Forum* – Workshops held with Offaly Community Forum on issues of planning and funding.
- *Progress integrated interventions for long-term unemployed men* – Local Interagency Group established and Strategy agreed which involves developing a package of responses that seeks to address the individual, family, and community needs of this target group and the local area in which they live.
- *Implement one urban and one rural based information and communications technology project* – ICT use study carried out and to be published. Mobhaile Pilot – 40 community and voluntary groups participated in training and established their own web presence.
- *Establish County Sports Partnership* – Interim Sports Partnership established and initial strategy development work carried out. Sports Partnership was awarded full designation in early 2006.
- *Support farm families in creating new income generating opportunities* – 389 farm families completed Stage 1 of Farm Options Programme, 195 completed Stage 2 and 188 farm families referred for other activities including training courses and support from other agencies.

1.3 Comhairle na n'Og

In 2005 area meetings of the Comhairle na n'Og were held in each of the four electoral areas in advance of the County Comhairle na n'Og which was held on 21st January 06 in the Council Chambers. 34 young people from all over Offaly took part in the event. 15 Councillors were present to take part in a Q&A session chaired by the Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council.



1.4 Supporting the Community Forum

C&E continued to support the community forum throughout 2005. Steering Group meetings were held on a monthly basis throughout the year and C&E facilitated the full and active participation of the Community Forum in the prioritisation of actions for the CDB Action Plan 2006-2008.

The Community Forum were supported in the preparation of a tendering procedure and the development of terms of reference for a comprehensive Review of the Community Forum which will take place in 2006.

1.5 Pride of Place

Three community projects were entered by Offaly County Council in the National Pride of Place Competition in Summer 2005. C&E supported the projects in the preparation of their presentation and throughout the judging process.

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

C&E supported the Industry & Enterprise Interagency Sub-Group of the CDB in achieving its targets for 2005 (See CDB Priority Actions)

C&E continued to facilitate the West Offaly Enterprise Fund during 2005, which granted aided 20 community applicants and 1 enterprise applicant.

A submission was made to Indecon on behalf of the CDB on the development of a framework for Midlands Gateway.

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

C&E initiated steps to develop a County Council Play Policy and a County Play Strategy in 2005. An Interagency Play Policy Committee was established in 2005 to steer the process. A programme of research and consultation was initiated at the end of 2005 and into early 2006. In addition an internal cross-departmental play policy committee was convened to develop the County Council Play Policy.

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

4.1 Social Inclusion

C&E continued to support the work of the Social Inclusion Measures Group and its priority project – the long-term unemployed men's pilot initiative in Birr.

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

The Child Poverty Study for Offaly was finalised in 2005 and will be made available on the Offaly CDB website in 2006.

4.2 Literacy Awareness Training

To mark National Adult Literacy Awareness Week in September for which the theme for 2005 was Active Citizenship and Literacy C&E organised a number literacy awareness training workshops for the staff in Offaly County Council. 24 members of staff from all sections participated in these workshops. The aim is to increase the awareness among the staff of Offaly County Council on the barriers and issues people with literacy difficulties face when accessing services. This training is particularly relevant to staff working at public counters, reception or

those who may need to assist our service users to complete forms or other documentation. Taking part in literacy awareness training can improve communications and ensure staff have a greater sensitivity towards adults with literacy difficulties.

4.3 Intercultural Awareness Training

In November 2005, to mark Anti Racist Workplace Week Offaly County Council and Tullamore Travellers Movement launched Planning for an Intercultural Offaly which includes a Information Resource Pack and an Intercultural Awareness Training Programme. The training programme is being rolled out to all staff in 2006.

5. Developing and delivering quality services

C&E facilitated the Cohesion process throughout 2005 including the administration of the Cohesion 2004 fund and the facilitation of the talks on the single unified local development structure. This process is on going through 2006.

C&E continued to support the SPC in their policy development role.

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

C&E developed a Communications Strategy for the County Development Board for adoption at the March 2006 CDB meeting. The strategy is to improve the internal communications of the CDB and its communications with its external stakeholders.

The section continues to collaborate with other sections within the Directorate on a regular basis through quarterly directorate meetings and through the Housing Social Inclusion Group.

In February 2005 Offaly CDB launched its Newsletter, which was distributed to every household in Offaly.

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

C&E is working towards this objective by implementing the Corporate Plan through Operational Plans for the Section and through positive engagement in the PMDS process.

Rec: Recreational Services		
Rec.1		
	Number of children's playgrounds per 1000 population directly provided by the local authority	0.016
	Number of children's playgrounds per 1000 population facilitated by the local authority	0.016
Rec.2	Number of visitors to local authority facilitated by swimming facilities per 1000 population	n/a
CP: Community Participation & Cooperation - Your Local Authority		
CP.1	% of local schools involved in the local Youth Council / Comhairle na n-Og scheme	16.25

Planning and Economic Development

The Planning Department is responsible for land use policy, control of development including Building Control and 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, the processing of Fire Safety Certificates and the taking of appropriate enforcement action where necessary.

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

<i>Year</i>	<i>No of Applications</i>	<i>No. Granted</i>	<i>No. Refused</i>	<i>Total Decided</i>
2001	1331	889	287	1176
2002	1390*	818	241	1059
2003	1486*	748	238	986
2004	1828*	891	273	1165
2005	1462*	859	217	1055

(*This figure includes applications which were invalid)

Strategic Policy Committee Meetings/Area Meetings

A total of 9 meetings of the Planning and Economic Development Strategic Policy Committee took place in 2005. This committee comprises of 6 members of Offaly County Council and 5 members from the community including , Trade Union, Business/Commercial, Tourism and Agricultural/Farming sectors.

Variations of Offaly County Development Plan 2003-2009

There were no Variations to the County Development Plan 2003 – 2009 in 2005.

Town Renewal Scheme 2000

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

Banagher
Ferbane
Edenderry
Clara

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



BELMONT



POLLAGH

Urban and Village Renewal Programme 2000-2006

Under this programme, environmental improvement works were carried out in the following towns in 2005:

Location	Project
Rhode	Enhancement of approach road to Village and utilization of existing open space for amenity area, landscaping, seating, footpaths in area adjacent to Community Centre and village centre.
Moneygall	Creation of a focal point at centre of the village, creation of a set-down area in front of the church and an amenity space with trees, landscaping and seating
Pullough	Environmental improvements to enhance the village, to include the creation of a sculpture near the canal, erection of interpretive boards, creation of kerb and provision of footpath, formalize junction and provide lighting and streetscape furniture
Crinkle	Regularise junction between Swag St. and School St., create amenity space, provide footpath, re-organise existing planting, provide ducting and street furniture.
Belmont	Creation of an amenity space for the community to include seating, land-scaping and paving in keeping with the rustic environment throughout the area.

Building Control

124 Fire Certificate applications were received during 2005. 125 certificates were issued. Commencement notices should be submitted between 14 and 28 days before the commencement of the works or the making of the material change of use. There were 668 commencement notices received by Offaly County Council between January 2005 and December 2005. During this time, the Council carried out 1457 inspections on buildings, for compliance with the Building Regulations 1997 and latest amendments.

Conservation Grants

In 2005, Offaly County Council received an allocation of €140,000 for grant assistance to be made available to owners of protected structures to enable them to undertake conservation works. Grants varying from €3,000 to €25,000 were allocated to 14 applicants subject to matching funding of 50% of the cost of the works.

Enforcement

In accordance with Part VIII of the Planning & Development Act 2000, the following details relate to enforcement proceedings in 2005:

Warning Letters:	221
Enforcement Notices:	64
Circuit Court Cases	2
Prosecutions:	7

Development Contribution Scheme

The Development Contribution Scheme was updated in January 2005 in accordance with the wholesale Price Index for Building and Construction published by the Central Statistics Office. It provides for contributions in respect of the following:

Table 1 – Level of Contribution – Residential & Industrial/Commercial Development

Class of Infrastructure		€per residential unit	€per m ² of floor area industrial/commercial development
A	Open Spaces, cultural, recreational and community facilities, amenities and landscaping works, town and village improvement – including land acquisition.	€30	€7.50
B	Roads, car parking, infrastructure to facilitate public transport, cycle and pedestrian facilities and traffic calming measures – including land acquisition.	€30	€1.50
C	Wastewater treatment facilities, sewers and drains – including land acquisition.	€110	€6.50
D	Water Treatment Facilities & Water Mains – including land acquisition	€1580	€6.50
	TOTAL	€750	€32

Table 2 – Levels of Contributions – Other Categories of Development

	Category	Amount of Contribution
A	Shortfall in provision of car-parking space : (i) Urban (ii) Rural	€4,220 per space €2,110 per space
B	Shortfall in provision of open space (i) Urban (ii) Rural	Special Contribution Special Contribution

C	Agricultural Development	<500m ² = nil 500 m ² - 1000 m ² = €2.50 per M ² > 1000 m ² = €5.50 per M ²
D	Initial afforestation/replacement of broad-leaf high forest by conifer species/peat extraction	€30 per hectare of site area, only where planning permission is required.
E	Land use for: (a) the winning and working of minerals (b) deposit of refuse or waste	€1,060 per 0.1 hectare of site area subject to a minimum charge of €10,550
F	Storage and Warehousing(not for retailing)	€16 per M ²
G	<i>Golf/Pitch & Putt</i>	Special Contribution
H	<i>Windfarms</i>	Special Contribution
I	<i>Swimming Pools</i>	Special Contribution

During 2005, Development contributions totaling €3,678,578.60 were received.

Offaly Local Authorities		
SERVICE INDICATORS		
P: Planning and Building Control		
P.1	Planning Applications - Decision Making	
	No. of applications determined for individual houses	584
	(% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for individual houses	265
	number requiring further info	316
	number where ext of time agreed	3
	Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for individual houses	75.38
	% of grants for individual houses	74.64%
	% of refusals for individual houses	25.36%
	% of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for individual houses	87%
	(% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for individual houses)	n/a
	% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for individual houses	13%
	No. of applications determined for housing development	86
	(% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for housing development	37
	number requiring further info	48
	number where ext of time agreed	2
	Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for housing development	78.9
	% of grants for housing development	66.30%
	% of refusals for housing development	33.70%

	% of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for housing development	92%
	(% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for housing development)	n/a
	% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for housing development	8%
	No. of applications determined for other categories: not requiring EIA	522
	(% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for other categories: not requiring EIA	338
	number requiring further info	171
	number where ext of time agreed	13
	Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for other categories: not requiring EIA	84
	% of grants for other categories: not requiring EIA	86.97%
	% of refusals for other categories: not requiring EIA	13.03%
	% of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: not requiring EIA	84%
	(% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: not requiring EIA)	n/a
	% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: not requiring EIA	16%
	No. of applications determined for other categories: requiring EIA	8
	(% of complete) applications determined within 8 weeks for other categories: requiring EIA	3
	number requiring further info	5
	number where ext of time agreed	0
	Average length of time taken to determine an application where further information is sought for other categories: requiring EIA	108.8
	% of grants for other categories: requiring EIA	62.50%
	% of refusals for other categories: requiring EIA	37.50%
	% of cases where the decision was confirmed with or without variation by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: requiring EIA	100%
	(% of cases where the decision was varied by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: requiring EIA)	n/a
	% of cases where the decision was reversed by An Bord Pleanala for other categories: requiring EIA)	0%
P.2	Planning Enforcement	
	Total number of cases subject to complaints that are investigated	98
	Total number of cases subject to complaints that are dismissed	20
	resolved through negotiations	28
	Number of enforcement procedures taken through warning letters	233
	Number of enforcement procedures taken through enforcement	66

	notices	
	Number of prosecutions	7
P.3	Average number of public opening hours per week	30.25
	number of pre-planning consultation meetings	1081
P.4	Average length of time from request for consultation with local authority planner to to actual formal meeting for pre-planning consultation	30.5
P.5	Buildings inspected as a % of new buildings notified to the local authority	29.90%

HERITAGE

The Heritage Act, 1995, defines national heritage as including monuments, archaeological objects, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife habitats, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways.

2004 was the fifth year of the heritage office in Offaly County Council and the fourth year of the implementation of the Offaly Heritage Plan 2002 – 2006. The delivery of the plan is the primary driving force for the work programme. Meetings of the Offaly Heritage Forum were held on four occasions with working groups meeting as needed. I would like to acknowledge the work of the heritage forum members, which is essential and significant. The support of the Heritage Council towards the heritage officer and the delivery of the Heritage Plan is much appreciated. The following is a summary of the main projects delivered in 2005. In addition, a considerable amount of time is spent liaising with communities and helping them plan, fund and deliver appropriate projects. For more information call the office on – 05793 – 46839 or see www.offaly.ie/offalyheritage.

Collecting Data

Killeigh Geophysical Survey - Assisted by the Heritage Council, Offaly County Council commissioned Dr Paul Gibson from Maynooth to carry out a geophysical survey of certain sections of the monastic enclosure at Killeigh.

Historic Landscape Character Assessment

During 2003, the Heritage Council and Discovery Programme funded a pilot Historic Landscape Character Assessment mapping exercise in Offaly. The aim of the project in 2005, was to take this data and to interpret, and present it so that it can be used in County Development Plans, Local Heritage Plans, planning developments and for researchers in general.

Graveyard Memorial Recording Project

In 2005, the memorials at Banagher and Lemanaghan were recorded using two different approaches, and a number of graveyards had the memorials photographed to facilitate future recording.

Hedgerow Survey

A hedgerow survey of Offaly and Laois was carried out for the first time, that brought together a range of fascinating data, which gives us information about hedges, as townland boundaries, field sizes over the years and the ages of certain hedges, in addition to data more specifically in the natural heritage area.

Disseminating Information

Artefact Inventory

Over 3000 artefacts from Offaly, now in the National Museum of Ireland, have been entered on an easy to search database.

Information Panels Launched - We launched eight information panels which were erected at monastic sites to help the visitor's understanding of their history and the physical remains. These are at Birr, Drumcullen, Gallen, Killeigh, Kinnitty, Letter, Rahan and Sier Kiernan. Thanks to Offaly Leader + and the OPW for their financial assistance with this project.

Stories from a Sacred Landscape - Offaly County Council commissioned archaeologist Caimin O'Brien and photographer Jim Fraher to document the early Christian monastic sites in Offaly, bringing together the archaeology, history and folklore together in a very visual book. This work is now complete as a superb 248 full colour book *Stories from a Sacred Landscape, Croghan Hill to Clonmacnois* that will be launched in the spring of 2006 in Tullamore.

Launch of Birr Town Atlas Book - Offaly County Council are delighted to have been involved with the production of *An Atlas of Birr* by John Feehan and Alison Rosse that was launched in Birr last spring.

Awareness Project with Radio Three

In order to bring awareness of certain key areas of heritage to a wider audience, we worked with Laois and Westmeath County Councils on a series of "sound bites" covering a range of heritage items. They were broadcast on Midlands Radio 3 throughout the year.

Cherished Places Competition

The Cherished Places competition organised with Offaly LEADER + continued in 2005 with an increased level of participation from community groups

Biodiversity Actions

The *Biodiversity Action Strategy for Offaly* was adopted and printed by Offaly County Council in June 2005. This is an important policy document setting out the process and principles for the biodiversity action plan in Offaly. A number of biodiversity actions took place in 2005, including a summer school *Exploring the Wild* that 30 teachers attending over five days. The econode walk at Knockbarron was launched in May in association with the Slieve Bloom Development Association and Coillte.

Offaly County Council Conservation Projects

A number of Offaly County Council conservation projects were progressed.

Leamonaghan Conservation Plan

The conservation of the church at Leamonaghan has been delivered in phases over the past four years, following the guidelines in the conservation plan. 2005 saw the continuation of the conservation of the church and works commencing at St Mella's cell, the early Christian oratory.



Lemanaghan on the Ballycumber to Ferbane road, where conservation of the main church in Offaly County Council's care, is ongoing.

Birr Pre Reformation Church

This tower which suffered partial collapse in the early 1990's was secured in 2004 with further grouting and pointing taking place in 2005 along with consolidation of the walls and window openings.

Star Fort

Work continues on the conservation of the remaining section of the star fort at the back of the Garda barracks in Tullamore. This work is carried out by the Jobs Initiative team with Offaly County Council who have undergone a training course in the care of masonry ruins.

Environment Section

The Environment Section of Offaly County Council has responsibility for a wide range of services as follows: -

- **Activities**

1. Waste Management
2. Pollution Control
3. Percolation Testing
4. Fire Service
5. Burial Grounds
6. Swimming Pools
7. Derelict Sites & Dangerous Buildings
8. Veterinary Service
9. Health & Safety
10. Major Emergency Planning
11. Control of Dogs and Horses

1. Waste Management

Progress on the implementation of the various elements of the Midlands Waste Management Plan is a significant part of the Waste Management programme. Having commenced a review of its Plan in 2004 the Council, together with the other four counties forming the Region for the purpose of the Waste Management Plan, made a draft Replacement Plan in July 2005 which reflects changes in population, waste arisings and infrastructural requirements. Submissions on the draft were accepted up to the end of September 2005, subsequent to which a new Plan would be made in February 2006.

Highlights of the draft Plan include:

- the provision of brown bins for households & business organic waste
- minimisation of construction & demolition waste
- examining the commercial viability and siting of an incineration plant for the Region
- awareness information campaigns to reduce waste at home and at work.
- increased investment on recycling initiatives e.g. Civic amenity facilities, bring bank density and household dry recycling expansion

Significant progress has been made in the following areas in 2005: -

- **Derryclure Landfill:** - Construction nearly complete on new extension costing €4m: expected completion date is Spring 2006.
- **Civic Amenity Sites:** - In addition to those at Tullamore, a facility in Edenderry operated on behalf of the Council by the private sector commenced operation in 2005.
- **Recycling Bring Banks –**

A total of 46 of Sites are now in operation.

- **Waste Enforcement-** The Council recruited six additional staff to carry out enforcement of Waste and Litter Pollution legislation. This is part of a 5-year plan, funded initially in full by the DEHLG Environment Fund. The aim is to provide an effective and visible presence to tackle illegal waste and litter activities, and involves the staff in operation on the ground and on patrol out-of-hours. In conjunction with the EPA Office of Environmental Enforcement and An Garda Siochana, a series of road checkpoints were arranged during 2005, to check on illegal waste movements.
- **Litter-** In 2005 Litter Wardens issued 233 fines and 17 prosecutions were taken for non-payment, 14 of which resulted in convictions.

2. Pollution Control

The Council exercises its functions and duties under environmental pollution legislation by way of information, licensing and enforcement. It issues licences to discharge trade effluent to waters/sewers in respect of premises used for carrying on a trade or industry, and issues Section 12 Notices requiring the carrying out of works necessary to prevent water pollution.

3. Percolation Test

Percolation Testing of Sites for houses in unsewered rural areas is carried out as a link to the Planning process and also in conjunction with pollution control mentioned above.

The Environment Section carried out 662 Percolation Tests in 2005.

4. Fire Service

A total of 731 incidents were attended by the County Fire Brigades in 2005.

Chimney fires accounted for 42% of these call-outs.

The Fire Service is the only 24-hour emergency service provided by the Council. A particular difficulty for local authorities is that there is no State subvention for the running of this vital service which in 2005 cost €2.7m.

A review of Offaly Fire Service was carried out during 2005 and recruitment of fire fighters to appropriate manning levels in all stations understaffed has commenced.

5. Burial Grounds

As part of its 5-year plan for the provision of new and the extension of existing cemeteries in the County, adopted by the members of Offaly County Council in 2003, the Council negotiated the purchase of land to extend the cemeteries at The Island, Rahan and at Edenderry during 2005.

6. Swimming Pools

Offaly County Council provided grant aid of €12,700 to each of the Swimming Pools at Birr, Edenderry and Clara. The Council made a submission to the Dept of Tourism, Sport and Recreation in support of an application by Birr Swimming Pool Committee for funding of €1.3 million to refurbish the pool at Birr and the Department approved same

in 2005. The Council also approved funding assistance in the sum of €500,000 for Tullamore Pool, which will fall due in 2006.

7. Derelict Sites and Dangerous Buildings

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

8. Veterinary Service

As part of its contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland the Council's Veterinary Inspectors carry out inspections of small abattoirs and small meat manufacturing plants supplying the domestic market to assess food safety procedures. The contract provides for the reimbursement to the Council of its full costs by the Department of Agriculture and Food.

9. Health Safety and Welfare at Work Act

The Council recruited its own Health & Safety Officer in 2005, having previously operated on a sharing basis with Laois County Council. The Officer must ensure that safety standards in all Council workplaces are maintained and duties include: Site Specific Safety Statements, Safety Induction Training, VDU Assessment on all workstations, Chemical Assessments on laboratory chemicals together with input and **circulation of Safety Week Newsletter** and a satisfactory 2-Day HSA Inspection.

10. Major Emergency Planning

The Major Emergency Committee operates to plan for any incident happening within the county which, while not requiring the activation of the regional major emergency plan, necessitates a co-ordinated response at local level. Training and exercises for all relevant personnel, including management, technical, administrative and area staff, take place on regular occasions.

11. Control of Dogs and Horses

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

In 2005 the Council continued to concentrate on re-homing stray or unwanted dogs where possible and 217 such animals were given new homes with a resulting reduction in those humanely destroyed.

The Council has no facility for impounding horses and avails of a service provided by Local Authority Services in Kilkenny. 27 horses were impounded in

2005 & all but one, which continues to receive medical treatment, were returned to their owners.

- **Environment Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) Meetings - 2005**

The Environment Section held 5 SPC meetings in 2005, and made recommendations to the Council on matters such as rationalisation of the County Fire Service and on swimming pool proposals.

The SPC members were briefed on progress to date on the review of the Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan.

- **Offaly County Council supported initiatives in the following areas in 2005: -**

<u>Initiative</u>	<u>Council Grant</u>
1. Environment Grants	€21,200
2. Clean-Up Week	€39,300
3. Anti-Litter Grants	€13,300
4. Composting Initiatives	€13,000
5. Local Agenda 21 Environment Fund Grants	€ 5,500
6. Household Hazardous Waste Collections	€27,00
7. Environmental Media Campaign – Midland Radio 3	€ 9,300

<i>Offaly Local Authorities</i>		
<i>SERVICE INDICATORS</i>		
<i>E: Environmental Services</i>		
<u>Water</u>		
E.1	% of river channel which is unpolluted	6
	% of river channel wich is slightly polluted	6
	% of river channel which is moderately polluted	6
	% of river channel which is seriously polluted	6
E.2	% of drinking water analysis results in compliance with statutory requirements with regard to public schemes	98.80%
	% of drinking water analysis results in compliance with statutory requirements with regard to private schemes (where appropriate))	99.00%
<u>Fire Service</u>		
E.3	Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in full time stations	n/a
	Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in part time stations)	5.64
E.4	% of attendances at scenes where first attendance is at scene within 10 minutes	58.60%
	% of attendances at scenes where first attendance is at scene within 20	36.97%

	minutes	
	% of attendances at scenes where first attendance is at scene after 20 minutes	4.43%
E.5	<i>Fire prevention</i>	
	Total number of fire safety certificate applications received	128
	Total number of fire safety certificate applications processed)	126
Waste Management		
E.6	% of households provided with segregated waste collection	n/a
E.7	% of household waste recycled	18.14%
	tonnage	2,756
E.8	% of household waste going to landfill	81.86%
	tonnage	12,438
E.9	Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for glass	48
	Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for glass	3
	Total number of recycling facilities for glass	51
	Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for glass	4
	Tonnage of waste collected for recycling glass per 5000 of population	80
	Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for cans	48
	Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for cans	3
	Total number of recycling facilities for cans	51
	Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for cans	4
	Tonnage of waste collected for recycling cans per 5000 of population	4
	Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for textiles	6
	Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for textiles	2
	Total number of recycling facilities for textiles	8
	Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for textiles	2
	Tonnage of waste collected for recycling textiles per 5000 of population	7
	Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for batteries	0
	Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for batteries	2
	Total number of recycling facilities for batteries	2
	Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for batteries	0.16
	Tonnage of waste collected for recycling batteries per 5000 of population	4
	Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for oils	0
	Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for oils	2
	Total number of recycling facilities for oils	2
	Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for oils	0.16
	Tonnage of waste collected for recycling oils per 5000 of population	0
	Number of bring sites with recycling facilities for other categories	0
	Number of Civic amenity sites with recycling facilities for other categories	3
	Total number of recycling facilities for other categories	3

	Number of locations per 5000 of population with recycling facilities for other categories	0.24
	Tonnage of waste collected for recycling other categories per 5000 of population	61
<u>Litter Pevention and Environmental Enforcement</u>		
E.10	<i>Litter</i>	
	Total number of full time litter wardens	4
	Total number of part time litter wardens	4
	Number of litter wardens (both full and part time) per 5000 of population	0.63
	Number of on the spot fines	359
	Number of prosecution cases taken because of non payment of on the spot fines	14
	Number of prosecutions secured	14
	% of areas within the local authority that are unpolluted (i.e. litter free)	3%
	% of areas within the local authority that are slightly polluted with litter	61%
	% of areas within the local authority that are moderately polluted with litter	27%
	% of areas within the local authority that are significantly polluted with litter	5%
	% of areas within the local authority that are grossly polluted with litter)	4%
E.11	<i>Environmental Complaints and Enforcement</i>	
	Total number of cases subject to complaints concerning environmental pollution (relating to waste, litter, water pollution, noise pollution, air pollution)	
	Number of complaints investigated	
	Number of complaints dismissed	
	Number of enforcement procedures taken)	
E.12	% of primary schools participating in environmental campaigns	53%
	% of secondary schools participating in environmental campaigns)	72%

Fire Service

Calls

No. of Turnouts	No. of Incidents	No. of Fires	No. of Chimney	No. of R.T.A.s
818	731	503 (incl 44 outside county Offaly)	304 60% of fires 42% of calls	149 20% of calls

The above shows the incidents attended by Offaly's fire brigades in 2005. There was an increase in incidents compared to the previous year; there was an 8% increase in calls, but a 28% increase in chimney fires. Chimneys form 42% of calls, and road traffic accidents, which were a small part of fire brigade operations, are now 20% (1 in 5) of all incidents.

While sadly, there were a number of fatalities and serious injuries as a result of road traffic accidents, there were no fatalities due to fire in 2005.

The Fire Service joined forces with the Ambulance Service in 2005 to receive First Responder Training. Approximately half the complement of fire fighters were trained to give a high standard of medical aid when and where required. This will prove an important benefit to the community.

Capital Projects

A new fire appliance for Ferbane was built and commenced service in August. Two new appliances were also commissioned and will be complete in 2006 – one Fire Appliance, and one Emergency Tender mainly to cater for the increase in road traffic accidents. The construction of a new fire station in Edenderry got under way in November, and is expected to be completed in 2006.



Signing the contract for new station in Edenderry Front: Kevin Doheny (Mulligan Builders), Peter Ormond Cathaoirleach, Niall Sweeney County Manager, Patrick Mulligan Main Contractor. Back: Denis Cunningham C.F.O.,

Tony Colville A.C.F.O., Seán Murray D.O.S. Raymond Mahon a/Co. Solicitor, Peter Lyons (Kenny Lyons & Assoc) Architect, Michael Turley Q.S. Ray Carroll S.E.O.

Fire Prevention

The Fire Service carries out inspections mainly under the Fire Services Act 1981 and 2003, and the Building Control Act 1990. They are also carried out under Planning Acts, Dance Halls Act 1935, Gaming and Lotteries Acts, Explosives Act (Fireworks Displays and Gun Licences), Dangerous Substances Act (Filling Stations), and Health Acts (Assemblies for plays and concerts). In 2004, 268

premises were inspected under planning legislation (including 23 for Birr Town Council and 29 for Tullamore Town Council. 128 Fire Safety Certificates were processed, an increase of 3 on last year.

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



First Responder (medical) Training course held at Tullamore Station in 2005

Finance totals

Expenditure for the year amounted to..... €2,736,541
 Income amounted to..... €...276,621
 Income from Fire Safety Certificates€.. 221,960

SERVICE INDICATORS:

<i>Offaly Local Authorities</i>		
E.3	<u>Fire Service</u>	
	Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in full time stations	n/a
	Average time, in minutes, to mobilise fire brigades in part time stations)	5.64
E.4	% of attendances at scenes where first attendance is at scene within 10 minutes	58.60%
	% of attendances at scenes where first attendance is at scene within 20 minutes	36.97%
	% of attendances at scenes where first attendance is at scene after 20 minutes	4.43%
E.5	<i>Fire prevention</i>	

	Total number of fire safety certificate applications received	128
	Total number of fire safety certificate applications processed)	126

Civil Defence Annual Report 2005

Civil Defence in Offaly again had a very busy year in 2005. The various units throughout the county continued to upgrade their First Aid qualifications and successfully sat both Advanced and Intermediate Level Exams. All units have now received their Intermediate Level Certificates and one group of Volunteers were presented with their Advanced First Aid Certificates by Mr Gerry Gervin, Director General of Civil Defence at a function recently. At present there is another group studying for the Advanced First Aid Exam and will take it in early April 2006

This year also brought the issue of Defibrillators to units and Offaly currently have 7 volunteers qualified in the use of this equipment.

Teams from Offaly had great success in the Annual National Exercises and Competitions. The Auxiliary Fire Service team participated in the Firefighting competitions and won the Science and Theory of Firefighting section of the All Ireland Auxiliary Fire Service Competitions, which were held in Virginia Co. Cavan. The Offaly team participated in the National Exercise comprising Rescue, First Aid, Basic Fire Fighting, Welfare, Searching and Map Reading. This year's exercise was held in Waterford and Offaly were runners up in both sections of the competition.

Teams of volunteers continued to participate in various regional and countywide exercises and training days in order to sharpen their skills in preparation for any emergencies likely to occur in the county or region.

Following a growing trend in the county personnel from Offaly participated in the Annual Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes. Carmel McDonald, Mike Hogan, Paul McDonald and Noel Smyth returned again to Lourdes to take part in the Annual Military Pilgrimage. This is a huge commitment on their part and is highly commendable and greatly appreciated. Ms Carmel McDonald received her 10-year medal for continuous overseas service.

Civil Defence provided ambulance cover and logistical support to the various community and sports events throughout the year including Kilcormac Ramblers New Year's Day walk, St Patrick's Day festivities in Tullamore and Kilcormac, Birr Vintage Week, Tullamore Phoenix Festival and Tullamore Agricultural Show, Edenderry Parish Day and Rugby Games and many more smaller events throughout the county. All in all Civil Defence attended at 45 community based events during the year. A particular highlight of our activities was our involvement in the World Sheepdog Trials which were held in Charleville Estate. This was the first time that this event was held in Ireland.

AFS Team 2005



The Offaly AFS team which won the Science and Theory of Firefighting section of the All Ireland Auxiliary Fire Competitions 2005

Back Row L to R Oliver Nolan, Joe Westman, Chris Shortall, Paul McDonald, Ger Sammon, Caroline Cooney.

Front Row L to R Anthony Berry, Liam Handy, Niall Sweeney, Co Manager, Gerry Gervin, Director General Civil Defence, Tony Colville Civil Defence Officer, Denis Canty, Asst Civil Defence Officer, Carmel McDonald AFS Instructor



Members of the Offaly Team in action at the National AFS Competition 2005

CORPORATE SERVICES

Our Goals

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

Support Services

An important function of the Corporate Services Department is the provision of a secretariat service for meetings of the County Council. The Annual Meeting of the Council took place in Áras an Chontae on 20th June, 2005. Councillor Peter Ormond was elected Cathaoirleach and Councillor Gerard Killally elected Leas Cathaoirleach. There are 21 Councillors on Offaly County Council. The Council normally meets on the third Monday of each month, excluding August. In addition an Annual Budget Meeting and An Annual Meeting are held.

Corporate Policy Group (CPG)

- _ Cllr. Peter Ormond Cathaoirleach (Chair).
- _ Cllr. T Feighery, Chairperson - Economic Planning & Development SPC.
- _ Cllr. N Bourke, Chairperson - Roads & Infrastructure SPC.
- _ Cllr. P Clendennen, Chairperson - Environment SPC.
- _ Cllr. J Carroll, Chairperson - Housing, Social & Cultural SPC.

The Corporate Policy Group met on occasions during 2005.

Strategic Policy Committees

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

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

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

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

Economic Development & Planning (11 members): Cllrs. Thomas Feighery, (Chairperson), Dervill Dolan, Barry Cowen, Thomas McKeigue, Johnny Butterfield,

Danny Owens, Noel Cribben, Mr Joe Enright, Mr Sean Loughnane, Mr Dominic Doheny, Mr Dominic Carroll.

Conferences Attended By Members in 2005

Conference	Venue	Date	No of Delegates
Duhallow Conference	Mallow	20/21 Jan	1
Corporate Training for the Public Sector	Galway Bay Hotel	26/27 Jan	4
Wicklow Tourism Seminar	Marriot Hotel, Wicklow	27 Jan	2
Merriman Winter School	Bunratty	28/30 Jan	2
Media Skills for Councillors	Castlebar	29 Jan	1
Mid-West Regional Authority Conference	Ennis	3/4 Feb	3
Local Gov. Planning Service Conference	Dungarvan	4 Feb	1
AMAI Spring Seminar	Letterkenny	11/12 Feb	4
Carlow Tourism Conference	Seven Oaks Hotel	24/25 Feb	1
Colmcille Winter School	Letterkenny	25/27 Feb	1
GCCC Annual Conference	Johnstown House Hotel	3/5 March	10
National Women's Conference	Dublin	7 March	1
Nuclear Hazards Conference	Drogheda	10/11 Mar	2
LAMA 22 nd Annual Conference,	Cork	31/3 – 1/4	7
Cork Co. Co. Mayor's Conf.,	Bantry	14/15 Apr	1
Tipperary Peace Convention,	Excel Centre, Tipperary	15/17 Apr	1
21 st Environment Conference	Carragaline	21/22 Apr	3
Duhallow Conference	Kanturk	21/24 Apr	1
Drogheda Cross Border Conference	Europa Hotel	28/30 Apr	2
BMW Annual Conference	Tullamore Court Hotel	5 May	7
Wesport Experience Conference	Hotel Wesport	19 May	1
IPA SPC Chair Training	Cork	9 June	2
Delivering e-government Locally	Middleton	14 June	3
Investment through People Conference	Carrick on Shannon	16 June	2
Confederation of European Councillors	Mullingar	23 June	3
Future of Food	UCD	23 June	1
Rural Tourism Conference	Tulsk	23/25 June	2
Byrne Perry Summer School	Gorey	24/26 June	1
Dr. Douglas Hyde Conference	Roscommon	15/17 July	3
Local Gov. and the Arts	Letterkenny	26 Aug	1
La Touche Legacy Seminar	Greystones	30/8 – 2/9	1
Combat Poverty Conference	NUI, Dublin	8 Sept	1
AMAI Annual Conference	Shannon	15/17 Sept	3
ICSH Social Housing Conference	Sligo	27/19 Sept	4
Public Order & The Local Authority	Gerystones	3/9-2/10	1
Planning Conference	Killybegs	5/7 Oct	2
Getting a Grip Conference	Killarney	6/7 Sept	2
Association of Irish Regions	Carlow	7 Oct	1
Great Blasket Commemoration	Kerry	7 Oct	1
Confederation of European Councillors	Berlin	12/15 Oct	3
Carlow Chamber of Commerce	Tullow	21 Oct	1
LAMA Winter Seminar	Letterkenny	4/5 Nov	4
Ceifin Conference	Ennis	28/9Nov	2

Community Safety Conference	Dundalk	10 Nov	1
Local Economic Dev. Conference	Limerick	24 Nov	4
Clare Tourist Council	Ennistymon	25/27 Nov	6
Local Gov. Budget Conference	Bunclody	9 Dec	2

PAYMENTS MADE TO MEMBERS IN 2005

NAME	Monthly Allowance	SPC Chairperson's Allowance	Conference Expenses	Representatio nal Payment	Cahirperso n's Allowance	Representing Offaly Abroad	TOTAL
NOEL BOURKE	4835.93	7054.8	4,694.95	15,094.85	0	0	31680.53
MOLLY BUCKLEY	3968.64	0	4,194.44	15,094.85	0	0	23257.93
JOHNNY BUTTERFIELD	3985.23	0	3,682.88	15,094.85	0	0	22762.96
JOHN CARROLL	5059.44	7054.8	4,350.86	15,094.85	0	0	31559.95
PERCY CLENDENNEN	4537.88	7054.8	4,517.15	15,094.85	0	0	31204.68
M. CORCORAN KENNEDY	5059.44	0	4,721.30	15,094.85	0	0	24875.59
BARRY COWEN	3941.82	0	375	15,094.85	0	0	19411.67
DERVILL DOLAN	3941.82	0	1,145.54	15,094.85	12767.91	5302.83	38252.95
EAMON DOOLEY	4537.92	0	4,342.01	15,094.85	0	0	23974.78
THOMAS FEIGHERY	4164.78	7054.8	3,245.73	15,094.85	0	0	29560.16
EDDIE FITZPATRICK	4240.02	0	3,755.01	15,094.85	0	0	23089.88
JOHN FORAN	4819.75	0	1,536.03	15,094.85	0	0	21450.63
MICHAEL FOX	4113.82	0	4,527.27	15,094.85	0	0	23735.94
CONNIE HANNIFFY	4449.62	0	4,083.27	15,094.85	0	0	23627.74
GERARD KILLALLY	4882.08	0	1,551.66	15,094.85	0	0	21528.59
FERGUS McDONNELL	4984.92	0	5,302.72	15,094.85	0	0	25,382.49
TOMMY McKEIGUE	3941.82	0	2,142.00	15,094.85	0	0	21178.67
TONY McLOUGHLIN	5045.4	0	2,020.71	15,094.85	0	0	22160.96
SINEAD MOYLAN RYAN	5087.4	0	4,351.94	15,094.85	0	0	24534.19
PETER ORMOND	5804.16	0	3,062.54	15,094.85	14270.01	3490.17	41721.73
DANNY OWENS	3941.82	0	3,438.64	15,094.85	0	0	22475.31
TOTAL	95343.71	28219.2	71041.65	316991.85	27037.92	8793	547427.33

Freedom of Information

Statistics:

In 2005 under the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 & 2003, the total number of applications were as follows:

- ◆ 21 applications were received by Offaly County Council.
- ◆ 1 application was received by Birr Town Council.
- ◆ There were no applications received by Tullamore Town Council.
- ◆ There were no applications received by Edenderry Town Council.

The Ombudsman

Four complaints were received by the Ombudsman in 2005 in relation to Offaly County Council.

Register of Electors

The Register of Electors was produced on the 1st February and came into force on 15th February 2005.

The total electorate for County Offaly for the 2005/2006 Register of Electors was 54,346 broken down over the local electoral areas as follows:

Birr	11,974
Edenderry	13,754
Ferbane	9,344
Tullamore	19,274
<i>Total on the Register</i>	<i>54,346</i>

Higher Education Grants

In the 2004/2005 academic year the number of Higher Education Grant new awards totalled 125 and a further 262 students qualified for grant renewal.

Expenditure on Higher Education Grants totalled €1,712,405.48 in that period. This money is recoupable from the Department of Education & Science, except for a fixed contribution made by Offaly County Council. The administration of the scheme is a service provided by this Council to students and parents in County Offaly.

County Coroners

The total expenditure in 2005 was €44,670.87 (including salary) in respect of coroners inquests.

Publications

The Corporate Plan 2005 – 2009
Annual Yearbook and Diary 2006

Contribution to Laois Offaly Families for Autism

A contribution of €2,500 was presented to Laois Offaly Families for Autism in lieu of the Council producing a calendar for 2005.



L to R Ray Carroll, Offaly County Council, Oliver Nolan, LOFFA, Dervill Dolan, Cathaoirleach, Offaly County Council, Gerry O'Loughlin, Chairman, LOFFA, Niall Sweeney, Offaly County Manager.



Signing of contract for Birr Civic Offices and Library at Wilmer Road, Birr

L to R – Front Row: Frank Murray, F C Murray & Sons; Niall Sweeney, Offaly County Manager; Dervill Dolan, Cathaoirleach, Offaly County Council; Tony McLoughlin, Cathaoirleach, Birr Town Council. Back Row: L to R Brian Mahon, Council Solicitor; Conoor Finnegan, McCarthy O'Hora Associates; Michael Turley, M J Turley & Associates, Quantity Surveyors Michael Roche, Director of Services, Offaly County Council; Anne Sullivan, Offaly County Council.



Delegation of Local Authority managers from Sweden on a visit to Aras An Chontae in May 2005

Chairman's Charity Ball

The Inaugural Chairman's Charity Ball was held in the Tullamore Court Hotel on 22nd April 2005. Fundraising from the event totalled €38,600. €19,300 was presented to Goal and €19,300 was presented to Offaly Hospice.



L to R Diarmuid O'Neill, Ronan Scully (GOAL), Ray Carroll, Dervill Dolan, Chairman, Niall Sweeney, County Manager, John McCann (Offaly Hospice), Paul Galvin

Human Resources Section

Offaly County Council recognise that our success in providing a high quality service to the community has been built on a loyal, dedicated and committed workforce. The Human Resources section functions include staff recruitment and retention, workforce planning, staff welfare, employee relations, industrial relations, training and development and assistance schemes.

Recruitment

The section oversees the recruitment of employees for Offaly County Council and for the Town Councils of Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore. In 2005, forty four interview boards were set up to interview candidates to fill permanent and temporary vacancies in the authorities. Independent interview boards were selected to recommend the most suitable candidates for employment or promotion in accordance with national regulations.

Recruitment Statistics	
No. of recruitment competitions held in 2005	44
No. of applications received	1475
No. appointed	52

Training

Customer care and service delivery is one of the four principles of Better Local Government and so all training is developed and delivered with this at its core. Training for staff concentrates on:

- Customer Care and Service Delivery
- Job Specific Skills
- Organisational Requirements
- Individual Developments

Offaly County Council's training during 2005 included courses held in-house and courses co-ordinated with organisations such as the Institute of Public Administration, Roscrea Regional Training Centre and FÁS.

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

During 2005 Offaly County Council continued its operation of a Work Placement Scheme for students in schools and colleges with 19 students being given the opportunity to work in various areas of the Offaly local authorities. This scheme benefits students by assisting them in achieving their course needs by gaining relevant work experience.

Performance Management Development Systems

The principle of PMDS is to develop greater inclusion in the process of business planning and develop personal development plans in respect of all staff. It is the means of relating the Corporate Plan to Business Plans and assisting in the delivery of the Councils' services.

The process will move the Council to an open learning style organisation with enhanced service provision for our stakeholders. Two staff members have been trained to introduce the process across the organisation and it is hoped that the system will be implemented in 2006.

Staff Welfare

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

A number of staff policies, e.g. Dignity at Work, Grievance and Disciplinary Policy, have been developed. An Equal Opportunities Policy is also in place which outlines the Council's commitment to treat and develop all its staff equally irrespective of sex, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, colour, race, nationality or membership of the travelling community.

Local Workplace Partnership Committee

Local Workplace Partnership is now fully embedded across the Authority. The primary purpose of Workplace Partnership is to effect ongoing change by consensus and in a non-adversarial way. It is a Management Union Employee forum and is representative of all employees. The Workplace Partnership committee is changing the focus from being project based to dealing with matters of a broader nature. Issues presently being dealt with through the process include Non Domestic Water Metering, relocation to Birr Civic Offices and Agreed Action Plan under Sustaining Progress 2003-2005. Workplace Partnership provides management, unions and employees with a valuable platform for ongoing consultation within Offaly Local Authorities.

Retirement

The following staff retired during 2005; Vincent Hussey, Senior Planner, Gerry Dillon, Partnership Facilitator, John Scully, Clerk of Works, Sanitary Services, Thomas Murphy, General Operative, Birr, John Nestor, General Operative, Tullamore.



Michael Roche, Director of Services, making presentation to Gerry Dillon



Niall Sweeney, County Manager, making presentation to John Scully

Offaly Local Authorities		
SERVICE INDICATORS		
C.1	% of working days lost to sickness absence	3.71%
	% of working days lost to sickness absenc	0.43%
C.2	Expenditure on training and development as a percentage of amount due	5%

Information Systems

In 2005 Offaly Local Authorities Information Systems department progressed a number of significant strategic projects. Among these were the following:-

Broadband Technologies

In 2005 the Tullamore MAN was formally handed over to e-Net under the terms of the Government's National Franchise. Approval was also received from the Department of Communications, marine and Natural Resources to proceed to Detailed Design phase on similar MAN projects in Edenderry, Clara, Banagher and Birr. These projects will be progressed significantly in 2006.

Under the Group Broadband Schemes the success of projects in Ferbane, Rhode and Banagher was greatly assisted by partnership with Offaly Co Council through the provision of high sites and technical expertise via the Council's IS department.

Telecommunications

The Council's wireless broadband network in Tullamore town was completely upgraded to provide 54 mbs connectivity to all locations in the town. This upgrading also allowed for a number of new locations and will greatly facilitate the Council's planned move of its Stores and Machinery Yard operations in 2006.

Voice telecoms services were analysed across all Local Authority sites with a view towards a standardised implementation beginning in 2006 with new systems planned for Birr (New Offices), Edenderry Town Hall and Tullamore Town Council. The council also implemented a Private Corporate Network in partnership with O2.

Geographic Information Systems

e-Mapping services were implemented in the Town Councils of Birr and Tullamore. A plan was also developed for incorporating e-mapping to www.offaly.ie in 2006.

Mobile Computing

Facilities using Citrix technology were implemented to allow remote network connectivity for staff and as backup/contingency for the larger sub offices in the county.

An e-payments service on www.offaly.ie was introduced for Town Council Traffic Fines. This service will be extended to other services in future years.

Application Databases

Offaly Local Authorities were among the first to introduce the national HOME Housing system in the third quarter of 2005.

Internet Services

The council's Internet Team began the process of completely rebuilding the County website www.offaly.ie. This is a major project that will come to fruition in 2006.

Rollout of computerised facilities throughout the Library network was also completed in 2005. Access to the Library catalogue is now available on-line.

Network Development

In a continuous effort to improve its technical infrastructure, the Council's Network Security Team carried out a Security Audit of its facilities in 2005. This audit will provide the foundation for a new Security Policy to be completed in 2006.

Staff Development

In a continuation of its staff development policy two members of the IS team have enrolled on the two year CCNA (Cisco Certified Network Admin.) programme at Athlone IT.

Also the IS department was a Pilot Department for the introduction of PMDS (Performance Management Development System). The organisational rollout of this initiative is being partly managed by a member of the IS staff.

Our Goals

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.

Our Strategies

- Prepare an annual financial budget that reflects our corporate objectives.
- Develop the new Financial Management System and in particular, the concept of accruals accounting.
- Ensure prompt payment to suppliers.
- Promote a value for money culture in the organisation.

Our Services

The expenditure for 2006 for Offaly County Council will be approximately €100million between Revenue and Capital jobs.

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

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

The Department also ensures that statutory and financial accounting principles, which apply to all money paid by or to the Council, are complied with.

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

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

The Main Sections within Finance are:

Revenue

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

Accounts Payable

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

Payroll

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

Fixed Asset Register

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

The Main Reports Produced by Finance are:

The Annual Budget

The Finance Department:

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

The Annual Financial Statement (AFS)

The AFS is produced annually and brings together all the revenue-related income and expenditure for the year, resulting in a surplus or deficit for the year. The Balance Sheet shows the assets and liabilities of the County Council at the end of 2005. A report on Income and Expenditure on Capital jobs is also prepared. Accounts are presented to members at Council Meeting and audited by the Local Government Auditor.

Income and Expenditure Account Statement 2005 – Unaudited				
	Gross		Net	Net
	Expenditure	Income	Expenditure	Expenditure
	€	€	€	€
Expenditure by Programme Group	2005	2005	2005	2004
Housing & Building	5,407,640	4,503,087	904,553	1,307,011
Roads Transportation & Safety	15,236,325	10,848,939	4,387,386	4,615,630
Water & Sewerage	6,481,106	1,520,658	4,960,448	4,400,744
Development Incentives & Controls	2,954,451	1,450,398	1,504,054	1,561,012
Environmental Protection	6,040,276	4,754,587	1,285,689	(276,762)
Recreation & Amenity	2,886,614	1,146,156	1,740,458	1,678,081
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	4,329,372	3,745,476	583,896	505,871
Miscellaneous	5,984,720	3,628,246	2,356,475	2,471,884
Total Expenditure\Income	49,320,506	31,597,546		
Net Cost of Programmes to be funded			17,722,959	16,263,472
From County Rates & Local Government Fund				
Rates			4,600,257	4,778,559
Local Government Fund			14,180,044	12,287,077
Charges to Town Councils			1,463,505	1,359,069
Surplus\ (Deficit) for Year before Transfers			2,520,847	2,161,234
Transfers to/from Reserves			(2,531,184)	(2,149,401)
Overall Surplus/(Deficit) for Year			(10,337)	11,832
General Reserve @ 1st January 2004			(7,479)	(19,311)
General Reserve @ 31st December 2004			(17,815)	(7,479)

Balance Sheet at 31st December 2005 - Unaudited

	2005	2004
	€	€
Fixed Assets		
Operational	176,836,017	169,088,520
Infrastructural	1,234,268,371	1,241,349,326
Community	51,000	41,000
Non Operational	-	-
	1,411,155,388	1,410,478,847
Work in Progress and Preliminary Expenses	58,114,821	30,847,784
Long Term Debtors	25,566,911	27,304,373
Current Assets		
Stocks	258,218	224,522
Trade Debtors and Prepayments	8,025,253	7,591,812
Bank Investments	19,244,405	15,199,748
Cash at Bank	4,863,080	3,823,854
Cash on Hand	29,470	25,613
Urban Account	-	-
	32,420,426	26,865,549
Current Liabilities (Amounts Falling due within one year)		
Creditors & Accruals	7,415,547	6,529,713
Urban Account	51,055	51,054
Finance Leases	7,612	5,901
	7,474,214	6,586,667
Net Current Assets / Liabilities	24,946,212	20,278,882
Creditors (Amounts falling due after More than one year)		
Loans Payable	70,067,198	54,283,847
Finance Leases	(3,932)	6,469
Refundable deposits	740,778	710,352
	70,804,044	55,000,668
Net Assets/(Liabilities)	1,448,979,288	1,433,909,218
Financed By:		
Capitalisation Account	1,411,155,388	1,410,478,847
Income WIP	62,336,773	28,002,541
Specific Revenue Reserve	840	840
General Revenue Reserve	(17,815)	(7,479)
Other Reserves	(24,495,898)	(4,565,531)
Total Reserves	1,448,979,288	1,433,909,218

Summary of Capital Expenditure and Income - Unaudited		
	2005	2004
	€	€
EXPENDITURE (Net of Internal Transfers)*		
Housing & Building	15,503,466	12,739,630
Roads Transportation & Safety	4,272,421	3,200,293
Water & Sewerage	16,178,604	10,562,265
Development Incentives & Controls	445,625	130,984
Environmental Protection	4,849,077	2,285,033
Recreation & Amenity	40,590	65,496
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	-	-
Miscellaneous	5,565,920	808,200
	46,855,702	29,791,902
INCOME (Net of Internal Transfers)*		
Housing & Building	13,290,131	11,157,492
Roads Transportation & Safety	3,810,408	2,921,060
Water & Sewerage	15,934,607	10,154,510
Development Incentives & Controls	4,847,622	4,552,039
Environmental Protection	10,225,048	2,610,198
Recreation & Amenity	171,578	5,695
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	-	-
Miscellaneous	3,533,578	4,618,970
	51,812,973	36,019,965
Surplus\ (Deficit) for year	4,957,270	6,228,062
Balance (Debit)\ Credit @ 1 January	17,654,906	11,426,844
Balance (Debit)\ Credit @ 31 December	22,612,177	17,654,906
* Excludes internal transfers, includes transfers to and from Revenue account		

Motor Taxation Office

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

Motor taxation receipts for 2005 were €1.37 million, an increase of 2% on 2004.

During 2005 a total of 54,597 vehicle licences and 8,309 driving licences were issued. Other transactions, including change of ownership for pre-1993 vehicles, certificates of roadworthiness, vehicle registration certificates and processing vehicle licensing arrears totalled 11,500. The Section also produces information to Gardai and other Local Authorities, e.g. penalty points, traffic fines, parking fines, etc.

Vehicle Licences	Number Issued	Value
Half Year	9,891	€2,054,726
Quarterly	24,609	€2,552,054
Annual	19,910	€2,200,954
Duplicates	187	€1,122

Driving Licences	Number Issued	Value
Three Year Licence	827	€3,345
Ten Year Licence	2,246	€6,150
Provisional Licence 1 Year	815	€1,985
Provisional Licence 2 Year	3,635	€4,165
One Year Licence	76	€5
Duplicates	710	€3,550

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

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

An online vehicle taxation service is now available – 10.51% of motor tax transactions in Offaly were dealt with online in 2005.

Transaction costs per transaction = €5.87.

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

Offaly Local Authorities		
SERVICE INDICATORS		
M: Motor Taxation		
M.1	Number at counter	55,050
	post	21,812
	online/phone	9,027
	% of motor tax transactions which are dealt with over the counter	64.09%
	% of motor tax transactions which are dealt with by post	25.40%
	% of motor tax transactions which are dealt with in other ways (e.g. online, by telephone)	10.51%
M.2	Number of postal applications which are dealt with on the same day (i.e. disc/driver licence issued) from receipt of the application	8,102
	% of overall postal applications which are dealt with on the same day (i.e. disc/driver licence issued) from receipt of the application	36.98%
	Number of postal applications which are dealt with on the third day or less (i.e. disc/driver licence issued) from receipt of the application	9631
	% of overall postal applications which are dealt with on the third day or less (i.e. disc/driver licence issued) from receipt of the application	43.96%
	Number of postal applications which are dealt with on the fifth day or less (i.e. disc/driver licence issued) from receipt of the application	2927
	% of overall postal applications which are dealt with on the fifth day or less (i.e. disc/driver licence issued) from receipt of the application	13.36%
	Number of postal applications which are dealt with over 5 days (i.e. disc/driver licence issued) from receipt of the application	1251
	% of overall postal applications which are dealt with over 5 days (i.e. disc/driver licence issued) from receipt of the application)	5.70%
M.3	Average number of public opening hours per week	29hrs
Rev: Revenue Collection		
Rev.1	Housing Rent	
	Amount collected at year end as a % of amount due	86.33%
	% of arrears 4-6 weeks old	5.21%
	% of arrears 6-12 weeks old	9.32%
	% of arrears more than 12 weeks old	77.67%
Rev.2	Housing Loans	
	Amount collected at year end as a % of amount due	84.62%
	% of arrears 1 month old	6.96%
	% of arrears 2-3 months old	4.37%
	% of arrears more than 3 months old	82.56%
Rev.3	Amount of commercial rates collected at year end as a % of amount due	92.64%
Rev.4	% of households paying refuse charges at year end	0.00%
Rev.5	Amount of non domestic water charges collected at year end as a % of amount due	56.79%

TULLAMORE TOWN COUNCIL

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

Main features during 2005

Civic receptions were held for the following:

To Honour

- Tullamore AFC
- Marian Place Residents Association (50th Anniversary)

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

Section 85 Local Government Act, 2001 resolution unanimously agreed.

Swimming Pool.

Offaly County Council approved an allocation of €500,000 for Tullamore Swimming Pool in 2006 subject to a review of the Development Contribution Scheme.

Land at Collins Lane.

It was agreed that Tullamore Town Council should borrow €4,000,000 from the Housing Finance Agency for the purposes of providing housing at Collins Lane, Tullamore.

Spollanstown Bridge

Part 8 Planning & Development Act 2001 - Spollanstown Traffic Calming & Bridge Widening Scheme.

Social Housing.

Part 8 Planning & Development Act 2000 - Social Housing at Puttaghaun.

Naming of New O'Molloy Street Housing Scheme.

Mr David Minton, Community Liaison Officer met with the residents of the new houses at O'Molloy Street and as a result of the meeting the residents requested that the area be called "**Meadow Close**". This was unanimously agreed by the Town Council.

Temporary Halting Site:

Major refurbishment work carried out at the Temporary Halting Site in Kilcruttin.

New Housing Scheme at Chancery Lane/Clonminch:

Work commenced on the New Housing Scheme at Chancery Lane/Clonminch.

Disability Audit.

At the request of Tullamore Town Council, Mr. Emmett Grogan and Ms. Carol Murnell carried out a Disability Audit of Tullamore Town.

Town Park.

Part 8 Planning procedure renovation of Town Park.

Skateboard Park

Funding in the amount of €72,000 was received from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Heritage Centre

The Council continued its support for the Heritage Centre by providing extra funding in the amount of €37,000 towards the capital costs of development.

Hackney Licences/Taxi

Tullamore Town Council has a total of 70 Hackneys and 12 taxis operating in the town. In 2004 Tullamore Town Council approved a taxi metre area in the town.

Planning

Tullamore Town Council granted eighty-six planning permissions, Thirteen were refused and there were thirteen appeals to An Bord Pleanala

Skateboard Park

Tullamore Town Council acquired funding in the amount of €72,000 for a skateboard park facility from the Department. The facility will be constructed in the Town Park in 2005.

Elected Members:

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

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

Representatives to Various Bodies:

VOCATIONAL

EDUCATIONAL COMMITTEE:

Councillor Sean O'Brien
Cllr Laurence Byrne
Cllr Sinead Dooley

A.M.A.I.:

Councillor Tommy McKeigue
Councillor Sean O'Brien

IRISH PUBLIC BODIES

MUTUAL INSURANCES LTD.:

Councillor Molly Buckley

BOARD OF

TULLAMORE DEW HERITAGE CENTRE:

Councillor Sinead Dooley
Councillor Tommy McKeigue

HOUSING COMMITTEE:

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

CONFERENCES COMMITTEE:

Councillor Paddy Rowland
Councillor Laurence Byrne
Councillor Richard Egan
Councillor Joseph Coughlan

OFFALY STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE

Cllr Paddy Rowland
Cllr Joseph Coughlan

Meetings of Tullamore Town Council held during 2005

Draft Budget Meeting	10 January 2005
Statutory Budget Meeting	13 January 2005
January Monthly Meeting	13 January 2005
February Monthly Meeting	10 February 2005
March Monthly Meeting	10 March 2005
Meeting 'in committee' re Swimming Pool	23 March 2005
April Monthly Meeting	14 April 2005
Special Committee Meeting with HSE and Iarnrod Eireann	03 May 2005
May Monthly Meeting	12 May 2005
Special Committee Meeting re Taxis and Arts Group	07 June 2005
June Monthly Meeting	09 June 2005
Annual Meeting June	09 June 2005
July Monthly Meeting	14 July 2005
September Monthly Meeting	08 September 2005
Special Committee Meeting re Draft Parking Laws, Tullamore Swimming Pool and Skateboard Park	03 October 2005
October Monthly Meeting	13 October 2005
November Monthly Meeting	10 November 2005
December Monthly Meeting	08 December 2005

The Town Council was represented at the following Conferences:

Heritage Development in Irish Towns
(NESF) National Economic Social Form
LAMA, Cork
Housing Conference – Limerick
AMAI – Shannon
ICSH (Sustainable Housing) – Sligo
William Carleton Summer School - Tyrone
Benedict Kiely - Omagh
General Council of County Council - Enfield
Tourism Conference - Clare
IPB Conference - Blessington
AMAI - Letterkenny
LAMA – Letterkenny
Pride of Place – Westport
Tom Johnson School – Kells
Suicide Prevention
Annual Clonmel Conference
Colmcille Winter School – Donegal

BIRR TOWN COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE BHAILE BHIORRA

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

Members of the Council are: Councillor John Carroll, The Ring, Birr
(Chairman 2005/2006)
Councillor Tony McLoughlin, Main Street, Birr
Councillor Michael Campbell, Woodland Park, Birr
Councillor Sean Doorley, 3 Meadowville, Birr.
Councillor Seamus Fanneran, Whiteford, Birr
Councillor Ann Hynes-Spain, 3 Bengal Lodge, Birr.
Councillor Michael Loughnane, 13 Meadowville, Birr
Councillor Denis Sheils, Ely Place, Birr
Councillor Noel Russell, 30 Pound Street, Birr

Monthly Meetings: Monthly meeting of the Council are held at 8.00pm on the second Monday of each month.

Representatives to Various Bodies:

Association of Municipal Authorities of Ireland:
Councillors N. Russell and S. Fanneran

Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurance Ltd:
Councillor M Campbell.

Offaly Vocational Education Committee:
Sr. Anne, McAuley Drive, Birr and
Councillor J. Carroll

Oxmantown Hall Committee:
Councillors A. Spain and S. Doorley

Birr Town Council/Chamber of Commerce:
Clr. J. Carroll, Cathaoirleach; Clr. S. Doorley
and Clr. M. Loughnane

Birr Gardai/Birr Town Council Sub Committee
Clr. M. Campbell and Clr. T. McLoughlin.

Environmental Policy SPC:
Clr. Michael Loughnane

Offaly County Council Conference Committee:
Clr. John Carroll

Offaly County Enterprise Board:
Clr. John Carroll

Offaly County Development Board:
Clr. Tony McLoughlin

Senior Staff: Director of Services: Michael Roche
Town Engineer: Uinsinn Finn
Town Clerk: Edel O' Brien

SERVICES PROVIDED

Housing and Building:

As at 31 December 2005 there are 176 rented houses in Birr together with a six bay residential caravan park at Croghan Road, Birr. Forty-six of these are Special Category (for Elderly or Disabled Persons).

Road Transportation and Safety:

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

Development Incentives and Controls:

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

The Council received valid planning applications during 2005.

Environmental Protection:

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

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

Recreation and Amenity:

The Council maintains a considerable area of open space in Birr.

Welfare:

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

Details of Expenditure on promotion of interests of local community.

Birr Town Council sponsored the following special events/initiatives in 2005:

After Schools Club	€500
Christmas Lights	€1,270
Ely O'Carroll	€1,000
St. Brendan's National School	€1,000
Birr Swimming Pool	€4,000
Heritage Towns of Ireland	€1500

Civic Receptions/Special Events

In December 2005, Birr Town Council held a civic reception in recognition of the achievements of the 2004 and 2005 under 12s Community Games Rugby Team on winning the All Ireland Community Games finals.

EDENDERRY TOWN COUNCIL

Town Councillors:

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

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

Edenderry Area Manager/Director of Services - Sean Murray

Town Clerk/Meetings Administrator - Deirdre Hunt
Valerie Waters (Acting)

Senior Executive Engineer/Town Engineer - Uinsinn Finn

Representatives of Various Bodies:

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

Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances - Councillor Jim Murrin

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

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

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

During the year the Councillors were actively involved in the promotion of all aspects of life in Edenderry. To this end, meetings were convened with different bodies, such as IDA, Midland Health Board (Health Service Executive) , Midlands Region Enterprise Ireland and Offaly County Enterprise Board.

During the course of 2004, the members, with the assistance of Offaly County Council, worked tirelessly for the betterment of the town and encouraged the enhancement of the façade of Edenderry in general.

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