

Tullamore Town Council



Review of Activity Report 2004 - 2009

The following members were elected in June 2004 to serve on Tullamore Town Council for the period 2004-2009 :-

1. **Cllr. Molly Buckley**
2. **Cllr. Laurence Byrne**
3. **Cllr. Joe Coughlan**
4. **Cllr. Sinead Dooley**
5. **Cllr. John Flanagan**
6. **Cllr. Richard Egan**
7. **Cllr. Tommy McKeigue**
8. **Cllr. Sean O'Brien**
9. **Cllr. Paddy Rowland**

The members set themselves a number of objectives for the period 2004-2009 which would promote the physical economic social and cultural development of the town during that period. The members can now reflect with pride the many achievements over the past five years.

From the outset, the members took a strategic approach in setting their objectives for their term of office. This involved reaching consensus on the needs and priorities for the town, meeting customer demands and expectations and balancing these with available resources. The members also adopted innovative approaches to sourcing the necessary funding for projects which was accessed through a variety of sources to make projects a reality. The council engaged in extensive consultation in relation to all of the major projects it undertook.

A summary of the main activities of the council over the five year period is as follows :-

Social

Social Housing Provision

The council utilises a wide range of options to deliver high quality housing units. This includes directly built units on council owned lands, the purchase of turnkey developments and good quality second hand units in the town and working in partnership with voluntary housing associations. During the last five years of the council 235 housing applicants were accommodated in the town. Whilst the majority of these units were standard family type accommodation, specially designed and adapted accommodation was also provided for persons with a disability and older persons. The council now maintains a total of 445 units of social housing stock.

The Council directly constructed 47 new units in Puttaghaun, 42 units at Chancery Park and purchased a turnkey development at church Road, Tullamore. All of these developments have been completed to the highest standard. The Community Liaison Officer will be working closely with the residents of these new developments to help them develop strong communities.

In addition to this, in excess of 200 applicants were assisted in acquiring private rented accommodation throughout the town both on a short term basis through Rent Supplement and on a longer term basis under the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

Housing Maintenance

Prior to 2004, housing maintenance on the Council's housing stock had been undertaken on an ad-hoc unplanned basis. To ensure the maximum return from the resources applied to housing maintenance, the Council agreed to implement a planned Housing Maintenance Programme for future years. In addition to the Council's own resources considerable additional resources were made available to local authorities by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to bring their existing stock up to date. Central heating, along with a number of other low cost energy and safety measures, including the provision of insulation and smoke alarms, were installed in 142 social housing units. The planned maintenance programme also incorporated a window and door replacement programme which saw the replacement of windows and doors in 98 houses.

The Council's housing stock is a very valuable asset and it is important that it is maintained to the highest possible standard and to meet rented accommodation housing standards.

Housing, Social & Cultural Strategic Policy Committee

The Town Council is represented on this committee of Offaly County Council and made a significant contribution to the major policy recommendations made over the past five years. For example, policies on Anti-social behaviour, Affordable Housing and Scheme of Letting Priorities for Social Housing. Cllr. Coughlan was the representative for the first three years of the council and Cllr. Richard Egan took over the role for the remaining two year period.

Planning, Economic & Community Development

Tullamore & Environs Development Plan

One of the first tasks facing the new Council when it was elected in June 2004 was to consider the Draft Tullamore and Environs Development Plan for the period 2004-2010. The Plan was adopted by the members on the 30th August 2004 and came into force on the 27th September 2004.

The basic aim of the Plan was to set out a framework for the physical development of the town of Tullamore and Environs, so that growth may take place in a sensitive, co-ordinated and orderly manner, whilst at the same time conserving the town's character and intrinsic heritage value.

The Development Plan for the period 2004-2010 recognised Tullamore town's role as part of the Midland Linked Gateway and the policies adopted in the plan were designed to promote and assist the town in fulfilling that role. The Plan projected that the population in the Tullamore Town and Environs would be 18,000 by the year 2010. The National Spatial Strategy projected the population of Tullamore to be 30,000 by the year 2020.

During the past 5 years Tullamore Town Council has worked with Offaly County Council, National Roads Authority, I.D.A., Enterprise Ireland and many other state and semi-state agencies in attempting to secure the implementation of the policies and objectives set out in the Development Plan.

In 2007 the statutory 2 year review of the Development Plan was carried out by the county Manager. This review identified that two actions needed to be undertaken in relation to the Town and Environs Development Plan:-

- (1) The zoning of additional lands for residential development to facilitate the projected increase in population.
- (2) To provide a planning framework for the Council's proposal under the Gateway Implementation Fund.

These two matters were dealt with by the members of Tullamore Town Council and Offaly County Council by way of a variation to the Town and Environs Plan adopted in June 2008.

On the 8th May the Pre-Draft Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plan for the period 2010-2016 issued to the members. This Pre-Draft must be considered by the members and the new Draft Plan published by July next.

Between June 2004 and the 1st May 2009 decisions were made on 516 planning applications, a number of which related to large residential and major town centre retail developments. This period has also seen the development of the new Regional Hospital, the construction of a new primary school at Collins Lane, the improvement of facilities at Tullamore Railway Station, the re-development of O' Connor Park and the construction of many new industrial/commercial developments in the town environs.

Road Transportation and Safety

Tullamore By-Pass

The Construction of the Tullamore Eastern By-pass has long been an objective of the Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plan. Construction of the By-Pass commenced in February 2007 and it is anticipated that it will be completed in early 2010. The completion of the By-Pass will bring many benefits to the town of Tullamore and indeed county Offaly including the elimination of traffic congestion in the town. The construction of The Western By-Pass has now been incorporated in the Town and Environs Development Plan as another key objective for both the town and county.

Transportation Study

The variation of the Tullamore Town and Environs Development Plan includes an objective to undertake a transportation study in the town. This study is necessary to develop the transport infrastructure to support the development of the four master plan areas in the town in a co-ordinated and integrated manner.

Traffic bye-laws

New traffic bye-laws were adopted by the council in 2006 following a lengthy consultation process. The bye-laws have considerably enhanced parking and traffic management in the town and provided much needed revenue to support the council's extensive leisure and recreational programme.

Joint Policing Committee

In 2006, Tullamore Town Council was one of 22 local authorities in the country selected to pilot a Joint Policing Committee (JPC) programme, a joint initiative of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

The committee consists of the nine elected members of the council, senior Town Council personnel and Gardai officials, Oireachtas members and three community and voluntary representatives. It is chaired by the Cathaoirleach of the Council.

The inaugural meeting of the Tullamore JPC took place on the 12th February, 2007. From the outset the committee took the view that its work would be based on an ethos of collaboration and co-operation with formalities kept to a minimum. A detailed work plan was prepared by the committee for the period 2009-2010 and launched in May 2009.

Community Liaison Officer

In 2009 the Council appointed a Community Liaison Officer whose duties include the facilitation of pre-tenancy training courses in local authority estates, support and advice to all residents associations in both social and private developments, working with State Agencies and local community and voluntary groups in particular the Chamber of Commerce and Tidy Towns Committee. It is envisaged that this officer will play a key role in co-ordinating the efforts of the town in improving the performance of Tullamore in the IBAL initiative and will work closely with the business, residential and educational sectors to achieve this objective.

Town Twinning Committee

The council became a partner to the Tullamore-Chandler Arizona Sisters Cities initiative in early 2009. The Chairman, Cllr. Sean O'Brien and Vice-Chair Cllr. Molly Buckley along with the Town Clerk sit on the twinning committee which was subsequently established. The main thrust of this initiative is to promote possible economic and social/cultural links between Tullamore and Chandler. The initial steering committee is currently in the process of selecting balanced sectoral representation for the committee to maximise the opportunity for linkages between Tullamore and this city.

Tullamore Tidy Towns

The Council works in partnership with Tullamore Tidy Towns committee, who play a proactive role in improving the quality of life in Tullamore and making it a more pleasant place in which to live, work and play. The council gives both direct financial assistance to the committee every year as well as indirect support through a targeted street cleaning programme, support for residents association clean ups and targeting of litter black spots. The Council also contributes to the Tullamore Credit Union Tidy Tullamore competition each year which has greatly assisted in fostering pride in both the residential and business communities in the town.

Lloyd Town Park

Lloyd Town Park which was officially opened in 2007 was one of the highlights of the council's achievements during their term of office. It was the first public park in the town and is in close proximity to two of the town's main primary schools. The park incorporates a wide range of facilities for all age groups and includes :-

- *Skateboard Park*
- *Bowling Green*
- *Children's Playground*
- *Water Feature*
- *Performance Area*
- *Landscaped Walking Area*
- *High Quality Car Parking and Toilet Facilities*



The park is open seven days a week all year round with extended opening hours during the summer months. Prior to the development of the Park, the Council engaged in consultation with a number of interested stakeholders.

Tullamore Leisure Centre

Tullamore Leisure Centre was officially opened in October 2008 achieving one of the long held ambitions of Tullamore Town Council. The Council worked in partnership with a local voluntary fund raising committee who following two decades of hard work raised almost half a million euro towards the project. To maximise funding opportunities for the project, the Council set up a limited company, Tullamore Leisure Limited to drive the project forward. The management of the facility was franchised out to Aura Sports and Leisure and its first three months of trading a total of 17,998 users availed of the pool, pitches and gym facilities in the complex.



Fleadh Ceoil 2007 - 2009

The town has been fortunate to host the Fleadh Ceoil na h-Eireann for the past three years and the council have played a major part in ensuring the success of this venture. Considerable resources have been put into the event in particular upgrading of footpaths in the town centre and the provision of traffic management and street cleaning services for the duration of the festival. The annual Fleadh attracts over 200,000 visitors to the town and provides a very welcome financial injection to the local economy. It also affords the Local Authorities and other Tourism Agencies the opportunity to promote Tullamore at both a national and international level.

Tullamore Show

It was a major disappointment for all involved with the Tullamore Show that due to weather conditions the Show did not take place in 2007 or 2008. In previous years the Town Council co-operated with the Show's committee in ensuring its success, and is looking forward to working with them again in 2009 at their new location for the Show.

Community Supports

The Council has assisted the Phoenix Festival, the St. Patrick's Day Parade, the re-establishment of the Town Band and many local groups and organisations during the past five years. The Council recognises that these groups make a significant contribution to the social and cultural life of the community.

National Ploughing Championships 2008

Tullamore hosted the national Ploughing Championships in 2008 and in partnership with Offaly County Council and the organising committee fully supported the event which was highly successful.

Local Representation

The Local Government Act, 2001 formally designated local Councils as a Fora for the democratic representation of the local community. Tullamore Town Council in exercising this role has engaged and interacted with many state and semi-state agencies, statutory bodies and many local community groups. It has received many deputations at its Council meetings over the past 5 years and

has assisted and encouraged these community groups in the projects they wish to undertake.

Financial

On the 1st January, 2004 the deficit on the Council's Revenue Account was €1.3 million. The Council recognised that to undertake the many projects it had planned it needed to restore order to the Council's finances. The need to identify additional funding sources was also recognised as a key requirement.

During the intervening period through prudent financial management by the Council and the additional funding provided through paid parking the deficit has been reduced to less than €200,000 in the last Audited Accounts presented to the Council. At the same time a number of major projects which have already been referred to were undertaken and funding provided for many new initiatives particularly in the area of support for local community groups.

On the 1st of April 2009 responsibility for water services was formally transferred from the Town Council to Offaly County Council. The Town Council will however continue to make a financial contribution to Offaly County Council for the provision of these services.

The present economic situation poses serious challenges for the Council in continuing to sustain services at their present levels. However through continued prudent financial management and ensuring that the best value for money is achieved in the utilisation of resources I am confident the Council will deal with these challenges.

Declan Kirrane
Town Manager

Ruth McNally
Town Clerk

14th May, 2009