

REPORT OF HEAD OF FINANCE ON THE 2008 DRAFT BUDGET

Introduction

The following report focuses on the details for each programme group included in Draft Budget for the year ending 31st December, 2008.

The following tables set out on a programme basis the draft Budgeted expenditure and income as compared with the adopted 2007 Budget and summarises the variances.

Table 1 – Expenditure

Programme	Adopted 2007	Budgeted 2008	Variance
	€	€	€
Housing & Building	7,073,276	7,778,580	705,304
Road Transport & Safety	24,583,836	26,305,390	1,721,554
Water Supply & Sewerage	9,131,973	10,223,096	1,091,123
Development Incentives & Controls	4,714,301	3,615,515	(1,098,786)
Environmental Protection	9,908,347	10,756,395	848,048
Recreation & Amenity	2,546,187	2,910,163	363,976
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	5,981,929	6,053,444	71,515
Miscellaneous	4,202,541	4,264,644	62,103
TOTAL	68,142,390	71,907,227	3,764,837

Table 2 – Income

Programme	Adopted	Budgeted	Variance
	2007	2008	
	€	€	€
Housing & Building	5,264,961	6,136,650	871,689
Road Transport & Safety	15,781,413	17,216,252	1,434,839
Water Supply & Sewerage	4,450,130	5,190,411	740,281
Development Incentives & Controls	2,738,763	1,430,963	(1,307,800)
Environmental Protection	4,537,361	4,617,191	79,830
Recreation & Amenity	288,259	338,222	49,963
Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	4,986,945	5,055,628	68,683
Miscellaneous	2,093,122	2,228,481	135,359
TOTAL	40,140,954	42,213,798	2,072,844

The net increased Revenue Expenditure requirement in the sum of can be analysed as follows:

Net Estimated increase in Revenue income	€ 2,072,844
Increase in Local Government Fund Allocation	€ 1,064,654
Increase in Gross Rates Income	€ 486,109
Increase in Town Demands	€ 141,230
Total	<u>€ 3,764,837</u>

At the October monthly meeting Members approved proposals to re-allocate the contingency sum of €250,000 to Water and Wastewater Services €200,000 and Roads €50,000.

The following graphical representations assist in highlighting the increased expenditure requirement over the coming year and the various sources of funding for the total estimated expenditure in the sum of €71.91 million.

Following that is a detailed analysis of the Draft Budget on a programme basis

Analysis by Programme Group

PROGRAMME 1: HOUSING AND BUILDING

Estimated Expenditure: €7,778,580

Estimated Income: €6,136,650

Our Goal: *To ensure that all persons in the County have affordable accommodation suitable to their social and personal needs.*

Local Authority Housing

A sum of €360,000 is included in the 2008 draft budget for Housing Maintenance, and a sum of €250,000 is being provided for pre-letting repairs to vacant houses.

Central Heating/Remedial Works

The Council will be aware that the Minister for the Environment, Heritage & Local Government introduced a funding programme for the provision of central heating, insulation and smoke alarms in Local Authority rented dwellings. An exchequer grant of €5,600 or up to 80% of the cost, whichever is the lesser, is available.

The Council has completed work on installing central heating, smoke alarms and insulation in all 2-bedroom houses. Work has now commenced on installing heating etc. in family type houses, and this will be completed by the end of 2008. The Council will therefore achieve its objective to complete the central heating programme as part of the Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004 – 2008.

As part of the Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing 2004 – 2008, the Council made an application for remedial works to 8 estates and 40 pre-1980 rural houses. Work is completed on the 40 house scheme, and work has commenced in three of the eight housing estates. The other five estates are at pre tender/tender stage. The remedial works include the replacement of windows/doors, provision of central heating plus insulation, fascia, soffit, chute replacement, and physical environment works – roads, driveways, boundary fencing.

Rental Accommodation Scheme

The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) commenced in May 2006 in North Tipperary on foot of a Government decision to transfer to Housing Authorities the responsibility for the long term housing needs of Supplementary Welfare Allowance Rent Supplement recipients. The Rental Accommodation Scheme is a new initiative introduced to cater for the accommodation needs of persons who are in receipt of rent supplement, starting with those in receipt of supplement for 18 months or more. The scheme will provide an additional source of good quality rented accommodation for eligible persons to enhance the response of local authorities to meeting long-term housing need.

The main features of the scheme are that local authorities will enter into contractual arrangements with accommodation providers to secure the medium to long-term availability of private rented accommodation for RAS. The property must meet minimum standards for private rented accommodation and the tenancy must be registered with the Private Rented Tenancies Board (PRTB).

A RAS Implementation Plan has been completed and approved by the DoEHLG. By the end of 2007, 95 tenants in Private Rented accommodation and 28 tenants in the Voluntary Housing Sector will be transferred to RAS. It is estimated that a further 60 Private tenants and 24 Voluntary Housing tenants will be transferred in 2008.

Housing Rents

Rental income in 2008 is estimated to be € 1,900,000, including rents on houses purchased under the Shared Ownership Scheme.

Tenant's rents presently range from 8% to 13% of assessable household income. Rents of houses let on differential rent are calculated as a proportion of the assessable household income in accordance with a graded scale, which includes allowances for children together with a contribution from any subsidiary earners in the household.

Shared Ownership

This Scheme enables people who cannot afford full ownership of a house to share the ownership initially with the Housing Authority. Income eligibility is as follows:

Single Income Household	Where Gross Income does not exceed €40,000 in tax year immediately preceding date of application
Two Income Household	2½ times the principal earner's income plus the subsidiary earner's income must not exceed €100,000 in the tax year immediately preceding date of application

23 applications for the Shared Ownership Scheme were received to 31st October 2007, and 11 applicants were issued with provisional approval to select a house on the open market. Two loans have been advanced in 2007 for the purchase/construction of houses on a shared ownership basis, with a further two applications at an advanced stage.

Affordable Housing Scheme

The 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme is aimed at helping lower income households to purchase their own homes. Under the scheme, Local Authorities can provide new houses on land owned or acquired by them. Affordable Housing is also acquired from developers in accordance with Part V of the Planning & Development Act, 2000, as amended. The houses are then offered for sale to eligible purchasers at cost price, therefore at a significant discount from market value.

The Council is exploring the possibility of providing houses under the 1999 Affordable Housing Scheme on Council land in Templetuohy, Puckane and Borrisoleigh. Following the adoption of the County Development Plan, Affordable Housing under Part V will become available at a number of locations around the county. To date, the Council has secured 10 affordable houses at Tullaskeagh, Roscrea, 7 houses at Ayr Hill, Roscrea, 2 houses at Lisdaleen, Templetuohy, 8 houses and 4 apartments at Borrisokane and 1 house at Cloughjordan. Negotiations are ongoing for the acquisition of further houses under Part V agreements.

Eligible Persons

- Tenants and Tenant Purchasers of local authority houses who intend to surrender their existing houses to the Authority.
- Person in need of housing who satisfy the income test as outlined previously for Shared Ownership loans.

- Intending applicants should be first time buyers and should be in need of accommodation. Their income would not be adequate to meet the repayments on a mortgage for the purchase of a house because the repayments would exceed 35% of annual income, net of income tax and PRSI.

Tenant Purchase Scheme

Up to 31st October 2007 a total of 18 applications have been received under the Tenant Purchase Scheme, and 17 sales have been completed.

From 1st January, 2007, local authorities have been given direct control over their Internal Capital Receipts generated from the sale of local authority dwellings and may use such funds for planned maintenance and capital improvement works to housing stock.

Assistance to Persons Housing Themselves

At 31st October, 2007 the Council has advanced 5 Tenant Purchase/Annuity Loans totalling €389,040. The level of loan redemptions remains high as borrowers opt to take advantage of lower interest rates available from commercial lending agencies.

Details of Redemptions in the current year is as follows: (Jan/Nov. 2007)

Loan Type	No. Redeemed	Value
Annuity/SDA	52	€205,581
Reconstruction	18	€4,121
Shared Ownership	12	*€1,214,597
HFA	1	€1,446
Caravan	1	€866

* This figure includes the purchase of the Council's equity.

Local Authority current interest rates are:

5.60% Variable - Annuity/Tenant Purchase/Shared Ownership/Affordable (including Mortgage Protection Insurance .598%)

5.00% Variable - Reconstruction

5.85% Fixed for 5 years - Tenant Purchase and Affordable only

Essential Repair Grant Works/Reconstruction Loans

The expenditure provision for the Essential Repair Grant Scheme was increased to €380,000 in 2007. 46 applications have been received to date in 2007, and 42 grants were approved to November 2007 mainly in respect of applications received in 2005 and 2006.

Reconstruction loans are available to eligible applicants for necessary house improvement works over a 5, 10 or 15 year term.

Disabled Persons Grant Scheme

This Council has received 249 applications for the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme in the period up to 31st October, 2007.

Approximately €1,450,000 has been paid out on foot of claims from approved applicants to date, in respect of 170 applications, for private houses. As outlined in the County Manager's report there are a substantial number on applications at various stages of processing.

It is proposed to include a figure of €81,606 in the 2008 Draft Budget to meet this Council's one third contribution under this scheme. This would require a Capital Allocation of €1,163,212 by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in respect of 2008.

In addition to this provision Grant work in respect of Local Authority houses is being funded from Internal Capital Receipts. It is estimated that up to €300,000 will be spent on the County Council's local authority houses in 2008.

New Housing Grant Schemes

As outlined in the County Manager's Report The Housing (Adaptation Grants for People with a Disability and Older People), Regulations 2007, became effective from 1st November 2007 and are as follows:

- a **Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for People with a Disability** which will assist with the provision/adaptation of accommodation to meet the needs of people with a disability;
- a **Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme**, which will assist with adaptations to address mobility problems primarily associated with ageing;

- a **Scheme of Housing Aid for Older People**, which will provide targeted support to improve poor conditions in the existing housing of older people.

The regulations provide for the introduction of means testing of applicants; indexation of grant levels and income bands; increase in the recoupment rate to local authorities to 80% in respect of individual grants and streamlining of arrangements in respect of Occupational Therapy assessment.

Activity under the new schemes in 2008 will be dependant on the availability of resources, as existing commitments under the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme and Essential Repairs Grant Scheme will have to be met.

Voluntary Housing Schemes

Expenditure under this heading is funded under the Capital Assistance Scheme and the Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme, allowing approved voluntary bodies to satisfy a very important social housing need and contribute in a very worthwhile way to the physical and social development of the rural county. The Capital Assistance Scheme is primarily geared towards small type accommodation and certain projects for the mentally handicapped.

Voluntary Housing Schemes have been provided in Roscrea, Kilcommon, Upperchurch, Nenagh, Templemore, Holycross, Drombane, Cloughjordan and Moyne.

Details of schemes approved/under consideration are as follows:

Location	Funding Source	Voluntary Body	No. of Units	Present Position
Brittas, Thurles	Capital Assistance	Thurles Lions Trust	14	Completed
Tyone, Nenagh	Capital Loan & Subsidy Scheme	Cluid Housing Association	31	Due for completion in 2008
Ballygraique Road, Nenagh	Capital Loan & Subsidy Scheme	Cluid Housing Association	76	Under construction
Whitepark, Roscrea	Capital Loan & Subsidy Scheme	Respond	42	Due to commence

Location	Funding Source	Voluntary Body	No. of Units	Present Position
Mitchell St., Thurles	Capital Assistance	Arlington Novas Ireland Ltd.	5	Due to commence
Stradavoher Road, Thurles	Capital Assistance	Newgrove Housing Association	11	Awaiting Post Tender approval
Streame, Limerick Rd., Nenagh	Capital Assistance	Sue Ryder Foundation (Ireland) Ltd.	50	At Preliminary Stage

Self Help Scheme

A sum of €40,000 was included in the 2007 budget for the purpose of making grants to Council tenants in respect of certain external and internal improvement works to their houses, and 40 applications have been received in the current year. A sum of €25,000 is proposed in the 2008 Draft Budget for the continuance of the scheme.

Action Plan for Homelessness

A new three year Action Plan on Homelessness for the period 2007 – 2009 was approved by the Homeless Forum and Housing SPC in December, 2006. The 2007 – 2009 Plan was formally adopted by the Council at its March, 2007 meeting. The plan has identified the need for emergency accommodation in North Tipperary.

Current proposals should see the delivery of emergency accommodation units in Nenagh and Thurles in 2008. Provision is being made in the 2008 budget in respect of Management costs (90% recoupable from DoEHLG) under Section 10 of the Housing Act, 1988. The Homeless Persons Centre continues to hold outreach clinics weekly in Nenagh, Roscrea and Thurles. To the end of October 2007, 129 persons/families presented at the Homeless Centre/Outreach Clinics for assistance from the Community Welfare Officer and/or Re-Settlement Worker.

Housing Management Initiative/Tenant Participation/Estate Management

Work in the area of Estate Management and Tenant Participation continued in 2007. Funding was approved by DoEHLG in 2007 for the appointment of (i) Tenant Liaison Officer (1 year), and (ii) Community Development Worker for Roscrea (2 years). Following on from these appointments a number of training and environmental programmes were run in one community in Roscrea. Marked progress has been noted and further programmes are planned for 2008. A comprehensive analysis was done of the current situation within two targeted communities. The findings are outlined in a detailed report which is being examined at present by the inter-agency group Community Action Partnership Roscrea (CAPR).

Residents committees are active in a number of areas and are availing of grant assistance from the Council's 'Tenant Participation' funding for various projects.

New communities were formed in Roscrea, Cloughjordan, Toomevara and Rearcross during 2007, with the appointment of tenants to new estates in these areas. Pre-Tenancy training was delivered to a total of forty three tenants during the year.

HOUSING CAPITAL WORKS

The Housing Capital Works Programme comprises: -

- (a) Construction/acquisition/refurbishment of houses.
- (b) Improvements Works in Lieu of re-housing.
- (c) Extensions to rented stock.
- (d) Traveller Accommodation.
- (e) Housing Land Bank.
- (f) Acquisition of houses under Part V agreements.

The above schemes are funded by a combination of Exchequer Grants and proceeds from the sale of houses under the Tenant Purchase Scheme; the Council receives an annual financial allocation from the Department for that purpose. The Land-Bank is funded initially from borrowing and the cost including holding charges is clawed-back when houses are built on the land.

HOUSE CONSTRUCTION:

The Council's Action Plan for Social and Affordable Housing was approved by the DoEHLG for the five-year period 2004-2008. An estimated figure of 40 housing 'starts' will be achieved in 2007 and the estimated number of house completions will be 50.

The Council is at an advanced planning stage in respect of sites located at Borrisoleigh, Puckane, Borrisokane and Rathcabbin.

TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION:

The Council has adopted a four-year Traveller Accommodation Plan for the period 2005-2008 with the objective of meeting the accommodation needs of the Traveller community in the county. Accommodation has been provided for four families to date in 2007. A further 3 families will be accommodated in 2007 in a 3 unit Group Housing Scheme at Templemore which is near completion. A further Group Housing Scheme at Cabra, Thurles, is progressing to Part 8 Planning in December, 2007.

LAND BANK:

In order to provide for the short and medium-term housing needs and to implement the Construction Programme, the Council has procured a substantial Land Bank. Over the past number of years, a total of c.21.05 hectares (c.52 acres) of serviced land have been purchased costing c.€3.3m. The Council raised a loan from the HFA to fund this purchase. Further land will be acquired as necessary, and the Council is currently in negotiations to acquire land under Part V of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as detailed in the Housing Strategy.

CAPITAL ALLOCATIONS:

The annual financial allocation to fund the Construction, Works in Lieu, Extension and Traveller Programme has been substantial in recent years to reflect the increased activity in the programmes and the increases in building and land costs. Hereunder are the allocations for the past three years: -

Year	Amount (Million €)
2005	7.5
2006	9.25
2007	6.5

Details of and progress on all schemes can be found in the Housing Quarterly Reports considered at Meetings of the Council.

PROGRAMME 2: ROAD TRANSPORT AND SAFETY

Estimated Expenditure: €26,305,390

Estimated Income: €17,216,252

Capital Account

2007 Road Grant Allocations

National Primary Improvements:

Nenagh Bypass to Toomevara	€ 800,000
2006 Retentions on Ballywilliam to Carrigatoher	€ 20,000
NP Safety Measures – Junction at Pintown Roscrea	€ 20,000
Total National Primary:	€ 840,000

National Secondary Improvements:

Roscrea ByPass	€ 45,000
Horse & Jockey/Thurles Bypass Feasibility Study	€ 166,000

National Secondary Pavement & Minor Improvements

N52 Congar – Ballylusky	€ 600,000
N52 - Ballingarry	€ 385,000
N52 Grange – Ardcroney	€ 750,000
N52 Pavement & Route Evaluation	€ 50,000
N62 Knockroe to Pouldine	€ 560,000
N62 Templemore – Footpaths	€ 150,000
N62 Lismackin-Behaglass & Gortagoona	€ 650,000
N62 Brittas	€ 50,000

National Secondary Safety Measures (Additional allocation)

RT N62 Forge Cross Junction	€ 60,000
RT N62 Junction Improvement at Knockroe, Templemore	€ 60,000

RT N62 Lining & Signing of Bends Templemore – Thurles	€ 20,000
--	----------

National Secondary Bridge Allocation

N62 Bridge Widenings	€ 500,000
----------------------	-----------

National Secondary Safety Measures

N62 RSRM Pedestrian Crossing Templemore Road, Thurles	€ 25,000
--	----------

N65 HCRM Junction at Portland, Portumna	€ 30,000
---	----------

N75 Thurles Traffic Calming (Dublin Road)	€ 400,000
---	-----------

Total National Secondary:	€4,501,000
----------------------------------	-------------------

<i>Overall Total – NRA Allocations</i>	€5,341,000
---	-------------------

NATIONAL PRIMARY ROADS.

A substantial programme of pavement strengthening of National Primary and Secondary Roads was undertaken in North Tipperary in 2007. This programme has resulted in major improvements in driving quality and safety on our National Roads. The major scheme undertaken in this programme was the Nenagh Bypass to Toomevara Pavement Improvement Scheme at a cost of over €900,000. The N7 overlay is now completed from the Limerick Border to near Toomevara (35 km).

NATIONAL SECONDARY ROADS.

Strengthening and overlay works were carried out at the following locations:-

- ❖ N52 At Ballingarry Village, Grange - Ardcroney
- ❖ N62 Knockroe to Pouldine, Templemore – Footpaths, Lismackin
- Behaglass and Brittas

A series of hazardous narrow skew bridges on the N62 were widened and the road realigned at a cost of over €500,000.

A contribution of €150,000 was received from the NRA towards footpaths in Templemore. This money was used in conjunction with the Shannon Broadband Footpath Restoration Works, to relay long sections of footpaths in the town.

The N75 Thurles Traffic Calming Scheme (Dublin Road) was completed from the Suir Bridge to the junction of Kickham and Mitchell Street.

NDP ROUTES

The present position on the NDP routes is as follows:-

N7 Nenagh to Limerick Scheme

Construction is now under way for over twelve months with contractors Bothar Hibernian, and is on programme for completion by July 2009.

N7 Nenagh to Castletown Scheme

Contracts for the main construction works are due to be signed before the end of 2007 with a start in early 2008 a completion date towards the end of 2010.

N8 Cullahill to Cashel

This Scheme is also twelve months into construction with Roadbridge/Sisk, and is due to be completed in July 2009.

Revenue Account

2007 Revenue Grant Allocations were as follows:

National Primary Maintenance	€ 243,986
National Primary Surface Dressing	€ 157,337
National Secondary Maintenance	€ 311,948
National Secondary Surface Dressing	€ 240,022
Winter Maintenance	€ 177,000
Bridge Maintenance	€ 80,000
National Route Lighting	€ 133,000
Restoration Maintenance (incl. CARS)	€ 2,212,000
Restoration Improvement (incl. CARS)	€ 6,355,000
Discretionary Maintenance	€ 807,000
EU Co-Financed Grants	€ 1,850,000
Discretionary Improvement	€ 683,000
Clár/DOE Funding	€ 119,276
Local Improvement Schemes	€ 375,456
Clar LIS	€ 65,434
Low cost safety schemes	€ 137,500
Non National Training Programme	€ 46,200
Regional Roads Signposting	€ 250,000
	€4,244,159

As a result of the Multi Annual Road Restoration Programmes from 1996 to 2007, a major improvement on the surface condition and driving quality is evident on the County's Regional and Local Roads. A new 3 year programme for the period 2008 to 2010 was drawn up in consultation with the Area Committees.

The following EU Co-Financed schemes were undertaken in 2007:-

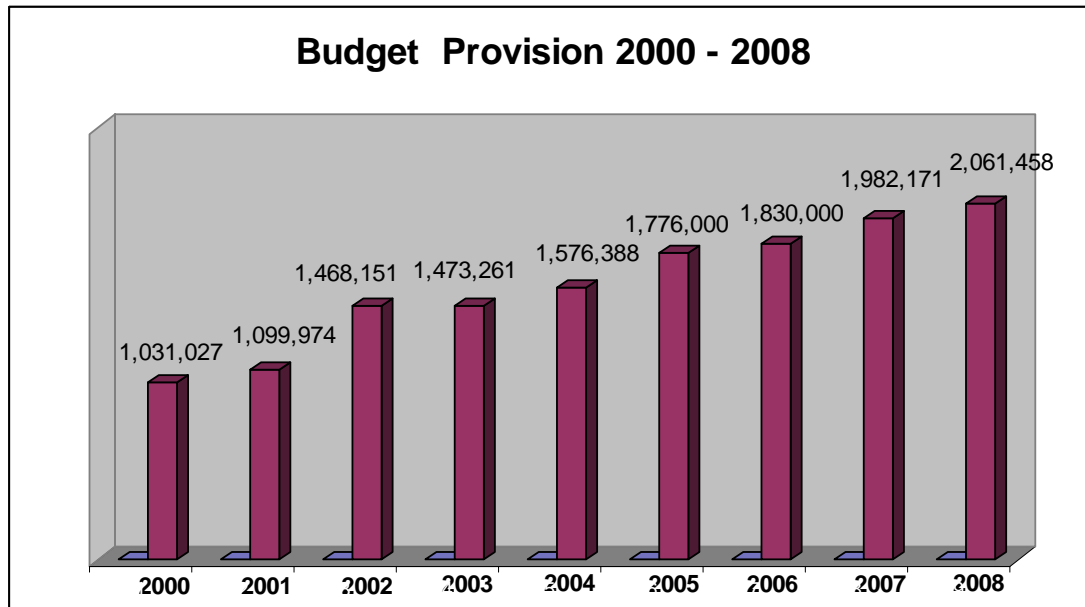
• R489 Birr/Portumna – (at Ballincor)	€ 20,000
• R494 Hogan's Pass Land Acquisition	€ 1,963
• R502 Templemore/Templetuohy Road	€216,472
• R 98/N62 Link Road, Thurles	€20,328
• R498 Nenagh/Thurles (Currahaha)	€1,580,619
• R503 Thurles/Limerick (Newport Co. Bounds)	<u>€10,618</u>
	€1,850,000

Specific Improvement Grant Proposals 2008

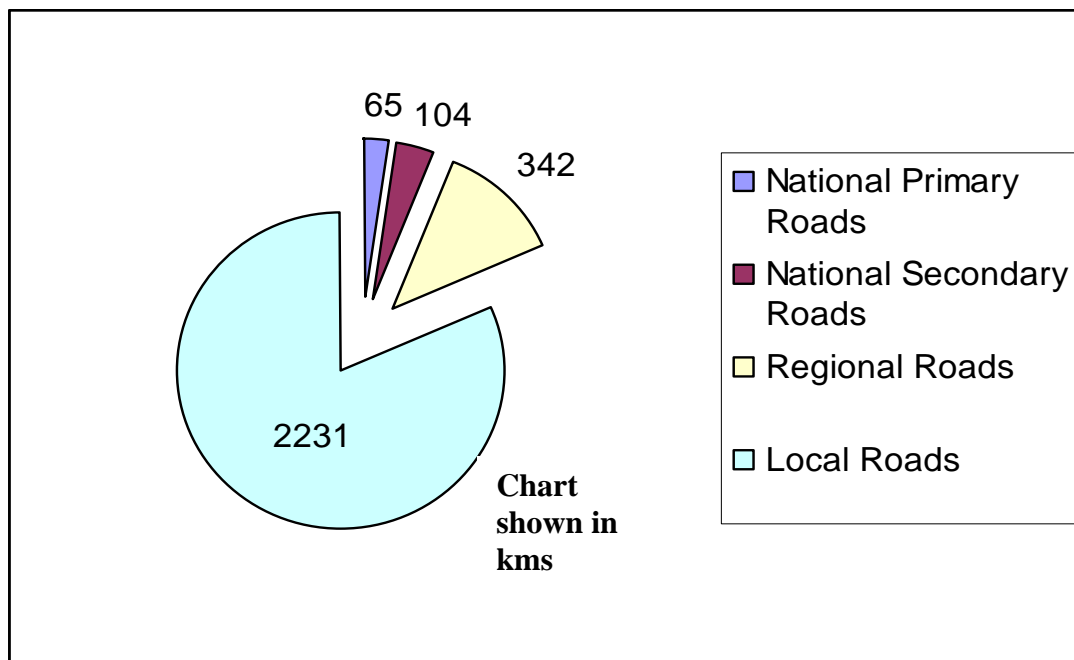
1. R498/N62 Link Road, Thurles	€1,030,000
2. R497 Nenagh/Dolla/Silvermines (at Benedine)	€850,000
3. R494 Hogan's Pass	€60,000
4. R503 Thurles/Limerick (Newport to County Boundary)	€60,000
5. R489 Birr/Portumna (at Ballincor)	<u>€400,000</u>
Total:	€2,400,000

The own resource provision for regional and local roads is €2,061,458 in 2008, an increase of 4% over 2007.

The Council's provision from own resources to Local/Regional Road Maintenance for the years 2000 to 2008 is set out in the following graph.



The public road system in the County comprises of the following:



Pay Parking in Roscrea Town

Pay Parking was introduced in the town of Roscrea with effect from 1st January 2007 and is working well to date.

Roscrea Weight Restriction

A new 7.5 tonne HGV weight restriction was put in place in Roscrea with effect from December 1st.

Regional Road Studding Programme.

The Programme for installing road studs (cats eyes) on all the Regional Roads continued in 2007. The Contract has just been awarded for the work covering 145 km of roadway, in respect of the following roads:-

- R438 Borrisokane – Athlone
- R503 Thurles – Newport
- R494 Nenagh – Ballina (Portroe).
- R499 Toomevara – Silvermines – Bushfield.
- R496 N7 – Ballina (Dunally Line).
- R504 Newport – Birdhill
- R502 Templemore – Templetuohy.
- R660 Thurles – Holycross.
- R661 Holycross – Dundrum.

Public Lighting Upgrade Scheme.

A total of €294,000 was spent on replacing and upgrading public lighting in 2007 in the county. This consisted of replacing the last of the mercury lights in the county and upgrading existing yellow (sox) lights to white (son) lights as follows:-

(1)	Roscrea.....	€60,000
(2)	Nenagh	€75,000
(3)	Templemore	€12,000
(4)	Borrisokane	€48,000
(5)	Thurles	€9,000
	Total:	<u>€294,000</u>

In addition, a further €105,000 of further upgrading work has been agreed and will be carried out early in the new year.

Motor Tax

The number availing of the facility to renew Motor Tax on-line is now approximately 32% of those eligible to tax online. There were 17,802 online transactions in respect of vehicles registered in North Tipperary in the period to the end of October 2007. Due to the bouyancy in the economy however, transactions carried out in the Motor Taxation office are still higher than prior to the introduction of Online taxing.

Reminders for renewal of Driving Licences are now being issued in respect of full licences which fall due for renewal each month.

New Learner Permits replaced Provisional Licences on 30th October, 2007

Motor tax receipts for 2006 were €12,528,311, and to the 31st October, 2007 were €1,197,706.

PROGRAMME GROUP 3: WATER SERVICES

Estimated Expenditure: €10,223,096

Estimated Income: €5,190,411

Water Services requirements throughout the county continue to expand. Matching capacity to growth in demand, due to high levels of economic activity, continues to be a major challenge. Four new waste water treatment plants will be operating in 2008 and the upgrade of Newport Regional Water Supply and the pipeline contract for Thurles Regional Water Supply will be underway. Other projects in the Town Council areas include, refurbishment of Thurles waste water treatment plant which is underway at present, and a new waste water treatment plant for Templemore which is due to commence.

The focus on drinking water quality is ensuring positive improvements in quality for both the Public Supplies and the Group Water Schemes. In 2008, additional routine monitoring will take place for parameters additional to the requirements of the Drinking Water Regulations, 2007. This is part of increased vigilance for cryptosporidium.

There will also be increased regulatory requirements for waste water treatment plants in 2008. All such plants are subject to EPA licensing requirements in a roll out programme over the next few years.

Operational costs of Water Services continue to increase to ensure service delivery and to comply with the changing regulatory requirements.

The Estimate for 2008 takes into account costs associated with:

- Operating costs for 4 additional waste water treatment plants
- Water Conservation management for Roscrea and Newport water supply
- Licence applications to EPA for waste water treatment plants
- Increasing demand on both drinking water supplies and wastewater treatment
- The large development in the group water supply scheme area where connected to Council supply
- Phosphate removal from waste water
- Disposal/reuse of water treatment and waste water treatment sludges
- Sampling of drinking water supplies to comply with the Drinking Water Regulations, 2007 and other risk issues

- Sampling of the waste water treatment plants to comply with relevant environmental legislation.

It should be noted that the Draft Budget 2008 does not include provision for capital replacement.

Water Services maintenance has a high element of “fixed costs” in the form of power, chemicals and payroll and the degree of flexibility in expenditure is limited.

It is proposed to continue to operate a Section 85 agency agreement with the three Town Councils whereby they will operate the Water Services on behalf of the County Councils.

Public Water Supply Schemes:

The estimated operational cost of €3,577,314 includes provision for a number of new Group Schemes that have been taken in charge, and additional water quality monitoring. Nenagh Town Council contributes 55% of the running costs of the Nenagh Regional Water Supply Scheme in respect of water supplied to the Nenagh urban area.

Public Wastewater Schemes:

The Seven Villages Project is currently at commissioning stage. Four of the villages are in North Tipperary (Terryglass, Clonmore, Upperchurch and Loughmore) and the others are in South Tipperary. These schemes are design, build and operate. Full operating costs will arise for all of 2008. These costs have been included in the Draft Budget for 2008.

The Waste Water Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations, 2007 set out a programme for local authorities to apply to the EPA for discharge licences with respect to discharges from local authority plants. This is an expensive process and while there is clarity about licence fees, it is not yet clear if the new licences will require local authorities to incur additional operational costs.

The total provision for the maintenance of wastewater schemes is increased to €2,387,411.

Non-Domestic Marginal Capital Cost:

Capital schemes are funded by the Water Services Investment Programme of the DoEHLG and local contribution of non-domestic marginal capital cost. As capital schemes come to completion the non-domestic marginal capital costs for the schemes are financed by the Council in accordance with DoEHLG criteria. The burden on the Council for each scheme depends on a wide range of variables but is currently at least 25% of the full capital cost. The local contribution is funded from development levies. However, the scale of investment required is expected to exceed that which is available from development levies. This issue is included in the County Manager's report.

Health & Safety

The improvement of water and wastewater treatment plants to comply with current Health & Safety requirements will continue to be funded in 2008 from Capital. Many of the existing facilities require immediate improvement with regard to Health and Safety. A sum of €350,000 is set aside for water and waste water facilities in the county. This continues the programme of improvement works that is currently underway since 2006.

Water Purchases

It is proposed to continue to purchase water from Templemore and Thurles Town Councils with provision of €105,000 being provided. Water purchases from other Local Authorities will not be required in 2008. Moyne Group Water Scheme supplied water to public schemes in 2007 and will continue to do so in 2008.

Rural Water Programme

Allocation 2007:

	€
Group Water Supply Schemes	600,000
Take Overs	500,000
Small Public Schemes	<u>850,000</u>
	€1,950,000

A total of 5 new schemes have been grant aided in the current year. A further 16 schemes have been grant aided in respect of refurbishment works which in some cases included treatment units to address water quality issues. The

Council will grant aid at least four new schemes in 2008 and are currently examining other potential schemes in the area.

Creeragh Ballingarry GWS is currently being taken over by the County Council and will be completed in 2007. Gortagarry GWS is to be taken over in 2008.

A total of 44 applicants have applied for private well grants and the sum of €30,824 has been paid in grants in the current year to date. A total of 40 schemes applied for the Group Water Scheme subsidy in 2007 and the sum of €14,708 has been paid out to date. All payments in respect of private well grants and subsidy payments are recouped from the Department of the Environment & Local Government on a quarterly basis.

The following is a list of works which have been completed to date in the current year 2007 under the Small Schemes Programme.

- Various Water Schemes – Telemetry Systems
- Nenagh R.W.S.S. – Replace 1.6 km of 100mm watermain at Lansdowne, Portroe
- Nenagh R.W.S.S. – Replace 0.9 km of 150mm watermain at Portroe Village
- Borrisoleigh W.S.S. – Replace 1.1 km of 200mm watermain
- Riverstown W.S.S. – Replace 3.5 km of 150mm watermain at Killeen, Riverstown
- Cloughjordan W.S.S. – Upgrade 3 km of 150mm watermain at Loughaun, Cloughjordan
- Terryglass W.S.S. – Upgrade 0.6km of 150mm watermain
- Upperchurch W.S.S. – Upgrade 0.5 km of watermain
- Toomevara S.S.S. – Sewer Upgrade
- Templemore S.S. – Upgrade sewers at Church St., Templemore.
- Roscrea S.S. – Separate storm and foul sewer at the Dublin Road

The Small Schemes Programme is prepared annually. The maximum grant for any project is 75% of the cost and the remaining cost is paid from the Council's own resources – development levies. A further grant is expected for 2008 and the list of 2008 proposals will be brought before the Council for approval.

Water and Wastewater Connection Fees.

There is no proposed change to the Water and Wastewater Connection Fees of €350 each, for the year 2008. However, depending on availability of resources, the Council will consider fully completing the works on the public road in cases where individuals are having difficulty meeting the Health and Safety requirements. This will be carried on a full cost basis.

WATER SERVICES CAPITAL SCHEMES:

The Capital Programme consists of new or substantial upgrades to existing Water Supply and Waste Water Schemes in the county. Schemes are divided into Major and Small Schemes. The latter refers to new schemes or improvements to existing schemes costing not more than €0.635m. The current estimated cost of schemes included in the Water Services Investment Programme is €18m. All of these Major schemes have progressed through various stages during 2007 and will continue to do so in 2008.

In the case of Major Schemes, the cost is met by Exchequer Grant and up to 80% of the cost of EU Cohesion Funded Projects is met by the EU. The Polluter Pays Principle applies to the more recent schemes, resulting in the Council paying for the future domestic and the non-domestic portions of the cost. This cost to the Council can be funded using borrowings repaid over 20 years. The cost of servicing the borrowings must be levied on the future domestic and non-domestic consumers, either by capital contribution and/or annual contribution based on consumption or loadings of the individual consumer.

The Capital Programme is set out in the Department's Water Services Investment Programme (WSIP) 2007-2009.

The largest project, on the current Programme, is the Thurles Regional Water Supply Scheme, at an estimated cost of €34m. This scheme is divided into two contracts. The treatment plant will be constructed as a Design, Build and Operate contract. The trunk mains are being constructed by traditional re-

measure contract. Tenders have been received and are being assessed for the latter contract. Similarly the Newport Regional Water Supply contract has been tendered and the tenders are being assessed, in both cases it is hoped that contractors will be appointed in early 2008.

Other Water Schemes on the WSIP include:

- Water Conservation (Stage 2) Rural Schemes
- Roscrea WSS
- North-West RWSS

Waste Water Schemes include:

- Templemore SS – treatment plant
- Thurles SS – treatment plant and sewer network
- Borrisoleigh SS
- Sludge Management Plan
- Nenagh SS – treatment plant and sewer network
- Roscrea SS – Collection system
- Ballina SS – treatment plant and sewer network
- Cloughjordan, Dromineer, Rearcross and Silvermines SS and sewer network
- Newport SS and sewer network

Templemore Sewage Scheme (Collection System) was completed in 2005 and the tenders for construction of the treatment plant have been assessed and it is hoped to appoint a contractor in the near future with construction expected to start in the first quarter of 2008. The treatment plant will be constructed by Design Build and Operate contract.

The Capital Programme includes projects under the Serviced Land Initiative. This is a Department programme to facilitate the provision of infrastructure for lands previously un-serviced in order to support housing developments. The Department fund 40 % of the cost of such projects.

Current approved SLI Projects include:

- Whitepark, Roscrea
- Kiltillane, Templemore

The Whitepark project is part of a social housing project and is at tendering stage. Approval was obtained from the DoEHLG for the Kiltillane Project and this is now at design stage. There is a proposal with the DoEHLG for an SLI for the Bohernamona Road, Thurles.

PROGRAMME GROUP 4: DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES AND CONTROL

Estimated Expenditure: €3,615,515

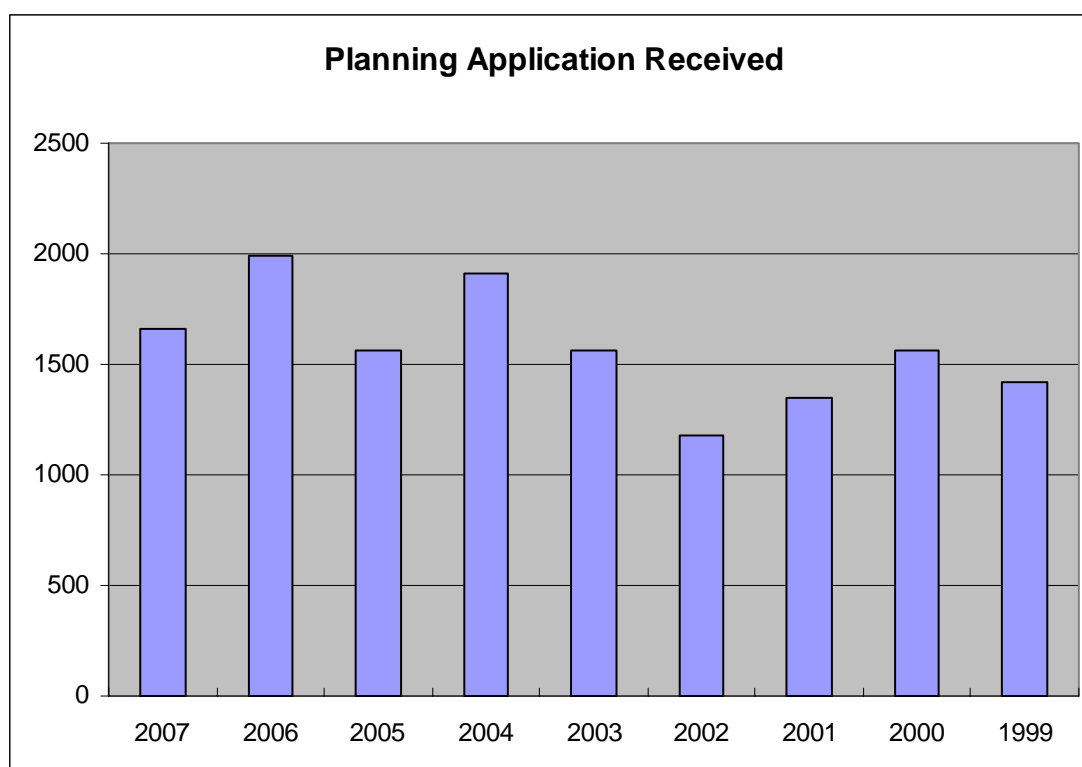
Estimated Income: €1,430,963

Planning and Development

Provision is included in 2008 for the following:

- Review of the County Development Plan 2004
- Variations of the County Development Plan
- Preparation of Birdhill Village Design Statement
- Completion of Review of Housing Strategy
- Completion of Rural Housing Design Guide
- Registration of Quarries in accordance with Section 261 of the Planning & Development Act, 2000
- Taking in Charge of Housing Estates

The numbers of applications received by this Planning Authority for the first 10 months of 2007 increased by 65 compared to the figures for the same period of 2006 which was a record year for receipt of applications.



Please note the figures for 2007 are only up to the **31/10/2007**.

Urban and Village Renewal

The Urban and Village Renewal Programme 2000-2007 is being funded under the National Development Plan.

Work continued in 2007 at the following Centres:

Urban: Templemore

Villages: Dromineer, Ballina, Newport and Holycross.

The outturn for 2007 is estimated at €15,800. No provision is made in 2008 as this programme has now finished.

Conservation Grants

In 2007, €4,000 was paid out in Conservation Grants towards the restoration of Protected Structures.

Pride of Place

The Pride of Place Competition is an all-Ireland initiative run in conjunction with Co-Operation Ireland. In 2007 North Tipperary County Council nominated Nenagh, Portroe and the Four Estates Residence Association Thurles to represent the County in the competition. The results achieved were excellent with Nenagh achieving runners-up position in the Category for population over 5,000 and Portroe being short-listed in the Category for 200-500 population. A sum of €5,000 is being provided in the 2008 Draft Budget.

Community & Enterprise Function

The Community & Enterprise Department provides executive support to the North Tipperary County Development Board and also performs a number of local authority functions. It continues to be involved in progressing strategic projects/actions as identified in the County Development Board 3 year Action Plan for 2006 to 2008.

Economic initiatives supported include: North Tipperary Tourism Limited, Lough Derg Marketing Strategy, Re-Skilling and Up-Skilling Employees Initiative, Thurles Marketing Initiative, Nenagh Economic Plan and development of the EU CONCERTO Renewable Energy Project.

Social inclusion initiatives supported include; the Cohesion Process involving the current two Community Partnerships & Tipperary Leader Group forming a unified company (to deliver both the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme and Rural Development Programme post 2006), an employment support in the form of a North Tipperary Lone Parent Initiative funded by the Gender Equality Unit, Parenting Support Programmes, Follow Your Dream Youth Project, Training and Education of Non-Nationals, Integrated Target Group Plans and Integrated Village Plans.

The Community & Enterprise Department operates the Local Authority's Community, Sport and Cultural Grants Scheme which, since its commencement, has allocated approximately €3.5m from the electoral areas towards 150 Community Groups for a range of community-based sports, recreational and cultural infrastructural projects.

The Department plays a lead role in the development of childcare in the county. It facilitates the administration of the County Childcare Committee, and houses and manages the staff that has responsibility for the delivery of the Committee's activities under the National Childcare Investment Programme. The Community and Enterprise Department is also responsible for the development and co-ordination of North Tipperary Local Authorities' Disability Strategy.

The Local Authorities role in the Clár Village Enhancement Programme is co-ordinated by the Community and Enterprise Department along with other infrastructural developments such as the Thurles Regional Arts Centre and Lough Derg International Waterpark Project.

The Department facilitates and supports the work of North Tipperary Community and Voluntary Association (CAVA). CAVA acts as the Community Forum for the county and is the nominating body for the Community and Voluntary sector which is represented on the various Organisations and Committees including the Councils SPC's, the County Development Board etc. The Communications and Development Officer employed by the Association is based in the offices of the Department.

A provision of €300,000 has been included in respect of Co-funding National Development Plan projects and a sum of €30,000 is also included as a contribution to Sports Partnership for a Sports Development officer.

PROGRAMME GROUP 5: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Estimated Expenditure: €10,756,395

Estimated Income: €4,617,191

Waste Disposal

a) Operation of Ballaghveny Landfill

The licence to operate the Ballaghveny Landfill was reviewed by the Environmental Protection Agency and this resulted in an increased range of responsibilities including additional monitoring and reporting resulting in increased operating costs. The landfill area increases each year leading to increased emissions such as leachate, which also results in increased costs. In addition, gas collection and flaring will come into operation at the facility in 2008.

Provision is included in the budget for the operation of the landfill in accordance with EU environmental directives, for loan charges on existing loans, and for new loans required for further site works in accordance with EPA licence requirements. In accordance with the licence, provision is continuing to be made in respect of the creation of a fund to be set aside for landfill aftercare and restoration. It is estimated that landfill income in 2008 will be €3,274,257.

b) Ballaghveny Community Grant

It is proposed to make a provision of €30,000 for the Community Support Grant in 2008.

c) Landfill levy

It is not anticipated that the landfill levy of €15 per tonne of waste accepted at the facility will increase in 2008.

Waste Management

a) Recycling/Waste Minimisation

Significant funding is also included for Recycling/Waste Minimisation to fund the following:

- A Programme of work by the Environmental Awareness Officer including meetings with Schools, Community Groups and businesses, increased awareness campaigns, and distribution of a Waste Management Guide to SME's in the Region;
- Continued promotion of the Council's recycling facilities and the completion of the Council's civic amenity site in Roscrea, which is expected to be operational in mid 2008. A provision has also been made for Thurles civic amenity site.
- The Tiobraid Alainn and Tidy Towns Grants schemes which have been transferred from Community & Enterprise to the Environment Budget.

b) Environment Enforcement Programme

The five year programme is supported under the Environment Levy Fund and North Tipperary County Council has employed two Technicians and an additional Litter Warden under the scheme. The DoEHLG grant covered the full cost of the first year of the scheme in 2004, and the grant continues each year at this level with no increases being given for wages or inflation. These increases have to be met by the Local Authority.

Litter Control

The Draft Budget provision of €1,000 covers the cost of the Litter Warden Service and a provision for clean up of indiscriminate dumping, and the operation of the litter free-phone service

Street Cleaning

Draft Budgeted expenditure in respect of street cleaning is expected to be €14,650

Burial Grounds

The Council is responsible for the upkeep of 100 burial grounds and local Burial Ground Committees undertake the maintenance work and receive an annual grant from the Council to help defray the costs. The maintenance grant is proposed at €600, similar to 2007. In addition, the best Burial Ground in each Electoral Area will receive an award of €400, with 2nd and 3rd receiving €300 and €200 respectively. The provision for maintenance grants is €70,000. In 2007, a provision of €13,000 was included for the first time to allow for minor improvement works to be carried out within the Burial Grounds, e.g. provision/repair of footpaths, walls, gates, etc. Minor capital works grants of

approximately €6,000 were approved in 2007 and it is proposed to carry forward the balance of €7,000 to 2008 to complete schemes.

Pollution Control

The EPA has a statutory role in overseeing the remit of local authorities and it is important that the Council should maintain and improve its overall performance in monitoring river and ground waters.

The Draft Budget provides for continuation of the Pollution Response Unit, payment of a contribution to the Regional Laboratory in Kilkenny, operation of the Environmental Laboratory and staffing costs associated with the implementation of the River Monitoring/Measures Report (Phosphorous Regulations), the Dangerous Substances Measures Report, and the implementation of the Agricultural Bye-Laws as adopted by the Council. The introduction of the Nitrates Regulations has effectively extended the requirements of the Agricultural Bye-Laws to all areas of the County and places increased responsibilities on the Local Authority. Provision has also been included in respect of the operational expenses of the Shannon River Basin and South East River Basin District Advisory Councils.

The Council will also contribute to the monitoring undertaken by the Roscommon Laboratory in respect of the Shannon River Basin District at an estimated cost of €25,500.

Tipperary Energy Agency

A contribution of €1,850 is included for the above agency who give specialist advice and who are continuing the analysis of the energy costs being incurred by the Council in order to maximise the energy cost savings. This increased contribution for 2008 will allow the Agency to expand its service to meet the Council's energy use responsibilities under the National Energy Efficiency Action Plan 2007/2010 and Climate Change Strategy.

Civil Defence

Civil Defence is a national organisation primarily comprising of volunteers, the day to day administration at local level is carried out by the Civil Defence Officer. The aim of the organisation is to recruit and train volunteers to enable the Civil Defence to give assistance to the primary emergency services i.e. Fire Service, HSE and Gardaí in the event of a major emergency/ incident

and to give assistance to the local communities, other voluntary groups and charitable organisations where possible.

Expenditure on Civil Defence is limited by grant allocation from the Civil Defence Board who recoups 70% of the cost to the County Council annually.

Fire Service

The Draft Budget for the Fire Service is being increased from €3,402,459 to €3,604,089, and the explanatory tables give a detailed breakdown of this.

There has been a significant increase in the training budget from €10,000 to €70,000 and this will allow for First Responder training to be provided to all firefighters in 2008. This training is essential to maintain the proficiency of the firefighters in first aid and road traffic extrication techniques.

In addition €30,000 is being provided to develop the Major Emergency Plan in line with the National Framework Document. An additional staff member has also been employed for this work.

In line with wage inflation an increase of 4% in the charge levied for attendance at fire brigade callouts is being proposed.

PROGRAMME GROUP 6: RECREATION AND AMENITY

Estimated Expenditure: €2,910,163

Estimated Income: €38,222

Swimming Pools

A provision of €46,400 for the maintenance of Borrisokane and Ballina swimming pools has been provided in 2008. The Draft Budget includes an amount of €80,000 in respect of contribution to the operational costs of Nenagh and Thurles Swimming Pools in 2008.

Libraries

The sum of €1,266,015 has been provided for the County Tipperary Joint Library Committee demand, which represents an increase of 8.94% over 2007.

Maintenance Of Open Spaces

A sum of €76,368 has been provided for maintenance of open spaces which is an increase of 24% on 2007. In addition a new provision of €60,000 is included in respect of maintenance of tourism facilities at Terryglass, Dromineer, Garrykennedy and Ballina during the summer months.

Arts

An amount of €16,616 is included towards arts development in the county in 2008. This figure includes a significant contribution towards the operational costs of €176,800 for the Source Arts Centre in Thurles which continues to go from strength to strength with a wide ranging programme of activity. In addition, €62,753 has also been included towards loan repayments on capital costs associated with this Centre.

A provision of €35,000 is included in respect of grants to organisations independently promoting the arts within the county; these include local arts, theatre and music organisations as well as health and community organisations developing arts activities and programmes.

A sum of €139,000 is provided towards the costs of the annual arts programme which includes initiatives such as county wide festivals, arts in education programmes and youth and community arts. This figure includes a net increase of €15,000 on 2007 to support development of a new Arts Plan for the county in 2008, to provide additional funding to support the 10th Anniversary of the Terryglass Arts Festival with an increased programme of events and to support festival co-ordination in the county.

Income of €10,000 is anticipated towards the arts programme in 2008. The arts service looks forward to working with all stakeholders in 2008 to develop the second Arts Plan for the county to ensure the continued development of the arts in North Tipperary into the future.

Heritage

The draft budget provides for the delivery of the Heritage Service through the post of the Heritage Officer and with a provision of €1,500 towards funding specific actions contained in the Council's Heritage Plan. Projects carried out under the Heritage Plan, part-funded by the Heritage Council, will ensure that best practice is followed in the protection of our county's heritage, and that people's enjoyment of it is enhanced. Provisional approval has been received from the Heritage Council for 6 actions for 2008. It is estimated that 50% of the cost of these actions will be recouped from the Heritage Council. The Council will continue to support the operation of a service from the building known as The Governor's House in 2008. The focus of the Heritage Officer's work in 2008 will be on continuing to co-ordinate the implementation of the Heritage Plan for North Tipperary.

PROGRAMME GROUP 7: AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, HEALTH & WELFARE

Estimated Expenditure: €6,053,444

Estimated Income: €5,055,628

Drainage:

A sum of €135,000 has been provided for land drainage, €11,000 for the clearance of rivers, and €7,200 being provided for cleaning Roscrea River.

VEC Pensions:

Superannuation of former VEC employees in the sum of €3,000,000 is recouped in full from the Department of Education and Science.

Higher Education Grants

A decision has been taken by the Minister for Education and Science to transfer the responsibility for the administration of Higher Education Grants to the Vocational Educational Committees. It is anticipated that this transfer will be effected in respect of the 2008/2009 academic year. North Tipperary County Council will, however, continue to administer renewal of grants for existing grant holders. Expenditure in respect of grants is recouped by the Department of Education and Science with the exception of €13,808 which is borne by this Council.

Mid West Region Health Service Executive

A sum of €55,000 has been included in respect of Agency Services provided by the Health Service Executive.

PROGRAMME GROUP 8: MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES

Estimated Expenditure: €4,264,644

Estimated Income: €2,228,481

Courthouses

The Court Services Board is responsible for all operation and maintenance costs of Courthouses used exclusively as courthouses. This expenditure is recouped in full from the Court Services Board.

Register of Electors/Local Elections

The total number of electors on the 2008/2009 Draft Register of Electors published on 1st November 2007 is 49,755.

Rates Collection

The Rates collection % for the current year is in line with previous years, and it is anticipated that the collection for 2008 will be in line with that for 2007. The provisions for irrecoverable rates and for refunds of rates are €30,000 and €205,000 respectively.

Strategic Policy Committees

The provision in respect of Strategic Policy Committees training and other expenses is included at €5,000.

Travel & Subsistence Outside the State

A provision of €8,000 is included – €4,000 for both Members and Non-Members to attend St. Patrick's Day Ceremonies in the United States to promote tourism and North Tipperary as a place to visit and invest.

Control of Dogs

The Council is responsible for the implementation of the Control of Dogs Act and employs a Dog Warden and operates a dog shelter at Knockalton. License inspections are carried out on an ongoing basis by the Council's dog warden, who has power to seize dogs, to impose on-the-spot fines, and to take court prosecutions.

CENTRAL MANAGEMENT CHARGE

Estimated Expenditure: €9,453,378

Estimated Income: €824,810

Health & Safety

The Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act 2005 and various regulations impose obligations on us in relation to workplace health and safety. The training budget is used to cover costs associated with training of staff to meet their responsibilities and to ensure that they are aware of all relevant requirements. The Health & Safety Advisor provides training and advice, liaises with the Health & Safety Authority and carries out inspections at various locations to ensure compliance with the relevant legislation. The proposed Draft Budget also covers costs associated with the preparation of Safety Statements, Evacuation Procedures and Risk Assessments.

Customer Consultation

As a follow on from the Customer Survey conducted in 2005 an exit survey was carried out during 2006 in the Motor Tax Section. The 2007 budget provision was used to part fund the consultation associated with the review of the potential for enhanced service delivery at Town Council and Area Level.

Official Languages Act 2003

During 2007 the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs approved our Language Scheme under the Official Languages Act 2003. The amount included in the Draft Budget is intended to progress the measures in the scheme and to meet our obligations under the Act.

Audit Committee

An amount of €10,000 has been included in the Draft Budget 2008 in respect of the Audit Committee established in accordance with the Local Government (Business Improvement Districts) Act 2006.

Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

The rollout of PMDS continued throughout 2007 and will reach full implementation by early 2008. New Team Development Plans and Personal

Development Plans will be developed in 2008 and a PMDS trainer will assist staff and monitor progress throughout the year.

Partnership

Workplace Partnership in North Tipperary Local Authorities has achieved considerable success to date. Management, unions and staff are addressing a wide range of issues of strategic and operational importance which are delivering positive outcomes to all the stakeholders. The National Social Partnership agreement 'Towards 2016' and the development of a new National Partnership Strategy 2008 – 2012 will continue to provide challenges for the Workplace Partnership Committee in developing and implementing the modernisation and change agenda over the coming years. The Workplace Partnership Committee is assisted by a facilitator whose costs together with associated administration and training costs are partially recouped from the Local Authority National Partnership Advisory Group (LANPAG). Accordingly, the sum of €19,660 has been provided for 2008, €8,660 of which will be recouped from LANPAG.

Information Systems

In the coming year, it is proposed to continue building on the use of Information Systems to support and enhance the provision of services and information to members of the public, the elected members, local authority staff members and other government bodies.

Initiatives planned for 2008 include:

- Further roll out of the Customer Contact Management System to other Sections of the organisation
- Providing the facility for our customers to perform online payments for appropriate services
- Providing a facility on the internet to do enquiries about planning applications using a map based interface
- Continued development of the North Tipperary County Council web site (www.tipperarynorth.ie)
- Upgrading our internal functional business systems in the areas of Planning, Finance, Water Services, Environment, Corporate Services, Housing and Roads.
- Upgrading the internal Intranet system
- Selecting new handheld devices for our revenue collection staff
- Continued support of our Staff and Elected Members in the use of Information Systems

- Supporting recommendations from the Partnership workgroups in the areas of flexitime, inter-authority services and incident reporting mechanisms.

The year 2008 will see a continued investment in the Local Area Network (LAN) and the Wide Area Network (WAN) infrastructure. Projects for 2008 include:

- upgrading the Air Conditioning and the Fire Protection facilities in our Data Centre
- upgrading the Email System to MS Exchange 2007
- upgrading our firewall systems so as to protect our network from internet and email viruses
- archiving infrequently used data to cheaper storage devices
- improving the Information Systems facilities in the Area Offices
- catering for any infrastructural changes that may occur during the course of the year
- continue to maintain our network at current performance levels
- continue to test the backup and recovery of systems and data in the event of a disaster

The implementation of the items outlined above along with the support and maintenance of our existing systems and infrastructure, and the provision of a support service to our staff and elected members, all form part of our five year ICT strategy, and supports North Tipperary County Council's objective of providing a service that will improve the quality of the economic, social and cultural life of the citizens of North Tipperary.

Legal Support Services

An amount of €2,120 is included in the 2008 Draft Budget. This includes payment of retainer in respect of legal services in accordance with an agreement signed in 2007.

Appreciation

I would like to record my appreciation to the staff of the Finance Section and, in particular Mr Gerry McGarry, Ms Breda Moloney and Ms Mary B Gunnell for their assistance in compiling this Draft Budget. I wish to extend my thanks also to all the Directors of Service, Heads of Functions and Section Heads for their co-operation and input.

Liam McCarthy,
Head of Finance.