Quality Assurance – In Depth Check

Section A: Introduction

This introductory section details the headline information on the operation of Library Services in County Kilkenny.

Programme or Project Information	
Name	Operation of Library Service
Detail	Kilkenny County Council's Library Service provides for the informational, cultural, educational, social and learning needs of the County
Responsible Body	Kilkenny County Council
Current Status	Revenue expenditure being incurred annually
Start Date	Ongoing Annual Budget
End Date	Ongoing Annual Budget
Overall Cost	€3.1 million per annum

Project Description

The operation of the Library Service is managed by the Library Section of Kilkenny County Council. The total expenditure for the service in 2021 was €3,116,846.

The core purpose of the Kilkenny Library Service is to provide for the informational, cultural, educational, social and learning needs of Kilkenny citizens. The service aims to provide safe, trusted and democratic spaces at the heart of the local community which are accessible to everyone and enable engagement and participation.

Strategic programming of events and activities, working in partnership with community groups, cultural organisations, statutory organisations and other groups, as well as the provision of user focused services ensures the Library Service meet the varied and changing needs of the community.

The Kilkenny Library Service operates through a branch network of 8 libraries. It is supported by the administrative functions at Library Headquarters, which also provides the Local Studies Service. The Mobile Library provides a vital rural service and serves over 50 rural areas over a three week schedule. The Library Service is open over 280 hours per week including late night and Saturday opening. A broad and varied range of digital services are also provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via the Library's website.

2021 Expenditure - Operation of Library Services	
Description	**€**
Payroll	1,410,770
Miscellaneous	707,553
Stock Purchase	179,829
Overhead Allocation	818,694
Total	**3,116,846**

Section B - Step 1: Logic Model Mapping

As part of this In-Depth Check, Kilkenny County Council's Internal Audit Unit have completed a Programme Logic Model (PLM) for the operation of Library Services, A PLM is a standard evaluation tool and further information on their nature is available in the Public Spending Code.

Objectives	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
Kilkenny County Council Library Service provides for the informational, cultural, educational, social and learning needs of the County	Budget of €3.1 million in 2021 39 staff 8 branch Libraries Mobile Library Local Studies Service ICT equipment including: 3D printers Self-service machines PC's Photocopiers My Open Library Stock in all formats including: Books Audio Books Specialised collections Local history material CD's & DVD's	Reading materials in all formats Events on site – Book clubs, language circles and school visits Digital Supports and services Family History Workshops On line programming: Art Workshops Virtual Book Clubs Podcasts Strategic programming: Right to Read Work Matters Healthy Ireland Creative Ireland Mobile Library service for older people, nursing homes and early learning centres	The provision of a range of Library Services based on the needs of each community served both via branches and online	The Library contributes to: Increased reading and literacy Improved digital access Improved health and wellbeing Fostering social inclusion and creating stronger more resilient communities The Library Service has expanded its offer and makes a valuable contribution to the community and its citizens

Description of Programme Logic Model

Objectives:

Kilkenny County Council Library Service provides for the informational, cultural, educational, social and learning needs of the County.

Inputs:

The countywide service is provided by a network of 8 branch Libraries, a Mobile Library Service and a Local Studies Service. 39 staff members provide the teams that are needed to deliver the Library service.

Activities:

Kilkenny Library Service provides an extensive range of high quality Library Programming and services which are community focused and cross-sectorial. Working in partnership with community groups and other stakeholders the Library ensures that they meet the varied and changing needs of the communities.

Outputs:

To provide a range of Library Services based on the needs of each community served both by branch Libraries and an online programme.

Outcomes:

The Library contributes to increased reading and literacy and improved digital access for service users. It fosters social inclusion and creates stronger more resilient communities.

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

The following section tracks the operation of Kilkenny County Council Library Services.

2021   The Library Service is an ongoing service provided by Kilkenny County Council. Funding for providing the service is included in the Annual Budget in the amount of €3.1 million.

Section B - Step 3: Analysis of Key Documents

The following section reviews the key documentation relating to appraisal, analysis and operation of Kilkenny County Council Library Service.

Project/Programme Key Documents	
Title	**Details**
Kilkenny County Council Annual Budget 2021	The budget allocation for the operation of the Library Service
Our Public Libraries 2022 Strategy – Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities	National Strategy for the development of Library Service
County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy Arts, Heritage and Libraries 2018-2022	The Strategy is an integrated approach to cultural services and cultural management in Kilkenny County Council
Agresso Financial Management System	Financial details on the expenditure and income for the operation of the Library Service

Key Document 1: Kilkenny County Council Adopted Budget 2021
'Kilkenny County Council's Adopted Budget 2021' details the expenditure and expected income for all service areas including the operation of the Library for 2021.

Key Document 2: Our Public Libraries 2022 – Inspiring, Connecting and Empowering Communities
This document details the National Strategy for the development of the public Library service. Building on technological and service innovations of recent years, it focuses on improving access, use and visibility of the public library and establishing it as the go-to place for a range of sustainable, integrated public services.

Key Document 3: County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy Arts, Heritage and Libraries 2018-2022
The County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy presents an integrated approach to cultural services and cultural management in County Kilkenny. It replaces separate plans for Arts, Heritage and Libraries services.

Key Document 4: Agresso - Financial Management System
Reports can be generated from Agresso detailing the level of expenditure across the Library service. It includes payroll costs, miscellaneous costs, book purchase payments and overhead allocations. This allows management to monitor budget adherence during the year.

The following section details the data audit that was carried out for the operation of Kilkenny County Council Library Services. It evaluates whether appropriate data is available for the future evaluation of the project/programme.

Data Required	Use	Availability
Financial Reports	To ensure adherence with budget	Yes
Procurement data for purchasing	To ensure compliance with procurement procedures	Yes
Number of Library visits, issues, registered members, cost per capita for operating the library and per capita expenditure on collections	Required for NOAC - Local Authority Performance Indicators Report	Yes
Monthly metrics collated on: Opening hours PC sessions Wi-Fi usage Usage of 10 online platforms Social media usage Website usage My Open Library usage Self Service Usage	The metrics reflect engagement with service users and allows for management to monitor, evaluate and adjust the operation of the service if needed	Yes

Data Availability and Proposed Next Steps

The necessary data is available to evaluate the operation of Kilkenny County Council Library Service. The availability of monthly detailed statistics allows management to ensure optimal operation of the Library Service.

While examining the breakdown of expenditure on Agresso it was noted in a small number of transactions that some of the 'Product Codes' used for raising 'Purchase Orders' were linked incorrectly in the background to the incorrect 'Account Element'. This resulted in 'non book purchases' being coded incorrectly to 'library book purchases'. Following consultation with the Library Staff and Staff in the Finance Section in Kilkenny County Council I recommend that a review of the 'Product Codes' for the Library Service be undertaken to rectify this issue.

Agresso the Financial Management System gives management up to date financial information to allow for ongoing budget monitoring and to ensure adherence to the Annual Budget.

The Library Services used the National Tender Framework for purchasing of stock. The Library avails of all opportunities to apply for additional funding and were successful in receiving grant funding from Creative Ireland and Dormant Account funding in the amount of €20k from each fund in 2021.

During the Covid19 Pandemic Kilkenny County Council Library Service adapted and mobilised staff quickly to sustain a level of service and support national Covid measures. Online platforms were promoted and invested in to allow customers to access the Library 24/7 from home. A door to door service was developed where stock was delivered by the Mobile Library directly to those who were cocooning and over 70 years as well as nursing homes. As events onsite were restricted the service moved quickly to provide a range of events online. The Library Service managed and staffed the Community Call Helpline based in Loughboy Library.

Kilkenny Library Service is part of the Directorate of Housing, Social, Community and Cultural Services in Kilkenny County Council. The Library Service report to the Strategic Policy Committee for Planning and Development, Heritage, Community, Arts and Culture. Regular reports on the operation of the Library Service are presented to Management in Kilkenny County Council.

Section B - Step 5: Key Evaluation Questions

The following section looks at the key evaluation questions for the operation of Kilkenny County Council Library Service based on the findings from the previous sections of this report.

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

The operation of Library Services broadly complies with the standards set out in The Public Spending Code. 'The County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy' forms the basis for the work of the Arts, Heritage and Libraries services for the period 2018-2022. The Library Service drafts a Work Programme/Service Delivery Plan on an annual basis, based on the contents of the County Kilkenny Cultural Strategy. Once the Annual Budget is confirmed, the Work Programme/Service Delivery Plan is determined providing further details on projects proposed, the project partners, timeframes and individuals and organisations responsible for delivery. This Service Delivery Plan is adopted by the Elected Members each year.

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

The necessary data is available to allow for a full evaluation if required.

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

Kilkenny County Council Library Services endeavor to provide and sustain a vibrant

sustainable modern public Library Service for the people of Kilkenny. I note further investment in two new capital projects namely the new Mayfair City Library and the Thomastown Library and this will further develop additional capacity. In addition the potential to relocate Callan library to a bigger and more suitable space will add to the physical infrastructure of the service is in plan.

I recommend that these new Libraries are adequately staffed and funded accordingly to ensure that Kilkenny Library Services continue to deliver a high quality library programme and services which are community focused and cross sectorial.

Section: In-Depth Check Summary

The following section presents a summary of the findings of this In-Depth Check on the operation of Library Services in Co Kilkenny.

Summary of In-Depth Check

Overall, I find the operation of Library Services in County Kilkenny complies with the broad principles of the Public Spending Code. I recommend a review and amendment of the Library 'Product Codes'/'Account Elements' is undertaken in Agresso to rectify the incorrect coding of a small number of purchase orders as detailed above.

Kilkenny County Council operates through a branch network of 8 Libraries. It is supported by the administration functions of Library Headquarters which also provides the Local Studies Service. The Mobile Library provides a vital rural service and serves over 50 rural areas. A broad and varied range of digital services are also provided. It is essential that Management ensure adequate staffing and appropriate funding is in place to enable the Library Service to deliver a high quality library programme into the future.