

DECEMBER
2020



Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

#Do: Baill Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí

To: Each Member of Offaly County Council

Tuairisc mhíosúil bainistíochta a bhreithniú i gcomhair
tionóil mí Eanáir

Monthly Management Report for consideration at the
January 2021 Monthly Meeting.

FINANCE:

Finance Report– Appendix 1

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FREE CHRISTMAS TREE TAKE-BACK SERVICE

Free Christmas Tree take-back service available at the 3 recycling centres – Tullamore, Edenderry, and Birr up until **Saturday, 23rd January 2021**. Trees must be free of decorations, tinsel, lights etc. One tree per customer.

SHOWCASE IRELAND, IRELAND'S CREATIVE EXPO

Showcase Ireland, Ireland's Creative Expo will pivot to a new innovative Virtual Showroom format from 25th – 29th January 2021, in response to the limitations imposed by the Covid 19 pandemic.

The project is organized by Showcase Ireland Crafts & Design Fair CLG, a subsidiary of Design & Crafts Ireland. It is supported by DCCI, Enterprise Ireland and the Local Enterprise Offices.

Showcase is one of the industry's largest international trade fairs where designers and craft makers provide a choice of contemporary and heritage collections, offering innovation, quality, sustainability and a distinctive point of difference to retail buyers from across the globe.

EENGINEX MEET THE BUYER EVENT, 15TH APRIL

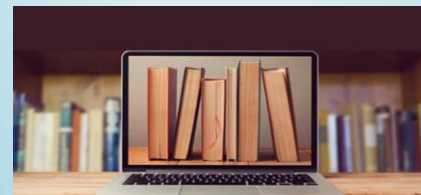
EENGINEX, the engineering "Meet the Buyer" event, makes a welcome return in 2021, where firms from all over Ireland and further afield will meet at City North Hotel to engage in face-to-face meetings with senior buyers and fellow manufacturers from throughout Ireland and the EU.

REPORT AT A GLANCE

Level 5 of the Plan for Living with COVID-19

In line with the Government's decision for the country to move to Level 5 of the Plan for Living with COVID-19 from December 30th, Offaly Libraries are providing online services only.

The library's digital collections can be accessed from home and include eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines and eNewspapers. You can also stream films and music and access many online resources for children. In addition you can avail of our online learning resources anytime, anywhere.



COVID-19 update

In accordance with Government restrictions, Offaly Libraries will provide online services **only** from Wednesday, 30th December for the duration of Level 5 of the Government's 'Plan for Living with COVID-19'.

www.offaly.ie/libraries



Libraries

Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí
Offaly County Council

18TH JANUARY 2021

ENVIRONMENT AND WATER SERVICES

Water

Works on the upgrade of the Tullamore, Birr and Clonaslee Water Treatment plants are on-going.

A boil water notice on the Water Supply in Clonbullogue was lifted on the 23rd of December, following the completion of the disinfection upgrade on the supply. This was one of 5 schemes which had upgrade disinfection systems constructed, namely Rhode, Edenderry, Walsh Island, Clonbullogue and Coolderry.

Leak repair: Find and fix works are ongoing in Rhode, Tullamore, Newtown, Edenderry.

Small Towns & Villages Development Plan: OCC have submitted our priority list to IW for consideration. The priority list is as follows: 1. Rhode WWTP, 2. Daingean WWTP, 3. Walsh Island WWTP, 4. Mount Lucas Borehole, 5. Clonbullogue Water Rising Main.

Environmental Complaints

From the 1st January 2020 to the last week in December, the Environment Section of Offaly County Council received and investigated 1465 complaints. These complaints cover the full range environmental issues such as litter, waste, noise, water quality, control of dogs, control of horses etc.

The Environment Section assisted in 224 community clean-ups across the county, providing bags, pickers, gloves and removing materials collected. It should be noted that the 224 community clean-ups are in addition to the complaints mentioned above.

Illegal Dumping

As part of the Anti-Dumping Initiative funding approved by the DECC earlier in

the year, CCTV cameras were installed at a number of litter/dumping black spots throughout the County. Following on from this exercise, the Environment Section issued 160 litter fines for fly tipping/dumping and 38 warning letters for more minor offences. Approximately 40% of these fines have been paid to date, with a number of extensions of time having been granted on the run up to Christmas.

A social media, radio and press campaign continues through December and into January 2021 around recycling, food waste prevention, the circular economy and anti-littering/dumping.

National Waste Enforcement Priorities have been communicated by the DCCE and these priorities will form focus enforcement activities in 2021.

Water Quality

Water Framework Directive sampling programme has once again been suspended due to Level 5 restrictions.

Detailed submission has been returned to the EPA regarding the 3rd Cycle Characterisation of local rivers under the EPA's River Basin Management Plan, covering both the Midlands & East region and the South East region. Draft plans will go forward for public consultation early in 2021.

A programme of site inspections to Section 4 industrial discharge licensees continues until the end of the year and into 2021.

DWWTS (septic tank inspections) National Inspection Plan continues through December with a nationally agreed target of 50% of 2020 inspection being completed by year's end, due to Covid restrictions. LASNTG have been approached with regards to potential training in septic tank

inspections for additional section staff, in order to meet requirements.

Flooding Relief Works

Flood relief works to the Bog Road in Portarlinton are now complete. This scheme was funded under the OPW Minor Flood Mitigation Works fund, with funding claimed and received late in December 2020. Other flood relief works are being developed in Rahan, Birr and Shannon Harbour.

Tullamore Living River Project

The Tender process for this scheme is now complete. Leader/LCDC have approved the funding for the wetland application, in principal at their November Meeting. Formal approval was signed off at the December meeting. The project is due to commence in Spring 2021.

Rural Water Programme

The Multi-Annual Rural Water Programme 2019 – 2021 is ongoing. Of the 19 projects across the county that were approved for grant funding for capital projects under MARWP 19-20, 7 have been completed to date and the other 12 projects are at various stages of planning and construction. More than €1.85m was allocated to Group Water Schemes in Co. Offaly under the MARWP 2019-2021 and so far €568,166.35 has been paid to GWSs for the works already carried out.

Annual subsidies for Group Water Schemes have been completed, a total of €978,426.00 was paid to schemes across the county. Our subsidy payments process was audited internally in 2020 and was found to provide 'Satisfactory Assurance' that it is in compliance with the Public Spending Code. Water quality sampling of Group Water Schemes has continued during the year with the Groups Schemes helpfully providing sampling kiosks and access to outside taps

to assist with sampling during Covid-19 related restrictions.

Burial Grounds

In 2020, volunteers continued to give a lot of time and effort to the upkeep, maintenance and improvement of their local Burial Grounds. To acknowledge and assist this effort Offaly County Council paid out grants to Burial Ground committees to the value of €22,500.00.

The tender documents for the extension of Kilreaghan Cemetery in Ferbane are due to be issued in early 2021 and Offaly County Council are in consultation with the local cemetery committee to include their views on the project. The proposed extension to Kilcoursey Cemetery in Clara was adopted under Part 8 of the Planning and Development Regs, 2001 and will proceed to tender in 2021.

NWCPO

Applications Processed and Projections

The NWCPO continues to process waste collection permit applications during the COVID-19 emergency through remote working measures and online communication tools.

As of 31st December 2020, there were **2,002** granted waste collection permits on the NWCPO register and **220** applications pending.

National Procurement Awards

A PRESTIGIOUS national award has recognised a pioneering and innovative project that equipped the new offices of the National Waste Collection Permit Office (NWCPO) with up-cycled



furniture. The award ceremony was held virtually on the 16th of December.

Announcing the NWCPO as the winner of the 'Best Green Procurement Project of the Year', the panel of judges recognised the project – the first of its kind in Ireland – for demonstrating that up-cycling at a commercial level was achievable and for its contribution to the Circular and Social Economy. Over 2.6 tonnes of carbon were saved by sourcing second-hand furniture over new, the equivalent of planting 180 evergreen trees.

The project was instigated by Leo Duffy, Programme Manager and co-ordinated by Maria Brennan Foyne, Staff Officer (NWCPO) with Claire Downey, Executive at Community Reuse Network Ireland (CRNI). Furniture and other items, including some bespoke pieces, were sourced, up-cycled, supplied and fitted by Rediscovery Centre, Back2New and Recycle IT and Freetrade Ireland amongst others – all social enterprises that provide jobs and training for people from marginalised groups or in long-term unemployment.

The NWCPO and Offaly County Council are delighted and honoured to receive the award. The Circular Economy and the promotion of environmental and social awareness is an integral part of our Climate Adaption Strategy and the role we all can play in mitigating the causes of Climate Change and using positive impacts to promote more sustainable lifestyles.



Photo of NWCPO Boardroom.

ROADS

Roads Programme 2020 is complete throughout the County and the final grant claim successfully submitted.

Offaly County Council received the 2021 National Roads Allocation of €2,300,855 from the TII. The allocation includes funding for the N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link major scheme, N62 Cloghan to Derrinlough peat replacement minor works scheme with €1.86m allocated for improvement works.

We will be notified of the grant allocation for the Regional and Local roads in the County in January. The 2021 Roads Programme will be prepared for March 2021.

HOUSING

COVID-19 – Housing

Various levels of COVID-19 restrictions continued during December 2020. The Housing Section reviewed service delivery and continues to provide critical essential services as outlined in the Government Roadmap. To assist us in streamlining service delivery we encourage the use of the following email addresses:

HAP Enquiries

hap@offalycoco.ie

Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans

homeloans@offalycoco.ie

Housing Inspections – HAP, Leased, Private, etc.

standards@offalycoco.ie

General Enquiries, Maintenance Issues, etc.

housing@offalycoco.ie

RAS & Leasing EnquiriesRAS@offalycoco.ie*Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People & People with a Disability Scheme*HousingAidGrants@offalycoco.ie*Anti-Social Behaviour*ASB@offalycoco.ie**December Housing Update**

- There are 530 on the Social Housing List awaiting housing support at the end of December 2020.
- A further 862 active tenancies are currently being supported under the Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) Scheme, 22 signed up for HAP and 7 exited from HAP in December.
- At the end of December 2020 there were 18 single people and 5 families in emergency accommodation.
- 22 Rebuilding Ireland Home Loans applications were received in 2020 to date and 6 RIHL have been approved.

Housing Stock – Number, Maintenance & Repair:

- Total housing stock at end of December, 2020 is 1,924.
- 3,492 maintenance call were logged to 30th December, with 292 received in December.

Housing Capital Programme Update

- Raheen, Clara development (38 units) – received Stage 2 approval on 21st August 2020 and is progressing to planning. Part 8 Planning application will be advertised in January 2021.
- Dargan Drive, Chancery Lane (20 Units) – received Stage 1 approval in March 2020. The Design Team have been appointed and initial meeting has been held. Site

investigations are currently being procured. Stage 2 application is expected to be lodged in March.

- Moneygall (4 units) – received Stage 2 approval in July 2020 and the members approved the Part 8 planning at the October Council meeting. Stage 3 application (permission to proceed to Tender) will be submitted to the Department by early February.
- Beechgrove Belmont (7 units) – received Stage 2 approval in July 2020 and the members approved the Part 8 planning at the November Council meeting. Stage 3 application will be submitted to the Department by early February.
- Sr. Senan, Edenderry (4 Units) – received Stage 2 approval in August 2020, and Part 8 planning was approved by the Elected Members at the December Council meeting. Stage 3 is currently being prepared for submission. Expected to be lodged with Department in early February.
- Banagher, Kylebeg (18 Units), a second stage 3 submission was made in April 2020. Stage 3 was approved by the DHPLG in May 2020. Tender documentation is almost complete and Tender will issue by the end of January.
- Circular Road, Daingean (9 units) - Stage 2 approval was received in December 2019 and the Part 8 planning resolution was approved by the members at the September Council meeting. Stage 3 approval to proceed to Tender was lodged on December 17th and scheme is expected to proceed to Tender in early February pending Department approval.

Single Dwellings under Four stage approval process:

- 1 Newbridge Street, Birr: Refurbishment of derelict dwelling to provide retrofitted 3 -bedroom dwelling – external design team appointed and Stage 2 approved in October 2020 – expected to submit Stage 3 in February 2021.
- 4 Hillview Holly Park, Birr: Stage 1 approval lodged on 22nd December 2020 to refurbish existing derelict dwelling.

Approved Housing Bodies Schemes

- Cluid Housing Association: Construction on the 26 units commenced in November 2020.
- Tuath: Killane Drive, Edenderry (27 units) – completion due in Q1 2021.
- Oaklee: Clonminch, Tullamore (19 units) – finalising tender process and appointment of contractor.
- Oaklee: Kearney's Field (41 Units) – In process of appointing consultant.
- Sofia Housing: Stage 1 approved (32 units) at Presentation Lands, Portarlinton. Stage 2 submission was made in October for a further 7 units.
- Sofia Housing, in a joint initiative with Midlands Simon Community, acquired Clonamore Hotel in Q3, 2020. The facility will be developed as an enhanced centre for the provision of supported accommodation for homeless people. Under the terms of a landmark agreement Midlands Simon Community will operate the facility, with a team of qualified social care workers providing support on a 24/7 basis. Following refurbishment, the facility will provide professional supports for up to 17 people.

Turnkey Developments

- Main Street Daingean (8 Units): Approved 13th August and works commenced in November 2020.
- MacGregol, Birr: 12 Units – 6 units complete and a further 6 are progressing.
- 6 further Turnkey Schemes were submitted to the department received departmental approval in December 2020.

Housing Grants

The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government notified the Council that the funding for 2020 Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability Scheme is €1,333,231 of which €266,646 will be provided from Offaly County Council's own resources. In all 130 grants were approved, i.e., 56 Housing Adaption Grants; 16 Mobility Grants; 58 Housing Aid for Older Persons grant. Housing staff are following up with the applicants.

Disabled Person's Grants

The Council received notification from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government that funding for DPG's, i.e., works on Council owned properties for 2020 is €174,740.51 (2019's allocation was €205,000). The Department considered the Council's request for additional funding and on 20th November approved an additional €26,418.49 to give a revised 2020 allocation of €201,160 (90%). Funding allowed the Council to complete 2 extensions and adaptations to 11 homes.

Retrofit Programme

The Council received notification on 8th September that €3.3m was being awarded to Offaly for the 'Just Transition for the Midlands Region' programme.

The Design Team have completed surveys of 36 no. houses and Tender Documents are

currently being prepared and are expected to issue in January 2021. A further lot of 42 houses surveys were due to take place in January 2021 but have now been postponed owing to the current COVID-19 situation. The balance of housing surveys was scheduled to take place in February. Prior to the retrofit works commencing in the dwellings the Council will engage further with the tenants to outline the works involved in each situation. The consultants will determine the works that will be required, works may include the following:

- Replacement of the heating system to a new technology heating system called a “Heat Pump”
- New radiators
- Attic insulation top up
- External or internal wall insulation
- Window Replacement
- New Doors
- Improved Ventilation

The Council has advised SEAI of the locations of these units for retrofitting and SEAI will now engage with private properties located near these dwellings to offer similar works under their existing home energy grant schemes.

LIBRARY SERVICES

Ask the Librarian

With Level 5 in place good communication is more essential than ever for libraries as we continue to provide online services to our patrons. Administered by Birr Library, Offaly Libraries’ e-mail service Ask the Librarian has been running since the first lockdown allowing patrons to ask questions and receive personalised answers in a friendly way. We are now, again, positioning and promoting this service to help patrons during these challenging times. A member of our library staff will find the answer to questions posed, drawing on the collective experience of the Offaly

Libraries team and making use of all our resources to find the answer and to help patrons get the most from their library service. Queries to date include methods of access to e-books, e-magazines or online newspapers; replacing pin numbers and local studies queries. Whatever library related query they may have, askthelibrarian@offalycoco.ie will aim to answer it. As author Neil Gaiman said, “Google can bring you back 100,000 answers. A librarian can bring you back the right one”.



Library usage in 2020 – we were busier than ever!

- There were 637,307 downloads of online material in 2020 which is a 4,310% increase on downloads in 2019.
- There has been an overall increase in our social media following of 41%.

To end the year on a high....

Library Love made it on the Top 50 feel-good news stories of 2020. The full article in the Irish Independent may be accessed [here](#) but see extracts of the significant library highlights below:

“If lockdown gave us one thing, it was a renewed appreciation for our libraries. When the Government imposed restrictions back in March, Libraries Ireland rallied to introduce online services that enabled people to join the library online and

immediately access ebooks, audiobooks, newspapers and magazines. Over 30,000 people ended up joining the library in March alone.

Other community initiatives across Ireland included providing copies of the Covid Pandemic Unemployment Payment form to those without printers or a Call To Chat service for older people looking for a chat. At a time when we needed them most, libraries were very much in our corner.” © Irish Independent, 31/12/2020.

Christmas Family Time at Offaly Libraries

Our staff curated an excellent **Christmas Family Time with 40 online videos** and an online Christmas variety show on the three Saturdays leading up to Christmas. **These postings reached 17,106 people and had engagement of 4,398.**



Our Zoom to the Library! Christmas story-times to primary schools and creches was very successful. The response from teachers and pupils was amazing and staff were thrilled to continue this festive favourite!

Edenderry and Daingean library, in collaboration with Offaly Tourism, produced an original Christmas storytime video that saw Mrs. Claus on a quest through County Offaly in the run up to Christmas. This brilliant production highlighted the gorgeous tourist attractions around the county in the search for Santa's spare suit!

Check out all the brilliant videos on [Facebook](#) containing lots of festive readings and songs.

Brickz4Kidz virtual Workshops

Staff of Tullamore Library in partnership with Brickz4Kidz Westmeath/Roscommon delivered seven virtual workshops to St Philomena's NS in Tullamore in mid-December. Brickz4Kidz workshops are for children from 3rd class up and encourage children to become more involved in STEM. Funding for the project was sourced from the Dormant Accounts Fund via the Department of Rural and Community Development and a further 18 workshops will be delivered to a further 9 Offaly 'Deis Schools' once level 5 restrictions have been lifted.

Offaly Libraries Blog

Have a read of our latest [blog](#) on the books that helped us in Offaly Libraries get through 2020 and you might find inspiration on what to read next!



DAF Projects Update

Our Touch-Type Read and Spell (TTRS) resource is

a multi-sensory course that teaches touch-typing to help children and adults improve their reading and spelling

skills. The resource is currently being piloted with key user groups in advance of 1,000 licences being made available around the county.



Our **BrickFlicks** project is a stop-go motion Lego animation workshop underway online. These workshops involve plenty of hands-on learning combined with some online demonstrations. Students design and create their own film sets, storyboards, and script for stop motion movies. These movies are filmed and edited on iPads or tablets.

Songwriting for Your Community and the *Bricks 4 kids* workshops are in development and will progress when safe to do so under public health guidelines.

Sign up for our Library Newsletter

A quick reminder that the best way to keep up to date with all library programmes, developments and new services is via our Library Newsletter and of course through following our social media channels. The link to subscribe to our newsletter is here; [Offaly Libraries Newsletter](#)

It's a New Year, 2021 –



FIRST FORTNIGHT
THE ART OF MENTAL HEALTH

Offaly Libraries are shining a spotlight on our vast mental health reading support collections during the month of January with First Fortnight!

From factual books to brilliant works of fiction and helpful information books, **Borrowbox**

has a wealth of eBooks & eAudiobooks to help open up discussion around mental health. Check out the digital collection here: <https://bit.ly/38YHfqe>

Coming soon... Keep Well Campaign at Offaly Libraries



As part of “Living with COVID-19” the government has launched a national Keep Well campaign focused on five major



themes to ensure that people have opportunities within their local community to help themselves keep well. Libraries are in the preparation stages of programmes that will interact with these themes.

- **Keeping active** - keeping active and being outdoors even during the winter, looking after your physical health can help your mental health and wellbeing.
- **Staying connected** - Staying connected with people, addressing isolation, supporting volunteerism and initiatives that support person-to-person connection.
- **Switching off and being creative** - Switching off and being creative or learning something new, getting back to nature and relaxation.
- **Eating well** - by nourishing your body and mind you can help your mental health and wellbeing.
- **Managing your mood** – giving people supports on where to go if they are in distress and links to relevant information points e.g. HSE’s Your Mental Health.

Our library core collections and numerous resources will provide our community with plenty of options to keep well during this time. Library Staff are busily creating original storytimes and engaging programmes to keep children entertained and supported during the current school closures. Keep up to date via our social media channels for daily postings.

Plans are underway for family support library events and creative and mindful activities to keep us all “well” in 2021. Offaly Libraries suggested reads and Ireland Reads programmes will also progress during the months of January, February and March.

Watch this space for more details!

The Healthy Ireland Autumn/Winter campaign continues with our first term of Baby Sign Classes (fully booked) delivered by Claire from ‘Clever Little Handies’.

The final three videos in Leona McDonnell’s ‘Mindfulness for Pregnancy’ series will be delivered online and the full series of six will be available indefinitely on our Facebook video archive.

LOCAL & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Offaly Covid-19 Community Response Helpline

The Offaly Community Call Helpline has operated since 30th March 2020. It operates from 9.00am to 5.00pm, 7 days per week helping those who are vulnerable and who need help accessing essential services or a listening ear. The Helpline number for Offaly is **FREephone: 1800 81 81 81**. A dedicated team of Community & Culture staff answer queries, with two staff working each weekend.

The Helpline Centre was very busy in the initial months as people struggled to deal with getting supplies of medicine or groceries, or were feeling isolated as they needed to cocoon. Gradually people have

become more aware of how to access the necessary services and have established their own support networks. As a result, the number of calls to the Helpline have diminished significantly over recent months. The Helpline will remain in place while there continues to be a need for the service.

SUMMARY OF MONTHLY CALLS AND EMAILS TO COVID HELPLINE 2020		
Month	Number	%
April	312	66.8
May	93	19.9
June	19	4.1
July	8	1.7
Aug	8	1.7
Sept	7	1.5
Oct	9	1.9
Nov	3	0.6
December	8	1.7
Total	467	100

SUMMARY OF TYPE OF CALLS AND EMAILS TO COVID HELPLINE 2020		
	Number	%
Deliveries	81	17
Isolation	30	6
Meals	8	2
Garda	5	1
Medical	105	23
Other e.g. volunteers	238	51
Total	467	100

Offaly Community Response Forum

The interagency Community Response Forum has met 16 times since the first meeting on 30th March 2020. The role of the Forum is to lead the co-ordination of community supports and resilience, helping vulnerable members of the community or those living alone to get deliveries of groceries, medicine and fuels and to have social contact during the pandemic.

The members of the Forum are Offaly County Council, HSE, GAA, OLDC, An Garda Síochána, ALONE, SVP, An POST, Offaly PPN, Local Link, Citizens Information Service, Túsla, IFA, Offaly Traveller Movement, Kildare Volunteer Centre (covering Offaly), Civil Defence, Offaly Library Service, Family Resource Centres, and Offaly Community Services. There is excellent co-operation and sharing of useful information between all of the agencies on the Forum.

In April 2020 Offaly was allocated €65,553 in Covid-19 Emergency Funding by the Dept. of Rural & Community Development for eligible community groups and organisations working directly with the public. This funding was allocated by the Community Response Forum to 37 groups and organisations to enable the provision of a range of emergency services such as Meals on Wheels, SVP, Online resources, newsletters, etc. A second Emergency Fund allocation of €48,694 was launched by Offaly LCDC on 18th December 2020, with a closing date of 15th January 2021.

Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

Offaly LCDC held their monthly meeting on Thursday 17th December 2020 with some members in the Council Chamber and the remainder attending by video link. Agenda items included the Rural Development LEADER Programme 2014–2020 and the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme (SICAP) 2018-2022 Annual Plan 2021.

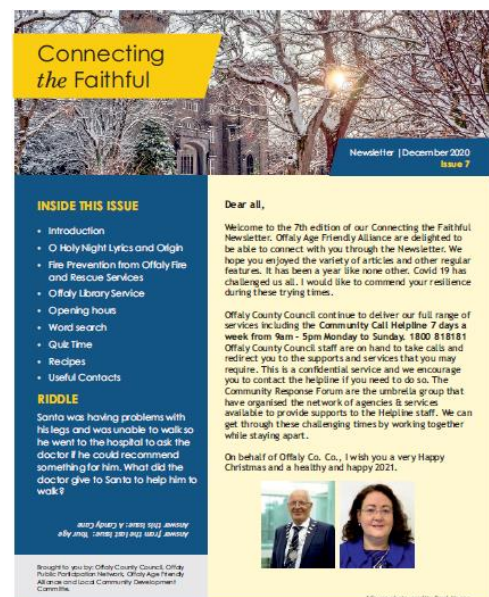
The committee were informed that funding of €547,961 had been allocated to Offaly under the Transitional LEADER Programme 2021, to allow locally-led rural development projects to continue to be delivered using the current LEADER model until the new EU programme commences in 2023.

Members approved the proposed Local Development Strategy (LDS) budget revisions. There was no change to the overall budget allocation, the revisions involved the movement of funds between themes and sub-themes. Under the Rural Development LEADER Programme, 17 Projects were approved and the total amount of funding awarded was €883,449.81.

The committee were advised that the Empowering Communities Working Group held a meeting on 3rd December 2020 in preparation for the SICAP Annual Plan 2021. The SICAP Annual Plan 2021 was presented to the members and agreed and approved in principle.

Age Friendly Strategy

The Connecting the Faithful Newsletter Christmas Edition included topical elements and a page with contact details for supports & services in Offaly compiled by the HSE in conjunction with Healthy Ireland as part of the Keep Well Initiatives. An extra 2,000 copies of the Newsletter were distributed by the Gardaí, OLDC & the Library services and elected members. This complimented the deliveries by AN Post of 4,000 copies.



The AF radio programme production meetings continue and the slot on December 21st included a Christmas address from the County Council Chief executives in Offaly, Westmeath & Laois and previous Council & HSE Choir recordings. The 8am slot on Sunday mornings is proving very popular with a range of interesting topics

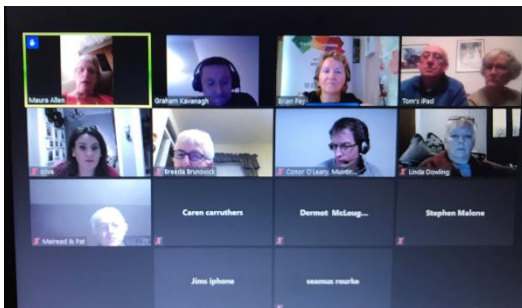
A Hamper draw took place in Tullamore for Older people. This was in conjunction with the Gardaí, OLDC, the PPN & the Credit Union. The Gardaí delivered the Hampers to the lucky winners.



Public Participation Network

Engaged with the Keep Well Healthy Ireland Initiatives. Providing details on the Keep Well actions to the PPN membership and promotion of same.

The PPN held a Zoom meeting with PPN membership and the Gardaí & Muintir na Tíre on Safety & Security in the home & Community. Sgt Graham Kavanagh &



Conor O'Leary both presented to the membership providing tips and guidance on safety & Security. This was well attended with a lively Q & A session to conclude the meeting. Offaly, Westmeath & Laois PPN's

organised the Competition to choose the name for the AF Radio Programme. Athlone Access Awareness won the Radio Name Competition Prize and were presented with their prize a Radio.



Comhairle na nÓg

The Comhairle na nÓg first online AGM was held on the 4th of December 2020. The event was opened by CE of Offaly County Council Anna Marie Delaney and Cathaoirleach of Offaly County Council John Carroll. The event was attended by students from all 12 secondary schools in Offaly and representation from Tullamore Youth Project. Presentations were made by the Executive on Comhairle work completed in 2020 and they gave a brief introduction to Comhairle. The theme of the AGM was climate change and there was a guest appearance by Padraic Fogarty on the topic of Climate Change and Biodiversity. This was followed by a lively Q&A session where many topics to do with climate change and Biodiversity were discussed. Padraic was engaging and informative and took questions from the participants in a relaxed and friendly fashion and the young people certainly used the opportunity to the best of their ability!

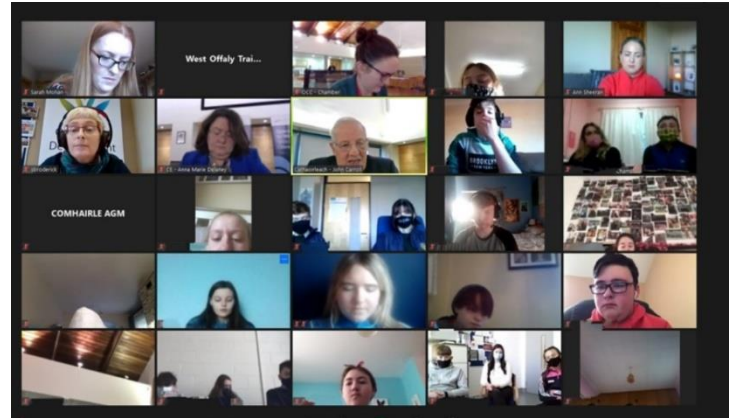
Following this the Executive presented their results of a survey they had sent to all secondary schools in Offaly. The aim of the survey was to see what issues are important to young people. The survey got a huge

result and 1,686 young people from all over Offaly responded to it. The young people divided into breakout rooms to discuss these results. The breakout rooms discussed the topics and voted on their priorities which were then fed back to the AGM. The topics voted on were:

1. Places to hang out (for young people)
2. Homelessness & Housing Issues
3. Discrimination of ethnic minorities
4. Transport & Affordability (of tickets)

All four topics got three votes each for 2021. This has shown us that these are the four topics chosen that are currently important to young people in Offaly.

To finish up the AGM on a less serious note there was a talent competition which showed us an interesting range of talent from all across the county. This included singing, joke telling, Irish dancing, guitar playing, piano and a display of art. The talent competition and the AGM was a credit to the young people of Offaly and their sense of fun and enthusiasm. They displayed a strong work ethic throughout the AGM and were extremely knowledgeable when discussing topics currently effecting them and effecting society at large. The AGM 2020 was a successful event and showcased the work completed by the Executive in 2020 and also showcased the wonderful young people of Offaly who have a very bright future ahead of them. Following on from the AGM the Comhairle na nÓg Executive virtually attended the 2020 the Showcase National Event. This is a



showcase of all the work completed by all the Comhairlí throughout Ireland and happens every second year. Some of the Executive watched this online from the Chamber in Offaly County Council and the Offaly Executive received a Certificate of achievement for their work completed in 2020 which included drafting a Policy on Females and Diversity in Offaly and a video for young people on Exam Stress and Anxiety.



ARTS

Music Generation Offaly Westmeath Virtual Choir 2020

We were delighted to finish the year with our first ever virtual performance. Following on from fortnightly online sessions we concluded the year by asking all of our young people to record themselves singing one of our songs which

we later released as a virtual performance. The performance can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/P8lnE56n7hM>



LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

The Local Enterprise Office Offaly team continues to work remotely and provides a full service to new and existing enterprises in Offaly. The LEO team are providing much needed assistance to deal with the unprecedented numbers of business owners contacting the Local Enterprise Office.

If we all #LookForLocal in Offaly this winter, we'll be helping local businesses and supporting jobs in local communities.

#LookForLocal Campaign

The Network of 31 Local Enterprise Offices are rolling out a national #LookForLocal campaign. The campaign is supported by the Local Authorities, Enterprise Ireland and the Government of Ireland. By shopping locally this winter, we'll be helping our local businesses and keeping jobs in our communities. We have examples of Offaly businesses listed on the LEO Offaly website, along with their website addresses. So, let's all #LookForLocal!

Upcoming Events and New Initiatives Prepare for Brexit – Information for Businesses

With Brexit now upon us, time is of the essence to get prepared if you haven't already. For any businesses dealing with UK companies, there may be issues with

continuity of supply post December 31st 2020. In particular payment of UK VAT on purchases will be demanded and this cost will not be recoverable. In addition, customs duties will be payable on most products. LEO Offaly has a range of training supports, mentoring and initiatives like the Brexit Scorecard to assist local businesses. Nationally, the LEO Offices will have dedicated Helpline in place for any businesses needing assistance over the Christmas period.

Ready for Customs Grant

This new grant provides companies with financial assistance to cover the costs of taking on much needed additional customs clearance staff, which will be required when Brexit becomes a reality on the 1st January 2021. This is a cash limited scheme of up to €20m, with the following financial support available:

- A grant of €9,000 to support the recruitment or redeployment of a full-time1 employee into a dedicated customs role.
- A grant of €4,500 to support the recruitment or redeployment of a part-time2 employee into a dedicated customs role.

The scheme closes on 31st March 2021 or when all the funds are allocated, whichever is the earlier.

COVID 19 Supports

Remote Training Sessions

Booking is now available for a number of Online courses such as Start your Own Business Course, Digital marketing for Business, COVID-19 Government Supports for business, A Layman's Guide to Tax, How to create marketing videos on a budget and Start your Own Business course. These courses are aimed at those

interested in starting their own business or growing their business. Most of the courses have been fully booked and have received excellent feedback.

Remote Mentoring Sessions

The Local Enterprise Office Offaly has a number of free mentoring sessions to assist businesses through the Covid-19 crisis. Please contact us to arrange a mentoring session. The types of mentoring available are Business, Finance, Banking Supports & Advice, Human Resources, Social Media Strategy and Microfinance Loans.

Financial Supports Overview

Some financial supports that may be available to Offaly businesses are listed below. Further information on all of these supports is available on <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Offaly/Financial-Supports/>

Feasibility, Research and Development

- a. LEO Feasibility Grant
- b. Agile Innovation Fund (Enterprise Ireland Scheme open to LEO Clients)

Business Start-Ups

- a. Priming Grant
- b. Microfinance Loan Scheme

Business Expansion

- a. Business Expansion Grant
- b. Microfinance Loan Scheme
- c. GradStart Scheme (Enterprise Ireland Scheme open to LEO Clients)
- d. Ready for Customs Grant ((Enterprise Ireland Scheme open to LEO Clients)
- e. Trading Online Voucher

Additional financial supports from other agencies include:

1. InterTrade Ireland Start To Plan Voucher Scheme

InterTrade Ireland offers 100% financial support up to €2250 (inclusive of VAT) towards professional advice in relation to Brexit matters. This support can help your business get advice on specific issues such as movement of labour, goods, services and currency management. For more information, visit www.intertradeireland.com.

2. SBCI Brexit Loan Scheme

The Brexit Loan Scheme can provide affordable financing to businesses that are impacted by Brexit. The Scheme is delivered by the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland (SBCI) through commercial lenders and will make €300 million available to eligible businesses with up to 499 employees at an interest rate of 4% or less. The loans are available through AIB, Bank of Ireland and Ulster Bank. Loans will range from €25,000 to €1.5 million per eligible business, with unsecured loans up to €500,000 and terms ranging from 1-3 years. For more information, please visit www.sbc.gov.ie

3. InterTrade Ireland: Support towards employing a full-time sales person

Many businesses face the challenge of funding and recruiting a dedicated professional to win sales in the cross-border market – and, here again, Acumen can help. Acumen will fund up to 50% of the cost of a Sales Person's salary in the first year. The maximum cost covered can be up to €37,500/£30,000 with Acumen paying up to €18,750/£15,000. For more information, visit www.intertradeireland.com.

Anna Marie Delaney, Chief Executive

Appendix 1

Revenue Account Grant Income & Payroll Summary to 31st December 2020

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL	Full Yr. Budget 2020 €m	Preliminary Value to December 2020 €m	% Year To Date
Payroll costs	27.07	27.82	102.8%
Grants and Subsidies Income	34.94	51.77	148.2%

OCC to 31st December 2020

	<u>Rates</u> €m	<u>Rents</u> €m	<u>Loans</u> €m
Opening Balance Jan 1, 2020	2.29	0.73	0.32
Invoices/Adjustments (Incl YE Estimates)	11.06	6.22	0.49
2020 Cash Collected to end of December	11.28	6.37	0.55
Closing Balance December 31st, 2020	2.06	0.58	0.26
<u>2019 Cash collected to December</u>	14.49	6.22	0.52
% Collection at this point in 2019	78%	102%	105%

Bank Overdraft to 31st December 2020

Number of days Overdrawn in Bank year to date	45	12%
Overdraft/Negative Interest and non-conforming charges to December 31st 2020 YTD	€28,185	
Bank Administration and transactional charges to December 31st 2020 YTD	€32,995	