

LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL

DRAFT



ANNUAL BUDGET FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2009

CONTENTS

Section 1

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT	3
SOCIAL POLICY AND HOUSING	10
TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE – ROADS & WATER SERVICES	14
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	24
ENVIRONMENTAL AND EMERGENCY SERVICES	28
RECREATION AND AMENITY - PARKS, LIBRARY SERVICE, CULTURE, SPORTS, COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE	37
AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE, CORPORATE SERVICES	45

Section 2

DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET	
TABLE A - F (NOTE NO TABLE C FOR CITY COUNCILS)	1 - 33

**LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CATHRACH LUIMNEACH**

Árus na Cathrach
Luimneach

3rd December 2008

TO: HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR AND EACH MEMBER OF LIMERICK CITY
COUNCIL

**Annual Budget for the year
1st January 2009 to 31st December 2009**

Introduction

During 2008 there has been a substantial change in the economic circumstances in which we operate. This change has been evident here in Limerick, throughout Ireland, and in almost every country worldwide. Tax revenues nationally are falling significantly in particular in the areas of VAT and stamp duty demonstrating a worrying downturn in consumer spending and a major slowdown in property transactions. Budgets brought to you in previous years have been expansionary with service and works programme initiatives being developed year on year. The circumstances in which we operate have changed. We must reflect economic realities and have due regard for those who benefit from our services and those contributing to the costs of service.

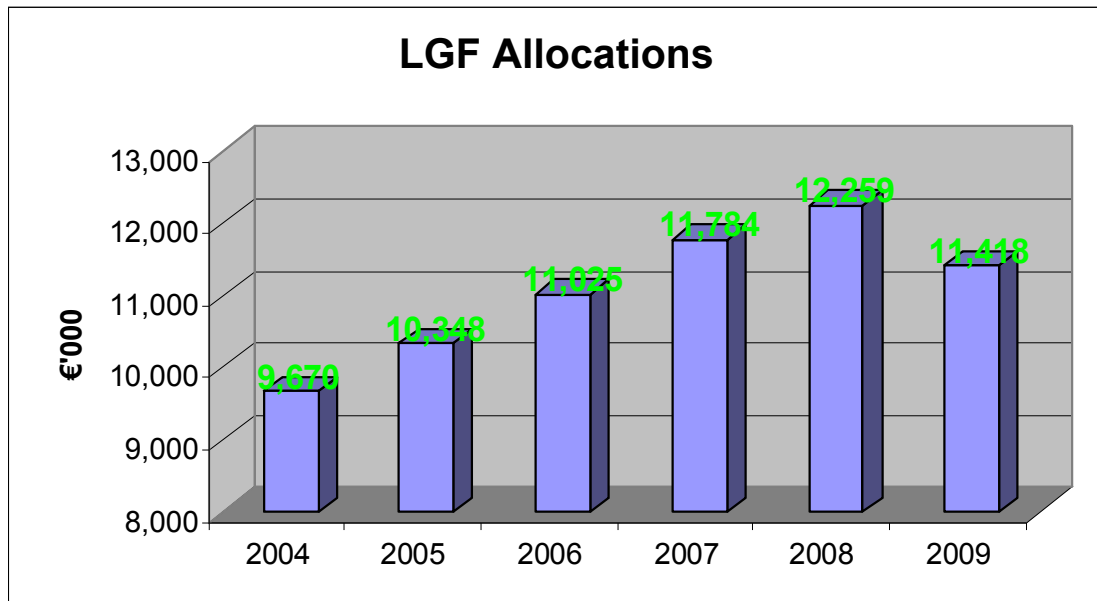
Economic Outlook

The short and medium term economic outlook points to a period of contraction.. Ireland is a small open economy with consequent vulnerability to global market shifts. This harsh and difficult external environment has and will cause considerable pressure on the Irish economy. GDP and GNP are projected at – 0.9% and –1.3% respectively for 2009, from an expected outturn of – 0.8% and -1.4% in 2008.

I have taken careful consideration of these issues in arriving at this draft budget. As in previous years, supporting competitiveness and supporting social programmes have been the primary drivers in framing a programme of works and services. Difficult trading conditions exist for all organisations, private and public sector. Limerick City Council is ever conscious of minimising the cost of services provided to users.

Local Government Fund

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government have advised that Limerick City Council's Local Government Fund Allocation for the year 2009 is €11,418,303. This allocation will be reviewed following the introduction of the non-principal private residences charge announced in the Budget. The 2009 allocation represents a 6.86% decrease from the 2008 allocation as set out in the following graph:



This reduced allocation arises through a reduced level of buoyancy in the Motor Tax yield and financial management measures applied as part of overall control of public sector spending. In contrast the 2008 allocation increased 4.58% on the 2007 allocation. The Local Government Fund represents a major source of funding for Limerick City Council. As a result of such a reduction in the fund balancing a budget and maintaining current service levels has been extremely challenging.

Budget 2009

In presenting the Annual Budget for the year ended 31st December 2009 to Council, I wish to take this opportunity, to summarise the financial position of Limerick City Council at 31st December 2007. The Annual Financial Statement of Limerick City Council for the year 2007 shows that the accumulated Balance on the Revenue Account is a credit position of €120,870 at 31st December 2007 (compared to the accumulated Credit Balance on the Revenue Account at 31st December 2006 of €323,872).

Current outturn figures indicate that the Revenue Credit will be maintained in 2008. Limerick City Council had an accumulated deficit for every year from 1979 to 2005. The improved financial position must be maintained and this will be done by a combination of cost management and income maximisation. The 2009 budget reflects the need to continue the strong financial management ethos while making every effort to meet the ever increasing demands on the services of Limerick City Council.

In framing the budget I have had regard to the demands that will be placed on this Council as a result of the Government decision to reduce the level of funding from the local government fund.

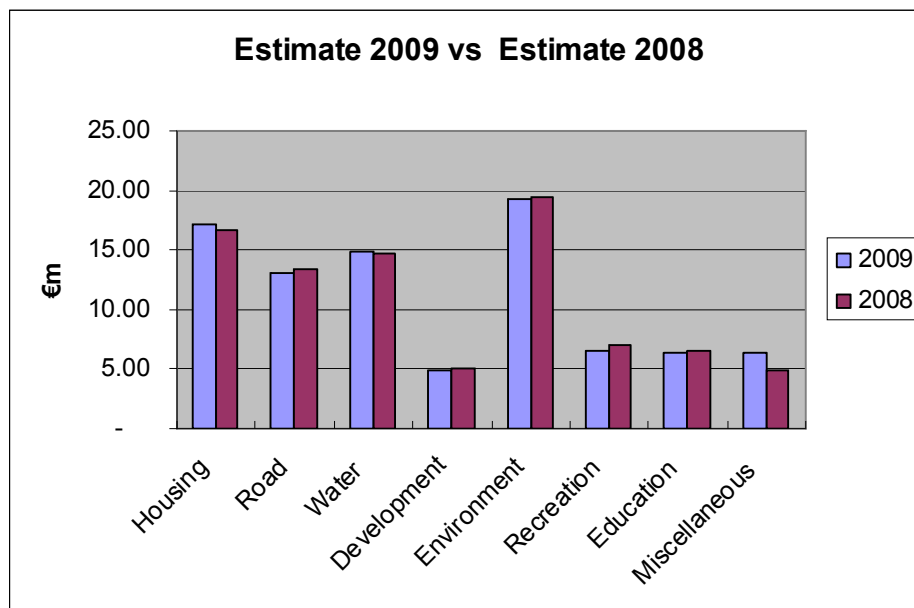
I will now set out the proposals for Expenditure and Income for 2009.

Expenditure – 2009

The Budget for 2009 provides for expenditure of €88.81 million. This represents an increase of almost €985,788 over the Budget for 2008, an increase of 1.1%. The following table sets out the expenditure by Division:

	Budget 2009	Budget 2008
1. Housing and Building	17,142,347	16,749,787
2. Road Transportation and Safety	13,003,249	13,373,128
3. Water Supply and Sewerage	14,942,904	14,640,853
4. Development Incentives and Controls	4,969,423	5,116,808
5. Environmental Protection	19,343,719	19,470,903
6. Recreation and Amenity	6,549,217	7,029,433
7. Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	6,420,527	6,459,153
8. Miscellaneous Services	6,435,200	4,980,734
TOTAL	88,806,586	87,820,798

The following graph depicts estimated expenditure by Division for 2009, compared to 2008.



Payroll and Pensions

Notwithstanding the 3% reduction on pay costs achieved as required, pay costs have increased arising from the cost of implementation of national pay agreements. These costs include:

- A 2.5% increase from 1st September 2008 with full year impact in 2009
- A 3.5% increase from 1st September 2009 (following an eleven month pay pause)
- Commitments to specific grades under the second benchmarking reports
- Increases to reflect movements along incremented scales

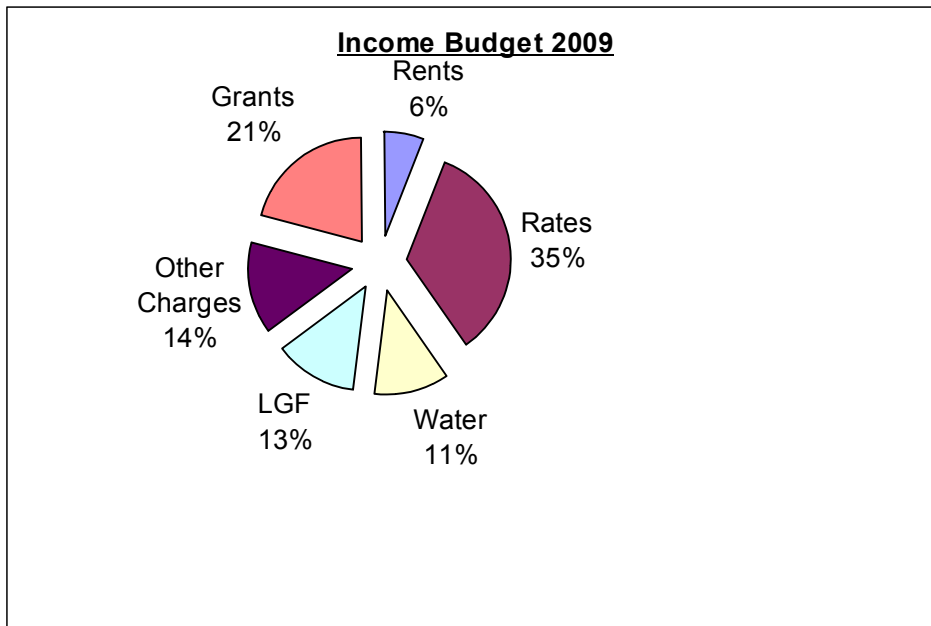
In order to minimize the increase in payroll costs in 2009 and to comply with the Government directive to reduce payroll costs a number of measures have been reflected in the budget. These include the non renewal of temporary contracts, non filling of vacancies that arise in 2009 along with the non filling of a number of vacancies that arose in 2008 and reductions in overtime and allowances. The pay costs and staff numbers will continue to be examined during 2009 in order to identify further savings where possible.

Non-Payroll Costs

There are a number of new costs and unavoidable increases in current costs facing the City Council for 2009. I have made every effort to maintain expenditure in critical areas. Non payroll costs have increased by 3%. In particular insurance, public lighting, energy and provision for rates refunds have increased significantly. Details of proposals are set out in the following pages.

Many Members of the City Council have requested that we make provision for an increased level of investment in improving the environment for Local Communities. These improvements would include traffic calming measures, footpath repairs, public lighting and environmental enhancements. There is provision in the Roads and Environment budgets for such works and it is intended in the New Year to have consultation with the Ward Members in relation to how best to expend this provision.

Income Proposals – 2009



The effective valuation of 380,524 (2008) has increased by 15,838 to 396,362 for 2009. This represents an increase of 4.2%. The increase in valuation primarily arises as a result of the boundary extension granted to Limerick City in March 2008. Without the effect of the boundary extension the effective valuation increase would have been circa 0.8%.

The year ahead is forecast as presenting difficult trading conditions for all businesses. Consumer confidence is low; credit availability has lessened, along with the presence of competition from external markets. As mentioned above the rates base is expected to hold next year with neither significant expansion nor contraction apart from the impact of the boundary adjustment.

Limerick City Council faces cost pressures in the operation of its many services. For example we must support the disadvantaged parts of the City, continue funding of community groups, maintain appropriate fire cover, provide public lighting and maintain our high standards of street cleaning. Nonetheless, this draft budget has been constructed to limit inflationary pressures in the Limerick economy.

It is vitally important to the City's future that we maintain the optimum conditions to support and increase economic activity. Such activity provides employment and also generates the rates necessary to fund a significant proportion of the essential work of the City Council.

This Council has demonstrated a commitment to the competitiveness of the City by being the first Local Authority to reduce the rates charge in adopting the annual budget for 2006. This initiative was continued in the 2007 and 2008 budgets and the following table compares the level of rate increase in the other four cities to the level of reduction achieved in Limerick City.

City Council	% Increase / (Decrease) in Rates 2005 to 2008
Galway	12.92%
Waterford	12.46%
Dublin	12.06%
Cork	10.34%
Limerick	-1.74%

If the City is to fulfil its full potential as the Gateway of the Mid-West, then we need to have a strong and vibrant City Centre. An increase in the annual rate on valuation by 3.0% to a rate of 76.6063 is proposed. This is the first time since 2005 that rates have been increased and I believe the proposed rate strikes an appropriate balance between the need to maintain competitiveness and maintain essential services.

I have included a sum of €11,418,303 in the Budget for 2009 in respect of the Local Government Fund. This represents a decrease of almost 7% on the amount received in 2008.

I have also included a contribution by the DoEHLG towards the domestic portion of the operational cost of the water treatment plant at Clareville. I have assumed that the operational costs of water services will be fully funded by a combination of this contribution, a portion of the Local Government Fund, water charges to non domestic customers in the City and charges to Limerick County Council and Clare County Council.

During 2008 a metering programme has been completed and as a result there is a change in the basis of charging for water and waste water in 2008. Over 2,200 meters have been installed and all customers will be billed a fixed standing charge plus a volume charge based on metered consumption. The consolidated (water and waste water) volume charge for 2009 is proposed at €2.30 per m³ and the consolidated standing charge is proposed at €300 per annum.

Conclusion

The draft Budget now presented to Members for their consideration reflects:-

- The need to maintain essential services despite reductions in Local Government Fund.
- The need to limit costs increases to the users of our services
- The need to continue a programme of investment and development of the City.
- The need to match spending programmes with resources.
- The need to support regeneration proposals for disadvantaged areas of Limerick City.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of Council for their assistance and support during the last year. In particular I wish to express my thanks to the Mayor, Councillor John Gilligan and his predecessor, Councillor Ger Fahy for their wholehearted commitment and support this year.

I also wish to express my thanks to the Directors, Mr. Kieran Lehane, Ms. Caroline Curley, Mr. Pat Dowling, Mr. Pat Dromey and their respective teams for their commitment and high quality work. I am very grateful to all the staff in the Finance Department, in particular Mr. John Field, Mr. Pat Murnane, Mr. Mark Connolly, Ms. Angela Murphy and Ms. Deirdre Byrne, for the many hours of work involved in the compilation of this Budget.

I look forward to the full support of the Members at the Statutory Budget Meeting to be held at 2pm on Thursday 11th December 2008.

Tom Mackey
City Manager

SOCIAL POLICY & HOUSING

Housing Capital Programme in 2008

The Housing Action Plan for 2004 – 2008 is due to finish at the end of December 2008 and a new plan will be presented to Council early in 2009 for its consideration. During 2008 considerable capital resources were expended and the funding role of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is acknowledged. The estimated outturns on the principal exchequer funded programmes for 2008 are as follows:-

Housing Construction/Acquisition	€22.4m
Regeneration	€8.0m
Home Improvements	€1.1m
Affordable Housing	€2.4m
Central Heating	€3.0m
Traveller Accommodation	€6.4m
Overall Total	€43.3m

This is a very high level of investment in housing services in the city and the benefits that accrue to residents, applicants and the council are considerable. The various action plans and policies approved by the members of the council facilitate the drawdown of these funds. The staff of the Housing section will continue to work closely with councillors to optimise investment in housing services.

The Fitzgerald Report alluded to the undue concentration of social housing in Limerick city. As a result of this the council is supply constrained within the current city boundary with a high dependence on casual vacancies. As regeneration progresses it is possible that the supply of casual vacancies will decline. In order to deal more effectively with this matter, consultation has commenced on a proposed joint housing strategy.

Glasgow Park Remedial Works

The Council has advertised for expressions of interest for remedial works for the Glasgow Park housing estate and it is expected that works will commence early in 2009.

Hyde Road, Bourke Avenue and Rathbane flat complexes

Following representations from Councillors in early 2008, considerable and welcome progress was made in the de-tenanting/demolition of the above obsolete flat complexes. This programme will continue in 2009.

Regeneration

During 2008 a team of 8 staff was recruited by the council to facilitate the Regeneration Programme. A draft Limerick Regeneration Masterplan was presented for consideration at the October 2008 council meeting and approved in principle. A special meeting of the council held on 24th November also considered the plan. Since the commencement of the process the council has expended in excess of €20m on regeneration and will continue with this work in 2009, again with the funding support of the Department of the Environment. An action plan is being prepared for 2009 for consideration by the members of the council.

Housing Needs Assessment

A Housing needs Assessment was carried out as of 31st March 2008. A report on this assessment was brought to the Housing SPC in September 2008 and revealed that a total of 1,928 households were considered to be in need of housing. The previous assessment carried out in March 2005 showed a net need of 845 households. This represents an increase of 128% in a 3 year period. In effect the net waiting list is rising by 30 new households per month. Possible reasons for such a large increase may include a rise in applications from non national households and more rent supplement applications opting for local authority housing. It is likely that owing to the deterioration in the economy that this growth in the waiting list will accelerate. The Housing Department is currently considering how best to respond to this increased demand through a range of social housing options.

Rental Accommodation Scheme (R.A.S.)

The rollout of the Rental Accommodation Scheme was significantly progressed in 2008 with a total of 90 transfers completed. The Scheme caters for the needs of persons in receipt of rent supplement for 18 months or longer and who have a long term housing need. The aim of the scheme is to provide good quality rented accommodation for qualifying applicants. It is anticipated that an additional 100 qualifying applicants will be catered for under the Scheme in 2009. A total of 454 inspections were carried out in 2008 under the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 1993.

Expenditure in Estates

A sum of €200,000 is being provided in 2009 for Social and Community Grants. A total of 11 groups received grant aid in 2008. In addition to the above, a further sum of €280,000 is being allocated to fund estate groups located in O'Malley Park, St. Mary's Park, Keyes Park, Carew/Kincora, Watergate, Our Lady of Lourdes, Moyross and Saint Munchins. Works carried out directly by the council will also be funded from this budget.

A Housing Inspector was recently appointed and introduced to the Housing SPC at its November meeting. The inspector will be responsible for ensuring that tenants comply

with the terms of their tenancy agreements in relation to the upkeep of their homes and other matters. The Community Co-ordinators continue working in following areas, Kileely/Thomondgate, Watergate/St. John's and the Janesboro/Kennedy Park/Glasgow Park/Rathbane area. The project has been made extremely welcome in each of these communities as the staff have integrated with other groups within the community. Events such as the summer fun days, crime awareness for the elderly and the Halloween children's parties proved to be a great success, while the added visible presence in the areas has been welcomed by many elderly residents.

Disabled Persons Grant/Housing Adaptation/Mobility Grants

As a result of a Government decision, responsibility for Housing Aid for the Elderly was transferred to Local Authorities in 2008. The Council received an initial exchequer allocation of €524,238 for the above schemes which allowed an overall expenditure of €758,000 with the balance of funds coming from the council's own resources. On foot the high level of demand for these grants, the Council secured a supplementary Exchequer allocation of €300,000. Final expenditure on these schemes in 2008 will exceed €1m.

Housing Maintenance

The Central Heating Programme has been completed by the Council in 2008 at a total cost of €9.04m. Central heating installation was carried out in 1,125 homes and this was partly funded by the Exchequer with the balance coming from the Council's resources.

The Housing Section services a rented stock of c. 2,800 units. Services are provided to houses in the Northside from the Moyross Depot and in the Southside by the Rathbane Depot. A dedicated re-lettings crew operates from Garryowen, dealing with in excess of 180 casual vacancies per annum. The budget for maintenance, repair and improvement for 2009 will be €3.3 million. Over 1,600 requests for repairs are dealt with annually.

Homeless Services

In 2008 the Government launched "The Way Home: a Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness 2008-2013" which has the aim of eliminating long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Ireland by 2010. A progress report on the Homeless Strategy and Action Plan 2008-2010 was presented to the Housing SPC at its meeting of the 30th April 2008. The focus for the Council will be on the provision of units for the City's homeless population with special regard to the needs of single persons. There will be greater inter and intra agency cooperation with all statutory and voluntary agencies.

RAPID Programme

The RAPID programme in Limerick is based in 3 areas of the City. In 2008 the programme has helped to secure funding for works such as; traffic calming measures

estate enhancement works such as improvements in public lighting and removal of graffiti. The graffiti removal programme commenced in November 2008.

Traveller Action Plan

A new Traveller Accommodation Plan 2009 – 2013 is currently being prepared and was considered by the Housing SPC at its meeting of the 3rd November 2008. The Draft Plan has now been advertised and submissions/observations invited.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE – ROADS & WATER SERVICES

“The overall aim of the Transportation and Infrastructure Department of Limerick City Council is to continue

- 1. to maintain and improve the road network within the City, promote and encourage an integrated sustainable public transport system with due regard for the safety and amenity of all,*
- 2. to provide potable water of a suitable quality and quantity to meet the needs of all of the City’s (and part of counties Limerick and Clare) users,*
- 3. to provide a treatment facility for waste water from the City and City environs to meet the discharge requirements,*
- 4. to provide the appropriate infrastructure to support and sustain the economic and social development of the City”.*

The Council’s Corporate Plan contains a number of key strategies that this Department is advancing. Amongst these are:

- Accelerate the physical re-development of the city centre to improve its streetscapes, appearance, facilities and accessibility
- Drive the economic development of the city to maximise investment potential using the City’s strategic location and connections to the transport network
- Work with the National Roads Authority and the Department of Transport in the delivery of the transport and associated elements of the National Development Plan and Transport 21.
- Enhance the character of the city and range of amenities and facilities

Roads and Traffic

The Roads and Traffic Section of Limerick City Council is primarily responsible for the design and construction of roads, maintenance of the existing street network, traffic management and safety, provision of public transport facilities, strategic transportation planning, regulation of street use and the management of public lighting. In addition to this the roads and transportation department are also responsible for the delivery of projects under the City Centre Strategy and the Riverside Strategy including Bedford Row, Thomas Street and Clancy Strand, O’Callaghan Strand and the Orbital Route.

The public road network in the city is primarily comprised of local, regional and national primary routes with one national secondary route. The length of national primary route in the city area has reduced significantly with the construction of the Southern Ring Road and the reclassification of National Primary roads.

1 Southern Ring Road (Phase 2)

Construction of Phase 2 of the Southern Ring Road commenced during the summer of 2006. This circa €800 million scheme involves the construction of a tunnel under the River Shannon at Bunlicky and the construction of over 10km of new dual carriageway linking the N18 in Coonagh with the N20 at its existing junction with the John Carew Park Link Road. Construction work is expected to be completed in mid 2010 and this new river crossing is expected to remove over 20,000 vehicles per day from Limerick city centre. The contractors constructing the tunnel achieved a significant milestone on the scheme this summer when the tunnel sections were successfully floated out and immersed in position under the riverbed. The contracting consortium is Direct Route and they have won a 35-year concession from the NRA to build, maintain and operate this road.

2. Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road

Limerick City Council appointed Malone O'Regan McGillicuddy Consultant Engineers for the design of the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road which includes a link road to Moyross. This road will open up the north side of the city, is a vital component for the regeneration Moyross, and may form part of an overall Northern Distributor Road of Limerick City. Progress on the scheme has been good during 2008 with the constraints study, route selection process and site surveys now complete. The EIS for the scheme is now almost complete and will be submitted to An Bord Plenala in January. At present Limerick City Council is proposing the construction of a dual-carriageway to high quality urban standards with at-grade junctions. The scheme will involve the construction of two new rail bridges and the upgrading of Knockalisheen road back into Watchhouse Cross. This scheme, subject to funding and approval by the Department of Transport and a favourable outcome from the EIS process should be fully designed and tendered by the end of 2009 with construction starting in 2010. The estimated cost of this scheme including land Acquisition is circa €38 million.

3. Road Maintenance

In 2008 Limerick City Council carried out in excess of 100,000m² road surface overlay and strengthening works at various locations throughout the city including major resurfacing works at;

1. Condell Road (N18)
2. Hyde Road
3. North Circular Road
4. Shannon Bridge
5. Sarsfield Bridge
6. Sarsfield Street
7. New Road Killeely
8. Anne Street
9. Greenfields
10. Lower Park Road

11. Rebogue Cross
12. O Donaghue Avenue
13. Ballinacurra Gardens
14. Woodview
15. Sir Harry's Mall
16. Belfield Lane
17. Naughtons Place
18. Canal Bank
19. Reidy Park
20. Little O'Curry Street

In addition to the above almost 15,000m² footpaths were reconstructed throughout the city. The ongoing programme of road and footpath restoration will be continued in 2009. Again priority will be given to the reduction and minimisation of risk with specific road works to be carried out in a number of areas in accordance with the funding that is expected to be allocated to Limerick City Council by the NRA and the DoEHLG in 2009.

A detailed and comprehensive roads programme will be brought before the Council in early 2009. This program will take into consideration all requests for road improvements received from members during 2008.

4. City Centre Remodelling Project

The regeneration of the City Centre area to create a high quality public realm is a priority for the Transport and Infrastructure department. In this respect several projects are currently being progressed and these include:

(b) Thomas Street/Augustinian Lane/Little Catherine Street/Little William Street.

Works were completed during early 2008 on Thomas Street, Little William Street, Augustinian Lane and on Little Catherine Street to create a high quality pedestrian priority streetscape finished with high quality materials.

(c) Upper Thomas Street/Foxes Bow/Catherine Street (between Thomas St. and Roches St.)

A contract for the remodelling of the remainder of Upper Thomas Street, Foxes Bow, Earsons Lane and a block of Catherine Street between Thomas Street and Roches Street has been awarded to John Craddock Civil Engineering Limited in early 2008 and is now almost complete. The completion of this scheme will mark a significant milestone in the transformation of the City centre as remodelling will have been completed on a central spine in the city centre stretching from Harvey's Quay up to Wickam Street including Bedford Row and all Of Thomas Street including streets and lanes of these streets.

(d) Limerick City Centre Orbital Route

Arup Consulting Engineers working with the Roads Engineering staff of Limerick City Council have developed plans for an Inner Orbital Route in Limerick City

that will facilitate the introduction of substantial remodelling and pedestrian priority works on O'Connell Street thus creating a high quality pedestrianised public space in Limerick City centre. This Inner Orbital Route will facilitate the extensive re-modelling of all the streetscape of O'Connell Street and William Street providing wider modern footpaths and new street furniture. The introduction of significant sections of this scheme will be advanced through the tender process and to construction during 2009. Extensive consultation has been carried out with all stakeholders during 2007 and 2008, to create plans that best reflects the type of city centre the citizens of Limerick city will desire in the future.

(e) O Connell Street/William Street Remodelling

Plans for the complete remodelling of O Connell Street and William street were advanced through the Part 8 Process during 2007 and 2008 and approved by City Council.

Limerick City Council were hopeful of receiving funding for these schemes during 2008 from The Gateway Innovation fund but unfortunately due to the current economic downturn funding under this scheme has been deferred.

Limerick City Council is currently looking at alternate funding sources for these important schemes.

It is anticipated that these schemes will be advanced through the detailed design and tender phases during 2009.

5. Public Transport

Work has continued during 2008 and many hours have been spent in consultation with Stakeholders to achieve consensus on the provision of Green Routes on the major transport corridors into Limerick City. Construction has commenced this Autumn on the first Limerick City Council Green Route on the Condell Road. This route will enhance access to the city for buses coming from Shannon and Galway and for the rerouting of some north side city bus services. This route will also provide access to the city from a Northside Park & Ride facility. Observers of infrastructure works in the city environs will have noted that Limerick County Council has now completed work on a Green Routes in Raheen and Caherdavin and Castletroy over the past two years. The continuation of these routes into Limerick city centre would reduce bus journey times and result in an increase in the frequency of service thus offering choice and a better service to people choosing to use public transport and encourage a modal shift to public transport thus reducing congestion in our City Centre. It is important that Limerick City avail of the enhanced capital funding programmes currently being provided by the Department of Transport for the provision of such Green Routes and for the provision of high quality Park and Ride facilities on the outskirts of the city once Green Routes have been provided. .

Limerick City Council is required by the department of transport to carry out a BRT/LRT Feasibility study during 2009 and will commence work on this in January.

6. Riverside Strategy

The Riverside is one of the most important natural assets of Limerick City and this is recognisable by the substantial new development investment currently taking place along the riverside. To complement these initiatives by the private sector Limerick City Council has prepared a riverside strategy that aims to re-evaluate the potential of this important public area to create a high quality amenity area that compliments and reinforces the Riverside City image. In this respect several schemes are currently being advanced and these include.

a) Clancy Strand

Limerick City Council completed a project to build new footpaths on Clancy Strand and to provide new high quality lighting. In addition to this substantial new paving works were carried out around the Treaty Stone and a new riverside park was constructed adjacent to the Curragour Falls to which has provided a facility where the riverside views can be enjoyed and enhance the experience of the falls. Included in the park are two new access ramps to the river in support of the kayaking and angling activities. Works are expected to be completed in March 2009.

b) O'Callaghan Strand

A contract to create a riverside promenade at O'Callaghan Strand and to upgrade the roadway was awarded to Murphy International at the start of 2008 and work on the project is now almost complete. This project has delivered a beautiful riverside promenade constructed in high quality materials with first class public lighting and riverside railings where users can now safely enjoy the fantastic riverside environment.

c) Clancy Strand Boardwalk

A contract for the construction of a Boardwalk on Clancy Strand between the new riverside park and the Treaty Stone was recently awarded to Carillion/Irishenco. This boardwalk 150 metres long and cantilevering three metres out over the river will provide a fantastic iconic riverside facility that will provide a safe walkway over this section of the Strand where the road is too narrow to provide a footpath and it will be a fantastic location to view the river, King Johns Castle and the Curragour Falls.

d) Other Riverside Projects

Plans are currently being developed for other schemes along the riverside including:

- Full upgrade of the riverside promenade between Shannon Bridge and Sarsfield Bridge along Bishop's Quay, Howley's Quay and Harvey's Quay. This scheme received Part 8 approval during 2008.
- A study for the enhancement of the riverside walk between Shannon Bridge and Barringtons Pier is currently being prepared and will be brought to public consultation during 2009.

7. Traffic Management

Continuing investment in effective and efficient enforcement of all traffic and parking regulations is important to maintain the city as a vibrant retail, economic and social centre. Conscious of the ongoing requirement to reduce congestion and to promote business and commerce in the City Centre the following proposals were developed during 2008.

a) UTC System

Limerick UTC System was further expanded during 2008 with new junctions in the extended boundary area coming into our charge. Significant investment of almost €100,000 was required at Ivans Cross to install a MOVA control system. A MOVA control system was also installed at the Mill Road junction which has significantly improved capacity. CCTV cameras were installed this year on 6 of the busiest junctions in the city.

b) Park Magic

On street parking management in Limerick City is provided under the disc parking system. This system was first introduced in 1983 and has proved over the years to be an efficient, effective and acceptable control method to provide shoppers and visitors to the city with, suitable and reasonably priced on street parking facilities.

In 2006 Limerick City Council commenced a programme of providing ‘added value’ to the disc parking customer. The objective is to make payment of disc parking fees and the use of the disc parking system more convenient. Following an open tender process ‘Park Magic’ were contracted for a period of 3 years to provide disc parking customers with a convenient choice of payment methods that include payment by credit card, mobile phone, fixed line phone and internet.

The Park Magic system permits Limerick City Council to improve management of the disc parking system, “reward” system users and to promote business and commercial activities in the city. A recent review of the contract indicated a very high compliance with contract requirements and large-scale acceptance by the public of the system.

This scheme has continued to operate successfully during 2008 and now accounts for over 20% of all paid parking transactions in the City.

c) Delivery Strategy

In tandem with the additional traffic management undertakings with respect to remodeling of city centre street project, the development of City Centre Orbital Route and Limerick Tunnel Project, the City Council has identified a clear objective to better manage and control H.G.V’s and commercial vehicle activity within the city. In consultation with the elected members, the Garda Siochana,

the representatives of the bus companies and commercial community within the city and environs the City Council intends to introduce more loading bays, mandatory loading times between 7.00am and 11.00am and after 18.00 hrs. Monday to Sunday inclusive.

The City Council intends through consultation to expand the Delivery Strategy to provide for regular control of vehicle weights and vehicle emissions.

d) Road Safety

The promotion of road safety awareness at every conceivable opportunity is a priority of the City Council Traffic Department. A major crash scene simulation was carried out this autumn in collaboration with the emergency services and Limerick County Council where secondary school students were able to observe the often terrible consequences of speeding and dangerous driving. This road safety awareness policy will be continued and expanded, using modern technology, in the coming year. In accordance with the need to consistently review the operation of all services, the School Warden Programme as presently delivered will be examined in detail in the coming year with a view to delivering enhanced value for money across this service. In 2009 we intend to expand our collaboration on road safety educational and awareness programmes with Limerick County Council. The School Cycle Training Program and the transition year Drive for Life Programme will be continued in 2009 with a target of training up to certificate level 500 primary school children and 200 secondary students.

Notwithstanding the City Council subvention of up to €10 per student, the primary school Cycle Training Programme has in general been poorly supported by the City's primary schools.

e) Anti-Skid Surfacing

Anti skid surfacing was installed on the approaches to a number of key junctions in the City during 2008. This surfacing should help to reduce the impact of rear end collisions and pedestrian accidents and the program will be continued during 2009.

8. Traffic Calming

In respect of engineering measures to provide and enhance road safety, the City Council is committed to an extensive roll out of traffic calming measures and traffic management initiatives at locations, which warrant appropriate works. The City Council will continue to collaborate and work in tandem with the Garda Síochána, the traffic authority, in the installation of the new speed detection camera installations within the city, scheduled to commence in 2008. The City Council spent in excess of €140,000 on traffic calming measures in the four Wards during 2008 in agreement with the Councillors. In 2009 we are proposing to continue the budget for member's discretionary traffic calming measures in each ward area to reflect the requirement for traffic calming measures in our housing estates.

9. Pedestrian Crossings

Seven new pedestrian crossings have been provided in the city during 2008 to improve safety for pedestrians and to make the city more accessible. These new crossings have been provided at;

1. Shannon Bridge
2. Clare Street at the Art College
3. Project School
4. Mallow Street
5. Dock Road

We propose during 2009 to continue our programme of making our city more accessible for pedestrians.

10. Taking in Charge

A new program for taking in charge of housing estates was prepared during 2008 and a priority list was agreed with the members. The following estates have been taken in charge during 2008:

1. Clyde Hill Mews
2. Henry Street Mews
3. Johns Gate Village
4. Tower View
5. Kyleglass

Surveys have been completed in the following estates and taking in charge is imminent;

1. The Georgian Village
2. Meadowlands Close (City Part)
3. Richmond Park
4. Coolraine Heights

This program of taking in charge of housing estates will be continued during 2009.

Water Services

The Water Services Department, incorporating both water and waste water continues to manage a significant capital and revenue programme ranging from the Limerick Main Drainage Civil Engineering Project and ongoing water conservation programme to the Design, Build and Operate contract for the improvement of the Clareville Water Treatment Plant. The efficient provision of water and wastewater services while ensuring a reduction in the amount of unaccounted for water in the city remains the priority within this department.

Clareville Water Treatment Plant

The Clareville Water Treatment Plant is now under the operations of a private contractor under a Design Build Operate type contract. The commencement date for this contract was April 2007 and this will see the operator in place until April 2027. An increase in capacity from 50MLD to 87MLD will be available by 2010. The strategic development of this water production facility will lead to a doubling of the capacity of the plant in the longer term and safeguards the provision of potable water to the City and County for that period. This increased capacity is predominantly to meet the needs of Limerick County and will be recouped accordingly.

Water Conservation / Water Distribution Network

Limerick City Council is committed to the implementation of its five-year Water Services Strategy as approved by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government. The strategy provides for the strategic provision, rehabilitation and maintenance of the water production, distribution and conservation systems within the city area.

Limerick City Trunk Mains

The development of a new ring water main for the city to support present and future development is being advanced. New ring water mains have been laid along the course of the Southern Ring Road and the Monaleen Road. The provision of a new water main from Rosbrien to Caherdavin including a river crossing will be completed in the coming year.

Over 500 metres of the existing Distribution Water Main were replaced during 2008. Additional valving works were carried out in the City to improve the water supply system and to minimise those areas affected during periods of works or shutdown. This also facilitates the advent of a new Find & Fix project.

The leakage detection programme in the city mains system continued during the past year with in excess of 300 leaks identified and repaired resulting in additional savings in the supply of water.

Non Domestic Metering Project

The non domestic metering Project is now substantially complete and non domestic customers are now receiving bills for both water and waste water services based on metered volumes.

Limerick Main Drainage

This scheme, the largest civil engineering project ever undertaken in the city is now complete. The city now has a modern up to date fully integrated drainage system, which is already providing substantial benefits in the improved quality of the water in the river Shannon and provides adequate capacity for the development of the City and its environs for the foreseeable future.

The rehabilitation of city centre sewers to obtain the maximum benefit from the installation of the Main Drainage Scheme needs to be undertaken as a Phase 2 development of the Limerick Main Drainage Project. A proposal to appoint consultants to advance Phase 2 has now been completed and is awaiting final approval of the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government.

Tenders have been received for a long term (20years) operate and maintain contract for the treatment works and the appointment of a preferred bidder is imminent.

Flood Alleviation

In 2008 flood alleviation works were completed along O' Callaghan Strand. Floodgates were installed in the vicinity of the boat club. The Office of Public Works part funded this project.

Public Toilets

There are two new state of the art wheelchair accessible public toilet facilities in Limerick City. The first facility is near the entrance to the People's Park. The second facility has recently been installed on Lower Bedford Row to replace the older model that had been in service for sixteen years.

A third facility is available at Arthur Quays Shopping centre. Limerick City Council provides for the cost of maintenance and upkeep from within our own resources.

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016

The Planning and Economic Development Department of Limerick City Council has formally commenced the review of the City Development Plan 2004-2010 and the consequential preparation of a new City Development Plan for its functional area.

To this end notice has been given pursuant to Part II Section 11 of the Planning & Development Act 2000 and Article 13B of the Planning & Development (Strategic Environmental Assessment) Regulations 2004.

During this notice period Limerick City Council is inviting submissions or observations regarding the review of the existing City Development Plan and the preparation of a new Development Plan. This is a pre-draft consultation period and further consultations will take place after the draft has been prepared. This initial stage of consultation will take place up until Monday 16th February 2009.

The new City Development Plan must be finished within two years. The Plan will set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the City for a six-year period i.e. 2010-2016.

Retail Strategy

A review of the Mid-West Retail Strategy is presently being undertaken. The current Mid-West Retail Strategy that is the subject of this review is for the period 2003 – 2011. The Strategy was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Retail Planning Guidelines for Planning Authorities (RPG). The review of the retail strategy for the Mid-West Region will be for the period 2008-2016.

Limerick City Council as lead Local Authority has advertised for the appointment of consultants to undertake this review on behalf of the Mid West Regional Authority and the administrative areas of Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and Clare County Council.

City Centre Strategy

The City Centre Strategy was presented to Council in January 2008 and formally approved at a Special Meeting of Limerick City Council on Thursday, 14th February, 2008.

In order to incorporate some of the proposed changes set down in the City Centre Strategy into the City Development Plan 2004, a formal Variation pursuant to Part II Section 13 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 was undertaken. This variation was approved by the Elected Members of Limerick City Council on 30th June 2008.

The City Centre Strategy will form the basis for the identification of key redevelopment opportunities in the City over the coming years.

Progress has been made in advancing some of the proposals set down in the City Centre Strategy during 2008. Work will continue in this regard in 2009.

Gateway Innovation Fund

The Gateway Innovation Fund (GIF) was established under the National Development Plan 2007-2013 as a specific measure to assist in the strategic development of the nine Gateway cities and towns designated in the National Spatial Strategy (NSS)

The Gateway local authorities were invited to submit proposals on a competitive basis to be funded under the Gateway Innovation Fund. The fund was intended to provide a total of €300 million for the three years 2008 to 2010 and the Limerick/Shannon Gateway submitted a bid for funding of €80m from the fund.

At the present time we have been advised that the Gateway Innovation Fund has been deferred and there is no provision in the Department of Environment budget in 2009 for any funds relating to Gateway Innovation Fund. The deferral of this funding will present challenges in the delivery of the planned City Centre public realm enhancement works.

Derelict Sites

A renewed and targeted approach was focused on this area during 2008. The Derelict Sites Act, 1990 provides specific powers to Local Authorities in dealing with derelict sites. Over 100 notices have been served on the owners of derelict sites during 2008. It is anticipated that work in this area will continue in 2009.

Borough Boundary Extension

In September 2007, the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government announced the establishment of a Boundary Committee to examine an extension of Limerick City Council's boundary, to give effect to the report on "Addressing Issues of Social Exclusion in Moyross and Other Disadvantaged Areas of the City" prepared by Mr. John Fitzgerald and adopted by the Government in April 2007. This report recommended a limited extension of Limerick City Council's boundary in the northern part of the City to facilitate intensive development and regeneration.

From March 1st, 2008, Limerick City Council's functional area was formally extended to incorporate the areas of Clonmacken, Caherdavin, Knock, Shanabooley, Clonconane, Clondrinagh, Coonagh East, Coonagh West and Ballygrennan, which includes the Moyross estates of Pineview Gardens, Delmege and Craeval Parks. The area forms the northern environs of Limerick City and is the subject of the Caherdavin Local Area Plan,

adopted in July 2005. The extension involves an area of 1020 hectares and will increase the area of the City by 50%.

The City Council's application for a boundary extension submitted in October 2005 remains with the Minister of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Integrated Area Plan

The termination date for developments under this scheme was July 2008 and the final projects are being completed. Permitted developments to date comprise more than €400m in investment creating almost 2.8 million square feet of building and over 1,200 residential units. Some designated sites where planning permission has been granted have not proceeded to construction.

Conservation of Protected Structures

In April of 2007, Minister John Gormely wrote to Limerick City Council requesting that more than 700 buildings be added to the Record of Protected Structures following the completion of an inventory of architectural heritage in the City by the Minister's department. From a preliminary analysis it would appear that some 300 are already on the RPS. The City Council proposes to initiate discussion with the Minister's advisors in relation to the remainder.

Planning Applications

The Council will receive c.500 planning applications in 2008. Amongst the significant developments granted permission during 2008 was:-

- (1) The Opera Centre – Retail development at Michael Street/Bank Place/Rutland Street/Ellen Street.

Work has progressed in 2008 on the implementation of a scanning system for planning files. The system has been set up and is now in its pilot phase. It is expected to go live in January, 2009. This will facilitate the viewing of current planning files on the City Council's website.

Development under construction

A number of large developments commenced construction in 2008 including:-

1. Mixed development at former An Post Complex and Roches Hanging Gardens, Henry Street, Limerick.
2. Phase 1 of residential development at Alandale Square, Courtbrack
3. Extension to Mary Immaculate College including auditorium, lecture theatres, meeting rooms, laboratories and seminar rooms.

General Promotional Work

Included in this provision are contributions towards Civic Week, Christmas Lighting, promotion of special events and the Limerick Co-ordination Office.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Regional Waste Management Plan

Limerick City Council continues to support the Regional Waste Management Office for the Region as it coordinates and oversees the implementation of the Replacement Waste Management Plan 2006-2011. Limerick City Council contributes financially to the costs of the implementation of the plan and participates fully on all technical, operational and policy committees.

Waste Collection Permit Regulations, 2007

Under the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations 2007, a total of five hundred and twenty nine Waste Collection Permits have been issued to Waste Collectors in the Limerick, Clare and Kerry region. Twenty-three Collection Permits have been issued to collectors whose principal place of business is based in Limerick City.

Notices are served under Section 18 of the Waste Management Act 1996-2007 for Vehicles Transporting Waste. During 2008, twenty-two notices were served under Section 18 which were issued to persons found carrying waste to determine if they were collecting waste for profit. Eleven Section 18 Notices were complied with, three were cancelled and one is awaiting a response, seven were convicted and fined in court for not responding to a Section 18 notice.

In addition there were three successful convictions under Section 32(1) for holding and transporting waste on a vehicle in a manner likely to cause environmental pollution.

Twenty-four notices were issued pursuant to article 34(1) of the Waste Management (End of Life Vehicles) regulations 2006. These notices were issued to car producers in respect of their national collection system for the dismantling and treatment of ELV's within the functional areas of Limerick. These notices were complied with.

A roadside checkpoint was carried out during the year with Garda assistance at a location in the city. The purpose of checkpoints is to check for compliance with the collection permit regulations at to increase awareness amongst the public.

Water Pollution/Discharge Licences:

In conjunction with Limerick City Council's sanitary services section under the Transport and Infrastructure Directorate, inspections of discharge license holders and water pollution incidents are carried out. All pollution incidents are investigated and legal action initiated where appropriate. The Water pollution database was reviewed and updated in 2008. Seventy-eight new water discharge licences were issued since January

2008. A number of premises were served notices under the Water Pollution Act 1977 and 1990. Limerick City Council will continue to actively pursue new licences in 2009 and will closely sample and monitor any trade effluent discharge to a public sewer.

Waiver Scheme

The Council continued to provide a waiver scheme for low-income families and old age pensioners during 2008.

The waiver scheme service is currently offered to 3,493 households who qualify on income grounds. All lifts are subject to a maximum weight provision of 12 kg per lift. It is expected that costs will increase in 2009 due to increased costs in the disposal of waste generally.

Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment Regulations 2005

There are 115 Electrical and electronic retailers registered with Limerick City Council under the above Regulations. These retailers are obliged to take back old electrical equipment similar to the type they have sold. Twenty-five spot checks were scheduled for the electrical retailers in the city centre in 2008 and to date fifteen checks have been carried out. A number of small non-compliances with the Regulations were noted and warning letters were issued. It is proposed to continue auditing retailers in 2009.

Waste Facility Permits

Limerick City Council currently has 11 Waste Facility Permits. During 2008, 1 permit was renewed under the Waste Management Permit Regulations 1998 and 2 new permits were issued under the Waste Management Permit Regulations 2007. There are 8 other permits which are due for renewal four of these before the end of the year and 4 in 2009. All Permitted sites are inspected and audited at least once a year.

Environmental Awareness and Education

Limerick City Council continues to work towards the principles of waste management in accordance with the Replacement Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 with particular emphasis on waste prevention. The Council also continues to support home composting, the Green Schools Initiative, Gum Litter and Litter Awareness program and many other worthwhile initiatives. During 2009 it is hoped to advance an initiative in conjunction with the commercial interests of the city.

The ongoing support of the Council members in relation to the Limericks Fairtrade status was very much in evidence in 2008.

Recycling Facilities

Limerick City Council has provided 19 bring bank sites in the city and a mini Recycling facility at Park Road. During 2009, the services being provided at these bring banks will be examined with a view to streamlining same to ensure value for money.

Wetlands

Limerick City Council is responsible for the ecological resource of wetlands existing within the City Boundary. Wetland areas are important ecological systems that are under threat worldwide. Significant work was undertaken to curb reed growth in the open water area at Westfields in September of this year. This will be monitored throughout 2009.

Preparatory work is ongoing on the Baggot Estate Nature Park initiative. Tree surgery has been carried out on the tree line avenue and thinning of trees in the 'urban' forest will take place before the end of this year. The grant application submitted to the Department of Environment Heritage & local Government for funding the compensatory wetland has been successful and we will look forward to progressing this initiative further in 2009.

Longpavement Rehabilitation

The Works on Long Pavement Landfill Rehabilitation have been ongoing in 2008 but with less productivity than might have been expected due largely to very inclement weather and exceptional levels of rainfall in the summer months.

Works are progressing and it is expected that the remediation will be completed in the first half of 2009.

Litter Pollution

Limerick City Council's dedicated Enforcement unit continued to deal with matters related to litter, illegal dumping, monitoring of plastic bag levy, the ban on smoky coal, the illegal transport of waste, wandering animals and dog licences during 2008. Set out below are some sample statistics for the year to 31st October, 2008.

Number of complaints processed	2,190
On the spot litter fines	561
Number of households surveyed in respect of their waste disposal Arrangements	278 *

Section 18 Notices, Waste Management Act 1996, which includes household surveys and requires any holder of waste to submit information in relation to their waste activities 219

Section 55 Notices, Waste Management Act 1996 (requires any holder of waste to take certain measures in relation to the holding, recovery or disposal of waste in order to prevent or limit environmental pollution). 55

*Please note 278 Surveys were carried out in 2008. However the majority of the 1,000 surveys carried out in 2007 were processed in 2008.

In 2009 Limerick City Council will continue to build on the close working relationship with the Gardai, in preventing litter in Limerick city.

Air Pollution – ban on bituminous coal

Enforcement Officers have inspected retailers in the city and the four main suppliers of solid fuel based in the city have been visited. A programme of spot checks of bell men selling coal also took place. The Council also took a successful prosecution through the District Court under the air pollution act in 2008. The Council will continue to enforce these regulations in 2009.

As in previous years results produced at the Council's three air-monitoring stations, which are monitored by the HSE, did not exceed the smoke and sulphur dioxide levels allowed.

Street Cleaning.

Under the Council's street cleaning mandate, the Cleansing Department continues to place an emphasis on keeping the City Centre and the main gateways to the City free of litter. In addition a Rapid Response Unit was set up to deal with litter black spots and illegal dumping.

Limerick City Council disposed of 1,853 tonnes of waste from January to October, 2008. The waste came from Litter Bins, the Milk Market, Street Cleaning and Fly Tipping.

During 2008, IBAL declared Limerick City 'clean to European norms'.

Control of Horses

In 2008 thirty eight horses were impounded by Limerick City Council, twenty six were re-homed by Animal Collection Services and nine were returned to their owners. In 2009

we will continue to seize horses that are illegally kept in Limerick City as stipulated under the control of horse's bye-laws.

Cemetery Services

During 2008, 49, additional grave spaces were provided at Mount Saint Lawrence Cemetery. Safety works have taken place on the roof on the chapel at Mount St Lawrence and the stone pier was rebuilt and capped. Restoration of graves was carried out in both cemeteries. On going provision and maintenance work on kerbing, pathways and driveways continues to be carried out in both cemeteries. Flowers and bulbs have been planted in Mount St Lawrence cemetery. Grass, hedge cutting and weed control has been carried out in both cemeteries. A tree survey was carried out in Mount Saint Oliver Cemetery which resulted in fifty trees being removed. The area has been reinstated and seeded.

In the year to date there have been 327 internments in Mount Saint Lawrence and Mount Saint Oliver.

Parks and Open Spaces

The Parks Section is responsible for the management and development of public parks, public open spaces and civic decoration. During 2008 grass cutting was carried out on all verges, parks and open spaces on a regular basis. Flower and tree pruning and planting took place in all our public parks.

Work on the refurbishment of the shelter in O'Brien Park, Clare Street will be completed in December 2008. This work is carried out in partnership with Limerick Civic Trust.

A tree planting programme was carried out in various parts of the city from November, 2007 to March 2008, using large semi-mature trees. The successes of previous planting programmes are now coming to fruition, which has resulted in an increase in tree pruning activity.

Development work at Shelbourne Park has been completed. The soccer pitches have been drained and newly sown and the park is due to open to the public in April 2009. A new children's playground will be installed in early 2009.

Green Flag

The Peoples' Park was awarded the "Green Flag" in 2008 from the UK Civic Trust. It is a particular honour as we were the only Irish recipients of this International award.

The Peoples Park opened as a public park in 1877 and it has been maintained at the highest standard which has allowed generations of Limerick people and visitors to Limerick City to enjoy the Park facilities. The Park is a flagship of the heritage and

culture of the City as it provides a focus for recreation, play and tourism in Limerick. This flag is the culmination of the many years work of the Limerick City Council and particularly the Parks Department.

Limerick Civic Trust entered the Peoples' Park for the Green Flag Award competition and submitted a comprehensive presentation to support their assertion that the Peoples Park merited international recognition. Two experts in horticulture and park landscaping travelled from London to spend a day in the Peoples' Park assessing every aspect of the entry in their capacity as official Green Flag Award judges. The People's Park has the benefit of retaining its historic features such as the original railings and two Victorian Pavilions, the drinking fountain which is one of two made by the George Smith Foundry in Glasgow and the Thomas Spring Rice memorial which towers over the park pre-dates the Peoples' Park as it was erected in 1822. The original maze of pathways around this monument is in the same location to this day. The Park has also adapted to people's current needs with the inception of the Infant's Memorial and the Children's Playground.

Urban Forestry

Pruning of the mini forest located on the Childers Road will commence in December 2008. Pruning in Baggot Estate forest will also commence in December 2008. A major tree pruning programme was undertaken on the tree lined avenue in Baggot Estate in 2008. Tree pruning will continue throughout the City on a scheduled basis.

Playground Facilities

Ongoing work on the management and maintenance of playgrounds in the city parks was carried out in 2008. In 2009 we will continue to audit our playgrounds to ensure that ongoing maintenance is provided.

Boundary Extension

Since the boundary extension the Parks Department have the responsibility to maintain green areas and roundabouts in the extended area.

Bridges in Bloom

The Bridges in Bloom programme continued in 2008, with eight bridges decorated with hanging baskets and a new pilot scheme of winter baskets for Matthew Bridge.

Grants for Community and Voluntary Groups

The Grant Assistance for Environmental Improvement Initiatives Scheme was introduced in 2003 to assist community and voluntary groups financially, in their efforts to improve

the visual amenity of their area. This year €90,000 was allocated to 32 groups from all over the City. The type of work eligible for grant assistance included tree/shrub and flower planting, grass cutting, skip hire, equipment purchase and hire, etc. It is intended to continue this worthwhile Scheme in 2009.

Fire and Rescue Service

The Service has four broad areas of activity that are mutually supportive in the delivery of an integrated service to the public.

- Fire & Emergency Operations.
- Fire Prevention, Building Control and Dangerous Buildings.
- Major Emergency Planning.
- Fire Service Mobilisation and Communications.

Fire & Emergency Operations

Achievements for 2008 include:

- The service successfully attended 1,466 incidents from 1st January to 31st October, 2008. Of this number, 905 were fire incidents and 158 were road traffic accidents.
- Refurbishment of Fire Station – Upgrade of Exhaust Extraction Unit in Appliance Bays.
- Enhancement of Health & Safety measures.
- Seven new recruits were trained with Dublin Fire Brigade and are now assigned to the Fire Station.
- A number of training courses were provided for staff in the following areas – First Responder, Senior and Junior Officers Courses, National Incident Command System, Breathing Apparatus, “Bronto” High Rise Appliance training and CPR.

Plans for 2009 include:

- Block Training.
- Progress extension of Fire Station.
- Achieve a standard fire & rescue equipment inventory on the first turnout of fire appliances.
- Further enhance the training regime within the Fire Brigade.
- Maintain and improve on standards of health and safety.
- Tender for new Water Tender and Water Tanker.

Fire Prevention, Building Control & Dangerous Buildings Department.

The function of the Fire Prevention & Building Control & Dangerous Buildings Department is to ensure the health, safety and welfare of people who occupy or use buildings, through ensuring the reduction of fire risk, proper means of escape, the access for people with disabilities and the conservation of fuel and energy.

Major Emergency Planning Section

The functions of the Major Emergency Planning section are to implement the provisions of the 2006 Framework for Major Emergency Management in Limerick City Council, to review and oversee Limerick City Council's Major Emergency Plan and to continually enhance Limerick City Council's capacity to respond to a major emergency.

Plans for 2009 are

- To implement the new format Major Emergency Plan in Limerick City Council.
- To conduct a series of tabletop and live exercises to test Limerick City Council's capacities for Major Emergency response.
- To improve the awareness of Major Emergency Management within all areas of Limerick City Council.

FIRE SERVICE MOBILISATION AND COMMUNICATIONS:

The Munster Regional Communications System (MRCC) is located at the City Fire Station. The MRCC Project was set up to improve the speed of response and efficiency of the call-out system for the fire authorities in Munster and became operational in December, 1992. Limerick City Council is the contracting Authority for this system and provides the service on behalf of the ten member Fire Authorities in Munster.

The Centre currently mobilises 66 retained fire stations throughout Munster and 4 full-time stations in Limerick City, Cork City and Waterford City.

In 2008, achievements included:

- Munster Regional Communications Centre handled in excess of 23,000 emergency calls from the public in the Munster Region.
- Maintenance and improvement on high performance standards in terms of the accurate and efficient despatch of Fire Service resources within the Munster Region.
- Ongoing development of geographic information systems in MRCC
- There have been significant developments of management information systems in accordance with the requirements of the MRCC and the participating fire authorities.

- Re accreditation to ISO 9001:2001 has been achieved over all business areas. The system has passed its tri annual full systems audit with the NSAI during which the MRCC's quality management systems were found to be without fault.
- On-going development of telecoms and Radio Communications Systems
- Successful completion of implementation of broadband backhaul pilot with Kerry County Council
- Implementation of regional mobile data project
- Full implementation of all internal and external training programs including National Incident Command and Major Emergency Planning training.

CIVIL DEFENCE

The Civil Defence provides emergency relief and support, when called upon by Limerick City Council and other civil authorities and helps to ensure the continued operation of vital services and the maintenance of public life during emergencies.

Activities for 2008 included:

- 17 volunteers completed Occupational First Aid Course
- 18 volunteers completed in Cardiac First Response.
- 13 volunteers completed Basic Firemanship Course
- 10 volunteers completed Radio operations and procedures.
- 5 volunteers on Pump Operators Course
- 8 volunteers on Road Traffic Accident Course
- 2 Instructors in Search Techniques and Map Reading.
- 3 instructors completed Induction Course at Civil Defence College

Purchase of 2003 HSE ambulance for Civil Defence.
Upgrading of Civil Defence H.Q.

Plans for 2009 include:

Continue the upgrading of the Civil Defence H.Q.
Continuation of enhancement of training programme across the services.
Major Recruitment drive in the new year.
Raising of Limerick City Civil Defence's profile within the City and nationally.
Convert our old ambulance to a Communication Centre.
Purchase of new van for Rescue Equipment
Communications Van and new Rescue Van to be made over with new Civil Defence insignia.

RECREATION AND AMENITY – PARKS, LIBRARY SERVICE, CULTURE, SPORT, COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE

Limerick City Library Service

Heinrich Heine famous Poet and Journalist of the 19th Century wrote in his play “Almansor”, “Where they burn books, they will ultimately also burn people”. It is ironic that when Hitler burned thousands of books on Berlin’s Opernplatz in 1933, works by Heinrich Heine were among the books burned and as we all know millions of people were burned in concentration camps. Similar events happened in Iraq and other parts of the world. Books are part of civilization and order.

Libraries are essential institutions to preserve this civilization and order. Their mission is to provide their communities with access to the world’s information. They are not just places for information but also recreation, education and culture.

Limerick City Library has many communities whom it serves – the unemployed, foreign nationals, the socially excluded, the elderly, business people, students, children, adults, researchers, teenagers, schools, the visually impaired and people with literacy difficulties.

Online access to the library is available to members of the public in the library and from the comfort of their own homes. It is possible to access the library website to renew books and music. The library catalogue of all 32 Library Authorities may be searched simultaneously. Adults, students and children have access to the appropriate online versions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica and the online version of the Irish Times is also available daily.

In 2008, an application was made to the Dell Foundation to fund a project entitled Fás eCollege Training Course. A cheque for \$10,000 was received from Dell and the course commenced in Watch House Cross Library. This course is primarily aimed at people who have low skill levels, low pay or are unemployed. In addition, library staffs have conducted a number of computer skills course during the year in the Granary, Watch House Cross and Roxboro.

The following are the statistics for 2008:

Total Issues	322,763
Total number of borrowers	13,361
Number of visitors	220,511
Number of hours spent on Internet	25,171

During 2008, eleven lectures were held in the Granary together with a Christmas Soiree. Between the Granary and Watch House Cross, 10 exhibitions have been held.

At present, plans are being finalised for a new Central Library and Headquarters in order to develop the service further and provide additional facilities. An application has been sent to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government and An Chomhairle Leabharlanna for their approval and funding.

Culture Night

Culture Night took place on Friday 19th September and was hugely successful. The feedback from the venues and the public was very positive and everyone is already asking about next year. On the night Museums, galleries, theatres, King John's Castle and other venues throughout the city hosted free cultural events for members of the public to enjoy late into the evening.

The Dockers Monument

The selection committee met on the 3rd of September and heard presentations from 9 artists. Two artists were further short listed and subsequently a decision was made to proceed with the proposal of Michael Duhan. The proposal is to place a set of four male figures, free standing on the ground the chosen site along the river walk. The figures will be cast in bronze and will be life size. Funding for completion of this project is currently being explored for possible completion in 2009.

Creative Limerick – Building the Arts

An application to Interreg has been submitted by Limerick City Council and Shannon Development to be part of a European Network 'Creative Regions European Network' - CREN. A decision will known in December.

The starting point for this project has been the recognition that the ability to be creative is not just associated with big metropolises. The project will go beyond the traditional approach to creativity which only includes the classic creative sectors like arts and sciences. The Interreg project subscribes to the philosophy of Charles Landry, according to whom regions can only become genuine creative regions if they include sectors like industry, design, public services, planning and environment.

For many years, the co-ordinated development of the creative sector has been part of Limerick's striving economy, but has been underutilised. Nevertheless numerous creative companies and organisations have chosen the city of Limerick as their new locations. Some facilities and services for the creative sector have been established and would benefit from a more co-ordinated development approach. The creative economy in the region is not as advanced as in other regions of the present project. The Interreg project objective is "to enlarge the economic impact of the creative sectors by strengthening the regional dimension and profile, and by widening their inclusion and regional spread", the Irish partners will lead this action to develop and test policies and measures to improve creative industries.

Artists' Studios in James Street

Capital works were carried on the 8 artists' studios in James Street in Limerick. The work carried out includes the upgrading of the facility to meet fire standards and remedial works on the exterior of the building. The Architects Department has been key in delivering the project. A capital grant from The Arts Council was secured for the work.

Artists' Apartments

Limerick City Council received funding under ACCESS II from the Department of Arts Sport and Tourism for the refurbishment of eight apartments in John's Square that will be used as sustainable living spaces for artists.

The Consultant Architects have submitted drawings to Limerick City Council. The plans have been approved by the Department and were submitted to Limerick City Council Planning Department under a Part 8 Planning Notification. These apartments will be opened in 2009

Limerick City Gallery of Art

In 2008 the following exhibitions have taken place at Limerick City Gallery of Art:

- *Truckscapes- Drawings from a mobile studio* Nick Miller
- *Excursions* – Performance Festival in association with Limerick Arts Office
- DA08 Limerick School of Art & Design Drawing Award Exhibition selected by Arno Kramer
- OPEN/INVITED ev+a 2008, *Too early for vacation*, curator Hou Hanru. LCGA works with ev+a on co-ordination, installation, marketing, young ev+a and ev+a events. This year a programme of walking tours, meet the artist primary school and third level workshops, school tours and family days was co-ordinated by LCGA. LCGA co-ordinated production of a DVD for the catalogue
- *A-Sixty Year Retrospective*, Walter Verling and an accompanying catalogue
- *Contemporary Video work from Glasgow Museums* Douglas Gordon, Roderick Buchanan and Danziel & Scullion
- *Contemporary Artists Explore Gallery as Studio* Niall deBuitlear, Fiona Hallinan, Ruth LeGear and Maria McKinney
- *Concrete Light* Simon Starling featuring a survey of recent works and a new commission *Mirrored Wall Head*
- *I Only Come Here 'Cos it's Free* Mike McLoughlin, including a new collaborative film work commission with actor Jon Kenny and writer Michael Finn
- *See Georgian Limerick*, A collaboration with the Irish Georgian Society and four photographers Sean Lynch, Deirdre Power, Kieran Clancy and Eamon O'Mahony
- *Presence 08*, the second annual Christmas Exhibition of Artists associated with Limerick

Limerick Gallery of Art activities for 2008

- Lcga hosted c. 30,000 visitors July 07-August 08
- We exhibited the work of 115 artists
- Published 3 catalogues, 7 brochures, 1 DVD
- Hosted 26 Free Family Day Workshops
- Hosted 20 Free primary school workshops
- Hosted 1 Free seminar
- Hosted 12 Free Lectures / Meet the artist /In conversation events
- Hosted approximately 100 Free exhibition tours to groups / schools
- Developed a new accessible web-site to be launched by end of year

Gallery Development Phase II

In 2008 the Gallery received a capital grant offer of €960,000 from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism for the physical development of the gallery. In 2009 we will continue to seek funding so as to begin this development which will greatly enhance our visitor services, upgrade the gallery and vastly improve our Permanent Collection storage.

In 2008 the gallery received funding from the Arts Council, The Heritage Council and Failte Ireland.

Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum

There were 63 additions to the museum collection during the year. Notable among them were: an Early Bronze Age axe from Ballyhoodane, Co.Limerick, c.2000 B.C.; two pieces of 18th century Limerick-silver, a cowrie-shell snuff box by Jonathan Buck and a tablespoon by John Hackett; memorabilia associated with the Michael O'Callaghan, 1st Republican Mayor of Limerick, murdered 7 March 1921; a silver medal won by Ballybricken Dairy, 1895, and a collection of local billheads, 1920 - 1950

The assistant curator acted as the Limerick representative on the Walled Towns of Ireland Network during the year. The Report on the City Walls was formally launched at the museum on Open Night, 19 September. A grant of €100,000 was received from the Heritage Council for works on the walls, which have begun.

There were over two and half million hits on the museum catalogue on the internet during the year, totaling nearly five and a half million since the launch in June 2004, and email enquiries and comments were received from all over the world. Information exchange with these is two-way, particularly from the descendants of Limerick people living abroad. More than 2000 enquiries were dealt with in total, from personal callers, by phone, letter and email.

Visitor numbers were 13,606.

Municipal Golf Course

The Municipal Golf Course in Rathbane continues to fulfill the role of a major public access facility in the Mid-West region. It is well maintained and available to the general public and visitors to the area.

Work continued in 2008 towards the further improvement of the Golf course. Tenders have been sought in respect of proposed works which are being part funded by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. Full consultation will continue in 2009 with local councilors and members.

Skateboard Park

- The Skateboard Park at Mount Kennett was officially opened on the 18th of July, 2008 by his worship the Mayor Cllr John Gilligan. The project was designed to complement the other riverside and City Centre projects.
- The total cost of the project including construction and fees was circa €300,000.
- The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government approved grant aid of €125,000 towards the project. Limerick City Council provided the balance of the funding, as well as the river side site.

St. Endas Sports Complex

The development of this Sports Complex is consistent with the policies and objectives contained within the Limerick City Council Sports and Recreation Policy Framework Plan approved by the City Council in 2005. The complex is now in place for thirty years and capital investment is necessary to maintain the fabric and environment up to modern, acceptable standards and improve competitiveness. Discussions continued in 2008 on the provision of funding with the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. Limerick City Council approved a contribution of €75,000 for this Complex in 2008. A further contribution will be made available in the 2009 Budget.

Support for Sporting Organisations

A new grant-aid provision totalling €33,000 for sporting/recreational activities was included in the adopted Annual Budget for 2008. These grants were paid out to approximately 30 groups during 2008. It is intended to retain the scheme in 2009 and a provision of €25,000 has been included in the draft budget.

Community and Enterprise

The Department of Community and Enterprise is charged with achieving a co-ordinated and integrated approach to the social and cultural development of Limerick City via Limerick City Development Board and related programmes, and to support Limerick City Council which is charged with leading the process.

Review of City Development Board

In common with all other City County Development Boards, Limerick City Council has commenced a review of its City Strategy. Reviews had previously been undertaken in 2005/06.

However a number of important developments have since taken place, including; the 2006 Census of Population, Towards 2016, the OECD Report on the Irish Public Service and the publication in January 2008 of Indecon Review of City Development Boards. Arising from this Indecon Report and following the receipt of review guidelines from the Department of Environment, the Development board has conducted a series of facilitated review meetings. The following has been agreed.

Limerick City Development Board will;

- Identify a limited number of key priorities and actions for the City over the next three years. The core objective for these priorities will be to address the need for greater public services co-ordination in the City.
- The new priorities will be identified given the changed socio-economic environment and will have regard for any key developments since the publication of the last set of priorities in 2005/06.
- The review will highlight ways in which public service co-operation can be developed and improved including co-operation and liaison between the City and its neighbouring Counties of Clare and Limerick
- The structures of the Board will also be examined to improve their effectiveness in delivering the new priorities.
- Review will be completed by 30th April, 2009.

In addition to the above, it is expected that the Economic sub –committee will be reactivated and a review of the Social Inclusion Measures group will take place in 2009.

The Interagency Plan for Travellers Services

- The Interagency Traveller Group met on 6 occasions during 2008 and progressed some of the actions as laid down under the Interagency Traveller Action Plan.
- In keeping with Plan Objectives, the HSE, Gardai and Limerick City Council convened onsite meetings in 6 sites during 2008 to facilitate communication between the residents and the local agencies. The meetings have proven beneficial to all parties and actions have been progressed as a result.
- The Interagency Group also made a 2nd round submission to Pobal under their Communications Strand for a Communications and Development Worker in May 2008. The role of the worker would be to coordinate, support and assist the improved delivery of services to Travellers in Limerick City.
- It is expected that the current Interagency Traveller Action Plan will be reviewed in 2009 and a new plan developed. This new Plan will set out a timeframe to address the needs of Travellers in Limerick City and is likely to operate for same time period as the City Development Board Strategy.

Youth

Limerick City Development Board in partnership with Limerick Youth Service facilitates Limerick City Youth Forum. The following are the main achievements for 2008;

- Hosting a Youth Conference entitled “Young People Creating Better Places to Live” in September 2008. The conference was the first of its kind in the region.
- Comhairle na NOg: A total of fifty-six young people participated in this years Comhairle, with representatives from thirteen secondary schools and youth clubs.
- Representatives from Comhairle na NOg were also nominated to attend Dail na NOg.

Work continues apace on an expanded work programme for 2009 incorporating an international youth exchange with a similar youth group from Europe with interests in youth participation, youth democracy and promotion of inclusion.

Children’s Services Committee

Following the publication of towards 2016 a new comprehensive and integrated strategic framework of social inclusion was put in place. As part of this policy framework a National Implementation group was established which has overseen the establishment of Local Children’s Services Committees in four pilot areas. Limerick City was one of the areas selected. During 2008 the group agreed a Children’s Services Strategy which was submitted to the Regeneration agencies and has now become part of the Masterplan for Regeneration in Limerick City.

Plans are at advanced stage for the employment in 2009 of a full time Children’s Services Coordinator which will be funded by partner organisations on the committee and the Office for the Minister for Youth and Children.

City of Learning

A Strategic Framework for Learning was launched by Minister Willie O’Dea, T.D., in November 2008. The Framework was developed during 2008 by the Limerick City of Learning Steering Group, a sub-committee of the Limerick City Development Board. A key goal of the Board’s Strategy for the City is that Limerick will become a City of Learning, a city full of opportunities.

Community Smoke Alarm Scheme

- The 2008 phase of the above scheme, which commenced in May, was completed on 24th October.
- A total of 253 homes benefited from scheme in 2008.

Cooperation Ireland Pride of Place Awards 2008

- The Pride of Place Competition is run by Co-operation Ireland in partnership with the All-Island Local Authority Steering Forum which encourages strategic and sustainable approaches to cross-border co-operation by local authorities.
- St. Munchin's Community Enterprise Centre, Killeely which entered this competition for the first time in 2008 was awarded second place in this competition in the Cities, Communities Facilities Category.

World Healthy Cities

As part of the City Development Strategy it has been proposed that Limerick City seek to become part of the World Health Organisation healthy Cities Programme. The Development Board continued to examine processes by which this can be achieved in 2008. Further work in this area is required in 2009.

Audit of Facilities

At the request of the Department of Environment, an audit of community, sports and arts facilities has been undertaken by local authorities through the County/City Development Boards (CDBs). Work on the Limerick City Audit is at advanced stage and will be submitted to the Department by end 2008.

AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE, CORPORATE SERVICES

ICT Department

In line with the strategic requirements for Limerick City Council the ICT department continues to support, recommend and provide the computer infrastructure, applications and systems required for all sections of Limerick City Council.

The ICT Department continues to focus on consolidation and efficiencies within Limerick City Council. In conjunction with the Finance department electronic payments were introduced in 2008. To date a total of 2671 payments were received electronically. A new wireless network providing Limerick City Council with high bandwidth, secure and cost effective communications link between Councils Office was commissioned in 2008. The wireless links have enabled the ICT department to consolidate backup strategies, offer a full ICT services to remote locations and support users remotely.

The ICT Department tested the continuity management plans for critical applications including Financial, Planning and file retrieval systems. Continuity plans for 2009 includes the installation of a backup generator in City Hall, providing Limerick City Council with the ability to maintain key services during a prolong disruption to the ESB power supply.

The ICT department expanded the core virtualisation infrastructure reducing the lead time required to update, replace or introduce new systems. The Virtualised system has also reduced the power requirement providing more environmentally efficient service.

The ICT service desk system offers comprehensive support to end users in Limerick City Council dealing with over 3550 support request in 2008.

As a result of the redesign of the City Council's corporate website (www.limerick.ie) in 2007 there has been an 80% increase in the number of online visitors from 150,000 in 2007 to over 270,000 in 2008. The information on www.limerick.ie is updated and maintained by the individual sections within the organization. This ensures that the most up to date information is always available for the public.

Over 470 files from the Limerick City Archives are now available online. This is the first initiative in the country to allow online access for the municipal archives.

Work has been carried out with the Planning department to allow the planning applications documents to be available online. All the planning applications received in 2008 have been scanned and will become available on 1st of January 2009.

Two new websites for Limerick City Gallery of Art and Access Limerick are to be rolled by the end of the year.

A 'Time Recording' system for the organization has been developed in-house and deployed on 1st of January 2008.

In 2008, Limerick City Council won a nomination for the Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Awards for its SARR system. The Service Activities Requests and Resolutions management system (SARR) has proven to be a cost effective system to manage customer requests.

The services that Limerick City Council offers on its website have been presented to the community on 1st of November 2008 at the ICT Community Fair 2008. Over 300 visitors have visited Limerick City Council's stand. This was the first initiative where the Council re-assured the community of its commitment to the move towards the digital age.

In 2008 the GIS team has focused on further roll-out of the Geographical Information Systems across multiple departments. A new version of the Generic Digitizing Tool has been deployed. An enhanced application that allows members of the public to access online spatially enabled data has been commissioned and it will be deployed by the end of the year.

Partnership

The Partnership process, over the past number of years, has been a mechanism to secure delivery of change and modernisation in the City Council and is based on the model of National Partnership that has been very beneficial in securing economic and social progress. During 2008 this process continued with the establishment of new committees to work on specific items of change on a directorate basis.

Performance Management Development System

As part of Sustaining Progress all local authorities are required to implement a system of Performance Management and Development (PMDS). Training requirements are identified as part of the personal development plan and courses are organised to meet identified training needs. The implementation of PMDS has been commenced in all departments.

Register of Electors

The 2008/2009 Register was published on the 1st February, 2008 and came into force on the 15th February, 2008. Work commenced in the summer on the preparation of the Draft Register for 2009/2010 that was published on the 1st November, 2008. Revised requirements specified by the Department of the Environment that are designed to improve the accuracy of the register came into force and were implemented.

Higher Education Grants

423 applications have been processed to date (up to and including 30th November, 2008) in 2008.

Official Receptions and Meetings

Details of Meetings, Civic Receptions and Mayoral Receptions for 2008 are as follows (the following figures cover the period up to and including 30th November, 2008):

No. of Council Meetings (including Special Meetings)	12
No. of Area Meetings	10
No. of SPC meetings	22
No. of Civic Receptions	4
No. of Mayoral Receptions	34
No. of Tender Openings	23

Audit Committee

An audit committee was set up for Limerick City Council in 2008. The committee is made up of both elected members and external representatives. Its functions include reviewing financial reporting practices in the organization, fostering best practice in the internal audit function, reviewing auditors' reports and management's follow-up, assessing and promoting efficiency and value for money and reviewing risk management in the organization. The audit committee will have an independent role in advising the council on the financial reporting processes, internal control, risk management and audit matters, as part of the systematic review of the control environment and governance procedures of the Council. The committee will operate under an audit charter.

Finance Department

The Finance department will continue to focus on improving the delivery of financial information to all relevant stakeholders.

Further efficiency improvements to payment processes were implemented in 2008.

Preparations commenced in 2008 for the implementation of a new payroll, superannuation and human resources system. Local authorities require a human resource, payroll and superannuation system to provide an integrated solution – replacing disparate spreadsheets, databases and applications – and offering greater efficiencies, not just at a local level, but at a national level by having commonly agreed processes. This approach also makes it possible to move towards a full shared services model in the future. The new system has been procured by the Local Government Computer Services Board and will be rolled out to two pilot authorities in 2008. LGCSB have chosen to implement software from Core International, a fully configured and integrated personnel system to meet the requirements of all local authorities. Limerick City Council are scheduled to commence implementation of the CORE project mid year, 2009 and provision has been made in the 2009 budget for initial costs relating to this system of €108,000.

There will be a continued emphasis on cash flow management in 2009. Unfortunately in 2008, while our cash position improved slightly on 2007, the average cash position during the year was disappointing. A number of factors gave rise to this. An internal audit review of recoupment procedures was carried out by the Internal Auditor in conjunction with Deloitte and Touche. The recommendations of this report were, for the most part, implemented in 2008. The implementation of its recommendations has improved the recoupment process. However, in the current economic environment the securing of all payments to the local authority will be challenging and all directorates will maintain a strong focus on cash flow management in 2009.

The Accounts Receivable section implemented a new system that allows customers pay their traffic fines on line (e-payments) and automatically over the phone 24 hours a day. It is planned to introduce further enhancements to the billing systems in 2009. The implementation of the new water meters onto the billing system was completed in 2008. There was a significant workload involved in the smooth transition from the current charges to the new basis of charging by usage. A new kiosk will be installed outside the motor tax office allowing customers to access motor tax on-line and thereby renewing their motor tax electronically without have to queue in the motor tax office.

As recommended by The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government a new costing system for Local Authorities was implemented by Limerick City Council in 2008. This results in a new format for the annual budget document and the annual financial statement. This new format gives a more accurate allocation of costs to each directorate of Limerick City Council.

A new Internal Auditor was appointed to Limerick City Council in June 2008. She has experience of auditing in both Public and Private Sector. She will continue to focus on ensuring that the key risks to the organisation are managed actively by Limerick City Council. A risk register, identifying the key risks to the organisation will be completed by the end of 2008.

As per circular Fin 08/2008, local authorities were requested to provide information on development levies. As at the end of November 2008 there was a net balance of €17m of paid development levies in the development levy fund. As you are all aware this income is ring fenced for capital projects. The projected allocation of these monies was outlined in Limerick City Council's Capital Budget 2008 – 2010. This document highlighted that there would be shortfall in levy funds available to allow the full implementation of the capital plan. This would result in a need to prioritise future levy funded capital projects.

Property Management

The Property Management Section will continue to coordinate and oversee all property transactions in 2009. The section has now been merged with future planning and derelict sites sections to form an Economic Development Section. Provision has been made in the budget for the implementation of the economic development actions contained in the City Centre Strategy, the continued employment of an executive planner to work on future planning and additional resources for the implementation of derelict sites legislation.