



**Comhairle Chontae Uíbh Fhailí**  
**Offaly County Council**

**Offaly County Council**

**AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2024**

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## Section 1      Introduction

**Section 5** of the Local Government (Business Improvement Districts) Act 2005 provides for the establishment of Audit Committees in Local Authorities and **Circular Fin 11/07** of 23 May 2007 also refers. The Local Government (Audit Committee) Regulations 2014 (SI 244) outline the role and responsibilities of Local Government Audit Committees.

Offaly County Council's Audit Committee was established by way of resolution of the Council in October 2007 and the external members were approved by the Council on the nomination of the County Manager following consultation with the Cathaoirleach.

The current members of the Audit Committee are as follows:

Mr. Brian Gunning, Chairman  
Mr. Peter Scully  
Ms. Connie Hanniffy  
Mr. Michael Loughnane  
Mr. Patrick O'Gorman

The committee was supported and assisted in 2024 by Ms. Anna Marie Delaney Chief Executive, members of the Management Team as well as Mr. Barry Loughlin Head of Internal Audit & Ms Tammy Dunne Staff Officer Internal Audit.

During the course of 2024, the Audit Committee met 4 times holding meetings on the following dates:

6<sup>th</sup> March 2024  
29<sup>th</sup> May 2024  
19<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
5<sup>th</sup> December 2024

The Audit Committee Annual Report for 2024 and Report to Council on 2023 Annual Financial Statement and Local Government Auditor's Report, were presented to the members of the Council by Mr Brian Gunning Audit Committee Chair, on the 24<sup>th</sup> March.

## Section 2



## **Chairman's Statement**

It gives me great pleasure to present the Annual Report of Offaly County Council's Audit Committee for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024.

The Audit Committee has a role in promoting good accounting practices, ensuring better and more informed decision-making, and improving the focus on value for money throughout the organisation. It also supports the work of the Internal Audit Unit and advises the Chief Executive in relation to the operation and development of that unit. Our role, therefore, is advisory rather than supervisory.

We are satisfied that Offaly County Council is well governed, well managed and that there exists a culture that is conducive to pursuing greater efficiencies, value for money and reforms of a kind that will benefit the people of County Offaly. We received full co-operation and support from the Chief Executive and her staff in relation to all aspects of our work. During the year we held productive meetings with both the Local Government Auditor and Chief Executive as well as meeting with the Head of Finance on multiple occasions. We commend the work of the Head of Finance and indeed the efforts of the Finance Department in compiling a balanced budget for 2025 and welcome the increased LPT allocation which will assist Offaly County Council with match funding for regeneration projects in the county's town and villages.

Regarding the Annual Financial Statements, we note and appreciate the progress that has been made over the last number of years in reducing the revenue deficit, with a further reduction of €421k bringing the deficit to €720K by the end of 2023. We wish to acknowledge the achievement in 2023 regarding the reduction of the deficit despite the macroeconomic challenges faced by the Council and would urge continuation of this process to its conclusion. The committee would like to commend the council and indeed the management team of Offaly County Council on their commitment to eliminate the deficit by the end of 2025.

The Audit Committee would like to thank the Internal Audit Unit for their efforts in 2024. It is important to note that the internal audit function is currently staffed at 2 full time employees with the Head of Internal Audit holding a professional qualification. The Head of Internal Audit holds quarterly meetings with the Chief Executive in addition to presenting audit reports to the Management Team and Audit Committee at regular intervals during the year.

The Head of Internal Audit has made good progress within the function regarding the updating of audit charters, adding to the recently developed Internal Audit Strategic Plan and audit universe for Offaly County Council. Good progress was made this year regarding the number of audits completed regarding what was an extensive Audit Plan for 2024. We note that several important recommendations and improvements were implemented by management throughout OCC. The committee will continue to seek feedback on the implementation of recommendations by owners from Internal Audit. The committee received comprehensive updates during 2024 from the Directors of Services in relation to their directorates and regular financial updates from the Head of Finance. We acknowledge and appreciate the updates which greatly assisted the fulfilling of our role.

In relation to the operation of the Audit Committee during 2024 we would like to express our thanks to Mr Barry Loughlin Head of Internal Audit, Ms Tammy Dunne Internal Audit Staff Officer, Ms Fiona Millane Head of Finance, and all the Director of Services for their invaluable support. I also wish to acknowledge the keen interest, commitment, and valuable contributions of all members of our committee. I commend their continued engagement throughout the year and look forward to continuing to fulfil our commitments until the end of our term in 2030. ..

The Audit Committee wish to acknowledge special thanks to Ms Anna-Marie Delaney for all the support she has provided the committee throughout her tenure as Chief Executive. As this is the last Annual Report to be presented during Anna-Marie's tenure the committee would like to commend Anna Marie's efforts as Chief Executive in navigating Offaly County Council through extremely difficult times which included the



pandemic and significant cost of living challenges while remaining committed to eliminating the revenue deficit. In closing the committee would like to wish Anna-Marie upon cessation of her term as Chief Executive all the best in her future endeavours.

**Brian Gunning**  
**Chairman**

### Section 3

#### **Role of the Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee has an independent role in advising the Council on financial reporting processes, internal audit, risk management and audit matters, as part of the systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the Council. The Committee also has a role in promoting good accounting practices, ensuring better and more informed decision-making, and improving the focus on value for money throughout the organisation. It will also support the work of the Internal Audit Unit and advise the Chief Executive in relation to the operation and development of the unit. The Audit Committee has no executive functions, nor powers. It has no role in the detailed audit process or in the signing off of audit reports. Neither does it have any responsibility of involvement in the review and approval (on behalf of management) of Annual Financial Statements.

The key duties of the Audit Committee as outlined in the Audit Committee Charter are:

- To review the financial and budgetary reporting practices and procedures within the local authority.
- To foster the development of best practice in the performance by the Local Authority of its Internal Audit function.
- To review any audited financial statement, auditor's report or auditor's special report in relation to the Local Authority and assess any actions taken within that authority by its Chief Executive in response to such a statement or report, and report its findings to the authority.
- To assess and promote efficiency and value for money with respect to the Local Authority's performance of its functions.
- To review systems that are operated by the Local Authority for the management of risks.
- To review the findings and recommendations of the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) and the response of the Chief Executive to these and take further action as appropriate.

### Section 4      **Activities Undertaken in 2024 to Fulfil Key Duties**

The Committee met on 4 occasions in 2024. Audit Committee Meetings were attended by the following:

- Chief Executive
- Head of Finance
- Directors of Services
- Local Government Auditor

At their meetings the Committee considered and received briefings on:

- Offaly County Council's Annual Financial Statement 2023



- Offaly County Council's Annual Report 2023
- Quarterly updates on Local Government Audit Service Statutory Auditor's Reports
- Quarterly updates on Internal Audit Plan progress
- Internal Audit Reports
- Internal Audit Recommendation Tracking System.
- Internal Audit Charter 2024
- Internal Audit Risk register
- Internal Audit Strategic Plan
- Internal Audit Plan for 2024/2025
- Audit Committee Work Plan 2024/25
- Offaly County Council's Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Report 2023
- Monthly Management Reports to Council

The Committee presented the following to the Council at its meeting on February 19th 2023:

- Audit Committee Annual Report 2023
- Audit Committee Report to Council on 2023 Annual Financial Statement and Local Government Auditor's Report
- Audit Committee Charter 2024
- Audit Committee Work Plan 2024
- Internal Audit Plan 2024

#### **Review of the processes surrounding the LA budget, in year budget monitoring and adoption of the AFS.**

As part of the Audit Committee Work Plan, an update on financials to the latest quarter was provided at each meeting. The Committee met with the Head of Finance in March 2024 and were briefed on current spending and economic challenges.

The Committee also met with the Chief Executive in March 2024 and in private with the Local Government Auditor in December 2024.

#### **Section 5      Internal Audit Activity 2024**

At their final meeting held in December 2024, the Committee considered the content of the Internal Audit Plan for 2025. This plan sets out the details of audits to be carried out during the year ahead. The Committee was satisfied that the content of the plan takes into consideration Internal Audit Strategic plan, advice from the Local Government Auditor and Audit Committee on areas of potential risk for the coming year.

Internal Audit were unable to complete all the audits included in the 2024 audit plan. Unfortunately, due to the complexity of the Cybersecurity Audit and delays in acquiring an independent expert the audit will need to be carried into the 2025 Audit Plan. Internal Audit also noted that while Parking Charges, LEO and NWCPO audits were completed reports will not be presented to the committee until April. At their meetings, the Committee received progress reports on the plan and were kept informed of any deviations as they occurred throughout the year.

The Internal Audit unit completed both non-discretionary audits during the year; Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme audit and the Public Spending Code. As part of their work programme the Internal Audit staff also reviewed the Internal Audit Charter, Internal Audit Procedure Manual and the unit's compliance with the Global Internal Audit standards as set out by the Institute of Internal Auditors. The Internal Audit Unit also monitored the Internal Audit Risk Register which was shared and approved by the Audit Committee.

Collaboration on audit topics took place within the Local Government Internal Auditor's Network both regional and national and staff participated in training and continued professional development activities.

The Committee noted the work undertaken during the year and offered advice intended to support the important role performed by Internal Audit.

The Audit Committee considered the following Internal Audit reports/reviews in 2024:

- SICAP 2023 Review
- Motor Tax stock Review
- Fuel Stocktake Review
- Planning Bond Review
- Travel and Subsistence Audit
- Fire Charges Audit
- Development Contributions Review
- LVP Card Review
- Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Report 2023
- Public Spending Code Quality Assurance In-depth Check Reports:
  - Revenue Programme – SICAP
  - Capital Project – Kylebeg, Banagher & Woodfield, Birr

## Section 6      **Conclusions**

During the course of 2024, Offaly County Council's Audit Committee carried out the work programme set out at the beginning of the year. Reflecting; the members were satisfied with reporting and co-operation from the Chief Executive and staff of Offaly County Council and welcomed the continuation of a good working relationship.

Mr Brian Gunning  
Offaly County Council Audit Committee

Date: 12<sup>TH</sup> March 2025.