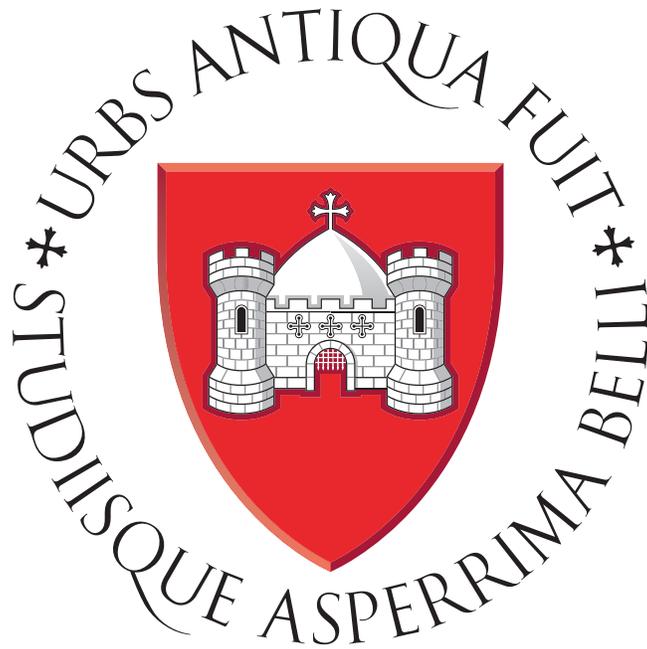


LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL



ADOPTED ANNUAL BUDGET FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2013

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**LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CATHRACH LUIMNIGH**

Cé na gCeannaith
Luimneach

10th December 2012

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

**Annual Budget for the year
1st January 2013 to 31st December 2013**

Introduction

The recession in the Irish economy has continued to deepen during 2012, with a continuing fall in consumer confidence, stagnation of the property sector, businesses going into liquidation, examinership or forced to close down, challenging external economic environment 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 three years.

General Government Balance

The General Government Balance (GGB) measures the fiscal performance of the whole General Government sector, which includes the Exchequer, the Social Insurance Fund, the non-commercial state-sponsored bodies, the National Pensions Reserve Fund and other extra-Budgetary Funds, the Local Authorities, and the Vocational Education Committees. The following table (*Table 1*) outlines the General Government Balance targets agreed between Ireland and the Trioka. As can be seen from the table below Ireland has been exceeding its targets and is expected to continue this trend. It should be noted including Bank Transfers the 2013 figure will worsen to €15.125bn

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
€ billion	14.7	13.1	12.4	8.1	5.0
% of GDP	9.2	8.0	7.3	4.6	2.7
Target deficit at end 2010:					
% of GDP	10.6	8.6	7.5	5.1	2.9

Source: Department of Finance *Stability Programme Update*. The figures for the GGB in € billion in that document have been expressed as a percentage of the rebased numbers for nominal GDP using the latest CSO *National Income and Expenditure, 2011*.

Table 1: Official Target Deficit on General Government Balance (excluding bank transfers), extracted from ESRI, Budget Perspective 2013, September 2012, Tim Callan, p. 14).

Economic Outlook

The European Commission, ECB and the IMF all declare that Ireland's implementation of the EU/IMF Programme is on track, despite the weakening external environment and higher levels of unemployment. It should be noted that the 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 three years due to the large gap between the State’s revenues and expenditure. This continued level of austerity can be seen in the Medium-Term Fiscal Statement issued by the Department of Finance in mid-October 2012, which details that the consolidation adjustment (i.e. expenditure reductions/ increased income) will be €3.5bn in 2013, €3.1bn in 2014, and €2bn in 2015 (see **Table 2** below for austerity measures for years 2008 to 2015). As can be seen from **Table 2** , approximately two-thirds of the actual and planned austerity measures over the period 2011-2015 relates to cuts in expenditure, both current and capital, and the balance is made up of increased revenue either through increased taxes or new taxes.

	2008-2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2011-2015
Revenue	5.6	1.4	1.6	1.3	1.1	0.7	6.1
Expenditure	9.2	3.9	2.2	2.3	2.0	1.3	11.7
of which Capital	1.6	1.9	0.8	0.6	0.1	0.0	3.3
Total	14.7	5.3	3.8	3.5	3.1	2.0	17.7
Per cent of GDP	9.2%	3.3%	2.3%	2.1%	1.8%	1.1%	10.6%

Source: Department of Finance Budgets. GDP figures revised based on CSO: *National Income and Expenditure, 2011* and Duffy, et al., 2012.

Table 2: Summary of Actual and Planned Austerity Measures over the Period 2008-2015, €bn, extracted from ESRI, Budget Perspective 2013, September 2012, Tim Callan, p. 14).

This level of austerity is required due to the high level of General Government Debt, which is estimated at €192 billion at the end of 2012, with almost 30% of it relating to support by the sovereign to the banking sector. The following graph (**Figure 1**) illustrates the level of debt to GDP (i.e. level of productivity in the state), which highlights the challenges faced by Government:

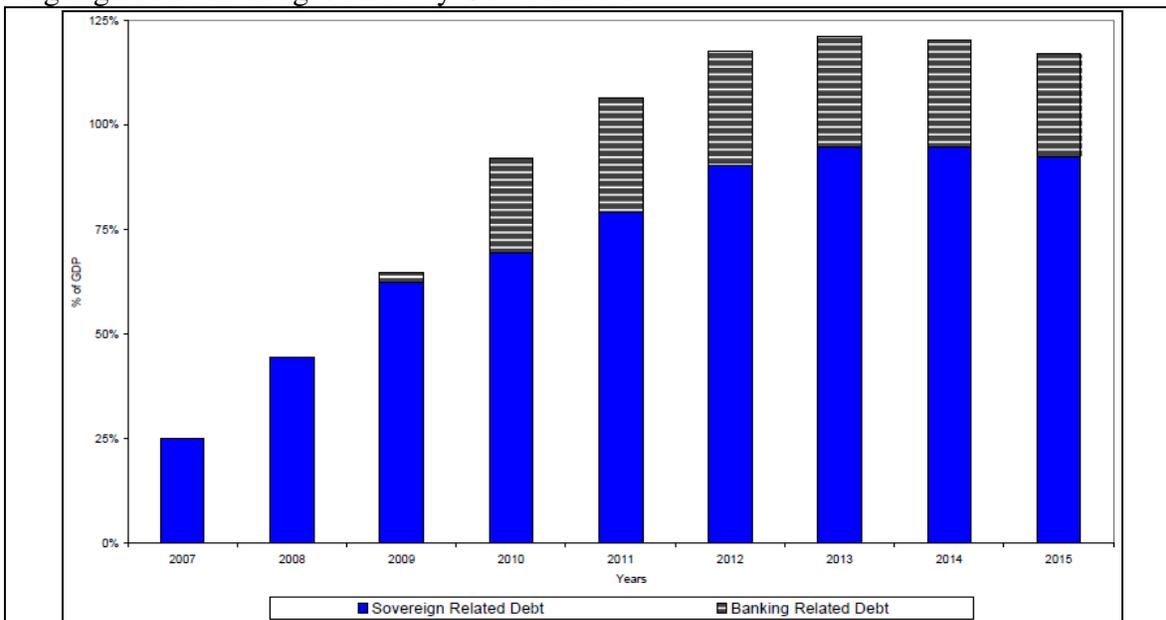


Figure 1: General Government Debt: 2007-2015 (as a percent of GDP), extracted from Medium-Term Fiscal Statement, November 2012, Dept of Finance, p. 28)

It's not all bad news from an economic outlook perspective, as can be seen from *Figure 2* below. *GDP, which is a measure of the level of productivity in the state, is beginning to return to positive terms.* The Department of Finance have outlined that the projected economic growth of GDP will be 1.5 percent in 2013, 2.5 per cent in 2014, and 2.9 per cent in 2015. It should be noted that GDP growth has been predominantly reliant on the export sector in recent years.

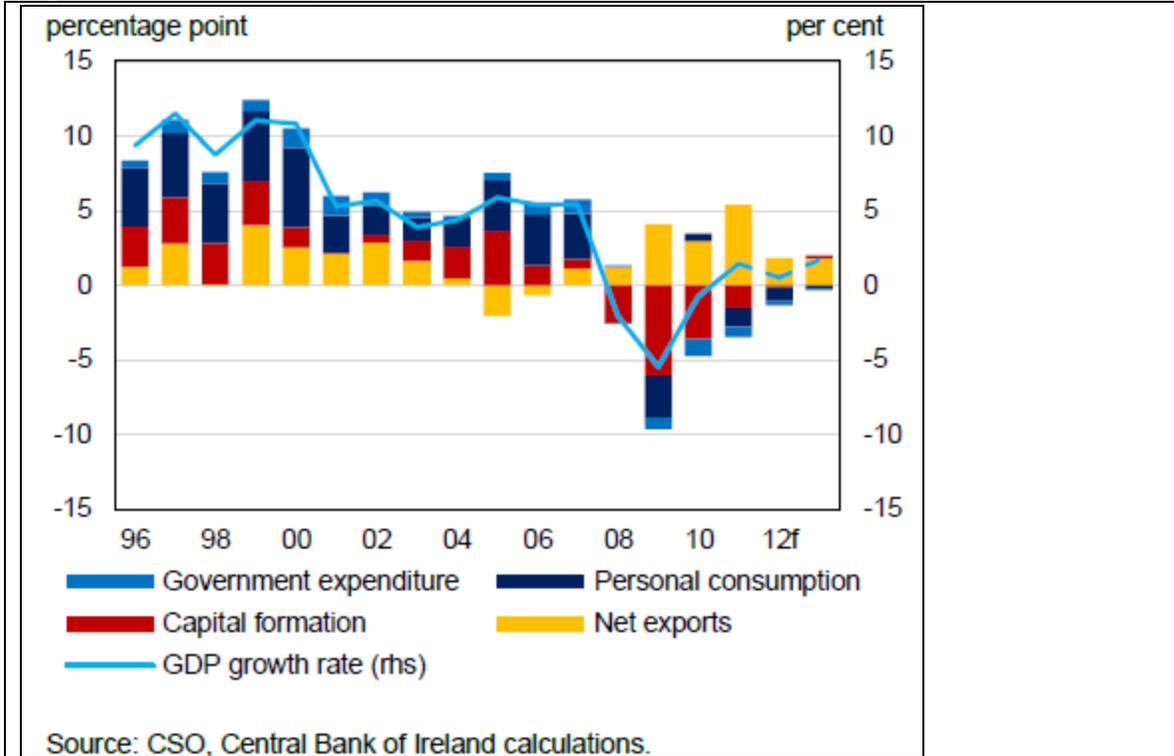


Figure 2: Composition of GDP Growth: Extracted from Central Bank of Ireland Macro Financial Review Nov 2012

Other challenges facing central and local government are the fact that conditions in the labour market remains poor. Employment losses this year have been worse than expected, with the balance of long-term unemployed increasing as can be demonstrated in *Figure 3* below. On average €22 billion is required to pay social welfare recipients and unemployment numbers are in the region of 14.6% (320,000) of the total workforce. This will continue to have a direct impact on the Irish economic recovery, and will require to be addressed locally and nationally by creating the conditions for sustainable economic recovery which will result in employment.

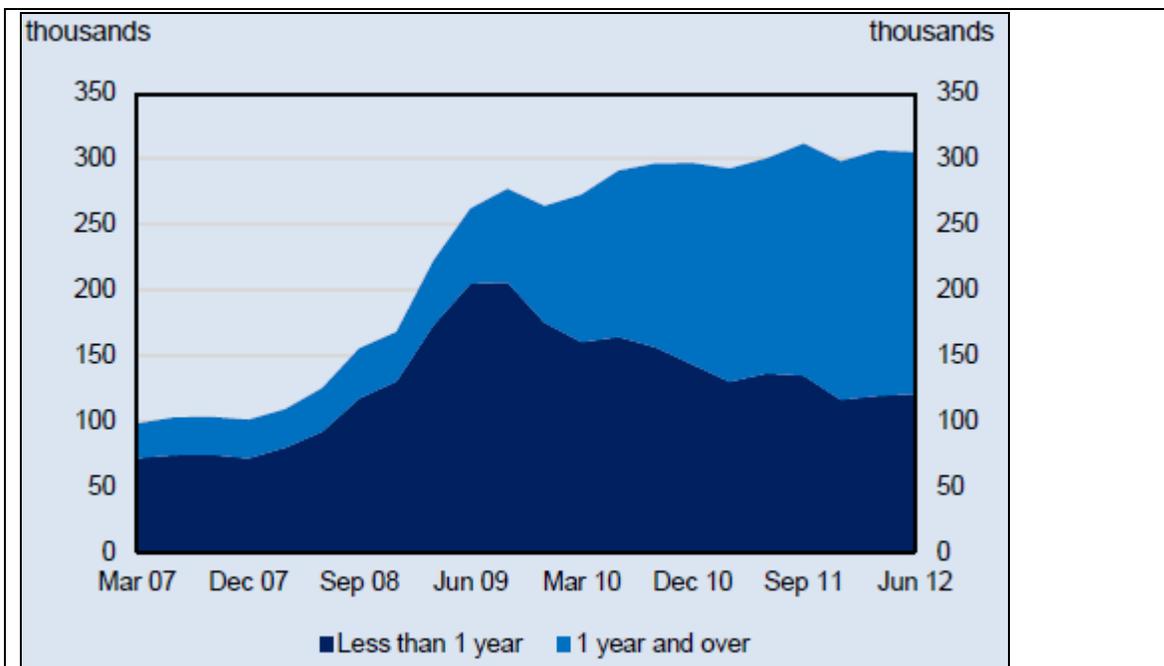


Figure 3: Unemployment by Duration: Extracted from Central Bank of Ireland Macro Financial Review Nov 2012, p. 15

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 13 September 2012) 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 €3.5bn.
- Revenue measure to yield €1.25bn in 2013 including:
 - A broadening of personal income tax base
 - A value-based property tax
 - A restructuring of motor taxation
 - A reduction in general tax expenditures
 - An increase in excise duty and other indirect taxes
- The budget 2013 will provide for a reduction of expenditure in 2013 of €2.25bn including:
 - Social expenditure reductions.
 - Reduction in the total pay and pensions bill.
 - Other programme expenditure, and reductions in capital expenditure.

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:

- Reference to *introduction of 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 property tax is to be introduced on 1st July 2013***. The collection percentage for the Household Charge in the Limerick City area is approximately 70%, which is in the top third of the country. The Property Tax will be collected centrally by the Revenue Commissioners and redistributed through the Local Government Fund. The Property Charge income is to replace Exchequer funding to the Local Government Fund.
- Property charge will be on top of 2nd home charge (***non-principal private residence charge-NPPR***) for 2013 – currently €200, which is received directly by local authorities. The NPPR charge will be abolished on 1st January 2014.
- ***Commercial Rates –Revaluation of Limerick City Council area***: The Valuation Order for revaluation of Limerick City was signed by the Commissioner of Valuation on 29th March 2012. The publication date for the valuation list arising from this exercise will be 31st December 2014, which means that 2015 will be the first year when Commercial Rate demands will be issued with the revised valuation.
- ***Motor Tax bands are to be adjusted in line with technological advances***. This was commenced in Government’s Budget 2012, and continued in Budget 2013.
- There have been ***changes under the current phase of Public Service Agreement*** on sick pay reforms, continued programme of non-replacement of staff who resign/ retire, review of pay allowances for elimination, and introduce more efficient way of working. Such changes are with the objective of improving the sustainability of the public sector wage bill, achieve current expenditure savings while protecting the delivery of public services.
- Domestic water charges are due to be introduced in 2014 by “Irish Water”.
- 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. There will be further updates on the progress of this Government commitment during 2013 and 2014
- “Significant change is envisaged for the local government sector over the coming years, with the publication of ***“Putting People First”*** by the Minister for Environment. The more immediate change will be 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 impact on the Exchequer contribution to local authorities over this time-frame (see ***Figure 4*** below).

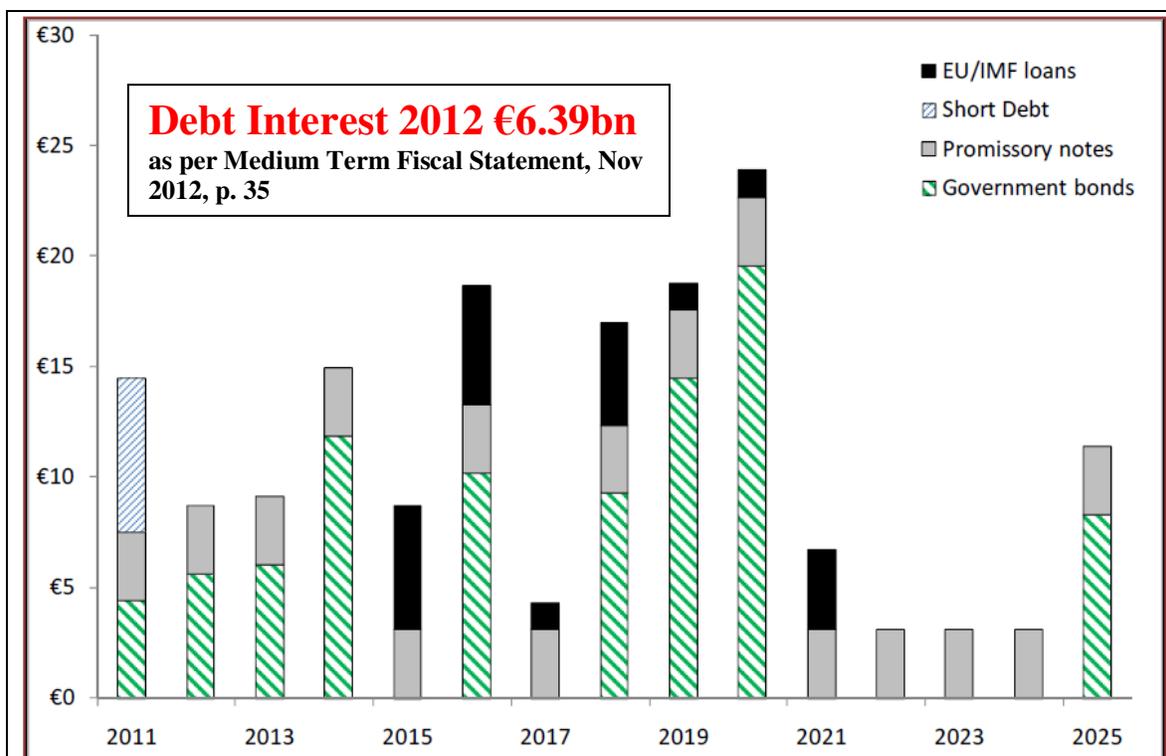


Figure 4: Refinancing Needs 2011-2025 – Repayment of Debt, €billion, Extract from ESRI Quarterly report, “Irish Government Debt and Implied Debt Dynamics 2011-2025, p. 16

Specific Local Authorities issues:

‘Putting People First’, the Government Action programme provides for Local Government to deliver more to the community it serves, be more accountable and build a stronger relationship between local government, local representatives and the communities they serve. One of the themes within this programme focuses on funding, accountability and governance and in this respect the introduction of a property tax in 2013 will provide locally generated funding to administer local services. The merger of Limerick County Council and Limerick City Council in June 2014 will provide unique challenges and opportunities for the members, management and staff of both Local Authorities. I will continue to develop and support the structures necessary to facilitate the transition to the new single authority.

The Draft 2013 Limerick City Council Budget has been prepared based on an increased allocation in the Local Government Fund and reduced funding for Local and Regional Roads. Against the background already outlined I have endeavoured to allocate the available funds to ensure that as far as possible the following objectives are achieved:

- Minimise impact on those communities dependent on council support, including protecting the expenditure allocation to Housing Maintenance.
- Continue to support those in need of home assistant grants
- Sustain a level of investment in our roads and water infrastructure
- Sustain employment and services commensurate with available resources

- Propose a reduction in the Commercial Rate Multiplier (i.e. Annual Rate on Valuation) of 5% demonstrating our support for the business community of Limerick City.
- Establishing a marketing fund to promote the City. The fund proposed in draft Budget 2013 is €250,000. This fund is in addition to the existing spend on festivals and other promotional events already supported by Limerick City Council. Such provisions will be significant in 2013, and will support the national initiative of “The Gathering 2013”.
- Establishing a fund for City of Culture 2014 of €235,000 in recognition of the unique opportunity to further promote Limerick.

The circumstances in which we operate have changed significantly as outlined above in the economic review. 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 2013.

Austerity measures will continue to be implemented during 2013 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 2013 continue to work under the terms of ***Public Service Agreement*** towards the overall objective of achieving a ***further reduction in employment levels through non replacement***. The Public Service Agreement contains a commitment to maintain the pay rates and employment status of existing public servants. It is recognised by all 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***. It should be noted that the Public Service Agreement has contributed to significant payroll savings in Limerick City Council, with remaining staff providing public services in a more efficient manner, which needs to be acknowledged.
- The Council will also ***seek additional cost savings*** from existing staff through changes in current work practices and arrangements, identify quick wins in preparation for the merger of the Limerick Local Authorities and through more efficient methods of service delivery. Management Team will be tasked with these objectives arising from the Budgetary Process.
- ***Continue to extend the use of ICT to achieve greater efficiencies and cost savings*** – which will be a particular focus of the Directorate of Change over the coming years.
- Look at further ***procurement opportunities*** including continued use of National Procurement Service contracts (OPW), and participate in regional procurement group, which will bring a focus onto non-payroll expenditure.

Budget 2013

In presenting the Annual Budget for the year ended 31st December 2013 to Council, I wish to take this opportunity, to summarise the financial position of Limerick City Council at 31st December 2011. The Annual Financial Statement of Limerick City Council for the year 2011 shows that the accumulated Balance on the Revenue Account is a credit position of €497,471 at 31st December 2011 (compared to the accumulated Credit Balance on the Revenue Account at 31st December 2010 of €317,825). The Audit of AFS 2011 has been completed and the Statutory Audit Report is being presented to the December Council meeting.

Current outturn figures indicate that it will be difficult to maintain the Revenue Credit in 2012, 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 2013 draft 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.

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

Expenditure – 2013

The Budget for 2013 provides for expenditure of €79,910,163. This compares to €82,958,895 for Budget 2011 (represents a decrease of €3,048,732 over the Budget for 2012). The following table sets out the expenditure by Division:

	Budget 2013	Budget 2012
A. Housing and Building	16,485,667	17,173,219
B. Road Transportation and Safety	10,951,465	10,642,163
C. Water Supply and Sewerage	13,434,545	14,040,613
D. Development Incentives and Controls	4,458,783	4,470,957
E. Environmental Protection	18,956,474	19,445,084
F. Recreation and Amenity	5,299,287	5,221,126
G. Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	2,240,850	3,620,235
H. Miscellaneous Services	8,083,092	8,345,498
TOTAL	79,910,163	82,958,895

Table 3: Revenue expenditure by Division Budget 2013 and Budget 2012

The following graph (*Figure 5*) depicts estimated expenditure by Division for 2013, compared to 2012.

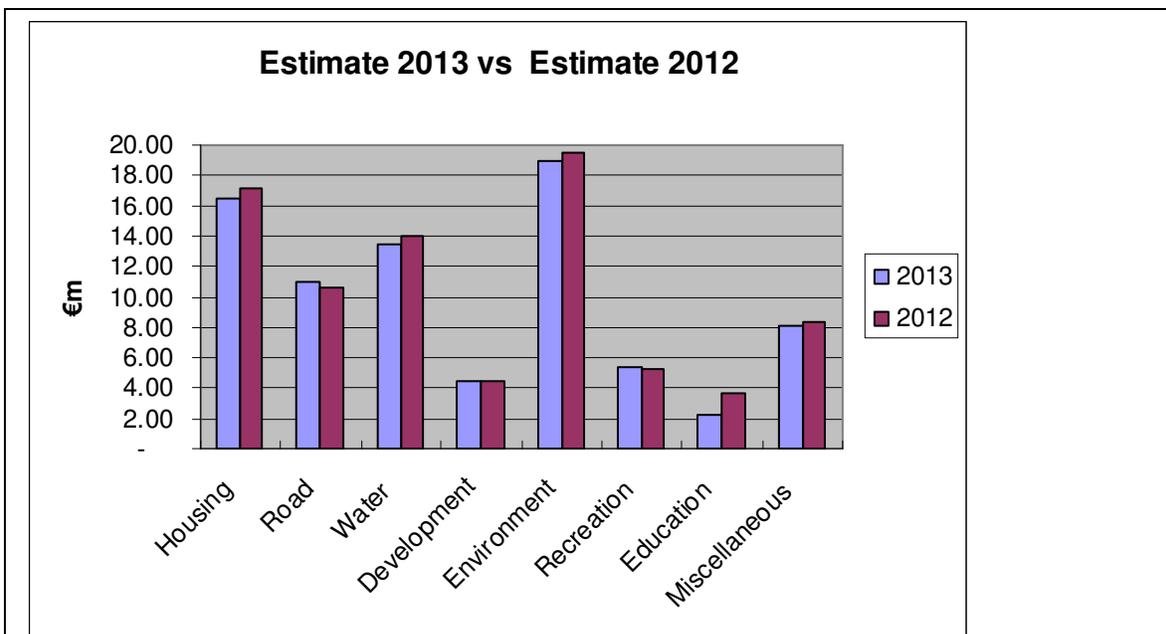


Figure 5: Estimate 2013 vs. Estimate 2012 Expenditure split by Division.

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 staff’s pay by an average of nearly 7 per cent (this money is retained by Limerick City Council). The pension levy partly replaced some of the reductions in the Local Government Fund since 2009 to 2012. The figure for Pension Levy is noted in Table A in the attached Budget book as €1,315,000 (“Pension Related Deduction”) for draft Budget 2013.
- Further pay reductions were applied on 1st January 2010 to all salaries/ wages of public sector employees arising from central Governments Budget 2010. Such pay reductions continue to be applied for Budget 2013.
- Overall staffing numbers have been reduced in-line with the staffing moratorium on an ongoing basis. During 2012, 25 staff retired, which was mainly due to the scheme in place that enabled staff retiring prior to end of February 2012 to avail of a higher pension and gratuity, and 2 deaths-in-service occurred in 2012. The consequential impact of the large numbers retiring in 2012 is a reduction in Wages and Salaries costs, and reduction in the level of gratuities required in 2013. The total difference between Budget 2012 and Budget 2013 for payroll (including Pensions/Gratuities) is €2.2m. This illustrates that Public Service Agreement is contributing significant savings to the public sector. The total provision made in draft Budget 2013 for pension gratuities is €1.31m. The Wages/ Salaries & Pension/ Gratuities costs are noted further below for 2013, 2012 and 2008 for comparison. There is a an 18% differential between 2013 and 2008.

Payroll (incl. Pensions)	Draft Budget 2013 (€)	Adopted Budget 2012 (€)	Actual 2008 (€)
Wages & Salaries	24,562,839	25,442,580	31,958,543
Pensions/Gratuities	7,637,708	8,955,829	7,388,628
	32,200,547	34,398,409	39,347,171

Table 4: Payroll (including Pensions Gratuities: Budget 2012 and Budget 2013

To continue to minimize the payroll costs in 2013 and to comply with the Government directive to reduce payroll costs a number of measures have been reflected in the Budget 2013. These include the non renewal of temporary contracts, non filling of vacancies that arise in 2013 (some vacancies may have to be filled for operational reasons) along with the non filling of a number of vacancies that arose in 2012 and reductions in overtime and allowances. During 2013 there will be 5 personnel appointed to the role of Traffic Management. Payroll costs including non-core payroll costs and staff numbers will continue to be examined during 2013 in order to identify further savings where possible. This will be done in line with the Public Service Agreement. It should be noted that Limerick City Council continued to reduce its work-force in recent years through introduction of new and more efficient work practices, and this has accelerated in recent years as illustrated in *Figure 6* below. Since 2004 to date, there has been a 21% reduction in whole-time-equivalents staffing numbers.

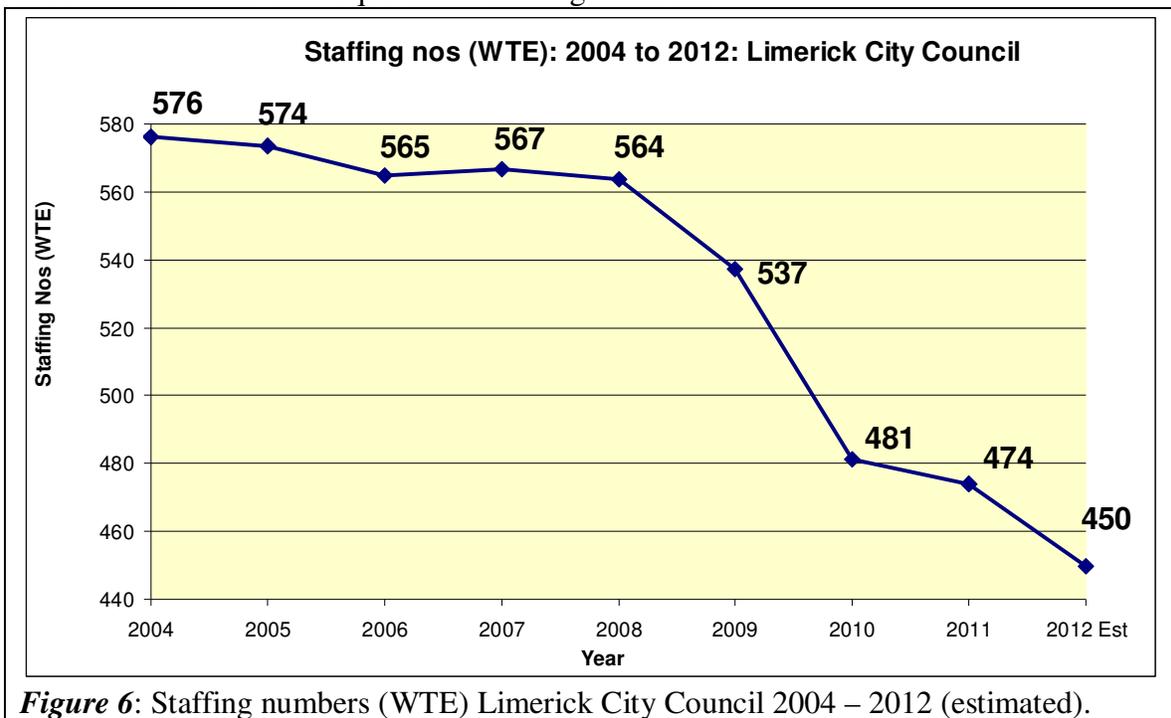


Figure 6: Staffing numbers (WTE) Limerick City Council 2004 – 2012 (estimated).

Non-Payroll Costs

There are a number of non-payroll costs and unavoidable increases in current costs facing the City Council for 2013. 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 is participating in national tenders for electricity, land-lines, mobile phones, stationary, paper, gas and bulk-fuel during 2012, and will continue to do so. Limerick City Council is also actively using national procurement systems such as LAQuotes and e-Tenders in an attempt to reduce non-payroll costs. There is also a staff member to be assigned the role of Procurement Officer for the Limerick Local

Authorities. The non-payroll savings have been reflected in Budget 2014. Procurement will be a constant focus going forward to ensure that Value for Money is achieved.

INCOME PROPOSALS - 2013

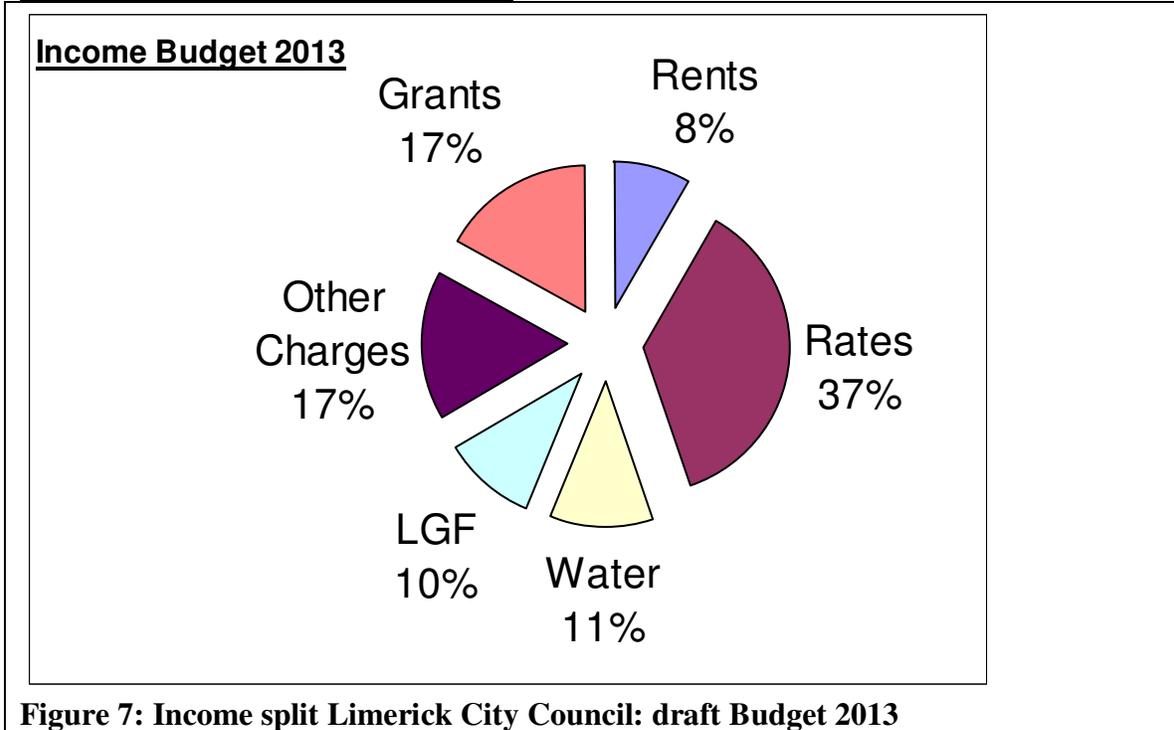


Figure 7: Income split Limerick City Council: draft Budget 2013

Figure 7 above illustrates the varying sources of income for Limerick City Council’s draft Budget 2013.

Local Government Fund

It should be noted that the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government increased its Local Government Fund allocation to Limerick City Council for Budget 2013 by 3.72% (€8,264,861) compared to the original 2012 allocation of €7,968,166. The support of the Department for Limerick City Council should be recognised in this regard, as it enables Limerick City Council to ensure both the vulnerable in society and business community can be accommodated in Budget 2013.

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 2013 (“Pension Related Deduction”), and is also noted in *Figure 8* below. The LGF allocation for 2013 of €8,264,861 plus the Pension Levy 2013 amount equates to €9,579,861, which enables it to be compared to amounts received in prior years (as per *Figure 8* below). It should be noted that the Budget 2013 figure is similar to the 2011 provision. It is uncertain at this stage what impact the introduction of the Property Tax in the 2nd half of 2013 will have on Local Government funding into the future.

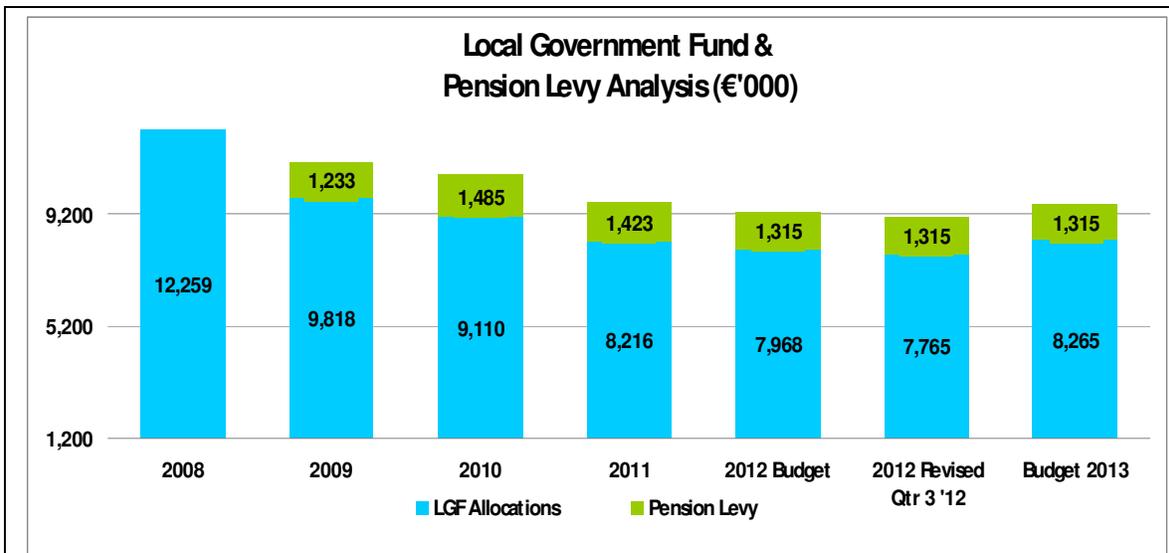


Figure 8: Local Government Allocation received by Limerick City Council 2004-2013

Road Grants

There has been a significant reduction in road grant allocation over the period 2009-2011. This trend has steadied during 2012. It's unclear what the allocation for 2013 will be, as the road grants allocation is notified in the 1st quarter of each year. Any further reductions will impact on the roads programme Limerick City Council is able to deliver during 2013. 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.

Commercial Rates

The year ahead is forecast as presenting difficult trading conditions for all businesses. Consumer confidence is low and 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 order to support competitiveness in the local economy, to protect the interests of communities and working towards the objective set out by Minister Phil Hogan TD for a merger of Commercial Rate levels between Limerick City Council and Limerick County Council areas, *this draft Budget 2013 is prepared on the basis of a proposed reduction of 5% in the Annual Rate on Valuation.*

In 2012, Limerick City Council had the third highest Annual Rate on Valuation of the 34 City/ County Councils (as illustrated in the *Table 5* below). This is despite Limerick City Council making considerable cost savings since 2004 to date. 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, and further reduction of 1.5% in 2012. ***It is proposed in this Draft Budget 2013 to reduce the Annual Rate on Valuation by 5% for Budget 2013.***

Local Authority Name	2012	2011
Kerry County Council	80.35	80.35
Wicklow County Council	76.78	76.77
Limerick City Council	74.93	76.08
Cork County Council	74.75	74.75
Roscommon County Council	74.38	74.38
Cork City Council	74.05	74.05
Clare County Council	72.99	72.99
Wexford County Council	71.52	71.52
Waterford County Council	69.92	69.92
Donegal County Council	69.7	69.7

Table 5: Annual Rate on Valuations 2012 & 2011: Top 10 City/ County Councils.

The reduction in the Annual Rate on Valuation proposed in this book is despite 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 and continued through 2012 will help to ensure vacant units in the city-centre will be filled by commercial businesses.

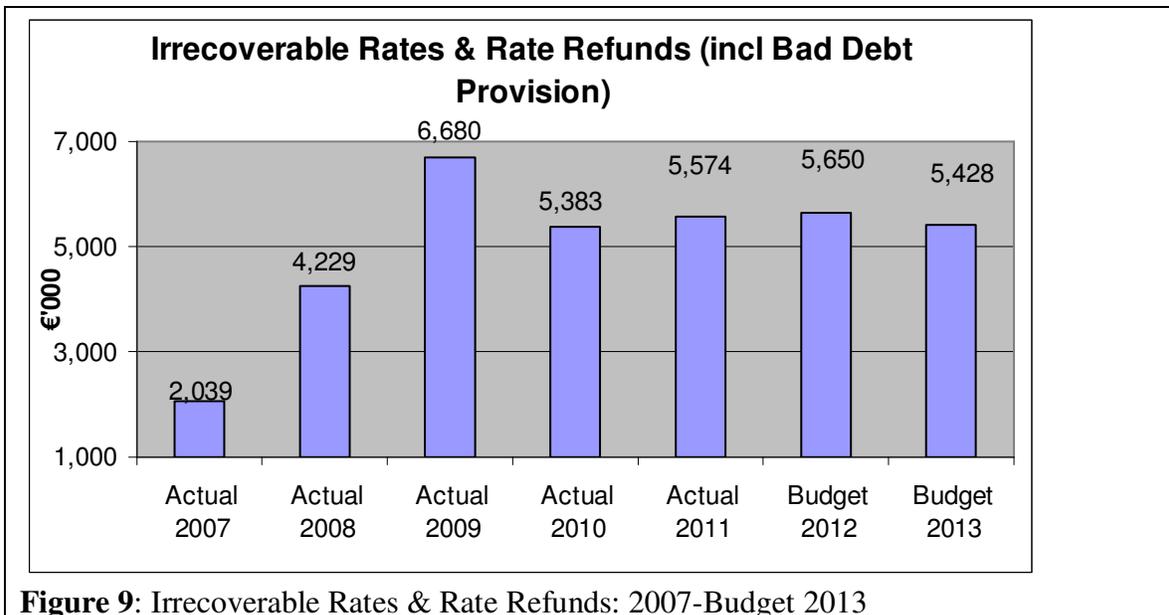


Figure 9: Irrecoverable Rates & Rate Refunds: 2007-Budget 2013

Water/Waste Water Charge:

The Water/ Waste-Water Charge is defined under the Water Pricing Policy and the cost of operating this service should 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 which is a fixed cost. It should be noted that volumes of water used have decreased during 2012 compared to 2011 by 15%, and this has necessitated in the need to increase the consolidated water charge to €2.70 per m³ in 2013 (3.8% increase), with the consolidated standing charge set at €350 per annum.

The following table compares the Water/Waste water charge for 2013 for Limerick City Council at €2.70 per m³ to the 2012 consolidated water charge for neighbouring local authorities of Limerick City Council.

Local Authority Name	2013 Consolidated	2012 Consolidated
Clare County	€2.94 per m ³	€2.94 per m ³
Limerick County	€2.70 per m ³	€2.60 per m ³
Limerick City	€2.70 per m ³	€2.60 per m ³

Table 6: Water/ Waste Water consolidated charge comparisons

Capital Budget 2013-2015:

In accordance with Section 135 Local Government Act, 2001, please find attached a report on the programme of capital projects proposed by Limerick City Council for the period 2013 to 2015. Given the fact that we are proposing allocations over three years, it would be unrealistic to suggest that these allocations are definitive and are subject to funding being available. Capital plans by their very nature are flexible rolling plans which will entail an annual review. Timescales will vary and this can be captured as part of an annual review process.

The circumstances in which we operate have changed. Central Government funding has fallen in the last few years and this is likely to continue in the short term. Also a sharp decrease in development levy income is a reality. In addition the ability to raise loan finance is also seriously curtailed by both the difficulties in the banking sector and central government policy on the level of borrowings permitted. We must reflect these economic realities in our capital programme and accordingly the programme as presented has focused on the key priority projects. It should also be noted that the Regeneration Agencies are now fully incorporated into Limerick City Council since the mid-2012, and will form part of the Capital Account being put forward at the Budget meeting.

The total expected spend on capital projects over the three years from 2013 to 2015 is just over €194m. 91% of the funding for these projects is grant aided with a further 2% funded by development levies. The following table summarises the funding sources:

Capital Expenditure 2013 – 2015	Grant Funded	Loan Funded	Development Levy Funded	Revenue Funded	Other (Land Sales / Other Contributors)
€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
193.85	177.52	0.97	4.35	1.285	9.725

Table 7: Summary of proposed Capital Budget 2013-2015

The funding required from development levies to fund these capital projects is anticipated at €4.35m. Our current development levy fund stands at circa €2.0m. However, future development levy income streams are not certain and future levy income may not reach the levels required to bridge this shortfall. Should this arise a prioritising of projects for the next three years will be necessary. The future availability of a Gateway Innovation Fund or similar Government stimulus initiative in the coming years, which is by no means certain, could also be used to fill this funding gap.

The majority of projects are subject to Central Government approval and such approval is key in the decision to proceed with these projects.

The delivery of these Capital Projects will require significant staff input. Staff will be allocated, where appropriate, to manage the delivery of these projects. These costs will be charged to the relevant capital job and have been included in the above expenditure estimates.

The projected cost of capital projects is based on information currently available. These costs are not based on tenders and no provision has been made for inflation or cost increases.

I ask the Members to consider the Capital Budget report as part of this Budgetary process.

Conclusion

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

- The need to maintain essential services.
- 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.
- 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.
- Proposing a reduction in the Commercial Rate Multiplier (i.e. Annual Rate on Valuation) of 5% demonstrating our support for the business community of Limerick City.
- Establishing a marketing fund to promote the City. The fund proposed in draft Budget 2013 is €250,000. This fund is in addition to the existing spend on festivals and other promotional events already supported by Limerick City Council.

- Establishing a fund for City of Culture 2014 of €235,000 in recognition of the unique opportunity to further promote Limerick.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Members of Council for their assistance and support since my arrival as Manager. In particular I wish to express my thanks to his worship the Mayor, Councillor Gerry McLoughlin for his wholehearted commitment and support.

It has been challenging to prepare the Budget 2013 documents in light of the economic back drop in which it has been prepared and also the necessity of ensuring the Budget reflect the need of the vulnerable and business community. I also wish to express my thanks to the Management Team 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, and Ms. Angela Murphy, 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 3pm on Wednesday, 19th December 2012.



Conn Murray
City Manager

Division A

Housing & Building

The challenges and opportunities facing the City Council in 2013 are significant and range across the full range of housing services provided by the Council.

Government Housing Policy was most recently set out by the Department in its Housing Policy Statement of 16th June 2011. The overall strategic objective as set out in this document is “to enable all households access good quality housing appropriate to household circumstances and in their particular community of choice”.

The delivery of the aims and strategic objectives of the general housing and regeneration programme will be central to the activities of the Home and Community Department in 2013.

Office of Regeneration Programme

2012 saw the successful transition of the Regeneration Agencies to the New Office of Regeneration within the new Limerick Local Government Arrangements.

The Regeneration project will reach a milestone in 2013 with residents moving into new homes in Moyross and construction advancing on regeneration projects in various parts of the city. Physical regeneration will advance in tandem with the social, cultural and economic aspects of the process.

The 33-unit Cliona Park development, currently approaching completion, will provide new homes in the heart of Moyross which create an urban edge to Moyross Avenue and new links to the surrounding area. Construction work commenced in 2012 on sheltered accommodation schemes in Vizes Court (Phase 2) and Colivet Drive in Carew Park. These schemes comprise 29 and 35 units respectively. The proposed 79-unit scheme at Lord Edward Street, close to the Regeneration area of Ballinacurra Weston, has advanced to detailed design stage following departmental approval. The sensitive redevelopment of this historic edge of city centre site will contribute to the rejuvenation of this area of Limerick city. This project is programmed to advance to construction in mid-2013.

Departmental approval has been received to advance design proposals for a housing scheme adjacent to the Southill Area Centre. The rezoning of part of the site to facilitate this development is complete. Approval to advance design proposals for Cosgrave Park, Moyross has also been received. A design team will be appointed to develop proposals for a site at Sheep Street/Athlunkard Street, King’s Island in early 2013. Proposals for housing adjacent to the crèche in Saint Mary’s Park and adjacent to the King’s Island Medical centre are also advancing.

Development proposals have been advanced within the framework of evolving Implementation Plans refocused following direct engagement with community leaders. Consultation has reached a point where wider community engagement in the process of the creation of their living environment can advance.

A pilot scheme to upgrade the thermal performance of 30 houses carried out with the Southill Development Cooperative, at the end of 2012, proved successful. This scheme has both direct and indirect benefits. The upgrading of the building fabric is complemented by the positive impact on the development of skills and local employment.

Strategic demolitions will continue in 2013. These demolitions will align with the overall strategic objectives. The extent of future demolition has been re-evaluated with the number of units proposed for demolition being reduced from that originally envisaged. Retention and refurbishment will be pursued where feasible.

Small scale capital projects will continue in 2013 with a view to enhancing the environment, improving security and improving connectivity.

Strategic site purchases which align with the overall regeneration objectives continue to play a role and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Infrastructural projects will play an important role in addressing physical isolation which is a factor impacting on all of the Regeneration areas. The Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor road is a vital component in improving connectivity to Moyross. This project is programmed to advance to construction in 2013.

Provision of New Accommodation

The Council, in addition to the works outlined above, will also progress the delivery of eight new units at Rathbane and secure the acquisition of an anticipated one hundred and forty new units through the Rental Accommodation Scheme. The City Council will also maintain an active inspection programme of private rented accommodation in 2013, with over five hundred inspections anticipated. These inspections will assess the level of compliance with the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008, and should continue to raise the quality of private rented accommodation in the City.

Homeless Services

The Council continues to receive approximately eight hundred presentations per year seeking support and emergency accommodation and anticipates a similar level of support request in 2013. The Council meets this need through the services of its multi disciplinary team and its emergency accommodation provisions.

2013 will see the introduction of the PASS (Pathway Accommodation & Support System) computer system which will track and monitor both the patterns of movement of homeless persons and the availability of emergency beds. This information will form the basis of our day to day support requirements and also facilitate planning of long term accommodation provision.

Traveller Accommodation Programme

The current Traveller Accommodation Plan expires in December 2013 and the Council is required to prepare a new Traveller Accommodation Programme.

The Council will prepare this plan with Limerick County Council to facilitate the preparation and adoption of a joint Traveller Accommodation Plan.

The Council intends to refurbish the Bawney's Bridge halting site in 2013.

Maintenance of its Housing Stock

The Council in 2013 will continue to improve its housing stock with the financial assistance of the Department under its Energy Efficiency Programme. The Council will also look to develop, in 2013, a planned maintenance strategy to ensure that the housing stock is maintained to the highest possible standard, and also having regard to new demands being placed on resources as a result of new designs/materials etc. The Council will continue initiatives such as boiler maintenance/repair programme in 2013 to deliver safe, cost efficient housing to its tenants.

Management and Maintenance of Estates

The Council recognises that the management and maintenance of its housing stock is pivotal to its statutory functions and the health and well being of our communities. Anti-social behaviour has been identified as one of the biggest challenges in relation to the delivery of the implementation plans under the regeneration programme. Accordingly, the Council has provided resources to ensure that a comprehensive, integrated management and maintenance programme is delivered in these areas. The Council will liaise closely with other bodies such as HSE, Gardai and communities etc. to secure the most effective response to this challenge.

A Housing Inspector was appointed in late 2012 whose role is to ensure that tenants comply with the terms of their tenancy agreements in relation to the upkeep of their homes and other matters. It is anticipated that this official will carry out over 400 inspections in 2013 to ensure that dwellings are properly maintained. The Council has employed 2 tenancy enforcement officers dedicated to investigating and reducing incidences of anti social behaviour. This team investigated approximately 200 complaints in 2012 with a satisfactory resolution to at least 90% of these complaints. The Council expects that this level of activity will rise in 2013.

Support for Communities

The Council recognises the very significant contribution made by community bodies and organisations throughout the City. The request from these bodies for financial and other forms of assistance continues to rise at a time when the resources available to meet such requests are limited. Notwithstanding these limited resources, the Council together with the Office of Regeneration has made provision in its estimates for 2013 for support to such community groups and bodies.

Voluntary Housing

The City Council plays a significant role in the provision of housing services by the voluntary sector. Newgrove Housing Association is currently building 35 units of accommodation for people with disabilities at Sexton Street, Limerick. This project is due for completion in May of 2013 and greatly enhances the facilities available for people with disabilities.

Novas Initiatives have also received preliminary approval for the redevelopment of Brother Russell House. This proposed redevelopment, which we anticipate will commence in 2013, will provide 34 units of high standard accommodation for homeless

people. It is anticipated that this project will be completed by the end of 2014. The council will actively pursue further initiatives with the voluntary sector in 2013 to ensure that the most appropriate housing response to identified needs is agreed and delivered.

Housing Grants

The City Council provides grant aid assistance under three categories: - Housing Adaptation Grant, Mobility Aids Grant and Housing Aid for Older People. These grants attract a very high level of interest and applications. In 2012 the Council awarded over three hundred grants representing an expenditure of approximately €2,000,000 for the above schemes. The City Council is providing for a sum of €400,000 in the 2013 estimates to fund its share of grant-aid expenditure. This level of funding will, subject to the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government's allocation, allow a similar level of grant

Division B Road Transport & Safety

The budget allocation for Travel and Transportation is made up from grants received each year from the Department of Transport Tourism and Sport (DTTAS), The National Transport Authority (NTA) and from the Council's own resources.

Grant allocation will not be notified to the Council until early 2013, and a detailed (Roads) Report will be prepared and presented to Council at the February 2013 meeting. Current indications are that grant allocations for Regional and Local Roads from the DTTAS will be reduced on those received in 2012. It also has not been possible to maintain the Own Resource Allocation for 2013 at 2012 levels.

Therefore, the 2013 Budget sees a shift in emphasis in terms of both the manner in which the Council will deliver its work programme and the type of work it will undertake. There will be a reduction in major improvement works being undertaken with the emphasis being primarily on a Care and Maintenance Programme for 2013. There is a need to ensure that our road asset base is maintained on a priority basis, taking account of traffic volumes and the strategic importance of routes. Therefore, priority will have to be given to improvement works to major roads over housing estate roads.

In preparing the Budget for 2013, provision is being made for the following:

1. Public lighting will continue to be provided for and the Council is now part of a national tender for energy supply and availing of attractive energy tariffs. Discussions are ongoing with adjoining local authorities in relation to shared service procurement for maintenance and repair service for public lighting.
2. Provision had been made to continue the Councils Road Safety Programme including the Road Safety Officer, Road Safety Promotion and the School Wardens Service.
3. Provision has been made to continue a programme of road and footpath maintenance including gully cleaning.

4. Provision has been made for maintenance of the Urban Traffic Control Network
5. Provision had been made for the Winter Maintenance works on priority 1 & 2 routes.
6. We will need to enhance the Traffic Management Control unit in 2013 to ensure that the city has an effective Traffic Management Control regime in place to ensure that illegal parking and parking that disrupts the free movement of traffic in the city can be dealt with.

Capital Works

Capital Expenditure has been significantly reduced in recent years. It is anticipated that some large schemes may be advanced should funding become available in 2013. These include:

- The City Quays Upgrade Scheme at Harveys, Howley and Bishops Quay has commenced and it is expected that this will be completed mid-2013.
- Work should commence on the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Road Scheme in 2013, subject to funding.
- It is expected that a small number of Low Cost Safety Improvement Schemes will be grant funded and will commence in the coming year.
- It is expected that provision will be made by the NTA for Bus Priority Measures in 2013.

The focus of Travel and Transport is to make the best use of the scarce resources available to maintain our transport network in good order. By delivering on the potential of Limerick, as Ireland's Smarter Travel Demonstration City, we can become a leader in Sustainable Travel by promoting and advancing viable options of public transport, cycling and walking to reduce reliance on the private car and Smarter Travel funding will be used in 2013 to continue the delivery of the approved programme.

Division C Water Services

Government's Water Reform Programme

The Government decided in December of last year, to establish a public water utility, Irish Water, to take over the operational and capital delivery functions of local authorities in the water services area. It is envisaged that Irish Water will be an Independent state owned subsidiary of Bord Gais Eireann and the underpinning legislation is currently being finalised. The overarching objective of the Government's water reform programme is to put in place structures and funding arrangements that will ensure a world class water and waste water infrastructure that meets all environmental and public health standards. Irish Water will have the capacity to enter into Service Level Agreements with local authorities during the rollout of the reform programme. The move of water sector functions from local authorities to a semi-State company operating in a regulatory

environment and new funding regime which will include the introduction of domestic water charges in due course is a major organisational change.

Water Services

The Water Services Department, incorporating both water and waste water, continues to manage a significant capital and revenue programme. These range from the Limerick Main Drainage Waste Water Treatment Plant at Bunlickey to the Design, Build and Operate contract for the improvement of the Clareville Water Treatment Plant to ongoing water conservation programmes.

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.

REVENUE

The total Revenue budget provision for Division C – Water Services – for 2013 is €13.4 million.

The Principal costs in this Division are:

- Operation of Clareville Water Treatment Plant,
- Operation of Bunlickey Waste Water Treatment,
- Operation and maintenance of networks, and
- Loan charges

The income in this division is generated from:

- Water and waste water charges billed to non-domestic customers,
- Water and waste water charges billed to Limerick and Clare County Councils,
- A contribution towards domestic costs from the Local Government Fund, and
- Fees for new connections to the water and sewerage network.

Clareville Water Treatment Plant

The Clareville Water Treatment Plant is under the operations of a private contractor under a Design Build Operate type contract. This contract commenced in April 2007 and will see the operator in place until April 2027. The plant now has a capacity of 87MLD. 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. The increased capacity is predominantly to meet the needs of Limerick County and will be recouped accordingly.

Bunlickey Waste Water Treatment Plant

The city has a modern up to date fully integrated drainage system and treatment plant, which is already providing substantial benefits in the improved quality of the water in the river Shannon. It provides adequate capacity for the development of the City and its environs for the foreseeable future.

The long term (20years) operate and maintain contract for the treatment works was awarded to a private consortium in May 2010.

Networks

Over 100 metres of the existing Distribution Water Main were replaced during 2012. 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 150 leaks identified and repaired resulting in additional savings in the supply of water.

Flood Alleviation

Continual monitoring of tidal changes is carried out by the Water Services Department. Floodgates on O' Callaghan Strand and Clancy Strand are erected in periods of potential flooding.

The Water Services Department currently operates a proactive gully cleaning programme whereby all gullies in the City are cleaned at least once a year.

Public Toilets

There are two 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 is on Lower Bedford Row.

A third facility is available at Shelbourne Park.

CAPITAL

Water Services Investment Programme 2010 - 2012

The provision of capital water and waste water projects in Limerick City is based on the Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2012 (extended to end of 2013). During the year contracts were signed for

- Water Conservation “Find” Project
- Water Conservation “Fix” Project
- Mains Rehabilitation Project Package 1.

The total Capital budget provision for Division C – Water Services – for 2013 is in the region of €7.3 million.

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, Community 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 has now commenced. A separate “find & fix” water conservation project has also commenced.

Limerick City Trunk Mains

The development of a new ring water main for the city to support present and future development is nearing completion. 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 and from the Dock Road to Caherdavin including a river crossing. The commissioning of the complete trunk main will start early in 2013.

Limerick Main Drainage

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 Community and Local Government.

Division D Development Management

Planning Enforcement

There were 124 Planning Enforcement referrals received for the period 1st January, 2012 to 28th November, 2012 and of these 42 cases have been closed. In the remaining cases engagement or enforcement action is continuing. A total of 25 certificates of exemption were issued in the period together with 57 certificates of compliance with planning, taking in charge etc.

Planning Applications

There were 175 planning applications received from 1st January, 2012 to 28th November 2012 of which 13 were invalid. In addition, there were 96 responses to further information received during the same period. Of the 166 planning decisions made within the period, 160 or 96.4% were granted, with 3.6% being refused. A total of 120 pre planning inquires were answered in the period. The amount of levies collected from 1st January 2012 to 28th November 2012 was €749,802.43, an increase of 13.5% from the equivalent figure in 2011 of €648,929.14.

Future Planning and related policy

The Planning Department produced the Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016 for the City this was adopted on the 25th November 2010 and published in January 2011. Following this the Department devoted considerable resources in 2012 towards continued work on the preparation of a “Core Strategy” for the Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016, as required under the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010. This strategy aims to guide development, primarily in the settlements, in a sustainable manner commensurate with predicted population growth. The strategy must show that the development objectives in the Development Plan is consistent, as far as practicable, with national and regional development objectives set out in the National Spatial Strategy and

Regional Planning Guidelines. Variation No.2 (Replacement of Chapter 2 to include the preparation of a Core Strategy) was adopted on 23rd April 2012. Variation No.3 – rezoning for lands at Southill, was brought forward, this was adopted on the 1st October 2012.

A Bio-diversity Plan for Limerick city was jointly prepared by staff from Planning and Environment, the purpose of the Plan is to benchmark bio-diversity in the City and fulfill commitments given in the City Development Plan 2010-2016 this was completed and published in 2012.

Planning Department staff have sat on the steering committee for Limerick and Clare Sports and Recreation Strategy and the Shannon Estuary Framework Implementation Plan which are to be published in 2013. The Planning Department has also managed the preparation of the Limerick Economic Strategy and Spatial Implementation Plan which will provide the blueprint for the future development of the metropolitan area.

The work completed on future planning coupled with the development management system, which governs the planning application process for new development ensures that the policies and objectives of the Development Plan is achieved and the principles of sustainable development are upheld.

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. Income of €46,606 has been generated through the licensing of Casual Trading pitches and events to the 28th November 2012. The existing by-laws are currently being reviewed with a view to extending the scope of casual trading within the city. New Bye-laws will be brought forward in 2013.

Event Management

The planning department has facilitated a number of events by coordinating the response from a number of departments and agencies and provides licences under the Casual trading Act 1990. In particular the Planning Department has sat on the St. Patrick's and the Riverfest organisation committees.

Heritage and Conservation

In the Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016 the number of protected structures increased by to a total of 435 and three Architectural Conservation Areas were created in the City. To date the Planning Department have received 10 requests for Section 57 Declarations for individual structures, 9 have been completed by the 28th November 2012. Three notices under Section 59 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 – 2012 have been served on the owners of protected structures requiring works to be carried out to prevent a protected structure becoming endangered. To support conservation in the

City three grants were allocated out of the Planning Codes for 2012. The Civic Trust have received €25,000 to-date with a further €25,000 to be paid by the end of 2012, both Cathedrals in the City will receive a grant of €5,000 each by year end to support ongoing conservation. Continuing support into the protection of Cities Architectural Heritage will be maintained through pre-planning advice, development management and enforcement in accordance with Development Plan policies & Government Guidelines.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick

The work on the above Plan, being carried out by consultants GVA/AECOM, is currently being finalised and it is hoped to bring the draft Plan before the Council early in 2013. This wide-ranging Plan will provide a blueprint for attracting investment and jobs to Limerick and will help to enhance the local authority's role and remit in economic development as recommended by the Minister in his recent local government reform policy document Putting People First. The important implementation phase of the Plan will commence in 2013 and will require the buy-in and support of many stakeholders, together with public and private sector investment.

A new Town Centre Management business unit is to be established headed by a Senior Executive Officer to work with and assist the business community in Limerick City, to enhance the public realm and to lead the physical redevelopment of the city centre.

It is widely recognised that an enhanced marketing effort for Limerick is needed in order to better promote Limerick as a tourist destination and as a place to work and do business in. Plans are underway to restructure and properly resource a marketing unit which will continue the good work already commenced by various initiatives to portray a positive image of Limerick to a wider audience.

LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE

It is intended that the Limerick City and County Enterprise Boards will be brought together under a new Local Enterprise Office (LEO) in 2013. The LEO will form one of the business units of the Economic Development and Planning Directorates and will provide a "one-stop-shop" for supports to micro and small enterprises in Limerick City and County.

Supports for City Centre Retailers

The economic development department continues to develop initiatives to promote Limerick as a key shopping and tourism destination focusing on ensuring the vibrancy of the city centre and enhancing footfall. The City Council is supporting key initiatives to combat the ongoing issue of retail unit vacancy.

Pilot Retail Incentive Scheme for Vacant Properties

Three applications were approved in 2012 and received year 1 grant subsidies equivalent to 50% of rates. Despite a reduction in the number of queries the scheme is seen as a positive incentive for start-up businesses in the targeted areas of the city centre. There are 42 businesses participating in the Freepark-Carparks Limerick initiative and the scheme will continue to be publicised to encourage city centre shopping.

Creative Limerick

Creative Limerick – Connect to the Grid continues to ensure that prime retail units are occupied adding vibrancy to the city centre and supporting the creative industries in Limerick.

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 Christmas shopping in Limerick City Centre.

Parks Atlantic Project - Interreg IVB Territorial Atlantic Area Programme

Limerick City Council in conjunction with the Mid-West Regional Authority (MWRA) completed the Parks Atlantic Project which aimed to enhance and capitalise of the parks and open spaces amenities in the city. A key outcome has been the development of a range of promotional postcards emphasising the natural and water amenities of Limerick and a strategic plan for the future development of the city's green spaces.

Derelict Sites

The current economic climate continues to present challenges regarding dereliction and increased number of complaints regarding vacant, although not necessarily derelict, properties. In 2013 the legislation will be used fully to reduce dereliction in the city. A total of 49 notices were served during 2012, 13 sites were remedied voluntarily and 1 site was taken out of dereliction. However it should be noted that there are onerous restrictions on the owners of listed buildings which combined with the current economic climate mitigate against these buildings being re-developed and occupied particularly in the extensive Georgian quarters.

Property Management

The Property Management Unit of the Economic Development Department continued to deal with the evaluation of strategic land holdings/opportunities, leases, licences, requests for wayleaves, land ownership queries, queries on rights of way, CPO compensation claims, adverse possession issues, settlement of outstanding land acquisitions/disposals, perfection of legal title on land, collection of rents owing, site inspections, maintenance of sites, trespass/squatters etc.

Medieval Building, Curry Street

Funding was received from the Structures at Risk fund to carry out works on this sixteenth century building. Surveys now show the need to carry out further works to preserve this listed building at a time when resources are limited. It is intended to develop a conservation plan for the building and negotiate long term outcomes.

Division E Environmental Services

Limerick City Councils Environment Department will continue to deliver a wide range of services to the highest operational standards possible in 2013 within the confines of the approved budget.

At a strategic level two overarching strategies will drive the Environment Departments business objectives from 2012 into 2013. These are

- (1) To continue to maximise community potential and energy in the maintenance of Limerick City neighbourhoods and environments.
- (2) To continue to achieve higher levels of cost efficiency in the delivery of services.

Street Cleaning

The street cleaning regime was maintained this year with 230km of road and footpath network receiving mechanical and manual sweeping. The cleansing team operates 365 days a year. Retendering of the waste collection contract for street sweeping provided cost efficiencies of €50,000 this year. The amount of waste was also reduced due to the introduction of a pilot leaf recycling project with Limerick Civic Trust. Leaves were gathered and stored for recycling instead of being part of street cleaning waste disposal.

Litter Pollution

The Environmental Enforcement Team continues to foster strong links with local communities, the HSE and the Gardai in their drive to combat litter and dumping within the City. The level of fly-tipping is much reduced due to the increased vigilance of our environmental inspectors and those within the community.

The 'Clean Street' Initiatives which focuses on the removal of illegal posters and the provision of designated advertising areas is starting to yield results with a dramatic reduction in the instances of illegal postering in the current year. The enforcement of the Presentation of Waste Bye-laws is also proving effective in reducing the levels of litter in the city centre while also contributing to a general improvement to the city streetscape.

Graffiti has been particularly problematic in the city in 2012. Limerick City Council have been working closely with the Gardai in tackling this problem. Legal proceedings have been initiated against a number of offenders who were responsible for illegal spraying of graffiti on several buildings and shop fronts around the city. As an additional preventative measure, Limerick City Council, in conjunction with the City Art Gallery and the School of Art and Design, has identified a designated Street Art area at Athlunkard Street.

A number of partnerships with the Limerick Civic Trust resulted in the entire removal of chewing gum from Cruises Street and this ongoing issue will be prioritised for enforcement for 2013. Also the Limerick Civic Trust worked closely with the Environment Department on the reconstruction and presentation of the Medieval Quarter Bring Bank outside City Hall.

Waiver Scheme

Approximately 3500 households in the city availed of the waiver scheme during 2012. This service which is targeted at low income families and old age pensioners will continue to operate in 2013. The contract was re-tendered in 2012 and Valcroft Ltd trading as Mr. Binman was the successful tenderer.

Bring Banks

The number of bring banks for recycling in the city remains at 22. Outsourcing of maintenance and servicing has worked very well and continues to provide cost saving. This service will be re-tendered in 2013.

Tidy Towns and the Limerick Going for Gold Campaign.

29 Groups from across the City participated in the National Tidy Towns competition and the City Council hosted its second ever Tidy Towns seminar to encourage this participation. This included a first time entry from the City Centre. With the continued support of the JP McManus Charitable Foundation, The Limerick Community Challenge from 2011 developed into the Limerick Going for Gold Campaign 2012. The City Council Environment Improvement Grants also facilitated this initiative. The Going for Gold was open to areas in the environs of the City. The campaign attracted great media attention locally. The Grand Final was broadcast live on local radio from City Hall in September. A Limerick Going for Gold 2013 calendar is currently in production and will be distributed via the Limerick Leader early in 2013. This campaign will be run again in 2013 with the support of the JP McManus Charitable Foundation.

Environmental Awareness and Education

The City Council continues delivering Environmental Initiatives under the Regional Waste Management Plan 2006 – 2012 with an emphasis on waste prevention. National Programmes such as the EPAs Local Authority Prevention Network and the Stop Food Waste Programme are actively supported. The Master Composter Volunteer Initiative continued in 2012 and volunteers took part in 5 events. The Council work supporting schools in the An Taisce Green Schools programme continues.

The Council continues its support of Limerick City Fairtrade status by working with the City's Fairtrade Committee.

Cemetery Services

Provision has been made to continue cemetery services at Mr. St. Lawrence and Mt. St. Oliver. Up to November 2012, 356 burials had taken place.

Archives and Records Management

Mount St. Lawrence joint project with M.I.C.E., St. Joseph's Mental Hospital Archive, Limerick Leader Photographic Archive, accommodation for City Archives with City Museum and Records Management Policy are the key projects for 2013.

Parks

Provision has been made to maintain and manage eight City parks and 350 acres of open space in 2013 which included daily and seasonal horticultural maintenance operations, grass cutting, tree management, and flower planting.

The hanging baskets in Parnell Street, Nicholas St, Cruises St and the Market Quarter together with the flower tiers in O'Connell Street, Bedford Row and Thomas St. will also be continued in 2013. The Parks Department will continue to work in tandem with the Limerick City Centre Tidy Towns Group to enhance City Centre buildings with suitable floral displays.

Major Improvements were carried out to the O'Connell Monument with new paving and refurbished flower beds complementing the refurbished fountain.

During 2012 the tree planting and pruning programme continued including the maintenance and monitoring of health and safety of trees through out the City and within the City Parks. Trees are monitored for disease including in particular Ash trees which are the subject of much concern internationally due to the Cholera Ash die back disease. During 2013 a tree mapping exercise will be undertaken in the City to record the location and status of Public Realm Trees using GPS technology.

Following on from our successful park events programme this year it is intended to continue such activities in 2013. Events to include EVA, The Limerick 4th July Festival, ERP recycling events, May music in the Park, Family fun days as part of National Recreation Week and Christmas present making in December 2013.

Control of Horses

The issue of wandering horses continues to be a challenge for Limerick City Council. To date 194 horses have been impounded in the current year. While the full cost of this service has always been recoupable from the Dept. of Agriculture, the Dept have advised that they will only cover 50% of the retainer fees in 2013. This will likely result in a net cost of €30,000 for Limerick City Council in 2013. Provision has been made in the budget to allow for this shortfall.

Control of Dogs

The issue of stray/unwanted dogs continues to be a problem in the city with over 320 dogs impounded last year. Of these, 99 were rehomed, 25 were reclaimed by their owners and the remainder were put to sleep. Responsible dog ownership is encouraged at all times with particular emphasis in 2012 on dog fouling and licence requirements. New bye-laws have been introduced to require dog owners to keep their dogs on a lead in patrolled public parks. The bye-laws also require dog owners to carry a receptacle on their person for clean up of their dog litter while out walking their dog. A unique approach to the promotion and marketing of responsible disposal of dog waste was introduced earlier this year with the “One Bag, One Bin” branding of Limerick City bins. This concept has been the subject of much favourable comment and will continue to be focused upon during 2013.

CAPITAL

Litterbin Replacement Programme

A review of City Centre Street Bins and Bring Banks will be undertaken in 2013 with a view to commencing a phased upgrading programme in the City Centre in conjunction with other City Centre infrastructural improvements.

Landfill

The aftercare plan at Long Pavement landfill is in place with the continued flaring of gas and extraction of leachate. Final account has been submitted to the Department for approval. 2013 will be the first year that the continued maintenance of Long Pavement will appear in the Revenue Account. A provision of €76,000 approx has been made for this. The Environment Department have also applied to the EPA for a Certificate of Authorisation to remediate the historic landfill at St. Mary's Park. It is hoped the EPA will have completed their review of the application in the first quarter of 2013.

Baggott Estate Amenity Enhancement Project

Baggott Estate Amenity Enhancement Project was completed this year and provides 1.1km of new walkway. Adult gym equipment and CCTV were installed on the walkway which has transformed an area previously suffering from anti social behaviour to a valuable and much utilised local amenity. The project was nominated by Limerick Chamber of Commerce for a Chambers of Ireland Excellence in local Government Award and the Environment Department are delighted to have won the award in the Parks and Recreation category.

Mount St. Lawrence

A History of Mount St Lawrence is currently being documented by Dr Matt Potter with the History Department of Mary Immaculate College and the Archives Department of Limerick City Council. It is intended to produce a Guidebook in 2013 on the cemetery. During 2012 agreement was secured with an adjoining landowner to develop a new extension of 2.52 acres to Mt St Lawrence cemetery. Planning permission to develop the site has been applied for under Part VIII of the Planning and Development Act. This

should be coming before Council soon for approval. Work is expected to commence on the site during 2013 and provision has been made to reflect this.

Parks

During 2012 the Council approved a Part VIII for restoration and improvement works to the band stand at the People's Park. A provisional sum has been included in the capital account to allow work to progress on this project subject to the identification of funding.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

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

- A) Fire & Emergency Operations
- B) Fire Prevention, Building Control and Dangerous Buildings
- C) Major Emergency Management
- D) Fire Service Mobilisation and Communications
- E) Civil Defence

A) FIRE EMERGENCY & OPERATIONS

Plans for 2013 include:

- To expand the rollout of national Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) in the service.
- To conduct annual block training including Breathing Apparatus refresher training.
- To further enhance the training regime within the fire service.
- To maintain and improve on standards of Health and Safety.
- To place a new Emergency Tender into service.
- To place new structural firefighting kit into service.
- To continue the development of the pre-fire planning programme.
- To work towards the implementation of joint fire service initiatives in the Limerick Local Authorities.

B) FIRE PREVENTION, BUILDING CONTROL & DANGEROUS BUILDINGS

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

Plans for 2013 include:

- More concentration on building control inspections
- Ensuring that all fire safety defects, itemised following inspections of premises, are remedied.
- Ensuring that all Dangerous Structure Notices are fully enforced.
- Ongoing assessment of Fire Safety Certificate and Disability Access Certificate applications.

C) MAJOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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.

Plans for 2013 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 and information management training courses.
- To continue to improve the awareness of Major Emergency Management within all areas of Limerick City Council.
- To work towards the implementation of joint MEM arrangements in the Limerick Local Authorities.

D) FIRE SERVICE 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.

Plans for 2013 include:

1. Support and iterate a Sharepoint Extranet solution for the Mid West Major Emergency Management Regional Working Group.
2. Increased involvement by MRCC staff in national next generation projects, including:
 - Migration of National Fire Service to TETRA
 - Specifying requirements of next generation software platform for mobilising resources.
 - Implementing existing quality management, training and financial models

to other areas of the Fire Service.

3. Continue to iterate and manage MRCC high performance levels.
4. Implement various national ICT projects as required.
5. Continue to deliver a high level of support to our existing customer base, namely the local authorities in the Munster region.

E) 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.

Plans for 2013 include:

- Civil Defence H.Q – Works to be carried out on the roof and Civil Defence will be back in HQ fully operational by June 2013.
- Hepatitis A and B and Tetanus programme ongoing for all volunteers. New recruits to be immunised.
- Welfare Service up and running.
- New group of volunteers to begin Basic training in February-March 2013.
- Training of Level 3 kayakers and Instructors.
- Train and re-train volunteers in all areas.
- Continually raising Limerick City Civil Defence's profile within the City and nationally.

Division F Recreation & Amenity

LIBRARY SERVICES

In 2012, Limerick City Library lent over 335,000 items to nearly 14,000 Library users, had over 275,000 recorded visits and provided over 35,000 internet sessions to the public. In addition, the Library provides a Local History Service which features a comprehensive website which is proving invaluable to local historians and family history researchers.

In 2013, Limerick City Library will focus on the following areas.

Collection Development

A strong collection of books and other learning resources are the core of a good library service. In 2013 Limerick City Library will continue to develop and strengthen its existing collections to provide a comprehensive range of reading materials and audio visual resources.

Outreach Activities

Limerick City Library will continue its Outreach Programmes in 2013. Examples of activities which took place in 2012 and will continue in 2013 include The Read together,

Learn together family reading programme, which was run in Watch House Cross Library. This programme concentrates on developing a relationship between the library service and local families and promotes a sense of ownership of the library through activities and visits. Other activities planned include the continuation of Local History Lecture series, The Summer Reading Challenge, Book Clubs and a series of exhibitions.

ICT Initiatives

Limerick City Library will continue to develop the Local History website. In 2013, the main emphasis will be on the continuing development of the “Obituaries, Death Notices, etc.” feature on the website. This resource now has all such records from the Limerick Chronicle newspaper from 1838 to 1926 – almost 20,000 individual entries. The Library Service will continue to provide up to date information on its events and services on the Library Facebook page. In addition, the Library will continue its Limerick 1912 Twitter Account. This service features events in Limerick 100 years ago alongside further miscellaneous materials of historical interest and now has nearly 1,500 followers.

JIM KEMMY MUSEUM

In November 2012 the museum reopened in its temporary home in Istabraq Hall. The priority for 2013 is to identify a new longer term venue and bring it on stream. The ambition for the new venue is to include the City Archives section for the synergies of co-location. Both the museum and archives have similar environmental needs for storage of their collections and it would provide a single location for researchers to visit.

In 2013 the museum will continue cataloguing its collection and producing images for its online catalogue. It will also continue collecting material relating to the city and county. Over 900 items were acquired in 2012. There is currently the potential for three major collections to be donated to be shared with the City Archives.

Genealogy is one of the main driving forces behind the Gathering in 2013. It is hoped that the museum will be able to convert its existing database of Limerick people c 1700-1950 to an online format, where it will complement the existing “Who was who of medieval Limerick” and “Who was who in early modern Limerick” to provide the unique resource of a set of fully referenced databases covering the whole of Limerick’s history. During 2013 we will improve and add to these databases and also to “Estate maps and rentals” our other database of people and maps of estates.

The museum will continue to deal with the hundreds of enquiries expected. It will also continue to provide requested help with the production of books, journals and TV programmes. In 2012 we provided material for inclusion in 10 books and journals and 4 TV programmes, and also gave one permission to publish a transcript of letters in the collection.

We will extend collaboration with Mary Immaculate College and its international partners in respect of the DNA research being carried out. We will continue to publish on local history and the museum collection. In 2012 the acting curator published one book and two articles. We will also continue to lecture on Limerick related themes to the general public and academic audiences.

We will continue to welcome visitors to our exhibition area and do our utmost to ensure they have a pleasant and memorable experience

LIMERICK CITY GALLERY OF ART

Limerick City Gallery of Art (LCGA) will have connectivity at its heart in 2013. In its exhibition programme, the gallery will connect to visitors by placing Limerick and its experiences alongside the National and International in terms of History and Contemporary Experience – the exhibitions will look at experiences of industry and look at how ‘work’ is considered in today’s world. We will partner with galleries and organisations in Dublin, Belfast, and the UK City of Culture 2013 Derry; working with international and Irish artists to deliver thought-provoking exhibitions on how the Citizen and their lives unfold in this age. This will begin a connection with the Decade of Commemorations, as the Centenary of the 1913 Lockout occurs, with all its implications for the birth of the State.

LCGA will also work with Eva international to look at ‘gathering’ key Visual Arts individuals from home and abroad to meet in Limerick mid-year.

The Education and Access programmes will elaborate on the exhibitions in programmes that are highly subscribed. Participation in the large number of educational activities such as Family Crafternoons or Mid Term activities testifies to the engagement of the Limerick audience. Another aspect that will be developed in 2013 is the active encouragement of young adults to look at how they can care for their city, with city-wide collaboration with Limerick City Council in organised graffiti and urban street art projects. This builds on strong Limerick traditions, and works with other Limerick agencies in their mission to equip young adults for the Contemporary World, with an enjoyment and application of their creative potential.

With visitors projected to be in excess of 65,000, many citizens and those who come to Limerick, will continue to enjoy the beautifully refurbished LCGA of the people sited at the edge of the People’s Park.

Limerick City Council Arts Service

In 2013 Limerick City Council Arts Service will continue to provide support, advice and direction to the cultural organisations, individuals and communities in Limerick interested in delivering arts and culture projects. The primary focus of this support is to create opportunities for direct contact between artists and audiences.

Limerick City of Culture 2014

Limerick has been awarded the designation of the first National City of Culture in 2014. A team will be brought together to deliver a programme of events and future planning around Limerick and Culture.

SPORTS & RECREATION

The Gathering

The Gathering has been described as one of the biggest tourism initiatives ever staged in Ireland and is expected to bring 325,000 extra visitors to the country in 2013. Local Gathering community meetings were held in the Adare and in Limerick and over 300 people attended. Both authorities have come together to optimise their efforts to drive the success of the Gathering. A number of worthwhile projects have been submitted for consideration.

Rathbane Golf Course

Improvements are underway at present to the new Junior Golf Teaching Course and the upgrade of sewerage facilities and minor works to the Clubhouse. Works in relation to the upgrade of sewerage works commenced in November 2012. An application for funding in respect of substantial redevelopment works to the Clubhouse was also made to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in 2012, the outcome of which is awaited. If successful, it is expected that this redevelopment will be undertaken in 2013.

Great Limerick Run

The 3rd Great Limerick Run took place in 2012. The event grew strongly and a total of 8,501 people took part. The 4th run is scheduled for 2013.

Grove Island Leisure Centre

A procurement process for an Operator to provide operational, maintenance and management (including marketing) to Grove Island Leisure Centre was commenced in 2012. It is expected that this Operator will be in place for 2013.

Division G / H

Agriculture, Education, Health, Welfare & Corporate Services

HUMAN RESOURCES

The current economic environment has placed an increased responsibility on management to ensure that staffing resources are assigned in the most efficient and effective manner possible. Over the past four years the Council's overall staffing numbers have declined significantly.

The Council will continue to maintain services through redeployment of staff into essential service areas. We are currently undertaking a workforce planning exercise focusing on our primary objective of providing public services over the next five years in the context of reduced staff numbers and the merging of the two local authorities.

We will concentrate our efforts in 2013 on developing further our staff competencies to meet the challenges ahead.

The Council will continue to utilise the mechanisms of the Public Service Agreement to minimise costs while abiding by our responsibilities in respect of safety and welfare of our employees.

CORPORATE SERVICES

The Council will continue to ensure that it maintains the highest standard of service possible to the Mayor and Elected Members throughout 2013.

This work will continue in tandem with its preparation, throughout the full range of Corporate Services, for the establishment in 2014 of the new Limerick Authority.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Establish a single Safety Management System in accordance with the National Policies and Procedures.

INTERNAL AUDIT

An internal audit and control function for Limerick City Council's internal operations will continue for 2013 in conjunction with preparations for the establishment of the new Limerick Authority in 2014.

ICT DEPARTMENT

In line with the strategic requirements for Limerick City Council the ICT department continues to support, recommend and provide the information and communication technology infrastructure, applications and systems required for all sections of Limerick City Council. The ICT service desk system offers comprehensive support to end users,

councillors, museum and libraries of Limerick City Council dealing with over 3,600 support requests in 2012.

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

Reduced Licensing costs by using Open Source technologies

Following the adoption of Open Source technologies in the previous years, during 2012 we continued the deployment of new and more efficient business systems which compared with proprietary systems provide better features without any licensing costs.

An Extranet collaboration portal which allows Limerick City Council to share documents, track project status, update and share calendars of events with other organizations has been deployed using the free and open source Alfresco Enterprise portal. Compared with proprietary systems, because this technology is open source, there are no limitations in the number of licensed users or organizations that can access this portal. Mailman, an open source system that allows the Council to maintain email distribution lists has been deployed. This system is particularly relevant for enabling collaboration with other organisations and also with the public. We continued in 2012 to up-skill our staff in using document, spreadsheet and presentation authoring systems. Training has been provided to 40 users on using LibreOffice, an open source office productivity suite. To facilitate public access to the Internet using inclusive technologies two community centres have been provided under the DIEGO project with touch screen PCs and open source technologies which reduced the annual maintenance costs to a fraction of the existing costs.

Expanded Network Services

During 2012 new offices have been provided with the necessary data and networking infrastructure. The Smarter Travel office is now operating in the Granary building and the North-side and South-side Regeneration offices have been provided with access to the wider Council data network.

Data Access on Mobile Devices

In order to improve the effectiveness of our staff the ICT Department continued the expansion of mobile technologies use for access to corporate data. A mobile device management system has been introduced to facilitate remote management of an increased number of devices.

Geographical Information Systems

The development of Geographical Information Systems continued in 2012 with a move towards increased collaboration and sharing of spatial data across various sections. Corporate Browser, a system that allows all staff in Limerick City Council to access and share important data sets, has been deployed. This allows staff to make informed decisions based on relevant and accurate data for example the water, roads and fibre networks, the list of CCTV cameras, community facilities, etc. Works have commenced on recording new datasets from the City with a high level of accuracy: trees, green spaces, traffic control equipment, etc.

In 2012 work continued on expanding our historical data sets with a new project aimed at mapping and recording each grave in the Mount Saint Lawrence Cemetery. This project is done in collaboration with Mary Immaculate College and the City Archives

department. The end result of this project will be a website where the public can browse and search the entire burial registry for the Mount Saint Lawrence Cemetery and precisely identify the location of each headstone.

City Archives Online

Following the initial publication of online Municipal Archives and based on the successful implementation of the online Museum Catalogue we started the implementation of a system that connects the City Archives, the Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum and all other historical resources available for Limerick in a single web based portal. This will allow the public to explore online the full breath of historical data in a consistent manner.

Social Media

Limerick City Council continued in 2012 to utilize social media to further enhance communications with the public and various stakeholder organizations. In 2012 we increased the usage of social media by publishing articles, facilitating discussions and disseminating information through various media related to conducting City business on Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare, etc.

The Council uses 8 Facebook sites, 7 Twitter accounts and also two YouTube channels. Over 1,400 users follow Limerick City Council Twitter @limerickcityco.

Data Protection

In 2012 the ICT Department with the support from all other sections has responded to 17 Data Protection requests.

Free Internet Access over WiFi

In an effort to improve the visitor experience in Limerick the Free Public WiFi initiative started in 2011 has been expanded in 2012 to cover the Milk Market and the Hunt Museum. 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 the public locations. As part of the redevelopment of Howley's Quay free WiFi access to the Internet will be provided as a pilot for a municipal data network.

Fibre Infrastructure

To improve the connectivity between City Council's public buildings and also to support the development of a municipal data network a pilot project has started in 2012 to deploy fibre connections between City Hall and other public buildings. This network will allow the provision of multiple data connectivity services, i.e. the expansion of the Free Public WiFi, improved connections to traffic management devices, parking guide systems, etc. and at the same time reducing costs and increasing the reliability compared with the existing connections.

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. As part of the DIEGO Project, the ICT Section organized in April 2012 an

international seminar on inclusive technologies. The DIEGO partners from Spain, UK, Cyprus, Greece and Italy used this opportunity to learn about the policies and strategies implemented at national and local level in order to boost ICT innovative projects and to combat digital exclusion in Ireland and in Limerick. On this occasion the DIEGO portal was launched: simply.limerick.ie.

In partnership with Limerick Community Connect over 500 people received training using the facilities in the Public Libraries on how to access public services through the DIEGO platform. The public can also access the DIEGO platform using a touch window interface which has been installed in City Hall.

Limerick.ie – The official guide to Limerick, Ireland

Following the launch in 2010 of 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 has a 100% availability rate.

In its second year the popularity of the website is continuing to grow with unique visitor numbers for 2012 alone expected to reach 300,000. Since its launch date, over 440,000 people from 188 countries have visited the website.

At the end of 2012 almost 2,000 amenities are available online and during the year almost 2,000 events have been advertised. The website has been used as the central source of information for events and promotional campaigns in Limerick: St. Patricks Festival, Riverfest, Bicycle Parade, Christmas in Limerick, etc. A section that presents information about major towns and villages in Limerick County is a new addition to the site. “Limerick insider” are online promotional videos which in 2012 covered some of Limerick's best attractions and major events which took place throughout the year.

Limerick.ie is continuing to evolve and development works have commenced in 2012 to launch a new version of the site in January 2013. The new version of Limerick.ie will offer an enhanced user experience with a fresh look and improved navigation and search facilities. The IT Department have also been working on a new project to ensure that Limerick will be represented in the ever growing mobile markets with the launch of Limerick.ie iPhone and Android apps in 2013. 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.

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 2012. 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 cash flow 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 2013. The total expected collection percentage for Rates is expected to be approximately 55% for 2012 (for 2011 percentage collection was 59%).

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 Debtors Management system which was implemented in 2011 will continue to help to streamline communications with customers with outstanding debt.

In 2012 the Household Charge was introduced. This was levied at €100 per domestic property. 70% of Limerick City households due to pay the charge did so in 2012. The Household Charge will be replaced by a Property Tax in 2013.

The Local Government Fund allocation to Limerick City Council was reduced in mid 2012 by €203,098. Such a mid year cut in funding required all directorates to review their 2012 spending. Consequently this funding reduction was offset by additional operational expenditure savings.

There will be a continued emphasis on cash flow management in 2013. Fortunately in 2012, the average cash position during the year was steady. A number of factors gave rise to this including a bridging loan funded by the Department to ease cash flow issues arising from the Regeneration Project. This increased cash flow 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 2013 as in previous years.

During 2011 extensive additional financial reporting has been introduced as part of the IMF/EU/ECB Memorandum of Understanding. This reporting continued throughout 2012. 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 2012. Ms Anne Halion, Local Government Auditor has been assigned to Limerick City Council.

Work on the merger of the financial management systems of both Limerick City Council and Limerick County Council has already begun and this process will continue in 2013. This process will be complex and time consuming and will require a strong focus in the coming year. In conjunction with this process certain sections within the finance structures of both organisations will merge in 2013.