

**LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CATHRACH LUIMNIGH**

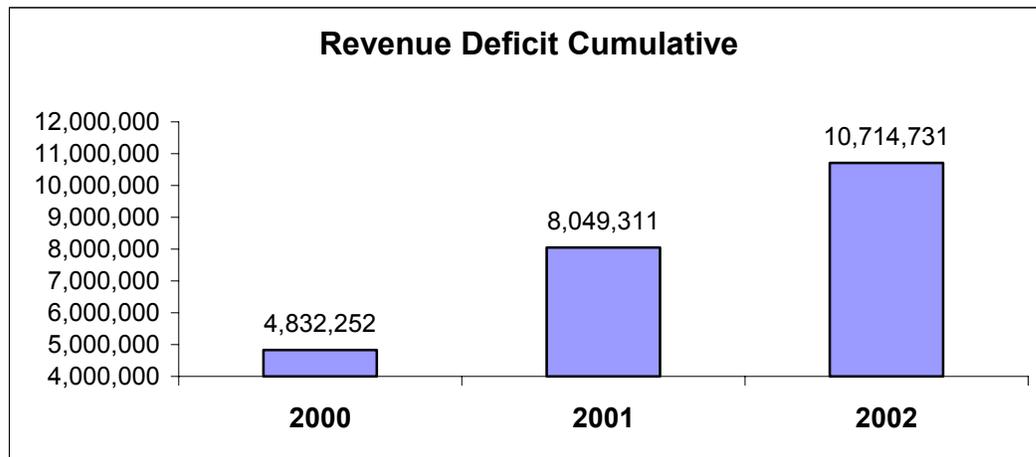
Árus na Cathrach
Luimneach

1st December 2003

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

**Annual Budget for the year
1st January 2004 to 31st December 2004**

In presenting the Annual Budget for the year ended 31st December 2004 to Council, I wish to take this opportunity, to summarise the financial position of Limerick City Council at 31st December 2002. The Annual Financial Statement of Limerick City Council for the year 2002 shows that the accumulated Debit Balance on the Revenue Account is a debit position of €10,714,731 at 31st December 2002. A summary of the Revenue Account over the last three years is as follows:



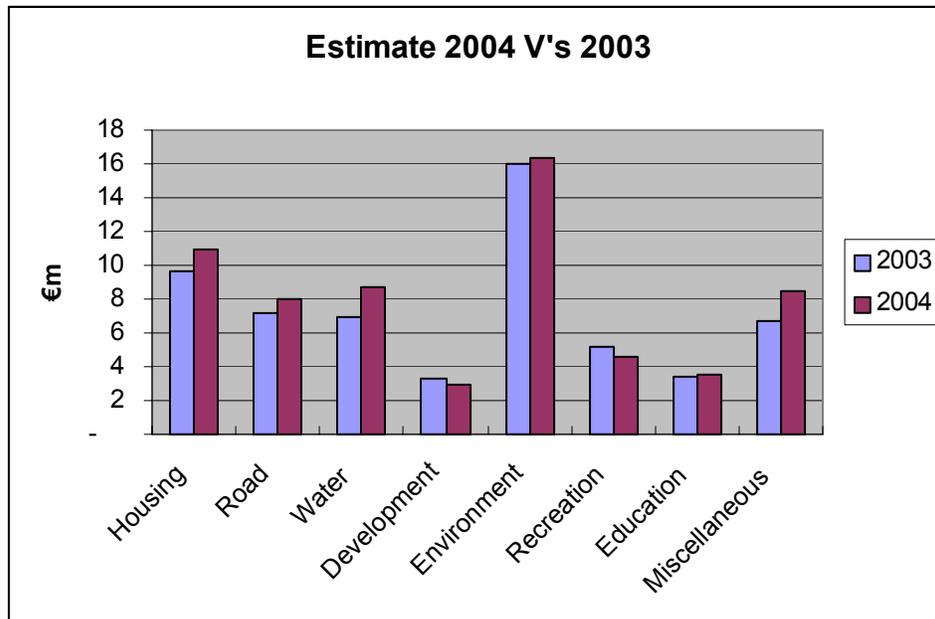
Current outturn figures indicate that the Revenue Deficit will not deteriorate significantly during 2003.

With this in mind and with the limited resources available to Limerick City Council I have given greatest priority to the most essential services while, at the same time, protecting the future sustainable development of Limerick City.
I will now set out the proposals for Expenditure and Income for 2004.

Expenditure – 2004

In recognition of the commitment to promoting and developing a sustainable, vibrant and attractive City, the Budget for 2004 provides for expenditure of €63.4 million. This represents an increase of €5 million or 8.5% over the adopted Budget for 2003. The following table sets out the expenditure by Programme Group:

	2004	2003
	€	€
1. Housing and Building	10,900,851	9,686,957
2. Road Transportation and Safety	7,960,012	7,171,877
3. Water Supply and Sewerage	8,748,545	6,974,412
4. Development Incentives and Controls	2,904,799	3,292,942
5. Environmental Protection	16,368,016	15,942,540
6. Recreation and Amenity	4,558,080	5,229,268
7. Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	3,551,677	3,396,364
8. Miscellaneous Services	8,443,304	6,676,508
Total	63,435,285	58,370,869



This increase in expenditure can be broken down as follows:

	2004	2003	Increase
	€million	€million	€million
Payroll and Pensions	33.40	31.70	1.70
Non Payroll	30.03	26.67	3.36
Total Expenditure	63.43	58.37	5.06

Payroll and Pensions

The cost for 2004 for additional Benchmarking and PPF awards is €2.4m. In preparing the Budget for 2004 I have taken steps to reduce this increase in payroll costs by:

- non filling of vacancies
- no additional employees in 2004
- temporary contracts not renewed
- the closure of the Genealogy Section
- the closure of Roxboro Swimming Pool

As a result of these items the overall increase in is €1.7m

Non-Payroll Costs

In framing the Budget, every effort has been made to ensure that the quality of services provided is maintained while at the same time ensuring that the needs of and the critical issues facing Limerick City Council are adequately resourced. There are a number of new costs and unavoidable increases in current costs facing the City Council for 2004. I have made every effort to maintain expenditure in critical areas.

The following list sets out the significant increases in Non-Payroll costs for 2004:

- Waste Water Treatment - €2.0m
- Windows and Doors Loan Charges €0.125m
- Production of Water - €0.16m
- Provision for Insurance - €1.0m
- Housing Maintenance Non Payroll €0.137m
- Overdraft Interest - €0.2m
- Irrecoverable Rates €0.224m
- Waiver Scheme - €0.024m
- Estate Management Grants €0.015m

Income Proposals - 2004

The effective valuation for 2003 of €294,383 has increased by €15,409 to €309,792 for 2004. This represents an increase of 5%. This increase is as a result of the continued improvements delivered in the City. There have been increases in economic activity and the level of investment in the City has continued to grow.

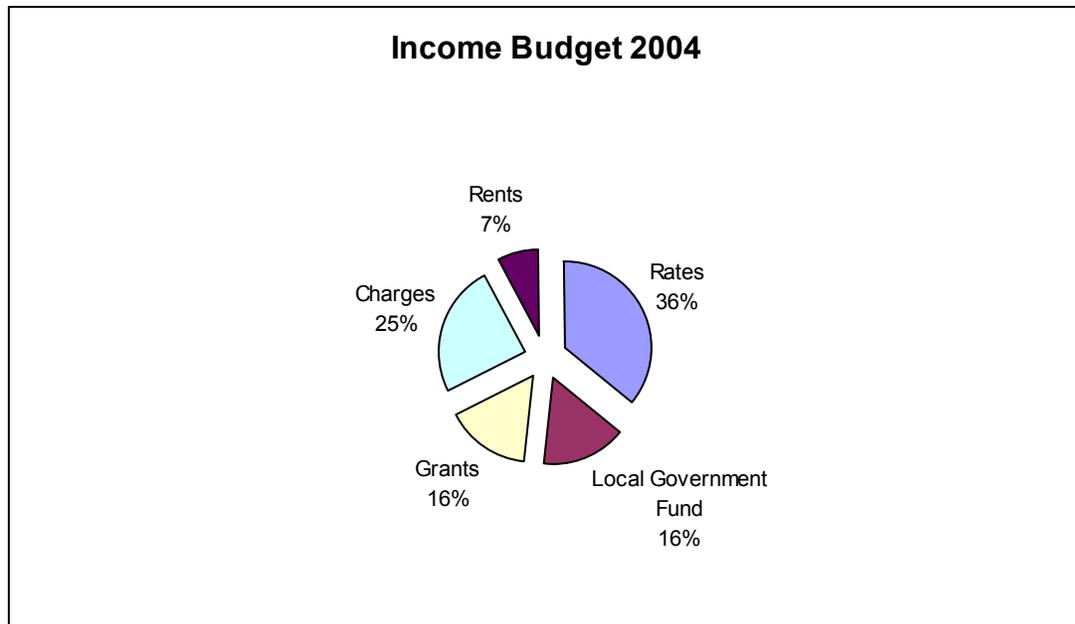
While this increased buoyancy in effective valuation has been a welcome boost to the finances of Limerick City Council in order to meet the commitments that I have referred to and having maximised all sources of income available to Limerick City Council I propose an increase of 4.9% on the General Annual Rate on Valuation.

I have included a sum of € 9,912,499 in the Budget for 2004 in respect of the Local Government Fund.

I have included an income of €1.265m from Limerick County Council and Clare County Council for the operation of the new Waste Water Treatment Facility at Bunlicky.

In 2004 commercial users will be billed a full years charge for waste water in accordance with the water in/water out principle. As a result the consolidated charge in 2004 will increase by 31% in 2004 to €5.51 per1,000 gallons.

I propose to increase parking discs from €1 to €1.50 and extend the number of 1 hour and 2 hour zones which will result in increased income of €600,000.



In the following pages I have set out on a programme by programme basis the main areas of income and expenditure.

Conclusion

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

- The need to pursue the Objectives of our Corporate Plan in accordance with the principals of value for money and customer care
- The need to continue a programme of investment and development of the City.
- The need to match spending programmes with resources.

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

I also wish to express my thanks to the Directors Mr. Seamus O’Sullivan, Mr. Oliver O Loughlin, Mr. Pat Dowling, Ms Caroline Curley and their respective teams for their commitment and high quality work. I am very grateful to the Staff in the Finance Department, in particular Mr. John Field and his Team, for the many hours of work involved in the compilation of this Budget.

I look forward to debating any issues involved with Members at the Statutory Budget Meeting to be held on 11th December 2003.

I recommend the adoption of the Annual Budget as set out.

Tom Mackey
City Manager

SOCIAL POLICY & HOUSING

"The overall aim of Social Policy and Housing is to develop and foster a culture of social inclusiveness and partnership in the delivery of the housing service."

Multi-Annual Building Programme

The Multi-Annual Building Programme 2000-2003 has seen a total of 240 starts to date. A number of new schemes, including Phase 1 of the Redevelopment of Apartments which includes over 50 units, are due to commence on site in early 2004. The Department of the Environment and Local Government provided an allocation of €13 million for housing construction in 2003. As well as providing for new build, housing funding was also made available for the refurbishment of vacant local authority houses in various areas of the city.

Housing Maintenance

The Housing Maintenance Department services a housing stock in excess of 3,200 units. Services are provided to houses in the Northside of the city from the Moyross Maintenance Depot and houses in the Southside are serviced by the Rathbane Depot. There is a dedicated relettings crew based in the Garryowen Depot and this crew dealt with over 260 relettings in 2003.

Replacement of Windows and Doors Programme

This programme, which is ongoing, commenced in 2001 and will continue over a five year period. To date, over 500 houses have benefited from the programme. Phase 3 of the programme is currently underway and includes 257 houses. Works will commence on 282 houses under Phase 4 in 2004.

Remedial Schemes

The Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government has approved funding totalling €15 million in respect of Phase 2 of the O' Malley Park Remedial Works Scheme. The project will have a full-time project management team located in the estate. It is expected that this office will be set up early in 2004 and the roll out of the scheme will commence thereafter.

In addition, the City Council propose to undertake a pilot scheme to refurbish 28 pre-1960s houses at Garryglass Avenue, Limerick.

Estate Management

Three Community Liaison Officers continue to be provided for in the estate management budget and provision is also made for the employment of a Tenancy Enforcement Official whose brief will be to deal with incidences of anti-social behaviour in our housing estates. Funding has also been provided for the running costs of each of the properly established estate management groups. A full-time Travellers Services Co-ordinator was appointed in 2003 to deal with the management and development of the traveller halting sites.

2003 saw the launch of Limerick City Councils Tenants Handbook. This booklet, the first of its kind to be produced by the City Council, advises City Council tenants of their rights and obligations and provides information regarding services available through the City Council.

Disabled Persons Grants

The City Councils provision of funding towards the Disabled Persons Grants Scheme was increased from €253,948 in 2002 to €300,000 in 2003. This amount of €300,000 has been maintained in the 2004 Budget. This resulted in the payment of grants to 68 applicants in 2003.

Homelessness

In 2003 a hostel, specifically designed for the accommodation of women with children was open by Suaimhneas (Respond Housing Association) in Moyross. Another groundbreaking first for homeless provision in Limerick was the opening of the Direct Access Hostel in St. John's Square. When opened in Christmas 2002 it was the first Direct Access Hostel in the Republic of Ireland. During 2004 the hostel will undergo major renovation to bring it in line with modern hostel requirements. Further plans for 2004 include improving the out of hours service and also providing a people carrier for use by all hostels.

ROADS, TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

"The overall aim of the Transportation and Infrastructure Department is to continue to maintain and improve the road network within the City, promote and encourage an integrated sustainable public transport system with due regard for the safety and amenity of all, and to provide the appropriate infrastructure to support and sustain the economic and social development of the City."

In order to achieve the above, the following objectives are prioritised:

Ensure the provision of a sustainable quality transport network in and around the City, for all modes of transport.

The roads and footpaths and related services and utilities will be planned, designed and maintained to ensure safety, accessibility and efficiency for all.

Have continuously available a high quality drinking water to meet local and regional demands.

Provide a high quality sanitary wastewater collection and treatment system to meet local and regional demands.

Provide adequate flood protection infrastructure to minimise risk of flooding and to provide an emergency response.

Develop the waterways to their full potential.

The main areas of responsibility of the Roads and Traffic Section of Limerick City Council are: road construction, design and maintenance, traffic management and safety, and public lighting.

The public road network of the city is made up as follows:

National Primary	15.25km
National Secondary	2.13km
Regional Roads	16.35km
Local Roads	<u>147.52km</u>
Total	181.25km

Road Developments

Southern Ring Road

The provision of the Southern Ring Road is critical to the continued development of Limerick City. Limerick City Council participates with Limerick County Council and Clare County Council in the development of the Southern Ring Road. Phase 1 of the Southern Ring Road running from Rosbrien (N20) to Annacotty (N7) with an intersection on the Tipperary Road (N24) commenced in April 2001 and is scheduled to be completed in April 2004.

The development of Phase 2 of the Southern Ring Road includes a downstream crossing of the Shannon River. The route corridor selection process has been completed. An Environmental Impact Statement has been prepared and the required Compulsory Purchase Order has been made. An application has been submitted to An Bord Pleanala for approval of the proposed Road Development. It is scheduled that the Southern Ring Road Phase 2 would be completed by 2008.

Realignment of Dublin Road

The City Council will be aware of the much-improved approach to our City through the completion of the four lane road from the Parkway Roundabout to the Plassey Road Roundabout. The completion of works replacing the old Groody Bridge will significantly enhance this area and lead to further economic and residential developments. This scheme received funding from the National Roads Authority.

Corbally Link Road

Limerick City Council received part funding from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (D.O.E.H.L.G) for the development of the Corbally Link Road running from O'Dwyer Bridge to Corbally Road (R 463) to Park Road (adjacent to N7 Dublin Road). This road will provide relief to local traffic in the area and includes the provision of cycle ways and will also provide additional pedestrian access to the Canal and pedestrian/cycle access to University of Limerick and River Shannon.

A further grant has been received for the completion of the Link Road from Corbally Road to the Park Road. The works involved include a new bridge over the Canal. This project is expected to be completed in 2004 and its provision will further improve traffic movements in this general area.

National Spatial Strategy

Limerick City along with Shannon was identified as a gateway city in the context of the new National Spatial Strategy.

The Limerick Planning Land Use and Transportation Study will be completed in early 2004, to allow us to maximise the opportunities that will arise from regional economic development.

Road Maintenance and Improvement

Road Maintenance

Funding raised under development levies for Road Traffic associated works allowed footpath restoration to be carried out at a number of locations. In addition, Specific Improvement Grants allowed for works to be carried out on the Roxboro Road, Kilmallock Road, Lord Edward Street and Parnell Street.

Traffic Management

Adaptive Urban Traffic Control System

The City Council has begun the implementation of an Adaptive Urban Traffic Control System (AUTC). This system will allow for improved traffic movement and greater pedestrian facility and safety. The AUTC will be implemented by early 2004 and will provide for increased number of controlled junctions in the city including a comprehensive parking guidance system to off-street parking facilities. The system is compatible with improved public transport facilities.

To improve traffic movement, increased clearway facilities and extended hours have been provided at a number of locations. Ongoing developments are taking place in regard to street nameplates, road signage and event signage.

Traffic Calming

Traffic calming schemes have been provided as agreed with the City Council and in accordance with funding received from the Department of the Environment and Local Government.

European Car Free Day

Limerick City Council participated in the European Car Free Day in September. The scheme concentrated on the City Centre area and was well received by both Traders and the general public.

Disc Parking

Limerick City Council monitor and evaluate the operation and effectiveness of the on-street disc parking management system. A Parking Study is currently being carried out which will lead to proactive parking policies on the management of parking within the City Centre. This review will also lead to defined parking requirements for inclusion in the 2004 Limerick City Council Development Plan, which is now under preparation.

Road Safety

The City Council continues to promote Road Safety Awareness at every opportunity, and the continuation of the School Wardens Programme is provided for.

Taking in Charge

The current procedure and policy of Limerick City Council regarding this programme is to reduce the number of housing estates not in charge on a planned basis having regard to the availability of resources. It is proposed to continue this exercise in next year's work programme.

City Centre Remodelling Project

The main aims of this project are to create a high quality public realm that can form a focus for the regeneration of the city centre area and to enhance accessibility of the City Centre for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport. Funding is provided by part grant aid from the D.O.E.H.L.G. under the Urban and Village Renewal programme and by Limerick City Council. Works are continuing with the completion of Baker Place and advance works on Lower Bedford Row. It is expected that grant-aid will be provided in 2004 to advance this regeneration programme.

Broadband

The economic development of the City will depend on the Rollout of the Metropolitan Area Network to reduce the cost of broadband access throughout the City and Environs. The City Council together with Shannon Development and other Local Authorities in the Mid West have formed a limited company to progress the project for which 90% funding is provided by the Department of Communications Marine and Natural Resources. The first phase of this project is at an advanced stage of completion.

Risk Management

Risk Management continues to receive on-going attention from the staff allocated to this function. There have been major improvements in the management of claims and the introduction over all services provided by Limerick City Council of avoidance measures to eliminate risk is a priority in the operation of these services. The Risk Management

Unit is responsive to changes in the insurance market, both nationally and internationally, in order that city management may apply or expand policies to cater for such change. It is our primary goal to continue to operate the efficiencies implemented.

Water Services

The Water Services Division managed a significant capital programme during the year 2003. This included

Limerick Main Drainage,
Water Conservation programme and
Progression on the improvement of Clareville Water Treatment Plant and associated rising mains.

Limerick Main Drainage

The Limerick Main Drainage Scheme represents the largest civil engineering project undertaken to date in the city. The scheme, costing approximately €230m. (Phase 1) involved 19 separate contracts. All of these contracts with the exception of contract 4.2 are completed/due to be completed by the end of year 2003, when the new sewage treatment plant in Bunlicky will be commissioned. Contract 4.2 will be completed in 2004.

Completion of Limerick Main Drainage requires provision to be made for the operation and maintenance of the wastewater treatment plant, pumping station and sewer collection system network.

Water Distribution Network / Water Conservation

Limerick City Council was the first authority to submit its five-year Water Services Strategy to the Department of the Environment and Local Government. The strategy provides for a 20-year plan for water production, distribution and conservation. The development of the strategy requires financial input from Limerick City Council.

Work has been completed on one section of the new ring watermain for the city as proposed by Limerick City Council. Other sections are being planned for 2004. It is anticipated that the main will be completed from Newcastle reservoir to Ivan's Cross in Caherdavin in 2004. The final section from Ivan's Cross to Longpavement will be submitted for tender document approval early in 2004.

Work was completed on the provision of a new rising main from Clareville to the reservoir at Newcastle in 2003. This has proved a major asset in ensuring water supply to the city and environs.

Additional valving was carried out in the City to improve the water supply system and to minimise those areas affected during periods of works or shutdown.

Limerick City Council's own staff identified over 200 leaks within the distribution system with associated water saving.

Contract documents are now complete for a major find and fix programme throughout the City. During the course of this work disruption to services will be inevitable from time to time. It is budgeted that over 25km of watermain will need to be replaced during the next 5 years as part of the water services strategy.

To date the Water Conservation Programme has brought about significant improvements to the water supply in the city with a budgeted 25% reduction in "unaccounted for" water. It will be necessary over the next three years to provide 3,000 water meters in the city area. Approximately 100 meters were installed during the year.

Clareville Waterworks

The major redevelopment of Clareville will commence during the coming year. It is expected that a contractor will be appointed mid-2004. This scheme allows for an effective doubling of capacity at the water treatment plant thus ensuring the strategic importance of Limerick with respect to water based industries. The plant has been operating to capacity throughout the year.

Limerick City Council has been advised of the application of the Polluter Pays Principle in all commercial areas of water services. This in effect will mean that Limerick City Council will be required to recover from the non-domestic sector the full cost of providing such services to these customers. The Government's Water Pricing Framework provides for the recovery of domestic capital costs from the Exchequer and domestic operational costs through the Local Government Fund. This framework is due to be fully implemented in 2006.

Waste Water

Considerable investment will be required in rehabilitation of city centre sewers and culverts. This is identified as Phase II of Limerick Main Drainage Project.

Flood Alleviation

Flood alleviation works were completed for the Loggers Stream by Limerick Main Drainage in 2003. Reconstruction of the quay walls in Clancy Strand will be completed in 2004. Funding for this work is provided by OPW. A submission for approval and funding for similar works in Sir Harry's Mall has been made.

Canal Project

Funding has been received under the INTERREG 111 Programme for the “Park Canal Restoration Project” which is being undertaken by Limerick City and five other European Cities. This funding is in response to a submission made by Limerick City Council in partnership with Shannon Development. The aim of the project under the title ‘Water in Historic City Centres’ to restore the Park Canal for amenity use and make the area more attractive for visitors and residents alike, while providing a tangible link between the medieval city of Limerick and the University of Limerick Campus. This project will act as a catalyst for further developments that will complement the substantial development that has already taken place in the City Centre.

ECONOMIC POLICY DEVELOPMENT & FUTURE PLANNING

"The overall aim of the Economic Development and Future Planning department is to ensure that the economic potential of the City can be realised through the proper planning and development of the City, strategically guided by the City Development Plan"

Planning and Development

Development Plan Review

Under the Planning Act 2001, the review of the City Development Plan commenced during 2002 with a report by the City Manager to the City Council on progress achieved under the 1998 Plan. This plan review which commenced on 18 December 2002 will extend through to 2004 before final adoption. An extensive consultation process took place in early 2003 and a further consultation process involving all relevant stakeholders will take place before the plan is adopted.

Retail Study

Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council, Clare County Council and Tipperary North County Council commissioned consultants to prepare a joint Retail Strategy. This Study was completed during 2003. Proposals and recommendations were presented to and subsequently adopted by the City Council in May 2003. The final adopted proposals will be incorporated into the new Development Plan when completed in 2004.

Docks Area Plan

The redevelopment of the Limerick Docklands is under examination by a representative group comprising Limerick City Council, Shannon Development and The Shannon Foynes Port Company. Consultants were appointed early 2003. An Area Plan is currently being prepared. It is expected that this plan, for the strategic development, redevelopment and renewal of the Limerick Docklands area, will be submitted to Council in 2004. The final adopted plan will be incorporated into the new Development Plan when completed in 2004.

Borough Boundary Extension

With the introduction of the Local Government Act 2001, there has been a change in the procedure for determining variation in Urban Boundaries. The City Council has been advised by the DOEHLG that a new submission will be required to comply with the requirements of this Act. Preparation has begun on the revised submission and it is proposed that the submission will be made in 2004.

Integrated Area Plan

The continued success of the Limerick City Integrated Area Plan will ensure that 41 of the 45 sites designated will be completed by the extended closing date of the 31/12/2004. It is anticipated that in excess of €352m in investment will arise out of this programme.

Living Over The Shops

Limerick was granted tax exemption on 1.5km of street in the City Centre. All owners have been contacted and advised through public seminars and publications. The “Corn Building” in Shannon Street, was completed under this scheme. The owners of a number of other suitable properties have come forward for inclusion in the scheme which is due to end on 31st December 2004.

Conservation of Protected Structures

The Planning Act 1999 & 2001 makes provision for conservation of buildings of Architectural Merit. 400 are listed in Limerick and we are currently examining a further 300 for inclusion in the new Development Plan. The City Council provides an assessment and advisory service to the owners of Protected Structures and also administers a Scheme of Grants for the maintenance of such buildings. The programme will continue through 2004 and it is expected that grant aid will also be available from the DOEHLG.

Contribution Scheme

The Planning and Development Act, 2000 provides for the adoption of a development contribution scheme. The purpose of which is to provide a mechanism to **partially** fund the provision of infrastructure and community facilities in the local authority area. The making of a development contribution scheme is a reserved function and the scheme must be adopted before March 11th 2004.

Community and Development

Limerick City Development Board

Limerick City Development Board launched its vision for Limerick City with the publication on Monday the 28th January 2002 of the Limerick City Development Board Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development. This sets out the goals and objectives for the City from now to 2012.

The Strategy was prepared under Part 13 Section 129 of the Local Government Act 2001 which provides a statutory basis for the establishment, composition and functions of the City Development Board and for the preparation by the Board of a Strategy for Economic, Social & Cultural Development.

The strategy is broadly based, covering all the major services in the City. It gives direction to where we want the City to go, what we want to achieve and provides a vision of what we as a community want our city to be like in 10 years.

The Strategy has now entered the implementation stage and the Board meet regularly to monitor the effective roll out of the goals and objectives signed up to in the strategy and also develop new ideas. A project management system funded by the partner organisations was designed this year to aid partners track, monitor and evaluate their actions and this can be accessed on www.limerickcitydb.ie Working groups have been constituted to work on developing and rolling out new-targeted strategies identified in the Limerick City Development Board Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development, this on going work will ensure Limerick City will continue to grow as an attractive vibrant enterprising City.

Next years programme of work will continue directing the implementation of the strategy.

The City Development Boards has been given the responsibility for co-ordinating the implementation of the National Children's Strategy at local level, to comply with this directive the City Development Board held a Comhairle na nÓg in May 2003. The event was held in City Hall and 115 young people participated in a very lively debate on issues that affect their lives, delegates were selected to represent their area at the 2003 Dáil na nÓg in Dublin, this took place in November 2003.

A Youth Forum will be formed as part of the 2004 work programme and this will ensure that children's voices are heard in their local area. This part of the National Children's Strategy which has as its first goal Children will have a voice in the matter which effect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

Limerick City Childcare Committee

The Limerick City Childcare Committee operates under the auspices of Limerick City Development Board. A childcare strategy has been drafted and was launched by Minister Michael Mc Dowell Dept of Justice Equality & Law Reform on 22 November 2002. Funding is allocated through the Dept of Justice Equality & Law Reform and Area Development Management Ltd (ADM) under the National Development Plan. Through Limerick City Development Board and Limerick City Council a Childcare Co-ordination and Development worker will be employed early in 2004.

RAPID

The RAPID Programme was launched by Minister Eoin Ryan in Limerick in February 2001. Three of the 25 designated RAPID areas nationally were identified in Limerick City:

- North Limerick City: Killeely/ Ballynanty (including Moyross),
- City Centre : Kings Island and Watergate Flats,
- South Limerick City: Southill, Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady Queen of Peace and St Saviours.

The plan for each area identified local needs and through projects specific to each agency developed an integrated response to those needs. Limerick City Council was the lead agency in the majority of the projects in each of the RAPID plans. The success of RAPID projects is dependant upon central funding and expectations must therefore be tempered in line with economic reality.

Limerick City Community Forum

The Community forum is facilitated by Limerick City Development Board. The Forum acts as the representative collective voice of 300 Community/ Voluntary organisations in the City. The Forum also acts as a platform for the Community/Voluntary sector in the City and it nominates representatives to the City Development Board and the Strategic Policy Committees of City Council.

Social Inclusion Unit

In 2002 Limerick City Council established a Social Inclusion Unit. The Unit is one of nine created by the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government as part of a national pilot initiative. The aim of the Unit is to facilitate the widening of the role of Limerick City Council in combating social exclusion and poverty in Limerick City.

The Unit works with all departments of Limerick City Council to assist in the development and delivery of programmes and services which target resources to those in greatest need. It is supported in its work by a Social Inclusion Steering Committee which comprises representatives of relevant departments of the organisation.

To date the Unit has supported a number of departments in the development of social inclusion initiatives. These include the modification of Limerick City Council's rent scheme to one which no longer contributes to the creation of poverty traps, the translation of in-house information leaflets into foreign languages for the benefit of non-English speakers accessing its services, and a review of Limerick City Council's consultation policy and procedures.

The primary aim of the SIU in 2004 will be to help enable Limerick City Council to become a leading organisation in developing and implementing sustainable policies based on equality which empower the citizens of Limerick to participate fully in society from an economic, social and cultural perspective. It will aim to add value to the work of the organisation by assisting departments to implement programmes and services which tackle exclusion in the City.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

"The overall aim of the Environment Department is to promote the conservation and improvement of the environment and enhance the business environment upon which that population depend for a livelihood"

Regional Waste Management Plan

Limerick City Council adopted the Regional Waste Management Plan on 12th September 2001 under the Waste Management (Amendment) Act, 2001.

Limerick County Council, as the Lead Authority for Waste Management in the Region has established a project team to roll out the implementation of the Plan. Limerick City Council contribute financially to the costs of the project team and participate fully on all technical, operational and policy committees to ensure that the interests of the city are reflected in all areas of the Plan.

Waste Collection Permit Regulations, 2001

The permits granted to Waste Collectors operating in Limerick City, under the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations, 2001 have ensured that a dry recyclable collection service is now available to the citizens of the city.

Environmental Awareness and Education

Limerick City Council will continue to work towards the implementation of the principle of reduce, recycle and recovery of waste generated in accordance with its Waste Management Plan. This is also in line with the Council's strategy of developing and implementing effective education programmes in homes, schools and businesses. Among the initiatives proposed for 2004 are the production of the Managing Waste Better Newsletter, provision of a Household Hazardous Waste collection and further promotion of home composting.

Recycling Facilities

To date Limerick City Council has provided 20 bring bank sites in the city and a mini Recycling facility at Park Road. Funding has been secured for the upgrading of these facilities and work is now underway. It will be completed in 2004. A planning application for a Civic Amenity site on the Childers Road will be lodged early in 2004.

Support Scheme for low income households

A support scheme was introduced for households who meet the terms of the scheme to receive a subsidy towards the refuse collection and disposal service being provided by Refuse collection operators. The Budget for 2004 provides a sum of €670,000 for this subsidy.

Westfields Wetlands

Limerick City Council has applied for funding through the EU Life Programme towards the implementation of a conservation and management plan for the Westfield wetlands. A decision on this application will be made in 2004.

Longpavement Rehabilitation

Limerick City Council has received a licence from the Environment Protection Agency (EPA) to rehabilitate and restore the closed landfill site at Longpavement. Work has already taken place and it is expected that further work will be carried out in 2004 on the implementation of the licence conditions. The total cost of this project will be in excess of €8m.

Litter Pollution

Two additional inspectors are now employed in the enforcement of litter and waste laws. The benefits of this increased enforcement effort will be evident in 2004.

Air Pollution

Limerick City Council has 3 air monitoring stations, Moyross, Southill and the City Centre where smoke and sulphur dioxide are continuously monitored. The results produced over the years have never exceeded the levels allowed. Since regulations governing the ban on the marketing, sale and distribution of bituminous coal in Limerick City and its adjoining built-up areas were introduced the air quality has improved further. The council will continue to enforce these regulations in 2004.

Cemeteries Department

During 2003 major improvements to pathways and driveways in both Mt. St. Oliver and Mt. St. Laurence, were carried out. Further improvements will be carried out in 2004.

Fire Service

Limerick City Council Fire Service has 5 broad areas of activity that are mutually supportive in the delivery of an integrated service to the public:

- Fire/Emergency Operations
- Fire Prevention & Building Control
- Major Emergency Planning
- Civil Defence
- Fire Communications

Fire & Emergency Operations

The Fire/Emergency Operations Department provides a comprehensive fire brigade service to the community, 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. The Fire Brigade operates from the Fire Station, Mulgrave Street, Limerick and provides fire and rescue services to an area of approximately 419 sq. kilometres and a population in excess of 100,000 people within the Borough itself and in adjoining areas in counties Limerick and Clare. The Fire Brigade also provides a response to road traffic accidents, chemical incidents, flooding and other emergencies.

Fire Prevention and Building Control

The function of the Fire Prevention & Building Control 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.

The services provided include:

- Licensing of Premises
- Planning Applications
- Fire Safety Certificate Applications
- Building Control
- Public Advice & Complaints Service

Major Emergency Planning

The Fire & Rescue Service updates the City Council's Major Emergency Plan. It also facilitates the development of departmental major emergency plans, such as those of the roads, water, sanitary and housing services of the City Council, by providing administrative and secretarial support and by chairing the City Council's Major Emergency Planning Implementation Committee.

Civil Defence

The Civil Defence organisation's objective in Limerick City Council, and indeed all over the Country, is to provide emergency relief and support and to ensure the continued operation of vital services and the maintenance of public life during major emergencies. Civil Defence responds at the request of City Council management, in accordance with the Major Emergency Plan.

Civil Defence is unique in that, although it is a City Council function, it is staffed by local volunteers who contribute generously of their time in service to the community.

Civil Defence is funded by a 70% grant aid from the Department of Defence, with the remaining 30% provided by the City Council.

Civil Defence was privileged in 2003 to have contributed to the success of a prestigious international event – THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS. Civil Defence volunteers served at the opening and closing ceremonies in Croke Park, Dublin.

Recently Limerick City Civil Defence competed in National Exercise Competitions in River based activity, Auxiliary Fire Service, Rescue and Casualty. The teams involved acquitted themselves very well.

Munster Regional Communications Centre

The Munster Regional Communications Centre (MRCC), located at the City Fire Station, is the base for the first part of a three-part national fire brigade mobilisation and communications system. Two other centres are planned, one in Dublin covering the Eastern region, and one in Castlebar covering the Western region.

The MRCC Project was set up to improve the overall speed of response and efficiency of the Call Out System for the fire authorities in the Province and became operational in December 1992.

The Centre currently mobilises 66 retained fire stations throughout Munster and one full time station in Limerick City. Three more full time fire stations, two in Cork City and one in Waterford City are about to be added to its system.

Limerick City Council is considered to be one of the most progressive Fire Authorities in the State. Over the last 20 years, it has been to the forefront in most of the developments of the Fire Service at national and regional level. Its contribution to the development of National Fire Safety Standards, National Training Standards, Emergency Planning and in particular the Regional Communications Service has been acknowledged at national level.

CULTURAL & SPORTING POLICY

"The aim of the cultural and sporting department is to endeavour to enrich the cultural lives of the citizens through improved awareness and access to facilities in our Libraries, Museums, City Art Gallery and related services."

Recreational and Sport Policy Framework

The Recreational and Sport Policy Framework strategy has audited and assessed the current provisions and standards of all recreational amenities and facilities in the city and the environs. It will bring forward appropriate policies for the provision, management and maintenance of recreational facilities. The draft report will be delivered to the Sporting Policy Strategic Policy Committee in February 2004.

Playground Facilities and Public Parks

The playground in the Peoples Park continues to provide large numbers of children in the city and its environs with a valuable amenity. The People's Park has been awarded Best Public Park in the Department of Environment Heritage and Local Government's City Neighbourhoods Competition for 2003. It is proposed to provide additional playground facilities in the City. The Council are pursuing the development of Shelbourne Park in consultation with local residents and elected members from the area. It is hoped to bring forward a Planning Application for Shelbourne Park in 2004 subject to the above consultations and finance being available.

City Enhancement Scheme

The "Bridges in Bloom" initiative was widely acknowledged in 2003 as a success. Funding of €35,000 has been provided in the estimates for 2004 to expand further on this initiative. In addition the council will be expanding the existing Gardens Competition to incorporate other areas of activity eg business premises.

Municipal Golf Course

The new management arrangement has now been in place for one year and is working well. Work will commence shortly on the restoration of the existing house to provide a modern and attractive clubhouse which is essential for the continued development of this course's potential.

Grants for Community and Voluntary Groups

In 2003 a pilot scheme was introduced to assist community and voluntary groups financially in their efforts to improve the local environment. It is proposed to continue this scheme in 2004 and a provision of €50,000 has been made in the Budget.

Grove Island Leisure Centre

The Grove Island Leisure Centre will open early in 2004. It will be a major recreational amenity for the City and will have the following facilities:

- 25 metre pool
- Kiddies pool
- Sports Hall
- Gym
- Sauna
- Steamroom
- Jacuzzi

Limerick City Library Service.

Limerick City Library has continued to promote and implement its four main objectives, education, access, social inclusion and modernisation during 2003.

In order to introduce children of all ages to reading a new Schools Library Delivery Van has been acquired. This will allow children who previously did not use the library, access to all types of library materials.

Children's Book Festival 2003 provided a wide range of events and activities for children of all ages. Almost every member of staff was involved in this year's festival, some of whom used their varied skills and talents to conduct storytelling, craft sessions, talks and quizzes.

The Building Contract is now signed for a state of the art library in Moyross. This library should be ready for opening early 2005.

The results of a National Public Library User Survey were released this year. This is the first such survey to be conducted in Ireland. About 46% of visitors used the library at least once a week while 75% travelled five miles or less to use the facilities. The usage statistics showed the main activities were to "borrow/return/renew books" and "browse". Over one-third of all visitors used the Internet and the main purpose was for "Email"(67%) and for "study/research" (67%). Library staff received high satisfactory ratings with nearly all respondents rating staff attributes as being "good" or "very good". From the analyses of the data Limerick City Library compared favourably with national statistics.

Dr. Matthew Potter commenced writing “The Changing Faces of Limerick Corporation/City Council 1198-2004”. This book will be ready for publishing in the latter half of 2004.

Limerick City Council Arts Service

Key activities undertaken by the Arts Service of Limerick City Council during 2003:

Calendar of Events - A weekly electronic version of ‘what’s on’ was introduced as a key information tool to provide audiences a guide to arts activities in Limerick City.

The first CNC National Choral Conductors’ Forum was held in Limerick in January. Over sixty conductors, teachers and choral singers participated at the event, which provided conductors with the opportunity to discuss ideas and issues relating to the world of choral music.

The annual Kate O’Brien Weekend, attended by over 200 people used three venues in the City. The theme of ‘The Subversive Family’ was well debated by visiting speakers and participants, which culminated in the Kate O’Brien lecture given by Ferdinand Mount.

The annual Limerick Print Auction, by students and staff of Limerick School of Art & Design, took place in City Hall. This is a hands-on event organised by students to alleviate costs of a trip undertaken by third year students of the printmaking department. The trip allows students to investigate the printmaking techniques of other countries.

Fresh Film Festival, a film festival for young people between 12-18 years, hosted a series of films; The Lost Boys, The Devil’s Backbone, Kids in America, The Innocents, in the national touring cinamobile. The Cinamobile is a 40 foot articulated truck that opens up into a cinema and was parked in Pery Square for a day. With a capacity of 70 it was full for the daylong screenings by schools in the area. As part of the festival the Irish Schools Video Competition took place, screened at the Belltable Arts Centre. Workshops on sound, camera techniques, artmation and editing also took place.

The first European Community Music Network gathering took place in March at the Irish World Music Centre. It brought together community musicians and academics to discuss the area of community music and to set up a European network for community music practitioners.

Art & Science: The Meaning of Life – a schools project in association with the Sculptors’ Society of Ireland. Sean Lynch artist and 24 students from St. Enda’s Secondary School worked on examining the subject matter of science/media. From January to March the group decided to look at the human figure and its relationship to scientific endeavours, especially the notion of cloning. An exhibition of the work by the students was held at the Hunt Museum.

Compose Yourself – A community music project in Galvone National School with the Education and Community Outreach Department of the Irish Chamber Orchestra, the emphasis of this project is on social and musical outcomes. The key aspects of the project were group work, experiential learning, and development of musical skills, feedback and evaluation. Two 6th classes one boys and one girls were involved in percussion and movement, ideas that are linked to the Music Curriculum of Primary Schools and facilitated by Siobhan Daffy, Diane Daly and Frances Shanahan.

IRMA Trust recognised the need in Limerick City for the provision of a rehearsal space for young bands in the City. Operating at LEDP, the project is operating as a pilot project called ‘Get In’, for one year. IRMA has provided equipment and instruments for the purposes of rehearsal and a technician is available through the IRMA Trust to set-up the equipment and maintains it for the year. Up to ten young Limerick bands now use the space on a weekly basis.

Paint the Feeling - An art exhibition to coincide with the visit of the Austrian Special Olympics team to Limerick was organised in June. The exhibition took place in City Hall during the month of June and included the work of St. Gabrielle’s, Irish Wheelchair Association, Southside Youth Initiative and St. Augustine’s. Postcards of the work will be produced in 2003.

Sionna Festival of European Traditional Music and Dance – 12th – 16th November An extensive programme of music, dance, street theatre, dance and disability, the French Market and the TG4 annual traditional music awards took place. Now in its 4th year, the festival has the potential for becoming a centrepiece of the arts calendar for the City.

Cuisle Poetry Festival – local national and international poets brought a rich flavour to the festival, which took place in Limerick from the 15th to 18th of October. John Liddy, Tom McCarthy, Louis DePaor, Mary Dorcey, Dr. Fred Freeman, and Jose Maria Alvarez all gave readings and other complementary activities included an art exhibition at LCGA, selected by Limerick poet Mary Coll. Alongside the festival, events in the City Library were organised for children, including readings by Mae Leonard, Marie-Louis Fitzpatrick and Siobhan Parkinson. Spring Onion Puppet Theatre was also part of the programme.

Limerick City Gallery of Art.

The Exhibition Programme at LCGA in 2003 included the following exhibitions:

Ambit Paintings and Drawings by the Limerick artist Samuel Walsh

The way things are 2000-2002 by Helen O’Leary

ev+a curated by Virginia Perez-Ratton Consisting of 70 artists from 20 countries installed at LCGA and various locations around Limerick.

Faith, paintings by Denis Farrell

Aphrodite installations and photography by Brian Kennedy

Bypass Michael McLoughlin’s exhibition based on his own locality of Dublin.

Shared Designs a collaboration between Our Lady of Lourdes Community Development Project, Young Women's Group, Limerick and Michael McLoughlin examining their community issues and the physical environment.

McCullough Mulvin Documentary Exhibition of Architectural Practice

Caroline McCarthy's the AIB Young Artist award winner presented a new installation entitled 'Promise' along with other recent works.

Of Colour in Craft a touring exhibition from the National Craft Gallery, Kilkenny

Extracts and Additions to the Permanent Collection

Cast-A-Net, Exhibition of illustrations by Gavin Hogg for book of poems by John Liddy.

'You said that without moving your lips' Photographs and installations by the London based artist Lindsay Seers

Text curated by Mary Coll as part of the Cuisle Poetry Festival

What you need for painting by Helena Gorey

A Floater in my Shadow, paintings and drawings by Jill Dennis

Iontas, Sligo Art Gallery Fourteenth National Small Works Exhibition 2003

MA Curatorial Museum based Research Project - Shinnors Scholarship

Limerick City Gallery of Art and the School of Art, Limerick Institute of Technology have begun an MA of Art by Research over a two-year period that joins the Academic programme of LIT, School of Art and Design with Limerick City Gallery of Art. The funding for the project has been provided by a scholarship donated for this purpose known as the 'Shinnors Scholarship 2003 – 2005'

The placement provides a unique learning situation for the prospective student on a day-to-day basis to study and engage with all aspects of the City Gallery's core activities including the Exhibition Programme, the Permanent Collection, the Outreach and Education Programme. This programme provides a unique focus on training within the gallery sector in the Visual Arts in Ireland.

Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum

There were more than 450 additions to the museum collection during 2003. Notable among them were a Limerick silver table snuffbox by Thomas Bourke, c.1790, a Limerick silver sauceboat by Samuel Johns, c.1750, a Royal Artillery jacket made at Limerick Clothing Factory 1903, a medal commemorating the capture of Limerick 1691 and a walnut and silver flute made by Corbett & Son, c.1850.

A Late Bronze Age metalwork hoard found at Newgarden, Castleconnell, was brought to the museum in March. It is expected that the hoard, consisting of a socketed axe, a sickle, a gouge and a chisel, dating from c.800 BC, will be acquired by the museum.

2009 records were added to the museum's computerised catalogue, which now contains 51,219 records. 5944 digitised images were added to the catalogue, bringing the total to

15,328. The catalogue was made available on the City Council's intranet in October, and work is ongoing to make it available on the Internet shortly, the first Irish online museum catalogue. A priority in the short term is to provide a digital image of every object in the catalogue.

More than 1600 enquiries were dealt with, from personal callers, by phone, letter and email. Illustrations were provided for several publications, including Window on Aran and Limerick in Old Photographs by Sean Spellissy, Made in Limerick published by Limerick Civic Trust, Limerick, A Stroll Down Memory Lane Vol. 3 by Sean Curtin and the Old Limerick Journal.

A bilingual poster promoting the twelve local authority museums designated under the Cultural Institutions Act 1997 was issued by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism.

Visitor numbers were about the same as in 2002.

CORPORATE & FINANCIAL SERVICES

"Corporate and Financial services represent a combination of internal support services whose objective is to ensure that the organization and the people within the organization are enabled to deliver a quality service to our customers"

Partnership

The Partnership approach to the achievement of change and modernisation of Local Government continues to develop in Limerick City Council. A number of initiatives including, provision of Return to Learning training opportunities for staff, assisting in the preparation for the Special Olympics, consulting with a large sample of staff with regard to Limerick City Council's proposed Human Resource Strategy, took place in 2003. A number of structural and operational changes were also introduced in 2003 following a general review.

It is proposed to continue to offer adult learning opportunities to staff during 2004, other items which will also be dealt with through Partnership will be; introduction of staff health initiatives, pre-retirement training, finalisation of a Bi-lingual Strategy and customer service initiatives. It is also expected that the actions required for modernisation of local government, under the 'Sustaining Progress' National Agreement, will provide an opportunity for the Partnership process to meet the challenges involved during 2004.

Human Resources

During 2004 Limerick City Council will implement the Human Resource Strategy which was commissioned in 2003. This will improve delivery of service to our customers and will empower and provide staff with greater job satisfaction.

Limerick City Council will continue to develop and provide training for all staff in accordance with the Training Needs Analysis study which was implemented in 2003.

ICT Department

There was further investment in Limerick City Council's Information & Communication Technology infrastructure during 2003. These works included the installation of a new organisation-wide integrated telephone system and the expansion of the corporate network to include the Homeless Persons Centre in Cecil Street.

The website www.limerickcity.ie had additional content added including information on the current status of all Planning Applications and current Road works. We have also added the facility for the public to participate in the consultation process on the Development Plan and City Cycle strategy.

Geographic Information Systems have been developing over the last two years and now the expanding desktop based analytical tools are being complimented by integrating web-based technologies, which cater for wider corporate accessibility.

The Intranet has now developed as a source of shared information within the organisation and has made a significant contribution to efficiencies.

The Information and Communications Strategy 2000 - 2004 developed by Gartner Group will be reviewed during 2004 to reflect future IT requirements.

Finance

Limerick City Council continued to roll out the financial management system in 2003. The Rates, Water and Housing Loans elements went live on the Financial Management System on 1st January 2003.

The introduction of the Financial Management System - Agresso has led to:
Enhanced reporting facilities enabling budget holders to monitor their budgets more effectively
Greater transparency and access to information.
Purchasing effectiveness has been enhanced leading to benefits in terms of ability to negotiate, prompt payments and tighter processing controls.

The rollout of the new system has resulted in changes to accounting practices in the organisation. In framing the 2004 budget I have been directed by the DOEHLG to only include income related to 2004. This means that the benefit of arrears from prior years being collected in 2004 is lost. The benefit is that we will recognise income on a current year basis meaning that at the end of 2004 our debtor balances will form part of our out-turn figures.

Property Management

During 2003 a Property Management Section was set up. This section deals with the purchase and sale transactions for all Limerick City Council owned assets.