

**Donegal County Council  
Internal Audit Department**



**Final Report**

**DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL**

**IA23/02 - Civil Defence Office**

July 2023

## **Table of Contents**

1. Introduction & Scope.....	3
2. Assurance Rating .....	3
3. Objectives .....	4
4. Methodology .....	4
5. Background .....	4
6. Relevant Legislation, Guidance and Circulars .....	5
7. Findings .....	6
7.1 Staffing .....	6
7.2 Services .....	6
7.3 Training .....	11
7.4 Towards 2030 .....	14
7.5 Policy and Procedures.....	15
7.5.1 Health & Safety .....	15
7.6 Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS) .....	15
7.7 Financial Management.....	16
7.7.1 Income and Expenditure .....	16
7.7.2 Assets .....	18
7.8 Data Protection, GDPR.....	18
8. Conclusions and Recommendations .....	18
8.1 Services .....	18
8.2 Policy and Procedures.....	19
8.3 Health & Safety .....	19
8.4 Systems Analysis.....	20
9. Acknowledgement.....	20
Appendix 1 – Circulation List .....	21
Appendix 2 – Audit Classification.....	22
Appendix 3 – IA23/02 Civil Defence Office - Summary Recommendations.....	23

## **1. Introduction & Scope**

One of the key objectives of Donegal County Council's Corporate Plan 2020-2024 is good service delivery and its commitment to "*deliver accessible, efficient and good value services and supports*". As part of this commitment the Council has pledged to support the Civil Defence service "*in its voluntary support role to both primary response agencies and the community sector*".

Civil Defence is a volunteer-based organisation that supports the front-line emergency services in dealing with severe weather, flooding, major accidents, firefighting and searches for missing people and also assists the local community with non-emergency community events.

Donegal Civil Defence currently provides community support to more than 50 community events each year, as well as acting as a multi-skilled second line service to the main emergency services of the Fire Service, Local Authority, An Garda Síochana, Health Service Executive & Irish Coast Guard.

This audit aimed to evaluate the processes involved in the provision of services by the Civil Defence Office as well as the policies and procedures in relation to same.

A draft audit was circulated to the Director of Emergency Services and relevant staff on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024. Internal Audit's findings and recommendations for remedial action, where applicable, are included herein.

## **2. Assurance Rating**

This audit has been assigned an assurance rating of:

### **Level 2 – Adequate**

See **Appendix 2** for Classification of Audit Assurance.

Based on the work carried out in this audit, Internal Audit found that there are generally good systems of management, control and governance in relation to the Civil Defence Office and that these should ensure that essential objectives are fully achieved.

Better implementation of Standard Operating Procedures as well as regular communication with the Health and Safety Office in Donegal County Council will help alleviate potential health and safety issues as well as ensure that staff are better informed.

### **3. Objectives**

The main objective of this audit is to assess the procedures employed by the Civil Defence Office and the various services it provides. The audit will also provide assurance that the service is in adherence to both local and national legislation and commitments.

### **4. Methodology**

The audit was approached as follows:

- Identify relevant legislation and policies in place at both a local and national level.
- Evaluate the systems, procedures and controls that are in place for the operation of the Civil Defence office and identify any potential risks in relation to same.
- Engage with relevant Civil Defence staff and conduct on-site visits.
- Review the provision of training courses and other services.
- Identify any potential risks in work processes and make recommendations where necessary.
- Review income and expenditure in relation to the Civil Defence Office on the Agresso Financial Management system.

### **5. Background**

Civil Defence (*Cosaint Shibhialta*) is a statutory volunteer-based organisation with a nationwide footprint, established in 1951. In central Government terms, responsibility for the organisation falls under the aegis of the Department of Defence. Nationally, Civil Defence is managed by 35 Local Authority Civil Defence Officers and has approximately 3,500 volunteers. At a local level, Civil Defence is managed by Civil Defence Officers employed by each Local Authority.

Under the Civil Defence Act 2002 a State Authority known as the Civil Defence Board was established to manage and develop Civil Defence at a national level. In 2013 the Civil Defence Board was dissolved in accordance with the Civil Defence Act 2012 and its functions were transferred back to the Minister for Defence.

The Civil Defence Branch of the Department of Defence, based in Benamore, Roscrea, Co Tipperary is charged with the management and development of Civil Defence at national level. The Civil Defence Branch provides policy direction, centralised training through the Civil Defence College, administrative support and

guidance and centralised procurement of major items of uniform and equipment in support of local authority Civil Defence efforts.

Civil Defence is funded by way of a grant from the Department of Defence. Funding for Civil Defence operations at local level is shared on a 70/30 basis between the Department of Defence and local authorities by way of an annual grant to each authority.

Civil Defence services are delivered through the Civil Defence Officer (CDO) of the relevant Local Authority for that area. The CDO is a full-time employee of the local authority and is responsible for the day-to-day management of Civil Defence matters under the overall direction of the relevant Chief Executive. Volunteers join Civil Defence through the local authority for their area and, in time, having undergone training and gained experience at local level may progress and qualify as Instructors.

The organisation has volunteers trained in each of the following services:

- Medical Response
- Search and Rescue
- Emergency Response
- Radiation Monitoring
- Community Assistance
- Communications

Civil Defence supports the frontline emergency services in dealing with severe weather, flooding, major accidents and searching for missing people. The organisation supports hundreds of community events throughout the year. These include large events such as air shows, tall ships, concerts and festivals and sports events. It also offers support to smaller local events such as parades.

## **6. Relevant Legislation, Guidance and Circulars**

- Local Government Act 2001
- Civil Defence Acts 2002/2012
- Air Raid Precautions Act 1939/1946
- S.I. No. 570/2012 – Civil Defence Board Dissolution Order 2012
- S.I. No. 212/1973 – Local Government (Civil Defence Offices Age Limit) Order 1973
- S.I. No. 213/1973 – Local Government (Civil Defence Offices) Regulations 1973

## **7. Findings**

### **7.1 Staffing**

Currently there is 1 fulltime staff member, (Civil Defence Officer) employed. A new post of Assistant Civil Defence Officer was established in 2021 and this position was due to be filled in July 2023 when the appointed person takes up the position. The Civil Defence Officer has responsibility for the oversight and administration of the office.

There are 6,500 volunteers throughout the country and 109 of these volunteers are registered with Donegal Civil Defence. 66 of these volunteers are active weekly. The Director of Service for Economic Development, Emergency Services and Information Systems acts as Line Manager for the Civil Defence Office.

### **7.2 Services**

Currently Donegal Civil Defence is pro-active in community emergency support and assists the local community in the following areas:

- First Aid
- Urban and Water based Search and Rescue
- Auxiliary Fire Fighting
- Kayaking / Boating Techniques
- Radio Communications (Civil Defence have their own independent VHF and UHF Network System)
- Welfare Provision
- Blizzard Conditions
- Gorse Fires
- Flooding
- Assistance with Searches

Over the last number of years, Donegal Civil Defence has supported the Gardaí, HSE, Fire Service and local communities in search and recovery missions and during severe weather conditions.

### **Medical Response**

Civil Defence is a recognised training institute by the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC). Volunteers are certified from Cardiac First Response (CFR) to Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) through Civil Defence. Volunteers are qualified to responder and instructor standard. A large number of volunteers, who work full-time in the statutory ambulance services, provide their expertise and skills to assist the Civil Defence College provide training to volunteers.

Volunteers provide first aid at community to national events; for example, local events, national sporting events and concerts. Civil Defence has access to the appropriate equipment required for administration of patient care within each standard. Civil Defence is authorised to use PHECC's Clinical Practice Guideline (CPG's). Recertification, up-skilling and Continuous Professional Competency (CPC) are provided for all Civil Defence volunteers, to ensure the standard of pre-hospital patient care is maintained.

## **Search & Rescue**

Missing person searches are a common occurrence for callouts for Civil Defence volunteers who work in support of An Garda Síochána and/ or the Irish Coast Guard. Civil Defence volunteers are qualified to national standards, at Responder, Search Manager and Instructor level. Regular joint training exercises are held with both An Garda Síochána and the Coast Guard. As well providing trained and experienced volunteers, Civil Defence has a large range of assets and equipment which can be offered to relevant parties during an incident.

These include 4x4 vehicles, boats, command and control vehicles, trained search dogs and remotely piloted aircraft (drones).

Civil Defence volunteers are certified through the Irish Sailing Association and the Irish Canoe Union to provide boating and kayaking expertise at community and national events, including missing person's searches at coastal locations and inland lakes and waterways.

Civil Defence has an extensive remotely piloted aircraft systems (drone) capability and drone teams are fully licenced and can operate throughout Ireland. They can quickly search inaccessible areas including along shorelines. A thermal imaging capability has recently been added to this service.

Civil Defence has a number of trained search dog teams, dogs are trained both for rescue work and also human remains detection.

## **Emergency Response**

Civil Defence provides second line support to the fire service. Volunteer skills include pumping and transfer of water. During environmental and flooding events Civil Defence provide personnel and equipment in support of the Local Authority Fire Services.

Volunteers are qualified as instructors in Water Awareness, informing parties of the dangers and difficulties working near water. This may be during a missing persons search or a flood event. Civil Defence instructors can also certify Basic Water Rescuer, Swiftwater & Flood First Responder.

The Welfare service is one of the most important services provided by Civil Defence. This service is divided into two areas: Food Preparation and Safety and

Evacuation of Displaced people. Both sections provide an important service, which may be required at every emergency situation.

Civil Defence volunteers are qualified to prepare food to high standards and the purchase and safe storage of food prior to serving is part of the training. Volunteers are certified by the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

The setting up of Evacuation Centres and the Registering of people attending such centres is a role allocated to Civil Defence under the Major Emergency Framework. Civil Defence supports the Primary Response Agencies during such emergencies, specifically in the registration, feeding and other supports to people in need.

In 2022 the Donegal Civil Defence responded to 4 emergency events:

- 2 x Flooding events (Pre-deployment of sandbags)
- 1 x Missing person search
- 1 x Explosion incident

It is envisaged that additional services will continue to be provided for in 2023 in areas of Major Emergency Management, supporting the Dept of Agriculture in the Avian Influenza response and the Community CPR Programme.

## **Radiation Monitoring**

The role of this service is to take radiation readings in the event of a radiological incident. Members of the service are trained in many disciplines such as communication procedures as well as in the reporting of radiation readings.

The Radiation Service has a number of important and specific functions under the National Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents which include:

- Collecting samples of differing types including soil, water and vegetation, and transporting them to the laboratories of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other designated laboratories for analysis.
- Conducting mobile monitoring in each of the local authority areas.
- Assisting, where required, in the implementation of control measures.

## **Communications**

Civil Defence operates a number of radio communications systems. These include:

- V.H.F (Very High Frequency) system which provides wide-area radio coverage. This is a national system that incorporates a network of radio base stations and hill-top radio repeater sites throughout the country. This enables communications between the headquarters and Civil Defence vehicles in each county area.



- U.H.F (Ultra High Frequency) system that is used mainly for on-site radio communications. This provides local radio coverage at incident sites and local areas of operation utilising U.H.F Mobile Radios, fitted to vehicles and Handheld Radios.

Civil Defence also operates a number of TETRA digital radio terminals which provide inter-communication with the primary response agencies, such as the Gardaí, HSE and the Fire Services.

For its water-based operations, Civil Defence utilises Marine V.H.F. radio which enables communications between the boat crews and other marine agencies such as the R.N.L.I., the Coast Guard and the various coastal and harbour radio stations.

Communications training is provided on all aspects of Civil Defence radio operations.

## **Community Assistance**

Although providing emergency support is the priority task of Civil Defence, where resources permit, Civil Defence supports appropriate community events. These events allow volunteers to practice their skills as well as contributing to events within their own local community.

Preference is given to local authority, charitable and not for profit events. Civil Defence support for community events takes many forms, including the provision of medical cover and safety boat cover. To avail of this assistance, the community group/organisers contact the Civil Defence Officer. March to October is traditionally the busiest season for these events.

The Community group/organisation completes an application form requesting the Civil Defence's attendance. The form outlines all the relevant information in relation to the event such as start/finish times, the expected attendance and the details for the Doctor on call. Where possible, applications should reach the Civil Defence Office not later than 28 days in advance of the date of the event for which the application is being made.

- After the application form is received, the scale of charges is sent out to the organisers.
- Safety plan and insurance cover are put in place by the event organisers (Civil Defence must be indemnified on the event's insurance).
- A file is opened for each event – this contains all relevant information.
- Confirmation is sent to the organisation – this is subject to resources being in place.
- Confirmation of event details is sent to the Area Commander – dates, size of venue, crowd volume etc.
- An assessment of new events is carried out in advance – for instance, the Civil Defence Officer ascertains what first aid resources and medical response is available at the event.

- The Area Commander confirms the volunteers to attend – if needed, extra resources can be drafted in from other areas.
- Relevant paperwork is completed – vehicle logbook, duty sheets etc.
- The CDO confirms all details 1-2 days in advance of the event – a driver is assigned to each vehicle and a sign in/out sheet is completed.
- If necessary, relevant incident report forms for pre-hospital/emergency care are filled out after the event – Ambulance Care Report (ACR), Patient Care Report (PCR), Cardiac Arrest Report (CAR). These are recorded in a database by Civil Defence.

In 2022, community assistance was provided to 35 non-emergency community events, providing 3,026 voluntary hours to local charitable and sporting events and local authority sponsored events. This included ambulance and medical cover for the events in question. These events included:

- 13 x Sports events
- 12 x Local Authority events
- 7 x Festivals
- 3 x Christmas events

Civil Defence also provides administration, social spacing, and medical support to the Irish Blood Transfusion Board. In 2022 this support was provided at 59 blood clinics.

### **Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)**

Civil Defence volunteers may be exposed to difficult scenes such as treating badly injured people. Even for experienced emergency personnel, exposure to such abnormal scenes can give rise to 'traumatic stress'. Civil Defence has a Critical Incident Stress Management System (CISM) in place to help volunteers cope with any difficulties arising from their involvement in Civil Defence.

There are four elements to the system.

1. All volunteers are required to attend a Critical Incident Awareness presentation.
2. Civil Defence officers and some volunteers have received 4 days training on CISM. These individuals act as peer-to-peer supports for volunteers.
3. After dealing with a distressing incident the Civil Defence Officer or senior volunteer will assemble volunteers away from the scene to discuss the incident. If the incident is very serious, professional counsellors will be brought in to meet the volunteers.

All Civil Defence volunteers can avail of a free, professional counselling service to help deal with any issues relating to their Civil Defence activities.

### **7.3 Training**

The Department of Defence reports annually on the number of Civil Defence volunteers who meet the minimum training standard. This standard is reviewed periodically by the Department of Defence and Local Authorities.

The Department of Defence also certifies, and quality assures volunteers as instructors across a range of areas which support the five core services.

As well as providing a maximum of 70% grant aid, the Department provides other supports to local Civil Defence units such as central training for local instructors in a "train the trainer" system through the Civil Defence College in Roscrea.

Training is provided weekly in various centres around the county and is delivered nationwide in First Aid, Cardiac First Responder, Occupation First Aid and Emergency Responder Levels. All First Aid training is delivered under the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council Program. Weekly training is also provided in Urban Search and Rescue, Line Rescue and Auxiliary Fire Fighting.

The Civil Defence Office in Donegal provides training courses in the following areas:

- Induction
- CISM
- Child Safeguarding
- Manual Handling
- People Moving
- Medical Services (CPR & Defibrillator First Aid Responder, Emergency First Responder, Emergency Medical Technician)
- Driver
- Radio Communications
- Drones, Auxiliary Fire Service
- Land and Water Search & Rescue (includes life jacket Competency)
- Flood first Responder
- Flood Technician
- Foot drill

All training records are kept both on the local data base and the volunteer register, these records are updated as training occurs.

**Civil Defence Training Courses provided in 2022**

<b>Course Name</b>	<b>No. of Courses Provided</b>	<b>Certifying Body</b>	<b>Delivered to</b>	<b>Total Attendees</b>
Induction	1	Civil Defence College	Civil Defence volunteers	6
Critical incident Stress Management (CISM)	1	Civil Defence College	Civil Defence volunteers	6
Child Safeguarding	1	Civil Defence College	Civil Defence volunteers	6
Medical - Cardiac First Responder	11	PHECC / Civil Defence Branch	Community Groups/CD Volunteers	45
Medical - Cardiac First Responder Student Instructors	1	Not Certified - Assessment Preparation	Civil Defence volunteers	5
Medical - First Aid Responder	1	PHECC / Civil Defence Branch	Civil Defence volunteers	6
Medical - First Aid Responder - Recertification	1	PHECC / Civil Defence Branch	Civil Defence volunteers	6
Medical - First Aid Responder Refresher	1	PHECC / Civil Defence Branch	Civil Defence volunteers	6
Medical - Emergency First Responder Refresher	6	PHECC / Civil Defence Branch	Civil Defence volunteers	31
Medical - Emergency Medical Technician	1	PHECC / Civil Defence Branch	Civil Defence volunteers	5
Manual Handling	4	National Ambulance College & Civil Defence College	Civil Defence volunteers	19

Internal Audit: Final Report: Civil Defence Office

Water Rescue - Boat Training	2	*Not Certified	Civil Defence volunteers	6
Water Rescue - Life Jacket Competency	3	Rescue III	Civil Defence volunteers	10
Auxiliary Fire Service	4	Not Certified	Civil Defence volunteers	24
**Auxiliary Fire Service - Fire Marshalling	4	Certificate of Attendance	DCC staff and Lifeguards	
Auxiliary Fire Service - Fire Safety Training (extinguishers)	2	Not Certified	Civil Defence volunteers	27
Civil Defence ADI Driver Training - Assessments	2	RSA ADI	CD Volunteer Drivers	9
Rope Rescue Training	2	Not Certified – Refresher Training	Civil Defence volunteers	16
Radiation Monitoring Training	2	Civil Defence Branch / EPPA	Civil Defence Volunteers	8
Drone Familiarisation Training	1	Not Certified - Upskilling	Civil Defence Volunteers	2
Radio Instructor Training	1	Not Certified - Instructor Assessment Preparation	Civil Defence Volunteers	5
Avian Influenza Training	1	Certificate of attendance issued	Civil Defence Volunteers	2
<b>Total Courses/Attendees</b>	<b>53</b>			<b>250</b>

\*Note: training that is held weekly/monthly to maintain the volunteers' skills.

\*\*Note: figures are held by DCC Training Section and were not available at the time of this draft report.

## **7.4 Towards 2030**

In June 2020 the Minister with Responsibility for Defence, Paul Kehoe T.D. announced the publication of the policy document "Civil Defence – Towards 2030". The policy document, which is the outcome of a review initiated by the Minister in September 2018, sets out Civil Defence roles and services into the future.

The review involved consultation with all stakeholders including Civil Defence Officers, Civil Defence Volunteers, the Civil Defence Inter-Agency Guidance Team, the Principal Response Agencies, including the Local Authorities who are responsible for the day-to-day management of Civil Defence.

The document confirms the roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders within the Civil Defence service i.e., the Civil Defence Office, The Department of Defence and Local Authorities.

The policy document also sets out the five core Civil Defence services going forward:

1. Emergency Response - Civil Defence's Emergency Response will support the Principal Response Agencies in times of emergencies.
2. Search and Rescue - Civil Defence will continue to support and assist An Garda Síochána in this area.
3. Medical Response - Civil Defence will continue to provide a Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) licenced emergency medical service.
4. Community Assistance - Community events allow volunteers to practice their skills, raise the profile of the organisation and may attract new volunteers. Where resources permit, Civil Defence will continue to support appropriate community events.
5. Radiation Monitoring Service - In 2015, the Department of Defence and the Environmental Protection Agency, consolidated the role of Civil Defence to the measurement of background gamma radiation and the sampling of soil and grass to supplement the automatic recording stations located throughout the State.

Each Local Authority Civil Defence unit is required to have trained personnel and equipment to allow them to undertake each of the five core services. The provision of any of these core services is dependent on the availability of appropriately trained volunteers in Local Authorities.

Other operational supports including drones, mapping, sonar, search dogs, welfare and communications are discussed in section 6, but may be used across all five core services.

## **7.5 Policy and Procedures**

Civil Defence policy is set down by the Minister for Defence through the Civil Defence Branch of the Department of Defence. The Department is also responsible for the strategic management and development of Civil Defence at national level.

Currently, there is not a full list of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) available. The SOPs for each individual service are issued by the Civil Defence Branch / Dept of Defence and are held separately for each service.

### **7.5.1 Health & Safety**

The Civil Defence Office does not currently have a Risk Register in place but does have an incident book which records incidents where injuries and potential injuries have occurred.

There is no single Health & Safety Management file in place to record relevant data and records, all service records are kept separately (e.g. Medical, Rescue, Auxiliary Fire etc).

Previously, Civil Defence staff had regular meetings with Donegal County Council's Health & Safety team, however these meetings have not taken place for some years and are not scheduled to recommence in the near future. However, in the event of an incident/ accident occurring within Civil Defence a report is sent to a Health & Safety Officer and necessary actions are put in place.

All Civil Defence uniform and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is issued centrally by the Civil Defence Branch/Dept of Defence. The only exception to this process was for Fire Suits that were purchased in 2022 for the Auxiliary Fire Service Crews, these were procured from an approved supplier in accordance with the specification requirements.

## **7.6 Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS)**

In 2021 the Department of Defence entered a contract to develop a new on-line Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS) for Civil Defence, the system is currently undergoing end-to-end user testing by Department staff, CDOs and some volunteers. The system will also be subject to security testing before the system 'goes-live' to protect volunteer data. The Department will continue preparing data, such as training records, that will be migrated across from the current systems. The 'go live' date was scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Volunteers will be able to access VEMS on their smartphone, laptop or tablet. Using the system, they will be able to receive messages about upcoming training events and duties as well as responding to confirm or decline attendance at events.

Timely reminders will also be sent to help ensure their Garda vetting, mandatory training skills and certifications are kept in date. Contact details can be updated online, and a calendar of events will also be available to volunteers.

It is envisaged that VEMS will help CDOs and ACDOs in their day-to-day work of managing, training, and deploying volunteers. These staff will have access to dashboards with key information about their volunteers, their skills, and their training. The system will also help them manage their equipment, e.g., vehicle maintenance and inspections. They will also be able to use the system to place orders for uniforms and PPE from central stores. CDOs will be able to run reports on all the activities of their Unit.

VEMS will provide the Department of Defence with accurate and up to date information on Civil Defence processes across the country. The system will aim to aid the Department with issues such as the efficient management of ordering and allocating stocks and equipment. It will also assist in organising central training and certifying training across the country as well as speeding up processes such as Garda vetting of volunteers.

||

## **7.7 Financial Management**

A sum in the amount of €189,657 was provided in respect of Civil Defence in Donegal County Council's Revenue Budget for 2022, this constituted an increase of €45,050 from the previous year.

Primary areas of expenditure provided for included:

- Salaries: €110,925
- Training for volunteers and associated costs: €20,200
- Buildings, vehicles, and equipment maintenance and running costs: €58,532.

The Department of Defence secured funding through the Dormant Accounts Fund in late 2019 to upgrade the excising vehicle fleet around the country. Subsequently, through this funding, in 2021 Donegal Civil Defence was allocated €35,000 towards the purchase of 1 Ford Transit Van as a communications vehicle for the service. Additional funding was also sought from the Department of Defence for the conversion works and the vehicle was put into service in 2022.

### **7.7.1 Income and Expenditure**

The Civil Defence Officer keeps a record of income and expenditure on excel spreadsheets with the expenditure element being made available at bi-monthly meetings with instructors and area commanders.



Below are the overall income and expenditure figures for the Civil Defence Office for the period 2020-2022:

**Income**

<b>Income Type</b>	<b>Amount (€)</b>
Department of Defence	124,643.30
Community Support events	5,580
Training	1,370.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>131,593.31</b>

As of June 2023, there is an outstanding amount of €600 for Community Support income relating to 3 separate community events in 2022.

**Expenditure (excl. payroll)**

<b>Job Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount (€)</b>
853CV002	Civil Defence Admin	90,625.09
853CV007	Capital Purchase Civil Defence	101,441.37
<b>Total</b>		<b>192,066.46</b>

The main areas of expenditure for Civil Defence in 2022 were:

<b>Description</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Volunteer Subsistence	€3,246.67
Office Stationery & Equipment	€3,254.42
Instructor - Fees	€3,325.05
Staff Travel	€3,932.75
Cleaning / Caretaking	€4,512.00
Purchase & Maintenance Radio Equipment	€4,877.67
Instructor - Travel	€5,085.40
Heating Oil	€5,219.00
Maintenance - Carndonagh Fire Station	€5,391.61
Electrical / Electric Meter	€5,514.08
Vehicle Fuel	€5,713.23
Maintenance - Building, Fall Arrest System etc	€6,663.48
Vehicle Maintenance (Ford Transit Van)	€33,217.98

### **7.7.2 Assets**

Civil Defence vehicles and Civil Defence equipment that are 100% funded by the Civil Defence are on the Civil Defence Branch asset register. All other equipment / Vehicles not funded 100% are on the Local Authority's Asset Register.

Major items of equipment available for training and community response are:

- 16-Seater Minibuses
- Rib Inflatable Boats x 2
- Wheel Drives x 3
- Kayaks x 14
- Ambulance x 3
- Kayak Trailer x 2
- Search And Rescue Vehicle complete with Stretcher and Winch
- Fire Tender x 1
- Incident Control Vehicle x 1
- Generator x 1

### **7.8 Data Protection, GDPR**

The data management system in the Civil Defence office is operated in accordance with Donegal County Council's data management policies and procedures. DCC is required to collate and process significant amounts of "personal data" in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act, 2018.

## **8. Conclusions and Recommendations**

It is recommended that the findings in this report be considered, and that appropriate remedial action be taken where necessary.

### **8.1 Services**

#### **Conclusion**

Anecdotal evidence from both Donegal County Council and Civil Defence staff indicates that there is a lack of awareness of the role and duties Civil Defence carries out within County Donegal.

Although most people are aware of the presence of Civil Defence in emergency situations and at community events, other support services such as attending gorse fires, providing fire safety training and flood response are not as widely known among the general public.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Civil Defence office undergoes a promotional campaign to improve awareness of the various roles it plays within the county. Methods of promotion such as social media platforms, leaflet campaigns and school visits should be explored to help in this campaign.

## **8.2 Policy and Procedures**

### **Conclusion**

Although the Civil Defence Office keeps an incident log to record incidents when providing services, there is currently no Risk Register in place for the section. There is also no central list of Standard Operating Procedures available.

### **Recommendation**

Given the nature of the services Civil Defence provides including attending emergency incidents, it is recommended that a Risk Register be completed and put in place for the Civil Defence office.

It is also recommended that consultation between all relevant parties (e.g. Senior Management, DCC Health & Safety team, Civil Defence staff) takes place in order to review the current operating procedures and assess the need for a centralised list of Standard Operating Procedures and to review and update existing procedures, where necessary.

## **8.3 Health & Safety**

### **Conclusion**

There is no single Health & Safety folder within Civil Defence with all service records kept separately within their own sections.

Currently, there are no regular meetings between the Civil Defence Office and the Health & Safety Team in Donegal County Council. This lack of interaction may lead to a lack of awareness in relation to new or updated Health & Safety policies.

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that a central repository of all relevant Health & Safety information be put in place as an amalgamation of all files would make it easier to ensure good practice is adhered to and all relevant information is freely available at a given time. Initiatives such as working groups and toolbox talks would help promote awareness of this area within Civil Defence.

## **8.4 Systems Analysis**

### **Conclusions**

The new Volunteer and Equipment Management System (VEMS) for Civil Defence was due to go live in July 2023 with the system undergoing testing at the time of this audit. It is envisaged that there will be a number of benefits when this system is fully implemented including remote access for volunteers, improved data storage and the provision of up-to-date information to the Department of Defence.

However, the implementation of the system required large tranches of data to be transferred from existing systems and it may be some time before the new system is fully tested and assessed.

### **Recommendations**

Given the amount of information involved and new work processes involved in implementing the system, it is recommended that a review of VEMS be carried out by relevant Civil Defence and Department of Defence staff at year end to assess any potential issues or difficulties being experienced by users and to implement improvements where necessary.

## **9. Acknowledgement**

I would like to acknowledge the assistance and co-operation of the Civil Defence Officer and Civil Defence volunteers during the course of this Audit.

*Sean Canning*

---

**A/INTERNAL AUDITOR**

**Appendix 1 – Circulation List**

**17/07/2024**      **Final Report sent to:**

[Redacted]

**Copied to:**

[Redacted]

**20/05/2024**      **Draft Report sent to:**

[Redacted]

**Copied to:**

## **Appendix 2 – Audit Classification**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Definition</b>
1. Substantial	<p>Evaluation Opinion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a robust system of risk management, control and governance</li> <li>- The systems in place should ensure that objectives are fully achieved</li> <li>- The control processes tested are being applied consistently</li> </ul>
2. Adequate	<p>Evaluation Opinion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a generally adequate system of risk management, control and governance</li> <li>- The systems in place should ensure that essential objectives are fully achieved</li> <li>- The control processes tested are, in general, being applied consistently</li> <li>- However, there are some weaknesses in control that are placing some objectives at risk. There is a risk that some objectives may not be fully achieved</li> <li>- Some improvements are required to enhance the adequacy and/or effectiveness of risk management, control and governance</li> </ul>
3. Limited	<p>Evaluation Opinion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a weak system of risk management, control and governance</li> <li>- There is considerable risk that objectives will not be achieved</li> <li>- The control processes that exist are not being applied consistently</li> <li>- There are some significant weaknesses in control in a number of areas</li> <li>- Prompt action is required to improve the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, control and governance</li> </ul>
4. Unsatisfactory	<p>Evaluation Opinion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is an inadequate system of risk management, control and governance</li> <li>- The system has failed or there is a real and substantial risk that the system will fail to meet its objectives</li> <li>- Systems/processes are open to significant error or abuse</li> <li>- Urgent action is required to improve the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, control and governance</li> </ul>
5. No Assurance	<p>Evaluation Opinion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internal Audit has been unable to form an opinion on the system of risk management, control and governance</li> <li>- Internal Audit has been unable to access or has been prevented from accessing essential information required to form an opinion</li> <li>- Internal Audit has not received the cooperation of staff/management</li> </ul>

**Appendix 3 – IA23/02 Civil Defence Office - Summary Recommendations**

	<b><i>Recommendations</i></b>	<b><i>Response from Directorate</i></b>	<b><i>Follow-up Actions undertaken by</i></b>	<b><i>Timeline</i></b>
1	<p><b><u>8.1 Services</u></b></p> <p>It is recommended that the Civil Defence office undergoes a promotional campaign to improve awareness of the various roles it plays within the county.</p> <p>Methods of promotion such as social media platforms, leaflet campaigns and school visits should be explored to help in this campaign.</p>	<p>Civil Defence has developed a Donegal Civil Defence Facebook Page and has commenced promoting their weekly training activities and weekly community duties on the social media platform. Where appropriate Civil Defence uses the Civil Defence website to promote their activities.</p> <p>An open day is planned for August 2024 to showcase the services of Civil Defence to the broader community.</p> <p>Commitment has been given to the Mary from Dungloe Festival Emergency Services Day 27 July to showcase the services of Civil Defence.</p>	<p>Civil Defence Officer / Civil Defence Volunteer Area Commanders</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
2	<p><b><u>8.2 Policies and Procedures</u></b></p> <p>Given the nature of the services Civil Defence provides including attending emergency incidents, it is recommended that a Risk Register be completed and put in place for the Civil Defence office.</p> <p>It is also recommended that consultation between all relevant parties (e.g. Senior Management, DCC Health &amp; Safety team, Civil Defence staff) takes place in order to review the current operating procedures and asses the need for a centralised list of Standard Operating</p>	<p>Two meetings have already taken place with the H&amp;S Team and the Civil Defence Officer (CDO).</p> <p>The DCC Health and Safety team has carried out a H &amp; S inspection in the Civil Defence Headquarters, Stranorlar and a report forwarded to the Civil Defence Officer with recommendations for implementation.</p> <p>The CDO has also reviewed all H&amp;S procedures in place in the Civil Defence Auxiliary Fire Station, Carndonagh with a view to having a similar inspection take place.</p>	<p>Civil Defence Officer in conjunction with the H&amp;S team.</p>	<p>Target completion Q4, 2024</p>

	Procedures and to review and update existing procedures, where necessary.	A Risk Register and Register of Standard Operating Procedures is to be compiled as part of this work.		
3	<p><b><u>8.3 Health and Safety</u></b></p> <p>It is recommended that a central repository of all relevant Health &amp; Safety information be put in place as an amalgamation of all files would be easier to ensure good practice is adhered to and all relevant information is freely available at a given time.</p> <p>Initiatives such as working groups and toolbox talks would help promote awareness of this area within Civil Defence.</p>	<p>Noted and agreed.</p> <p>The imminent appointment of an Assistant Civil Defence Officer will allow the time to be given to developing a single H&amp;S Management file which will amalgamate all relevant information.</p> <p>Quarterly, the Civil Defence Officer meets with the volunteer area commanders and instructors and H&amp;S is always an agenda item. The information from these meetings is disseminated through the commander / instructors to the volunteers in their area of responsibility.</p> <p>H&amp;S procedures forms part of the training delivered to the volunteers through their respective instructors on a weekly basis.</p> <p>The DCC H&amp;S Team Member is to attend the Area Commanders / Service instructors next quarterly meeting and continue this periodically.</p>	Civil Defence Officer	Target completion Q1 2025
4	<p><b><u>8.4 Systems Analysis</u></b></p> <p>Given the amount of information involved and new work processes involved in implementing the system, it is recommended that a review of VEMS be carried out by relevant Civil Defence and Department of Defence staff at year end to assess any potential issues or difficulties being experienced by users</p>	<p>Ongoing issues with VEMS are being highlighted daily by CDO's / ACDO's and volunteers. To address these a VEMS support team has been set up by the Civil Defence Branch.</p> <p>The Civil Defence Branch are in continuing talks with CODEC (System Provider) to address the 'bugs'/ technical issues in</p>	Civil Defence Officer in consultation with the Civil Defence Branch	Target completion is year-end 2024 but could be extended depending on progress.



Internal Audit: Final Report: Civil Defence Office

	and to implement improvements where necessary.	the system.  Additional training has been delivered to all end users to address some of the ongoing problems. This training is continuing on a need basis.		
--	--	--	--	--