

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL



BUDGET 2017

SUPPLEMENTARY DIRECTORATE REPORTS

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES REPORTS

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OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL
BUDGET 2017

FRANK HESLIN
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES

REPORTS

Roads; Health and Safety Report

General

The 2016 Initial Roads Budget was as follows:

• Transport Infrastructure Ireland	€ 619,761
• Department of Transport Tourism & Sport	€6,254,894
• Offaly County Council (Own Resources)	€1,642,129
• Total	€8,516,784

The 2015 Initial Roads Budget was €8,951,905.

The Offaly County Council allocation above does not include an allocation of €839,500 for Public Lighting and a central management charge (support services) of €2,938,702

Additional funding was received as follows during the year: -

• Transport Infrastructure Ireland	€3,310,854.00
• Dept Transport, Tourism & Sport (DTTS)	€2,012,300.00
• (Flooding €2,000,000 + €12,300 Public Lighting)	
• Department of Environment (Flooding)	€ 427,067.08
• Total	€5,750,221.08

Projects undertaken and completed during 2016 are detailed under the following Grant Categories: -

National Road Grants 2016

- 2016 National Roads (N52, N62 & N80 = 104kms)
- Ordinary Maintenance (€871,354)
- Pavement Overlay/Reconstruction Schemes - €2,625,200
- N52 Roundabouts on Tullamore By Pass (€201,200)
- N62 Cloghan/Ferbane (€1,970,000)
- N52 Kilcormac (€454,000)
- N80 Killeigh Surface Water (€156,500)
- N52 & N62 Bridge Improvements (Managed by TII)
- N52 Public Lighting Refurbishment Project (€105,161) - National road upgrade (160 LEDs)

Non National Road Grants 2016

2016 Non National Roads (Regional 390kms +County 1640 kms = 2030 kms)

- Ordinary Maintenance (€2.29M)
- Surface Dressing (€871,000)
- Pavement Recycling/Overlays (€2.942M)

- Low Cost Safety Schemes – 6 No.(€190,000)
- Bridge Strengthening Works – 13 No (€200,000)
- Non-National Road upgrades (300 LEDs) throughout Offaly (own resources)
- Town Allocations [Tullamore, Birr & Edenderry](€940,190)
- 30 kph speed limit introduced into all public housing estates
- Introduced “Driver Feedback Signs” at a number of locations in all 3 Municipal Districts.
- Birr Active Travel project substantially completed
- Inventory of all public lights €45,000 (part funded by TII, SEAI and own resources)

Health and Safety 2016

Health and Safety objectives were set out at the beginning of the year with the management team after reviewing 2015 both from a local and national level.

The key objectives were;

1. To continue to enhance the safe working environment for all employees of Offaly County Council and members of the public.
2. To ensure that **communciation** between all levels of staff within the organisation relating to health and safety are improved.
3. To continue to work closely with external groups such as the Health and Safety Authroity and consider any improvements which are suggested.
 - Every day staff in Offaly County Council are reminded of the risks they face and how to elimnate or reduce this risk.
 - Nationally, during 2016, 26 fatalities occurred (A reduction of 12 on the same period for 2015).

Industry	Number of Fatalities in 2016
Agriculture	12
Fishing and aquaculture	2
Mining and quarrying	1
Manufacturing	1
Water supply	1
Construction	3 (Down from 11 in 2015)
Repair of motor vehicles	2
Transportation and storage	1
Support service activities	

Information as of the 23rd of September from the H.S.A. website

- One of the main targets for 2016 was to enhance communication with staff on accidents/incidents and good practices from other local authorities and private

companies. This was achieved through monthly safety discussions and through refresher health and safety training. This will continue in 2017.

- All work needs to be treated safely and a suitable Safe system of Work agreed and communicated to all staff prior to commencing the works.
- There was an overall reduction in Offaly County Councils accident ratio in 2016 (As of the 23rd of September 2016) when compared to the same period in 2015.
- Senior management continued to provide leadership in order to raise the profile of safety within Offaly County Council. A key focus in 2016 involved safety discussion with all staff. Guest speakers who have had serious injury in the workplace were invited into give their experience on how workplace injuries have changed their lives and their families.
- The management team and senior management group carried out a number of inspections during the year and this will remain a key focus for 2017.
- A health and safety review will be completed in full in early 2017 and this will be used to set out the targets and areas for improvements in 2017.

Road Safety 2016:

- Continuous Weather Alerts circulated to all Offaly County Council staff and Councillors
- Update County Councils website in relation to weather alerts and road safety initiatives
- Road safety Video/Message installed in Ferbane, Edenderry, Birr and Banagher Credit Unions.
- Liaising with other Credit Unions regarding Road Safety Video/Message
- Circulation of road safety Posters to all National schools in the County
- Collaboration with the Road Safety Authority in "Check it Fits Service" – Child Car Seats in various locations
- Organised Drive for Life Programme for Ard Scoil Chiarain Naofa, Clara, St. Mary's Secondary School, Edenderry and Banagher College, Banagher
- Presentation of Junior School Warden Certificates to 2 schools – Portarlinton NS and Ferbane NS
- Liaising with St. Brendan's N.S. in relation to the introduction of a Junior School Warden Scheme
- Arranging Junior School Warden training in consultation with An Garda Síochána
- Liaised with Municipal Districts concerning road safety at various schools

- Attendance at the following national schools together with the Road Safety Promotional Officer in relation to road safety:
- Gort na Mona, Blueball- Kinnity NS, Kinnity, Cloneyhurke NS, Portarlinton- Killeigh NS, Killeigh Tullamore Educate Together, Tullamore

Plan for 2016

- It is expected that the roads budget for 2017 will be similar to 2016 and will also include budget allocations for Birr, Edenderry and Tullamore towns.
- Complete the review adopt and implement the 2017 Countywide Speed Limit By Laws
- Investigate alternative sources of funds including lobbying the TII and DTTS for additional funds
- Continue upgrading the N62 between Cloghan and Birr
- Progress road improvement schemes on the N52 and N62 including resurfacing on the N62 in Ferbane and junction improvements in Cloghan.
- Carry out structural/strengthening improvements on 12 bridges on the Non National Road network.
- Progress safety schemes on National (Boolinarig & Doon Cross) and Non National roads
- Carry out all the RIG (3 year plan) schemes and surface dressing schemes allocated by the DTTS for 2017.
- Maintain sufficient funding levels in relation to the maintenance/energy costs associated with the public lighting network.
- County Road Maintenance (Own Resources) allocation is insufficient and needs be increased in order to provide a satisfactory level of service
- Promote the CIR scheme as a very useful funding stream for the improvement of the NNR network
- Aim to achieve greater efficiencies in our winter maintenance activities
- Continue to improve on last year's health and safety record
- Road Maintenance/Improvement and Public Lighting allocations for Tullamore and Birr towns will be included in the 2017 roadworks programme.
- Progress Smarter Travel initiatives subject to funding being made available from the DTTS

Conclusion

It is expected that the roads budget for 2017 will be similar to 2016 and will also include budget allocations for Birr, Tullamore and Edenderry towns.

Fire Services Report

Activities in 2016

Offaly County Council Fire & Rescue Service provided an effective and professional response to emergencies on a 24/7, 365 days basis throughout 2016. Offaly County Council Fire & Rescue Service respond to an average of 660 incidents and 700 station callouts throughout the county. The Section 26 Fire and Emergency plan formed the basis for the Fire Service work program 2015. The 2016 budget of €2.9 million maintained the Fire Service.

Significant resources have been made available for training within the Fire Service with an expected spend of €130,000 for training alone in 2016. In addition the Councils' commitment to training for fire fighters, and research into the latest equipment and technology ensures that our fire crews are best equipped to respond quickly, safely and effectively to the full range of emergency incidents that we attend.

The training centre in Tullamore was utilised for training internally and by other Local Authorities and generated an income of €100,000.

In addition to the above Offaly County Council Fire Service is responsible for the assessment of all Fire Safety Certificate, Dangerous Substances, and Disabled Access Certificate applications, give advice on planning referrals, licence applications, fire safety inspections of public premises and fire safety promotion. Offaly Fire service is actively involved in the Community Smoke Alarm Project and also delivered the Fire Safety Schools program to all primary schools in the county.

The Building Control function of Offaly County Council is integrated into the fire service. This includes the inspection and monitoring of new works to monitor for compliance with all the requirements of the Building Regulations.

Both the Local and the Regional Major Emergency Plan were maintained, reviewed and revised by the Major Emergency Development Committee, the Regional Working Group and the Regional Steering Group. Offaly County Council chairs the regional Steering Group for Major Emergency Management.

Civil Defence provides an emergency response capability and supported the community and events throughout 2016. Over 50 Civil Defence duties were carried out during 2016.

Ferbane Fire Station

Approval was received in 2016 from the Department Of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government to proceed with the construction of Ferbane Fire Station. Offaly County Council is in the process of awarding the tender for the construction of the new fire station to be located on the site of the Ferbane Area Office, Gallen. It is hoped to start construction by the end of 2016 with an expected completion date of mid 2017. The approval is subject to a maximum all-in contribution from the Department of €1,100,000.

€90,000 was made available from the Department for the purchase and introduction of new equipment into the service in 2016, including:

- The purchase of Thermal Imaging Camera's
- The purchase of a high pressure fogging system
- The replacement of existing high pressure air bags
- The purchase of a 4WD vehicle.

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2017

The 2017 Estimate demonstrates Offaly County Council commitment to maintaining the level of funding required to implement the Draft section 26 plan so that an effective and professional response to fires and other emergencies is provided. Offaly Fire Service will continue to explore and implement cost efficiencies across all aspects of the service.

CORPORATE SERVICES & ARTS SERVICE

Offaly County Council's Corporate Services and Arts Section work to realise the Council's mission statement, i.e., *'To make Offaly the best place to Live, Work, Visit and Invest'*. We do this through fostering a spirit of Civic Leadership and seeking to provide quality customer services within the resources available. As far as practicable, all services are delivered to ensure that they enhance the quality of life of those who live, work, invest in, and visit, Offaly.

CORPORATE SERVICES

MEETINGS ADMINISTRATION

Corporate Services staff supports the efficient and effective administration of meetings of the County Council, Corporate Policy Group, Management Team and Joint Policing Committee. A meeting with members of the Oireachtas was held in September 2016. A Civic Welcome was held on the occasion of the visit to Offaly County Council of the Honorable Mr. Kevin O'Malley, United States' Ambassador to Ireland on Tuesday 20 September 2016.

2016 COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE

The Offaly 2016 Commemoration Committee, comprising of elected members and staff, coordinated a number of events throughout the year, including hosting 9 exhibitions in Áras an Chontae. The Committee worked closely with the Historical Societies in Offaly, National and Secondary Schools, local communities and the relatives of the eleven men from Offaly who were known to have fought in the Easter 1916 Rising. The flagship event, ***Offaly 100 – Together We Remember***, Ceremony of Commemoration followed by a candlelit walk from the Courthouse to The Church of the Assumption where a concert was held was attended by over 2,000 people.

The programme was supported by funding provided by Offaly County Council; Irish Public Bodies Insurance; Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs; Department of Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government.

REGISTER OF ELECTORS

A Supplementary Register of Electors was created for the Dáil Election, held on 26th February 2016.

ETHICS REGISTER

The annual Ethics Register was published and made available in accordance with the legislation.

CUSTOMER CARE ACTION PLAN

The Council supported its Customer Charter during 2016.

OMBUDSMAN, DATA PROTECTION, FREEDOM OF INFORMATION & ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

All queries and requests were dealt with in accordance with the relevant information and within the given timeframes during 2016.

SERVICE INDICATORS

Corporate Services coordinated the return to the Local Government Management Services Board of our annual return of data on the Service Indicators for 2015.

LEISURE AND RECREATION

Corporate Services staff represent Offaly County Council on the management committee and executive committee of Offaly Sports Partnership. Staff work on the boards of Tullamore Community Arts Centre Ltd and Birr Theatre and Arts Centre Ltd to progress the delivery of arts infrastructure across the county.

SWIMMING POOLS

Corporate Services administer funding for swimming pools.

Clara Swimming Pool, following its refurbishment works, re-opened to the public in mid 2016. A grant from the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, in the sum of €784,000, was secured for the refurbishment works at Clara Swimming Pool.

A meeting was held with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in Killarney to consider refurbishment works at the Edenderry Swimming Pool in summer 2016.

STUDENT GRANTS

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), the new single awarding authority for all new student grant applications was introduced in 2012. All new students and students changing courses now apply to SUSI. Corporate Services staff continue to administer the Student Grant Scheme to those students who are continuing their studies from the previous year. No Student Grant renewals were received for the 2016/2017 academic year.

TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Staff meetings were held on a regular basis throughout the year.

CANTEEN AND CRÈCHE FACILITIES

The canteen and crèche services continued to be supported by staff during the year.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND STORAGE

Corporate Services encourage the use of electronic communication while ensuring sufficient and accurate paper records are kept to meet our obligations.

CORPORATE SERVICES PRIORITIES FOR 2017:

Where resources provide Corporate Services will:

- Administer meetings of the County Council, Corporate Policy Group, Management Team and Joint Policing Committee.
- Maintain the Register of Electors.
- Support the embedding of the Municipal Districts in Offaly.
- Support Swimming Pool Committees.
- Coordinate the Land and Property Register for the county.
- Implementation of priority actions from our Access Plan in compliance with the Disability Act 2005.
- Hold regular staff meetings.
- Coordination the Authority's submission of the Service Indicators in accordance with the national timeframe.
- Explore cost efficiencies that may be achieved with regard to advertising, stationery and other services.

OFFALY ARTS SERVICE

TULLAMORE COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRE

Tullamore Community Arts Centre Limited continues their work towards realising the Tullamore Community Arts Centre. The former Kilroy's store, High Street, Tullamore was purchased in 2016 and tenders were sought to procure a Design Team for the Tullamore Arts Centre. *Our Arts Centre* was used during Culture Night 2016 and for Foundation 16 projects. It is envisaged that the centre, when developed, will bring a new culture and community hub to the centre of Tullamore and provide an increase in the town's economic activity and development.

MUSIC GENERATION

Our investment into Music Generation Offaly Westmeath (MGOW) (€12,500 per annum plus support in kind) yields a significant annual investment in performance music education for the region. Over its initial 3 years (2013 - 2015) MGOW has invested close to €1.2m in creating new routes for children and young people to access performance music education. Currently over 5,000 children have increased access to performance music education through a range of interventions. The return on our investment is also significant in terms of the 27 musicians who have benefitted from new employment opportunities across the region. In 2016 MGOW's governance structures were strengthened prior to entering the next development phase which involves funding from the Department of Education. *Singfest*, held over 3 days in Athlone AIT in June 2016, was considered by all as a fantastic success.

FILMOFFALY

Offaly County Council continues to develop FilmOffaly, the Offaly Film Commission, in association with the Irish Film Board. FilmOffaly promotes the county as a resource for increased film production using the FilmOffaly Award, the Vendor Discount Scheme and as a location service for incoming productions.

In 2016, following the allocation of €22,500 from the REDz pilot scheme, Red Dog were awarded a contract to develop a new media marketing campaign. An advertisement, seeking to capture the potential that Offaly has to offer as a film location to both domestic and international productions was widely advertised across the sector and via social media.

PUBLIC ART / PER CENT FOR ART SCHEME

Acclaimed photographer Veronica Nicholson was commissioned in 2016 to document the county. *Observing Offaly*, a publication of photos taken throughout Offaly in 2016, launches in

November 2016 and an exhibition will be held in Áras an Chontae during November and December 2016.

FESTIVALS

Offaly has a high concentration of unique festivals with the capacity for significant cultural profile and inward tourism and investment into Offaly, in particular festivals such as Castlepalooza, OFFLine Film Festival, Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival. The Arts Service continues to advise festivals on their programming and audience development capacity. Information, advice, promotion and funding was given to Birr Vintage Week and Arts Festival, Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival, Fleadh Cheoil, Foundation 16, *That Beats Banagher*, Culture Night and OFFline Film Festival.

FUNDING OF CULTURAL FACILITIES

In 2016 grant aid was provided to Birr Theatre and Arts Centre to provide cultural and quality of life experiences to local audiences and is significant in attracting an ongoing cultural profile of the county.

In 2016 the Council, in partnership with Bord na Mona, continued to explore the development of Lough Boora Parklands and the sustainability of the Sculpture in the Parklands. A children's education pamphlet was developed.

CULTURE NIGHT

In 2016, Culture Night expanded to 36 free events across the county, including many heritage sites and community venues such as the Clara Big Visitor Centre, Birr, Charleville, and Clonony Castles, Edenderry Youth Cafe with over 2,890 people attending/happening upon events across the county.

ARTS ACTS GRANTS

These funding schemes promote and support community, voluntary and professional activity and achievement in the arts by building the capacity of individuals and groups to achieve their highest potential. In 2016, 36 grants were awarded to various groups and bodies.

Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival

The festival, a partnership project between Offaly County Council and Birr Theatre and Arts Centre, has continued to develop its programme and increased audience participation. In 2016

it was hosted in Birr, Clara and Edenderry, reaching a large number of young people and providing employment for local performers and artists.

Offaly Youth Theatre (OYT)

OYT with chapters in Tullamore, Birr and Edenderry allow teenagers an important outlet of expression while providing employment for artists.

Mini Movies

The youth film making programme in partnership with OFFline Film Festival has seen 500 children make and screen their own mini stop motion animations at the annual film festival. In 2016 Shinrone NS, Kinnitty NS and St Brendan's Community School worked with Filmmaker Terence White to develop their mini movies which were screened in Birr Theatre and Arts Centre during the OFFLine Film Festival.

Arts and Health:

Through our support of Anam Beo (Offaly's Arts, Health and Wellbeing Programme) in partnership with the Dublin Mid Leinster HSE, quality art experiences are developed with those in long term health care in Offaly's care centre providing employment for 5 artists. In 2016 Anam Beo held an exhibition, *100 Years 100 Faces* in Our Arts Centre.

MIDLAND ARTS AND CULTURE MAGAZINE

The Arts Office collaborates with Laois, Westmeath and Longford Arts Offices to create a greater midland cultural identity through the twice yearly production of the Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine.

PR - SOCIAL MEDIA

The Arts Service has effectively broadened its audience and demographic through the use of Facebook pages for Offaly Arts, FilmOffaly, Hullabaloo Children's Arts Festival and Music Generation with over 2,500 new people engaging with the arts locally.

ARTS SERVICE PRIORITIES FOR 2017:

Where resources provide the Arts Service will:

- Further develop FilmOffaly through partnership, building with locally and nationally bodies, to achieve an increased international profile.

- Lead out on the Music Generation Offaly/Westmeath regional performance music education programme
- Coordinate the promotion of the cultural activity of the county through online resources, local and national media.
- Actively work with Tullamore Community Arts Centre Limited to progress the delivery, management and financial structures of an Arts Centre for Tullamore.
- Facilitate Offaly Local Authorities Public Art Working Group to maximise funding and manage a number of commissions in the arts through innovative use of the *Per Cent for Art Scheme* across the county.
- Provide advice and funding, where grant schemes are available, to community and professional arts activity in Offaly.
- Provide advice, support and where possible funding to cultural infrastructure projects.
- Provide an effective advice and information service to the public on ways to access and participate in the arts.
- Manage an exhibition / arts programme for the atrium of Áras an Chontae.

Library Service Report

Introduction

Progress on the implementation of ***“Opportunities for all”*** the national strategy for Public Libraries 2013-2017 continued in 2016. Key achievements include:

- Introduction of free services: free membership and free reservations.
- Introduction of Online Services: eBooks, eMagazines, eAudiobooks, eBusiness, eLearning, eNewspapers and eLanguages.
- My Open Library initiative shortlisted for Chamber Ireland’s Excellence in Local Government Award 2016.
- DHPCLG Capital Funding approval of €105,000 for My Open Library in Edenderry and Ferbane.
- DHPCLG Capital Funding approval of €1.7 for a new Community Library in Edenderry.
- New services promoting Business Enterprise and Employment Services to entrepreneurs, the underemployed and unemployed.
- Offaly 1916: Provision of a full programme of events including the publication of ***“Offaly and the Rising: an educational Resource”*** for primary and secondary schools launched and distributed to all schools in Offaly.

Performance

Overall the trend in increased use of the library service continues. A continuous review of library services activities including opening hours, staffing levels and evaluation of services based on financial constraints remains in place. The number of loans continues to decrease due to the reduction in funding over the last 7 years. It is expected this will increase again as funding towards book and media is restored. The use of social media and online services by our users has increased by over 40% in 2016.

Performance *	2015	Sep-15	Sep-16	% difference
Members	14557	10918	11966	9.60%
Visits	251815	188861	208325	10.31%
Wifi	127854	95891	102373	6.76%
Internet	69545	52159	56224	7.80%
Loans	256457	192343	189238	-1.61%
Website visits	95171	71378	101171	41.74%
My Open Library visits	15308	10396	19830	90.74%

*Preliminary figures only

My Open Library

The community has embraced and appreciates the My Open Library initiative in Banagher and Tullamore which is now operational for almost 2 years. People use it for borrowing and returning items, using internet PCs, Wi-Fi on their own devices, browsing, printing, photocopying, individual study or community activities and meetings. Since the solution was implemented, 1700 people have registered to use My Open Library.

Prior to My Open Library, Banagher was open 14 hours a week and Tullamore for 47 hours a week. Both libraries are now accessible to the public 98 hours a week. So far this year in Banagher, there is over 6000 visits and almost 8000 items have been borrowed. 57% of all visits and 70% of loans are during My Open Library hours. In Tullamore library, which is open 6 days a week with staff, the My Open Library usage is 13% of all visits.

In June 2016, Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, Mr. Damien English announced the launch of a call for proposals from Local Authorities to implement the 'My Open Library' initiative. The Minister described the initiative and said "it means that the public and communities will have access to this invaluable local resource when they need and want to use it most. This will strengthen the prominence of the library in the local community and position it as a focal point for community engagement". Offaly County Council has received approval of capital funding from DHPCLG of €105,000 towards the implementation of "My Open Library" initiative in Ferbane and Edenderry Library.

Offaly 2016

Offaly & the Rising: an educational resource was launched in February 2016 as part of the Offaly 2016 Centenary Programme and was delivered to all Primary and Secondary schools in Offaly. The educational resource is available in hardcopy and online format and includes:

- Bibliography of Offaly Library Resources
- Power Point presentation of the 1916 rising in Offaly
- Video format presentation of 1916 rising in Offaly
- Teachers Notes



Library Management System (LMS)

A new National LMS system is currently being implemented in public libraries. Offaly Library service is in phase 3 and the system will go live in January 2017.

This new system will provide the following benefits for customers:

- One **single library membership card** to access all Public libraries in the Country.
- Users will have access to library collections, resources and digital content of all public libraries in one search.
- Virtual library accessible to all members.



Secondary Schools in Offaly participated in the “1916 A Poem for Ireland National Poetry Competition” organised locally by Offaly Library Service. Each school selected a winning entry and a judging panel selected the winning County entry to go forward to the National competition. The County winner for his poem “The Street” was Samuel Denehan, a second year student at St Mary’s Secondary School, Edenderry.

Libraries supporting Business and Employment

Offaly Library service participated in a national pilot project to determine how libraries can



support enterprise and employment and strengthen links with the LEOs, Intreo services and other relevant bodies, and to avoid any duplication of services.

In conjunction with Offaly Local Development Company, Offaly Libraries have recently launched a Library eLearners group in Edenderry Library. The service supports people wishing to complete an online

training course using the new elearning resource: Universal Class service. This service will soon be launching in Tullamore Library.

Libraries supporting Digital Literacy

Classes and workshops on basic ICT skills, searching, the web, and social media were delivered across the Library network for the many people who want to improve their digital literacy to enable them engage more fully with e government services.

Local Studies and Archives

Local Studies 2016: Dr. Philip Conway hosted a series of talks as part of the Library 1916 programme including

- The 1916 Rising Commemorations in Offaly in 1966.
- The Offaly Republican Roll of Honour, Exploring IRA fatalities in South Offaly, 1918-1930
- “A great deed was done last night...” The role of Seamus O’ Brennan in “The Tullamore Affray” and the 1916 Rising.
- “Hated; Despised; Degraded...”? The Fate of Michael Foley, Edenderry's 1916 Rising Veteran.
- Rhode’s connections to the 1916 Rising and its legacy in North Offaly.

Archives 2016: Offaly Library Service is continuing to prioritise the development of a County Archive service working in collaboration with Offaly History. There remains a considerable work program to be completed. The following projects were funded by the Heritage Council and Offaly County Council during 2016.

- Completion of the cleaning and cataloguing of the large 90-box collection entitled ‘Records of Robert Perry & Co’ (P68).
- Creation of a profile for Offaly County Library on IAR (www.iar.ie) so that future catalogues can be uploaded expediently. This will raise the profile of the repository nationally and will attract new researchers.
- Creation of reference lists of (a) local government archives and (b) private collections available on the library’s local studies webpages.
- Complete accession of a large tranche of the records from the former Birr UDC.
- Commencement a systematic overhaul of existing catalogues of collections that are related to the Decade of Commemorations period (1913-1923)

Heritage Week

Offaly Libraries in conjunction with the Heritage Officer ran a number of different events for Heritage week. All 8 libraries played host to Jude Stynes with “Hands on History” where guests were able to see weapons and uniforms from the 1916 period.



Libraries supporting Literacy

61 schools from across the county participated in the Read Anything, Anytime, Anywhere Literacy Initiative. Collectively the children of Offaly read for 3,841,761 minutes or 7 and 1/3 years.



The Summer Stars Reading programme was launched by Minister of State for Housing and Urban Renewal, Mr. Damien English during a visit to Tullamore Library on Tuesday 21st June, 2016.



Tullamore Library introduced a collection of books for adults and children in the Lithuanian language in 2016.

Digital Resources

Access to online resources is now available from our website www.offaly.ie/libraries. This is a new national service and includes the following online services available free to members

	<p>Learn a language online Access to 60 foreign language courses available plus English courses for speakers of other languages</p>
	<p>Universal Class offers access to over 500 Online Continuing Education Courses.</p>
	<p>Online access to over 100 popular magazines</p>
	<p>Online access to current news and historical newspapers from ProQuest</p>
<p>eBooks and eAudiobooks</p> 	<p>Online access to eBooks & eAudiobooks.</p> <p>Library users can borrow 5 eBooks and 5 EAudiobooks at any one time</p>
	<p>Online access to comics & graphic novels</p>

Cultural Programme

Culture night took place on Friday 16th September. Tullamore library hosted the Le Chéile choir for a rooftop performance and Edenderry Library hosted Storymaking with Paul Timoney. Our regular events include book clubs, storytelling activities, author visits and exhibitions.

Events included

- Science Week

- Positive Ageing Week
- Culture Night
- Heritage Week
- Birr Vintage Week
- Hullabaloo children's Art Programme
- Author Visits e.g. Geraldine O'Neill
- Book Launches
- Christmas Programme

Priorities for 2017

1. Publish a new Library Development Plan for Offaly Library Service.
2. Progress plans to develop a new library in Edenderry included in the national library capital funding programme.
3. Extend My Open Library project to Clara and Birr Libraries.
4. Commence a Technology Replacement Programme for all libraries.
5. Implementation of the national shared Library Management System including the migration of data to the new Library Management System.
6. Implement a programme to deliver an Age Friendly Library service in conjunction with Offaly Local Authority Age Friendly programme.
7. Continue to focus on literacy and provision of a literacy programme.
 - Implement the Right to Read literacy action plan
 - Promote and improve services to children and young people supporting parents, teachers and carers in literacy, numeracy and communications skills
 - Work with local stakeholders, PPN and LCDC to deliver literacy programmes actions.
8. Evaluate the Libraries Supporting Business, Enterprise and Employment pilot project and implement agreed actions.
9. Develop partnerships with other organisations providing local history and archives to ensure coordinated and enhanced access to collections of local history and archives for end users.
 - Work with Offaly History towards the development of a County Archive Service.
10. Work with communities to provide quality cultural services and programming.
11. Continuous review of library services activities to include opening hours, staffing levels and evaluation of services based on budgetary cuts and non filling of staff vacancies.

Human Resources Department

Key Objectives and Priorities

Recruit, retain and support a competent staff complement to deliver organisational priorities and act as a driver for organisational management development and change

Legislative Context

There is a raft of both national and EU legislation impacting on the day to day work of the department both from an operational and financial perspective including: -

- Health, Safety & Welfare at work
- Payment of Wages
- Working Time Directive
- Equality
- Disability
- Data Protection

Key Activities & Expenditure

- Recruitment
- Employee welfare and supports
- Industrial Relations
- Staff training and development
- Development and implementation of workplace policies
- Implementing requirements of Public Service Agreements
- Performance Management Development System (PMDS)

Offaly Co. Council employs almost 400 full-time staff. Almost 90% of the budget allocation for the HR department is non-discretionary and assigned to salaries and statutory subscriptions and levies to agencies such as the IPA and LGMA and maintenance and licensing contracts for IT system.

The expenditure is broadly broken down into three main spending areas:-

- Staff Recruitment
- Safety, Health and Welfare of Staff
- Staff Training and Development

There has been a significant reduction in the 'discretionary' spending element since 2009 which has impacted significantly on staff training and development in particular which is now confined primarily to statutory health and safety and other mandatory or essential training. On a positive note, some relaxation in public sector recruitment during 2016 has resulted in a modest staff recruitment campaign particularly focused on key front line services such as housing, a trend expected to continue in 2017.

Key Priorities 2017

- Targeted recruitment based on organisational needs and priorities and robust business cases;
- Implementation of measures contained in the Lansdowne Road Public Service Agreement which provides for some pay restoration to staff in 2017;
- Driving organisational change and development in line with national and local policies;
- Preparation of new workforce plans and succession planning taking into consideration the dynamically changing environment within which the local authority sector works, the current age profile of staff and the number of pending retirements within the next 5 years;
- Management of industrial relations issues particularly in the area of water services;
- Continue to invest in the training and personal development of our staff to ensure effective implementation of the on-going local government reform process;

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL
BUDGET 2017

SEAN MURRAY
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES

REPORTS

Housing Report

Offaly County Council has a multi-faceted response to meet the demand for Social Housing including direct construction, acquisition (including turnkeys), partnership with Approved Housing Bodies on construction on their own lands and council lands, leasing of units from private landlords and approved housing bodies, public private partnership and the administration of the Housing Assistance Payment.

Rebuilding Ireland - Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness

Rebuilding Ireland, the Government's Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness was launched in July 2016 and addresses Homelessness, accelerating social housing, building more homes, improving the rental sector and utilising existing housing. The Action Plan builds on the targets and objectives set in the previous Government's Social Housing Strategy launched in November 2014.

2016 Activities to the end of quarter 3 2016

Social Housing Assessment 2016

The 2016 Social Housing Assessment was completed from July to September. Over 1,700 households placed on the housing waiting list prior to October 2015 were reassessed to confirm their eligibility for social housing support. Assessments were also completed for 370 new applicant households in the first 3 quarters of 2016 to determine their eligibility for inclusion on the list. 1,403 households in Offaly were on the social housing list at the end of September 2016.

In the first 3 quarters of the year 73 households were allocated local authority or leasing tenancies. 256 applicants have established tenancies under the Housing Assistance Payment since June 2015 and an additional estimated 800 applicants on the social housing waiting list prior to the assessment were in receipt of rent supplement.

Housing Assistance Payment

Offaly has administered the Housing Assistance Payment since June 2015. Two new staff posts were established in the Housing Department in June 2016 to support its administration. 256 households on the housing waiting list were supported through HAP by mid October 2016. A further estimated 800 households on the housing waiting list are in receipt of Rent Supplement from the Department of Social Protection. These Rent Supplement tenancies will transfer to the local authority Housing Assistance Payment beginning in quarter 4 2016. These tenancies

will be maintained by the local authority in future. Inspections by OCC of properties rented via the HAP programme began in 2016.

House Acquisitions

Approval was obtained from the Department in April to acquire and upgrade 36 houses in 2016 in accordance with its terms and conditions. Bids had been accepted on 32 houses across the county in areas of social housing need by the end of September with the acquisition programme continuing. Acquisition and adaptation of housing units is 100% funded through the Department's Capital Programme subject to unit cost ceilings.

Expressions of interest were sought from private developers to deliver completed housing developments for turnkey acquisition by Offaly County Council. Significant interest was expressed in this call. Developers continue to engage with the Council as they work through planning and financial requirements for suitable developments.

Returning Vacant Stock to productive use (Pre-lets)

Pre-let works have been completed on 41 council owned homes to date in 2016 with a further 11 units on hand. Part funding has been received for 14 of these units from the Department. A submission for part funding of a further 27 units is with the Department. The remaining 11 units will be completed in quarter 4 subject to funding.

Offaly County Council's pre-let budget in 2016 was €100,000. Continued part funding by the Department for the return of vacant houses to productive use is not guaranteed in 2017. If discontinued, the full cost of pre-let works must come from the Council's own resources (pre-let budget). The council's ability to return vacant units to use quickly and to a high standard will be determined by the financial resources available.

Disabled Persons Grants – Local Authority stock

It is anticipated that adaptation works will be complete on 14 council owned homes in 2016 to meet the needs of tenants with disabilities through the Disabled Persons grant Scheme. The 2016 budget for Disabled Person Grants was €265,682 of which 90% (€239,114) was funded by the Department.

Energy Efficiency Programme

Energy Efficiency works will be completed on almost 300 council owned homes in 2016 supported by the European Regional Development Fund. Offaly County Council continued with an ambitious programme of insulation retrofitting this year. This Programme benefits those at risk of fuel poverty and is making a significant contribution to Ireland's carbon emissions

reduction targets and energy reduction targets for 2020. To date Offaly has been involved with Phase 1 of the programme which is focused on providing attic/roof insulation and the less intrusive cavity wall insulation in relevant properties. The revised budget advised to Offaly County Council for this programme in September 2016 was €540,000.

Maintenance of Local Authority Housing Stock

There were over 2,700 requests for repairs and maintenance by local authority tenants in the first 3 quarters of 2016. Each request is logged on the i-house software system and forwarded to the relevant Clerk of Works for follow up. The total budget for housing repairs and maintenance in 2016 was €389k.

Direct Construction Programme

Offaly County Council is committed to achieving our targets as identified under the Social Housing Strategy 2015-2017. In order to fast track the Housing Capital Programme, a dedicated **Capital Works Housing Design Team** has been established since May 2016 .

The primary aim of this design team will be the delivery of Offaly County Council's targets under the Social Housing Strategy 2015-2017 and beyond which includes new house Construction, Acquisitions, Voids, Capital Assistance Schemes and Part Vs etc. in partnership with the Approved Housing Bodies under the guidance of the DHPCLG.

Detailed costings and designs have been submitted to the Department for approval to advance to the next stage of planning and tender for construction respectively for projects at Chancery Lane Tullamore (18 units) and Blundell Wood Edenderry (33 units). Capital Appraisals have been prepared for a number of other potential construction projects.

Construction in Partnership with Approved Housing Bodies

Expressions of interest were sought from Approved Housing Bodies in delivering construction projects on Council owned lands. Partner AHBs were selected for four sites, one each in Clara and Edenderry and two in Tullamore. Draft plans for these sites have the potential to deliver c.130 housing units subject to planning and Departmental approval (4 stages).

Leasing programme – Private Landlords and approved Housing Bodies

Expressions of interest were sought from private landlords seeking to lease units via the local authority. The response to this call was poor.

Through the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) part-funding was provided by the Department for the acquisition of 20 units in Edenderry by an Approved housing body. Offaly County Council has 100% nomination rights to these units. Approved Housing bodies are seeking to acquire / construct units which will be part-funded via CALF and to which the Local Authority will have nomination rights in order to increase social housing supply.

Capital Assistance Scheme

The Capital Assistance Scheme provides funding to meet the identified housing needs of people with disabilities, homeless, older persons and returning emigrants in partnership with Approved Housing Bodies. In 2016 approval was received to progress to Planning for construction of 6 units for older persons/people with disabilities at Scurragh Birr. Submissions for funding were made to the Department for the construction of 4 units for Homeless families at Mountbolous. Feasibility studies were completed for future CAS projects at Portarlinton and Tullamore. Approval was obtained for the acquisition and adaptation of 3 no. homes for the service users of Approved Housing Bodies working with people with disabilities.

Housing Grants for Private Home Owners – people with disabilities

Approximately 115 private home owners will be supported to adapt their homes to meet the needs of family members with a disability in 2016. The available budget of over €1m (20% funded by Council own resources) will be fully allocated by year end.

A review of the administration of Private Housing Grants was conducted by the Housing Strategic Policy Committee in 2016 with the objective of meeting a greater number of priority needs and achieving best use of public money from the resources available.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

The Government issued its revised Tenant Incremental Purchase Scheme in late 2015. The scheme allows local authority housing tenants (subject to some exceptions and conditions) to acquire the homes they rent at a discounted price. In Offaly 76 applications were received and processed in 2016. Of these 21 were refused based on the terms and conditions of the scheme. The remainder have been progressed to offer stage. It is anticipated that the majority of the eligible applicants may apply for Local Authority Housing Loans in late 2016.

Housing Rents

The Housing Department currently maintains and assesses 2,100+ social housing rent accounts. This involves assessing the level of rent payable regularly as required by tenants or other agencies with whom the tenants are engaged. Rents payable are set by regulation. Staff also

monitor the level of rent arrears on accounts and pursue arrears both informally and formally in accordance with statutory provisions. The debt collection function associated with housing rents and loans will transfer from the Housing Department to the Central Revenue Collection function in Q4 2016.

Homelessness

There were over 100 new Homeless presentations in the first 3 quarters of 2016. Notice to quit by private rented landlords, unaffordable private rents and the lack of private rented supply were the main reasons for presentation. All emergency accommodation beds in the county and the region were continually fully occupied in 2016. At the end of September there were 22 adults and 26 children from the Offaly Housing list in emergency accommodation. The budget for Homeless Services for 2016 was €193,000. Expenditure on Homeless Services at the end of August was €185,000 due to the significant demand for emergency accommodation. Some additional funding contribution towards emergency accommodation was received from Government in October 2016.

Traveller Accommodation

A mid term review has sought submissions on the 2014-2016 Traveller Accommodation Plan. Submissions are to be considered and the review completed by the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee by year end. A review of Fire Safety on Traveller Halting Sites was completed by the County Fire Service in 2016 and a national report issued. Funding was received for the upgrade of some Halting Site units. Detailed designs and costs for a 4 unit Group Housing Scheme at Chancery Lane are with the Department awaiting approval to go to planning.

Anti-Social Behaviour Complaints

There were 88 complaints of anti-social behaviour received up to the end of Q3 2016. Complaints were dealt with in accordance with the Anti-social Behaviour policy as revised by the Housing SPC in November 2015 and adopted by Council in January 2016. This review of policy incorporated the provisions of Part 2 of the Housing Act 2014.

Policy Development and Review 2016

Council adopted revised policies on anti-social behaviour and rent arrears in January 2016. The Strategic Policy Committee reviewed the Estate Management Policy, Scheme of Letting Priorities and the administration of Private Housing Grants. Offaly County Council made a submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness in April 2016.

Priorities for 2016

- Increasing social housing supply via all available means.
- Progression of construction projects at Blundell, Edenderry and Chancery Tullamore to final stage approval and construction start.
- Appraisal and progression of new direct build proposals, sourcing of acquisitions, and return of voids.
- Partnership with Approved Housing Bodies and private landlords to increase social housing supply.
- Review provision of Homeless Services and the objective of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan to end homeless provision through B&Bs and Hotels by mid 2017.
- Review and record status of Local Authority Housing stock for planning and maintenance purposes.
- Seek to maximise the resources available to improve stock via programmes such as energy efficiency, voids, DPGs and Traveller Accommodation.
- Transfer of c.800 Rent Allowance tenancies to the Housing Assistance Payment in 2016 and future administration of same.
- Administration and management of the Tenant Purchase Scheme for Local Authority Social Housing tenants.
- Completion of a further rent review for all rent accounts.
- Capacity building and support for Local Authority Residents' Associations.
- Implement a programme of review and revision of Local Authority tenancy issues.
- On-going review of the structure, efficiency and effectiveness of Offaly County Council's Housing Service. Complete and support the transfer of all debt collection functions from Housing to Central Revenue Collection.

Water Services Report

Irish Water Service Level Agreement (SLA)

The Council is continuing to deliver Water Services in accordance with the SLA with Irish Water and the Annual Service Plan for 2016.

Work is currently underway to design a Water Industry Operating Framework for Local Authorities and Irish Water working in collaboration. The Water Industry Operating Framework (WIOF) will put in place an industry structure to operate efficiently, effectively, responsively and cohesively under the SLA agreement.

Water Services are 100% funded by Irish Water who are now the Statutory Authority for water services and all major decisions around funding of services will be approved by Irish Water. The Local Authority remains the Water Services Authority in connection with Group Schemes, Small Private Supplies (SPS) and domestic wastewater treatment systems (septic tanks).

The delivery of Water Services under the SLA, although challenging, is an opportunity to retain a level of water services activity within Local Government and to influence water services investment and policy in the future.

Drinking Water Supply

The 2015 EPA Drinking Water Report is not yet published so official compliance ratings are not available for the 2015 sampling period. The Offaly compliance rate calculated for 2015 (based on compliance data sent to IW) is 99.86% Microbiological Parameter compliance, 98.96% Chemical Compliance and 100% Indicator Parameter Compliance. This may vary slightly in the final 2015 EPA report.

The most recent EPA Drinking Water Report (2014) shows that Offaly had a 95.4% microbiological compliance rate in 2014 and a 100% Chemical Parameter Compliance rate. Offaly is one of only 9 Local Authorities that currently does not have a Water Supply scheme on the EPA Remedial Action list.

Watermain rehabilitation projects in Edenderry and Kilcormac commenced in 2016 will further assist in reducing Unaccounted For Water. Irish Water are now measuring UFW in terms of absolute quantities. Based on the trend to date, it is expected that UFW will in the order of 10,000m³/day, down from 10,826 m³/day in 2015.

Wastewater

There are 14 Wastewater Treatment Plants in Offaly with Discharge Licences serving agglomerations with populations greater than 500. Meeting the stringent limit values on these licences is challenging but considerable progress was made regarding same in 2016.

Full secondary treatment is now provided in all public sewerage schemes in Offaly with a significant improvement in quality standards compliance being achieved as a result.

The Birr Wastewater Treatment Plant was upgraded in 2016 with Fine Bubble Diffuse Air installed to treat existing flows to the Plant and provide capacity for future development in Birr.

Water Services Capital Schemes

The Irish Water Capital Investment Plan 2014 – 2016 identifies new Capital project priorities in Offaly. It is envisaged that greater emphasis will be placed on completing low cost small scale projects through the Minor Programmes and Suppressed Capital funding mechanisms which will facilitate the upkeep and improvement of existing schemes. This approach will be beneficial to our county given the large number of small schemes.

A watermain rehabilitation contract in Edenderry and Kilcormac commenced in March and is due for completion by year end.

The following Schemes are on the Capital Investment Plan 2014 – 2016

Scheme Name	Contract Name	Current Status
Watermain Rehabilitation		
Offaly Water Conservation Stage 3 Watermain Rehabilitation Project Phase 1	Tullamore North & South	Complete
	Birr Town	Complete
	Edenderry & Kilcormac	Under construction
	Tullamore Town	Complete
Capital Investment Plan 2014 – 2016		
Tullamore Water Supply Scheme	Water Treatment Plant Upgrade (Clonaslee)	Planning Permission Notification of Decision received on proposal to upgrade the Plant. Contract documents being prepared for Design and Build Project.
	Development of Sources	Pump Testing to take place at Ardan and Clonaslee boreholes with a view towards putting them into production
	New Water Treatment Plant and Supplementary Reservoir Arden	Preliminary Design complete. Planning application by year end.
	Network	Watermain Rehabilitation Complete Minor Works Programme Marian Place/O Molloy Street complete.
Birr Water Supply Scheme	Water Treatment Plant Upgrade	Planning Permission received. Alternative Design being considered. Tender documents to follow.
Tullamore Sewerage Scheme (Network)	Drainage Area Plan	Review of Network and CSOs complete. Consultant appointed. Design commenced. CCTV survey ongoing.

In 2017, we will continue to engage with IW on prioritising infra-structure improvements in Offaly.

There is a rigorous health & safety inspection and management regime in place across all water services infra-structure and this is driving an ongoing programme of Significant Health and Safety Improvement Works. There is also a significant investment in plant replacement and process optimisation through a minor works programme.

Rural Water Programme

Subsidies

A total of €410,593 was paid in 2016 to 16 Group Water Schemes for GWS Subsidies. In August 2016 Circular L5/16 notified LA's that the amount of Subsidy payable towards the operating costs of Group Water Schemes, which was significantly reduced from 1/1/2015, will be fully restored to GWS to coincide with the 9 month period commencing 1 July 2016 when public domestic water charges are suspended.

Rural Water Programme (RWP) 2016 Capital Works

The Offaly RWP submission was forwarded to the Department of the Environment on in January 2016. An interim allocation of €203,760 was received from the Department on 5th May 2016. This equates to 50% of total RWP grant expenditure in Offaly in 2015. This funding allocation was approved by the RWMC on the 12th May 2016 for the following schemes:

Name of GWS	Measure	Allocation €
16 GWS - Water Sampling Kiosks	Water Quality Works	16,000
Ballyboy	Water Quality Works	8,000
Ballykilleen GWS	Water Quality Works	15,000
Bracknagh GWS	Water Conservation/Upgrade	41,660
Clareen GWS	Water Quality Works	71,100
Clonfinlough GWS	Water Quality Works	7,000
Killeigh GWS	Water Quality Works	45,000
Total		€203,760

Circular L6/16 was received from the Department on 30 August 2016. It confirmed the final allocation of funding in 2016 of **€204,150** (interim allocation plus €390). The Rural Water Monitoring Committee wrote to the Department to express disappointment at the relatively low level of funding for Offaly.

A separate funding application was made to the Department in early May 2016 to enable the amalgamation of Aghancon GWS (34 houses) with Clareen GWS (305 houses). This submission was assessed by the Department and approval has been given as a pilot project in 2016 (though the amount of funding is not stated).

Well Grants

Under this scheme, if a residential property is more than 7 years old and not connected to either a public or group scheme, it may be eligible for a grant, (subject to some conditions).

The grant is subject to a maximum of 2,031.58 euro (or 75% of cost of the work, whichever is the lesser) and must be used for the provision of a new water supply or the upgrading of an existing one. The number of well grants paid by Municipal District in 2016 were as follows:

No. of Well Grants Paid by Municipal District	2016
Birr Municipal District	4
Tullamore Municipal District	1
Edenderry Municipal District	1
Total Grants Paid	€11,241

Environment

National Waste Collection Permit Office (NWCPO)

There are currently over 2,200 active Waste Collection Permits on the NWCPO register.

The NWCPO reviewed all household waste collection permits in 2016 to implement the Pay By Weight Regulations and ensure all household collectors were authorised appropriately and had measures in place to implement Pay By Weight charging. The regulations ensure that all collectors have the means to inform customers of what their charges would be in a Pay By weight regime compared with their current charging mechanism. The actual charging on a Pay By Weight Basis has been deferred pending review in 2017.

The NWCPO was formally approved in March 2015 to develop a system for the management of Waste Facility Permit and Certificate of Registration data. This system includes both a national register of waste facilities and an annual return system for waste facility permit and certificate of registration data. In 2016, the Annual Return System was implemented and the Register established.

Waste Management

The contract to operate the three Civic Amenity Sites and the waste transfer station at Derryclure was retendered in 2016. Due to the very substantial reduction in the value of waste and recycled material over the last few years, along with the requirement to introduce Pay By Weight at CA sites, there was a very substantial increase in the cost of the contract. Following negotiations, the facilities are being operated on a short term basis by the current service provider, and the contract will be retendered when there is more certainty in the waste market.

Derryclure Landfill

The Council continues to operate a waste acceptance facility at the site, where waste from domestic customers and local businesses is accepted and transported off site for reprocessing. The aftercare costs of the landfill continue to be a financial burden on the Council.

Recycling Facilities

There are currently 43 bring banks in the County for glass, aluminium & steel cans recycling on both private and public sites. We are continuing to expand our textile bank infrastructure in order to provide additional services to the people of our county.

We continue to operate three Civic Amenity Facilities (CAF) in Birr, Derryclure and Edenderry. These accept a wide range of materials for recycling and complement our existing Bring Bank facilities. Charges apply for all waste brought to these facilities, with the exception of electrical items, glass packaging and batteries.

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

Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021

The Waste Management Planning regional structure was changed to three regions in line with the 2012 Government Policy document “ A Resource Opportunity- Waste Management Policy in Ireland”. Offaly is in the Eastern/Midlands Region, as defined under “Putting People First”. The new Eastern Midlands Regional Waste Management Plan 2015-2021 was launched on the 14th May 2015. Offaly County Council staff work with our Regional colleagues to implement the policies of the plan.

Waste Enforcement

We continue to investigate all illegal waste activities and instigate legal proceedings as appropriate with a significant number of successful prosecutions. We inspected and audited the operations of Waste Collector Permit holders and Waste Facility Permit Holders in the functional area including vehicles and premises.

2016 - Environmental Pollution Complaints (October 2016)							
	Total instigated by public	Total instigated by LA	No. closed	% Closed	No. of cases not finalized at 31/12/16	No investigation warranted	Investigation finalised in 2016
Litter cases	558	0	497	89.07	61	0	497
Air	32	0	16	50	16	0	16
Noise	33	0	16	48.48	17	0	16
Water	23	0	14	60.87	9	0	14
Waste pollution	132	0	87	65.91	45	0	87
Total	778	0	630	81	148	0	630

Timescale	Fines	Prosecutions	Convictions
To date in 2016	4	3	Nil

Green Schools Awareness Programme

Offaly County Council continues to support this environmental initiative and has achieved great progress in this regard.

Offaly County Council continues to support the Green Schools Programme by frequent visits to the schools, facilitating free workshops to the schools, arranging the annual teacher training seminar as well as making a financial contribution to the schools for their environmental projects.

Protection of Natural waters

Water Framework Directive:

The EU Water Framework Directive 2000 seeks to protect and improve our natural waters, including rivers, lakes, groundwater, coastal water and transitional waters. The Water Framework Directive objectives are implemented through River Basin Management Plans and Programmes of Measures

Offaly is affiliated to three River Basin Districts (RBDs); namely the Shannon International River Basin District, the Eastern River Basin District and the South Eastern River Basin District. We continue to implement an extensive operational monitoring programme of the rivers and groundwater within the county.

A new Water Framework Directive Office – the Local Authority Waters and Communities Office has been established to facilitate a coordinated regional approach.

We will continue to investigate activities and facilities, such as agriculture, septic tanks and commercial and industrial discharges to surface waters, within the catchment area of designated rivers with less than good status in conjunction with this new Water Framework Directive Office

Protection of Groundwater:

Staff from the Environment Section implements the revised Code of Practice for the assessment of onsite waste water treatment systems for single houses (new developments).

We continue to carry out investigations in Zone of Contributions of Public Water Supply boreholes based on the perceived risk from agricultural, domestic, commercial and industrial activities to the groundwater quality.

Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems

Staff from the Environment Section implements the EPA Code of Practice 2009 for the assessment of onsite waste water treatment systems for single houses (new developments).

We continue to carry out investigations in Zone of Contributions of Public Water Supply boreholes based on the perceived risk from agricultural, domestic, commercial and industrial activities to the groundwater quality.

Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems

We implemented the Domestic Wastewater Treatment Systems inspection programme in 2016, in accordance with EPA requirements. A total of 16 systems are to be inspected before the end of the year. Grants, subject to certain criteria, are available to households to carry out remedial works recommended following inspections.

Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Studies (CFRAM)

Work by the OPW is continuing nationally on the CFRAM studies and there is a high degree of consultation with Local Authorities. Offaly is affiliated to three CFRAM's; namely the Shannon, Eastern and South Eastern.

There are 8 Areas of Further Assessment within Offaly with varying proposals from flood forecasting and public awareness to individual property resilience and construction of new flood defense walls.

There have been a number of public consultation days within the County in 2016 to seek public input and submissions on these draft maps. The Public Consultation Period & Submission by the Public will be complete by the end of 2016.

The OPW made a presentation to the elected members at the September meeting. A submission on behalf of the members was subsequently made to the OPW. Among the items in the submission was the concern that Banagher was not an Area For Further Assessment (AFA) and that the Shannon system should be managed by a single authority.

Following the public consultation process the draft Plans will be finalised taking on board the comments received and will be then sent to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for approval. If approved they will then be sent to the Local Authorities who may adopt them.

The Government is providing €430 million for flood risk management measures as part of the Government's overall Capital Investment Plan 2016 — 2021. The enhanced investment programme will enable the OPW in collaboration with the relevant Local Authorities, to begin the process of preparation and planning for the structural works and schemes that are expected to be recommended under the CFRAM Plans.

Offaly County Council made an application to the OPW for funding for a flood defence scheme in Portavolla, Banagher.

Climate Change and Energy Awareness

Climate Change & Energy awareness continue to be key area where we are required to show leadership in both promoting public awareness and in changing mind sets towards energy management. Offaly County Council continues to work in conjunction with the Midland Energy Agency in an effort to achieve the objectives as set out in the 2020 targets.

Following the commencement of the Climate Action & Low Carbon Development Act 2015, a team has been formed to develop a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Offaly County. The development of the strategy will be led by the planning and environment sections of OCC. Training and briefing of staff is commencing at the end of 2016.

Burial Grounds

A capacity survey of all Council owned burial grounds in Offaly has been completed and was presented to the Environment & Water Services SPC on the 29th September 2016. The survey has identified 4 burial grounds with capacity issues which will require development works of varying degrees in the coming years. The burial grounds involved are Clara, Clonmacnoise,

Cloncrane and Kilreaghan. Resources will need to be allocated in the coming years to fund the necessary works.

Animal Control and Welfare

Stray Animal Control Service

Our Veterinary Section manages its Dog Control service in accordance with the Control of Dogs Act, 1986. In line with procurement requirements the Control of Dogs and Dog Warden service was tendered in October 2014 and a contract awarded for the years 2015 - 2017.

Control of Dogs	
No. of Dog Licenses sold to date in 2016	1,844
No. of Dog Licenses sold in 2015	2,612
On the Spot Fines issued in 2015	15
No. Stray Dogs in Dog Pound 2015	610
No. of Dog Breeding Establishments registered in 2015	8

Control of Horses

Under the Control of Horses Act 1996, all local authorities are responsible for the control of horses in their area including the collection of stray horses on public land. A total of 164 horses were seized by the Local Authority in 2014 and 101 were seized in 2015. A total of 41 horses were seized in the period Q1-Q3 2016, indicating that the downward trend in horse seizures is continuing.

Control of Horses	
Year	No. Seized
2010	14
2011	59
2012	50
2013	60
2014	164
2015	101
To September 2016	41

Food Safety

Our Veterinary Department is responsible for carrying out functions in relation to Food Protection and Disease Control. It implements the terms and conditions of a 3 year service contract which has been agreed between the Council and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and which runs from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2019. The contract covers the official controls on food safety carried out by the Council.

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL
BUDGET 2017

DECLAN KIRRANE
DIRECTOR OF SERVICES

REPORTS

Planning & Development

Development Management:

Offaly County Council administers the planning function for the entire county. The number of planning applications within the County increased during 2016, from 375 in 2015 to an estimated 420 at year end. 17 applications to extend the appropriate period (planning permission) were received to end September 2016. Pre-planning and in particular counter queries have risen sharply during 2016, indicating further likely increases in construction activity in 2017.

Since 2009, the Planning Department has been carrying out 'on the spot' validations at the public counter to ensure that when an application is accepted, all documentation is in order. This helps to keep invalid applications to a minimum while also assisting in the processing of valid applications. It is a continual aim to maintain this service to the public.

The Planning Department is also continuing with its scanning project, which allows for current and historical files to be viewed over the internet. This has proved important in terms of compliance with Access to Information on the Environment Regulations.

In addition to the above mentioned, the other main areas of focus for Development Management in 2016 were as follows:

1. Housing: The level of pre-planning for housing developments has increased markedly in 2016. It is expected that these will lead to planning applications during 2017.
2. Unfinished Housing Developments & Taking in Charge Applications
3. The Planning Section in conjunction with the Housing, Roads, Water Services and Environment sections continues to implement the DECLG's Managing and Resolving Unfinished Estates Guidelines. The latest Housing Survey, published on 16th December 2015 by the Minister for Housing and Planning has 11 Unfinished Housing Developments listed in the county of Offaly, down from 34 in 2012. 23 estates have been removed from the list since 2012 as a result of the necessary works having been undertaken by developers, site development inspections and meetings, facilitation (i.e. targeted release of bonds) and pursuing site resolution plans during this period. Of the 11 listed in the latest survey, there is ongoing activity in respect of 5 developments. Eight no. applications to take estates in charge were received in 2016 and one resolution to take estates in charge were made by the Council.
4. Derelict Sites There are currently 22 sites on the Derelict Sites Register (7 in the County and 15 in Tullamore Municipal District). Progress on Derelict Sites has been a

particular priority for Planning in 2016 and through a combination of approaches, the files on 10 sites across the County (not necessarily on the Derelict Sites Register) have been successfully resolved.

5. Enforcement & Compliance
6. Enforcement activity in the year 2016 to date is broadly in line with the corresponding period in 2014. So far, 36 new enforcement files have been opened. 95 Warning Letters have been
7. issued of which 69 were in respect of development contributions. 31 Enforcement Notices have been served in 2016 to date of which 19 were in respect of development contributions. Regular meetings are held with the Council's legal advisors to ensure that cases are pursued in a timely manner.
8. Work is ongoing in order to secure the delivery of a very significant Mountain Biking Trail development in the Slieve Blooms in conjunction with Coillte and Laois County Council. The planning applications have now been submitted to both Councils.

Forward Planning:

a) Edenderry Local Area Plan

The process for making the new Edenderry Local Area Plan 2017-2023 commenced in September with the Pre-Draft Public Consultation. As part of this stage of the plan, a public consultation evening was held at Edenderry Town Hall on the 27th of September. This encompassed a well attended drop in session in the afternoon and a very worthwhile facilitated session from 19:30 to 22:00, that night. This session examined various themes relevant to Edenderry with the overall vision of developing Edenderry as a place where people want to live, work and socialise with family and friends. Attendees included a cross section of voluntary groups, residents associations, sporting clubs, and business people from Edenderry. The final outcome of the meeting was a graphic representation of the consultation event. All submissions will be considered in the preparation of the draft plan which is ongoing. It is envisaged that the draft LAP will go out on public display later this month (November).

b) Tullamore Enhancement Plan

Extensive consultation and an application for funding was made in 2015. In February 2016 notification confirming that ERDF funding was successful was received. This consists of €1.5 million for street enhancement works in the town centre in particular O'Connor Square, High Street, and Columcille Street to include underground cables, new paving, lighting, street furniture, planting, and reconfigured public areas. It also includes €100,000 for a pedestrian bridge from Millennium Square to the Bridge Centre Car Park. Offaly County Council must provide matching funding.

The procurement procedure for a design and project management team commenced in April 2016 and the successful tender, a consortium led by Peter Lyons and Associates and Park Hood, was appointed in July 2016. A final non-statutory consultation period regarding various options on the proposed layout of the town centre is being undertaken in October, November 2016. It is anticipated that the Part 8 procedure will commence before year end. Following a successful Part 8 procedure, the construction tender will commence. It is anticipated that all works relating to the proposal will be completed by Q1 2018.

c) Town Renewal Scheme

Applications under this scheme were submitted to The Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for Clara, Edenderry, Shannonbridge and Kinnitty in October.

d) Connecting People – Connecting Places

In September 2015, the elected members of Offaly County Council endorsed Connecting People-Connecting Places, the walking and cycling strategy for County Offaly.

Building on the foundation of *Connecting People Connecting Places, Sept. 2015*, the overall vision for walking and cycling in the county, in 2016 the Forward Planning Section are examining the feasibility of certain objectives of this strategy, in particular to extend quality, family friendly cycle and walkways along the Grand Canal Towpath and also other forge cycling and walking links to the NCN and some of Offaly's prominent tourist destinations such as Clonmacnoise and the Slieve Blooms.

The Section is also liaising with DTTAS in a bid to source funding to commence construction of part of the Grand Canal Cycleway. An application for funding was lodged with Fáilte Ireland in August 2016, and a decision on this is due in early December 2016.

e) Grand Canal Cycleway /Walkway

Phase 1 – Tullamore to Lough Boora via Grand Canal Towpath.

Sourcing of funding streams on-going as outlined above

Phase 2 - Digby Bridge, Tullamore to Edenderry

The Forward Planning Department in cooperation with Waterways Ireland and with the assistance of the Roads Department, are in preparation of a Part 8 application for phase 2 of the Grand Canal Cycleway. It is proposed to extend the Cycleway from Digby Bridge Eastwards towards Edenderry to link in with the existing cycleway / walkway on the Grand Canal Towpath in Edenderry. It is envisaged that the Part 8 application will be prepared towards the end of 2016, and put on public display thereafter.

Phase 3 - Ballycomon to Kilbeggan along towpath of Kilbeggan Branch of Grand Canal.

Initial Stakeholder consultation, (with WCC and WI) and pre-design work has begun on this phase.

This element of the Grand Canal Cycleway is particularly strategic as it would link Offaly's Cycling and walking routes with the entire Royal Canal Cycleway via Kilbeggan and the NCN.

Economic Development, Enterprise and Planning Strategy Policy Committee (SPC)

The SPC worked through its adopted work programme for 2016, including topics such as:

- Rural Housing Policy for areas of Special Control
- Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 – Two Year Progress Report
- Updates on County and Town Development Plans
- Briefing on Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015 –Vacant Site Register
- Updates on recent / pending legislation / guidelines / circulars
- Noting of Bord na Mona 2030 Strategy

In relation to Planning, in 2017 the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) will consider such issues as the ongoing implications of legislative changes and new guidelines, particularly in relation to housing delivery, social housing / Part VIII changes, forthcoming legislation pertaining to the Office of the Planning Regulator, other planning regulation changes, implications of Government policy on renewable energy, revised wind guidelines and a wind energy development framework (DCDNR). Also the National Planning Framework, a position paper for same which is due in Nov. 2016 and the consequent Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Dublin and Mid-East Region. Furthermore, the SPC will consider the implications of ECJ petition against Ireland in relation to peat extraction, initiatives to promote economic and tourism development in the county, further requirements arising from EU Habitats and EIA Directives and progress in relation to Unfinished Housing Developments.

Legislation / Guidelines received in 2016 and / or expected in 2017

- EIA regulations transposing EIA Directive 2014/52/EU (by 16/5/2017).
- National Planning Framework (to replace NSS)
- Regional Social and Economic Strategies (successors of Regional Planning Guidelines)
- Planning Bill no. 2 (establishing Office of Planning Regulator and other amendments).
- Housing Bill – 100 house developments going to An Bord Pleanala but with a two stage Local Authority consultation, EIA screening applications now to require Local Authority Decision and stricter Part VIII Local Authority Development timelines.
- Revised Development Plan Guidelines.
- Peatlands Strategy (draft issued in 2014).
- Revised Wind Energy Guidelines.
- Renewable Energy Export Policy & Development Framework.
- Planning & Development (Taking in Charge of Estates) Act.

Areas of Activity for 2017

In addition to the normal activities of Development Management, Forward Planning, Enforcement and Taking in Charge of developments, the following are the main major items of activity envisaged for 2017:

- Continue to make progress on resolving Unfinished Housing Developments and Derelict Sites.
- Assist in the identification of key opportunity sites for social housing provision.
- Input into various and emerging tourism and amenity projects / initiatives.
- Input into the NSS successor, called the National Planning Framework, due for completion in 2017.
- Input into the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Dublin and Mid-East Region. The four Midlands counties have been grouped into a unit within the region as a 'Special Planning Area', which is aligned with NUTS III classification and as such will require significant input to the Regional Assesbly.
- Strategic Infrastructure Developments – at least one expected during 2017.

Local & Community Development

Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

The Offaly Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) was established under the Local Government Act in 2014 and is managed from Offaly County Council for purposes of developing and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development and held 10 meetings during 2016. The Offaly LCDC members represent local government, state agencies, local development bodies, social, economic, environmental and community interests.

Statutory Interests 8		
Sector	Member Name	Organisation
Local Authority Elected Members	Cllr John Clendennen Cllr Declan Harvey Cllr Brendan Killeavy	Offaly County Council Offaly County Council Offaly County Council
Local Authority Officials	Declan Kirrane Orla Martin	Offaly County Council Offaly County Council
State Agencies	Tony Dalton Con Feighery Graham Tuohy	Laois & Offaly ETB Teagasc Department of Social Protection
Non Statutory Interests 10		
Community & Voluntary	Tom Finnerty Frances Walsh	Offaly Public Participation Network Community Representatives (2)
Social Inclusion	Elizabeth Fleming Margaret Murphy	Offaly Public Participation Network Social Inclusion Representatives (2)
Environment	Eimhin Shortt	Offaly Public Participation Network Environmental Representative (1)
Local development and community development bodies	Brendan O'Loughlin	Offaly Local Development Company
Other civic society or 'local and community' interests	Dominic Doheny John Keena Henry O'Shea Christina Byrne	Construction Industry Federation Offaly Irish Farmers Association SIPTU Slieve Bloom Rural Development Co-op

LCDC projects during 2016 included implementing the community element of the Offaly Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021; continuing contract manager for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) (including undertaking both a mid year and end of year review with Offaly Local Development Company as the Programme Implementer); and adoption of the Local Development Strategy application for LEADER 2014-

2021 with Offaly Local Development Company as the Implementing partner on behalf of the LCDC which is the 'Local Action Group' that will be the contract holder for LEADER funding.

Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

One of the main responsibilities of the Offaly LCDC is implementation of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021, for the County, which was adopted by Offaly County Council in December 2015. The LECP implements actions to strengthen and develop the economic and community dimensions of County Offaly. Offaly County Council will supervise the economic strand of this plan, while the community element will be governed by specialist sub-committees of the LCDC. The strength of the LECP is collaboration and its interagency format of delivery.

LEADER 2014-2020

The Offaly LCDC is the designated Local Action Group (LAG) managing €8,036,763.90 announced as Rural Development Programme funding allocated to Offaly. In Autumn 2016 the animation campaign and calls for expressions of interest for funding was undertaken by OLDC on behalf of the LCDC and it is anticipated that by the end of 2016 the grant application process will have commenced.

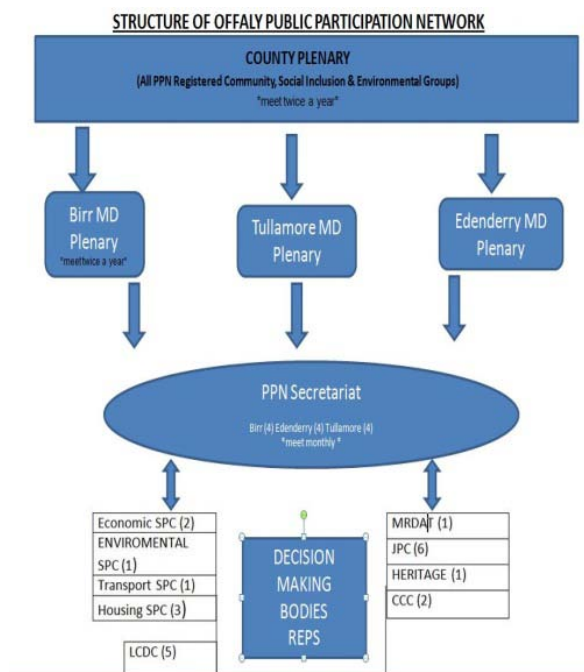
Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

The Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) is now in its second year of management by the LCDC with Offaly Local Development Company as the Programme Implementer. The value of the Offaly SICAP contract for 2016 is €738,314.00. There are three overall goals in SICAP - to *Empower Disadvantaged Communities*, to support *Lifelong Learning* and to move the target groups closer to *Employment*. There are nine SICAP target groups. These are - children and families living in disadvantaged areas; people living in disadvantaged communities; the unemployed (including those not on the Live Register); young people¹; lone parents; people with disabilities; new communities (including refugees/asylum seekers); Travellers, and Roma.

¹ Young unemployed people aged 15-24 living in disadvantaged areas & young people aged 15-24 who are not in employment, education or training.

Public Participation Network (PPN)

The Offaly Public Participation Network (PPN) is the main link through which the Local Authority connects with the community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors. Over 250



groups are registered to date as members of Offaly PPN. A key project for 2016 was the 'Community Supports for Disabilities Day', held in May by the PPN, with keynote speaker Martin Naughton RIP. This event has been recognised by the Public Sector Magazine for the National Community Award 2016.

Sixteen Secretariat Meetings and numerous sub-group meeting took place to date completing the Constitution for the group, PPN website, financial system, draft documents as required, training on linkage groups and terms of reference, regional meetings, salesforce database upload of members, weekly mailing to members and

social media funding updates.

A briefing meeting with Offaly County Council and PPN reps took place in September. A full time PPN Resource Worker will be assigned to the PPN in early 2017 with recruitment taking place in Q4 2016. The Linkage groups and Municipal District PPN structure is a focus area for 2017.

Offaly Comhairle na nÓg

The Offaly Comhairle topic for 2016 was Youth Enterprise Promotion. This was an innovative project by Offaly Comhairle to promote youth enterprise in response to the high rate of Youth Unemployment in Ireland. A 35 minute film was produced to help teenagers consider enterprise as a career option linking with Outcome 4, Objective 7 of National Youth Strategy 2015-2020. The Premiere of this film was held in Tullamore Cinema in March 2016 with key stakeholders and youth involved along with very positive feedback as a result of the event and the production.

The next project underway for Offaly Comhairle is 'Generation Communication' where teenagers in Offaly want to connect better with older people. A number of actions will take place to reflect this. Offaly Comhairle meets monthly to discuss collective youth issues with a representative committee of 12-17 year olds from across the county. There is one

representative from Offaly on Dail na nÓg. 15 Comhairle Executive members will attend the National Showcase of Comhairli in Croke Park in November. Copies of the DVD production 'Who wants to be an Entrepreneur' will be available at the Croke Park Showcase event and will be circulated to local Schools and Youth Projects thereafter with a worksheet for students and resource sheet for teachers.

Offaly Youth Enterprise Project

Through the REDZ funding in 2015, a targeted youth enterprise promotion programme called the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship Programme NFTE has been delivered to 4 targeted youth projects in Offaly, with a further 4 groups underway in their enterprise training. There is one full time worker employed to promote youth enterprise to targeted youths in collaboration with the Laois/Offaly Education and Training Board. This funding was sourced as a direct result of Offaly Comhairle Youth highlighting the need for youth employment opportunities and enterprise education and is supported by the Comhairle na nOg Co-ordinator. At the July LCDC meeting, there was a presentation by the Youth Enterprise Worker on the Project with a view to extending the project to 2017.

Tidy Towns Network

This network is in place since 2011 where the Tidy Towns groups come together 3 times a year to progress their plan of works for each year. This network is a collaborative project of the Community and Heritage section of OCC. In March 2016 a survey was carried out with the groups to ascertain collective priority areas for the groups. Presentations to the Network this year included the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, Funding Opportunities through the Rural Development Programme, and Birdwatch Ireland.

Tullamore was selected as the 2016 Town entry in Entente Florale Europe for 2016 based on the high score of Tullamore Tidy Towns in the National Competition. Tullamore was one of three recipients to achieve the gold standard Award in the Entente Florale Europe competition in September 2016.

Offaly Community Watch Network

Offaly Community Watch is a network of Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch groups that is in operation since 2011. It is facilitated by the PPN, Local Garda Sergeant and Muintir na Tire Regional Worker. The Network meets 3 times per year with a regular attendance. Each meeting focusing on a particular area of community safety and security with guest speakers invited and allows for open dialogue and feedback on local issues and concerns. This year the meetings have included explaining how the public can report Public Lighting faults in Offaly,

linking Community Watch to the Joint Policing Committee for better feedback and updates and there was a ploughing championships traffic management plan briefing for the Network in September. Offaly Community Watch provides a countywide text alert system that links all the groups to the Gardai in Offaly for instant circulation of Community Safety matters and Garda updates. This Countywide text alert system is in place for 6 years and proving ever popular and useful.

Resettlement Programme

The Community Welcome Committee, working from the Presbyterian Church, Tullamore, continued to operate the 'Tullamore International Welcome Centre' on 'Thursday afternoons until late Spring, funded by the Department of Justice & Equality.

Pride of Place 2016

Three Offaly communities were nominated by Offaly County Council to the national Pride of Place competition. These were Ferbane Food Campus (as an element of the Ferbane Business and Technology Park), Kilcormac and Ballycommon. They each presented their community projects to a high standard on judging dates in mid July. National winners will be announced at the Pride of Place awards event on 26th November.

Offaly Mental Health Talk Week

Offaly County Council supported this event through funding and allocation of staff to the OMHTW committee to support the HSE 'Little Things' campaign, the core OMHTW programme in 2016.

Smoke Alarms

The section continues to allocate 10 year battery operated smoke alarms to over 65s and vulnerable households in the county. Seventy four alarms have been installed in 2016 to date.

The Community Tourism Diaspora Fund

This year a €24,000.00 fund was allocated across 16 events for 2016, with specific criteria to market events to the diaspora, and attract overseas visitors to Offaly.

Jigsaw Offaly

This is chaired by Offaly County Council, with Offaly Co Co staff input to support its ongoing programme with links to agencies and the community.

Offaly Sports Partnership

Offaly Sport Partnership is an inter agency group which is a sub structure of Offaly County Council, hosted by the council and core funded by Sport Ireland. The long term shared **vision** of Offaly Sports Partnership is of a county with a vibrant sport culture which is inclusive of all people.

In 2016, Offaly Sports Partnership delivered a range of sport, physical activity and active living programmes.

- In schools for over 3,000 pupils
- Recreational community sport programmes for over 50 adults
- Volunteer training for over 100 club volunteers
- Physical activity programmes for over 150 older people
- A dedicated Sports Inclusion Development Programme reaching 500 people with disabilities
- An integrated sports programme for children of an ethnic minority background that saw 18 national medals being claimed; and one member representing Ireland abroad
- Community coaching programmes for the unemployed in Tullamore, Clara and Portarlinton reaching 40 trainees
- Local promotion of national events such as Bike Week, Operation Transformational national walk day, Play Day and Recreation Week that reached up to 1,000 adults and children

Offaly Sports Partnership secured almost €250,000 in funding from a variety of sources (e.g. Sport Ireland; Health Services Executive; Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport; Department of Children and Youth Affairs; Dormant Accounts Disbursement Fund, etc) in 2016.

For more information on Offaly Sports Partnership, visit www.offalysports.ie; or contact us on 057 93 57462, or by email to sports@offalycoco.ie

Tourism

Offaly Tourism Limited

Offaly Tourism Limited was established in December 2014 to act as a collective marketing and promotion body that is responsible for promoting Offaly to domestic and international tourism markets. To date Offaly Tourism Limited have completed the process of developing a new compelling tourism brand to establish a clear and consistent perception of County Offaly, '**Offaly – Ireland's Hidden Gem**' and a new tourism website (www.visitoffaly.ie) as a vehicle to create brand awareness.

Strategic Marketing Plan

In June 2016, Crowe Horwath was engaged to develop and implement a strategic marketing plan for Offaly Tourism Limited. The Strategic Marketing Plan includes a vision for the Offaly brand as follows: *‘Offaly will be readily identified as a destination with a distinct natural and cultural identity reaping the benefits of a tourism strategy where trade and community share responsibility for maximising all of the county’s advantages in enhancing the quality of the visitor experience’.*

The Strategic Marketing Plan has three core pillars will be underpinned by marketing tactics will initially focus on creating awareness of the Offaly tourism brand, increasing awareness of the “hidden gems” i.e. tourism products, encouraging collaboration within the local tourism industry and creative communications of existing products and services.

The Strategic Marketing Plan will be delivered via four tactical plans which details the specific actions required to implement each campaign. The agreed quarterly theme for the four campaigns is as follows:

- Local People and Local Stories – Q4, 2016
- History and Heritage – Q1, 2017
- Sports and Leisure – Q2, 2017
- Lifestyle and Culture – Q3, 2017

Tactical Plan for Q4 2016 - Local People & Local Stories

The Local People & Local Stories theme is designed to showcase the local people of Offaly which has been highlighted as one of key strengths of the county in a tourism context. Using local stories to present what Offaly has to offer domestic and international visitors will help build awareness of Offaly as a tourism destination at this initial stage. This theme has been chosen for Q4 as it coincides with both the Slieve Bloom storytelling festival and OFFline Film Festival.

Tullamore Show:

Offaly Tourism in partnership with Local Enterprise Office Offaly hosted the Offaly – Ireland’s Hidden Gem Pavilion at Tullamore Show on the 14th of August 2016. The Show provided an excellent platform to promote and market Offaly and develop brand awareness.

National Ploughing Championships:

To coincide with the National Ploughing Championships, Offaly County Council hosted the ***'Offaly – Ireland's Hidden Gem'*** Pavilion. Offaly Tourism Limited and Local Enterprise Office Offaly lined up exciting tourism displays and artisan food and craft producers to showcase the huge variety of high quality tourism attractions and artisan food and craft products available in the county. This initiative was a major element of Offaly County Council's work to capitalise on the fantastic opportunity presented by the National Ploughing Championships to attract tourists and investment to the county.

Offaly – Ireland's Hidden Gem Tourism Brochure:

An Taoiseach, Mr. Enda Kenny launched the new 'Offaly – Ireland's Hidden Gem' Tourism Brochure at the National Ploughing Championships. The brochure provides comprehensive information about Offaly's key tourism attractions.

Midland Cycle Destination Project

Bord na Móna (BnM), Coillte and Offaly County Council have come together to prepare a Feasibility Study assess the potential to develop a national cycle destination as a major tourism project in County Offaly. The scope of this project covers most of county Offaly, but links into wider regional and national strategic plans for off-road trail networks and will dovetail into trail projects currently underway. It comprises the development of trails primarily and also the identification of services and their locations to cater to the users of the trail network.

The Study identified a "Core Network Trail" in excess of 155km including the following key elements:

- 1) The Grand Canal
- 2) Portarlinton to the Grand Canal at Mount Lucas Wind Farm
- 3) Lough Boora Discovery Park to the Slieve Blooms at Kinnity.
- 4) The Slieve Bloom Mountain Biking Trail
- 5) A Monastic trail via the Pilgrims Path to Clonmacnoise.

Enterprise & Economic Development

Offaly businesses are supported by Offaly County Council, through the Local Enterprise Office (LEO). The Local Enterprise Office is the “one stop shop” for all Government supports for anyone looking to set up or expand their business and create jobs in Offaly. The Local Enterprise Office has a close working relationship with other development agencies, private sector and Chambers of Commerce in delivering business initiatives.

Throughout the year, LEO Offaly supported a high number of aspiring and existing business owners through a range of supports including mentoring, enterprise training, seminars, finance and networking. In addition to local events, LEO Offaly participated in the full range of nationally run Local Enterprise Programmes. These included: Food Academy, Student Enterprise Awards, National Enterprise Awards, National Women’s Enterprise Day and Irish Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) Competition. LEO Offaly also actively promoted and processed applications for Microfinance Ireland Funds and Trading Online Vouchers.

LEO Offaly is also responsible for driving economic development in the County. As part of this work, LEO Offaly provides outreach services to towns within the County, promotes business parks such as Ferbane Business & Technology Park, Rhode Business Park and works with business groups to promote economic development across the county. LEO Offaly also assists with funding applications such as REDZ.

Highlights for 2016 include:

Enterprise Awards

A number of Offaly businesses won awards in 2016, some through nationally run Local Enterprise Competitions. These include:

- *2016 National Enterprise Award:* Applied Concepts Ltd - www.appliedpi.com
- *2016 Student Enterprise Awards, Senior Category, Innovation Award:* Daniel Carroll -
- *2016 Student Enterprise Awards, Intermediate Category, Innovation Award:* Gallen Students.
- National and International Recognition went to the following Offaly businesses:
- *2016 Irish Food Writers Guild Award:* Wild Irish Foragers - www.wildirishforagers.ie
- *2016 International Cheese Gold Award:* Mossfield Organic Cheese - www.mossfield.ie
- *2016 Plumbing & Heating, Industry Achievement Award:* Stephen Grant, Grant Engineering – www.grantengineering.ie
- *2016 Bank of Ireland Start up Award, Craft Category:* Truzees - www.truzees.com

Competitive Fund Awards

Offaly was successful in 4 funding applications, two under the Community Enterprise Initiative and two under the LEO Competitive Fund:

Community Enterprise Initiative

Expansion of The Junction Business Innovation Centre in Tullamore, €125,000

The Junction Business Innovation Centre is a 4,200 sq. ft facility, designed and fitted out as a dedicated business innovation centre. Situated in Axis Business Park, Tullamore it is a multi-functional space, providing: hot desk facilities, office space, business training and mentoring, and facilities for people to develop ideas and business. This is supplemented by ongoing business supports from the Local Enterprise Office. Funding received to:

1. To recruit a dedicated Business Development Manager
2. To enhance The Junction and thereby create more enterprise space
3. To create a Fab Lab and further office space adjacent to The Junction, thereby connecting design with prototyping/batch manufacture and Midland Manufacturers.

Development of the Food Campus in Ferbane, €125,000

Ferbane Food Campus is a community owned food production and training facility. Since opening it has assisted in excess of 20 food start-ups through its time share kitchen facility to carry out product development testing and also to produce products for consumption. To date over 300 people have accessed training and mentoring supports through the facility. Funding received to facilitate the continued development of employment generation opportunities in Ferbane and West Offaly in the Food Sector, through an expansion of activities.

LEO Competitive Fund

Collaborative LEO Project (among 4 Midland LEOs) to assist Engineering Sector in the Midlands, €118,000

The Midlands Engineering Cluster Programme is a structured programme of market-led innovation, best practice transfer and product and trade development. It will create a new synergy between engineering enterprises; educational institutions and support agencies in the region that will aid their sustainability.

Collaborative LEO Project (among 4 Midland LEOs) to assist Solo-Entrepreneurs take on their first member of staff, €62,000

The Midlands One to Two Growth Initiative will break down inherent job creation obstacles by assisting carefully selected solo entrepreneurs from across the Midlands in overcoming the legal, regulatory and administrative barriers to adopting employer status, thus stimulating new employment creation and business expansion.

Local Diaspora Strategy Development Fund

Offaly County Council applied for and has been awarded €10,000 (100% funding) towards the development of a Diaspora Strategy for Offaly.

Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor visits The Junction

LEO Offaly was delighted to host a visit of newly appointed Minister Mitchell O'Connor to The Junction Business Innovation Centre on Friday, 3rd June. The Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation was in Tullamore to officially open BioNua Ltd, the IDA supported company in Sragh Industrial Estate. Following that event, the Minister visited The Junction and met many of the tenants there. Minister Mitchell O'Connor complemented Offaly County Council and Directors of Offaly Innovation & Design Centre Ltd, citing The Junction as a model of Best Practice. Since then, the Junction has been shortlisted in the 2016 Excellence in Local Government Awards.



Pictured L to R: Declan Kirrane, Cllr. John Clendennen, Chair of Offaly Innovation & Design Centre Cllr. Sinead Dooley, Orla Martin, Minister Mary Mitchell O'Connor, Marcella Corcoran Kennedy T.D., Cathaoirleach Cllr. Eamon Dooley, Chief Executive Anna Marie Delaney, Cllr. Tommy McKeigue, Michael Brougham, Niall Mulligan

National Ploughing Championships

The National Ploughing Championships took place in Scraggan, Tullamore in September 2016.

76 Offaly businesses showcased their products and services at the massive 3 day event. 26



Offaly food, craft and tourism businesses took stands in the colourful **Offaly – Ireland’s Hidden Gem Pavilion**, a further two Offaly businesses (Deanery Furniture and De Mad Food Company) had stands in the National **Local Enterprise Village**.

Dotser Web & Marketing Ltd and Caballis Equine Ltd featured in the **Enterprise Ireland Innovation Arena**. A further 46 Offaly businesses took part throughout the site. Feedback

was that business was brisk, and sales better than previous years.

Promotion of Offaly Enterprises

LEO Offaly actively promotes Offaly Enterprise and in 2016 launched the #Offaly Enterprise logo. This brand/logo is used as an identifier for Offaly businesses. LEO Offaly has been using it on Social Media and encourages individual businesses to use the logo too.



InBusiness Magazine

In Q3 2016, LEO Offaly placed a two advertorial in Chambers Ireland InBusiness Magazine. The magazine has a print circulation of 12,000 and a wide online circulation. The article used the “Hidden Gem” concept to highlight Offaly’s strengths as a business location, tourism destination and film location. It also highlighted enterprise award winners and innovators.

2017

LEO Offaly will continue to drive entrepreneurship and economic development in Co Offaly. The team will continue to work with individual businesses and business groups to maximise job creation within a wide portfolio of business sectors, across the County. LEO Offaly will work to implement the key actions from the Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) and the Action Plan for Jobs. The team will also look to leverage funding opportunities, and to work in a collaborative way with industry groups, stakeholders and those working in economic and community development.