

**KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL****ADOPTED 2009 BUDGET****To the Cathaoirleach and Each Member of Kilkenny County Council****Overview**

The total expenditure in the 2009 Budget amounts to €76.2 million, a decrease of €0.9 million on the adopted 2008 Budget.

The 2009 Local Government Fund allocation of €20,685,770 is a reduction of €1,213,204 (5.6%) on the 2008 allocation of €21,898,974.

It has been the clear expressed view of the members that having regard to the difficult economic climate, and the difficulties faced by businesses generally, that there should not be a rates increase. It has proved possible to accommodate the member's views, balanced with the need to deliver services with some changes, and to prepare a balanced budget. Accordingly, no rates increase is proposed for 2009.

The main factors influencing the 2009 budget are:

1. The €1.2m (5.6%) decrease in funding from the Local Government Fund.
2. Increased costs of energy (20% increase September 2008), and general inflation of 4%.
3. Increased costs of water and waste water services, including a contribution of €300,000 towards the operational costs associated with the new Waterford City Waste Water Treatment Plant. This contribution will fund that element of the Plant's capacity servicing the Waterford City Environs area in South Kilkenny.
4. The need to implement EU and national policy on water pricing.
5. The need to re-balance services having regard to changes in population, availability of financing, a changed construction environment, etc.

### **Broad Strategies**

As agreed previously, any strategy for the development of Kilkenny must have regard to three principal strands of development (1) the development of the rural economy and the role and needs of the principal towns and villages and the surrounding rural areas (2) the development of Kilkenny city and its role as a hub in national and regional development strategies (3) the development of South Kilkenny and the development of the Gateway with the Waterford County & City Authorities.

Equally, the Council must have regard in its policies, its operations, and in its income and expenditure projections to the downturn in economic performance and the reduced resources available. It is expected that there will be a further downturn in public financing in the coming year.

Accordingly, the Council must seek to be prudent and must deliver and or re-balance services in line with the current and expected availability of finance, while seeking to be as developmental as possible.

### **Expenditure Changes in the draft 2009 Budget**

The main expenditure changes in the draft budget are as follow:-

1. Housing – provision is included for the implementation of the rental assistance scheme, housing maintenance, and housing adaptation grant schemes for older people and people with a disability. Total provision of €10.9m – an increase of €0.3m.
2. Roads – provision is included for maintenance of the road network, provision for public lighting costs and provision for improved road safety promotion/education. The local contribution towards the funding of Roads is €2.3m. Total provision of €18.6 million.
3. Water Services – this budget reflects higher treatment costs including energy and increased production, increased EPA Discharge Licensing costs and a first time contribution of €300,000 towards the operational costs of the Waterford City Waste Water Treatment Plant. Total provision of €13.0 million – an increase of €0.8 million.

4. Development Management – continued support for planning services and community initiatives. Total provision of €6.8 million – no change on 2008. The 2008 Budget initiative in relation to the setting up of a fund for a third/fourth level education facility/economic development is continued in 2009.
5. Environmental Services - the main expenditure in this area relates to Dunmore Landfill, general environmental services and the Fire Service. The main point of note is that Dunmore Landfill, operated by the Council, will close towards the end of 2009. Fire Service budgets include provision towards the implementation of the Fire Services change programme and the Framework for Major Emergency Management. Total provision of €10.7 million – a decrease of €0.9 million.
6. Recreation and Amenity – The 15<sup>th</sup> December will see the opening of The Watershed, the Scanlon Park sports complex jointly provided by both Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Borough Council. This is a landmark facility for both the region and nationally, and is a very welcome addition to the County's recreational infrastructure. Provision has been made for the operation of outdoor leisure areas including playgrounds and open space. Provision is made for the Arts Programme and proposals will be further developed in 2009 for gallery, cultural and arts facilities. Total provision of €4.3 million – a decrease of €0.6 million.
7. Agriculture, Education and Health and Welfare – increases relate to VEC pensions and Higher Education Grants. Total provision of €7.7 million – an increase of €0.6 million.
8. Miscellaneous Services – includes council plant and bitumen stores, local elections, coroner expenses, motor taxation and members expenses. Total provision of €3.9 million – a decrease of €0.1 million.
9. Central Management – includes area office overhead, corporate affairs overhead, corporate buildings overhead, finance function overhead, human resources function, IT services, print and post room overhead, and pension and lump sum overhead. Total provision of €10.8 million (apportioned over service divisions A-H above) – a decrease of €0.3 million.

A more detailed and comprehensive analysis on each service division is included later in this report.

### **Capital Programme**

A multi annual Capital Budget to cover the years 2008 – 2013 has been prepared coterminous with this draft 2009 operational Budget. This multi annual capital programme projects the Council spending over €1.5 billion between the years 2009 to 2013 on the provision of new fixed assets, and the upgrading or expansion of existing assets, all which are required to meet the demand of a growing county. The capital expenditure envisaged will be funded primarily from government grants, development contributions, borrowings and the sale of assets and is based on current economic conditions and projections. Should there be a material change in conditions, then this budget would have to be subject to further review.

The Council hopes to secure €1.36 billion in government grants to help fund the capital programme and it will need to raise approximately €62 million locally, whether from development contributions, sale of assets or annual Income & Expenditure Budget provision.

As can be seen from the Capital Budget, the infrastructural expenditure envisaged is very much front-loaded into the next number of years with the Council's share of the total funding cost being financed from development charges over a much longer period. There is a consequential need for the Council to avail of loan financing, such loans to be repaid from development charges. Departmental approval is required for any loans sought and in the current financial and banking climate, it may be expected that any such proposals would be subject to intense scrutiny.

The capital programme provides the necessary infrastructure such as roads, water and environmental services to meet the needs of the county, enable the county to grow and develop its own indigenous industry, and also attract new industry.

The draft 2009 Budget makes provision for the operational costs of completed capital schemes. Such costs include energy, insurance and maintenance etc.

### **Development Contributions**

Current Balance of Development Charge Income

The balance on the development contributions fund at the end of 2007 was €15.3m. The 2008 Development Contribution Scheme Budget allocated €10m of this to various infrastructure projects. It is likely that a further €7m will be collected during 2008. At the end of 2008 there will be an expected balance of €12.3m on the Development Contribution Fund broken down as follows:

	<u>€m</u>
Balance at 31/12/2007	15.3
Development Contribution Scheme Capital Budget - 2008	(10.0)
Development Contribution Scheme Collections - 2008	<u>7.0</u>
	<u>12.3</u>

Estimate of 2009 Development Charge Collection

The current Development Contribution Scheme projected annual development charge receipts of approximately €1.4m p.a. With the very sudden and sharp reduction in development activity, it now appears likely that the Council will collect no more than €5m p.a. in development charges for the foreseeable future; this very severe reduction in development charge collection has an impact on the amount of local funding available for infrastructural investment and has been factored into the Draft 2009 – 2013 Capital Budget assumptions. This is a situation that is being kept under continual review.

Indicative 2009 Development Contribution Scheme Budget Funding

Subject to further work as referred to in the Draft 2009 – 2013 Capital Budget, it would appear that the 2009 Development Contribution Scheme Budget, to be presented in February/March 2009, will indicate proposed spending of approximately €5/€6m.

### **Public Sector Pay Awards**

The budgeted Income and Expenditure payroll costs (including pensions) for Kilkenny County Council in 2009 is €27.6m, which represents 36.2% of the 2009 Budget. Given the labour intensive nature of local authority activities, this is considered to be a reasonable level for provision.

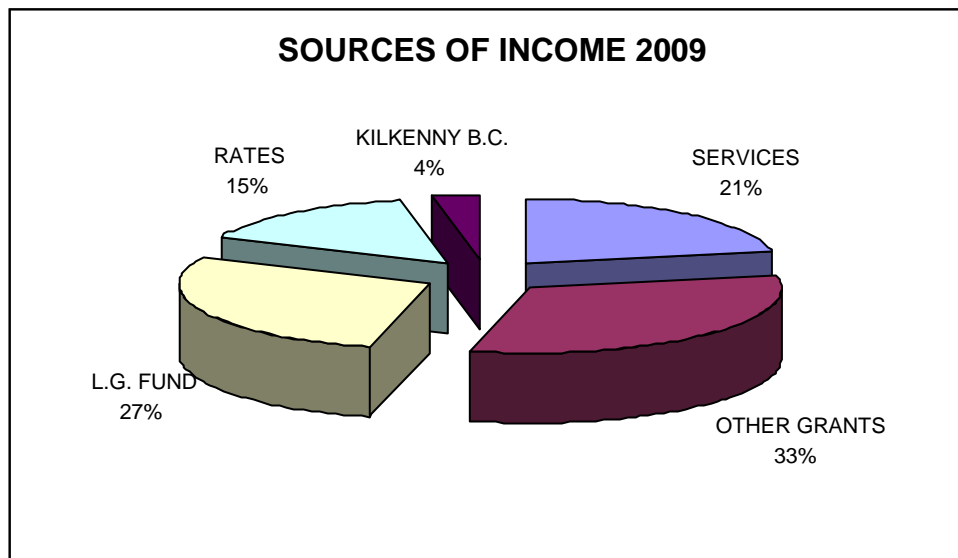
The budgeted 2009 payroll costs comply with the Government requirement that payroll costs be reduced by 3%.

### **Inflation**

Over the past two years there has been very significant price increases in the goods and services essential to the Councils work programmes. The Central Statistics Office latest publication shows the annual rate of inflation (CPI) at 4% for the period to October 2008.

### **Sources of Funding**

The following chart shows the principal sources of funding in the 2009 Budget.



### **Commercial Rates**

A 0% rates increase has been budgeted in the draft 2009 Budget.

The contribution from commercial rates is 15% of the 2009 Budget income.

### **Other Charges**

While the 2009 budget provides for a continuation of a high level of service across all service divisions, every effort has been made to keep charges to the public as low as possible. It is proposed that the following charges will apply in 2009.

- Landfill gate fees will be maintained at €130 per tonne plus government levy of €20 per tonne - €150 in total.
- The Council will complete the three year phased implementation of the National Water Pricing Policy in 2009 by charging the full economic costs, to be set at of €0.98 and €1.96 per m<sup>3</sup> for water and waste water services respectively, – for further details see also the Section following on Water Services – Service Division C.
- Fire Services – the call out charges will be increased from €50 per person/hour to €70 per person/hour attending.

### **Strategic Policy Committees**

The Councils five Strategic Policy committees Forward Planning & Development, Housing & Social, Environmental Policy Fire Services & Emergency Policy, Infrastructure, Transportation & Water, Arts Culture Heritage Tourism & Education have addressed major strategic issues facing the County under the Chairmanship of Cllrs Pat Millea, Tommy Brennan, Martin Brett, M. H. Cavanagh, and Ann Phelan. The SPCs are an important part of the Councils policy development process and they dealt with a very significant range of policy matters during 2008.

### **Area Committees**

The Council's five area committees of Ballyragget, Callan, Kilkenny, Piltown and Thomastown, under the Chairmanship of Cllrs Mary H Cavanagh, Tom Maher, John Coonan, Dick Dowling and Michael O'Brien, met quarterly, or more often as considered necessary by individual committees, to deal with issues relating to service delivery on an area basis. The area committees have addressed a range of road, traffic management, village renewal, community, environmental improvement and service issues for their localities in 2008.

**Service Division**

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

**Conclusion**

I wish to thank all the members of the Council and the Cathaoirleach Cllr. Tomas Breathnach and his predecessor Cllr. Tom Maher for their continuing work to advance the county the members of the Corporate Policy Group and SPC chairs, Chairman Cllr. Tomas Breathnach, Cllr. Anne Phelan, Cllr. Pat Millea, Cllr. M. H. Cavanagh, and Cllr M. Brett and the chairs of the area committees, Cllrs. M.H. Cavanagh, John Coonan, Tom Maher, Michael O' Brien and Dick Dowling.

I also wish to extend my appreciation to the Directors of Services John McCormack, Tony Walsh, Philip O' Neill, John Mulholland and John Dempsey, Head of Finance and to all staff for their co-operation and assistance during 2008.

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**J. Crockett,**  
**County Manager.**

## Service Delivery at Local Area Level

During 2008, a huge amount of work was done at Local Area Committee level with members of the 5 electoral areas meeting regularly to focus on issues appropriate and relevant to their local area. As well as their role in allocation of funding and prioritisation of works within their electoral areas, the area committees have an invaluable function through the regular interaction with deputations they receive from local community groups. Reports from the Area chairs are given at the following County Council Meeting and keep the full Council informed regarding current issues within the areas. Amongst the issues discussed at area level in 2008 were:

- Roads Grants 2008
- Estate management
- Road works scheme 2008
- Various Local Area Plans relevant to that Electoral area
- Public lighting
- Boundary Reviews arising from the report of the Boundary Committee
- Taking in Charge of Estates
- Community involvement schemes
- Flooding
- Local traffic control measures
- Community and cultural facilities capital schemes
- CLAR
- Allocation of the local portion of Development Contribution Scheme funding
- Surface dressing

The area committee membership is as follows:

**Kilkenny Electoral Area:** (6 meetings)

Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick  
 Cllr John Coonan(Area Chair)  
 Cllr Marie Fitzpatrick  
 Cllr Martin Brett  
 Cllr Michael Lanigan  
 Cllr Paul Cuddihy  
 Cllr Malcolm Noonan

**Ballyragget Electoral Area:** (4 meetings)

Cllr MH Cavanagh(Area Chair)

Cllr Patrick Millea

Cllr Maurice Shortall

Cllr John Brennan

Cllr Catherine Connery

**Thomastown Electoral Area:** (5 meetings)

Cllr Dixie Doyle

Cllr Pat O'Neill

Cllr Tom Brennan

Cllr Ann Phelan

Cllr Michael O'Brien(Area Chair)

**Piltown Electoral Area:** (4 meetings)

Cllr Pat Walsh

Cllr Dick Dowling(Area Chair)

Cllr Cora Long

Cllr Catherine Phelan

Cllr Tomas Breathnach

Cllr Pat Dunphy

**Callan Electoral Area:** (5 meetings)

Cllr Tom Maher(Area Chair)

Cllr William Ireland

Cllr Matt Doran

Kilkenny County Council will work with the elected members in the five Electoral Area to develop and implement improvements in the main urban centres in the county and in their hinterlands as resources permit in 2009.

<b>SPC Committee Membership</b>
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**SPC 1 – Forward Planning & Development Policy**

<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>NAME</b>
ELECTED MEMBERS (7)	Cllr. Pat Millea, Chairperson Cllr. Tom Maher Cllr. Pat Dunphy Cllr. Dick Dowling. Cllr. Dixie Doyle Cllr. Malcolm Noonan Cllr. Tomas Breathnach
BOROUGH COUNCIL  MEMBER (1)	Cllr. Betty Manning
DEVELOPMENT/CONSTRUCTION	Denis Guilfoyle
ENVIRONMENT / CONSERVATION / CULTURE (1)	Eileen Somer Ronan
AGRICULTURE / FARMING	Kevin Connolly
COMMUNITY / VOLUNTARY / DISADVANTAGED (1)	John Burke,
BUSINESS / COMMERCIAL	Michael Nolan
TOTAL (13)	

**SPC 2 - Infrastructure, Transportation, Water Services & Other**

<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>NAME</b>
ELECTED MEMBERS (5)	Cllr. Mary Hilda  Cavanagh (Chairperson from 21/7/08)  Cllr. Paul Cuddihy  (Chairperson to 21/7/08)  Cllr. Pat O'Neill  Cllr. Pat Walsh  Cllr. Cora Long  Cllr. Maurice Shortall
AGRICULTURE  FARMING (1)	John Bambrick
COMMUNITY / VOLUNTARY / DISADVANTAGED (1)	Eamonn Walsh
BUSINESS  COMMERCIAL (1)	Alison McGrath
TRADE UNION (1)	Phil Funchion
TOTAL (9)	

**SPC 3 - ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INCLUDING FIRE SERVICES AND  
EMERGENCY PLANNING**

<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>NAME</b>
ELECTED MEMBERS (6)	Cllr. Martin Brett (Chairperson from 21/7/08) Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick Cllr. Catherine Phelan Cllr. Matt Doran Cllr. Malcolm Noonan Cllr. Maurice Shortall (Note: Cllr. John Brennan was Chairperson to 21/7/08)
ENVIRONMENT / CONSERVATION / CULTURE (1)	Eileen Flynn
AGRICULTURE / FARMING (1)	Michael Rice,
COMMUNITY / VOLUNTARY / DISADVANTAGED (1)	Sean Fitzpatrick
BUSINESS / COMMERCIAL (1)	Trish Finegan
TOTAL (10)	

**SPC 4 – Housing Policy**

<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>NAME</b>
ELECTED MEMBERS (7)	Cllr. Tom Brennan (Chairperson) Cllr. Catherine Connery Cllr. Pat O’Neill, Cllr. W. Ireland, Cllr. Martin Brett, Cllr. Cora Long. Cllr. Marie Fitzpatrick.
DEVELOPMENT / CONSTRUCTION  (1)	Ivan Shannon
AGRICULTURE / FARMING (1)	Bill Madigan.
COMMUNITY / VOLUNTARY / DISADVANTAGED (1)	John Burke
TRADE UNION (1)	Yvonne Moriarty
TOTAL (11)	

**SPC 5 – Community & Social Policy, Arts, Culture, Heritage, Tourism, Education**

<b>SECTOR</b>	<b>NAME</b>
ELECTED MEMBERS (5)	Cllr. Ann Phelan, (Chairperson) Cllr. John Brennan Cllr. Michael Lanigan Cllr. Michael O'Brien, Cllr. John Coonan
CORPORATION MEMBER (1)	Cllr. Joe Reidy,
ENVIRONMENT / CONSERVATION / CULTURE (1)	Emma Devine
COMMUNITY / VOLUNTARY / DISADVANTAGED (1)	Breda MacDonald
BUSINESS / COMMERCIAL (1)	Jackie Kennedy
TOTAL (9)	

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

### **Strategic Policy Committee**

The Housing & Social Strategic Policy Committee met on five occasions in 2008 under the chairmanship of Cllr. Tommy Brennan. The principal areas of discussion included the revised grants schemes, the development of a strategic programme of activity, the assessment of need, homeless person's provisions, and a review of the traveller accommodation programme.

### **Shared Services**

During 2008 the Housing Staff from the County Council and the Borough Council moved into rented offices at John's Green Kilkenny to provide a more effective and shared service for housing functions. All housing staff are now located in one building and it will enable us to deliver a housing service from one location to all our customers.

Kilkenny Local Authorities will avail of all housing options to meet the needs of those who are unable to provide their own accommodation and to assist those who wish to directly provide their own accommodation. Our Housing Services will be delivered in line with National Policies and best practices will be utilised to ensure that homes provided will be of a high standard within sustainable communities.

### **Housing Need Assessment**

The tri-annual housing assessment of need was completed by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2008. The assessment was carried out jointly by both local authorities. A total of 1,157 applicants were interviewed with 953 approved to go on the housing list. This reflects the most accurate account of actual housing need in the city and county.

**Social Housing Provision**

In the last year, social housing output for the County was maintained at a high level. 112 units were provided through our own construction programme and through the provision of units from Part V. This combined with 38 casual vacancies enabled Kilkenny County Council to accommodate 150 households in 2008. The expenditure on Social housing capital provision amounted to €21m in 2008

The construction/provision of houses will continue to be funded by the Department from the 1/1/2009 based on a three year rolling programme. Each Local Authority will receive final notification of the funding for the three year period 2009 – 2011 early in 2009. There are currently 122 units under construction and these are due for completion over the next two years. This may increase if sufficient funding is secured.

There will be an increased focus in 2009, on minimising the number of vacancies in the Council's housing stock.

The planned maintenance programme on housing estates throughout the County is now complete. The Central Heating Programme was also completed in all housing estates in 2008.

A major upgrade of our rural houses commenced in 2008. 20 houses were selected for Phase 1 and tenders were accepted and work commenced during 2008. The works will include central heating, new doors/windows, fencing/gates/driveways and improvements to water services treatment systems. There are approx 180 rural houses in our rented stock. It is planned to upgrade these houses over a period of years provided adequate funding is available from State Grants or Internal Capital Receipts.

**Rental Accommodation Scheme**

27 new units were secured during 2008 in the private rented sector to accommodate eligible RAS tenants with an additional 26 tenants transferring to the scheme in existing accommodation. In the voluntary sector 28 tenants transferred to the scheme. The total number of tenants now accommodated under this scheme is 317.

**UNHCR Resettlement Programme**

Under the UNHCR Resettlement Programme, Kilkenny County Council participated in the Sudanese Resettlement Project which took place in 2008 in Kilkenny City. Eleven families from Sudan were accommodated under the Rental Accommodation Scheme.

**Community Development/Estate Management**

In 2008, resident participation increased from 48 committees to 67 active groups. This marked increase in committees required the Council to pursue alternative means of engaging with these groups. This resulted in the development of a Cluster Network of committees in different areas in the City and County. These Cluster Networks allow simultaneous access to a number of committees in a central location.

The Estate Management Conference focussed on Diversity and Interculturalism and a number of representatives from different ethnic groups based in Kilkenny City performed for the participants and provided cultural background information on their country of origin. There were also reports from a number of committees on phased projects which had reached completion on their estates.

Adjudication for the second annual Tidy Estates competition took place during the summer months and prizes were awarded at the estate management conference.

Capacity building training is ongoing with Newpark Close Estate in Kilkenny City and this will allow the preparation of a programme of regeneration work for the estate subject to funding being available from central Government. Participation in these sessions is representative of all areas on the estate.

The Council has made available a house in Hebron Park for community use. An extension to the community house is nearing completion and preparations are being made for future activities and services which will be provided from the centre for all area residents.

The Committee in Bishop Birch Place estate are preparing a business plan to advance the development of a permanent community building on their estate. This is being facilitated by funding from Pobal under the RAPID Dormant accounts scheme. The Council are actively engaged with the Community to progress this project and the Council will be providing the site for the Community building.

**Affordable Housing**

The Council had 83 affordable units available for sale in 2008 across the County and has been very active in promoting this scheme. However, despite widespread publicity, the uptake on Affordable Housing has been slow. 41 units have been sold to date during 2008.

**Voluntary Housing**

Kilkenny County Council continues to be very proactive in the area of Voluntary Housing. There are now 691 units provided by the Voluntary Housing Associations in the County. 36 new units will be occupied during 2008 and a further 13 are under construction and due to be completed in 2009.

**Housing Adaptation Grant Schemes for Older People and People with a Disability**

The new framework of grant aid to assist with the housing needs of older people and people with a disability introduced in November 2007 created challenges for the Council during 2008. An allocation of €816,000 was received in 2008. This was not sufficient to meet the increased number of applications for grant assistance. An additional allocation of €150,000 has been notified to the Council in October 2008. Despite an increase in state funding, the Council made a decision to prioritise applications on the basis of most need. We have been only in a financial position to approve disability applications where they have been deemed high priority by the Senior Medical Officer with the HSE and applications for the Older Persons where roof repairs/electrical are deemed to be an emergency. The challenge will continue into 2009 to ensure that applicants most in need will be catered for. It will be necessary to bring a revised framework for the most effective implementation of these grants to the full Council for their approval during 2009.

The current framework of grant aid is as follows:

- Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for People with a Disability - assists with the provision/adaptation of accommodation to meet the needs of people with a disability who have an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual impairment. The level of grant aid available is determined on the basis of gross household income and shall be between 30-95% of the approved cost of works. Maximum grant available is €30,000. A total of 47 grants were paid in 2008.
  
- Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme - assists with adaptations to address mobility problems primarily associated with ageing. The maximum grant is €6,000 or 100% cost of the works, whichever is the lesser. The grant is available to households whose gross annual income does not exceed €30,000. A total of 3 were paid in 2008.
  
- Housing Aid for Older People - provides targeted support to improve living conditions in the existing housing of older people. Maximum grant available is €10,500. A total of 46 grants were paid in 2008.

### **Services to the Traveller Community**

Service provision to the Traveller community has continued to be delivered on the basis of inter-agency cooperation as outlined in the *'Interagency Action Plan for Travellers on Co. Kilkenny 2006-2009'*. This plan identifies key aims and objectives in relation to areas of disadvantage experienced by Travellers, including:-

- Training & Employment
- Community Development
- Youth
- Law Enforcement
- Accommodation
- Health
- Education

*The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2009-2013* is at draft stage and following a period on public display will be presented to the Council in April 2009 for ratification. The assessment of need identifies a total of 53 families requiring accommodation over the five year period of the programme.

### **Homeless Services**

Kilkenny Homeless Action Team (KHAT) was established in 2006 as part of the integrated strategy for provision of homeless services in the South East. This interagency team comprised of the Local Authority, HSE and NGO's working with homeless. The group meets on a weekly basis and aim to provide a coordinated and planned service to homeless persons. KHAT has dealt with 121 homeless persons in 2008.

## Road Transportation and Safety – Service Division B

### Strategic Policy Committee

The Infrastructure, Transportation and Water Strategic Policy Committee met on four occasions in 2008. In July 2008 Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh took over the chairmanship of this SPC from Cllr. Paul Cuddihy. During 2008 the principal matters discussed included a review of the school safety programme, agreement of a road safety plan, review of the speed limit policy, the review of the water services programme for 2008, updates on the progression of various water and sewage infrastructural projects, input into the water services programme, updates on the water conservation project and progression on the provision of bus shelters around the county in co-operation with other agencies.

### 2008 Road Surface Dressing/Re-surfacing

The following surface dressing and re-surfacing of roads was carried out during 2008:

	<b>Non-national</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Total</b>
	kms	kms	kms
Surface Dressing	149	6	155
Re-surfacing	74	6	80
	223	12	235

### Road Works Scheme 2009

Expenditure on all National Primary and National Secondary Road Improvement Works are included in the Capital Account and in the Road Works Scheme. The detail is not given in this draft Budget.

It is expected that the non-national road restoration programme will continue during 2009, but that grant receipts from the Department of Transport could be somewhat less than received during 2008. The non national road grants cover expenditure on such areas as pavement overlays, surface maintenance, low cost accident schemes and community involvement in roadworks on the counties regional and local road network.

In the light of the reduction in the Local Government Fund allocation, as notified, the 2009 Budget proposes to reduce the local funding element of non-national roads. Whereas the 2008 local contribution was €2,703,000, the 2009 allocation is proposed at €2,308,000 representing a reduction of some 14%. It is not expected there will be a reduction in activity in road resurfacing or routine maintenance work. However, there will be a loss of activity in comparison to recent years on special works programme such as footpaths, signage, new public lights etc.

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

#### *Draft Mobility Management plan for Kilkenny City.*

The draft Mobility Management Plan for Kilkenny City and Environs is currently in the final stages of preparation. The Plan addresses pedestrianization, one way systems, park and walk, city bus service, car parking, cycle paths and improved signage. A central objective in the plan places a renewed emphasis on modal shift and higher priority for pedestrians and cyclists. The Draft has yet to be considered by members of Council.

#### *M8 Cullahill / Cashel*

Construction work on the 40km section of motorway commenced in November 2006. Progress on all aspects of this scheme is highly satisfactory to date. The Contractor for the construction phase is Road bridge/Sisk. The completion date of the scheme is December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008, six months ahead of schedule and under budget.

#### *M9/N9 Waterford/Knocktopher*

Construction work on the 23km section of high quality dual carriageway commenced in January of 2007. The Contractor appointed on the scheme is Ascon Ltd and work is proceeding satisfactorily. The estimated completion date of the scheme is Q3 2009. Its completion and opening to traffic in 2009 will coincide with the opening of the Waterford City By Pass and new River Suir Bridge Crossing at Grannagh.

*M9/ N9 Carlow/Knocktopher*

Construction work commenced in January of 2008 on 46km of motorway which will, on opening in 2010, complete the entire 110 km dual carriageway/motorway between Waterford City and Kilcullen. Travel times between Kilkenny and Dublin will be more consistent and easily planned. It is estimated journey times between Kilkenny and the outskirts of Dublin will be just over one hour. Work is currently underway in a very satisfactory manner on all aspects of the scheme.

*N24 Mooncoin By Pass*

The Environmental Impact Statement and CPO documentation in relation to 11 km of dual carriageway have been completed to final draft stage and await the approval the NRA. There is no indication as yet of a multi annual funding programme for this scheme.

*N25 New Ross By Pass*

An Bord Pleanála held an oral hearing in respect of the scheme in April 2008. No determination has yet been made by the Board. Approximately 1.5 km of the proposed by pass is located within Co Kilkenny and Wexford Co Council is the project lead authority. Design alternatives for future route and traffic improvements between Waterford Environs and just south of New Ross are also under examination.

*N76 Tennypark to Brownstown*

Kilkenny County Council at its April monthly meeting of 2007 approved Part 8 planning in relation to the scheme. At just over 3.5 km in length, the full project is estimated at €12.5million. There is currently no indication of future funding for the scheme by the National Roads Authority. Kilkenny County Council has made bye laws in respect of the application of a 60kph special speed limit at this location.

*N77 Ballynaslee*

Kilkenny County Council at its April 2007 meeting approved Part 8 planning in relation to the scheme. At just over 2km in length the project is estimated at €7 million. Site investigation has been completed this autumn and detailed design has commenced. Kilkenny County Council awaits funding from NRA to commence the CPO and tender phases.

*Kilkenny Central Access Scheme*

The Environmental Impact Statement and CPO documentation have been submitted to An Bord Pleanála for approval and the oral hearing has concluded. A decision by the Board is expected in the spring of 2009.

*Kilkenny Western Environs Relief Road*

The CPO for the scheme was confirmed by Kilkenny County Council in August 2007. The Council has short listed a number of firms for the final tender phase.

*Thomastown Relief Road*

Kilkenny County Council approved the scheme planning in December 2007. Site investigation is now underway and negotiations for land purchase have commenced and in a number of cases concluded successfully. The scheme envisages a bypass of Thomastown 3.5 km long in the Eastern Environs of the town commencing on the Bennettsbridge Road and terminating on the New Ross road

*Old Golf Links Road/Lovers Lane*

The statutory public consultation process was completed in April 2008. Detailed scheme design and tender documentation has been completed and tenders will issue in weeks. It is planned to commence construction in the early part of 2009.

*Newpark Drive, Kilkenny*

Kilkenny County Council as its April 2007 meeting approved the Part 8 planning of the scheme. Negotiations are ongoing with property owners regarding compensation and accommodation issues. It is planned to commence the work on conclusion of satisfactory negotiation for lands.

*Kells Road Improvement*

This scheme involves the improvement of a section of road between the Kells Road Roundabout and Mayfield Housing Development. Design options are currently being assessed and the formal public consultation process concluded in June 08.

*N10 Kilkenny Ring Road Improvement*

The Kilkenny Ring Road between the Waterford Road Roundabout and the Carlow Road Roundabout will shortly reach design capacity. Scheme planning and public consultation has concluded the provision of enhanced roundabout capacity, footpath and cycleway provision. Work is planned to commence on a phased basis in 2009.

*Callan, Green Street Improvement*

Tender documents are currently under preparation in respect of improvement works on to Green Street. Priced tenders are to be returned in late November with a view to commencing work early in 2009.

*Stoneyford Traffic Calming and Village Improvements*

Council approved part 8 planning in September, 2007. Footpath improvements works have been ongoing since 2007 and will continue in 2009.

*Knocktopher Ballyhale Traffic Calming*

Kilkenny County Council at its March Meeting approved the Part 8 planning in respect of this scheme. While provision has been made through local budgets for limited improvements in the current year, the Council will seek additional funding from the National Roads Authority to progress the full scheme in 2009.

**Public Lighting**

Kilkenny County Council maintains approximately 6,800 lights. The Council assumed responsibility for over 100 new lights during 2008. This number is comprised of new lights installed under the agreed public lighting programme and lights taken in charge on recently completed housing estates.

Kilkenny County Council operates and maintains its public lighting stock through a formal maintenance contract with ESB public lighting division. Costs are budgeted to increase from €339,000 to €390,000 in 2009. The completion of the agreed public lighting programme is still ongoing with some areas more advanced than others.

**Road Safety**

Road Safety is an extremely important function of Kilkenny County Council. To this end the continued budgetary provision towards road safety awareness, the school warden system and the support of community focussed road safety campaigns will be a key consideration for the members.

**School Safety Programme**

This is year two of a three year programme aimed at reducing the risk to school children at each of the county's 88 schools. Works on the provision of special speed limit signs, road markings and crossings as required are underway. The final year of the programme will be completed in 2009.

**Speed Limit Bye Laws**

Kilkenny County Council recently made Special Speed Limit Bye Laws for the County and City. Provision will be made in the 2009 budget to erect new statutory signage at relevant locations designated in the schedules to the bye laws.

## Water Services – Service Division C

### Strategic Policy Committee

The Infrastructure, Transportation and Water Strategic Policy Committee discuss water services related issues and the principal matters discussed were outlined earlier in the Service Division B review.

The 2009 Budget projects a €88,000 increase in the operational cost of water and waste water services to €1,233,000.

This very substantial increase in the operational costs associated with providing water services is mainly attributable to the following:

- (1) €300,000 cost increase associated with the first time contribution towards the operational costs of the Waterford City waste water treatment plant
- (2) €60,000 cost increase arising from the 20% ESB price increase granted in September 2008
- (3) €90,000 cost increase associated with Water Quality Monitoring Programme for 2009. This increased resource is required to bring the monitoring programme into compliance with current and impending legislative and best practice requirements.
- (4) €125,000 cost increase associated with legislative requirement to license waste water discharges. Under the Waste Water Discharge Authorisation Regs 2007 SI 684, water service authorities are required to obtain licences for waste water discharges from the EPA.

The draft 2009 Budget projects an Operational and Maintenance Grant of €500,000 being required from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government towards the operational costs associated with waste water treatment plants. The 2009 grant has not yet been announced but is expected to be similar to the 2008 allocation of €484,000.

### **Water Pricing Policy – Water Services Income**

In line with international best practice and EU policy, Ireland has been moving steadily towards making the full cost of water and waste water services transparent and securing full cost recovery from non-domestic customers.

Under the Governments Water Services Pricing Policy, local authorities are required to:

- Ensure that non domestic users pay for operational costs subject to water pricing being made fully transparent;
- Ensure that any cross subsidies between the domestic and non domestic sectors are eliminated.
- Ensure that water metering is rolled out to all non domestic consumers by the end of 2006.

The Policy also envisages that:

- Funding for the operational costs of domestic water and wastewater services would be met by the Exchequer in a transparent fashion;
- Local authorities would fund the non-domestic element of capital funding from a loan fund, to be repaid through non domestic user capital contributions in a manner that reflects Polluter Pays Principle and that will be uniform;
- Whereas previously the DOEHLG provided 100% funding for the capital element of domestic costs, under Water Pricing Policy, any new residential area shall, for the purposes of capital grant from Government, be treated as commercial non-domestic.

In line with the above policy Kilkenny County Council

- (1) Will have meters fitted to all non domestic connections by the end of 2008
- and
- (2) Introduced in 2007 a waste water charge for waste water to be charged on the basis of “water in, water out”

When the waste water charge was introduced, it was noted that full economic charging for water and waste water services would be introduced on a phased basis over the three years 2007-2009 inclusive.

This draft budget proposes charges of €0.98 and €1.96 per cubic metre for water and waste water services, increases of 7c and 34c per cubic meter respectively. These charges represent the calculated economic cost of services and compare against the 2008 charges of €0.91 and €1.62 per cubic meter for water and waste water respectively.

The 2009 Meter Rental charges will be as follows:

<b>Service Pipe Size</b>	<b>2009 Meter Charge</b>
12mm	€75
19mm	€89
25mm	€89
32mm	€116
7.5mm	€116
50mm	€93
75mm	€229
100mm	€75

### **Water Quality Monitoring Programme – 2008 Achievements**

1. Improved Communications to Public, Elected Members – Use of local radio and email to provide speedy information
2. Improved Management Control – Setting up of Incident Management structures for early intervention of water quality incidents
3. Source Protection – Worked with Environment Section to generate Source Protection Plans and delivery of leaflets to communities.
4. Improved Monitoring Systems – Installation of new alarms and backup monitoring provisions for early warning
5. Improved Monitoring – Programme of monitoring was expanded both in terms of numbers and parameters being tested
6. Discharge License Programme – in-house delivery of 6 discharge license applications to EPA in respect of waste water treatment plants

## **Water Services Capital Programme**

Substantial progress has been made in 2008 with the advancement of the Water Services Capital Programme and in Improvement in the Management and Operations of Water and Wastewater Facilities.

### *Water Quality*

Programme of Improvements include:

- Increased water source protection measures – Buffer Zones etc.
- Improved Treatment Plant Operations – alarm systems etc.
- Increased monitoring and incident management e.g. on-line information to customers.

### *Wastewater Treatment*

Council has applied to the EPA for Discharge Licenses in respect of our major urban centers – 7 No. with 8 further centers being applied for in 2009.

### *Water Conservation.*

- Stage 1 complete (district meters installed and in operation, Thomastown Pilot project complete). Awaiting funding for stage 2.—Leak Detection and Repair --Application with Department since Sept 2008. Hopeful of approval for Stage 2 shortly – Cost €3.4 million.
- Water Conservation Booklets distributed to non-domestic consumers – Businesses, Agriculture and Schools.
- Water conservation tips programme launched on KCLR.

### *Water Metering*

- Metering of all non domestic consumers will be complete next month – 5,000 customers
- Intention to move from 6 month billing to 2 month billing in 2009

### *Capital Programme*

#### *Under Construction and at Tender Stage.*

- Kilmacow Sewerage Scheme - major scheme.  
- network 70% complete.  
- Treatment Plant – Tenders being evaluated.
- Gowran Sewerage Scheme - service land initiative-- commenced
- Waterford City Wastewater scheme - near completion.  
- Includes Environs in Co. Kilkenny
- Clarnwood – City Environs - completed.
- Small Schemes Programme - ongoing.
- Thomastown Sewerage Scheme - Service Land Initiative. Tenders being Evaluated.

#### *Progress in Advancing Major Schemes*

**Mooncoin Regional Water Supply:** Includes Waterford City Environs and Belview Port. Detailed Technical report with Department since 27/06/2008. EIS published 15/02/2008. Decision due soon from An Bord Pleanala. Well drilling almost complete. Expressions of interest for shortlisting of Main Contractors submitted and evaluation carried out.

**Kilkenny City Regional Water:** Detailed Technical report with Department since 21/07/08. Drilling contract has been awarded to drill Production wells at Kilkieran and Dunmore. This drilling will commence in the coming weeks and will be complete by end of November. Approval sought from Department to proceed with Advance works.

**Kilkenny City Wastewater Treatment Plant:** Detailed Technical report with Department since 25/09/08. EIS sent to An Bord Pleanála for approval on 24/10/08

**Freshford, Goresbridge, Johnstown Sewerage Bundle:** Approval received this month from the Dept to proceed to carry out detailed design and contract docs.

**Gowran/Goresbridge/Paulstown:** Checked alternative ground water sources and it appears likely that not enough water is available from alternative sources, so it is probable that Council use existing Tobergoolick Pool for the long term upgrade. Advance works to ensure quality over the coming winter are currently being designed.

**Ballyragget, Clogh/Castlecomer, Urlingford/Johnstown Water Bundle:** Detailed Technical report gone to Department since 22/09/08.

**Thomastown, Callan, Graiguenamanagh, Inistioge Water Bundle:** Drilling complete. Draft report for Thomastown and Inistioge with Kilkenny County Council since early Nov. Draft Reports for other two schemes due within the next month.

**Castlecomer Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade:** Request for Department funding submitted 09/07/08. Currently being considered by the Water Services Section of the Department.

**Stoneyford Wastewater Treatment Plant:** Part 8 approved by Council at November Meeting.

#### **Water Conservation Programme**

1. Stage 1 commenced March '07 for 12 rural water supply schemes
2. February 2008 requested approval for inclusion of Kilkenny City which was granted on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008 with budget of €1.98m
3. Application for Stage 2 submitted November 2008 and hope to commence January 2009 with budget of €3.5m
4. Completed Thomastown Pilot Project - commenced August '07 delivering a savings of 500m<sup>3</sup>/day, enough to supply 1,000 houses
5. Completion of 79 District Meter Areas infrastructure

6. Demand Management – successful public relations campaign on radio, school visits, Ploughing Championships to advise consumers on water conservation

## Development Management – Service Division D

### Strategic Policy Committee

The Forward Planning & Development Strategic Policy Committee met on four occasions in 2008 under the chairmanship of Cllr. Pat Millea. The principal matters discussed included progression of the draft County and City Development Plan, completion of draft rural housing guidelines which were approved by the Council in June 2008, the policy on taking-in-charge of estates, sustainable residential development, an integrated retail strategy and the rural housing strategy.

### Development Control

To the end of October, 1,378 planning applications were received. This is a substantial decrease in the number of planning applications received when compared with the same period in previous years. On average, there has been a decrease of 18% over the nine year period 2000 to 2008 (as at end October each year) as outlined below.

#### Statistics for Planning Applications

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Jan to.....</b>	<b>Application Received</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Jan to.....</b>	<b>Applications Received</b>
Dec 2008	n/a	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 08	1,378
Dec 2007	2,272	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 07	1,934
Dec 2006	2,346	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 06	1,878
Dec 2005	2,046	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 05	1,722
Dec 2004	2,088	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 04	1,717
Dec 2003	2,069	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 03	1,695
Dec 2002	1,898	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 02	1,541
Dec 2001	1,828	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 01	1,557
Dec 2000	2,027	31 <sup>st</sup> Oct 00	1,669

If the 2008 activity is compared to the same period in 2007, then the percentage decrease is 40%. 2006 and 2007 were exceptional years, both in terms of the detailed and complex applications submitted for housing developments, as well as 26% of all planning applications arising in both years being agricultural and arising from the deadline posed by the Nitrates Directive.

The following table provides an analysis of the types of planning application received for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 (as at end of October each year).

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
Housing Developments	6%	4%	4%
Single Houses	36%	35%	44%
House Extensions/Other	24%	18%	24%
Agriculture Related –Nitrates Directive	22%	26%	6%
Max Fee Applications	2	2	1
Other	12%	18%	22%

The reduction in applications being received has resulted in a consequential reduction in the planning fees income as outlined below

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>PLANNING FEES INCOME</b>	
	<b>@ 31<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER</b>	<b>@ 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER</b>
<b>2008</b>	€ 731,000	€ 850,000
<b>2007</b>	€1,010,000	€1,132,000
<b>2006</b>	€1,085,000	€1,153,000
<b>2005</b>	€1,084,000	€1,116,000
<b>2004</b>	€ 740,000	€ 957,000
<b>2003</b>	€ 962,000	€ 977,000
<b>2002</b>	€ 477,000	€ 491,000
<b>2001</b>	€ 460,000	€ 537,000
<b>2000</b>	€ 497,000	€ 685,000

### **Strategic Forward Planning**

The highlight of the year was the adoption in June of both the Kilkenny County and Kilkenny City & Environs Development Plans 2008-2014. The County Plan puts in place a development strategy for the next six year period with major growth targeted for Kilkenny City as a Hub and the Ferrybank- Belview area as part of the Waterford City Gateway. In addition, a total of 9 Local Area Plans were advanced. The Loughmacask and Woodstock Local Area Plans were advanced to the point of adoption and five others, Castlecomer, Callan, Thomastown, Graiguenamanagh and Ferrybank/Belview, to the point where they will be adopted early in 2009. The local area plan process was also started for both Kilmacow and Bennettsbridge.

As part of the Callan & Castlecomer Local Area Plans, the Planning Department, in association with the Council's IS department, released on a trial basis a new "Wiki" which is intended to broaden the scope of public consultation around the preparation of Local Area Plans. The Wiki enables interested and engaged members of the public to participate online in a collaborative discussion around the development of future Local Area Plans. This will be enhanced further as more Local Area Plans are prepared. The Kilkenny Planning Wiki won a merit award in the 2008 Vodafone Innovating Government Awards. It also won a commendation in the Excellence in Local Government Awards under the category Planning Service.

### **Customer Service Initiatives**

During the current Council's term, well in excess of 10,000 planning applications will have been assessed. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all staff for their dedication and commitment in delivering such a comprehensive service to the public over the past five years. Such an unprecedented period of development has seen the introduction of numerous initiatives aimed at improving the service being delivered to the public in the planning area. During 2008, the following initiatives were introduced:

- ❖ Publication of the Kilkenny Rural Design Guidelines
- ❖ WiKi Project – an award winning initiative as highlighted above.
- ❖ Establishment of panel of approved Site Assessors
- ❖ Scanning of 14,500 planning files to facilitate the ePlanning objective of opening up the planning system and files to internet browsing
- ❖ Workshop held for planning agents

### **Taking in Charge**

A total of 26 housing estates out of 34 estates that had been listed, were taken in charge by the County Council during the year.

## **Enforcement**

The following is the position as at 31<sup>st</sup> October

▪ Complaints for Non-Compliance	-	197
▪ Warning Letters	-	99
▪ Enforcement Notices	-	72
▪ Successful Enforcement Court Cases	-	10

## **2009 Work Programme**

### *General*

The economic downturn is impacting on the number and scale of planning applications being lodged for assessment. In the absence of previous high activity levels, the Council will redeploy Planning Department resources to ensure that a cost effective service, utilising and maximising the resources that are available, continues to be delivered.

### *Strategic Forward Planning*

Proposals for the year include

- ❖ Completion and adoption of the Local Area Plans for the scheduled towns of Callan, Castlecomer, Thomastown and Graiguenamanagh
- ❖ Completion and adoption of the Local Area Plan for the strategically important area and new town of Ferrybank/Belview.
- ❖ Completion and adoption of Local Area Plans for Kilmacow and Bennettsbridge
- ❖ Commence review of Local Area Plans for Mooncoin, Fiddown, Piltown and Gowran
- ❖ Commence preliminary work on Local Area Plans for Johnstown and Paulstown
- ❖ In the city and Environs work will commence on the following
  - Framework Plan/Local Area Plan(s) for Diageo site and Bateman Quay
  - Framework Plan/Urban Design/Local Area Plan for Hebron Road
  - St. Canice's Precinct Local Area Plan

It is proposed to advance the above plans in-house utilising our own professional expertise through the redeployment of staff from the Development Control function.

**Compliance and Enforcement**

The current economic decline has resulted in a decrease in the number and scale of planning applications being received and offers an opportunity to redeploy staff from development control to those areas of the planning function which, in recent years, have been under resourced. Accordingly, 2009 will see a focus on post planning and ensuring compliance with the planning permissions as granted and the respective planning conditions imposed. With the redeployed resources, a more proactive planning enforcement role is envisaged.

**Quarries**

As a result of recent quarries registration issues, compliance in this area will now also be prioritised.

**Taking in Charge**

A continuation of the recent focus accorded to the taking in charge process will see the Council advance the taking in charge procedures in respect of additional estates in 2009. This will result in the active engagement with a number of developers as the completion of certain estates, where issues have been identified, is pursued. It is also proposed to advance work which has commenced in the GIS mapping of all estates and their services throughout the County. This is a resource which will be of benefit into the future.

**Conservation**

This is an area to which additional resources are being redeployed in 2009. The NIAH Report identified 1,200 sites in the County that require assessment and mapping. In addition similar work is required in respect of the protected structures identified in the County and City Development Plan. These are areas that we were not in a position to adequately resource to date and it is now intended to do so.

**ePlanning**

The programme of scanning planning files will continue in 2009. This programme will now be advanced and resourced in-house. It is hoped to scan an additional 3,500 planning files during 2009 paving the way for access to these files to be made available to the public over the internet.

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

### **Strategic Policy Committee**

The Environmental Policy, Fire Services and Emergency Planning Strategic Policy Committee met on four occasions in 2008. In July 2008 Cllr Martin Brett took over the chairmanship of this SPC from Cllr. Johnny Brennan. The principal matters discussed included the South East River Basin Management Plan, the proposed introduction of a county-wide, three-bin, waste collection service, climate change, water quality, review of the major emergency plan and review of the litter management plan.

The Strategic Policy Committee is overseeing the Climate Change Action Strategies currently being developed. A Kilkenny County Council (organisational) Climate Change Strategy is now at draft stage and will be presented to the SPC in the first quarter of 2009. Thereafter, upon adoption, attention will turn to the development of a County Kilkenny Climate Change Action Plan. In the interests of heightened public awareness for this globally important issue, the Council currently runs Climate Change Tips and Advice slots on local radio.

In matters of Waste Management the Committee supported, and advised, the ongoing implementation of the Joint Waste Management Plan for the South East Region.

### **Landfill and Waste Management**

Kilkenny County Council continues to operate Dunmore Landfill Site under EPA Waste Licence W0030-02. The filling of Cell 14 is underway, the last Cell to be filled at Dunmore Landfill. At the current rate of filling, the landfill will close around September 2009. The proposed rate for landfill disposal for 2009 is €150 per tonne including a €20 landfill levy i.e. no increase in disposal costs but a €5 increase in the landfill levy which was introduced in July 2008. Consideration is being given to the impact of the landfill closure and Members will be advised in this matter throughout 2009.

Regarding Dunmore Landfill Site, the Dunmore/Bleach Road Community Fund has continued to increase while the landfill has been filled. By closure, the value of the fund is likely to be in the order of €200,000. Discussions have commenced with locals regarding the project to be funded from the Community Fund and proposals for the project will be presented to Members in 2009.

Restoration of the landfill, in accordance with the requirements of the Waste Licence, is ongoing and capping works are substantially complete on Cells 1 to 12 with works to Cells 13 and 14 likely to commence in the second half of 2009.

In highlighting the landfill closure, it should be noted that Dunmore Civic Amenity Site, attracting approximately 25,000 vehicular visits per annum, will continue to operate into the future. The Civic Amenity Site is operated to a high standard and has been extremely popular with the public. Waste accepted at the facility now includes glass, cans, plastics, paper, cardboard, wood, metals, batteries, household hazardous waste, CDs and books, textiles, oils and WEEE.

The current charge of €3.50 per car load continues to apply for general recyclables with some items such as oils charged per item. WEEE and household batteries are accepted free of charge, as required in law. Charges and opening hours at the Recycling Centre will be reviewed on closure of the landfill.

Attention is drawn to the costs being borne by the Local Authority with respect to the provision of recycling services throughout the County. In addition to the Civic Amenity Site at Dunmore, Kilkenny County Council provides a weekly recycling service at Newrath and provides for the operation of over 40 Bring Bank Sites throughout the County. Gross operational costs for these services totals €705,000 in 2009 with income of €90,000 from the gate fee at Dunmore CAS and an estimated Department subsidy of €112,000. As a result, the net 2008 cost of recycling services, the vast bulk of which are provided and maintained by local authorities, stands at €503,000.

During 2008 the Council introduced a cleaning contract for the recycling bring bank network throughout the county which has proved to be particularly popular and has

substantially reduced the complaints being received by the Council with respect to the presentation of these critical waste management sites. As discussed with Members at various stages throughout 2008, it is envisaged that a more rapid response to the removal of fly tipped material will be introduced in 2009.

In conjunction with the adoption of the Litter Management Plan 2008 -2011, the provision of a full time street cleaning service in the Environs of Kilkenny City will be advanced in 2009. This will compliment the establishment of the Litter Forum to oversee the implementation of the Plan aiming to provide an integrated, cross-sectoral approach to the ongoing challenge of litter management.

### **Enforcement Activities**

The Council's Waste Management Enforcement Team was very active throughout the year. Regulation and monitoring of waste disposal sites and waste management facilities is a priority for Kilkenny County Council and the comparative performance of the local authority in this area is extremely favourable.

Over 1,200 complaints were investigated in the first half of 2008 on a range of environmental, waste management and water quality matters.

### **Education & Awareness**

Tidy Towns and Green Schools seminars were held in 2008. There are now 25 Green Schools in the County.

The Environment Section manned an information booth at the National Ploughing Championships in September, which proved very successful. The section also participated at the Iverk Show in Piltown.

In 2009 it is intended that particular attention will be paid to the development of waste prevention programmes and the expansion of existing waste prevention measures.

**Water Quality**

While EPA Water Quality Reports indicate a general improvement in water quality standards, there is significant progress to be made if Ireland is to achieve the targets specified in the EU Water Framework Directive. There will be continued emphasis on water quality in 2009 building upon the Source Protection measures and public advice leaflets provided during 2008. The Council will seek to coordinate the activities of the Water Services and Environment Sections in order that both drinking water quality standards are protected and the upward trend in water quality is continued and accelerated.

**Parks**

Phase 3 of The Woodstock Gardens restoration was completed in 2008 with the erection of the Turner conservatory. The facility attracts upwards of 35,000 visitors per annum and continues to be maintained to a very high standard.

The continued development of the River Nore Linear Park is providing a very significant and highly attractive amenity for locals and visitors. The Local Authority Members Association saw fit to award the Walk the prize of Best Public Park in 2008. Throughout 2008, works have continued at Talbots Inch and the Canal Walk. In 2009 Members will be presented with detailed proposals for the development of the Lacken Walk to Ossory Bridge section of the Linear Park and it is envisaged that works will commence on this section of the project by mid-2009.

Three additional playgrounds came on stream in 2008 in Ballyhale, Newpark and Graiguenamanagh bringing to 15 the number of playgrounds being maintained and operated by Kilkenny County Council since 2005. The Council continues to maintain these playgrounds to a high standard in accordance with insurance requirements and in the interests of sustaining their use longer term.

A Multi Use Games Area opened in Garringreen in 2008 and a further such facility will open at Newpark early in 2009.

Kilkenny City together with County urban centres continues to perform well in the National Tidy Towns competition. The Environment and Parks Sections will continue to provide advice and assistance to local community groups who make a considerable contribution to the presentation of local urban centres and neighbourhood districts. In the case of Kilkenny City, Kilkenny County Council, in partnership with Keep Kilkenny Beautiful, will seek to introduce a Roundabout Sponsorship Scheme in 2009 together with the development of plans to upgrade the major approaches to Kilkenny City.

**Fire Service Charges**

The fire service call out charge will be increased from €50 per person/hour to €70 per person/hour attending and will generate an additional €200,000 in income.

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

### **Strategic Policy Committee**

The Arts, Culture, Heritage, Tourism & Education Strategic Policy Committee met on four occasions in 2008 under the chairmanship of Cllr. Ann Phelan and Cllr. Michael O'Brien. The principal matters discussed included the Library Development Plan, the Arts Strategy implementation and its impact on the local economy, the County Biodiversity Plan, the Heritage Plan, the Commemoration of James Hoban and Climate Change.

### **The Watershed at Scanlon Park**

The Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Borough Council funded new public sports and leisure complex, The Watershed, opens its doors to the public on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> December. This world-class facility comprises three swimming pools, a multipurpose sports arena with retractable seating, a fitness gym and aerobics studio on the site of the existing Scanlon Park athletics track and outdoor pitches. The Watershed will transform the recreational facilities available to people in the city and county and extremely competitive membership and pay and go rates will ensure maximum participation from potential users. The Watershed is a facility that will enable access to sport and leisure for all with programmes and events for all sectors of the community, age groups and voluntary organisations. Both Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Borough Council are jointly funding €14m of the overall complex cost of €20m. The complex will be run by Kilkenny Local Authorities Leisure Complex Limited, the private limited company jointly owned by both Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Borough Council. This company has a commercial mandate and the contribution it generates will be needed for the complex maintenance and/or subsequent upgrading.

**County Development Board**

Kilkenny County Council is an active partner in the CDB process. By contributing to all of the priority actions. Outside of the main priority area, the Board was active in the development of the Interagency Traveller initiative and Resettlement Programme. The Board provides support for Comhairle na nOg, Kilkenny Recreation and Sports Partnership. The agreed three year programme has now come to an end. The Board will be concentrating on developing a new three programme to be completed by April.

**RAPID**

Five New RAPID Strategic Themes were launched in 2008 (Health, Family Supports, Community Safety, Physical Environment & Education) to plan towards 2013. Numerous projects have been completed including the refurbishment of O'Loughlin Court Community Facility, Upgrading of Hebron Park Community House, Newpark Close Playground, Newpark Sports Field MUGA. New investment was secured for numerous projects including MUGA for The Butts, Health Leverage Projects, including Outreach Services for the Elderly in the communities & Graffiti Removal Project. Application was made for Springboard project for Kilkenny City. Funding has been secured for 2009 under Physical Environment Improvement Scheme for all RAPID Areas of the city and applications are being considered. A major future focus for RAPID will be on projects that improve service delivery to the communities through better service integration, inter-agency support and project leadership.

**Library Service**

The Library Operational Plan set out development areas for 2008.

- The Library Service completed the consultation process with the various stakeholders for the new 5 year Library Development Plan, which will inform future service development and delivery.

- Improvements in Information Systems included the introduction of PC Reservation, Public Internet PC booking and print management software, People Counters; and Britannica online.
- A selection of Kilkenny local interest titles were digitised through An Chomhairle Leabharlanna in co-operation with the Library Service and will be available on [www.askaboutireland.ie](http://www.askaboutireland.ie)
- Library staff took part in disability training as well as special literacy/disability software and hardware being introduced in branches.
- Under the library promotion programme, a new library guide was launched and numerous events and activities took place across the branch network.
- The Schools Library Service serviced over 10,000 primary pupils and library staff provided information and advisory services to schools and teachers
- The Local Studies outreach programme continued with in-house presentation on Library Local studies sources to Primary and Secondary teachers and Adult Education/ Third level students
- Proposals are being developed for a new library and new library headquarters at the Council's headquarters and precinct at John Street – See section on Miscellaneous Services.

### **Heritage Office 2008**

Work continued in 2008 on the implementation on the Draft Kilkenny Heritage Plan 2007-2011. Heritage Plan projects successfully completed include: preparation of Heritage Communications Strategy; Seminar and awareness campaign on the use of lime; Heritage Resource Directory, in conjunction with the Conservation Officer.

Other projects completed include; preparation of the Draft Kilkenny Biodiversity Plan; repairs and conservation of Talbots Tower, in conjunction with the Kilkenny City Walls Steering Committee; a seminar on the care and conservation of historic graveyards; co-ordination of the Historic Graveyard Grants scheme, in partnership with the Environment Section; promotion and co-ordination of Heritage Week; supporting local tidy towns groups through an advice seminar, in conjunction with the Environment Awareness Officer.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Agriculture, Health, Education &amp; Welfare – Service Division G</b></p>
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**Agriculture**

Provision has been made for the statutory drainage demand.

**Education**

The Council administers the pension scheme for the VEC. The expenditure involved is 100% recoupable.

The Council, acting in an agency capacity on behalf of the Department of Education, administers the Higher Education Grants Scheme. It had been proposed that the VEC would take over responsibility for the administration of the Higher Education Grant Scheme in 2007; this did not happen and there is yet no indication as to when the VEC will be ready to assume this role. Expenditure on grants is recouped with the exception of €15,200. Administration and other support costs associated with the scheme are not recoupable.

## Miscellaneous Services – Services Division H

### **Franchise Costs**

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

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

The role of the elected members is critical and is pivotal to the county's development and success. The Elected Members responsibilities and role has expanded in recent years as Council responsibilities expanded, and as part of national developments to strengthen local democracy. It is important that the supports available to elected representatives reflect these responsibilities and changes and this service provides for this. At the request of the members, there is a reduced provision for members travel in 2009.

### **Motor Taxation**

The Motor Tax On-Line Service was introduced in 2004, through which customers can renew their motor tax via the internet. The service has proven very successful with almost 37 % of all renewals that can be done on line now being renewed on line; this represents 31% of all renewals

### **Administration of Rates**

The principal expenditure in this service relates to the provision for irrecoverable rates of €710,000, which constitutes just over than 6.2% of the expected rates income.

### **Shared Services**

The concept of Shared Services was introduced under “Towards 2016: Social Partnership Agreement”. Essentially it provides for a mechanism whereby internal efficiencies can be achieved in service delivery through local authorities sharing or combining the resources available to deliver such services. Apart from achieving efficiencies, the concept also has at its core the delivery of improved customer services. During 2008, proposals for sharing and/or combining services were advanced within Kilkenny Local Authorities. These proposals will see the following changes introduced from an early date in 2009

#### *Housing*

The Housing service is a frontline and very visible service best suited to being delivered on a “combined” basis for the City and County. A dedicated housing office has now been established at John’s Green House where both the County Council and Borough Council housing administrative and technical staff are located. This provides the opportunity to provide a “one stop shop” housing advice, client based service that public housing requires in accordance with government policy as outlined in “Delivering Homes, Sustaining Communities”.

#### *Finance*

The Finance function is ideally suited to being delivered on a shared service basis under the overall control of the Head of Finance. The Finance functions of both authorities have now been amalgamated and will operate from County Hall. This will lead to efficiencies in the short term as systems, processes and methods of operation are combined.

#### *Parks and Environment*

The ambiance of Kilkenny City and its vibrant urban environment is what makes the City an attractive place for people to visit, work and live in as it fulfils its role as a Hub for the South East Region. Management of the environment, which includes the protection and enhancement of the city’s magnificent built and natural heritage, in addition to the general appearance of the City and its Environs, are essential to fulfilling and delivering on the City’s undoubted potential. Accordingly, the proposal

is to combine the delivery and management of certain environmental services for the greater City and its Environs in City Hall from very early in 2009.

### *Roads*

The responsibility for roads in and around the City has long been an area of confusion for elected members and the general public. To a lesser degree, there have been issues in relation to coordination of work programmes between both local authorities and with other statutory undertakers. Apart from delivering a more seamless service, the proposal to combine the roads function for the City and Environs in City Hall will eliminate these issues.

### *Planning*

Since mid 2007 the Executive Planner for Kilkenny Borough Council has also been assessing the planning applications for the Environs area. This has worked very well and has assisted in achieving a consistency in approach. The planning function is central to the delivery of the Hub status for the greater Kilkenny City. As such, it is proposed to transfer the responsibility for the management of this function to be based in and operating from City Hall.

### *Traffic*

Management of public car parks, the new regime of on-street parking and the extension of this regime into the environs on a consistent basis is important as it is a core element of the delivery and management of the sustainable transport initiative for the greater city. This will require consistency and coordination in our approach and as such it is intended to manage this operation for the greater City and Environs from City Hall.

*Measures to Support Shared and Combined Service Initiatives*

To support and ensure the success of the initiatives as outlined above, a number of measures will be put in place which include

- The setting up of a multi-functional Customer Service Office in City Hall
- Provision of and access to integrated information systems
- Establishment of reporting relationships, including timely reporting to the elected members at the monthly meetings.
- Putting in place appropriate legal basis, including Section 85 Agreements as appropriate
- Personnel restructuring.

*County Hall and Precinct Improvement*

Proposals are being developed for the construction of the County and the Borough Council's new library, new library headquarters, additional offices for the Council to replace rented accommodation for mixed uses, and for a new park. Having regard to the changed development and financial context, the mechanisms for the development of proposals are being reviewed.

## Finance

### **Audit Committee**

The Council appointed its Audit Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> February, 2008. The Audit Committee members are;

Mr. Martin Hanrahan, Chairman

Ms.Phil Walsh

Mr. Sean Brady

Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh

Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick

The Audit Committee will have met on three occasions during 2008 and remain in place for the duration of the current elected Council. The committee has an independent role in advising the Council on financial reporting and processes, internal controls, risk management and audit matters as part of the systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the Council

### **County Charge**

Kilkenny County Council charge Kilkenny Borough Council for the cost of services incurred by the County Council but which relate to the Borough Council area. Examples of such services would include the fire service, libraries, water services, environmental management, etc. These services are costed, and charged for, under the County Charge mechanism. The budgeted 2009 County Charge is €2.7m which is an increase of €0.2m on 2008. Kilkenny County Council are now charging the Borough Council the full cost of services provided, the previous transitional arrangement now being ended.

### **Rate Charge**

Kilkenny County Council's rate charge is the lowest in the country and is significantly lower than that charged by most other Local Authorities, i.e. **21% lower** than the national average. As such, the Council's scope with regard to additional discretionary spending is limited and leaves the Council much more dependant on other income sources than comparable authorities.

### **Revenue Collection Reorganisation**

The Council's collection of housing rents and loans, water charges and rates was predominantly a door-to-door based collection service up to the end of May 2008. The revenue collector function and process was reorganised and rationalised effective from the beginning of June. The Council now offers the following payments methods to customers:

#### Rates

1. Direct Debit.
2. Standing Order.
3. Cash Office.

#### Water

4. On-line at [www.kilkennycoco.ie](http://www.kilkennycoco.ie)
5. Cash Office
6. By Phone Quoting debit/credit card details
7. Direct Debit.
8. Standing Order.

#### Rents & Loans

9. Household Budget
10. An Post Payment Card.
11. On-line at [www.kilkennycoco.ie](http://www.kilkennycoco.ie)
12. Cash Office
13. By Phone Quoting debit/credit card details

Since June 2008, the County Council now carries out debt collection work for both itself and Kilkenny Borough Council on a shared service basis. Of the former Revenue Collectors, six remain within Finance working as office based debt collection Staff Officers with the remaining former Revenue Collectors either being redeployed to other service areas or retiring. The net effect of the reorganisation is that the Council is providing a more cost effective and efficient collection service with no deterioration expected in collection performance.

**Corporate Procurement Plan**

During 2008, the Council prepared a draft Corporate Procurement Plan which will go to the Council for approval at the December meeting. This plan outlines the principles under which the Council will conduct its procurement and contracting arrangements, and adopts a corporate wide approach in all procurement activities.

## Information and Communications Technology

Kilkenny County Council is committed to the use of information systems to expand and increase the efficiency and quality of service delivery in the specific areas of:

1. Public Services
2. Services to elected members
3. Services to local authority staff


Kilkenny Local Authorities has an extensive ICT infrastructure in place with over 350 desktop users, 50 servers and 29 networked buildings. In 2009, Kilkenny County Council, will be concentrating on maintaining the existing infrastructure with further work continuing in the following areas:

### **Disaster Recovery**

Considerable work has already been done on providing disaster recovery and business continuity capability. In 2008 new software and hardware was invested in to help implement a comprehensive disaster recovery plan. Further work will be carried out in this area in 2009.

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### **Continued Development of Web Sites**

In 2008 we made some additions to our web sites by adding new information formats such as  RSS, audio and video. The planning Wiki which was introduced in 2008 has received national and international recognition. Built on an open source system called ScrewTurn the system was developed in house without significant cost to the local authority. In 2009 we will continue to investigate implementing open source technologies to further engage and collaborate with the citizens of Kilkenny in the provision of our services and information.

**Virtualisation**

Work will continue in 2009 on consolidating our existing server farm using virtualisation technology. Virtualisation will bring a number of benefits to the local authority. When work is complete we will see a significant reduction in the power requirement and cooling requirements for the computer room which will be a cost saving to the council. It also reduces the need to invest in new hardware as many systems can be installed on the existing hardware.

**Planning File Images on Web**

Work continued in 2008 with the scanning planning files. It is now planned to make these scanned images of planning files available via the web site in early 2009 on a phased basis. This will allow the public view the full details of a planning file via the web.

**Geographical Information Systems**

In 2009 Kilkenny County Council will continue to maintain and extend where possible the amount of GIS information available to customers via the web through the councils Interactive Mapping application. With over 70 GIS layers available to the public Kilkenny County Council has one of the most comprehensive GIS offerings of any local authority in Ireland. Work will also continue in 2009 on the Report and Notification Service with further improvements in this area which will allow the council notify its customer by SMS and email of service outages in their area.