



Chief Executive Report December 2023

Longford County Council

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November and December Highlights

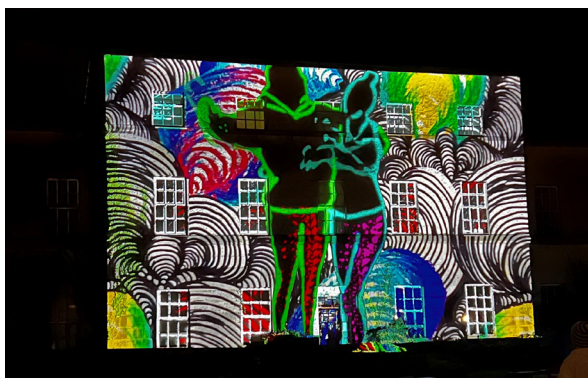
Taoiseach opens Rose Cottage War of Independence Centre

On Sunday 12 November, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar officially opened the Rose Cottage War of Independence Centre, which was home to the late General Sean MacEoin, and headquarters to the North Longford Flying Column during the Battle of Ballinalee 103 years ago.



Project Us lights up Connolly Barracks in Longford Town

Project Us art installation was created by student from Templemichael College and Meán Scoil Mhuire, Longford alongside artist Caroline Conway and music composer Niamh Ní Mheara, commissioned by Longford Arts Office.



Longford County Council Employee Appreciation Day 2023

On 5 December, Aras an Chontae hosted the annual Employee Appreciation Day. The event included the presentation of long service awards, Employee Recognition Awards, and a fascinating keynote speech from Rory O'Connor.



#ShopLongford campaign offers €1,000 in local retail vouchers

Local Enterprise Office Longford and Longford Chamber teamed up with local retailers to offer €1,000 in vouchers with the 'Elf in Longford' campaign, encouraging shoppers to support local during the festive season.



Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Age Friendly Programme

Older Persons' Council

Newly elected chairperson of the Older Persons' Council Kitty Birchill hosted a very busy December meeting.

Conor McGrath, Community Education Facilitator at Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board informed the group of the wide range of classes that are available to local community groups.

Ann Moran, Regional Co-Ordinator of the Age Friendly Healthy Homes, and Mary Carey Longford Healthy Homes Co-Ordinator also presented at the meeting on the new structure of the Healthy Homes programme.

Longford Chief Executive and Chair of Longford Age Friendly Alliance, Paddy Mahon made a presentation to Kitty Hughes to acknowledge her valuable contribution to the Older Persons' Council both locally and nationally over the last number of years.

ACORN Training

As part of the Healthy Homes programme, 38 participants were given ACORN tablets. Aoife McGrath from Age Friendly Ireland hosted a digital skills training workshop in Longford Library on 7 December, where training was given on how to use their ACORN age-friendly tablets. These sessions will be repeated in the new year for library members with ACORN tablets.

Age Friendly Alliance Meeting

The busy December meeting was held on 8 December. Richard Smith, Senior Executive Architect with Longford County Council presented on Active Travel initiatives, in particular the plans for new bus shelters in Longford Town.

Age Friendly Achievement Awards

The Rath Mhuire Community Car, which serves the older community in North Longford was shortlisted in the Transport category at this year's Age Friendly Achievement Awards, hosted by the Wexford Age Friendly Programme on 30 November.

Granard MD Cathaoirleach Cllr Turlough McGovern joined Jackie Kennedy and Pamela Martin from Dolmen Resource group in attendance at the awards along with Director of Service Barbara Heslin and Age Friendly Programme Manager Martina Needham.

Although the Community Car lost out on the night to the winner - the first age-friendly railway station (McDonagh Station, Kilkenny), it was a great achievement to be one of the three shortlisted projects in such an important category as Transport which recognises the vital difference that the availability of good quality, easily accessible, user friendly and reliable transport options can make to an older person.

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

Longford Handy Helps

The Longford Handy Helps collection will be available in Granard Library in January 2024. We are continuing to promote our Handy Helps gadget borrowing initiative in our pilot libraries with new branding and press release displays in our libraries, on our website, and on social media platforms.

Libraries

Events

In addition to the monthly Book Club meetings and Writer's Group meetings, Ballymahon Library hosted a poetry reading by Margaret Nohilly on Saturday 4 November. This event was attended by local poet, Noel Monahan, who also delivered his fourth and final poetry writing workshop on the day.

Ballymahon Library continues to facilitate Longford Westmeath Education and Training Board (LWETB) with English classes for Ukrainians being held weekly on Mondays and Wednesdays. From early November, English language classes are also being delivered weekly by the LWETB on Thursdays.

Art Exhibitions

At the beginning of November, Edgeworthstown library hosted an art exhibition by local artist Laura Doherty who portrayed her wonderful portraits and landscapes in our community room.



The exhibition was a great success with almost 100 people in attendance and €5,000 raised for Laura's chosen charity, An Saol Foundation, who offer support to people with acquired brain injuries. Laura is a friend of the Libraries Services having hosted her first exhibition in Longford Branch Library ten years previous.

An exhibition of photography by teachers and students of St Christopher's Services was launched on 8 November in Longford Branch Library.

An exhibition by the art group Reflections took place in the branch during the month of December.

Summer Stars

We had awards presentation for the winners of our Summer Stars hampers.

Little Library Bags and Little Book at Bedtime

This national programme provided free little library bags for all children starting primary school in September. These bags were available to collect from each library in Longford.

As an additional initiative, there was a

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

'Little Book at Bedtime' free bedtime story books, library card wallets, and reading tips are available at the library to pick up and keep.

Children's Book Festival

In October for the Children's Book Festival, we had a Zoom workshop for national schools with author Andy Stanton in conjunction with Westmeath libraries. Longford Libraries held several events during October including puppet shows with Jay Ryan and Halloween storytelling with Chris Thompson and Maggi McKenna in all our branches. We had other various competitions and arts and crafts sessions.

We had a 'Design a Bookmark' competition where children were invited to design a bookmark. We had prizes for the first three designs in each of the two age categories, and the winner in each category had their bookmark printed professionally. The winners were presented with their prizes and bookmarks in December. Amy Rooney was presented with her prize for coming first place in the 9-13 years age category of the competition.



We were delighted to have a winner from our Edgeworthstown Community and for it to be an avid reader like Amy made it very special. Amy attended the presentation with her mum Emer, classmates, teachers, and Cllr. Paul Ross.

Family Time at Your Library

In December for Family Time at your library, we had several candle-making workshops with Mo Smith, Santa sign workshops, and Mrs Claus Storytelling sessions in all our branches. Several of the libraries had Christmas arts and crafts sessions, carol singing, Christmas storytelling sessions, and much more

Edgeworthstown Library Art Group

November saw the launch of the first Art Group in the library. Following on from the fantastic feedback from art workshops held here in October, Senior Library Assistant Craig is facilitating a monthly group that allows like-minded people to get together and share tips and tricks when it comes to their drawing/painting.

There is great interest in the group, and we envisage that it will go from strength to strength each month.

Book Launches

A collection of short stories and poems was launched in the library on 16 December. Titled 'More Quirky Tales', the book is written by local authors, illustrated by local children, and funded

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by Creative Ireland. The launch was a great success.

On 27 November the latest edition of 'Teabtha' was launched in the library by the Longford Historical Society in Longford Branch. This edition was edited by Martin Morris, Longford County Archivist.

On 28 November, 'En passant and the Purple Jar' book was launched in Edgeworthstown Library. The story "En passant" was written by Daire McLoughlin, Elizabete Bolmane, Chloe Cubbon, Culann Fitzgerald, Oliwia Zygmuntowicz, Leo Kelly, Patricija Zeikmane, Keava Whelan, Roberts Brizga and Deividas Jasiunas. The purple jar is a re-print of Maria Edgeworth's short story.

On 12 December, Luke Baxter and Hugh Farrell launched their latest book 'When Stones Speak' in Longford Branch.

Christmas Coffee Mornings

On 14 December, Granard Library held a Christmas gathering with members of our long-standing Book Club.

On 15 December, Edgeworthstown Library held a coffee morning as a thank you to our customers, followed by Ballymahon Library on 20 December.

All in attendance agreed it was a wonderful and simple way to connect people.

Christmas Programming

The Longford Age Friendly Programme

hosted a series of Christmas Flower Arranging demonstrations with florist Mary Holmes in Ballymahon, Granard, Lanesboro, and Longford Libraries which were very well attended.



Mary created some lovely arrangements which were later raffled off, with lots of very happy ladies heading home with beautiful Christmas florals.

Santa Letter Workshop

On Monday 4 December, Granard Library staff welcomed junior and senior infants from Scoil Samhthann, Ballinalee. We read a story and then hats and coats back on, Santa letters in their hands and we headed to the local post office in Granard town.

On our journey, we sang Christmas songs. In the post office, we were greeted by Pdraig and Mary, as each child went up and handed their letter to Pdraig. Mary was on standby with sweets and a pencil from An Post.

Back at the library, there was another story and a little bit of dancing and joy to Christmas music. Everyone got a Christmas goodie bag filled with little surprises and a membership card.

Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives



The other participating schools were:

- Sacred Heart NS Granard
- St. Bernard's NS, Abbeylara
- St. Columbas NS, Mullinalaghta.

This was a very special event with library staff, children, and teachers extremely happy, and it is hoped to make it an annual event. A huge thank you to Padraig and Mary in the post office for their wonderful reception

Creative Ireland

A total of 39 initiatives and projects were supported across County Longford through Creative Ireland and Longford County Council in 2023.

Still Voices Film Festival 2023 took place from 15-19 November providing the local community access to a diverse programme of films and cultural activities across the five days. This year, the short film competition received 486 films from 67 countries.

The programme included a panel discussion where three filmmakers discussed their career progression from short films.

The festival also included the following events in the library:

- A Creative Ageing screening for an over-60's audience
- An autism-friendly screening for local children
- A workshop on pursuing a career in animation for Transition Year students from Mercy Secondary School, Ballymahon

Creativity in the Older Person

Our Rocking and Bopping musical themed events concluded in December with three concerts taking place in Longford, Granard, and Edgeworthstown Libraries.

Over 30 events were delivered during the autumn as part of this initiative. The feedback has been very positive with many older people enjoying themselves and local musicians engaging with the audiences.

This Creative Ireland funding provided a great opportunity to promote local talent with a varied range of local musicians from county Longford taking part in this programme.

Healthy Ireland

In December we hosted three cookery demonstrations with Fiona Egan from Cloghan Farm in Longford. Fiona showed us how to make family-friendly meals for Christmas using simple ingredients from our cupboards. We had a huge response to the workshops

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with almost 100 people in attendance.

On 4 December, Longford Library hosted a Mindfulness Workshop with Pauline Rogers from Bawn Holistic Therapies, Longford. Pauline showed us some simple ways of targeting and overcoming stress points in our lives. It proved to be a very worthwhile workshop that everyone who attended benefitted from.

Eleanor Glennon facilitated three workshops for students with autism and also for parents of children with autism. Eleanor's play therapy workshops are very popular and were very well received.

Literacy Friendly Longford

Businesses in Longford were invited to nominate a member of staff to train to become a workplace Literacy Friendly Ambassador. A two-day training course was offered in November and provided free training in Literacy Awareness, Plain English, Digital Literacy, and Literacy Friendly Approach.

This training was funded in conjunction with SOLAS and the LWETB as part of the Adult Learning for Life Strategy.

Longford STEAM

The Granard Lego club continued every Thursday with wonderful enthusiasm. This has proven to be a great event in the Library on Thursdays from 4–5pm. The Longford Lego Club was also up and running in November.



Beginners Coding for Kids with Siobhán Grealy and funded by Creative Ireland commenced mid-November, continuing for six weeks in Ballymahon, Granard, and Longford Branche Libraries.

Science Week

Stonepark National School joined Longford Libraries for a Science Week Storytime with Criodán from Midlands Science on 15 November, while on 18 November a 'Go Fly Your Kite' kite-making workshop took place with pupils from St Mary's National School, Edgeworthstown and St Teresa's National School, Killoe.



Library, Arts, Heritage and Archives

The workshops went down a treat thanks to the fun and enthusiastic facilitators George and Glenn.

Archives

Several sessions were held on the best practice in file management on the Council network for the staff of Longford County Council. These sessions were introduced to ensure efficient record usability, and accessibility as well as to improve security for all staff and the documents of their respective department.

These sessions also discussed the importance of record retention schedules, and if/when documents can either be disposed of securely or sent to the archives.

The reorganisation of the Archives continues at Longford headquarters

Heritage Programming

In November, pollinator workshops were delivered for the community as part of the Local Biodiversity Action Fund 2023.

Operation Blue Light Santa

Founded by Community Garda Emma Kiernan, a presentation was made to seven Little Blue Heroes and their families in Ballymahon Library on Saturday 2 December as part of the launch of their Operation Blue Light Heroes book.

The Blue Santa concept has helped raise thousands of euros for several

worthwhile causes and community groups. Now in its third year, all proceeds of this year's book sales are going towards Little Blue Heroes Foundation and St Christopher's Services.

On 20 December, Jessica Thompson, author of Operation Blue Light Heroes, delivered three story-time sessions in Ballymahon Library reading her latest book to children from St Matthew's National School.

Fond Farewell

In November we bid a fond farewell to our friends and colleagues, Mary Kelly and Helen Sheridan, as they retired from the Library Service. They are greatly missed by their local communities in Edgeworthstown and Lanesborough.



Corporate Services

Customer Services

Customer Services responded to 1,550 calls in November and December, as well as 176 emails dealt with through the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and many in-person customers.

Check the Register

Both local and national media campaigns ran through the month of November, which seen a significant increase in Check the Register applications. In addition, information in relation to Check the Register was included in correspondence to all Council tenants and an information leaflet was sent via An Post to every household in county Longford.

Across November and December, 618 checktheregister.ie applications were processed, including both new registrations and updates.

Official Languages Act

Work continues to meet the Official Languages Act (Amendment) 2021 Section 10A obligations. In 2023, 567 out of 2,295 advertisements, or 24.7%, were either in Irish or bilingual, surpassing the 20% target.

Freedom of Information

Freedom of Information (FOI) and Access to Information on the Environment (AIE) requests, as well as Office of the Ombudsman complaints

received are detailed below:

| | Nov | Dec | YTD* |
|----------------------|-----|-----|------|
| FOI requests | 6 | 3 | 60 |
| AIE requests | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| Ombudsman complaints | 1 | 3 | 11 |

*YTD: year to date

Data Protection

The Data Protection Officer attended national and regional data protection officer meetings.

Also in November and December:

- Data Protection Commission complaints received: One
- Data breaches: two
- Data protection queries received and closed: 16

Data Protection training was delivered to all employees of Longford County Council.

Data Protection Newsletter

The first edition of the new Data Protection quarterly newsletter was published in December and made available to all employees.

Elected Members Supports and Meetings Administration

A mix of online and hybrid, the following meetings took place across November and December:

Corporate Services

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 7 November | Corporate Policy Group (CPG) |
| 8 November | Longford County Council |
| 22 November | Longford Municipal District (MD) |
| 27 November | Finance Committee Meeting |
| 28 November | Granard MD |
| 4 December | Statutory Budget Meeting |
| 7 December | Ballymahon MD In Committee |
| 12 December | CPG |
| 13 December | Longford County Council |

Elected Member Events

Events attended by elected members included:

- ALLG Module 6 Training, 18 November
- Scoil Mhuire CSPE class visit to the Council Chamber on 23 November

Communications

Press Releases

Six press releases were issued, including:

- Rose Cottage War of Independence Centre officially opened by An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar
- Congratulating the winners of the 2023 Better Estates Awards

- Longford Community Safety Partnership launches Community Safety Grant scheme
- Congratulating the winners of Longford Sports Star Awards

Events

- Communications provided support to the Regeneration Team for the official opening of the Rose Cottage War of Independence Centre in Ballinalee on 12 November, which was officiated at by Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.
- Communications also supported the Longford Sports Partnership on their hosting, in partnership with The Longford Leader, the 2023 Sports Star Awards.
- Attended the Local Government Management Agency annual Communications Seminar in Dublin.
- Longford County Council was shortlisted at the Excellence in Local Government Awards for the Online Rehome a Dog Campaign in 2023

Social Media

Communications provided a live stream of the Longford Sports Star Awards 2023 from the Longford Arms in November. There was also coverage of the Longford Town Christmas Lights and Project Us from Connolly Barracks.

| | *Reach or Impressions | Follower Count |
|----------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Facebook | 42K | 6,765 (^98) |

Corporate Services

| | | |
|-----------|------|-------------|
| Instagram | 3.4K | 1,777 (^53) |
| Twitter | 19K | 3,474 (^25) |

*Reach: Number of people who had post enter their screen.
Impressions: Number of times post entered a screen

Website Improvements

Communications continue to work with Council sections to update and improve content on Longfordcoco.ie. Work is being undertaken to update elements of the Longford Library website to incorporate a new logo and other user experience improvements.

Health and Safety

Health and Safety Inspections

Fifteen health and safety inspections were completed.

Health and Safety Training

Health and safety briefings on risk assessments and standard operating procedures were held with employees in Roads, Active Travel, Environment and Housing..

Consultation was held with technical employees in the Roads section regarding review and proposed changes to standard drawings for works on minor roads.

Housing Contractor Seminar

Twenty contractors on the Housing Framework recently attended a Health and Safety Seminar in the Rugby Club on 17 November.

Speakers at the seminar included Brian Molloy, Construction Policy and Inspector with the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), and Michael Murray, Public Safety Manager with ESB Networks.

Topics covered at the seminar included safe work at height, asbestos, dangers of silica dust, HSA online training and documentation resources, and danger



of carrying out work in vicinity of ESB cables, among others.

National Standards Authority of Ireland Audit

The ISO 45001 recertification audit for Longford County Council's Safety Management System took place over four days in October and November.

The following sections were audited:

- Fire Services
- Libraries
- Civil Defence
- Roads
- Building Facilities
- Housing

Corporate Services

- Human Resources
- Machinery Yard

The auditor had no findings or opportunity for improvements from the audit, which was an excellent result.

The closing meeting was very positive, and auditor Shane MacLoughlin complemented the safety culture of the organisation, the knowledge, and the engagement of all employees he met during the audit.

Local Enterprise Office

#ShopLongford Campaign 2023

Local Enterprise Office Longford and Longford Chamber teamed up to give shoppers the chance to win great prizes from Longford town's top retail outlets as part of the #ShopLongford campaign.



The campaign started on 21 November with five shops participating each week for four weeks.

To be in with a chance to win, shoppers had to find the elves in the shops, snap a photo and post it to Facebook or Instagram using the hashtag #ElfinLongford, and tag the shop they found the elf in. At the end of each week, the participating shops chose a winner who will receive a €50 voucher, just in time for Christmas shopping season.

The #ElfinLongford is a pilot initiative being undertaken as part of the wider #ShopLongford campaign, which aims to drive footfall and encourage shoppers to look for local during the festive season.

At the end of the campaign, the Longford Shopping Centre won the Shop Longford Champion award and was presented with a certificate of recognition.

Over 60 female business owners gather in Longford for tri-county networking event

Longford, Leitrim and Westmeath Women in Business Network held their last tri-county networking event for 2023 in Longford Rugby Club on Monday, 11 December.

Over 60 female business owners and managers attended. MC on the night was Pat Murphy, Chairperson of the Tri County Women in Business Network, who also facilitated a networking session.

A local business showcase featured Ciara Murphy from ebroadband in Longford, Leitrim was represented by Caroline Ward from Caz Cards and Westmeath was represented by Eibhlin Fitzpatrick from The Refill Mill.

The event concluded with a wind down session delivered by Elaine Collins-Prevost and Karen Collins from Soul Sisters in Longford.



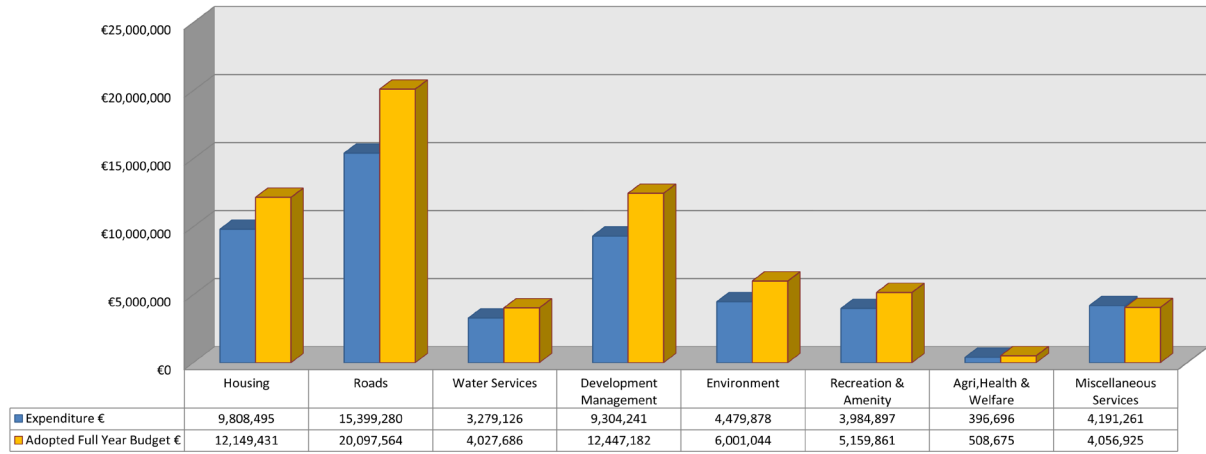
Finance

Revenue and Account Income and Expenditure Summary by Service Division Year to date to quarter end 30 September 2023

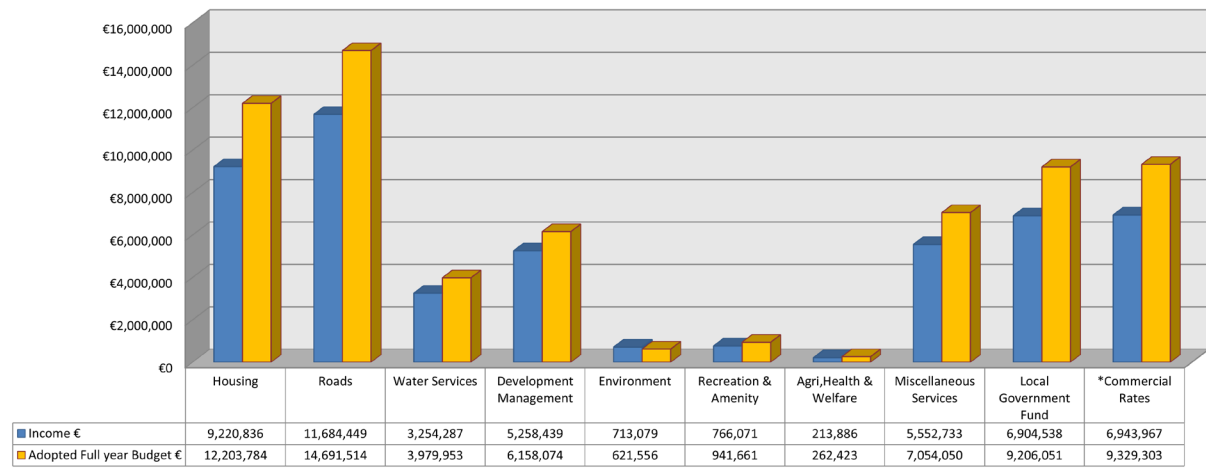
| | EXPENDITURE | | | | INCOME | | | | NET |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| | Expenditure € | Adopted Full Year Budget € | % Budget Spent to date | Budget Remaining € | Income € | Adopted Full year Budget € | % Budget Raised | Budget outstanding € | Actual Overall Surplus/ (Deficit) € |
| Housing | 9,808,495 | 12,149,431 | 81% | 2,340,936 | 9,220,836 | 12,203,784 | 76% | 2,982,948 | (587,659) |
| Roads | 15,399,280 | 20,097,564 | 77% | 4,698,284 | 11,684,449 | 14,691,514 | 80% | 3,007,065 | (3,714,831) |
| Water Services | 3,279,126 | 4,027,686 | 81% | 748,560 | 3,254,287 | 3,979,953 | 82% | 725,666 | (24,839) |
| Development Management | 9,304,241 | 12,447,182 | 75% | 3,142,941 | 5,258,439 | 6,158,074 | 85% | 899,635 | (4,045,802) |
| Environment | 4,479,878 | 6,001,044 | 75% | 1,521,166 | 713,079 | 621,556 | 115% | (91,523) | (3,766,799) |
| Recreation & Amenity | 3,984,897 | 5,159,861 | 77% | 1,174,964 | 766,071 | 941,661 | 81% | 175,590 | (3,218,826) |
| Agri, Health & Welfare | 396,696 | 508,675 | 78% | 111,979 | 213,886 | 262,423 | 82% | 48,537 | (182,810) |
| Miscellaneous Services | 4,191,261 | 4,056,925 | 103% | (134,336) | 5,552,733 | 7,054,050 | 79% | 1,501,317 | 1,361,472 |
| Local Government Fund | | | | | 6,904,538 | 9,206,051 | 75% | 2,301,513 | 6,904,538 |
| *Commercial Rates | | | | | 6,943,967 | 9,329,303 | 74% | 2,385,336 | 6,943,967 |
| | €50,843,874 | €64,448,368 | 79% | €13,604,494 | €50,512,285 | €64,448,369 | 78% | €13,936,084 | (€331,589) |

Finance

Expenditure versus Budget - Quarter 3, 2023



Income versus Budget - Quarter 3, 2023



Finance

Summary of Major Revenue Collections - Quarter 3, 2023

| | Opening Arrears | Billed | To be Collected | Collected | Closing Arrears | Collected |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Quarter 3, 2023 | € | € | € | € | € | % |
| *Rates | €859,492 | €9,258,578 | €10,107,936 | €6,917,286 | €3,190,650 | 68% |
| Rents (inc. RAS) | €882,623 | €5,633,720 | €6,491,747 | €5,619,881 | €871,866 | 87% |
| Housing Loans | €346,022 | €851,329 | €1,197,350 | €867,174 | €330,176 | 72% |

| | Opening Arrears | Billed | To be Collected | Collected | Closing Arrears | Collected |
|------------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Quarter 3, 2022 | € | € | € | € | € | % |
| *Rates | €966,941 | €8,733,549 | €9,132,643 | €6,435,357 | €2,697,286 | 70% |
| Rents (inc. RAS) | €800,153 | €5,546,374 | €6,331,409 | €5,526,132 | €805,277 | 87% |
| Housing Loans | €457,955 | €750,013 | €1,207,968 | €796,145 | €411,823 | 66% |

| | Opening Arrears | Billed | To be Collected | Collected | Closing Arrears | Collected |
|------------------|-----------------|----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|
| VARIANCE YOY | € | € | € | € | € | % |
| *Rates | (€107,449) | €525,029 | €975,293 | €481,929 | €493,364 | -2% |
| Rents (inc. RAS) | €82,470 | €87,346 | €160,338 | €93,749 | €66,589 | -1% |
| Housing Loans | (€111,933) | €101,316 | (€10,618) | €71,029 | (€81,647) | 7% |

Fire Services

Fire Prevention

Five fire safety certificates and 4 court licence applications were processed.

Health and Safety

No incidents to report.

Training

All five stations completed a full days skills training.

Emergency First Responder refresher training completed by 17 firefighters.

Three drivers completed Emergency Service Driver refresher training.

One firefighter completed a full chainsaw course.

Recruitment

The interview process for the Assistant Chief Fire Officer post in Fire Service HQ has been completed. The post will be filled early in the new year.

The interview process for the Full Time Station Officer post in Longford Town has been completed, and will be filled early in the new year.

There are a number of further vacancies in all five fire stations with applications being accepted.

Equipment

The tender has been awarded for the new battery-operated road traffic

cutting equipment. The new equipment will be delivered in early 2024.

Operations

All stations remained fully operational.

Eight personnel attended the Longford County Council long-service awards in Aras an Chontae. Sub Officer Roy Coughlan received the 25 years service award, while others received 20 year service awards.



Major Emergency Management (MEM)

A regional Major Emergency Working Group meeting was held in December.

Climate Action

A new Class B Fire Engine has come into service, replacing a 1999 vehicle. This vehicle utilises cleaner fuel technology producing lower emissions. It also utilises water more efficiently leading to less run off from its activities.

Regeneration

Rose Cottage, Ballinalee

On Sunday 12 November, An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar officially opened the Rose Cottage War of Independence Centre, which was home to the late General Sean MacEoin, and headquarters to the North Longford Flying Column who played an important role during the Battle of Ballinalee 103 years ago.



The opening up of the building as a café and interpretive centre will bring direct employment to the village. The building is within the village core, and bringing it back into use will positively impact on the visual presentation of the village.

Rose Cottage will also be an ideal stopping off point for tourists helping visitors to appreciate and learn the heritage of this special place in Ireland Hidden Heartlands



Moyne Amphitheatre and Latin School

Phase 1 - works on the Amphitheatre are fully complete, and it was officially opened by Minister Heather Humphreys TD on 8 September 2023.

Phase 2 - works are continuing on Moyne Latin School and on the extension to the interpretive centre, with works expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS)

Successful applications under the Project Development Measure of the 2023 ORIS were announced by Minister Heather Humphreys TD on 21 November 2023.

Longford County Council submitted the following two projects under this measure and were successful in receiving funding of €49,500 each for:

- Feasibility and environmental assessments, including appropriate assessment required for the development of water access points in Lough Gowna and North Longford
- Feasibility and environmental assessments, including appropriate assessment required for the development of water access points at Longford, Lanesborough and Ballymahon

Regeneration

URBACT UR Impact

U.R. Impact is an action-planning project co-funded by the URBACT IV European programme. Longford County Council is one of ten partners working together with the aim of addressing the promotion and measurement of the impact of social inclusion and community development in urban regeneration projects.

The network is led by Cinisello Balsamo (Italy) and brings together partners from across Europe, including Municipality of Mértola (Portugal), Broumov Municipality (Czech Republic), Municipality of Targu Frumos (Romania), Municipality of Murcia (Spain), Municipality of Hannut (Belgium), Municipality of Longford (Ireland), Municipality of Bovec (Slovenia), Kamza Municipality (Albania), and Municipality of Bielsko-Biata (Poland).

The goal is to create an Integrated Action Plan that provides an evaluation of the social impact of urban regeneration programs within the municipality. By prioritising social impact, with a focus on community involvement, urban regeneration actions are rethought by placing citizens and their social, economic and environmental well-being at the centre of the processes. It also allows for an increased sense of belonging and civic participation.

The Longford project will focus on the town of Ballymahon, in the support of the delivery of the Pobal le Cheile project but also looking at the wider

town area and to develop an Integrated Action Plan for the town, identifying regeneration projects with a focus on the social impact of those projects.

As part of the initial stages of the project, Longford County Council welcomed the URBACT Lead Expert Liat Rogel and Lead Partner from Cinisello Balsamo, Massimo Capano to Ballymahon on 13 and 14 November, to meet with representatives from Longford County Council and the local community in Ballymahon to gather information on the town and the project.

Representatives from the Regeneration Team visited Cinisello Balsamo, Italy in early December to meet with the partners to learn and exchange knowledge on the social impact of urban regeneration projects, as well as visiting a number of sites around Cinisello Balsamo and Milan that have been regenerated with the social impact as the leading focus.

Longford Town Centre First

The Longford Town Centre First Strategy is currently under development. A very successful public consultation event was held in Longford Library on Tuesday 24 October where over 60 members of the community visited the library to view the initial proposals and give feedback. An online survey was also ran over two weeks at this time which also received over 60 responses.

The feedback from this consultation

Regeneration

and engagements with the Town Team have informed the development of the draft Longford Town Centre First strategy, which is due to be put on public consultation in early January.

Longford Town Team had a first meeting on Tuesday 12 December to review the emerging proposals, which was a very productive and informative meeting with a lot of positivity among the Town Team members around the potential for the Town Centre First Strategy and the delivery of actions for the improvement of Longford Town.

Active Travel

R198 Battery Road Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme

Over November and December surfacing works were completed to the carriageway, footpath and cycle track on the left-hand side of the R198 Battery Road on exiting Longford Town between the entrance to St Albans up to the Demesne Lane junction. The temporary traffic lights have been removed for the lead up to Christmas with two-way traffic being restored.

The current works area has been confined to a much smaller area to end of year and will expand again in January to progress up to the Lisbrack junction with temporary traffic lights to return.

When complete this Pathfinder sub project will deliver over 1.2 km of new footpath and cycle track along this

key arterial route to Longford Town. Works will include the signalisation of the Lisbrack road junction, carriageway and junction tightening along the route and the undergrounding of overhead services, public lighting upgrades and road surface renewal.



N63 Ballinalee Road Pedestrian and Cycle Scheme

The construction of cycle track and footpath on the northern side of the N63 Ballinalee Road is now practically complete with just some signage and road markings yet to be installed.

On the southern side of the N63 significant progress has been achieved with more than 60% of the new cycle track now surfaced on this side and junction tightening works are well underway.



Regeneration

When complete this second Pathfinder sub project will deliver over 1.8 km of new footpath and cycle track along this National secondary route to Longford Town and will connect seamlessly to the Majors Well Road section of the N63 where cycle track and footpath works were completed in January 2023.

Safe Routes to School at Scoil Mhuire, Newtownforbes

Works are substantially complete on this important project that is being delivered under the National Transport Authority's Safe Routes to School Programme supported by An Taisce Green Schools.

Over the last two months the two new raised zebra crossings have been commissioned into operation with the removal of the old warden crossing on the N4 also now complete. Oak trees were also planted within the school grounds in the new green space that was created as a result of the newly offset front boundary where the old staff carpark used to be located.



Ennybegs Shared Path to St Teresa's School

Construction work is now completed on this project that has seen the creation of a new shared path link to connect the village of Ennybegs to St Teresa's National school for both pedestrians and cyclists.

Over the past two months the final surface has been placed on the path including raised priority crossing points and concrete aprons, all the public lights have been switched on, and topsoiling with hedgerow and tree planting has been completed with the path now open for public use.



Planning

Planning Applications

Among the many planning applications being considered at present. The extension application for Centre Parcs has been granted by An Bord Pleanála. This will result in an almost 50% increase in accommodation provision on the site.

The demolition of the existing Power station in Lanesborough has also been granted by An Board Pleanála.

ePlanning has been fully implemented and is running smoothly significantly reducing our paper waste.

There have been several Part VIII development applications processed from Housing, Regeneration, and Active Travel.

The waiver scheme in relation to development contribution has been implemented with a modest uptake in applications.

Longford Town Local Area Plan

Preparation of Longford Town Local Area Plan is currently at pre-draft stage.

Preparation was paused pending the publishing of detailed Census 2022 results at the end of September. These results are now being analysed by the Planning team.

County Development Plan

A report on the progress achieved in securing the objectives of the Longford

County Development Plan 2021-2027, and a review of the progress achieved in implementing the Housing Strategy was prepared for elected members.

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve

The application to UNESCO for Biosphere Reserve status for Lough Ree is progressing. Consultants have been appointed to carry out a public consultation, due to start in January 2024, following a ministerial launch.

This project features in the National Climate Action Plan, Shannon Tourism Masterplan, Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 and the Programme for Government. It is a flagship project in the region and aims to help efforts to combat climate change and reverse biodiversity loss.

Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT)

The Planning Section has published a draft map which was required for Revenue Commissioners under the RZLT legislation. Submissions were invited and reviewed regarding exclusion or inclusion on the map and possible re zoning.

No additional land was identified as being in scope. Therefore, it is not required to publish a supplemental map.

A final map was published on 1 December 2023.

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People • Place • Opportunity

Management Report for December 2023 prepared in accordance with Sec 136 (2) of the Local Government Act 2001, as inserted by Section 51 the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The report outlines key aspects of our service delivery and performance in December 2023 in securing the objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Signed: 
Paddy Mahon
Chief Executive

