

Longford County Council Chief Executive Report December 2022

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December Highlights

Taoiseach visits Longford

Taoiseach Micheál Martin officially opened St Michael's Court, a new social housing development in County Longford. While in town, the Taoiseach also attended the contract signing for Ballymahon Pobal le Cheile.



#ShopLongford launched

#ShopLongford was launched by Local Enterprise Office, Longford in association with the Longford Chamber of Commerce. This social media campaign encourages us all to shop locally during the Christmas season.



Employee Appreciation

Longford County Council held an Employee Appreciation Day to acknowledge all employees for their service. Awards were presented for long service, continued learning and the promotion of health and safety in the workplace.



Sláintecare Healthy Communities launch

Minister of State for Public Health, Wellbeing and National Drugs Strategy, Frank Feighan TD launched Sláintecare Healthy Communities in Longford. It aims to support health and wellbeing with better access to services to promote healthier lifestyles.



Community and Enterprise

Library, Heritage and Archives

My Open Library in Lanesborough

Installation work for the My Open Library service in Lanesborough Library has begun. This will allow extended opening hours for library users. Lanesborough Library will be closed for a short time for these works to take place.

My Open Library is up and running in Ballymahon Library, with people visiting the library over Christmas including Christmas Day and using online services to connect with family and friends further afield.

Risk assessments and the installing of additional health and safety equipment in Edgeworthstown and Granard libraries is underway also.

Right to Read national programme

Plans are underway on four events to look forward to as part of the Right to Read national initiative: Spring into Storytime (taking place in April), Summer Stars (in July and August), Children's Book Festival (in October) and Family Time at your Library (late 2023). The events will encourage families to read together, improving literacy for younger children. Eighteen storytime sessions were organised across all libraries for 450 children.

Healthy Ireland in Edgeworthstown

Six play sessions took place in December in Edgeworthstown Library for primary schools' junior classes and Autism Spectrum Disorder Units. Testimonial from a St John's National School teacher

noted the children's enjoyment. "The children thoroughly enjoyed the wide variety of materials and toys that they had to interact with. The large space allowed them great scope to express themselves and to move freely from one activity to another...It was very interesting to observe the children interacting with the materials provided and watching how they related to each other during the play session".

Archives

Additional items were donated by the daughter of the late Anne Byrne (1915-2019), Ardagh. This adds to the substantial collection deposited in 2020.

Longford Libraries has agreed in principle to a donation from the Reynolds family. This will form the foundation of the Albert Reynolds Archive Collection.

Decade of Centenaries Programme

The Garda Centenary Exhibition travelled to the libraries in Granard, Edgeworthstown and Ballymahon. The national exhibition as well as items of local interest were incorporated into this. Overall, about twenty groups visited the exhibition, including many school groups.

County Longford GAA Archive launch

County Longford GAA Archive, in partnership with the Longford County Board, was launched in Longford Library. Items relative to the history of County Longford GAA will be collected as part of this archive. Four major donations of material were made at the launch. Others donations have been promised, an excellent foundation for this collection. Many thanks to MC Eamonn Brennan, guests of honour All-Ireland Champions Longford Slashers Ladies Football Team and everyone who donated and expressed interest in donating material.

Community and Enterprise

Local Enterprise Office

Women's Enterprise Day 2022

Longford, Leitrim and Westmeath Women in Business Network held their tri-county networking event in Longford Rugby Club. Over 70 business women attended. 'Rest, relax and refocus' was the theme for this popular event, one of the first since the start of COVID-19.



Shop Longford launched

Local Enterprise Office (LEO), Longford, along with Longford Chamber of Commerce launched the annual #ShopLongford campaign. This online campaign encourages everyone to shop from local businesses throughout the Christmas period. Throughout December the campaign featured many local businesses and was very well received.

Business Development Programme with Longford Women's Link

LEO Longford and Longford Women's Link delivered a successful Business Development Programme which addressed challenges facing women in business.

Corporate Services

Customer Services

Customer Services dealt with over 2,000 calls and 134 emails in November and December, as well as in-person customers.

Franchise

Since ChecktheRegister.ie went live in October, 319 new and updated registrations in County Longford have been processed. Several initiatives were rolled out to encourage registering and updating details, including

- an online advertising campaign
- internal communications for employees and Elected Members
- Information desks in Longford Shopping Centre and the Sláintecare Healthy Communities launch
- Information sessions at the Older People's Council meeting in Longford Library
- Advertisement in Longford Credit Union



Official Languages Act

Under the Official Languages Act, requirements for advertisements in Irish and in Irish language media were achieved by the Council. The Council had 20.2% advertising in Irish and 5.8% of its advertising in the Irish language media, exceeding targets of 20% and 5% respectively.

Community and Enterprise

Corporate Services (Contd)

Freedom of Information (FOI)

	Nov	Dec	YTD*
FOI requests received	7	1	58
Access to Information on the Environment requests received	1	0	8
Office of the Ombudsman complaints received	1	0	5

*Year-to-date

Elected Members Supports and Meetings Administration

The following meetings took place:

8 November	Corporate Policy Group
9 November	Longford County Council
14 November	Finance Committee
21 November	Statutory Budget
22 November	Granard Municipal District (MD)
23 November	Longford MD
25 November	Adjourned Statutory Budget
6 December	Ballymahon MD
13 December	Corporate Policy Group
14 December	Placemaking Strategic Policy Committee Longford County Council

Elected Members Training

Elected members attended a Cost of Living Crisis seminar and Data Protection training in November.

Events

The 'Christians in Morocco: Living Together' art exhibition was launched in St Mel's Cathedral.

A Civic Recognition event was held for All-Ireland Medal winner, Aoibhinn Ni Loinsigh.

Policies Adopted

Several policies were adopted by the Elected Members, namely:

- Policy on Twinning
- Terms of Reference for Protocol and Procedure Committee
- Terms of Reference for Place Naming Committee
- Policy on Commemorative Plaques and Monuments
- Civic Protocols December 2022 Update
- Longford County Council Civic Honours Checklist

Data Protection

Data Protection Compliance Reports for 2022 were issued to all sections in Longford County Council.

The Council's Cookies Policy and notices were updated to comply with Regulation 5 of the ePrivacy Regulations on all Longford County Council websites.

Health and Safety

All Ireland Occupational Safety Awards
The Council were awarded Regional (Midlands) and Continuous High Achiever Awards at the All Ireland Safety Awards.



Community and Enterprise

Corporate Services (Contd)

Employee Appreciation Day

As part of the Council's Employee Appreciation Day, Health and Safety recognised employee contribution to the safety management system. A presentation was made to Council Safety Representatives, manual handling trainers and VDU assessors.



Christmas Lights

Health and Safety assisted on the event management plan for turning on Longford Town Christmas lights.

Health and Safety Inspections

Eight safety inspections were completed in November and December.

Health and Safety Internal Audits

An internal health and safety audit was completed with the Regeneration section in November.

Health and Safety Meetings

Safety Monitoring Consultative Committee meetings were held within all directorates. The Safety Management Team meeting was also held.

Health and Safety met with Irish Water to discuss transfer of health and safety information from the Council to Irish Water. Information will be transferred to Irish Water in line with data protection when approved by management.

Communications

Press Releases

Nineteen press releases were issued. These included:

- Minister Feighan TD launches Longford Sláintecare Healthy Communities
- Taoiseach Michael Martin officially opens new social housing development in County Longford
- Longford Art Gallery set to open its doors again for the Christmas season

Media Enquiries

Communications dealt with 14 media enquiries in November and December

Communications Training

Content Management System and social media training was organised for employees of the Council in December. Further training is being planned for early 2023.

The Acting Communications Officer also attended Major Emergency Management Media Liaison Officer training. Also in attendance were representatives from Westmeath, Laois and Offaly County Councils, An Garda Síochána and the Ambulance Service.

Social Media

Communications shared updates on how to have a green Christmas and things to do in County Longford at Christmas. Requirements to have 20% of social media advertising through Irish were also met.

	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Posts and Stories	193	199	172
New followers	236	8	73
Reach/Impressions	286K	28.5K	42.3K

*Reach: number of people who had a post enter their screen

**Impressions: number of times a post entered a person's screen

Finance and IT

Finance

Revenue and Account Income and Expenditure Summary by Service Division Year to date to quarter end 30 September 2022

	Expenditure				Income				Net
	Expenditure (€)	Adopted Full Year Budget (€)	% Budget Spent to Date	Budget Remaining (€)	Income (€)	Adopted Full Year Budget (€)	% Budget Raised	Budget Outstanding (€)	Actual Overall Surplus/ (Deficit) (€)
Housing	7,890,609	10,026,917	79%	2,136,308	8,217,217	11,032,967	74%	2,815,750	326,608
Roads	13,628,041	20,380,160	67%	6,752,119	10,013,910	15,289,857	65%	5,275,947	(3,614,131)
Water Services	3,290,290	4,260,760	77%	970,470	3,153,748	4,158,150	76%	1,004,402	(136,542)
Development Management	8,259,157	11,417,181	72%	3,158,024	4,446,117	6,058,853	73%	1,612,736	(3,813,040)
Environment	4,416,213	6,178,587	71%	1,762,374	488,870	729,751	67%	240,881	(3,927,343)
Recreation and Amenity	3,923,945	4,891,511	80%	967,566	1,023,644	853,625	120%	(170,019)	(2,900,301)
Agri, Health and Welfare	402,327	499,303	81%	96,976	199,757	255,030	78%	55,273	(202,570)
Miscellaneous Services	4,551,986	3,925,448	116%	(626,538)	4,952,401	5,027,742	99%	75,341	400,415
Local Government Fund					6,933,356	9,244,474	75%	2,311,118	6,933,356
*Commercial Rates					6,556,159	8,929,416	73%	2,373,257	6,556,159
	€46,362,568	€61,579,867	75%	€15,217,299	€45,985,179	€61,579,865	75%	€15,594,686	(€377,389)

These figures were submitted to the Department on Monday, 12 December 2022.

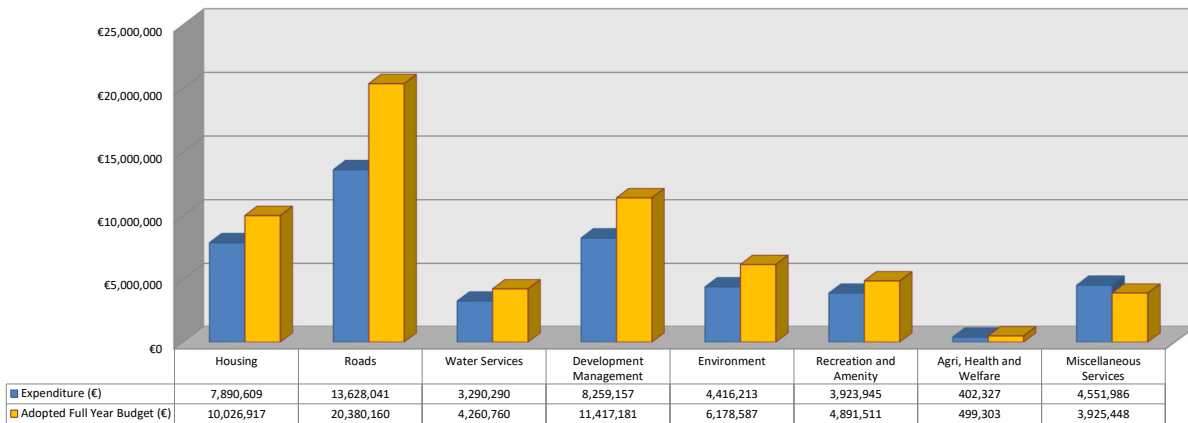
Where COVID-19 related expenditure has been incurred, corresponding Deferred Income from Central Government has been accounted for.

*The amount of Commercial Rates waived under the 2022 three-month waiver scheme for Q1, 2022 was €465,872.

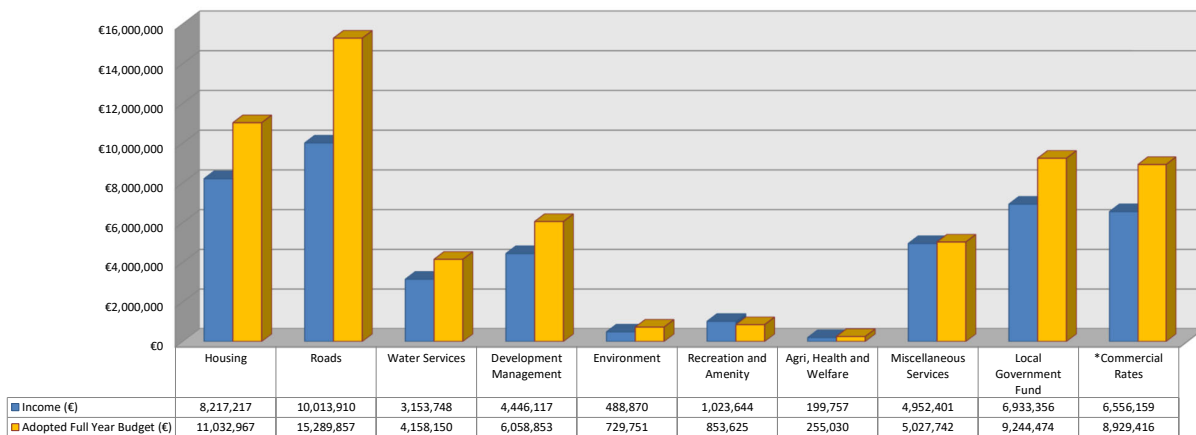
Finance and IT

Finance (Contd)

Expenditure v Budget Quarter 3, 2022



Income v Budget Quarter 3, 2022



Finance and IT

Finance (Contd)

Summary of Major Revenue Collections Quarter 3, 2022

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

	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected
Quarter 2, 2021	€	€	€	€	€	%
*Rates	€ 1,124,618	€ 10,021,112	€ 8,526,659	€ 4,398,415	€4,128,244	52%
Rents (inc RAS)	€ 839,673	€ 5,428,702	€ 6,266,455	€ 5,367,992	€898,463	86%
Housing Loans	€ 481,344	€ 717,407	€ 1,198,751	€ 719,299	€479,452	60%

	Opening Arrears	Billed	To be Collected	Collected	Closing Arrears	Collected
Variance YOY	€	€	€	€	€	%
*Rates	(€157,677)	(€1,287,563)	€605,984	€2,036,942	(€1,430,958)	19%
Rents (inc RAS)	(€39,520)	€117,672	€64,954	€158,140	(€93,186)	2%
Housing Loans	(€23,389)	€32,606	€9,217	€76,846	(€67,629)	6%

* COVID-19 commercial Rates waivers amounted to €465,872 in Q1, 2022.
These have been taken account of in the 'To be Collected' figures above.

Infrastructure, Housing & Innovation

Water

Find and Fix Programme

The Find and Fix team are nearing completion of leak detection in the Ballinalee, Newtowncashel and Colehill district metered areas (DMAs). Significant water leakage savings have been achieved. A new programme of DMA leak detection work has been scheduled for 2023.

The Find and Fix team were busy installing network improvement infrastructure. This includes additional bulk water meters, flow loggers and sluice valves.



Capital Network Schemes

Water submitted the 2023 Priority List for network watermain rehabilitation schemes, and backyard and lead service replacement schemes to Irish Water. This will help to maintain and improve the water network within the county.

Water also continues to liaise with Irish Water on the following capital network rehabilitation schemes:

- Reservoir cleaning and repair, with workshops ongoing to agree temporary and permanent repair for Carrowmore reservoir

Fire

Awards

Three personnel attended the Long Service Awards in Trim. Sub-Officer Padraig Carberry receiving the 30-year award and Station Officers Raymond Hussey and Kevin Madden received the 20-year awards.

Major Emergency Management

A regional Major Emergency Management working group meeting took place in December.

Training

Training completed included:

- Hazardous Material Incident Command
- Community First Responders refresher training
- Emergency Service Driver training
- Petroleum Licencing course
- Induction training

Health and Safety

There are no injuries to report.

Operations

There were 39 callouts in November and 40 in December. All stations remained fully operational.

Fire Prevention

Six fire safety certificates and seven court licence applications were processed.

Recruitment:

Two applicants were successful for Lanesborough fire brigade. Granard Station Officer post was filled.

Equipment

The tender was awarded for new fire tunics, with the first batch delivered.

Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

Regeneration

Pobal le Cheile contract signed

Ballymahon Pobal le Cheile contract were signed with Kenny Lyons and Associates Architects. It was attended by Taoiseach Micheál Martin. The project is funded under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund and Longford County Council.

This community hub project will become home to many services in close proximity to one another. It will bring several vacant buildings back into active use. Works will include renovating the former convent building to be home to Bridgeways Family Resource Centre. The Dean Egan Library be home to a youth club. The old school house will be renovated for remote working and Ballymahon Men's Shed.

Knappogue Bog Walk Car Park

The Knappogue Bog Walk car park is now complete. The car park can be used for accessing the bog walk and the Mid Shannon Wilderness Park. Works included surfacing works and fencing. The car park will also encourage use of the Royal Canal Greenway.



Ballymahon to Newcastle Woods Walk and Cycleway

Phase one is complete on the construction of a walk and cycleway linking Ballymahon Town with Newcastle Woods along the River Inny. Works involved widening and raising sections of an existing 600m existing pathway to protect against flooding. It will enhance connectivity and encourages activity, including by opening up the River Inny and associated economic opportunities.

Active Travel

Three Active Travel schemes were completed in November and December, in Drumlish, Legan and Farranyoogan.

In Drumlish, an 2.5 metre wide and 185 metre long footpath was constructed along the L-1013 Cloone road. Work involved hedgerow removal, setting back a new boundary fence to accommodate a grass verge, road drainage, public lighting and improvements to a public well access point.

In Legan, a 2.5 metre wide and 225 metre long footpath was complete along the L-1099 Rathowen road. Works included the relocation of Eir telecommunications poles, installing public lighting, landscaping, road drainage and surface improvements.

Works are substantially completed on a footpath link at Farranyoogan. It will provide pedestrian and cycle connectivity from the Farranyoogan estate to the Royal Canal Greenway and beyond.

Also under Active Travel, Part 8 planning was approved for a shared pedestrian and cycle path to connect the village of Ennybegs to St Teresa's National School. Works will start in January 2023.

Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

Planning

County Development Plan

Longford County Development Plan 2021-2027 policies and strategies are being implemented. Design and print are now complete.

Local Area Plan and Local Transport Plan

Issues paper public consultation is complete. Consultants for the Longford Transport Plan and Strategic Environmental Assessment, Appropriate Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the Longford Town Local Area Plan are engaged. Work is progressing on the Longford Town Transport Study and the Town Plan.

Active Travel

Planning continues to provide support and guidance for Active Travel for the Mall Park bridge eastern access, Dog Track and Church Street proposals. Part 8 planning applications are complete.

Compulsory Purchase Orders

Reviews of several Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) is underway. Planning reports concern the acquisition of semi-derelict properties. Planning provides administrative backup relating to the CPO process. This involves collaboration with Housing and Regeneration sections and legal representatives.

Enforcement

The enforcement team work continues and includes progressing cases for legal action.

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve

Lough Ree Biosphere Reserve proposal is out to tender for consultants to prepare the UNESCO application.

Planning Applications

A number of large planning applications are being considered by Planning, including in the renewable energy area.

Residential Zoning Land Tax

Planning is working on the statutorily required map, reports, and public consultation for the Revenue Commissioners under the Residential Zoning Land Tax legislation. This work continues into 2023.

Regeneration Projects

Planning continues to provide support and guidance for Regeneration. Specific design work was undertaken for a playground for all, including autistic children. Part 8 is for presentation to the Municipal District elected members in 2023.

Housing, Planning and Project Delivery

Climate Action Initiatives

Planning

Planning are working with the Council's climate change team with intention of producing a climate change adaption and nature plan in 2023.

Regeneration

Longford Connected works are ongoing, increasing the walkability of Longford Town. The work will also support sustainable and compact urban growth which, in turn, supports public transport development.

Part of Regeneration, the Active Travel team works to reduce dependence on cars by giving attractive and safer options to leave the car at home. In Longford, three active travel schemes were new footpaths in Drumlish, Legan and Farranyoogan. This work will also help to reduce noise from traffic, improve air quality, and reduce congestion and carbon emissions.



CONNECTED

People • Place • Opportunity

Management Report for December 2022 prepared in accordance with Sec 136 (2) of the Local Government Act 2001, as inserted by Sec 51 the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The report outlines key aspects of our service delivery and performance in December 2022 in securing the objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Signed:



Paddy Mahon
Chief Executive





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A Longford County Council Publication 2023