



CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2016

May 2017

Comhairle Contae an Chláir
Clare County Council
Áras Contae an Chláir

Bóthar Nua, Inis, Co. an Chláir
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Introduction by the Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive

We are delighted to introduce Clare County Council's Annual Report for the calendar year 2016. The details of the council's achievements during the year are set out under each directorate and we would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of the many services provided by the council, its departments and the Elected Members during the year.

In an effort to further improve the organisational structure of Clare County Council, five distinct directorates were created in October 2016. The new directorates are Economic Development, Social Development, Physical Development, Rural Development, and Finance and Support Services.

During 2016, Clare County Council billed a total of €41.9m in rates. The collection of commercial rates improved on the previous year while the council implemented a commercial rates payment incentive scheme.

In the area of planning and economic development, the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 was adopted and contained key objectives aimed at stimulating the sustainable economic, rural and social development of the county. A net total of 173 new jobs were delivered in 2016 by small businesses that have been supported by Local Enterprise Office Clare.

2016 was a year marked by a number of progressive developments relating to the council's role in supporting local tourism. The Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience, Loop Head Lighthouse and the Bird Viewing and Information Point (BVIP) in Mountshannon each recorded increases in visitors. The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Geopark and Lough Derg Marketing Group promoted sustainable tourism in the region. Clare Tourism promoted and marketed Clare as a tourism destination, while the council played a key role in the hosting of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Ennis.

Significant progress was made in relation to the maintenance and improvement of the national, regional and local road network while a number of road safety, flood relief and coastal protection works were progressed. Work was completed on the 3km section of the West Clare Greenway and

significant progress was made on the delivery of cycling facilities under three Ennis Active Travel Town schemes.

In the area of human resources and recruitment, the number of council employees by the end of the year was 762 with an additional 77 employed through the Retained Fire-Fighter Service. The Recruitment Team continued to stabilise the workforce by filling posts through competition. Meanwhile, 244 staff training courses were delivered across the organisation with 2,044 attendees.

Clare County Council continued to implement its Occupational Health and Safety Management System and saw a reduction in reportable accidents.

The usage of the online motor tax facility www.motortax.ie continued to grow incrementally, and considerable progress was made in further enhancing the means by which the council communicates with staff, Elected Members and the public. Significant inroads were made by the ICT Department in the development of an extranet site.

Under the Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Irish Water, the council continued to manage and carry out works to ensure the continuity of potable water supply in each of the water supply zones in Clare during the year. The billing and collection of non-domestic water charges were transferred to Irish Water in late 2016.

In the area of environment, the council covered a broad area of activity including waste, litter, pollution, water quality and veterinary services. A wide-ranging environmental awareness programme focusing on a number of target groups including community groups, businesses and schools was also implemented.

In the area of housing, the council worked to address the needs of homeless people and families in emergency accommodation, accelerate the provision of social housing, utilise vacant homes and improve the rental sector. The directorate, working with a range of statutory agencies, service providers and advocates, was involved in the construction, purchase, leasing and renting of homes, traveller accommodation, homelessness as well as the ongoing maintenance and management of our own 2,400 housing stock.

During 2016, Clare County Council maintained its core objective of providing quality public services by working closely with community groups, organisations, residents associations and businesses to deliver positive change for communities across Clare. The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) was established. The process of establishing a more age friendly community in Clare continued as Clare County Council co-ordinated the delivery of the county's inter-agency Age-Friendly Strategy. The Burial Grounds Priming Grant and Community Playground Support Schemes provided funding to assist groups to carry out important work in their locality. Meanwhile, the CLÁR and Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) initiatives helped to progress important community infrastructure projects. In 2016, Clare County Council also provided valuable support to communities involved in Clare in Bloom, Tidy Towns and IPB Pride of Place.

Work commenced on the design and delivery of the new County Library including a gallery, local studies centre and library headquarters on the site of Glór. The council, through the Clare Arts Office, supported a number of other arts and culture developments. Clare Museum recorded its busiest year since 2007 while Glór increased its programming by 20% during 2016. The Archives Service expanded its collection while the council's Records Management unit ensured that vital records are permanently and securely preserved.

From a sports and recreation perspective, 2016 saw the continuing success and high usage from all sectors of the community at all of the Active Ennis and Kilrush facilities.

Our Emergency Services were extremely active in 2016 providing an invaluable public service. The Fire Service responded to 855 incidents while thankfully, there was no fire fatality in 2016 in County Clare. 2016 was the busiest year on record for Clare Civil Defence.

As Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive, we are pleased to confirm that the results achieved during 2016 met and exceeded the expectations at the start of the year.

In Clare County Council, we are confident that the commitment and experience of staff, combined with a supportive and progressive council and

continued good relations with local communities and other agencies, will drive the organisation forward in furthering the economic, social and rural development of all of Clare.



Cllr. Bill Chambers
Cathaoirleach



Pat Dowling
Chief Executive

Clare County Councillors

Ennis Municipal District

Cllr. James Breen

Cllr. Johnny Flynn

Cllr. Pat Daly

Cllr. Ann Norton

Cllr. Tom McNamara

Cllr. Mary Howard

Cllr. Paul Murphy

Cllr. Clare Colleran Molloy

Killaloe Municipal District

Cllr. Joe Cooney

Cllr. Pat Hayes

Cllr. Michael Begley

Cllr. Tony O'Brien

Cllr. Pat Burke

Cllr. Alan O'Callaghan

Shannon Municipal District

Cllr. Cathal Crowe

Cllr. John Crowe

Cllr. Gerard Flynn

Cllr. P.J. Ryan

Cllr. Pat McMahan

Cllr. Mike McKee

West Clare Municipal District

Cllr. Christy Curtin

Cllr. Richard Nagle

Cllr. Bill Slattery

Cllr. Ian Lynch

Cllr. Michael Hillery

Cllr. P.J. Kelly

Cllr. Bill Chambers

Cllr. Gabriel Keating

Finance and Support Services Directorate

Finance Department

Non Principal Private Residence (NPPR) Charge

The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009, as amended by the Local Government (Household Charge) Act 2011 and the Local Government Reform Act 2014 introduced a €200 annual charge in respect of all residential property not used as the owner's sole or main residence.

During 2016, outstanding NPPR charges continued to be collected. A total of €877,000 was received by Clare County Council in 2016.

Higher education grants

SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland) - the national authority for grant applications started accepting new applications for 2012/2013 academic year.

The council continues to assess and pay students who were already in receipt of a grant in the academic year 2011/12 and who are progressing to the next year of the same course. This number continues to reduce each year and in 2016, Clare County Council processed 36 student files and paid out grants to the value of €111,000.

Accounts Payable and Prompt Payment of Accounts Act 1997 / Late Payments in Commercial Transactions Regulations 2002 and SI no. 580 of 2012

In 2016, Clare County Council spent almost €82m on non payroll costs, covering both operational costs and capital project expenditure.

During 2016 the sum of €3,889 was incurred in prompt payment interest, compared to €2,577 in 2015. The sum of €28,140 was incurred in prompt payment compensation payments, payable under the terms of S.I. 580 of 2012, compared to €20,350 in 2015.

Commercial rates collection

Commercial rates are payable on a diverse range of commercial properties such as factories, offices, shops, hotels and restaurants. The National Valuation Office based in Dublin (www.valuations.ie) determines the valuation that is to be applied to a rated property. Following the consideration of the council budget each year, the elected members determine the rate to be levied on this valuation.

Clare County Council billed a total of €41.9m in rates in 2016. Approximately 39% of Clare County Council's revenue expenditure is raised through commercial rates. The collection of rates on commercial and industrial properties is essential in maintaining the range of council services. In 2016 the collection of commercial rates improved on the previous year with outstanding commercial rates reducing by over €1m. The council is aware of the financial difficulties which some ratepayers are experiencing and it remains committed to adopting a practical approach in terms of facilitating rate payers in their payment arrangements. The council has the facility for commercial rates customers to pay their rates liability online via the Clare County Council website.

In 2016, the council implemented a commercial rates payment incentive scheme, where commercial rate payers could avail of a grant on their property when all the rates payable on an occupied property have been discharged on time. Over 56% of occupied properties availed of this in 2016.

Internal Audit Department

The Internal Audit Department is part of the council's Corporate Governance structure. It is an independent appraisal function within the council charged with reviewing activities across all areas within Clare County Council.

The role of internal audit is to provide independent assurance that an organisation's risk management, governance and internal control processes are operating effectively.

An Internal Audit Charter sets out the role and responsibilities of the Internal Auditor and management.

The Internal Audit Department:

- operate to an Audit Plan which sets out a schedule of audit reviews and spot checks to be carried out. Recommendations made are followed up with management.
- interacts with the council's Audit Committee and the external Local Government Auditor in promoting risk management, good accounting practices and improving the focus on value for money throughout the organisation.

Corporate Services Department

This department provides a support service to the elected members and to council management and administers a number of functions directly to the public.

Meetings of Clare County Council

Clare County Council conducts much of its business at meetings of the full council. Such meetings are regulated by law.

During 2016 Clare County Council held the following types of meetings:

- Annual General Meeting - 1
- Ordinary Meetings - 11
- Adjourned Monthly Meetings - 3
- Budget Meetings – 2
- Special Meeting on Clare County Development Plan – 1

Meetings of the full council are presided over by the Cathaoirleach of the council. In the event that the Cathaoirleach is absent, the Leas Cathaoirleach chairs the meeting. The public and the media have a statutory right to attend meetings of the council. Council meetings are held on the second Monday of each month, except August, in the Council Chamber, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.

Corporate Policy Group (C.P.G.)

The Corporate Policy Group consists of the Cathaoirleach of the day together with the chairs of the Strategic Policy Committee. The Corporate Policy Group has a statutory basis set out in Section 133 of the Local Government Act, 2001 and has specific functions in relation to the preparation of the Annual Budget and the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Policy Group meet on a monthly basis with the council executive.

Municipal District Areas

Members meet at area level throughout the year to discuss matters relevant to their particular electoral area. Each municipal district committee has a senior official assigned to it to co-ordinate functions and assist the members in their deliberations. The meetings are attended by the Senior Executive Engineer and a member of the administrative staff in the area. These meetings are generally attended by the press and the minutes of each area meeting are listed on the agenda at a subsequent council meeting for noting.

Elected members

There are 28 members on Clare County Council and they were elected at the May 2014 Local Elections. They represent the following electoral areas:

- Ennis – 8
- Killaloe – 6
- Shannon – 6
- West Clare - 8

The current council is scheduled to be in existence until May 2019 when the next local elections are due to be held.

The political representation on the council following the 2014 Local Elections is as follows:

- Fine Gael - 8
- Fianna Fáil – 12
- Sinn Féin - 1

- Non-Party - 7

The Annual General Meeting is held in June each year and Councillor Bill Chambers, who represents the West Clare Municipal District, was elected Cathaoirleach in June 2016 for the ensuing year. Councillor Paul Murphy, who represents the Ennis Municipal District, was elected Leas Cathaoirleach at that same meeting.

Office of the Ombudsman

This office was established under the Ombudsman Act, 1980. Its role is to investigate complaints about administrative actions, delays or inactions adversely affecting persons or bodies in their dealings with state bodies including Local Authorities.

In 2016 a total of 15 new complaints were made to the Ombudsman by persons who felt aggrieved by a particular decision/action taken by this council.

In 2016 the Office of the Ombudsman concluded 14 of these cases involving Clare County Council. The outcome of these cases was as follows;

- Complaints against Clare County Council not upheld – 5
- Complaints against Clare County Council partially upheld – 1
- Complaints against the council upheld – 2
- Assistance provided to the complainant – 5
- Withdrawn - 1

Public relations

Clare County Council made considerable progress during 2016 in further enhancing the means by which it communicates with staff, Elected Members and the public. A new Communications Officer was appointed in May. A monthly 16-page staff newsletter was produced, while Clare County Council expanded its social media presence (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook). A revised Monthly Management Report was developed to further improve the reporting of progress made by Clare County Council Directorates during the preceding month. The output of press releases and photographs promoting

the services provided by Clare County Council also increased significantly during the year.

Customer Care Co-ordinator

The council is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers and has a complaints/comments policy in place. The council's Customer Care Co-ordinator investigates all complaints/comments received. A person not satisfied with the response provided by the Customer Care Co-ordinator can request to have their case examined afresh by the Senior Executive Officer, Corporate Services. In 2016, the Customer Care Co-ordinator responded to eight complaints/comments received.

Register of Councillors Expenses 2016

The 2016 Register of Councillors Expenses will be available on the Clare County Council's website at the end of April 2017. This register will include details of the following:-

- Attendance at conferences, seminars and training.
- Payments made in respect of travel and subsistence expenses within or outside the State.
- Salaries, monthly allowances, allowances to Strategic Policy Committees, Chair of Municipal District allowances, Cathaoirleach and Leas Cathaoirleach allowances.
- Payments by other bodies/associations, the members of which were nominated by Clare County Council.
- Attendance at meetings of Local Authorities, Strategic Policy Committees, Municipal District areas, Joint Policing Committee, Audit Committee and Directorate meetings.

Clare County Council Committees

Clare County Council has formed a number of committees, namely, Strategic Policy Committees, Joint Policing Committee and the Audit Committee.

Strategic Policy Committees

Strategic Policy Committees (S.P.C.s) are structured around the main functions of council. They are made up of elected councillors and other representatives of the social partners and other sectoral interests. Each S.P.C. is chaired by an elected councillor and is supported by a Director of Service. The task of the S.P.C. is to assist and advise the council in the formulation, development and review of policy. Final policy decisions, however, will ultimately rest with the full council acting as a body.

Listed hereunder are details of the S.P.C.s and the number of meetings held in 2016:-

- Planning and Housing – 5
- Environment and Transportation – 4
- Economic Development and Enterprise – 6
- Cultural Services and Arts (including Community, Recreation and Amenities) – 4

At the end of 2016, proposals were developed to review the S.P.C.s in line with the new directorate structure.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee has an independent role in advising the council on financial reporting, processes, internal control, risk management and audit matters, as part of the systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the council.

It supports the work of the Internal Audit Department and advises the Chief Executive in relation to the operation and development of the department.

The committee is non-executive and is independent in the determination of its work programme and in formulating any recommendations, taking account of the functions referred to above.

The committee has five members, three external members and two elected members. The chairperson is Tom Kirby, Director of Water Services National Training Group. The committee met five times in 2016.

Civic Receptions

Three civic receptions were held in 2016, as follows:-

- 11th July 2016 - for the Tulla Céilí Band as they celebrated the 70th Anniversary of their establishment and in recognition of their contribution to the world of traditional Irish music, both at home and abroad.
- 12th September 2016 – for St. Patrick’s Pipe Band, Tulla as they celebrated the 80th Anniversary of their establishment and in recognition of their contribution to all organisations and events during that time.
- 12th December 2016 – for the Clare and District League Soccer Team in recognition of winning the 2016 FAI Oscar Traynor Cup.

Records management

Our records management unit archived 272 boxes of documentation to the records centre and to an external storage provider. Records are only disposed of according to the National Retention Policy for Local Authority Records.

The photographic digital archive continues and additions to the photographic collection are being done on an ongoing basis to ensure their preservation.

All Chief Executive orders, county council minute books and registers of electors have been gathered, bound and subsequently archived, thus ensuring vital records are permanently and securely preserved.

Joint Policing Committee (JPC)

The Joint Policing Committee serves as a forum for consultation, discussions and recommendations on policing and crime issues within the Clare local authority administrative area. It also reviews levels and patterns of crime and related underlying factors. Four meetings took place in 2016.

The JPC has 31 members including elected members, Oireachtas Members, local authority representatives and Garda representatives.

Freedom of information (FOI)

The new [Freedom of Information Act](#) introduced in 2014 brought a number of changes to the Freedom of Information system including removal of the upfront application fee of €15.00 and widening the range of bodies to which the FOI legislation applies. This is reflected in the increase in the number of requests received in 2016. Details of comparisons are as follows:-

- In 2014 there were 53 FOI requests (48 valid and 5 invalid/excluded), 2 internal reviews and 1 appeal to the Information Commissioner.
- In 2015 there were 110 FOI requests (104 valid and 6 invalid/excluded), 3 internal reviews and 1 appeal to the Information Commissioner.
- In 2016 there were 129 FOI requests (128 valid and 1 invalid/excluded), 5 internal reviews and 1 appeal to the Information Commissioner.

The outcome of valid requests received in 2016 are as follows:-

- Granted – 46
- Part-granted – 43
- Refused – 35
- Transferred - 1
- Withdrawn/outside FOI - 3

The categories of the requests are as follows:-

- Journalists – 42
- Business Interest Groups – 8
- Oireachtas/Public representatives - 2
- Staff – 12
- Clients - 19
- Others - 45

The policy of Clare County Council is:

“To give members of the public access to information held by this authority, to the greatest extent possible, in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy of the individual”.

Further information and application form is available on the council’s website www.clarecoco.ie

The following is a summary of the new fee structure in respect of FOI requests:

- Search and retrieval costs - €20 per hour plus copying charges:-
 - Photocopy per sheet - €0.04
 - CD Rom - €10.00
 - Radiograph - €6.00
- There is a minimum threshold of €101 below which no search, retrieval and copying fees can be charged. Once the charge reaches €101, full fees apply;
- There is a cap of €500 on the amount of search, retrieval and copying fees that can be charged;
- There is a further upper limit on estimated search, retrieval and copying fees at €700 above which an FOI body can refuse to process a request, unless the requester is prepared to refine the request to bring the search, retrieval and copying fees below the limit.

The Freedom of Information Act sets out appeal mechanisms in the event of a refusal of a request, or in relation to deferral of access, charges, form of access etc. Fees are also payable in certain cases on appeal as follows:-

- The fee for internal review under Section 21 is now €30 (€10 for medical card holders and their dependants).
- The fee for appeals to the Information Commissioner under Section 22 is now €50 (€15 for medical card holders and their dependants).

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 1988 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 govern the processing of all personal data.

The purpose of these acts is to protect the privacy rights of living individuals regarding the processing of their personal data by those who control such data.

Clare County Council is registered as a Data Controller and a Data Processor with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (Registration number 0476/A).

There were 16 data subject access requests made under Section 4 of the Act for access to personal data held by Clare County Council in 2016.

There is a fee of €6.35 to make a data subject access request.

Further information on the council's 'Data subject access policy' and 'Code of Practice' in relation to Data protection matters is available on the Council's website www.clarecoco.ie

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Regulation (EU) 2016/679) is a regulation by which the European Commission intends to strengthen and unify data protection for individuals within the EU. The regulation was adopted on 27th April 2016. It enters into application on 25th May 2018, after a two-year transition period and will then replace the Data Protection Acts 1988 & 2003.

Health and Safety

In 2016, Clare County Council continued to implement its Occupational Health and Safety Management System and seek continuous improvement in Health and Safety. A significant focus was on the re-training of all line managers in the Occupational Health and Safety Management System during 2016 and an increase in the number of safety inspections and internal Health and Safety Audits completed. In addition, 1482 staff attended a Health and Safety Training Course.

In 2016, there was a reduction in reportable accidents and an increase in the number of near misses reported with continued compliance with our policies and procedures.

Performance Indicators

The council's performance is measured by a series of Performance Indicators, set nationally by the National Oversight and Audit Commission. While the indicators for 2016 are not yet compiled, the indicators for 2015 are available on <http://noac.ie/noac-reports/>

Objectives and Supporting Strategies - Corporate Plan 2015 to 2019

Objective - provide a quality service focused on the needs of our customers and citizens

Actions	Progress in 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing the implementation of organisational change to deliver efficient and effective quality services. 	<p>During 2016, the council completed a programme of restructuring into five new directorates to focus on key priorities of the council. These are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical Development Social Development Economic Development Rural Development Finance and Support services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating effective customer communication through technology and engagement with staff. 	<p>Customer care is a high priority for the council and received a continued focus in all training programmes and induction of new staff. Technology improvements are implemented on an ongoing basis, in particular a Contact Management System for customers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing timely information to stakeholders in relation to local service delivery. 	<p>This is a key objective for all staff and meetings with key stakeholders are held regularly.</p> <p>Considerable progress was made in 2016 with the appointment of a Communications Officer, improvement of our social media presence on many platforms.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in partnership with other bodies to deliver efficient and effective services. 	This is working well in Clare County Council across all the service areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that the council, through its service delivery plan priorities, makes best use of resources to ensure achievement of outcomes is optimised. 	This is a key objective for all to ensure efficient, effective and timely delivery of services.

Objective - achieve balanced and sustainable development to deliver benefits to all areas of County Clare.

Actions	Progress in 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and implementing the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for County Clare in partnership with Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). 	The Local Economic and Community Plan was adopted by council following an extensive public consultation process. Two monitoring and implementation groups have been established (Economic and Community) to focus on delivery of actions identified in the plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing and implementing the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 and implement the Local Area Plans for Shannon and Ennis. 	The final draft of the County Development Plan was adopted by the elected members, following consideration of all public and statutory submissions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting the LEO as a “first stop shop” for local enterprise and implement the Local Enterprise Plan. 	41 applicants were approved funding of €1.03m. LEO Clare ran 62 training programmes. In addition, LEO Clare ran 17 seminars/workshops covering topics of relevance to local enterprises in Clare. Mentoring remained a key priority with 43 enterprises availing of this focused “one to one” assistance. 2016 resulted in a net increase in numbers employed by 173, ranked 4 th in terms of job growth across 31 LEO’s.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Harnessing the deepwater potential of the Shannon Estuary through leading on the implementation of the Strategic Integrated Framework Plan (SIFP) for the Shannon Estuary. 	The Steering Group and Working Groups for the Shannon Estuary Integrated Framework Plan progressed more detailed studies and wider marketing and promotion of the opportunities available under the plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positioning Clare as a low carbon county through the implementation of the Clare Renewable Energy 	Development of the largest wind farm in Clare (80MW) commenced construction in 2016. Progress was also made on development

Strategy and the Clare Wind Energy Strategy.	proposals for solar energy.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving and maintaining our road network and to collaborate with relevant agencies in the public and private sector to ensure that other key infrastructure including broadband, electricity and gas supplies are enhanced. 	Major road projects at Blakes Corner (Ennistymon), Killaloe and Limerick Northern Distributor Road are being progressed by the council. A Broadband Officer was appointed to coordinate activity of the county. New service providers facilitated to provide additional broadband infrastructure in Ennis town.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with Irish Water to ensure that water and wastewater infrastructure are maintained and planned for the future, to allow for sustainable development and for preservation of the aquatic environment from pollution. 	Close collaboration took place with Irish Water on the formulation and implementation of the capital programme for water and waste water infrastructure.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Shannon Group on the development of aviation related activities at Shannon Airport and the University of Limerick on the Clare Campus/University Zone. 	<p>Key working relationship has been developed with the Shannon Group to facilitate the delivery of the group's ambitious plans for the airport and adjoining lands.</p> <p>Detailed zoning was agreed for an enterprise zone at the University of Limerick Campus in Clare</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering improved tourist infrastructure at strategic locations around the County. 	A sustainable Development and Visitor Management Plan has been commissioned for Holy Island. Strategic Masterplan and Visitor Facilities Building Design commissioned for Doolin. Two improvement projects are planned for the Cliffs of Moher Visitor experience.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively pursuing town and village renewal through engagement with property owners and the delivery of public realm improvements in partnership with Tidy Towns and Community Groups. 	Ongoing programme of town and village improvements projects are underway through Town and Village Scheme, REDZ programme and Public Area Enhancement Scheme.
<p>Delivering on the social housing needs of County Clare through a capital works and acquisition programme under the government's Social Housing Strategy 2020.</p> <p>Note: the relevant Government Strategy is <i>Rebuilding Ireland</i> which</p>	Clare County Council has a target to deliver 529 social housing units for the period to 2019, supported by an allocation of €26.1 million, to be invested in a combination of building, buying and leasing schemes. Our target under Rebuilding Ireland out to 2021 is 1,009 units.

has superseded <i>Social Housing Strategy 2020</i> .	Included in our Capital target is 124 units to be delivered through the construction of new units, purchasing new and second hand units and returning vacant social housings to productive use. Based on our delivery in 2015 and 2016, we have exceeded our capital target by 158 units, and according to the department, this is a very positive outcome.
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Objective - to promote social inclusion and participation of all communities and combat marginalisation.

Actions	Progress in 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinating, managing and overseeing the implementation of Local Community Development Programmes including the Social Inclusion Community and Activation Programme (SICAP). 	<p>The LCDC has responsibility in this area and manages SICAP. Clare Local Development Company is the Programme Implementer for SICAP. Each year the LCDC considers and approves an annual plan and carries out mid year and end of year reviews. The 2017 budget for SICAP is €855,341. The current contract is for three years and ends in December 2017.</p> <p>Clare Local Development Company is the Local Action Group for the LEADER Programme in Clare. There is a requirement to report once yearly to the LCDC on the implementation of the Local Development Strategy and the roll-out of the LEADER Programme.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring co-ordinated approach to community development through the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). 	<p>There are currently 18 members on the LCDC representative of the council, the PPN, Chambers of Commerce, Department of Social Protection, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, LEO, Clare Youth Service, Health Service Executive, Local Development Company and the farming pillar. All structures endeavour to work together in order to ensure co-ordination of approaches.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Securing the delivery of the community element of the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). 	<p>The LCDC has established a Community Implementation Team for the purposes of delivering on the community actions within the plan. A Customer Relations Management (CRM) has been developed in order to track progress on the actions and the relevant lead and partner organisations have been identified. Each organisation is tasked with the responsibility to prepare an annual plan for the actions which they lead.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering Clare County Council's Equality Action Plan. 	<p>This is an area that is continually monitored with a view to ensuring that our services ensure equality for all.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting community engagement and involvement through the Clare Public Participation Network (PPN). 	<p>During 2015, the council established the Public Participation Network structures in the County. The secretariat now employs a Resource Worker who works to an agreed annual plan. The council has a Memorandum of Understanding and an annual Service Level Agreement with the PPN and provides €30,000 annually.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordinating the County Age Friendly Strategy, the Arts Plan, Traveller Strategy and supporting the RAPID Programme and the Immigrant Strategy. 	<p>The council has led on the establishment of the inter-agency age friendly structures since 2012. The strategy was developed in 2013 and contained a number of actions where leads were identified. The first strategy is now completed and 80% of actions have been closed out. A number of actions were no longer relevant. The next strategy covers the period 2017 – 2021 and will be finalised in May 2017.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating in and contributing to the work of inter-agency groups including Clare Sports Partnership, Clare Local Development Company and National Network of Recreation and Play Officers. 	<p>The council continues to work with partner agencies across sectors in the delivery of its services. In regard to the ones mentioned over, the position is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A staff member of Clare County Council is a Board Member and Treasurer of the Clare Sports Partnership The Rural Development Directorate supports the Rural Development Forum in steering the implementation of the Rural Development Strategy. The Rural Directorate supports the LCDC (Local Community Development Committee) in the implementation of the LECP: Local Economic and Community Plan. The Economic SPC supports the delivery of the economic parts of the LECP. A staff member of Clare County Council is involved with the National Network of Recreation and Play Officers and three staff members in the Rural Directorate support the Clare Local Development Company (CLDC).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working in partnership with community groups and others to 	<p>The council has a long history of supporting community and voluntary groups by providing</p>

ensure the delivery of community initiatives and facilities such as playgrounds, tidy towns and other environmental enhancement projects.	advice, support and financial assistance for projects or programmes all over the county. The council offers a range of schemes which support community endeavour. The council has recently established a Rural Development Directorate, the focus of which is to work towards revitalising the rural areas of the County.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging and interacting with our Diaspora to establish a communication channel and grow a mutually beneficial and reciprocal relationship. 	The council has developed relationships with organisations representing the Diaspora in a number of international locations. During 2016 these links were further developed and consolidated.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making our services and buildings accessible to all. 	This is an area that is continually monitored with a view to ensuring that our services and our building are accessible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging youth participation through appropriate schemes such as Comhairle na nÓg. 	The Comhairle na nÓg initiative is a very successful initiative in Clare with 14 second level schools participating. The children have focused on many initiatives over the years including mental health, cyber safety, submissions to for example the LECP and LDS. They also present to the relevant Strategic Policy Committee each year and participate in Dáil na nÓg. The initiative is managed locally by the council and is delivered by Clare Youth Service.

Objective - improve, preserve and enhance the environment in the interests of present and future generations

Actions	Progress in 2016
Delivering a comprehensive inspection and enforcement programme to secure compliance across the broad range of environmental legislation.	In drawing up the 2016 RMCEI plan (Recommended Minimum Criteria for Environmental Inspections) Clare County Council identified the activities to be included in the inspection plan. Typical criteria when setting priorities included environmental impact, compliance record, legal obligations to inspect, national policies and objectives and available resources. Facilities and sites inspected in 2016 fell into 27 groups, 10 related to water, air and planning and 17 to waste management. In all, over 6,000 inspections were carried out across County Clare in 2016 by Environment Section staff.

<p>Mentoring and supporting individuals, communities, workplaces and schools in the pursuit of best environmental practice.</p>	<p>A wide-ranging environmental awareness programme focusing on a number of target groups including community groups, businesses and schools was implemented in 2016. A significant number of environmental education events took place. Environment Section also worked in conjunction with the EPA and ENVA Ireland in providing a farm hazardous waste collection.</p>
<p>Reducing energy consumption and promoting initiatives towards achieving national energy efficiency and climate change targets.</p>	<p>In 2016, Clare County Council undertook a range of initiatives to improve energy performance including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading of public lighting to LED efficient lamps • Upgrading of lighting and heating controls in County Hall and other buildings • Installation of a combined heat and power plant in Ennis Leisure centre • Energy awareness training days for staff in house • Energy management training for the ISO 50001 standard.
<p>Protecting, enhancing and promoting our coastline, beaches and natural amenities while having regard to our heritage and biodiversity issues.</p>	<p>Nine County Clare beaches achieved blue flag status in May 2016 - Ballycuggeran, Cappa, Kilrush, Fanore, Kilkee, Lahinch, Mountshannon, Spanish Point, Whitestrand Doonbeg, Whitestrand Miltown Malbay</p> <p>The international blue flag symbolises high standards in water quality, safety and services as well as environmental management, information and education. The award is made by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), an independent non-profit organisation. The Irish Green Coast Award was awarded to beaches at Bishops Quarter at Ballyvaughan and Seafield, Quilty.</p> <p>Work commenced in 2016 on the development of plans for improved amenities at Lahinch, Spanish Point and Kilkee.</p> <p>New Beach Byelaws were introduced from August 2016.</p>

<p>Promoting sustainable and self sufficient waste management practices in accordance with the objectives of the Regional Waste Management Plan.</p>	<p>Work continued on implementation of the Regional Waste Management Plan objectives, through environmental education and awareness projects, including the introduction of a new Waste Prevention Grant, which promoted re-use and repair. The Waste Enforcement Team worked on implementation of waste presentation byelaws, producer responsibilities, packaging regulations etc.</p> <p>Clare County Council provides five recycling centres at Central Waste Management Facility at Ballyduff Beg, Inagh, Ennis, Lisdeen, Scariff and Shannon. 54 bring bank sites within the county accept green, clear and brown glass and aluminium cans. Of the 54 sites, 6 accept plastic bottles. Currently there are 13 sites which accept textiles (clothing).</p> <p>A total of circa 8,300 tonnes of materials were collected from all the sites combined during 2016.</p>
<p>Proactively addressing all forms of pollution which threaten the attractiveness of our towns and villages, the beauty of our countryside or the quality of our waters.</p>	<p>The environmental laboratory of Clare County Council spans the following core areas of activity: Water, wastewater, agriculture, waste, air, planning. Clare rivers and ten lakes are monitored in accordance with the relevant Operational Monitoring Programmes, a requirement of the Water Framework Directive. There were 12 bathing areas monitored in 2016, Kilkee, Fanore, Cappagh Pier (Kilrush), Whitestrand (Doonbeg), Lahinch, Whitestrand (Miltown Malbay), Quilty, Spanish Point, Bishops Quarter (Ballyvaughan), Ballycuggeran (Lough Derg), Mountshannon (Lough Derg) and Ballyalla. During the year 19 public water supplies, 19 private supplies and 96 group water schemes were monitored. Tests were carried out to meet the statutory requirements of the EU (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 122 of 2014).</p>

Objective - develop a highly motivated, skilled and customer focused workforce

Actions	Progress in 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting staff to reach their full potential by implementing the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 94% compliance with the start of year PDPs in 2016

<p>revised PMDS process across the organisation identifying relevant and or mandatory training needs and personal development plans for all staff.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 244 courses (137 different courses) with 2,044 attendees and the training budget €242,000 was fully committed in 2016 • The Roads Training Grant of €60,000 was fully committed and the Water Services Training Grant of €30,000 was fully committed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting the continuing professional development of staff through the following methods – an effective PMDS process; the council’s continuing education scheme; supporting CPD requirements; the Employee Assistance Programme as well as the professional Business Coaching Programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuing Education Budget €30,000 was fully committed in 2016. • 59 technical courses many with CPD credits were attended by staff. • Business coaching was continued in 2016, with expenditure of €16,000.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging two way communications on day to day performance as well as identifying opportunities for improvement. 	<p>PMDS formed the central pillar within the organisation for developing staff and identifying opportunities in 2016.</p> <p>Following an audit by National Standards Authority of Ireland, which involved the contribution of upwards of 70 staff, Clare County Council retained the ‘Excellence Through People’ certification in 2016. The feedback from this review is contributing to the plans for 2017.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring staff are fully conversant with the Customer Service Charter and Customer Service Guidelines. 	<p>Induction course for new entrants focuses on the Customer Service Charter and guidelines.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring effective internal communication to empower staff to make effective decisions and provide an efficient service to the public. 	<p>The council created the position of Communications Officer in 2016 to aid the development of all communication networks, including the re-launch of the Banner Bulletin, various presentations and general communications guidance across a range of services.</p> <p>Upgrade of Core HR to allow staff to view personal records and improve efficiency. Presentations were given to staff in the Council Chamber.</p> <p>Transition of the payroll function to the Shared Services Centre in Laois (MyPay) as one of the national efficiency objectives: This significant project was communicated to staff and was completed in November 2016.</p>

	<p>Phase two of the ‘MyPay’ project commenced in 2016 and the details were communicated to all staff.</p> <p>A number of staff talks were held to raise awareness of changes in approaches nationally to recruitment competitions (competency based) and the transfer of non-domestic billing to Irish Water.</p> <p>Regular meetings were held throughout 2016 with representative Unions to maintain and strengthen working relationship and retain open channels of communication.</p> <p>Significant inroads made by the ICT Department in consultation with the Partnership Committee in the development of an Extranet site for the dissemination of information and notices to all staff via mobile technology – accessibility by outdoor staff being a key driver in this project.</p> <p>Clare County Council continues to offer welfare guidance (which can have significant impact on performance for both individuals and teams) to all staff across the organisation. This work is supported through a dedicated Welfare Officer.</p> <p>Business Coaching supports offer an opportunity to build management competencies on a one-to-one level while both ‘Local Government’, ‘A-Z’ and ‘Line Manager’ training is actively promoted and participated in.</p>
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Objective - work within a framework of democratic principles to facilitate optimum public participation and community involvement

Actions	Progress in 2016
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing support services to the elected members and Strategic Policy Committees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All supports necessary were provided to elected members and the sectoral representatives of the SPCs. A review of the operation of the SPCs was commenced at the end of 2016 to align the policy areas to the new directorate structures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitating effective and ethical governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The structures in place include the Internal Audit function, the Audit Committee, External Audit, continued reporting are in line with the principles of good corporate governance.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that members and officials have the supports and appropriate structures they need to perform effectively in their roles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is ongoing and every effort is made to ensure that the staffing and structures are appropriate to meet the needs of the services to be provided to the people of County Clare. The revision of the structure which took place in October 2016 further strengthened the ability of the council to deliver on key priorities. This will be embedded in 2017.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting elected members in their civic, representational and policy making roles in the exercise of their reserved functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chief Executive, the Management Team and the Corporate Services Department ensure that members are supported in their representational and policy making role. Any training requested is provided to the members.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing the capacity of those with governance and leadership responsibilities to ensure outcomes achieved are consistent with good governance obligations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The concept of good governance is key to the functioning of the organisation and training in governance and leadership / management is provided as required.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a constructive, respectful, working relationship between members and officials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The relationship between the elected members and the executive and all staff is working well and were further enhanced during 2016, with meetings being held on particular issues such as the extensive workshops on the County Development Plan, improvements to the monthly management report and the use of all forms of communication.

Human Resources Department

The Human Resources (HR) Department has a corporate wide role supporting both management and staff. The department performs a central function in meeting the business needs of the organisation through recruitment, staff development, welfare and the management of corporate HR systems, policies, superannuation and industrial relations.

2016 saw a number of changes in the staffing structure in HR with new team members joining throughout the year. The number of employees in the council as at December 2016 was 762 with an additional 77 employed through the Retained Fire-Fighter Service.

In 2016 the council continued to actively participate in the government's Labour Activation Programmes. During 2016, the council had 59 people employed under the Gateway Scheme. The objective is to provide valuable work experience for the long term unemployed and it is important to note that during 2016 a number of participants in this scheme were successful in becoming permanent employees of Clare County Council through competition.

Recruitment

The Recruitment Team continued to stabilise the workforce throughout 2016 by filling posts via competition. The earlier months of 2016 were spent focusing on the indoor staffing levels whilst the latter half of the year focused on the outdoor teams.

Following an independent review of staffing requirements at a national level, recommendations were made in respect of staffing levels in Water Services. With the support and input of staff, unions and management, significant progress was made towards the end of the year in 'regularising' posts across the outdoor workforce in such roles as Foremen, Fitter/Plumbers, Senior General Services Supervisors and General Operatives.

Clare County Council also collaborated with both Tipperary County Council and Limerick City & County Council in running a competition for 'Clerical Officers' on a regional basis with over 900 people expressing an interest in working for Clare County Council.

Staff training and development

The Training Department within HR promotes and monitors the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) process which has been in place since 2005. PMDS presents a tool to set goals, identify training needs, promote policies such as Health and Safety and to appraise, support and develop teams and individuals. The primary objective is to improve services to the customer. The 'Personal Development Plan' for all staff is at the heart of PMDS.

As 2016 ended a total of 244 courses had been delivered across the organisation with 2,044 attendees. The training budget of €242,000 was fully committed as was a further budget of €60,000 from Road Training Grants and €30,000 from the Water Training Grants. Approximately €30,000 was committed to continuing education and 59 technical courses were delivered under Continued Professional Development. Business Coaching offered to assist staff in terms of management development, was accessed by 17 line managers across the organisation during 2016.

Following an audit by National Standards Authority of Ireland, which involved the contribution of upwards of 70 staff, Clare County Council retained the 'Excellence Through People' certification in 2016.

Employee welfare

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 places obligations on the council as an employer to safeguard employee's welfare. The continued development and focus on the council's Employee Welfare Scheme aims to provide and improve assistance and is a significant support for employees. This service includes the provision for employees of external independent and confidential counselling and coaching services, in addition to the support from the internal Employee Welfare Officer. The programme also provides support for staff following critical incidents/personal trauma. A Wellness Programme is planned each year providing an opportunity for staff to focus on, and take part, in health and wellbeing opportunities.

Clare County Council continues to offer welfare guidance (which can have significant impact on performance for both individuals and teams) to all staff across the organisation. This work is supported through the dedicated Employee Welfare Officer.

Industrial relations

Regular meetings were held throughout 2016 with representative unions to maintain and strengthen working relationship and retain open channels of communication.

The Human Resources Department also represents the council at all third party hearings in accordance with best practices with ongoing support from the Local Government Management Agency.

Workplace partnership

The Partnership Committee is a positive forum for the discussion between management and staff outside of the industrial relations arena. Discussions in 2016 centred on key sector and organisational issues which were significant from both a staff and management perspective.

Significant inroads were made by the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Department, in consultation with the Partnership Committee, in the development of an extranet site for the dissemination of information and notices to all staff via mobile technology – accessibility by outdoor staff being a key driver in this project.

Superannuation

Transition of the payroll function to the Shared Services Centre in Laois (MyPay) was one of the national efficiency objectives. This significant project was communicated to staff and was completed in November 2016. The migration of the ‘Superannuation’ function to MyPay was significantly progressed during the latter stages of the year.

Core System

The Core System provides a central pillar to the management of HR functions across the organisation. Staff profiles, timekeeping/attendance and salaries are all managed through this system. 2016 saw a significant upgrade to the Core System with Version 19 being rolled out during the year. A new interface with additional functionality such as the ability for Core users to view their personal pension details and training history featured in this roll-out. Staff presentations were given in the Council Chamber with further modules to be rolled out at a later date.

Motor Taxation Department

The usage of the online motor tax facility www.motortax.ie continues to grow incrementally. Over recent years, Clare uptake has gone from 47% in December 2013 to 55% in December 2014 and 63% in December 2016. This ranks Clare 15th in terms of online usage, with Dublin City having the highest overall online business at 83% and Kildare and Meath ranking second and third, being in the 78% online bracket. Online statistics are increasing in every county and a majority of people do their motor tax online now in 25 of the 27 motor tax authorities.

Physical Development Directorate

Environment Department

The Environment Department covers a broad area of activity including waste, litter, environmental awareness, pollution, water quality and veterinary services. The 2016 work programme was largely driven by an extensive regulatory framework. As one of the constituent members of the Southern Waste Region, Clare County Council is governed by the waste policy and objectives set out for the region in the Southern Region Waste Management Plan which was adopted in 2015.

Waste and litter management

The enforcement priority areas during the year related to illegal dumping and littering; permitted waste facilities; waste tyres; food waste; end-of-life or scrap vehicles. In addition, work has focussed on the operation of the Presentation of Waste Bye Laws. Other enforcement activities carried out include monitoring of waste collection and facility permits and use of CCTV surveillance to counter illegal dumping and littering and unauthorised burning. Enforcement procedures of a judicial nature were continued in relation to unauthorised waste disposal. Checking for compliance with various waste-related regulations concerning waste electrical equipment, waste batteries, plastic bags, solid fuel regulations (smoky coal) and farm plastics were also carried out by the Waste Regulation and Enforcement Section.

Education and awareness

A wide-ranging environmental awareness programme focusing on a number of target groups including community groups, businesses and schools was implemented in 2016. A significant number of environmental education events took place including the launch of National Tree Week, launch of the Gum Litter Challenge and continuation of the Green Schools Programme and events at each of the nine blue flag beaches in Clare. Clare County Council teamed up with internet animation creator Sminky Shorts, to launch the Green Dog Walkers campaign, which aims to change dog owner behaviour in relation to dog litter. The clip was widely circulated on social media and picked up by national news channels.

The Environment Section worked in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and ENVA Ireland in providing a farm hazardous waste collection. A number of upcycling workshops were provided across the county, funded from a new waste prevention grant to promote re-use and repair to demonstrate to people that waste can also be a very valuable resource.

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2016

The greening of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2016 in Ennis was carried out with support from the EPA Local Authority Prevention Network “Green your Festival”. Clare County Council developed signage to assist members of the public with the segregation of waste into mixed dry recyclables, food waste and mixed waste. Traders at the festival used compostable cups and were encouraged to take steps to prevent waste. A number of workshops were held and best environmental practice was encouraged.

Central Waste Management Facility (CWMF), Inagh

The Central Waste Management Facility (CWMF) in Ballyduff Beg, Inagh, is an operational civic amenity (CA) site and green waste composting facility. There is an engineered landfill located within the site, which closed in November 2011. The site operates under EPA waste licence W0109-02.

With the exception of green waste, all waste received at the facility is removed by contractors for offsite landfill/ recycling/recovery. During 2016, a total of 2,300 tonnes of waste was received at the facility, comprising 735 tonnes of household recyclable material for offsite recycling/recovery, 969 tonnes of residual waste for offsite processing/landfill and 600 tonnes of green waste which was processed in the compost facility on the CWMF site. The compost product is currently used for site landscaping works.

The filled area of the landfill is now fully lined, capped and sealed. Gas is continuously extracted from wells within the landfill to the site enclosed flare. Leachate is pumped via an automated system to leachate holding tanks and is removed as required by road tanker for treatment in approved offsite wastewater treatment plants.

Landfill monitoring

The Central Waste Management Facility (CWMF), Doora Landfill, Lisdeen Waste Transfer Station and Scariff Civic Amenity Site were monitored on an ongoing basis during the year in accordance with waste licence requirements.

Recycling

Clare County Council provides five recycling centres. These 'Civic Amenity Sites' are situated at the following locations:-

- Central Waste Management Facility at Ballyduff Beg, Inagh
- Recycling Centre, Gort Road Industrial Estate, Ennis
- Recycling Centre, Lisdeen, Kilkee
- Recycling Centre, Scariff
- Recycling Centre, Smithstown, Shannon

In addition to the recycling centres, there are 54 bring bank sites within the county accepting green, clear and brown glass and aluminium cans. Of the 54 sites, 6 accept plastic bottles. Currently there are 13 sites which accept textiles (clothing).

A total of circa 8,300 tonnes of materials were collected from all the sites combined during 2016.

Environmental laboratory

The environmental laboratory of Clare County Council spans the following core areas of activity - water, wastewater, agriculture, waste, air and planning.

Rivers and lakes

Clare rivers and ten lakes are monitored in accordance with the relevant Operational Monitoring Programmes, a requirement of the Water Framework Directive (implemented under the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations, 2003, as amended by SI 350 of 2014). Details of the sites can be accessed on www.shannonrbd.com.

Bathing waters

There were 12 bathing areas monitored in 2016 as follows:-

- Kilkee,
- Fanore,
- Cappagh Pier (Kilrush),
- Whitestrand (Doonbeg),
- Lahinch,
- Whitestrand (Miltown Malbay),
- Quilty,
- Spanish Point,
- Bishops Quarter (Ballyvaughan),
- Ballycuggeran (Lough Derg),
- Mountshannon (Lough Derg) and
- Ballyalla

Drinking water

During the year 19 public water supplies, 19 private supplies and 96 group water schemes were monitored. Tests were carried out to meet the statutory requirements of the EU (Drinking Water) Regulations 2014 (S.I. No. 122 of 2014).

Shellfish water

There are 5 designated shellfish waters in County Clare as follows:-

- Aughinish Bay,
- Poulnaclogh Bay (part of Ballyvaughan Bay),
- Poulnasharry Bay,
- Carrigaholt Bay and
- Rinnevella Bay.

These were designated under the European Communities (Quality of Shellfish Waters) (Amendment) Regulations 2009, S.I. No. 55 of 2009.

Catchment surveying – investigative monitoring

A number of river body catchments were surveyed in terms of validating pressures that were identified during the River Basin Management Plan preparation process, and gathering more information as to activities present in these catchments that could potentially cause an impact on water quality.

Clare County Council waste water treatment plants

Thirty plants were monitored during the year. All plants with a population equivalent (P.E.) of greater than 500 were monitored and the results of monitoring were sent to the EPA for publication in the report “Urban Waste Water Discharges in Ireland”. Plants with a P.E of less than 500 were also monitored.

Water Pollution Discharge Licences - Section 4 & 16

Section 4

During the year, 110 audits and inspections were carried out at facilities licensed under Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act, 1977 & 1990. Inspection reports were sent to these facilities and warning letters and/or statutory notices were issued where appropriate.

Section 16

Ninety six premises are licensed in the county to discharge to sewers under Section 16 of the Local Government Water Pollution Act, 1977 & 2007. Licences are now issued by Irish Water on recommendation from Clare County Council Environment staff.

Water/Air/Noise Pollution Complaints

A total of 96 complaints relating to water/air pollution were received and responded to in 2016.

Water Framework Directive (WFD)

Investigations were carried out during the year on a number of water bodies where water quality is at risk of failing to meet Water Framework Directive objectives. Staff in the Environment Department also worked with the EPA on desk based assessments to assist in identifying pressures responsible for placing water bodies in the county at risk of failing to achieve WFD objectives.

Water Pollution Discharge Licences - Section 4 and 16

Inspections were carried out at licensed premises, licensed under Section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act, 1977 & 1990. Inspection reports were sent to premises inspected and where non-compliances were identified, then warning letters were issued.

Ninety six premises are licensed in the county to discharge to sewers under Section 16 of the Local Government Water Pollution Act, 1977 & 2007. Licences are now issued by Irish Water on the recommendation from Clare County Council's Environment staff.

Shannon and Western river basin

The Shannon and Western River Basin District Plans cover the period 2009 – 2015 and have been prepared in consultation with all stakeholders. The plans aim to protect all waters within the district and, where necessary, improve waters and achieve sustainable water use. Waters include rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs, ground waters, protected areas (including wetlands and other water-dependent ecosystems), estuaries (transitional and coastal waters). Implementation of these plans is taking place. The review of these plans commenced in 2016. Reviewed plans are to be finalised by December 2017.

Beaches and amenities

The following nine Co. Clare beaches achieved blue flag status in May 2016:-

- Ballycuggeran,
- Cappa,
- Kilrush,
- Fanore,
- Kilkee,
- Lahinch,
- Mountshannon,
- Spanish Point,
- Whitestrand Doonbeg,
- Whitestrand Miltown Malbay.

The international blue flag symbolises high standards in water quality, safety and services as well as environmental management, information and education. The award is made by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE), an independent non-profit organisation. The Irish Green Coast Award was awarded to beaches at Bishops Quarter at Ballyvaughan and Seafield, Quilty. Work commenced in 2016 on the development of plans for improved

amenities at Lahinch, Spanish Point and Kilkee. New beach byelaws were introduced from August 2016.

Gardening section

The council's Gardening Section continued to maintain very high standards in ensuring the attractiveness of our towns and villages in the county and in supporting and assisting various Tidy Towns Committees. In 2016, the Gardening Section team had the town of Ennis looking very well for the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann music festival.

Veterinary services

Clare County Council is an official agent of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. By way of a Service Level Agreement, Clare County Council is responsible for supervising and granting approval for all abattoirs and meat plants in the county including one wild game establishment. In 2016, Clare County Council facilitated the running of three courses for slaughterhouse operatives on aspects of animal welfare.

Dog control

The contract for provision of Dog Warden Services was awarded to Midland Animal Care Limited, Ballyshane, Cloghan, Co. Offaly in late 2015 and the new contract took effect from 1st January 2016. Midland Animal Care Limited carry out the council's statutory functions in this area with the exception of the making of byelaws and the taking of prosecutions.

Strategic Policy Committee

The Strategic Policy Committee for Environment and Transportation held four meetings in 2016. This committee has a membership of fourteen comprising of nine elected members and a representative from each of the following sectors: - agriculture/farming, environmental, business employers, community/voluntary and trade union. The Chairperson is Councillor Joe Cooney. Environmental related policies which were formulated and developed included the following:-

- Clare Beach Byelaws 2016

- Policy on Free Access to Waste Transfer Stations/Waste Management Facilities (re Voluntary and Community Clean ups)
- EPA Local Authority Performance Assessment Framework
- Marine Strategy Framework Directive
- Establishment of an energy forum

Energy awareness

In 2016 Clare County Council undertook a range of initiatives to improve our energy performance including:-

- Upgrading of public lighting to LED efficient lamps
- Upgrading of lighting and heating controls in Áras Contae an Chláir and other buildings
- Installation of a combined heat and power plant in Ennis Leisure centre
- Energy awareness training days for staff in house
- Energy management training for the ISO 50001 standard.

Energy savings 2016

- Water services upgrades – 8MWh of savings
- Building fabric and services – 54MWh of savings
- Public Lighting – 146MWh of savings
- Transport/vehicles – 61MWh of savings
- Total savings for 2016 – 269MWh

Clare County Council is an active participant in the national monitoring and reporting programme and is on target for the 33% increase in energy efficiency target set by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Clare County Council energy cost, consumption and efficiency measures

Energy cost details for 2016

- Total energy spend - €2,438,273
- Total annual spend on electricity - €1,634,624
- Total annual spend on electricity – Water Services - €55,062
- Total annual spend on public lighting - €1,023,137
- Total annual spend – electricity other than water and public lighting - €556,062
- Total annual spend on road fuels (diesel/petrol/biofuel) - €581,663
- Total annual spend on heating fuels (gas/oil/biomass etc.) - €221,987

Consumption details for 2016

- Electricity – Grid – 11,627.4MWh
 - Fossil fuels – 9,322.6MWh
 - Renewable energy – 731.5
- Total energy – 21,681.6MWh

Water Services Department

Service Level Agreement with Irish Water

The Service Level Agreement (SLA) was made on 1st January 2014 and will expire at the end of 2025. It was due to be reviewed in 2016 but review was postponed until June 2017. For the duration of the SLA, the council is governed by a sequence of Annual Service Plans (ASPs) whereby Irish Water determines the budget, staffing numbers, and key performance indicators (KPIs) and targets for the specific calendar year.

Irish Water’s transformation programme

During 2016 Irish Water continued to pursue its transformation programme, which will specify how water services (operational and capital) will be delivered to customers when Irish Water is the direct provider after the SLA expires. Among the most significant of the projects within this programme are

regional capital offices, laboratory strategy, and Water Industry Operating Framework (WIOF).

Water services operations

Under the SLA the council continues to manage and carry out works to ensure the continuity of potable water supply in each water supply zones in Clare, and collect and treat wastewater in the towns and villages which are serviced by public waste water treatment systems. Clare County Council staff respond to the work orders raised to us by Irish Water as a result of customer contacts and our own identification of issues that need to be resolved. In addition, the programme of water conservation, leak detection and repair is a key activity for Irish Water and for Clare County Council as its agent.

Water services capital projects

All decisions on capital projects are now made by Irish Water. Projects are included in either (i) the Capital Investment Programme for single major projects, or (ii) one of Irish Water's national capital programmes for smaller or repetitive works.

(i) Capital Investment Programme (CIP) 2014-2016

During 2016 the council, as agent of Irish Water, continued to manage the following CIP works:

- Upgrade of the Wastewater Treatment Plant at Clonroadmore – practically completed.
- Ennis Water Mains Rehab Project – Contract 2 – practically completed.
- Shannon Advanced Upgrade of Wastewater Pumping Stations – completed.
- New pumped sewer on Bothar na Luachra, Shannon – completed.
- Shannon Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Phase 1 – practically completed.

- Quin and Kilfenora Wastewater Treatment Upgrade – planning stages.

(ii) National capital programmes

Irish Water originally named this category “Minor Programmes”, but the description “minor” can be misleading as many contracts are large in scope. Individual jobs may be relatively small, but are repetitive in nature, and amenable to being bundled into high monetary value contracts covering more than one county. In 2016 Clare County Council carried out works for Irish Water including:

- Local water mains replacement.
- Replacement of components of water and wastewater treatment plants.
- Installation of new pumps.
- Upgrade of water disinfection systems.
- Decommissioning Rockmount water treatment plant, Miltown Malbay.
- Flow metering at wastewater treatment plants.

Planning also commenced on the following:-

- Long-term options for Corofin water supply.
- Treatment of coastal discharges in Ballyvaughan, Clarecastle, Kilkee, Kilrush, Liscannor.
- Upgrade of Miltown Malbay wastewater treatment plant.

Rural Water Programme (RWP)

The Rural Water Programme (RWP) remains outside the remit of Irish Water and continues to be managed centrally and funded by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. It encompasses both capital and operational work.

Rural Water capital

This comprises works for provision of new group schemes, and for upgrading and takeover of existing group schemes. Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government funding for takeover works is 100% and for new and upgrade works 85%. Takeover of group schemes is now done by Irish Water and no longer by Clare County Council. During 2016, protocols for takeover of group water schemes by Irish Water were finalised, arising from the discussions of a working group which included Clare County Council representation, leading to the takeover of four Co. Clare group water schemes. By the end of 2016 no protocols for takeover of group sewerage schemes had yet been agreed.

Works were commenced / completed on the following group schemes in 2016 under the three main headings below, amounting to a total capital investment in the schemes of € 230,000.

The following upgrades of schemes, including water conservation took place

- Payment for the balance of money was made for schemes in Carrigerry, Cree, Cahermurphy, Drumline, Kilmaley, Toonagh, Moneskeagh, Quinspool.
- Coolmeen
- Toonagh-Dysert
- Kilmaley-Inagh
- Quinspool
- Fortwilliam
- Inchovea
- Quinspool, Ballycannon

Bored wells grants

The grant scheme for bored wells is funded up to a maximum of €2,031.58 per application by the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government. In 2016, 28 applications for bored well grants were

received and grants were paid out on 18 applications, amounting to a total of €31,298.

Rural water operational

The Rural Water Programme also provides an Annual Subsidy Grant to group water schemes for the operational and maintenance costs of group schemes. In 2016, there were 44 subsidy applications received by Clare County Council for funding of the operational costs for private and public group water schemes. In total, payment of €911,000 was paid out by the council under this heading, all of which is recoupable from the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government.

Non-domestic metering and billing

Billing and collection of non-domestic water charges were transferred to Irish Water in November 2016. However the council will continue to read customers' meters on behalf of Irish Water and resolve physical issues with meters referred to us by Irish Water.

Other water services works outside the scope of Irish Water

The council continues to manage a number of local networks and treatment plants which have not been taken over by Irish Water. Most of them were built by either the council or the former Rural Housing Organisation to serve small housing estates in villages, or by developers of new estates in areas where there was no public system. As estates continue to be taken in charge under the planning process, the number of these systems continues to increase. Funding of these operations appears unlikely to be provided by Irish Water in the foreseeable future, and provision in the council's own annual budgets will continue to be necessary.

Roads and Transportation Department

Roads and transportation is responsible for the design, maintenance and improvement of the national, regional and local road network throughout the county and also has responsibility for road safety, parking management, flood relief works, coastal protection, insurances and arterial drainage.

Schedule of municipal district works

The 2016 Schedule of Municipal Districts Works Programme which had a total value of €16.9m was substantially completed and all approved allocations were successfully drawn down from the various funding agencies involved.

Listed hereunder are a number of the highlights/works that took place:-

- Strengthening/surface dressing of more than 182km of road network.
- Continuation of enhanced bridge remediation programme.
- Continuation of remediation works at a number of coastal sites affected by the coastal storms of early 2014 – with specific emphasis on coast roads, coastal defence infrastructure, tourism infrastructure and piers and harbours.
- Cappahard roundabout and drainage works, Ennis.
- Work was completed on the 3km section of the West Clare Greenway from Ennis Town Centre to Lees Road Sports and Amenity Park.
- Road Safety Programme.

Public lighting

Clare County Council has responsibility for the management and maintenance of 13,000 public lights in the county (with the exception of those pertaining to the motorway network). Public lighting is by far the largest energy consumption component of Local Authority infrastructure - the council continues to seek funding for the upgrading of the infrastructure on an ongoing basis – with particular emphasis on reduction of its carbon footprint over the coming years.

Coastal storm damage

The programme of remediation following the 2014 coastal storms continues and at the end of 2016 a total of €13.6 million had been spent on this programme which involved an array of repair and reconstruction works to sea walls, revetments, roads, piers and tourism infrastructure, at several locations around the entire county coastline. The sum remaining to be spent in relation

to the coastal damage repair programme is €6 million. The programme pertaining to same should be substantially completed during the second quarter of 2017 (with the exception of Lahinch), pending successful passage through outstanding planning processes and other factors.

Flooding Winter 2015/2016

Funding of €3.6 million to deal with flood damaged roads was made available by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2016 on foot of the flood events of December 2015 and January 2016. This funding facilitated repairs to drainage systems and repairs to a very significant schedule of roads across the county.

Roads Capital Projects

Killaloe By-Pass

Following a series of interactions through courts arising from an application for Judicial Review pursuant to the An Bord Pleanála approval to the project in early 2013, the Supreme Court upheld the previous High Court decision by rejecting the most recent appeal in mid-November, 2016 - meaning that the legal process is now concluded and the project is approved to proceed towards the construction stage. Notices to Treat were served at the end of August 2016 to facilitate initiation of the next significant stage of the project – the land acquisition stage which will be based on the approved Project Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).

Limerick Northern Distributor Road (Phase 2)

Preliminary design work is ongoing. The formal variation pertaining to the Clare section of the project was passed in July 2015 – both in respect of the County Development Plan and the South Clare Local Area Plan. The equivalent proposed variation of the Limerick County Development Plan was defeated by Limerick Councillors on 29th July 2015. Recently, Limerick City and County Council has been reviewing its options and has decided to pursue an amended variation, based on the same route corridor as was proposed in 2015 but with the benefit of the concept of more elaborate junction arrangements at the Eastern termination/docking point.

Blake's Corner, Ennistymon

A determination was confirmed in 2016 by An Bord Pleanála that neither an Environmental Impact Statement nor a Natura Impact Statement would be required and, therefore, the formal planning process to apply in determining the outcome of the proposal, as presently envisaged, will be the Part VIII process. The steering group is presently considering options based on the current position as outlined above and liaison is continuing with Transport Infrastructure Ireland with a view to commencement of the formal planning process as soon as possible.

N85 Kilnamona Realignment Scheme

Design work has been ongoing throughout 2016 and a preferred route was identified.

Doolin Pier

The Doolin Pier Construction Project was completed in mid June of 2015 and the level of activity in terms of ferry operations has increased significantly over the past two tourist seasons, as a result of the additional flexibility and opportunity afforded by the development. The council appointed a team of consultants in 2016 to facilitate design and ultimate implementation of an overall master plan for the harbour and village areas to incorporate the development of an accommodation building, enhanced parking, traffic management etc.

Ennis South Flood Relief Scheme

The project has been approved and works will commence on the ground in 2017.

West Clare Railway Greenway

Construction work is completed on the 3km section from Ennis Town Centre to Lees Road Sports and Amenity Park. Planning for and design of the overall proposal which will facilitate a cycle connection between Ennis and Lahinch will proceed through 2017.

Ennis Active Travel Towns

Planning approval was confirmed and construction work completed in respect of a series of integrated cycle and pedestrian facilities throughout Ennis town, the key components of which are:

Route 1 Quin Road

Railway bridge to Bruach na hAbhainn, on-road cycle lanes, zebra crossings and public lighting.

Route 2 Clareabbey to Kelly's Corner

Cyclist and pedestrian facilities at the major junctions.

Route 3 Tulla Road to Gort Road Link

A shared-use type scheme with signing and lining to provide a shorter link for cyclists on roads with lower traffic.

Traffic management

The council has responsibility for the management and enforcement of traffic throughout the county. Parking bye-laws and pay and display facilities are in operation in Ennis , Kilrush , Kilkee and Lahinch. The council continues to invest in staff and resources to improve the service delivery in this area.

Other roads activities

Hedgecutting

Clare County Council provided an allocation of €10,000 to continue the Community Hedgecutting Grant Scheme in 2016. Twenty grants were approved in 2016. This initiative is facilitating greater awareness among landowners of their responsibility in relation to management of roadside hedges in their properties.

Community Involvement Scheme

Clare County Council allocated €325,000 in 2016 in respect of Community Involvement Schemes which facilitated the completion of 16 projects throughout the county.

Fire and Emergency Services Department

A summary of activities in the area of Fire and Building Control in 2016 included:

Fire service operations

- 2016 saw a levelling off in call-outs to the Fire Service with 855 calls, down from the 2015 figure of 864 incidents.
- There was no fire fatality in 2016 in County Clare.
- Chimney fire callouts increased by 19% to 126 for 2016, from a historical low in recent years of 106 for 2015.
- There was a slight reduction in domestic fires in 2016 from 46 to 43. However a new trend appears to be that the cause of approximately 20% of such fires may be due to incorrectly fitted stoves.
- Delivery of a comprehensive Training Programme for Fire Service Personnel.
- Provision of new workwear uniforms for the Fire Service.
- Upgrading works completed at Ennistymon Fire Station of approximately €250,000 with the cost claimed from the Department of Housing, Community and Local Government.
- Preparation of planning and layout drawings for upgrade works at Kilkee Fire Station
- There were 3 retirements and 1 resignation from the Fire Service, with 5 new persons recruited and trained, in 2016

Fire service performance indicators

Fire service performance indicators - 2016	Performance
Average time taken, in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in part-time stations in respect of fires	5.75 minutes
% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the	44.86%

scene is within 10 minutes	
% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	32.70%
% of cases in respect of fire in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	22.43%
Average time taken, in minutes to mobilise fire brigades in part-time stations in respect of all other (non-fire) emergency incidents	5.82 minutes
% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is within 10 minutes	30.59%
% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 10 minutes but within 20 minutes	44.77%
% of cases in respect of all other emergency incidents in which first attendance at the scene is after 20 minutes	24.62%

Health and Safety

In February 2016, Clare County Fire and Rescue Service maintained the OHSAS 18001 Health and Safety Management System Standard for the implementation of their Safety Management System throughout the service following a surveillance visit by the National Standards Authority Ireland.

Fire prevention

- Risk Based Inspection Programme continued – nursing homes, apartment buildings and hostels, with initial inspections carried out. Officers are now carrying out re-inspections on some areas.
- A large programme of work was carried out for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in Ennis in 2016 including:

- A program of inspections, targeted at venues proposed for the Fleadh, was carried out and any necessary remedial works identified.
- Occupancy figures were calculated and monitored during the Fleadh.
- Advised on public safety in relation to many of the venues, stage areas, campsites, businesses and licensed premises.
- Provision of fire safety training to the volunteer venue managers.
- Fire safety certificate applications increase to 102 in 2016 from 73 in 2015.
- There were 124 licence applications dealt with during 2016 by Fire Prevention Officers covering pubs, hotels, community centres and events throughout the county.
- A successful Schools Fire Safety Programme was carried out in 2016, whereby members of the fire service visited national schools, providing them with fire safety advice and handouts to ensure that they could bring home the message of fire safety to their homes.

Building Control

- Rate of inspections of new building works remained within our target and 12% of notified buildings were inspected in 2016.
- With the online submission of commencement notices into the Building Control Management System, a technical desk study of every commencement notice is carried out, and where issues are identified, a follow-up is carried out by the particular Fire Officer involved.
- The Building Control (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2015 commenced on the 1st September 2015 to allow an “Opt Out” type of commencement notice to be submitted. A large number of queries have been received and dealt with in relation to commencement notice submissions.

- Increase in Disability Access Certificate Applications from the 2015 figures from 46 to 67 Disability Access Certificates in 2016.

Major Emergency Management

- Ongoing training was provided to personnel who may be involved in delivery of key roles in the response to a major emergency to ensure Clare County Council remain prepared for responding to a major emergency.
- Clare County Fire and Rescue Service continues to provide secretariat to the council's Major Emergency Management Committee. Clare County Fire and Rescue personnel also participate in the Mid West Regional Working Group and associated sub-committees.
- Procedures and plans prepared for dealing with major emergencies were put into action by Clare County Council as the lead agency in the response to severe weather events associated with winter storms and also to the prolonged flooding incidents in Clonlara, Co. Clare. A review was carried out on the response to the severe weather incidents, with a report on same submitted to the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management.
- Clare County Council in conjunction with the other agencies took part in "Exercise Shamrock", an interagency exercise at Shannon Airport in March 2016.
- Under the "Control of Major Accident Hazards involving Dangerous Substances" legislation, the following actions were carried out by the Local Competent Authorities (Local Authority, An Garda Síochána, Health Services Executive and Shannon Foynes Port Authority):
 - The External Emergency Plan for Shannon Airport Fuel Terminal, an Upper Tier Seveso Site, was tested in December.

Dangerous structures

- The number of cases reported to the local authority was the same as the 2015 figure, with 26 cases reported in 2016.

- Continued difficulty in getting builders/property owners to carry out required works due to financial constraints, with the Local Authority having to provide funds from its own resources to carry out works to remedy dangerous situations on private properties on a number of occasions, with recoupment of the funds being difficult to get.

Civil Defence

Currently there are over 100 active volunteer members trained in a variety of disciplines, including:

- Emergency Medicine
- Technical Rope Rescue
- Firefighting
- Swiftwater Rescue
- Boating and Search Procedures.

2016 was the busiest year for Clare Civil Defence on record. This was attributed to in no small way by the massive role played by the unit in Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2016. Clare Civil Defence provided the entire medical cover for the event as well as providing swiftwater rescue cover of the River Fergus throughout the event. Over 3,500 work hours were covered during the 8 days by over 100 volunteers and Clare Civil Defence was very kindly assisted by colleagues from Counties Galway, Limerick and Tipperary. Clare Civil Defence operated a new system for tracking medical crews on the ground to enable us to respond to calls for medical assistance within 60 seconds of receiving a call. This was the first time that such a system was deployed for an event of this size. The entire operation for the event was a huge success.

This year also heralded the introduction of Small Unmanned Aircrafts (drones) to the Clare unit. Two volunteer members trained for 8 months to become pilots and both successfully qualified and are now licensed by the Irish Aviation Authority. The Small Unmanned Aircrafts (SUA) have been deployed on several searches to date and Clare Civil Defence is the most active drone

unit in the country at the moment. Unfortunately, Clare Civil Defence was involved in the most missing persons searches of the country's 32 Civil Defence Units. Into the future the SUAs will be used to assist other sections of Clare County Council such as the Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Section and they are also being requested on a regular basis by An Garda Síochána. As part of the development of this program Clare Civil Defence has kitted out a mobile control vehicle which has the ability to view real time video being received by the SUA as well as transmit these images directly to a control room anywhere in the country. At the moment this is the only vehicle of its type and capabilities within the country.

Despite the extremely busy year put down by the volunteers, Clare Civil Defence members achieved the following throughout 2016:

- 3 x qualified cardiac first responder instructors
- 1 x cardiac first responder advanced instructor
- 24 x first aid responders
- 9 x emergency first responders
- 2 x emergency first responder instructors
- 3 x emergency medical technicians
- 12 x swiftwater flood and first responders
- 2 x manual handling instructors

The unit was honoured to be awarded the Clare Garda Division Community Youth Award (Group) in December 2016 in recognition of its contribution to the development of youth within the county. 12 new recruits were taken on at the beginning of the year and all successfully qualified to become members of the unit.

Social Development

Housing Department

In August 2016, the restructuring of directorates across the organisation resulted in the formation of the new Social Development Directorate which incorporates the functions of Housing, Culture, Sport and Recreation.

Our Strategy Statement is: “To address the needs of homeless people and families in emergency accommodation, accelerate the provision of social housing, utilise vacant homes and improve the rental sector”.

The directorate is involved in the construction, purchase, leasing and renting of homes, traveller accommodation, homelessness, as well as the ongoing maintenance and management of our own 2,400 housing stock. To efficiently serve our customers, Clare County Council depends on close working relationships with a range of statutory agencies, service providers and advocates. The council works closely with the elected members and sectoral interests on the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) which met on six occasions in 2016 to discuss and agree a range of policies and initiatives.

Some of the services and initiatives that the Housing Department undertook during 2016 are as follows:

Estate management

There are now 40 residents associations in local authority estates throughout the county. There was excellent participation in the annual Best Kept Estates Competition, which saw a prize fund of €7,150 being divided among 21 residents' groups. The overall winner and the recipient of the Mary Hennessy Memorial Award was Connaught Road, Scariff.

Ongoing estate management activity includes casework referrals to relevant agencies and dealing with issues of tenancy breaches and sustainability.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

A Tenant Purchase Scheme based on incremental purchase principles was introduced during 2016. Under the terms of the scheme tenants with a

reckonable gross income of €15,000 per annum or above may apply to purchase the property they are renting. A minimum of 50% must be in the form of employment income. Discounts available are based on household income and range from 40% to 60% of the market value. The discounts are subject to an incremental purchase charge. There has been significant interest in the scheme to date and at year end sales of 3 properties had been completed.

Housing assessments and allocations

During 2016, a total of 609 applications for social housing support were assessed by the Housing Department. The statutory assessment of housing needs was also completed during the year which entailed a review of all housing applications. There are now approximately 2,400 approved applicants for social housing support on the housing waiting list. Based on experience to date it is likely that a significant proportion of these applicants are interested in housing support via rent supplement or a housing assistance payment (HAP) and do not wish to be considered for standard local authority housing.

The Housing Department allocated 124 new tenancies in the council's standard housing stock during the year.

Resettlement Programme

County Clare welcomed 9 Syrian refugee families to the county in 2016 under the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees led Resettlement Programme. The families have been housed in Shannon and Sixmilebridge and have been supported by an inter agency group coordinated by Clare County Council and included all relevant agencies i.e. Tusla (Child and Family Agency), Health Service Executive, Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, Clare Local Development Company, the Department of Social Protection, Clare County Childcare Committee, Clare Immigrant Support Centre and An Garda Síochána.

Housing loans

The number of annuity loan applications received in 2016 has increased from 2 in 2015 to 56 in 2016. This is partly due to the Incremental Tenant Purchase Scheme and the Shared Ownership Restructuring Schemes introduced in 2016. The new restructuring option for Shared Ownership borrowers came into effect on the 1st April 2016. Repayment arrangements are to be structured on the basis of affordability and will involve restructuring of all outstanding debt (outstanding annuity balance, rental equity balance plus any arrears) into a single Annuity Loan. The term of the Annuity Loan will be determined by the amount of the monthly repayment deemed to be affordable and sustainable for each Shared Ownership borrower.

The council is implementing the guidance on mortgage arrears under the revised Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process. We are also implementing the Mortgage to Rent Scheme for repossessed houses and restructuring option for Shared Ownership Loans. Whilst the arrears remained at a similar level at the end of 2016, it is expected that the arrears in 2017 will significantly decrease due to the implementation of Mortgage to Rent and the Shared Ownership Restructuring. One Mortgage to Rent application was completed in 2016 with a further 11 applications under consideration.

House acquisitions

A total of 185 viewings took place in 2016 with agreement reached for the purchase of 100 dwellings and these are all progressing to contract signing. 47 contracts were signed at year end and sales closed in respect of 51 dwellings. Offers are continuing to be made on properties. Overall to date in terms of acquisitions since mid-2015, agreement has been reached for the purchase of 145 dwellings, contracts signed for 92 dwellings and sales closed in respect of 88 dwellings. Whilst house prices have increased over the last year, there is still value to be obtained and the council is continuing to purchase as many dwellings as possible to accommodate people on our social housing waiting list.

Housing capital

Funding for housing development in Clonlara and Feakle were announced in late 2016. A tender competition using the council's consultancy framework was undertaken with design development due to commence in 2017. This coupled with the Tullyglass and Quilty schemes, forms the current approved capital investment programme in housing development for Clare. The Social Development Directorate meets with the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government officials regularly to review current and pending applications for additional schemes ensuring an ongoing strategic oversight to the delivery of housing in Clare.

Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF)

The Social Development Directorate made a submission to the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government for the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) for three locations in Clare including Shannon, Ennis and Ennistymon to seek funding assistance in the delivery of key infrastructure, such as roads, to enable early activation of suitably located and scaled housing sites that are currently zoned, to produce housing quickly, at scale and at affordable prices. This project involves cross directorate coordination and delivery.

Social Housing Public Private Partnership (PPP) Programme - Shannon

The Social Housing PPP Programme is a partnership between the Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (DHPCLG) and Clare County Council and a specially formed project company, referred to as PPP company. The proposed development of housing on Shannon Lands East has been progressed to design team appointment in 2016. When completed this will create a provision of 50 social housing units in Shannon town to which the council will have 100% nomination rights. Architectural Services are providing technical input and project management support and co-ordination as part of the project team and the Director of Service is a member on the project board for delivery of the scheme.

Social Leasing Scheme

Clare County Council leases private housing to accommodate social housing tenants. At the end of 2016 there were 110 short term leases and 83 long term leases in place. The council has entered into agreement with approved voluntary housing bodies to provide a further 63 units.

Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme commenced in Clare County Council in June 2015. To be eligible for a Housing Assistance Payment, the person (or both persons for a joint application) applying must be currently on Clare County Council's housing list. The scheme provides assistance for those eligible to pay their rent in private rented accommodation. It is up to the applicant to source the private rented accommodation. The tenancy agreement remains a private agreement between the tenant and their landlord. Where a person(s) is deemed eligible for HAP, a payment is made directly to their landlord by the local authority monthly. A person who is approved for a Housing Assistance Payment is also required to pay rent to the local authority, which is based on income. By the end of 2016 there were 1,000 households receiving assistance under the HAP scheme in Clare.

Rental Accommodation Scheme (R.A.S.)

There were 421 households on R.A.S. at the end of 2016. While 681 households have been accommodated since the introduction of R.A.S., a number have left the scheme for various reasons including movement into other social housing, private housing or a positive change regarding their housing need. The council has a responsibility to inspect private rented properties in accordance with the Private Rented Regulations, 1992. A total of 676 properties, including HAP, R.A.S. and leasing properties, were inspected in 2016.

Voluntary housing

Clare County Council continued to work with the approved voluntary housing bodies in 2016. Cluid Housing Association purchased 7 Houses in Ennistymon, and Inis Housing Association have leased 12 houses at

Riverwood Village, Kilrush, both are occupied by tenants nominated by Clare County Council.

Homelessness services

The hostel at Laurel Lodge, Ennis provides emergency accommodation and care for homeless men. This 13-bed facility is operated by St. Vincent de Paul with financial assistance provided by the council. The council also works in partnership with the Department of Social Protection to deliver other homelessness services, and sourcing private rented and emergency accommodation. In 2016, 428 people were assisted through the homelessness clinics. The Clare Homelessness Alliance assisted in implementing the Clare Homelessness Action Plan 2013-2018.

Traveller accommodation

Traveller accommodation continues to present challenges, particularly in the context of the rapid growth in young traveller households. The Traveller Accommodation Programme 2014 – 2018 is focused on maximising occupancy of existing accommodation and was reviewed in 2016. It is intended to work towards achieving the targets set out in the plan in the context of rising demand and increasing capital funding availability. The council continues to work with relevant agencies and groups on initiatives to develop a framework to deliver integrated support services to the traveller community.

Clare Traveller Integrated Strategy

In 2016, this strategy continued with its inter-agency co-operation and inter-community collaboration on a range of issues relating to the traveller community in Co. Clare. During the year, a number of events and activities were held including a Traveller Living History Exhibition which included the role of travellers in 1916.

Housing grants

In 2016, a total of 292 adaptation grants were approved for payment to disabled and elderly persons in private accommodation to facilitate the continued occupation of their houses.

Refurbishment of casual vacancies

In 2016, the council refurbished 90 vacant properties and returned these to productive use. Of these properties, 78 were refurbished through department funding, with the balance financed through the council's own resources.

Energy efficiency upgrades

Investment under the Energy Efficiency Programme continued in 2016. Works were progressed on an estate-wide basis with the target of achieving a comfortable living standard for all local authority households. Works were carried out to 243 houses under Phase 1 in 2016 which included cavity wall insulation, attic insulation and insulation of primary pipe work along with ventilation works. Works under Phase 1 have now been fully completed.

Revitalise Areas through Planning Investment and Development (RAPID)

Clare County Council continued to support the development of the community in Ennis West under the RAPID Programme. This involves working with young people, families and older people and especially Park United Schoolboys/Schoolgirls soccer club which caters for more than 100 young boys and girls (<16 years of age) and which runs an academy for children under ten years of age.

Culture and Arts Department

New County Library

In 2016, Keith Williams Architects were appointed as the lead consultant to deliver the new County Library including a gallery, Local Studies Centre and the Library Headquarters on the site of Glór. To date the design team have commissioned surveys, determined the feasibility of the proposal and consulted with stakeholders such as staff of the Library, Arts, Ennis Municipal

District, Information Technology, Building Control and Planning. The design team have completed the preliminary design and the design and are preparing for public consultation and sketch design development in early 2017. The design aspiration seeks to create a new landmark civic entrance to the combined cultural facilities. The project management is provided by Architectural Services with the County Librarian as the lead project co-ordinator.

Clare County Library

The number of stock issues was up by 2% on 2015 figures with an increase of 11% on new membership. The introduction of free library membership in January 2016 can be attributed to this increase. The number of visits to libraries in County Clare in 2016 was 397,980. The number of events in libraries was 884, these included ongoing activities such as book clubs, story-time, film clubs, craft sessions and computer classes as well as events marking national activities such as Poetry Ireland Day, Heritage Week, Bealtaine, Africa Day, Polska/Eire Festival, Culture Night and Seachtain na Gaeilge. Over 12,500 people attended these events.

Clare County Library joined with other library authorities nationwide in July 2016 using Sierra, the new national Library Management System (LMS). The new LMS enables members of each county library service to request and borrow books and other materials from each of the other counties. Members now have a much wider range of books and other items to choose from and can borrow up to 12 items at a time. Members also have free access to a range of e-resources including e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines, e-newspapers and language and other online learning courses through their library account.

The library's annual Teen Week in March featured 1916 commemoration events including a countywide poetry and creative writing competition. The National Summer Reading Programme was promoted throughout July and August in all library branches. A new national story-time initiative ran over the Summer in Shannon, Ennis, Scariff and Ennistymon libraries. Participating libraries hosted themed story-time workshops with emphasis on parental

participation. Over a thousand children enjoyed the “Children’s Book Festival” headline event featuring storyteller Niall de Burca at Glór in October. Over sixty events in the 2016 programme saw thousands of children visit branch libraries during the month. Seachtain na Gaeilge, World Book Day and Science Week were marked in branches with art workshops, author visits, storytelling and illustration workshops. A toy and sensory resource collection for children with complex needs was launched in Shannon library in December, 2016. Over 70 assistive toys, selected with advice from local health and education professionals, were made available for borrowing.

Marketing/Outreach

Outreach visits continued to local Day Care Centres and Nursing Homes, including Kilmaley, Ennistymon, St Joseph’s, Ennis, Kilrush, Clarecastle and Raheen. In April, the library participated in the Age Expo event in Carrigoran. Library staff took part in a monthly book slot on Clare FM, covering book reviews and library news. Collaboration with the Ennis Book Club Festival led to a Chambers Ireland/Excellence in Local Government Award in the Supporting Tourism category.

An exhibition entitled ‘1916 in the International Press’ was created in-house and was displayed at branch libraries during the year. Several other commemorative events took place in libraries - talks, Enneclann genealogy event, book displays and discussion groups.

Refurbishment works were carried out in Ennistymon Library at a cost of €50,000 and carpets were fitted in Tulla and Killaloe libraries. Several health and safety issues were addressed, including asbestos surveys at Newmarket-on-Fergus and Kilrush libraries and electrical inspections were carried out in all branches.

Clare Museum

There were 36,000 visits to Clare Museum during 2016, a figure which includes some 3,800 visits during the week of the All-Ireland Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. This is the highest visitor figure since 2007 and the fourth busiest year ever. Museum focused educational workshops were a feature of the

year, with almost a thousand pupils from 24 primary schools and 174 transition year students from four secondary schools taking part. The museum also provided support for several Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board's adult education courses.

'An Interpretive Guide to Patrick Brennan's Autograph Book' was launched in December and the autograph book was placed on long-term display as part of the Clare 1916 Programme. There were over 100 acquisitions to the museum collection following the public promotion of the museum's Collection Policy. In its bid to attain full accreditation under the Heritage Council's Museum Standards Programme for Ireland, the following documents were adopted by the Cultural, Arts, Community, Recreation and Amenity Services SPC in November:-

- The Clare Museum Strategic Action Plans 2016 and 2017
- The Education Policy for Clare Museum 2017-2019

Clare Arts Office

2016 was a busy year for Clare Arts Office with the expansion of the Riches of Clare concert series from 16 to 21 concerts, to compliment the Sharing Clare aspect of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. The Arts Office also commissioned artworks for 2 of the roundabouts during Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann as well as organising traditional singing workshops for children and supporting the Fleadh generally.

22 schools participated in our Artist in Schools Scheme throughout the county and over 30 schools benefitted from Music Generation's Music Education Programme, supported by the Arts Office. Two traditional singers in residence were also appointed to promote traditional singing amongst young people in the county. Almost 50 art projects took place with disability organisations culminating in a Christmas concert in Cois na hAbhna and an exhibition and performance in Glór in May. The Arts Office organised over 20 exhibitions in Kilkee, Scariff and Ennis as well as professional development sessions for artists in the area of Child Protection Training and Health and Safety.

Glór

Despite being a challenging year for Glór in 2016, there have been many new initiatives and developments to celebrate and reflect on. In 2016, Glór increased its programming by a further 20% with a diverse programme made up of festivals, an expanded children's programme, additional classical and contemporary music events, newly piloted artists' residencies focussing on children and young people, and traditional music. Collaborations with Ennis Street Arts Festival, Ennis Book Club Festival and Bealtaine/Age and Opportunity, Clare County of Culture and Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann were very positive experiences for Glór and its audiences. Throughout the year, programming has incorporated a developmental focus, and while retaining the more commercial and popularly appealing elements of performing arts programming, Glór has expanded by introducing a number of artist in residence projects, also reaching out to the older community in collaborations with Age and Opportunity/Bealtaine 2016.

Highlights and new developments included the following:-

- A special reading programme called Léamh in association with Ennis Book Club Festival.
- Three targeted Artist-in-Residence projects focussing on pre-schools with Joanna Parkes.
- Traditional music for young people with traditional musician in residence Eoin O'Neill.
- A new drama initiative for the over 55s with Marie McNamara.
- The annual own produced highlight, the MÓRglór Award Night, which this year honoured the outstanding contribution of Clare musician Frank Custy to the traditional arts.

Direct costs have increased in line with this growth in activity and Glór continues to seek to develop other funding streams including increased funding through public sources, increased corporate and individual membership and sponsorship and to promote its use to businesses as a conference venue. Orla Flanagan was appointed Director of Glór and took

the reins from Interim Director Liz Kelly in August. Glór's partnership with Cultúrlann Sweeney Theatre continues, and a new partnership with Raviolo Verde Café continues to explore joint revenue potential.

Sport and Recreation Department

Active Ennis Sports and Leisure Facilities

2016 saw the continuing success and high usage from all sectors of the community at all of the Active Ennis and Kilrush facilities.

At Active Ennis Leisure Complex, there was the highest uptake of short-term memberships since these options were made available in 2003.

There was also an expansion of fitness classes to provide a greater variety of health and fitness options at different times of the day, satisfying all clients.

Active Ennis Leisure Complex continues to retain the White Flag for Excellence Award, Gold Standard and also the Gold Standard for Disability Awareness.

Under the Sports Capital Grant Programme, tenders have been sought for the refurbishment of the gymnasium at Active Ennis Leisure Complex.

A combined heat and power unit at Ennis Leisure Complex, along with other energy efficiency measures and general maintenance of the pool changing area, was completed in 2016, with funding from the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme.

Continued growth in usage of Active Ennis Sports and Amenity Park, Lees Road and other associated outdoor facilities has been noted.

Under the Sports Capital Grant Programme secured in 2015. Tenders were sought for the redevelopment of the Astro Turf Pitch at Lees Road in 2016.

Active Kilrush Sports Complex

The Active Kilrush Sports Complex comprises of an astro turf pitch, Gallery Park soccer pitch, running track, new soccer training pitches with an integrated GAA pitch, dressing rooms and includes Cappagh playground.

Regular users of the facilities include local soccer clubs, local tri-clubs, ladies football and 'kick-about' groups.

Funding will be sought for the completion of Phase 3 of the development of Active Kilrush Sports Complex to include dressing rooms, storage facilities, courts and car parking. This project will demonstrate cross-directorate co-operation with Rural Development.

Archives Service

The Archives Service continued to digitise material from our Local Authority collections of record books. It is intended that the user's interaction to get historical records be as simple and efficient as possible, in terms of finding information contained within the digitised material. In 2016, the Archives Section accessioned an additional collection i.e. an exhibition on Rodger Casement which was held on 23rd March 2016.

The archives dealt with a large amount of queries in the areas of genealogy, local authority and private collections, Our Lady's Collection, acquisitions and donations of material in 2016.

Rural Development Directorate

A new directorate for Rural Development was established in late 2016 to bring a focus and commitment to improving the rural areas of the County.

Rural and Community Department

Rural Economic Development Zones (REDZ) Initiative

Clare County Council secured €200,000 from the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs under the REDZ initiative to support the marketing and promotion of the Lough Derg Blueway.

CLÁR Initiative

€284,000 was secured, under the CLÁR Initiative, to fund safety measures at schools and community facilities within the designated CLÁR areas of the county. Pedestrian crossings, driver feedback display signs, flashing amber safety lights and child safety signage were installed at various locations and benefitted 27 projects in the county.

Tidy towns

40 projects benefitted under the Public Area Enhancement Scheme 2016 with a total funding of €80,000 allocated to the various towns and villages across the county. This has been a very successful and positive scheme in Co. Clare. The groups were supported and assisted by council staff in the development of their projects.

Pride of Place 2016

Pride of Place is an annual all-island competition run by Co-Operation Ireland in conjunction with local authorities north and south of the border and Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurance. It aims to recognise and celebrate the vital contributions that communities make to society along with generating awareness, respect and inclusion for every facet of society.

The following groups represented the county in the 2016 competition:-

- Ogonnelloe Exchange in Category 7 (Community Enterprise Initiative),

- Clare Bus in Category 8 (Communities Reaching Out Initiative)

Burial grounds

During 2016, 45 priming grants were paid to voluntary committees to assist them in the maintenance of 82 burial grounds within the county. The work of these voluntary groups is invaluable. A grant totalling €8,000 was also paid towards the development of Kilcrona burial ground extension in Carrigaholt.

Local Community Development Committee (LCDC)

The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) was established under the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The LCDC has 19 members who are drawn from various government departments, local public representatives and community groups with the latter having the majority. The LCDC is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the community actions set out in the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP). It is also responsible for managing and monitoring the delivery of the Social Inclusion Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP)

The SICAP is managed and monitored by the Local Community Developed Committee of Clare County Council. It is implemented by Clare Local Development Company. The programme assists community groups that work with people who are disadvantaged as a result of their social, economic or ethnic circumstances. It also works with individuals who have similar experiences by way of supporting their efforts to gain employment or to further their education or training.

Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provided for the preparation and adoption by the Local Authority of a six year Local Economic and Community Plan. The LECP was formally adopted in early 2016. The economic element of the plan was prepared by the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC). The community element was prepared by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC). The Implementation

of the community element of the plan is overseen by a sub-committee of the LCDC.

Public Participation Network (PPN)

A Memorandum of Understanding and Service Level Agreement were signed between the PPN and Clare County Council and an annual work plan was submitted in early 2016.

The database of registered community and voluntary, social inclusion and environmental groups was transferred to Clare PPN in June 2016.

The 2016 operational costs of the PPN were met from a Department of Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government grant of €50,000 and a contribution from Clare County Council of €30,000.

Age-Friendly Strategy

Clare County Council co-ordinates the delivery of the county's inter-agency Age-Friendly Strategy with eight agencies leading or supporting the delivery of the various actions. Clare County Council is committed to delivering its services in an age-friendly manner and 2016 was the final year of the first strategy. The work of the board is supported by the work of the Older People's Council and by the Implementation Team which is directly responsible for the delivery of the Action Plan.

Community Playground Support Scheme

In 2016, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) provided a Capital Grant Funding Scheme for play and recreation. Clarecastle Playground was allocated funding under this scheme.

Clare County Council approved the development of a community playground support scheme for the period 2017 – 2018 by means of which support is provided for community groups who own and manage their own playgrounds by helping them to meet the cost of insurance, maintenance, audit fees as well as annual health and safety inspections. Approximately 30 community playgrounds will benefit.

Clare Comhairle Na nÓg

Clare Comhairle Na nÓg is part of a national initiative from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Comhairle aims to provide an opportunity for young people, in the 12-18 age range, to identify the issues that are important to them, discuss some of the changes they would like to see and suggest ideas to implement change.

The members participated in a range of activities relating to mental health, relationships and sexuality education during 2016 and Comhairle members presented their achievements to the Cultural, Arts, Community, Recreation and Amenity Services Strategic Policy Committee.

Members of Clare Comhairle na nÓg travelled to the Icelandic Youth Parliament, as part of a Youth Exchange. This gave members a greater understanding of the Icelandic youth democracy structures and how much they have in common with the young people despite cultural differences.

Broadband, Digital and Information Technology Department

Clare County Council's Broadband, Digital and Information Technology Department is responsible for the provision of Information Communications Technology (I.C.T.) services to all employees of Clare County Council. The council's network now covers 15 different locations throughout the county supporting 500 users. These sites include local area offices in Shannon, Kilrush, and Ennistymon where the provision of services locally is facilitated through the use of I.C.T. Services. Services delivered locally include:-

- Motor tax
- Bill payment and enquiry
- The planning enquiry system.

This department also facilitates the use of centrally hosted systems in the government hosting centre in Dublin. These systems include the Human Resources, Superannuation, Payroll System and the Higher Education Grants and Housing Systems.

During 2016, the department has been active in the area of system expansion and rollout, with the majority of the development work required being carried out in-house.

In line with current trends, Clare County Council has committed to utilising social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook in an effort to improve communication and enhance the provision of information to the public. In this regard, resources have been provided for the successful implementation and management of this facility. These services will also be complimented by our existing website www.clarecoco.ie which currently experiences an average of 25,000 hits per month.

This year also saw the appointment of a County Broadband Officer. This appointment is aimed at providing dedicated resources to promote and support the implementation of the National Broadband Plan and progress the rollout of Broadband throughout the county.

Part of the Broadband Officer's role is the development of a Digital Strategy for the county. This strategy will identify the role that broadband can play in the future economic and social development of the county and also the role the Local Authorities can play to facilitate same. The strategy will comprise of a number of short, medium and long term objectives which will be implemented over the lifetime of the strategy (5 years).

Economic Development Directorate

Tourism Department

Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience

In 2016, the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience welcomed 1,427,166 visitors which is a 15% increase on 2015. While the increase in visitors was welcome it posed many challenges in relation to capacity management, which will continue to exist as the demand to visit the Cliffs of Moher increases.

The Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience was voted Ireland's Top Attraction in the inaugural Readers Travel Awards from the Irish Independent Travel magazine. The organisation also received an average 95.5% rating from over 21,000 international customers of C.I.E. Tours and went on to win the Gold Award for Best Visit at the 2016 C.I.E. Excellence Awards. The Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience was also shortlisted in the Green Tourism and Leisure Category of the 2016 Green Awards.

In 2016, the Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience entered its fourth year of participating in the World Host Customer Service Excellence Programme. An average rating of 87.4% was achieved in monthly mystery visitor audits. Survey data showed that the number of visitors to the Cliffs of Moher who spent the night before or the night after their visit or both nights in County Clare had risen from 33% in 2014 and 37% in 2015 to 40% in 2016.

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark

The Burren and Cliffs of Moher UNESCO Global Geopark won the National Geographic World Legacy Award for Destination Leadership, announced at ITB Berlin in March 2016.

The Brothers of Charity and the Geopark were shortlisted for the Aontas Star Award for their work on Universal Access, and the Geopark was also shortlisted for the Irish Tourism Industry Environmental Award for its work on a Code of Practice for Sustainable Tourism.

The Geopark is twinned with the Shilin Geopark in Yunnan Province in China and the Geopark hosted a visit by a delegation led by Liu Huiyuan, Vice Governor of the People's Government of Yunnan Province.

The Korean National Broadcasting Company filmed a feature on the Geopark for Korean National TV which was aired in September. The Geopark also hosted delegations from aspiring Geoparks in Finland, USA and Korea.

The Geopark collaborated with the Burren Ecotourism Network to produce a short promotional video which to date has attracted over 100,000 viewers.

Lough Derg Marketing Group

During 2016, the Lough Derg Marketing Group oversaw a number of projects with a view to raising the profile of Lough Derg as a holiday destination. A 2fm promotion of Lough Derg Lakelands was arranged in April 2016 and Lough Derg featured on the RTE 1 Programme 'Tracks and Trails' in April. A 'Taste of Lough Derg' Programme was launched and continued throughout the Summer.

Upgrade works to the amenity area at Ballycuggeran were completed in early 2016 and these works were funded under the Lough Derg Stimulus Fund. Construction work on the Lough Derg Canoe Trail commenced in September 2016.

Clare Tourism

Clare Tourism continues to promote and market County Clare as a tourism destination with the support of an elected steering group representative of the public and private sector. The new branding of Clare Tourism was heavily promoted throughout 2016, in particular in the lead up to and duration of Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2016. The key characteristics of the brand are strong, engaging, vibrant and true. The key brand qualities are the landscape and location, the people and the music.

Clare Tourism leased a premises in the Abbey Street Car Park for the duration of Fleadh. The premises was used as a Visit Clare Expo and proved to be a great asset in promoting the new brand, giving tourism information about the county and as an exhibition space for tourism providers.

The Clare Tourism Festivals and Events Guide has proven to be a popular marketing tool in recent years. In 2016, Clare Tourism designed and circulated 15,000 copies of the guide and also made a copy available to download on www.clare.ie. The guide was also distributed when representatives from Clare Tourism promoted County Clare at National, European and American consumer and trade shows.

Clare Tourism hosted its Business to Business Tourism Networking Events in February and November of 2016. The event gave tourism providers in Clare the opportunity to network with each other, form tourism collaborations and make new contacts. The event was well attended by over 200 tourism providers.

Throughout 2016, Clare Tourism engaged in print, radio and digital promotional campaigns. All campaigns were designed to create awareness of County Clare as a tourism destination.

The County Tourism website www.clare.ie was maintained and updated throughout 2016 which resulted in monthly visitors reaching up to 35,000 unique users per month.

Community Tourism Diaspora Initiative 2016

Forty four applicants were approved for funding under the Community Tourism Diaspora Initiative which supports festivals and events in the county.

Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) for Economic Development and Enterprise

The Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development and Enterprise has assisted the council in the formation, development and review of policy in all functions of Economic Development and Enterprise.

The SPC met on a scheduled basis during the year (6 meetings held in 2016) to deliver its annual work programme as follows:-

- Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 (areas covered included)
 1. Shannon Airport
 2. UL – Clare Campus

3. Shannon Estuary – Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for Shannon Estuary (SIFP)
 4. Towns and villages
 5. Renewable energy
- Workshop on the “Action Plan for Jobs in the Mid-West Region”
 - Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021
 - “Introduction and Overview of Regional Skills Forum”
 - Local Enterprise Office
 - Community Finance Ireland – “Financing Community & Social Enterprise”
 - Draft Development Contribution Scheme

Local Enterprise Office (LEO)

The Local Enterprise Office is a “First Stop Shop” to provide support and services to assist Clare based enterprises start and grow. The key focus is to maximise opportunities for job creation and retention.

2016 resulted in a significant increase in public interactions with the LEO, driven by a focused campaign to raise awareness of the services provided by LEO Clare using both traditional media and an increased presence on social media. 2016 also saw the introduction of our first “Local Enterprise Week” which was a week dedicated to celebrating and encouraging Clare based enterprises. Over the course of the week, 17 different events took place around the county with 597 people attending.

In what turned out to be an exceptional year, the number of applications for funding more than doubled and the LEO was able to approve funding of €1.03m to 41 different enterprises. This was facilitated by LEO Clare being successful in obtaining additional funding of €245,000 during 2016 to meet demand.

The number and variety of training courses continued to evolve. This year the LEO ran 45 training programmes in which 570 entrepreneurs participated. 17

events covering topics of relevance to enterprises in Clare were held, at which 652 people attended. A further 43 enterprises were assisted by the allocation of a mentor to provide one to one targeted assistance to help the enterprises grow and develop.

In addition to core activities the LEO continues to support and encourage young entrepreneurs through our Student Enterprise Awards for second level students and Irelands Best Young Entrepreneur, aimed at the 18-35 year age bracket. In 2016, nearly 900 students attended our Student Enterprise events. The number of applicants for Irelands Best Young Entrepreneur doubled to 46.

The primary role of the LEO is to facilitate the creation of employment in Clare. Job numbers for 2016 saw a net increase of 173 in employment among enterprises supported by LEO Clare. The outlook for further job growth in 2017 is positive.

LEO Clare continues to work collaboratively with other job creating agencies such as Enterprise Ireland and the Irish Development Authority (IDA). LEO Clare activities form a key component of the Mid-West Regional Action Plan for Jobs.

Planning Department

Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023

The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 was adopted by the Elected Members at a Special Meeting of Clare County Council on the 19th December 2016 and is effective from the 25th January 2017 in accordance with legislation. The plan replaces the existing Clare County Development Plan 2011-2017, the Kilrush Town & Environs Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Ennis & Environs Development Plan 2008-2014. The Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 includes settlement plans and zonings for the settlements of the county and accordingly the existing West Clare Local Area Plan 2012-2018, South Clare Local Area Plan 2012-2018, North Clare Local Area Plan 2011-2017 and East Clare Local Area Plan 2011-2017 were deemed to be revoked with effect from 21st January 2017.

Strategic Integrated Framework Plan for Shannon Estuary (SIFP)

The SIFP is a major inter-jurisdictional land and marine based framework to guide the future development and management of the Shannon Estuary. The marketing of the estuary as a location for investment was prioritised in 2016, with the preparation and circulation of a set of marketing brochures for the Marine Related Industry Strategic Development Locations. In addition, the implementation web-site was launched which contains a wealth of information and resources relating to these sites which will further assist in the marketing and promotion of these sites at an international level. Communication and collaboration has also been established with the Irish Development Authority (IDA) and the Irish Marine Development Office (IMDO) to commence marketing of these sites at an international level through the establishment of linkages and setting up meetings with the appropriate sectors across the industry. A place has been secured at the “Nor-Shipping” international shipping exhibition and conference in 2017. This is one of the most important meeting places for the global maritime industry and will establish the SIFP on the global stage. The Environmental Sub Group completed a bird data review and commenced the process of preparing a tender for undertaking a Bird Usage Survey of the entire Shannon Estuary which will act as a baseline for approximately 20 years. This will be progressed in 2017 and into 2018.

Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for Inis Cealtra (Holy Island)

Following the appointment of Solearth Architecture by Clare County Council, work commenced on the preparation of a draft Visitor Management and Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for Inis Cealtra (Holy Island). Public consultation on the Draft Plan will be undertaken in early 2017.

Town and village renewal projects

- Funding of €380,000.00 was approved in September by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs under the Town and Village Renewal Scheme 2016. Projects were identified and endorsed by the Elected Members of each municipal

district and public realm enhancement works commenced in Clarecastle, Shannon, Kilkee and Scariff and will continue into 2017.

- Recreational funding of €255,625.20 was granted by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for the Shannon Looped Walks Project which will be administered and project managed by the Planning and Enterprise Development Department in co-operation with the Shannon Municipal District Office.
- Clare County Council was in receipt of Limerick Hinterland Funding for elements of the Shannon Green Infrastructure Plan (€85,000) and the Killaloe Town Park (€135,000) both of which will be project managed by the Planning Department. A masterplan was prepared for the Killaloe Town Park (Tobermurragh and Bane Field) and public consultation meetings were attended by local stakeholders. The availability of funding under the Limerick Hinterland Funding Scheme to upgrade the public realm edge along the New Street boundary was set out as was the proposed detail of the upgrades including the road realignment, footpath and planting beds and street trees. There was general endorsement of the master plan by the community. The plan will go forward as a Part 8 planning application in early 2017.
- EU funding of €455,000 was allocated to Clare County Council from the Southern Regional Assembly's Operational Programme 2014-2020 to support sustainable urban development in the Limerick-Shannon Gateway. The funding will be matched by Clare County Council and will go towards a proposed development of Shannon Town Park along with Rineanna Park to deliver a new flagship Shannon Town Park. The proposed works include the creation of a natural water feature, adventure play area and a bandstand/performance area, along with the formal laying of footpaths, lighting and the creation of formal and informal seating areas. The development will also include works to the two no. junctions on Bóthar Linne along the southern perimeter of the site, and the creation of a pedestrian crossing on same. Following public

consultations on the masterplan, the plan will go forward as a Part 8 planning application in early 2017.

- A presentation was given to the Ennis Municipal District Elected Members in September on the CEDRA study for Parnell Street and O'Connell Square, which looked at the potential of Parnell Street as a heritage and cultural quarter and included proposals for covering part or all of the street. It also looked at the redesign of O'Connell Square to enhance its civic use increasing pedestrian comfort and offering a better setting for the monument. The presentation which was delivered by Nicholas de Jong Associates, Urban Design Consultants was commended by the members.

Architectural conservation

During 2016 the Architectural Conservation Officer reported on planning issues pertaining to protected structures, Architectural Conservation Areas, vernacular buildings, infrastructural works of built heritage interest and archaeological issues within the county. 27 no. Section 57 Declarations were issued to permit owners to carry out works to protected structures. Support was given to tidy towns and community groups.

Funding for protected structures and buildings in Architectural Conservation Areas (ACAs) was provided in 2016 by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (DAHRRG) through the Built Heritage Investment Scheme (BHIS). Funding of €50,000 was allocated and approved for grants by the DAHRRG and 6 no. conservation projects were undertaken and completed in County Clare in 2016.

The Records of Protected Structures for County Clare, Ennis Town and Kilrush Town were reviewed, updated and amalgamated into one single Record of Protected Structures which was adopted as part of the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 – Volume 4.

Heritage and biodiversity

The Heritage Council funded three projects under the Clare County Heritage Plan 2011-2017 in 2016 as follows:-

The Tree Design Guide

The Tree Design Guide aims to promote the importance of trees, inspire people to plant more trees, demonstrate where to plant trees and inform on how, which species and when to plant trees. This is an essential guide for anyone designing for, planting and maintaining trees in towns and villages in Clare and provides the advice to enable the planting of the right tree in the right place.

The guide outlines the many benefits of trees and hedgerows for the environment, biodiversity, landscapes, health, communities and the economy, reminding us that trees can be beautiful but also functional. It details important things to consider prior to selecting and planting trees, including how to avoid future problems by planting the right tree in the right place. The guide discusses the many elements to work with in terms of designing with trees and making tree-friendly places.

The freshwater pearl mussel survey of three rivers in west Clare.

The freshwater pearl mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*) is a species of bivalve mollusc that lives in rivers and lakes; it is a larger, freshwater relative of the edible mussel. These animals are highly threatened and recently categorised as critically endangered across Europe. It is also recognised as critically endangered in Ireland. The Cloon River is the only river designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under S.I. 296 of 2009 in County Clare for the freshwater pearl mussel. Recent surveys of the Doonbeg River have found significant populations in some river reaches with potentially suitable habitat in the Cree and Annagheeragh rivers.

Survey of the Cree and Annagheeragh rivers found that there was not a viable population of Fresh Water Pearl Mussel in the two rivers. Further survey took place of the Doonbeg River in order to add to the information on the presence of fresh water pearl mussel in this river. A public information presentation was held by Shelia Downes in Kilrush during Heritage Week 2016, which included an introduction to the species, its habitat requirements, life cycle and long term prospects within County Clare.

Primary School Raptor Workbooks

As top predators, birds of prey, or ‘raptors’ have long been recognised as important indicators of the health of our environment. These top predators command a special interest and respect, particularly with children. In this regard, School Raptor Workbooks, one for students of 1st to 3rd classes and one for 4th to 6th class pupils, were made available to every primary school student in County Clare. Focusing on the amazing birds of prey from the smallest, which is a falcon called the Merlin, to the largest, which is the enormous White-Tailed Eagle, and the endangered Hen Harrier also known as ‘the skydancer’ for which Clare is one of the most important counties. Through animations, ecological information, fun facts and games, the different raptor species are used to introduce and explore topics such as ecosystems, food chains, conservation threats, and the importance of a healthy environment.

The aim of the workbooks is to increase appreciation and awareness of the local environment in a fun and appealing way while fostering a sense of the value of biodiversity and a healthy countryside outside the classroom window.

Implementation of the Shannon Green Infrastructure Plan and Design Guide

The Shannon Green Infrastructure Plan and Design Guide has prepared the way for the funding and development of the Shannon Town Park, Embankment of the Shannon Estuary Looped Walks, the Slí na Mara and the Green Corridor from St Patricks to the Riverside in 2016. In addition the plan has lent support to the local community to seek funding to undertake conservation works at the Shannon Town wetlands. The Shannon Town Park Scheme is central to the layout of Shannon and the project will support physical enhancement of the town. The development will create community space and contribute to social revitalisation and cohesion.

Reading the Landscape Training Course 2016 for Community Groups in Lough Derg

The aim of the ‘Reading the Landscape’ Training course was to enable the participants to identify, examine and record the heritage features of their own

local area through their own dedicated fieldwork and provide them with the techniques to upload the information they gather onto the internet.

Bird Viewing and Information Point (BVIP)

The BVIP at Mountshannon is a public viewing site to see Irish White-tailed Sea Eagles (WTSE) in the wild. It has attracted over 10,000 visitors each year since it was opened in 2014. Despite the failure of the birds to breed in 2016, probably due to disturbance, the BVIP remained open to the public to visit, get information and view the White-tailed Sea Eagles at Mountshannon for the 3rd consecutive year over the summer period.

Heritage Week

Heritage Week has continued to grow every year in Clare and allows for local communities and interested individuals to showcase their rich local heritage. Heritage Week has continued to grow to over 90 events taking place throughout County Clare in 2016.

Taking in charge/unfinished estates

23 residential housing estates were taken in charge by Clare County Council in 2016 with significant progress achieved on the completion of many others, through engagement with all relevant parties. Clare County Council has a register of over 180 residential housing estates in the county that are either unfinished, unsatisfactorily completed and/or not taken in charge.

During 2016, local authorities were requested to make submissions for funding to complete the taking in charge process on private housing estates where developers are no longer active and sufficient funding was no longer available. Arising from the submission made by Clare County Council, funding was received for 12 estates. Work has been completed on 8 of these estates with works to be completed on the remaining estates in 2017. Eight of these estates have been taken in charge while the statutory process for taking in charge of the remaining estates will commence in 2017.

There are currently 185 number of estates on the council's Register of Estates and the council continues to work with bondholders and developers to

progress the completion of estates to the requisite standard for Taking in Charge.

Development management

The number of planning applications received in 2016 was 1,020 - an increase of 13% on the previous year. Determinations were made in relation to 766 planning applications, of which 726 were granted and 40 were refused. 39 applications were appealed to An Bord Pleanála and of these, 16 decisions were reversed by the board.

Pre-planning

374 pre-planning consultations took place during the year to enable applicants discuss the principles of their proposals with council planners.

Planning enforcement

The enforcement section received 143 complaints during 2016. 209 warning letters and 38 enforcement notices were issued. Legal action was commenced on 11 cases.

Development contributions

The sum of €1,882,406 was collected during 2016. Such contributions cover a range of services, including water, sewerage, roads, amenity, community, recreation and car parking. The water services contributions are collected as an agent of Irish Water.

Municipal Districts

There are four municipal districts in the County, which provide a range of local services at local service centres in Ennis, Scariff, Kilrush and Shannon.

Municipal District of Killaloe

The members of the Killaloe Municipal District met regularly during 2016 to consider the provision of services and the improvement of facilities and amenities in their district. The members met with representatives from local community groups throughout the year to discuss issues relevant to their areas. Funding was provided towards a number of important projects under the General Municipal Allocation. Cllr. Tony O'Brien was elected Cathaoirleach at the Annual General Meeting in June 2016 and Cllr. Pat Burke was appointed as Leas Cathaoirleach.

Municipal District of Ennis

Ennis is one of four municipal districts in the County of Clare. Reserved functions are exercised by the elected members having regard to the divisions of such functions as set out in the Local Government Reform Act 2014. The Municipal District of Ennis also includes the surrounding environs of Clarecastle, Quin, Barefield, Kilnamona and Kilmaley. The budget for 2016 for the Municipal District of Ennis was €54,400.

The members of the Municipal District of Ennis provided grant assistance under a Community and Arts Grant Scheme in 2016. The objective of the grant scheme was to encourage and support local organisations and groups active in the cultural, artistic and community development needs of the municipal district. Applicant organisations were based within the Municipal District of Ennis area and the projects submitted for grant assistance had a Municipal District of Ennis focus.

Ahead of the arrival of more than 400,000 people to the Clare County Capital for Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann in August, Clare County Council introduced the Ennis Streetscape Improvement Scheme 2016. Under the Scheme, financial assistance of up to €700 or 50% of the cost of the works was provided to the

owners and occupiers of new and existing commercial premises in the town centre who carried out improvements, external painting in particular, to the front of their properties.

The scheme was designed to encourage business owners to play their part in improving the appearance of their properties and in doing so contribute to an enhanced streetscape in Clare's largest town. The initiative proved successful and was welcomed by businesses in the town. A total of €30,000 was provided to 53 successful applicants under the scheme in 2016.

The municipal district also supported a number of festivals and events which were held at various times throughout the year. A number of annual contributions were also paid to organisations within the municipal district to assist with their own annual budget for the year. All allocations were approved by the 8 members of the Municipal District of Ennis.

Twinning

The Twinning Committee engaged in the following activities during the year.

Delegation from Germany

Clare County Council welcomed a delegation from our twinned counterparts from Langenfeld, Germany for the Ennis Book Festival in March 2016.

A full programme of events was organised which included many of the book festival events in Glór. The group toured Loop Head Lighthouse and the Cliffs of Moher along the West Coast. Most of the visit was recorded by our German friends and a special evening was then held in Langenfeld in June 2016 which showcased tourism at its best in Co. Clare.

Delegation from China

Following on from our Friendship Agreement in 2015 with the Yunnan Province in China, Clare County Council welcomed a delegation from China in May, 2016.

The group was formally welcomed by the Mayor of Clare, Cllr. James Breen and members of Clare County Council in the Council Chamber. They attended a meeting at Shannon International Airport and toured the Shannon

Industrial Zone. They also toured the UNESCO Burren and Cliffs of Moher Geopark as part of their study tour of Co. Clare.

Casual trading

Clare County Council continued its policy of managing casual trading under the Casual Trading Act 1995.

Clare County Council is responsible for casual trading in the following areas:-

- Ennis Market,
- Kilrush,
- Ennistymon Town Centre,
- Doolin Pier,
- Kiladysart Square,
- Kilfenora Square,
- Killaloe Car Park,
- The Square Kilkee,
- Miltown Malbay,
- Shannon and
- Tulla.

In addition, Clare County Council is also responsible for casual trading at numerous events which takes place in the county throughout the year such as the Kilrush Horse Fairs, Willie Clancy Festival, Lisdoonvarna Matchmaking Festival etc.

The Ennis Market continued to see the largest number of casual traders within the county. The market saw an increase in the number of traders from the previous year with a total of 22 traders, trading across Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. There was also an increase in the number of traders trading over the Christmas period.

The newly covered “Ennis Market” building project was completed in 2016 with the official launch in September. This marked the completion of phase 1

of the re-development of the market at Garraunakilla, the site of the Farmer's Market. Other works completed under phase 1 of the Ennis Market Rejuvenation Project included:-

- the upgrading of public infrastructure surrounding the site including parking, roads and footpaths,
- the upgrading of existing public roadways, site lighting, street furniture,
- the demolition of the existing structures, landscaping and planting.

Ennis St. Patrick's Day Parade, 2016 Theme "Clare County of Culture"

More than 6,000 people lined the streets of Ennis for the 2016 St. Patrick's Day Parade. The Grand Marshall, 97 year old Patrick Wall, from Kilmihil, Co. Clare, captured the imagination of the entire Country following on from a media campaign for nominations for the "Oldest Patrick in Clare". This initiative was welcomed on a national level and was particularly poignant given the other centenary celebrations during 2016.

5th Class from Ballyea National School also stole the show with their interpretation of the 1916 Rising as Gaeilge. They went away with the overall prize of €400 for their excellent performance on the day.

The Grand Marshall, Pakie Wall and the Mayor of Ennis, Cllr. Pat Daly, led the parade in a horse-drawn carriage, which was followed by over 50 groups representing the diverse culture of County Clare. The parade continues to grow from strength to strength and, with an ever increasing number of participants, was hugely successful and entertaining, providing a rainbow of colour on what is a great family fun day. Clare Civil Defence assisted with crowd management on the day and provided a presence on the River Fergus to the delight of the spectators.

Ennis landmarks were illuminated in green light in the run-up to St. Patrick's Day as part of the local authority's support of Tourism Ireland's annual 'global greening' initiative. Áras Contae and Chláir and the Daniel O'Connell monument among others joined the Pyramids of Giza, the Christ the Redeemer statue in Rio de Janeiro, Sydney Opera House, the Little Mermaid

in Copenhagen, HMS Belfast in London and dozens of other landmarks and iconic sites around the world in the initiative.

Municipal District of West Clare

The members of the West Clare Municipal District met regularly during 2016 to discuss the provision of services in their district. Statutory meetings took place at various locations throughout the district, including Kilrush, Ennistymon, Kilfenora, Vandeleur Walled Gardens and Kilmihil. During these meetings, the members met with representatives from local businesses and communities to consider issues relevant to these areas. As well as the statutory meetings, a number of special meetings took place throughout the year. The West Clare Municipal District adopted the budgetary plan and a general municipal allocation of €276,700 for 2017 at a special meeting held on 19th October 2016. The Doolin Pier (Parking Places) Bye-Laws 2016 were adopted by the West Clare Municipal District members at their meeting in May. Cllr. Bill Slattery was elected Cathaoirleach at the Annual General Meeting in June 2016 and Cllr. Michael Hillery was appointed as Leas Cathaoirleach.

Municipal District of Shannon

At the annual general meeting of the Municipal District of Shannon in 2016, Cllr. John Crowe was elected as Cathaoirleach, and Cllr. Mike McKee as Leas-Cathaoirleach.

During 2016, the inaugural community grants scheme of the Shannon Municipal District was completed, with 49 sporting, cultural, historical and community groups receiving grant funding.

Recreational funding was granted by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs for the Shannon Looped Walks Project. Funding was also awarded from the Limerick Hinterland Fund for elements of the Shannon Green Infrastructure Plan. EU funding was allocated from the Southern Regional Assembly's Operational Programme 2014 to 2020 and matched by Clare County Council for the development of Shannon Town Park.

Abridged Financial Statement: Year ended 31 December 2016

Income and Expenditure Account	2016	2015
	€m	€m
Income		
State Grants	28.0	25.8
Local Property Tax	3.2	3.5
Goods and services	32.9	30.9
Commercial Rates	41.9	42.3
Income from other Local Authorities	0.1	0.1
Pension Levy	1.3	1.7
Total income	107.4	104.4
Total expenditure	96.6	93.8
Surplus / (deficit) for year before transfers	10.7	10.5
Transfers to / from reserves	(10.0)	(10.0)
Overall surplus / (deficit) for year	.75	0.55
General revenue reserve / (deficit) – opening	(0.3)	(0.8)
General revenue reserve / (deficit) – closing	(0.5)	(0.3)

Balance sheet	2016	2015
	€m	€m
Fixed assets	2,734.3	2.725.4
Work in progress and preliminary expenses	15.5	15.7
Long term debtors	20.8	26.3
Current assets	56.0	55.4
Current liabilities	(36.5)	(42.3)
Net current assets / (liabilities)	19.5	13.0
Creditors (amounts falling due after more than one year)	(88.3)	(95.0)
Net assets	2,701.8	2,685.5
Financed by		
Capitalisation Account	2,734.3	2,725.4
Income work in progress	15.2	15.7
Specific revenue reserve	-	-
General revenue reserve	0.5	(0.3)
Other balances	(48.1)	(55.4)
Total reserves	2,701.8	2,685.5

Representation of Elected Members on Committees

Regional Assembly

Cllrs. P. McMahon, B. Slattery.

Education and Training Board

Cllrs. M. Hillery, G. Keating, A. Norton, C. Crowe, M. Howard

Appointment of Chair Designate for each of the four Strategic Policy Committees

Cllrs. R. Nagle, G. Flynn, P. Hayes, J. Cooney

Local Authority Members Association

Cllr. B. Chambers

Association of Irish Local Government

Cllrs. P. Daly, C. Curtin, J. Crowe, J. Cooney. (Cllrs. P. Daly, C. Curtin and J. Crowe permanent delegates)

Lisdoonvarna Fáilte

Cllr. R. Nagle

Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd.

Cllr. C. Colleran Molloy

Board of Management of Cahercalla Hospital

Cathaoirleach of the day

Board of Management of Kilkee Waterworld

Cllr. G. Keating

Board of Management of Lahinch Seaworld

Cllr. B. Slattery

Rural Resettlement Ireland

Cathaoirleach of the Day

Hunt Museum Trust

Cllr. P. Murphy

Board of Glór Irish Music Centre

Cllrs. M. Howard, G. Flynn

Clare Sports Partnership

Cllrs. G. Keating, T. McNamara

Local Traveller Accommodation Advisory Committee

Cllrs. T. O'Brien, C. Curtin, G. Keating, R. Nagle, M. McKee, A. Norton

Twinning Committee

Cllrs. M. Howard, M. Begley, T. O'Brien, G. Keating, P. McMahon, P.J. Ryan,
M. McKee, P. Hayes, Cathaoirleach of the day

County Clare Road Safety Working Group

Cllrs. T. O'Brien, J. Cooney, P.J. Ryan

County Rural Water Monitoring Committee

Cllrs. P. Burke, M. Hillery, C. Curtin, B. Chambers, P. Murphy

Active Ennis/Kilrush Sports and Leisure Committee

Cllrs. C. Colleran Molloy, M. Howard, J. Breen, I. Lynch

Audit Committee

Cllrs. P. Hayes, G. Keating

Board of Clare Local Development Company

Cllrs. G. Keating, T. McNamara

Local Community Development Committee

Cllrs. J. Flynn, B. Chambers, M. McKee

Regional Health Forum West

Cllrs. T. McNamara, P.J. Ryan, A. Norton, P. Burke

Joint Policing Committee

Cllrs. I. Lynch, M. Hillery, A. O'Callaghan, P. McMahon, P. Burke, J. Crowe, B. Slattery, A. Norton, M. Begley, P.J. Ryan, G. Flynn, P. Daly, M. Howard, P. Murphy

Governing Body of the National University of Ireland

Cllr. P.J. Kelly.

Western Inter County Railway Committee

Cllrs. J. Breen, P. Hayes, P.J. Kelly, J. Crowe, P. Murphy

Standing Orders Sub-Committee

Cllrs. G. Flynn, B. Chambers, C. Curtin, J. Cooney, P. Murphy, C. Colleran Molloy

Seminars and Conferences attended by Clare County Councillors in 2016

- Housing Grants and Schemes, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, 22nd – 24th January 2016 (2 members attended).
- Auditing and Governance in Local Government, Carlingford, Co. Louth, 15th – 17th April 2016 (2 members attended).
- Law and the Environment, UCC, Cork, 21st April 2016 (1 member attended).
- The Construction Bar Association of Ireland Annual Construction Law Conference, Dublin, 22nd April 2016 (1 member attended).
- Local Authority Members Association Spring Seminar, Sligo, 1st – 2nd April 2016 (23 members attended).
- Oireachtas Reform and the Councillor, Edgeworthstown, Co Longford, 24th – 25th June 2016 (1 member attended).
- Entitlements to Health Services, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, 8th -10th July 2016 (5 members attended).
- BREXIT – The Economic Consequence for Ireland, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, 5th - 7th August 2016 (1 member attended).
- Entitlement to Health Service, Carlingford, Co. Louth, 2nd – 4th September 2016 (2 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government 3rd Annual Conference, Buncrana, Co. Donegal, 5th - 6th May 2016 (10 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government, Module 1, Local Authority Safety Services, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, 18th February 2016 (4 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government, Module 1, Local Authority Safety Services, Waterford, 13th February 2016 (16 members attended).

- Local Authority Members Association Autumn Training Seminar, Bantry, Co. Cork, 30th September – 1st October 2016 (12 members attended).
- Meeting the Challenge for Rural Water Supplies, Furbo, Galway, 15th September 2016 (1 member attended).
- Irish Association of Suicidology Conference, Killarney, Co. Kerry, 6th - 7th October 2016 (1 member attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government – Module 2 - Local Authority Cultural Services, Arts Heritage and Library Services – A Guide for Elected Member, Killarney, Co. Kerry, 20th May 2016 (13 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government – Module 2 - Local Authority Cultural Services, Arts Heritage and Library Services – A Guide for Elected Member, Killarney, Co. Kerry, 20th May 2016 (12 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government – Module 2 - Local Authority Cultural Services, Arts Heritage and Library Services – A Guide for Elected Member, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, 14th May 2016 (2 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government, Module 3 – Local Authority Planning – An Update Briefing for Elected Members, Ennistymon, Co. Clare, 14th June 2016 (4 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government, Module 3 – Local Authority Planning – An Update Briefing for Elected Members, Dundalk, Co. Louth, 18th June 2016 (10 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government, Module 4 – Local Authority Housing and the National Action Plan for Housing, A Briefing for Elected Members, Cork, 10th September 2016 (18 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government Autumn Seminar, Gorey, Co Wexford, 13th-14th October 2016 (15 members attended).

- Association of Irish Local Government – Module 5 – National and Local Authority Emergency Planning. Kilkenny, 27th October 2016 (20 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government – Module 5 – National and Local Authority Emergency Planning. Kilkenny, 27th October 2016 (20 members attended).
- A Practical Guide to Budget 2017, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, 2nd - 4th December 2016 (1 member attended).
- Irish Council for Social Housing – Partnership Working for Housing Associations and Local Authority Elected Members, Dublin, 16th November 2016 (2 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government, Module 6, Regional Assemblies and their role with Local Authorities and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016, Wexford, 15th November 2016 (3 members attended).
- Association of Irish Local Government, Module 6, Regional Assemblies and their role with Local Authorities and the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016, Dublin, 19th November 2016 (8 members attended).
- Centenary Talks, Galway, 12th November 2016 (1 member attended).
- Western Inter Rail Committee Meeting, Tubbercurry, Sligo, 8th September 2016 (1 member attended).
- Comhairle na nÓg, Dublin, 24th November 2016 (1 member attended).
- Old Place, New Space Unlocking the Building Environment for the Future, Cork, 12th February 2016 (1 member attended).
- Local Authorities Building Stronger Communities, Dublin, 25th February 2016 (1 member attended).
- Scoil Samhraidh an Phiarsaigh, Ros Muc, Co. na Gaillimhe, 28th - 30th July 2016.
- EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, 5th - 7th February 2016.

Contact information/telephone numbers

Clare County Council, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare

Telephone: (065) 6821616, Fax: (065) 6828233, email: info@clarecoco.ie,
website, www.clarecoco.ie

Hours of business: 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday to Friday

Note: Planning Department and Cash Office close to the public at 4:00 p.m.

Emergency contact number: (087) 4169496 (outside office hours only)

Motor Tax, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis

Hours of business: 9:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, telephone: (065) 6844661.

Clare County Museum

Tel: (065) 6823382, email: ClareMuseum@clarecoco.ie

Active Ennis Sports and Leisure Facilities

Tel: (065) 6821604, fax: (065) 6823655

Glór Music Centre

Tel: (065) 6845370

Direct dial in facility

To facilitate our callers all sections have a direct dial in facility. Individual sections can be contacted by dialling the following numbers:

- Archives and Records Management, (065) 6846538
- Arts Office, (065) 6846267
- Broadband, Digital and IT Department, (065) 6846377
- Central Cash Office, (065) 6846807
- Civil Defence, (065) 6822199
- Corporate Services Department, (065) 6846209

- Environment Department, (065) 6846331, fax (065) 6846444
- Environment anti-litter freephone, 1800 606706
- Finance Department, (general queries), (065) 6846308
- Fire and Emergency Services Department, (065) 6846410
- Freedom of Information, (065) 6846405
- Group Schemes, (065) 6866115
- Higher Education Grants, (065) 6846320
- Housing Department, (065) 6846334
- Human Resources Department, (065) 6846415
- Local Enterprise Office Clare, (065) 6846230
- Partnership Facilitator, (065) 6846435
- Planning Department, (065) 6846232
- Register of Electors, (065) 6846363
- Revenue Department, (065) 6846530
- Roads and Transportation Department, (065) 6846312
- Road Design, (065) 6846479
- Rural and Community Department, (065) 6846222
- Tourism Department, (065) 6846429
- Veterinary Services Department, (065) 6846560
- Water Safety, (065) 6846470
- Water Services Department, (065) 6866116

Municipal district offices

Ennis, (065) 6866133

Killaloe, (061) 640815

Shannon, (061) 362319

West Clare, (065) 7072283/9054310

Library branches

Corofin, (065) 6837219

Cranny, (065) 6832070

De Valera Branch Library, (065) 6846353

Ennis Library Headquarters, (065) 6846350, website www.clarelibrary.ie

Ennistymon, (065) 7071245

Kildysart, (065) 6832113

Kilkee Sweeney Memorial Library, (065) 9056034

Kilmihil, (065) 9050528

Killaloe, (061) 376062, Fax (065) 376062

Kilrush, (065) 9051504

Lisdoonvarna, (065) 7074029

Local Studies Centre, Ennis, (065) 6846271

Miltown Malbay, (065) 7084822

Newmarket-on-Fergus, (061) 368411

Scariff, (061) 922893

Shannon, (061) 364266

Sixmilebridge, (061) 369678

Tulla, (065) 6835919

Other useful numbers

Central Waste Management Facility, Ballyduffbeg, Inagh, (065) 6836960

Scariff Recycling Centre and Transfer Station, (061) 921735

Shannon Recycling Centre, (061) 364483

Lisdeen Recycling Centre and Transfer Station, (065) 9060175

Ennis Recycling Centre (065) 6893705