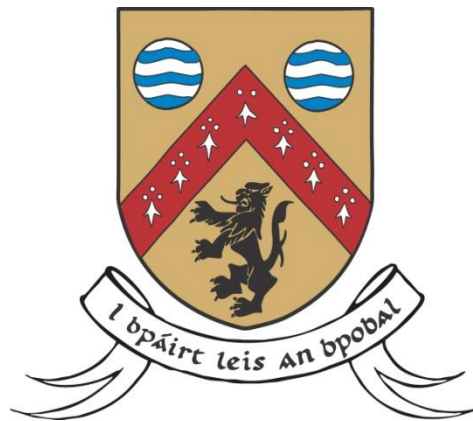


**Comhairle Chontae Laoise**

**Laois County Council**



**Service Delivery Plan 2021**

**As adopted by the Members on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2020.**

## SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2021

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**To: Cathaoirleach and Each Member of Laois County Council**

**Re: Service Delivery Plan 2021**

I enclose, for the consideration of Members of the Council, the Council's Service Delivery Plan for 2021.

The preparation and adoption of a Service Delivery Plan are provided for on a statutory basis in the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Service Delivery Plan identifies the principal services to be provided by the Council to the public and is consistent with the adopted budget for 2021 and the Corporate Plan 2019 – 2024.

The Plan is based on the objectives and strategies outlined in the Corporate Plan, in each of the Service Areas, and sets out the actions which the Council intends to take in 2021 so as to meet its commitments to its customers under its numerous policies, plans and programmes including the Local Economic Community Plan 2016-2021 and the Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. A comprehensive work programme is planned to be undertaken through a variety of service delivery mechanisms, including direct service provision for the most part, by contract, through shared services in co-operation and in partnership with different agencies, through Service Level Agreements such as those with Enterprise Ireland and Irish Water and indirectly through the various grant and assistance schemes to community and other groups.

There is an emphasis in Local Government on performance and on the efficient delivery of services. Progress in implementing the Service Delivery Plans will be monitored by each department and their teams on a regular basis and relevant significant matters will be reported on, as appropriate, in the regular monthly Management Reports to the Elected Council.

There is an obligation also to include in the Council's Annual Report, an assessment of the Council's delivery of services during the year when compared with the Service Delivery Plan and such a statement will be included in the 2020 Annual Report. Assessments of the Council's performance will be undertaken by each Director of Service and his teams at their regular Service Review meetings and a mid-term report will be prepared and presented to the Corporate Policy Group

The adoption of the Service Delivery Plan for 2021 is recommended to Council.

Signed:

**John Mulholland**  
**Chief Executive**

## **Introduction**

This Service Delivery Plan for 2021 is prepared having full regard to the Councils Corporate Plan in which the Council's Mission Statement and its Core Values and Principals have been outlined as follows:

***“The Council will lead the sustainable economic, social, cultural and community development of our County and deliver quality public services to the communities we serve.”***

In supporting the democratic process and the mandate of the Elected Representatives as well as recognising the need for a safe, healthy, and a supportive environment for staff, the Council subscribes to the following core values and principles:

### **Our Vision:**

***“That Laois is an excellent place to live in, to work in, to invest in and to visit – for now and for the future”.***

### **Core Values:**

#### ***Local Democracy and Accountability***

The Council will exercise its democratic mandate in an impartial, transparent and accountable manner, subject to legal, ethical and statutory requirements.

#### ***Quality Customer Service***

The Council is committed to providing a high quality service to our customers, in an inclusive, equitable and responsive manner.

#### ***Sustainability***

The Council is committed to ensuring it works in ways which accord with the principle of sustainability, facilitate economic progress and social cohesion, and enhance and safe-guard the natural and built environment.

#### ***Social Inclusion***

The Council is committed to promoting social inclusion in all its activities.

#### ***Partnership***

The Council values partnership with private sector, state agencies, community groups, the wider community and our workforce.

#### ***Management of Resources and Value for Money***

The Council is committed to the efficient and effective use of the available financial and human resources.

## **Corporate Objectives**

The Corporate Objectives of Laois County Council are as follows:

1. To enhance the social, cultural and economic lives of the people of Laois,
2. To foster and promote sustainable environmental initiatives and practices in the County/Region,
3. To facilitate and promote sustainable development of the County, including the delivery of key infrastructural projects subject to compliance with good environmental standards and practice,
4. To promote and support socially inclusive communities,
5. To continue to develop and improve the quality of Customer Services,
6. To prudently manage the Council's resources to achieve effectiveness in outcomes for resources expended,
7. To continue to develop Corporate Management practices within the Council and to execute effective Risk Management practices.

## Corporate Affairs

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Service to Elected Members	To facilitate and support the representational role of Elected Members.
Franchise and Elections	To maximise participation in the democratic process. To prepare and complete an accurate Register of Electors. To facilitate the holding of elections and referenda.
Customer Services	To deliver an effective and efficient quality customer focussed service which responds to the needs of the community. To communicate effectively and maintain information clear, brief and concise.
Corporate Governance	To ensure that the requirements of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended in relation to Ethics is implemented in full in respect of employees and elected members.

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. The ongoing provision by the Chief Executive and his staff of advice, information and guidance to Elected Members in relation to the strategic direction of the Council, in the exercise by the Council of their reserved functions, in support of the policy making role of the Elected Members and in the delivery of the day to day services.
2. Continue to support and develop the role of the Elected Members and to maximise efficiencies in the conduct of the meetings of Laois County Council and its committees.
3. To facilitate the ongoing implementation of enhanced customer service delivery arrangements at Áras an Chontae.
4. To implement the commitments outlined in Laois County Council's Climate Adaptation Strategy in relation to the activities of Corporate Affairs.
5. Prepare and arrange for the adoption of Laois County Council's Annual Report for 2019 by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.
6. Implement the requirements of the Ethics Framework.
7. Prepare and implement a Communications Strategy.
8. Ensure timely publication on the Council's website of the Agenda and agreed Minutes of Council meetings (including Municipal District meetings).
9. Publish the Register of Electors 2021/2022 in accordance with the prescribed timeframes together with any additional Supplements as required. Continue to maintain the Register and publish the draft Register of Electors 2022/2023 in November 2021.

10. Facilitate and process requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2014, Access to Information on the Environment Regulations and Data Protection Acts.
11. Prepare and submit the annual return in respect of Performance Indicators for 2019 in accordance with agreed deadlines.
12. In association with the Information Technology section, continue with the implementation of the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations and the Data Protection Act 1988 to 2018.
13. Commence preparation of the Annual Service Delivery Plan for 2022 immediately after the adoption of the 2022 Budget.
14. Co-ordinate the process of assessing the Council's performance under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.
15. Manage Covid related safety measures across Corporate buildings.

## Housing

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Housing	To ensure that all our citizens enjoy an adequate standard of housing accommodation appropriate to their needs , and as far as possible , in a location and tenure of their choice and to provide a responsive and supportive housing service for those in need of assistance.

### Key actions for 2021:

1. Achieve the Rebuilding Ireland target 2018-2021 of new accommodation units in 2021.
2. Progress to construction the CBS Lands, Convent and Hepburn Courts Lands.
3. Progress the Regeneration of lands at O'Moore Place to planning and design stage
4. Identify vacant/derelict homes and sites in the county and prioritise their reuse as residential
5. Continue to maintain the achievement of 15-week turnaround when re-letting properties.
6. Complete the retrofit of 160 housing units in 2021 under the Just Transition Programme. This will improve energy efficiencies among our housing stock and act as a pilot for the remainder of our stock.
7. Commence a Planned Maintenance Programme for our existing stock.
8. Continue to build on our positive working relationships with the Approved Housing Bodies active in the County to ensure maximum delivery under CAS, CALF and Long-Term Leasing.
9. Continue to maintain Council stock to good living standard for all tenants in accordance with the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019.
10. Continue to investigate all anti-social behaviour complaints and provide a proactive tenant liaison response.
11. Continue to meet the Housing Assistance Payment targets for 2021 as set by the Department of Housing.
12. Continue to provide Traveller Accommodation in line with the Traveller Accommodation Programme 2019-2024 adopted in September 2019.
13. Continue to meet the Private Rented Inspections targets for 2021 as set out by the Department of Housing.



14. Continue to ensure suitable emergency accommodation is available to individuals and families that present homeless.
15. Continue to assist service users living in emergency accommodation and potentially homeless housing applicants to secure tenancies with the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) through the Homeless Hap Place finder Service.
16. Continue to promote and administer the new Rebuilding Ireland Loan Scheme effectively and efficiently.
17. Maximise the effectiveness of the Housing Aid for Older People, Housing Adaptation Grants and Mobility Aids Grants.

<b>Local Performance Target</b>
A target of 840 Private Rent Inspections will be carried out in 2021

## Roads and Transportation

The areas of Activity & Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Roads – Network	Improvement and Restoration of the Regional and Local Road Network in line with Department of Transport Guidelines.
Road - Network	Improvement and Restoration of National Road Network in consultation with the TII.
Road – Bridges	Maintain and Improve Road Bridges throughout the County
Roads Safety	Engage with all relevant agencies in the promotion and improvement of Road Safety throughout the County. Complete traffic management studies and audits in our urban centres to identify traffic management deficiencies and opportunities to allow corrective action to be taken
Roads – Transportation Policy	Develop policies aimed at meeting the various transportation needs of the County through the Strategic Policy Committee
Roads – Sustainable Transport	<p>To consider national and international carbon reduction commitments in the design of new road infrastructure and in the provision and operation of public lighting services.</p> <p>Provision of a network of Electric Vehicle charging points.</p> <p>Provision of a Town bus Service for Portlaoise</p> <p>Due consideration of the needs of all road users in compliance with Section 13.5 of the Roads Act, particularly urban environments.</p> <p>To promote a shift to environmentally sustainable modes of transport through the improvement and development of pedestrian, cycling electric vehicle charging infrastructure and public transport infrastructure and services.</p> <p>Provision of a network of Electric Vehicle charging points.</p>

### Key actions for 2021:

1. Undertaking of Health & Safety (work practices) Schedule of Inspections.

2. Restoration Improvement/Restoration Maintenance and Discretionary Maintenance Programmes on circa 50km of road network, as provided for in the 2021 Roadworks Programme (second year of the multi-annual 2019-2021 Roads Programme).
3. Implement the MapRoad system as a GIS for the public road network in County Laois and as an asset management system.
4. Improvement and Restoration of the National Road Network in consultation with the TII to include pavement and minor works projects.
5. Road Safety Working Together Committee to meet on at least 2 occasions in 2021.
6. Undertake identified Low Cost Safety Improvement Schemes.
7. Undertake approved Urban Regeneration Development Fund projects.
8. Undertake approved Town & Village Renewal Scheme projects.
9. Undertake approved Active Travel Measures projects.
10. Undertake approved Climate Action projects.
11. Deliver the Winter Maintenance Plan 2021/22.
12. Commence development in 2021 of a Smarter Travel Strategy for County Laois.
13. Ongoing Maintenance and Replacement of 9,350 public lights under Low Carbon initiatives, e.g., Low Carbon Town Portlaoise.
14. Delivery of Footpath Upgrade Scheme.
15. Complete Phase 1 of the Lyster Square Enhancement Scheme in Portlaoise.
16. Progress in 2021, the delivery of a Multi Annual River Maintenance Programme 2020-2024.
17. Commence development in 2021 of a Multi Annual Bridge inspection and repair programme.
18. Administration and Enforcement of pay parking and associated Bye Laws.
19. Review of parking arrangements at agreed locations
20. Ensure compliance with Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets (DMURS) and other related Standards, Regulations and Guidelines.
21. Progress the goals of the Laois Climate Adaptation Strategy 2019 – 2024 appropriate to the Roads Section.

## **Capital Projects Office 2021**

### **Urban Regeneration & Development Fund (URDF)**

1. Project Management of approved URDF projects:  
Portlaoise Cultural Quarter (€7m)
  - Fort Protector Phase 2 (Tower Hill, Church Street & Railway street public realm improvements).
  - Scoil Mhuire Refurbishment.
  - Completion of Old St. Peters church tower & graveyard restoration works.

## Portlaoise Low carbon Town (€2m)

- Triogue Blueway Phase A (construction) & Phase B (consent).
- Completion of upgrade & improvements to Portlaoise cycle routes.
- Completion of Low Energy lighting upgrade for Portlaoise.

## **J17 National Enterprise Park**

- Completion of finishing works for Phases 1-3 for roads and services infrastructure from J17 to Clonminam.

## **Portlaoise Town Bus Service**

- Work with the NTA and other stakeholders to finalise routes and the design of the bus stop locations to advance the scheme. Progress the delivery of the scheme subject to funding being made available.

## **Laois Flood Relief Schemes**

### **Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme**

- Complete Stage1 (scheme review and development of a preferred option) & advance Stage 2 (planning consent).

### **Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme**

- Complete stage 1 (scheme review and development of a preferred option).
- Commence Stage 2 (planning consent).

### **Clonaslee Flood Relief Scheme (Minor Project)**

- Complete stage 1 (scheme review and development of a preferred option).
- Commence Stage 2 (planning consent).

### **Mountrath**

- Work with the OPW Flood Risk Management Section to complete the Scheme Viability Report for the Mountrath study area with a view to determining its eligibility or otherwise for inclusion as a future OPW funded Flood Relief Scheme.
- Complete the Minor works scheme approved by the OPW.

## **Minor Works Schemes**

- Where feasible and within the resources made available prepare & submit applications to the OPW for Minor Works Schemes to alleviate identified flood risk. Advance schemes through to construction where funding is made available.

## Water Services

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
SLA - Public Water and Wastewater Schemes	<p>To work in collaboration with Irish Water in accordance with the Service Level Agreement to ensure that a safe, dependable and resilient water supply is provided to the people of Laois in compliance with the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014, as amended and to assist Irish Water in improving the quality of effluent discharged from their Wastewater Treatment Plants. In so working in conjunction with Irish Water, protect the public health of Irish Water’s customers, improve the quality of the effluent discharged to the receiving environment and support the socio-economic development of the County.</p> <p><i>This objective is subject to Irish Water continuing to provide the necessary financial and personnel resources in the annual budget &amp; that Irish Water deliver on the Capital Investment Programme (CIP) 2020-2024 in order for Laois County Council to meet the targets set out in the Annual Service Plan (ASP) 2021.</i></p>
Non SLA Rural Water	<p>Continue to support the Group Water Scheme Sector in conjunction with the DPHLG and with the support of the National Federation of Group Water Schemes financially, administratively and technically to ensure that a safe, dependable and adequate water supply is provided to the rural population and farming community in Laois in compliance with the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2014, as amended, thus protecting the public health of the people of Laois and supporting the socio-economic development of the agricultural sector.</p>
Small Private Schemes with a commercial or public activity (SPSs)	<p>Carry out the functions of the local authority as supervisory authority in order to improve the quality of water intended for human consumption in SPSs in accordance with the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations, 2014 thus protecting the public health of the people of Laois, in particular vulnerable users of drinking water</p>

	and supporting the socio-economic development of the County.
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## Key Actions for 2021:

### SLA - Public Water and Wastewater Schemes

Delivery of service in accordance with the Service Level Agreement and the 2021 ASP.

**1. ASP 2021** - The Measures and targets agreed for these measures set within the ASP are grouped into one of the 4 categories as below:

- **Customer** – Providing services that are valued by customers. This is influenced by the CER Customer Handbook and proposed Overall Performance Assessments (POAs).
- **Internal Process/Compliance** – Adherence to all reporting requirements and meeting regulatory requirements set out by the relevant statutory and regulatory bodies e.g. CER and EPA.
- **Financial** – Providing a cost effective service, within budgetary constraints.
- **Learning and Growth** – To continuously improve and drive transformation and change initiatives.

**2.** In line with the **Joint National Laboratory Strategy**, maximise the usage of the Laois County Council's INAB Accredited Water Service and Environmental Laboratory by IW to ensure the future sustainability and enhancement of an accredited Water Services/Environmental Laboratory Service. In particular, the enhancement of accreditation for testing wastewater samples is the priority for 2021.

### **3. Capital Projects**

To progress capital schemes in Laois in conjunction with Irish Water thus supporting the socio-economic and educational development of the County, in particular:

- Portlaoise Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade.
- Portlaoise Water Supply Improvement – the introduction of 3 no. boreholes in Coolbanagher.
- Portarlinton Public Water Supply Improvement – bringing the Borehole in Doolough wellfield into production.
- Ballyroan WWtP: Planning and Design of Phase 2, 3 and 4 an
- Castletown WWTP – new decanter arm.
- Borris in Ossory WWTP Energy Efficiency upgrade with Fine Bubble Diffused Aeration
- Ballinakill WWTP – Upgrade to Waste Stream.

#### 4. Special Projects

**Taking in Charge private housing schemes:** Engage with IW and the planning department in accordance with the MoU and Protocol agreed between IW and the LA to have all assets of estates TiC since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 transferred to IW and take in charge 4 estates in Portlaoise, 1 in Portarlington and 1 in Mountmellick.

### Non-SLA Activities

#### 1. Health and Safety:

- *H & S Inspections under LCCs SMS 2021 to 2022:* Ensure that programme of works is set and that the target number of inspections in that programme is met by relevant staff.
- *Welfare Facilities:* Continue to roll-out welfare facilities as required for all outdoor staff.
- Review and update Laois County Council's Safety Management Systems (SMS) and in particular risk assessments.

#### 2. Laois County Council's INAB Accredited Water Service and Environmental Laboratory:

Complete a **5 year Business Plan** to be approved by Management in order to ensure the future viability of the Laois County Council Water Services/Environmental Laboratory, and in particular:

- *Market Strategy:* Maintain existing customer base and seek and secure new business from neighbouring Local Authorities, LAWPRO and LCC's Environment Section in accordance with Market Opportunities.
- *Network of Accredited Local Authority Laboratories-*Engage with WSTO, the Water Committee of the CCMA and the DPHLG to finalise the Business Plan for the implementation of this Shared Service.
- *Accreditation:* Enhance our Accreditation status by achieving accreditation for wastewater compliance parameters.
- *Monitoring of Private Drinking Water Supplies:* In accordance with EPA approved 2021 programme for monitoring of DW, ensure that all Private Supplies are monitored in accordance with the European Union (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014, as amended, for all Public Group Water Schemes, regulated Private Group Water Schemes and small private supplies and extend to those exempt Private Group Water Supplies.

#### 3. Rural Water

- *Multi-Annual Rural Water 2019 to 2021:* Complete the delivery of the programme.
- *Climate Change:* Carry out a review of all Private Regulated GWSs to assess the potential for energy, materials and chemical efficiencies,



- *Grants:* Allocate grants to active Group Water Schemes as soon as the allocations are notified by DHPLG. Monitor progress and works involved in the expenditure of the grants.
- *Taking in Charge GWSs:* In conjunction with Irish Water, continue the programme of upgrades to active and orphan GWS, to facilitate the takeover by Irish Water of same.
- *Data Acquisition:* Examine and establish current situation on all publicly supplied GWSs and Private GWSs.
- *Subsidies:* Administer subsidies to the 25 active GWSs in accordance with the subsidy scheme.
- *Well Grants:* Administer Well Grants in accordance with the well grant scheme.
- *Reports:* Submit reports and timely recoupment of grants, as required.
- *Water Quality:* Monitor water quality of the Group Water Schemes.
- *National Rural Water Review Group Project-Local Authority Services Delivery to Rural Water:* Continue to support the implementation of the national shared service.

#### **4. Small Private Schemes (SPSs)**

- Maintain Register and Review.
- Engage with SPSs and ensure that their water supply is monitored.
- Where there are exceedences, consult with the Health Service Executive to advise on appropriate action & keep existing protocols for consultation with HSE under review.
- Carry out 6 audits of SPSs and 2 of Private Group Water Schemes on a Risk Assessment Basis. Where required follow up with enforcement where there is unacceptable progress including issuing directions and taking legal action when appropriate and proportionate.
- Report annually to the EPA on Water Quality.
- Ensure that supplies are registered in accordance with the European Union (Water Policy) (Abstraction Registration) Regulations 2018.

#### **5. Dangerous Structures**

- Maintain and review the 12 open files on the Register of Dangerous Structures and Places and liaise with planning in relation to derelict sites. Follow on new cases as they arise and continue to progress all files and aim to reduce the number open during 2021 to 9.

#### **6. Public Nuisances**

- Follow up on cases as they arise.

## Local Enterprise Office

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Maximising Business Potential	Deliver support services that equip Entrepreneurs, Owners and Managers with the knowledge to plan, grow and sustain productivity, innovation and competitiveness, as well as encourage greater technology uptake.
Collaborate with Enterprise Ireland	Enhance communication with Enterprise Ireland to facilitate potential progression of companies from LEO to EI, facilitating access to relevant EI financial, business and research facilities.
First Stop Shop	Provision of First Stop Shop activities in respect of Business Support, Enterprise Development and Promotion, including Signposting.
Make it easier to do business	Provide supports, guidance and solutions that make it easier for Entrepreneurs, Owners and Managers to identify opportunities and implement actions to start-up, grow and survive within a competitive business environment.
Promote a Best Practice Enterprise Culture	Act as the catalyst and advocate for the establishment of a best practice enterprise culture among start-ups, micro and small businesses; also promoting enterprise and self-employment as a viable career option among the wider population.
Environment for Start Ups	Implement actions and initiatives that create awareness among potential entrepreneurs of the types of supports available, thereby improving the conversion rate of business ideas to fully-formed enterprises.

### **Priority actions for 2021 are:**

1. Increase awareness of the Local Enterprise Office / Local Authority services through an enhanced communications strategy,
2. Strengthen links with Laois Diaspora,
3. Market Laois as a place to do business through the promotion of the 'Connect2Laois' brand,
4. Support clients to effectively respond to Brexit
5. Assist businesses in developing an export strategy,
6. Assist businesses in becoming more innovative and competitive,
7. Promote the Green Agenda,
8. Assist businesses in transitioning to a Low Carbon Economy in collaboration with The CUBE,
9. Encourage female entrepreneurs to maximise their full potential in their plans for growth and success,
10. Support entrepreneurs, owners and managers in accessing financial supports and enabling them to plan, grow and sustain productivity, innovation and competitiveness,
11. Provide access to training and mentoring supports to an increased number of participants,
12. Support business in accessing and participating in exhibitions, seminars and networking events,
13. Promotion of the Micro-Finance Ireland Loan Fund,
14. Promotion of Online Trading Vouchers,
15. Liaise directly with Enterprise Ireland regarding the progression pathways for new and existing clients,
16. Refer enterprises to relevant support services,
17. Support sectoral networks to promote the development of clusters,
18. Working with other key stakeholders to promote Laois as a place to do business,
19. Work with Enterprise Centres in the County to increase enterprise space offering,
20. Supporting economic actions in the Midlands Regional Enterprise Plan, the Local Economic and Community Plan, etc.

## Economic Development & Business Support Unit

The areas of activity and objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Promotion of Business Information and Enterprise Support Services	To contribute to a dynamic environment that is supportive of entrepreneurs and their new enterprises and the development and growth of the existing businesses in the County
Promotion of Economic Activity in the County	To attract Foreign Direct Investment to the County, foster employment and provide the right environment and supports to help all businesses to thrive.

1. Promote Council/LEO support to new and existing businesses in the County,
2. Promote and develop the "Connect2Laois brand through an enhanced communications strategy,
3. Manage the marketing and promotion of the J7 National Enterprise Park,
4. Work with the Laois Chamber of Commerce in promoting Laois as a place to do business,
5. Support and promote enterprise through the enhancement and improvement of Business Parks in the County,
6. Promote Portlaoise as a place to do business through the "Portlaoise Town Team initiative"
7. Work with Laois TASTE to promote, support and grow the Food & Drinks Sector in the County,
8. Support and promote the development of the Portlaoise and Stradbally Farmers markets,
9. Access funding for economic development initiatives,
10. Build relationships with Internal, External (SME's), External (Large/FDI), Public Sector agencies for the creation of sustainable employment,
11. Implement enhanced signage around Portlaoise and carry out improvements to the 3 laneways in Portlaoise in accordance with the Tourism Destination Town Project.
12. Launch the Façade Enhancement Scheme in Portarlington.
13. Assist where necessary the advancement of projects allocated funding under the Urban and Rural Regeneration Development Funds, Regional Enterprise Development Fund and Town & Village Renewal Schemes
14. Work with other key stakeholder to promote Laois as a place to do business

## Tourism

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objective
County Promotion	To promote Laois as a quality tourist destination and events centre. Support and collaborate with industry partners to promote Laois as a vibrant, interesting and distinctive county.

### Key Actions for 2021

1. Administer Laois County Council's Tourism Grant Scheme 2021.
2. Continue to support the Board of Laois Tourism with their implementation of the Strategic Plan for Tourism in Laois 2018 - 2023.
3. Continue to support Ireland's Ancient East initiatives in association with Fáilte Ireland
4. Work with Fáilte Ireland, Waterways Ireland and the Local Community Development Company to promote and work collectively on new tourism developments in the County, including the completion of the Barrow Blueway.
5. Support Coillte in the completion of the Mountain Bike Trail in the Slieve Blooms
6. Support the Ras na mBan "Premier Women's Cycling" event in Laois.
7. Promote the Garden & Walking Trails within the County.
8. Promote and support existing County & Town Twinning Structures.
9. Commence & Complete the Tourism Destination Town Project for Portlaoise
10. Progress the provision of car parking at interpretative signage for the Rock of Dunamaise
11. Continue implementation of Laois County Council's 2017 - 2022 Tourism Statement of Strategy and Work Programme
12. Support the Portarlington Regeneration Strategy 2030.

## Property Management

The Areas of Activity & Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objective
Property Management	To record all acquisitions, disposals and burdens within the remit of Laois County Council to include Housing Stock and Land, Industrial Sites and keep it in an accurate Interest Register

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. Continue to register all current land and housing interests and maintain the Property Interest Register to ensure it reconciles with the Fixed Asset and Fire Insurance registers and keep both up to date.
2. Migrate all property interest data from existing PIR system into the new IMGS System for 2021.
3. Register all current & historical land interests, land transactions and digitising to link into the PIR system, to ensure an accurate Property Register for the County.
4. Ensure best economic or optimal use of Council owned lands and consider disposal of non-essential sites.
5. Co-ordinate the purchase, sale, lease or transfer of all properties.
6. Invite expressions of interest for the reuse of property/land.
7. Continue to maintain all the Council's land, buildings & parks onto the National State Property Register Database that is overseen by the OPW.

## Broadband

The areas of Activity & Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Broadband	To promote availability of Broadband through existing Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) and other service providers  To support the National Broadband Plan  To support the provision of high speed broadband throughout the County

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. Support the implementation of the 2021 action items as outlined in the Laois Digital Strategy 2020-2024
2. Co-ordinate and assist in the rollout of further Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) throughout the County as required and funding allows;
3. Deliver on the four WIFI-4-EU vouchers granted, in order to fund the setup of free WiFi hotspots in public spaces throughout the County.
4. Assist where possible with the rollout of broadband initiatives in line with the National Broadband Plan.
5. Support the rollout of High-Speed broadband to all areas of the County.
6. Support the provision of Mobile Monopoles around the County to remove Mobile signal black spots.
7. Support the rollout of High-Speed Broadband by providers such as EIR, SIRO, Virgin Media, ENET etc.
8. Support and provide High Speed Broadband Hubs in community and economic facilities throughout the county.

## Planning and Sustainable Development

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Forward Planning	To develop a plan led framework to guide the development of the County which is consistent with national and regional planning policies and the principles of sustainable development.
Development Management	To ensure that high quality services are provided by the Development Management process in an efficient, equitable and consistent manner to all our customers in line with proper planning and sustainable development.
Planning Enforcement	To ensure continued implementation of the Planning Enforcement process in line with relevant Planning and Development legislation.
Building Control	To monitor compliance with Building Regulations and implement the Building Control Management Systems in line with relevant building control legislation.
Unfinished Housing Developments	To continue to take estates in charge in an efficient manner consistent with National Guidelines and Planning and Development Legislation.
Derelict and Vacant Sites Implementation	To address the issue of dereliction and vacancy in the towns and villages of the County in line with the relevant Planning and Development legislation and Derelict Sites legislation

### Key Actions for 2021:

#### Forward Planning:

1. Complete the review of the Laois County Development Plan 2021-2027;
2. Commence the review process for the local area plans for Portlaoise, Portarlinton, Graiguecullen and Mountmellick;
3. Complete the Regeneration Strategy for Portarlinton Town centre;
4. Complete Masterplans for the Tyrrell Land bank/ The Ridge, Stradbally Road Portlaoise;



5. Prepare a Local Authority Renewable Energy Strategy (LARES) Strategy for Co Laois
6. Contribute to the Urban and Rural Regeneration Development Fund and TVRS applications as required during 2021;

### **Development Management**

1. Provide an efficient Development Management service by ensuring all applications, Section 5 declarations, Section 97 certs, etc. are dealt with within a timely manner and in accordance with the relevant legislation;
2. Implement the E-Planning project being rolled out nationally with regard to the lodgement of planning applications online;
3. Provide a Pre-Planning Clinic service at Council offices and with relevant sections in attendance as required;
4. Ensure Compliance reports for planning consents are dealt with within a timely manner and in accordance with the relevant legislation;
5. Comply with processes, as required, in relation to the provision of reports on Strategic Infrastructure Developments (SID) and Strategic Housing Developments (SHD) for An Bord Pleanala

### **Planning Enforcement**

1. Deal with all planning complaints within 6 weeks of receipt, take appropriate action by the issue of warnings letters or enforcement notices where required;
2. Implement of the Planning and Development Legislation in relation to the enforcement of short-term lettings within the County;

### **Building Control**

1. Implement provisions of the Building Control Act and Regulations, maintain Public Register and inspect at least 12% -15% of construction sites;

### **Unfinished Housing Developments**

1. Monitor bonds on a monthly basis and submit claim on bonds as required;
2. Advance progress on current applications for taking in charge, complete the taking in charge of a minimum of 10 estates by the end of 2021;
3. Avail of government grants for site resolution works on unfinished housing developments;

### **Derelict and Vacant Sites Implementation**

1. Ensure the process in relation to Derelict Sites is monitored and implemented in compliance with relevant legislation;

2. Target at least 5 high priority Derelict Sites with focus on those in town/village centres which are negatively impacting upon the streetscape and indeed the Tidy Towns scores for these towns and villages.
3. Implement the Vacant Sites legislation by levying the site on the Vacant Sites Register in 2021;

<b>Local Performance Target</b>
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A target of 10 no. estates to be taken in charge in 2021
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## Heritage & Conservation

### Heritage

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Heritage	To record, conserve and raise awareness of the built, natural and cultural heritage of Laois, to promote participation in, access to and enjoyment of Laois heritage by all

#### Key Actions for 2021:

#### 1. Review and prepare a new County Heritage Plan for the period 2020- 2025

1.1. Co-ordinate the writing of new Laois Heritage Plan to cover the period 2020 – 2025, including public consultation and liaison with relevant external groups and internal committees e.g. SPCs.

#### 2. Implement the actions of the County Heritage Plan

2.1. Implement projects under the Laois Heritage Plan 2014 – 2020, with support from the Heritage Council, including

- Heritage Awareness programmes (primarily Heritage Week, but also Science Week and other events).
- Publications: Continue with Phase II of the three- year project to publish a book on Rock of Dunamase with Wordwell Books; Assist with publication of the Conservation Management Plan for Fort Protector.
- Connecting Communities – continue to work with the community in Timahoe to ensure implementation of the Conservation Plan for the Monastic Site, including management of vegetation and masonry, and contribution to the Timahoe Heritage Festival (public health guidelines permitting).

#### 3. Establish and promote the best practice in heritage management and conservation.

3.1. Start work on the new Laois Offaly Conservation and Pollination project, depending on final approval from the Just Transition Fund.

3.2. Secure consent and facilitate the removal the Robert Hartpole effigy from Portarlinton Town Park and its relocation in Carlow County Museum.

- 3.3. Manage the operation of Community Monuments Fund in Laois, depending on funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, working with communities to secure archaeological monuments in their area.
- 3.4. Manage ongoing community heritage conservation projects at Killabban Church, Kilmanman Church and other important sites as may arise throughout the year, in partnership with relevant community groups and elected members.
- 3.5. Contribute to development and implementation of heritage conservation at Timahoe Round Tower, Donaghmore Workhouse and Stradbally, depending availability of Town and Village Renewal Scheme funding
- 3.6. Work on aspects of the Portlaoise Cultural Quarter project, primarily conservation of Old St Peter's Graveyard, heritage interpretation at Fort Protector and Phase II of the Fort Protector Public Realm upgrade (Tower Hill), as part of the overall project.
- 3.7. Continue the Climate Action project at Abbeyleix, promoting community engagement with the issue of climate change.
- 3.8. Work to maximise the benefit to heritage and communities in Laois of the Ireland's Ancient East programme, through project to develop of visitor facilities at the Rock of Dunamase, development and promotion of the Laois Heritage audio guides and app.

#### **4. Raise awareness of and promote enjoyment of the heritage of County Laois**

- 4.1. Deliver on the aims of the National Biodiversity Action Plan in Laois with the Assistance of NBAP funding. This year's actions continue the research started at Abbeyleix Bog in 2020 and focus on raising awareness of the importance of biodiversity
- 4.2. Promote awareness of the importance of biodiversity through the Nature Podcast planned in partnership with BirdWatch Ireland and Offaly County Council, and continued promotion of garden biodiversity and the mental health benefits of getting out in nature.
- 4.3. Contribute to the government "Keep Well" campaign through the Resilience team, and promotion of the mental health benefits of getting out in nature, through radio ads, nature podcast and garden biodiversity booklets.
- 4.4. Provide advice, support and assistance in accessing expertise and funding as required to local authority staff, Elected Representatives and communities on conservation and promotion of Laois built, natural and cultural Heritage, including Community Heritage Projects through the Heritage Council.
- 4.5. Contribute to the development of strong heritage networks at local and national level through the Laois Heritage Forum and the Local Authority Heritage Officer Network.
- 4.6. Collaborate with Culture Team and Creative Ireland in association with the Arts Office, Laois Libraries and others to deliver on the aims of the Creative Ireland programme in Laois.

## Conservation

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Conservation	To fulfil Laois County Council's obligations under the Planning and Development Act 2000-2014, in relation to Protected Structures and Architectural Conservation Areas and to promote conservation of the built heritage of Laois through the statutory planning process and administration of conservation grants as funding allows

### Key Actions for 2021

1. Manage the Built Heritage Investment Scheme, and the Historic Structures Fund and any other architectural conservation funding made available by Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
2. Provide advisory service in relation to protected structures and assist owners in availing of funding to conserve protected structures;
3. Issue Section 57 Declarations as required by owners and managers of Protected Structures in a timely manner;
4. Take necessary enforcement action under the Planning Acts to ensure that Protected Structures are maintained.

## Environment

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
<b>Environmental Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To improve, protect, enhance and promote the natural and built environment in the interests of present and future generations</li><li>• Improve water status in all water bodies.</li><li>• To protect public health and to improve and maintain air quality and to protect against noise pollution.</li></ul>
<b>Waste Management &amp; Enforcement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To improve, protect, enhance and promote the natural and built environment in the interests of present and future generations.</li><li>• The protection of human health and the environment against harmful effects that may be caused by the generation, collection, transport, treatment, storage and disposal of waste.</li></ul>
<b>Litter Management</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To prevent, control and manage litter.</li><li>• To encourage and promote public awareness.</li><li>• Provision of Waste Facilities.</li><li>• Partnership with Communities and Business.</li><li>• Enforcement of the Litter Pollution Acts</li></ul>

The Environment Section's design and implementation of waste policy shall ensure that we lessen our impact on the environment by helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reducing the generation of all waste streams - including food, construction and demolition, packaging, and municipal waste.

Waste prevention is a central concept of the circular economy. The circular economy aims to reduce waste at all stages of the economic cycle and ensure materials are used as efficiently as possible.

All Environmental Services will have regard for the Laois County Council Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. The Environment Section will continually monitor and review all of the potential risks and opportunities related to environmental compliance as well as climate change.

### **Key Actions for 2021:**

#### **1. Environmental Protection:**

Implementation of the National Environmental Enforcement Priorities 2020.

**(a) National Water Priorities - *“Improving Water Status in all Water Bodies”***

1. Water Framework Directive monitoring and investigative monitoring;
2. Investigate Water Quality complaints and incidents
3. Monitor and enforcement of private water supplies including the completion of 6 no. audits of Small Private Supplies & 2 No. Private Group Water Supplies subject to Covid-19 restrictions etc.
4. Carry out Farm inspections, risk based on catchment science
5. Monitor & Enforcement of Section 4 – Discharge to Water licenses.
6. Carry out inspections of domestic wastewater treatment systems in accordance with EPA’s Annual Plan;
7. Provide resources for engagement, knowledge exchange within priority areas for action and referrals from LAWPRO.
8. Assess and provide advice on conditions for planning permissions in relation to requirement for Section 4 License applications, agricultural developments and large housing developments.

**(b) National Air Priorities - *“Protecting Public Health & to Improve and Maintain Air Quality.”***

1. Ensure that fuel merchants, retailers and householders are compliant with Solid Fuels Regulations;
2. Continue extension of Ambient Air Monitoring Programme;
3. Investigate Air and Noise complaints;
4. Assess and provide advice on conditions for planning permissions in relation to air/noise regulation
5. Provide ongoing resources to carry out enforcement work to ensure compliance with solvents, deco-paints & petroleum vapour regulations, air pollution licences, noise action plans and wind turbine complaints.

**2. Waste Management & Enforcement:**

**a) Implementation of National Waste Priorities 2021:**

- Tackle significant illegal waste activity;
- Focus on the management, movement and disposal of C&D waste;
- A targeted inspection programme of End-of-Life Vehicles (ELV) sites and ELV operators;
- Ensure compliance with waste collection -household and commercial;
- Identification of Multi-Agency Sites of Interest.

**b) Management of Laois County Council’s Landfill & Civic Amenity Site:**

1. Progress the roadmap for the development of the Kyletalesha Facility to upgrade and improve the existing infrastructure to facilitate the

- improved management and control of the Landfill and Civic Amenity Site operations.
2. Continuous review of the management and operation of the Kyletalesha Civic Amenity Site to improve the quality of service being provided and to control and minimise operational costs etc.
  3. Continue the Waste License annual monitoring programme.
  4. Annual review of the Closure, Restoration and Aftercare Management Plan for the Landfill.
  5. Cell 15 - Construction & Demolition Material: Prepare an application to the EPA to increase the permitted annual intake of material and to increase the storage capacity of the Cell.
  6. Review of the facilities Safety Management System and to carry out Health and Safety Audits & Inspections in accordance with the annual programme.

### **3. Litter Management**

1. Implement the objectives of the Litter Management Plan 2018-2020
2. Draft New Litter Management Plan 2021-2023;
3. Ensure the objectives/aims in the Plan are central to everyday activities & prepare an annual report for the Elected Members.
4. Identify projects which assist in the delivery of raising awareness regarding litter pollution.
5. Enforce breaches of litter legislation including monitoring authorised temporary signage.
6. Investigate litter & illegal dumping complaints.

### **4. Bring Centres (Bottle Banks)**

1. Regular maintenance, inspections and upkeep of the facilities
2. Tackle illegal dumping incidents at sites
3. H&S audits & inspections

### **5. Veterinary Services**

1. Provide for the inspection of abattoirs and comply with the Services contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.
2. Comply with the Service Contract with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (F.S.A.I.) in relation to the eleven food business plants and submit all reports and recoupments within the prescribed timeframe.
3. Provide for the control of dogs in accordance with the Control of Dogs Acts 1986 and 1992.
4. Comply with the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010.



<b>Local Performance Target – Waste Enforcement</b>
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The number of proposed litter inspections for 2021 is 1025. (A litter inspection is defined as a two-hour patrol by a litter or community warden for the purpose of implementing the Litter Management Act.)
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## Fire & Rescue Service

The areas of Activity & Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Fire Brigade Operations	To provide for the rescue or safeguarding of persons and the protection of property from fire and other emergencies.
Fire Service Infrastructure	To provide satisfactory infrastructure for the fire service.
Fire Prevention	To provide for the safe guarding of the public from the hazard of fire in the built environment.
Community Fire Safety	To reduce the number of fires and other emergencies that put lives at risk in accordance with the "Keeping Communities Safe" policy.
Major Emergency Management	To prepare and maintain the Council's ability to carry out its functions in any Major Emergency or other critical incident that might be declared.

### Key actions for 2021:

#### Fire Brigade Operations:

1. Maintain adequate provision for the reception of and response to calls for the assistance of LCFRS.
2. Respond to 100% of reportable/reported fire and other non fire emergencies 24hrs a day 365 days a year - on average 700 p.a. Ongoing to Q4,
3. Provide Senior Fire Officer roster 24/7/365 and provide initial senior Local Authority presence at the scene of a major incident/emergency via the Rostered Senior Fire Officer:
  - a. RSFO to respond and be in attendance within 60 minutes of the call if he/she determines it necessary to attend in accordance with the 1996 Rostering of Senior Fire Officers agreement.
4. Provide appropriate training and development for all LCFRS personnel:
  - a. Provide a minimum of 80 hours on-station training & 20 hours block for all retained personnel in accordance with the 1999 Composite Agreement to maintain our competent person concept.
5. Provide effective supervision, quality training and up to date equipment and safe system of work by using the Local Authority Safety Management System & carrying out Incident Safety Audits - Ongoing to Q4 2021.
6. Continue to survey and audit the location and adequacy of water supplies for fire-fighting purposes, fire-fighting equipment and fire hydrants, subject to agreement with Laois Co. Council/Irish Water regarding water storage levels & reservoir capacity.

7. Maintain LCFRS capability in accordance with our Section 26 Fire and Emergency Operations Plan, showing the provision made by Laois County Council in respect of organisation, appliances, equipment, fire stations, water supplies and extinguishing agents, training, operational procedure and such other matters as may be relevant, and for dealing with operations of an emergency.

<b>Local Performance Target</b>
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Target time of 5 ½ minutes response from time of alert to going mobile to the incident.
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### **Fire Service Infrastructure:**

1. Progress the new capital works at Mountmellick Fire Station subject to capital funding provided by NDFEM.
2. Progress the new capital works for a new Stradbally Fire Station subject to approval & capital funding provided by NDFEM.

### **Fire Prevention:**

1. Maintain a register of fire safety notices served by LCFRS.
2. Assess & respond where appropriate to all planning applications referred to the Fire Service, ongoing to Q4 2021.
3. Engage with relevant parties for all licenced outdoor events held in Co. Laois - Ongoing to Q4 2021.
4. Administer Fire Safety Certificate Application and Assessment process – Ongoing to Q4 2021.
5. Assess Dangerous Substances licence applications, subject to staffing- Ongoing to Q4 2021.
6. Respond to licensing application where appropriate, under Intoxicating Liquor Acts- Ongoing to Q4 2021.
7. Follow up on all fire safety related complaints – Ongoing to Q4 2021.

### **Community Fire Safety**

1. Ongoing delivery of the Primary Schools Programme to 3<sup>rd</sup> class pupils in 70 schools in Co. Laois – end of Q4 2021.
2. Carry out Fire Safety in the home talks/demonstrations as necessary- Ongoing to Q4 2021.

### **Major Emergency Management:**

3. To continually develop and maintain Major Emergency Management capabilities of Laois County Council - Ongoing to Q4 2021:
  - a. Continue with quarterly audits of key MEM areas such as our Local Co-ordination Centre, Controller of Operations Facilities, Crisis Management Team facilities - Ongoing to Q4 2021.
  - b. Deliver IT upgrades for MEM infrastructure, including electronic information management systems
4. Review Laois County Council's Major Emergency Plan and update as necessary – End Q2, 2021.
5. Manage M.E.M training schedules as provided by the National Steering Group and Region Working Groups - Ongoing to Q4 2021.

## Civil Defence

The areas of Activity & Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Support to the frontline emergency services. These include large events such as air shows, tall ships, concerts and festivals, sports events. We also support smaller local events such as parades.	To support the frontline emergency services in dealing with severe weather, flooding, major accidents, fire fighting and searching for missing people.
Provide supports to community events	To support community events throughout the year. These include events such as concerts and festivals & sports events. We also support smaller local events such as parades.

### Key actions for 2021:

1. To recruit and maintain an active and reliable force of 55 members. To maintain a well trained efficient team to assist in an emergency situation by having at least 60 training classes in 2021.
2. To continue to recruit new members.
3. To carry out a review of Civil Defence operations in Laois and benchmark against similar branches Nationwide.
4. To provide assistance to other Local Authorities as requested.
5. To assist communities with recovery and resilience in the aftermath of any incidents.
6. To provide and maintain the necessary specialist vehicles, plant and equipment for use as a supporting agency for incidents in the County and region as may be required.

## Library

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Library	<p>To continue to develop and adapt our services to provide a modern accessible Library and Information service for all sections of the community during Covid19 following Public Health guidelines.</p> <p>To support and promote our online resources, e-books and online events programme to all sections of the community, improving ICT facilities and digital literacy for our customers .</p> <p>To maintain and continue to develop Library Infrastructures.</p> <p>To develop Libraries as Cultural and Learning Centres.</p>

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. To continue to roll out and implement programmes in the National "Living with COVID-19" Plan with Library and other council services in Laois to ensure that people have opportunities within their local community to help themselves keep well during the COVID 19 era.
2. Continue with Library Delivery Services to housebound, cocooning and isolated persons in the county in partnership with Volunteer Laois
3. Continue to work in partnership with LGMA, Department of Rural and Community Development rolling out national library initiatives such as Right to Read, Work Matters, Healthy Ireland and Services to Marginalized and Disadvantaged Communities.
4. Adoption and Launch of a Laois Library Development Plan 2021-2025, building upon the national library strategy *Our Public Libraries 2022: Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities*.
5. Continue to engage with all sections of the community both offline and online promoting library usage through national events and activities such as Creative Ireland, Seachtain na nGaeilge, Bealtaine, Heritage Week, Children's Book Festival, Laois Literary Events, Science week and Healthy Ireland.
6. Introduce Sensory Friendly library services and facilities on a pilot basis in some library branches.
7. Continue with Age Friendly library services in main libraries in the county.
8. Continue to upgrade ICT facilities in all library service points creating digital spaces and facilitate free digital learning in the library.
9. Piloting of the Open Library service in Portarlinton Library in line with Public Health Guidelines

10. Continue with the construction of new Library at Main Street, Portlaoise
11. Continue with repair works in Rathdowney Library
12. Continue to promote and utilise social media pages to publicise and promote Library, Council and Cultural services to our online community.
13. Continue with Local history digitization and uploading of records to Laois Digital Archive.
14. Provide and upgrade high quality Free WIFI, IT facilities and provide access to printing and scanning facilities in all branches.

## Community

The areas of Activity & Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Laois Local Community Development Committee	To promote and assist an integrated approach to local and community development through plans and programmes both monitored and delivered by Laois Local Community Development Committee.
Social Inclusion and Equal Opportunities for all	To support delivery of services to the socially excluded throughout the County and where appropriate, to encourage civic engagement by those most excluded.
Laois Covid Community Support Response	To contribute, manage and oversee the community-wide effort to limit the spread of COVID-19. Ensure that the wide variety of groups working across the county assist those in need, and did so in an organised, collaborative and targeted way.
Laois Public Participation Network	To support the work of Laois PPN as the vehicle through which the Community, Social Inclusion and Environment sectors are represented in the local authority and other forums. To further develop the PPN to highlight the importance of civic participation and to ensure that the voice of the Community, Voluntary and Environmental sectors is heard.
Youth Democracy and Participation	To promote the participation of young people in decision making of service providers in the County and to encourage their input into the future development of our county through local authority youth programmes and Laois Comhairle na nÓg.
Age Friendly	To deliver quality services within existing structures, through co-operation and collaboration, ensuring resources are aligned and used with maximum efficiency and effectiveness for the ageing population of the County.



	To support existing collaborative structures in delivering the Age Friendly Programme in Laois.
Joint Policing	To support community policing initiatives in Laois and to further develop strategic relationships with An Garda Síochána and communities through the Joint Policing Committee structures.
Town and Village Renewal / Rural Regeneration and also Accelerated Measures Schemes in response to COVID 19	To deliver upon initiatives and funded programmes aimed at renewing our rural towns and villages, both aesthetically and economically and to support the ongoing development by communities in this regard. Accelerated Measures Schemes focus on immediate interventions that can be delivered in the short term to assist Towns & Villages to adapt to COVID 19.

### **Key Actions for 2021:**

#### **Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)**

1. Monitor and ensure optimum delivery of the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP) in 2021, a programme valued at over €600,000 annually.
2. Complete a review the Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 in accordance with national guidelines
3. Monitor and ensure continuing delivery by Laois Local Action Group (LAG) of the LEADER Programme in 2021, and through this the delivery of objectives of the Laois Local Development Strategy 2014-2020.
4. As Financial Partner in respect of the LEADER Programme 2014-2020, carry out all financial checks on LEADER projects, claims and administration claims, including the Article 48 checks prescribed in EU Regulations.
5. Deliver upon all DRCD funding schemes rolled out to the LCDC, including the initiatives under the Community Enhancement Programme.
6. Monitor the delivery of the Healthy Laois Plan 2018-2020, review/extend the plan as appropriate. Develop an implementation plan specific to 2021 and work with collaborative partners to achieve actions.

#### **Social Inclusion**

1. Support and promote social inclusion in Laois, working collaboratively with other partners to do so.

2. Support the work of interagency partners in respect of the engagement and inclusion of the Traveller community.
3. Continue to administer to the Age Friendly Alliance and support the work of the Older People's Forum to drive the implementation of the Laois Age Friendly Strategy 2016-2021.
4. Support the work of partners in engaging with and assisting migrant communities.
5. Facilitate schools engagement programmes, e.g., Skills at Work and commence development of other programmes to increase awareness of local democracy and the work of the local government.
6. Support Laois Comhairle na nÓg to be the voice of young people in Laois and provide ways in which young people are included in shaping policy/plan making that will affect their lives and future.

## **Community Development and Supports**

1. Convening and administration of meetings of the Laois **Covid-19 Community Response Forum**.
2. Operation of the Laois Community Support Response Helpline to facilitate the most appropriate community response to the needs of vulnerable people living in our community.
3. Efficient administration of all COVID related community funding supports
4. Oversight and effective implementation of 'Keep Well Campaign'.
5. Support the development of Laois PPN and its work plan in 2021 particularly the development of Special Interest Groups and to ensure appropriate representation on local authority and other committees. Promote the PPN as the vehicle to support the "joined up" approach to raising and resolving of issues.
6. Work collaboratively with communities to support the physical and economic development of their local areas, through the Town and Village Renewal and Rural Regeneration and Development Schemes, both existing projects to be completed and applications for funding in 2021.
7. Highlight and acknowledge the contribution of the community/voluntary, social inclusion and environmental sectors in Laois, by hosting the Annual Community & Voluntary Awards in 2021.
8. Continue to support the work of Laois Joint Policing Committee in 2021. Review the 5-year JPC Strategic Plan 2019-2021 and commence preparation of a new Strategic Plan.
9. Seek out suitable projects for entry in the 2021 Pride of Place competitions and if appropriate, work with entrant groups throughout the competitive process.

## Climate Action and Environmental Supports

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Community Initiatives / Tidy Towns	To support and facilitate environmental community development initiatives
Environmental Awareness	To raise environmental awareness by working with schools and community groups.
Local Agenda 21 (LA21)	To promote and facilitate sustainable development initiatives at community level.
Climate Change	To implement and develop the Laois Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. By developing and continuing several initiatives, we respond to the effects and challenges of climate change, both present and future. To examine mitigation measures that will seek to further improve the Council's energy efficiency whilst significantly reducing its greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint.
Cemetery & Burial Ground Management	To maintain the 27 Cemeteries in the ownership of Laois County Council

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. Provide financial assistance in accordance with the Community and Tidy Towns Grants Scheme and any other applicable grants as advised.
2. Engage with the Laois Federation of Tidy Towns committees on projects and identify suitable projects which will complement and enhance their existing work schedules.
3. Host environmental awareness activities for various sectors such as green schools teacher workshops, school based workshops with themed specialists, food waste minimisation etc.
4. Provide advice and assistance to the schools that have already been awarded the Green Flag in Laois and also to the schools endeavouring to achieve Green Flag status in 2021.
5. Co-ordinate the Climate Adaptation Steering Group within the Council to advance the Council's Climate Adaptation Strategy.
6. Implement relevant strategies and targets from the Laois Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to combat Climate Change.
7. Assist further energy efficiency across the Council's infrastructure.
8. To assist communities to undertake the Sustainable Energy Community process under the SEAI.
9. Identify suitable LA21 projects and have suitable partners to avail of funded projects, as appropriate.
10. Incorporate the principal of environmental sustainability in Council programmes.

11. Continue to progress conservation and carbon reducing initiatives that will aid the progression of making Laois a sustainable, climate-resilient region for future generations.
12. Continue to develop and maintain the 27 Cemeteries in the ownership of Laois County Council.

## Arts

The areas of Activity & Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Inclusive and Creative Communities	To celebrate and increase public engagement in the arts in our county, particularly those for whom access to the arts is difficult.
Children and Young People	To support and encourage our children and youth to experience and develop through the arts.
Supporting artistic capacity and infrastructure	To underpin and support a suitable range of artistic infrastructure and capacity build both the built and community artistic infrastructure.
Collaborative working	To deliver our objectives by working in cooperation with our national and local partners.

### Key Actions for 2021:

#### Arts

1. Implement the strategic objectives of the Arts Plan 2018-2022 by developing an annual action plan for 2021, also fulfilling the actions in the Arts Framework Agreement 2018 – 2025.
2. Implement the 2021 Creative Ireland Laois Programme, in accordance with the objectives of the overall Creative Ireland Laois Programme 2018-2022.
3. Progressing a public art plan for Laois in 2021.
4. Further develop partnerships with the Arts Council, Government Departments, Laois/Offaly ETB, ALAAO, Youth Theatre Ireland, Poetry Ireland, the VAI and local partners.
5. Work collaboratively with partners on the Laois and Offaly Local Creative Youth Partnership, to implement the Local Creative Youth Partnership Initiative.
6. Promote and participate in national and local annual events such as Culture Night, National Drawing Day, Bealtaine Festival, Cruinniú na nÓg, the Leaves Literature Festival and other events as they are advised.
7. Administer schemes such as Arts Act Grants, Tyrone Guthrie Centre Bursary, Artist residencies, and provide support and advice to local festivals and community arts events.
8. Continue to implement the Artist in Schools scheme in 9 schools in Laois and the Summer Arts programme.
9. Develop the potential in 2021 of our county's location as a creative hub and/or location for film making.
10. Oversee the development of Laois Youth Theatre, in partnership with Dunamais Arts Centre, and other youth theatre programmes within the county.
11. Continue to support and develop our artistic infrastructure including the Laois Arthouse, Dunamais Arts Centre, Laois Music Centre and other artistic facilities.

## Sport, Recreation and Play

The areas of Activity & Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Sport, Recreation and Play	To promote inclusion of people from all backgrounds and abilities in our planning with regard to sport, recreation and play.
Healthy and Active Living	To promote physical activity in forms to ensure good health and wellbeing for all.
Facilities	To maintain to a high standard our recreational and sporting facility and support the development of other such facilities in our county.
Support	To support sporting and community organisations in accessing funding and promote the development of all genres of sport and recreation.
Collaborative working	Endeavour to work in cooperation with partners in all sectors to achieve our common goals.

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. Continue implementation of the Recreation, Play and Sports Strategy 2018-2022 by developing an annual implementation plan for 2021.
2. Ensure the safe, gradual and inclusive return to recreation, play and sport facilities, programmes and events in accordance with COVID-19 Government Public Health Guidelines
3. Secure funding from various government departments to enable delivery of a range of national programmes and events that promote inclusive participation in recreation, play and sports.
4. Advance the upgrading works and revised management licencing for Portlaoise and Portarlinton Leisure Centres to ensure both facilities deliver a safe quality service to the public
5. Maintain to high standard and continue to promote and develop public play spaces ensuring a quality experience for all users.

Specifically, continue the:

- Accessibility and biodiversity upgrading at Portlaoise Leisure Centre, Mountrath and Stradbally, Rathdowney and Coolrain Playgrounds
- Make further applications for funding to upgrade play areas in 2021 under the DCYA Capital Infrastructure for Play and Recreation Programme and other funding streams.

- Advise and support community groups with the development of community play facilities.
  - Maintenance of Green Flag Award for Páirc an Phobail and People's Park Portarlinton
6. Oversee development of recreational infrastructural works in 2021, both Council led and collaborative projects, e.g., CLÁR, ORIS, Town and Village Renewal, and make further applications under each scheme, where appropriate, in 2021.
  7. Oversee the promotion and delivery of national programmes and events to encourage increased usage of public facilities and increase participation including Healthy Ireland, Community Resilience Fund, Let's Play Ireland and Bike Week
  8. During Covid 19, we will work in line with government guidelines to help people stay active in their own areas. We will cooperate with initiatives such as "let's Play Ireland" and the "Growing our Resilience- Keep Well" campaigns in the areas of sport, play and keeping well- both physically and mentally.
  9. Further strengthen community cohesion by developing strong partnerships with Laois Sports Partnership, NGB's and local sporting groups in 2021
  10. Continue to assist community groups and clubs to develop quality sport, recreation and play facilities through the provision of advice, training and information.

## **Water Safety**

1. Continue to oversee and support the Water Safety Programmes to primary schools in County Laois in 2021.
2. Ensure the safe, gradual and inclusive return to water safety programmes and events in accordance with COVID-19 Government Public Health Guidelines
3. Maintain ring buoys and water safety signage erected by Laois County Council in 10 locations countywide and explore new technologies to alert removal of ring buoys.
4. Continue to raise awareness of water safety through the delivery of 4 key water safety events during Water Safety Awareness Week 2021.

## Financial Management and Motor Taxation

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Financial Management	To provide effective management of the Council's finances and resources to ensure delivery of the Council's objectives and to achieve and maximize efficiency

### Key actions for 2021:

1. Implement the budgetary control framework across all revenue divisions and capital programmes.
2. Monitor and manage the 2021 budget allocations for revenue and capital.
3. Provide monthly financial management reports to the Management Team detailing Expenditure / Income against budgets for revenue and capital.
4. Provide quarterly financial management reports to the Corporate Policy Group detailing Expenditure / Income against budgets for revenue and capital.
5. Daily / weekly monitoring of cash balances to ensure optimum use of cash/overdraft facilities.
6. Monthly reporting on debt collection performance.
7. Maximise all income streams and focus on debt collection.
8. Engage with our Commercial Rate Payers ensuring they receive all relevant supports as advised by the Department. Ensuring all those who should pay rates, are set up for billing purposes.
9. Payment of: a) Trade Suppliers within 30 days, b) Engineering Certificates within 14 days, c) Utilities within 14 days, although the terms of trade suppliers are 30 days, we aim to pay as many suppliers as possible within 15 days in accordance with the Prompt Payments legislation.
10. Implementation of E Invoicing project. This will further improve efficiencies in accounts payable. This project has commenced and will be completed in early 2021.
11. Complete the Annual Financial Statement 2020 on or before the end of March 2021.
12. Prepare the budget for 2022 between 1st November 2021 and 29th November, 2021, with budget to be adopted by the Members within 14 days of the Budget meeting. Budget Book and CSV file to be with the DECLG by 31 December 2021.
13. Continue to implement the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process, the Mortgage to Rent Scheme and Shared Ownership re-structuring where deemed necessary.
14. Continue to develop efficient payment methods for all customers, including payment online.
15. Motor Taxation – Continue to provide a flexible service to meet customer requirements.



16. Submit Statutory / EU IMF returns within the prescribed timelines

**A) GGB/Quarterly Revenue, Capital and Debtors**

Q4 2020, Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Q1 2021 Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Q2 2021 Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2021

Q3 2021 Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Q4 2021 Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022

**B) 2021 Borrowing Return**

Q4 2020 Friday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2021

Q1 2021 Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Q2 2021 Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Q3 2021 Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Q4 2021 Friday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2022

<b>Local Performance Target</b>
Complete the Annual Financial Statement 2020 on or before the end of March 2021.

## Human Resources

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Recruitment and Selection	To source the appropriate human resources to meet the needs of the Council in accordance with the Workforce Plan.
Human Resources Policies, Procedures and Practices	To implement a 'People Strategy' for Laois County Council To develop and communicate policies to ensure compliance with employment legislation, and implement effective HR management systems.
Staff Training and Development	To train and develop staff in the skills and competencies needed to achieve organisational, team and individual objectives.
Industrial Relations	To maintain stable relationships between management, employees and union representatives.

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. Review Workforce planning requirements in line with the new Corporate plan 2019-2024.
2. Recruit in accordance with the requirements specified in the Council's Workforce Plan, Departmental Guidelines and support the delivery of labour activation measures as appropriate.
3. Progress a phased implementation of a 'People Strategy' for Laois County Council in 2021 and plan for further implementation measures in the medium term.
4. Develop and communicate H. R. policies having regard to its legal requirements in relation to equality and public service duty, as required
5. Examine and review internal communications, within the overall Communications Strategy.
6. Ensure effective management of the CORE HR systems and the retained payroll/superannuation function.
7. Prepare and implement a staff Training and Development Programme for 2021.
8. Meet with Unions regularly to maintain a stable industrial relations environment and ensure compliance with the Public Service Agreements.

## Information Technology

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Information Technology	To provide Management and Staff with modern information systems to assist them in providing quality services to Customers and Elected Members
Information Technology	Provide a resilient and standardised Information Systems infrastructure for the organisation which will facilitate the cost effective and efficient provision of services to customers
Information Technology	Back office transformation through the digitisation of business processes to deliver efficiencies to staff and customers.

### Key actions for 2021:

1. Continue the rollout of the network infrastructure plan 2020-2022 for the upgrade of critical devices.
2. Review and finalise the rollout of the IT Security Roadmap 2020/2021 to protect critical systems, both 'on' and 'off' network.
3. Develop use cases for the Geographical Information System (GIS) for addressing issues across the organisation.
4. Develop and expand the Digital Process Management System within Housing and other service areas as part of the business process improvement agenda.
5. Develop on-line forms to further facilitate access to services by the public.
6. Upgrade the telephone system and meeting room infrastructure to provide cost effective voice and video conferencing facilities.
7. Maintain all key IT applications on up to date and supported versions and technologies
8. Review, test and update the ICT Disaster Recovery Plan.
9. Review and upgrade the backup services for critical systems and data.
10. Complete the upgrade program to upgrade the broadband connectivity to Area offices and libraries.
11. Support the implementation of the Laois Digital Strategy 2020-2024
12. Provide support for the Laois Climate Adaptation Plan.
13. Participate in collaborative opportunities within the Region that offer efficiencies in cost and time

14. Ongoing review of Contracts for Services and re-tender where required in line with procurement guidelines.
15. Continue to annually review licensing requirements for Windows OS and application suite
16. Continue to maintain and update the council Web Sites and Intranet and continue to facilitate the deployment of online services.
17. Continue to support office based and remote staff and Councillors through a professional and efficient IT Support service.

## Risk Management

The areas of activity and objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Risk Management	To support the organization in delivering its objectives through minimizing associated identified risks and providing guidance and assurance.

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. Review and update the Risk Management Register.
2. Insure the Local Authority against all relevant risks.
3. Complete the Internal Audit Plan 2021 and develop future Audit Plans with due attention to the principle of governance.
4. Assist with the Local Government Audit and with the Food Safety Authority, the Fire and Emergency External Validation Groups assessment, the Service Indicator verification process, Irish Water's reporting and audits and Enterprise Ireland's audit of the micro enterprise programme and its other quarterly and annual verifications.
5. Address appropriately any issues raised in the audits.
6. Facilitate a minimum of four meetings of the Audit Committee in 2021.
7. Report to the National Oversight and Audit Commission on any issues raised by it.
8. Implement the recommendations of Value for Money Reports/Studies.

## Procurement

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Procurement	To ensure the main principles of Public Procurement are adhered to, while achieving value for money and managing risks associated with the procurement of goods, services and works on behalf of Laois County Council.

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. Promote best practice and application of Procurement Directives & Regulations for EU, National & below threshold expenditure across the organization
2. Co-ordinate a Procurement Steering team within the Council to improve the strategic support and direction of procurement driving compliance, value for money and sustainable procurements
3. Proactively promote and monitor the use of Green procurement and Social Considerations by Service Area where appropriate
4. Build organisational capacity to deliver successful procurements through the creation and roll out of procurement & systems Training
5. Publish Procurement Procedures Manual and Templates
6. Monitor expenditure for the procurement compliance for all supplies, services and works contracts
7. Review 2020 procurement procedures per Service Area with a view to developing a procurement strategy for 2021
8. Review and publish new Corporate Procurement Plan
9. Promote utilization of Office of Government Procurement (OGP) National Frameworks and ensure Service Areas comply with the terms of the Frameworks.
10. Promote participation in the Local Government Operational Procurement Centre (LGOPC) Frameworks through the Supplygov portal and ensure that all mini competitions are conducted by Service Areas in accordance with the rules of the relevant Framework Agreements.
11. Ensure that all supplies & services over €25,000 and works over €50,000 which are not covered by an OGP or LGOPC Framework are advertised on eTenders portal and evaluated/awarded in accordance with EU Directive 2014/24/EU.
12. Encourage publication of all Contract Award Notices
13. Encourage the use of the Quotation facility on E-Tenders & Supplygov.ie
14. Assist and ensure the Public Spend Code Quality Assurance Report 2020 is submitted to NOAC by the end of May 2021.

## Health and Safety

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

Areas of Activity	Objectives
Safety Health and Welfare	To provide: Safe places of work, Safe Systems of work, Safe Plant and Equipment, Safe and healthy employees, so far as is reasonably practicable.

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. Monitoring of our Safety Management System through a Safety Inspection Programme (c 250 inspections) and Accident / Incident Investigation as appropriate.
2. Prioritising preventative/corrective action programme within each Department - (Q 1, 2, 3 and 4).
3. The provision and implementation of a Health & Safety Training Programme
4. Provision of occupational Health Services - (Q 1, 2, 3 and 4).
5. Maintain and enhance safety communication mechanisms including Covid-19 - (Q 1, 2, 3 and 4).
6. Review/upgrade lone working IT based system (Q 2).
7. Review of statutory plant arrangements with relatively new Insurance Company engaged (Q1/Q2)
8. Rollout of a new IT based interactive Safety Management System- (Q1, 2, 3, and 4).
9. Enhance GDPR arrangements as appropriate.

## My Pay

The areas of Activity and Objectives are outlined hereunder in respect of this area:

<b>Areas of Activity</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
Project Planning and Implementation	Develop and implement a roll-out schedule to have all Local Authorities live by the end of 2022. Develop and implement a roll-out schedule to migrate Wave 6 Local Authorities into MyPay by the end of 2021.
Payroll	Ensure all payees in the sector are paid accurately and on time.
Superannuation	Develop a Centre of Excellence for superannuation for the sector.
Quality Management	Develop a quality management system to facilitate the delivery of a quality payroll and superannuation service.

### Key Actions for 2021:

1. Migrate Wave 6 Local Authorities into MyPay by the end of 2021.
2. Make €900,000,000 in total payments to approximately 43,000 Local Authority payees in 2021.
3. Continue to achieve accuracy levels greater than 98% target. MyPay currently achieve 99.9% accuracy.
4. Progress the Superannuation rollout to wave 4 Local Authorities by the end of 2021.
5. Manage the Single Public Service Pension scheme for the Local Government Sector.
6. Manage the creation and submission of all payroll related taxation requirements on behalf of our client local authorities as their tax agents.
7. Provide advice and support to all local authorities and participate in policy formulation for the sector in relation to payroll.
8. Comply with all Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and service level obligations as set out in the Payroll Service Level Agreement.
9. Provide accurate pension entitlement statements for our client local authorities.
10. Provide advice and support to all local authorities and participate in policy formulation for the sector in relation to superannuation.
11. Comply with the following Key Performance Indicator (KPI) obligations:



<b>Category</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>KPI</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Reporting Period</b>
Accuracy	1.1	Incorrect net pay due to Client error as a percentage of number of payees.	Less than 2%	Quarterly
	1.2	Incorrect net pay due to Service Provider error as a percentage of number of payees.	Less than 2%	Quarterly
Timeliness	2.1	No. of delays to payroll runs due to the Client.	Less than 4 per quarter	Quarterly
	2.2	No. delays to payroll runs due to the Service Provider.	Less than 4 per quarter	Quarterly
	2.3	EFT payment file submitted for payment to the bank in accordance with the payroll timelines	100%	Quarterly
Compliance	3.1	Submit month end and year end returns to Revenue by statutory dates	100%	Quarterly
Customer Service	4.1	Percentage of queries to service desk resolved within target times.	90%	Quarterly
	4.2	Number of queries received by the Service Provider	N/A	Quarterly

11. Monitor and report on performance to ensure that agreed service levels are being met or exceeded.

12. Actively review our processes to support our continuous improvement targets.

13. Manage and report on the mitigation of risk in the centre.