



Comhairle Chontae Chill Chainnigh
Kilkenny County Council



BUISÉAD A GLACTHA

ADOPTED BUDGET 2023

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KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL

- 2023 BUDGET -

14th November, 2022.

**TO: AN CATHAOIRLEACH
& EACH MEMBER OF KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL**

RE: BUDGET 2023

Dear Councillor,

Enclosed for your consideration is the Draft Budget for Kilkenny County Council for the year ending 31st December, 2023.

The Statutory Budget Meeting to consider the Draft Budget is scheduled for Friday, 25th November, 2022 at 3.00 p.m.

Current Year

The current year has been very challenging for the Council's finances. The Council is not immune to the inflationary pressures that are seriously impacting our citizens and businesses. The Council is facing rising costs mainly as a result of the increase in energy prices and the pent-up demand for goods and services following the reopening of our economy post Covid. At the same time, we experienced a decrease in income from some of our goods and services, including car park income and planning fees.

The Council continued to operate the national Rates Waiver Scheme in 2022, which was in the form of a 3-month waiver for eligible businesses, and €748k was approved for Kilkenny businesses under the Scheme. The funding for this Covid related support measure is recouped from the Department. I want to compliment the staff in Finance who continued to administer the scheme efficiently.

Ukrainian Response Unit

A Temporary Protection Directive was activated by the European Council last March in response to the crisis arising as a result of the conflict in Ukraine. Ukrainians arriving in Ireland are considered Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP's) and under the EU Directive have access to various rights and entitlements, such as social welfare income supports, employment and self-employment, accommodation, schools and health care services. Staff in the Housing Department and in Civil Defence provided early support before the Ukrainian Response Unit was established within the Council and the Community Response Forum, first established during the Covid pandemic, was reinstated to help coordinate the local response to the arrival of Ukrainians. I want to thank all Council staff and in particular the small team within the Response Unit for the trojan work they have done to date in welcoming and helping to accommodate over 1,100 Ukrainians in County Kilkenny.

It is expected that this number will increase significantly in the coming months. The full costs incurred by the Unit are recouped from the relevant Government Departments. I also want to thank all of the organisations, agencies and people of Kilkenny for their continued generosity and support in helping to integrate the Ukrainian people into our local community.

Budget Challenges 2023

Each year the Council faces tough choices in reaching a balanced budget and this year is no different. Indeed, the challenges faced this year are unprecedented. I am acutely aware that the services we provide are critical to supporting our communities and to the quality of life enjoyed by our citizens. Accordingly, the main focus in the preparation of this Budget has been to protect funding to the full range of services we deliver to the people of Kilkenny. This has been extremely difficult, especially in the context that:

- An additional €1.4m is required to fund energy costs. Our share of the Government's energy support package to the local authority sector nationally will be €1.08K, resulting in the Council having to find an additional €319K to fund increased energy costs;
- Additional funding is required to cover the increased costs involved in delivering a range of existing services, including Housing (*e.g. Housing Maintenance and increased cost of void refurbishment*) and Fire services (*e.g. to meet growing demand for inspection of residential and commercial property*);
- Additional funding is also required to fund additional services detailed in this report to be provided next year, including the new City Library, Town Regeneration Officer, maintenance of the South East Greenway and the preparation of the Council's Climate Action Plan; and
- A further loss in car park income next year and a loss of income from Planning fees of €84k. A review of parking charges will be carried out in 2023 to limit this reduction to €80K.

Our finances are extremely tight and we have a limited number of sources of income where there is local discretion to raise revenue. LPT and commercial rates are two such income sources. The decision of the Council in July to hold the Local Property Tax (LPT) at the 2022 level has provided €1.07m towards this Budget. The buoyancy from commercial rates from additional rate payers being added by the Valuation Office to the Council's rate base will yield an additional €750K. While welcome, this will be insufficient on its own to meet our objective of protecting the full range of services we deliver to the people of Kilkenny. Accordingly, I am also recommending that the Council increase the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) by 3%. This is less than half the high rates of inflation reported by the Central Bank in its latest Quarterly Bulletin, which projects consumer price inflation of 8.0% for this year and 6.3% in 2023.

The ARV for commercial rates has remained unchanged in Kilkenny for 15 years. Furthermore, the Council has suffered a loss in commercial rates income of circa €950k per annum, as a result of the appeals process that followed the harmonisation of commercial rates between the County Council and former Borough Council in 2014. I acknowledge that an increase in commercial rates in the current climate will not be welcomed by businesses. I further recommend therefore as a measure to safeguard our smaller rate paying businesses, that the prompt payment incentive be increased to 5.8%, capped at €250. This will effectively mean any business availing of the incentive whose rate demand in 2022 was €4,000 or less, will see no increase in their demand in 2023. Approximately 74% of all rate payers in Kilkenny pay less than €4,000 per annum. The 3% increase in the ARV will yield a further €350K in essential income for the Council. The proposed ARV will still remain one of the lowest rates of all 31 local authorities nationally.

The combined income from LPT and commercial rates in 2023 will help ensure that we not only deliver on our statutory responsibilities but that we can also continue to support the wide range of community services that rely on annual funding from the Council.

These include:

- Watergate Theatre
- Rothe House
- Drum Youth Centre
- Kilkenny Tourism
- Kilkenny Archives
- Keep Kilkenny Beautiful
- Public Partnership Network
- Kilkenny Arts Festival
- South East Energy Agency
- Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership
- Garda Youth Programme
- Estate Management
- Ossory Youth
- Rural Transport
- Dail na Nóg
- Local Enterprise Start-up Programme
- Medieval Mile Museum (*managed on behalf of the Council by the Kilkenny Civic Trust*)

All of these organisations, services and schemes provide vital support to local communities across County Kilkenny. The decision taken on LPT and commercial rates also allows the Council to maintain the level of funding for the following grant schemes for 2023:

- Anti-Litter & Anti-Graffiti
- Tidy Towns
- Paint Scheme
- Festival & Events Grants
- Graveyard Grants
- Amenity Grants

and maintain our funding for the Library Book Fund.

Other Key Priorities

Meeting housing need, social and private continues to provide significant challenges in Kilkenny and nationally. The delivery of “Housing for All” and its many schemes will remain a priority for the Council. 160 new homes will be completed and occupied by the end of this year and a further 200 new homes are in the development pipeline.

Responding to Climate Change and achieving the ambitious national targets across many areas of our work and services will be challenging. This Budget provides for a dedicated Climate Action Team to oversee the preparation and implementation of a 5-year Climate Action Plan, which will set out how the Council will adapt the way we deliver services to meet our statutory climate targets. This will include measures such as retrofitting our public lights with energy efficient LED lanterns, retrofitting our housing stock and changing behaviour in particular in mobility through for example active travel initiatives.

Local authorities will play a leading role in the delivery of the Government’s Town Centre First (TCF) policy launched earlier this year. This Budget provides for the appointment of a Town Regeneration Officer to oversee the implementation of the actions contained in the TCF policy, which will help ensure our towns and villages function as viable and vibrant locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social and recreational hubs for the wider rural community.

Delivering our Capital Programme

Whilst we are dealing with the Revenue Budget our daily activities and the staffing provision in this Budget also support the delivery of an ambitious capital programme. I intend to present the 3-year Capital Programme 2023-2025 to Council for consideration in December.

Driving economic development is important and requires resourcing. The delivery of our Capital Programme is having a positive impact right across the County. The public realm and infrastructure projects from improved streetscape, parks, playgrounds and open spaces significantly enhance the place-making credentials of our towns and villages. It is especially pleasing to note that the Council's on-going work in place-making was a major contributory factor in the decision by Abbott to invest in a new production facility in Kilkenny this year that will create upwards of 850 new jobs when it is operational.

We will continue to focus on investment that generates and drives economic activity while protecting and promoting our social, cultural and heritage objectives. In delivering the Capital Programme, a balance is required between borrowings (*mindful that every €1m borrowed requires a provision of €70,000 in the Revenue Budget*), development contributions and provision in the Revenue Budget. We will discuss with the Council over the coming months how we resource the delivery of the Capital Programme in a sustainable manner, reflecting all funding sources, grants, development contributions and borrowings.

We will continue to work to avail of all national grants schemes to deliver for local communities. The majority of grant schemes require some element of local match funding. Below is just a sample of the many projects being delivered by the Council which are also positively impacting on the quality of life of our citizens.

CALLAN

The Motte Field (Callan)

In 2021, funding was secured under the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructural Scheme (ORIS) to deliver Phase 2 of the Motte Field Looped Walk on the west side of the Callan Bypass. This section of walk is located on private lands and the Council has made steady progress with the interested parties to obtain a long-term lease agreement to facilitate development.

One Way System

Funding has been secured from the National Transport Authority under active travel measures to proceed with the implementation of the temporary one-way system which has proved hugely successful during the pandemic. Additional funding has been secured to further enhance the footpath on the Callan By-Pass which is an important amenity for locals and much used.

Friary Complex & Bridge Street Regeneration Project

Funding in the amount of over €860K has been awarded under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF) earlier this year for the design and planning of the development of the Friary Complex and two buildings on Bridge Street, Callan. It is expected that consultation will take place in early 2023 regarding the future uses of these buildings which will include proposal for a new library in the Friary.

CASTLECOMER

Castlecomer Discovery Park

Funding was secured under Measure 2 of ORIS, which allowed for the rehabilitation and enhancement of the Ardra Looped Walk and Arboretum Walk. Plans to officially re-open this enhanced amenity, which will facilitate ease of access all year round is scheduled for later this month. A second application was successfully secured under the Project Development Measure of the ORIS and a tender has issued for consultancy services to aid in the development of a much-needed Masterplan for the Discovery Park.

Pedestrian Bridge

The construction of a pedestrian bridge removing pedestrians from the Narrow Bridge on the N78 was not only a necessary safety improvement but also connects the Town to the Discovery Park. By improving connectivity it will help increase visitors to the area and boost the local economy. The bridge officially opened in January 2022.

FERRYBANK

South East Greenway

Wexford County Council is the lead authority for the Project Office delivering the South East Greenway (SEG) from Waterford to New Ross. This 24km Greenway traverses 3 Counties. The project is being delivered in a number of Lots. The first 3 Lots are now substantially complete. The Project Office are considering opening sections of the Greenway as they are completed. It is hoped that the completed 8km section from Rosbercon to Glenmore will be opened to the public early next year. The next section of Greenway to be constructed will be Lot 5a, namely the 5km section from Ferrybank to Luffany. It is anticipated that the tender for this element of the works will be advertised in the coming weeks.

Work is also progressing to advance the feasibility, planning and design of potential links to the Greenway from the villages of Glenmore and Slieverue. Additional capital funding will be required when a route is agreed and planning consent obtained for these links.

Consultants have also been engaged to prepare a Feasibility Study & Route Selection Report for a Link from SEG to Woodstock Estate, Inistioge. The Feasibility Study concluded that the Woodstock SEG Link is feasible. On foot of this outcome, engagement has commenced with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) to determine if this project could be considered within their current Greenway project portfolio as an extension to the SEG.

North Quays Project

The following projects in South Kilkenny are included in the URDF allocation for the North Quays:

- **Belmont Link Road:** The provision of this road, linking from the Abbey Road to the Belmont Road will support residential development by opening up lands and facilitating the planned population growth for the greater Waterford City in a compact manner. It will also provide access to the Greenway. The project requires a Part 10 application to An Bord Pleanála and consultants are being appointed to bring the project from planning stage straight through to construction and completion.
- **Greenway Connectivity:** This will provide greater access and facilitate usage of the Greenway in Ferrybank as a smarter travel option for people living, working and attending school in the area.
- **Abbey Road & Belmont Road Improvement Works:** will enhance the approaches to the North Quays and will accommodate active travel infrastructure.
- **Port Road:** The planned upgrade works will provide access to open up additional lands for development. This work is considered critical if Belview Economic Area is to develop to its full potential. The design work for this project will commence early in 2023.

GRAIGUENAMANAGH

Works were completed on the Abbey Hall Recreational Area – Rehabilitation Scheme and the Graiguenamanagh Men’s Shed earlier this year with both officially opened by Minister

Humphreys on 25th May. The completion of the Abbey Hall Recreational Area removed what was essentially a derelict site from the Main Street and brought it back into public use for the free enjoyment of the community and has proven very popular with locals. The Men's Shed project saw the transformation of the disused toilet block on the Convent Road into a very attractive Men's Shed workshop. The net result makes for a much improved streetscape and community facility that provides a shared space for men to come together to enjoy each other's company and to share ideas and skills. Both projects were delivered in collaboration between the Council, Kilkenny Leader Partnership and the local community.

Silaire Wood Loop Walk

Following the delivery of the boardwalk replacement and trail enhancement scheme in late 2020, additional funding was secured under Measure 1 of the ORIS to extend the existing walking trails within the woods. This work was completed recently providing a total trail length of 1.5km and has proven very popular with locals and visitors.

Barrow Valley Outdoor Activity Hub

The Hub was successful in securing funding of over €92K under the Town & Village Renewal (T&VR) Scheme earlier this year to install an access barrier, public lighting, CCTV, grass mats and outdoor seating.

Pedestrian Bridges

Consultants continue to work on the Design Options Report for the proposed pedestrian bridges over the River Barrow in Graiguenamanagh/Tinnahinch. The provision of these two bridges, along with the camper van infrastructure in the Outdoor Activity Hub, were identified as key objectives within the 2019 Graiguenamanagh-Tinnahinch Tourism and Recreational Project Concept Study, which set out a roadmap to stimulate sustainable economic development and attract inward investment. It is expected that the Report on the two bridges will be finalised before the end of this year.

The Graiguenamanagh Men's Shed

Works to retro-fit and refurbish the Council's disused toilet block on the Convent Road into a high quality new workshop for the Graiguenamanagh Men's Shed were completed this year. Whilst the main purpose of the project was to repurpose the existing building into a workshop, works also provided for a new pollinator friendly green living roof along with enhancements to the public space in front of the Health Centre and Library providing a space for visitors to these services to relax in a green comfortable setting.

Flood Relief Scheme

The Flood Relief Scheme is progressing through *Stage 1 - Options Evaluation and Selection* and will progress to *Stage 2 - Design and Planning* during 2023. The ultimate goal, when the project is delivered is to protect homes and businesses from future flooding and to enhance the amenity of the River to locals and visitors. The Flood Scheme will have a very positive impact on Graiguenamanagh.

KILKENNY CITY

Breaghagh Valley

Work was completed on the road infrastructure and it opened in 2021. It is having the desired positive impact with a number of planning permissions and applications in the pipeline for residential development in the Breaghagh Valley neighbourhood. Two Strategic Housing applications in the area were granted by An Bord Pleanála and work has commenced on a 77 house unit scheme. Permission has also been granted to the Kilkenny-Carlow Education & Training Board (KCETB) for two new secondary schools in the area. The Breaghagh Valley will become home to over 3,000 families over the next 10-15 years.

Abbey Quarter

Phase 1

Work on Phase 1 of the **Abbey Quarter** is almost complete. The Brewhouse Building is now complete and opened earlier this year and is fully occupied. The Brewhouse has brought additional jobs to the heart of the City. Work is well underway on the former Mayfair Ballroom with the new Library due to open early in 2023. Works have been completed to bring the 19th Century Tea Houses back into use and the Temporary Car and Coach Park were opened earlier this year. Work has also been completed on the public realm at Horse Barrack Lane and Brewhouse Square adding to the Riverside Park and Skate Park opened last year.

Phase 2

The development of a new urban street through the Abbey Quarter and a two and half acre Urban Park around St. Francis Abbey form the main components of Phase 2 funded under the URDF Round 2 Call. These new public realm spaces will also facilitate use by our many festivals and events.

In addition we attracted funding to deliver a board walk under Greensbridge to connect the two existing riverside walkways. Consultants have been appointed to examine the feasibility of same and we expect to proceed to planning in 2023. The Abbey Quarter Partnership lodged a planning application for the next building on the site during the year.

Outer Ring Road

The Northern Ring Road Extension is a critical piece of infrastructure for Kilkenny City & County. We have recently completed a Strategic Assessment Report for the project and this report has been submitted to TII for consideration and will support a future application for funding to enable the project to progress to planning.

Tholsel Project

The detailed design of this project will be completed and construction will commence next year, with the expected opening date for the new tourist attraction scheduled for Autumn 2024. In addition to the tourist aspects to the project, the works will also make the building universally accessible with the provision of a lift and will reinstate the Mayor's Parlour to its original height.

Kilkenny Countryside Park

Successful grant applications were made under both Measure 3 of the ORIS and the Sport Capital Programme, to assist with repurposing the 17 acre former landfill site at Dunmore into a new recreational and biodiversity park. The detailed design has been finalised and the tendering process for the main works contract is nearing completion. Works are expected to commence on Phase 1 of the development in early 2023. Works to improve the Mass Path from the Dunmore Community Carpark and the access from the Bleach Road have also been completed.

South East Technological University (SETU)

The region welcomed the announcement in May of this year of the amalgamation of the Institute of Technology Carlow and Waterford Institute of Technology as the new SETU, with campuses across the region in Wicklow, Wexford and Kilkenny as well as Carlow and Waterford. SETU celebrated its official launch last September and will prepare a Strategic Plan for its development over the next 5 years. I look forward to engaging in this process and making a really strong submission to SETU on behalf of the Council to show how the Kilkenny campus can help the new university achieve its stated ambition to grow its student numbers by 7,000 and to increase its teaching space by 40,000 square metres over the next 10 years.

Corporate Festivals

Kilkenny County Council manages three corporate Festivals annually - St Patrick's Day Festival, which partners with Tradfest, Kilkenny Day and Yulefest. St. Patrick's Festival has benefited from additional Fáilte Ireland funding over the last two years and this is set to continue for 2023. With regard to Yulefest, St Patrick's Day and Kilkenny Day, these festivals have benefited significantly in 2021 and 2022 from Local Live Performance Scheme and Covid funding which facilitated much outdoor entertainment and animation of the City and County Towns.

Members should note that without additional funding, we are not in a position to fund the same level of entertainment and animation next year. This will be particularly visible at Yulefest. Therefore, Yulefest 2023 will not have the same entertainment programme as 2021 and 2022. It is unlikely that the Council will be in a position to facilitate Markets on the Parade, outdoor entertainment or grants for local communities for Christmas lights.

THOMASTOWN

Public Realm Works at Logan/Low Street

Logan/Low Street, Thomastown received funding under the RRDF with the objective to enhance the visual appearance of both streets and to improve traffic flow in the area.

Works are just completed with an upgrading of the existing streetscape using high quality paving materials, removal of existing overhead service cables relocating and replacing them underground, provision of new heritage public lighting and revision to existing traffic management with new surface and line marking.

Sessions House

Construction on the redevelopment of Sessions House commenced late last year and will be completed by the end of this year. Sessions House will become the new home to the Design & Craft Council of Ireland School of Jewellery.

Library at Community Hall

Detailed design is substantially complete on this project and it is expected to go to tender before the end of this year. Construction should commence at the end of Q1 next year and the new library should open by Spring 2024.

WORKS ACROSS THE COUNTY

Outside of Ferrybank and the scheduled Towns we are continuing to deliver projects in partnership with communities with funding from national programmes such as Town and Village Renewal and CLAR. Many rural walks/paths/recreational amenities have received upgrades with funding attracted under ORIS. These schemes are extremely important to our smaller towns and villages and this Budget provides for the Council's match funding where it is necessary.

Active Travel

Kilkenny County Council will continue with the ambitious programme in relation to Active Travel in the coming years. Active Travel will help to reprioritise mobility, provide safer streets and facilitate the regeneration of our city, towns and villages.

SUMMARY / RECOMMENDATION

I believe this to be a fair budget that strikes a balance between competing demands for limited resources, while protecting the delivery of our services to the people of Kilkenny. This Budget also facilitates continued investment in key infrastructure and amenities and supports our work at community level across County Kilkenny. We would all wish to be able to do more but we must operate with the resources available.

Appreciation

I would like to sincerely thank all the Elected Members for your continued support and work on this Budget on behalf of the people of Kilkenny.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution that our staff make, right across the organisation, to ensure the public of Kilkenny get the best services for the resources we have available. The staff's efforts in providing essential services is acknowledged and through their efforts we have maintained services and progressed the delivery of our Capital Programme.


I want to acknowledge the huge contribution of the outgoing Chief Executive, Colette Byrne. Colette left a strong legacy and pipeline of projects and initiatives for us to continue to progress for Kilkenny.

I want to sincerely thank my fellow members of the Management Team, Tim Butler, Mary Mulholland, Martin Prendiville, Fiona Deegan and Denis Malone and their respective teams for all their work throughout the year and for their input in the preparation of the Budget.

A special word of thanks is due to Martin Prendiville, Head of Finance and his team for their meticulous work in bringing this Budget together and to Martin for making himself available to you the Elected Members at all times during the Budget process. I also wish to acknowledge the team in Finance for managing the Council's Finances throughout the year with a particular focus on maintaining cashflow.

Finally, I want to thank the Cathaoirleach, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick for his support to me and in the Budget process. As the First Citizen of Kilkenny he plays an important role in providing civic leadership.

Yours sincerely,



Sean McKeown,
Acting Chief Executive.

BUDGET 2023 – FINANCE OVERVIEW

The details of the Draft Budget for 2023 are set out in the attached Tables on pages 45 to 78. The total estimated expenditure for 2023 is €98.7m compared with €93.9m for 2022.

The budget process for the last two years has been extremely challenging due to the scale of the uncertainty caused by Covid-19. The level of support provided by National Government ensured that cuts to local authority services were avoided during this period. While Covid-19 has not gone away its impact has been significantly reduced. However, we are now faced with another very significant challenge of high inflation, the level of which has not been seen for almost forty years.

Inflation is having a significant impact on all of the Council's service areas and capital programme. Energy costs to run all of the Council Buildings in particular, has increased dramatically and we expect further increases in the coming months. The energy cost for the full year of 2023 is expected to be in excess of €1.4m higher than the full year of 2021. We are also seeing significant inflation in other areas such as roads and housing maintenance, fuel to name just a few. Government has confirmed that compensation will be provided to Local Authorities to partially offset the increased energy costs. This compensation is estimated to amount to 77% of the increased cost. While it is difficult to predict the full impact with accuracy at the moment due to the volatile nature of markets we do expect cost increases due to inflation to exceed €2.0m for 2023. The additional costs not compensated will have to be absorbed within the existing budgets which will mean less work for the same money.

Government has confirmed that compensation will be provided in 2023 for the additional payroll cost arising from the national pay agreement.

The draft budget has maintained the overall level of discretionary expenditure with significant increases in the allocations for Fire Services, Libraries and Parks to meet the needs of service delivery in each of those areas.

Commercial Rates

The gross rate demand for 2023 is €21.7m, which is €447k higher than the 2022 Budget figure. The 2023 estimate provides for an increase of 3% in the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) amounting to €622k. This is the first time in 15 years that the rate multiplier is being increased and is absolutely necessary to maintain the current levels of discretionary funding across all service areas. The prompt payment discount is also being increased to 5.8% (*capped at €250 per rate account*) from 3% currently. This will mean no net increase in the rate demand for 74% of rate payers if they avail of the prompt payment discount. The proposed ARV is still one of the lowest of all local authorities. The ARV for the former Borough rate payers was reduced by 9.5 % between 2011 and 2015 as part of the Harmonisation process following the abolition of the Borough Council in 2014.

The Valuation Tribunal is continuing to assess the appeals on the full revaluation of all properties carried out by the Valuation Office in 2017. A total of 197 accounts were appealed to the Valuation Tribunal. To date 193 of these appeals have been heard. These appeals have resulted in a loss of annual income of €853k. The total estimated loss in annual income when all appeals have been heard is expected to be in excess of €950k. This loss is provided for in the draft Budget.

The vacancy refund of 90% remains unchanged for 2023. This will impact approximately 481 properties throughout the City and County. 66% of these properties have an annual rate demand of €2,000 or less.

Other Income Sources

There is no change to the income derived from Local Property Tax in 2023 which remains at €11.8m.

The Draft Budget assumes that the income from car parking will be €2.23m which is €80k below the 2022 budget estimate. A review of car parking charges is planned for early 2023. This review is estimated to yield additional income of €150k which is included in the overall income figure.

Income from social housing rents is estimated to increase by €770k reflecting the inclusion of additional houses added to stock and income derived from the rolling rent review which will be ongoing throughout the year.

Planning fee income is estimated at €569k for 2023 which is €84k down on the 2022 estimate.

The discussions with Irish Water on the 2023 Budget are ongoing. The Draft Budget assumes a recovery of €6.3m on payroll, other services and the central management charge.

Capital Programme

The updated Three Year Capital Programme will be presented to Council for approval in December. The estimated expenditure on social housing for the period 2022 to 2024 is €170m which is 100% grant funded under the Government's Housing For All Programme. Social Housing delivery will be delivered in line with the Kilkenny Housing Delivery Action Plan for the period 2022 to 2026. While the expenditure on social housing is 100% grant funded a working capital facility of between €8m and €10m is required to fund the developments.

The total estimated expenditure on projects excluding housing (*100% funded*), Roads (*100% funded*) and fire services (*100% funded*) is €155m. The estimated match funding required is €42.3m, of which €25m has been identified. This match funding includes €8.5m of new term loans approved by Council but not yet drawn down. €3.5m of this loan relates to the upgrade of the public lighting stock. The draft Budget makes provision for repayment of both loans. When these two loans are drawn down the total amount of non-mortgage debt being serviced will amount to €27m.

The estimated outstanding balance on completed capital projects at the end of 2022 is €8.6m, with the larger projects being written off over a period of eight years. The cost inflation currently being experienced in the construction sector presents a significant challenge given the number of large contracts in the pipeline that have yet to be tendered. It is essential for the longer-term financial sustainability of the Council that a balance funding model is maintained to fund the capital programme.

Some of the key provisions in the 2023 Budget are as follows:

- Housing rents increased by €770k.
- Housing maintenance - €2.6m, no change.
- Expenditure on homeless services - €620k, no change.
- Expenditure on RAS/Leasing - €10m, no change.
- Housing grants - €1.65m, no change (*20% funded from Council funds*).
- Local roads funding maintained at 2022 levels.
- Municipal District funding allocation included at €200k - no change.

- Provision of €463k for write-down on outstanding balance on St. Francis Bridge, no change.
- Provision of €250k for write-down on outstanding balance of Breaghagh Valley Infrastructure.
- Planning fee income to €569k, reduction of €84k.
- Kilkenny Tourism Subvention - €75k, no change.
- Festivals/Events support - €112k, no change.
- Christmas Festival - €99k, reduction of €14k.
- St Patrick's Day - €40k, no change.
- Kilkenny Day - €10k, no change.
- Paint the Shop Scheme - €10k, no change.
- Tidy Towns - €14k, no change.
- Woodstock Maintenance - €300k - increase of €20k.
- Callan Friary Development - €25k, no change.
- Drum Youth Centre - €50k, no change.
- Traveller Horse Project - €20k, no change.
- Provision for match funding for Town & Village Renewal and other grant schemes- €85k, no change.
- Regional Assembly Contribution - €103k, no change.
- Archives - €12k, no change.
- Derelict Sites - €20k, no change.
- Heritage Programme - €100k, no change.
- Medieval Mile Museum Subvention - €230k, no change.
- Historic Landfills - €100k, no change.
- Recycling Centres & Bring Banks - €182k, no change.
- Dunmore Civic Amenity site operating costs - €855k, reduction of €4k.
- Illegal dumping - €45k, no change.
- KKB - €10k, no change.
- Street Cleaning - €1.38m, reduction of €10k.
- Burial Grounds Maintenance - €315k, no change.
- Burial Ground Grants & Improvements - €30k, no change.
- Civil Defence - €216k, increase of €13k.
- Fire Service - €5.22m, increase of €670k.
- Climate Action - €226k, €186k of grant funding.
- Library Service - €3.75m, increase of €647k.
 - Library Book fund - €120k, no change.

- Maintenance of Parks and open spaces - €1.88m, increase of €144k.
- Amenity Grants - €140k, no change.
- Playground Maintenance - €80k, no change.
- Support for sporting bodies - €80k, no change.
- Arts Expenditure - €465k, increase of €87k, with €51k of extra grant funding.
- Watergate Subvention - €154k, no change.
- Rothe House Subvention - €60k, no change.
- Veterinary Expenditure - €307k, no change.
- Control of Dogs - €175k, increase of €15k.
- Control of Horses - €85k, no change.
- Coroner - €180k, no change.
- Motor Tax Office - €515k, increase of €49k (*Salaries*).
- Central Management Costs - €9.0m, increase of €702k.
 - €441k of increase relates to the increase in building energy costs.
- Pension Charge - €5.0m, no change.

It is critical that the Council continues to ensure that expenditure is in line with the income available. This will be challenging for 2023 due to the level of uncertainty arising from inflationary pressures impacting expenditure in all service areas.

Housing & Building – Service Division A

Housing For All

The Housing For All Programme launched in September 2021 sets out the Government’s mission to tackle the housing crisis. A key element of this programme is to increase housing delivery nationally to an average of 33,000 new homes per year in the period 2022-2030. Housing For All includes a target to deliver an average of over 9,500 new build social homes per annum over the next five years, with annual targets increasing year on year.

Kilkenny County Council in partnership with the voluntary housing sector, under Housing For All are required to deliver 803 social and 76 affordable housing units in Kilkenny in the period 2022 to 2026. The current building programme has more than 200 homes in the development pipeline at the end of 2022 with a further 160 homes to be completed and occupied before the end of 2022. These developments include 66 homes at Pennefeather, 12 at Brother Thomas Place and 23 at New Orchard in Kilkenny City as well as houses at Jenkinstown, Ferrybank and Mooncoin being delivered in 2022.

New housing delivery targets have been set for Kilkenny under the Housing For All Programme as follows:

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Build	170	149	153	164	167	803

There will be many challenges in the delivery of these ambitious delivery targets and the Housing Office will utilise all the provisions of the Housing For All Programme to ensure that targets are not only met, but exceeded over the period to 2026.

The national Affordable Housing regulations were finalised in 2022 and Kilkenny County Council will proceed to the delivery of affordable housing units supported by the Affordable Housing Fund in 2023.

Housing Stock and Maintenance

The Council has a current housing stock of 2,650 units. We receive and respond to an average of 5,000 maintenance requests per annum. The number of calls during 2022 has increased reflecting a built up demand following Covid 19 restrictions. It has been challenging to meet demands for reactive maintenance due to increased costs and limited availability of contractors during 2022. The proposed progression to a planned maintenance system remains an objective of the Council to achieve improved efficiencies in stock management and customer service. We have commenced carrying out stock conditioning surveys on some of our properties.

Rent Review

A rolling rent review process is now in place ensuring that each tenancy has their differential rent reviewed every 12 months. This system avoids sharp shocks to household finances and ensures that all households are assessed equitably in accordance with their income. On average rents charged by Kilkenny are below 18% of overall household income. The increase in rental income reflects increases in household incomes and additional housing tenancies. No further clarifications have been received in respect of a National Rent Scheme.

Housing Allocations

The housing section remains committed to the introduction of choice based letting in 2023 to improve the efficiency of the allocations process and to reduce refusal numbers on new tenancies.

Homeless Assistance

The Housing Section continues to support households in need of emergency accommodation. The provision of own front door short term accommodation by the Council reduced the need for hotel accommodation during 2022. The emergency homeless accommodation budget is funded 90% by the Department of Housing Local Government & Heritage grant and 10% from local provision in the Council's annual budget. Difficulties in sourcing smaller affordable private rented accommodation in Kilkenny City has resulted in challenges for our Placefinder and Social Care service who work to prevent homeless presentations.

The Table below illustrates the changes in homeless presentations over the last 4 years. There has been a notable increase in homeless presentations in 2022. This trend is expected to continue requiring an increase in emergency accommodation expenditure.

MONTH	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
January	37	25	23	18	34
February	32	12	27	34	34
March	21	16	24	26	51
April	18	16	19	24	25
May	29	20	14	42	44
June	20	14	12	37	40
July	15	30	19	34	31
August	26	28	22	24	54
September	19	26	26	41	
October	27	22	26	42	
Total	244	209	212	322	

Housing Grants

The draft budget retains the funding to be made available for housing grants under the three grant schemes:

- (i) Disability Housing Grants,
- (ii) Mobility Assistance Grants, and
- (iii) Housing for Older Persons Grants.

While we continue to approve high numbers of grants under all schemes to assist people to remain comfortably in their own homes, many households approved are experiencing difficulties in sourcing contractors to carry out works. We will continue to work with applicants to ensure that most urgent needs are met.

Housing Loans

The Council continues to provide Housing Loans to eligible housing applicants to provide accommodation from their own resources. The challenge continues to be the availability of houses and apartments to purchase in Kilkenny. A total of 12 loans have been approved from 1st Jan to 31st October 2022. 8 loans have been paid out in the same period amounting to €1.2m. The number and value of the loans paid out in 2022 has reduced due to the restricted availability of affordable houses on the market. The national First Homes Scheme has been introduced to assist with access to the private housing market for households with affordability issues. This will impact on the number of loans being processed by the local authority.

Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS)

In previous years, salaries and costs relating to the administration of the RAS scheme were recouped from the Department in full. Due to changes in procedures from January 2021, these costs are no longer funded through the recoupment process. We are awaiting on clarification from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in regard to the funding of this going forward.

Vacant Homes

The Vacant Homes Officer continues to assess vacant properties with the potential to be brought back into use as residential dwellings and to assist landowners through that process. During 2022, a number of new schemes were introduced by Government to promote the reuse of residential properties. The vacant home refurbishment grant was introduced with 12 applications received by Kilkenny County Council. The Vacant Homes Unit will be required to deal with projects under Repair to Lease, Buy and Renew, Vacant Homes Refurbishment Grants and Serviced Sites funding to encourage the adaptive reuse of town and village sites. The Vacant Homes Officer will also continue to progress Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO's) as appropriate. CPO procedures were completed in respect of 5 properties with additional notices issued in relation to 13 further properties in 2022. The Vacant Homes Officer has also worked to create infill sites for the development of homes in town centres where privately owned vacant or underutilised properties can be combined to create viable development sites. Locations where such projects are underway include Johnstown, Goresbridge and Piltown. The regeneration of complex town centre brownfield sites remains a core objective of the Housing Delivery Team.

Tenancy Management

The Tenancy Management Section deals with anti-social behaviour complaints in relation to our tenants. This draft budget retains funding for three Tenant Liaison Officers. The TLO's provide advice to tenants on all details of their tenancy. Cases of serious anti-social behaviour are dealt with using enforcement procedures set out in the councils Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy.

Traveller Accommodation

There have been 14 allocations under the Traveller Accommodation Programme (TAP) up to end of Oct 2022. Plans to meet the identified housing need were included in the Housing Delivery Action Plan. Capital delivery team are progressing projects for delivery under Housing For All during the period 2023-2026.

A review of the TAP will commence before the end of the year in accordance with Section 17 of the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998. The Local Traveller Accommodation Committee (LTAC) has continued to meet during 2022 identifying measures needed to be prioritised to meet changing needs.

ROAD WORKS SCHEME 2022

NON-NATIONAL ROADS

Kilkenny County Council's local contribution to road maintenance and improvement works amounted to €1.611m for 2022. This allocation covers costs associated with the operational activities of the Road MD Offices and the staff (*GSSs, General Operatives etc.*) reporting thereto.

Road Improvements are largely funded via the Capital Account and through the Annual Roadwork's Scheme, adopted by the Members in March of each year following the announcement of Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and Department of Transport Tourism and Sport Grant Allocations. In recent years Kilkenny County Council has benefitted from certain flexibilities afforded to the Council in the assignment of grant allocations. In the context of the 2023 Roadwork's Scheme it is important that this flexibility is retained to support the Council in achieving efficient management and improvement of the road network.

The main road improvements on the Non-National road network are funded from the Road Restoration Improvement and Maintenance Grant Scheme for which the Council received a grant allocation of €11.52m in 2022. Significant progress has been made on the Non-National road network over the years since the Restoration Grant was introduced and the condition rating of the roads in County Kilkenny compares favourably with any other County in the state.

Other key Non-national road funding strands in 2022 included a Discretionary Grant allocation of €2.64m, rehabilitation of declassified National roads grant of €250k, a bridge rehabilitation grant of €247k, Low Cost Accident Scheme grant of €397k, and Community Involvement in Roadworks (*CIR*) funding of €538k.

In addition, Kilkenny County Council received additional funding for Climate Change adaptation of €567k and drainage works funding of €652k.

Details of the Non-national road grants for 2023 will be issued in January 2023 and have risen from €9.7m in 2017 to €17m in 2022.

NATIONAL ROADS

Pavement Schemes and Major\Minor Works Programme

Under the Pavement Improvement and Major\Minor Works Programme, financed by Transport Infrastructure Ireland, Kilkenny County Council progressed the following Schemes in 2022:

- The **N78 Webbsborough Pavement Scheme** covering a length of 1.9km was completed in Q3 2022 for a cost of just under €750,000.
- The **N10 Dundaryark to Danesfort Pavement Scheme** covering a length of 1.3km has commenced construction in November 2022 and is expected to be completed by Q1 2023 weather permitting for a cost just over €900,000.
- **The N77 Suttonsrath Pavement Scheme (Ardloo Junction North)** covering a length of 1.6km is presently out to tender with a tender return date of 17th November. It is expected that the contract will be awarded by late November with construction commencing during Q1 2023.
- **N24 Tower Road - Tower Road Junction Improvement Scheme** - The procedures to facilitate land acquisition progressed during 2022. The scheme is expected to be awarded before the end of November 2022 with construction commencing in January 2023. A 12 month construction period is envisaged.

- **N77 Ballyragget to Ballynaslee Minor Improvement Scheme** - Land acquisition and advanced archaeological investigations progressed during 2022. The preparation of tender documentation is on-going with the expectation that the tender will be issued during Q2 2023.
- **N25 Waterford to Glenmore Scheme** - As no funding was provided to progress the scheme beyond Phase 2, the scheme was officially suspended in September 2022.
- **N24 Waterford to Cahir** - This scheme is within Phase 2 Option Selection. Potential solutions having regard to the constraints identified are being developed and a preferred solution will be selected by Q3 2023.
- **N24 Carrick Road Improvement (*Bends West of Mooncoin*)**
The development of the necessary reports to facilitate the application to An Bord Pleanála for both planning and CPO approval continued through 2022. It is expected that the formal application will be made before the end of November 2023.

Other Key Infrastructure Improvement Schemes advanced during 2022 included:

Kilkenny Northern Ring Road Extension (1.5 km)

Kilkenny County Council considers the Northern Ring Road Extension project a critical piece of infrastructure for the City and County. Kilkenny County Council submitted a SAR (*Strategic Assessment Report*) for the scheme to the Department for its consideration in Q2 2022. A response is awaited.

Ormonde Street Improvement

Phase 2 of the Ormonde Street Improvement works were completed in 2022. It is envisaged that these works will re-commence in early 2023 and take 3 months to complete. The works will consist of a complete pavement replacement including provision of new footpaths and public lighting and partial one-way system.

Vicar Street Improvement

The Vicar street Improvement works will commence in Q1 2023. The works consist of making the street one-way for vehicular traffic to facilitate the widening of footpaths. A contra-flow cycle lane will be provided to allow cyclists to continue to use the road in both directions. New pedestrian crossing points will be provided to improve pedestrian mobility and safety.

Active Travel

The National Transport Authority (NTA) has provided grants for sustainable transport measures to the Greater Dublin Area and in Regional Centres for many years. Kilkenny City benefitted from this support with the introduction of the Kilkenny City Bus Service in December, 2019.

In 2021 the NTA expanded their grant scheme under the Active Travel Programme for all Local Authorities. Active Travel can be defined as projects that facilitate mobility under our own steam, walking and cycling and promotes projects to encourage active travel and make it safer and more attractive for the public.

Kilkenny County Council has been funded for four staff to develop and implement projects throughout the City and County, ranging from larger projects like the One-way in Callan, Cycling routes in Kilkenny City to pedestrian crossings, improvement to lane way connectivity and lighting. Such projects will not only lead to safety improvements, but also to healthier lifestyles and repurposed city centre and towns and villages that will give a higher priority to communities and revitalise our streets

Public Lighting - Maintenance

Kilkenny County Council maintains approximately 11,000 public lights. The annual investment in public lighting provision per annum is €963k of which maintenance accounts for approximately 20% and energy accounts for 80%. This level of funding for lighting provision is expected to be maintained for 2023. Income from Transport Infrastructure Ireland for public lighting on National Roads and under the Motorway MMarC contract in 2022 was €154k and the balance of the funds required comes directly from the Council's own resources. It is anticipated that similar funding will be received from TII, although this may be reduced to account for energy savings arising from upgrades of the existing National Route lighting under TII funded projects in the past 3 years.

Public lighting maintenance is currently carried out under contract by Enerveo Ltd, formally SSE Airtricity on behalf of Kilkenny County Council.

Energy Efficiency, Energy Conservation and Climate Change

In 2022-2024, Kilkenny County Council as Lead Authority for Region 2 of the National Public Lighting Energy Efficiency Project (*PLEEP*), intends to retrofit the balance of the lighting stock through this Project. The Tenders for the Works Contract and the Consultant Contract have been returned. The contract for the award of the contract was made in Q2 of 2022. Survey and design will commence in Q 4 2022 with installation of the new lanterns expected to commence in Q 2023.

Kilkenny County Council continues to actively encourage the use of LED lighting technology in new public lighting installation and retrofits. The use of energy efficient technology is being recommended in new planned developments in the County.

Flood Relief Projects

In 2022, two major Flood Relief Capital Projects advanced through the Design Stage of the schemes for both the communities of Graiguenamanagh and Ballyhale. Both schemes will advance to Stage 2 in 2023 - Planning Phase. These schemes will provide a standard of protection to approximately 92 properties and will have a significant social and economic benefit to the effected communities of both Graiguenamanagh and Ballyhale.

IRISH WATER

Service Level Agreement

The Council continues to manage the transition of Water Services to Irish Water [IW] which commenced in January, 2014 through a Service Level Agreement (SLA) for a period of 12 years. This process is accelerating and changes are proposed for 2023. For budget purposes all costs relating to the operation of Water Services in 2023 will be recouped from Irish Water under the terms of this SLA until a new transition document is agreed.

Infrastructure Programme

A number of major and minor capital works progressed in 2022. The projects will provide significant upgrades to a number of plants and pipe networks which will be essential for the development of Kilkenny into the future. Some of the works ongoing & completed were

Kilkenny City Regional Water Supply Scheme

Construction works on the Kilkenny City Regional Water Supply Scheme (RWSS) Upgrade Contract is progressing following commencement in early 2022. The upgrade works will ensure an enhanced quality water supply for 28,000 customers.

Approximately 40% of the construction works are complete. The majority of the works undertaken to date are the major civil engineering elements of the project.

A brief summary of completed and ongoing works includes:

- The construction of the new 2.8km treated water rising main between Troyswood Water Treatment Plant and the Radestown Reservoirs.
- The construction of the new raw water intake works.
- The construction of the new Chemical Storage and Treated Water Dosing building.
- The construction of new flocculation and process tanks including the upgrade of the existing flocculation system and process tanks.
- The extension of the existing treatment plant building including the new UV dosing room.
- The construction of the Used Wash Water Equalisation Settling Tanks and Sludge Holding Tanks for clarification of liquid waste residuals.
- The construction of the new Clear Water Tank to facilitate contact time verification on site.

Gowran Regional Water Supply Scheme (RWSS)

The proposed new scheme for the Gowran, Goresbridge & Paulstown areas is currently at tender stage with a closing date for tenders in November 2022.

The existing Gowran RWSS has a treated water throughput of approximately 980m³/day. All raw water for the scheme is currently sourced from Tobergoolick Pool and treated at the adjacent water treatment plant (WTP).

The design demand of the Gowran RWSS has been calculated as 1,500m³/day. Irish Water's proposal is to replace the existing Tobergoolick Pool source and treatment plant with new groundwater sources and a new WTP which can deliver this design demand.

Irish Water has acquired the Woodquarter Water Abstraction Site for the purpose of developing groundwater sources. Raw water will be pumped from this site to a new water treatment plant (WTP) and storage reservoirs. Once treated at the proposed new Gowran WTP, all treated water will be pumped to the existing Butlersgrove water tower via a new treated water rising main from Gowran WTP before being distributed to the scheme from the existing water tower.

The advanced works contract to develop the new abstraction site at Woodquarter, Gowran has commenced in October 2022.

WATER NETWORKS PROGRAMME

Pressure Management

In conjunction with Irish Water, a detailed analysis was undertaken on the City network. Two throttled valves reduce pressure in the network on the trunk mains feeding the City from both Troyswood and Radestown. To deliver a controlled pressure on the network, the throttled valves are being replaced by Pressure Reducing Valves (PRV), with day/night controllers and with remote monitoring through our Scada system. The installation of this equipment on the network enables both the existing network to service the Western Environs development and will reduce water loss from the network with an anticipated 15% reduction in burst main frequency.

Mains Rehabilitation Works

- Slieverue Village - installation completed, replacing 1200m of ageing 100mm Asbestos Watermain with 125mm HDPE watermain on the main street of Slieverue.
- Knocktopher Village - installation completed, replacing 1250m of ageing 100mm PVC Watermain with 125mm HDPE watermain on the R699 in Knocktopher Village.
- Carrickmourne, Thomastown - installation currently in progress, replacing 3,250m of ageing 50mm PVC Watermain with 125mm HDPE watermain.
- Detailed designs were completed on mains rehabilitation projects for the Dublin Rd, Thomastown and Norelands, Bennetsbridge areas. Commencement dates are scheduled for Q4 2022 for both projects.

Operational

Water & Waste Water services are critical services and were maintained and operated at full capacity by our staff during the year while adhering to public health requirements.

Backyard Services

- Michael Street, Kilkenny - installation completed, replacing 250m of ageing 100mm Cast Iron Watermain with 125mm HDPE watermain and replacement of 25 backyard services.
- St Fiaccres Place, Kilkenny - Preliminary design submitted for mains rehabilitation and backyard services project with a commencement date scheduled for Q1 2023

Find and Fix

The Find and Fix process continued through 2022 reducing leakage within the Bennetsbridge, Paulstown, Graignamanagh, Thomastown, Inistioge, Piltown, Callan and Kilkenny City water supply zones.

There were 111 leaks found and 97 leaks repaired in the year to date (*January 2022 – October 2022*). In Q2 2022, Irish Water in conjunction with the Council's Water Services staff commenced the implementation of a trial leak acoustic listening system. This entailed the installation of 500 smart listening devices into the water network in the Kilkenny City and Callan Town areas. The smart listening system has assisted in the locating of 22 leaks so far.

First Fix

Cold calling continued in 2022 after Covid-19 restrictions were lifted. In total 318 properties have been investigated for leaks with 63 leaks repaired in the year to date (*January 2022 – October 2022*).

Disinfection and PH Correction Programme

The Disinfection and PH programme continued in 2022. This upgrade of works at Water Treatment Plants and reservoirs has delivered a standardisation of disinfection across the County. The programme has improved drinking water quality, by improving the disinfection system and standards while ensuring compliance with all regulations. Source protection design works continued for Gurteen, Callan and Jamestown Water Treatment Plants with works scheduled for completion in Q4 2022.

Access to Heights and Edge Protection (AHEP) Scheme

Kilkenny County Council, working with IW and appointed contractors are assessing works required to address the risk associated with falling from heights and ensure the safety of personnel at designated Waste-Water and Water Sites in Kilkenny continues. Risk assessments have been submitted for 19 sites with necessary works commencing in Q4 2021 and scheduled for completion in 2023.

Welfare Programme

In conjunction with IW, Welfare Facilities were provided at the following Water Treatment Sites in Kilkenny:

- Loon WTP
- Ballyraggett WTP
- Gowran WTP
- Bennettsbridge WTP
- Callan WTP

Rural Water Programme

The Rural Water Programme remains the responsibility of Kilkenny County Council and facilitates the continued support of water and waste water services to over 200 group schemes in the County. The Council will oversee the public and private group scheme sector during 2023, including the delivery of new schemes, the improvement and support of existing group schemes throughout the County and the administration of private well grants. A number of improvement projects will be carried out in 2023 from funding allocated under the Rural Water Programme.

Public Conveniences

Provision of €45,000 has been made in 2023 for the maintenance of public conveniences throughout the City and County.

Small Towns & Villages Growth Programme

Kilkenny County Council was notified that Bennettsbridge had been approved for funding under the above program. It is envisaged that this scheme will utilise Kilkenny's full allocation for 2020-2024. This scheme will continue through Irish Water's capital delivery process. The scheme has been handed over to the Irish Water's asset delivery team and is currently in the concept design phase. This project is to be delivered by Early Contractor Involvement and Irish Water is currently in the process of appointing an ECI contractor.

Development Management – Service Division D

Strategic Planning

Following the adoption of the City & County Development Plan for the period 2021- 2027 work has progressed on a number of masterplanning exercises which are currently on going and will be completed by end of Q2 2023. These include masterplanning for Loughmacask and St. Canice’s Campus in the City along with a review of the Abbey Quarter Masterplan and Urban Design Code. In the wider County, we are currently drafting the Urlingford Town Centre Masterplan and work has also commenced on the preparation of Masterplans for the settlements of Ballyragget, Paulstown and Kilmacow. The appointed consultants are currently undertaking a review and updating of Health Checks for each of these settlements.

Development Management

The number of planning applications received year to date to the end of October 2022 had shown a decrease of circa 21% compared to the same period in 2021. This has brought the number of planning applications back to similar levels as 2020.

A number of significant applications were received during 2022, including that for the reopening of Galmoy mine, a strategic housing development for 181 houses in Kilkenny City and an application for a new manufacturing facility by Abbott Laboratories.

Compliance and Enforcement

The Council’s Enforcement Team continues to prioritise the investigation of non-compliance of planning conditions, unauthorised developments, and unfinished estates. The number of enforcement complaints to be investigated to the end of October 2022 is as follows:

	To October 2021	To October 2022
Complaints Received	106	71
Warning Letters Issued	92	72
Enforcements Notices Issued	17	31
Cases Closed	90	79

Taking in Charge

The Council completed the process of taking in charge of a total of 5 estates in 2022 namely:

- Margaretsfield, Callan Road,
- The Paddocks, Gowran,
- Filbuckstown, Mooncoin
- Arbourmount, Ferrybank.

Works are progressing on the following estates to bring them to satisfactory standard for taking in charge:

- Kiln Lane, Callan
- The Greens, Thomastown
- Whitehall, Paulstown
- An Choill Rua, Paulstown
- Abbeygate, Ferrybank
- College Park, Callan Road
- Rathullard

Building Control

Kilkenny County Council continues to participate in the National Building Control Programme which is managed by the National Building Control Office. Up to the end of October 2022, a total of 300 Commencement Notices were received through the Building Control Management System (BCMS). This represents a decrease of 23% compared to the same period in 2021.

Vacant Site Register

There are 28 sites on the Vacant Sites Register and the number of cancelled entries due to site activation or improvement now stands at 19 sites. The most recent cancellation was for John's Green, a regeneration site, where improvement works were recently carried out by the owner. For 2022, the emphasis will be on the activation of sites currently on the Register, the pursuit of levies due and ongoing monitoring. The Vacant site levy will be replaced by the Residential Zoned Land Tax in 2024, but any outstanding levies will remain due to be paid to the Council. Draft Maps of land in scope for the Residential Zoned Land Tax were published on the 1st November, and submissions are now invited. This is a national exercise, and all maps will be on display until January 2023.

Conservation

An advisory service is provided on a continuous basis to the public and internally to Council Departments on conservation issues. The Council also administers a range of funding initiatives below.

Works for the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS) are complete for 2022 as follows:

Total Grants paid out:.....	€153,947
Total amount leveraged by private funds:	€184,378
Total cost of projects:	€338,325
Total number of days employment:	526
Total projects supported:	12

The **Historic Structures Fund (HSF)** is also concluding, to-date four of the five projects approved funding have been delivered, with works to the Shee Alms House nearing completion: The completed projects are:

Structure	Project Works	HSF Stream	Grant Awarded	Privately Leveraged Money	Total Project Cost	Total Number of Days Employment
Old Ennismag Bridge	Arch & Parapet Repairs	Stream 1	€50,000	€19,806	€69,806	155
Kells House	Render Works	Stream 1	€38,000	€44,245	€82,245	180
St. Canice's Cathedral Kilkenny	Upgrade Lightening Conductor	Stream 1	€27,820	€8,475	€36,295	52

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

The LEO is the first point of contact for all businesses in County Kilkenny. The LEO support services continue to enable the Council to play a positive and proactive role in assisting small businesses to start, to develop and to grow and in 2022 played an integral role in supporting businesses.

Businesses were supported by LEO staff to avail of a number of financial and soft supports to assist them to sustain and grow their business including:

- €475,748 in direct financial assistance has been approved for 17 manufacture /export service businesses located throughout the County. This assistance is linked to the projected creation of 46 new jobs over the next three years.
- €344,385 in Business Expansion Grant assistance awarded to 12 existing businesses with forecasted new job creation of 39 jobs. Business Expansion grants assist businesses trading greater than 18 months to make investment in growing their businesses and employment numbers.
- €47,778 in Agile Innovation Funding to support a business to carry out research and development on a new product for their business
- €35,610 in Priming Grant (Start-up assistance) to 1 new business.
- €27,975 awarded in feasibility study grants to 3 businesses.
- €30,000 in Grad Start funding to 1 business
- 8 Technical Assistance for Micro Exporter grants awarded totalling €15,196 This scheme supports businesses to explore their export market opportunities.
- 13 Businesses have commenced LEAN one to one consultancy programmes to investigate possible resource efficiencies and process improvements for their businesses.
- 4 Business have commenced the LEO Building Better Business LEAN programme.
- 30 businesses approved for the Trading Online Voucher totalling €61,023 to support the enhancement of their online trading capacity.
- support the enhancement of their online trading capacity.
- 11 Green for Micro supports awarded totalling €22,426. This scheme supports businesses to becoming greener and environmentally friendly.
- 3 Digital Start Vouchers to the value of €12,528.
- 9 business applicants have been supported to make loan applications to the Micro Finance Ireland loan fund.
- 342 people participated on focused small business training, including 85 people participating on the Starting Your Business programme
- 525 businesses have availed of specialised business specific mentoring on a variety of topics including finance, marketing, social media marketing and HR.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Urban Regeneration

The Council secured funding approval in 2021 under Call 2 of the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (*URDF*) in respect of the two applications submitted.

The first relates to Phase 2 of the public realm in the Abbey Quarter (*AQ*) and includes: the development of a new urban street (*with pedestrian and cyclist priority*) through the AQ and development of a 1-hectare urban park and public plaza around the St Francis's Abbey national monument; the construction of a Board Walk at Greensbridge to provide the missing link to connect the 2 existing Riverside Walks in the City; and the further refurbishment of the former squash courts on the AQ as a Cultural Hub.

The second application relates to enhancing the streets and public realm in the City Core area to help transform the quality of place and accessibility of the City Centre and implement the Orientation Strategy that aims to rebalance the perceived center of gravity and attract more visitors from the Castle into the City Centre.

The main projects associated with this application are:

- Improving the public realm and introducing mobility/smarter travel options (*to include consideration of new one-way systems*) along High Street and Rose Inn Street;
- Upgrading of the streetscape and public realm along Ormonde Street to include provision of a new one-way system;
- Upgrading the streetscape along the pedestrianised Kieran Street and the laneways and slips that connect it with High Street;
- Upgrading the streetscape and laneways in the St Mary's Precinct; and
- Upgrading the public realm in Carnegie Plaza and the streetscape along Barrack Lane linking to John Street.

These projects are ongoing at various stages of development. It is anticipated that construction works on the new urban street (*with pedestrian and cyclist priority*) through the AQ and development of a 1-hectare urban park and public plaza around the St Francis's Abbey national monument will commence early in 2023.

Kilkenny.ie - The Best of Ireland

The Council continued to promote the new Kilkenny brand – Kilkenny.ie – The Best of Ireland, a priority of The City Centre Task Force. The brand positions Kilkenny as an outstanding destination for customers, visitors and investors. The Council is using the brand to promote Kilkenny as an ideal place to visit, shop, work, set up a business, live and raise a family.

#shopkilkenny - Keep it in the County

The Council continues to promote 'shopkilkenny – Keep it Local' message asking shoppers to shop locally and support local business and jobs. As many businesses have adopted an ecommerce presence since Covid-19 we have also been focusing the message on #shopkilkenny online – supporting our local businesses by purchasing online locally where possible. A Shop Kilkenny winter campaign will take place in the run up to Christmas.

#tastekilkenny - Savour the Experience

Tastekilkenny was established to support our local food producers, local cafes, hotels, gastro pubs and restaurants. Farming, agriculture and food excellence are at the very essence of the story of Kilkenny. This passion for food is evident across the entire County with each town bustling with top food producers, hospitality, brewery's & distilleries. The Parade in Kilkenny City on Thursday and Saturday mornings gives a sample of this amazing food.

October saw Taste continue in its support of our local food producers and local hotels and restaurants and worked to cross promote all the wonderful Savour Activity through its social media platforms:

- The Taste Facebook page has reached 4,200 followers;
- The Taste Instagram Page has passed 2,000 followers; and
- Social Media Competitions have been run to promote Kilkenny Animated and Kilkenomics. These competitions each had over 200 entries.

Savour Kilkenny Food Festival returned from October 28th to 31st 2022 and hosted talks from experts, demos from top chefs, unique dining experiences and all the food stalls you can imagine packaged into a festive atmosphere in the beautiful surrounds of the City.

TOURISM

Kilkenny Tourism working in partnership with Kilkenny County Council continues its marketing and PR campaign for Kilkenny throughout the year.

The Kilkenny Tourism, digital marketing will work in conjunction with the National Keep Discovering Campaign highlighting all the festivals, events and activities to see and do in Kilkenny in the shoulder season and beyond.

Local Tourism Structures

Kilkenny County Council continues to invest resources in building the tourism offer county wide through long term partnerships, including with Kilkenny Tourism, Destination Kilkenny, Fáilte Ireland and the OPW. The Council will continue to proactively support all efforts to market and promote Kilkenny both nationally and internationally, when the time is right as a top class tourist destination.

Medieval Mile Museum

The Medieval Mile Museum is now an established part of the Medieval Mile experience and is an integral component of our overall tourism offer. The operation and management of the Museum continues to be carried out by Kilkenny Civic Trust, who operate the Museum on a commercial basis on behalf of the Council.

Woodstock Gardens & Arboretum

Woodstock is a significant tourism and amenity asset and requires careful management in order to develop its full potential. Kilkenny County Council owns 50 acres and Coillte are responsible for the remaining Woodstock Demesne, comprising some 900 acres. Funding was secured under the 2022 Local Biodiversity Action Fund for invasive species control in both Silaire Wood and Woodstock Gardens. In Woodstock, the funding allowed for the clearing of circa. 2.3 acres of Cherry Laurel within the Gardens and wider Estate. The funding also facilitated the purchase of equipment to allow in-house garden staff continue this work into the future. The Council will continue to pursue funding opportunities to assist in the implementation of the Plan, including the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS), which has yielded significant success since 2018.

Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme

The Project Office will continue to identify and deliver projects under the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS).

Ukrainian Crisis Department

The war between Russia and Ukraine has been ongoing since February 2014. On 24th February 2022, the conflict saw a major escalation as Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. A Temporary Protection Directive was activated in March 2022 by the European Council's Implementing Decision in response to the mass influx of displaced persons caused by the invasion. Ukrainian refugees began to arrive in Kilkenny from 17th March 2022 and Kilkenny County Council were tasked with the setup of a temporary accommodation centre to manage arrivals. A Ukrainian Response Unit was established within the Council to co-ordinate the Kilkenny response, headed up by an Acting Director of Services and small staff cohort.

Ukrainians arriving in Ireland are considered Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection (BOTP's) and under the directive have access to various rights and entitlements, such as:

- a Personal Public Service Number;
- employment and self-employment;
- suitable accommodation;
- school if they are children under 18 years;
- social welfare income supports and health care services from the HSE.

The temporary protection permission initially allowed beneficiaries to reside in Ireland for a period of 1 year and the permission has now been extended to March 2025.

There are currently over 1,100 Ukrainians living in Kilkenny, representing 1% of the total population of Kilkenny and 2% of Ukrainian arrivals to Ireland. Ten per cent of the Ukrainian population in Kilkenny are living in Council managed temporary accommodation centre at the St. John of God Convent in the City and The Friary in Knocktopher. A further 10% are living in shared and vacant properties which were pledged by the citizens of Kilkenny. Kilkenny County Council placed Ukrainian families with the property owners from the temporary accommodation centre. A further 68% are living in 14 commercial properties (*a direct contract between the International Protection Accommodation Services - IPAS and the commercial operator*), and these are dispersed throughout the County. A further 12% are living in private arrangements throughout the County.

Kilkenny County Council, through the Community & Interagency Response Forum ensure that Ukrainian refugees, once provided with accommodation are assisted with supports through the various agencies such as the Department of Social Protection for social welfare supports, the Health Service Executive to access health services, Kilkenny and Carlow Education and Training Board for English language training, school placements and adult guidance supports, Kilkenny Leader Partnership for training and registration supports, Local Link for transport supports and any other requirements which arise on a daily basis. Thirty percent of adult Ukrainians are now registered in employment. Thirty one percent are children and two-thirds of the children are now enrolled and attending Primary and Secondary schools throughout the County.

It is difficult to estimate the costs which will be incurred in 2023, given the ever evolving nature of the war in Ukraine. The work of the Ukrainian Response Unit is fully funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

WATER QUALITY

Local Authority Waters Programme (LAWPRO)

The Local Authority Waters Programme (*LAWPRO*) is a shared service managed jointly by Kilkenny and Tipperary County Councils. The Programme employs 60 specialist staff nationally across a range of scientific, community engagement and other disciplines. These staff are based in 13 Local Authority offices across the country, including five staff based in Kilkenny County Council. *LAWPRO* is fully funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (*DHLGH*).

The River Basin Management Plan 2018 - 2021 is still operational across the country and prioritises 190 areas for action (*PAAs*). These are areas that are at risk of not meeting their water quality objectives as set out in the European Water Framework Directive. Seven of the *PAAs* are wholly or partly in County Kilkenny namely; the River Dinin, River Duske/Powerstown Stream, River Nuenna, Pockocke (*Brownstown*) River, River Breaghagh, River Erkina and the River Lingaun. As agriculture is a significant pressure in the *PAAs*, *LAWPRO* works closely with Teagasc and dairy advisors of the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advice Programme (*ASSAP*) to assist farmers in understanding pressures on their local catchment and implementing local measures where required.

It is expected that The River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2022 – 2027 will be published at the end of 2022. This will significantly increase the number of *PAAs* in which *LAWPRO* is active in Kilkenny to include the Baunballinlough Stream, the Blackwater (Kilmacow), Caherleske Stream, Castlecomer Stream, Desart Stream, Ennisnag Stream, the River Glory, the River Goul, the Gowran River, Kings River, Lisdowney Stream, the Monefelim River and the Stoneyford Stream.

Water Safety

Lifeguard services continues to be provided each summer at the 5 river locations in County Kilkenny along the Nore and Barrow that are traditionally used by swimmers during the summer months to ensure public safety. These locations are at: Graiguenamanagh, Thomastown, Inistioge and two locations in Kilkenny City at The Meadows and The Weir and Bleach Road. Kilkenny County Council will continue to provide the service at these locations.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

Dunmore and Granny Recycling and Waste Disposal Centres

The Council operates a full-service waste recycling and disposal centre at Dunmore Civic Amenity Site (*CAS*). 2022 was once again one of the busiest years on record for the Dunmore *CAS*. The staff at Dunmore continue to provide a very high level of service to their customers and the feedback from the general public is always extremely positive. The Granny Recycling and waste disposal centre in the south of the County continues to provide for waste recycling and disposal services, comparable to those available at the Dunmore *CAS*. While the Centre is privately run, Kilkenny County Council makes an annual contribution towards the operational costs of the facility.

Bring Centres

The Council provides and manages 46 Bring Bank Centres throughout the City and County. Usage of our Bring Centres has decreased approx. 20% on 2021 figures and is mainly down due to the lifting of all Covid restrictions.

Waste Enforcement

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. Resources are targeted to build on the success of previous enforcement actions. The areas targeted are in line with the national waste enforcement priorities which include illegal waste activity by unauthorised operators, construction and demolition (C&D) waste, end-of life vehicles (ELVs), waste collection - household & commercial and multi-agency sites of interest. Our Southern Region Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authority (WERLA) will continue to support Kilkenny County Council with legal and technical advice on our enforcement activities.

Environment Complaints

All Environment complaints received are logged on the CRM (*Customer Relations Management*) System. The number of complaints being received and logged by Environment staff for investigation for the first ten months of 2022 is 814 compared with 1,066 for the same period last year (*i.e. down circa 24%*). The nature of these complaints ranges from littering, illegal dumping, water quality and abandoned cars. The vast majority continue to be related to littering and illegal dumping.

Street Cleaning

The Council continues to provide street cleansing services in the major towns and villages - Callan, Castlecomer, Graiguenamanagh, Kilkenny City, Thomastown and Ferrybank. These services are essential to ensuring a high level of amenity in the key towns across the County.

Let's Team Up to Clean Up, Together for Kilkenny

"Let's Team Up to Clean Up, Together for Kilkenny" saw over 50 groups registered to participate in the first environmental day of action, with 600 litter pickers distributed along with 6,000 flowering bulbs to neighbourhoods across Kilkenny City. The pilot event took place on Kilkenny Day, the 9th of October. It helped the Council to gain logistical experience in advance of running the much larger event next spring, that will incorporate both the City and County. The corporate sponsors have been instrumental to allow this initiative to become a reality by providing the necessary financial support for the next three years to cement this environmental day of action into the County's community calendar. The Council acknowledges the support of the sponsors, PRL, Dawn Meats, John O Shea Trust and Glanbia PLC/Glanbia Co-op together with our waste management sponsor Panda.

IBAL

The Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) Anti-Litter League was set up in 1996. An Taisce monitors towns independently on behalf of IBAL and in accordance with international grading standards. The results of Round 1, 2022 released in June indicated that Kilkenny City retained its perennial status as Cleaner than European Norms coming 8th out of 40 towns and cities surveyed. IBAL acknowledged the work on the part of many within the community to achieve this consistent high standard.

Climate Action

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act sets out a clear leadership role for local authorities in helping Ireland transition to a carbon neutral economy and in particular requires local authorities to reduce the carbon emissions associated with delivery of services by more than half by 2030. Kilkenny County Council takes its responsibility in this regard seriously. The Council has signed up to a Climate Charter which among other things commits to delivering a 50% improvement in energy efficiency by 2030, is a member of the EU Climate Alliance, and has adopted a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy which is aimed at proactively taking action to minimise the impacts of climate change on local people, ecosystems, infrastructure and buildings and encouraging people to change their behaviour to more sustainable lifestyles.

A Climate Action Officer has been appointed to co-ordinate the preparation of a Climate Action Plan setting out both mitigation and adaptation measures and monitoring to ensure the climate targets are achieved.

The Council is already delivering on a wide range of measures to meet these commitments including:

- deep retrofit of older Council buildings to improve energy efficiency;
- installation of solar panels on Council buildings to produce renewable energy;
- provision of Home Energy Saving Kits through the Council's library branches, available to home owners to help them identify and implement energy savings in their own homes;
- continued upgrade of public lights across the County to more energy efficient LED lights;
- delivery of OPW funded flood relief schemes in towns and villages across the County that are exposed to flooding; and
- initiatives to promote reduction of waste (*in particular food waste*), encourage recycling and reduce single use plastics.

Energy Management

Kilkenny County Council successfully secured ISO 50001 accreditation in 2021 and retained the standard following Audit in 2022. The ISO 50001 standard is the world's leading Energy Management Standard for energy use and consumption and provides a systematic approach for organisations to achieve continuous improvement in terms of energy performance. The Council's Energy Team comprises Senior Staff from across the organisation and includes the Line Managers of all the significant energy users (*SEUs*) in the Council from public lighting, the fleet of vehicles and the Council's offices and buildings. Kilkenny County Council received invaluable support from the 3CEA (*the three Counties Energy Agency*) in the process of achieving the standard.

Kilkenny County Council has already achieved the public sector energy efficiency target of at least 33% energy efficiency by the end of last year when compared to the 2009 baseline period. The ISO 50001 certification will be the basis of formulating a pathway to reach the even more ambitious energy efficiency targets that have been set for 2030 and beyond.

Burial Grounds

The Council manages 14 burial grounds across the County. 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 Council's Local Area offices.

The Council is about to commence the development of a Columbarium Wall Garden at St. Kieran's Cemetery Kilkenny. The Columbarium Wall will contain a number of niches, with each niche incorporating a memorial plaque. The cremated remains are placed behind the plaque in a receptacle or urn designed specifically for that purpose. The project completed the Part 8 Planning consent process in 2022.

Fire Services

The Fire Service is an essential public service and has operated and responded to calls during the current pandemic. During this public health crisis our focus continues on:

- (i) Protecting the communities we serve and to limit the spread of Covid-19;
- (ii) To ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff in the pursuance of their duties; and
- (iii) To maintain an effective Emergency Response.

The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Darragh O'Brien T.D., announced a new €61 million Fire Service Capital Programme 2021-2025. The programme will support Kilkenny County Council's Fire Service with a funding investment of over €8 million. The delivery of Urlingford Fire Station is underway with plans proceeding for the provision of a new station in Kilkenny City. An additional fire tender to improve our current fleet of vehicles has also been provided during 2022.

Provision has been made in the draft budget to provide additional staffing within the Fire and Emergency service to meet growing demand for the inspection of residential and entertainment spaces in Kilkenny. This will ensure a more proactive approach to inspections and enforcement of multi-unit residential properties and licenced premises throughout Kilkenny to improve public safety.

Civil Defence

During 2022 the Civil Defence service in Kilkenny has continued to benefit from increased numbers of volunteers and has been an invaluable support to both emergency and health services during the Ukrainian response. This service will be further strengthened during 2023 with the provision of additional equipment and training to further strengthen the capacity of the service overall.

COMMUNITY, EDUCATION & LIFELONG LEARNING

Community Section

The Community Section within Kilkenny County Council has made significant progress in building relationships and delivering projects throughout the County. It is hoped to further build on this progress in 2023 allowing us to identify and deliver more successful local projects in more communities. The appointment of a Town Regeneration Officer (TRO) for Kilkenny will assist communities in repurposing town centre locations for residential, community, creative and business use.

- The Council will continue to support the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in its role in collaborating with other agencies in preparing and implementing a new Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for County Kilkenny. Work is underway in the preparation of the new LECP which will be completed in 2023 providing a framework of actions for community and economic development across the County in the coming years.
- The LCDC Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) will continue during 2023. This programme has delivered and will continue to deliver investment of approximately €630k per annum for social inclusion measures over the 5 year period.
- The LCDC has supported 5 Healthy Ireland Actions across 5 agencies in Kilkenny during 2022. The LCDC will be supporting other agencies to deliver Healthy Ireland initiatives continuing and expanding the implementation of agreed actions in the Healthy Ireland Plan for Kilkenny. Round 4 of the Healthy Ireland Programme will commence in 2023 to deliver a wide variety of projects over the next 3 years.
- A new LEADER Programme will commence in 2023 and expressions of interest have been sought for a Local Action Group. The Council will actively support the implementation of a successful LEADER programme throughout the County under the new funding round 2023 to 2027.
- We will continue to support many initiatives and programmes all over the County including International Women’s Day, the Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement, Kilkenny Citizens Information Centre, The Drum Youth Facility, Comhairle na nÓg, the Garda Youth Diversion Programme, Ossory Youth, The Rural Transport Initiative- Ring – A- Link, Estate Management and the Childrens and Young Peoples Services Committee, amongst others. Kilkenny County Council has a strong commitment to community programmes and events which is evidenced by the continued financial provision to such initiatives under a range of programmes.
- The Community Section will continue to develop and submit applications for funding under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF), Town and Village Renewal (T&VR), CLAR and other funding streams as available during 2023, supporting and ensuring project delivery where funding allocations are made. Projects delivered in 2022 included additional works at the Barrow Activities Hub in Graiguenamanagh, the provision of a remote working space at Urlingford and other community led projects at Kilmanagh, Piltown and Gowran.

Age Friendly Programme

- The Council will continue to collaborate with various agencies in implementing the Age Friendly Strategy .

The Kilkenny Older People’s Council will continue to be supported through the provision of office space, administrative and financial support and assistance.

Disability Strategy

A Disability Steering Group established in 2022 will proceed to the preparation and adoption of a Disability Strategy during 2023. This process will involve consultation and engagement across all service areas within the local authority and with as many groups and individuals as possible across the County.

County Kilkenny Creative Ireland Programme

The Creative Ireland Programme in Kilkenny supported a number of projects in Kilkenny in 2022 across a range of cultural areas in line with Creative Ireland Programme criteria. These projects included Bookville, "The Second Chamber" documentary filmed at Knockroe with the Young Irish Filmmakers, "My Father's Dragon" exhibition by Cartoon Saloon at The Butler Gallery, workshops in drawing and theatre production, events held by KTCM, The Historical Harp Society of Ireland, KCAT and other groups around the County. A new national Creative Ireland Programme was adopted in 2022 with a commitment to continue funding the programme for the period 2023 to 2027.

Kilkenny County Council has completed a Cultural and Creative Strategy for the County for the period 2023 to 2027 which will be launched in early 2023 and will support the development of the cultural and creativity sector in Kilkenny by working with communities and groups in the preparation of projects and funding applications.

The Public Participation Network (PPN)

The Community Section continues to support the PPN in the delivery of services to support the community and voluntary sector in the County. Work will be increased to support capacity building in the sector to ensure continued engagement with emerging groups around the County.

PARKS/OPEN SPACES

Public Realm Maintenance

There has been a significant increase in the requirement for public realm maintenance in the City core with the opening of the Riverside Linear Park, Skateboard Park, Butler Gallery and outdoor seating areas at Market Yard and at the Watergate. This increase in maintenance is likely to require a reorganisation of the public realm maintenance section of the area. Outside of the City core, the opening of the LIHAF scheme in the Western Environs has also resulted in additional maintenance requirements.

Playgrounds

The Parks Department continues to assist communities in developing and maintaining playgrounds across the County. Ongoing maintenance continues around the County in our playgrounds and parks to maintain them to a high standard. For the month of November 2022 the focus was on the replacement of parts of old or worn play equipment, tree planting and re-mulching.

The Council are assisting the local community to develop the Freshford Playground and Amenity Area. Planning for the development was granted in April this year by An Bord Pleanála. The Council entered into a long-term lease agreement with the local GAA club for part of the lands required to deliver this amenity, the balance of the lands already being in Council ownership. The procurement process for the fencing and play equipment is concluded and the Castlecomer Area Office are currently undertaking the civil works, which include the construction of an access road, parking area, footpaths, drainage etc. Good progress has been made over the month of October and it is anticipated that this element of the project will be completed before the end of the year.

Amenity Grants

The Amenity Grants Scheme is invaluable in assisting community groups in towns and villages across the County to maintain and upkeep their neighbourhoods. The main objective of the scheme is to encourage and aid small-scale works to improve the local environment and community involvement in the upkeep, maintenance and enjoyment of public amenities. The 2022 Amenity Grants Scheme was brought before the Elected Members at the May Council Meeting. 172 applicants were awarded grants totalling €140,000. This is distributed to groups across the County to enable them to maintain their own outdoor recreational spaces. The range of works typically involve tree planting, grass cutting, planting flowers, erecting signage and many other amenity type projects. These works combined will help to continue to contribute to the overall amenity of County Kilkenny and help enhance the County's reputation as a quality place to live and visit.

Partnership Projects

The Project Office will continue to provide technical design and supervision supports to deliver an agreed schedule of projects in partnership with Kilkenny LEADER Partnership (KLP) under the LEADER Programme. A number of projects have been identified which range in scope from feasibility studies to construction works. The overall objective of this partnership is to progress additional recreational opportunities, create enhanced amenity spaces and improve pedestrian and cyclist connectivity, thereby enhancing our outdoor recreational offering. Two projects worthy of note are the Design Options Report to assess the connectivity options between the new South East Greenway and the villages of Glenmore and Slieverue. This has been advanced and route options have been prepared and the selected routes will progress to planning and design in 2023.

ARTS

Arts Programme

Kilkenny County Council's Arts Programme is delivered in partnership with The Arts Council to improve the delivery of a successful and increased Arts Programme in 2023. This agreement requires the continued investment in community arts projects by Kilkenny County Council to ensure the provision of match funding by the Arts Council of Ireland. Community arts projects and support services for emergent artists in our County will continue to be the focus of the Arts Programme in 2023. The curator in residence programme in Kilkenny has been acknowledged as a major contribution to the development of emergent art curators and is a unique opportunity for young people to develop the skill sets required for a career in the arts. In 2023, a dedicated Arts Youth resource will be provided for Kilkenny, supported by the Arts Council of Ireland and provision has been made in the draft budget to support this post.

Music Generation

The Music Generation programme is delivered in partnership with the Education and Training Board (ETB) and commenced in 2019. The establishment of a schools programme during the pandemic period was extremely challenging. More than 13 programmes have successfully taken place across schools with more than 1,183 participants. The primary wellbeing initiative was delivered in 21 schools involving 8 musician educators and 2,437 participants. The continued support of this programme will allow Music Generation to continue to expand its services to young people across our County. Programmes offered by Music Generation included a Trad Hub in Castlecomer and Summer Drummer groups at 15 locations around the County. Overall more than 3,000 young people have benefited from programmes delivered by Music Generation in Kilkenny during 2022.

Contribution to Other Bodies

Financial provision has been made in 2022 to honour commitments made for the support of the Butler Gallery. Additional funding has also been made available to increase support for community engagement projects within the Kilkenny Arts Festival, which has had a reduction

in national funding. The Kilkenny Arts Festival will celebrate its 50th year in 2023 and the Council has maintained funding for the programme of events in the Festival in 2023.

LIBRARY SERVICE

Kilkenny Library Service continues to be a service at the heart of the local community and provides for the informational, cultural, educational, social and learning needs of Kilkenny citizens. The services provided at local level by this service during 2022 have been central to the provision of community supports through door to door book deliveries, online programming and many public facing local services. The value of this front line community based service has been evident throughout 2022, adapting to the ever changing environment to provide a personal and effective community resource.

Provision has been made in the draft budget for additional salary costs within the Library Service. This increased provision has been made to meet the commitments of the library service workforce plan agreed in 2019 and the increased requirements of the Mayfair Library in Kilkenny City, which will open to the public in 2023. This facility will provide greatly enhanced Library Services for Kilkenny. It is essential that increased funding and staff are provided to maximise the success of the new Mayfair library in 2023.

The Library Service will continue to encourage and promote all on line services during 2023 to ensure that library users can access as much content as possible remotely. In 2023, the library service will continue to provide the many and varied range of services including:

- Continued delivery of high quality library programmes, which are community focused and cross sectoral supporting literacy, lifelong learning and health and wellbeing, climate change and sustainability.
- Progress the development of a 5 year Library Development Plan, supporting the aims and objectives identified in the forthcoming new national strategy.
- Continued participation in Cruinniu na nÓg, the Creative Ireland Programme and The Decade of Centenaries Programme.
- Continued door to door delivery service for older service users.
- The development of a dedicated Age Friendly programme of events and workshops throughout the year will continue as well as accreditation for the Age Friendly library status for the remaining branches.
- Continue to develop and work with relevant organisations and partners on the Right to Read Programme, Work Matters and Healthy Ireland @your Library.
- Continue to provide literacy and reading supports to families, children and schools through 4 distinct programmes:- Spring into Storytime, Summer Stars, Bookville and Family Time@your library.
- Progress the Mayfair Capital project to completion. Progress stock purchasing, processing, cataloguing and classification of 55,000 items. Once building is accessible progress fitout specification, equipment setup, ICT systems and processes, health and safety processes and My Open Library setup.
- Progress Stage 3 Thomastown capital project application and Stage 1 Callan Library application.
- Rollout of digital hubs and dedicated spaces across the library network focusing on 3D printing, coding and Makerspaces activities and workshops.
- Continue to support the national library management system and national delivery system to ensure a comprehensive service to all citizens.
- Maintenance of a comprehensive, up to date and relevant stock collection both in print and online to meet the requirements of individuals, organisations and our communities.

The provision of regular programming for all ages – book clubs, language circles, craft workshops and exhibitions, music recitals and talks.

Agriculture, Health, Education & Welfare - Service Division G

Food Safety

Kilkenny County Council through the Veterinary Office, acting under a service level agreement with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) continues to support and monitor and registered small food producers and abattoirs in the area. This is an essential service to ensure high food safety standards and to assist SMEs seeking to develop or expand in this highly regulated sector.

Shared Service with Carlow

Kilkenny County Council continues to have responsibility for food safety issues within the County of Carlow on a shared service basis. This arrangement has been in place through a Section 85 Agreement.

Control of Dogs

Under the Control of Dogs Act, Kilkenny County Council has a statutory obligation to provide dog warden and dog shelter services. Kilkenny County Council jointly owns and operates, as a shared service with Carlow County Council, the dog shelter at Paulstown, Co. Kilkenny. Midland Animal Care Ltd are the contracted service provider for the dog warden/dog shelter services to Kilkenny and Carlow County Councils. At the end of October 2022 the total number of dogs dealt with at shelter was 292. This compares to 153 for 2021, which is a 91% increase.

Franchise Costs

A budget of €10K covers the costs excluding salaries to maintain the rolling Register of Electors. A provision of €40K is being set aside each year towards the costs of the local elections which are held every 5 years. The next year for local elections will be in 2024.

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 over the years as Council's responsibilities expanded. Members take an active role in developing policies and strategies together with representations from national agencies and local interests. It is important that the supports available to elected representatives reflect these responsibilities and changes. A total budget of €1,120k is provided for salaries, chairpersons' allowances, training/conferences and expenses of the Elected Members. A provision of €2K is included for expenses due to external members on SPC's Committees and the Joint Policing Committee (JPC).

Town Twinning

Kilkenny City is twinned with Moret-sur-Loing (France), Malbork (Poland), Kilkenny Minnesota (USA) and Formigine (Italy). The Council through the twinning subcommittee will continue to foster relationships with all our twinned towns and will facilitate and encourage communities/schools/clubs to forge links with these towns in the areas of culture, sport and education. The Draft Budget includes a provision of €10k for the costs of same.

Public Relations

Kilkenny County Council is committed to providing the public and communities with information through our websites and other online media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook. Our website was enhanced during 2021 to ensure that information is readily available and easy to access. We have commenced issuing an annual newsletter to all householders in Kilkenny. This has been received very well. A provision of €30K is included towards annual public relations costs.

Irish Language

All statutory bodies are legally required to promote the use of the Irish language. Under the Official Languages (*Amendment*) Act 2021, there is a new statutory obligation for public bodies in relation to advertising, general communications and commercial communications when engaging with the public since October, 2021. Kilkenny County Council is endeavouring to publish a number of statutory reports and information leaflets in English and Irish. Every opportunity is availed of in ensuring that our native language is used in our printed material and also in signage throughout the County. Staff are encouraged to avail of training courses available to enable them to converse with our customers and provide a service to those who wish to communicate through our native language. A provision of €23k is included in the draft budget to cover the cost of translations services, Irish lessons/training and advertising in Irish language media outlets.

Data Protection

Kilkenny County Council is registered as a data controller and is also a data processor. Under the Data Protection Legislation, the local authority is obliged to keep personal information in a secure manner. Any individual is entitled to request data held on them and also had a right to have their data rectified or erased. Policies and procedures in relation to holding data are reviewed regularly or introduced to ensure that the local authority does not hold data not required and does not have any security breach of personal data.

Archives

There is ongoing work in relation to retention of records to ensure that we comply with national standards. All Council records are stored off site and are managed by a staff member in Corporate. There is a provision in the draft Budget to employ an Archivist/Data Protection Officer to ensure that critical records of historic value are protected and archived properly in a suitable building and also to carry out the duties required under Data Protection legislation. There are numerous historical records held by other bodies in County Kilkenny which should at some stage become part of a centralised Kilkenny Archive and this will be the subject of future discussions once the post is filled.

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ADOPTED BUDGET 2023

FINANCIAL TABLES