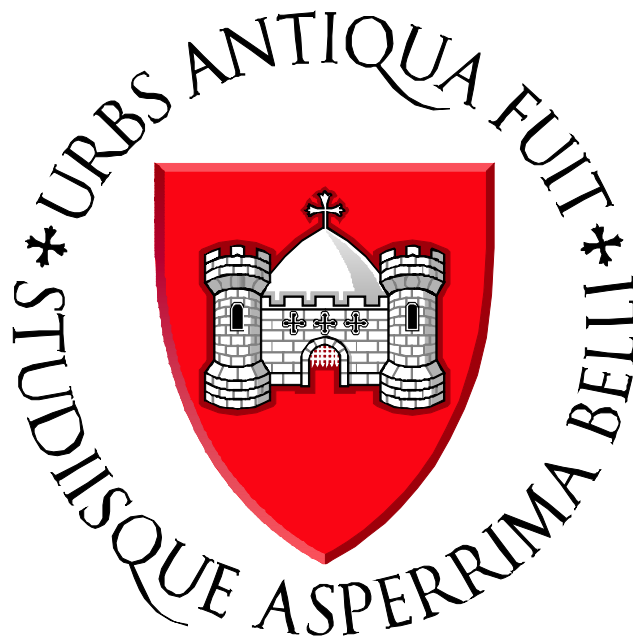


# LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL



## ADOPTED ANNUAL BUDGET FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2012

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**LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL  
COMHAIRLE CATHRACH LUIMNIGH**

Árus na Cathrach  
Luimneach

12<sup>th</sup> December 2011

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

**Annual Budget for the year  
1<sup>st</sup> January 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012**

**Introduction**

The recession in the Irish economy has continued to deepen during 2011, with a continuing fall in consumer confidence, stagnation of the property sector, businesses going into liquidation, examinership or forced to close down, and high levels of unemployment.

The Government have continued to be subject to complying with the EU/IMF/ ECB Troika Memorandum of Understanding and will be over the next four years.

**Overall Exchequer Position:**

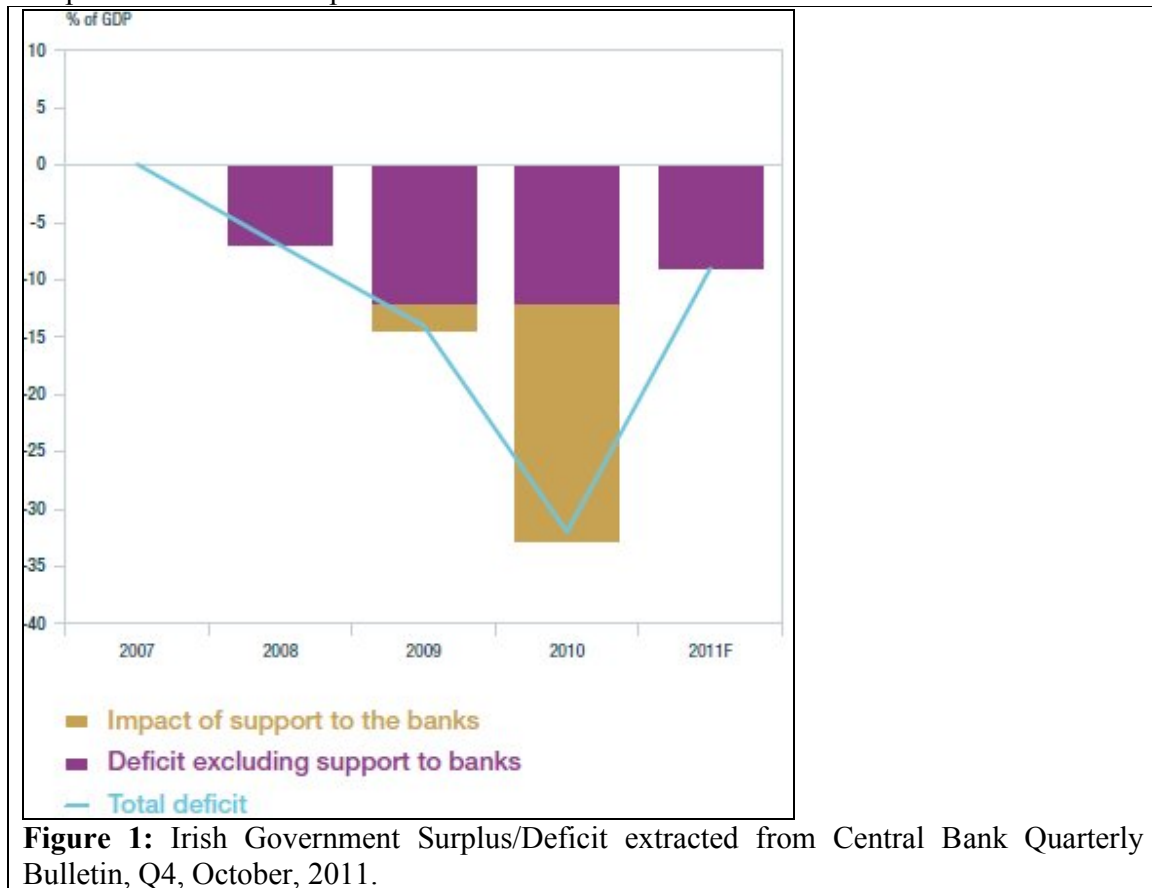
In 2010 the gap between Government receipts and spending was €18.5 billion (i.e. Exchequer deficit). As per the Government's 2012 Estimates of Receipts and Expenditure, the forecasted Exchequer Balance for full year 2011 is €25.2 billion deficit, and forecasted for full year 2012 at €21.56 billion deficit. The €6.6bn increase in the deficit for 2011 compared to 2010 is mainly due to non-voted capital expenditure banking related payments of €3.1 billion in Promissory Note payments to Anglo Irish Bank, INBS and EBS, and over €7.5 billion in once-off payments relating to July's recapitalisation of the banking sector.

**Economic Outlook**

The European Commission, ECB and the IMF all declare that Ireland's implementation of the EU/IMF Programme is on track. They have noted during the third review in 2011 that Ireland has had strong policy implementation, with all agreed structural benchmarks and quantitative performance criteria under the Programme met, and in some cases, exceeded. It should be noted that release of EU/IMF and bilateral loan tranches is conditional on Ireland delivering on its commitments and meeting quantitative targets and structural benchmarks set out in the Memorandum of Understanding and Memorandum of Economic and Financial Policies. This will result in Government austerity measures continuing over the next four years.

To continue to improve the sustainability of the public finance, Minister Noonan introduced €3.8 billion of additional fiscal consolidation in Budget 2012 (i.e. spending reductions and increased taxes).

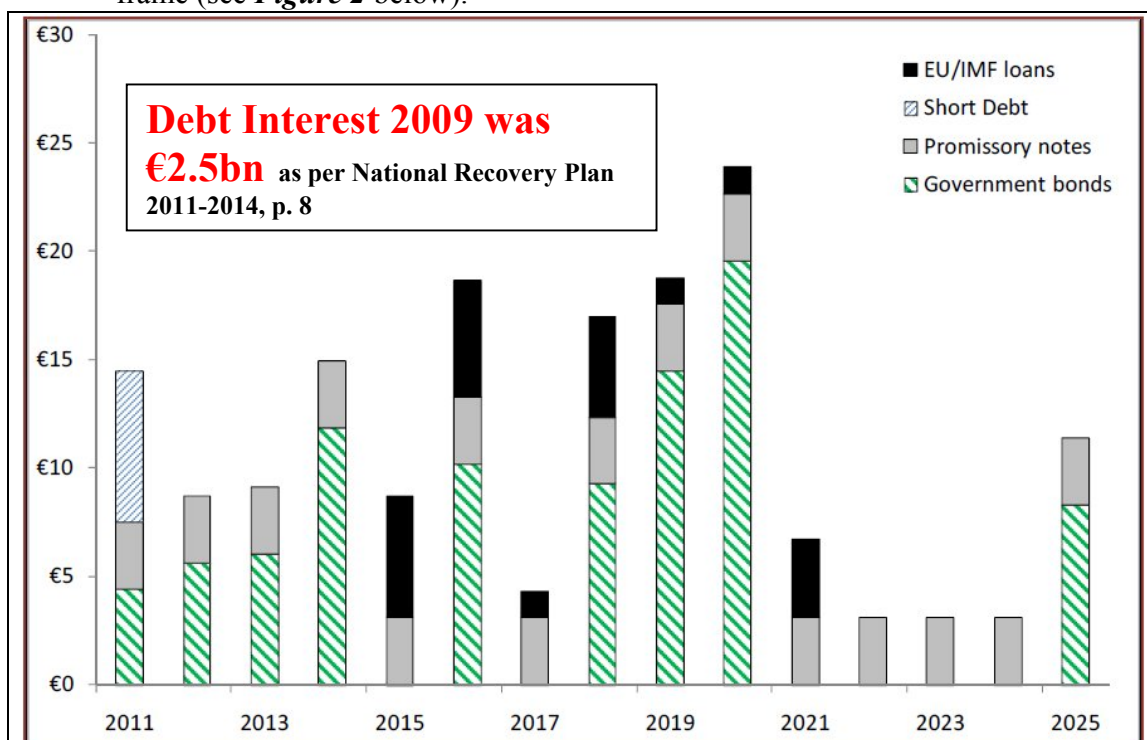
The deterioration of Irish Government finances as a result of the financial crisis and economic recession is evident from **Figure 1** below which shows the Irish Government Surplus/Deficit over the period 2007-2011.



One of the most significant policy documents published in recent years that will impact directly on the finances of Limerick City Council is the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014 (“the Plan”). Some of the provisions included in this Plan and other EU/IMF agreements that will impact over the four year time frame include:

- Reduction in Local Government Fund (LGF) expected over the four year plan. The reduction of LGF for 2012 can be viewed in **Figure 6 (p. 12)** below.
- Reference to introduction of *site value tax/ property tax* to fund essential locally-delivered services.
  - This has led to the introduction of a Household Charge in 2012 with initial flat-rate charge of €100, with a full value-based charge to be introduced in 2014. In 2012 the €100 charge will result in the collection of €160m, which be part of the Local Government Fund. The monies will not be collected by the Local Authority. It will be collected centrally, and redistributed through the Local Government Fund. The Household Charge income is to replace Exchequer funding to the Local Government Fund.
  - Charge will be on top of 2<sup>nd</sup> home charge (non-principal private residence charge) – currently €200, which is received directly by local authorities.

- Commercial Rates will be moved to a site value basis – revaluation. This is expected to be effective for Limerick City from January 2015.
- Motor Tax bands are to be adjusted in line with technological advances. This has commenced in Government’s Budget 2012.
- Grace-period for retirements under which pensions are calculated by reference to pre-cut rates of public service is being extended to end February 2012. This will have budgetary implications for 2012. For Limerick City Council there is in excess of €2.2m euro budgeted for Gratuities in 2012.
- Introduce a reformed pension scheme for “new entrants” to the public service and reduce their pay by 10% - this is in effect for 2012.
- Domestic water charges to be introduced by 2014 on a metered basis. The timing of this objective is uncertain.
- “Significant change is envisaged for the local government sector over the coming years, as set out in the recommendations of the Local Government Efficiency Review”. For Limerick City Council this objective has commenced with the setting up of the Limerick Re-organisation Implementation Group to plan the merger of Limerick City Council and Limerick County Council by mid year 2014.
- Significant increased debt refinancing burden is projected in the coming years, which will reduce the Exchequer contribution to local authorities over this time-frame (see *Figure 2* below).



**Figure 2: Refinancing Needs 2011-2025 – Repayment of Debt, €billion**, Extract from ESRI Quarterly report, “Irish Government Debt and Implied Debt Dynamics 2011-2025, p. 16

**Other initiatives set out by the IMF/EU/ECB for the Irish Government for Budget 2013 include the following:**

As per the “Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Policy Conditionality”, agreed with the IMF/EU/ECB (dated 3 December, 2010) actions to be completed by the Government by Quarter 4, 2012 (i.e. Budget 2013) include:

- The Irish Government introducing consolidation (saving) measures to at least €3.1bn.
- Revenue measure to yield €1.1bn in a full year including:
  - A lowering of personal income tax bands and credits.
  - A reduction in private pension tax relief.
  - A reduction in general tax expenditures.
  - An increase in property tax in Budget 2013.
- The budget 2013 will provide for a reduction of expenditure in 2013 of €2bn including:
  - Social expenditure reductions.
  - Reduction of public service numbers and public service pension adjustments.
  - Other programme expenditure, and reductions in capital expenditure
- The government will undertake an independent assessment of transfer of responsibility for water services provision from local authorities to a water utility with a view to start charging in 2012/ 2013. -It’s noted in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform November 2011 publication “Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2012-16” (p. 26-27) that “The Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is leading a study on the establishment of a *national water company*. As set out in the Programme for Government there is a commitment to the establishment of a new company, Irish Water, taking investment and maintenance out of the hand of local authorities.....Decisions on these issues will be taken later 2011”. There is no further update on this objective.

The circumstances in which we operate have changed significantly as outlined above. We must reflect economic realities and have due regard for those who benefit from our services and those contributing to the costs of service in the preparation and adoption of Budget 2012.

***Austerity measures will continue to be implemented during 2012 to stabilise the public finances and to commence a return to a sustainable fiscal position.*** For Limerick City Council some of these measures included:

- The City Council will in 2012 continue to work under the terms of ***Croke Park Agreement*** towards the overall objective of achieving a ***further reduction in employment levels through non replacement***. The Croke Park Agreement contains a commitment to maintain the pay rates and employment status of existing public servants. It is recognised by all that that there must be a reduction in the cost of the public service employment through ***the achievement of restructuring, flexibilities and reforms of existing work practices***.
- The Council will also ***seek additional cost savings*** from existing staff through changes in current work practices and arrangements, and methods of service

delivery. Management Team will be tasked with these objectives arising from the Budgetary Process.

- ***Continue the roll-out of Open Source IT software*** (savings of €100k p.a.)
- Look at further ***procurement opportunities*** including legal services, and consider using National Procurement Service contracts (OPW), and participate in regional procurement group.
- ***Continue the roll-out of new technologies*** including the CORE system, Debt Collection system and use of on-line technologies.
- ***The Retail Incentive Scheme for Vacant Retail Units*** introduced by Economic Development section in 2011 (with objective of improving retail activity in City core) will continue in 2012.

## **Budget 2012**

In presenting the Annual Budget for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 to Council, I wish to take this opportunity, to summarise the financial position of Limerick City Council at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010. The Annual Financial Statement of Limerick City Council for the year 2010 shows that the accumulated Balance on the Revenue Account is a credit position of €317,825 at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2010 (compared to the accumulated Credit Balance on the Revenue Account at 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009 €260,191). The Audit of AFS 2010 has not yet been finalised.

Current outturn figures indicate that it will be difficult to maintain the Revenue Credit in 2011, but every effort will be made to break-even. Limerick City Council had an accumulated deficit for every year from 1979 to 2005. The steady financial position since 2005 must be maintained and this will be done by a combination of cost management and other measures as outlined above. This objective will be more challenging as Exchequer funding for Local Government is coming under pressure due to austerity measures the Government have to introduce. The 2012 Budget reflects the need to continue a 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.

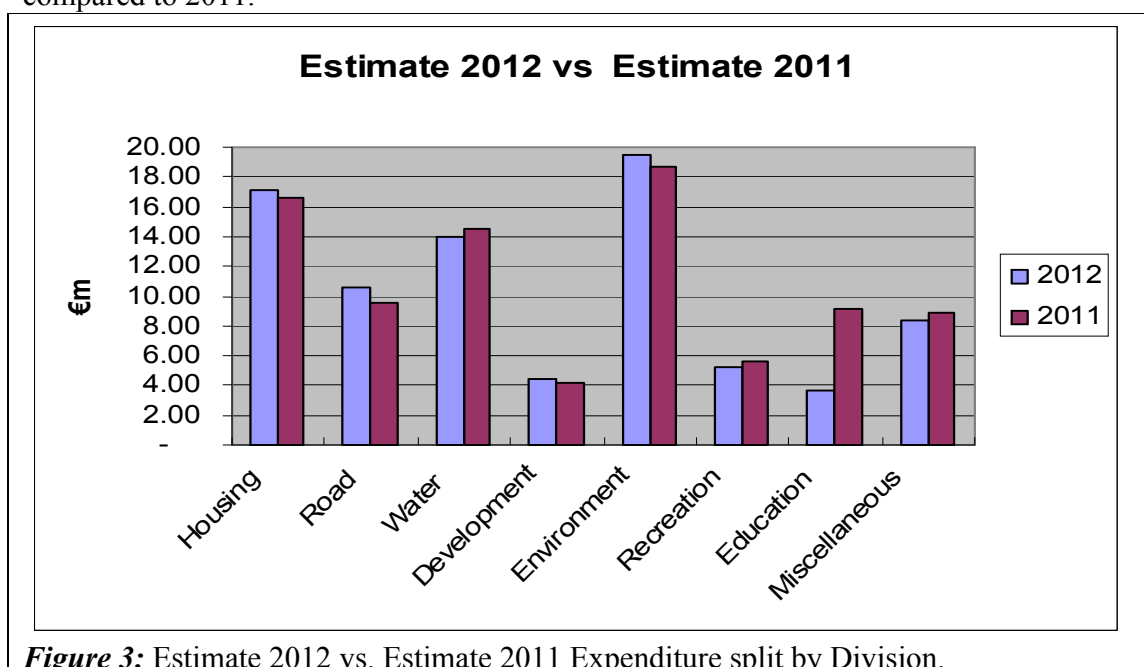
I will now set out the proposals for Expenditure and Income for 2012.

### **Expenditure – 2012**

The Budget for 2012 provides for expenditure of €82,958,895. This compares to €87,412,175 for Budget 2011 (represents a decrease of €4,453,280 over the Budget for 2011). One of the main reasons for the significant decrease is that Limerick City Council will not be paying VEC/LIT pensions in 2012 – this function has been transferred to the Department of Education. These pensions were financially neutral to Limerick City Council. This change can be seen in Division G “Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare” in Budget 2012. The following table sets out the expenditure by Division:

	Budget 2012	Budget 2011
A. Housing and Building	17,123,219	16,592,076
B. Road Transportation and Safety	10,642,163	9,566,944
C. Water Supply and Sewerage	14,040,613	14,538,067
D. Development Incentives and Controls	4,450,957	4,238,481
E. Environmental Protection	19,445,084	18,740,915
F. Recreation and Amenity	5,221,126	5,680,462
G. Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	3,618,235	9,128,599
H. Miscellaneous Services	8,417,498	8,926,631
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>82,958,895</b>	<b>87,412,175</b>

The following graph (*Figure 3*) depicts estimated expenditure by Division for 2012, compared to 2011.



*Figure 3:* Estimate 2012 vs. Estimate 2011 Expenditure split by Division.

### **Payroll and Pensions**

It must be acknowledged that staff in Limerick City Council has already made a substantial contribution to the necessary reduction in expenditure, namely through:

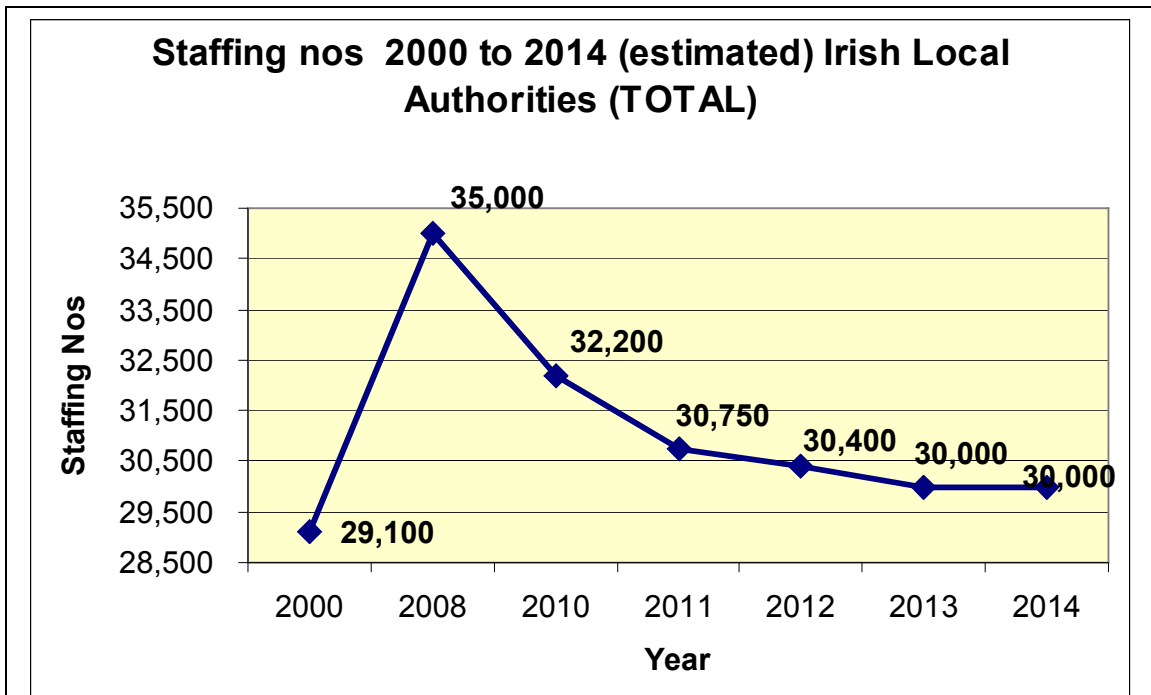
- The *pension levy*, which has reduced their pay by an average of nearly 7 per cent (this money is retained by Limerick City Council, but it's deducted from the overall Local Government Fund allocation). This is noted in Table A as €1,315,000 ("Pension Related Deduction").
- Further pay reductions were applied on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010 to all salaries/ wages of public sector employees arising from central Governments Budget 2010. This resulted in an average pay reduction of 8% of which 35% had to be remitted to central Government in 2010 (€455k approx.). Such pay reductions continue to be applied for Budget 2012. These savings has since been incorporated into a reduced Local Government Fund allocation for 2011 and 2012.

- Overall staffing numbers have been reduced in-line with the staffing moratorium on an ongoing basis. During 2011, seventeen Officers/Employees retired from Limerick City Council, twelve were due to retirement on age grounds and five were due to ill-health retirements. A further two retirements due to ill-health are due to retire before year end.
- There is expected to be a significant number of ‘unplanned’ retirements in 2011/ early 2012 (22 staff have expressed interest to date) due to the Government scheme of preserving pension entitlements to pay scales and rates prior to pay cut applied on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2010. This grace period will end on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2012. There is also an ongoing requirement to provide for retirements based on ill-health grounds. The total provision made in draft Budget 2012 for pension gratuities is €2.2m (€1.7m in 2011). The consequential impact of those retiring is a reduction in Wages and Salaries costs, but an increase in Pensions & Gratuities. The Wages/ Salaries & Pension/ Gratuities costs are noted further below.

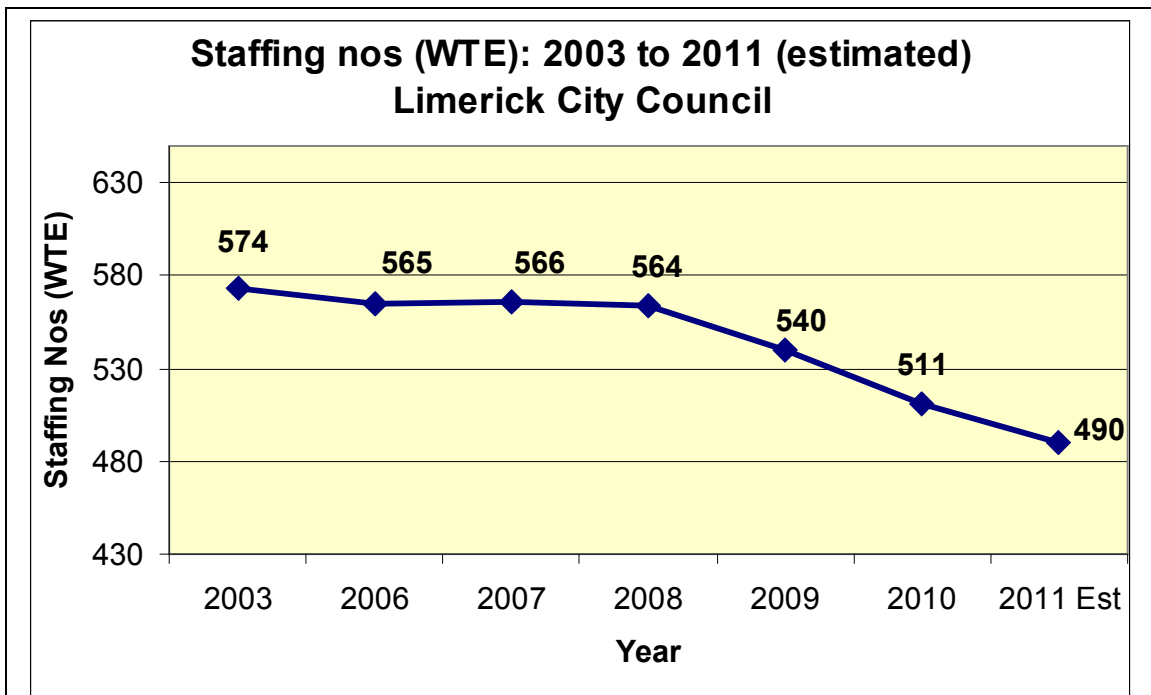
The details of payroll costs are noted below for 2012 and 2011:

<b>Payroll versus non-payroll</b>	<b>Draft Budget 2012 (€)</b>	<b>Adopted Budget 2011 (excl VEC/LIT Pensions)</b>
Wages & Salaries	25,442,580	26,311,525
Pensions	8,955,829	8,567,909
	<u>34,398,409</u>	<u>34,879,434</u>

To continue to minimize the increase in payroll costs in 2012 and to comply with the Government directive to reduce payroll costs a number of measures have been reflected in the Budget 2012. These include the non renewal of temporary contracts, non filling of vacancies that arise in 2012 (some vacancies may have to be filled for operational reasons) along with the non filling of a number of vacancies that arose in 2011 and reductions in overtime and allowances. Payroll costs including non-core payroll costs and staff numbers will continue to be examined during 2012 in order to identify further savings where possible. This will be done in line with the Croke Park Agreement. In the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014 it has been noted that staffing number in local authorities in Ireland must be reduced further as outlined in the **Figure 4** below. It should be noted that Limerick City Council continued to reduce its work-force in the mid 2000’s through introduction of new and more efficient work practices as illustrated in **Figure 5** below.



**Figure 4:** Staffing Numbers of Irish Local Authorities from 2000 up to 2014 (estimated), details extracted from The National Recovery Plan 2011-2014, p. 64.



**Figure 5:** Staffing numbers (WTE) Limerick City Council 2000 – 2011 (estimated).

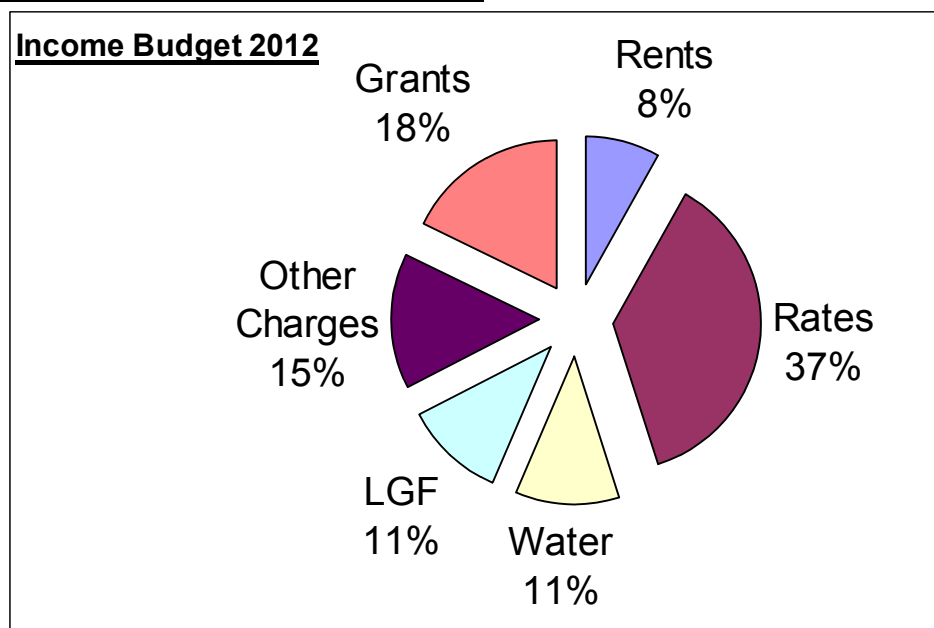
**Non-Payroll Costs**

There are a number of non-payroll costs and unavoidable increases in current costs facing the City Council for 2012. I have made every effort to maintain expenditure in critical areas. In particular insurance, public lighting, energy, overdraft, loan financing and

provision for rates refunds and bad debts provide a significant drain on resources. Details of proposals are set out in the following pages.

Limerick City Council has successfully tendered for electricity services in 2010 which will result in savings for 2011 in the area of public lighting, maintenance and general electricity costs. These savings have been reflected in Budget 2012. Procurement will be a constant focus going forward to ensure that Value for Money is achieved.

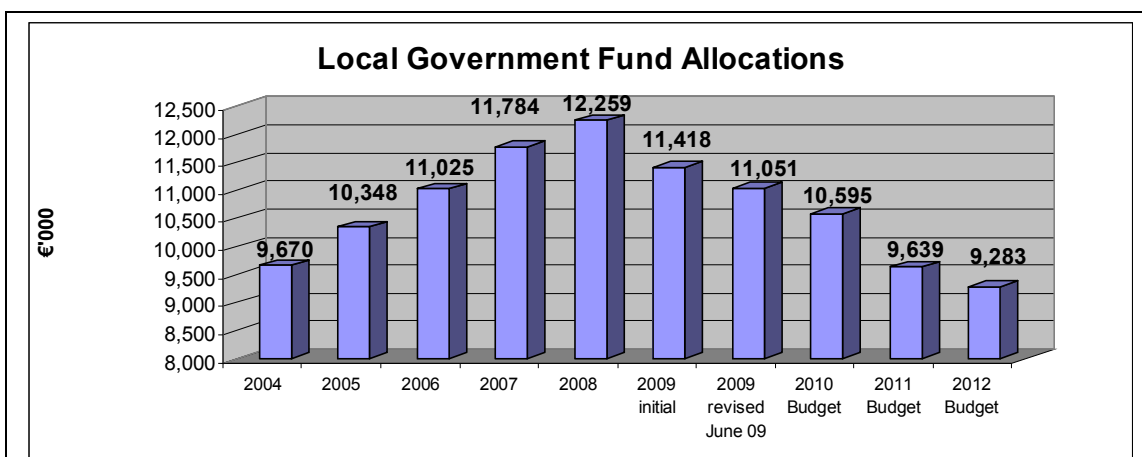
## INCOME PROPOSALS - 2012



The chart above illustrates the varying sources of income for Limerick City Council's draft Budget 2012.

### **Local Government Fund**

It should be noted that the method of allocating the Local Government Fund (LGF) for 2012 is different to prior years. The LGF allocation is based on the amount "paid" by the Department during 2011 with a percentage reduction. In 2010 a "pension levy" was introduced and local authorities were allowed to retain these monies, but the amount "paid" by the Department in the LGF allocation was reduced accordingly. The Pension Levy which is disclosed separately in Table A of the Budget Tables is budgeted to be €1,315,000 for 2012 ("Pension Related Deduction"). The LGF allocation for 2012 plus the Pension Levy 2012 amount equates to €9,283,166, which enables it to be compared to amounts received in prior years. This brings the LGF allocation to pre 2004 levels (see *Figure 6* below). The 2004 Local Government Fund allocation to Limerick City Council was €9.67million. The 2012 LGF allocation is reduced when compared to the 2011 allocation of €9,638,920 (which includes Pension Levy income). The impact of the reduction in the Local Government Fund for 2012 has not been offset by any new sources of income for Limerick City Council in 2012, and therefore has resulted in cost reductions to be sought across all Divisions.

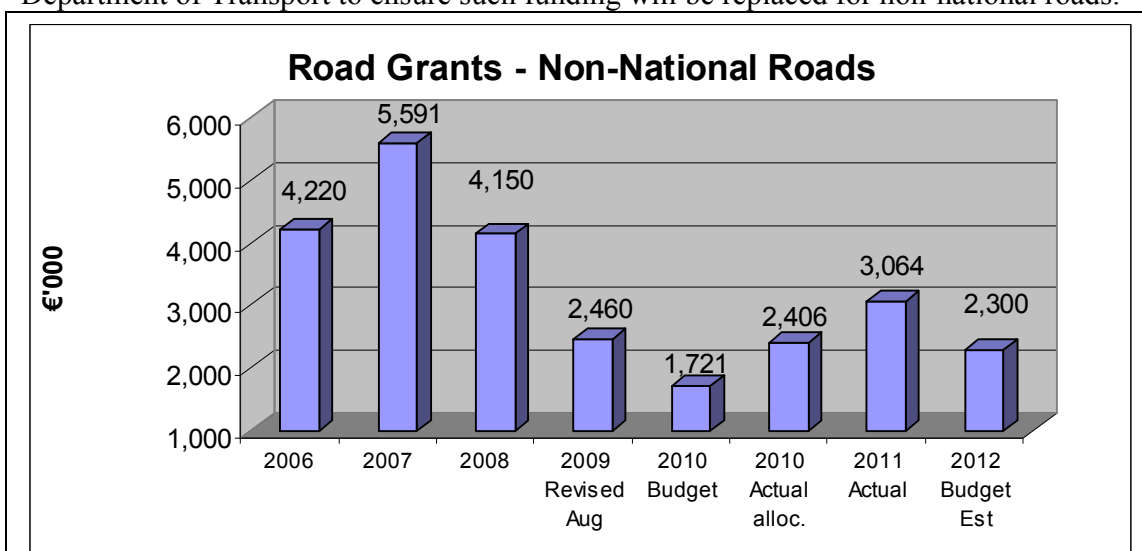


**Figure 6:** Local Government Allocation received by Limerick City Council 2004-2012

This reduced LGF allocation arises through a reduced level of buoyancy in the Motor Tax yield nationally and austerity measures introduced as part of the EU/IMF/ECB agreements. The **Household Charges of €100** being introduced in 2012 is not income coming directly to local authorities – it is being receipted centrally and replacing Exchequer funding that would normally be part of the national Local Government Fund. As per the Government’s Budget 2012 “Summary of 2012 Budget and Estimate Measure Policy”, The €100 Household Charge is an interim measure pending design and implementation of a full property tax which will apply in 2014.

### Road Grants

There has been a significant reduction in road grant allocation during 2009 and 2010. This trend has steadied during 2011. It’s unclear what the allocation for 2012 will be. Details of the funding reductions in prior years and the expected income figures for 2012 are noted below. Any further reductions will impact on the roads programme Limerick City Council is able to deliver during 2012. It should be noted that due to the opening of the Limerick Tunnel, all national roads in Limerick City Council’s area are declassified, therefore not attracting NRA funding. Representation has been made to the NTA and Department of Transport to ensure such funding will be replaced for non-national roads.



**Figure 7:** Road Grants Limerick City Council: Non-National Roads: 2006-2011

### **Commercial Rates:**

The Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government has requested that local authorities exercise restraint in setting commercial rates and local charges for 2012, in order to support competitiveness in the economy, nationally and locally, and to protect the interests of communities. In line with this request and working towards the objective set out by Minister Phil Hogan TD for a merger of Commercial Rate levels in Limerick City Council and Limerick County Council areas, ***this draft Budget 2012 is prepared on the basis of a proposed reduction of 1.5% in the Annual Rate on Valuation.***

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. 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. 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.

In 2011, Limerick City Council had the third highest Annual Rate on Valuation of the 34 City/ County Councils (as illustrated in the Table below). This is despite Limerick City Council making considerable cost savings since 2004 to date, which would have been the period of the boom, and also having reduced commercial rates by 0.5% in Budget 2011. This indicates the significant under-bounding of Limerick City Council's area. This issue is one of the subjects being reviewed by the Limerick Re-organisation Group appointed by Minister Phil Hogan, TD this year.

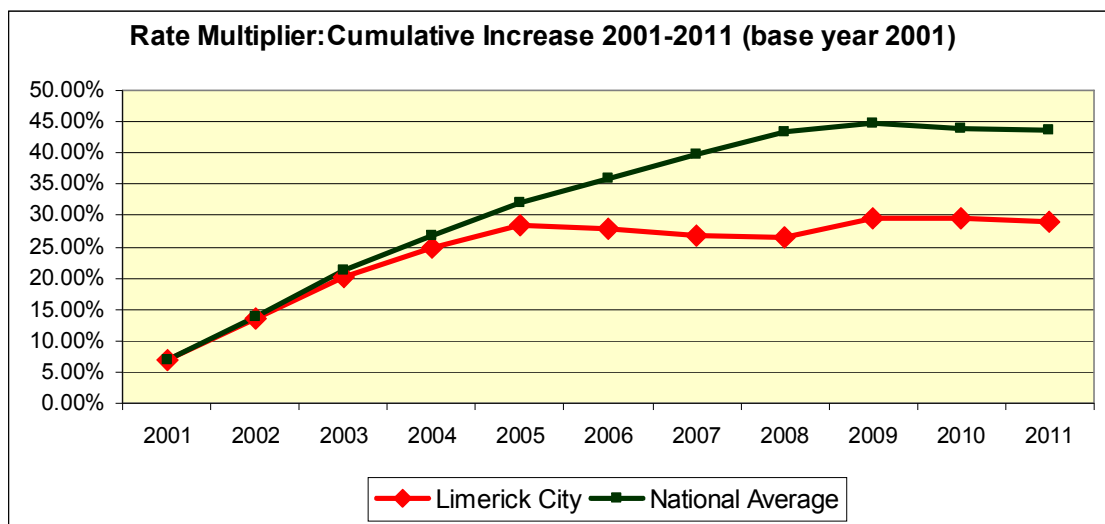
<b>Local Authority Name</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2010</b>
Kerry County Council	80.35	80.35
Wicklow County Council	76.78	76.78
Limerick City Council	76.07	76.46
Cork County Council	74.75	74.75
Roscommon County Council	74.38	75.13
Cork City Council	74.05	74.05
Clare County Council	72.99	72.99
Wexford County Council	71.52	71.52

**Table: Annual Rate on Valuations 2011: Top 8 City/ County Councils.**

It should be noted that the €200,000 annual compensation payable to Limerick Co. Co. arising from boundary extension to North Rural in 2008 has not been included in Budget 2012.

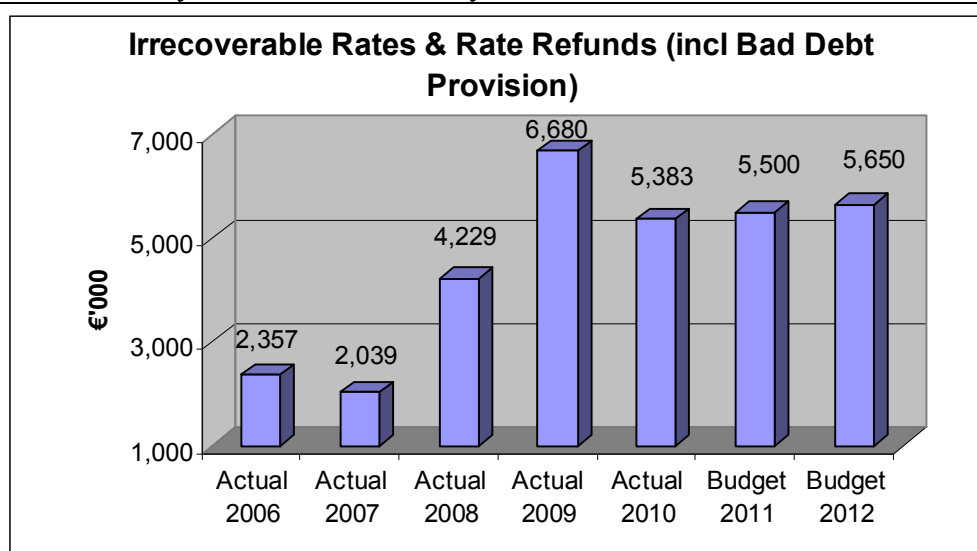
This Council has demonstrated a commitment to the competitiveness of the City by being the first Local Authority to reduce the rates charge in adopting the annual budget for 2006. This initiative was continued in the 2007 and 2008 budgets. In Budget 2010, the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV) was left at the 2009 level of €76.4576. In Budget 2011, there was a reduction of 0.5% to €76.0753. ***It is proposed in this Draft Budget 2012 to reduce the Annual Rate on Valuation by 1.5% for Budget 2012.***

**Figure 8** below illustrates the attempts made by Limerick City Council since Budget 2005 to reduce down its commercial rate charge to the business community. This was done through significant cost reductions through non-replacement of staff & introduction of greater efficiencies in the delivery of service to the public & business community.



**Figure 8:** Rate Multiplier trends 2001-2011: National Average vs. Limerick City Council

The reduction in the Annual Rate on Valuation proposed in this book is despite the reduction in funding from the Local Government Fund for 2012, and the continuing level of Bad Debt provision required for Commercial Rates (as illustrated in the **Figure 9** below). The Bad Debt provision is required due to the high level of vacancy in Limerick City (estimated to be 17%), and due to business closures in the city. There has been a slow turnaround in recent months, with a small number of these vacant becoming occupied, but such progress will be slow. It's hoped the Retail Incentive Scheme introduced by the Economic Development section in 2011 will help to ensure vacant units in the city-centre will be filled by commercial businesses.



**Figure 9:** Irrecoverable Rates & Rate Refunds: 2006-Budget 2012

**Water/Waste Water Charge:**

The Water/ Waste-Water Charge is defined under the Water Pricing Policy and the cost of operating this service can not be subsidised from any other service area. There has been significant infrastructural investment in the last number of years in this area to guarantee adequate processing capacity for Limerick City which is detailed further in the Water Services section of this report. Such infrastructure is partly funded by central government (for domestic customers) and the balance is funded through loan financing (for commercial customers). The cost of such loan financing has risen significantly in the last three years, and this has necessitated in the need to increase the consolidated water charge to €2.60 per m3 in 2011, with the consolidated standing charge remaining at €300 per annum (2010 level). *There is no proposal to increase Water/Waste Water Charges for Budget 2012.*

The following table compares the Water/Waste water charge for 2012 for Limerick City Council of €2.60 per m3 to the 2011 consolidated water charge for neighbouring local authorities of Limerick City Council.

<b>Local Authority Name</b>	<b>2011 Consolidated</b>	<b>2012 Consolidated</b>
Clare County	€2.94 per m3	€2.94 per m3
Limerick County	€2.60 per m3	€2.60 per m3
Limerick City	€2.60 per m3	€2.60 per m3

**Table: Water/ Waste Water consolidated charge comparisons**

**Retail Incentive Scheme**

The current economic situation has resulted in an increase in vacancies in retail properties across the city. In an effort to encourage occupancy of these vacant units in the City Centre retail core, Limerick City Council has designed a scheme to offer incentives for the higher order retail uses of such premises. It is intended to ensure that any incoming use will respect and enhance the multifaceted character of the area and will allow and encourage a diversity of uses to increase its overall attractiveness for shopping, leisure and business purposes. It is intended that such a scheme will be cost neutral.

## **Conclusion**

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

- The need to maintain essential services despite reductions in Local Government Fund, and road grants compared to previous years.
- The need to limit cost increases to the users of our services.
- The need to continue a programme of investment and development of the City, albeit on a reduced basis compared to previous years due to limitations in funding & financing.
- The need to match spending programmes with resources.
- The fact that the economy is still in a general weakened condition with consumer confidence low.
- The need to support regeneration proposals for disadvantaged areas of Limerick City.
- The need to plan for the merger of the two Limerick Local Authorities with the proposed reduction in Annual Rate on Valuation in this draft Budget.

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 his worship the Mayor, Councillor Jim Long and his predecessor, Councillor Maria Byrne for their wholehearted commitment and support this year.

It has been challenging to prepare the Budget 2012 documents amid the ongoing Statutory audit of AFS 2010. I also wish to express my thanks to the Directors, Mr. Kieran Lehane, Ms. Caroline Curley, Mr. Pat Dowling, Mr. Oliver O'Loughlin 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. Pat Murnane, Mr. Mark Connolly, Ms Irene Griffin, Ms. Angela Murphy and Ms. Deirdre O'Flynn, 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 Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

**Tom Mackey**  
**City Manager**

## SOCIAL POLICY & HOUSING

### Housing Capital Programme in 2011

Government Housing Policy is “to enable all households access good quality housing appropriate to household circumstances and in their particular community of choice”. Good quality housing is the bedrock of healthy communities. The City Council is the housing authority for the city and has a strong tradition in the direct provision of housing as well as a range of housing options and services. While continuing with construction, the Council has in recent years also expanded its house purchase programme. During 2012 a number of schemes will be under construction or planned to proceed to construction, including:-

- Cliona Park, Moyross (a mixed scheme involving 13 family homes and 20 apartments)
- Vizes Court Phase 2 (29 apartments)
- Lord Edward Street (70+ homes)
- Kincora/Carew Park (36 homes)

It is likely that there will be well in excess of 100 homes being built by the end of 2012 and this is very positive. It has been the expressed wish of the Council that there would be increased emphasis on construction in the capital programme owing to its greater economic benefits and job creation in the city. The City Council is unique in obtaining approval to have the above schemes underway, as part of its building programme and the support of the elected members and the receiving communities are essential in this regard. It should also be noted that further construction schemes under the regeneration process are under consideration.

Owing to the constraints on public finances households will have to rely more on housing supports in the years ahead, than in the past and the new Government Housing Policy (June 2011) setting out changes was circulated to the Council and considered at the Housing SPC. Limerick is very fortunate to have housing schemes under construction due to the support of the Department.

The availability of capital is dependent on exchequer funding and the state of government finances. In the 5 year period 2006-2010, the Council spent c. €160m in capital housing services alone. This investment continued during 2011 with considerable capital resources being expended and the funding role of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government is very much appreciated and acknowledged. The estimated outturns on the principal exchequer funded programmes for 2011 are as follows:-

<b>Housing Construction/Acquisition</b>	<b>€4.0m</b>
<b>Regeneration</b>	<b>€29.6m</b>
<b>Home Improvements/Grants</b>	<b>€2.0m</b>
<b>Capital Assistance Scheme</b>	<b>€2.9m</b>
<b>Energy Efficiency</b>	<b>€0.9m</b>
<b>Traveller Accommodation</b>	<b>€0.4m</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>€39.8m</b>

Given the state of public finances generally, the delivery of this investment level is very welcome. This is a very necessary and high level of investment in housing services in the city and the benefits that accrue to residents, applicants and the council are considerable. Such high spending also benefits the economy of the city. The various action plans, strategies and policies approved by the members of the council facilitate the drawdown of these funds and the continuing support of the members for these schemes is appreciated. The staff of the Housing section will continue to work closely with councillors, residents, communities, the Limerick Regeneration Agency and the Department of the Environment to optimise investment in housing services.

### **Regeneration**

The council has a team of 10 staff employed to facilitate Regeneration. Considerable and welcome progress has been made on the regeneration programme during 2011 in Moyross, Southill, Ballinacurra Weston and Saint Mary's Park. The total budget for Limerick Regeneration in 2011 was €40m of which €30m was allocated to the Council. The Council will spend more than this and indeed since the commencement of the process in 2007, has spent in excess of €85m on regeneration. This work will continue in 2012, again with the funding support of the Department of the Environment. The appearance of the estates has improved as physical regeneration proceeds with many vacant & derelict properties cleared and landscaped.

In June 2010 the Government announced support for 26 new regeneration projects in the City with a total investment of €337m. The commitment involves providing over 850 new and refurbished housing units at a total cost of over €160m in a period of 4 and a half years. This level of government commitment to housing services in the city at a time when public finances are severely challenged is a credit to the efforts of the Council and the Regeneration Agency.

### **Housing Needs Assessment**

A statutory Housing Needs Assessment was carried out in March 2011 and a report giving details of same was furnished to the Council. It revealed that a total of 3,027 households were considered to be in need of housing and this was a considerable increase from March 2008. There is a continuing high demand for council housing/support with many households turning to the Council for assistance. It is likely that owing to the deterioration in the economy that this growth in the waiting lists 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.) and Housing Standards**

The implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme has continued in 2011 with a total of 138 transfers to be completed. The Council has been very active in this area for a number of years with over 600 households now accommodated under the scheme. Expenditure in 2011 on RAS is estimated to be circa €3.4m and this is fully recouped from the state. 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 130 qualifying applicants will be catered for under the Scheme in 2012.

The target for inspections under the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 1993 in 2011 is 550. The Council is one of the most active housing authorities in this area in the country. This improved regulation coupled with transfers under RAS means the volume of occupied sub-standard accommodation in the city has declined greatly.

### **Management and Maintenance of Estates**

A Housing Inspector was appointed in 2008 and is responsible for ensuring that tenants comply with the terms of their tenancy agreements in relation to the upkeep of their homes and other matters. This official has carried out almost 500 inspections in 2011 to ensure that dwellings are properly maintained. Efforts will continue to recruit an additional inspector to strengthen this regulatory role.

The Council has a team of 3 staff dedicated to investigating and reducing anti social behaviour. So far in 2011, 290 complaints were received by the team, of which 95% were successfully resolved through dialogue and mediation. In a small number of cases it was necessary to seek resolution through legal channels and thus far in 2011, 8 notices to quit have been issued, 9 court orders for possession obtained with 6 repossessions effected and 11 homes voluntarily surrendered.

In November 2010, the Council adopted the Anti Social Behaviour Strategy as required under the 2009 Housing Act. This policy will strengthen the effectiveness of the Council's response to unacceptable behaviour. A free 'phone line (1 800 283064) was also introduced in 2010.

### **Expenditure in Estates**

A sum of €325,000 is being provided in 2012 for Social/Community & Estate Management Grants in 2012. Works carried out directly by the council will also be funded from this budget.

The Community Co-ordinators (6 no.) 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 has 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.

It is important to note that the funding for grants and the delivery of the above initiatives is dependent on exchequer assistance obtained through the regeneration process.

### **Housing Grants**

As a result of a Government decision, responsibility for Housing Aid for the Elderly was transferred from the HSE to Local Authorities in 2008 and re-named Housing Aid for Older People. The Council now operates three types of housing grants, via: - Housing Adaptation Grant, Mobility Aids Grant and HAOP. Councillors are aware that there is a

very high level of interest and applications for all grants but HAOP in particular. The Council received an initial allocation of €1,525,000 for the above schemes in 2011 and was then notified of a supplementary allocation of €500,000 which will allow an overall expenditure of €2,000,000 in 2011. This allocation has been fully utilised. A sum of €350,000 is being provided from the council's own resources in 2012 to fund grants.

### **Housing Maintenance**

The Housing Section services a rented stock of c. 2,800 units and maintains 7 halting sites. 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 c.80 casual vacancies per annum. The budget for maintenance, repair and improvement for 2012 will be €3.0 million. Over 1,800 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 end 2010. 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. In 2009 the open access hostel moved from Bridgeland House to McGarry House and this transfer has facilitated the delivery of greatly improved services for homeless persons in accordance with the council's homeless strategy.

### **Energy Efficiency Programme**

This is a new programme introduced by the Department in 2009 and the Council received a capital allocation of €1.15m in respect of same. These monies can be used to fund improvements to the council's rented stock to deliver an energy efficiency rating of C1. This is a high rating level that is not easily achieved and a number of houses were improved during the year. It is estimated that 70 homes will have been improved in 2011. It is intended to continue with this scheme in 2012, subject to Departmental funding.

## **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.
- 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, William Street, Johns Square and the Orbital Route. The transportation department is also playing a role in forward planning and are currently project managing studies such as The Mid West Area Strategic Plan and the public Transport Feasibility Study.

The public road network in the city is now comprised of Local and Regional Roads following the opening of phase 2 of the Southern Ring Road and the subsequent reclassification of the National road network in the city to Regional Road Status. This provides a particular challenges to the city council in respect of reduced maintenance grants as no funding is now provided to the City Council from the National Roads authority for the maintenance of National Routes and the reclassified Regional roads have to be maintained from Non National Road Grants which are not provided at the same level as National Road Grants.

### **1. Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road**

Limerick City Council is advancing 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. 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. Progress on the scheme has been good during 2011 with the An Bord Pleanala Oral Hearing having been heard in March and the EIS and CPO for the scheme been confirmed by An Bord Pleanala in September. Limerick City council are currently preparing the detailed design and tender documents for the scheme. This scheme, subject to funding and approval by the Department of Transport could be tendered in mid 2012 with a possible construction start early in 2013. The estimated cost of this scheme including land Acquisition is circa €40 million.

## **2. Road Maintenance**

In 2011 Limerick City Council carried out in excess of 100,000m<sup>2</sup> road surface overlay and strengthening works at various locations throughout the city including major resurfacing works at;

- North Circular Road
- Woodlawn
- Claughan Fort, Garryowen
- Downey Street, Garryowen
- Kileely Road
- Ballynanty Road
- Park Gardens,
- O'Connell St
- Mallow St
- Barrack Lane
- Union Cross
- Cross on Clare Street
- Whitethorn Drive and Woodbine Avenue
- Coonagh Road - Near Airfield
- Courtbrack Avenue
- Park Road
- Ballinacurra Gardens
- Westfields NCR
- Lifford Avenue
- Rhebogue Road (from Pumphouse Cross to Dublin Road Junction)

In addition to the above almost 15,000m<sup>2</sup> footpaths were reconstructed throughout the city. The ongoing programme of road and footpath restoration will be continued in 2012. 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 Department of Transport in 2012.

A roads programme will be brought before the Council in early 2012 in line with available funding. This program will take into consideration all requests for road improvements received from members during 2012.

## **3. Sarsfield Bridge Improvement Works**

Improvement works were carried out during 2011 on the Abutments of Sarsfield Bridge to counteract the effects of scouring to the base of the abutments. A contract for the restoration of the old Light standards on Sarsfield Bridge was prepared and tendered. Analysis of the tenders will be completed over the next few weeks and we hope to award a contract in early 2012.

#### **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:

##### **(a) William Street/Sarsfield Street Remodelling**

The William Street improvement scheme comprises the fourth stage of the Limerick City Centre Re-modeling of Streets and Public Open Spaces Programme. This ambitious initiative aims to make the City Centre a visitor friendly environment and a far more attractive place in which to shop, to visit, do business, and pass the time of day. Development of the William Street/Sarsfield Street project has entailed extensive on-going consultation with key stakeholders and the local business and residential community on the street.

Limerick City Council is grateful to the stakeholders for the level of cooperation and goodwill it has received throughout the consultation process and construction phases of this project.

The William Street scheme has provided a much needed facelift to the public streetscape which has become very dated. The scheme consists of widened pavements on the street, re-surfacing in high quality materials including Irish Limestone; improved street lighting and signage; under-grounding of services; distinctive street furniture and new tree planting and public transport facilities including a bus lane, bus shelters and new taxi ranks.

It is intended that the pedestrian-friendly theme will be followed by improvement works to other key streets as further funding becomes available, representing a radical transformation and the realisation of a new heart for the City Centre. The William Street scheme is now about 90% complete. 50% funding was provided for this scheme through the European Regional Development Fund.

##### **(b) John's Square Remodelling**

John's Square is an important gateway to the centre of Limerick City and a public open space in front of the St. John's Cathedral providing important first impressions for both residents and visitors. John's Square is at the centre of a group of historically significant buildings including St. John's Cathedral, St. John's Hospital and the limestone town house buildings in the square accommodating many businesses which all attract heavy visitor use.

Works commenced to remodel John's Square in September 2011. The work is now about 50 % complete and will be completed early in 2012. This upgrade contract is valued at just under €1 million euro with 50% funding provided for this scheme through the European Regional Development Fund.

The works which include extensive upgrade of the public space by the provision of high quality granite paving, new street lighting and traffic calming measures to provide a nice public space establishing an appropriate setting for the historical buildings surrounding John's Square as intended by the early designers allowing visitors to Limerick and local residents to enjoy the historic architecture in a setting that reflects their heritage value contributing to the broader city economy and sustainability.

Limerick City Council would like to thank the businesses and residents of William Street, John's Square, Lower Gerald Griffin Street and surrounding streets for their assistance and help during these projects.

## **5. Riverside Strategy 'The Quays'**

The Riverside is one of the most important natural assets of Limerick City and this is recognisable by the substantial new development investment that has taken place along the riverside over the last few years. To complement these initiatives by the private sector Limerick City Council has implemented 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 have been completed in recent years including Clancy Strand and O'Callaghan Strands. Limerick City Council was successful in 2011 with its application to Failte Ireland for Tourism Infrastructure funding and Minister Noonan recently confirmed funding of almost **€3.2 million** towards the upgrade of the riverside promenade between Shannon Bridge and Sarsfield Bridge along Bishop's Quay, Howley's Quay and Harvey's Quay. Detailed design has commenced on this project which we currently call '**The Quays**'. It is expected that this project will be tendered in early 2012 and that construction will commence in mid 2012.

## **6. Sustainable Transport Projects**

Limerick city centre like other cities suffers from traffic congestion at peak times as a result of our over dependence on car based transport. Several initiatives at reducing our level of dependency on cars are currently being promoted including the improvement of Public Transport Facilities and the provision of bus Lanes. These initiatives will help 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. They will also encourage a modal shift to public transport thus reducing congestion in our City Centre. It is important that Limerick City avail of the capital funding programmes currently being provided by the Department of Transport for the provision of Green Routes. Work has continued during 2011 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

### **(a) Childers Road Widening and Green Route**

Limerick City Council are currently working on designs for the widening of Childers Road between the Parkway roundabout and John Carew Park Link Road Junction road to accommodate bus lanes in both directions and improved capacity and safety at junctions along this route. The upgrade of the Childers Road and Improvements to the Roxboro Road Roundabout Junction were highlighted as a priority in the Limerick Southside Regeneration Masterplan and funding was committed under the Limerick Regeneration Implementation Programme. The design of this scheme is now almost complete and the Scheme Environmental Impact Statement is almost ready to be submitted to An Bord Pleanála.

### **(b) Ballinacurra Road Green Route`**

The members of Limerick City Council approved the Part 8 for the Ballinacurra Road Green Route in 2011. The proposed project works form part of Limerick City's Southern Green Route, and will connect with the recent Green Route works carried out by Limerick County Council on Saint Nessans Road in Raheen.

This project includes the construction of an inbound bus lane and street improvement measures from the city boundary at Ballinacurra Creek on the Ballinacurra Road R526 to its junction with Childers Road R509 and further footpath, public lighting and traffic signal upgrades from Childers Road junction up to Punches Cross. Detailed design of this

scheme is proceeding and construction of the scheme will commence when funding is confirmed during 2012.

**(c) Walking & Cycling Strategy**

Limerick City Council with assistance from the Smarter Travel unit in the Department of Transport has completed a walking and cycling strategy for Limerick City and its Environs during 2011. The aim of this ambitious strategy is to create plans for an extensive network of high quality safe routes that can be used by people for commuting and leisure trips on foot and by bicycle. Part of the strategy will also look at ways of promoting cycling and walking as alternatives to the car. This strategy is aimed at reducing traffic congestion and promoting healthier lifestyles.

**7. National Transport Authority Grants**

Limerick City Council were successful in securing grant funding of almost €1.6 million in 2011 towards a number of important projects. These included;

**a) Variable Message Signs (VMS) and Parking Guidance Signs**

Funding was secured for the provision of 10 Variable Message Signs on the main access routes into the city and for the provision of 26 Parking guidance Signs at various locations around the core city centre. The signs are very visible and display real time car parking information and clearly demonstrate the ample availability of off-street parking in the city centre. The provision of the parking guidance signs is a partnership to encourage business and commerce and will lead to;

- Reduce the number drivers, driving around looking for a parking space
- Reduce traffic congestion in the city centre
- Reduce queuing on approach roads to car parks
- Increase awareness of Car Parks
- Better utilisation of Car Park Spaces
- Advanced knowledge of space availability
- Real time information and directions
- Orientation assistance for visitors
- Less frustration for visitors to the city

The VMS signs allow the city council to give motorists advance notice of road works, parking information, events in the city allowing motorists to better plan their journey into the city centre.

**b) Provision of cycle advance stop lines (ASLs) at key junctions**

Cyclists Advance Stop Lines (ASLs) were provided at 27 Junctions around the city to increase safety for cyclists waiting at traffic lights and to raise awareness of the presence of cyclists among motorists on the city road network.

**c) Upgrades of Pedestrian crossings to Mobility Impaired Disable Standards (MID)**

Four Pedestrian crossings in the City were upgraded to M.I.D. Standard delivering Improved road safety for pedestrians, catering for persons with disabilities, i.e. visually impaired including universal access. Energy efficiencies and reduced maintenance costs

**d) Cycle Network Hazard Improvements**

The purpose of the project was to improve the safety of existing facilities for cyclists and pedestrians at various locations throughout Limerick City Centre where significant hazards exist.

**e) Condell Road Walking and Cycling Facility**

The purpose of these works was to complete the walking and cycling facilities along the Condell road including the provision of a Cycle & Pedestrian Access Ramp from Condell road down to O'Callaghan Strand. The project has provided an amenity that is easily accessible and attractive to walkers and cyclists. It will encourage people to use cycling for commuting to work and education from the western suburbs of the city

**f) Speed Warning Control Signs**

The project involves the installation of 6 No electronic speed activated radar warning signs. The purpose of the project is to reduce the occurrence of traffic speed violations on roads throughout Limerick City by providing motorists with a graphic display of their speed helping them to ensure that vehicular traffic complies with speed limits in the city. This will ensure that the urban environment is safer for walkers and cyclists to move around. The project should also reduce the incidence of speed related accidents.

**8. 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 2011.

**a) Urban Traffic Control System (UTC)**

Limerick UTC System was further expanded during 2011 with new junctions being added in the Sexton Street North, Dock Road and Clare Street areas of the city. These new junctions have increased safety for pedestrians at these junctions.

**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 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 2012 and now accounts for over 25% of all paid parking transactions in the City with 15,000 customers using this service.

**c) 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 technologies in the coming year.

**9. 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 provision of traffic calming measures. The City Council spent in excess of €100,000 on traffic calming measures in the three electoral Wards during 2011 in agreement with the Councillors. In 2012 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.

**10. Taking in Charge**

A new program for taking in charge of housing estates was prepared during 2009 and a priority list was agreed with the members. The following estates have been taken in charge during 2009:

- Meadowlands Avenue
- Meadowlands Close
- Meadowlands Avenue
- Butterfield Close (part of)
- Aspen Gardens (proposed for the Council meeting of the 19<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

This has had the effect of taking in charge an additional 7,990 m<sup>2</sup> of road surface and an additional 2,990m<sup>2</sup> of footpath surface along with associated water and sewer services.

Surveys have been completed in the following estates during 2009 and taking in charge is imminent;

- Riverglen
- Sunville Court
- AvondaleCourt
- Meadow Springs
- The Hermitage

**10 Mid-West Area Strategic Plan (MWASP)**

Limerick City Council acting as lead authority on behalf of the four mid-west Local Authorities commenced work on The Mid West Area Strategic Plan during 2009. The need for the Mid-West Area Strategic Plan is to:

- Strengthen and enhance the functionality of the Limerick / Shannon Gateway and Ennis Hub, as identified in the National Spatial Strategy 2002 - 2020

- Provide guidelines for the promotion of sustainable development in existing urban centres and rural areas within the region
- Identify the regions strategic requirements for the next 20 years
- Inform authorities future social, physical, educational, economic infrastructural spending programmes as well as upcoming local authority development plans
- Inform future National Development Plan (NDP) reviews and the future Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) and National Spatial Strategy (NSS) reviews.
- Aid in identifying and securing National Government funding

The output of the Strategy is not intended to be an ‘end-state’, but rather the first substantial step in a rolling strategy that shall help shape the future of the Mid-West Region.

The mid West Area Strategic plan will now be put on Public Consultation and interested parties will be invited with to make submissions. It is currently expected that the study will be completed during the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2012.

## **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 was achieved in April 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. A proposal for restructuring the infrastructure in public open space to facilitate the elimination of common looped lead mains is with the DEHLG for their approval.

### **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, the Monaleen Road and from Rosbrien to the Dock Road. The provision of a new water main from the Dock Road to Caherdavin including a river crossing will be completed in the coming year.

Over 1000 metres of the existing Distribution Water Main were replaced during 2009. 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.

The leakage detection programme in the city mains system continued during the past year with in excess of 500 leaks identified and repaired resulting in additional savings in the supply of water.

### **Non Domestic Metering Project**

The non domestic metering Project is now 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. The Water Services Department is currently operating a proactive gully cleaning programme whereby all gullies in the City will be cleaned at least once a year. It is a credit to the City Council that the recent flooding almost nation wide had little or no impact on the City.

### **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**

### **Planning Related Policy**

#### **Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016**

- The City Development Plan was adopted on the 25th November 2010 and published in January 2011 and circulated to all prescribed bodies.
- The Plan sets out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the City for the six-year period 2010-2016.

#### **Mid West Area Strategic Plan (MWASP)**

MWASP is 20 year strategic plan for the mid west region being undertaken on behalf of the Mid West Regional Authority and the administrative areas of Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and Clare County Council. It will provide the basis for infrastructural programme over the coming 20 years.

#### **Housing Strategy**

A regional housing strategy has been prepared on behalf of the Mid West Regional Authority and the administrative areas of Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and Clare County Council. The preparation of a housing strategy is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended and is unique in that it has been prepared for the region as opposed to a single authority. The strategy provides guidance on the scale of housing demand in the region and the anticipated levels of demand for social housing. The strategy also provides guidance on how the demand for social housing should be allocated across the region. It was adopted by Limerick City Council in March 2011.

#### **Regeneration**

The Regeneration Agency received the approval for the construction of a mixed residential scheme at Colivert Drive, Southill in November 2011. It is anticipated that further development proposals will be presented in the course of 2012. In addition it is expected that implementation plans for the coming 5 years will be presented to the Council for approval for each of the areas.

### **Planning Operations**

#### **Conservation of Protected Structures**

The Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016 has included 133 additions to the Record of Protected Structures. All the owners of protected structures have been informed of their inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures.

In the course of 2011 the Department of the Environment Community and Local Government withdrew conservation grants to owners of protected structures to carry out works.

### **Planning Applications**

The Council will have received approximately 250 planning applications in 2011. Amongst the significant developments received during 2011 were:-

A new library at Limerick Institute of Technology.

The construction of an elderly persons accommodation complex at Colivet Drive Southill.

The construction of 49 dwellings at Lower Park Corbally.

### **Significant Development under construction**

The development of a medical facility and pharmacy on the Island Road.

The redevelopment of the JFK primary school.

A mixed residential development at Cliona Park Moyross

### **Enforcement of Planning**

The council received in excess of 150 complaints in respect of unauthorised development in the course of 2011. A number of these complaints have resulted in prosecution in the course of 2011.

### **Casual Trading**

Limerick City Council is charged with the control of casual trading in the city. This is done by the enforcement of the casual trading by-laws. In the course of 2011 a pilot Christmas market in conjunction with the Limerick Market Trustees is to be undertaken. It is intended that the existing by-laws will be reviewed in 2012 with a view to extending the scope of casual trading within the city.

### **Event Management**

In the course of 2011 Limerick City (Thomond Park) hosted one outdoor concert which required the granting of an Event Management Licence under the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. These events make a substantial contribution to the local economy. It is anticipated that in the course of 2012 that a number of similar events will be held in the city and will require an event management licence. A number of smaller events were held in the city throughout 2011 which were aided by the Planning Department – The big top at the Milk Market, Arthurs Day, Heineken Cup match day events etc.

### **Economic Development (incorporating Property Management)**

#### **Limerick City Council (Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road) Compulsory Purchase Order 2010**

The compulsory purchase order for the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road was confirmed by An Bord Pleanála in September 2011. Limerick City Council served notice of this confirmation on 92 landowners/reputed land owners and occupiers/reputed. The compulsory purchase order provides for the compulsory acquisition of 114 separate map references/landholdings.

### **Pilot Retail Incentive Scheme for Vacant Properties**

The pilot Retail Incentive Scheme for vacant property was approved by the elected members of Limerick City Council in April 2011 and was formally launched in May 2011. The scheme aims to address the specific problem of vacancy that is in the core retail area of Limerick City.

The scheme offers incentives for the encouragement of city centre higher order retail uses on key Limerick city streets in order to address vacancy on these locations.

The scheme provides for a grant towards the fit out cost of vacant shops in the city centre particularly on; O'Connell Street, William Street, Shannon Street, Roches Street, Catherine Street, Little Catherine Street, Henry Street, Liddy Street, Honans Quay, Denmark Street, Cruises Street, Todd's Row, Chapel Street, Bedford Row, Thomas Street, Sarsfield Street and the north-east half of Patrick Street and Rutland Street (to specifically include the Opera Centre site).

The grant relief to be provided under the Retail Incentive Scheme for Vacant Property is as follows:-**Year 1** - Grant relief is based on certified fit out costs subject to a maximum of 50% of the annual rates liability for the first year.

**Year 2** – Grant relief is based on original certified fit out costs (as submitted at year 1) subject to a maximum of 25% of the annual rates liability for the second year.

It is anticipated that the Retail Incentive Scheme for vacant properties will provide a positive impact on the City Centre by reducing the number of vacant premises and improving the overall retail offer in the City Centre. This will in turn positively enhance the overall economic vitality and viability of the City Centre both for existing and new businesses. 30 enquiries have been received to date by the Economic Development Department regarding the scheme. There are currently 3 applications to hand for the scheme.

### **Free Park – Car Parks**

FreePark-Carparks Limerick is a trial initiative which aims to bring more shoppers into Limerick city centre. Limerick city centre car parks and traders have joined forces to offer a new service to provide free parking to Limerick shoppers in participating city centre car parks.

The scheme, which began on Monday, 3rd October is being rolled out initially on a pilot basis with the aim of operating on a long term basis if successful. When customers spend a set amount in participating shops, hotels, restaurants and businesses, they will be rewarded with parking vouchers, based on a minimum spend in that outlet. The customers can redeem the voucher against their parking charge, offsetting the cost of city centre shopping. Depending on the amount spent, shoppers may park in the 11 participating city centre car parks for free.

Limerick City Council has facilitated the implementation of FreePark-Car Parks by developing the scheme and working with retailers and car-park operators to inform them of the scheme and launch the scheme. All associated marketing for the scheme was provided by Limerick City Council. 43 retailers are currently participating.

### **Limerick City Council's marketing document setting out Limerick City Council's plan for the city centre.**

Limerick City Council proposes to issue a marketing document which sets out works that have taken place to date in Limerick City Centre and future works that are proposed for the City Centre. This document highlights Limerick City Council's commitment to

ensuring that Limerick City Centre has a key role in driving the economic viability of the Mid-West Region.

### **City Centre Strategy**

Progress continues across all Departments in implementing and delivering actions identified in the City Centre Strategy

### **Creative Limerick**

Creative Limerick – Connect to the Grid continues to occupy vacant retail units that are between retail lettings. The scheme provides active and engaging shop frontages in the City Centre thereby enhancing the overall ambience in the City Centre. Creative Limerick provides an opportunity for start-up businesses to test the market place with low to minimal costs. It is intended that the scheme will be expanded in late 2011 / early 2012 to incorporate a greater element of pop-up shops throughout the City Centre.

### **Parks Atlantic Project - Interreg IVB Territorial Atlantic Area Programme**

Limerick City Council in conjunction with the Mid-West Regional Authority (MWRA) continued to make progress on the Parks Atlantic Project during 2011.

The main objective of this transnational cooperation project is to capitalize on the value of urban and suburban parks and enhance their Atlantic contribution to sustainable urban development.

### **Marketing of Limerick City Centre**

Limerick City Council in conjunction with Shannon Development, Limerick Co-Ordination Office and Limerick Chamber have again this year developed and funded a marketing campaign promoting Limerick City Centre for Christmas 2011.

### **Derelict Sites**

The current economic climate continues to present greater challenges regarding dereliction. A total of 57 notices were served to date during 2011 and 11 sites were taken out of dereliction, this included key sites in the City Centre that were long-term derelict sites.

### **Property Management**

The Property Management Unit of the Economic Development Department continued to advance a significant number of matters under this area of responsibility during 2011 including settlement of outstanding CPO compensation claims, land acquisitions/disposals, evaluation of strategic land holdings/opportunities, leases, licences, requests for wayleaves, putting in place legal documentation (Deed of Charge) for drawdown of Access II funding for artists apartment in John Square, land ownership queries, queries on rights of way, adverse possession issues, perfection of legal title on land, collection of rents owing, site inspections, maintenance of sites, Part V, trespass/squatters etc

## **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & EMERGENCY SERVICES**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

During 2011 the Environment Department took the strategic approach of promoting the Tidy Towns competition as a means of harnessing community activity towards improving the Environment of the City. Following a seminar organised by Limerick City Councils Environment Department held in City Hall in February 2011, 12 no communities in Limerick City entered the National Tidy Towns competition for the first time.

On the platform of this initiative the JP McManus Charitable Foundation Trust kindly sponsored a competition for the Limerick communities that entered the Tidy Towns competition. This competition was supported by Limericks Live 95 FM and the Limerick Leader and concluded with the announcement of prizewinners by the Mayor in September.

It is intended to continue this initiative in 2012 with a particular focus on encouraging the retail and commercial sectors participation.

#### **Street Cleaning**

Street cleaning is carried out on a 365 day a year basis and involves sweeping and cleaning of the 230km of city road and associated footpath network that make up the city centre and surrounds. Two large mechanical sweepers were purchased this year allowing for increased efficiencies in sweeping and reduced atmospheric and noise emissions due to the euro V engines in the new scarab sweepers. Recycling at the Milk Market on Saturday mornings continued in 2011 and continues to be a big success which is notable in the reduction in the volume of material collected for disposal by the street cleaning team. The number of street bins in the city has also increased with the total number of 205 street litter bins now in Limerick City. The operation of GPS Tracking Mechanisms on all environment vehicles has been very effective in managing routing.

#### **Litter Pollution**

The Environmental Enforcement Team continues to work closely with individuals, local communities, the HSE and the gardai to prevent littering and dumping in the City. Overall, there has been a decrease in reports of fly-tipping, although the number of households who do not have a bin service is on the increase which affects street bins and dumping of domestic rubbish. During the lead into May Eve a comprehensive campaign including newspaper advertisements, individual visits and notices to households, garda cooperation and quick removal of bonfire materials reduced the damage to greens and pollution in the City.

The 'bin your butts' initiatives continued including patrols with members of the Garda Síochána, dispensing of ashtrays to premises which have cigarette litter and distribution of personal 'bin your butt's ashtrays. New 'dog' patrols with Scoop the Dog have taken place on popular dog walking routes to dispense 'poop scoop' bags and remind dog owners of their responsibilities.

In the city centre, the 'Clean Street' Initiatives have focused on the removal of illegal postering and the provision of designated advertising areas and a pilot on the presentation of waste. Increased enforcement of the Presentation of Waste Bye-laws is leading to a reduction of city centre litter and improvements to the city streetscape. The serving of statutory notices to commercial premises under the Litter Pollution Act helps ensure that business owners understand their responsibilities for keeping their general areas clean.

It is expected that increasing amounts of households storing of domestic waste and leading to illegal dumping will continue to be a challenge in 2012, particularly in private rental accommodations where there is a high turnover of tenants. It is hoped that new amended bye-laws on waste will be implemented to ensure that bin service providers collect during off peak hours and prevent the storage of private bins on the city streetscape.

### **Waiver Scheme**

The Council continued to provide a waiver scheme for low income families and old age pensioners during 2011. This service will continue to operate in 2012 and is currently availed of by approximately 3500 households in the city. All lifts are subject to a maximum weight provision of 12 kg per lift.

### **Bring Banks**

The number of bring banks for recycling in the city has increased to 22 including the most recent placement at Hassets Cross. Outsourcing of maintenance and servicing has worked very well and continues to provide cost savings

### **Grants to Community and Voluntary Groups**

The Environmental Improvement Scheme was introduced in 2003 to assist local community groups with the enhancement and upkeep of their communities. The JP McManus Charitable Foundation agreed to match the Council provision for environmental grants in 2011 and as a result the number of grants approved doubled in 2011 to over 60 recipients. In 2011 it was identified that a concerted effort should be made to encourage groups to enter the national Tidy Towns competition as the ideal structure to cohesive community effort.

### **City Hall Waste Management System**

Limerick City Council has developed and implemented a revised waste management system in City Hall. The revised system implemented in conjunction with Corporate Services recognised best practice in waste reduction, re-use and recycling and includes an organic waste bin having regard to the provisions of the Food Waste regulations 2010. The system was tendered for in June and the successful applicant was Clean Ireland Recycling who now operates the process.

### **Regional Waste Management Plan**

Limerick City Council continues to support the Regional Waste Management Office for the region as it co-ordinates the Regional Waste Management Plan 2006-2011. The Council contributes financially to the cost of implementing this plan and participates fully on all technical operational and policy fora. The Regional Office in conjunction with Limerick City Council's Environment Department delivered numerous initiatives in

Limerick City during the year including a seminar on the 2010 Food Waste Regulations, Thomond Park Waste Monitoring Initiative, European Recycling Week and Waste, Electrical and Electronic Equipment initiatives.

#### **Ballysimon ELV Site Closure.**

In response to ECJ Ruling case C-494/001, Ireland committed to implement an enforcement regime to ensure the cessation of illegal waste activity. Limerick City Councils Environment Department with Limerick County Council led a successful multi agency operation that resulted in the closure of the illegal ELV site at Monoclino, Ballysimon Road, Limerick. Up to 70 personnel from various state agencies including the Gardai, the Armed Response Unit, Customs & Excise and Revenue engaged in the exercise which took place on 5th July 2011. Waste comprising 30 vehicles, lifting and cutting equipment, various types of scrap metals and tyres were recovered from the site and 89 tonnes of waste were sent to an authorised facility for proper disposal. The site is now officially recognised as a closed site by the EPA. The exercise provided valuable first hand experience of the highly effective outcomes available from multi agency operations.

#### **Waste Collection Permit Regulations, 2007, (as amended)**

Under the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations 2007, as amended, a total of 94 permits (48 Multi-regional), have been issued to waste collectors in the Limerick, Clare and Kerry region. 529 Waste Collection permits were issued under the previous 2001 regulations and 25 Collection Permits have been issued to collectors whose principal place of business is based in Limerick City. To date 10 permit holders have been audited by Limerick City Council staff.

#### **Waste Site Facilities**

There are currently 8 no active permitted sites for waste processing in the Limerick City area. The waste types and methods of processing are varied. During 2011, 2 existing permits were renewed and 1 new permit was issued and 3 permits expired.

#### **Environmental Awareness and Education**

Limerick City Council continues to work towards delivering on 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 actively support the An Taisce Green Schools Initiative and encourages the use of home composting and correct waste management for householders.

A master composters scheme was implemented this year and a composting demonstration site was built in O'Brien Park.

Litter awareness continues to be a key focus and a number of city centre awareness initiatives were delivered during the year including two very successful deep clean projects which harnessed voluntary effort. The success of the environmental awareness work carried out by the Environment Department helped Limerick City to achieve the status of best Fair Trade City in 2011. A “Love Limerick, Don't Litter” calendar was produced for 2011 to highlight the work being done to promote litter awareness and management.

### **Allotments**

The Environment Department developed an allotment project on a 0.4 acre site at Ballynanty. The site comprises 28 raised bed free draining allotments and there has been 93% uptake on the plots. The project facilitates rainwater harvesting and has utilised available space to develop a composting area. One allotment holder has been self sufficient in vegetables from his plot in 2011.

### **Longpavement Remediation Project**

The remediation of Longpavement Landfill site is complete and has been operating in 2011 with the gas extraction and leachate abstraction systems commissioned and operational. Gas is extracted from 32 gas wells and leachate is extracted from 11 leachate wells. The gas is flared and the leachate is stripped of methane on site. The site has been planted as a wildflower meadow and a new wetland has also been created.

### **Baggott Estate**

The Baggott Estate wetland redevelopment was completed in 2011 and now provides an area of high visual and natural amenity in the Ballinacurra area. The area will be further developed by the work which has commenced on the Baggott Estate Amenity Enhancement. This involves the creation of 1km of recreational walkways with CCTV cameras and information displays. Works will be completed in 2011.

### **Parks**

The Parks Department continued their Spring, Summer and Winter bedding planting programme including the popular 'Bridges in Bloom' as well as caring for over 330 acres of open space in the City. The number of summer flower tiers was increased on O'Connell Avenue which provided a city centre floral display and the Market Quarter area and Roches Street were supplied with hanging basket displays. Work took place with Limerick Biodiversity Group on a pilot wildflower bed.

The Parks recreation programme continued in 2011 with four successful May Music in the Parks events and Summer and Easter activities sponsored by ERP. A new partnership with Gothicka – a Limerick based arts collective led to a day and night Halloween event for all ages. Christmas in the City Family events include a Christmas Treasure Hunt, puppet show and present making workshop. There was a very positive response to the fact that these were 'free' events.

A machinery shed was completed for indoor storage along with proper rest facilities for staff at the Parks Nursery. As part of the refurbishment of Moyross Playground, Limerick City Council sponsored a new piece of play equipment. A new railing was also installed around Thomond Court walls at the request of residents. Householders were offered a free household Christmas tree shredding service. The Winter/ Spring focus is on tree pruning and planting and training staff on health and safety requirements.

In 2012 a major challenge for parks will be the maintenance of green areas and open spaces throughout the city as further areas are taken in charge and redeveloped, extending the grass-cutting area. It is hoped to carry out work on the historic bandstand in the People's Park and a Part VIII is being formalised. It is expected that there will be further demand on Parks for free family and play and exercise facilities.

### **Control of Horses**

Up to the end of November 2011, 243 horses were impounded by Limerick City Council. The cost of these impoundments was €348,667. The full cost of this service is recoupable from the Dept. of Agriculture. It is expected that changes to passport and chip and pin legislation will effect the changes in horse control in 2012 but these rely on the Department of Agriculture and Gardai.

### **Control of Dogs**

This service continued to run in conjunction with Limerick County Council and three court orders were secured regarding dangerous dogs in 2011.

### **Cemetery Services**

The Cemeteries Service has undertaken a series of accessibility works to improve the accessibility of the three Limerick City cemeteries – Mount Saint Lawrence, Mount Saint Lawrence extension and Mount Saint Oliver including the redesign of the gateway of Mount Saint Oliver and improvements to footpaths. A new software management system has been introduced to manage the cemeteries records and it is the first time it has been introduced in a public cemetery in Ireland.

The maintenance of older graves where ownership is unclear is an issue for cemetery services and it is hoped that the introduction of new cemetery bye-laws will address some of these issues as well as providing a regulatory framework for other issues.

### **Amendments to Bye Laws**

The amended Intoxicating Liquor byelaws were adopted in August 2011 and all garda stations have now been issued with fine books entitling the Garda Siochana to issue €75 fines to people drinking alcohol in public open space areas.

## **EMERGENCY SERVICE**

The Service has five 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 Management
- Fire Service Mobilisation and Communications
- Civil Defence

### **Fire & Emergency Operations**

#### **Achievements for 2011 include:**

- The service successfully attended 1160 incidents from 1st January to 1st November, 2011. Of this number, 657 were fire incidents.
- Training courses were provided for staff in the following areas: Cardiac First Responder, Emergency First Responder, Hazardous Materials, Aerial Ladder Platform Operator, Compartment Firefighting Techniques Refresher, Breathing Apparatus Refresher, Breathing Apparatus Maintenance, Swift Water Rescue

Technician, as well as various Senior and Junior Officer Training Courses and Seminars.

- Swift Water First Responder training was provided to Limerick County Council Fire and Rescue Service personnel by Limerick City instructors.
- All operational crews undertook and completed block training in Dublin Fire Brigade's Training Centre as part of scheduled block training.
- Health and Safety awareness and competency was enhanced by the conduct of Safety Information Sessions which were attended by Senior & Junior Officers and Firefighters, respectively.
- The Fire and Rescue Service Safety Statement was reviewed and updated.
- Service and maintenance contracts were reviewed for fire engineering equipment, pumps, fire lockers and winches.
- The programme of pre-fire planning was continued for high risk premises within the Service's operational area.
- New equipment was purchased to improve the safety of fire personnel responding to water-related incidents.
- A development committee was established to review and implement a suite of national Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs)
- A new Water Tanker was commissioned and placed into service.
- Construction commenced on two new Water Tenders with full funding from the DoECLG.
- A recruitment competition for recruit Firefighters was completed and 5 new recruit fire fighters commenced training in November.

**Plans for 2012 include:**

- To conduct annual block training.
- To further enhance the training regime within the Fire Service.
- To maintain and improve on standards of Health and Safety.
- To place two new Water Tenders into service.
- To prepare specifications and tender documents for the procurement of a new Emergency Tender.
- To purchase new structural firefighting kit.
- To continue the development of the pre-fire planning programme..

**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 and the access for people with disabilities. To achieve these, a summary of the duties of this department are:

- Fire Safety Certificate applications are assessed pre commencement of construction of buildings.
- January 1st 2010 saw the introduction of the Disability Access Certificate. These are applied for pre occupation of a new building, and the applications are assessed by this department.

- Both commercial and Domestic buildings are inspected for deficiencies in relation to Fire Safety, and actions are taken to improve Fire Safety where required.
- Inspections are carried out at selected building sites to ensure that construction is in accordance with the Building Regulations.
- Complaints regarding dangerous buildings are investigated, and appropriate actions taken to eliminate the risk posed to the public.
- Community Fire Safety talks are given to all members of the community, particularly to school groups and the elderly.

### **Major Emergency Management Section**

The functions of the Major Emergency Management 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.

#### **Achievements for 2011 include:**

- The development of a system of resources and staff which may be used to receive and provide public information via a call centre during a crisis.
- The issue of updated Major Emergency Plan appendices.
- The conduct of an inter-agency table-top exercise involving the Crisis Management Team and Local Co-ordination Group.
- The development of systems for notification of ESB activities affecting Limerick City.
- Participation by senior Limerick City Council staff in Onsite Co-ordination training courses.
- Successfully implementing the response and co-ordination function of the Crisis Management Team (CMT) and the associated Information Management system during the period of flood risk and subsequent period of severe cold weather in November, December and January 2011.
- The introduction of an SMS based mobilisation and information sharing system which has been successfully used to coordinate Crisis Management Team activities.
- The conduct of Voluntary Emergency Services (VES) seminar in Thomond Park, which over 60 volunteers attended from various voluntary agencies.

#### **Plans for 2012 are:**

- To further improve communication systems between the incident site and the Local Co-ordination Centre.
- To participate in exercises coordinated by the Mid-West Regional Major Emergency Management Group.
- To complete further Onsite Co-ordination training courses.
- To continue to improve the awareness of Major Emergency Management within all areas of Limerick City Council.
- To increase usage of the SMS based mobilisation and information sharing system.

## **FIRESERVICE MOBILISATION AND COMMUNICATIONS:**

### **Munster Regional Communications System:**

The Munster Regional Communications System (MRCC) is located on the same site as Limerick City Fire and Rescue 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 2011, achievements included:

- Munster Regional Communications Centre handled in excess of 25,000 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 excellent and without fault.
- On-going development of telecoms and Radio Communications Systems
- Continued development of regional mobile data project
- Full implementation of all internal and external training programs including National Incident Command and Major Emergency Planning training.
- Development and implementation of a successful program of Major Incident/Emergency Helpline training for the member Fire Authorities and other Emergency Services under the auspices of the Regional Major Emergency Management Groups..
- Development and integration to the new Emergency Call Answering Service (999/112) in co-operation with the other blue light services, BT Ireland and CommReg.
- Management and development of national digital linking systems to the new BT ECAS systems on behalf of the DoECLG and Fire Services.
- Management, development and implementation of systems for the activation of DoECLG crisis management teams in the event of Local, Regional or National Major Emergencies or Incidents.

## **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.

**Achievements for 2011 include:**

- Limerick City Civil Defence came second in the Regional Competitions held in Nenagh in October..
- Limerick City Civil Defence will have participated in 63 duties from January 1st 2011 to December 26th 2011.
- 30 new volunteers trained in all basic training (Manual Handling, CFR, OFA, S&R, Communications – Level 2, Auxiliary Fire Service Training).

All Limerick City Civil Defence volunteers now trained to a basic level of courses.

- Other courses delivered to volunteers this year
- Water Awareness carried out in March 2011.
- Pump Operation carried out in March 2011.
- Road Traffic Collision carried out in March & April 2011.
- Intermediate Auxiliary Fire Service Course (Pilot) carried out in May & June 2011.
- USAR Training carried out in September 2011.

**Plans for 2012 include:**

- Hepatitis A and B and Tetanus programme ongoing for all volunteers. New recruits to be immunised.
- Continuation of the enhancement of training programme across the services.
- Redevelopment of Welfare Service
- Continually raising Limerick City Civil Defence's profile within the City and nationally.

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

Limerick City Council provides a range of arts and cultural services through its combined support for the Arts Service, Limerick City Gallery of Art, the Library Service and the Museum Service. Together these services provide programmes of activities that create an access for all approach to service provision.

**Limerick City Library Services Report 2011**

Since the early 1900's, the general public has visited the library to, seek information, attain knowledge, receive advice and guidance or simply borrow books and relax.

The world around us has changed in significant ways since the Public Library Act of 1850. Technical developments have influenced user needs, the library and the service it provides. The automation of Public Libraries in 1990, the introduction of the Internet to Limerick City Library in 1997 and to-day the introduction of Social Media, WiFi, IPAD's and the Kindle have changed and put increased pressure on the Public Library. We are in an environment in which the role of libraries is changing rapidly but we forget at our peril that lending books and encouraging reading is what we were put here to do in the first place.

Our libraries are much more than computers, kindles or even books, they are increasingly vibrant hubs of community life. Libraries have always been central to Education and

self-improvement. They also have the power to act as motors for more dynamic and effective learning, whether for individuals or for groups.

### **Watch House Cross Community Library.**

Once again this year the library at Watch House Cross co-operated with the Northside Local Education Committee. This committee identified a need and an opportunity to develop and undertake a Literacy Initiative which encompasses the entire Northside Community. A copy of "The Giggler Treatment" by Roddy Doyle was distributed to all 1,500 households on the Northside of the city. Limerick City Library contributed to the purchase of these books. Over a four week period, initiatives, such as storytelling, table quizzes, art projects, family reading, drama workshops, etc took place. Most of the activities took place in the library. The initiative involved children (toddlers to teenagers), their parents and grandparents. All pupils attending the seven Primary and Post-primary schools in the area were involved.

Watch House Cross Choir resumed rehearsal in September with a full programme of musical pieces. The choir of 52 voices will be singing for 40 minutes during the interval at the Limerick Choral Festival in March 2012. The choir sang at City Hall for the "National Commemoration Day for the War Dead" together with the "Mid-West Vocal Academy Choir" in July 2011.

Both choirs have been invited to Poland by the Teachers Chamber Choir who are celebrating 25 years in existence to sing at a Concert and a Eucharistic Celebration in July 2012.

### **Central Library, the Granary.**

An Chomhairle Leabharlanna administered a grant scheme this year on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. Limerick City Library received €25,295.82 for the purchase of Books for Children, DVD's, Music, Language Courses, and Adult Audio Books.

### **Internship:**

The Internship Programme which ran in the library for 6 months was very successful. This programme involved Dell Workers who were made redundant being given the opportunity to gain experience within Limerick City Council. A programme of IT training was drawn up and sessions took place in Watch House Cross, The Granary and Roxboro Libraries. Groups of 6-8 people attended one day a week, over a six week period in each location and this continued throughout the six months. These courses were geared towards Adults who had no previous computer skills.

### **Book Review Project:**

Following a very successful initial project with two city centre Primary Schools, a second Book Review Project commenced in September with four schools (St. Mary's GNS; St. Mary's BNS; St. John the Baptist and St. John's GNS). The objective was to encourage reading with children in addition to promoting the library service to Parents, Teachers and Pupils. Teachers have noted a marked increase in the reading levels of their Pupils. The Reading Ages were tested before the project began, using standardised scales, and again when the Project was completed. In almost every case, the children's reading age increased.

## **Reference & Local Studies Department, 2011**

### **Website Development:**

Our digitisation and website development programme dramatically increased in pace during this year. Three main resources were focused on – the local study files, the Limerick Chronicle obituaries project and e-books project.

The Local Study Files – there are now well over 100 files on the website. These constitute an online encyclopedia of Limerick.

Obituaries project – We have scanned all obituaries, death notices, reports of deaths, inquest reports, etc. which appeared on the Limerick Chronicle from 1854 to 1907 onto the website as well as a database up to 1930.

E-books– We have added a number of full scans of local history books to the website. We have also placed a number of further resources online during the year, the most notable of which is an extensive file of histories of various Limerick families.

### **Lectures:**

There were nine lectures in the History Lecture Series held during 2011.

### **Collection development:**

The Reference department has an excellent book collection, particularly in the areas of Irish history and Biography. During 2011 we endeavoured to acquire all new publications relevant to this area.

### **Research & Queries:**

Assisting library users, both in-house and remote, continues to be the core service of the Reference Department. The research room (newspaper microfilm area) in particular, was extremely busy, with all four microfilm readers in use for much of the time. The acquisition this year of a microfilm reader which can print to computer file was a major development and much-appreciated by researchers. It has also had the effect of significantly reducing the amount of printing from microfilm.

### **Library Statistics**

<b>December 2010 – November 2011</b>						
	<b>Granary</b>	<b>WHC</b>	<b>Roxboro</b>	<b>Mobile</b>	<b>Caherdavin</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Issues</b>	195,631	92,915	21,816	20,674	1,507	332,543
<b>Regs</b>	5,761	3,641	838	4,064	110	14,414
<b>Internet</b>	20,918	11,173	3,312			35,403
<b>Visitors</b>	167,005	82,482	20,367		1,054	270,908

## **Limerick City Council Arts Service Report 2011**

**Kate O'Brien Weekend** 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> February [www.kateobrienweekend.com](http://www.kateobrienweekend.com)

**Faber Studio's Artists' Talk Series 2011**, March – April

<http://faberstudioslimerick.blogspot.com/>

**CATDIG / Spiritstore** SpiritStore is an ongoing Limerick based art project. To date the SpiritStore project has created and documented a series of temporary installations and interventions CATDIG 2011. <http://spiritstorelimerick.blogspot.com/>

**May Music in the Park** As part of the May Music in the Park series, Limerick City Council worked with top local musicians and singers with lunchtime concerts in the city's leafy People's Park to bring an exciting and varied music recital programme to the people of Limerick. [www.limerick.ie](http://www.limerick.ie)

**LoveLive Music** A free concert in Limerick city library took place to celebrate Ireland's first national music day as well as a concert in Belltable Arts Centre funded by RTE [www.lovelivemusic.ie](http://www.lovelivemusic.ie)

**Dialogue Arts + Health** Limerick City Council Arts Office hosted an arts in health Dialogue to inform the future of arts in Health policy in Ireland. A peer-led Dialogue Series took place on 3 occasions in Limerick between Sept-Nov 2011

<http://dialogueartsandhealth.wordpress.com/>

**In-Flux** 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> May Hosted by Occupy Space, Influx brought together 12 artist-led project spaces from Ireland and Europe, creating pop-up galleries for a weekend of art viewing and network developing. [www.influx2011.com](http://www.influx2011.com)

**Community Arts Committee** The Limerick City Community Arts Group is a representative network of geographical and issue-based community and arts organisations across Limerick City. By working in partnership, we aim to: promote arts in Limerick City communities; involve communities in the development of arts that is relevant to their lives; build the capacity of communities, including the arts community, to develop and promote community arts. An audit and training will take place in December 2011

**The Horse Outside** 'Horse Outside' in the grounds of the riverside Hunt Museum. The life-size hand painted fibreglass horse has been decorated by the Roxboro School Completion Programme and the Southhill Outreach Programme, in an artist-led initiative emerging from the Corridor Art Project

**Your Video Here Exhibition** Your Video Here is a Film, Video and Animation Exhibition took place online and in Limerick City in September 2011. YVH is about exploring the ideas of the 'Remix', online video editing and the authorship of work

**News From the Island** A 40 minute long solo dance piece by Katarina Mojziso

**Bottom Dog** Limerick based theatre company, formed by Myles Breen, Mike Burke, Mike Finn and Liam O'Brien have been researching a production of 'The Lonesome West' to be performed in 2012 [www.bottomdogtheatre.com](http://www.bottomdogtheatre.com)

**Ceramics Limerick** Exhibition in the Hunt Museum as part of Year of Craft [www.ceramicslimerick.com](http://www.ceramicslimerick.com)

**Askeaton Arts** Limerick City Council funded a bus to bring artists from Limerick City to the event in Co. Limerick–Welcome to the Neighbourhood <http://www.askeatonarts.com>

**Limerick City Music Education Partnership** With Limerick City VEC an application for the second round of applications was prepared. [www.limerickcitymep.ie](http://www.limerickcitymep.ie)

**Cultural Diversity & The Arts** An information/networking seminar to make visible the Cultural Diversity potential of Arts Council funding schemes was held in Limerick in May. This event was presented by the Limerick City and County Integration Working

Group, in association with The Arts Council and Create, as part of Limerick Intercultural Week 2011. 70 people attended the event. [www.artscouncil.ie](http://www.artscouncil.ie)

**CoMA Limerick** As part of the LoveLive Music Day, CoMA performed a lunchtime concert in the Hunt Museum,. We also supported their Music Capital Scheme [www.myspace.com/comalimerick](http://www.myspace.com/comalimerick)

**ev+ a** In 2011 the committee appointed a new director starting in September. The committee submitted a new business plan for the redevelopment of ev+a and worked with in-flux / occupy space for their exhibition [www.eva.ie](http://www.eva.ie)

**Culture Night** Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September A night of discovery and adventure throughout Limerick City's cultural facilities funded by the Department of Arts, Heritage and Gaeltacht Affairs. The national launch of Culture Night took place on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> August in Dublin Castle. [www.culturenight.ie](http://www.culturenight.ie)

**Portal** An Eileen MacDonagh Sculpture that was created in 1988 was in need of repair and renewal. Along with the artist new paving and a small new sculpture were put in place

**Association of Irish Choirs** The Association of Irish Choirs supports and promotes excellence in choral music. Limerick City Council supported the presence of the Irish Youth Choir in Limerick in 2011. [www.aaic.ie](http://www.aaic.ie)

**Collecting for Ireland** Works from the Arts Council Collected curated by Ruairi O Cuiv July-Sept 2011 at the Hunt Museum

**Grants Under the Arts Act** Grants towards arts groups, events, and small festivals:

**CUISLE Limerick City International Poetry Festival** Cuisle Poetry Festival has created international links with Brighton and Slovenia. This year, two winners of the Young Poet of the Year Competition travelled to Sezana in Slovenia to participate in the Youth Poetry Festival. The following Limerick poets travelled to Brighton to participate in The Crawley WordFest: Ciaran O'Driscoll, Jo Slade, Bridget Wallace and Mark Whelan. [www.limerick.ie/cuisle](http://www.limerick.ie/cuisle)

**Ormston House** Members show curated by Alice Maher & Aideen Barry (15 artists) in December 2012. [www.ormstonhouse.com](http://www.ormstonhouse.com)

### **Capital Projects – funded by the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht**

The Belltable Arts Centre – complete, officially opened in September 2011

Artists' Apartments, John's Square – due to be completed in 2011, official opening 2012

Limerick City Gallery of Art – to be completed in December 2011, official opening 2012

### **Limerick City Gallery of Art Service Report 2011**

#### **Exhibitions**

**Philippe Chancel DPRK** -January -Photographic work presenting an insight into People's Republic of North Korea. Venue: Istabraq hall, Limerick City Council

**Pomeranians and other Conversation Pieces** - February-May - Paintings and drawings with an animal theme presented in the Prologue room of the Hunt Museum.

**Holger, Hillman et al** - March-April - Theatre and Poster Designs from the Michael O' Connor by German Designers Franz Holger and Hans Hillmann.

Venue: Istabraq hall, Limerick City Council, the Church Gallery of LSAD

**How Capital Moves Kennedy Browne** - March-May - A site specific installation in Istabraq Hall, addressing the difficult subject of redundancy and the impact on the lives of individuals when big companies re-locate to cut costs and enhance profits.

Curated by Annette Maloney in partnership with LCGA

Venue: Istabraq hall, Limerick City Council

**Fine Lines** - June-July - A selection of Drawings curated from the National Collection of Contemporary Drawing foregrounding new acquisitions to the collection by younger Irish artists including Brendan Earley, Clodagh Emoe and Brian Fay.

Venue: Istabraq hall, Limerick City Council

**Convergence: Literary art Exhibitions** August-September - Curated by Mia Lerm Hayes, a major exhibition focusing on the interconnectedness between art and literature, situated in two offsite venues Venue: Ormston House and Istabraq hall, Limerick City Council. In collaboration with Golden Thread Gallery and Ormston House LCGA Permanent Collection at the Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum

**Culture Night** - September - Sneak preview of the Carnegie Building

**Of De Blacam and Meagher** - November/December - Architecture practice de Blacam and Meagher. The exhibition which represented Ireland at the 12<sup>th</sup> international Architecture Exhibition *La Biennale di Venezia*. In collaboration with the Irish Architectural Archive. Venue: LCGA, Carnegie Building

**Personal Taste** - November/December - Invited curators Alan Counihan (Visual Artist and Curator), Paul Mosse (Visual Artist and Aosdana) and Ann Mulrooney (Manager and Curator, National Craft Gallery) present a series of rooms which reflect their taste of a selection from the permanent collection. Venue: LCGA, Carnegie Building

**November Species of Space2** – Seminar: Katerina Gregos on *The Danish Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale - Challenging curatorial orthodoxy in the Biennial Context*; Alfredo Cramerotti *On Translating, Expanding, Compressing and Misusing Space*; Vaari Claffey on *Gracelands - Substance Abuse*; Simon Rees on *EAST by SOUTHWEST*; And Annie Fletcher on *Be(com)ing Dutch*.

Expanding on research and outcomes of Six Memos led by Mary Conlon, Shinnors Scholar LCGA (2009-2011).

Venue: LCGA Carnegie Building and Ormston House.

In partnership with eva International, Ormston House.

Supported by Culture Ireland.

## **Events**

**Double Act** - May 2011 - In partnership with Occupy Space and Influx Alternative Art Fair, Double Act presented a series of screenings, conversations and some reflections on the collaborative process. The event was supported by eva International and featured Jota Castro, Marian Lovett, Agnieska Pindera, Vivienne Dick, Treasa O' Brien, Paddy Jolley, Daniel Jewsbury, John Buckley and Shane Cullen. Venue: Thomas St.

**En Plein Air** - June and July 2011 - Open Air Drawing Workshops in People's Park led by artists Padraic Murphy and Patrick Fitzpatrick and historian Fiona Leahy (of Limerick Civic Trust). Venue: People's Park

**Family Drawing Workshops** - July-August 2011 - Family Drawing Workshops in Istabraq Hall led by artists Pamela Dunne and Melissa O' Brien.

Venue: Istabraq Hall

**Drawing Seminar** - July 2011 - Drawing Seminar focused on drawing as research and process with a keynote lecture by Stephanie Straine (University of London) and presentations by artists Julie Merriman and Samuel Walsh. Venue: Istabraq Hall

**Art into Literature** - August 2011 - Marian Lovett in conversation with the eminent artist and writer Brian O' Doherty focusing on the overlap between his artistic and literary careers. Venue: Ormston House

**Is Reading Relevant?** - September 2011 - Afternoon seminar chaired by Dr. Kieran Cashell with participation and presentations from Mia Lerm Hayes, Sean Lynch, Nick Thurston and Fiona Fullam. Venue: Ormston House

### **Capital Projects**

Limerick City Gallery of Art Phase II Development, official opening 2012.

## **Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum Service Report 2011**

2011 has seen the museum moved to a web-based cataloguing system courtesy of a grant from the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport. This greatly enhances the catalogue because it allows items to go live online immediately they are added, as well as allowing multiple images and pdfs to be presented. The catalogue is to be found on [www.limerick.ie](http://www.limerick.ie), where it is part of the new history portal, our common entry point to the historical resources of museum, archives and library.

During the year we have added to the historical resources section within the museum section of the City Council website. "Estate Maps and Rentals" is an ongoing listing of all landed estate maps and rentals for the county and includes the tenants names where applicable. It should be a major resource for genealogists and other historians. An index of people in the Civil Survey of 1654 has also been compiled. Our, "Who was who in Medieval Limerick" continues to be used as a base by an international study in Viking DNA.

Visitor figures are down on 2010. This seems to be largely the result of the absence of foreign language students in town this year. The museum again participated in Culture Night and organised a walk around the city walls. There were just over 450 visitors to the museum and over 40 on the walk.

To date there have been 630 additions to the collection this year with an uncounted box of glass slides from the 1940s yet to be added. One of the highlights is a collection of 190 aerial photos of the city taken in 1986, which demonstrates the huge positive changes that have taken place in the city. Other items include ecclesiastical lace, modern postcards, football programmes and a watch by Ryan of Limerick.

60 people have had supervised access to the collections this year, including 8 who accessed material from the City Archives. This year we have provided images for 6 books and journals and one video. An exhibition of sporting memorabilia was presented in the basement of The Hunt Museum to help celebrate the City of sport year.

There have been two publications of articles by staff this year, one on the castles of Limerick City in the North Munster Antiquarian Journal the other being two early descriptions of the city in the Old Limerick Journal. The museum has also helped with the production of the 2011 volume of the Old Limerick Journal, which contains an article compiled by a transition year student while on 2 weeks' placement in the museum.

The museum has continued again as the base for the City Walls Conservation. approx €40,000 was secured through the Irish Walled Towns Network and the work has now been completed on the Island Road, as well as emergency works by St. John's Hospital. Plans for the proposed move of the museum have not yet been finalised.

### **SPORTS AND RECREATION REPORT 2011**

Limerick City was designated as a European City of Sport for 2011. This award follows successful collaboration between Limerick City Council and Shannon Development in submitting a bid to the European Capitals of Sport Association, (ACES). The formal launch of Limerick as a City of Sport took place in January, 2011.

The designation of the award provided significant for the City to promote one of its best assets, its proud sporting culture and to maximise the potential economic, sporting and cultural benefits arising from the award to the City. The following is a sample of some of the events which have taken place in 2011;

- European Duathlon Championships
- Great Limerick Run
- Guinness Book of Records World Hacka Record Attempt
- South of Ireland Junior & Senior Tennis Championships
- Limerick Sporting Artefacts Exhibition
- EPC European Power lifting and Single-lifts Championships
- AIESEP International conference – Physical Education
- Limerick Masters Swimming Club: Thomond Swim

#### **Municipal Golf Course**

Following redevelopment and upgrade works to Rathbane Municipal Golf Course in 2010, further work was carried out in 2011 to improve the condition of the entrance road and part of the boundary wall. Some funding has been sourced from the Department of Tourism Trade and Sport to upgrade sewerage facilities at Rathbane Clubhouse. It is anticipated that these works will be completed in 2012.

#### **Great Limerick Run**

The second Great Limerick Run took place on Sunday, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2011. Over 6,000 people participated in the three events including the marathon, the half-marathon and the six mile event. Large numbers of people turned out cheer on the runners. Plans for the 2012 event are already underway.

#### **European Mobility Week 2011**

Reflecting the 'Alternative Mobility' theme of European Mobility Week 2011, the Community & Enterprise Department organised an exhibition on Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> September in the Milk Market, Limerick, in collaboration with other public agencies, private companies and voluntary groups. A four page promotion was also published in the Limerick Post on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2011.

### **COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE**

The Community and Enterprise Department 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.

### **Joint Limerick City/County Economic Development Committee**

The Joint Limerick City/County Economic Development Committee which was established in 2009 following publication of the Indecon Report Recommendations in 2008 and the subsequent receipt of Guidelines for the establishment of Economic Development Committees from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, continued its work in 2011.

Following a Workshop held in November 2011, the Committee has agreed the preparation of a strategy based on a limited set of economic priorities for implementation to complement the unification process of Limerick City and County Councils. It is anticipated that the strategy will take the form of an overarching economic strategic plan for Limerick.

### **Social Inclusion**

Limerick Intercultural Week took place from May 21<sup>st</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup> 2011. The week long calendar of events allowed people of all ages and nationalities to join in celebrating their rich culture and history with the majority of events free for all the family.

The celebrations officially opened on May 21<sup>st</sup> with the Limerick Sixes Sportsfest. Among the highlights were the MBNA Limerick International Music Festival organised by the Irish Chamber Orchestra from May 24<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>. Intercultural week was brought to a close on Sunday, May 29<sup>th</sup> with Irish Aid sponsored Africa Day Festival of Cultures celebrations in Limerick City Hall and the Milk Market. The week's events were run under the auspices of the Limerick City/County Integration Working Group.

### **The Annual Co-operation Ireland Pride of Place Awards**

**Pride of Place** is an initiative of the Local Authority all-island Steering Forum. The forum is hosted by **Co-operation Ireland**, a charity which has been involved in promoting peace-building activities North and South for the past 30 years. **The Pride of Place Awards** recognise the selfless work, being done all over the island of Ireland, by local community and voluntary groups to create caring, viable, vibrant and visible communities.

Judging of the **Pride of Place (Cities) Competition 2011** took place in July 2011. Two judges from Co-operation Ireland met with the 4 groups, nominated by the C E Department, and rigorously assessed their work. The groups were:

- Moyross Residents Forum
- Limerick Civic Trust
- Southill Family Resource Centre
- The Get Back Challenge

The All-Island Pride of Place Awards ceremony took place on Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2011. In keeping with the success of previous years for Limerick City entries, The Southill Family Resource Centre claimed first prize in its category while the Get Back Challenge was awarded runner up prize in its category.

### **National Recreation Week**

The aim of National Recreation Week which ran from 28<sup>th</sup> October to 3<sup>rd</sup> November was amongst other things, to highlight the importance of recreation for young people. A family event 'A Haunting Family Day' was organised in the People's Park on 29<sup>th</sup> October, 2011 by the Environment Department and proved to be a great success.

### **Integration**

The Limerick Integration Working Group (IWG) operates under the Social Inclusion Measures Committees of both Limerick City and County Development Boards. The IWG was established with the aim of bringing together statutory, community and voluntary bodies to address integration needs of migrant and host communities in Limerick. 2011 saw the inauguration of Limerick Language Alive Week, a week long programme of events to enable people of all ages and nationalities to join together to celebrate the diversity and vibrancy of language in their community through participation in events which aimed to bring language alive, connect communities and break down communication and cultural barriers.

### **Youth**

Limerick City Comhairle na n-Og is a local youth council, which gives young people the opportunity to be involved in the development of local services and policies. Limerick City Development Board with the support of key partner Limerick Youth Service is responsible for the delivery of the Comhairle na n-Og programme as part of implementing the National Children's Strategy at local level.

The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has urged each Comhairle to increase their focus on decision making structures with a view to understanding the issues which affect them both locally and nationally.

The following are the main activities for 2011;

- Participation in Dail Na n-Og – National Youth Parliament in Croke park
- Comhairle na n-Og Annual General Meeting
- Development of Information DVD on Bullying “If You Really Knew Me”

A Comhairle Na n-Og Steering Committee was formed in 2011. Links have also been established between the Comhairle and Limerick City Childrens Services Committee.

### **Community & Voluntary Forum**

Limerick City Community & Voluntary Forum continued it's work during the year. The sixth Limerick City Community and Voluntary Fair took place at the Milk Market at the end of September, 2011.

### **Limerick City Childrens Services Committee**

Since its inception, the Limerick City Childrens Services Committee, (CSC), has been directed in its thinking, planning and strategising by the national Agenda for Childrens Services and the need to provide effective service coordination for Childrens Services in Limerick. The original work plan of the CSC was developed in line with the Limerick Regeneration Agencies' Master Plan. Work continued during 2011 in relation to the following;

- Development of the Limerick Assessment of Need System (including a Sharing Information System and a Common Assessment Framework, CAF).

- Further Development of the Restorative Practice Programme: Training was rolled out to a number of agencies during 2011.
- Progressing of Research Projects
- National Early Years Access Initiative: This is a funding initiative managed by Pobal. The Initiative will fund a maximum of 13 innovative local inter-agency demonstration projects nationwide.

Work in relation to all of the above strands will continue in 2012.

### **Limerick City of Learning**

Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival took place from 13<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2011. This was the inaugural year for this festival with a wide variety of free events taking place in various locations throughout the city during the week. The Festival was organised by the Limerick City of Learning Steering committee in collaboration with Limerick Communications Office. 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. The festival promoted and celebrated learning in all its forms, showcasing that learning is happening everywhere – for everyone.

Following the employment of a Lifelong Learning Facilitator in 2010, the engagement of an Intern during 2011 will provide the additional administrative support required to further progress the City of Learning programme during 2012.

### **FAS (EGA) Internship Framework**

The Community and Enterprise Department co-ordinated the Internship Programme within Limerick City Council during 2010/2011. This Programme provided a training intervention combining certified training modules in addition to periods of structured workplace learning. Seven Interns were provided with work placement for a period of six months. This programme proved very successful with a number of the Interns securing full time employment.

### **Summer School on Local Democracy at University of Limerick**

The first U.L. Department of Politics and Public Administration Summer School to be held in partnership with Limerick City Development Board took place at the University of Limerick from 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2011. The theme of the School was 'Renewing Local Democracy Through Civic Engagement'. A Mayoral Reception was held for participants on 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2011.

### **National Day of Commemoration Ceremony**

Limerick hosted a Day of Commemoration Ceremony on Sunday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2011 to honour all Irish men and Irish women who died in past wars or on service with the United Nations. 2011 was the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first such ceremony which is held annually at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham in Dublin. During 2011, regional ceremonies were held in five other locations across the country.

Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, the Jewish Community and the Islamic community conducted the multi-faith commemoration at which the Mayor of Limerick presided. Also participating were the 12<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion, Sarsfield Barracks, The Watch House Cross Community Choir, the Mid-West Vocal Academy and the Boherbuoy Band.

# AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE, CORPORATE SERVICES

## ICT DEPARTMENT REPORT 2011

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 service desk system offers comprehensive support to end users, councillors and libraries of Limerick City Council dealing with over 3,500 support requests in 2011.

The ICT Department continued in 2011 to focus on efficiencies and cost reductions initiatives.

### **Reduced Licensing costs by using Open Source**

Following the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement buy-out in 2009 and the introduction of Open Source technologies in 2010 the annual licensing costs have been **reduced by €120,000** (or €600,000 over 5 years). In 2011 we continued the deployment of Open Source technologies for email, document processing, spreadsheet and presentations.

### **Libre Office upgrade**

When licensing rights over Open Office - an office management suite - were claimed by Oracle, a global software company, the ICT department avoided expensive licensing costs due to vendor lock-in by migrating all our users to the community version called Libre Office. This clearly demonstrated, as anticipated in 2010, the advantages of open source software: freedom to choose from multiple options avoiding vendor lock-in and an overall better negotiation and purchasing position. As Libre Office is based on a open source licensing model, it comes free of charge.

As of the end of 2011 all our 420 users are using Libre Office and more than 50% use it exclusively. The introduction of open source software provided an opportunity to up-skill our staff in a structured manner and enable personal development. In 2011 training in document processing, spreadsheet and presentations has been provided to 54 users.

### **Email upgrade**

In 2011 the ICT Department started the migration process to an open source email system. It has been a real challenge to change a system that has been in use for over 12 years and which affected the communications for all our users. The project has been successfully completed. The ICT Department migrated and provided individual training for all our 420 users which are now using a web based email solution called Zarafa. This solution allows our users to access email from anywhere on any platform (Linux, Apple or Windows), in any browser (Firefox, Google Chrome or Internet Explorer) and on any smart device including smart mobile phones and tablet devices without the need of technical support. With this solution the number of users can increase without any additional licensing costs as Zarafa is an open source product. This newer technology allowed us to increase the performance of our email system: each user can now receive and store up to 8 times more messages while the largest attachment that can be sent or received by email is now 5 times larger, up to 25Mb in file size.

### **Data access on mobile devices**

In order to improve the effectiveness of our staff the ICT Department introduced in a pilot phase mobile technologies for access to corporate data. Email and web access on mobile phones is now provided to relevant staff, based on business requirements. The costs associated with this process have been minimized and also facilitated by the introduction of open source software.

### **Reduced Printing costs - Printing Policy**

Following the adoption of a Printing Policy and a public tender, the ICT Department consolidated the printing and copying equipment used by Limerick City Council. Six multifunctional devices (printer/copier/fax/scanner) and 20 monochrome printers replaced 70 old printers; this represents a 40% reduction in the number of devices and a consolidation from 52 models and 9 makes of printers to only 5 models and 3 makes of devices. This enables us to purchase toner in bulk, at a competitive price. We centralized the maintenance, toner purchasing and reporting of costs. All our printers are now set to duplex (double sided) thus reducing paper consumption. The deployment of scanning features also enables us to reduce paper consumption and promotes the electronic delivery of documents.

### **Social Media**

Limerick City Council started in 2010 to utilize social media to further enhance communications with the public and various stakeholder organizations. During the severe weather conditions in December 2010 we provided updates not only through traditional methods, i.e. media releases and website updates, but also using social media sites such as Twitter.

In order to expand the usage of these communication channels a Social Media Policy has been developed. This policy provides all employees of Limerick City Council with proper guidance as to how to represent (or not to misrepresent) Limerick City Council on social media websites.

In 2012 we aim to increase the usage of social media by publishing articles, facilitating discussions and disseminating information through various media related to conducting City business: Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare, etc.

The ICT section has facilitated the uptake of social media in other sections: The Arts Section and Limerick City Gallery of Art now provide updates on Twitter while The City Libraries uses both Twitter and Facebook.

The public can now follow us on Twitter @limerickcityco

### **Free Internet over WiFi**

In an effort to improve the services provided by Limerick City Library, visitors to the Granary, Watch House Cross Community Library and Roxboro Library, can now access the Internet over a free WiFi network. The service has also been enabled in all the exhibition, restaurant and adjacent public areas of the newly refurbished Limerick City Gallery of Art. Our plan is to provide the highest standards of communications and a “connected” visitor experience in all our public spaces by providing free Internet access in all our public locations by the end of 2012. Free Internet has been provided in City Hall since March 2011 for all its visitors: in the Council Chamber for media and journalists, for public events that take place in City Hall on a regular basis and for the visitors of the Gallery of Art Off-site which was located in Istabraq Hall during 2011.

### **SMS service**

A SMS service was set-up in order to provide immediate and direct text message communication with our customers and clients. The service enables us to reduce postage costs and to provide a new, more efficient communication channel.

### **Facilitate the CORE Project**

The CORE project is a nationwide IT project with the aim of centralising HR management across all local authorities. To facilitate this project two sub projects were commissioned: migration of time sheet data to new CORE system and migration of training data to new CORE system. Working with the Human Resources Department the ICT Department deployed electronic time keeping devices in City Hall, Granary and Fire Station.

### **DIEGO**

The DIEGO project (Digital Inclusive eGovernance) is a project co-financed by the European Commission under the CIP ICT-PSP to provide access to e-Government services for all citizens, with special attention to the elderly, the disabled or people living in rural areas and to those to whom new information and communication technologies are still unknown. The ICT Section worked in 2011 to build a content portal which makes online council information available to the public in an simple, clear and easy to access manner. Internal business systems such as SARR (the public complaints system) has been integrated in DIEGO.

The DIEGO portal which will be launched in 2012 is available at: [simply.limerick.ie](http://simply.limerick.ie).

### **Online Museum Catalogue**

The museum catalogue is now maintained and developed using the open source application Collective Access. All museum artefacts are now catalogued by the museum curator using this system. In addition all artefacts (over 55,000 unique items) are now available for the public to browse and search at [museum.limerick.ie](http://museum.limerick.ie).

### **Limerick.ie - The official guide to Limerick, Ireland**

Following the launch in 2010 of [limerick.ie](http://limerick.ie), a new all inclusive on-line voice for Limerick, the ICT Department in Limerick City Council has continuously provided support and development resources in order to ensure that [limerick.ie](http://limerick.ie) has a 100% availability rate.

At the end of 2011 over 1,300 amenities and over 1,750 events have been published at an average monthly rate of more than 100 events. The website has been used as the central source of information for events and promotional campaigns in Limerick: European City of Sport, St. Patricks Festival, Riverfest, Thomond Park Experience, Bicycle Parade, Intercultural Week, etc. "Limerick insider" a monthly news video bulletin is produced and published on [Limerick.ie](http://Limerick.ie).

The website received in one year almost 200,000 visits from which over 142,000 are unique visitors! [Limerick.ie](http://Limerick.ie) is now listed as the number one website when searching Google for information on Limerick. The availability of positive, up-to-date information is invaluable in providing a positive image of Limerick.

[Limerick.ie](http://Limerick.ie) is supported by Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council, Shannon Development, Limerick Co-Ordination Office, Limerick Enterprise Development

Partnership, Limerick Chamber, Limerick Regeneration, Integrating Limerick Working Group, Limerick City Enterprise Board, PAUL Partnership and Limerick City and County Development Boards..

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **Human Resources/Payroll/Superannuation Information and Processing (CORE)**

The Core computer system project has a range of functionality covering human resources, payroll, superannuation and time and attendance amongst others. Limerick City Council progressed with time and attendance for indoor staff from the beginning of 2011 on a phased basis. This module also contains an employee self service (ESS) called Core portal with appropriate security and access control facilities for different categories of user, i.e. HR staff, managers and individual employees.

The Council went live with three further modules in 2011; superannuation, recruitment and Central Statistics Office (CSO) . The deadline for all 27 local authorities to complete phase 1 which comprises six modules is the end of March 2012. Limerick City Council completed phase 1 in July 2011 so it is well advanced in progressing the project.

Work on Phase 11 of the project covering training and health and safety commenced in September 2011 and the Council will be going live by mid December, 2011 with the Training module. The Health and Safety module will commence early in 2012 as it is only now ready for release to local authorities. The Performance Management Development System PMDS will be Phase 3. Work is ongoing on this module and the release date is not known as yet.

### **Performance Management Development System (PMDS) and Staff Training**

PMDS is pivotal in clarifying roles and responsibilities within all Departments. The Team Development Plans of each department (TDP) assist in prioritising activities/tasks and setting targets in-line with our objectives in the Corporate Plan. Personal Development Plans (PDP) clarify roles and also identifies both individual and team training needs which informs the Training Programme. Priority is given to essential training which has been identified by staff and line managers in the PDP as necessary for the job being done by each individual employee.

Applications for Further Education courses will be considered having regard to available resources. City Council will continue to use a combination of internal and external providers to meet the training requirements.

### **Retirements/Resignations 2011**

During 2011, seventeen Officers/Employees retired from Limerick City Council, twelve were due to retirement on age grounds and five were due to ill health retirements. A further two retirements due to ill health are due to go before year end. The amounts for these are not included in the monetary figures given below.

The value of the lump sums paid out is as follows:

Gross Lump Sums paid	€947,306.43
Deductions made	<u>€ 80,113.52</u>
Net Lump Sums paid	€867,192.91

One person received a non pensionable gratuity. Two death gratuities were paid.

A further 12 employees left the employment of Limerick City Council. Eight of these had an entitlement to refund of contributions for having under two years service. A further four had a preserved benefit entitlement.

22 employees have indicated that they intend to retire by the end of February 2012.

### **Recruitment**

The Council carried out a number of recruitment processes for personnel with specific expertise during 2011. 9 no. interviews were held for recruitment purposes and 4 no. interviews were held for internships under the Government's Graduate Internship programme. The overall level of employment in the City Council continues to decline.

### **REGISTER OF ELECTORS**

The 2011/2012 Register was published on the 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2011 and came into force on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2011. Supplement to the Register of Electors 2011/2012 was published for the Dáil Election in February 2011 and Presidential Election and Referenda in October 2011. Work commenced in the summer on the preparation of the Draft Register for 2012/2013 that was published on the 1<sup>st</sup> November, 2011.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION GRANTS**

603 applications have been processed to date this year (up to and including 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2011) a decrease from 608 over the same period in 2010.

### **OFFICIAL RECEPTIONS AND MEETINGS**

Details of Meetings, Civic Receptions and Mayoral Receptions for 2011 are as follows (the following figures cover the period up to and including 6<sup>th</sup> December, 2011):

No. of Council Meetings (including Special Meetings)	18	No. of Civic Receptions	4
No. of Area Meetings	4	No. of Mayoral Receptions	42
No. of SPC meetings	18	No. of Tender Openings	17

### **INTERNAL AUDIT & THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Internal Audit is an independent function, attached to Corporate Services which reviews the systems, procedures and internal controls in place throughout the Council. It carries out audits and reviews through its annual audit plan, which is drawn up in conjunction with the Management Team and the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee consists of three external members, one former Councillor and the Mayor. During 2011 the Committee reviewed the Internal Auditor's Reports and also carried out an evaluation of a number of other areas including the Council's financial and budgetary process, the Local Government Auditor's Report, Value for Money initiatives and the processes in place in relation to Risk Management in the organisation. The work programme for the Committee in 2012 will benefit from and reflect on their work in 2011 and will include:

- Preparation of the 2012 Audit Plan
- Completion of Audits and Reviews on areas as outlined in the Audit Plan 2011.
- Preparation of the Risk Register for 2012.

### **ARCHIVES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

- The contract for off site storage was reviewed and a new three year contract was signed which resulted in significant savings being negotiated.

- A decision was taken by the Senior Team to develop a File Management structure to be in place mid 2012.
- A multimedia web page for Ranks Flour Mill has been set up on Limerick.ie with the assistance of a Heritage Council grant [www.limerick.ie/ranks](http://www.limerick.ie/ranks)
- A major oral history project was carried out in conjunction with Mary Immaculate College. Under this 23 interviews were carried out to create an oral history archive for Industrial Limerick.
- A parallel acquisition project to collect, scan and digitize documents and ephemera held in the community relating to Industrial Limerick was instigated. 24 small collections have been created and cataloged under the project to date.
- The Cecil Mercier papers, donated in 2010 were cataloged and digitized in 2011. Under the archives digitization programme the Lloyd papers and the Special Committee Minutes for Limerick City Council were also digitized. These will be made available in a new format under open source software currently in development- Collective Access which will provide a new interface for all the archive digitized collections.
- A small collection of the De Vere of Curraghchase papers were donated to the City Archives by the O' Brien family. These build on an existing collection held by the City Archives and contain the first letter written by Aubrey de Vere to his father. They also contain the letters of his father written from debtors prison.
- A collection of photographs relating to the Hungarian refugees in Limerick in 1956 was donated to the City Archives and a display marking this was created for a reception in City Hall.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Key activities during 2011 were as follows

- Four meetings of the Management Safety Committee as part of the Safety Management System.
- Five Safety Statements were reviewed and updated
- Greater detail and analysis incorporated into the risk assessment process.
- Numerous site specific Risk Assessments were carried out.
- Five Meetings of the Safety Representatives Committee. The committee was joined by a representative from Roads Maintenance.
- Provision of a new Employee Assistance Programme.
- Safety Training was provided.
- Training was provided in Child Protection Policy.

The programme for 2012 plans to maintain and upgrade safety skills levels by means of appropriate training and improve the Safety Management System through the introduction of the Safety Auditing and the implementation of the National Guidance Safety Policies and Procedures.

## **FINANCE DEPARTMENT**

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

The Finance Department continued to work closely with its customers in 2011. Given the current economic climate the City Council is more than aware of the difficulties that

City Centre Business faces. Payment plans have been agreed with those having difficulties in meeting payments due to Limerick City Council. It should be noted that such arrangements simply spreads the payment of a current charge to ease short-term cashflow difficulties for businesses. It must be made clear however that there is no question of reducing rates outstanding by city business – all that the Council can do for business is to be flexible in defining the timelines by which rates obligations must be discharged. It must be made clear that all rates must still be paid in full. This is imperative in order for Limerick City Council to maintain and protect its income stream. There is no doubt that the collection of monies due to it will be challenging for Limerick City Council in 2012. The total expected collection percentage for Rates is expected to be approximately 55% for 2011 (for 2010 percentage collection was 63%).

The Accounts Receivable Department is constantly striving to give improved customer service and has a system in place that allows customers pay their traffic fines on line (e-payments) and automatically over the phone 24 hours a day. A new Debtors Management system has been implemented in 2011, which will help to streamline communications with customers with outstanding debt.

2012 sees no change to rates of the Non Principal Private Residence Tax (NPPR) of €200 per unit. This form of income introduced in 2009 has been very successful and is expected to generate circa €1,240,000 in income for Limerick City Council this year, which is reflected in Budget 2012, Division H. In 2012 there will be a household charge introduced of €100 per domestic property. This money will be collected by a central agency and not by the local authority. The monies collected will become part of the national Local Government Fund, replacing Exchequer funding. Therefore no additional income is expected from this new source for Local Authorities in 2012.

There is a continued focus on the use of electronic forms of payment where feasible. Fortnightly pay was introduced in January 2010. This has resulted in increased efficiencies in the processing of all payroll for Limerick City Council, and subsequently staff have been redeployed/ reassigned new duties during 2011.

The implementation of a new payroll, superannuation and human resources system is completed in 2011. 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.

There will be a continued emphasis on cash flow management in 2012. Fortunately in 2011, the average cash position during the year was steady. A number of factors gave rise to this including monies received from the Department towards old sites purchased historically from own resources. This process was part of the Regeneration process. This increased cashflow has been dampened by the slowdown in the amount and the timeliness in which Limerick City Council is securing payments from its customers. 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 2012 as in previous years.

During 2011 extensive additional financial reporting has been introduced as part of the IMF/EU/ECB Memorandum of Understanding. A number of quarterly financial reports are required to be submitted, which has led to additional workload for the finance sections. Limerick City Council has had a change of Local Government Auditor in 2011. Ms Marita Gonsalves, Local Government Auditor has been assigned to Limerick City Council from Kerry County Council. The Audit of AFS 2010 has led to additional pressures on the finance section in preparing this Budget book. The co-operation and effort of all staff in preparing this Budget book under such pressures has been appreciated.