

**KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**DRAFT 2014 BUDGET**

*To the Cathaoirleach and Each Member of Kilkenny County Council*

Dear Councillor,

Attached for your consideration is the draft 2014 Budget. The prescribed period for the holding of the 2014 Budget meetings is from 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 to 13<sup>th</sup> January, 2014.

**Budget Context**

Recent years have been particularly challenging for the Council. The major recession and consequent significant reduction in all lines of income have led to significant re-balancing with major limitations on service levels and major cuts in areas like payroll, contract employment and procurement. The Council, both elected members and staff, have worked hard to make sure that Council service provision would be maintained and also not burdened by revenue deficits, so as to enable balanced growth as the County and the economy emerges from recession.

Separate funding arrangements for Kilkenny Borough Council will be abolished from next year and with it the county charge. Central government funding for the Borough Council is now incorporated into County Council funding. Responsibility for local property charge collection has transferred to the Revenue Commissioners and provision has been made in the budget for the absorption of same in respect of Council housing.

Water and waste water assets, and responsibility for operations will transfer to Irish Water early in the New Year. The Council will deliver water services for Irish Water under the terms of a 12 year service level agreement. This will also mean significant changes to the council's finances and to the system of financial management and accounting.

Council staff numbers have reduced by 24% since 2008. A Voluntary Redundancy Scheme is now being implemented and it is expected that this will be self funding over a three/four year period. In any event, staff levels are now at historically low levels and further staff cuts are not proposed in the interests of the maintenance of service delivery.

The total expenditure in the draft 2014 Budget amounts to €1.3m, an increase of €100,000m on the adopted 2013 Budget of €1.2m. The 2014 Local Government Fund allocation will be €8.5m.

Given the above context, and cognisant of the Council's wish to support local business, no increase is proposed in the 2014 commercial rates charge and rates will remain unchanged since 2008. The Council's rate charge is the lowest nationally and is 23% lower than the national average. This represents a direct financial gain to business in the County of €3.6m per annum and a consequential loss to public service provision.

The main factors influencing the 2014 budget are:

1. The Local Government Fund allocation of €8.5m which is of significant assistance.
2. Local roads funding of €1.6m, an increase of €200,000 (14%) on the 2013 Budget. The extra €200,000 is to be allocated equally among the four areas.
3. The need to retain flexibility in relation to the Department of Transport road grants.
4. Irish Water will now take over the net funding cost of water supply and waste water treatment with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2014. This saving of €8m is compensated for by a reduction in the Local Government Fund.
5. There is an increase of €214k in housing provision – absorption of property tax at €57k and the establishment of a provision for mortgage bad debt of €157k

6. A sum of €100k is provided for Public Conveniences.
7. Library Stock budget for 2014 has more than doubled to €80,000, an increase of €50,000 on 2013.
8. Provision for rates strike off costs of €2.2m. This is a substantial provision and is unchanged from the 2013 Budget.
9. Non Principal Private Residence Charge has been abolished for 2014 a reduction of €85,000 on Budget 2013. This reduction has been compensated by a reduction within the Local Government Fund allocation.
10. Reduced salaries cost provision of €12.6m, a reduction of €730,000 (5.5%) on 2012.

In 2012 the Council completely eliminated the 2001 year end deficit of €21m and a balanced budget has been achieved since then. This is a very significant financial achievement at a time when the Council's revenue/operational budget declined from €81.2m in 2008 to €61.2m in 2013.

### **Strategic Direction**

The Council's strategic direction was set by the economic development plan adopted by the members in 2010—this plan continues to direct Council's priorities, objectives and operations.

Six strategic objectives were set

- (1) To develop third level education and research
- (2) To support the development of agriculture and agri-business
- (3) To support the development of tourism and the arts
- (4) To support the development of life sciences and manufacturing in South Kilkenny at Belview
- (5) To support the development of services generally and ICT, Telecoms and Financial services particularly.
- (6) To support the development of Kilkenny city, Belview port and the scheduled towns.

### **Third Level Education and Research**

The establishment in St. Kieran's College of the TSSG by the Council with Waterford and Carlow Institutes of Technology in St. Kieran's College has been a major success. On opening, it was projected that the centre would have 10 high level researchers and provides supports to business to the value of €1m. Since then, the level of business has doubled to €2m and the centre employs 20 researchers as well as providing office and research support to a number of companies on site and across the county. The centre now needs to expand, and the Council's of both the County and City have decided in conjunction with the two Institutes of Technology to establish a new research and enterprise campus at the Smithwick's site in the context of Government decisions to establish a Technological University of the South East. This will be a major task for the year ahead.

### **Agriculture and Agri-Business**

Agriculture and agri-business is a central element and driver of Kilkenny's economy and of the regional and national economy. Kilkenny is at the centre of the milk field and this presents an enormous economic development opportunity for farmers and for the entire business and general community.

The major expansions by Glanbia at Belview and at Ballyragget embody the level of opportunity. The increase in milk supply post quarter 2015 represents the single most important economic development opportunity in the county. Accordingly, the capture of the scale of such opportunity and the mitigation of business and environmental risk is a major objective. In that context the work of the CEO agri-business group and of the environmental agencies group has been critically important, and may provide a template for national policy direction as well as for local policy.

### **Tourism and the Arts.**

In 2013, the Council's received approval of its application to Failte Ireland for the development of a medieval mile in Kilkenny City with the aim of strategically lifting city and county tourism economic performance.

This programme is now underway with the completion of Phase 1 of the public realm improvement in Kilkenny City at High Street, the completion of the planning process for a new museum and exhibition centre at St. Mary's Church and the initiation of a

design tendering process for a new garden/park amenity along the river Nore. These projects will progress significantly in 2014.

Approval will now be sought to bring forward Phase II of the Medieval Mile project specifically the plans for the Butler Gallery and for a new Tourist Information Office. The most immediate and significant tourism project in the year ahead will be the opening of the new Smithwicks visitor centre in the summer of 2014. It is a Diageo objective that some 100,000 visitors will be attracted to this centre, and this will represent a very significant boost to tourism performance.

The tourism awards received in 2013 – Overall Tourism winner and best town and friendliest city – demonstrate and underpin the County's commitment to tourism and provide confidence to the tourism sector that further growth is achievable. The completion of the medieval mile project and support for the tourism sector will continue to be a major objective of the Council.

### **Life Sciences and Manufacturing**

The provision of a major water supply to the Belview area by the IDA and the County Council at a cost of €13m has been a major success. The decision by Glanbia to locate their new dairy ingredient plant in Belview at a cost of €180m, would not have been possible without a strategic water supply. The decision by Coillte to expand the Smartply operation at Belview is also a major boost for the South Kilkenny area.

The Council will actively seek to market and expand major industrial activity at Belview in the year ahead. In that context, a working group of importers/exporters was established in 2013 and chaired by the Council, with the Port of Waterford, and is progressing well. The objective is to review and improve shipping services as a business support to Kilkenny and to the region.

### **Services**

Kilkenny is a major national and international services centre with companies such as Statestreet, Glanbia Plc, Glanbia GIII, Cartoon Saloon, Taxback, Connect Ireland, Banking 365, the VHI and others.

The Council's objective is to consolidate and expand its attraction for service companies, and to that end, seeks to work closely with such companies and with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and Connect Ireland.

A new dimension and a new offer for services companies is the Smithwicks Site which the Council will acquire in quarter 3 of 2014. It will be a major objective of the Council to progress the development of the proposed research and enterprise campus on the Diageo site in line with decisions made by the County and Borough Councils in mid 2013 with a major focus on service companies in the ICT, financial services and general corporate sectors.

New marketing, funding and institutional arrangements will need to be put in place for the development of the Smithwicks site and proposals will be brought to the Council in the year ahead. As a first step a design team is now being sought for the refurbishment of the Brewhouse.

### **Towns Development**

The Council acting as scheme promoter and in partnership with Leader and with local community groups, has secured funding of €1,660,500 for the completion of an Urban & Village Renewal Project in each of the following towns, Callan, Griaguenamanagh, Thomastown and Ballyragget.

The scheme will provide for the environmental upgrading of the existing streetscapes using high quality paving materials and street furniture, the removal of existing overhead service cables together with their relocation/replacement underground and the provision of new, decorative street lighting, landscaping and revisions to existing traffic management measures.

Following Leader approval, all four schemes were tendered and contracts will be signed in January 2014 with a view to commencing works in quarter one of next year.

## Council Financial Position

Table 1 illustrates the trends in funding of the Income & Expenditure account over the period 2008 – 2014.

*Table 1*

	2008		2012		2013		2014	
	€000	%	€000	%	€000	%	€000	%
Local Government Fund	22,022	27	15,113	22	15,105	25	8,478	14
Rates	11,162	14	11,996	17	12,062	20	12,119	20
Other Income	45,577	56	37,831	55	30,192	49	37,743	61
County Charge	2,500	3	2,600	4	2,600	4	1,760	3
Pension Levy	0	-	1,250	2	1,200	2	1,200	2
	<b>81,261</b>	100	<b>68,790</b>	100	<b>61,159</b>	100	<b>61,300</b>	100

As can be seen above, income from the Local Government Fund has reduced by €13.5m (61%) from its peak of €22m in 2008 to €8.5m for 2014. While gross rates income has increased by €1.0m over the period 2008 to 2014, the benefit of this is negated by the increase in rates strike off cost of €1.8m over the same period.

The Council has successfully eliminated the 2001 year end balance sheet deficit of circa €1m by:

1. Strict adherence to operational and capital budgets;
2. The generation of significant unbudgeted cost reductions and income improvements; and
3. The introduction of the Development Contribution Scheme in 2004, which generated capital funding for infrastructure works.

While at the 2013 year end the Council's balance sheet is cleared of any unfunded deficits or balances by way of revenue transfers and development levies, the Council is limited by its relative lack of resources to progress projects outside of those that are contained in the adopted 2013 - 2015 Capital Budget.

## Development Contributions

At this stage of 2013, just over €1.9m in Development Charges has been collected and there will be an expected balance of €0.8m on the Development Contribution Fund at the end of 2013, due to development levy allocations in 2013.

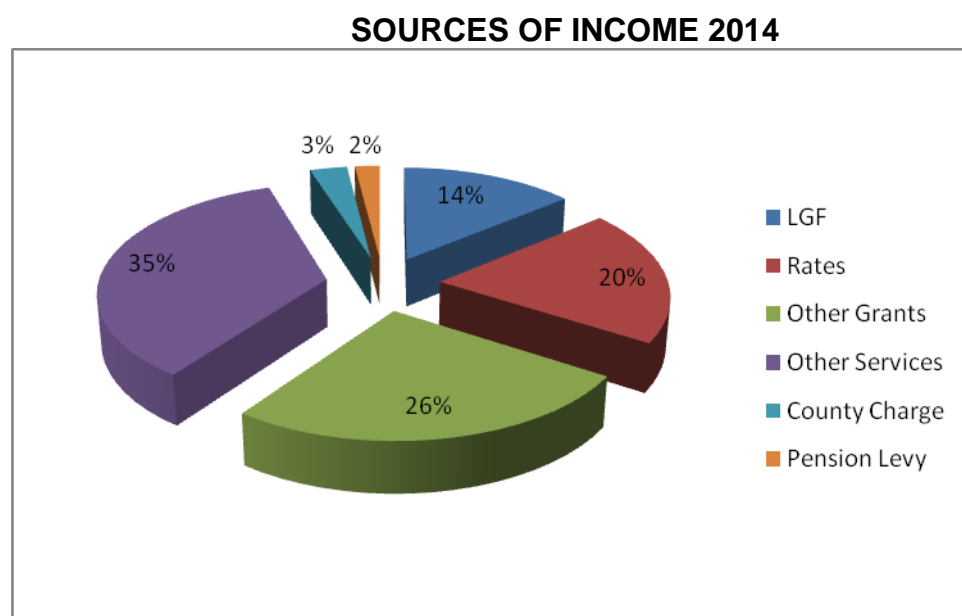
## Payroll Cost

The number of staff employed by both Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Borough Council has reduced significantly over the last number of years as can be seen below:

	Whole Time Equivalent
31 <sup>st</sup> December, 2008	644
30 <sup>th</sup> December, 2009	595
31 <sup>st</sup> December, 2010	568
31 <sup>st</sup> December, 2011	561
31 <sup>st</sup> December, 2012	529
31 <sup>st</sup> December, 2013	<u>490</u>
Total Reduction	<u>154</u> (24%)

## Sources of Funding

The following chart shows the principal sources of funding in the 2014 Budget.





### **Commercial Rates**

A 0% rates increase has been budgeted in the draft 2014 Budget.

The contribution from commercial rates is 20% of the 2014 Budget income.

### **Other Charges**

No changes are proposed in other Council charges and levies.

### **Strategic Policy Committees**

The Council's five Strategic Policy committees Forward Planning & Development Policy, Housing & Social Policy, Environmental Policy Fire Services & Emergency Planning, Infrastructure, Transportation & Water Services & Other, Community & Social Policy, Arts Culture Heritage Tourism & Education have addressed major strategic issues facing the County under the Chairmanship of Cllrs Maurice Shortall, Marie Fitzpatrick, Tom Maher, Matt Doran and John Brennan. The SPCs are an important part of the Council's policy development process and they dealt with a very significant range of policy matters during 2013.

### **Area Committees**

The Council's five area committees of Ballyragget, Callan, Kilkenny, Piltown and Thomastown, under the Chairmanship of Cllrs Mary H Cavanagh, Billy Ireland, John Coonan, Cora Long and Jane Moran met quarterly, or more often as considered necessary by individual committees, to deal with issues relating to service delivery on an area basis. The area committees have addressed a range of road, traffic management, village renewal, community, environmental improvement and service issues for their localities in 2011.

### **Service Division**

The attached pages describe and outline the main expenditure and income issues arising in each of the service divisions. The draft budget was prepared by the Management Team was examined and considered by the Corporate Policy Group and by the Council itself.

## **Conclusion**

I wish to thank all the members of the Council, and the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Pat Dunphy and his predecessor Cllr. Marie Fitzpatrick for their continuing work to advance the county, the members of the Corporate Policy Group, and SPC chairs, Cllrs Maurice Shortall, Marie Fitzpatrick, Matt Doran, Tom Maher and John Brennan, and the chairs of the area committees, Cllrs. M.H. Cavanagh, Billy Ireland, John Coonan, Cora Long and Jane Moran.

I also wish to extend my appreciation to the Directors of Services John McCormack, Philip O' Neill and John Mulholland and to all staff for their co-operation and assistance during 2013. A particular word of appreciation is extended to Declan McDonnell and his team for their work in preparing this budget document..

Yours sincerely

*Joe Crockett*

J. Crockett, City & County Manager.

19<sup>th</sup> December, 2013

## **Housing and Building – Service Division A**

### **Strategic Policy Committee**

The Housing & Social Policy Strategic Policy Committee met on 4 occasions in 2013 under the chairmanship of Cllr. Marie Fitzpatrick. The principal areas of housing policy that were discussed were as follows;

- Housing Allocation Policy
- Social Housing Assessment
- Transfer of Rent Supplement
- National Differential Rent Scheme
- Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) 2013
- Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014-2018
- Void Management
- Retrofitting Programme
- Private Grants
- Loan Arrears Management
- South East Homeless Action Plan
- RAS/Leasing Initiative

### **Social Housing Provision in 2013**

In 2013 the County Council acquired 9 houses into stock and constructed a rural cottage at Timberoe. An additional allocation under the Jobs Stimulus Package provided for the purchase of 6 additional houses.

Under the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) a further 102 units (to end November) were provided during 2013 bringing the total to 461 RAS properties. The Leasing Scheme did not deliver units in 2013 and is proving less attractive than the RAS Scheme. The Council are at an advanced stage of negotiations in respect of two schemes and it is hoped that 2014 will see the delivery of private units into leasing.

### **Social Housing Provision**

Capital Allocation 2013 (SHIP Programme)	1,070,000
Additional Allocation	639,450
RAS Allocation	2.2ml

The full allocation was expended in 2013 with the provision of 169 units as follows:

Construction/Refurbishment	52
Purchases	15
RAS	<u>102</u>
	<u>169</u>

It is expected that capital funding will remain the same in 2014 with some indications that the construction programme may re-commence. The Council expects funding for the completion of the remaining PART V units at Rose Hill, Kells Road. The Council also proposes to advance a housing scheme of 12 units at Gaol Road, Kilkenny City depending on capital allocation from the Department.

#### ***Traveller Accommodation –St Catherine’s***

The Council secured Department approval to proceed with the tendering process for the construction of 2 group houses at Wetlands as part of a phased scheme. Construction will commence in early 2014 once capital allocation is confirmed. An application will be made to the Department seeking an additional 2 to 4 units in the second half of 2014 as part of second Phase of this Scheme.

#### **Homeless Assistance**

The Housing Section dealt with over 200 referrals in 2013. The Homeless Action Team (HAT), which is an interagency group, meet weekly to review, on a case by case basis, those who have presented as homeless and are being assisted by the agencies. In dealing with homeless the Council relies heavily on the great work being done by both The Good Shepherd Centre and Amber. It is a welcome development to have the ‘Lodge’ based in the Good Shepherd Centre renovated to meet the emergency accommodation needs of homeless families in Kilkenny.

Given the current economic climate it is expected that there will be a constant demand for these services. The HAT model is proving to be a very customer service focused model and ensures that only those unwilling to engage with the service providers go without supported accommodation. It is noticeable that there is a marked increase in the number of homeless clients presenting with addiction, mental and behavioural issues.

## Voluntary Housing

The Council continues to be very proactive in the area of Voluntary Housing. There are almost 700 units of accommodation provided by Voluntary Housing Associations in the County. Two voluntary bodies were approved funding totalling €15,000 for 6 units, one in the city and one in south Kilkenny, targeting applicants with special needs. There were four successful applications for funding under the ‘Special Call’ Scheme in 2012 totalling €1,095,000 delivering 14 units and all 4 schemes are now in their final stages of completion.

The means to support voluntary housing bodies by way of the grant assistance [CAS] is expected to continue in 2014 in the form of a ‘*Special Call*’ where invited applications must be made within a restricted period. The Department of Environment will notify each Local Authority when the Scheme is open for receipt of applications.

## Housing Grants

In 2013 the number of persons assisted under the Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes was 195. The Average grant paid out was €7,533.

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Grant Allocation	1,867,500	1,867,000	1,867,500	1,406,162
Additional Allocation	0.00	604,250	0.00	82,471
Total	1,867,500	2,247,750	1,867,500	1,488,633
No. Applicants Assisted	322	360	258	195

The Council has dealt with the backlog of grants under the Housing Aid for Older Persons Scheme and it is hoped to advertise the scheme for a restricted period in 2014. The 2013 allocation of €1,488,633 was funded by the Department to the value of €1,190,064 with the balance of €297,727 from Kilkenny Local Authorities.

### **Maintenance/Retro-fitting Programme**

Kilkenny Local Authorities have a stock of 2,154 rented houses, 1,554 in the County area and 600 in the City area. It has been critical throughout 2013 to adhere to the maintenance budget while still providing an effective and efficient service to our tenants.

Kilkenny Local Authorities received a grant of €377,688 in 2013 for energy efficiency works to existing housing stock and long term voids. In addition, The Council in association with CKEA secured €2.4ml from SEAI which allowed a further 138 houses to be retrofitted in 2013. These retrofitting works and the return of vacant units back into stock have reduced significantly the level of internal capital receipts which funds these schemes in 2013. This will impact on the number and level of works that will be carried out on casual vacancies/voids/energy efficiency works in 2014.

### **Housing Assistance Payment**

Kilkenny County Council will be one of the pilot local authorities for the proposed Housing Assistance Payment Scheme which is due to commence in 2014. Essentially this scheme will see the existing Supplementary Welfare Allowance/Rent Supplement scheme transfer to local government. This will present new challenges for us all in how we deliver social housing.

## **Road Transportation and Safety – Service Division B**

### **Strategic Policy Committee**

The Infrastructure, Transportation and Water Strategic Policy Committee met on four occasions in 2013. Under the chairmanship of Cllr. Cllr Matt Doran the principal issues discussed included class three local roads, road safety, community involvement in road works, proposed power grid network improvements, speed limits, review of bus shelter provision in rural and urban areas, and reviews of planning and the progression of various water and sewage infrastructural projects.

### **2013 Road Surface Dressing/Surface Restoration**

The following surface dressing and roads surface restoration and pavement improvements were carried out:

	<b>Non-national</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Total</b>
	kms	kms	kms
Surface dressing/restoration	77	4	78

### **2013 Road Works Scheme**

Expenditure on all National Primary and National Secondary Road Improvement Works are included in the Capital Account and in the Road Works Scheme.

The non-national road restoration improvement programme will continue during 2014. The grant receipts from the Department of Transport, through the National Roads Authority, are expected to be less than those allocated in 2013 but are expected to be increased by other central government funding in early 2014. The scope and extent of road reconstruction and surface dressing in 2014 will depend on funds to be allocated by the NRA based on the new multi annual roads restoration programme covering the period 2013 to 2016. The aggregate value of the programme is around €22 million over the four years in question (€14.9 million for road reconstruction and €7.1 million for surface restoration). The actual allocation under this heading was

€6.69 million in 2013 (€5.0 million for reconstruction and €1.69 million for surfacing).

The non national road grants cover expenditure on areas such as pavement overlays, surface maintenance, low cost accident schemes and community involvement in roadworks on the county's regional and local road network.

The 2013 budget for local roads funding was €1,413,000. The 2014 allocation is proposed to be €1,613,000, representing an increase of €200,000 to be split equally among the four areas.

As in 2013, it is important that the Department of Transport/NRA continues to allow flexibilities in the way in which roads grants can be used so as to give road authorities greater discretion in planning and undertaking of road maintenance functions.

The Council's emphasis in 2013 will continue to be on ordinary road maintenance and road drainage improvements and essential road safety works.

An effective asset management and recording system is central to Kilkenny County Council undertaking its road maintenance activities in an efficient manner. A new feature of the four year roads programme is the requirement to survey and record all road pavement conditions on a central GIS based database. To this end and in order to pursue value for money in road works the Council will continue to develop its pavement and bridge management systems based on the MapRoad and GIS suites of software. The adherence to this new data recording system is a future requirement to drawing down funds from the Dept of Transport/NRA.

### **Roads Capital Projects and Improvements**

The past decade has seen capital expenditure in excess of €1 billion invested in roads and motorway schemes in Co Kilkenny. The economic outlook over the next number of years means that all major scheme planning in the county has now been suspended. It is noted that the NRA will work from a budget of €250 million per annum over the next three years. This compares with €750 million for 2012 and far greater sums in previous years.



Examples of schemes to be paused include the by passes of Mooncoin, Carrick on Suir and Thomastown and the realignment of the N25 Waterford to Glenmore road. A notable exception is the New Ross By pass scheme. Work has recommenced on the shortlisting and consideration of a panel of contractors to undertake the project under a public private partnership. It is expected that a contractor will be selected in qtr three next year.

Planning design and preparation of tender documentation will however continue with respect to the following projects.

Ballynaslee; 2km , €4.2 million

Following purchase of all necessary lands in 2012 the Council undertook archaeological resolution works, earthworks and advance drainage works in 2013 to the value of €500,000. The position of funding for next year is unclear but the Council is in a position to tender for the construction works should finance be made available.

Callan Road ( Tennypark); 3.5km, €8million

This scheme is ready to progress to CPO and Kilkenny County Council will seek the NRA's approval to publish the CPO in early 2014. Thereafter land acquisition is dependent on An Bord Pleanala approval to the CPO and the availability of NRA grant aid to advance the scheme.

Tower Road, Pilltown €1.1 million

The Project Appraisal Report and Cost benefit analysis has been sent by KCC to NRA. The emerging preferred option of KCC is to construct the bridge/flyover and to reduce local land acquisition by retaining the right turn into Ink Bottle junction.

Kilkenny Central Access Scheme. €10.4 million

The scheme is estimated to cost €10.4 million, including land acquisition, and shows a cost benefit ratio of 7.2 to 1. The scheme comprises 700 metres of urban standard street/road commencing at Vicar Street, spanning the river Nore via a new five span bridge and terminating at the Castlecomer Road.

Prequalification of scheme contractors has taken place and tenders for pricing of construction contract will issue early in 2014.

*Kilkenny Ring Road Northern River Crossing. 1.5 km €11 million.*

The Environmental Impact Statement, Compulsory Purchase Order issued to An Bord Pleanála on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 2013. It is now a matter for the Bord to consider the application by Kilkenny County Council for statutory consent to the proposed development.

### **Public Lighting**

The County Council maintains approximately 9,000 public lights. A regionally procured contract was initiated by the Councils in the South East region in 2011 in an effort to procure better value for money. Airtricity were awarded the contract and commenced maintenance on lighting stock in Kilkenny in April 2012.

The power supply for public lighting is supplied by Energia and this supply contract is overseen by the National Procurement Service.

The cost of public lighting per annum is €890,000 of which maintenance accounts for €290,000 and energy accounting for €600,000. Estimated income from the NRA for public lighting in 2014 is €120,000. The local budget allocation to public lighting is a net €760,000 (expenditure €890,000, income €130,000) in 2014 in order to cover the total costs for both maintenance and power supply in the year ahead.

On average the cost associated with the ongoing maintenance and operation of a public light is €100 per light per annum. There are an estimated 1200 lights throughout County Kilkenny within housing estates that will in due course be taken in charge by Kilkenny County Council.

### **Road Safety**

Road Safety is an extremely important function of the Council. To this end, the continued budgetary provision towards road safety awareness, the school warden system and the support of community focussed road safety campaigns will be a key consideration for the Council. The Road Safety Plan for Kilkenny covering the period 2014 to 2020 will be prepared during the first quarter of the year. The Council and An Garda Síochána will continue to cooperate to ensure improvements in road safety in the county.

# **Water Services – Service Division C**

## **Strategic Policy Committee**

The Infrastructure, Transportation and Water Strategic Policy Committee met on 4 occasions in 2013. Under the chairmanship of Cllr. Matt Doran, the principal issues arising were Water Services Needs Assessment, Water Services Investment Programme, Water Conservation Programme and Irish Water.

## **Progress by Council in 2013:**

Significant progress was made by the Council's Water Services throughout 2013 in:

1. Development and implementation of the Water Services Capital Programme including Water Conservation.
2. The Council's Public Water Schemes achieved a 100% micro-biological compliance in 2012 – a major achievement.
3. High collection levels of non-domestic water charges – 82% collection estimated for 2013 – one of the highest collection rates in the country.

## **Irish Water**

### **Service Level Agreement**

The Council will manage the transition of Water Services to Irish Water commencing January, 2014 and this will be achieved through a Service Level Agreement over the coming 12 years.

The services that will be covered by the Agreement relate to the following:-

- Water treatment (including source protection);
- Water network and related operations (including water conservation);
- Delivery of water to customer connections and collection of wastewater from customer sewers;
- Waste water treatment and related operations (including sludge management);
- Waste water network operations including combined sewers which discharge into the collection network;
- Sampling and testing;
- Regular reporting on activities;
- Support for the water services capital programme; and

- Management, engineering and administration support in relation to the above.

The cost of operating Water Services for 2014 will be €14 million of which €12m will be paid for by Irish Water.

## 2. **Transitional Arrangements:**

There will be a number of transitional arrangements as not all functions will transfer in January, 2014. These include:-

- Non-domestic billing and collection will be carried out by the Council on behalf of Irish Water until the end of June 2014.
- Calls from the public in relation to burst water mains etc. will be dealt with by the Council until April 2014 after which they will be dealt with by the Irish Water Call Centre.
- New connections to watermains/sewers – transfer to Irish Water June 2014.

## 3. **Water Services Capital Programme:**

- \* The Capital Programme including Water Conservation and Minor Capital will transfer to Irish Water with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2014.
- \* The Council's Capital Team will remain in place and report to Irish Water.
- \* The Council has given Irish Water its Capital Priority Programme.

## 4. **Training:**

An extensive Training Programme has commenced with our Staff and will continue over the next 12 months. The training will cover:-

- New Irish Water Financial, and Procurement systems.
- Over 40 protocols between Irish Water and the Local Authority on how different water services functions are to be carried out.

## 5. **Domestic Metering:**

Irish Water commenced metering in Kilkenny in December, 2013. Kilkenny was identified as being a location where there are considerable number of existing suitable boundary boxes where screw-in meters can be provided i.e. no excavations required – approximately 2,000.

This Programme of 2000 meters will be completed by the end of 2013. The main installation programme will commence in July, 2014.

**Rural Water Programme:**

The Rural Water Programme will remain the responsibility of Kilkenny County Council however the Small Schemes Programme which formed part of the Rural Programme will transfer from January 2014 to Irish Water and will be part of their Capital Programme.

The Council will oversee the public and private group scheme sector and the budget cover the administration of the following Programmes:

- Grant Schemes for Group Schemes €148,300
- Private Well Grant Schemes €130,000
- Subsidy Payments to Group Schemes €260,000

**Public Conveniences:**

Provision of €100,000 has been made for 2014.

## Capital Programme

During 2013 the Council advanced significantly the water Services Capital Programme

### Projects Completed

- Ballyhale Waste Water Treatment Plant
- Kilmaganny Waste Water Treatment Plant
- Purcellsinch Waste Water Treatment Plant (upgrades)
- Paulstown Waste Water Treatment Plant (outfall) €1m

### Projects advanced to construction stage

- Freshford, Johnstown, Goresbridge D.B.O.  
Waste Water Treatment Plants €3.6m  
Contractor being allocated
- Castlecomer, Stoneyford, Urlingford  
Waste Water Treatment Plants €2.0m  
Tender being advertised

### Projects being advanced through planning/design stage

- Inistioge/Thomastown Water Supply €6m
- Kilkenny City Water– Outrath Reservoir €1m
- Kilkenny City Water– Dinin and Nore intake works and bank side storage €3.5m

### Projects - Preliminary Reports with DoECLG for approval

- Monocoin Water Supply Scheme Stage 2
- Piltown and Fiddown WWTP
- Bennettsbridge “
- Mullinavat “
- Inistioge “
- Clogh/Moneenroe “

## Water Conservation Capital Programme

### Schemes Commenced

Direct Labour – John’s Quay, Talbots Inch, Castlecomer Rd., Kilkenny. Creel St., Freshford €0.3m

### Contracts being awarded

Station Rd., Thomastown – Tibberaghny Rd., Piltown – Ullid & Ballinabooley, Kilmacow. €2.5m

### Scheme being designed

Contract – Main St/High St., Graigueமானanagh, Leggettsrath Cottages, Kilkenny. Newrath €2.2m

The Council through its leak detection and repair programme has reduced the unaccounted for water from 53% a number of years ago to 39% in 2013 and is now below the national average of 41%

## Rural Water Programme

- The Council expended its full allocation totalling - €1.06m
- Pilot Group Sewerage Schemes were completed in Massford and lower Kilmacow.
- New Water source for Gowran, Goresbridge, Paulstown Water Supply Scheme to facilitate 8 housing schemes is currently being developed.

## **Development Management – Service Division D**

### **Strategic Policy Committee**

The Forward Planning & Development Strategic Policy Committee met on six (6) occasions in 2013 under the chairmanship of Cllr. Maurice Shortall. The principal matters discussed included the Draft County & City Environs Development Plans 2014 - 2020, Wind Energy Strategy for the county, unfinished and completed housing developments, taking in charge of housing estates, review of the development contributions scheme and the proposed Eirgrid Inter-Connector Project.

### **Strategic Forward Planning**

The review of the County & City Development Plan commenced formally in June 2012. In order to raise awareness and outline the issues involved for interested people, groups and organisations, a document entitled “*Our Plan - A Guide to Having Your Say*” was published. An extensive consultation exercise was undertaken which included newspaper articles, awareness raising meetings, website development, a primary schools project and a secondary schools project.

A total of ten meetings were held with organisations which were representative of wider groups within the County. The purpose of these meetings was to raise awareness and also to encourage these specific representative bodies to consider the issues of relevance to them and encourage submissions. A total of seven public meetings were held across the five Electoral Areas in the County and City, one each in Thomastown, Callan, Castlecomer, Ferrybank, Graiguenamanagh and two in the City. Consultation exercises were carried out in three primary schools in the City - St. Patrick’s De la Salle, St. John’s Senior School, and Presentation Primary School. Johnstown Vocational School was selected to pilot a consultation exercise with transition year students at secondary school level.

A dedicated website was set up to facilitate public participation and collaboration in the process. The website <http://ourplan.kilkenny.ie/> was officially launched at the



County Council meeting on the 21st May 2012. The primary purpose of the site is to utilise social media technologies and services in order to provide a forum where citizens can make comments and generate debate and can collaborate with the Council during its forward planning consultations and processes. The site also gave information on how to make a written submission.

### **Development Control**

526 planning applications were determined in the period 1/1/2013 to 30/11/2013.

557 new applications were received in the period 1/1/2013 to 30/11/2013.

Planning Fees for 2013 have reduced substantially compared to previous years with the 2013 income being 76% of that in 2012 and 25% of that in 2008, details as follows:

• Year to date 31 <sup>st</sup> October, 2008	€630,000
• Year to date 31 <sup>st</sup> October, 2009	€400,000
• Year to date 31 <sup>st</sup> October, 2010	€314,000
• Year to date 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2011	€257,490
• Year to date 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2012	€206,680
• Year to date 31 <sup>st</sup> October 2013	€158,245

### **Building Control**

A total of 207 commencement notices were received by the Building Control Authority in 2012. To 30/11/2013 a total of 210 commencement notices have been received. Inspections are carried out by the Planners under the Building Control Act on approx 20% of the commencements notified.

Two complaints under the building control regulations were received and investigated. One was completed and the second is still under investigation. New Building Control regulations will come into force in March 2014. This will place additional responsibilities for certification on the local authority.

### **Compliance and Enforcement**

The County Council continues to prioritise the investigation of non-compliance of planning conditions, unauthorised developments, and unfinished estates. The objective is to bring all estates up to taking in charge standard. Planners now have

responsibility for dealing with enforcement in their respective development control geographic areas. The Council has proactively prioritised completed housing schemes for compliance and undertaken enforcement action where appropriate.

<b>Position at 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013</b>	
Number of Cases subject to Complaints Investigated	84
Cases Resolved Satisfactorily	48
Number of Warning Letters Issued	71
Number of Enforcement Notices served	52
Number of Prosecutions	3

### **Unfinished Housing Estates**

The national survey undertaken in 2010 by the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government identified 76 unfinished housing estates in Co. Kilkenny. Engagement with a number of developers continued throughout the year. The Department granted funding for safety works on two unfinished estate in 2013 with relevant works undertaken under contract. Renewal of bonds on uncompleted developments continues to be a priority to ensure that funds are available if required to complete the infrastructure in accordance with the planning permission granted. Priority in 2013 was to focus on bringing a number of these developments up to the standard for taking in charge with the assistance of NAMA, financial institutions, receivers etc and drawing down the bond to fund the works. This work will continue into 2014. A national survey was carried out by the Department in 2013 to track the extent and condition of unfinished housing developments since 2010. In Kilkenny there were 76 unfinished developments in 2010. This figure has been reduced in 2013 to 34 unfinished developments.

In addition the Housing Section has been advancing proposals for social housing in a number of unfinished developments located in Ferrybank, Thomastown and Kilkenny.

### **Taking in Charge**

The Council has 52 applications on hand to have estates taken in charge which are at various stages of progression. The majority of applications require additional works to complete the estate to the satisfaction of the Council. A number of Developers

have been requested to complete these works at the earliest opportunity. The Council is actively engaging with Residents, Receivers and Bondholders to ensure developments are completed and in compliance with permissions granted. Kilkenny County Council has, and will continue to utilise our staffing resources to facilitate remedial works on developments where the bond has been claimed and where the Developer is no longer engaging. Fifteen (15) estates have been taken in charge during the last twelve months and there are five (5) presently before the Council.

A provision of €50,000 has been included in the draft budget to enable the Council to fund inspections required outside of the expertise of our own staff e.g. CCTV surveys and public lights.

### **Additional Responsibilities for Planning**

The responsibility for inspection of private rented dwellings is currently carried out by the Planning Technicians. In addition the Councils interaction with the Age Friendly County Initiative is being coordinated by the forward planning unit.

## **Environmental Services – Service Division E**

### **Strategic Policy Committee**

The Environmental Policy, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Strategic Policy Committee met on four occasions in 2013 under the Chairmanship of Cllr. Martin Brett to September and Cllr. Tom Maher thereafter.

The principal discussion areas included the Evaluation of the Joint Waste Management Plan for the South East Region, National Climate Change Strategy, Education and Awareness Strategy for 2013, Dog Warden Service, Fire Service updates, Food Waste Regulations, Illegal Dumping and abatement strategies, Litter name and shame policy, Re-use of bulky waste study, new Waste Management Regions, the South East River Basin Management Plan, Veterinary Services delivery, review of the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan, and the Kilkenny Water Quality report 2012.

### **Water Quality**

Thanks to the ongoing investment in a programme of discharge licensing, farm inspections and nutrient management planning, the 2012 river report for Kilkenny showed continuing improvements in water quality. A new inspection programme for septic tanks commenced in 2013. Under the EPA Inspection Plan, Kilkenny will inspect 31 septic tanks in the first year. The setting up of Irish Water will have a number of impacts on the work of the Environment Section. In particular discharge licensing to sewers is one area that will be covered by the local authority's SLA with Irish Water.

The Council has prepared and has received approval for its Coastal Pollution Plan from the Irish Coastguard, which is a statutory requirement for all counties which have either a coastline or tidal rivers. In 2013 a co-ordination plan for the Suir Estuary was also approved and a training exercise was held in November 2013.

Lifeguard services continue to be provided each summer to ensure public safety at the four main traditional bathing areas on the River Nore and Barrow.

## **Waste Management**

Kilkenny County Council is now part of the new Southern Region for waste management purposes along with Carlow, Clare, Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford counties. The Region has commenced the preparation of a new Waste Management Plan under joint lead authorities Limerick / Tipperary. The current South East Plan remains in force until the new Plan is made.

Education and Awareness initiatives in 2013 included

- Spring Educational Programme with 37 primary schools participating
- Green Schools programme involving 84% of primary schools and 81% of secondary schools in Kilkenny
- 11 WEEE Collections between February and April with a further 6 half day rural collections
- Year 2 of a 3 year Gum Litter Taskforce Campaign was launched in Kilkenny City
- 120 groups registered with An Taisce for National Spring Clean Kilkenny 2013.
- Anti-dog fouling campaign

The Council operates a full service waste recycling and disposal centre at Dunmore. It also has 40 Bring Bank sites throughout the county plus a weekly recycling service for paper and plastic at Newrath. The Council was a finalist for the Repak Recycling Centre of the Year 2013 Award for its Dunmore facility.

The Dunmore Community Fund which amounted to €255,473 was fully disbursed in 2013 on upgrading the community hall. Works are ongoing on the GAA training facility located on Council lands surrounding the closed landfill.

The Council continues to place a strong emphasis on enforcement of all environmental legislation, through the implementation of its RMCEI (Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections) Plan. This service is funded in part by a block grant from the DECLG.

### **Street Cleansing**

The Council continues to provide street cleansing services in the major towns and villages. A dedicated mechanical sweeper and driver are assigned to each of the towns of Callan, Castlecomer, Graiguenamanagh and Thomastown. Other sweeping services are provided by a sweeper hired full time from the machinery yard on a rota which is agreed with the Area offices.

### **Veterinary Services**

From January 2013, Kilkenny County Council took over responsibility for food safety issues within the County of Carlow on a shared service basis. This involved renegotiation of the food safety contract with the FSAI and tendering for additional contracted veterinary services. The food safety responsibilities for both counties are fully funded by the FSAI.

Under the Control of Dogs Act, Kilkenny County Council has a statutory obligation to provide a dog warden and a dog shelter, and this service can only be provided by a local authority, the ISPCA or another recognised animal welfare organisation. Kilkenny County Council jointly owns and operates, as a shared service with Carlow County Council, the dog shelter at Paulstown, Co. Kilkenny. The ISPCA has provided this service to Kilkenny and Carlow for a number of years. The service will be procured again in 2014 by Kilkenny County Council on behalf of both counties, and is mainly funded through dog licence income.

### **Burial Grounds**

The Council manages 13 active burial grounds. Each has a caretaker who arranges plot sales, manages the registers and maps for the burial ground and supervises interments. Maintenance is arranged through the local Area office.

### **Energy Management**

Kilkenny County Council has a legal obligation to achieve 33% reduction of energy usage by 2020, as measured against 2009 baseline year demand. In early 2013, the Council signed up to a standardised energy monitoring system set up by the

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), called EnergyMap. Achievements to-date in 2013 include:

- Successful delivery of €2.3 million housing insulation and energy efficiency program affecting 176 local authority and voluntary houses
- Successful delivery of local Better Energy Communities where CKEA was flagged as national leaders in the delivery of this type of project and their template to be used for future provision nationally
- Drafting of a Register of Opportunities identifying further energy saving initiatives
- Provision of energy efficient public lighting scheme on the Kells Road, Kilkenny with the facility to dim the lights at selected times, generating 45% energy savings
- Receipt of Energy score card for 2011 showing Kilkenny County Council's significant progress towards meeting its 2020 target
- Roll out of additional training on Agresso system to facilitate future monitoring of energy usage

Prospects for 2014 include the following:

- To continue to work in partnership with the Carlow Kilkenny Energy Agency (CKEA) and SEAI
- €30,000 provided in budget as a contribution towards funding CKEA

Expected further developments and significant involvement by Kilkenny County Council in the following selected areas

- Better Energy Communities
- EU sponsored Intelligent Energy project for public lighting
- Energy Efficient buildings

## **Community and Recreation – Service Division F**

### **Strategic Policy Committee**

The Arts, Culture, Heritage, Tourism Strategic Policy Committee held 4 meetings during 2013. The Committee reviewed progress of the various work programme of the Library Service, the Arts Office and the Kilkenny Heritage Forum. In addition the Committee would have reviewed many of the social inclusion initiatives that are being supported by the Community Section.

### **County Development Board**

The County Development Board met on one occasion during 2013 and has since dissolved as an entity. The recommendations outlined in *“Putting People First –An Action Programme for Effective Local Government”* combined with the legislation outlined in the Local Government Bill 2013 which has proposed the dissolution of County Development Boards and the establishment of Local Community Development Committees has and will bring significant changes to the role of the Community and Culture section. The functions of Local Community Development Committee will include:

- Preparing and adopting a five year Local and Community Plan for County Kilkenny
- The implementation of the Plan
- Undertaking a review of the Plan at least once within 5 years after adoption
- Monitoring and reviewing on an ongoing basis the implementation of the Plan

The Social Inclusion Measures Sub-Committee of the CDB met on 3 occasions and has agreed that a change in the role and direction of SIM is needed. A social inclusion perspective is seen as having significant input in the Local Community Development Plan in Kilkenny and is in line with the proposed changes outlined *Putting People First* and the Local Government Bill 2013. The Community and Culture section hosted a Social Inclusion Seminar in November to support the development of a robust discussion and input into the new local government structures being proposed. This is seen as a first step in bringing the voices and perspectives of those working



with socially marginalised groups as well as those who directly experience poverty and social exclusion together to input and be a part of newly established local Community Development Committees. Many of the groups who engaged are still specifically supported by the Community and Culture section - Children's Services Committee, Older peoples Forum, Traveller Interagency Group, Local Drugs Task Force, Comhairle na nÓg Groups for Social Justice in the City, the Community and Voluntary Forum, Kilkenny Access Group, Kilkenny Homeless Forum, Kilkenny Link Up (Mental Health Forum) and/or Suicide Prevention Group, Kilkenny Integration Forum, etc.

### **Community**

**Older Peoples Forum** - This group is a key stakeholder in the Age Friendly County Initiative and as part of involving older people in this countywide initiative we are supporting the establishment and capacity building of a strong forum for older people across the county.

**Kilkenny Traveller Interagency Group** – an initiative that brings Travellers and agencies together to focus on key issues for Travellers across the County. It helps focus agencies on meeting the real needs of Travellers in the County and provides for a sharing of resources in meeting those needs. Key projects include St Catherine's Halting Site re-development, the Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement and the Traveller Horse Project

**Implementation of an Integration Strategy and the support of the Kilkenny Integration Forum** a key piece of work that will help improve service delivery in the County to ethnic minority groups and the integration process.

### **Ferrybank**

The Ferrybank Development Project (FDP), an inter-agency/inter-community process which stemmed from the cohesion process 2004 was a co-ordinated attempt to respond to identified needs with a particular emphasis on social inclusion. During this time, Ferrybank had been identified as a key area requiring significant community development work under various strategies by many agencies in Kilkenny and Waterford.

The central aim of the FDP was to enhance community development and service provision in the area and to enable a collaborative approach to the long term strategic development of Ferrybank.

Kilkenny County Council was heavily involved in this initiative and contributed €45,000, through a number of local funding streams, towards a Child, Family & Community Centre for the area, between 2006 & 2008. Due to the downturn in the economy and issues around securing match funding resulted in the project not reaching completion stage.

During 2013 Kilkenny County Council has revisited this initiative. The Council recognise that, given the huge changes that have taken place in Ferrybank over the past 10 years, there still remains a need within the community for a dedicated community development facility in the area that would both accommodate and provide a base from which cohesive and integrated community focused activity could be led.

Stemming from this, Kilkenny County Council in 2014 will be working closely with relevant agencies and the local community in a co-ordinated approach to undertake the development of a new Strategic Plan for the Ferrybank Development Project. This plan will review work carried out under the initial phase and build on the learning to inform a new plan going forward. This will be based on the current needs of the community in Ferrybank and the overall aim is to work towards the long term sustainability of the project:

Two key areas must be addressed in this strategic plan:

1. Development of a work plan around the process of community capacity building within the area.
2. Investigating the Hillsfield Building Community Space and its use in a way that addresses community deficit as identified by the community, supports the community to own the process and identifies, sources and secures the necessary resources to bring the building to a state where it can be utilised by the community.

### **Kilkenny Comhairle na nÓg**

Comhairle na nÓg are child and youth councils operating in the 34 Local Authority areas of the country. The purpose of Comhairle is to give children and young people the opportunity to be involved in and have a voice in the development of local services and policies. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs lead Comhairle na nÓg at national level under the National Children's Strategy 2000, with the Comhairle na nÓg Development Fund being administered through Pobal.

Kilkenny County Council is the agency at local level with responsibility for the delivery of Comhairle na nÓg. They manage this delivery through

1. Co-ordinating and Supporting an inter-agency steering committee whose role is to advise and assist the Comhairle throughout the year in the implementation of a work plan
2. Working closely with Ossory Youth, via a Service Level Agreement which has clear performance indicators and specific outcomes outlined.

### **Community & Cultural Facilities Capital Grant Scheme**

In the second year of this grant scheme a total of €165,000 was available for administering under this scheme. The scheme was opened for a two month period in March and April. 19 applications were received with funding being sought to the level of €76,352.000 and 6 projects secured funding. 2014 will be the final year of the scheme.

**St Canices Neighbourhood Centre** has been approved €85,000 from the Borough Councils Capital Programme (an additional €85,000 from the HSE) to redevelop the "Old Boys Club" at the Butts. The centre will be used as part of a mixed use neighbourhood support service and will also provide a base or headquarters for an "Older Persons Activity Centre" This investment advances the Countywide Age Friendly Strategy being implemented.

**Functional Families** aims to develop an interagency case management process for Families. This process will involve the coordination of a range of universal, selective and targeted services working with adults, young people, children and families, and working across all sectors, including local authorities, HSE, justice and youth

services, voluntary organisations, schools and community agencies that come into contact with individuals in families at risk due to substance misuse and related issues

## **Heritage**

The Heritage Office continues to provide a strategic heritage service in Kilkenny, including implementation of the Kilkenny Heritage Plan in partnership with the Kilkenny Heritage Forum. Some of the projects undertaken in 2013 include:

### **Kilkenny Heritage Plan**

A review of the Kilkenny Heritage Plan was commenced, in partnership with the Kilkenny Heritage Forum, in 2013. It is intended to complete this review and prepare a new Heritage Plan in 2014.

### **Explore the Nore**

The Heritage Office worked with Trail Kilkenny to commission and oversee a feasibility study for developing an interpretative strategy and suite of trails in the River Nore Valley. The data for the strategy is based on the results of the River Nore heritage Audit -See

[http://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Services/Heritage/Heritage\\_Audit\\_of\\_the\\_River\\_Nore.html](http://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Services/Heritage/Heritage_Audit_of_the_River_Nore.html). It is intended to move to the next phase of this project in 2014.

**Community Heritage Initiatives** – The Heritage Office provided a strategic programme of training and support for local communities in the following heritage areas: fieldname recording

[http://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Services/Heritage/Kilkenny\\_Field\\_Name\\_Recording\\_Project.html](http://www.kilkennycoco.ie/eng/Services/Heritage/Kilkenny_Field_Name_Recording_Project.html) ; historic graveyard inscription recording (www.historic.graves.ie); and oral history recording. All of the data collected will be incorporated into Kilkenny Local Authorities GIS database and websites.

### **Kilkenny Military Heritage Project**

The Heritage Office continues to work with the Kilkenny Barracks Museum and other partners to develop the Kilkenny Military Heritage project. A trail of Kilkenny City, commemorating key events in War of Independence, will be produced in 2014. This will be part of Kilkenny Local Authorities Decade of Commemorations Programme.

## **Review of County Development**

The Heritage Office worked with Forward Planning and the Conservation Officer to review of the Heritage Chapters in the City & County Development Plans. As part of this, 2 workshops were run with the Planners, with support from National Monuments Section and National Parks and Wildlife Service of Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

## **Arts Office**

### **Literature**

Kilkenny County Councils Arts Office has a strong commitment to providing literary developments both independently and through partnerships and collaborations between the Arts Office and Library Service and beyond. We focus on ensuring a balanced approach to the development of programmes and activities across the city and county. Through our collaborations we strive to:

- Develop and generate new audiences and to extend the appreciation of literature
- Introduce writers to new experiences and offer new opportunities
- Support the continuing professional development of writers in Kilkenny
- Strive to make writing a realistic career choice through diverse initiatives

### **2013 literary programmes**

As part of our on-going commitment to Kilkenny writers, in partnership with the Library Services and the Irish Writers Centre we hosted a special publishing day focusing on short stories. The day featured talks from industry experts and offered the opportunity to pose questions to the speakers. We ran spring and autumn literary workshops and events in partnership with the Library covering creative prose, poetry, short story writing and publishing. We also hosted an intensive short story writing weekend with Dr. Hilary Lennon. We produced the twelfth issue of the very popular Kilkenny Poetry Broadsheet, a publication from the Arts Office, which gives local writers a platform for their work. We initiated the redesign and re launch of the Rhyme Rag, an online resource for young people to get their poetry seen, professionally critiqued, professionally illustrated and published. To complement this programme we ran a series of free teen poetry workshops across the county.

**Siamsa - childrens programme** - has been part of the Kilkenny County Council Arts Office's programme since 2011 and we have run a wide range of children workshops for ages ranging from 5 to 13 year olds. This fun programme has supported children in developing a variety of skills including drawing, painting and making in a diverse range of media. The workshops have included origami, clay modelling, lego art and textile work. The focus for 2013 was on art and science working together. Spring and Autumn series - Workshops have included: *Colour Lab, drawbots, rocket racers, mechanical marvels and space explorers*, each workshop exploring moving mechanical toys, motors, space exploration and re purposing materials. All activities are child centred and the participants are encouraged to give feedback on the workshops to support their development of having a voice in their creativity. Overall these workshops were a great opportunity for the children to work with a professional artist furthering their creativity, using their imagination and being resourceful in a fun and relaxed environment. The demand for this programme far outweighs our capacity to offer enough places, this is a testament to the quality of the activities we offer and we receive extremely positive feedback and constant enquiries regarding places.

**Culture Night Kilkenny 2013** was a resounding success with a wide-ranging programme of free events taking place around the city on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> September. This year's figures show over 100% increase in audience attendance on last year. By all accounts the venues and organisers involved agreed that this year was by far the best for them in terms of gaining new audiences and raising visibility of the arts. Culture Night Kilkenny 2013 Facebook page received 205 likes. To catch a glimpse of events on the night Culture Night Kilkenny 2013 can be seen on Youtube- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vMkfKt07CSM>

**Open Circle community arts collective** is a new project borne out of the 5-6 project. The objectives going forward are to diversify the use of the projects community space, increase participation, independence and develop new groups and activity. The development of a strategic plan will outline ways we will achieve these objectives.

Open Circle undertook the development of new partnership approaches in 2013, partnering with Blackstack Print studios to enhance, broaden and support Open Circle's engagement with the arts in the wider community. This partnership was made

possible by another significant partnership developed with Kilkenny VEC (Community Education Dept.)

In an on-going drive to develop the capacity of the project and reach out to a broader audience of participants, a public call was put out for women who would like to engage in a community arts project in Kilkenny.

### **The Library Service**

Kilkenny County Library Service through its collections, services and service points promotes and supports: reading and literacy; lifelong learning; access to and use of IT; heritage, culture and social inclusion.

Since it opened a year ago on the 4<sup>th</sup> December, Ferrybank Library has been an overwhelming success with over 3,000 members, more than 57,000 items loaned and nearly 60,000 visits. It shows that where the right resources are invested in terms of staff, stock, IT and building, the service will be widely used.

The library is a community hub, a learning space and a meeting place. The community room is used on an ongoing basis by community groups –across the spectrum- and for library events. The public Internet Access PC's and WIFI access are widely used by individuals and are also used computer classes.

The proposal to develop a new City Library at County Hall advanced during the year. It is expected to go to tender and for construction to commence during 2014.

The Library Service continues: to develop internal and external partnerships, resource sharing and 24/7 services. During 2013 these included:

- Solas/FAS e-learning classes at Ferrybank and Loughboy Libraries
- Kilkenny VEC Community Education Service and Age Action computer classes in Ferrybank Library
- Creative writing workshops in conjunction with the Arts Office

- Publishing day and Short stories weekend with the Arts Office and the Irish Writers Centre
- Teen Poetry Workshops in collaboration with the Arts Office and Poetry Ireland
- Provision of support material for the Community and Culture Section /Arts Office Making Space project. (INTERREG programme)
- Failte Isteach Conversational English classes through Kilkenny Integration Forum, hosted by the City Library
- Transparent Languages Online – FREE online language courses for Library members through [www.kilkennylibrary.ie](http://www.kilkennylibrary.ie) 80+ different languages including Irish , French, German, Spanish, Polish, Chinese and English as a Foreign Language.

Service enhancements planned for 2014 include the introduction of Online magazines and E-books for library members which will be made available through [www.kilkennylibrary.ie](http://www.kilkennylibrary.ie)



## **Agriculture, Health, Education & Welfare - Service Division G**

### **Agriculture**

Provision has been made for the statutory drainage demand.

### **Education**

Up to November 2011 the Council administered the pension scheme for the VEC. The expenditure involved was 100% recoupable. This function has now transferred to the Paymaster General.

The Council, acting in an agency capacity on behalf of the Department of Education, administers renewal of applications under the Higher Education Grants Scheme. All new applications under this Grants Scheme are administered centrally through the VEC in Dublin. Expenditure on grants is recouped with the exception of €15,200. Administration and other support costs associated with the scheme are not recoupable.

## Miscellaneous Services - Service Division H

### **Franchise Costs**

This expenditure relates to the costs associated with the Register of Electors and provision being made towards the costs of the next local elections in June 2014.

### **Local Representation/Civic Leadership**

The role of the elected members is critical and is pivotal to the county's development and success. The Elected Members responsibilities and role has expanded in recent years as Council responsibilities expanded, and as part of national developments to strengthen local democracy. It is important that the supports available to elected representatives reflect these responsibilities and changes and this service provides for this.

### **Motor Taxation**

The Motor Tax On-Line Service was introduced in 2004, through which customers can renew their motor tax via the internet. The service has proven very successful with almost 50% of all renewals that can be done on line now being renewed on line; this represents 41% of all renewals.

### **Rates Administration**

The main expenditure in this service relates to the provision for irrecoverable rates of €2,230,000, which constitutes 18.4% of expected rates income. This provision is unchanged from the 2013 Budget and is necessary to cover the expected rates strike off costs associated with the increased number of vacant properties arising from the recession.

## **Finance, Economic Development and Procurement**

### **Economic Development**

This area is covered in the opening statement under Strategic Direction.

### **Tourism Support**

The Council provides support to Tourism in the county in the form of annual grant support to Kilkenny Tourism and support of the destination Kilkenny Tourism Strategy. More important however is the dedicated staff resource that is available to support Kilkenny Tourism in their promotion of the county and the ancillary back-up in the form of office accommodation, IT, web development and other supports.

A major capital application was approved by Fáilte Ireland for the development of major projects in Kilkenny City as part of the Kilkenny “Medieval Mile” experience and will see investment of €5.5m in the initial phase.

### **Procurement Unit**

The Procurement Unit is operational since September 2010 and is involved in directing and controlling all procurement or purchasing spend. Initially the Unit’s concentration has been on analysing the big spend items and the biggest suppliers. The Unit’s objectives are to ensure that a proper procurement process has been completed and that the Council/Borough achieve savings/efficiencies where possible on its procurement activities.

The Procurement Unit provides direction to the relevant section or Service Area which is undertaking the procurement in question. To date the Procurement Unit has been involved in over sixty contracts of various sizes to a total value of approx. €25m – these contracts include both Capital Works projects and consultancies (particularly for Water Services and Roads Departments) and annual operational type spends. This involvement takes many different forms from initial contact with the Service Area, analysing whether the Council or Borough can provide the good/service itself, engaging with the market prior to tender, advising on the appropriate tender and contract documentation, assisting with the evaluation of tenders, advice on notification letters to tenderers, etc.

Savings of over €2m have been achieved as at December 2013 in respect of both capital and operational spends.

A number of areas have been progressed in the last year:

- Use of various LA Quotes Frameworks to drawdown locally supplies of Road Making Materials, Plant Hire and Bulk Fuel;
- Use of new National Procurement Service (NPS) Framework for Energy (Electricity/Gas) Supply in 2013 and assistance received from Carlow/Kilkenny Energy Agency in monitoring this new Framework;
- Drawdown of goods and services from other available NPS Frameworks including Media Advertising, PPE and Office Supplies;
- Renewal of the Council's Housing Construction Panel in respect of minor building and civil works;
- Specific assistance to Service Areas regarding revised Government Guidelines concerning appropriate levels of previous turnover, performance bonds and insurances to be used in works related tender documents;
- Ongoing assistance and advice to Service Areas in respect of other tender competitions published on the Government procurement website eTenders and
- Updating of the Council's internal Procurement Procedures document

### **Audit Committee**

The Audit Committee members are

Mr. Martin Hanrahan, Chairman

Mr. Sean Brady

Cllr. Catherine Connery

Cllr Eamon Aylward

Mr. Joe Allen

The Audit Committee met on four occasions during 2012 and remains in place for the duration of the current elected Council. The committee has an independent role in advising the Council on financial reporting and processes, internal controls, risk management and audit matters as part of the systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the Council. Its business is conducted under the guidance of a local Audit Charter and minutes of its meetings are included in monthly County Council agenda as appropriate.

### **County Charge**

Kilkenny County Council charge Kilkenny Borough Council for the cost of services incurred by the County Council but which relate to the Borough Council area. Examples of such services would include the fire service, libraries, environmental management etc. These services are costed, and charged for, under the County Charge mechanism and the reduced 2014 County Charge of €1.76m reflects Irish Water funding of water services. Kilkenny County Council charge Kilkenny Borough Council the full cost of services provided.

### **Rate Charge**

Kilkenny County Council's rate charge is the lowest in the country and is significantly lower than that charged by most other Local Authorities, i.e. **23% lower** than the national average. As such, the Council's scope with regard to discretionary spending is limited and leaves the Council much more dependant on other income sources than comparable authorities.

### **Process Efficiencies**

The Core HR Payroll and Superannuation IT System is being rolled out as a shared service in Kilkenny Local Authorities with Phase 1 of the implementation now complete. This system is providing:

- Better Management Information
- Automation of tasks including departmental returns and superannuation benefit statements
- Increased efficiency and effectiveness of staff leading to better customer service and value for money
- Efficiencies in processing wages and salaries
- Better management of leave, absenteeism and legislative provisions governing working hours

Phase 2 will assist in the management of staffs health & safety training, training & development needs generally, performance appraisal and in any recruitment which may occur. The roll out of Phase 2 will commence in 2014.