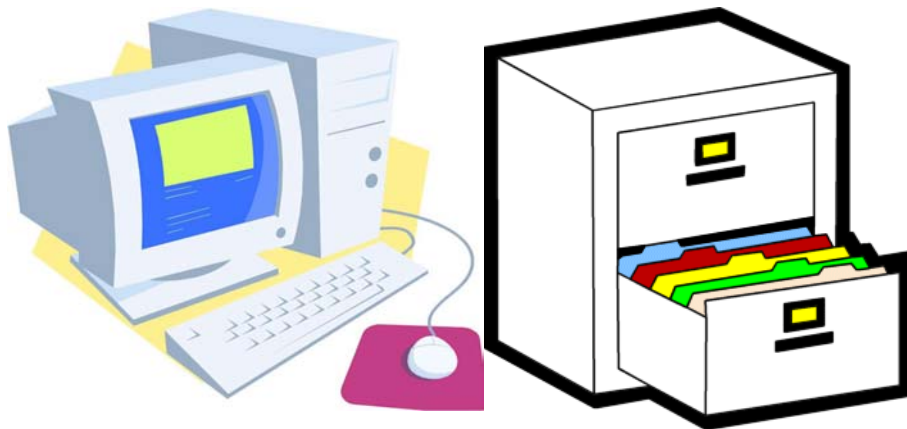


**Comhairle Chontae Longfoirt
Longford County Council**



**Guide to the
Functions, Services & Records
of Longford County Council**



Freedom of **(info)**rmation

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION SECTION 15 REFERENCE BOOK



Comhairle Chontae Longfoirt
Longford County Council

**GUIDE TO THE FUNCTIONS, SERVICES & RECORDS
OF LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL**

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACTS 1997 & 2003

SECTION 15 REFERENCE MANUAL

2007 EDITION

Freedom of information

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
1. Longford County Council	6
1.1 The Role of Longford County Council	
1.2 Strategic Policy Committees	
1.3 Services/Programme Groups	
1.4 Financing of Services	
1.5 Regulations governing the operations of Local Authorities	
1.6 Accountability	
1.7 Format and Classes of Records held by Longford County Council	
1.8 Meetings of Longford County Council	
1.9 Election to County Council	
1.10 Addresses of Longford County Council Offices	
2. Structure Chart for Longford County Council	12
3. How to get information under the Freedom of Information Acts	13
4. Housing and Planning	17
4.1 Housing	
4.2 Planning	
5. Roads and Transportation and Water Services	28
5.1 Roads and Transportation	
5.2 Water Services	
6. Corporate Services, Environment , Emergency Services, Recreation & Amenity	35
6.1 Corporate Services	
6.2 Environment	
6.3 Fire Service	
6.4 Civil Defence	
6.5 Recreation and Amenity	
7. Community and Enterprise, Human Resources, Library and Cultural Services	47
7.1 Community and Enterprise	
7.2 Human Resources	
7.3 Library, Archives and Heritage	
7.4 Arts	
8. Finance and Information Systems	55
8.1 Finance	
8.2 Rates and Higher Education Grants	
8.3 Motor Taxation	
8.4 Information Systems	
9. Glossary of Terms	63
Appendix 1	
Public Access to Information outside the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003	64
Appendix 2	
County Library Service Points - Opening Hours	70
Appendix 3	
Freedom of Information (Fees) Regulations, 2003 – Application Fees	71

INTRODUCTION

Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003

The **Freedom of Information Act, 1997** establishes three new statutory rights:

- a legal right for each person to access information held by public bodies
- a legal right for each person to have official information relating to him/herself amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading
- a legal right for each person to obtain reasons for decisions affecting him/herself

The Act asserts the right of members of the public to obtain access to official information to the greatest extent possible consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy of individuals.

Scope of Section 15 Freedom of Information Act Manual

This Manual is prepared in accordance with the publication requirements set out in Section 15 of the **Freedom of Information Act, 1997 as amended**. It is a reference book containing a general description of:

- the structure and organisation, functions, powers and duties of Longford County Council.
- the services it provides and how these services may be availed of by the public.
- the classes of records/information held by the County Council and how a request to the Council under the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003 can be made.

The Council is disposed to conduct its business in as open and transparent a manner as possible. In keeping with this, it will continue to make available information to the public ***outside the formal procedures*** of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, subject to the general scope of exemptions of the Act.

Availability of Section 15 Freedom of Information Act Manual

This printed Manual is available for consultation, or removal free-of-charge, in the following locations:

- Customer Service Desk, County Council Offices, Aras an Chontae, Gt. Water St, Longford
- Customer Service Desk, Town Council Offices, Market Sq., Longford
- Branch Libraries at Longford, Lanesboro, Granard, Ballymahon, Drumlish and Edgeworthstown
- Citizens Information Centre, Level One, Shopping Centre, Longford.

An electronic copy may be accessed at www.longfordcoco.ie.

Scope and Availability of Section 16 Freedom of Information Act Manual

Another manual under Section 16 of the Freedom of Information Act, as amended, is required to be published by public bodies containing information on the rules and practices related to the work carried out in each of the sections of the Council. The rules, listed in the Section 16 manual, under which the Local Authority makes decisions that affect the rights, privileges, benefits etc. of members of the public are available to the public, so that citizens may make an informed judgement as to whether their entitlements have been accorded to them in full.

Copies of the Section 16 Manual are available for inspection at Customer Service Desk, County Council Offices, Aras an Chontae, Gt. Water St., Longford.

Access to Routinely Available Information

The County Council already makes available to the public certain information on its functions and activities and this will continue without having to make formal application under the Freedom of Information Act. In this regard, see **Appendix 1** at the back of the manual. The **Freedom of Information Act** is intended to facilitate public access to information held by public bodies ***which is not routinely available by other means***. Access to information under the Act is subject to certain exemptions, procedures and time limits. It may not be necessary, in all cases, to use the FOI Act to access information and records - please contact the relevant section who will advise you as to whether the information you require can be provided to you directly or whether you will have to make a formal FOI request in order to access the information.

How to get more information on the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003

If you wish to know more about the Freedom of Information Act, please contact the:

Senior Executive Officer,
Corporate Services,
Aras an Chontae,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.
Tel. 043 - 46231

Fax. 043 – 41233

Email: info@longfordcoco.ie
Website: www.longfordcoco.ie

This reference book is not a **definitive** description of all of the services of the County Council and should you require further details on any aspect please contact the relevant section.

(The terms “local authority”, “county council”, “Longford County Council” and “council” have been used interchangeably throughout this manual)

1. LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

MISSION STATEMENT

To lead the sustainable development and promotion of County Longford and improve the quality of life through the efficient delivery of inclusive, customer focused local services.

1.1 The Role of Longford County Council

Longford County Council was constituted under the Local Government (Ireland) Act, 1898. It is one of 29 County Councils in the Republic of Ireland serving a population of 34,391 (2006 Census) and delivering a wide range of services necessary to the physical, economic, social and cultural life of the county.

Local Authorities perform both a representational and an operational function because the Irish system of Local Government encompasses both democratic representation and public representation.

The **representational** role is performed directly by the elected members of the County Council. Longford County Council has 21 members from 4 electoral areas within the County boundary. Members of the Council are elected according to a system of proportional representation for a period of five years. The Mayor is elected from the membership of the Council at the annual meeting usually held in July of each year.

The wide range of functions performed by the elected representatives are called “reserved functions” and these lay down the framework of policy under which the County Manager operates.

Such functions comprise mainly decisions on major matters of policy and include:

- adoption of annual Budget
- approval for the borrowing of money
- making and varying of Development Plans
- making, amending or revoking of Bye-Laws
- bringing enactments into force
- nominating persons to act on other public bodies.

The County Council makes its decisions by **Resolution** at its monthly meetings.

The **operational** role is performed by the County Manager and his staff. They are responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Council. The functions carried out by the County Manager are called “ executive functions”.

Such functions include:

- employment of staff
- acceptance of tenders
- management of the Local Authority’s property
- the collection of rates and rent
- the granting and refusal of planning permissions
- day-to-day administration.

The County Manager makes his decisions by written **Manager's Order**.

In making his decisions the County Manager must act in a way that is consistent with the policy which has been established by the elected members and have regard to their wishes. He has the right to attend meetings and take part in discussions but is not entitled to vote. Whenever requested by the Mayor or elected members, the County Manager must furnish all information in his possession or procurement concerning any business of the Local Authority. He must inform the elected members before undertaking any new works other than works of maintenance or repair. The Local Authority may prohibit the undertaking of any such works thus brought to its notice, provided that they are not works which the Local Authority is required by law to undertake.

1.2 Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's)

Proposals for the reform of local government in Ireland were published in the policy document "Better Local Government – A Programme for Change", 1996. The objective of the Programme is to create a modern, efficient and properly resourced system of local government based on the following principles:

- Enhancement of local democracy
- Improvement of customer service
- Developing efficiency
- Provision of proper resources

The programme involves the establishment of Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) to enhance the policy-making role of the elected member. Each SPC will examine particular policy areas in detail and report on necessary changes to the full Council. The Committees are comprised of elected members (Councillors) and external representatives of bodies/sectors relevant to the Committees' work.

The Council has four such Strategic Policy Committees as follows:

1. Housing and Building and Social Policy, Planning and Building Control Policy
2. Transportation, Road Development & Maintenance and Road Safety Policy
3. Water Services and Environmental Policies (Cross- Directorate SPC with Roads)
4. Economic, Urban and Rural Development, Cultural and Recreational Policies

The Mayor of the Council and the Chairpersons of the SPC's form a **Corporate Policy Group (CPG)** which has a key role in developing an enhanced role for Councillors. This group links the work of the SPC's, acts as a type of cabinet and provides a forum where policy positions affecting the whole County can be agreed for submission to the full Council.

1.3 Services/Programme Groups

Services are provided for members of the public by the various Departments of Longford County Council under the following 8 Programme Groups which are standard to all Local Authorities:

1. Housing and Building
2. Road Transportation and Safety
3. Water Supply and Sewerage
4. Development Incentives and Controls

5. Environmental Protection
6. Recreation and Amenity
7. Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare
8. Miscellaneous Services

The provision of services above across these eight operational areas are managed by Directors of Services within the following Directorate Structure. The five Directorates in Longford County Council currently cover the areas of :

- Housing, Planning and Forward Planning
- Roads, Transportation and Water Services (Infrastructural Services)
- Corporate, Environment, Emergency Services, Recreation and Amenity
- Human Resources, Community and Enterprise, Economic Development and Cultural Services
- Finance and Information Services

1.4 Financing of Services

The expenditure of Longford County Council on provision of services can be classified under two headings:

1. **Revenue (Current) Expenditure:** on day-to-day provision of services e.g. housing maintenance, road maintenance etc. The main sources of funding for this expenditure are:
 - Government grants and subsidies
 - Commercial rates
 - Income from goods and services e.g. housing rents, housing loan repayments, service charges, planning fees, etc.
2. **Capital Expenditure:** on creating assets e.g. house building, major road improvement works etc. The main sources of funding for this expenditure are:
 - Capital grants from the Exchequer
 - Capital receipts e.g. Sale of houses and lands
 - Borrowing.

1.5 Regulations governing the operations of Local Authorities

Local Authorities operate subject to statute law and specific codes. Their operations are regulated by:

- EU Directives
- National Legislation
- Local Legislation e.g. Bye-Laws
- Adopted policies of the Council.

In addition, a wide range of rules, procedures and guidelines are used by the Local Authority in making its decisions, determinations and recommendations.

A list of these items is published in a separate manual prepared in accordance with Section 16 of The Freedom of Information Act, 1997, as amended.

1.6 Accountability

The Accounts of the Local Authority are subject to audit by the Local Government Auditor who is employed by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Local Authorities are, also, subject to investigation by the Ombudsman, the Information Commissioner, the Commissioner for Environmental Information and the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

1.7 Format and Classes of Records held by Longford County Council

Longford County Council holds a variety of records in the following formats:

- Paper files – most of the County Council's records are held in this format
- Computer databases – information held on disk
- Computer printout
- Ledgers/Registers
- Microfilm/Microfiche – very limited use of this format
- Audio/Video – limited specialist information held in this format.

Classes of Records

Records are maintained by Longford County Council on the following broad subjects:

Internal Administration: These are records relating to the day-to-day management of the County Council. Information held in this area includes general correspondence and subjects such as organisation of training courses; allocation of leave; office provision for staff; staff recruitment, remuneration, re-location and retirement; circulation of information documents and much more.

Policy: This is information held on the formulation and implementation of the Council's policy which can evolve from a range of sources e.g. technical reports; professional opinion of staff and external bodies; adopted resolutions of the Council and Manager's Orders. It is likely to contain analysis of proposals for development from the point of view of cost, impact and practicality.

Legislation: All national legislation governing Local Authority activities is held by the Council as the statutory reference for its programme of works.

Instructions/Guidelines: Information in this category includes Departmental Circulars issued to the Local Authority as instructions/guidelines for the administration of various schemes. It may, also, include recordings by staff of their experiences in operating any such schemes.

EU Directives/Guidelines: Much of the work of the public service is now set out in European Union directives and guidelines on particular aspects of policy enacted at Union level. Material held on these would contain information on the directions and how they are interpreted and operated.

1.8 Meetings of the County Council

Longford County Council is required by law to hold an annual meeting and a budget meeting each year. However, to efficiently conduct the business of the Council it meets on a much more regular basis than this.

- A Monthly meeting of Longford County Council takes place on the 3rd Wednesday of each month (except August) usually at 3.30 pm. in the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae.
- An Annual meeting at which the election of the Mayor takes place is held in June of each year.

- A Budget meeting is held each year to consider the Local Authority Budget for the subsequent year.
- Strategic Policy Committee meetings and Area Committee meetings take place on a regular basis.
- The Mayor may call a meeting at any time or any five members may call a meeting if the Mayor, after requisition by five members, does not call a meeting within seven days.

A set of rules called “**Standing Orders**” are made by the Council to regulate its proceedings and cover items such as notice of meetings, order of business, voting and other matters.

The Mayor chairs Council meetings and has a casting vote which s/he may use at his/her discretion in the case of an equality of votes.

Written “**Minutes**” of the meeting and the resolutions passed at it are prepared. These minutes are circulated to the members for confirmation with the agenda and notice of the next meeting. Following being proposed, seconded and confirmed by the meeting, they are then signed by the Mayor.

Attendance at Meetings

The County Manager has a right to attend Council meetings and to take part in discussions as if he was a member but he does not have a right to vote. Other County Council staff attend as required.

Section 45 of the Local Government Act, 2001 provides a statutory right, subject to special considerations, for both the media and members of the public to attend Council meetings. If a deputation wishes to speak at a Council meeting notice of this intent must be given to the County Council one month in advance.

1.9 Election to the County Council

The last local election for membership of County Councils took place in 2004. It is envisaged that the next local elections will take place in June 2009. Polling in local elections takes place throughout the country on the same day. Election to the Council is by way of proportional representation and casual vacancies in membership caused by death, resignation or disqualification of elected members are filled by co-option of a new member by the remaining members. The co-opted member has the same tenure as the member whose place he takes and retires with the general body of Councillors.

Longford County is currently divided into 4 Electoral Areas i.e. Ballymahon (6 Members); Drumlish (3 Members); Granard (5 Members) and Longford (7 Members), thus, a total of 21 members is elected to Longford County Council. The Mayor is elected from this representation.

Who is entitled to vote in a local election?

Persons aged 18 years and over are entitled to be registered to vote in a local election for the electoral area in which they ordinarily live. Irish citizenship is not a requirement for eligibility to vote at a local election.

Nomination of Candidates

Subject to specified disqualifications and incompatibilities, every person aged 18 years and upwards who is an Irish Citizen, or not being a citizen, is ordinarily resident

in the State, is eligible for election as a member of a Local Authority. Nominations may also be made by any elector who is on the register of electors for the electoral area to which the nomination is made but the candidate must give his consent to the nomination.

The Election

In Longford the Returning Officer is a senior employee who is responsible for the conduct of the election and for declaration of results.

When nominations are completed s/he makes arrangements for holding the election, appoints necessary staff, has ballot papers prepared etc.

The Local Authority must draw up Polling Schemes for the electoral area specifying the polling stations in which people must vote. This is a reserved function of the Council.

1.10 Addresses of Longford County Council Offices

Longford County Council

Aras an Chontae,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.
Tel. 043 – 46231
Fax. 043 – 41233
Email: info@longfordcoco.ie
Website: www.longfordcoco.ie

Out of Hours Emergency Service – Tel: 1850 211 525

Office Hours:

Monday – Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm

Public Holidays Closed

Office Hours – Motor Taxation:

Monday – Friday 9.30am - 4.30pm

Public Holidays Closed

County Library Headquarters, Level 1, Town Centre, Longford

Tel. 043 – 41124/5

Fax. 043 – 48576

Email: library@longfordcoco.ie

County Fire Service, Templemichael, Longford

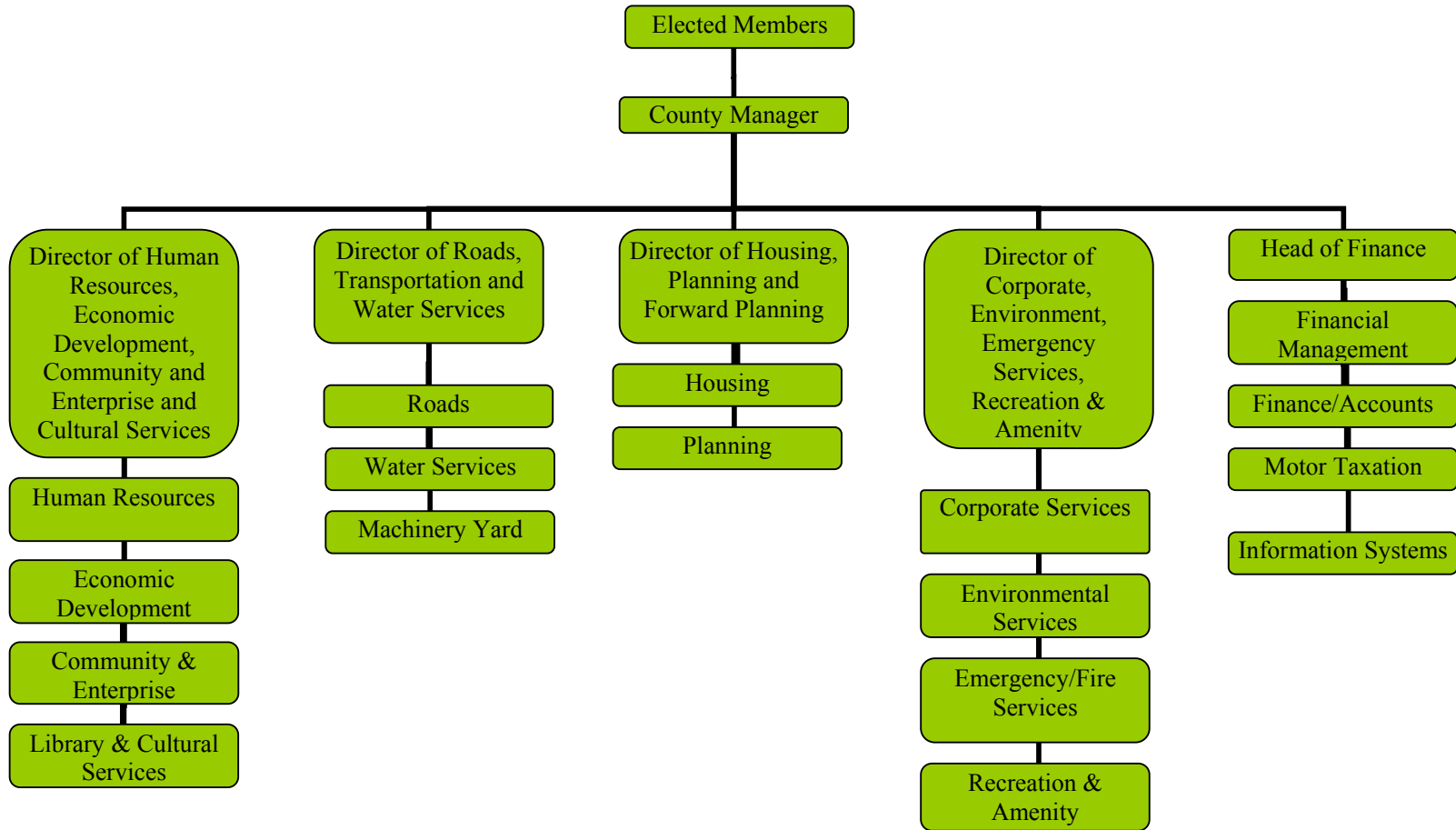
Tel. 043 – 47136

Fax. 043 – 41985

Civil Defence, County Clinic, Dublin Rd., Longford

Tel. 043 – 46228

2. Structure Chart by Directorate & Function for Longford County Council



3. HOW TO GET INFORMATION UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACTS, 1997 and 2003

(The following is not, and does not purport to be, a legal interpretation of The Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003)

3.1 Main Features of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997

The Freedom of Information Act establishes three new statutory rights:

- a legal right for each person to access information held by public bodies
- a legal right for each person to have official information relating to him/herself amended where it is incomplete, incorrect or misleading
- a legal right to obtain reasons for decisions affecting oneself.

In addition, the Act provides for the establishment of an independent Office of Information Commissioner to review decisions relating to Freedom of Information made by public *bodies*.

3.2 Access to Records

The Acts give right of access (**subject to exemptions**) to the following records:

- all records created after the commencement of the Act i.e. 21st October 1998
- all personal records whenever created
- all personnel (staff) records created after 21st October 1995 or earlier if used adversely against a staff member
- earlier records if they would lead to a better understanding of a current record.

3.3 Applications under the Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003

The F.O.I. Acts are designed to allow public access to information held in manual or electronic form by public bodies which is **NOT** available through other sources. Access to information under the Acts is subject to certain exemptions and involves specific procedures and time limits.

Any member of the public is entitled to apply for access to information under the F.O.I. Acts (if the information is not otherwise available).

Applications should be addressed to:

**Freedom of Information Officer,
Corporate Services,
Aras an Chontae,
Longford County Council,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.
Tel: 043-46231; 043-41233
Email: info@longfordcoco.ie**

- Applications should be ***in writing*** (if you have a disability in this regard special arrangements will be made) and should ***indicate that the information is sought under The Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003***
- If applicable, the request should be accompanied by the appropriate up-front fee – see Appendix 3 for details
- If information is desired in a particular form i.e. photocopy, computer disk etc. this should be mentioned in your application

- **You may be required to prove your identity**, especially when requesting personal information so you may, therefore, be asked to produce your Passport, Driving Licence, Birth Certificate or other form of identification
- Please give as much detail as possible to enable the staff of the office to identify the requested record. If you have difficulty in identifying the precise records which you require, the staff of the office will be happy to assist you in preparing your request
- The County Council is obliged to acknowledge a request within 2 weeks of receipt and to respond with a decision usually within 4 weeks, but if Third Parties and/or other factors are involved, within 8 weeks.

3.4 Rights of Review and Appeal

The Freedom of Information Acts set out a series of exemptions to protect sensitive information where its disclosure may damage key interests of the State or of Third Parties. Where the Local Authority invokes these provisions to withhold information, the decision may be appealed. Decisions in relation to deferral of access, charges, forms of access etc. may, also, be the subject of appeal. Details of the appeals mechanisms are given below.

3.5 Internal Review

You may seek internal review of the initial decision which will be carried out by an official at a higher level if:

(a) you are dissatisfied with the initial response received i.e. refusal of all or part of a request, form of access, charges relating to a fee or deposit, or if

(b) you have not received a reply within 4 weeks of your initial application. This is deemed to be a refusal of your request and allows you to proceed to internal review.

Requests for internal review should be submitted in writing to:

**Senior Executive Officer,
Human Resources,
“Freedom of Information”
Aras an Chontae,
Longford County Council,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford. Tel: 043 – 46231
Fax: 043 – 41233
Email: humanresources@longfordcoco.ie**

Such a request for internal review must be submitted within 4 weeks of the initial decision. The Local Authority must complete the review within 3 weeks. If applicable, the internal review request should be accompanied by the appropriate up-front fee – see Appendix 3. **Internal review must normally be completed before an appeal may be made to the Information Commissioner.**

3.6 External Review by the Information Commissioner

Following notification of internal review decision, you may appeal within 6 months (or 2 weeks if Third Parties are involved) to the Information Commissioner for an independent review of the decision. However, if you have not received a reply to your application for internal review within 3 weeks this is deemed to be a refusal and you may appeal the matter to the Commissioner.

The Commissioner may review the following:

- decisions made on internal review under Section 14
- initial decisions on requests made personally by a head of a public body
- decisions to extend the time for consideration of requests under Section 9
- decisions to which the consultation procedures outlined in Section 29 apply.

The Information Commissioner may affirm, annul or make a new decision.

Appeals in writing may be made directly to the Information Commissioner at the following address:

Office of the Information Commissioner,
18 Lr. Leeson St.,
Dublin 2.

Tel: 01- 6395689
Fax: 01- 6395676
Email: info@oic.ie
Website: www.oic.gov.ie

Note: the decision of the Commissioner may be appealed on a point of law only to the High Court (Section 42)

3.7 Fees

Fees may be charged as follows:

(a) Application/Up- Front Fees

- Under the Freedom of Information Act (Fees) Regulations, 2003 the Minister for Finance prescribed an up-front fee to be charged by a public body in respect of a request for access to a **non-personal** record under Section 7 (Request for Access to Records), Section 14 (Review by Heads of Decisions) and Section 34 (Review by Information Commissioner of Decisions) of the Principal Act. See **Appendix 3** for more detailed information.

(b) Search, Retrieval & Photocopying Fees (additional to Application Fees)

- in respect of **personal** records, no fees will be charged unless a large number of records is involved
- in respect of other (**non-personal**) information, fees may be charged in respect of the time spent efficiently locating and copying records based on a standard hourly rate as prescribed by the Minister for Finance
- no charge may apply in respect of the time spent by public bodies considering requests.

A deposit of not less than 20% may be payable if the total fee is likely to exceed €50.79. In these circumstances the Local Authority shall, if so requested, assist the member of the public to amend the request so as to reduce or eliminate the amount of the deposit.

Charges may be waived in the following circumstances:

- where the cost of collecting and accounting for the fee would exceed the amount of the fee
- where the information would be of particular assistance to the understanding of an issue of national importance, or

- in the case of personal information, where such charges would not be reasonable having regard to the means of the requester.

3.8 Policy with regard to Confidentiality and Freedom of Information

Longford County Council undertakes to hold any information provided to it by individuals or others on a confidential basis, subject to its obligations under law, including the Freedom of Information Act. If, for any reason, it is wished that information provided to the council should not be disclosed because of its sensitive nature, then it is incumbent upon the person or body when supplying the information to make clear this wish and to specify the reasons for the sensitivity of the information. The Council will consult with any individual or body so supplying sensitive information before making a decision on any freedom of information request.

4. HOUSING AND PLANNING

4.1 Housing

General Description

The core objective of Housing Policy as set out in Longford County Council's Corporate Plan 2005-2009 is to:

- Provide and maintain an acceptable standard of Social and Affordable housing in a planned environment that meets the needs of the people of County Longford and promotes Social Inclusion.

The Corporate Plan outlines the strategies and actions to be used to achieve these objectives. The Housing & Social Policy, Planning & Building Control Policy S.P.C. with elected members, sectoral and community representatives supported by the Director of Services and Senior Executive Officer, allow for a stronger focus on strategic planning and service delivery.

Functions

The functions of Longford County Council in relation to **Housing** are as follows:

- to provide and manage rented Local Authority housing for those unable to provide housing from their own resources
- to promote home ownership through tenant purchase schemes, shared ownership schemes, affordable housing and various loan options for those who fulfil certain criteria
- to be a facilitator for approved voluntary or non-profit housing organisations by providing rented accommodation and facilities
- to provide accommodation for homeless and Travellers.

Services

Under the direction of the Director of Services or his nominee the Senior Executive Officer and staff of the Housing Department ensure the delivery of the range of Housing Services on a daily basis and the Housing Engineer has responsibility for the design and supervision of the Capital Housing Programme, the maintenance of Local Authority dwellings and the technical assessment of various schemes in place for the assistance of persons housing themselves. Application forms are available for all schemes from the Housing Office. The following services are delivered:

1. Provision and Management of Rented Local Authority housing

- Building/Acquisition of houses
- Extensions to Local Authority houses in lieu of re-housing
- Extensions/alterations to Local Authority houses for needs of disabled persons
- Remedial Works schemes
- Application and assessment for rented Local Authority housing; Transfer applications; Housing allocations
- Housing Rent system; Rent & Tenant purchase annuity collection
- Estate management/tenant training
- Maintenance of Local Authority housing

2. Assistance to persons providing housing for themselves

- House Purchase and Improvement Loan Scheme; Shared Ownership Scheme; Affordable Housing; Improvements in lieu of re-housing
- Tenant purchase scheme administration

- Mortgage Allowance Scheme
- Housing Adaptation Grant for people with a Disability
- Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme
- Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme

3. Voluntary Housing

- Rental Subsidy scheme
- Capital Assistance scheme

4. Provision of accommodation for Homeless and Travellers

- Building, purchasing or improving private homes through schemes as at 2. above
- Direct provision, including local authority housing, group housing, residential caravan parks, transient and temporary halting sites
- Support to voluntary housing schemes as at 3. above.

5. Private Rented Dwellings

- Registration and Enforcement of Regulations

1. PROVISION AND MANAGEMENT OF RENTED LOCAL AUTHORITY HOUSING

Building/Acquisition of Houses: Longford County Council has approximately 1350 rented properties in its ownership. Each year a number of new houses are built while a number will be sold to existing tenants under the “tenant purchase schemes”. An Assessment of Housing Needs is carried out by the Local Authority every three years to establish housing requirements in the area. This assessment was last carried out in 2005 and forms the basis for allocation of housing starts by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The 2008 Housing Needs Assessment is currently in progress. To achieve the targets under the Local Authority Housing Plan and to help local authorities devise strategic plans for the delivery of targets, the Government has introduced a multi-annual construction programme.

Extensions to Local Authority houses in lieu of re-housing: Where a housing applicant or an existing tenant of the Local Authority, existing accommodation is overcrowded, an extension to existing accommodation may be provided in lieu of re-housing.

Extensions/alterations to Local Authority Houses for disabled persons: In cases where a disabled member of a household being resident in a Local Authority house requires extra accommodation or alteration to existing accommodation to meet his/her needs, the Council may carry out such work or may offer alternative housing more suitable to the person’s needs.

Remedial Works schemes: The remedial works schemes allow the Local Authority to completely renovate a street or scheme of Local Authority houses thus providing up-to-date facilities in previously sub-standard accommodation.

Application and assessment for rented Local Authority Housing; Transfer applications and Housing allocations: To apply for accommodation it is necessary to complete an application form which can be obtained along with full details from the Housing Office. Each application is assessed under the “Scheme of Letting Priorities”. In considering applications various reports may be sought and taken into consideration e.g. Medical reports, Health Board reports, Environmental Health Officer’s report and report from other Local Authority if previously a tenant. Transfer applications from existing tenants may, also, be considered. As vacancies arise, houses will be allocated in accordance with applicant’s position on the waiting list as determined under the “Scheme of Letting Priorities”. The “Tenancy Agreement” sets out the conditions applying to the tenancy and must be signed by each tenant.

Housing Rent system: Rent & Tenant purchase annuity collection; Rents on all houses now allocated are based on the “Differential Rents Scheme” as updated. This scheme sets minimum

and maximum rents for Local Authority houses with rents charged on the basis of household income. Fixed rents still apply in the case of some very long standing tenancies. Longford County Council gives tenants the following options in relation to the method of paying rent or tenant purchase annuities:

- **weekly door to door collection**
- **payment at Cash Receipting Office/Customer Service Desk during office hours**
- **payment through An Post Household Budgeting Scheme for tenants in receipt of certain Social Welfare payments**
- **payment through the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS)**
- **payment through Bank/Building Society Standing Order**
- **payment through salary deduction schemes.**

(NON-PAYMENT OF HOUSING RENT MAY LEAD TO LEGAL ACTION FOR RECOVERY OF THE AMOUNT DUE OR EVICTION FROM HOUSE)

Estate Management/Tenant training: Longford County Council welcomes tenant participation in the management of its housing estates and several housing associations have been set up. All tenants must complete a pre-tenancy course.

Housing Maintenance: Policy in relation to maintenance of rented Local Authority dwellings is set out in the "Statement of Policy on Housing Management". This statement details the respective responsibilities of the County Council and the tenant in relation to maintenance.

The responsibility of the tenant to maintain the property in good condition is, also, included in the "Tenancy Agreement" which is signed at commencement of a tenancy.

(REQUESTS FOR HOUSING REPAIRS SHOULD BE MADE TO THE HOUSING_SECTION AT ARAS AN CHONTAE, GT. WATER ST., LONGFORD)

Information available

Relevant guidelines for the provision of the above services are available for consultation at the Housing Office. The staff of the office will help with any queries from the public.

Classes of Records held

- Applications for Housing
- Medical/Social worker reports on applicants
- Environmental Health Officer/C.M.O. reports on accommodation
- Assessment of Individual Housing Need
- Technical report on suitability of accommodation for extension or improvement
- Income details for rent calculation purposes
- Details of rent and payment history
- Revenue collector reports where relevant
- Legal records where relevant
- Plans, costings, tenders relating to provision of housing
- Monthly notification to County Council of allocations
- Maintenance Records
- Statistical information and returns on housing needs, allocations
- Financial records of Housing Operation.

2. ASSISTANCE TO PERSONS PROVIDING HOUSING FOR THEMSELVES

House Purchase and Improvement Loan scheme; Shared Ownership scheme;

Improvements in lieu of re-housing: A person wishing to purchase a house (new or second-hand) or build a house, or improve an existing house but who cannot get a loan from a financial institution may be eligible for a Local Authority loan. In order to qualify, the applicant must meet an

income eligibility test which takes into account the incomes of the principal and any second earner in the household. The maximum loan payable and eligibility criteria is set by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and altered from time to time by Regulation. The same limits will apply in all Local Authorities.

The **Shared Ownership Scheme** offers home ownership in a number of steps to those who cannot afford full ownership in the traditional way. Initially, ownership is shared between the Local Authority and the shared owner. The applicant for this scheme purchases a set percentage of the equity in the house by obtaining a mortgage from the Local Authority or funding it from some other source. The balance of the equity is rented from the Local Authority and is bought out by the shared owner over the period agreed under the scheme. A subsidy towards the rent is available for shared owners on low income.

The **Affordable Housing Scheme** provides for the building of new houses in areas where house prices have created an affordability gap for lower income house purchasers. The houses will be offered for sale to eligible first time purchasers at cost price, and, accordingly, at a significant discount from the market value of comparable houses in the area.

The scheme of **Improvement works in lieu of re-housing** allows a Local Authority to improve or extend a privately owned dwelling for an approved applicant as an alternative to providing Local Authority housing. Persons who benefit under this scheme are required to pay a weekly or monthly charge related to their means and the cost of the works carried out on the house.

Tenant Purchase Scheme: Tenants of a Local Authority house for at least one year may apply to purchase the house which they have rented either outright or by way of shared ownership. The price of the house will be the market value as determined by the Local Authority less discount for years of tenancy (up to a maximum of 10 years). The purchaser must fund the purchase by way of a mortgage loan from a Local Authority, lending agency or other resources. The valuation of the property may be contested by the purchaser on production of a certificate from a certified valuer.

Mortgage Allowance Scheme: This applies to tenants of County Council houses and Voluntary Housing who wish to buy a private house and return their current home to the local authority. The allowance is payable on a reducing basis over a five year period towards the cost of the mortgage. The allowance is payable directly to the mortgage lender and is designed to ease the transition from rent to mortgage.

Housing Adaptation Grant for people with a Disability: This grant is aimed at the adaptation of accommodation to meet the needs of a person with a disability who will occupy the property as their normal place of residence on completion of works.

Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme: This scheme is available to fast track grant aid for minor adaptations which will address mobility problems primarily but not exclusively associated with ageing.

Housing Aid for Older People Grant Scheme: This scheme is available to assist older people (aged 60 years and above) living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs or improvements carried out.

Information available

Relevant guidelines for the provision of the above services may be consulted at the Housing Office.

Classes of Records held

- Housing loan applications as submitted
- Income details supporting application
- Technical reports on property
- Reports from Health Board/Rehabilitation Board re. Disabled Persons Grants
- Mortgage documents
- Individual account records for Housing Loans/Shared Ownership/Improvement Works in lieu of re-housing scheme
- Legal details where applicable.

3. VOLUNTARY HOUSING

In addition to direct provision of Local Authority housing, Longford County Council will support the provision of housing and other facilities by Voluntary Bodies through the following schemes:

Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme: Approved voluntary housing bodies may apply for financial assistance to provide self-contained rented accommodation for low-income households in need of housing. The financing of the accommodation is to meet the capital cost of providing the dwellings by way of a loan and a subsidy in respect of each qualified household. Rent is related to household income. The County Council advances a loan to the voluntary body for the construction of the houses. Funding is 100% of the cost.

A rental subsidy recoupable from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is paid by the County Council and is a fixed amount per eligible dwelling adjusted each year in line with movements in the Consumer Price Index. This subsidy is paid towards the costs of management and maintenance of the dwellings.

Capital Assistance Scheme: Under this scheme Voluntary Bodies provide accommodation and services to meet special housing needs for elderly, disabled or homeless persons. A minimum of three-quarter of houses built under this scheme must be reserved for approved housing applicants of the Local Authority, the homeless or tenants/ tenant purchasers who are returning their existing dwellings to the Local Authority. The Local Authority advances a loan to the Voluntary Body to provide the accommodation and services. The loan is fully subsidised by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Information available

Relevant guidelines for the provision of the above services are Capital Funding Scheme for the Provision of Rental Accommodation by Approved Housing Bodies (Voluntary and Alternative Houses) Memorandum VHU: 2/02 May 2002. This document may be consulted at the Housing Office.

Classes of Records held

- Applications from Voluntary Bodies
- Technical Reports
- Approval of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government
- Mortgage documents
- Financial details of schemes

4. PROVISION OF ACCOMMODATION FOR HOMELESS & TRAVELLERS

In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act, 1998, Longford County Council appointed a Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee to advise on the provision

and management of accommodation for Travellers and, also, adopted the Traveller Accommodation Plan 2005 –2008 for the provision of accommodation for Travellers in their functional area. This plan details the accommodation to be provided over the life of the plan from the various options (standard local authority housing, group housing schemes, permanent residential caravan parks and transient halting sites).

The Longford Homeless Forum Action Plan sets out the strategies and actions that Longford County Council along with the Health Service Executive, Midland Area in partnership with the voluntary bodies see as necessary to provide a coherent and integrated delivery of services to homeless people.

Classes of Records held

- Traveller Accommodation Plan 2005 -2008
- Longford Homeless Forum Action Plan
- Application under the various schemes
- Details and reports in relation to applications.

5. PRIVATE RENTED DWELLINGS

Registration and Enforcement of Regulations: The Residential Tenancies Act, 2004 introduced a new system of registration of private rented dwellings and repealed previous regulations in this area. Part 7 of the Act provides that landlords will have to register details of each tenancy with the **Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB)**. The PRTB is responsible for the registration of tenancies only. It is expected that the PRTB will supply local authorities with details of the tenancies in their area. The data would then be used by the local authority in its enforcement of regulations in accordance with the Housing (Rent Books) Regulations, 1993 and the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations, 1993. The local authority will continue to be responsible for maintaining the register of dwellings (formerly rent controlled dwellings) in accordance with the Housing (Private Rented Dwellings) Regulations, 1982.

Information available

Information on the control of private rented dwellings is best documented in the statutory legislation and regulations listed above. Further details are available from the Housing Office.

Classes of Records held

- Application for Registration
- Register of Properties

Further Information on all Housing Services may be requested from:

Housing Department
Aras an Chontae,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

Administrative Officers, Senior Executive Engineer
Tel: 043 – 43370, 43373, 43409 Fax: 043 – 41233

4.2 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

General Description

The core objective of the Planning and Development section is to:

- Provide a flexible framework for the guidance and control of development within County Longford which will contribute to the growth of the county while protecting and improving overall environmental quality.

Functions

The functions of Longford County Council in relation to planning and development are as follows:

- To process planning applications and development enquiries
- To prepare and publish a County Development Plan and carry out regular reviews of the County Development Plan
- To prepare Local Area Plans and Village Policy Statements and other such documents which promote the integrated, orderly and sustainable development of the county
- To prepare and review the Housing Strategy/Retail Strategy
- To monitor unauthorised development and enforce regulatory codes including Building Control
- To facilitate local industrial development by working with the IDA and other appropriate agencies in relation to sites for industry
- To continue to work in partnership with local communities to facilitate redevelopment and combat rural decline under the Urban/Village Renewal Programme.

Services

The range of planning services are provided by the Senior Planner and staff. Liaison with the Council's Housing, Sanitary, Roads and Fire Services in addition to consultation with various statutory bodies such as the Midland Health Board, An Taisce, the National Roads Authority and Government Departments is also an essential part of the procedure required in assessing various development projects and proposals. Services delivered to the public from the Planning Office at Aras An Chontae are as follows:

- Development Plan
- Local Area Plans
- Village Policy Statements
- Development by the Local Authority/State Authorities
- Planning Permission
- Planning Applications
- Compulsory Purchase and Vesting Orders
- Warning Letters and Enforcement Notices
- Building Control – Commencement Notice and Dispensation/relaxation of Building Regulations
- Environmental Impact Statements
- Urban/Village Renewal Scheme
- Licensing of appliances and cables, etc. on public roads.

County Development Plan: Under Section 9 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 a Local Authority is obliged to make a development plan every 6 years. The current County Development Plan 2003 -2009 was adopted in April 2003 and is currently under review. The review is a two year process involving extensive public consultation that will result in the adoption of a new Plan by April 2009. The new Development Plan will contain a revised housing and retail strategy, an updated list of protected structures, a landscape and wind assessment for the County and a set of guidelines for dwellings in rural areas amongst other matters. The overall goal of the Plan is to contribute to the growth of the economy of County Longford and to provide for the needs of its population while improving the level of environmental quality which currently exists. The Plan aims to promote and allow for the provision of employment opportunities in agriculture, industry and services which will retain the population within the County and contribute to a raising of incomes.

Local Area Plans and Village Policy Statements: Under the County Development Plan, it is intended that two further tiers of plans will cover the County in more detail. These consist of 6 Local Area Plans for the larger towns and villages and 33 village policy statements for smaller villages. Local Area Plans will consist of a set of written objectives for the areas in question and contain zonings, indicative of the level of development considered appropriate in each area. The village policy statements may or may not contain zonings but will give a general indication of the policy of the council in relation to development in those areas.

Development by, on behalf of, or in partnership with the Local Authority or State

Authorities: Development carried out by a planning authority in its own functional area is not subject to the requirement to seek planning permission. However, it is important that the public is consulted about development which will have a material effect on the proper planning and sustainable development of an area. In addition to publishing a newspaper notice, there is now a requirement to erect a site notice on the land in which the proposed development is to occur. Similar provisions apply in respect of specified developments by or on behalf of State Authorities.

Planning Permissions: There are 3 types of planning permissions. An application may be made for Permission, Outline Permission or Permission consequent on the grant of outline permission. The most common type of application made is for permission, often referred to as full permission. However, there are circumstances when a person may wish to ascertain if the planning authority agrees with the proposal in principle before the submission of detailed plans. If a person obtains outline permission, exact details and drawings will have to be submitted and permission obtained consequent on the grant of outline permission before starting work.

Planning Applications: Decisions are issued as quickly as possible – average decision time is 6 weeks – with domestic extensions etc. taking less time to process compared with multiple housing projects. The Council is obliged to consider the “proper planning and sustainable development” of the area in assessing planning applications in accordance with the Planning and Development Act, 2000 and the proposals of the County Development Plan, 2003. Planning proposals must involve public notice prior to making an application. This must be done both

- by a notice in an approved newspaper
- by erecting a site notice, which must be on durable material, erected in a conspicuous position on the land or structure, so as to be easily visible and legible by persons outside the land or structure.

One copy of each public notice must then accompany the application. For the newspaper notice the planning authority require the full page showing the date of publication. The date of the erection of the site notice should be given on the notice and the application form. Applications must be received within 2 weeks of publication of a newspaper notice. A site notice must be erected on or before the day an application is lodged and be maintained in position on the land or structure for a period of 5 weeks from the date of receipt of the planning application by the planning authority and shall be renewed or replaced if it is removed or becomes defaced or illegible within that period.

Inspection of Planning Applications: All planning applications, submitted under the Planning and Development Act, 2000, are available for inspection and purchase by members of the public during office hours at the offices of the planning authority. Any person or body may make observations in writing on an application on payment of a fee within a period of 5 weeks of receipt of the application. All such submissions must be taken into consideration by the Council in making its decision. These submissions are, also, available for public inspection.

Decision Time: The planning authority shall not make a decision on an application until the 5 week period from the date of receipt of the applications has elapsed. Decisions are usually made within 6 weeks and these decisions are posted weekly at the Planning Office, Aras An Chontae; Longford Library and Branch Libraries throughout the county. A list of decisions is, also, sent to local newspapers, elected members, Health Service Executive etc.

Appeals: The planning system includes a comprehensive appeals process. Under this process all planning decisions made by planning authorities may be subjected to independent review by An Bord Pleanala, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1. Appeals must be lodged within four weeks of the decision by the planning authority.

Compulsory Purchase and Vesting Orders: In preparation for proposed developments the County Council may, in the absence of agreement with the owners or where ownership cannot be determined, acquire the property by Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) after following the procedures set out in legislation. Persons whose property may be subject of a CPO made by the Council may appeal to An Bord Pleanala. Vesting Orders are another form of compulsory acquisition of property by the Council. Such orders may be made under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 and the Planning and Development Act, 2000 including vesting orders for protected structures. A person whose property is the subject of such an order may appeal to the Council against the making of the order.

Warning Letters and Enforcement Notices: Under planning legislation, where unauthorised development may have been, is being or may be carried out the planning authority shall issue a warning letter, as soon as may be after the issue of a warning letter, the planning authority shall make a decision as to whether or not to issue an enforcement notice. An enforcement notice shall (a) in respect of a development where no permission has been granted, require that development to cease or not to commence or (b) in respect of a development for which permission has been granted, require that the development will proceed in conformity with the permission. Court proceedings may be initiated by the planning authority in the event of non-compliance with the terms of the notice.

Building Control: Commencement Notice and Dispensation/Relaxation of Building Regulations: The basic system of control is covered by the Building Control Act, 1990 and the Building Control Regulations supplement this system. The primary objective is to protect public health and safety by ensuring compliance with the Building Regulations. Longford County Council is the building control authority for County Longford.

A Fire Safety Certificate is required for development other than domestic and agricultural dwellings. A decision must be made by the Building Control Authority (Longford County Council) on a valid application for a fire safety certificate within 2 months of the date of receipt of the application unless an extension of time is agreed with the applicant. A fee is required for each application. Where the Local Authority grants a Fire Safety Certificate with conditions, or refuses to grant a certificate, the applicant may appeal to An Bord Pleanala within 1 month of the date of the decision. Application forms are available from the Planning Office. Any person who intends to carry out works or make a material change in the use of a building requiring planning permission, or who intends carrying out any other works that require a Fire Safety Certificate, must notify the County Council by way of a Commencement Notice not less than fourteen days and not more than

twenty eight days before development commences. The Building Regulations do not apply to routine repairs or maintenance.

A building control authority may grant a Dispensation from or a Relaxation of a requirement of building regulations. A decision on an application for a dispensation/relaxation must be made within 2 months of the date of receipt of the application, unless an extension of time is agreed with the applicant. Where an applicant is dissatisfied with the decision granted, or a refusal to grant, s/he may appeal to An Bord Pleanala against the decision within 1 month of the date of the decision.

Environmental Impact Statements: Applications for certain categories of major developments must be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The 2001 Planning and Development Regulations determine the scale and type of such developments. Projects which would have a significant effect on the environment are also subject to the procedure irrespective of the size of the proposed project. The statements are assessed by the Council and reference to the submission of such statements must be made in the newspaper and site notice of the proposed development. The EIS is a statement of the likely effects on the environment and will set out any measures to be taken to avoid or moderate environmental damage. Certain large scale developments carried out by or on behalf of the Council will, also, require an EIS and the development shall not be carried out unless An Bord Pleanala has approved it with or without modifications.

Urban and Village Renewal Programme: This scheme, operated under the urban and village renewal sub-programme of OPLURD is a system of grant support. Local Authorities have a major role to play in these initiatives which have transformed cities and towns since the inception of the schemes. The renewal scheme provides for the infrastructural development of designated towns and villages through e.g. the provision of decorative paving, creation of footpaths, landscaping, streetscape furniture, riverside walkways and undergrounding of services in conjunction with the ESB and Telecom Eireann. The settlements chosen are those most likely to gain maximum benefit, due to their location on strategic transport routes and their place in the settlement hierarchy of the county. The Urban and Village Renewal Strategy is continuing in Longford Town, Ballymahon, Granard, Drumlish, Ballinalee, Edgeworthstown, Lanesboro and Abbeyshrule.

Licence for Advertising Structure, Appliances and Cables: Under planning legislation, a licence may be granted to any person to erect, construct, place or maintain an advertisement structure, a vending machine, a hoarding, cable, wires, etc. on, under, over or along a public road. Application forms are available from the Planning Office. There is provision for appeal to An Bord Pleanala in relation to the granting, refusing, withdrawing or continuing of a licence or the conditions of a licence.

Information available

Various leaflets produced by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government dealing with all aspects of planning are available on request from the Planning Office.

Application forms for all planning matters are available from the Planning Office and staff of the office are, also, available for consultation and guidance on all planning matters. Decisions on planning applications are on public display in the Council Offices, County Library and Branch Libraries throughout the county. Notice is also give in the local newspapers. The Health Board and Elected Members of the County Council, also, receive copies of the decisions.

Classes of Records held

- County Development Plan
- Local Area Plans
- Village Policy Statements
- Urban/Village Renewal
- Planning Applications and Decisions appealed
- Planning Register
- Commencement Notices Register
- Unauthorised Development

Further information on Planning Services may be obtained from:

Planning Section
Aras an Chontae,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

Administrative Officer: 043 - 43405

5. ROADS & TRANSPORTATION AND WATER SERVICES

5.1 Roads and Transportation

General Description

The core objective of the Roads and Transportation section is to:

- Ensure that infrastructural transportation policies and investments assist and enhance the economic and social development of County Longford and preserve and improve the physical attractiveness of the county and its background environment.

Functions

The principal functions of Roads & Transportation are:

- maintenance and improvement of existing roads
- planning and implementation of new roads
- promotion and facilitation of improved standards of road safety
- promotion and facilitation of alternative transportation systems.

The goal is to identify and implement the most economically and environmentally sustainable systems of safe transportation to best serve the needs of the county in its immediate and long term development.

“**Public Road**” means a road, over which the public have right-of-way and, for which the road authority carries full maintenance responsibility.

Public Roads are classified as follows:

- **National Primary** roads are major long distance through-routes linking the principal ports and airports, cities and towns
- **National Secondary** roads are medium-distance through routes connecting important towns and linking to the national primary routes
- **Regional** roads interconnect between national roads
- **Local** roads include all rural roads and urban roads other than national or regional roads.

Services

The County is divided into two engineering Areas through which services are delivered to the public by the Director of Services, Administrative and Engineering staff. Each Area is managed by a Senior Executive Area Engineer based at Áras an Chontae. The Roads and Transportation services delivered from the Public Office in Aras an Chontae include the following:

Public Roads Services

- Improvement and maintenance of National Primary Roads
- Improvement and maintenance of National Secondary Roads
- Improvement and maintenance of Regional Roads
- Improvement and maintenance of Local Roads
- Land Acquisition and Compulsory Purchase
- EU Co-Financed Projects
- Involvement of the Community in Maintenance and Improvement Works on Public Roads
- Public Lighting

Non-Public Roads Services

- Local Improvement Schemes

Traffic Management Services

- Traffic Calming
- Low-cost safety and accident prevention schemes

Issue of Licences/Permits

- Temporary Closing of Roads
- Transportation of Abnormal Load

Investigation of Insurance Claims

- Public and Employer liability

General

- Dangerous Structures, Trees etc.
- Temporary Dwellings and Unauthorised Signs
- Extinguishment of Public Rights of Way.

Public Roads

National Primary Roads: Longford County Council is the road authority for the National Primary Roads in the County:

N4 Co. Westmeath - Edgeworthstown - Rooskey

N5 Longford - Tarmonbarry

Total: 46km

National Secondary Roads: Longford County Council is the road authority for the National Secondary Roads in the County:

N55 Co. Westmeath - Edgeworthstown - Granard – Co. Cavan

N63 Longford - Lanesboro

Total: 67km

The National Roads Authority (NRA) has overall responsibility for planning and supervising the construction, improvement and maintenance of the network of national roads (including access routes to the principal ports and airports).

NRA staff consult closely in the preparation of road designs for major schemes with the County Council. The extent of improvement and maintenance works on national roads depends on the annual grant allocation made by the National Roads Authority. The County Council acts on behalf of the NRA in implementing programs of maintenance and improvement by contract and by direct labour.

Regional Roads: Longford County Council is the road authority for the Regional Roads in the County:

Total: 147km

Local Roads: Longford County Council is the road authority for the Local Roads in the County:

Class 1- Local Primary 421km

Class 2- Local Secondary 566km

Class 3- Tertiary Roads 344km

Longford County Council is committed to the maintenance and improvement of non-national roads. In addition to the annual grant allocation from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Council commits significant resources to maintenance and improvement works. Following notification of the grant allocation from the Department, an integrated programme of works is prepared (Annual Road Works Scheme). This programme is the vehicle used to implement discretionary maintenance and improvement works, multi-annual road restoration and maintenance works, and public lighting and traffic management works. The methods of implementing works and the balance between direct labour works and contract works is decided on the basis of economics, efficiency and effectiveness.

Land Acquisition and Compulsory Purchase: In preparation for proposed developments e.g. by-passes, the County Council seeks mutual agreement with the landowners involved for the acquisition of the lands necessary to undertake the roadworks. If agreement cannot be reached, the Local Authority has power to acquire the land by Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) after following the procedures set out in legislation. Persons whose property may be the subject of a CPO made by the Council may appeal to An Bórd Pleanála against the making of the order. Vesting orders are another form of compulsory acquisition of property, available to the Council. Such orders may be made under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 or the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 2000. There is a right of appeal to the Council against the making of such an order.

EU Co-Financed Projects: In 1994, a scheme of specific grants was introduced to meet 100% of the cost to Local Authorities of individual road improvement projects. Improvement projects approved for specific grants qualify for assistance from the European Regional Development Fund. Certain projects relating to Tourism, Forestry, Rural Development and Industry qualify under this scheme.

Community Involvement: The Local Authority may seek the support of local communities in improving and maintaining non-national roads. This involves communities undertaking activities such as opening and maintaining drains, removing grass banks to aid road drainage etc. In addition, communities must contribute financially towards roadworks which the County Council implements. A percentage of the annual Road Restoration Grant is set aside for these Community Schemes.

Public Lighting: As a road authority, Longford County Council is responsible for the provision and maintenance of public lighting.

Non-Public Roads

Local Improvement Schemes: Longford County Council has statutory power under S.81 of the Local Government Act, 2001 to construct and improve certain non-public roads and to undertake minor drainage improvements. The expenses of the Council in carrying out local improvement schemes are met partly by the State Grant and partly by local contribution based on a percentage of the project cost. Future maintenance remains the responsibility of the users.

Traffic Management: *Traffic management provides for the safe and efficient movement of vehicles and persons on the road network within the functional area of Longford County Council.*

Licences, Permits

Temporary Closing of Roads: A road authority has power to temporarily close public roads for road races or other events, to permit the carrying out of works or for any other purpose. The regulations relating to temporary closing of roads require the publication of two notices:

1. a notice of **intention** to temporarily close the road
2. a notice of the **decision** to temporarily close the road.

The notice of intention must allow for objections to be made in writing to the road authority within a specified period being not less than 3 days from the date of publication of the notice. The road authority must consider any objections received and not withdrawn.

Investigation of Insurance Claims: *Public and employer liability claims are processed in consultation with the Roads and Transportation Department and with the Council's insurers.*

General

Dangerous Structures, Trees etc.: There is an obligation on landowners and occupiers to ensure that roadside structures, trees, shrubs etc. do not become a danger to those using or working on a public road. A road authority under the Roads Act, 1993 may serve a written notice on a landowner or occupier requiring the carrying out of specified works within a period of time stated in the notice to ensure the safety of those using or working on a public road. A person on whom such a notice has been served may appeal to the District Court against the notice within 14 days. The road authority may carry out the work itself in a case where a person fails to comply with a notice and may recover the costs from the landowner/occupier. The road authority may take action itself to deal with immediate and serious hazards where it is imperative that a danger be removed at once.

Temporary Dwellings and Unauthorised Signs: Under the provisions of the Roads Act, 1993 a road authority may remove a temporary dwelling from a National Road. It must return the dwelling to the owner, but can seek to recoup any reasonable costs incurred by it. In certain circumstances, it is allowed to dispose of a temporary dwelling. A road authority, also, has power to remove unauthorised signs, caravans, vehicles etc. on public roads which are used for advertising, the sale of goods or the provision of services on those roads. Except in exceptional circumstances, it must return to the owner any sign, caravan etc. removed.

Extinguishment of Public Rights of Way: Where a public right of way is no longer valid, the Local Authority has powers of extinguishment under the Roads Act, 1993. It must publish the proposal in a local newspaper setting out the public right of way to be extinguished, the right of the public to inspect the relevant map during a period which shall be not less than a month and the right to object to the proposal before a specified date. Any objections or submissions made, and not withdrawn, must receive consideration.

Information available

The "Roads Act, 1993", is the main source of information on roads services. The staff of the office will, also, help with any particular queries from members of the public.

Classes of Records held

- Financial Records
- EU Records
- Community Involvement Files
- Local Improvement Schemes
- Construction and Maintenance Files
- Records on applications for Permits

Further information on all Roads Services may be obtained from:

Roads Department,
Aras an Chontae,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

Director of Services
Tel: 043 – 46231 & Fax: 043 - 43439

NORTH & SOUTH AREAS**Functions**

The Area Engineers with their staff are responsible, inter alia, for the following range of services within their respective areas:

- Management of Area
- Management of Area Personnel
- Design and Implementation of various Road Improvement and Traffic Management projects
- General Road Maintenance
- Road Drainage
- Management of Machinery Yard
- Management of Road Safety

Services

Area services relating to roads are delivered through the Area Engineers and their office and outdoor staff. Most records are held in Áras an Chontae.

Machinery Yard: Located at Farnagh, the Machinery section maintains Council plant and vehicles, which are supplemented by hiring-in as necessary. A maintenance service in respect of fixed mechanical plant in Council water and sewerage installations is, also, provided.

Contact Numbers

Area Engineer North & Area Engineer South
Tel: 043 – 46231
Fax: 043 - 43439

5.2. WATER SERVICES

General Description

The core objective of the Water Services section is to:

- Provide environmentally sustainable water services and environmental infrastructure to secure economic and social development and to lobby for increased capital funding.

Functions

The function of the section is to deliver services and develop policy in the areas that are the responsibility of the Water Services Strategic Policy Committee of the Council.

Services

The Director of Services together with the Senior Engineer, Senior Executive Officer, technical and administrative staff deliver the following range of water services to the public.

- Public Water Supplies, Public Sewerage Schemes, Private Water Supplies, Private Sewerage Schemes and Surface Water Drainage.

Public Water and Sewerage Schemes

There are 5 Regional Water Supply Schemes serving the County i.e. Longford Central, Ballymahon, Lanesboro/Newtowncashel, Lough Gowna and Granard with a total network length of 1100 Km and serving an estimated 34,361 consumers. In addition there are 42 private sourced Group Water Schemes.

There are 8 public sewerage schemes i.e. Longford Town, Granard, Edgeworthstown, Legan, Ballymahon, Kenagh, Lanesboro, Newtownforbes, Drumlish. The length of the network is 185 Km.

Potable Water Supplies and Sewerage Treatment

The public may avail of the provision of potable water supplies and the treatment of Urban Waste Water Discharges services in a number of ways.

Potable water

- By connection to the public watermain
- By connection to a group scheme watermain
- By upgrading an existing defective private supply
- By providing a private supply where the options above are not possible.

Sewage Treatment

- By connection to the public sewer
- By connection to a group sewerage scheme.

The public may apply for a licence to connect to the public supplies by contacting the Water Services Section. There is a charge for this service and the cost also covers road restoration and insurance.

Applicants who wish to connect to group schemes should obtain permission from the group and, also, permission from the Council.

The Council provides grants for the provision of new Group Water and Sewerage Schemes. This is where two or more applicants form a group to extend the existing public network or where this is not possible to provide a separate system.

There is also a scheme to provide financial assistance for groups and individuals to upgrade water supplies where they are currently deficient.

Where none of the above options are available individual grants for the provision of domestic wells may be paid.

The Council, also, pays a subsidy for the operation and maintenance of group schemes.

Details of all the above may be obtained from the Rural Water Liaison Officer.

The Council has arranged for monitoring of the quality of Drinking Water in accordance with the Drinking Water Regulations. The results may be obtained by contacting the Water Services Section.

Water Charges: The Council charges for non-domestic water and wastewater services in accordance with the Government's Water Pricing Framework which was introduced in 2000. Under this policy there is a requirement to provide universal metering of non-domestic water supplies by 2006. The aim of this policy is that the cost of providing this service to the non-domestic sector should be fully recovered through the water charge. The collection of these charges is the responsibility of the Water Services Section.

Information available

Information on Water Services may be requested from the Senior Executive Officer, Aras an Chontae, Longford.

Classes of Records held

- Operational details in relation to schemes e.g. maps of pipe works in GIS and in hard copy format
- Details of applications for water and sewerage connections
- Contracts for the provision and maintenance of schemes
- General files in relation to water and sewerage schemes
- Strategic Rural Water Plan
- Sludge Management Strategy
- Network Appraisal and Renewal Plan
- Flood Study of the River Camlin
- Assessment of Need for Water Services
- Sludge Register.

Contact Numbers

Senior Engineer: 043 – 43383

Senior Executive Officer: 043 - 43362

6. CORPORATE SERVICES, ENVIRONMENT, EMERGENCY SERVICES, RECREATION AND AMENITY

6.1 Corporate Services

General Description

The core objective of the Corporate Services Department in Longford County Council is to promote the delivery of efficient and effective services across the organisation. The department is responsible for ensuring that an appropriate corporate image of the Council is presented in every regard. In particular, the Corporate Services Department is responsible for the operation of the Council's Customer Service Desk, the Cash Receiving Office and the Council's Telephone Reception Service.

Functions

The Corporate Services Department provides the administrative support service in respect of Council Meetings and the work of the County Manager. Much of the work relating to publicising the Council's activities is carried out by the Corporate Services Department. The Corporate Services Department is, also, centrally involved in organising functions at which Civic Honours are conferred.

The Corporate Services Department supports the role of the elected members of Longford County Council. The compilation of the Register of Electors is carried out within the Corporate Affairs Department and the holding of Local Elections is also a function for which the department has responsibility. Many issues that have an impact across the organisation are coordinated and carried out as part of the work in the department. Examples of activities that are dealt with are Corporate Planning, the administration of matters relating to Health and Safety, Freedom of Information requests, contact with the Office of the Ombudsman, Casual Trading, the Official Languages Act and the National Disability Strategy.

Services

Secretariat Service: In accordance with the provisions of Section 46 of the Local Government Act, 2001 a Meetings Administrator has been appointed to provide a secretariat service for all statutory meetings of the County Council. The Meetings Administrator is based in the Corporate Services Department.

Register of Electors: Longford County Council is responsible for the production of the Register of Electors for County Longford.

Local Elections: Local Elections are held every five years in line with the constitutional amendment passed on the June 11th, 1999. The arrangements relating to the holding of the Local Elections is coordinated by the Corporate Services Department.

Annual Report: Under the provisions of the Local Government Acts, Longford County Council is required to publish an Annual Report in which the performance of its functions in the previous year are highlighted. The information for inclusion in the Annual Report is collated by the Corporate Services Department.

Corporate Plan: Under the provisions of Section 134 of the Local Government Act, 2001, Longford County Council is required to draw up a Corporate Plan following the holding of a Local Election. The Corporate Plan is a statement of the objectives, strategies and priorities for the Council for the 5 year period for which the Council is elected.

Civic Honours: The highest honour that can be conferred by Longford County Council is the according of a Civic Reception to honour an achievement by an individual, group or organisation. The hosting of a Civic Reception is coordinated by the Corporate Services Department.

Customer Services: Longford County Council is committed to the delivery of customer orientated services which will respond to the needs, concerns and aspirations of the people of Longford. Employees are required to maintain appropriate ethical standards and to be accountable in the way in which they conduct business on the Council's behalf. In this regard the Council has published a Customer Care Plan which sets out a statement of principles on issues such as accessibility, equality, the making of complaints and the means by which information relating to services can be obtained. The Customer Care Plan also contains details relating to the standards for customer service that the Council is seeking to achieve. The Customer Care Plan is designed to enhance the quality of interaction between customers, employees and the Council's elected members and to ensure that all services are delivered in an appropriate, transparent, courteous, fair and timely manner, that is sensitive to the needs of the customers of the Council. Copies of the Customer Care Plan can be obtained from the Corporate Services Department.

Health and Safety: Longford County Council has prepared Safety Statements in accordance with the requirements of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989. A comprehensive training programme related to Health and Safety is provided to the employees of the Council. The Council employs a Health and Safety Advisor who works with the Council's Safety Management Committee and the Safety Representatives to ensure that a safe working environment is maintained for and by the employees of the Council.

Freedom of Information: The processing of requests for information received under the provisions of Freedom of Information legislation is coordinated by the Freedom of Information Officer who is based in the Corporate Services Department. The Section of this manual entitled "**How to get Information under the Freedom of Information Acts**" provides more details regarding the making of Freedom of Information requests.

Ombudsman: The processing of requests for information received from the Office of the Ombudsman is coordinated by employees in the Corporate Services Department.

Casual Trading: The Council is responsible for the control and regulation of Casual Trading in its functional area. Any person engaged in Casual Trading must obtain a Casual Trading Licence before they can legally trade in a public place in the county.

Official Languages Act: The Official Languages Act, 2003 makes provision for a statutory framework or "Irish Language Scheme" that will outline how the Council will deliver its services through the medium of the Irish language. The primary objective of the Act is to ensure the availability and provision of a higher standard of public services through the medium of Irish. Longford County Council has submitted a Draft Irish Language Scheme to the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. When the approval of the Minister is received the Council will implement the actions that are contained in it.

National Disability Strategy: The Disability Act, 2005 was enacted with the overall aim of advancing the participation by persons with disabilities in everyday life. The Disability Act places significant responsibilities on public bodies to ensure, over time, that public buildings and services are accessible to people with disabilities. The Council has established a Disability Action Team that is representative of each of the service areas and departments of the Council. An Action Plan for the implementation of the Disability Strategy has been prepared. The Council has appointed an Access Officer who is based in the Corporate Services Department. The Access Officer facilitates the meetings of the Disability Action Team.

Information available

Various information leaflets, advertisements that are placed in local and national newspapers and advertising campaigns on radio and television provide information relating to the Register of Electors.

The Council's Annual Report and Corporate Plan are available and can be obtained by contacting the Corporate Services Department.

Classes of Records held

- Council Property
- Franchise
- Elections
- Buildings Management
- Customer Services
- Freedom of Information
- Ombudsman
- Health and Safety
- Public Relations
- National Disability Strategy
- Law
- General Administration & IT
- Meetings Administrator
- County Manager's Records
- Records of County Council Meetings
- Manager's Orders

Further information on the range of services delivered by the various departments within the Directorate may be requested from:

Corporate Services Department
Áras an Chontae,
Great Water Street,
Longford

Contact Numbers

Administrative Officers – 043 – 43304; 043 – 43433

Assistant Staff Officer – 043 - 43311

Clerical Officer – 043 – 43449

6.2 ENVIRONMENT

General Description

The core objective of the Environment Section is to:

- Provideenvironmental infrastructure to secure economic and social development and to lobby for increased capital funding.

Functions

The principal functions are to protect and enhance the physical environment, to make provision for waste disposal and to control and eliminate sources of environmental pollution.

Services

The Director of Services together with the technical and administrative staff deliver the following range of environmental services:

- Waste reduction and recycling
- Litter Control
- Environmental Awards Scheme: Tidy Towns, Green Schools, Tidy Estate/Area
- Environmental Awareness Programme
- Pollution Control (water, air, noise)
- Monitoring of Potentially Dangerous and Derelict Buildings and Places
- Inspection of Premises
- Dangerous Substances Licences
- Control of Animals
- Road Sweeping Operations
- Maintenance Support for Burial Grounds
- Veterinary Services and Food Safety
- Environmental Impact Statements
- Fire Control and Prevention Services
- Civil Defence and Emergency Planning.

Waste Reduction and Recycling: Longford County Council promotes waste reduction and recycling through sponsored Bottle and Can Banks located at the Town Centre, Longford and in other county towns.

Litter Control: Under the Litter Pollution Acts, 1982 - 1997, the Council employs a Litter Warden to issue on-the-spot fines to offenders and to assist in awareness activities.

Environmental Awards Scheme: Longford County Council participates in the Environmental Awards Scheme that is organised by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Projects undertaken by the County Council include:

- Green Schools Competition
- Tidy Towns Competition
- Litter Initiative Grant Scheme
- Environmental Partnership Fund Scheme
- Tidy Schools Competition.

Applications forms and information are available from the Environment Office when such competitions/events are organised.

Awareness of the Environment: Longford County Council is conscious of its role in continuing to heighten awareness of the environment. To this end it has launched an Environmental Awareness Week Campaign involving ENFO and other interested groups and gives talks to community groups and schools on the subject.

Pollution Control: Under the Pollution Control Acts the quality of drinking water, surface water etc. is monitored in the Environmental Laboratory of the County Council and pollution incidents are investigated. Where necessary, the Council may serve notice on the offender to cease pollution or if necessary proceed to Court Order. A Water Pollution Register is maintained and may be inspected at the Environment Office at Aras an Chontae. Under the Air Pollution Act, 1987 the County Council is empowered to monitor offensive emissions. Noise Pollution is dealt with under the Noise Regulations, 1994 and any person, including a Local Authority, may make an application to the District Court seeking an Order to deal with the nuisance. The Council operates an environmental laboratory to monitor the natural environment and contributory pollution levels in the County.

Monitoring of Potentially Dangerous Buildings and Structures: A Fire Authority is empowered to serve a **Fire Safety Notice** on the owner or occupier of any building, which it considers to be, potentially dangerous i.e. a building, which in the event of fire occurring in it would constitute a serious danger to life. A fire safety notice may prohibit the use of a building or part of it, or prohibit its use for specified purposes, or prohibit the use of the building until certain things are done to the satisfaction of the Fire Authority to make the building safe. The County Council may apply to the High Court for an order forbidding or curtailing the use of a dangerous building.

Where a Fire Authority is of the opinion that certain substances of a flammable, explosive or potentially explosive nature are used, stored or deposited adjacent to a building so as to represent a serious danger to life, it may serve a Fire Safety Notice requiring that certain steps be taken to reduce the danger to a reasonable level. A person on whom a Fire Safety Notice is served may within 14 days from the date of the service appeal against the notice to the District Court on certain grounds.

Property owners are encouraged to engage in re-development of the sites. Where necessary the Local Authority will use its statutory powers under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990 to have dangerous, unsightly and derelict structures demolished, removed or screened as appropriate.

Inspection of Premises: An authorised officer of the County Council may enter at all reasonable times and inspect land or a building to which the public has access. As well as carrying out fire safety inspections, an officer may examine premises for pre-fire planning purposes i.e. to familiarise the fire brigade with the layout etc. Where an officer is refused entry to land or a building, the Council may apply to the District Court for a warrant authorising such entry.

Dangerous Substances Licences: As a Fire Authority Longford County Council is responsible for the licensing of **Petroleum Stores**. It may decide to grant or refuse an application for a licence. The applicant, if dissatisfied, may appeal to the Health and Safety Authority and if the applicant still disagrees with the decision of this Authority s/he may appeal to the High Court. Application forms are available from the Environment Office.

Control of Animals: The Council employs a full time Dog Warden to deal with stray and unwanted dogs. The Council, also, operates the Dog Licensing Scheme.

Road Sweeping Operations: This function is carried out on an agency basis by the Roads and Transportation Section.

Maintenance Support for Burial Grounds: The Council has established LJI Ltd, (Jobs Initiative Programme) as a separate company which, through FÁS, employs people in the maintenance and improvement of Burial Grounds. The participants are long term unemployed and in addition to gainful employment are provided with appropriate training to enable them compete for full time jobs. Financial and practical support is, also, given to local cemetery committees.

Veterinary Services and Food Safety: The main responsibility of the Veterinary Department is the delivery of services provided by the Council as an Official Agency under contract to the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. In this regard food premises and operations in the following categories are supervised with a view to ensuring compliance with food safety legislation.

- Domestic Abattoirs
- Low throughput meat processing premises
- Meat transport vehicles

Environmental Impact Statements: an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) must accompany applications for certain categories of major developments. Regulations determine the scale and type of such developments. Projects, which would have a significant effect on the environment are, also, subject to the procedure irrespective of the size of the proposed project. The Council assesses the Statements and reference to the submission of such statements must be made in the newspaper notice of the proposed development. The EIS is a statement of the likely effects on the environment and will set out any measures to be taken to avoid or moderate environmental damage. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to whom an application for an integrated pollution control licence must be made assesses the environmental pollution aspects of an EIS. Environmental Impact Assessment must, also, be carried out for certain large-scale developments carried out by or on behalf of the Council.

Information available

Members of the public currently enjoy comprehensive freedom of access to information on the environment in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Access to Information on the Environment Regulations), 2007. These Regulations set out the procedures for public access to information relating to the Environment held by public bodies.

Full details in relation to these Regulations may be had from the Corporate & Environment Section, County Council Offices, Aras an Chontae, Longford.

Classes of Records held

- Waste Reduction and Recycling
- Litter Warden Service
- Environment Competitions
- Dangerous Buildings - Notices
- Pollution Files - Results of Monitoring Water Quality
- Integrated Pollution Control Licences granted and under consideration by the EPA
- Waste Management Plan
- Litter Management Plan
- Construction and Demolition Waste
- Lough Derg/Ree Catchment Plan
- Burial Registers (held by Cemetery Caretakers)
- Dog licences database
- Food Safety Records.

Further information on Environmental Services may be requested from:

Environment Section,
Camlin Court Offices,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

043 – 43367

Website: Check out the Environment website page at www.longfordcoco.ie.

6.3 FIRE SERVICE

General Description

The core objective is to:

- Provide a high standard operational/fire fighting service
- Provide a safety/prevention/advisory service.

Functions

Longford County Council is the Fire Authority for the whole County and its functions are to:

- make provision for the prompt and efficient extinguishing of fires in buildings and other places of all kinds in its functional area and for the protection and rescue of persons and property from injury by fire, and
- establish and maintain a fire brigade, provide premises and make such
- other provision as it considers necessary or desirable for such purpose, and
- make adequate provision for the reception of and response to calls for assistance of the fire brigade.

Services

The services of the Department are administered by the Chief Fire Officer and staff from the Fire Service Department, Templemichael, Longford and the Fire Brigade locations throughout the County. The administration of Fire Safety Certificates and operation of the Building Control Regulations is carried out by the Planning Office at Aras an Chontae. The Chief Fire Officer makes recommendations in relation to the granting or refusal of Fire Safety Certificates.

Fire Brigades: A fire authority is required to make reasonable provision for the prompt extinguishing of fires occurring in buildings and other places and for the Protection and rescue of persons and property from injury by fire. For this purpose, Fire Brigades are located at and deliver emergency fire-fighting services from the following areas: Longford, Edgeworthstown, Granard, Lanesborough and Ballymahon. These brigades provide a fast response around the clock, not only for fires, but, also, for traffic accidents, flooding and other emergencies. The fire service by its basic nature must be structured, flexible, adaptable and capable of responding quickly. Its role must be understood while at the same time it must appreciate and understand its own position and limitations. The service is, therefore, delivered through clearly defined operational procedures specified in its “**Operational Plan**”. All fire personnel are instructed and trained in the procedures as outlined in the Plan.

Fire Charges: The Council levels charges for attending fires and other emergencies.

Information Available:

The “Operational Plan” for the Longford Fire Service is available for inspection on request to the Senior Executive Officer, Corporate and Environment Section, Aras an Chontae, Longford.

Classes of Records held

- Personnel Files; Training Records; Building Records
- Equipment Records; Protective Clothing Files;
- Fire Certificate Applications; Fire Occurrence Sheets
- Charges for Services

Further information on the Fire Service is available from:

Fire Service Department,
Templemichael,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

Chief Fire Officer
Tel. 043 - 47136 or 46231, ext. 297

Fire Brigades

All emergency calls to be made by dialling **999** or **112**

MAJOR EMERGENCY PLAN

A **Major Emergency** is defined as any event which, usually, with little or no warning causes or threatens death or injury, serious disruption of essential services or damage to property, beyond the normal capabilities of the Gardai, Local Authorities (including Fire Authorities) and Health Services. Such incidents could be major fires, explosions, leakage of dangerous substances, transportation accidents.

Longford County Council has in place a "**Major Emergency Plan**" which outlines the procedures to be followed and the functions to be undertaken by the various agencies in the event of a major emergency. The procedures and functions are co-ordinated with those of the Midland Health Board and the Gardai. The Major Emergency Plan is usually activated by the agency (Local Authority, Gardai or Health Board) which first becomes aware of a major emergency.

The preparation and review of this plan is a Local Authority function to which all sections of the organisation contribute. The main resource of the Local Authority for dealing with these emergencies (apart from the Fire Service) lies with the Roads and Transportation Section.

Information available

The Major Emergency Plan is available for inspection on request to the Senior Executive Officer, Corporate and Environment Section, Aras an Chontae, Longford.

6. 4 CIVIL DEFENCE

General Description

The Civil Defence Service of the Local Authority is dedicated to assisting the community in a variety of ways, but particularly in lessening human suffering in times of crisis.

Functions

Its main functions are as follows:

- to formulate plans as required by the Local Authority
- to co-ordinate arrangements necessary for civil defence plans
- to arrange for the formation, recruitment, training etc. in relation to civil defence and to give instruction to members of the public
- to arrange for the training of personnel for duty under the Peacetime Nuclear Accident Plan and to formulate plans for civil defence involvement in the Major Emergency Plan of the Local Authority.

Services

The Civil Defence Officer, who controls operations and co-ordinates emergency responses, gives immediate direction. Other personnel are volunteers. Voluntary members are provided with instruction and training in order to deliver the following services if required:

- Auxiliary Fire Service
- Casualty
- Rescue
- Warden
- Welfare

Auxiliary Fire Service: At present, this service is not available in County Longford, but it is proposed that training be provided in the AFS at some future date to enable personnel to assist the Fire Service in major emergency situations.

In addition, voluntary members may be called out to give assistance in the event of environmental problems such as biological pollution of drinking water sources. Civil Defence provide first aid, stewarding and crowd control at local community and sporting events. Under the Peacetime Nuclear Accident Plan the response would be the implementation of the Local Radiation Plan.

Casualty: All Civil Defence members receive instruction in basic First Aid and while on duty must assist in any way possible when they encounter casualties requiring First Aid. The greatest demand for assistance from Civil Defence is for ambulance and First Aid cover at community events.

Many organisations, also, avail of the excellent First Aid training which can be provided by Civil Defence instructors.

Rescue: Civil Defence train rescue personnel to assist the Fire Service and the Gardai in locating people who are lost or trapped and in removing injured or ill people without allowing their condition to deteriorate.

Warden: are trained, in the event of a radiological emergency, to monitor and report on levels of radiation in each area and assist where required in implementation of control measures.

Welfare: Civil Defence may be involved in feeding and administering accommodation for people displaced from their homes owing to some disaster.

Information available

Information is available on request from the Civil Defence Officer, Dublin Rd., Longford or from the Civil Defence Board, Civil Defence College, Benamore, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary.

Classes of Records held

- Administration
- Training; Classes
- Vehicles & Equipment
- Personnel

Further information on the Civil Defence Service may be obtained from:

Civil Defence Officer,
County Clinic,
Dublin Rd.,
Longford
Tel. 043- 46228/46231
Email: civildefence@longfordcoco.ie

Civil Defence Board,
Civil Defence College,
Benamore,
Roscrea,
Co. Tipperary.
Tel: 050525310
Email: civildefence@defence.irlgov.ie
Web: www.civildefence.ie

6. 5 RECREATION AND AMENITY

General Description

This programme includes the provision of swimming pools, parks and open spaces and library and cultural services.

Functions

The main functions in relation to Recreation and Amenity in this Directorate relate to:

- Swimming Pools
- Playground Maintenance
- Open Spaces

Services

Swimming Pools: Longford County Council makes an annual contribution to the operation of the new Swimming Pool in Longford Town.

Playground Maintenance: Longford County Council makes an annual contribution to the maintenance of the Playgrounds in the Mall Complex, Longford Town and, also, in Lanesboro, Ballymahon, Granard and Edgeworthstown.

Open Spaces: The Council, also, makes an annual contribution to the amenity areas at Lough Gowna, Barley Harbour and Lanesboro.

Information available

Information on the delivery of Recreation and Amenity services within the Directorate may be requested from:

Corporate Services Department
Áras an Chontae,
Great Water Street,
Longford

Classes of Records held

- Swimming Pool
- Playground
- Amenity

Contact Numbers

Administrative Officers – 043 – 43304; 043 – 43433
Assistant Staff Officer – 043 - 43311
Clerical Officer – 043 – 43449

7. COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE, HUMAN RESOURCES, LIBRARY AND CULTURAL SERVICES

7.1 Community and Enterprise

General Description

The Directorate covers a wide range of activities including the promotion of economic and social development, human resource function and the provision of library and cultural services.

Functions

The main functions of the Community & Enterprise Section are:

- To support the Longford County Development Board
- To facilitate monitoring and implementation of the Longford County Strategy
- To support the work of the Social Inclusion Measures Working Group
- To administer the Cohesion and Voluntary Funding
- To facilitate the implementation of the Longford Traveller Interagency Plan.
- To support and develop the Longford County Community & Voluntary Forum
- To maintain Database of Registered Community & Voluntary Groups in the County
- To implement CLÁR Programme
- Establish and develop Longford Sports Partnership
- Coordinate and manage the development of Longford Social Inclusion Strategy.
- To host and develop Comhairle na nOg. Establish Youth Council for Longford County Council. Facilitate annual Young Citizens Award.
- Promote Pride of Place and Pride of Longford Competition
- Library, heritage and Cultural Services.

Services

Under the direction of the Director of Services, the Community and Enterprise Development Officers deliver the following range of services.

Longford County Development Board: The Board, resourced and supported by the Community & Enterprise Section, was established in May 2000 and comprises 27 members representing the Local Government and Local Development Sector, State Agencies and Social Partners. The main functions of the Board are to:

- co-ordinate delivery of public services in County Longford and to promote co-operation between the various agencies and interests operating at County level and
- monitor the implementation of the Integrated Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Longford.

An Integrated Strategy for the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of County Longford was ratified by Longford County Council and subsequently adopted by the Board in July 2002. A review of the Strategy was conducted in 2005. 13 priority actions were identified for the period 2005 – 2008. These include:

1. Economic Development
2. Modern resilient infrastructure
3. Building local communities
4. Facilitate greater participation in leisure activities
5. Develop the tourism of the County
6. Co-ordination of services for domestic violence
7. Reduction of early school leaving and services to those affected
8. Integration of ethnic minorities and migrant workers
9. Develop a poverty profile
10. Develop cohesive approach to service delivery

11. Support services for older people
12. Substance misuse
13. Supports for marginalised men.

Responsibility for the implementation of the County Strategy rests with the County Development Board. The Community and Enterprise Section resources and supports the Board and sub-groups of the Board to ensure proper monitoring and implementation of the Strategy.

Community & Voluntary Forum: The Longford County Community and Voluntary Forum was established in early 2001 as part of the process of setting up the County Development Board. The Community and Voluntary Sector is one of the Social Partners and is represented on the Board by 2 members.

The Forum comprises over 130 organisations from the Community and Voluntary Sector. A democratically elected Umbrella Forum operates as a Steering Group at County level and fulfils a key link between the Board and communities on a county-wide basis.

The Community and Enterprise Section resources and supports the Community and Voluntary Forum through regular structured consultation and implementation of an annual Work Programme. The Section, also, maintains a Database of Registered Community and Voluntary organisations in the County.

Social Inclusion Measures Working Group: The Social Inclusion Measures Working Group is a sub-group of the Longford County Development Board with a specific focus on addressing social exclusion. This is achieved through the co-ordination and collaboration of the members.

CLÁR Programme: Launched in October, 2001 CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Ard-Riachtannais – Programme for revitalising Rural Areas) aims to ensure that priority is given in the N.D.P. to rural areas of special disadvantage.

2 regions in Longford County have been designated as CLÁR Regions (based on population decline between 1926 and 2002), North Longford and South West Longford.

CLÁR is designed to address the problem of depopulation and the decline in services:

- (a) The re-prioritisation of investments under the N.D.P. to ensure that disadvantaged rural areas get priority of investment under the Plan, and
- (b) The provision of a dedicated fund of €25.4 m over the 2002-2003 period to match funding of Government Departments and other State Agencies for special projects.

The CLÁR programme in County Longford is co-ordinated by the Community and Enterprise Section.

Information available

Details of the various programmes of the Community and Enterprise section are available on request.

Classes of Records held

- Economic Development Files
- County Development Board
- Integrated Strategy Files
- CLAR Files

Further information on the services of Community and Enterprise may be obtained from:

Community and Enterprise Department,
Aras an Chontae,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

Community and Enterprise Development Officers
043-43472/46393

7.2 HUMAN RESOURCES

General Description

The core objective of Human Resources as set out in Longford County Council's Corporate Plan 2005-2009 is to:

- Promote Longford County Council as an inclusive organisation with a democratic mandate that is customer focused, performance driven and delivers efficient, effective and quality services through a highly trained and motivated workforce.

The Corporate Plan outlines the strategies and actions to be used to achieve these objectives.

Functions

The Human Resources (HR) Section deals with functions in relation to human resource management. The HR function is primarily a service to the local authority itself unlike most other functions which provide a service to the public and the community. The main areas of activity of this section include: Manpower Planning, Staff Recruitment, Staff Training and Development, Superannuation, Industrial Relations, Workplace Partnership, Employee Assistance Programme, Equality and Family Friendly Policies.

Services

Under the direction of the Director of Services or his nominee the Senior Executive Officer and staff of the Human Resource Department ensure the delivery of the range of HR Services on a daily basis.

Manpower Planning: Manpower planning involves the management of staff resources for the effective operation of the organisation, including planning for recruitment, deployment and retirements. The core numbers of permanent staff must be maintained within the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's approved staff complement.

Staff Recruitment: The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government has prescribed the qualifications and conditions of office for all grades of employments within the Local Authority. Longford County Council is committed to providing equality of opportunity in all employment practices and recruitment of staff takes place strictly on merit. Independent interview boards are appointed by the County Manager to recommend the most suitable candidates for appointment in accordance with the qualifications and job description for the grades concerned. Managerial and professional grades are recruited by the Public Appointments Service (PAS) on behalf of the Local Authority.

Training and Development: A designated staff member is responsible for providing training to improve the skills and knowledge of staff. The Performance Management Development System (PMDS) established a structured mechanism targeting training at the business needs of the organisation and at employees personal development needs. Managers and staff can now identify the specific competencies needed to achieve the goals and objectives agreed for their area as identified in the organisation's Corporate Plan. Every employee is afforded an opportunity to develop these competencies through appropriate and agreed training subject to the availability of finance. Training consists of on-the-job training and attendance at internal and external courses of particular relevance to the area of Council activity to which the person is assigned. Limited financial support is, also, provided for staff participating in third level education courses.

Superannuation: Permanent, part-time (subject to qualifying conditions) and temporary whole-time employees are entered on the Superannuation Register. Permanent officers appointed pre and post 6th April 1995 are obliged to contribute certain percentages of pay towards Superannuation. Additional contributions are payable by members of the Spouses and Children Schemes. Employees are generally obliged to retire at the age of 65 (in certain circumstances an earlier retirement age applies), however, the Public Service Superannuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2004 introduced new superannuation and retirement provisions for “new entrants” to the public service appointed on or after the 1st April 2004.

Industrial Relations: Longford County Council aims to achieve and maintain good working relationships with Unions and Staff Representatives to reconcile conflicting demands with the minimum of conflict. The fostering of good industrial relations promote the resolution of issues at local level. In cases where it is not possible to get resolution at local level, the industrial relations machinery involving the Labour Relations Commission and the Labour Court are used.

Workplace Partnership: Workplace Partnership in Longford County Council aims to achieve through consensus with management, unions and staff lasting progress and new work practices with a common goal of creating a better working environment and delivering services of the highest quality to the people of County Longford.

Employee Assistance Programme: The Employee Assistance Programme provides a confidential and free advisory service to all current and retired staff. The service is provided by an independent counselling service retained by the Council.

Equality and Family Friendly Policies: Longford County Council fully subscribes to the principles of equality as laid down in legislation to ensure that all employees are treated in an equitable manner. The Dignity at Work policy contains the Council's policy statement on workplace bullying and harassment and details the complaints procedure.

Employees of the Council are entitled to Annual Leave in compliance with the Organisation of Working Time Act, 1997. In addition, the Council continues to promote family friendly policies and assists staff members in that area in making available to them opportunities for Worksharing, Term Time Leave, Parental Leave, Career Breaks, Flexitime and Special Leave.

Information available

Vacancies for all staff appointments are advertised and applications invited.

Classes of Records held

- Superannuation Register
- Personnel files
- Recruitment and Associated Files
- Leave Entitlements
- Staff Training and Development
- Equality
- Industrial Relations
- Workplace Partnership

Further information on Human Resource services may be requested from:

Human Resources Department
Aras an Chontae,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

Administrative Officer – 043 –43441
Senior Staff Officer – 043 – 43312; Staff Officer – 043 - 43431
Clerical Officer – 043 -43450

7.3 LIBRARY, ARCHIVES AND HERITAGE

General Description

Longford County Council seeks to enrich the lives and sense of identity of every person in the county and increase their social and cultural opportunities by developing a vibrant, cohesive library, arts, archives and heritage service.

The Library service is an information, educational and recreational resource for the whole community and performs a significant role in the area of social integration.

Functions

The role of the public library service continues to evolve. However, its core principles remain constant. The service aims to:

- establish itself as the local gateway to knowledge by providing opportunities and conditions for life-long learning , education, recreation, information and culture for all citizens
- create, foster and support reading habits in children from an early age
- promote awareness of local studies and the oral tradition, appreciation of the arts and cultural heritage
- provide information services to local enterprises and community groups and to celebrate innovation and achievement in the local community
- support and participate in literacy activities.

Services

Under the direction of the County Librarian, the Library Service in County Longford is delivered through a network of six (6) Branch Libraries located at Longford, Granard, Ballymahon, Lanesboro, Drumlish and Edgeworthstown. Longford Branch is the main service point. The following services are delivered:

- Lending and Reference Services for Adults and Children
- Journals Collection; Local and National Newspapers
- Community Information
- Careers Information
- EU Information
- Annual Reports & Information Booklets/Leaflets from Government Departments; Semi-State and other organisations
- Archives/Local Studies
- Primary Schools Service
- Exhibitions - local and national
- Internet and email service.

A wide-ranging collection of books, audio-visual and other material is available in many languages reflecting the needs of the local community. The memory of Longford through its recorded documentation is preserved for study and research purposes in the Archives/Local Studies section of the County Library Headquarters and smaller collections of local history material are placed in each Branch Library. Exhibitions, both local and national, take place on a regular basis as well as a variety of other outreach activities.

The Library Service is open to all, regardless of age, race, sex, nationality, language or social status. Bring along some form of identification and you may become a member for a nominal fee and there is no charge for children.

A library service to all Primary Schools in the County is operated from County Library H.Q. This service is grant-aided by the Department of Education and Science.

Information available

Each Branch Library holds information leaflets on opening hours, services and forthcoming events. The Library website, also, provides information on services, exhibitions, local studies and branch libraries. It may be accessed at: www.longfordlibrary.ie. Local newspapers in particular, and local radio are regularly used to publicise Library events. An Annual Report is published each year detailing library activities for the previous year. This report is available from the County Library on request. Staff training takes place on a regular basis to inform staff about delivery of services existing and proposed. Specific information queries on the library service should be addressed direct to the County Librarian or through any member of staff.

Classes of Records

- General Correspondence; Annual Reports; Estimates of Expenses
- Stock Records - Purchase, Accounts, Statistics & Catalogued Records
- Branch Library Files; Maintenance & Development of the Service
- Automation; Exhibitions & Outreach Activities
- Library Membership Registration Cards.

Archives

Under Section 65 of the Local Government Act, 1994 and Section 80 of the Local Government Act, 2001, local authorities must adopt appropriate policies and practices to retain, manage and preserve local records and archives. In this regard, Longford County Council employs an Archivist on a shared basis with Leitrim County Council to examine ways in which the custody, care and access to the local authority archives may be enhanced and progressed.

Heritage

The aim of the Longford County Heritage Plan is: "That our heritage will be part of life for everyone". This is being achieved through the:

- Establishment and management of the County Longford Heritage Forum
- Co-ordination and implementation of the Longford County Heritage Plan 2004 -2009.

The Heritage Officer offers professional advice on a range of heritage issues to Council staff, elected members, members of the public, community organisations and groups.

Further information on the Library Service, Archive and Heritage Services and opening hours of all branch libraries may be obtained from:

County Librarian,
Library HQ,
Town Centre,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

County Librarian
Tel: 043 - 41124/5
Fax: 043 – 48576

Website: www.longfordlibrary.ie.

7.4 The Arts

General Description

In recognition of the crucial role played by local authorities in the development of creative activity, particularly at local level, Longford County Council in partnership with the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon has appointed a County Arts Officer. His role is primarily as an enabler, encouraging local amateur and professional artists and arts groups and providing full time administrative back-up for these individuals and groups.

Functions

The various functions of the Arts Office are as follows:

- to assist in the development of the arts in a structured manner through the formation of a plan for the cultural and artistic development of County Longford
- to advise and assist in the disbursement of grants under Section 12 of the Arts Act, 1973
- to assist artists and arts organisations in securing sponsorship from the commercial sector for arts initiatives
- to establish an arts information and advice service
- to develop proposals on the housing of the Arts
- to propose ways of introducing a greater level of awareness of the Irish language in arts and cultural activity
- to develop a programme to raise awareness of the arts and increase arts activity in the schools.

Information available

A full programme of arts activities e.g. exhibitions, lectures etc. undertaken to date is available from the County Arts Officer. He is available to the public for consultation, guidance and information during office hours at the Grafton Court Council Offices, Grafton Court, Longford – Tel: 043-34919.

8. FINANCE AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

8.1 Finance

General Description

The core objective of the Finance Department is to:

- Manage the finances of Longford County Council in an efficient and effective manner while achieving value for money.

Functions

The main function of the Finance Department of Longford County Council is to:

- manage the financial affairs of the Council
- ensure that adequate internal controls are in operation to safeguard the assets of the organisation, and
- ensure, as far as possible, the accuracy and reliability of the accounting records.

The Local Government Act, 2001 and the Public Bodies Orders, 1946 - 1998 govern the keeping of accounts and records in Local Authorities. The Local Government Act, 2001 introduced a new Accounting Code of Practice to bring the accounting practices of local authorities in line with those in the private sector.

Services

The Head of Finance, who reports directly to the County Manager, is responsible for the management of the financial affairs of Longford County Council. The staff of the Finance Department deliver the following services:

- Payment of Wages & Salaries to staff
Payment for Goods & Services (Creditors Payments)
- Payment of Pensions to former staff of Longford County Council and their spouses and children where applicable (including former V.E.C. staff)
- Annual Budget
- Annual Financial Statement
- Audit of Accounts
- Control of Insurances
- Financial Management

Payment of Wages & Salaries to Staff: This service involves the processing of wages and salaries for all staff including deduction of P.A.Y.E. and P.R.S.I. and other statutory and non-statutory deductions and for all returns relating to same.

Payment for Goods & Services: All invoices are forwarded to Accounts Payable where they are matched with orders and goods received notes. Payments are made either by paying orders or electronic funds transfer, creditor accounts are monitored and all statutory tax returns are processed.

Under the “**Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997**” the Local Authority is required to pay for the supply of goods and services by the prescribed payment date. Where payment is late the supplier is entitled to interest from the date payment was due to the date of actual payment. The rate of interest is the ECB rate plus 7% and is revised on the 1st January and 1st July each year. In the case of disputed goods, the supplier may seek arbitration and the purchaser must agree to the arbitration decision.

Payment of Pensions to former staff of Longford County Council and their spouses and children where applicable: Lump sums and pensions are calculated at time of retirement of staff and estimates are calculated on request. Lump sums are paid as close as possible to day of retirement and pensions are paid on a fortnightly basis. Calculation of lump sums and pensions for Vocational Education Committee (V.E.C.) staff are carried out by the V.E.C. and paid by the County Council.

Annual Budget: The Revenue budget which the Local Authority is required by law to prepare each year is called the "Budget". The format of the Budget documentation is prescribed in the Local Government Act 2001 and is standard to all Local Authorities. It is based on eight (8) programme groups with associated sub-programme groups. The **adoption** of the Budget is a reserved function of the elected members. Statutory Budget Meetings are open to the public and are held between prescribed dates in November and January each year. The Local Authority must publish notice of this meeting giving at least seven days public notice. The Budget must be circulated to the elected members at least seven days before the Statutory meeting and made available to the public for inspection or purchase - copies may be requested from the Finance Department.

Annual Financial Statement: The annual accounts of a Local Authority are called the "Annual Financial Statement", the structure for which is set out in the Local Government Act, 2001 and is designed to ensure the accountability of the Local Authority. The Annual Financial Statement (AFS)) is prepared at the end of the financial year on an **accruals** basis. The Annual Financial Statement is set out in the same programme group format as the Budget.

Audit of Accounts: An important element of the Finance function of the Local Authority is the whole system of internal audit and control. Internal checking of all monies receipted and lodged is carried out on an ongoing basis. Internal audit reviews the operations and procedures of the County Council in terms of efficiency, effectiveness of internal check and accounting procedures. The Local Government Auditor is appointed by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to audit the accounts of the Local Authority and to report on them. Notice of the commencement of the audit is published and members of the public are entitled to bring to the attention of the auditor any item of the accounts which they believe to be incorrect.

Control of Insurance: Arrangement of insurance cover and payment of premiums in respect of Public Liability, Employer's Liability and all relevant risks is the responsibility of the Head of Finance and Finance Department. Insurance claims are processed internally through the Finance and Housing Departments and dealt with externally by the Insurance Company.

Financial Management: The Head of Finance is responsible for the management of cash balances and indebtedness.

Information available

General information and queries from **suppliers** about individual payments should be directed to the Accounts Payable Section. Explanatory leaflets and clarification of the Superannuation Code are available on request from the Finance Department. Local press carry notice of the Budget Meeting. The Budget is available for inspection at the Finance Department during office hours. Copies may be supplied to members of the public for a nominal charge. Information is available on the Annual Financial Statement from the Head of Finance or any member of the Finance staff. Accounts are open for inspection by all interested parties during office hours for 7 days before audit. Public notice of same is given in the local press. Information on the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997 may be sought from the Finance Department.

Classes of Records held

- Tax and P.R.S.I. records, including P.A.Y.E., Sub-Contractor Tax, Withholding
- Tax etc.
- Computer listing at end of financial year
- Superannuation Registers
- Payroll masterfiles
- Service histories for all staff
- Background information on calculation of Budget
- End of year records
- Supporting documentation
- Insurance Register
- Fixed Assets Register
- Invoices

Further information on the range of Finance Services delivered may be requested from:

Finance Department
Aras an Chontae,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

Administrative Officer – 043 – 43426
Accounts Payable 043 – 34902; 34905

8.2 RATES AND HIGHER EDUCATION GRANTS

Functions

The main functions of Longford County Council in relation to Rates and Higher Education Grants are:

- To collect monies due to the County Council in respect of Rates
- To administer the Higher Education Grants Scheme.

Services

Services are provided by the staff directly to the public at the public counter, over the telephone, by interview in the office or at their own premises through Rate Collectors in the case of commercial ratepayers. The main services are as follows:

- Rate Collection
- Higher Education Grants
-

Rate Collection: The collection of rates income involves preparation of rate book and issue of demand notes, receipting and lodgement of monies, updating of accounts records, attention to queries and appropriate action in the case of defaulters. Rates are payable in 2 moieties, the first on issue of the rate demand usually during February/March of each year, the second moiety is due on 1st July. The rated occupier is liable for payment of rates. Where the collector is unable to obtain payment in the normal way, legal proceedings may be taken to recover the outstanding amount with costs. Following this an instalment order may be sought or a judgement mortgage obtained and registered against the property. The Rate Collector, also, has the power to seize goods to cover the value of the amount outstanding. The Local Authority can offset any monies due to a ratepayer against rates due.

All fixed property has a **Rateable Valuation**, but rates are payable only on commercial properties. Domestic rates have been remitted since 1978. Rateable valuations are fixed and altered by the *Commissioner of Valuations* and not by the Local Authority. The rateable valuation is used by the Local Authority to determine the commercial rates payable by each ratepayer. **The Valuation Act, 1988** introduced a system of continuous revision of valuation throughout the year. A Local Authority may now submit a list of revision requests to the Commissioner of Valuations within the first 10 days of any month and the Commissioner must make his decision within 6 months. In general, Longford County Council will automatically list new properties or those where significant alterations have taken place. Any person may apply to the Commissioner on payment of a fee per listing for revision of a valuation. Decisions are issued quarterly and these revised valuations will usually take effect for rating purposes from the date of receipt from valuation office. The Commissioner issues to the Local Authority a "Certificate of Valuation" which indicates the total rateable valuation for all property within its administrative area.

Appeal Procedures: Each owner/occupier and the Local Authority has a right of **first appeal** to the Commissioner of Valuations in respect of a property which has been the subject of revision. Any person not satisfied with the Commissioner's decision has 28 days after revision publication date to lodge an appeal. The **Valuation Tribunal** was set up to hear appeals against decisions of the Commissioner of Valuation following first appeal to his office.

Apportionment of Valuation: A rated occupier or owner may seek an apportionment of a rateable valuation e.g. where two or more businesses operate from different portions of one premises.

Rate Book and the Making of Annual Rate on Valuation: A rate book must be produced by each Local Authority annually setting out each property, its rateable valuation and details of the rates due by persons liable for rates. When the rate has been prepared a public notice is inserted in the local papers. The rate book is then available for public inspection for a period of 14 days. Any ratepayer who is dissatisfied with the rate assessed may appeal to the Local Authority within 2 months of the date of the making of the rate.

Higher Education Grants Scheme: Under the Local Authorities (Higher Education Grants) Acts, 1968 -1992 and in accordance with the provisions of the relevant Higher Education Grants Scheme, Longford County Council is enabled to grant aid eligible students undertaking courses in most third level institutions. The "Higher Education Grants Scheme" for each year is drawn up by the Department of Education and Science and adopted by the County Council. The Scheme sets out details of eligibility and grants payable. Disputes arising in relation to the interpretation of the Scheme shall be determined by the Minister for Education and Science.

Information available

The staff of the Rates/Higher Education Grants Section deal with all queries on Rates Accounts and also give details and application forms for Higher Education Grants. The local press carry notice of the scheme setting out the details and closing date for receipt of applications.

Classes of Records held

- Valuation Books
- Copy Rate Demands
- Collectors Warrants
- Financial Records

- Copies of demands and receipts
- Details of all applications and payments made relating to Higher Education Grants
- Supporting documentation.

Further information on Rates and Higher Education Grants is available from:

Contact Numbers

Staff Officer - 043 – 43412

8.3 MOTOR TAXATION

General Description

Longford County Council is the Motor Taxation Authority for the County of Longford. The Motor Taxation function is carried out by the Council on an agency basis for the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Functions

The main functions of Longford County Council in relation to Motor Taxation are as follows:

- issue and control of Motor Vehicle Licensing (Road Tax)
- issue and control of Driver Licensing
- control of Excise Duties paid and lodgement of same.

Services

The Motor Taxation office is led by an Authorised Officer who, together with staff, ensure the delivery of all motor taxation services. Service is delivered to the public in three ways i.e. personal, post and telephone. The Motor Tax Department is open to the public from:

Monday - Friday: 9.30 am - 4.30 pm.

Closed: Bank Holidays

The following main services are delivered by the Administrative Officer and staff of the Motor Taxation Department in accordance with legislation laid down:

- Taxation of Vehicles
- Driver Licensing
- Public Service Driver's (PSV) Licence (Receipt of fees)
- Issue of Certificates of Road Worthiness for Commercial Vehicles
- Supply of Licensing particulars
- Certification of Traffic Offences (Gardai/Parking)
- Trade Plates

Taxation of Vehicles: Vehicles which are used on public roads must be licensed. To apply for a first licence, the vehicle must have already been registered by the Revenue Commissioners. Renewal is required on expiry of the first licence and either quarterly, half yearly or yearly thereafter. Renewal of taxation on a private car may be completed at the Motor Tax office or alternatively on-line at any location using internet access and a unique pin number. The pin number along with the motor taxation reminder notice is issued from the Department's Vehicle Registration Unit (VRU) in Shannon.

Testing of private cars, known as a National Car Test (NCT) and conducted by a state appointed company, was introduced during the period 2000-2002. For further information contact 1890 200 670.

Driver Licensing: A Learner Permit is a Permit issued to enable a person to learn to drive and apply for a driving test. Applications for first Learner Permit must be accompanied by a valid Theory Test Certificate for the category/categories concerned. For more information contact 1890 616 106. A Learner Permit may be renewed. When applying for a third or subsequent Permit, evidence is required of having either (a) undergone a driving test within 2 years of date of application or (b) received notification of a driving test appointment.

A “full” driving licence is first issued where applicant has recently passed a driving test or where applicant wishes to exchange a driving licence issued by another EU Member State or other “recognised country”. A one, three or ten year licence is granted as appropriate.

PSV Licence: Drivers of small public service vehicles must obtain a special PSV driver’s licence before they can drive this category of vehicle. The relevant fee is paid to the Motor Taxation office and the PSV licence is issued by An Garda Siochana following a special test.

Issue of Certificate of Road Worthiness: Certain categories of Motor Vehicle such as Large Public Service Vehicles must undergo a test for roadworthiness at an authorised Test Centre. On production of a Pass Certificate from the test centre, Longford County Council will issue a Certificate of Road Worthiness.

Supply of Licensing particulars: The Local Authority supplies, free of charge, full particulars of any licensed vehicle to any other licensing authority, the Garda Siochana, the Revenue Commissioners, any Department of State or any Local Authority exercising functions pursuant to the Local Authorities (Traffic Wardens) Act, 1975

Certification of Traffic Offences (Garda Siochana/Parking): Details regarding the registered owner plus current tax details are submitted on Form C(T)53 in pursuance of Article 4 of the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Order 1958 and Section 61(2) of the Finance Act, 1993, as substituted by Section 87 of the Finance Act, 1994. Each form is certified by the Authorised Officer.

Trade Plates: Trade plates may be issued to a motor dealer in order to allow a vehicle to be used on the public road for testing, sale or repair purposes. A trade licence is issued for a maximum period of one year.

Information available

All our information is available on www.motortax.ie or on our website www.longfordcoco.ie.

Detailed information of each service is also shown on the relevant application forms. The staff of the office will be happy to assist with any queries from the public.

Classes of Records held

- Vehicle Registration files for each vehicle
- Files for Driver Licensing (contains applications/renewals/details of endorsements/disqualifications/medical reports etc. as relevant)
- Register of daily transactions
- Returns to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Further information on Motor Taxation Services may be obtained from:

Motor Taxation Office,
Camlin Court Offices,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

Administrative Officer at 043 -43403

8. 4 INFORMATION SYSTEMS

General Description

The Information Systems (IS) Department provides up-to-date, efficient and comprehensive IT services for Longford Local Authorities.

Functions

The function of the IS Department is to:

- provide support to all areas of Longford County Council and Longford Town Council in the operation and maintenance of computer systems, networks and infrastructure
- implement the Councils' IS Strategies
- maximise the use of ICT to improve and expand the delivery of service internally in the organisation and externally to our customers.

Services

Within the Finance Directorate, the Information Systems Department is led by the Head of Information Systems who assisted by technical staff deliver IT services on a daily basis to all sections of Longford Local Authorities.

This section provides support services for all other sections within the Council. The availability of accurate and relevant information is necessary to enable staff to deliver a quality service. The staff in the IS department maintain the Local Authorities Intranet and the following internet sites:

www.longfordcoco.ie www.longford.ie
www.longfordlibrary.ie www.longfordtowncouncil.ie www.virtualwriter.net

Classes of Records held

There are no systems processed in the IS Dept. The Authorities Information systems reside on Servers in the IS Comms room and all systems are backed up on a nightly basis and stored off-site.

Information available

Information on the work of the IS department may be obtained from:

Information Systems Department,
Aras an Chontae,
Gt. Water St.,
Longford.

Contact Numbers

Project Leader: 043 -43416

Website

www.longfordcoco.ie

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Local Authority Officers often use terminology to describe their work and the information they hold which may not be familiar to the general public. The more commonly used terms are set out below.

AFS	Annual Financial Statement	HR	Human Resources
A.E.	Assistant Engineer		
A.O.	Administrative Officer	Internal Administration	This related to the day-to-day management of the Council. Typically, information of this type can pertain to staff training courses, annual leave, circulation of information documents etc.
A.S.O.	Assistant Staff Officer	IC	Information Commissioner
BLG	Better Local Government	IS	Information Systems
CDB	County Development Board	IT	Information Technology
CLÁR Programme	A programme for revitalising rural areas	NCT	National Car Test
C.O.	Clerical Officer		
CPG	Corporate Policy Group	NRA	National Roads Authority
CPO	Compulsory Purchase Order		
DOEHLG	Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.	NSC	National Safety Council
E.E.	Executive Engineer	PAS	Public Appointments Service
		PSV	Public Service Vehicle
		RAPID Programme	Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a procedure for assessing the likely effects on the environment of a proposed development.	S.E.	Senior Engineer
EIS	An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) contains an analysis of the likely effects, good and bad, of a project on the environment	SEA	A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a procedure for examining major policy issues in relation to their negative environmental impacts.
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency	S.E.E.	Senior Executive Engineer
EU	European Union	S.E.O.	Senior Executive Officer
FOI	Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003	S.O.	Staff Officer
FOI Section 16 Reference Book:	Provides details of the rules and practices used by the Council for making decisions under schemes directly administered by the Council.	S.S.O.	Senior Staff Officer
HEG's	Higher Education Grants	SPC's	Strategic Policy Committees
Hereditament	Any property which can be inherited.	V.E.C.	Vocational Education Committee
HQ	Headquarters	VRU	Vehicle Registration Unit

APPENDIX 1 - PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION OUTSIDE THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACTS, 1997 and 2003 INCLUDING RIGHTS OF APPEAL

The Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003 are designed to allow public access to information on public bodies which is **NOT** otherwise available. The following is a general guide to the legislation/information which is already publicly available and as such is outside the scope of the F.O.I. Act.

Statutory Legislation

Local Authorities are multi-purpose bodies which operate subject to statute law. The fundamental legislation for existing authorities is scattered over various nineteenth century and other enactments and is often complex and fragmented. However, a good start has been made towards updating the general local government law with the Local Government Acts of 1991 and 1994. The most recent comprehensive legislation to generally modernise and consolidate local government law, repeal outdated legislation and underpin the programme for change "Better Local Government" is the Local Government Act, 2001.

Acts of the Oireachtas, including Acts dealing with local government, are available for direct purchase from the:

Government Publications Sales Office,
Sun Alliance House,
Molesworth St.,
Dublin 2.

or by mail order from:

Government Publications,
4-5 Harcourt Rd.,
Dublin 2.

or through any bookseller.

Acts and Regulations may, also, be accessed on the websites www.irlgov.ie or on www.irishstatutebook.ie.

The Data Protection Act, 1988 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act, 2003

Longford County Council is registered as a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act, 1988. The Data Protection (Amendment) Act, 2003 extended the provisions of the 1988 Act to include manual data (previously only applied to computerised data) and a request in relation to such data may be made under either the Data Protection Act or the Freedom of Information Act.

Information Available at the Offices of Longford County Council

Library Service

The County Library produces guides to its opening hours and services for both the Administrative Headquarters and the Branch Library network throughout the County. These guides are available from the County Library free of charge to members of the public.

Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

This government department issues a wide range of leaflets on Local Authority activities and these are available at the public offices of Longford County Council.

Planning

The public already enjoys the right to a range of information under other legislation e.g. Planning and Environment. This right will remain unchanged and such information is **excluded** from the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Some examples of this currently available information are as follows:

Planning Applications:

- The planning register is open for public inspection, free of charge, at the Planning Office during opening hours
- You are entitled to view, free of charge, all documents submitted with a planning application at the Planning Office, during office hours, from the date of receipt of the application until the decision is made on it
- Internal reports on the application, prepared by or on behalf of the Council, can be viewed after the decision on the application has been made during the period for appeal
- A list of planning permissions received and decided on is furnished monthly to the local papers for publication
- Copies of planning permissions may be purchased for a set fee
- Planning decisions are available for public inspection for the life of the permission (usually 7 years). Older files may be available
- Copies of Environmental Impact Statements or extracts from same may be purchased from the Planning Office at a reasonable cost.

Environmental Information

Under the Access to Information Regulations, 2007 subject to certain exceptions, information relating to the environment in the possession of a Local Authority must be made available on request to any person. Requests for such information must be made in writing to the Senior Executive Officer, Corporate and Environment, Longford County Council, Aras an Chontae, Longford. Longford County Council may charge a copying fee to cover reasonable costs involved in supplying the information. You are entitled to receive a reply to your request not later than 1 month from receipt of same. There is provision in the Regulations for internal review and external review to the Commissioner for Environmental Information.

Development Plan

The County Development Plan is produced every 6 years. The current plan "Longford County Development Plan 2003 – 2009" was adopted in 2003. The Development Plan may be inspected at the Planning Office and the County Library.

Payment of Accounts

Under The Prompt Payment of Accounts Act, 1997 the Local Authority as a "purchaser" is required to pay for the supply of goods or services by the prescribed payment date. The prescribed payment date is the date specified in a written contract or if there is no written contract or if the payment date is not specified in the written contract, payment must be made within 30 days of receipt of an invoice or date of supply whichever is the later. If a payment is not made by the due date, the purchaser must pay an interest penalty on the amount outstanding.

Audit of Accounts

Prior to Audit of Accounts by the Local Government Auditor a notice is published advising the public of its right to examine the accounts of the County Council within a specified period. Copies of the Annual Financial Statement (AFS) are lodged in the County Library and are, also, available for consultation at the Accounts Office, Aras an Chontae.

Annual Financial Statement (AFS)

After the close of the financial year a summary of the accounts of the local authority called the Annual Financial Statement is prepared, the structure for which is set out in the Local Government Act, 2001. The AFS contains details of expenditure and receipts under each of the eight programme groups for both revenue and capital accounts.

Annual Budget

Notice of the meeting to consider the Annual Budget is published annually in the local papers not less than 7 days before the meeting is held. Copies of the Local Authority Budget may be purchased at the Accounts Office during the specified period. Copies of same are, also, lodged in the County Library.

Rate Books

Available for viewing for a 14 day period at the Rates Office, Aras an Chontae, prior to the making of the rate each year. Relevant dates are published in the local papers annually.

Annual Report

Longford County Council publishes each year an Annual Report detailing its activities in the previous year. This report is available at the public offices of the County Council and a copy is, also, furnished to the local papers.

Corporate Plan

In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government act, 2001 Longford County Council has published a Corporate Plan 2002 –2005 which sets out the objectives, strategies and priorities of the Council for the period of the Plan. Copies are available on request from the Corporate Services Section at Aras an Chontae.

Register of Electors

The Draft Register is published on the 1st November each year. The sections of the register relevant to the electoral areas are forwarded to the Garda Stations, Post Offices and Branch Libraries in those areas. The full draft is available for inspection in the Main Branch Library; County Council Customer Service Desk; County Registrar's Office, Courthouse; the County Clinic, Dublin Road and Longford Town Council. Forms for new entries or corrections to the register are, also, available at those locations. The Full Register is published on the 1st February each year and is available for inspection at the same public offices as the Draft Register.

Water Pollution Register

This register is available for inspection at the Environment Office, Aras an Chontae.

Register of Fire Safety Certificates

This register is available for public inspection at the Planning Office, Aras an Chontae.

Register of Private Rented Dwellings

A register detailing all private rented dwellings is available for public inspection at the Housing Office, Aras an Chontae.

Waste Management Register

Under Section 19 of the Waste Management Act, 1996, each Local Authority must maintain a register of all applications for waste collection permits. This register is available for inspection by the public at the Environment Office, Aras an Chontae.

Public Register of Interests

In accordance with the provisions of the Part 15 of the Local Government Act, 2001 a public register of members' interests and the interests of employees and other persons as prescribed must be maintained by the local authority. This register is available for public inspection in the Finance Section, Aras an Chontae.

Public Register (Members)

Article 8 of the Local Government (Representational Payment for Members) Regulations 2001 made under Sections 142 and 143 of the Local Government Act, 2001 requires each local authority to maintain a public register each year in relation to members' expenses for attending meetings, committee meetings, conferences, training etc. This register is available for inspection by the public at the Accounts Office, Aras an Chontae.

Current Rights of Appeal regarding Decisions/Actions of Longford County Council

Members of the public have extensive rights of appeal in relation to decisions or actions taken by Longford County Council. These include the following:

Planning Appeals

All individuals or interest groups who have made a submission have the right to appeal to An Bord Pleanala against any planning decision of the Local Authority. Information on the Appeals process is available at the Planning Office.

Comments on Planning Applications

You may, also, comment in writing to Longford County Council on any planning application within 5 weeks of lodgement of valid planning application before the decision is made on it and your comments must be taken into consideration in making the decision on the application. You must be informed of the decision when it is made.

Fire Certificate

The granting of a Fire Safety Certificate with conditions or refusal to grant same may be appealed to An Bord Pleanala within 1 month of the date of the decision.

Fire Safety Notice

A person on whom a Fire Safety Notice is served may within 14 days from the date of service, appeal against the notice to the District Court on certain grounds.

Dispensation/Relaxation of Building Regulations

Where an applicant is dissatisfied with the decision granted, or a refusal to grant, s/he may appeal to An Bord Pleanala against the decision within 1 month of granting the decision.

Licence for Advertising Sign/Scaffolding or Hoarding Permit

There is provision for appeal to An Bord Pleanala in relation to the granting, refusing, withdrawing or continuing of a licence, or the conditions of a licence in the above regard.

Petroleum Stores

If the Local Authority refuses to grant a licence or grants a licence on conditions with which the applicant is dissatisfied, s/he may appeal to the Health and Safety Authority. Where the Authority gives a direction with which the applicant is still dissatisfied, s/he may appeal to the High Court.

Dangerous Buildings/Places

Any person aggrieved by a notice served may apply to the District Court for the annulment of the notice within a specified period.

Higher Education Grants

Questions or disputes in relation to the interpretation of the Higher Education Grants Scheme may be referred to the Minister for Education and Science whose decision is final.

Valuation Act

If you dispute the valuation on your premises you may appeal to the Valuation Office in Dublin through the County Council and state the specific grounds on which your appeal is lodged.

Derelict Sites

A local authority may serve a notice on the owner or occupier of a derelict site. Representations in relation to a notice may be made to the local authority within 14 days. An objection to the proposed compulsory acquisition of a derelict site may be submitted to the local authority within a specified period.

Valuation of Derelict Site

An owner of a derelict site which has been valued by the Council for the purposes of the derelict site levy may appeal the amount of such valuation to the Valuation (Appeals) Tribunal.

Air/Noise Pollution

The County Council may serve notice on the occupier/person in charge of any premises causing air or noise pollution. A person on whom a notice is served may make representations to the Council concerning the terms of the notice.

Litter Pollution

Owners/occupiers, on whom notice is served in relation to litter pollution, may make in the first instance written submissions to the Council on the terms of the notice. If an owner/occupier is dissatisfied with any or all of the terms of the notice the matter can be appealed to the District Court within 21 days of receipt of the notice.

Water Pollution

Discharges to Waters: a local authority may serve a notice requiring any person having the custody or control of any polluting matter to prevent it from entering a river etc. A person on whom a notice is served may make representations to the local authority regarding the terms of the notice.

Taxi and Hackney Licences

If the local authority refuses to grant or renew a hackney licence the applicant may appeal the decision to the District Court.

Temporary Closing of Roads

The notice of intention must allow for objections to be made in writing to the road safety authority within a specified period being not less than 3 days from the date of publication of the notice. The road authority must consider any objections received and not withdrawn.

Compulsory Purchase Order

Persons whose property may be the subject of a compulsory purchase order made by the Council may appeal to An Bord Pleanála against the making of the order.

Freedom of Information Acts, 1997 and 2003

See Freedom of Information details elsewhere in this manual for information on both the internal and external appeals procedures. Copies of this Section 15 Reference Manual are available on request from the Corporate Affairs section or alternatively an electronic version may be accessed at www.longfordcoco.ie.

Personnel

Prior to the enactment of the Local Government Act, 2001 a clear distinction existed between Officers and Employees. These categorizations have been replaced by virtue of Section 157 of the 2001 Act with a single description of "employee". General employment law now applies to all employees replacing the role that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government formerly held in relation to certain staff issues.

An employee may in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act, 2001 invoke the provisions of the Unfair Dismissals Act, 1977 – 2001 if the question of his/her removal from office arises.

ADDRESSES FOR APPEALS

**An Bord Pleanala
64 Marlborough St,
Dublin 1
Tel. 01 – 8588100**

**Health and Safety Authority
10 Hogan Place
Dublin 2
Tel. 01 – 6147000**

**Valuation Office
Irish Life Centre
Lr. Abbey St.
Dublin 1
Tel. 01 - 8171000**

**Office of the Ombudsman
18 Lr. Leeson St.
Dublin 2
Tel. 01 - 6395600**

**Local Government Personnel Section
Custom House
Dublin 1
Tel. 01 - 8882344**

**Office of the Information Commissioner,
18 Lr. Leeson St.,
Dublin 2
Tel. 01 – 6395689**

APPENDIX 2 - COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE POINTS - OPENING HOURS AND CONTACT DETAILS

Branch	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Longford Willie O Dowd 043-41124 longlib@iol.ie	10.00 – 8.30	10.00 – 5.30	10.00 – 8.30	10.00 – 5.30	10.00 – 5.00	10:00-2:00
Ballymahon Carmel Kelly 0902-32546 mahonlib@eircom.net	2.00 – 5.00 6.00 – 8.00	Closed	Closed	2.00 – 5.00 6.00 – 8.00	2.00 – 5.00	10.30 – 12.30
Edgeworthstown Sheila Walsh 043-71927 edgelib@eircom.net	Closed	10.30 – 1:30 2.00 – 8.00	Closed	2.30 – 8.00	Closed	10.30 – 1:00
Granard Rosemary Gaynor 043-86164 granlib@eircom.net	Closed	10.00 – 1.00 1:30 – 7.00	10.00 – 1.00 1.30 – 7.00	1:30-8:00	10.00 – 1.00 1.30 – 5.00	10:00-2:00
Lanesboro Stella O'Sullivan 043-21291 lanelib@eircom.net	2:00-8:00	2.00 – 6.00	10.00 – 1.00 2.00 – 8.00	Closed	10.00 – 1.00 2.00 – 5.00	10.00 – 1.00
Drumlsh Isabella Mallon 043-24760 dronlib@eircom.net	Closed	10.30 – 1.00 1.30 – 8.00	Closed	1.30 – 5.30 6.00 – 8.00	Closed	10.30 – 1.00

APPENDIX 3 – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FEES) REGULATIONS, 2003

Summary

Regulations have been made by the Minister for Finance prescribing fees for the purposes of section 47 (6A) of the Freedom of Information Act, 1997.

The following fees will apply to FOI requests under section 7 of the FOI Act (requests for access to records) and applications under section 14 (internal review) and 34 (review by Information Commissioner) received on or after 7 July 2003:

Requests for Records

- A standard application fee of **€15** must accompany an FOI request under section 7 for a record or records containing non-personal information.
- A reduced fee of **€10** applies if the person making such a request is covered a medical card.
- The following requests/applications are exempt:
 - a) A request under section 7 for a record or records containing only personal information related to the requester.
 - b) An application under Section 17 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information).
 - c) An application under section 18 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).

Internal Review

- A standard fee of **€75** must accompany an application for internal review under section 14.
- A reduced fee of **€25** applies if the person bringing the application is a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder.
- The following internal review application are exempt:
 - a) An application in relation to a decision concerning records containing only personal information related to the applicant.
 - b) An application in relation to a decision under section 17 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information).
 - c) An application in relation to a decision under section 18 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).
 - d) An application in relation to a decision to charge a fee or deposit, or a fee or deposit of a particular amount.

Review by Information Commissioner

- A standard fee of **€150** must accompany applications to the Information Commissioner for review of decisions made by public bodies under section 34.
- A reduced fee of **€50** applies if
 - a) the person bringing the application is a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder or
 - b) the person is specified in Section 29 (2) i.e. a third party with the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner where a public body decides to release their information on public interest grounds.
- The following applications to the Information Commissioner are **exempt**:
 - a) An application concerning records containing only personal information related to the applicant.
 - b) An application in relation a decision under section 17 (right of amendment of records relating to personal information)
 - c) An application in relation to a decision under section 18 (right of person to information regarding acts of public bodies affecting the person).

- d) An application in relation to a decision to charge a fee or deposit exceeding €25 under section 47 in respect of search and retrieval and photocopying of records (decisions in relation to the charging of fees or deposits for search and retrieval and /or photocopying of less than €25 are not subject to review by the Information Commissioner).
- e) An application in relation to a decision to charge a fee under section 47 (6A), or a fee of a particular amount under section 47(6A), on the grounds that the records concerned do not contain only personal information related to the requester or the requester is not a medical card holder or a dependant of a medical card holder.

Summary of Fees

Type of Request/Application	Standard Fee *	Reduced Fee **
Request for a Record		
Initial Request	€15	€10
Internal Review	€75	€25
Review of Information Commissioner	€150	€50
<u>Request for a record or containing personal information</u>	No Charge	No Charge
<u>Application under section 17 for amendment of a record containing incorrect, incomplete or misleading personal information</u>	No Charge	No Charge
<u>Application under section 18 for the reasons for a decision affecting the individual</u>	No Charge	No Charge

* Fee will not apply where a person appeals a decision to charge a fee or deposit or a fee or deposit of a particular amount under Section 47 of the FOI Act

** Reduced fee will apply in respect of third parties who appeal a decision of a public body to release their information on public interest grounds.