



Quality Assurance Report 2019

Issued by

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

**Submitted to the National Oversight Audit Commission
(NOAC) in compliance with the Public Spending Code**

AUGUST 2020



Certification

This Annual Quality Assurance Report reflects Laois County Council's assessment of compliance with the Public Spending Code. It is based on the best financial, organisational and performance related information available across the various areas of responsibility.

Signed:



Mr. John Mulholland
Chief Executive

Dated:

31st August 2020

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1. Introduction

Laois County Council has completed the Quality Assurance (QA) report as part of its on-going compliance with the Public Spending Code (PSC).

The primary aim of the Quality Assurance process is to gauge the extent to which Departments within the Council are meeting the obligations outlined in the Public Spending Code. The Public Spending Code ensures that the state achieves value for money in the use of all public funds. Details of the Public Spending Code can be found on the following website:

<http://publicspendingcode.per.gov.ie>

The Public Spend Code predominately refers to Government Department procedures and some of the terminology is very specific to that sector. In order to inform the QA exercise for the Local Government Sector, a Guidance Note was developed to assist in providing interpretations from a Local Government perspective.

This guidance note was further updated in September 2019 and has informed the completion of the 2019 report.

The Quality Assurance Process contains five steps:

1.1 Drawing up Inventories of all projects/programmes at different stages of the Project Life Cycle.

The Project Life Cycle includes appraisal, planning/design, implementation and post implementation review. The three sections to be completed are expenditure being considered, expenditure being incurred and expenditure that has recently ended. The inventory includes all projects/programmes with a value in excess of €0.5m.

1.2 Publish summary information on the Council website of all procurements in excess of €10m.

This applies to all projects in progress or completed.

1.3 Checklists to be completed in respect of the different stages.

These checklists allow Laois County Council to self-assess its compliance with the code. The checklists are provided through the PSC document. Only one of each checklist per Local Authority is required.

1.4 Carry out a more in-depth check on a small number of selected projects/programmes.

A number of projects or programmes (at least 5% of total capital spend and 1% of current spend) are selected for an in-depth check. This includes a review of projects from initial appraisal right through to post implementation review.

1.5 Complete a short report for the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC)

This includes the inventory of all projects, the website reference for the publication of procurements above €10m, the completed checklists, the Council's judgment on the adequacy of processes given the findings from the in-depth checks and the Council's proposals to remedy any discovered inadequacies.

This report fulfils the fifth requirement of the QA process for Laois County Council. It is important to note that consideration of all current expenditure is carried out as part of the statutory Budget process as set out in the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended).

2. Inventory of Projects/Programmes

This section contains an inventory list of all projects and programmes greater than €0.5m at various stages of the project life cycle. The inventory lists all Laois County Council's projects and programmes at various stages of the project life cycle which amount to more than €0.5m. The inventory list (Appendix A) is divided between revenue expenditure and capital expenditure and between three stages:

Project Inventory Reporting Criteria/Requirements	
A. Expenditure being considered	Capital Grant Schemes greater than €0.5m Capital Projects between €5m - €20m Capital Projects over €20m Revenue Expenditure programme increases over €0.5m
B. Expenditure being incurred	Capital Projects greater than €0.5m Capital Grant Scheme greater than €0.5m Current Expenditure greater than €0.5m
C. Expenditure that has recently ended	Capital Projects greater than €0.5m Capital Grant Scheme greater than €0.5m Current Expenditure greater than €0.5m

The process described below was followed to identify projects and programmes that needed to be reported in the QA report:-

All relevant directorates/departments within Laois County Council were requested to compile an inventory of relevant projects and programmes in their respective areas.

2.1 Expenditure being considered

Appendix A contains the details of projects with a value greater than €0.5m that Laois County Council was considering during 2019. The total value of the 40 capital projects listed is €107.84m. The five areas where projects were being considered for investment are in the Housing Directorate, with 31 projects valued at €89.83m, the Roads Directorate with 3 projects valued at €4.21, the Economic Development Directorate with 3 projects at €4.38m, the Emergency Services Directorate with 1 project at €1.5m, the Recreation & Amenity Directorate with 1 project at €2.32m and the Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare with 1 project valued at 5.6m.

These projects are listed in the Capital Indicative Programme 2020 – 2022 adopted by the Members of Laois County Council on 11th November 2019. The housing element forms part of the Social Housing Strategy 2020. There was an expansion of >€500,000 in the existing current expenditure in divisions B02 NS Roads – Maintenance and Improvement & B04 Local Roads – Maintenance & Improvement totaling €4.35m.

2.2 Expenditure being incurred

Appendix A also contains the details of all areas of expenditure with a value greater than €0.5m being incurred by Laois County Council in 2019. Please note that as of the date of this report the 2019 expenditure is unaudited. In total there are 44 projects in this category. The total value of all these items of expenditure is €126.17m of which €64.36m relates to capital expenditure with the balance being revenue expenditure. The revenue expenditure, which totals €61.81m, relates to the normal day to day activities of the council such as roads maintenance, housing stock maintenance, water services maintenance, landfill operations, library operations, with the majority of this expenditure relating to payroll. Full details of this expenditure are included in the Annual Financial Statement for 2019 which was approved by the members of Laois County Council at their meeting of 27th April 2020.

2.3 Expenditure that has recently ended

Appendix A also includes a summary of the inventory of expenditures above €0.5m recently ended. There are 2 capital projects in the Housing Directorate, valued at €7.15m completed.

3. Published Summary of Procurements over €10m

The Quality Assurance process requires Laois County Council to publish all procurements in progress, in excess of €10M on our website. Laois County Council had no procurement in progress, in excess of €10M during 2019. This fact has been published on our website.

4. Assessment of Compliance

4.1 Checklist Completion: Approach Taken and Results

The third step in the Quality Assurance process involves completing a set of checklists covering all expenditure. The high level checks in Step 3 of the QA process are based on self-assessment by Laois County Council, in respect of guidelines set out in the Public Spending Code.

There are seven checklists in total:

- Checklist 1:** General Obligations Not Specific to Individual Projects/Programmes
- Checklist 2:** Capital Projects or Capital Programme/Grant Schemes being considered
- Checklist 3:** New Current expenditure or expansion of existing current expenditure being considered
- Checklist 4:** Capital Expenditure being incurred
- Checklist 5:** Current Expenditure being incurred
- Checklist 6:** Capital Expenditure completed
- Checklist 7:** Current Expenditure that reached the end of its planned timeframe or was discontinued

A full set of checklists 1-7 has been completed by Laois County Council. Each Directorate and relevant department therein completed individual checklists. These checklists were then compiled to create one overall checklist representing the Council overall. The compiled checklist for Laois County Council is set out in Appendix B. In addition to the self-assessed scoring, the vast majority of answers are accompanied by explanatory comments received from the Directorates. Each question in the checklist is judged by a 3 point scoring scheme as follows:-

- Scope for significant improvements = a score of 1
- Compliant but with some improvement necessary = a score of 2
- Broadly compliant = a score of 3

4.2 Main Issues Arising from Checklist Assessments

Checklist 7 did not apply to Laois County Council during 2019. This checklist deals with expenditure in excess of €500K incurred during 2019 but will not be incurred in future e.g. closure of landfill sites, transfers to central services etc.

The checklists completed for expenditure being considered and ongoing, by the various departments of Laois County Council display a relative high level of compliance with the Public Spend Code however, additional work will have to be done in respect of carrying out post project reviews. Laois County Council's emphasis is on achieving best value for money and managing projects in an effective, efficient and economical manner for the betterment of the county.

5. In-Depth Checks

Section 4 of the Public Spending Code requires Internal Audit to carry out an in-depth review of a sample of projects to ascertain the quality of the appraisal, planning and/or implementation stages in order to assess overall compliance with the Public Spending Code.

The projects selected for in-depth review each year are based on the criteria set out below:

- **Capital Projects:** Projects selected must represent a minimum of 5% of the total value of all Capital projects on the Project Inventory **(based over a three year average to achieve 15%)**
- **Revenue Projects:** Projects selected must represent a minimum of 1% of the total value of all Revenue Projects on the Project Inventory **(based over a three year average to achieve 3%)**

The following table summarises the value of projects selected for in-depth review over the past three years:

Year	Total Project Inventory €mil	Total Capital Project Inventory €mil	Total Revenue Project Inventory €mil	Value of Capital Projects selected €mil	% of Projects selected of total Capital Inventory %	Value of Revenue Projects Selected €mil	% of Projects selected of total Revenue Inventory %
2017	169.01	108.90	60.11	9.25	8.50	0.66	1.09
2018	220.35	152.73	67.62	6.85	4.48	2.18	3.22
2019	245.51	179.35	66.16	5.60	3.12	-	-
Total over 3 yrs	634.87	440.98	193.89	21.70	16.10	2.84	4.31

The above figures show that Laois County Council has achieved the three year average of 15% for Capital Projects (16.10%) and 3% for Revenue Projects (4.31%).

Projects/programmes that were selected for in-depth review in respect of 2019 are as follows:

5.1 Capital:

- Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme €5,600,000

5.2 Revenue:

- Laois County Council had achieved in excess of the 3% requirement over past 3 years, therefore no Revenue Project in-depth check was carried out.
- Confirmed in order with NOAC.

Full copy of the in-depth check can be found at Appendix C

5.3 Summary of In-Depth Checks

5.3.1 Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme

It is the opinion of Internal Audit that Laois County Council is in substantial compliance with the Public Spending Code in respect of its responsibilities for the Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme (FRS).

The project is in line with national flood relief policy and appropriate appraisal of the scheme was conducted as evidenced by the South Eastern CFRAM Study. It details the key objective of the project and decided on a preferred method following studies on the flood cell, viable flood relief options, analysis of constraints and cost estimates. It also demonstrates the requirement of a flood relief scheme for Portarlington.

Pre Tender approval was received from the Sanctioning Body, the OPW, and the tender process was completed through etenders in line with proper procurement procedures. Back-up documentation for necessary approvals from Senior Management, OPW and Offaly County Council are on file. There is strong project management in situ and a system of robust controls in place as the project moves from its initial stage.

The thresholds and methodologies for appraisal set out in the PSC indicate that projects between €5 million and €20 million should be subject to preliminary and detailed appraisal, which includes, at a minimum a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA). On this project a MCA was documented for the preferred option. An economic assessment of the costs and benefits highlights the economic justification of the scheme.

Overall, the process and procedures carried out to date in respect of the Portarlington FRS comply with the relevant guidelines and frameworks and are in substantial compliance with the Public Spending Code.

6. Inadequacies Identified in QA Process

The in depth checks for 2019 did not highlight any significant compliance issues in relation to the PSC. However continuing compliance will require ongoing monitoring and staff training.

7. APPENDIX A - Inventory

The in depth checks for 2019 did not highlight any significant compliance issues in relation to the RSC. However, compliance with the RSC requires ongoing monitoring and reporting.

Local Authority Laois County Council	Expenditure being considered				Expenditure being incurred			Expenditure recently ended			NOTES
	Current > €0.5m	Capital		Capital Projects	Current Expenditure	> €0.5m		Current Expenditure	> €0.5m		
		Capital Grant Schemes	€0.5 - €5m			Capital Grant Schemes	Capital Projects				
		> €0.5m	€5 - €20m			€20m plus	Capital Projects				

Housing & Building

A01 Maintenance/Improvement LA Housing					3,356,840							
A05 Administration of Homeless Service					797,005							
A06 Support to Housing Capital Programme					1,020,000							
A07 RAS Programme					3,814,161							
A08 Housing Loans Programme					1,906,154							
A09 Housing Grants					1,498,851							
Housing Acquisition Programme				5,000,000								
2019 House Purchases									6,400,062			
Ballymorris Rd, Portarlinton 0115239C									6,370,563			
Moore St. Rathdowney 0115243C								1,687,979				
Gleann na Glaise, Ballyroan 0115238C								2,877,856				
Mooreville Rathdowney 0115249C								2,207,761				
Pattison Est, Mountmellick 0115233C								3,275,363				
Shannon St. Mountrath 0115232C								1,300,619				
St. Kierans, Errill P2 0115263C								3,736,974				

Local Authority	Expenditure being considered				Expenditure being incurred			Expenditure recently ended			NOTES	
	Current > €0.5m	Capital Grant Schemes		Capital Projects		Current Expenditure	> €0.5m		Current Expenditure	> €0.5m		
		>€0.5m	€0.5 - €5m	€5 - €20m	€20m plus		Capital Grant Schemes	Capital Projects		Capital Grant Schemes		Capital Projects
Laois County Council												
Sean Doire, Durrow P2 0115257C				5,398,859								
Harbour Court, Mountmellick 0115250C		1,114,081										
Carrig Glas, Stradbally, P1 0115268C			5,419,030									
Clonrooske, Knockmay 0115269C		2,012,130										
The Priory, Borris in Ossory 0115270C		2,134,117										
Rathmoyle, Abbeyleix 0115271C		2,921,134						1,296,983				
The Orchard, Stradbally 0115255C												
O'Moore Place Regeneration 0113002C			6,500,000									
Hepburn Court, Portlaoise			10,000,000									
Respond Dev, Abbeyleix Rd 0128006C			7,500,000									
County Hotel, Portlaoise 0114089C		3,000,000										
Convent Site Sophia, Portlaoise 0128043C			10,060,000									
CALF Agreements 0112014C								2,612,198				
CALF Ballickmoyler Rd, Graiguecullen		869,000										
CALF Main St. Stradbally		1,018,632										

Housing & Building

Local Authority Laois County Council	Expenditure being considered			Expenditure being incurred			Expenditure recently ended			NOTES
	Current > €0.5m	Capital Projects		> €0.5m		> €0.5m				
		Capital Grant Schemes	€0.5 - 5m	€5 - €20m	Capital Grant Schemes	Capital Grant Schemes	Current Expenditure	Capital Projects	Capital Projects	

Housing & Building

CALF Bellingham Portlaoise Part V			1,353,605																		
CALF Borris Rd Portlaoise Part V			1,892,900																		
CALF Dublin Rd Portlaoise Part V			1,637,665																		
CALF Doireann Alainn Ballylunan			728,197																		
CALF Kinacourt 18 Units Phase 1			612,750																		
Part V Foxborrow 6 Units																					
Part V Rush Hall Mountrath			900,000																		1,150,538
Part V Derrynouce Portarlinton			800,000																		
Part V Bradleys Dublin Rd Portlaoise			990,000																		
Part V Borris Rd Portlaoise			695,000																		
Part V Maitings & Roselawn Portlaoise			1,516,389																		
Part V Droughill Portarlinton			670,000																		
House Purchases 2018																					6,000,000

Local Authority	Expenditure being considered				Expenditure being incurred			Expenditure recently ended			NOTES
	Current > €0.5m	Capital		Capital Projects	Current Expenditure	> €0.5m		Current Expenditure	> €0.5m		
		Capital Grant Schemes	€0.5 - €5m			€5 - €20m	€20m plus		Capital Grant Schemes	Capital Projects	

Road Transportation and Safety

B02 NS Rd- Maintenance & Improvement	3,018,219				2,718,625						
B03 Regional Rd – Maintenance & Improvement					4,722,066						
B04 Local Road - Maintenance & Improvement	1,337,300				9,732,693						
B05 Public Lighting					1,564,278						
B10 Support to Roads Capital Prog					547,704						
N80 Maidenhead Scheme 0222090C								8,409,712			
Portlaoise Southern Circular 0222052C								7,305,955			
Traffic Management Portarlinton 0222063C		750,000									
LED Public Lighting Upgrade 0225055C								1,500,000			
Rural Regeneration Durrow 0435028C								1,040,000			
Lyster Square 0225054C		500,000									
Portlaoise – Laneway Enhancement Scheme 0224032C								851,000			
Footpath Upgrade/Risk Reduction Portlaoise								500,000			
Portlaoise Public Realm 0224031C								633,000			
Portlaoise – Market Sq, Main St & Lower Sq 0225011C		2,960,000									

Water Services

C01 Operation & Maintenance of Water Supply					2,272,055						
C02 Operation & Maintenance of Waste Water Treatment					1,550,765						

Local Authority Laois County Council	Expenditure being considered				Expenditure being incurred			Expenditure recently ended			NOTES
	Current > €0.5m	Capital Projects		Capital Projects	Current Expenditure	> €0.5m Capital Grant Schemes	Current Expenditure	> €0.5m Capital Grant Schemes	Capital Projects		
		Capital Grant Schemes	>€0.5m							€0.5 - €5m	

Development Management

D01 Forward Planning							588,050				
D02 Development Management							915,291				
D06 Community and Enterprise Function							2,385,708				
D09 Economic Development & Promotion							1,840,015				
Portarlinton Enterprise Hub			1,016,000								
Portlaoise Cube			2,688,016								
Faite Ireland Small Schemes Prog			675,000						2,702,000		
Low Carbon Town									9,372,000		
Cultural Quarter											
Togher Enterprise Lands (0422017C)										6,000,000	

Environmental Services

E02 Op & Mtce of Recovery & Recycling Facilities							572,292				
E05 Litter Management							602,233				
E07 Waste Regulations, Monitoring & Enforcement							503,245				
E11 Operation of Fire Services							3,969,806				
Fire Station at Rathdowney			1,500,000								

Laois County Council	Current		Capital			> €0.5m			> €0.5m			
	> €0.5m	Capital Grant Schemes	Capital Projects	€0.5 - €5m	€5 - €20m	€20m plus	Current Expenditure	Capital Grant Schemes	Capital Projects	Current Expenditure	Capital Grant Schemes	Capital Projects
		>€0.5m										
Recreation and Amenity												
F02 Operation of Library and Archival Service							2,523,907					
F04 Community, Sport and Recreational Development							827,585					
F05 Operation of Arts Programme							1,123,792					
Portarlington Public Realm & People's Park			2,316,000									
Portlaoise New Branch Library 0622009C									5,500,000			
Agriculture, Education, Health and Welfare												
Mountmellick Flood Relief Scheme									3,200,000			
Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme				5,600,000								
Insert other category/s if required												
Miscellaneous Service												
H03 Administration of Rates							2,686,817					
H09 Local Representation/Civil Leadership							874,796					
H11 Agency and Recoupable							6,894,831					
Developments at Aras an Chontae 0883008C									670,000			
Total	4,355,519	0	52,357,168	55,477,889	0	61,809,565	0	64,363,473	0	0	7,150,538	

8. APPENDIX B - Checklists

Checklist 1 - To be completed in respect of general obligations not specific to individual projects/programmes

General Obligations not specific to individual projects/programmes	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 – 3	Discussion/Action Required
1.1 Does the local authority ensure, on an on-going basis, that appropriate people within the authority and its agencies are aware of the requirements of the Public Spending Code (incl. through training)?	3	All relevant staff and agencies have been notified of their obligations under the code.
1.2 Has training on the Public Spending Code been provided to relevant staff within the authority?	1	External training for 2 No staff on 26 th May 2016. Further training would be welcome by Local Authority staff.
1.3 Has the Public Spending Code been adapted for the type of project/programme that your local authority is responsible for? i.e., have adapted sectoral guidelines been developed?	3	Heads of Finance Working Group developed guidelines on adapting the PSC to Local Authorities structures and approach.
1.4 Has the local authority in its role as Sanctioning Authority satisfied itself that agencies that it funds comply with the Public Spending Code?	3	No funding greater than €500k granted.
1.5 Have recommendations from previous QA reports (incl. spot checks) been disseminated, where appropriate, within the local authority and to agencies?	3	Yes. Recommendations are notified to relevant parties for review and application.
1.6 Have recommendations from previous QA reports been acted upon?	2	Ongoing monitoring carried out by Internal Audit
1.7 Has an annual Public Spending Code QA report been certified by the Local Authority's Chief Executive, submitted to NOAC and published on the authority's website?	3	Yes
1.8 Was the required sample of projects/programmes subjected to in-depth checking as per step 4 of the QAP?	3	Yes the total sample selected over period 2017-2019 was in excess of PSC requirements.
1.9 Is there a process in place to plan for ex post evaluations/Post Project Reviews? Ex-post evaluation is conducted after a certain period has passed since the completion of a target project with emphasis on the effectiveness and sustainability of the project.	3	Relevant staff have been reminded of their obligations to carry out post-project reviews as required and this will be checked by Internal Audit annually
1.10 How many formal Post Project Review evaluations have been completed in the year under review? Have they been issued promptly to the relevant stakeholders / published in a timely manner?	3	1 Post Project review was carried out in 2019 in respect of Conniberry Way Capital Housing Scheme.
1.11 Is there a process to follow up on the recommendations of previous evaluations/Post project reviews?	3	Relevant staff have been advised of this requirement and checks will be carried out by Internal Audit
1.12 How have the recommendations of previous evaluations / post project reviews informed resource allocation decisions?	3	Relevant staff have been advised of this requirement and checks will be carried out by Internal Audit

Checklist 2 - To be completed in respect of capital projects/programmes & capital grant schemes that were under consideration in the past year

Capital Expenditure being Considered – Appraisal and Approval	Self- Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
2.1 Was a preliminary appraisal undertaken for all projects > €5m?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Development Mgm, & Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare Code. Not applicable to Roads & Fire Service.
2.2 Was an appropriate appraisal method used in respect of capital projects or capital programmes/grant schemes?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Roads, Fire Service, Development Mgm & Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare Codes.
2.3 Was a CBA/CEA completed for all projects exceeding €20m?	N/A	Not applicable to any Code
2.4 Was the appraisal process commenced at an early stage to facilitate decision making? (i.e. prior to the decision)	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Roads, Development Mgm, Fire Service Codes
2.5 Was an Approval in Principle granted by the Sanctioning Authority for all projects before they entered the planning and design phase (e.g. procurement)?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Roads, Fire Service, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare
2.6 If a CBA/CEA was required was it submitted to the relevant Department for their views?	N/A	Not applicable to any Code
2.7 Were the NDFA consulted for projects costing more than €20m?	N/A	Not applicable to any Code
2.8 Were all projects that went forward for tender in line with the Approval in Principle and, if not, was the detailed appraisal revisited and a fresh Approval in Principle granted?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Not applicable to Roads, Dev Mgm, Fire Service – Project never progressed to tender stage.
2.9 Was approval granted to proceed to tender?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare, N/A to Roads, Dev Mgm & Fire Code
2.10 Were procurement rules complied with?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Roads, Fire Service, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare.
2.11 Were State Aid rules checked for all supports?	N/A	Not applicable to any Code
2.12 Were the tenders received in line with the Approval in Principle in terms of cost and what is expected to be delivered?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare. N/A to Roads, Dev Mgm & Fire Code
2.13 Were performance indicators specified for each project/programme that will allow for a robust evaluation at a later date?	2	Score relates to Housing, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare N/A to Roads, Dev Mgm, Fire Code
2.14 Have steps been put in place to gather performance indicator data?	3	Score relates to Housing, Roads and Development Mgm Code, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare

Checklist 3 - To be completed in respect of new current expenditure under consideration in the past year

Capital Expenditure being Considered Appraisal and Approval	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
3.1 Were objectives clearly set out?	3	Yes, only applicable for Roads Code.
3.2 Are objectives measurable in quantitative terms?	3	Yes, only applicable for Roads Code.
3.3 Was a business case, incorporating financial and economic appraisal, prepared for new current expenditure?	N/A	Annual DTTAS and TII funds determined per county at national level
3.4 Was an appropriate appraisal method used?	N/A	As above
3.5 Was an economic appraisal completed for all projects exceeding €20m or an annual spend of €5m over 4 years?	N/A	As above
3.6 Did the business case include a section on piloting?	N/A	As above
3.7 Were pilots undertaken for new current spending proposals involving total expenditure of at least €20m over the proposed duration of the programme and a minimum annual expenditure of €5m?	N/A	As above
3.8 Have the methodology and data collection requirements for the pilot been agreed at the outset of the scheme?	N/A	As above
3.9 Was the pilot formally evaluated and submitted for approval to the relevant Department?	N/A	As above
3.10 Has an assessment of likely demand for the new scheme/scheme extension been estimated based on empirical evidence?	N/A	As above
3.11 Was the required approval granted?	N/A	As above
3.12 Has a sunset clause (as defined in section B06, 4.2 of the Public Spending Code) been set?	N/A	As above
3.13 If outsourcing was involved were procurement rules complied with?	3	Yes
3.14 Were performance indicators specified for each new current expenditure proposal or expansion of existing current expenditure programme which will allow for a robust evaluation at a later date?	N/A	As above
3.15 Have steps been put in place to gather performance indicator data?	N/A	As above

Checklist 4 - To be completed in respect of capital projects/programmes & capital grants schemes incurring expenditure in the year under review

Capital Expenditure being Considered – Appraisal and Approval	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
4.1 Was a contract signed and was it in line with the Approval in Principle?	3	Yes, as appropriate, score relates to Housing, Roads, Dev Mgm, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare, Library, Corporate Code
4.2 Did management boards/steering committees meet regularly as agreed?	3	Yes, regular meetings held, score relates to Housing, Roads, Dev Mgm, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare Library, Corporate Code
4.3 Were programme co-ordinators appointed to co-ordinate implementation?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Roads, Dev Mgm, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare, Library, Corporate Code
4.4 Were project managers, responsible for delivery, appointed and were the project managers at a suitably senior level for the scale of the project?	3	Yes, score relates to Roads, Dev Mgm, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare Library, Corporate Code
4.5 Were monitoring reports prepared regularly, showing implementation against plan, budget, timescales and quality?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Roads, Dev Mgm, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare, Library, Corporate Code
4.6 Did projects/programmes/grant schemes keep within their financial budget and time schedule?	2	Score relates to Housing, Roads, Dev Mgm, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare, Library, Corporate Code.
4.7 Did budgets have to be adjusted?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Library and Road project budgets had to be adjusted. Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare minor adjustments required for Flood Relief Scheme.
4.8 Were decisions on changes to budgets / time schedules made promptly?	3	Yes, score relates to Housing, Roads, Dev Mgm, Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare, Library, Corporate Code.
4.9 Did circumstances ever warrant questioning the viability of the project/programme/grant scheme and the business case incl. CBA/CEA? (exceeding budget, lack of progress, changes in the environment, new evidence, etc.)	N/A	No
4.10 If circumstances did warrant questioning the viability of a project/programme/grant scheme, was the project subjected to adequate examination?	3	Agriculture, Education Health & Welfare Flood Relief Scheme contains Suspension & Termination Clause (2) in relation to the various Scheme stages.
4.11 If costs increased was approval received from the Sanctioning Authority?	3	Yes, approval received from Sanctioning Authority for Housing, Library & Road projects increases.
4.12 Were any projects/programmes/grant schemes terminated because of deviations from the plan, the budget or because circumstances in the environment changed the need for the investment?	2	No

Checklist 5 - To be completed in respect of current expenditure programmes incurring expenditure in the year under review

Incurring Current Expenditure	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 -3	Comment/Action Required
5.1 Are there clear objectives for all areas of current expenditure?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes, The spending programme objectives are set out as part of the annual budget process. They are also included in the Corporate Plan Service Delivery Plans & Local Enterprise Development Plan. ▪ My Pay – Objectives set annually which are monitored by the Program Board
5.2 Are outputs well defined?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Annual Service Delivery Plans define outputs for each revenue expenditure programme. National KPI's are in place for Local Government Sector. ▪ LEO – Annual Targets submitted to Enterprise Ireland ▪ MyPay – SLA in place with clients
5.3 Are outputs quantified on a regular basis?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service Delivery Plans are reviewed on a yearly basis. KPIs for specific services are kept under review nationally on a continuous basis. ▪ LEO – Performance Monitoring System updated monthly for monitoring by Enterprise Ireland ▪ MyPay – SLA in place with clients
5.4 Is there a method for monitoring efficiency on an on-going basis?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes, Budget performance and ongoing monitoring is in place. ▪ Internal and external auditing is also in place. ▪ LEO – Quarterly cashflows submitted to Enterprise Ireland to ensure compliance/efficiency ▪ MyPay – SLA in place with clients
5.5 Are outcomes well defined?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outcomes are defined in policy documents and programmes of work adopted by the Council. ▪ LEO – Outcomes clearly defined by number of new business start ups/new jobs created/uptake of LEO support/programme ▪ MyPay – SLA in place with clients

5.6 Are outcomes quantified on a regular basis?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ongoing monitoring is undertaken by revenue programme co-ordinators and forms part of the Local Authority's Annual Report. ▪ LEO – Annual Employment Survey carried out to ascertain number of new jobs created in LEO supported business/monthly updates to EI ▪ MyPay – SLA in place with clients
5.7 Are unit costings compiled for performance monitoring?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some unit costings are included as part of the National KPIs in place for the Local Government sector. ▪ MyPay – SLA in place with clients
5.8 Are other data compiled to monitor performance?	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some other data is compiled and is service dependent. ▪ LEO – Quarterly cashflows submitted to EI/Annual returns to EI/ongoing evaluation of LEO supports ▪ MyPay – SLA in place with clients
5.9 Is there a method for monitoring effectiveness on an on-going basis?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Combination of all of the above measures.
5.10 Has the organisation engaged in any other 'evaluation proofing' ¹ of programmes/projects?	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ LEO – All training programmes are evaluated on completion. Annual Business Reviews carried out on LEO supported clients, Employment Survey carried out annually. ▪ MyPay – Governance review carried out in 2016

¹ Evaluation proofing involves checking to see if the required data is being collected so that when the time comes a programme/project can be subjected to a robust evaluation. If the data is not being collected, then a plan should be put in place to collect the appropriate indicators to allow for the completion of a robust evaluation down the line.

Checklist 6 - To be completed in respect of capital projects/programmes & capital grant schemes discontinued and/or evaluated during the year under review

Capital Expenditure Recently Completed	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
6.1 How many post project reviews were completed in the year under review?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes one relating to Housing
6.2 Was a post project review completed for all projects/programmes exceeding €20m?	N/A	
6.3 Was a post project review completed for all capital grant schemes where the scheme both (1) had an annual value in excess of €30m and (2) where scheme duration was five years or more?	N/A	
6.4 Aside from projects over €20m and grant schemes over €30m, was the requirement to review 5% (Value) of all other projects adhered to?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Score relates to Housing
6.5 If sufficient time has not elapsed to allow for a proper assessment, has a post project review been scheduled for a future date?	N/A	
6.6 Were lessons learned from post-project reviews disseminated within the Sponsoring Agency and to the Sanctioning Authority? (Or other relevant bodies)	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes, score relates to Housing
6.7 Were changes made to practices in light of lessons learned from post-project reviews?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Yes, score relates to Housing
6.8 Were project reviews carried out by staffing resources independent of project implementation?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Score relates to Housing

Checklist 7 - To be completed in respect of current expenditure programmes that reached the end of their planned timeframe during the year or were discontinued

Current Expenditure that (i) Reached the end of its planned timeframe or (ii) Was discontinued	Self-Assessed Compliance Rating: 1 - 3	Comment/Action Required
7.1 Were reviews carried out of current expenditure programmes that matured during the year or were discontinued?	N/A	No programmes relevant to the PSC in 2019.
7.2 Did those reviews reach conclusions on whether the programmes were efficient?	N/A	No programmes relevant to the PSC in 2019.
7.3 Did those reviews reach conclusions on whether the programmes were effective?	N/A	No programmes relevant to the PSC in 2019.
7.4 Have the conclusions reached been taken into account in related areas of expenditure?	N/A	No programmes relevant to the PSC in 2019.
7.5 Were any programmes discontinued following a review of a current expenditure programme?	N/A	No programmes relevant to the PSC in 2019.
7.6 Were reviews carried out by staffing resources independent of project implementation?	N/A	No programmes relevant to the PSC in 2019.
7.7 Were changes made to the organisation's practices in light of lessons learned from reviews?	N/A	No programmes relevant to the PSC in 2019.

Notes:

- ❖ The scoring mechanism for the above checklists is as follows:
 - Scope for significant improvements = a score of 1
 - Compliant but with some improvement necessary = a score of 2
 - Broadly compliant = a score of 3
- ❖ For some questions, the scoring mechanism is not always strictly relevant. In these cases, it is appropriate to mark as N/A and provide the required information in the commentary box as appropriate.
- ❖ The focus should be on providing descriptive and contextual information to frame the compliance ratings and to address the issues raised for each question. It is also important to provide summary details of key analytical outputs covered in the sample for those questions which address compliance with appraisal/evaluation requirements i.e. the annual number of appraisals (e.g. Cost Benefit Analyses or Multi Criteria Analyses), evaluations (e.g. Post Project Reviews). Key analytical outputs undertaken but outside of the sample should also be noted in the report.

9. APPENDIX C – In Depth Check No. 1

Quality Assurance – In Depth Check

Section A: Introduction

Programme or Project Information	
Name	<i>Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme</i>
Detail	<i>Capital Investment Programme to provide a flood relief scheme in Portarlinton</i>
Responsible Body	<i>Laois County Council</i>
Current Status	<i>Expenditure Being Considered</i>
Start Date	<i>2018</i>
End Date	<i>Proposed date 2023</i>
Overall Cost	<i>€5.6 million</i>

Project Description

A) Background

The Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme (FRS) is a key infrastructural project being undertaken by Laois County Council. Portarlinton sits in both counties Laois and Offaly, but was part of relief schemes assigned to Laois County Council and therefore Laois County Council is the lead and Contracting Council with the support of the Office of Public Works (OPW). The Scheme is part of the first tranche of projects emanating from the Programme of Investment in Flood Relief Measures under the National Development Plan 2018-2027, which was announced in May 2018. The project represents a capital investment of €5.6 million and is expected to be completed by 2023.

As the River Barrow passes through Portarlinton town, out of bank flooding occurs due to insufficient channel capacity. A number of properties are affected due to flooding on both banks of the river. Properties are further affected at the downstream extent of the Blackstick Drain due to a back water effect from the River Barrow. The Portarlinton FRS is required to manage the existing flood risk and also the potential for significant increase in flood risk due to climate change and other pressures that may arise in the future.

The project while in its initial stage has five stages which will culminate in the handover to Laois County Council of a constructed flood relief scheme. The proposed handover is expected to be in 2023.

The five stages of the Project are:

- Stage I : Identification and development of a Preferred Scheme
- Stage II: Planning Process
- Stage III: Detailed construction Design, Compilation of Work Packages and the Preparation of Tenders for Contracts
- Stage IV: Construction Supervision & Project Management Services
- Stage V: Handover of Works

In 2011 a preliminary Flood Risk Assessment was completed by the OPW in accordance with the EU Directive on the Assessment and Management of Flood Risks 2007. It identified Portarlinton as an Area for Further Assessment (AFA) and this information was taken forward in the OPW commissioned South Eastern Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAM) Study on the River Barrow. The South Eastern CFRAM study undertook a detailed engineering assessment of flooding in Portarlinton and identified one preferred option to deal with the flooding risk, which is to construct a flood relief scheme consisting of a series of hard defences. These hard defences would consist of flood embankments, walls and raising of roads and would offer the standard level of protection against a flood with a 1% probability of occurring in a given year, more commonly called the 100 year flood event. The hard defences would protect the 1% AEP (Annual Exceedance Probability) fluvial flood event with an estimated height of 1.6m and a total length of 3.3km.

Laois County Council on the approval of the OPW set up a Capital Projects Office in 2018 to manage and progress the relief schemes assigned to it, including the Portarlinton FRS.

One Consulting Engineering firm was to be procured to oversee the designing, planning and building of the scheme.

B) Need for the Scheme

The need for a flood relief scheme was identified as far back as 2007 when the Portarlinton Flood Risk Management Strategy was completed and recommended that in order to alleviate the risk of flooding, floodwalls and embankments should be implemented in the centre of Portarlinton along the River Barrow and the Blackstick Drain. Portarlinton has a long history of flooding dating back to 1964 and as recent as November 2017. The flooding in 2017 highlighted again the requirement for a long term measure to meet the challenge of flooding as all attempts to alleviate the flooding to date had not been successful.

C) Appraisal of Project

The South Eastern CFRAM study identified and assessed the flood risk in Portarlinton and after mapping the flood cell, it looked at the flood management options available to meet the challenge of the flood risk. Following an optioneering process whereby different flood management measures were considered from a starting point of doing nothing, it highlighted the benefits, if any, around each option and the constraints involved. The study concluded that a flood relief scheme of hard defences would be the only viable and effective method of flood management for the community of Portarlinton. Included in the study was the creating of a hydraulic model to ascertain the effectiveness of this method. The model indicated that the scheme would give protection to properties located in the flood cell for a one in one hundred year storm. The South Eastern CFRAM study identified 144 properties that would benefit from the flood relief scheme as well as the economic, social and public realm benefits to the town of Portarlinton.

D) Oversight and Governance:

A signed Section 85 Agreement (Local Government Act 2001) exists between Laois and Offaly County Council, acknowledging Laois as the Lead Authority. This gives Laois County Council all the statutory powers, duties and functions of Offaly County Council to perform and carry out fully all functions necessary to design, construct and complete the Portarlinton FRS. It states that Laois County Council shall design, construct and complete the Project to such a standard in consultation with Offaly County Council and the OPW.

The project will be carried out under the direction and guidance of a Steering Group which is made up of representatives from Laois County Council, Offaly County Council, the OPW and from other stakeholders as required. A Project Manager has been appointed to oversee the project. Strict protocols are inserted in the Project Brief on the governance of the Project Manager and the Steering Group. Progress reporting and monitoring are built into the project brief through each stage of the project.

E) Current Status

At present, approval has been received from the OPW to award the provision of Engineering and Environmental Consultancy Services to the winner of the tender competition. This has been followed by the Chief Executive of Laois County Council approving the issuing of Letter of Intent to the successful Engineering Consultancy firm. The firm, who have now formally accepted the Project, will select, develop and design the Portarlinton FRS.

The purpose of this review is to establish if the appraisals carried out to date comply with the Common Appraisal Framework thereby ensuring their compliance with the Public Spending Code.

This main focus of this review relates to the Appraisal Stage of the project in 2019.

F) The Public Spending Code - Capital Expenditure Appraisal Thresholds

The thresholds and methodologies for appraisal set out in the PSC are as follows:

- The least detailed assessment should be carried out for minor projects with an estimated cost **below €0.5 million**, such as projects involving minor refurbishment works, fit-outs, etc.
- Projects costing **between €0.5 million and €5 million** should be subject to a single appraisal incorporating elements of a preliminary and detailed appraisal.
- Projects between **€5 million and €20 million** should be subject to preliminary and detailed appraisal which includes at least a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA).

Based on the Capital Expenditure Thresholds outlined above, the Portarlinton FRS Project (Project Costing between €5 million and €20 million) should be subject to preliminary and detailed appraisal which includes at least a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA).

Section B - Step 1: Logic Model Mapping

As part of this In-Depth Check, Laois County Council's Internal Audit has completed a Programme Logic Model (PLM) for the Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme. A PLM is a standard evaluation tool and further information on their nature is available in the [Public Spending Code](#).

Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
<p>To provide a flood relief scheme for Portarlington to meet the challenges of fluvial flooding.</p>	<p>Budgeted expenditure for the project is €5.6million</p> <p>Staff back-up support of a Senior Engineer, Executive Engineer and Project Administrator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting up of a Capital Projects Office ○ Implementing a Steering Group ○ Issuing a Project Brief ○ Procuring a Consultancy Engineering firm to progress both the Engineering and Environmental elements of the project. <p>The project shall comprise of five stages;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stage I : Identification and development of a Preferred Scheme ○ Stage II: Planning Process ○ Stage III: Detailed construction Design, 	<p>A fit for purpose flood relief scheme for Portarlington</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protection from a 1 in 100 year fluvial flooding event ○ Successful delivery of the scheme on budget and on time ○ Improve the quality of life for the people of Portarlington

		<p><i>Compilation of Work Packages and the Preparation of Tenders for Contracts</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Stage IV: Construction Supervision & Project Management Services</i> ○ <i>Stage V: Handover of Works</i> 		
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Description of Programme Logic Model

Objectives: The objective of the Portarlinton FRS is to provide a long term measure from the risk of flooding to the community of Portarlinton. The project will develop and implement a flood relief scheme that ensures that flood risk can be managed effectively and sustainably into the future. The aim is to provide a 1% AEP event flood protection while also ensuring that there are no impacts on communities located upstream and downstream.

Inputs: The primary input to the programme will be the capital funding of €5.6 million which will be provided for by the Office of Public Works.

Staff back-up support of a Senior Engineer/Project Manager, Executive Engineer and a Project Administrator are required in the oversight and day to day workings of the project. All staff are permanent Laois County Council personnel and their costs will be covered by the OPW as follows;

Senior Engineer/Project Manager 50%

Executive Engineer 50%

Administration Officer 25%

Activities:

1. Setting up of a Capital Projects Office from where the Laois County Council staff appointed to the project work from in 2018.
2. Senior Engineer appointed as the Project Manager and heading up of the Steering Committee who will oversee and monitor the project as it progresses.
3. Chief Executive Order No. 084/2019 signing the Deed of Adherence for the Provision of Engineering and Environment Consultancy Services for Portarlinton FRS.
4. The preparation and issuing of the Project Brief in December 2019 setting out the project objective, scope of the project and outlining requirements for each of the five stages of the project along with estimated time periods.
5. Invitation to Tender published on etenders on 9th December 2019 for the Provision of Engineering and Environmental Consultancy Services using the OPW Framework for Projects of €5 million or more. 4 no. tenders were received and opened 26th February 2020.
6. Approval from OPW to award the Provision of Engineering and Environmental Consultancy Services for Portarlinton FRS contract to winning tenderer received on 13th May 2020

Outputs: Having carried out the identified activities using the inputs, the outputs of the project is the engagement of an engineering consultancy to design, plan and construct a flood relief scheme for Portarlinton.

Outcomes: The envisaged outcomes of the project are to provide a flood relief scheme for Portarlinton that provides a Standard of Protection of 1% AEP flood which will be to the benefit and enhancement of the community of Portarlinton.

Section B - Step 2: Summary Timeline of Project/Programme

The following section tracks the Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme from inception to conclusion in terms of major project/programme milestones



2016	Completion of South Eastern CFRAM Study on River Barrow
19 February 2018	Publication of the Flood Risk Management Plan for the Barrow River Basin
26 June 2018	Elected Members of Laois County Council adopt Flood Risk Management Plan for Laois
1 November 2018	Confirmation from OPW of funding commitment to the project
6 November 2018	Approval from OPW to setting up of Capital Projects Project Team and funding salaries of appointed staff
14 August 2019	Steering Group Meeting 01
12 September 2019	Steering Group Meeting 02
25 September 2019	Steering Group Meeting 03
14 November 2019	Chief Executive Order No. 084/2019 signing Deed of Adherence for the Provision of Engineering and Environment Consultancy Services for Portarlinton FRS
9 December 2019	Issuing of Tender Specification and RFT for Portarlinton FRS Engineering and Environment Consultancy Services RFT 162611
17 February 2020	Signing of Section 85 Agreement between Laois County Council and Offaly County Council
20 February 2020	Latest date for submission of Tenders. 4no. Tenders received
25 March 2020	Publishing of Tender Assessment Report
13 May 2020	Approval from OPW to award the Provision of Engineering and Environmental Consultancy Services for Portarlinton FRS contract to winning tenderer
20 May 2020	Chief Executive Order 021/2020 approving issuing of Letter of Intent to successful Consultant for the provision of Engineering and Environmental Consultancy Services for Portarlinton FRS

Section B - Step 3: Analysis of Key Documents

The following section reviews the key documentation relating to appraisal, analysis and evaluation for the Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme.

Project/Programme Key Documents	
Title	Details
1. South Eastern Catchment-based Flood Risk Assessment & Management Study of the River Barrow	A detailed study of the flood cell in Portarlinton which resulted in the development of Flood Risk Management Plans and provides the appraisal for the project
2. Letters from OPW (1 November 2018, 6 November 2018)	Approval from OPW for progressing with the flood relief scheme in Portarlinton and confirmation of funding of staff resources.
3. Minutes of Meetings of Steering Group	This is documentary evidence of agendas and minutes of meetings that were held. The minutes provide a comprehensive record of those present, matters discussed, outcomes agreed and actions required along with assigned responsibilities.
4. Chief Executive Order No. 084 dated 14 November 2019	Chief Executive's Order signing Deed of Adherence for the Provision of Engineering and Environment Consultancy Services for Portarlinton FRS
5. Tender Specification for Engineering & Environmental Consultancy Services	This sets out the Project Brief for the Appointment of Technical Consultancy Services
6. Form of Tender & Schedule for Conditions of Engagement for Consultancy Services (Technical)	Sets out milestones of the Project
7. Section 85 Agreement	Sets out Agreement between Laois County Council and Offaly County Council

Key Document 1: South Eastern CFRAM Study

The South Eastern CFRAM study forms the appraisal for the progressing of a flood relief scheme for Portarlinton following the identification and study of the flood cell. The Study culminated in 2016 with the development of Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) which considered and examined flood risk management measures designed to deal with the identified flood risk. The FRMP's set out the policies and actions recommended to be pursued by the OPW to achieve the most cost effective and sustainable management of existing and potential future flood risk taking account of environmental plans, objectives and legislative and statutory requirements. Its preferred flood risk management options were identified and subsequent plans were recommended to be developed and progressed.

Feasibility Studies on the flood cell were carried out and methods of flood management were measured under four receptor groups- Technical, Social, Economic, Environment/Cultural Heritage. Each option was then put through a justification test for rejection/retention. In compliance with the requirements of the Public Spending Code the twelve options considered in the Optioneering study included the 'Do nothing approach', 'do minimum' but both were found to provide unacceptable outcomes to achieving the required Standard of Protection. From the feasibility study on the flood cell in Portarlinton, the preferred method carried forward to address the flood risk was a system of hard defences.

A Multi Criteria Analysis was developed to review the Hard Defences method where the four receptor groups were scored against the non –monetary benefits and impacts of potential future schemes. The outcome determined again the progressing of the Hard Defences option.

An economic appraisal was completed as part of the study based on monetary damage and the benefit of providing a standard of protection of 1% AEP. The economic benefits are shown to outweigh the cost of the measure which ensures value for money. Present Value Damage of the cost of flooding in Portarlinton was estimated at €26,063,992 whereas the estimated cost of providing a hard defence system which offered a Standard of protection of 1 % AEP was €5.6million.

Key Document 2: Approval Letter from Office of Public Works to Laois County Council

Approval was received from the OPW for the progressing and confirmed funding of the flood relief scheme. Further correspondence confirmed the funding for salaries of staff based in the Capital Projects Office in Laois County Council for the delivery of a flood relief scheme for Portarlinton.

Key Document 3: Agenda/Minutes of Meetings of Steering Group

In compliance with the requirements of the Public Spending Code for projects 'under consideration' for a formal structure to be put in place, a Project Manager was appointed and a Project Steering Group was set up. Steering group members include representatives

from Laois County Council, Offaly County Council, OPW and from other stakeholders as required. There is documentary evidence of agendas and minutes of all meetings that have been held in relation to the project. The minutes show topics discussed by the attendees, outcomes agreed and actions required along with assigned responsibilities.

Key Document 4: Chief Executive Order No. 084/2019 signing Deed of Adherence for the Provision of Engineering and Environment Consultancy Services for Portarlington FRS

The Deed of Adherence approves Laois County Council to use the OPW Framework for the procurement of the Provision of Engineering Consultancy Services for flood management projects where the estimated value is €5 million or more.

Key Document 5: Tender Specification for Engineering & Environmental Consultancy Services

This document sets out the Project Brief for the appointment of Technical Consultancy Services to design and develop the flood relief scheme. It outlines the scope of services required to deliver the project objective. It sets tasks to be met at the beginning, during and end of each stage of the project by the Consultancy firm. It is very clear that while using the studies and reports from the project appraisal in the SE CFRAM study, the onus is on the consultancy firm to ensure the relevance and accuracy of all study analysis and outputs provided for the development and design of the required scheme.

The document discusses the oversight role of the Steering Group and embeds its oversight role. Attendance by the consultant project manager at steering group meetings is mandatory as is the submission of progress reports and agendas for all steering group meetings which are to take place on a monthly basis.

The financial governance of all stages of the project is required to align with the requirements of the Public Spending Code and Capital Works Management Framework. The benefit cost-ratio for the preferred scheme shall be calculated assuming the current scenario is maintained for the economic project horizon (50 years.)

Key Document 6: Form of Tender & Schedule for Conditions of Engagement for Consultancy Services (Technical)

The OPW LOT 2 Framework for the Provision of Engineering Consultancy Services for projects with an estimated value of €5 million or more was used to procure the Consultancy Firm as per EU guidelines. This Framework Agreement dated 11th December 2017, facilitates the procurement of relevant consultancy services for Flood Relief projects without requiring the need for a full public procurement process. The RFT 162611 for the provision of Engineering Consultancy Services and Environmental Consultancy Services for the Portarlington FRS issued as a mini competition on etenders on the 9th Dec 2019 with a closing date of 20th Feb 2020, 12 noon.

Lot 2 has 8 Participants on the OPW framework who each received an invitation to tender in their etenders message box. The participants were advised that the Award Criteria was 75 Quality/25 Price and the weighting of quality criteria was outlined.

Key Document 7: Section 85 Agreement between Laois County Council and Offaly County Council

The signed Section 85 Agreement (Local Government Act 2001) gives Laois County Council all the Statutory powers, duties and functions of Offaly County Council to perform and carry out fully all functions necessary to design, construct and complete the Portarlinton FRS.

Section B - Step 4: Data Audit

The following section details the data audit that was carried out for the Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme. It evaluates whether appropriate data is available for the future evaluation of the project/programme.

Data Required	Use	Availability
South Eastern CFRAM Study	Project Appraisal and justification of the requirement for the Flood Relief Scheme	Yes. Available from files
Tender Assessment Report	Assess Procurement	Yes. Available from files
Details on Expenditure on Project	Assess if project was within budget	Yes. Available from Agresso financial management system
Project Management Reports	Assess the reporting and monitoring of the project as it progresses	Should be available once commencement of Consultancy Engineering firm
Post project review	Assess if project objectives were met at each stage and if project was managed successfully	Should be prepared after project is complete

Data Availability and Proposed Next Steps

The financial data requirements listed above are available from Agresso Financial Management System and files as required. This has been checked and confirmed.

The necessary data to assess the procurement process is available on file.

Data in relation to Project Management Reports will be available as the project progresses. This information will help evaluate the performance of the contractor and allow the Council to minimise the possibility of cost over-runs when planning and construction commences.

Section B - Step 5: Key Evaluation Questions

The following section looks at the key evaluation questions for the Portarlington Flood Relief Scheme based on the findings from the previous sections of this report.

Does the delivery of the project/programme comply with the standards set out in the Public Spending Code? (Appraisal Stage, Implementation Stage and Post-Implementation Stage)

This in-depth check examines the Appraisal Stage of the Public Spending Code (parts B01 & B02)

The South Eastern CFRAM Study presents the business case for the Project and in doing so meets the Steps 1 to 7 as set out in B01 of the Public Spending Code (PSC) in relation to the category 'Expenditure under Consideration' and the 'Standard Appraisal Process'. The Study meets the requirements to define the objective of the project, it explores various options taking into account of constraints and it quantifies the cost of viable options identified. The Study analyses options while identifying the associated risks with each option and concludes with recommending a preferred option to the Sanctioning Authority.

Steps 1 and 2 of part B02 of the Public Code have been addressed in the establishment of the Project Steering Group which has met the requirements to establish a project management structure and prepare a Project Brief. A Project Manager has been appointed and a formal structure has been put in place for project expenditure monitoring in the form of the Project Steering Group. Minutes are available of all meetings covering significant development to date.

Is the necessary data and information available such that the project/programme can be subjected to a full evaluation at a later date?

Key documentation such as the South Eastern CFRAM Study which contains the Cost Benefit Analysis and the Project Appraisal are available. All tender documentation, along with copies of the Steering Group meeting minutes are available on file as are all correspondences between Laois County Council and the OPW in relation to the Project.

The data required for monitoring and evaluation of the project is defined in the Project Brief and will be available once the Project moves forward from its initial stage.

The intention to set up a register of requests for information as information exchanges commences will be useful for further reviews and evaluation.

What improvements are recommended such that future processes and management are enhanced?

Audit Opinion – **Substantial Assurance** (see Appendix 1 for a definition of opinion)

The Substantial Assurance grading outlined above is based on the overall control environment in respect of the Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme.

This in-depth check demonstrates that the Council is fulfilling its obligations under the Public Spending Code in respect of the scheme.

This is an ongoing project which is still in a relatively early stage. Project Management and the Steering Group should continue to apply a rigorous oversight throughout the duration of this project to ensure it is delivered as intended and afterwards to ensure all necessary post project evaluations are undertaken.

It is important where cost increases or time delays have been identified that there should be consultation with the relevant parties to identify whether a reappraisal is necessary in line with the Public Spending Code.

A post project review should take place in a reasonable timeframe as per the Public Spending Code requirement, to assess whether the scheme objectives have been met.

Section: In-Depth Check Summary

The following section presents a summary of the findings of this In-Depth Check on the Portarlinton Flood Relief Scheme.

Summary of In-Depth Check

It is the opinion of Internal Audit that Laois County Council is in substantial compliance with the Public Spending Code in respect of its responsibilities for the Portarlinton FRS.

The project is in line with national flood relief policy. Appropriate appraisal of the scheme was conducted as evidenced by the South Eastern CFRAM Study. It details the key objective of the project and decided on a preferred method following studies on the flood cell, viable flood relief options, analysis of constraints and cost estimates. It also demonstrates the requirement of a flood relief scheme for Portarlinton.

Pre Tender approval was received from the Sanctioning Body, the OPW, and the tender process was completed through etenders in line with proper procurement procedures. Back-up documentation for necessary approvals from Senior Management, OPW and Offaly County Council are on file. There is strong project management in situ and a system of robust controls in place as the project moves from its initial stage.

The thresholds and methodologies for appraisal set out in the PSC indicate that projects between €5 million and €20 million should be subject to preliminary and detailed appraisal, which includes, at a minimum a Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA). On this project a MCA was documented for the preferred option. An economic assessment of the costs and benefits highlights the economic justification of the scheme.

Overall, the process and procedures carried out to date in respect of the Portarlinton FRS comply with the relevant guidelines and frameworks and are in substantial compliance with the Public Spending Code.

Appendix 1 - Definitions of Overall Audit Opinion on System Adequacy and Control

Level	System Adequacy & Controls
Full Assurance (Effective)	<i>Internal controls meet acceptable standards overall and provides reasonable, but not absolute assurance, that the activity covered is subject to adequate risk management and control</i>
Substantial Assurance (Some Improvement Needed)	<i>Internal control framework meets minimum acceptable standards overall but needs to be improved because some risks are not adequately mitigated</i>
Limited Assurance (Major Improvement Needed)	<i>Internal control framework does not meet minimum acceptable standards overall as some key control activities require significant improvement to ensure that all risks are adequately mitigated</i>
No Assurance (Unsatisfactory)	<i>The internal control framework does not meet minimum acceptable standards overall. Systematic and/or material control weaknesses were identified</i>

