## Contents

1. Introduction from An Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive  
2. Membership of Westmeath County Council  
3. Mission Statement  
4. Corporate Plan  
5. Strategic Goals  
6. GOAL 1 - ECONOMIC AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT  
7. GOAL 2 - SOCIAL INCLUSION AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION  
8. GOAL 3 - INFRASTRUCTURAL CAPACITY  
9. GOAL 4 - PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT  
10. GOAL 5 - QUALITY CUSTOMER SERVICE  
11. GOAL 6 - ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY  
12. Procurement  
13. Protected Disclosures Act 2014  
15. Financial Review  

Appendix 1: Conferences attended by Westmeath County Council Members in 2018  
Appendix 2: Council Membership of Committees and Other Bodies  
Appendix 2a: Payments Received By Council Members
Introduction from An Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive

As we look back on the year that was 2018, one thing that stands out for us all is Storm Emma, the effects of which were felt by many for some time after. The TV footage of stranded vehicles that had become stuck in snow drifts and people rescued to safety.

However, the fundamental role of local government is to lead and serve local communities and the cohesion between the emergency services and the Council during storm Emma were exemplary.

Despite this turbulent start to the year, there were several achievements in 2018 and the following are just some of the highlights of the last year.

- Expenditure by Westmeath County Council on the public road network in 2018 amounted to just under €18 million.
- Commencement of the review of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and preparation of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2020-2026
- Operation and maintenance of 23 No Playgrounds and support of a further 15 No community playgrounds.
- Funding secured by Westmeath County Council under the 2018 Rural Support Schemes was €2,081,428.
• A new Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018-2023 was prepared with the aim to increase awareness and understanding of our shared heritage in Co. Westmeath.

• Westmeath County Council purchased premises in Lough Sheever Corporate Park, Mullingar which when fitted out will become the new Civil Defence Headquarters.

• Westmeath County Council completed the construction of 10 social housing units in 2018 – and progressed three turnkey construction developments.

• We welcomed the designation of Athlone town as a Regional Growth Centre for the Midlands in the National Planning Framework under Project Ireland 2040.

• Successfully secured funding for all five project applications under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund and €600K under The Rural Regeneration Development Fund for Kinnegad.

• The continued expansion of the Greenway from Galway to Dublin.

• Westmeath County Council participated in “Our Council Day” on the 10th April 2018 to highlight the numerous essential services provided by the Council. The number of social media followers increased by approx. 28% on 2017 at 55,271 followers.

• 34 centres who entered the Tidy Towns competition increased their marks with Bronze medals awarded to Athlone and Ballinahown and an Endeavour Award to Streamstown.

• Now, 14% of our public lighting network consists of energy efficient LED lanterns.

This very brief summary just touches on some of the many positive achievements in 2018 made possible by the Elected Members and staff working together with our communities to the benefit of everyone and we acknowledge their commitment and support during the year together with the cooperation of the people of the county.

“ We are confident that the work of the Council and the progress achieved will enhance the quality of life for the people of Westmeath.”

Cllr John Dolan
Cathaoirleach

Pat Gallagher
Chief Executive
Membership of Westmeath County Council

**Athlone Area**

01 Cllr. Frankie Keena The Lady’s Walk, Moydrum, Athlone | Tel: 090 6478473 / 085 7474074 | Email: fkeena@westmeathcoco.ie | Web: www.frankiekeena.ie

02 Cllr Paul Hogan 49 Retreat Park, Athlone | Tel: 0879054960 | Email: phogan@westmeathcoco.ie

03 Cllr Tom Farrell Cauran, Waldersstown, Athlone | Tel: 09064-85245 / 0860274848 | Email: tom.farrell@westmeathcoco.ie

04 Cllr John Dolan Avondale, Kilgarvan, Athlone | Tel: 09064 30053 / 0872278261 | Email: john.dolan@westmeathcoco.ie

05 Cllr Aengus O’Rourke Barrybeg, Roscommon Road, Athlone | Tel: 0863867484 | Email: aengus.orourke@westmeathcoco.ie | Web: www.aengusorourke.ie

06 Cllr Michael O’Brien 21 Cois na hAbhainn, Moate | Tel: 0906466689 / 0860692326 | Email: micheal.obrien@westmeathcoco.ie

07 Cllr Ailish McManus Hillquarter, Coosan, Athlone | Tel: 087-2939828 | Email: ailish.mcmanus@westmeathcoco.ie

**Mullingar Area**

01 Cllr. John Shaw Riverdale, Raharney | Tel: 087 7602355 | Email: john.shaw@westmeathcoco.ie

02 Cllr. Emily Wallace Lemongrove, Gaybrook, Mullingar | Tel: 087-1926575 | Email: emily.wallace@westmeathcoco.ie

03 Cllr Michael Dollard 15 Beechgrove, Bellview, Mullingar | Tel: 044-9343987 (Constituency Office) / 044-9342105 (H) | Fax: 044-9343966 | Email: mdollard@westmeathcoco.ie

04 Cllr. Una D’Arcy Ben Cottage, Ben of Fore, Fore | Tel: 0879058792 | Email: una.darcy@westmeathcoco.ie

05 Cllr. Paddy Hill Clonsura, Castletown-Finea, Mullingar | Tel: 043 81174 / 087 6806572 | Email: phill@westmeathcoco.ie

06 Cllr. Frank McDermott Ben Breeze House, Fore, Castlepollard | Tel: 044-9666338 / 086 6023868 | Email: fmcdermott@westmeathcoco.ie

07 Cllr. Bill Colentine Railway House, Dominick Street, Mullingar | Tel: 086 2459216 | Email: billy.collentine@westmeathcoco.ie

08 Cllr. Brian Crum Lacken, Multryfarnham, Mullingar | Tel: 087 6437567 | Email: brian.crum@westmeathcoco.ie

09 Cllr. Ken Glynn 2 Brosna Grove, Mullingar | Tel: 087 2362680 | Email: kenglynncllr@westmeathcoco.ie

10 Cllr. Johnny Penrose Ballintue, Ballynacargy | Tel: (044) 9373398 / 087 9501495 | Email: jpenrose@westmeathcoco.ie

11 Cllr. Andrew Duncan 24, Dominick Street, Mullingar | Tel:0879068186 | Email: Andrew.duncan@westmeathcoco.ie

12 Cllr. Liam McDaniel Toarlisnamore, Ballingore, Kilbeggan | Tel: 086-8386388 | Email: liam.mcdaniel@westmeathcoco.ie

13 Cllr. Sorca Clarke 65 Ardleigh Vale, Mullingar | Tel:0861072342 | Email:sorca.clarke@westmeathcoco.ie
Strategic Policy Committees

**Housing, Community, Corporate & Culture SPC**

The SPC, under the Chairmanship of Cllr Ken Glynn, met on four occasions during 2018. Meetings were held on 29th January, 20th March, 23rd July and 10th December 2018.

Issues considered included –

- Urban and Rural Regeneration Scheme;
- Libraries Strategy – *Our Public Libraries 2022*;
- Westmeath Culture and Creative Strategy;
- Vacant Homes Strategy; and,

---

**Council Meetings: 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meetings Type</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Council Meetings:</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance Committee Meetings:</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budget Meetings:</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Meetings:</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Council Meetings in total:</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Policing Committee Meetings:</td>
<td>4 (Committee Meetings and 1 Public Meeting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audit Committee Meetings:</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCDC Meetings:</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Environment, Water & Emergency Services SPC

4 SPC’s held in 2018, dates as follows:-

*June 2018*
- Briefing on the implementation of the objectives in the River Basin Management Plan
- Revised Waste Presentation Bye-Laws
- Proposal for the creation of Bye-Laws for a Dog Park in Mullingar
- Update on Derelict Sites
- Noise Action Plan Start of Consultation.

*October 2018*
- Update on Derelict Sites

*November 2018*
- Eastern-Midlands Annual Report 2016/2017
- Anti Dumping Initiative Projects
- County Survey on swifts - update

*December 2018*
- Presentation on Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.
- Update on Dog Warden Service.
- Update on Waste Presentation Byelaws.

Planning & Transportation SPC

Four meetings of the Strategic Policy group were held during 2018 with the following issues were discussed:

- County Retail Strategy.
- Athlone Joint Retail Strategy.
- Review of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020
- Housing policy in respect of (a) rural & (b) urban areas.
- Draft Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern Midland Regional Assembly Area
- Planning & Development Amendment Act 2018.
- Local Improvement Scheme 2018 (Private Roads)
- Community Involvement Scheme 2018 (Public Roads)
- Bye Laws for the Old Rail Trail Greenway between Mullingar and Athlone
- EcoBike Bike Sharing.
- Irish Wheelchair Association Back in 5 Campaign
Economic, Enterprise and Tourism SPC

The Economic, Enterprise and Tourism SPC met in February, June, September and December 2018.

Items for discussion included:

- Initiatives for funding under the Business Promotion Fund.
- The Business Incentive Scheme.
- The proposed new Shopfront Enhancement Grant Scheme.

Presentations were received from:

- Bernie Ginnell on the review of the Implementation Plan of the Economic Elements of the LECP.
- Dermot O’Neill of the Irish Centre of Excellence in Robotic Technology.
- Maurice Fitzgerald, ENET on the Metropolitan Area Networks (MANs).
- Sarah Morgan, Regional Policy Planning and Research Officer for Westmeath, Offaly, Laois and Longford.
- Christine Charlton, Head of Enterprise on Local Enterprise Office activities.

Regular reports were also received from the Tourism Officer on activities and progress of the Tourism Office.
Mission Statement
The ultimate goal of Westmeath County Council.

“To enhance the quality of life for the people of Westmeath by leading economic and community development, and, delivering efficient and sustainable services.”
Corporate Plan
The 2018 Westmeath County Council Annual Report tracks the various actions and initiatives taken by the council to deliver on each of the six Strategic Goals contained in the Corporate Plan 2015-2019.

### Strategic Goals

The achievement of this overriding statement can in turn only be realised through the attainment of a number of interrelated Goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal Number</th>
<th>Goal Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Economic and Enterprise Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social Inclusion and Community Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Infrastructural Capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Protection of the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Quality Customer Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Organisational Capacity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Economic and Enterprise Development**

“To maximise the continued and sustainable economic and enterprise development of our county.”

**Social Inclusion and Community Participation**

“To facilitate the broadest possible participation by citizens in local decision making including the development of their communities and their county.”

**Infrastructural Capacity**

“To ensure that our physical and social infrastructure is sufficiently developed to support economic development, and enhance the quality of life.”

**Protection of the Environment**

“To improve, protect and promote our environment in the interests of present and future generations.”

**Quality Customer Service**

“To ensure that quality customer service is at the centre of everything we do.”

**Organisational Capacity**

“To maximise organisational capacity through the continuous review of operational efficiency, human resource, financial and risk management.”

### Supporting Strategies

In order to deliver these strategic Goals the Council is required to meet a range of Supporting Strategies. The Supporting Strategies form the basis of the functions of the Council as set out in the Annual Service Delivery Plans and Schedule of Municipal District Works.

Note – Goals are numbered for reference purposes only and not to indicate priority.
**Goal 1 - Economic and Enterprise Development**

“To maximise the continued and sustainable economic and enterprise development of our county.”

**Supporting Strategies**

1.1 Work with the IDA, Enterprise Ireland, other agencies and the business community to ensure that all avenues for job creation in the county are fully exploited.

1.2 Provide for co-ordinated and cohesive support of enterprises through the promotion of entrepreneurship, fostering of new business start-ups and development of existing businesses to drive job creation.

1.3 Guide the sustainable development and growth of the county in accordance with EU, National and Regional policy through the implementation of the County Development Plan.

1.4 Prepare and implement a new Retail Strategy for the county in consultation with other agencies and the business sector.

1.5 Facilitate and support the preparation and implementation of the six year Local Economic and Community Plan for the county.

1.6 Facilitate the continued expansion of the tourism sector in association with other agencies, as a means of effective impact on economic, social and cultural development in the county.

1.7 Facilitate the rural development of the county through implementation of the Rural Water Programme and support of initiatives for Rural Transport and provision of broadband services.

1.8 Promote and support the business and commercial sector through initiatives such as the Business Incentive Scheme, the Economic Development Promotion Fund and support for festivals and events.
Local Enterprise Office

Financial Assistance

Measure 1 Grants

The Local Enterprise Office (LEO) provides direct financial support to businesses with 10 employees or less. 2018 was a very busy year for LEO Westmeath. Funding totalling approximately €827,000 was awarded to businesses for 43 Measure 1 grant projects, comprising of 13 Priming Grants, 26 Business Expansion Grants and 4 Feasibility Study Grants.

Trading Online Vouchers

LEO Westmeath provides small businesses with grants of up to €2,500 to help develop their websites in order to generate online sales. The objective of the scheme is to help small businesses grow their sales and exports thus creating jobs. 26 TOVs were awarded in 2018.

Technical Assistance for Micro Exporters Grant (TAME)

The TAME grant is designed to help micro enterprises explore, develop and unlock new overseas markets for their products and services, within Europe and beyond. TAME can cover up to 50% of qualifying expenditure, up to a maximum of €2,500 (excluding VAT). In 2018, 26 Westmeath businesses were awarded TAME grants.

Micro Finance

Microfinance Ireland (MFI), is a not-for-profit lender, established to deliver the Government’s Microenterprise Loan Fund. MFI works very closely with the Local Enterprise Offices, providing loans to small businesses. LEO Westmeath works with and on behalf of clients to prepare and put forward applications to Micro Finance Ireland for loan funding.

Business Training

The Local Enterprise Office provided 66 training programmes and seminars in 2018, including ‘Start Your Own Business’, Social Media Marketing, SAGE, HACCP for Food Handlers, GDPR Workshops, Revenue Online Services, & Finance for Small Business. ‘One to one’ website, marketing, patent, and GDPR clinics were also provided. There were a total of 974 participants over all the training programmes.

Mentoring

LEO Clients can avail of ‘one to one’ mentoring with business experts in many different areas of business such as Finance, HR, Marketing, Business Development, Product Development, Patents, Web Development, Tendering & Brexit. In 2018 there were 229 participants in mentoring clinics and assignments.
Promotion of Entrepreneurship & Enterprise Awareness

LEO Westmeath works towards creating a culture of entrepreneurship in County Westmeath by running Awards Programmes.
Westmeath Enterprise Awards

The Final of the Westmeath Enterprise Awards took place in March during Enterprise Week, celebrating ’20 years of Winners’. The overall winners’ Ciarán Gorman and Darren Fenton of Mullingar company ‘Bevcraft’ went on to represent Westmeath at the National Enterprise Awards where they won the Mid-East Regional Award.

Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur Competition

‘Ireland’s Best Young Entrepreneur’ is a completion for entrepreneurs under 35. 44 entries were received in the 2017/2018 Westmeath competition. Ciaran Gorman of ‘Bevcraft’ represented Westmeath at the Regional and National Finals where he was Runner Up in the Best Established Business category.

Schools Enterprise Programme

Each year Westmeath Schools take part in the Student Enterprise Awards. 8 schools took part in the 2017/2018 awards. The County Final was held in Athlone during Enterprise week and teams from the following schools were chosen to represent Westmeath at the National Finals:

• Junior Category – Moate Community School with ‘Little Pip’
• Intermediate Category – St. Joseph’s Secondary School, Rochfortbridge with ‘Easy Bakes’
• Senior Category - Moate Community School with ‘Aon Scheal’

The 2018/2019 competition was launched in September 2018 with 9 schools signing up to take part. LEO Westmeath hosted an Ideas Generation Workshop in the Athlone Institute of Technology in October which was attended by over 150 students.
Other Initiatives

Midland Engineering Cluster Programme

The Midlands Engineering Cluster Programme commenced in 2017 for with LEO Westmeath providing the lead on the project. Engineering companies from Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath availed of tailor made training and mentoring as well as networking develop the capability of the sector. The programme went from strength to strength in 2018, 17 engineering companies from the group exhibited at the National Life Sciences Expo held in Mullingar in June.

Going North Initiative

LEO Westmeath along with LEOs Offaly and Laois undertook a ‘Going North’ Initiative in 2018 aimed at businesses wishing to explore new business opportunities in Northern Ireland. Workshops focusing on maximising market opportunities and converting these opportunities in to actual sales were held.

LEAN for Micro

LEAN for Micro is a programme available to businesses to implement LEAN Principles with their businesses. The LEAN programme facilitates businesses to become more efficient, cut down waste and do everything more cost effectively. In 2018 19 Westmeath Businesses participated in the LEAN Programme.

Networking Events & Seminars

A Seminar and Network Event was held in the Annebrook Hotel in March with guest speakers Jane Swarbrigg of ‘Inglot Cosmetics’ and Conor Cochrane of ‘Social Media Elite’. Also in March the Tri County Women in Business Network held its inaugural networking evening, offering an opportunity for women led businesses to come together to collaborate, share ideas, knowledge and support. Over 60 women from Longford Leitrim and Westmeath attended the event. The WIB group came together again in October. Both events featured presentations by inspirational female entrepreneurs. Two Trading Online Voucher Seminars were also held during the year to facilitate and encourage Westmeath Businesses to begin trading online or to improve their online offering. LEO Westmeath hosted ‘Get Your Business Brexit’ ready events in Mullingar and Athlone to help Businesses plan and prepare for the effects of Brexit. Individual Brexit advisory mentoring was also available free of charge.

Economic Development & Promotion

The Economic Development Unit based within the Local Enterprise Office works to promote and develop business in Westmeath and to attract new business to the county through a range of initiatives.

The Business Incentive Scheme

The Business Incentive Scheme (BIS) was introduced in 2015 to facilitate the re-use of long term vacant premises. The grant which was a percentage of Commercial Rates paid was made available to occupiers of eligible long term vacant properties over a three year period. At the end of 2018 it was decided to replace the BIS with a new ‘Shopfront Enhancement’ Grant Scheme to be available from January 2019. Applicants approved for the BIS in 2018 will benefit from the grant up until 2020.
Mullingar e-Working Centre

Work space, with high quality broadband, has been provided on the campus of Áras an Chontae, Mullingar which allows employees who may be travelling long distances, to work remotely from their place of employment thereby cutting down on commuting time and costs. The facility is also available to small business owners who need a quiet space to work.

Property

The Economic Development Unit maintains a database of all available commercial property in the county both in private and in Council ownership.

County Promotions

The Council continued to support the ‘Marketing Mullingar’ Initiative in 2018, including:

• The Renewal of the Purple Flag for Mullingar
• The roll out of the ‘Ask for Angela Campaign’
• The Mullingar.ie website
• A video to promote Mullingar as a thriving town for business and lifestyle
• Implementation of a web based ‘Shop Local’ voucher system for Mullingar.

The Council also gave support to the Destination Athlone Marketing Strategy and Athlone Chamber of Commerce for a number of initiatives including:

• The ‘Shannon River Feastival’
• The Athlone Christmas Marketing Campaign &
• The ‘The Christmas Lights Switch on’ event

These initiatives were funded from the Council’s Business Promotion Fund which is overseen by the Economic, Enterprise and Tourism Strategic Policy Committee.

The fund also supported the Mullingar Chamber of Commerce, National Life Sciences and Engineering Expo held in Mullingar in June 2018.
Local Economic & Community Plan (LECP) 2016-2021

The LECP was adopted by Westmeath County Council in December 2015, its purpose is to identify and implement actions to strengthen and develop the economic and community dimensions of each local authority area over the period 2016-2021. The Local Enterprise Office and the Economic Development Section co-ordinates the economic elements of the plan. An Implementation Strategy has been developed which sets out objectives and actions covering a full range of Economic Actions. The Implementation Strategy is reviewed annually with input received from a wide variety of stakeholders. Each stakeholder reports annually on outcomes for the year as well as setting out proposed actions for the coming year.

Funding Applications

LEO staff contributed to the preparation of the economic elements of the following funding applications:

- Urban Regeneration and Development Fund
  - Athlone & Mullingar
- Rural Regeneration and Development Fund
  - Kinnegad & Castlepollard

Tourism

2018 was a busy year for Tourism development in the county. A strong focus was placed on developing marketing content, including an extensive library of high-quality images, two new promotional videos, new brochures for the Old Rail Trail Greenway, the Royal Canal Blueway (in collaboration with Waterways Ireland) and a County Map Guide.

Social media marketing for Westmeath began in 2018 and is continuing to grow; the top post on the ‘Visit Westmeath’ Facebook page had a reach of 100,000, with Instagram and Twitter also gaining momentum. A new tourism website www.visitwestmeath.ie is now live, aimed at showcasing the county and encouraging visitors to plan their trip.

Features on Westmeath were included in printed media, including: Go Ireland’s Ancient East, Go Wild on the Lakes, Celtic Media Group’s ‘Your Ireland’ supplement and the National Ploughing Championships brochure. Using newly developed promotional materials, Westmeath took part in promotional opportunities at the World Canal Conference, Athlone in September 2018 and the National Adventure Tourism Conference, Mullingar in December 2018, at which the county’s attractions were promoted to international delegates and tour operators.

In April 2018, Fáilte Ireland launched their new Regional Experience Brand, Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands, which aims to promote the midlands as a destination to get ‘active in nature’. The river Shannon is a central focus of this new brand, and a Shannon Masterplan is currently being developed, featuring potential experience development and growth opportunities for Athlone and other areas along the river.

Mullingar remains part of Ireland’s Ancient East, a regional brand focused on history, heritage and storytelling. In July 2018, we were delighted to be awarded a grant of €198,000 by Fáilte Ireland, for an upgrade of the interpretation and storytelling at Belvedere House, Gardens and Park. The new interactive visitor experience, focussed on bringing the unique characters and stories of Belvedere to life, will be complete and open by autumn 2019 and will bring this attraction to the forefront of Ireland’s Ancient East.
In order to plan for tourism at a strategic level and identify regional opportunities for collaboration and funding, a County Tourism Steering Group was established in 2018. In addition, in collaboration with the Mullingar Chamber of Commerce, a new drive towards developing Mullingar as a visitor destination commenced. Following a successful seminar in November 2018, with speakers including the award-winning travel writer Pól Ó Conghaile, it was agreed by all stakeholders to establish an industry-driven initiative and identify a series of actions to be delivered in 2019 and beyond, aimed at creating and promoting multi-day visitor experiences in the Mullingar area.

In 2018, support was provided for the Athlone Shannon Feastival, which took place on the 8th and 9th September in the lead up to the World Canal Conference. This event had an extensive line-up of water-based and food activities and it is envisaged that it will grow and improve year after year.

Funding applications were prepared for tourism-related projects under the Town and Village Renewal and Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Schemes to include links between visitor attractions and towns and villages, along with enhancements to existing visitor infrastructure. Tourism elements were also incorporated into the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development funding applications.
Planning and Development

Commencement of the review of the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and preparation of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2020-2026

The pre Draft consultation stage of the Westmeath County Development Plan was undertaken from 16th February 2018 until 12th April 2018. Issues Papers were prepared to stimulate debate on the main issues for consideration in this review process and were forwarded to Prescribed Bodies, Elected Members, stakeholder groups, the Public Participation Network (PPN) groups (546 groups) and all Primary and Secondary schools within the County. Three public meetings were convened in Mullingar, Athlone and Castlepollard wherein members of the public were encouraged to discuss issues relating to the content of the Draft Plan. In addition, a number of key stakeholder meetings were held to ascertain the viewpoints of individual sectoral groups.

In total, ninety three submissions were received during the pre Draft consultation phase of the Draft Plan. The Chief Executive’s Report on the Pre-Draft Consultation stage was prepared and presented to Elected Members on June 1st. Following their consideration of this report, the Members resolved to issue Strategic Direction on the content of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2020-2026.

Work commenced on the preparation of the Draft Plan but following the adoption of the Planning & Development Amendment Act 2018 in July, the Council was directed to postpone working on the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020, pending the adoption of the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Eastern & Midland Regional Assembly area.

Variation No. 3 to the Athlone Town Development Plan (ATP) 2014-2020 - Lissywollen South Framework Plan

Variation (No.3) to the Athlone Town Development Plan 2014-2020 was adopted by the Council on 25th June 2018. Variation (No.3) provides for the incorporation of a new Framework Plan for the Lissywollen South area of Athlone into the Athlone Town Plan. The plan presents an opportunity to develop this strategically located 78 ha land bank as a highly sustainable and integrated new urban quarter extending from the town centre of Athlone. It provides site development frameworks aimed at kick-starting the development of a substantial and sustainable residential community within Lissywollen South in tandem with supporting social and community infrastructure including employment and leisure facilities.
Vacant Site Register

The “Vacant Site Levy” was introduced under the Urban Regeneration & Housing Act 2015 to ensure that vacant or underutilised land in urban areas is brought into beneficial use. In accordance with the provisions of the Act, the Council incorporated mandatory objectives its statutory Plans to give effect to the Vacant Site Levy. Accordingly, a Variation to both the Westmeath County Development Plan (Variation No. 4) and the Athlone Town Development Plan (Variation No. 2) together with an amendment to the Mullingar Local Area Plan (Amendment No. 2) were undertaken and subsequently adopted by the Elected Members in May and October 2018.

An assessment was undertaken in relation to the number of vacant residential properties in the County, the number of Applicants on the Housing List, the availability of residential properties to let/to buy within the County and the level of undeveloped zoned and serviced lands. In addition, an on-site survey was carried out to determine the level of vacancy and urban decay within Mullingar and Athlone.

In October, notices of intention issued to 23 landowners in respect to placing the identified sites on the Vacant Site Register. Following the statutory appeal period and assessment of submissions received, Notices of Entry onto the Vacant Site Register issued to 21 landowners in relation to 8 sites in Athlone and 8 sites in Mullingar, including three sites in the ownership of Westmeath County Council.

Urban Regeneration Development Fund (URDF)

The Department of Housing, Planning & Local Government launched the Urban Regeneration Fund in 2018 to stimulate new residential and commercial development in cities and towns. The Planning Department submitted competitive bids for 3 significant regeneration projects in Athlone, namely:

(i) Provision of a mixed use scheme at Loughanaskin involving enterprise and residential development

(ii) Development of a Cultural Quarter on Connaught St, including the provision of creative studios, a digital and innovation hub, boutique hotel and creation of a looped greenway between the Canal and the River Shannon.

(iii) Provision of streetscape works at the junction between Church Street and Mardyke Street.

Competitive bids were also submitted for two projects in Mullingar under the URDF as follows:

(i) Extension of the commercial town core to provide for a range of town centre uses together with the provision of housing, an innovation/business hub and civic plaza.

(ii) An integrated residential quarter including bespoke accommodation for Older Persons supported by economic, social and community development at Canal Avenue.

The Council was successful in securing funding for all five URDF applications.

Rural Regeneration Development Fund (RRDF)

A successful competitive bid was made under the Rural Regeneration Development Fund for a scheme in Kinnegad to provide a Public/Educational Campus, Town Park and to examine the feasibility of developing an Enterprise and Employment hub in Kinnegad and undertaking public realm enhancement works within the town centre.

Application for funding under the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme 2018

The Planning Department prepared and submitted an application under this scheme for the completion of a new linkage between the Grand Canal Greenway to the Royal Canal Greenway. This project will provide for the development of a greenway link along the former Kilbeggan Branch of the Grand Canal from the Harbour in Kilbeggan terminating at the County boundary. A 1km urban link will also be developed between the harbour and Kilbeggan town centre. The application was successful and was awarded funding to the amount of €500,000.
Community Development

Westmeath Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021

The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) represents the first strategic framework for bringing together the proposed actions by a range of agencies involved in delivering economic and community development in Westmeath. The LECP was adopted by Westmeath County Council in Dec 2015 and in 2018, an annual implementation plan for the community element of the Westmeath LECP was developed and approved by the Local Community Development Committee. This identified the actions each stakeholder proposed to advance during the year.

LEADER Rural Development Programme

LEADER is an EU funded programme aimed at improving the quality of life in rural areas and diversifying the rural economy. Westmeath LCDC was selected in 2015 as the Local Action Group for the LEADER programme with Westmeath Community Development as the Implementing Partner. During the course of the year 58 expressions of interest were received for LEADER projects. At the end of 2018 the LCDC had approved 45 No projects amounting to €802,578 in grant support with €194,889 issued in grant payments.

Rural Support Schemes

The Rural Support Schemes form part of the Government’s commitment to rural development by ensuring that the benefits of economic recovery are felt in every part of the country in accordance with the “Action Plan for Rural Development”. These Rural Support Schemes were initially launched in 2016 and are generally advanced by way of the Department of Rural and Community Development providing grant support based on applications received from the Council. These applications were informed by Expressions of Interest received from local community groups. A local contribution towards the project cost is required from either the Council or the local community.

Funding secured by Westmeath County Council under the 2018 Rural Support Schemes was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>CLAR</th>
<th>Town and Village</th>
<th>Outdoor Rural Recreation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Provides funding for small scale infrastructural projects in rural areas that have suffered the greatest levels of population decline</td>
<td>The central aim of the scheme is to support the revitalisation of towns and villages in order to improve the living and working environment of their communities</td>
<td>Support the development of new outdoor recreational infrastructure or the necessary maintenance, enhancement of existing infrastructure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of Projects</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant Funding</td>
<td>€324,867</td>
<td>€452,000</td>
<td>€924,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Project Cost</td>
<td>€361,428</td>
<td>€565,000</td>
<td>€1,155,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Belvedere House, Gardens & Park

Belvedere is a magnificent 160 acre estate of undulating parkland and with impressive visitor facilities including the fully restored Georgian Villa of “The Wicked Earl”, Robert Rochfort which dates back to 1740. The estate boasts a fascinating Victorian Walled Garden and some of Ireland’s most famous follies including “The Jealous Wall” the largest folly in Ireland.

Owned and operated by Westmeath County Council, Belvedere House is an elegant Palladian hunting lodge that retains its early form, fabric and character and is a very important example of our cultural built heritage that has been transformed into a fantastic tourism and community asset of national importance.

Belvedere is open practically all year round and visitors can enjoy up to 10km of safe, scenic and serene woodland & lakeshore walks and become immersed in the unique history of the restored Georgian Villa and the beautifully maintained Victorian Walled Garden. There is a magical Fairy Garden for all to enjoy and four Children’s Play Areas, including a 30 metre Zipline. Visitors can also enjoy several picnic areas on the estate and savour the culinary delights of the onsite Café or browse in the Gift Shop.

Located within Ireland’s Ancient East, Belvedere House Gardens & Park dramatically demonstrates the beauty, intrigue and passion of the lives and history of the big house that makes for an enchanting visitor experience and an excellent day out with a difference.
With Visitor Numbers increasing to 143,000 in 2018, Belvedere House Gardens & Park operates very successfully as a multi-faceted tourism/leisure and community asset. As well as its increasing tourism business, Belvedere provides access to a wide range of community-based and sporting events and local initiatives which during 2018 included:

• January: The local Operation Transformation Walk, with Westmeath Sports Partnership
• March: National Tree Week Guided Woodland Walk
• St. Patrick’s Weekend Ceili at Belvedere
• April: Easter Treasure Trail over the Bank Holiday Weekend
• May: Westmeath County Council Cathaoirleach Awards 2018
• LIFE Music Festival over the last weekend in May
• June: “Topline” Men’s Sheds National Awards
• July: Scruffs Dog Shows in aid of ISPCA
• Chapterhouse Theatre Company “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”.
• August: Chapterhouse Theatre Company “Robin Hood and His Merry Men”.
• Heritage week Free Guided Tours at Belvedere
• “Inflatable Colour Run” at Belvedere
• “Brickworld” Lego Exhibition
• September: Culture Night Free Guided Tours
• October: Leinster Schools Cross Country Championships
• Halloween Treasure Hunts over the Bank Holiday Weekend
• November: “The Lights After Dark” Fireworks Event
• December: Winter Food & Design Fair showcasing local food producers & craft workers
• “Green Santa” at Belvedere over 3 weekends
• Christmas Floral Demonstration with Richard Haslam

Check out www.belvedere-house.ie for more details of Belvedere’s year round calendar of events.
**Athlone Municipal District**

- The Council continued to support Destination Athlone in 2018, providing a financial contribution towards their Summer Marketing Campaign for Athlone: At the Heart of It and providing further support for a Christmas Campaign, highlighting Athlone as the ‘Top of the Tree’.
- 31,175 visitors to Athlone Castle.
- 15,631 visitors to Luan Gallery.
- Supported Drama, Arts, River & Food Festivals.
- Ireland’s Hidden Heartlands Tourism Brand Launched in 2018.
- 292,912 persons attended Athlone Regional Sports Centre.

**Mullingar Municipal District**

- Mullingar Town Enhancement Scheme - Works commenced September 2018 and are scheduled to be complete in 2019.
- Town & Village Renewal - 5 Schemes approved; 3 completed and 2 in progress and will be completed in 2019.
- Ardmore Road School – Works progressed.
- Lynn School – Works completed up to wearing course.
Goal 2 - Social Inclusion and Community Participation

“To facilitate the broadest possible participation by citizens in the development of their communities and their county, including participation in the formation, development and implementation of policies and programmes.”

Supporting Strategies

2.1 Facilitate community participation in local decision making structures through support for the Public Participation Network.

2.2 Support the operation of the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) and its role to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development.

2.3 Ensure that all policies and programmes of Westmeath County Council are subject to, and supported by, community consultation.

2.4 Support and recognise community participation and achievement through such initiatives as the Community Grants, Cathaoirleach Awards and Pride of Place Schemes.

2.5 Promote social inclusion by engagement with communities and other agencies in initiatives to improve the quality of life for all the people of the county including the elderly, youth and the disadvantaged.

2.6 Promote participation in sport and recreation in association with other agencies and the community.

2.7 Work in partnership with local community groups in the promotion of heritage, fire prevention, water safety and environmental awareness programmes together with actively supporting tidy towns, playgrounds, recreational and local tourism initiatives.

2.8 Maintain and develop an arts service and implement the County Arts Plan which contributes to the enrichment of people’s lives while supporting the celebration of Westmeath’s unique traditions and evolving identity.

2.9 Facilitate and participate in the Westmeath Joint Policing Committee as a forum for consultation, discussion and recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the county.
Community Development

Westmeath Public Participation Network (PPN)

The PPN is an umbrella structure for the 600 community and voluntary groups in the County and interacts with the local authority structures and other agencies to develop and input into policy making and strategy development for the betterment of all in the county. Membership of the PPN provides local groups with access to information, funding, and input to decision making of local agencies.

Westmeath Public Participation Network (PPN) was very active during 2018 and initiatives undertaken included:

- Hosted the National PPN Annual Conference on behalf of the National PPN Advisory Group.
- Participation of 61 PPN Reps on 18 local decision making structures.
- Provision of information on availability of funding and supports for local groups.
- Initial arrangements for the development of a Community Hub in Mullingar
- Participation in Westmeath Joint Policing Committee.
- Provision of a range of training and information events
- Consultation and provision of input to national and local policy documents

Westmeath Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

The LCDC is a committee of the Council and its primary role is to develop, co-ordinate and implement a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development. The membership of the committee comprises of a range of statutory and non-statutory socio-economic partners so as to ensure an appropriate representational balance between public and private interests, while also facilitating an appropriate mix across the broad range of actors across the county. The Westmeath LCDC met 7 times during the year and the primary work of the LCDC in 2018 has been advancing the following initiatives:

4. Advancement of community support initiatives including the Community Enhancement Programme, Men’s Shed Grant Scheme, and Healthy Ireland Initiative.
Cathaoirleach Awards

This 12th annual Cathaoirleach Awards event was held in May 2018 and attended by over 250 community volunteers in Belvedere House and Gardens with special guest Fr Peter McVerry. The purpose of this event is to recognise the contribution of individuals and groups to their local community. Awards presented on the night included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Award</th>
<th>Prize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Winner of Cathaoirleach (Cllr John Shaw) Person of the Year</td>
<td>Shay Murtagh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pride of Place</td>
<td>Killucan Rathwire Tidy Towns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ballinalack Tidy Towns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Westmeath Age Friendly Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project of the Year Award 2018 Winner</td>
<td>Killucan Area Services €5,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good 2 Talk €2,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Killucan Rathwire Tidy Towns €2,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath Tidy Town Merit Award 2018 Winner</td>
<td>Ballinahown €6,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidy Towns Awards Mullingar Municipal District Winner</td>
<td>Tyrrellspass €4,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidy Towns Awards Athlone Municipal District Runner Up</td>
<td>Glasson €2,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidy Towns Athlone Municipal District Runner Up</td>
<td>Castlepollard €2,500</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidy Towns Awards Mullingar Municipal District Endeavour award</td>
<td>Moate €2,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidy Towns Award Mullingar Municipal District Endeavour aware (joint)</td>
<td>Rathowanie €2,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidy Towns Award Mullingar Municipal District Endeavour aware (joint)</td>
<td>Killucan Rathwire €2,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco Friendly School Award Winners</td>
<td>Little Smiles Coole Pre school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St Mary’s National School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moate Community School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Community Grants

In order to support the work of local community and voluntary groups, in 2018 the following Community Grants were awarded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Grant</th>
<th>Total Grant Amount</th>
<th>No of Groups who received grants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents Association Grants</td>
<td>€33,150</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidy Town Grants and Awards</td>
<td>€73,500</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project of the Year</td>
<td>€10,000</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Action Scheme Grants</td>
<td>€81,000</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas Lights Grants</td>
<td>€50,000</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Enhancement Programme (CEP)</td>
<td>€285,000</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men’s Shed Grants</td>
<td>€19,000</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festivals and Events</td>
<td>€98,300</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pride of Place

Three groups were honoured to represent Westmeath in the National All Island Pride of Place competition in 2018 and were awarded Westmeath Pride of Place awards at the Cathaoirleach Awards event in May 2018; Ballinalack Village, Killucan/ Rathwire Tidy Towns, and Westmeath Age Friendly Council and Programme. All three groups worked tirelessly in preparation for judging day which took part at the end of August 2018. Westmeath Age Friendly Council worked with many agencies across the county in preparation for the judging day and were rewarded at the National All Island Pride of Place event in Cork, when Westmeath Age Friendly scooped a category award.

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

The SICAP Programme is focussed on the most marginalised in Irish society. It aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion through local engagement and partnership between disadvantaged individuals, community organisations and public sector agencies. 2018 represented the first year of a new 5 year contract where Westmeath Community Development fulfilled the role as the Implementing Partner for the delivery of the SICAP programme. With an annual budget of €781,539, the programme is operated under two goals and twelve actions with targets set each year which capture progression of groups and individuals involved in the programme. In 2018 all programme targets were met by the Implementing Partner, Westmeath Community Development, which included:

- 69 Local Community Groups, (LCG’s), were supported under SICAP in 2018;
- 786 individuals assisted with progression towards employment with:
  - 140 achieving part time/full time employment;

Healthy Ireland

In 2018 Westmeath LCDC received funding of €75,000 from the Department of Health for 7 projects associated with promotion of healthy eating, information, and promotion of physical activity.
Westmeath Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme

Westmeath Age Friendly Programme hosted meetings of the Age Friendly Council, Age Friendly Service Providers Forum and the Age Friendly Alliance in 2018. The Age Friendly Council and Service Providers Forum were particularly busy in 2018 and their programme of work included the following actions;

- Westmeath Age Friendly Programme were awarded affiliation to the World Health Organisation (WHO) for their work with Older People in December 2018.
- Age Friendly Village piloted in Collinstown.
- 47 Age Friendly Groups received a total of €28,200 in community funding grants from Westmeath County Council.
- Two consultation sessions were carried out with Older People; July and November 2018 with a total of over 300 individuals contributing to actions for the Westmeath Age Friendly Strategy 2018 – 2022.
- An Age Friendly / Disability Expose was hosted in October with over 35 service providers in attendance.
- Intergenerational event and workshops was hosted in August with over 120 older people and 30 youth in attendance.
- A specially designed course called “Live Longer and Prosper” was created, funded by Healthy Ireland and rolled out in Moate, Castlepollard, Killucan and Kinnegad facilitating over 105 older people to benefit from cookery, exercise, information and a social outlet over a five week period.
- The Age Friendly Programme also entered the National All Island Pride of Place competition and obtained an award in the Community Wellbeing category.
**Westmeath Comhairle na nOg**

Westmeath Comhairle na nOg were very active in 2018. Over 200 young people (age 12 to 18) attending their Annual General Meeting to elect their 35 strong Executive Committee. The objective is to agree a programme of work for the year which reflects young people being supported and trained in identifying, prioritising and progressing topics and issues affecting young people in Westmeath. The highlights of this programme included:

- Piloted a voting programme to raise awareness and understanding of the political system and its impact on the lives of all.
- Information campaign to raise awareness and understanding of sexual health and available services across all 13 secondary schools in Westmeath.
- Participation in an intergenerational event with active age groups to engender greater interaction between generations.
- Won an “Excellence in Children Award” as part of the work they carried out with youth in the county for Longford/ Westmeath Children and Young Persons Services Committee.

**Sport and Recreation**

In 2018, Westmeath County Council continued to promote participation in sport and recreation through a range of measures such as:

- Operation of Athlone Regional Sports Centre and operation and maintenance of Mullingar Swimming pool.
- Maintenance of an extensive walking and cycling network.
- Operation and maintenance of 23 No Playgrounds and support of a further 15 No community playgrounds.
- Support for sports development programmes through the Leinster Council GAA, FAI and Leinster Rugby.
- Participation in national bike week and national play programmes.
- Support of Westmeath Sports Partnership programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Visitors to Recreation Facility</th>
<th>2018 Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlone Regional Sports Centre</td>
<td>292,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullingar Swimming Pool</td>
<td>101,984</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PERFORMANCE INDICATOR**

Percentage of local schools and youth clubs involved in the local Youth Council/ Comhairle na n-Og scheme in 2018

84.62%
Civil Defence

Much of the Civil Defence community support goals were achieved through the provision of planning, operational, logistical support, stewarding, first aid, ambulance cover, assistance with policing plans, associated traffic management at community events and humanitarian assistance throughout 2018. Events included An Garda Síochána Open Day at Mullingar Station, Cycle Against Suicide, Darkness into Light, Ordination of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath, Sports Partnership Events, Mullingar Road League, Westmeath School’s Cross Country, Athletics and Sporting Endurance Events. Members were also on duty for Mullingar Christmas Market and Charity Fundraising Events. Members assisted with the nightly operation of the Cold Weather Shelter located at the Civil Defence Headquarters in Dublin.

Health & Safety

Water Safety

Westmeath County Council continues to support Irish Water Safety (based in Galway) and their national role in the promotion of Water Safety.

Water Safety promotion

Three Water Safety Weeks and four lifeguard courses were held at Athlone and Mullingar swimming pools during the year. Mullingar Swimming pool, in conjunction with local primary schools, continued to provide the PAWS (Primary Aquatic Water Safety) programme to over 2,500 school children. Six swim camps were also held at Mullingar pool to assist those to develop their swimming skills.

Public Awareness

Water Safety press releases were released to the public to remind persons to be aware of the hazards associated with water and also promote the benefits of water safety awareness.

Water Safety Signage

Water safety public information signage was installed during 2018 at the designated bathing areas at Collinstown, Portnashanghan and Lilliput.

Signage was also installed at the many water slipways across the county reminding slipway users of the various water based hazards and in particular the need to wear personal flotation devices (i.e. life jackets and buoyancy aids) whilst on the water.

Ringbuoys

There are 122 ringbuoys located around the Lake County to assist persons in the event of an emergency occurring at a water source. These ringbuoys are periodically inspected by Local Authority staff to ensure standards are maintained.
Environment

Assistance & support to local community groups during National Spring Clean Month (April)

- Clean up kits supplied to Community Groups/Tidy Towns Groups/Residents Association/schools and litter/rubbish collected and disposed of.

Assistance to local community groups during National Tree Week

- 55 groups availed of free saplings.

Promotion of Responsible Dog Ownership

- Supply Green Dog Walkers (GDW) toolkit to community groups/Tidy Towns/Residents Associations.
- Provision of audio device equipment to engage with public regarding the issue of dog fouling.
- Radio promotion regarding dog fouling.
Local Agenda 21 grant aid

Grant assistance to 19 groups for a variety of environmental projects e.g. Reusable Cup Scheme, allotments, gardens, native planting etc. Total funds allocated €21,850.

Environmental Awareness

- Tidy Towns Workshop with Christy Boylan and Billy Flynn, Tidy Towns Adjudicators, followed by individual meetings with Tidy Towns Groups – there was an increase in overall scores by all participants in the competition and Ballinahown and Athlone won a bronze medal and Streamstown securing an Endeavour Award.
• Cookery demonstration to raise awareness of food waste and the brown bin service with Chef Catherine Fulvio.
• Biodiversity awareness on Old Rail Trail.
• Reuse Month (October): projects including Killucan Tidy Towns working with Hullabaloo on environmental project.
• Mural at Garrycastle Bridge.
• Hazardous Waste Collection Day held in May in Mullingar Civic Amenity Site.
• Free Mattress Collection Day held in Athlone Civic Amenity Site.
• Anti Dumping Initiatives carried out at the Al River, Willowpark, Athlone, Gracepark Road, Athlone and Canal Avenue, Mullingar. Community cleans up of areas that were black spots previously and now restored to natural beauty with an additional “art space” created at Gracepark Road, Athlone.
• County survey of swifts to identify nest sites and population within the county.
• Brown Bin Promotion to include social media and newsprint competitions.
• Greening of Athlone Christmas Markets to make the markets more sustainable – waste bins for segregation of waste was provided and paper bags were used to replace plastic bags.
16 Green School Flags awarded in 2018

Green Schools Seminar for teachers to promote the Green Schools Programme. In 2018 there were 16 Green School Flags awarded;
- Litter & Waste: 1
- Energy: 1
- Travel: 3
- Biodiversity: 5
- Global Citizenship Litter & Waste: 4
- Global Citizenship Energy: 1
- Marine: 1

Savings made by schools participating in the Green Schools Programme during 2017/2018 school year:

| Saved 2,953 tonnes of waste from going to landfill | Saved 21.4m units of electricity | Saved 2.5m litres of oil | 389m litres of water |

Athlone Municipal District

- Engagement with the Athlone Public Participation Network through a presentation of issues and challenges document.
- Assisted RAPID with issues brought forward from the Athlone RAPID Forum Community members.
- Improvement works at Tang, Streamstown, Boher, Drumraney, Ballymore, Loughnavalley and Rosemount were delivered under the Clár Scheme.
- Playground Improvement Works were delivered at Parnell Square under the Healthy Ireland Initiative.

Mullingar Municipal District

Housing Grants

- Housing Aid for Older Person
- Housing (Adaption Grant of people with a disability)
- Mobility Aid Grant - Housing Grants awarded 128
Westmeath Arts

Arts Programme 2018

Grants and Funding 2018

Artists’ Bursaries and Scholarships 2018

45 professional artists across a range of artistic disciplines received bursaries to develop their own professional practice and work in County Westmeath.

Arts Act Grant 2018

Grants were provided to 41 amateur community or voluntary groups, individuals or organisations to develop public interest in the arts, promote the knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts and to assist in improving the standards of the arts.

Arts in Community 2018

21 groups, comprising Schools, Health Care Settings and Community Groups benefitted in 2018 from funding for project-based initiatives which encouraged meaningful collaborations between professional artists and these groups.
John Broderick Inaugural Writer’s Residency

Delivery of inaugural Writer’s Residency in collaboration with Arts Council of Ireland. September to March Programme. For a period of 10 weeks the writer was based in the Aidan Heavey Library for 20 hours per week. As well as progressing her own writings the resident writer delivered the following engagements:

- Poetry recitals in the library and the community
- Inspired by Broderick 2019 national and secondary school writing competition (which received 100+ entries)
- Voices of the Ford - a writer’s salon event at Luan Gallery
- Weekly articles for local media and national media coverage
- Extensive social media engagement (dedicated website)
- A series of Connecting with Broderick workshops, engaging participants as readers of Broderick’s work
- One-to-one mentoring scheme with local writer
- Schools, community and third level workshops
**Dancer in residence / collaboration with IMR**

Supported placement of a pilot programme, situation contemporary Dancer in Residence in Irish Manufacturing Research, Mullingar.

A video piece created during the residency was featured at the Wicklow Screen Dance Lab as an example of innovative collaboration in Dance.

**Venues**

In 2018 the arts office provided support to venues including: The Dean Crowe Theatre (40K), Tuar Ard Arts Centre (20K) and Áras an Mhuíllinn (3K), Mullingar. Funding to a number of other Arts venues is issued directly by the local authority.

**Arts Council – support to arts in Westmeath 2018**

A grant of €42,700 towards the arts office programme was received from Arts Council in 2018.

**Music Generation**

In 2018, Music Generation Offaly/ Westmeath (MGOW) increased access to performance music education for over 6,500 child & young people aged from 3 – 18 by making creating music part of young people’s lives; seeking to give them life enhancing skills through learning to sing and play instruments; and at the most basic generating opportunities for children and young people to experience making music with others so contributing to the development of their personal, social and cultural identity. To achieve this MGOW works with a core team of 27 musician tutors who not only deliver weekly performance music tuition, but also benefit from on-going career support through the provision of professional development.

The Singfest festival of singing now entering its 4th year, grew out of one such partnership. Created and delivered in partnership with Sing Ireland (Ireland’s national resource agency for the development of singing), and funded through the Arts Council/ Music Generation Partnership, it is hoped that Singfest will become established as an annual feature of the choral calendar. Currently more than 300 secondary school students and nearly 1,000 primary students are preparing for this year’s event which is again based in the Athlone IT.

**Midlands Arts and Culture Magazine**

The Midlands Regional Arts and Culture Magazine is produced twice yearly and is also available online. It is circulated across the 4 x partnering counties of Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath. The magazine is also distributed to regional and national arts organisations and funders. The magazine is a crucial showcase for arts activities among professional artists, organisations, community groups, voluntary and amateur groups and individuals.
Westmeath Creative Ireland

Westmeath Arts Officer co-ordinates the Creative Ireland initiative in Westmeath. A Culture Team comprising a broad range of culture and arts representatives oversee the Westmeath Creative Ireland Programme.

In 2018 a Creative Ireland Strategy plan was launched, and a community grant scheme provided support to over 50 creative community projects.

Examples include Crane Bird Art school, Mullingar Junior Stage School, Transformative College, Athlone River & Food Festival, Mullingar Resource Centre, Atelier programme by Athlone Arts & Tourism, Ethos – ‘Everything’. Athlone Community Training Centre with Lucy Tormey – mural on Garrycastle Bridge. Moate Performing Arts – Dancezone Stage production, Castlepollard Men’s Shed. Streamstown Tidy Village created an Open Air Farm Machinery Museum along the Old Rail Trail. Helium Arts ran filmmaking workshops for teens living with diabetes.

There was 16 events organised throughout the County for Cruinniu na nÓg examples were Creative Waste with rediscovery centre in St Etchen’s NS, Ceolchoirm na nÓg, ‘Let’s Drum’ Workshop in Taghmon NS, ‘Under the Sea’ workshop in Luan Gallery, Emerald Lakes Dance and Drama – a night of Irish music, song and dance in Rochfortbride, ‘Coder Dungeon Open day’ in Clonmellon.

Additional programme elements in Westmeath Creative Ireland in 2018 included (1) Bliain na Gaeilge and, (3) European Year of Cultural Heritage events.

Midlands Bursary / Paris – Cultural Centre

The 4-county partnership (Westmeath, Laois, Offaly and Longford) supported a residency in the CCI in Paris in 2018.

Culture Night 2018

Westmeath hosted Culture 39 events, performances and activities (both artist and community-led) across the county with local volunteers playing an important role in the success of these events.

Arts events in County Buildings

The Arts Office programmed over 30 arts and cultural events in the County Buildings ranging from Christmas concerts, emerging artists’ shows and launches - to the showcasing of school and community group projects and competitions.
In 2018, 122,331 people visited Mullingar Arts Centre. 53 professional and 24 local theatrical events were staged in the theatre. In total, 26,636 people saw live performances.

Musicals In The Classrooms

An initiative sponsored by Mullingar Panto Group was Musicals In The Classrooms. 15 schools participated in 2017. Tutors from Mullingar Arts Centre visited rural schools and brought expertise in musical theatre to children in these outlying villages. The schools were offered a choice of 2 abridged shows 1. Oliver and 2. Joseph & The Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat. Mullingar Arts Centre provided sets, costumes, sound, lighting and the productions were put on in the schools’ local halls and some in Mullingar Arts Centre. Schools that participated in this were Milltownpass, Emper, Gainstown, Ballymahon, Kildalkey, Kilbeggan, The Downs, Tyrrellspass, Castlepollard, Crowenstown, Coole, Curraghmore, Whitehall, Rathowen and Greenhills Dublin. This is a new and exciting venture.

The project was a roaring success with schools, the Board of Directors decided to continue with the scheme with a new show ‘A Jungle Story’ in 2018. Rehearsals began in September 2018 with Arts Centre tutors visiting the schools each week. 12 schools took part in the ‘Jungle Story’ project:

Educate Together, Curraghmore, St. Marys CBS, Gainstown, All Saints, Loughnavally, Presentation Senior School, St. Colmans (x2), The Downs, Kildalkey, Raharney and Gaelscoil an Mhuileann. Over 600 pupils have taken part in the shows.

Mullingar Student Players

Little Women

Little Women the Louisa May Alcott classic presented by Mullingar Student Players was directed by Sean Lynch and was performed by a cast of 16 talented students; the show ran from 20th – 22nd September and was a massive sell out success. The play was also a featured event for Culture Night 2018 on Friday 21st September where admission into the play was free.

Little Shop of Horrors

Little Shop of Horrors was staged in Mullingar Arts Centre from 2nd – 7th April 2018. The show featured a talented cast of 35 talented students. The production crew was director Sean Lynch, musical director Greg Peters & choreographer Aimee MacManus.
Junior Stage Schools

*Aladdin*

Aladdin was staged in August 2018 for seven performances by students from the ever growing Junior Stage Schools within Mullingar Arts Centre. 30 children took part in the production of Aladdin.

Senior Stage Schools

*High School Musical*

High School Musical was staged in October 2018 for five performances by members from the Senior Stage Schools within Mullingar Arts Centre. The show was a huge success.

Rail Theatre Company

*A Doll’s House*

In February 2018, Rail Theatre Company presented their production of A Doll’s House, the production ran from 22nd – 24th February and also held special performances for Leaving Cert students. The cast was Jemma McNamee, Sara Jane Mangan, Claire Egan, Ben Thompson, Daniel Egerton & Conor Walsh.

Mullingar Pantomime Group

*Jack & The Beanstalk*

Mullingar Pantomime Group staged their most successful show yet in 2018 with Jack & The Beanstalk which was their twelfth year. Always everybody’s favourite night out at Christmas, the panto once again broke previous box office records by selling out all eighteen shows before opening night. In addition to 25 adult performers, 150 students from the Stage Schools took part.
Music In The Classrooms (Sponsored by Mullingar Pantomime Group)
Lorcan Daly visited schools weekly and introduced them to the instruments of the Concert Band. Starting off with Flute and Piccolo and working his way up to Tuba, Euphonium and Percussion – students had a firsthand experience of instruments. On the seventh week the students come to the Centre for a performance by the Army Band. Schools that took part in this programme in 2018 were Rathwire, Raharney, Kildalkey, Gainstown, Presentation Senior, Kinnegad, St. Marys Junior School, St. Colmans and Educate Together.

Mullingar School of Classical Ballet
Patricia McDermott and Eadaoinn McKenna are employed by Mullingar Arts Centre to teach classical ballet from Pre-Primary to Grade 8 to students from ages 4 to 17. Some of the Students previously performed in the European Ballet in Sleeping Beauty. The syllabus followed is that of the Royal Academy of Dance, and pupils are prepared for examinations which are conducted by the Academy. Mullingar School of Classical Ballet boasts a huge amount of pupils and continues to be one of the most prestigious ballet schools in Westmeath.

Dionysus School of Dance
Dionysus School of Dance takes place under the direction of Siobhan Moore along with tutors Eadaoinn McKenna, Robyn Byrne & Adam Fogarty. Dionysus is a fusion of jazz, contemporary, classical, musical theatre, lyrical, commercial and hip hop dancing. The school also caters for fashion shows/competitions/outdoor events and much more. In late 2017 Dionysus rebranded by introducing a new colour scheme and logo and launched their first website www.dionysus.ie in early 2018 which introduced an online booking system. The students of Dionysus School of Dance took to the stage for their annual show on June 2nd and 3rd 2018. Dionysus achieved huge competition in prestigious Irish dance competitions in 2018.

Elevate Academy Of Dance
Elevate Academy Of Dance takes place under the direction of Aimee MacManus along with tutor Sabrina MacCauley Healy. ‘Dance Upon Your Dream’ is the school’s slogan with classes in Lyrical, Jazz, Arco-Dance, Musical Theatre, Hip Hop, Contemporary and much more. The academy caters for students from 3 years to teenagers. Elevate regularly take part in nationwide Performance & Competition Squads. Elevate also hosts Twinklesteps, a specially developed programme for children aged 3 – 6 years encouraging the development of a love of dance and music in a fun and imaginative way. Elevate hosts it’s classes in Mullingar on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays & Saturdays & classes in Kinnegad on Saturdays. Elevate achieved huge success in prestigious Irish dance competitions in 2018.

Spirit Performance of Dance Technique
Spirit Performance of Dance Technique is a new dance school in Mullingar Arts Centre under the direction of Sarah Corrigan. Spirit’s classes cover a variety of techniques such as street, tap, jazz, classical, contemporary and lyrical. The school caters for all ages and aims to train dancers to be rounded and creative performers whilst enjoying fun filled classes. The school is going from strength to strength. Spirit achieved huge competition in success in prestigious Irish dance competitions in 2018.

Stage Schools
The Mullingar Art Centres Kinder, Junior, Senior & Rural Stage Schools provide young people with an opportunity to participate in the Performing Arts. The aim is to educate and enrich the quality of life of the youth within the community through instruction in and access to the various creative art forms such as dance, theatre, music, literary, and visual arts. A public performance is held at the end of the programme year to engage the community and allow the students to receive public recognition for their work.
The Stage Schools operate with the understanding that the arts can be used to build self-esteem, promote social development, improve school performance and help youth develop the discipline necessary to achieve success in other areas of their lives. In pursuit of these goals, students are engaged in theatre projects that are designed to foster personal growth and development.

**Rural Stage Schools**

Since 2015 Mullingar Arts Centre now offers its stage schools in the following rural areas - Ballymahon, Ballynacargy, Castletown Geoghegan, Delvin, Kilbeggan, Loughegan, Longwood, Rathwire, Rathowen & Rochfortbridge. A total of 474 children attend the rural stage schools.

The Academy of Rock has tutors providing classes in piano, keyboards and guitar. Classes were also held for Piano, Flute, Traditional Instruments with Siobhan Masterson.

**Dance Outreach**

6-week courses are run in rural schools as part of the outreach programme. The dance programme is designed to help children develop their artistic, creative and physical strengths. The course concentrates on several styles of dance such as jazz, hip-hop, classical and contemporary. Aerobics is also an important aspect of dance to help with breathing techniques and to teach the children routine. Each workshop starts with aerobics and stretching exercises based on core stability and physical strength. The class is then focused on the performance and dance routines. Participating schools are: St. Marys CBS, St. Etchens Kinnegad, Presentation Junior, St. Colmans, The Resource Centre, Gainstown, St. Kennys, St. Patricks Johnstownbridge, Rathwire, Multyfarnham, Loreto College, Presentation Senior, Kildalkey, Boher National School and Taughmon.

**Drama Outreach**

The Drama Outreach Programme in rural schools is both educational and fun. It has many benefits and has been received very enthusiastically by students and teachers alike. Students not only learn about what drama is, the history of drama and various forms it takes, but they are also given an environment where they can explore emotions, self expression and creativity. Students develop their skills in listening, observation and communication. It gives them confidence not only in performing but in being creative and sharing their ideas. Through role play and improvisation they learn empathy, acceptance and respect for others by effectively “standing in someone else’s shoes”. It encourages team work as well as one’s own initiative. Subjects students are studying in class can also be incorporated into drama lesson plans (e.g. a history lesson on the Famine or 1916 can be brought to life through role play) or any other topics teachers may find beneficial to the group such as ‘bullying’.

**Community Arts Project**

The Centre has established relationships with many schools and over the years, in particular, St. Marys CBS transition year students. Under the direction of the Centre the students have participated in the ‘Transition Year Drama’ competition, hosted by the Briery Gap Cultural Centre in Macroom, Co. Cork and much more. Last year the students from St. Mary’s CBS staged the play ‘A Few Good Men’ which played for three performances in the centre, the musical ‘The Producers’ for three performances and The play The Gaeltalk, an Irish speaking piece where they eventually won the award ‘Best Secondary School’ in Scoil Dramaiocahta. They meet every Wednesday in the Arts Centre doing drama, music and workshops.
Mullingar Gospel Choir

Mullingar Gospel choir meet every Tuesday under the guise of Musical Director Claire Gilmartin who took over in September whilst resident director Niamh Moore is on a career break in foreign parts. There are over 40 members in total and growing. They have performed at monthly Saturday vigil Masses in Mullingar Cathedral and much more including competitions around the country in 2017 and performed in The G2T Factor song contest in the Mullingar Arts Centre in August 2018. The choir achieved huge success in 2018 when they came first in the Gospel category in the Navan Choral Festival.

Sweet Tunes Active Retired Choir

Sweet Tunes Active Retired Choir was formed under the musical guise of Choir Director Angela Lynch in September 2013. Sweet Tunes rehearse Monday mornings and the occasional Thursday morning. There are 50 members in total and growing. Past performances include - Christmas Carol Service with Midland Orchestra November 2014, St. Patricks Day Parade 2014 & 2015, Flashmob on Grafton Street as part of the Junior Stage Schools day trip to Dublin, MAC End of Year showcase 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017, Sherton Hotel Athlone Active Retirement Day, The Marigold Festival, Shaws Department Store Christmas Evening and they also hosted a Christmas concert in the Mullingar Arts Centre in collaboration with the Stage Schools in 2018. The only way is UP for this dynamic group as they grow in confidence.

In 2018 the Sweet Tunes Choir travelled on a trip to Rome and performed at The Vatican.

Briery Gap

The Briery Gap All-Ireland Transition Year Drama Festival in association with Cork County Council, Macroom Town Council and Cork VEC was introduced to schools in 2001 and has proved to be quite a success. The 18th Briery Gap All Ireland TY Drama Final and the 8th All Ireland 15 Minute Light Entertainment Festival in association with Cork County Council VEC and Macroom Town Council took place in Mullingar in 2018. The preliminary rounds for both festivals and the All Ireland Final took place in Mullingar Arts Centre in 2018.

An Scoil Dramaiochta

The All Ireland An Cumann Scoil Dramaiochta Finals took place once again in the centre in 2018 over a number of days.

Royal Irish Academy Of Music Exams 2018

In 2018, 164 students from Mullingar Junior Stage School, Kinder Stage School and Rural Stage Schools took their Royal Irish Academy of Music Exams. Students were examined in Poetry, Recital, Drama, Mime, Conversation, Reading & Theory. The students of Mullingar Art Centre’s Senior Stage Schools received their awards from the Royal Irish Academy of Music, Speech and Drama. All students received top marks with numerous Distinctions, Honours & Merits. Presenting the students with their awards on the night was Chairman of the Board John McGrath and tutor Natasha Dunne.

Eimhin Fitzgerald Doherty received a High Achiever Award from the Royal Irish Academy of Music in 2018.
Human Resources

Business in the Community Ireland’s (BITCI) Skills @ Work Programme

Westmeath County Council continued its participation in this programme in partnership with Mullingar Community College senior cycle to enhance the vocational dimension of their educational experience. As part of this partnership which has been established since 2015, students partook in the Skills @ Work programme. The partnership has been facilitated by the Schools’ Business Partnership (SBP) and is an initiative of Business in the Community Ireland (BITCI).

The programme re-commenced in November 2018 for its fourth year, for school year 2018-19. 25 students are involved in the programme and the learning outcomes include CV and interview preparation for their future career preparations. It is hoped that the course will provide students an insight the business of the Council and also the many career opportunities that exist in Westmeath County Council.

ICT

National Broadband Plan

The Council continued its engagement with the Dept. of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment to prepare the way for a smooth implementation of the National Broadband Plan. This will be a major infrastructure project for the county which will bring badly needed high-speed broadband services to areas of Westmeath not currently provided for by commercial operators. A project team was put in place in 2016 and a broadband officer appointed. The Council is also participating on the Northern Region Broadband Action Group. Work is also being carried out on the establishment of Gigabit digital hubs.

Following survey and mapping of mobile black spot areas in the county there is ongoing engagement with mobile phone and teleco infrastructure companies regarding addressing areas where coverage is poor.

Ongoing support and advice is offered to business and property owners affected by poor broadband and mobile coverage. In some areas significant progress has been made.

A sum of €53,000 in funding was secured from the Department of Rural and Community Development as part of the Digital Innovation Programme 2018. This was secured for the for the digitisation of Cemetery Records in cemeteries managed by Westmeath County Council.

A Digital Readiness Assessment for Westmeath was completed in 2018 and this fed into and informed the Digital Readiness Assessment for Irish Local Authorities.
Supporting Family Literacy

During April, all branches offered “Spring into Storytime” sessions reinforcing the importance of reading and telling stories to children. The Summer Reading Stars programme continued to be a core element of our Right to Read campaign, encouraging families to read for pleasure throughout the summer. It was launched by storyteller Aideen McBride in June. Reading rewards were handed out in all libraries to participants and the programme culminated in medal award ceremonies in each of the branch libraries. 3,080 children participated in the programme. Additional activities were held throughout the summer including: storytimes, storysack sessions, craftrnoons, lego sessions, K’nex building, paper craft activities and talks with the Dogs Trust. During December, storytimes were offered as part of the Family time at the Library programme.

In June, as part of our ongoing commitments to new communities, Mullingar Library was delighted to host representatives from the Lithuanian Embassy for the handover of Lithuanian language material for children.

As part of the Decade of Centenaries programme, an initiative called Westmeath Reads saw invitations extended to schools, staff, elected members and council executive to read the book Mollie on the March to raise awareness of Women and the Vote in Ireland. School children also had the chance to meet and question author Anna Carey as part of the programme.

As part of the Right to Read Campaign, a pilot scheme called Me & My Library hour was launched in Athlone. This welcomes families with children of all abilities to the library in the knowledge that it is a supportive and non judgemental space with materials to help when children are overwhelmed.
Supporting our schoolchildren

During 2018, Westmeath Libraries saw 9514 visits by schoolchildren. Visits included tours and talks as well as book exchanges. A wide number of competitions were held with local schools encouraging creativity.

Children’s Book Festival continues to offer children the opportunity to expand the imagination, develop their creativity and explore the joys of reading for pleasure. This October festival remains a key part of the Right to Read Campaign with visits in 2018 by storyteller Niall de Burca and authors Dale Treadwell, Carmel Kelly and Emer Conlon from Vroom Town. all inspiring children to write, read and use their imaginations. Castlepollard Library also introduced local TY students to the “Human Book” experience.

Supporting STEM

(Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics) Castlepollard, Mullingar, Moate and Athlone Libraries participated in Engineers Week, offering activities which were designed to develop an interest in STEM. In addition, these libraries had the opportunity to participate in the Midlands Science Festival. This saw an amazing range of high quality lectures and activities on offer including: Dinosaur science, Pain Killers, DNA, Mary Ward’s World of Wonder and the Reptile Zoo.

Supporting our Heritage

Westmeath Libraries continues to cherish and promote our local heritage and our national heritage. Heritage Week remains a core activity in with exhibitions taking place in all libraries. The Aidan Heavey Library was also able to facilitate the Intangible Heritage art project which asked children and parents to look at the world around them with new eyes. In 2018, Moate Library organised an intergenerational project which culminated in the production of a book “Sharing Stories: folklore retold in Moate Library”. Westmeath Libraries also played a key role in the Decade of Centenaries programme with the Westmeath Reads initiative, the Voices of War Lecture series and the collaboration with All Saints NS which resulted in an exhibition of poetry inspired by WWI.
Our heritage is something which has global appeal. As such, the Library service was delighted to welcome representatives from the Australian Embassy to Moate Library for “James Guinan Remembered”. This saw the handover of James Guinan’s War medals to the Library Service. The Aidan Heavey Library also welcomed an Australian tour group for a lecture on Oliver Goldsmith and the Kirby Collection. The Library Service continued to acquire local archives including the diaries of the Athlone journalist Peter Kiernan.
Supporting our Health

2018 saw the development of the Healthy Ireland at your Library programme. A core set of recommended titles were made available in every library in the country. Additions were also made to Healthy Ireland ebooks collection. To compliment this, a wide range of talks and activities were rolled out across the county. This included: mindfulness for children, mindfulness for adults, Health awareness talks, gratitude tree, chair yoga, disco fruit madness, and herbs for health. The Library service also worked with agencies to provide supports eg through Speech and Language Therapy talks in Mullingar and through Triple P parenting talks in branches around the county.

Supporting Creativity

Westmeath Libraries started 2018 with the acquisition of a dragon which was developed in collaboration with artist Tamsin Argent and HSE clients. The Aidan Heavey Library was delighted to work with the inaugural John Broderick Writer in Residence, Annemarie Ní Churreáin, to highlight the work of John Broderick and to facilitate workshops for emerging writers. Mullingar Library also promoted creative writing with Culture Night Taster Sessions and a short teenage writing programme in December. Castlepollard Library also hosted a Spooks and Books Creative Writing course for 7-10 year olds. As part of the Bliain na Gaeilge programme, Westmeath Libraries held a successful art competition based on SeanFhocail which saw huge uptake by national school pupils. Athlone and Mullingar Libraries also played a key role in celebrating Cruinniú na nÓg with drumming workshops, Monsters under the Bed stories with Gary Ward and dance and songs with the Mullingar Lithuanian Language School. We also celebrated Cruinniú with local schools in Kilbeggan, Kinnegad and Taughmon working with Dolores Keaveney and the Rediscovery Centre. The Library service continues to support local creativity with exhibitions such as Ursula Meehan’s Camaraderie in Castlepollard, with the launch of the Athlone Community Radio documentary, The Bandmaster in Athlone Library, with the display of the Kilbeggan Men’s Shed Distillery model and with book launches such as Westmeath through the lens.

Supporting jobseekers and enterprise

Work Matters was established in Athlone, Mullingar, Castlepollard and Moate Libraries.
Transport

Road Safety

We aim to reduce road collisions through implementing the actions as detailed within the Westmeath Road Safety Action Plan which are based on the four core elements of Education, Engineering, Enforcement and Evaluation.

Road Safety Educational Measures

Junior School Wardens:

The Junior School Warden Scheme has been operating in Ireland since 1969 and four schools in Westmeath - St Etchen’s Kinnegad, St Peter’s Athlone, Coralstown NS and St Ernan’s Delvin participate in the scheme.

A regional competition, sponsored by Westmeath, Longford and Roscomon local authorities and the Roads Safety Authority, is held each year with teams from each school participating.

This year the competition, hosted by Westmeath County Council, was held on June 8th in Kinnegad.

3 teams-St Etchen’s Kinnegad, Coralstown NS and St Ernan’s Delvin- represented Westmeath with a further five schools representing Longford and Roscommon.

Teams were of a very high standard with 1st place in the 2018 competition being awarded to Newtownforbes NS and St Etchen’s Kinnegad finishing runners up and Loughlynn NS co Roscommon in third place.

Trophies were presented to the winning teams with a medal issued to remaining teams competing on the day in recognition of their achievement in representing their county at the finals.

Road Safety Events & Campaigns

In addition to national campaigns which are co-ordinated by the Road Safety authority the Council ran a number of road safety campaigns through various media forums to increase road safety awareness.

Teighan Newcombe received a special prize sponsored by the Westmeath Examiner as the overall category winner age 4-7.

A Road Safety Poster Competition was held in December with over 400 entries received from schools from around the county who were invited to submit entries on any Road Safety theme.

Social media was also used as a means to deliver the road safety message with online competitions being run during the year in conjunction with the Gardai, Fire services and the Westmeath Examiner group.

Cycle training continued to be an important part of the road safety education programme and approximately 800 primary school children were trained during the 2018 as part of the Westmeath Sports Partnership Cycle Safe programme. Other activities supported and promoted included Check It Fits, Car Free day, European Day without a Road Death, and World Day of Remembrance for road traffic accidents victims.
Goal 3 - Infrastructural Capacity

“To ensure that our physical and social infrastructure is sufficiently developed to support economic development and quality of life into the future.”

Supporting Strategies

3.1 Operate housing services which seek to maximise the various forms of social housing support available.

3.2 Work with the National Roads Authority on the implementation of a maintenance and improvement programme for our national road network in the county.

3.3 Implement a comprehensive maintenance and improvement programme for the regional and local road network.

3.4 Co-operate with Irish Water in the implementation of their capital investment programme to ensure that water and waste-water infrastructure is adequate to facilitate the economic and community development of the county.

3.5 Maintain and develop high quality social infrastructure including libraries, arts, sport and recreation facilities to support sustainable communities and enhance quality of life for people of the county.

3.6 Continue construction of the National Cycle Network and promote and support development and maintenance of walking/cycling routes within the county in conjunction with other agencies.

3.7 Work with the Road Safety Authority, the Gardaí and other interests in promoting and improving road safety in the county.

3.8 Ensure that the Annual Service Plans agreed between Irish Water and Westmeath County Council provide adequate finance and personnel to deliver a high quality water and waste water service throughout the county.
Housing

Social Housing Stock

The Council provides social housing by way of direct provision – construction or acquisition of previously owned dwellings – and by way of renting from the Private Sector through the Rental Accommodation Scheme or through the Social Housing Leasing Initiative. The total number of social units available to the Council at 31st December 2018 is 2,695 as set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Housing</th>
<th>LA Owned Stock</th>
<th>RAS</th>
<th>Leasing</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Housing Units</td>
<td>1,961</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>2,838</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Housing Need Assessment

A Statutory Housing Needs Assessment was carried out the Council on instruction of the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government as at 11 June 2018. Nett Housing Need was 1,585 households and the change since the last statutory assessment of 2017 is shown in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Change (number)</th>
<th>Change (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath County Council</td>
<td>1,679</td>
<td>1,585</td>
<td>-94</td>
<td>-5.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At 31st December 2018, the number of approved applicants on the Councils Housing list increased to 1,674 (net need).

Housing Supply

Construction

Westmeath County Council completed the construction of 10 social housing units in 2018 – 1 at Ennell Court and 9 units at St Laurence’s Terrace Mullingar. In addition, 15 units at Belvedere Hills, Mullingar were refurbished and brought into the social housing stock in 2018.

At the end of 2018 there were two projects under construction:

• Arcadia Site A, Athlone. 33 social housing units under construction. Completion expected in Q1 2020.
• 6 social housing units being refurbished at Belvedere Hills, Mullingar. Completion expected in Q1 2019.

The Council also progressed or supported three turnkey construction developments in 2018:

• 12 social housing units for the Council at Cloonlara, Mullingar. Anticipated delivery in Q1 2019
• 7 social housing units for the Council at Abbeybrook, Kilbeggan. Anticipated delivery in Q1 2019
• 12 social housing units for Túath Housing at Rochfordbridge. Anticipated delivery in Q4 2019.
Part V Housing Units

The Housing department has been working with a number of developers to agree on the housing requirements associated with the Part V of the Planning and Development Acts. There was a notable increase in activity in this area in 2018 which is anticipated to lead to the delivery of a number of housing units in 2019 and thereafter.

Planning and Design

In 2018, the Council progressed the procurement process to procure an Economic Operator to develop a circa 16ha site at Brawny Road, Lissywollen, Athlone. It completed the First Stage and Competitive Dialogue Stage with a view to issuing the Invitation to Submit Final Tenders in early 2019. This proposed development will delivery circa 560 mixed tenure housing units, of which 30% (circa 170 housing units) will be social with the remaining being private. It is anticipated that construction will commence in 2020 with circa 200 units to be delivered by end 2021 and the remainder in phases to mid 2024.

In 2018, the Council’s Capital Housing Team, had a further 14 projects at various stages of the Planning and Design process as summarised below. These projects have the potential to deliver approximately 213 dwelling units.

Projects at Planning and Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning and Design Stage</th>
<th>Number of Projects</th>
<th>No of Housing units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Appraisal</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 – Capital Appraisal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 – Pre-Statutory Approval</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 – Pre-Tender Approval</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4 – Tender Approval</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acquisition

The Council acquired 59 (including 21 at Belvedere Hills that were/ are being refurbished) previously owned houses in 2018 as part of its social housing provision. Agreement was also in place to acquire 14 other units and these were due to close early in 2019.

Approved Housing Bodies

The Council continued its work with Approved Housing Bodies and provided assistance under the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) and the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) schemes in 2018.

Construction commenced on a 12 house scheme at Rochfordbridge under the CALF Scheme in October 2018 which is due for delivery in Q4 2019.

The Council supported a range of CAS and CALF proposals that will deliver social housing in Westmeath in 2019 and beyond. In this regard, during 2018, the Council worked with and is supporting the Approved Housing Body Sector on more than 10 projects that is estimated to potentially deliver over 200 housing units over the coming 3 years at various locations in the County.
Casual Vacancies and Housing Allocations

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Vacant Dwellings 1 Jan 2018</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Casual Vacancies 1 Jan to 31st December 2018</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of offers made to 31st December 2018</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Tenancies agreed to 31st December 2018</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Vacant dwellings at 31st December 2018</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Refurbishment of Vacant Houses

Westmeath Co. Co. consistently applies Internal Capital Receipts (ICRs) funding when available to ensure that newly vacated LA housing units do not become long term voids. During 2018 the Council incurred expenditure in the region of €373,175 and received a total grant €207,845 from the Department of Housing Planning Community and Local Government to refurbish 34 units.

Housing Maintenance/Improvement of Housing Stock

Whilst the Council has a relatively new housing stock, the maintenance of same has been one of our key priorities. During 2018, 1306 housing repair requests were completed at a cost of €508,285. In addition, the Council carried out a Planned Maintenance Programme to improve its housing stock at a cost of €350,465 in 2018.

The Council also drew down funding from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government of €244,308 to fund adaptation works in 39 local authority houses, necessary for the proper accommodation of the tenant who has a disability.

Rental Accommodation Scheme and Social Housing Leasing Initiative

Westmeath County Council continues to promote the Rental Accommodation Scheme and Leasing Scheme. These schemes continue to be a popular choice for some of our housing applicants. These schemes are vehicles by which Westmeath County Council provides for the housing needs of social housing applicants. As in previous years the Housing section continued to assess and procure properties for inclusion in these Social Housing Programmes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>RAS</th>
<th>LEASING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of contracts at 1 Jan 2018</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. new contracts 1 Jan and 31st December 2018</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No of contracts terminated to 31st December 2018</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Contracts at 31st December 2018</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Housing Assistance Payment Scheme

The Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP) was commenced in Westmeath on 1st December 2016 under the Housing Assistance Payment (Section 50) (No.2) Regulations 2016 (S.I. No. 574 of 2016). HAP is a further social housing support option available to approved applicants on the Council’s housing waiting list. It replaces the rent supplement payable by the Department of Social Protection.

In 2018, a total of 290 HAP tenancies were signed giving a total of 656 active HAP tenancies at 31st December 2018.
**Mortgage to Rent**

The Council continued its implementation of the Mortgage to Rent Scheme for the owners of distressed mortgages in the local authority sector. Under the scheme families with unsustainable mortgages who are engaging with the Local Authority may apply for assistance under the scheme. The clients concerned must also qualify under additional criteria as set down by the Department of the Environment Community and Local Government. Under the scheme Local Authorities ‘buy back’ the family home and appoint the mortgagor as tenant under a Differential Rent but with also an additional weekly payment in relation to the bad debt incurred.

There were 2 cases signed up under the Mortgage to Rent Scheme in 2018.

**Housing Grants 2018**

The Council continues to implement the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, Housing Aid for Older People and Mobility Aids Grant Scheme. A total of 204 households in Westmeath benefitted from these schemes in 2018 at a cost of €1.478m.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Grants Approved</th>
<th>Value of Grants Approved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing Grant for People with a Disability</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility Aid Grants</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Aid for Older People</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>319</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Private Rented Houses Regulation**

Inspection and Enforcement of Private Rented Dwellings Standards Regulations

| No. of dwellings inspected in 2018 | 506 |
| No. of Inspections carried out in 2018 | 541 |
| No. of non compliance letters issued in 2018 | 450 |

**Housing Purchase and Improvement Loans 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loan Type</th>
<th>Applications Received</th>
<th>Applications approved</th>
<th>Loans paid out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Construction/Purchase</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Improvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Homeless Services**

Westmeath County Council is the Lead Housing Authority for the midland homeless region comprising of the Counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath. In 2018, it managed an allocation of €2,515,057 Section 10 funding received from the DHPC &LG. Each Council contributes 10% to this sum which supports a host of services which includes the following in the region:

- Regional Case Working service across the four counties, to include a service to link in with complex homeless service users.
- Emergency Accommodation Providers in the region include:
  - TEAM in Mullingar;
  - Midlands Simon in Tullamore and Athlone;
  - 2 Facilities run by the St. Vincent de Paul in Longford

Two Homeless Place Finders for the Midland Region were recruited in Q4 2018 to assist homeless persons find accommodation through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) programme.
Traveller Accommodation

The Council commenced the process for review of the Traveller Accommodation Plan 2014 – 2018 and it is expected that a new plan shall be adopted in the course of 2019.

The annual target for the accommodation of traveller families in standard local authority housing as set out in the current TAP is 7 and the Council achieved this target in 2018.

Discussions took place with families in Blackberry Lane Halting Site, Athlone on plans for redevelopment of the site. Final meetings were held in November 2018 and proposals for redevelopment agreed. Next step in the process is for the Council to engage consultants to advance planning and design of the redevelopment proposal.

The Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee, under joint Chairs Cllr Sorca Clarke and Cllr Michael Dollard, met on three occasions during 2018.

Estate Management

The Council continued its programme of assisting Local Authority Estates in the provision of assistance to promote and encourage the self-help attitude towards estate upkeep and appearance.
National Roads Design Office

**Galway to Dublin Greenway**

The Mullingar to Athlone Greenway is part of the proposed Galway to Dublin National Cycle Route. When completed the Galway to Dublin Greenway will be a significant tourism investment which will benefit regional and local employment.

Westmeath NRO assisted Meath and Kildare with the development of the Greenway between Maynooth and the Westmeath county boundary.

The detailed design of the underpass on the Dublin Galway railway line at Montree, Athlone was undertaken by Irish Rail on behalf of Westmeath County Council. Irish Rail tendered the construction contract. The successful contractor, Jons Civil Engineering Ltd, was awarded the contract in December 2018. Construction work will commence early in 2019.

An automated pedestrian/cycle counter on the greenway near Athlone recorded 218,081 trips in 2018.

Design work for the section between Athlone and Galway City will recommence in 2019.

**N4 Mullingar Longford (Roosky)**

Westmeath NRO prepared a Project Appraisal Plan report which was submitted to the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport (DTTAS). Notification has been received that the report has been assessed as compliant with the Public Spending Code (PSC) and the Common Appraisal Framework (CAF).

Preparation of tender documentation for the procurement of specialists engineering consultancy services has commenced.
**N52 Tullamore to Kilbeggan Link**

The development of this scheme, which was shelved in 2012 due to financial constraints, has recommenced. This project is 8.1km in length and will link the Ardan roundabout on the N52 Tullamore Bypass in County Offaly to the M6 Junction No. 5 at Kilbeggan in County Westmeath.

Offaly County Council is the lead authority and is assisted by Westmeath NRO. A Project Appraisal Plan was prepared by Westmeath NRO and submitted to DTTAS. Notification has been received that the report has been assessed as compliant with the Public Spending Code (PSC) and the Common Appraisal Framework (CAF).

Engineering consultancy services will be procured in early 2019 to progress the development of this scheme.

**N52 Cloghan to Turin Construction Contract**

Fox Building and Engineering Ltd commenced construction of the 3.5km realignment of the N52 between Cloghan and Turin in August 2016. Construction was substantially completed in February 2018 which is followed by a twelve month maintenance period.

**N52 Turin to Billistown Realignment**

The preliminary design and environmental studies for the 6km N52 Turin to Billistown scheme were completed in 2017. Part 8 planning approval was received in January 2018 and TII approval was subsequently received to commence the CPO process. Following withdrawal of objections, the CPO was confirmed by Westmeath County Council in July 2018. Land compensation negotiations commenced with the issuing of Notices to Treat to affected landowners in October 2018.

Geotechnical and archaeological investigations were carried during 2018.

Westmeath NRO prepared the detailed design and tender documentation for the project. The construction contract was tendered in November 2018 with a closing date of 21st December 2018. Subject to funding and approvals, an award of contract is expected in the first half of 2019. The construction period is 18 months.

**N55 Athlone to Ballymahon Realignment**

A public consultation was held in April 2018 where five route options with six potential links were put on display. Following assessment, these route options and links were refined down to six end to end route options in October 2018.

These route options are undergoing further detailed appraisal with a view to selecting a preferred route in 2019.
Transportation

Road Construction and Maintenance

The total public road network in Westmeath is 2,332 km in length. Westmeath County Council is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of this network apart from 82km on the M4 and M6 Motorways which is maintained directly by TII under a Motorway Maintenance and Renewals Contract.

Expenditure by Westmeath County Council on the public road network in 2018 amounted to just under €18 million. Funding of €9.0 million was provided by TII towards the National Roads (excluding Motorways) while the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (DTTaS) provided €8.055m for works on the Regional and Local Road network and Westmeath County Council provided €1.8 million.

This funding included a separate Community Involvement scheme allocation of €401,000 which facilitated works at 10 locations. A Special Maintenance Grant of €700,726 was also provided to complete restoration works which arose from the severe weather occurrence in spring and summer of this year at 47 locations.

Local improvement schemes are funded by the Department of Rural & Community Development and provide funding of improvement works to private roads. Funding of €607,224.00 together with local contributions facilitated 22 Local Improvement Schemes to the value of €676,232.00.

National Road Schemes

In addition to road and verge maintenance type works on National Roads in 2018 the Council completed the following pavement improvement schemes:

N62 Creggan Lower to Knockanea (Fardrum) , Athlone
N55 Glasson Southern Approach, Athlone

Additional Pavement Improvement Schemes were also undertaken on the National Road Network at the following locations:

- N4 Portnashangan (€111,000)
- N4 Rathowen (€91,800)
- N52 Rosmead, Delvin (€86,300)
- N55 Caplaherd Ballykeeran (€117,113)
- N62 Ballinahowen Village North (€150,000)

These schemes has improved pavement life of these respective roads, and has also improved the skid resistance, ride ability and drainage along these sections of the National road network

Other works to improve road surface quality were completed at 30 no sites on National Roads at a cost of €552,000 along with a number of safety schemes at:

- N55 Ballykeeran Village Vehicle Actuated Signage
- N55 / L 1437 Glasson Village Junction Improvement Scheme
- N4 Rathowen and Ballinalack Pedestrian Crossing Upgrades
Regional and Local Roads

Road Restoration, Maintenance and Improvement Works

Maintenance and Improvement works undertaken by the Council on the Regional and Local Road network in the County in 2018 included an investment of €5.2 m of Road Restoration Improvement works and €1.12m of Surface Dressing Maintenance works.

In addition an investment of €3.5m in a range of road maintenance works were carried out including Road Drainage, Street Sweeping, Public Lighting maintenance and upgrading, Winter Gritting, Weed and Verge Maintenance, Bridge Rehabilitation, Road Signage maintenance and upgrading, Traffic Management Schemes, etc.

Bridge Rehabilitation

Department of Transport funding of €200,000 enabled the completion of rehabilitation works on Bridges during 2018 at the following locations.

Rostella Bridge Kilbeggan, Bladerry Bridge Castledaly, Kilpatrick Culvert Mullingar, Dysart Culvert Mullingar, Golcorra Bridge Castletown Geoghegan, Shandonagh Bridge Mullingar, River Glare Bridge Castletown, Tully Bridge Athlone, Barradrum Bridge, Old Rail Bridge Horseleap, Spittalstown Bridge Horseleap and Coola Bridge South Kilbeggan.

Emergency Bridge Culvert Replacement works which necessitated an emergency road closure were also undertaken on the local road in New Forest, Tyrellspass.

Low Cost Safety Measures

The provision of €200,000 by the DTtS enabled the Council to undertake targeted Road Safety Engineering measures at four locations within the county in 2018. The engineering measures included improvements to the available sightlines junctions Gainstown, Ballymore, Newbrook and Drumraney Athlone.
Winter Maintenance

The Council’s Winter Service Plan which is published on the County Council website includes a schedule of priority routes which are treated with salt each time it is deemed necessary to do so.

In respect to the 2017/2018 season a total of 5008 tonnes of salt was spread over 87 nights as part of the Winter Maintenance Service which was managed and operated by the Council’s Machinery Yard. The increase in salt usage was primarily attributed to Storm Emma. The Winter Maintenance period lasts from mid October to the end of April each year. The aim is to keep priority routes safe and as free as possible from wintry hazards.

The TII manages the national procurement of road salt for National and Non-National Roads and also maintains a national reserve of salt for distribution to local authorities in the event of a forecast of a severe weather event, i.e. a prolonged cold snap, or blizzard conditions.

The County has a roster of ‘Icecast’ Duty Engineers who are responsible for making the decision as to whether to salt our priority routes or not. Data received from Met Eireann and Road Side Weather Stations assist the Duty Engineer in the decision making process.

Public Lighting

There are approximately 11,500 public lights in Westmeath.

Westmeath County Council is progressively upgrading its public lighting stock with a high energy efficient LED alternative with the aim to reduce energy consumption and energy costs whilst improving lighting output.

In addition to routine maintenance, funding was secured for projects which assist in meeting European directives that oblige the Council to reduce its energy consumption on the public lighting network around the county. Lantern LED Upgrades on three National Roundabouts on the N52 at Mullingar and on the N62 at Creggan were undertaken in 2018. This lead to an immediate saving of 40% in monthly energy bills. Other areas that were upgraded to LED Lanterns were Beech Grove, Bellview Heights, O’Growney Drive, Cathedral View in Mullingar. At the end of 2018, approximately 14% of our public lighting network consists of energy efficient LED lanterns.

Water Services

Athlone Sewerage Scheme

Contract 1 – Interim upgrade of the Athlone Wastewater Treatment Plant was completed in 2018.

Contract 2 – Replace existing terminal pumping station at Golden Island with a new pumping station to include storm water storage; construct new gravity river crossings, and new tunnel sewers to eliminate discharges of untreated effluent to the River Shannon; Tenders were sought in 2018 and are under review by Irish Water.

South Westmeath Water Supply Scheme

It is proposed to construct a new water treatment plant to treat water abstracted from Killinure Lough and new watermains to connect to the Mullingar Regional Water Supply Schemes. The new Plant will replace the existing Athlone Water Treatment Plant and will have capacity to supply Athlone Town and environs and other areas of the County including large areas of South Westmeath currently served from Portloman Water Treatment Plant in Mullingar. The Plant at Portloman will be replaced with a smaller Plant to serve Mullingar and environs, which will reduce abstraction from Lough Owel.
Planning permission was granted in 2018 for works at the existing Athlone Water Treatment Plant, the new Water Treatment Plant in Mullingar, and for new reservoirs in Drumraney & Moate. A planning application for a new Water Treatment Plant in Athlone was submitted in 2018.

Preparation of Contract Documents continued in 2018 and tenders are to be sought in Q2 of 2019.

The Rural Water Programme facilitates the development of water services in rural areas of the County and the allocation from the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government for this programme in 2018 was €120,500 which was broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>2018 Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Environmental &amp; Public Health Compliance &amp; Enhancement of existing Schemes (Group Water Sector)</td>
<td>€70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition of Schemes to Public Water and Waste Water Sector – includes Takeover of GWS and new Group Sewerage Schemes</td>
<td>€50,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The grant for Environmental & Public Health Compliance & Enhancement of existing Schemes (Group Water Sector) was allocated to Laragh, Multyfarnham, Ballybroder and Riverpark Group Water Schemes for upgrade works on the Schemes, including the installation of UV treatment systems.

Six Group Water Supply Schemes were allocated funding for works required to allow the Schemes to be taken-in-charge by Irish Water.

There were also 42 grants (€74,546.06) paid towards the provision of new, or an upgrade of existing, private water supply wells.

Work to reduce the volume of unaccounted for water (UFW) from the water supply networks continued in 2018. Coming into 2018, the level of UFW as a percentage of the total volume of water supplied was calculated to be 40% and at the end of 2018 had reduced to 38.2%, due to significant efforts in Athlone on backyard services and old cast iron pipes. Water levels in Lough Owel dropped to an historic low during 2018 but due to active water conservation efforts by the Council and Contractors working on behalf of Irish Water, supply was maintained to all customers.

In 2018, under the Service Level Agreement with Irish Water, Westmeath County Council produced an average of 33,393m³ (7.3 million gallons) per day of drinking water from three water supply sources (Lough Owel, Lough Lene and the River Shannon) to serve a population of approximately 75,400 in the major towns and villages in the County as well as a wide rural area, through an extensive network of public water mains and public group water supply scheme extensions to the public mains. The most recent EPA report is in respect of 2017 and shows that the quality of drinking water in Westmeath was 100% compliant with the statutory microbiological standards and 100% compliant with the statutory chemical standards in 2017.

**Library**

**Public Consultation**

The Library service collaborated with other council departments as venues for consultation. In particular, Moate Library played host to meetings for the Moate Town Action Plan.

**Utilise Information and Communications Technologies**

Grant Funding saw the acquisition of upgraded pcs, laptops, digital recorders, mobile projector, wifi and collaborative whiteboards to support the role of the library service as centres for digital support.
Athlone Municipal District

• Athlone was designated a Regional Growth Centre for the Midlands in the National Planning Framework under Project Ireland 2040.
• Three applications were submitted for Athlone under the Urban Regeneration Development Fund in 2018. All three applications were successful. The projects are: the Loughinaskin Urban Quarter, the extension of the Church Street Enhancement Scheme and the West Bank Tourism & Cultural Quarter.
• The Church St Enhancement Scheme was substantially completed in 2018 with full completion anticipated for February 2019.
• Town & Village Schemes at Dún na Sí, Moate and Streamstown Old Railway Station were progressed.
• Improvements at Burgess Park, Athlone, the old CIE Road, Moate and Portlick were delivered under the Outdoor Recreation Scheme.
• Removal of the old Waterways Ireland Store at the Quay, Athlone.
• Junction improvement works were carried out at the Junction of the Roscommon Road and the Old Galway Road in Athlone.

Mullingar Municipal District

Road Works Programme

- 15 Discretionary Improvement Schemes
- 8 CLAR & Outdoor Recreation Schemes
- 5 Town & Village Renewals
- 22 LIS Schemes
- 10 Cul de Sacs
- 9 CIS Schemes
- Restoration of 71 Local & Regional Roads
- Surface Dressing of 46 Local & Regional Roads
- 2 Low Cost Safety Schemes
- Local Road Maintenance and Verge Trimming
- Ongoing street sweeping, litter bin collection, litter removal
- Ongoing maintenance of Town Park, Parks & Open Spaces, Graveyards and Amenity Areas

Environment

Westmeath County Council staff carry out compliance monitoring and reporting of the Wastewater Treatment Plants on behalf of Irish Water. This involves the ongoing sampling and monitoring of the Plants in accordance with the Urban Waste Water Regulations and their EPA Licences.
Goal 4 - Protection of the Environment

“To improve, protect and promote our environment in the interests of present and future generations.”

Supporting Strategies

4.1 Secure the sustainable development of the county by the implementation of the County Development Plan.

4.2 Support the implementation of the National Climate Change Adaptation Framework through flood risk management and land-use planning.

4.3 Assist Irish Water in leak detection and promotion of water conservation to minimise wastage.

4.4 Minimise impact on the environment from all of our activities through energy efficiency measures and reduced carbon emissions.

4.5 Protect and improve water quality in our lakes and rivers by the implementation of the River Basin Management Plans.

4.6 Protect and enhance the natural and built environment by implementation of the Westmeath Heritage Plan.

4.7 Protect and maintain the natural environment of the county and implement the actions of the Westmeath Biodiversity Plan.

4.8 Implement the Smarter Travel policy and develop sustainable transport initiatives to reduce car-based travel.

4.9 Enhance urban environments by the implementation of streetscape improvement projects, elimination of dereliction, litter management and provision of parks and open spaces.

4.10 Implement regulatory framework in respect of Waste Management, Litter Control, Planning Enforcement, Building Control, Dog and Horse Control.

4.11 Maintain a responsive fire and emergency service to protect the safety of people, property and the environment.
Planning

Development Management

Development Management is the general term used to describe the functions relating to the processing of planning applications. It also entails, pre-planning, compliance, Part VIII, appeals to An Bord Pleanála, collection of development contributions and Section 5 referrals among other matters. The total number of planning applications received by the Council in 2018 was 645. This represents an increase of 5.9% on the 2017 figure. A total of 459 applications were granted planning permission and 46 planning refusals issued by year end 2018. The Council also processed 29 applications for Section 5 Declarations.

Pre-Planning Meetings

Pre-planning meetings are designed to assist and inform prospective applicants on principle planning and design matters prior to the making of a formal planning application in relation to individual developments (including for example rural dwellings, large scale residential and commercial developments). They are found to be very beneficial to prospective applicants and assist in improving the quality of a subsequent planning application in many cases. The demand for formal pre-planning consultations remained strong throughout the County in 2018 with 279 pre-planning meetings undertaken.

Strategic Housing Development Applications

The Planning and Development (Residential Tenancies) Act 2016 introduced the requirement for applications for housing developments of 100 units or more and larger mixed use developments to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála. The Planning Department also dealt with initial planning consultations with prospective applicants (and/or their agents), in relation to three Strategic Housing Developments within the County.

Planning Enforcement

A total of 94 formal complaints of unauthorised development were received in 2018. 32 warning letters were issued and 12 enforcement notices served during the year. 42 cases including a number of historic cases were closed and the Council initiated court proceedings in six cases and secured one prosecution.

Development Contributions

Development Contributions under Section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 – 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Opening Balance</th>
<th>Amount Collected</th>
<th>Closing Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€3,536,516</td>
<td>€424,771</td>
<td>€2,958,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€2,958,010</td>
<td>€1,209,947</td>
<td>€2,343,702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€2,343,702</td>
<td>€1,322,218</td>
<td>€1,901,297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Projects on which benefited from Development Contribution funding in 2018

- Works to R400 Mullingar - Rochfortbridge
- Mullingar - Athlone Cycleway
- Surfacing Access to Canal Cycleway at Mullingar Railway Station
- Purchase of Streamstown Railway Station
• Surfacing carpark at Grange Community Centre, Mullingar
• C- link Clonmore, Mullingar
• Railway Field Link Road, Athlone
• Works to LT-14775 Hillquarter, Athlone
• Church Street Enhancement, Athlone
• Works to LT-57131 Baltrasna, Mullingar
• Works to L-54651-0 Killinure, Athlone
• Works to L-54381 Moate
• Works to L-1113 Tyrrellspass
• Works to L-1923 Rathowen
• Footpath on R395 Collinstown
• Works to L – 11223 Dalystown, Mullingar
• Lynn School Link Road, Mullingar

Taking in Charge of Estates

The ongoing review of unfinished housing development projects in compliance with Section 180 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended, for the purposes of taking in charge of such developments by Westmeath County Council continued in 2018. Site resolution engagement involving developers, lenders, and where applicable, administrators/receivers was progressed. The Council liaised extensively with Irish Water in order to bring unfinished estates to a standard to be taken in charge. At the end of the year, there were 32 housing developments in the county, which have not been taken in charge by the Council, and are unfinished to some degree. During 2018 the following three estates were Taken in Charge by the Council:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estate</th>
<th>Date Taken in Charge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Orchard, Athlone</td>
<td>23rd July 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meadow Lane, Athlone</td>
<td>23rd July 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toorvalley, Moate</td>
<td>23rd July 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018-2023

A new Heritage Plan for the County was prepared in 2018. The aim of this plan is to increase awareness, participation, knowledge, enjoyment and understanding of our shared heritage in Co. Westmeath and to ensure its proper conservation, management and protection for future generations. Following a number of public consultation workshops, the Draft Plan was prepared and submissions invited. The submissions were brought to the Heritage Forum for consideration in May and the Plan was subsequently amended where required. The Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018-2023 was adopted by the Elected Members on 23rd July 2018. It is available to download at http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/media/HeritagePlan201823-1.pdf.

Geological Heritage Audit

An audit of Geological Heritage Sites in Westmeath was carried out and funded by the Heritage Council with support from Westmeath County Council in 2018. The project involved a desktop study of the County Geological sites (CGS) in Westmeath, which informed a programme of field work, during which the Geologists visited each CGS across the County. The study identified 28 geological sites in the County and included a survey report on each site. Some of these sites are considered to be of national importance as a best representative example of a particular geological feature. The audit of Geological Heritage Sites in Westmeath will inform the County Development Plan 2020-2026 and will serve as a guidance document since it includes recommendations on how to best present and promote the geological heritage of County Westmeath. The geological audit report and site descriptions are available on the Council website.

Westmeath Field names Recording Pilot Project

A pilot project to record the fieldnames in County Westmeath commenced in 2018, with funding from the Heritage Council and Westmeath County Council. The project was piloted in three parishes, where the field names were recorded by volunteers. Dr Aengus Finnegan, an expert in the Irish language and in place names, co-ordinated the project and was assisted by a lead volunteer in each parish. A project specific record sheet and methodology was designed following discussion with co-ordinators of field name recording projects in other counties. During 2018, 43 volunteers collected approximately 725 field names from 64 townlands in three parishes. The majority of names collected are from the parishes of Taughmon in the north of the County and Drumraney in the south. Of the names collected c.7% are of Irish-language origin. The recorded field names were uploaded to https://meitheal.logainm.ie/westmeath-field-names/
Historic Graveyards – Information and Recording

A project that aimed to update communities on best practice, existing guidelines, and legislation on the care, conservation and recording of historic graveyards was carried out in 2018 with funding from the Heritage Council and Westmeath County Council. An audit was carried out by Antoine Giacometti of Archaeology Plan Heritage Solutions to determine which graveyards have been recorded and to what level of detail and the findings and associated Audit Report were presented at the Historic Graveyards Information Day.

Three further Information Events were held in Mullingar, Ballymore and Athlone and involved field trips to historic graveyards and methods of recording historic headstones. These Information events, and the publicity around them, helped raise awareness of historic graveyards and their value in terms of history, archaeology, biodiversity, genealogy and heritage tourism.

Creative Ireland – European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018

Two heritage led projects were undertaken in 2018 to celebrate European Year of Cultural Heritage. A children’s art competition was launched across primary schools in the County and the children were invited to create a poster celebrating our European heritage. Lots of creative entries were received and a selection of these was displayed in exhibitions held at Mullingar, Athlone and Castlepollard during Heritage Week. Three Big Dig events were held in Athlone, Mullingar and the winning School – St Tola’s NS, Killuagh, Co. Westmeath.

The second project was a collaborative one with Meath County Council, Kildare County Council and Dutch Federation for Conservation of Irish Bogs. ‘Peat Crossing Borderlines’ was a two day event held on 28th-29th July 2018 and involved a visit to Scragh Bog in Westmeath, which was the first of several sites purchased by the Dutch and given as a gift to the Irish people. It is now in the care of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) before moving on to visit Girley Bog, Co. Meath.

Heritage Week

Over 60 events were held around the County and good attendance was noted across these events, helped no doubt by the good weather.

Built Heritage Investment Scheme

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht provided funding of €46,396 to the Council in 2018, under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme to fund conservation works to four Protected Structures in the County. The grants awarded ranged from €10,000 - €15,000 and funded stone work, window repairs and roof repairs.

Structures at Risk – Grant Assistance Scheme

The Council also received a further grant of €43,000 under the Structures at Risk Fund, to assist with works to safeguard three Protected Structures in immediate danger of deterioration. The projects included roof replacement and wall repairs, extensive vegetation removal and structural stabilisation.
Section 57 Declarations

Section 57 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended allows for the owner or occupier of a Protected Structure to make a written request to the planning authority, to issue a declaration as to the type of works which it considers would or would not materially affect the character of the structure or any element of the structure, thereby clarifying which works would be considered exempted development. The Planning Department received and issued Section 57 Declarations in relation to 21 Protected Structures during 2018.

Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020

Progress continued in 2018 on the implementation of the 102 actions contained in the Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020.

All-Ireland Pollinator Plan Regional Event – Conference for Local Authorities, Athlone

Westmeath Heritage Office was delighted to support the National Biodiversity Data Centre Annual Conference on the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, which was held in Athlone in March 2018.

County Westmeath Swift Survey

A Countywide survey of Swifts was carried out, in line with the Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan: Actions 39*; 41*; 42*. The survey was funded by Westmeath County Council, with support from Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment. The survey was led by Bird Watch Ireland with support from the Westmeath Branch, Tidy Towns groups and other interested volunteers. 43 towns were surveyed and 203 nest sites were confirmed. The final report will be launched in Q1 2019 and will be made available on the Westmeath County Council website.

National Biodiversity Week – Nature Walk Coolure

Westmeath Heritage Office and NPWS Ranger Triona Finnen organised a nature walk on the Shores of Lough Derravaragh in Coolure, Co. Westmeath. The event was enjoyed by all who attended and many species were spotted including Marsh Fritillary Butterfly and Hawk Bee Moth.

Greenway Biodiversity Project

With funding from the National Biodiversity Action Plan Fund, NPWS, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Local Agenda 21 Environmental Partnership Fund from the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and Westmeath County Council, a project was initiated to raise public awareness of and record the biodiversity along the Old Rail Trail Greenway. This project will lead to the preparation of an Action Plan to enhance biodiversity along the route and set out actions to work towards making it a pollinator friendly corridor. Seven Primary Schools and four Secondary Schools together with a number of Tidy Towns groups along the route participated in this study and availed of nature walks and workshops on the identification of species and discussion of biodiversity issues.
Water Services

The foul sewer network collects effluent from approximately 14,800 premises for treatment at 23 waste water treatment plants. Monitoring of the treated effluent from the plants is carried out as required by the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and conditions of the Discharge Licences and Certificates of Authorisation issued by the Environmental Protection Agency. The most recent EPA report is in respect of 2017 and shows that the quality of treated effluent was good, except in the case of 4 areas where improvements were needed and these are being addressed by Irish Water.

Environment

Protect and improve water quality in our lakes and rivers by the implementation of the River Basin Management Plans

River Basin Management Plan

The Government has published the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021. The Plan, under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), sets out the actions that Ireland will take to improve water quality and achieve ‘good’ ecological status in water bodies (rivers, lakes, groundwaters) by 2027. Westmeath County Council samples the Lakes & Rivers under the National Monitoring Programme.

Bathing Water

In Ireland, local authorities have the primary responsibility for the management and monitoring of bathing waters and for the implementation of management measures to reduce or eliminate sources of pollution under the Bathing Water Quality Regulations 2008.

During the bathing season in 2018, Westmeath County Council carried out weekly and fortnightly monitoring of the quality of the designated bathing areas within the county. These bathing areas are located at The Cut on Lough Lene, Portnashangan on Lough Owel and Lilliput on Lough Ennell. Monitoring results can be viewed at https://www.beaches.ie.

Both The Cut and Portnashangan were found to be of “Excellent” quality. Lilliput, Lough Ennell is classified as achieving “Poor” Water Quality in 2018 based on the assessment of bacteriological results for the period 2015 to 2018.

Domestic Waste Water Treatment System Inspections

The Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012 requires the EPA to produce a National Inspection Plan. Inspections are carried out by the local authorities to make sure that Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems do not pose a risk to human health or the environment. Westmeath County Council carried out 25 inspections in 2018 in accordance with the Environmental Protection Agency, National Inspection Plan 2018-2021.

Agricultural Inspections

Westmeath County Council carried out 12 compliance inspections in 2018 under the European Union (Good Agricultural Practice for Protection of Waters) Regulations 2017.

Discharge Licence to Water (Section 4)

Local authorities are given powers under the Local Government (Water Pollution) Acts, 1977 & 1990 to control the discharge of effluent to waters. During 2018, Westmeath County Council carried out 25 inspections of premises holding a Section 4 discharge licence.
Food Safety and Veterinary Services

Food Safety

Westmeath County Council entered into a new contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) in 2016. This contract is a three year contract. Under the Contract, Westmeath County Council carries out enforcement of food safety legislation in 11 abattoirs and one small meat manufacturing plant. Westmeath County Council is also responsible for the enforcement of animal welfare legislation in the 11 abattoirs. In 2018 one new premises registered with Westmeath County Council.

Animal Control

Dog Control

There was a further decrease in the number of dogs seized and surrendered to the dog pound during 2018. This is consistent with a trend over the past decade and indicative of a changing more responsible culture around dog ownership. While the stray and unwanted dog trends are in the downward direction complaints relating to barking and fouling in public areas remain an issue, though the initiatives taken to educate and to promote a responsible approach to the management of dog fouling in public places is beginning to show some dividends.

![Number of Dogs Seized & Surrendered 2006-2018](chart)

Dog Breeding Establishment Act 2010 (DBE Act)

Ten establishments were registered with Westmeath County Council in 2018. These include Hunts, Charities, a Boarding Kennel and a Dog Breeding Establishment.

Horse Control

37 horses were impounded during 2018. The recent low numbers is consistent with the national picture, which sees supply and demand for horses coming into balance and also an increase in the price being paid for horses. While there are still some ongoing problem in the urban areas of Athlone and Mullingar with stay horses and breaches of the exclusion area requirements of the Control of Horses Bye-Laws 2012, there has been an improvement in compliance.
Enhance urban environments by the implementation of streetscape improvement projects, elimination of dereliction, litter management and provision of parks and open spaces.

Continued improvement in the National Tidy Towns results with an increase in marks for all 34 centres who entered the competition in 2018. Bronze medals were awarded to Athlone and Ballinahown and an Endeavour Award to Streamstown.

The Civic Amenity Sites in Athlone and Mullingar have continued to provide an important service with over 49,000 customers using the facilities in 2018 bringing 2,680 tonnes of waste and recyclables.

Across 40 bring bank locations in County Westmeath, members of the public recycled 43.3 tonnes of Aluminium and 1140 tonnes of glass.

At the 24 clothes bank locations around the county, members of the public facilitated the reuse of 58.4 tonnes of clothing.

There are 24 private waste facilities in the county with waste authorisations permitted by Westmeath County. These services facilities range from waste transfer stations, soils and stone recovery, composting facility, WEEE, authorised treatment facilities (scrapyards) etc.

A Certificate of Authorisation was approved by the EPA for the former landfill site in Moate. Remediation works are due to be carried out in 2019.

In 2018 a total of 6,876 enforcement inspections were undertaken.

**Athlone Municipal District**

- Work on Permanent Flood Defences continued.
- Anti Dumping Initiative projects completed in Grace Park Road and at AL River, Willow Park to value of €24,600 and €9,600 respectively.
- Provided support for Athlone Tidy Town’s ‘Big Clean’ day which arranged for communities in the town to come together for a litter collection day.
- Make Athlone Litter Free Steering group consisting of representation from Athlone Tidy Towns, Business interests and Council representatives set up in 2018 and met regularly throughout the year.
- In the National litter survey of 2018 by conducted by business group Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) Athlone achieved 2nd out of 40 towns / cities surveyed.
- Commenced a Drainage Scheme on the River Boor funded by the OPW.

**Mullingar Municipal District**

- Schedule of MMD Works – Agreed and monitored by the MMD Members on a quarterly basis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERFORMANCE INDICATOR</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of households based on the 2016 Census who are situated in an area covered by licensed operator providing a 3 bin service at 31/12/2018</td>
<td>2,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Pollution Cases closed from 1/1/2018 to the 31/12/2018</td>
<td>1,111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fire Services

**Operational Fire Service**

- Fire-fighters were maintained at agreed numbers with Personal Protective Equipment provided and training completed.
- Occupational health system up to date.
- Wage payments on schedule.
- Fire Service incidents responded to and dealt with.
- Fire Station buildings maintained.
- Provide mobilisation system maintained and functioning.
- Fire Service fleet maintained and functioning.
- Fire Service equipment maintained and functioning.

**Community support/fire prevention programme**

- 2018 School Programme completed.
- Pre-fire Planning continuing on an ongoing basis.
- Media used to promote fire safety awareness.
- Advice provided to Planning Authority.

*The following Certificates were processed in 2018 in accordance with national requirements.*

- Fire Safety Certificates
- 7 Day Notice
- Regularisation Certificates
- Revised Fire Safety Certificates
- Dangerous Substances Certificates
- Explosive Certificates

**Licensing Systems**

Licensing applications were processed for Courts.

**Civil Defence**

Civil Defence assisted An Garda Síochána with water and land searches for missing persons in the Athlone and Mullingar Districts in January and February and in the operation of Policing Plans for community events. Storm Emma mobilised Civil Defence for transportation and humanitarian response. 4X4 vehicles, drivers and navigators transported Westmeath Council Emergency Staff, Roads Engineers and rescued drivers stranded in vehicles that had become stuck in snow drifts. HSE Assistance Response including blood sample transfers, transporting medical laboratory, nursing, catering, ward staff to and from work in Hospitals, Community Houses and Nursing Homes, transferring dialysis patients to and from Renal Units in Tullamore and Cavan Regional Hospitals, collection of sick children and their parents from their homes and transferring them to hospital. Garda Callouts to transport severely ill adults to hospital from areas, inaccessible by National Ambulance Service appliances. The Civil Defence fleet and drivers were active 18 hours a day for the duration of the severe weather incident.
PERFORMANCE INDICATOR

| Average Time to Mobilise Fire Brigades in Part Time Stations in respect of Fire | 5.57 min |
| Average Time to Mobilise Fire Brigades in Part Time Stations in respect of non Fire | 7.00 min |
Goal 5 - Quality Customer Service

“To place quality customer service at the centre of everything we do.”

Supporting Strategies

5.1 To maximise the use of Council facilities, such as District Offices and Libraries, for the dissemination of information on services.

5.2 Review and implement our Customer Services Action Plan.

5.3 Seek to provide efficient housing, planning, environmental and other services to our customers in an equitable and courteous manner.

5.4 Continue to operate a Customer Contact Management System to record customer interactions.

5.5 Ensure that appropriate staff training programmes are in place to deliver quality customer service.


5.7 Enhance and promote online transactional and information services including use of social media.

5.8 Maximise organisational performance in the context of the National and Local Service Indicators and other performance measures.

Library

Westmeath Libraries continues to put the customer at the heart of the service, maximising space, staff and resources to provide a wide range of customer focused activities. Libraries remained a gateway whether through accessing books, multimedia, computer facilities or information on local information services and activities.

- 12,916 members joined Westmeath Libraries in 2018.
- 324,633 books and 25,053 multimedia items were borrowed.
- 274,799 people visited the Libraries.
- 28,093 internet sessions were used including 11,657 Wi-Fi sessions.
Manage and develop the County Library as a learning organisation

Westmeath Libraries worked with a number of agencies to tackle issues surrounding digital literacy offering basic computer courses and literacy courses. These agencies included: Irish Rural Network, Digitise the Nation, Mullingar Congress, Third Age, NCBI and LWETB.

Market and promote the library and its services throughout the County

Westmeath Libraries continued to develop its online profile raising awareness of library activities and local services. Individual branch pages were developed on Facebook and a new Instagram profile was developed.

- Facebook followers increased from 1244 to 1350.
- Twitter followers increased from 1666 to 1802.
- Instagram followers numbered 223 at the end of the year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERFORMANCE INDICATOR</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Library visits per head of population for the LA area per the 2016 census</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of items issued to library borrowers in 2018</td>
<td>223,497</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Corporate Services

Customer Service

A core aim of Westmeath County Council is to provide citizens and customers with the highest quality service in an economic, efficient, effective and equitable manner. A customer is any individual, group or organisation who avails of a service or information from the Council.

Our commitment to our customers is to provide a quality service in a professional and sensitive manner throughout our complete range of services.

- We will provide clear, helpful and accurate information
- We will improve our external website
- We will ensure appropriate access to our Civic Offices for all members of the public.

Westmeath County Council’s Customer Service Charter, available on our website at www.westmeathcoco.ie, outlines in detail our commitment to you, our customer.

“Our Commitment: to place quality customer service at the centre of everything we do.”
Westmeath County Council continued to actively use social media to communicate more effectively with customers and stakeholders.

The number of social media followers increased by approximately 12,000, with 55,271 followers on our various social media channels at the end of 2018.

Westmeath County Council participated in Our Council Day on 10 April 2018, using social media to highlight the numerous essential services provided by the Council.

At present, the Council operates the following social media accounts:

**Facebook**
- Westmeath County Council [https://www.facebook.com/westmeathcoco/](https://www.facebook.com/westmeathcoco/)
- LEO Westmeath [https://www.facebook.com/LEOWestmeath/](https://www.facebook.com/LEOWestmeath/)
- Westmeath County Library [https://www.facebook.com/WestmeathLibrary/](https://www.facebook.com/WestmeathLibrary/)
- Westmeath Arts [https://www.facebook.com/westmeath.arts/](https://www.facebook.com/westmeath.arts/)
- Visit Westmeath [https://www.facebook.com/visitwestmeath/](https://www.facebook.com/visitwestmeath/)
- Mullingar Dog Shelter [https://www.facebook.com/MullingarDogShelter/](https://www.facebook.com/MullingarDogShelter/)
- Mullingar Swimming Pool [https://www.facebook.com/MullingarSwimming/](https://www.facebook.com/MullingarSwimming/)

**Twitter**
- Westmeath County Council [https://twitter.com/westmeathcoco](https://twitter.com/westmeathcoco)
- LEO Westmeath [https://twitter.com/WestmeathLEO](https://twitter.com/WestmeathLEO)
- Westmeath County Library [https://twitter.com/whcclibrary](https://twitter.com/whcclibrary)
- Westmeath Heritage [https://twitter.com/Wmeathheritge](https://twitter.com/Wmeathheritge)
- Westmeath Arts [https://twitter.com/ArtsWestmeath](https://twitter.com/ArtsWestmeath)
- Visit Westmeath [https://twitter.com/LoveWestmeath](https://twitter.com/LoveWestmeath)

**Instagram**
- Visit Westmeath [https://www.instagram.com/visitwestmeath/](https://www.instagram.com/visitwestmeath/)
- Westmeath Library [https://www.instagram.com/westmeathlib/](https://www.instagram.com/westmeathlib/)

**PERFORMANCE INDICATOR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018</th>
<th>842,912</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total page views of the Local Authority’s websites in 2018</td>
<td>842,912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of followers at end 2018 of the Local Authority’s social media accounts</td>
<td>55,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of social media accounts operated by the Local Authority</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Register of Electors

Franchise Section It is each individual’s responsibility to check the Register to ensure they are included on it. The Register may be viewed at the offices of Westmeath County Council, your local Post Office, Library and Garda station or online at www.westmeathcoco.ie where details of eligibility can be obtained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Athlone</td>
<td>25,283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullingar/Kilbeggan</td>
<td>20,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullingar/Coole</td>
<td>23,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>68,523</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Westmeath County Council Civic Receptions 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Colaiste Mhuire, Mullingar (All Ireland Junior A Football Final)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multyfarham GAA Junior Football Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mr Wayne Kelly - National Elite Boxing Title</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Handball Civic Reception
Total Cost €687.58

ICT

Data protection

Responsibility for ensuring the Council’s duties are upheld under Data Protection legislation lay with the ICT Department until mid 2018. During 2018 a Data Protection Officer was appointed who has taken over this role.

Online Services

The Council continues to provide and maintain public WiFi services in a number of locations across the county as well as in its public offices. Details are available on the Council’s website http://bit.ly/2EfFsAH

Athlone Municipal District

• 899 Customer Contact Management System enquiries received
• 11 Municipal District Meetings held in 2018
• Total of 172 Motions & 131 Questions submitted by Members in 2018
• 246 planning applications received in 2018

Mullingar Municipal District

• 3,592 Customer Contact Management System enquiries received
• 11 Municipal District Meetings held in 2018
• 5 In Committee Meetings held in 2018
• Total of 649 Motions & Questions submitted by members in 2018.
• 366 planning applications received in 2018
• 101,984 persons attended Mullingar swimming pool
Civil Defence

Requests and queries dealt with directly by telephone, e-mail and via CCMS system. Enquiries from callers to office dealt with immediately. Provision of organisational and logistical advice to community, sporting and charity groups.

Environment

- 238 Commencement Notices (regarding 285 buildings) were received in 2018.
- All notices were administratively and technically checked and deemed either valid or not valid within required timeframe.
- 18.6% of buildings covered by Commencement Notice lodgement were inspected.
- 38 Disability Access Certificates were received and processed as necessary.

Water Services

The Council continued to review processes in water & wastewater plants to maximize efficiencies and improve customer service.

From January 2014, the Council has been operating under a 12 year Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Irish Water to provide water services in Westmeath in accordance with an agreed Annual Service Plan. Measurement against a number of key performance indicators showed that the Council met its obligations under the SLA.

During 2018, the Council continued to engage with Irish Water on its transformation programme, including management of customer queries and complaints, the National Laboratory Strategy, and development of the Water Industry Operating Framework (WIOF).

Fire Service

Requests and queries dealt with in accordance with CCMS guidelines.

National Performance Indicators

F2: Fire: Average time for Time Ordered to Time Mobile: 5:57 minutes
F2: S/S: Average time for Time Ordered to Time Mobile: 7:00 minutes
F3: Fire: Breakdown of calls from Time Ordered to Time IA
  < 10 minutes 29.06%
  10<>20 minutes 54.70%
  >20 minutes 16.24%
F3: S/S: Breakdown of calls from Time Ordered to Time IA
  < 10 minutes 11.45%
  10<>20 minutes 65.65%
  >20 minutes 22.90%
Goal 6 - Organisational Capacity

“To maximise organisational capacity through the continuous review of operational efficiency, human resource, financial and risk management practices.”

Supporting Strategies

6.1 Facilitate and support the representational role of the elected members through ongoing training and increased use of technology.

6.2 Continued implementation of the Human Resource Strategy and review of organisation structure and workforce plans having regard to legislative, financial or other changing circumstances.

6.3 Maintain and develop effective financial management systems which are responsive to our ever-changing needs, obtain value for money at all times, consist of strong cash-flow management and robust budgetary control.

6.4 Plan for the protection of our citizens through the emergency management framework for response to flooding, adverse weather and other emergencies.

6.5 Implement an organisation-wide Health and Safety Management System.

6.6 Ensure the property and assets of the Council are managed in a manner which maximises their present and future potential.

6.7 Fully explore and maximise opportunities that may arise through increased use of shared services and implement local shared service initiatives advanced under the Local Government Efficiency Review Group Report.

6.8 Facilitate and promote the implementation of organisation-wide ICT initiatives which provide opportunities for engagement with our communities and support increased efficiency and customer service.

6.9 Constantly review and have regard to the Risk Management System currently in place.

6.10 Maintain an Internal Audit function and fulfil any audit requirements arising therefrom, together with any requirements arising from Statutory Audits or recommendations of the Audit Committee.
Human Resources

Staffing Numbers 2018

Westmeath County Council employed a total of 538 staff at 31st December 2018. Human Resources experienced a continued rise in recruitment activity throughout the year with a total of 32 recruitment competitions managed during the calendar year. A total 54 no. of new employees were recruited in 2018.

Training and Development

A comprehensive training and development programme was delivered to Westmeath Co. Council staff in 2018, including a wide range of Health & Safety courses and awareness seminars. Progress has been achieved in terms of identification of training gaps and the provision of training reporting methods along with the continuation of the Performance Management and Development (PMDS) process. In addition business skills courses such as ICT, interview preparation skills, presentation skills, report writing and GDPR awareness were also provided. Our Training Plan also provided for the training needs of newly recruited staff members and given the large volume of recruitment over the last 18 months a group session Orientation Programme for new recruits was rolled out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERFORMANCE INDICATOR</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of Whole Time Equivalent Staff at 31/12/2018</td>
<td>453.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of paid working days lost to medically certified sickness absence</td>
<td>3.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of paid working days lost to self-certified sickness absence</td>
<td>0.38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fire Services & Civil Defence

Westmeath County Council purchased premises in Lough Sheever Corporate Park, Mullingar which when fitted out and become the new Civil Defence Headquarters, this acquisition will enable the consolidation of Civil Defence personnel, training and equipment in a modern, central and easily accessible facility.

Civil Defence provided assistance and support to Local Authority, An Garda Síochána and Community Groups for Emergencies, First Aid and Ambulance Cover, Stewarding and other Community Support. New personnel were recruited. Regular and specialised training was carried out. Nine members attended the 60th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes. Members from Westmeath have participated for the past 25 years. Service awards for the Pilgrimage were introduced in 2018 and Westmeath members received awards.

Major Emergency Plan updated. Training for Major Emergency carried out.

Midland Region Flood Emergency Response plans adopted by Midland Major Emergency Steering Group.

Civil Defence is supported by Westmeath County Council. Premises were purchased in order to provide a new Headquarters for the organisation. Civil Defence provided transportation assistance to the Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, Health Service Executive and humanitarian support to the wider Westmeath community during Storm Emma. Other community support goals were achieved through the provision of planning, operational, logistical support, stewarding, first aid, ambulance cover at events. New personnel were recruited. Regular and specialised training carried out.
Health & Safety

Westmeath County Council is committed to managing and conducting its work activities in such a way as to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of its employees and others who may be affected by its business activities.

Workplace Fatalities in Ireland

In 2018, a total of 37 workplace fatalities, across all industries, were reported to the Health and Safety Authority. This figure indicates a decrease of 23% on 2017 figures and is the lowest annual fatality figure since the establishment of the HSA in 1989. Thankfully there were no workplace fatalities in the Local Authority sector during 2018.

Health & Safety Training

Westmeath County Council is committed to promoting a safety culture, giving staff new skills and knowledge and developing good safety procedures on the job. Eighty four health & safety training courses were held with a total budget spend of €106,000. A large range of courses were held covering all aspect of health and safety. Some key training courses that were held during 2018 were locating underground services, tractor operator, safety representative and driver decision training. Also, a training exercise in dealing with a serious workplace accident was held in December 2018.

Communication and Consultation

The organisation safety reports was prepared each month by the Health and Safety Officer and circulated to all employees. On a periodic basis, the Health and Safety Officer also circulated key items of information (e.g. information on workplace incidents across the country, new legislation, safety alerts) on health and safety to keep employees updated on all aspects of health and safety requirements.

The County Council Management Team held quarterly dedicated health and safety meetings during 2018 to review ongoing health & safety performance across the organisation. The Health and Safety Officer attends these meetings also and provides relevant performance data information along with national developments in health and safety.

The Safety Monitoring Consultative Committee meetings were held in each department on a quarterly basis. This forum allows for specific safety issues within each section to be discussed. This is a valuable forum for addressing local issues and gives safety representatives an opportunity to raise safety issues on behalf of their work colleagues.

New organisation safety representatives were selected during the year. These representatives, along with existing organisation safety representatives, attended a designated safety representative training course.

Accident and Incident Details

Westmeath County Council is focused on the prevention of accidents in the workplace. Where accidents do occur, they are investigated to understand the root cause and prevent future reoccurrence. During 2018, twenty work related accidents involving staff were recorded at Westmeath County Council. These accidents resulted in 92 days lost. Key accident causes were slip and falls, manual handling and struck by an object. Thirteen of those accidents resulted in no time lost, whilst the seven remaining accidents accounted for the lost time.
Safety Inspections, Audits & Regulatory Compliance

Westmeath County Council continued with its extensive safety inspection program as a tool to monitor and maintain health and safety standards among their own staff and contractors. The Management Team conducted 19 site inspections whilst the Health and Safety Officer conducted 33 site inspections. The organisation departments & sections recorded an impressive 6,868 location inspections and over 3,098 vehicle inspections. Completion of this large number of inspections on an ongoing basis requires effort and commitment by all staff in the organisation. The reward for this effort is continuous improvement of safety standards and a reduction in serious accidents.

The H.S.A (Health & Safety Authority) carried out three unannounced site inspections during 2018. No improvement or prohibition notices were issued to Council.

ICT Department

Multi-Annual ICT Plan

Work continued during 2018 on implementing the ICT multi-annual plan, covering the years 2016 to 2018. This plan sets out a roadmap of how ICT services will be maintained improved during this period.

ICT Infrastructure

Work continued in 2018 to improve and protect the Council’s ICT infrastructure.

- Work on building a new Active Directory infrastructure continued during 2018 with a number of critical phases completed successfully.
- A number of wide area network services were procured to improve network connectivity across the organisation.
- A major upgrade to desktop software was procured in 2018 and towards the end of the year work commenced on migrating the councils desktop operating system and Office productivity to the new systems.
- New fixed line and mobile voice & data services contracts were procured and implemented ensuring ongoing best value is achieved in the provision of these services.

Graphic Design

The ICT Department continued to provide a graphic design service to the Council, producing statutory publications, signage, posters, timetables, certificates and graphic design work for online services including the new Belvedere and Council websites.

GIS Services

Work continued during 2018 to develop the new GIS solution commissioned in 2017, enabling the Council to provide high quality applications.

Athlone Municipal District

- Construction of new facilities at Blyry Depot to consolidate operations and to generate efficiencies in service delivery.
Procurement

Background

The National Public Procurement Policy Framework states that “Public procurement policy aims to achieve value for public money, whether it is grant funding, rates and local property tax or service charges. Value for money in procurement is the optimum combination of the whole-of-life costs and/or price where appropriate and quality or fitness for purpose to meet with the user’s requirement.”

The EU Procurement Directives, National Procurement Regulations, Policies, Circulars, rules and requirements guide procurement activities of the Council.

Corporate Procurement Plan

Considering the above, and within the context of the Council’s Mission Statement and Strategic Goals as described in Westmeath County Council Corporate Plan, the Council’s Corporate Procurement Plan 2016-2019 has been approved. The Corporate Procurement Plan provides a plan with multiyear objectives to ensure that the organisation’s procurement of goods, services and contracts for works, operates in accordance with the National Public Procurement Policy Framework and supports effective and efficient allocation of resources and service provision while ensuring transparency and accountability.

Procurement Section

While procurement and purchasing activities take place throughout various sections of the organisation, the role of the Procurement Section is to:-

• Provide advice to staff in relation to Procurement,
• Prepare the Quality Assurance Report required under the Public Spending Code,
• Monitor compliance of the organisation with EU Directives and National Regulations, Policies, Circulars, rules and guidelines,
• Develop procurement procedures and requirements,
• Provide advice in relation to the preparation of tenders and tender documentation, and review of tender documentation,
• Co-ordinate the appointment of legal service providers under the legal services framework agreement,
• Purchase Bulk Fuel, Personal Protective Equipment, Clothing and Footwear, Road Signage and other items on behalf of other sections of the Council.

The following reports and documents have been prepared by the Procurement Section:

• Project Inventory list as required for the Quality Assurance Report,
• Procurement /Project Progress of contracts of more than €10.0 million as required for the Quality Assurance Report,
• Quarterly Compliance Reports,
• Quarterly Reports on Purchase Orders >€20,000.
The Procurement Section has been involved in the following procurement activities:

- Interpretation media for Belvedere House and Estate,
- SRFT under the Framework for Cash and Coin Collection, Transit and Processing Services,
- SRFT under the Framework for Cleaning of Public Offices,
- Request for Tender for Audit of Geological Heritage Sites.

**Procurement Reports and Information published on web portal**

The following Procurement reports and information are published on Westmeath County Council’s web portal and available to County Westmeath citizens and suppliers:

- Corporate Procurement Plan,
- Purchase Orders that exceed €20,000,
- Public Spending Code Quality Assurance Report,
- Procurement /Project Progress of contracts of more than €10.0 million,
- General Procurement Information.

**Delivering of Primary Objectives of the Council**

- **Economic and Enterprise Development**
  Encourage shared procurement between sections of the Council.

- **Organisational Capacity**
  LGMA and LGOPC arranged training sessions during the year for the training of local authority buyers. Training in the use of CWMF documentation has been arranged and conducted by the LGMA.

- **Infrastructural Capacity**
  The quality and detail of transactional information recorded in Agresso is continuously being monitored and improved where required.
  
  The use of electronic platforms such as eTenders and Supplygov.ie and any other facilities developed by OGP and LGOPC where available, is continuously being encouraged in line with Procurement Directives, National Regulations and Government Policy.
  
  The aggregation of requirements and shared procurement across sections of the Council as well as with other neighbouring local authorities are continuously being encouraged where it makes good economic sense.
  
  In-depth checks on selected projects/programmes as required by Public Spending Code are been conducted by the Internal Auditor of the Council.

- **Quality Customer Service**
  The aim of public procurement is to achieve value for money for the taxpayer, when conducting procurement activities, whilst achieving the aims and objectives of the project or scheme being undertaken.
Protected Disclosures Act 2014

Report under Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 for the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018

The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 became operational on 15 July 2014. The legislation is intended to provide a robust statutory framework to protect workers who raise concerns regarding potential wrongdoing (whistleblowers) that has come to their attention in the workplace. The Act requires every public body to establish and maintain procedures for dealing with protected disclosures and to provide written information relating to these procedures to workers.

The legislation provides a comprehensive suite of employment and other protections to whistleblowers that are penalised by their employer or suffer a detriment from a third party on account of rising concerns regarding possible wrongdoing in their workplace. They will benefit from civil immunity from actions for damages and a qualified privilege under defamation law. Making a protected disclosure or reasonably believing a disclosure is protected is a defence to any offence prohibiting or restricting the disclosure of information.

The Act sets out a number of ways in which disclosures can be made – for example, to a person’s employer and, in some circumstances, to an external ‘prescribed’ person.

Each public body is required (under Section 22 of the Act) to publish an annual report setting out the number of protected disclosures received in the preceding year and the action taken (if any). This report must not result in persons making disclosures being identifiable.

This report of Westmeath County Council covers the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018. We are committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability. We aim to foster a working environment within which employees feel able to raise concerns relating to potential wrongdoing in the workplace and to provide the necessary support procedures for those that raise genuine concerns. We issued written procedures to workers to advise them of the approach to take when seeking to make a protected disclosure.

No protected disclosures were received in the period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018.
Lobbying Act 2015

In March 2015, the Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 was signed and came into effect on September 1st, 2015. The Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015 is designed to provide information to the public about:

• Who is lobbying
• On whose behalf lobbying is being carried out
• The issues involved in the lobbying
• The intended result of the lobbying
• Who is being lobbied.

Lobbying is an essential part of the democratic process. It enables or facilitates citizens and organisations to make their views on public policy and public services known to politicians and public servants.

The Act does not aim to prevent or inhibit lobbying. It does aim to make the process more transparent. The Act aims to do this by providing for:

• The establishment and maintenance of a publicly accessible register of lobbying
• The Standards in Public Office Commission (The Standards Commission) to be the regulator of lobbying
• Obligations on lobbyists to register and to provide information regularly about their lobbying activities, including, in the case of professional lobbyists, information about their clients
• A code of conduct on the carrying-on of lobbying activities
• The introduction of a “cooling-off” period during which lobbying activity may not be carried out by some former officials.

Lobbyists need to:

• Register on the Register of Lobbying website which is maintained by Standards Commission: www.lobbying.ie
• Provide information to the Standards Commission about your lobbying activities three times a year.

There is no cost to register as a lobbyist. Members of the public can view and search the register free of charge.

Registering

Lobbyists must register if they are carrying on lobbying activities. Carrying on lobbying activities meets the following conditions:

1. Communicating either directly or indirectly with a “Designated Public Official”.

Designated Public Officials

They are:

• Members of local authorities
• Chief Executive Officers and Directors of Services in Local Authorities
Financial Review

Introduction

The Annual Financial Statement of Westmeath County Council for the year ended 31 December 2018 is available to view on our website at http://www.westmeathcoco.ie/en/media/AFS%202018.pdf Comparative figures are shown for 2017.

Key Points

The following are the key points for the year 2018:

- A surplus on the Revenue Account of €18,205;
- A year free of a bank overdraft facility and associated costs;
- Repayment of principal on long term borrowings of €7m including repayment of principal on mortgage loans of €2.3m;
- New lending of €1.5m in respect of mortgage loans;
- Improvement in debt collection performance on all three major income streams: rates, rents and loans;
- Improvement in our ability to fund future long term capital investment consequent on the improving Government fiscal position.

Review of Financial Performance

The surplus for 2018 is €18,205 (2017, €30,657).

The surpluses reported in recent years are important steps in the establishment of a reasonable revenue surplus in order to provide a buffer to help address the financial impact of unforeseen adverse circumstances which may occur in the future.

Strict financial controls will continue to be maintained with the objective of ensuring that the Revenue Account is kept within balance and that deficits are not incurred.

Income

For every €1 of income earned during 2018, 51 cent was represented by Grants and Local Property Tax, 29 cent was represented by Goods and Services and 20 cent was represented by Commercial Rates.

A summary of the major sources of income is set out in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>€</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grants &amp; Subsidies</td>
<td>28,432,465</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>31.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goods &amp; Services</td>
<td>22,832,285</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>31.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Property Tax</td>
<td>11,205,507</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension Related Deduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rates</td>
<td>15,951,045</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions other LAs</td>
<td>273,503</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td><strong>78,694,804</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Rounding may affect totals.
**Expenditure**

Westmeath County Council works to sustain essential services and advance critical investments in Westmeath’s future while bringing our expenditure base in line with projected levels of funding.

In some instances, it was not possible to implement reductions on certain expenditure which by nature was non discretionary, for example payments required by contract or loan agreement terms.

For every €1 of revenue expenditure incurred in 2018, 30 cent was absorbed by Payroll Costs; 6 cent was incurred on Pensions; 51 cent on operational costs and 13 cent on all other non-pay costs.

**Capital Account**

Expenditure on Capital projects amounted to €32.0m in 2018 (2017, €23.6m). There were 14 projects with expenditure in excess of €300,000:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Project</th>
<th>€</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acquisition &amp; Refurbishment of 21 units at Belvedere Hills, Mullingar</td>
<td>3,743,233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Street to Dublin Gate Street Enhancement</td>
<td>3,273,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curraghmore NS Construction</td>
<td>2,211,954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N52 Cloughan to Billistown 2012</td>
<td>1,429,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Development St Laurences Tce</td>
<td>1,086,823</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Development at Arcadia Athlone</td>
<td>906,847</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N52 Cloughan to Billistown Phase 2 – Turin to Billistown</td>
<td>884,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilbeggan Town Centre</td>
<td>561,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of Market House Kilbeggan</td>
<td>495,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynn School Link Road</td>
<td>418,806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repairs to Vacant houses</td>
<td>410,928</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Defence HQ</td>
<td>387,161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athlone Flood Defences</td>
<td>370,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mullingar Town Enhancement Scheme</td>
<td>330,526</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Government’s fiscal position and therefore the availability of appropriate levels of funding are critical to funding our programme of capital projects. And with the improving fiscal position, activity has recommenced in recent years. This is evidenced by the Government’s Housing Strategy in particular with approval having been obtained for acquisitions and a number of construction projects. 72 houses were added to our stock in 2018 through a combination of acquisitions (60) mortgage-to-rent (2) and construction (10).

Our ability to fund any local contribution, which is well known at the initiation of the project, is a key factor in initiating capital projects. This local contribution is funded mainly through development contributions. While net income of circa €872,000 was generated in 2018, of the total €407,000 were specific contributions, €416,000 were standard contributions, with the remaining €49,000 contributions in respect of water services infrastructure. The absence of a strong and consistent flow of development contribution income continues to pose serious questions as to the financing of further similar projects.

The sale of houses to sitting tenants has, in the past, been a very valuable source of funds. These funds, which were hugely important, were mainly used to maintain and enhance existing housing stock. The announcement of a new scheme in late 2015 was a welcome development. There were 2 transactions completed in 2018, yielding €106,070.
Revenue Collection

Set out in the following table is a summary of our revenue collection performance for 2018 with comparatives for 2017 and 2016:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rates</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rents</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Loans</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The economic environment, the availability of credit, and static incomes has made collecting debt particularly difficult in recent years. We made further progress in 2018 and we continue to work to improve our performance again in 2019.

Westmeath County Council continues to work with borrowers in arrears in accordance with the procedures set out in the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP), as agreed by the local authority sector. Our overall objective is to find and implement a sustainable solution for each mortgagee while simultaneously managing the corresponding financial risk to the Council. While the overall level of arrears (net of those accounts in surplus) has been reduced very significantly in recent years, work remains to be done in this area.

National initiatives such as: the creation of a MARP Fund to alleviate residual losses arising; the Mortgage-to-rent Scheme; Shared Ownership Restructuring Options, are key tools in enabling us to address this issue and thereby reduce the financial exposure on the local authority. 2018 proved to be another important year as we worked to move the bulk of borrowers in arrears that are on short-term alleviation measures to a long-term sustainable solution. We will continue this work in 2019.

“While we are committed to working with customers in difficult circumstances we have and will take all actions available to us in order to collect the debt where a customer refuses to positively engage with us.”

Financial Reporting & Control

Annual Financial Statement

The aim of the Annual Financial Statement is to fairly present the financial position of Westmeath County Council for the year and as at the end of 2018. This is achieved through the production of Statements, Notes and Appendices, as required by the regulatory accounting framework set by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Accounting Policies

The Accounting Policies used in the preparation of the AFS are set out in the Statement of accounting policies. Westmeath County Council is fully compliant with the regulatory accounting framework as determined by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

Statutory & Other Audits

Westmeath County Council undergoes an annual audit, required by statute, carried out by the Local Government Audit Service (LGAS). The Audit for the financial year 2018 is expected to commence in July 2019. This Audit provides an independent review to help assure a fair presentation of Westmeath County Council’s financial position. Westmeath County Council is also subject to audit in relation to EU funding, Government funding, tax compliance and audits with a Value for Money objective through the Local Government Audit Service.
System of Internal Controls

The Executive of Westmeath County Council acknowledges its responsibility for systems of internal control in Westmeath County Council including putting in place processes and procedures for the purpose of ensuring that control systems are effective. These systems can provide reasonable but not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or detected in a timely period. Effective internal control systems enable Westmeath County Council to meet its responsibilities for the integrity and accuracy of its accounting records.

Westmeath County Council has taken steps to ensure an appropriate control environment is in place by:

• Clearly defining and documenting Management responsibilities and duties;
• Encouraging a strong culture of accountability across all levels of the organisation;
• Facilitating the work of the Internal Audit;
• The maintenance of a Corporate Risk Register;
• The work of the Ethics Officer;
• Supporting the work of the Audit Committee.

Financial Management

Financial management reporting in Westmeath County Council is robust and thorough. A rigorous system of financial monitoring ensures that any significant budget variances are identified and appropriate actions are taken to minimise any adverse financial impact. The system of internal financial control is based on a framework of regular management information, administrative procedures including segregation of duties, and a system of delegation and accountability. In particular, it includes:

• A comprehensive budgeting system with an annual budget which is reviewed and agreed by the elected members.
• Regular financial reviews: quarterly and ad-hoc financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts on both expenditure and income and variance analysis evaluation.
• Setting targets to measure financial and other performances.
• Strict policies and procedures, regularly reviewed, for the receipt, recording and control of monies.

Procurement

Effective procurement is a key objective of this organisation. We have a dedicated procurement team resourced by our Procurement Officer and his staff within the Finance Directorate. Our objective is to continue to enhance procurement procedures and expertise in the context of the Corporate Procurement Plan. We have already realised improvements in this area and will continue to work to ensure that we obtain value for money in all categories of expenditure.

Conclusion

Westmeath County Council services critically support business, residential and visitor life in the County. Service demand remained high in 2018 notwithstanding economic pressures, and this remains the case in 2019.

As we continue to become accustomed to a new structure of local government in Westmeath we will continue to manage our finances in a prudent fashion striving always to ensure that essential services are delivered to a high quality and represent value for money. We will also continue to maintain strict financial controls making the necessary adjustments where changing circumstances demand.
## Conferences attended by Westmeath County Council Members in 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Conference: Organising Body</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Councillors In Attendance</th>
<th>Amount Claimed (T&amp;S)</th>
<th>Conference Fee/Training Fee</th>
<th>Total Cost - Code 0811775R AILG/LAMA Training</th>
<th>Total Cost - Code 0811775R - Other Conferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19/02/18</td>
<td>LAMA</td>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>Awards 2017</td>
<td>Clr Una D'arcy</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€100.00</td>
<td>€100.00</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/02/18</td>
<td>NUI</td>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>Diploma - Community Development Practice</td>
<td>Clr Una D'arcy</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€400.00</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/02/18</td>
<td>AILG</td>
<td>Mullingar, Co. Westmeath</td>
<td>Module 1</td>
<td>Clr Emily Wallace Clr Michael Dollard</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/02/18 &amp; 24/02/18</td>
<td>Colmcille Hertigage Trust</td>
<td>Letterkenny, Co. Donegal</td>
<td>Housing Provision - Ireland</td>
<td>Clr Paul Hogan</td>
<td>€321.07</td>
<td>€150.00</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€471.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/04/18 &amp; 7/04/18</td>
<td>LAMA</td>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>Spring Conference</td>
<td>Clr Frank Mcdermott Clr Tom Farrell Clr Paddy Hill</td>
<td>€270.79</td>
<td>€160.00</td>
<td>€430.79</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/04/18 &amp; 13/04/18</td>
<td>AILG</td>
<td>Dungarvan, Co. Waterford</td>
<td>Annual Conference Spring</td>
<td>Clr Billy Collentine Clr John Dolan Clr Tom Farrell Clr Paddy Hill</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€278.82</td>
<td>€160.00</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/04/18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaza, Dundalk, Co. Louth</td>
<td>Rural Society In Transition</td>
<td>Clr Emily Wallace</td>
<td>€82.41</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€82.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/04/18</td>
<td>iPB AGM</td>
<td>Clarion Hotel Dublin</td>
<td>Agm</td>
<td>Clr John Dolan</td>
<td>€124.49</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€124.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23/06/18</td>
<td>AILG</td>
<td>Crown Plaza Hotel, Dundalk</td>
<td>Module 3</td>
<td>Clr Tom Farrell</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/07/18</td>
<td>JPC</td>
<td>Ashling Hotel, Dublin</td>
<td>Consultation Event</td>
<td>Clr Frank Mcdermott</td>
<td>€99.21</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€99.21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/09/18</td>
<td>NUI Galway</td>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>Diploma - Community Development Practice - Fees</td>
<td>Clr Frankie Keena</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€800.00</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/09/18 &amp; 29/09/18</td>
<td>LAMA</td>
<td>River Island Hotel, Castleisland, Co. Kerry</td>
<td>Autumn Training Seminar</td>
<td>Clr Paddy Hill Clr Tom Farrell</td>
<td>€180.00</td>
<td>€180.00</td>
<td>€668.27</td>
<td>€180.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09/18</td>
<td>AILG</td>
<td>Birr, Co. Offaly</td>
<td>Module 4</td>
<td>Clr Emily Wilace Clr Tom Farrell</td>
<td>€82.99</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Conference: Organising Body</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Councillors in Attendance</td>
<td>Amount Claimed (T&amp;S)</td>
<td>Conference Fee/Training Fee</td>
<td>Total Cost</td>
<td>Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/10/18</td>
<td>AILG</td>
<td>Longford Arms Hotel, Longford</td>
<td>Module 5</td>
<td>Clr Tom Farrell</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
<td>0811787R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/10/18 &amp; 26/10/18</td>
<td>AILG</td>
<td>Monaghan</td>
<td>Autumn Training Seminar</td>
<td>Clr Paddy Hill Clr Billy Collentine Clr Tom Farrell</td>
<td>€192.19</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€135.00</td>
<td>€327.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/11/18</td>
<td>NUI Galway</td>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>Diploma - Community Development Practice - Fees</td>
<td>Clr Una D'arcy</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€400.00</td>
<td>€400.00</td>
<td>€400.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/11/18</td>
<td>AILG</td>
<td>Laois</td>
<td>Module 6</td>
<td>Clr Emily Wallace Clr John Dolan Clr Tom Farrell</td>
<td>€57.28</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€55.00</td>
<td>€112.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/11/18</td>
<td>NUI Galway</td>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>Diploma - Community Development Practice - Fees</td>
<td>Clr Emily Wiliace</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€800.00</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/12/18</td>
<td>NUI Galway</td>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>Diploma - Community Development Practice - Fees</td>
<td>Clr Paul Hogan</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€800.00</td>
<td>€0.00</td>
<td>€800.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>€2,481.60</strong></td>
<td><strong>€5,913.27</strong></td>
<td><strong>€4,624.70</strong></td>
<td><strong>€3,977.11</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Council Membership of Committees and Other Bodies 2018

Association of Irish Local Government
Cllr. Tom Farrell
Cllr. John Dolan
Cllr. Paddy Hill
Cllr. Bill Collentine

Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurance Limited
Cllr. John Dolan

Local Authority Members Association (L.A.M.A)
Cllr. Tom Farrell
Cllr. Andrew Duncan

Border, Midland and Western Regional Assembly
Cllr. Paddy Hill
Cllr. Andrew Duncan

Westmeath Local Community Development Limited
Cllr. Bill Collentine
Cllr. Aengus O’Rourke
Cllr. Tom Farrell

Mullingar Integrated Arts Centre Ltd
Cllr. Ken Glynn
Cllr. Brian Crum
Cllr. Frank McDermott
Cllr. Andrew Duncan

Athlone Arts and Tourism Ltd.
Cllr. Aengus O’Rourke
Cllr. John Dolan
Cllr. Michael O’Brien

Westmeath County Council Road Safety Working Together Committee
Cllr. Tom Farrell
Cllr. Liam McDaniel

Strategic Policy Committees:

Transportation and Planning
Chair: Cllr. Tom Farrell
Cllr. Brian Crum
Cllr. Sorca Clarke
Cllr. Liam McDaniel

Housing, community, Corporate and Culture
Chair: Cllr. Ken Glynn
Cllr. Frankie Keena
Cllr. Michael Dollard
Cllr. Michael O’Brien
Cllr. Andrew Duncan

Economic, Enterprise and Tourism
Chair: Cllr. Aengus O’Rourke
Cllr. John Shaw
Cllr. John Dolan
Cllr. Una D’Arcy
Cllr. Bill Collentine

Environment, Water and Emergency Services
Chair: Cllr. Paul Hogan
Cllr. Michael O’Brien
Cllr. Paddy Hill
Cllr. Johnny Penrose
Cllr. Frank McDermott

Local Rural Water Monitoring Committee
Cllr. Frank McDermott
Cllr. Liam McDaniel
Cllr. Bill Collentine

Traveller Consultation Committee
Cllr. Sorca Clarke
Cllr. Aidan Davitt
Cllr. Michael Dollard

Athlone Regional Sports Centre Ltd.
Cllr. John Dolan
Cllr. Frankie Keena

Belvedere House & Gardens Committee
Cllr. Emily Wallace
Cllr. Liam McDaniel
Cllr. Bill Collentine

Westmeath Heritage Forum
Cllr. Andrew Duncan
Cllr. Tom Farrell
Cllr. Una D’Arcy

Dean Crowe Theatre Trust
Cllr. Frankie Keena

Shannon River Basin District Advisory Council
Cllr. Aengus O’Rourke
Cllr. John Dolan

Eastern River Basin District Advisory Council
Cllr. Paddy Hill
Cllr. Una D’Arcy

Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board
Chair: Cllr. Frankie Keena
Cllr. Michael Dollard
Cllr. Liam McDaniel
Cllr. Tom Farrell
Cllr. Emily Wallace
Cllr. Ken Glynn
Cllr. Una D’Arcy
Cllr. Sorca Clarke

Dublin-Mid Leinster Regional Health Forum
Cllr. Andrew Duncan
Cllr. Frankie Keena
Cllr. Michael Dollard

Westmeath County Council Audit Committee
Cllr. John Shaw

Midland Regional Drugs Taskforce
Cllr. Aengus O’Rourke

County Westmeath Joint Policing Committee
Chair: Cllr. Frank McDermott
Cllr. Michael O’Brien
Cllr. Paddy Hill
Cllr. Paul Hogan
Cllr. Tom Farrell
Cllr. Andrew Duncan
Cllr. Frankie Keena
Cllr. Sorca Clarke
Cllr. Ken Glynn
Cllr. John Shaw
Cllr. Bill Collentine
Cllr. Aengus O’Rourke
Cllr. Emily Wallace
## Appendix 2a

**Payments received by Council Members appointed to Committees and Other Bodies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committees / Other Bodies</th>
<th>Payments To:</th>
<th>Period: 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board</strong></td>
<td>Ken Glynn</td>
<td>No payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frankie Keena</td>
<td>€463.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liam McDaniel</td>
<td>No payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emily Wallace</td>
<td>No payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Dollard</td>
<td>€1,118.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sorca Clarke</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Farrell</td>
<td>€1,540.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Una D’Arcy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dub-Mid Leinster Regional Health Forum</strong></td>
<td>Andrew Duncan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frankie Keena</td>
<td>€554.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Dollard</td>
<td>€534.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Association of Irish Local Government</strong></td>
<td>Paddy Hill</td>
<td>€1,700.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bill Collentine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tom Farrell</td>
<td>€1,836.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>John Dolan</td>
<td>No payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Midland Regional Drugs Taskforce</strong></td>
<td>Aengus O’Rourke</td>
<td>No payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eastern and Midlands Regional Assembly</strong></td>
<td>Andrew Duncan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paddy Hill</td>
<td>€2,500.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>