

LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL

ADOPTED



ANNUAL BUDGET FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2008

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**LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CATHRACH LUIMNIGH**

Árus na Cathrach
Luimneach

11th December 2007

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

**Annual Budget for the year
1st January 2008 to 31st December 2008**

In presenting the Annual Budget for the year ended 31st December 2008 to Council, I wish to take this opportunity, to summarise the financial position of Limerick City Council at 31st December 2006. The Annual Financial Statement of Limerick City Council for the year 2006 shows that the accumulated Balance on the Revenue Account is a credit position of €323,872 at 31st December 2006 (compared to the accumulated Credit Balance on the Revenue Account at 31st December 2005 of €25,482).

Current outturn figures indicate that the Revenue Credit will be maintained in 2007. Limerick City Council had an accumulated deficit for every year from 1979 to 2005. The improved financial position must be maintained and this will be done by a combination of cost management and income maximisation. The 2008 budget reflects the need to continue the strong financial management ethos while making every effort to meet the ever increasing demands on the services of Limerick City Council.

In framing the budget I have had regard to the demands that will be placed on this Council as a result of the Government decision to establish regeneration agencies for the Northside and Southside of the City. Limerick City Council has expressed its support for the work of the regeneration agencies and I believe that in addition to central government funds expected to be allocated to Limerick City Council that the proposed expenditure in this Budget will facilitate this support.

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

The Committee is established under Part V of the Local Government Act 1991 and is to report to the Minister towards the end of this year. This budget has not taken into account the income or expenditure for the limited extension area.

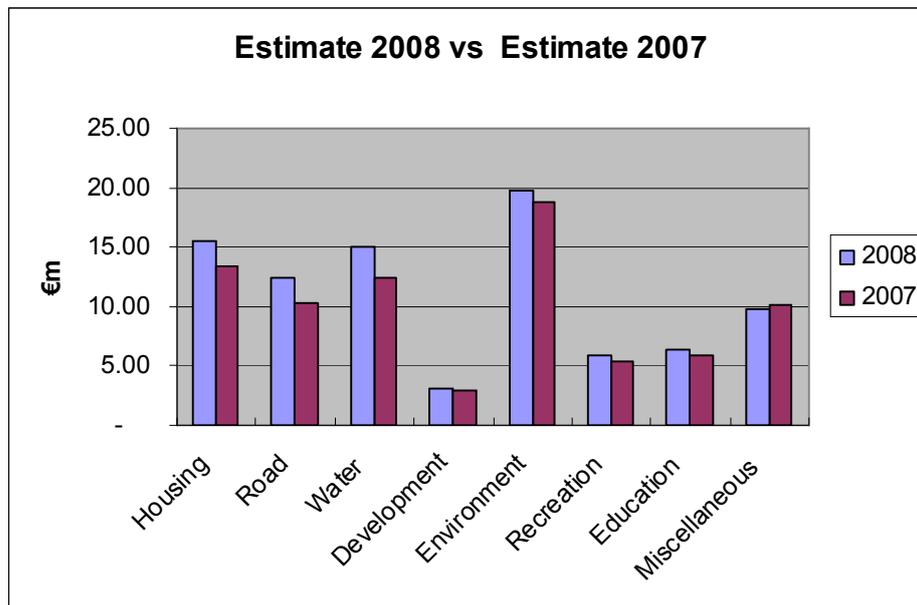
I will now set out the proposals for Expenditure and Income for 2008.

Expenditure – 2008

The Budget for 2008 provides for expenditure of €87.86 million. This represents an increase of €8.3million over the adopted Budget for 2007. The following table sets out the expenditure by Programme Group:

	Budget 2008	Outturn 2007
1. Housing and Building	15,539,827	13,444,077
2. Road Transportation and Safety	12,340,452	10,341,591
3. Water Supply and Sewerage	15,023,171	12,471,757
4. Development Incentives and Controls	3,127,605	3,015,987
5. Environmental Protection	19,853,052	18,826,615
6. Recreation and Amenity	5,832,032	5,467,156
7. Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	6,349,469	5,834,933
8. Miscellaneous Services	9,795,188	10,133,275
TOTAL	87,860,796	79,535,391

The following graph depicts estimated expenditure by Programme Group for 2008, compared to 2007.



This increase in expenditure can be broken down as follows:

	2008	2007	Increase
	€ million	€ million	€ million
Payroll and Pensions	40.945	39.60	1.345
Non Payroll	46.915	39.96	6.96
Total Expenditure	87.86	79.56	

Payroll and Pensions

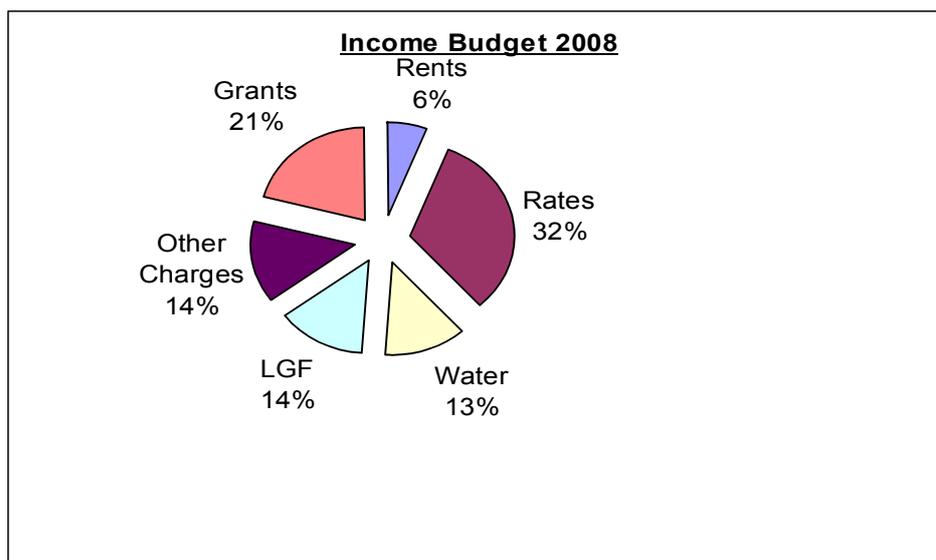
The cost for 2008 reflects an increase of 3.4% on 2007. This increase is sufficient to cover national agreements in relation to pay. In order to minimize the increase in payroll costs it is intended not to increase the number of employees, and to consider the necessity of filling any vacancies that occur in 2008 on a case by case basis.

Non-Payroll Costs

There are a number of new costs and unavoidable increases in current costs facing the City Council for 2008. I have made every effort to maintain expenditure in critical areas. Non payroll costs have increased by 17.4%. Details of proposals are set out in the following pages.

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

Income Proposals – 2008



The effective valuation of €361,611 (2007) has increased by €18,796 to €380,407 for 2008. This represents an increase of 5.2%. The increase in valuation is a measure of the economic development in the City. The increase of 5.2% reflects the continued positive development.

The following table summarises the rates income between 2005 and 2008 and the annual rate on valuation for the same period:

	Actual 2005 €'000	Actual 2006 €'000	Actual 2007 €'000	Budget 2008 €'000
Rates Income	24,271	26,296	26,962	28,364
Increase		2,025	666	1,401
Cumulative Increase		2,025	2,692	4,093
% Increase in Rates Income		8.3%	2.5%	5.2%
Cumulative % Increase Rates Income		8.3%	11.1%	16.9%
Annual rate on valuation	75.69	75.31	74.56	74.56
% Increase / (Decrease)		-0.50%	-1.00%	0.00%
Cumulative Increase / (Decrease)		-0.50%	-1.5%	-1.5%

Despite a cumulative reduction in the Annual rate on valuation of 1.5% since 2005 the rates income of Limerick City Council has grown by 16.9% during this period.

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.

If the City is to fulfil its full potential as the Gateway of the Mid-West, then we need to have a strong and vibrant City Centre. Many Councillors have brought to my attention in the last year the very positive effect on the economic activity of the City that the rates reduction has had.

Consequently, and in order to encourage businesses to locate in Limerick City, I have made provision in the 2008 Budget for no increase in the Annual Rate on Valuation.

The cost of parking discs has not increased since 2004. During this time the costs associated with the provision of the traffic management service have increased and accordingly I propose to increase the cost per disc from €1.50 to €2.00. I propose that this increase be implemented from 1 July 2008. In order to facilitate short-parking visits in the city, it is proposed to implement through the Park Magic system a charge of €1 for a half an hour for certain parts of the City Centre.

I have included a sum of €12,306,247 in the Budget for 2008 in respect of the Local Government Fund. This represents an increase of 5% on the amount received in 2007.

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

During 2007 a metering programme has been completed and as a result there is a change in the basis of charging for water and waste water in 2008. Over 2,200 meters have been installed and all customers will be billed a fixed standing charge plus a volume charge based on metered consumption. The consolidated (water and waste water) volume charge for 2008 is proposed at €1.99 per m³ and the consolidated standing charge is proposed at €260 per annum.

Conclusion

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

- The need to improve the City's competitive advantage.
- 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.
- The need to support the implementation of the John Fitzgerald report

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 Ger Fahy and his predecessor, Councillor Joe Leddin for their wholehearted commitment and support this year.

I also wish to express my thanks to the Directors, Mr. Kieran Lehane, Ms. Caroline Curley, Mr. Pat Dowling, Mr. Pat Dromey and their respective teams for their commitment and high quality work. I am very grateful to 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 believe that this budget demonstrates that we are serious about attracting investment to our City Centre.

I look forward to the full support of the Members at the Statutory Budget Meeting to be held at 2pm on Tuesday 18th December 2007.

Tom Mackey
City Manager

SOCIAL POLICY & HOUSING

Housing Programme

The Action Plan for Social & Affordable Housing 2004 – 2008 was reviewed in early 2007. The main priorities are

- Regeneration
- Delivery under Rental Accommodation Scheme (R.A.S.)
- Improving the output of the Voluntary sector
- Improvement in estate management and greater collaboration with the Gardaí through the operation of a Joint Policing Committee and Community Co-ordinator Scheme
- Improvement of traveller and homeless services

The review showed that the council is supply constrained within the current city boundary with a high dependence on casual vacancies. With the commencement of regeneration schemes it is possible that the supply of casual vacancies will decline. As a result of this the Housing Section commenced an enhanced purchase programme throughout the city to increase supply, and deal with the growing waiting list.

The Council will carry out the triennial statutory assessment of need in March 2008. Information from the assessment will allow the council prepare a new accommodation strategy. It will also be used to prepare a new Housing Strategy in collaboration with the Planning Section.

Regeneration

A draft strategy report for the regeneration of St. Mary's Park to deal with cultural and community development, social and economic improvement as well as physical and infrastructural regeneration of the area has been prepared. The draft was submitted to the Department of the Environment in early November to allow for inclusion in the Department's housing capital estimates for 2008 and a reply is awaited from the Department. It is envisaged that the document will be finalised in 2008, following an extensive public consultation process with councillors, residents and stakeholders.

The Government appointed John Fitzgerald (former Dublin City Manager) to review issues of social exclusion/disadvantage in Moyross and other parts of the city. Mr. Fitzgerald delivered his report in April 2007 and this led to the establishment of two regeneration agencies on the north and south sides of the city. The two boards and staff have been in place since September 2007 and intend to have detailed plans completed in 2008 to deal with all aspects of regeneration.

As events have overtaken the O'Malley Park Remedial Works Scheme, it has ceased and will be absorbed into the wider regeneration programme.

Rental Accommodation Scheme (R.A.S.)

The rollout of the Rental Accommodation Scheme was significantly progressed in 2007 with a total of 100 transfers completed. The Scheme caters for the accommodation needs of persons in receipt of rent supplement for 18 months or longer and who have a long term housing need. The aim of the scheme is to provide good quality rented accommodation for qualifying applicants. The progress of the scheme will seek to reduce and ultimately eliminate the level of sub-standard accommodation in Limerick City. It is anticipated that an additional 100 qualifying applicants will be catered for under the Scheme in 2008.

Voluntary Housing Sector

The Housing Section is seeking to improve the contribution to housing supply from the Voluntary Sector particularly for those persons with special needs such as the elderly, homeless or disabled. Projects completed during 2007 have given a total of 28 units to date and a further 10 units have received funding and should be occupied in early 2008.

A number of other schemes are planned. It is estimated that a further 30 units of accommodation should come on stream in 2008 with further completions in 2009.

Expenditure in Estates

A sum of €200,000 is being provided in 2008 for **Social and Community Grants** whose aim is to achieve an overall improvement in the social and community wellbeing of their area. These monies are used to fund projects in the community such as clean ups, minor environmental works, assistance to a number of voluntary groups. In total 11 groups received grant aid in 2007

In addition to the above, a further sum of €240,000 is being allocated to fund general estate management. This allows the Council to contribute towards the employment costs of seven estate management workers that are employed by various estate management groups throughout the city. These are O'Malley Park Environmental Group, St. Mary's Aid, Keyes/Carew/Kincora, Watergate, Our Lady of Lourdes, Moyross and Saint Munchins. The total assistance to the groups amounted to €151,000 in 2007. In addition various works are carried out directly by the council and were funded from this budget.

The Council has developed a close working relationship with An Garda Síochána over the last couple of years. This relationship has been formalised through the establishment of the Limerick City Community Safety Partnership which brings together key statutory bodies including the City Council, H.S.E., Gardai, and the Department of Justice. Under the Joint Policing Committee which oversees this partnership, contributions have been made to the C.C.T.V. network in local authority housing estates and a Community Co-ordinator Pilot Project commenced in March 2007.

The Community Co-ordinators are currently working in following areas; Kileely/Thomondgate, Watergate/St. John's and the Janesboro/Kennedy Park/Glasgow Park/Rathbane area. The project has been made extremely welcome in each of these

communities as the staff have integrated with other groups within the community. Events such as the summer fun days, crime awareness for the elderly and the Halloween children's parties proved to be a great success, while the added visible presence in the areas has been welcomed by many elderly residents.

The continued employment of two Tenancy Enforcement Officers, who deal with anti-social behaviour in our housing estates, reflects the commitment of the Housing Section to improve the quality of life within our estates. In the 11 months to date in 2007 a total of 206 cases of alleged anti social behaviour were brought to the attention of the team and investigated. This resulted in the issue of six notices to quit, eleven tenancies being surrendered, five repossessions and one exclusion being granted.

During 2007 the Council refurbished and amalgamated three house units at Delmege Park, Moyross, in order to facilitate the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal to establish a community within the greater Moyross area. The public response has been very favourable and positive to their arrival and work to date.

Traveller Action Plan

The publication of the Traveller Accommodation Plan 2005 – 2008 resulted in considerable improvements being delivered at the Clonlong, Childers Road and Long Pavement Halting Sites during 2007, involving a total of 50 bays. Remedial works will commence at the Rhebogue Halting Site in early 2008 with the refurbishment of 6 houses.

Disabled Persons Grant/Housing Adaptation Grants

In 2007, 100 applications received provisional approval for Disabled Persons Grants. From 1st November, 2007, the Department of the Environment has replaced the Disabled Persons Grant Scheme with two new grants, i.e., The Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme and the Mobility Grants Scheme. Maximum payable under these grants, which are means tested, are €30,000 and €6,000 respectively. A provision of €250,000 has been provided in the 2008 budget for the City Council's contribution towards these grants. Additional provision has been made in the 2008 budget for the payment of a new grant, "Housing Aid to the Elderly". This grant which was formerly administered by the H.S.E. will cover necessary improvement works to privately owned houses by persons over 60 years of age. The maximum grant under this scheme is €10,000. The grant will be means tested for those earning over €30,000 per annum. An amount of €80,000 has been provided for same from the council's resources to provide for the 20% local contribution. These new schemes will be brought before the Housing SPC early in the new year for its consideration.

Housing Maintenance

The Housing Maintenance Department services a housing stock of 3,000 units. Services are provided to houses in the Northside of the city from the Moyross Depot and in the Southside by the Rathbane Depot. A dedicated re-lettings crew operates from Garryowen, dealing with in excess of 200 new lettings of casual vacancies per annum. The budget for maintenance, repair and improvement for 2008 will be €3.2 million.

A sum of €200,000 has been provided from the Council's own resources to facilitate the continued delivery of the **Central Heating Programme**. 350 houses are due to be completed in 2008 at a cost of €2.8 million. It is planned to complete another 350 units in 2009.

Over 1,200 Council houses have to date benefited from the **Windows & Doors Programme**. Phase 6 of this Programme was completed during 2007. This phase involved the completion of 203 houses in Craeval Park, Pineview Gardens and Delmege Park, Moyross. A small number of houses remain to be completed in early 2008 and this will conclude the programme.

Homeless Services

In 2008 a new Limerick City Homeless Strategy & Action Plan for 2008-2010 will be prepared and will be submitted to the Council for adoption. It will be a key priority for the Council to relocate the direct access hostel from St. John's Square as approved at the November Council meeting.

The homeless services also plan to review long term hostel residents to ensure that older vulnerable members of the homeless community are placed in more secure, supported accommodation.

Social Inclusion Unit

The main role of the social inclusion unit is to support the council's involvement in tackling social exclusion across the range of its activities, as per the Council's Corporate Plan. The unit helps integrate the National Anti-Poverty Strategy in the council's policies and provides a strong anti-poverty focus.

The SIU has coordinated Limerick City Council's application for disability funding over the last number of years. Since the inception of this fund in 2005 Limerick City Council has received €1.7million. The amount received from the Department of Environment in 2007 was €305,000. In addition the SIU has facilitated the Council's internal Disability Implementation Group to produce a Disability Implementation Plan.

The SIU worked in collaboration with Limerick City Council's Arts Office, Library, Gallery and Museum during the Bealtaine Festival (a celebration of older people) to improve access and promote the cultural services available to elderly people in local authority estates through the provision of a cultural bus trip during the month of May.

RAPID Programme

The RAPID Programme in Limerick is based in three areas throughout the City. In 2007 the Programme has helped secure various funding such as;

- Traffic Calming Measures (€300,000) for 2007/2008 under Leverage Funding
- Dormant Accounts Social & Economic Strand “Additionality Measures” (€600,000)

Social & Community Grants from Department of Environment

- Our Lady of Lourdes Action Centre €75,000
- Protection of Alms Houses €75,000

Works also continued in relation to Housing Estate Enhancement works in 2007 for which funding was received in 2006.

Community Based CCTV Scheme

The RAPID Programme co-ordinated a project to establish a community-based CCTV system. A grant of €200,000 was awarded in 2007 for Killeely/Thomondgate.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE – ROADS & WATER SERVICES

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

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

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

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

Roads and Traffic

The Roads and Traffic Section of Limerick City Council is primarily responsible for:

The design and construction of roads, maintenance of the existing street network, traffic management and safety, provision of public transport, regulation of street use and public lighting. In addition to this the roads and transportation department are also responsible for the delivery of projects under the City Centre Strategy and the Riverside Strategy including Bedford Row, Thomas Street and Clancy Strand.

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

1 Southern Ring Road (Phase 2)

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

2. Corbally Link Road

Construction work on phase 2 of the Corbally Link Road was completed in August 2007 and officially opened in October. The scheme involved the construction of 1km of a single carriageway road linking Grove Island with Park Road and involves the construction of a new bridge over the Park Canal, high quality footpaths and cycle paths, public lighting, new water main, sewers and associated utilities. Construction was carried out by Sorenson Civil Engineering Limited. This contract cost was €4.5 million and was part funded by a Grant from the DEHLG. The overall cost of Phase 1 and Phase 2 was in excess of €8 million including Land Acquisition costs.

3. Moyross Access Road

Consultants have been appointed for the design of the New Moyross access road running from Coonagh north of the estate over to the Knockalisheen Road. This scheme, subject to funding should be fully designed and tendered over the next year with construction starting in 2009.

4. Road Maintenance

In 2007 Limerick City Council carried out in excess of 50,000m² road surface overlay and strengthening works at various locations throughout the city including major resurfacing works at;

1. Dock road (N69)
2. Dublin Road
3. South Circular Road
4. Hartstonge Street Upper
5. Reboge Hill
6. Clontarf Place
7. Old Park Road
8. Sexton Street North
9. Mulgrave Street
10. Courtbrack Avenue

In addition to the above almost 10,000m² of new footpaths were constructed throughout the city and 7000m² of existing footpath was provided with an Eco-flex thin surface overlays to extend its life span. Thin surface overlays (Raulumac) were also provided in the following housing estate roads to extend the life span of the surface;

1. Lynwood park
2. Norwood Park
3. Shelbourne Park
4. Janemount/College Avenue Corbally
5. College Avenue Moyross

The ongoing programme of road and footpath restoration will be continued in 2007. Again priority will be given to the reduction and minimisation of risk with specific road works to be carried out in a number of areas in accordance with the funding that is expected to be allocated to Limerick City Council by the NRA and the DoEHLG in 2008. Among the schemes currently proposed for 2008 and subject to the confirmation of grant aid are:

Condell Road (N18)
 O Callaghan Strand (Road 62)
 Sarsfield Street (R527)
 Hyde Road (Road 459)
 Ennis Road (R857)
 Lower Glentworth Street (Road 353)
 Anne Street

A detailed and comprehensive roads programme will be brought before the Council in early 2008. This program will take into consideration all requests for road improvements from members. The draft budget has provided for an increase in the investment in road upkeep from €4.9m to over €6.2m in 2008.

5. City Centre Remodelling Project

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

- (a) Bedford Row**
 The remodelling of Bedford Row which was substantially completed during 2006 is now almost 100% complete as the Savoy Retail & Hotel development opens for business.
- (b) Thomas Street/Augustinian Lane/Little Catherine Street/Little William Street.**
 Works were completed during 2007 on Thomas Street, Little William Street, Augustinian Lane and on Little Catherine Street to create a high quality pedestrian priority streetscape finished with high quality materials.
- (c) Upper Thomas Street/Foxes Bow/Catherine Street (between Thomas St. and Roches St.)**
 A contract for the remodelling of the remainder of Upper Thomas Street, Foxes Bow, Earsons Lane and a block of Catherine Street between Thomas Street and Roches Street has been awarded to John Craddock Civil Engineering Limited.

Work will commence on this scheme in January and will be completed by the year end.

(d) Limerick City Centre Orbital Route

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

(e) O Connell Street/William Street Remodelling

Plans for the complete remodelling of O Connell Street and William street were advanced through the Part 8 Process during 2007 and approved by City Council. It is anticipated that these schemes will be advanced through the detailed design and tender phases during 2008.

6 Public Transport

Work has continued during 2007 and many hours have been spent in consultation with Stakeholders to achieve consensus on the provision of Green Routes on the major transport corridors into Limerick City. Observers of infrastructure works in the city environs will have noted that Limerick County Council completed work on a Green Route in Raheen and Caherdavin during 2007 and have recently awarded a contract for the construction of a Green Route on the Dublin Road in Castletroy. The continuation of these routes into Limerick city centre would reduce bus journey times and result in an increase in the frequency of service thus offering choice and a better service to people choosing to use public transport and encourage a modal shift to public transport thus reducing congestion in our City Centre. It is important that Limerick City avail of the enhanced capital funding programmes currently being provided by the Department of Transport for the provision of such Green Routes and for the provision of high quality Park and Ride facilities on the outskirts of the city once Green Routes have been provided. The provision of a high quality sustainable public transport network must be a priority for Limerick City.

7 Cycle Routes

As with Green Routes it is now government policy to provide more sustainable methods of local transportation and with this in mind a Cycle Strategy for Limerick City was approved in 2004. The first major cycle paths in Limerick city were completed during 2006 with almost 2km of new cycle path constructed on the Childers Road between the Kilmallock Road roundabout and the Parkway roundabout. In addition to this a new

cycle path was constructed along the banks of the restored Park Canal during 2006. In 2007 new cycle paths were completed along the route of the new Corbally Link Road and Limerick City Council are currently engaged in works to extend the cycle path at the Parkway roundabout to the county boundary along the old Dublin Road to link up with the University. It should also be noted that Green Routes are designated for cyclists as well as buses and taxis.

8. Riverside Strategy

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

a) Clancy Strand

Limerick City Council is currently engaged in a project to build new footpaths on Clancy Strand and to provide new high quality lighting. In addition to this substantial new paving works will be carried out around the Treaty Stone and a new riverside park will be created adjacent to the Curragour Falls to maximise the riverside views and enhance the experience of the falls. Included in the park are two new access ramps to the river in support of the kayaking and angling activities. Works are expected to be completed in March 2008.

b) O'Callaghan Strand

A contract to create a riverside promenade at O'Callaghan Strand and to upgrade the roadway has been awarded to Murphy International and work will commence in January for a duration of 9 months.

c) Other Riverside Projects

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

- Full upgrade of the riverside promenade between Shannon Bridge and Sarsfield Bridge along Bishop's Quay, Howley's Quay and Harvey's Quay. This scheme is currently going through Part 8.
- Boardwalk on Clancy Strand between the new park and the Treaty Stone. (Currently at Part 8)
- A scheme for the enhancement of the riverside walk between Shannon Bridge and Barringtons Pier will be prepared during 2008.

9. Traffic Management

Continuing investment in effective and efficient enforcement of all traffic and parking regulations is important to maintain the city as a vibrant retail, economic and social centre. Conscious of the ongoing requirement to reduce congestion and to promote business and commerce in the City Centre the following proposals were developed during 2007.

a) Park Magic

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

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

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

This scheme has continued to operate successfully during 2007 and now accounts for over 20% of all paid parking transactions in the City.

b) Delivery Strategy

In tandem with the additional traffic management undertakings with respect to re-modeling of city centre street project, the development of City Centre Orbital Route and Limerick Tunnel Project, the City Council has identified a clear objective to better manage and control H.G.V’s and commercial vehicle activity within the city. In consultation with the elected members, the Garda Siochana, the representatives of the bus companies and commercial community within the city and environs the City Council intends to introduce more loading bays, mandatory loading times between 7.00am and 11.00am and after 18.00 hrs. Monday to Sunday inclusive.

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

c) Taxi Ranks (Appointed Stands)

Following consultation with the Garda Síochána and the Limerick branches of National Taxi Union and Limerick Taxi Drivers Association, the City Council completed a review of the city's taxi ranks. This programme increased the seven day 24 hour appointed stands stock from 54 to 98 and provided 30 new evening and nighttime stands.

The City Council proposes to further review and extend the city's Appointed Stands Stock in 2008 in consultation with the Garda Síochána and the above organisations.

d) Road Safety

The promotion of road safety awareness at every conceivable opportunity is a priority of the City Council Traffic Department. This policy will be continued and expanded, using modern technology, in the coming year. In accordance with the need to consistently review the operation of all services, the School Warden Programme as presently delivered will be examined in detail in the coming year with a view to delivering enhanced value for money across this service. In 2008 we intend to expand our collaboration on road safety educational and awareness programmes with Limerick County Council. The School Cycle Training Program and the transition year Drive for Life Programme will be continued in 2008 with a target of training up to certificate level 500 primary school children and 200 secondary students.

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

10. TRAFFIC CALMING

In respect of engineering measures to provide and enhance road safety, the City Council is committed to an extensive roll out of traffic calming measures and traffic management initiatives at locations, which warrant appropriate works. The City Council will continue to collaborate and work in tandem with the Garda Síochána, the traffic authority, in the installation of the new speed detection camera installations within the city, scheduled to commence in 2008. The City Council spent in excess of €120,000 on traffic calming measures in the four Wards during 2007 in agreement with the Councillors. In 2008 we are proposing to raise the budget for member's discretionary traffic calming measures in each ward area by almost 20% to reflect the requirement for traffic calming measures in our housing estates.

11. Pedestrian Crossings

Seven new pedestrian crossings have been provided in the city during 2007 to improve safety for pedestrians and to make the city more accessible. These new crossings have been provided at;

1. Condell Road
2. Shannon Bridge
3. Bishops Quay
4. Clare Street at the Art College
5. Pa Healy Road
6. Park Road
7. Watch House Cross

We propose during 2008 to continue our programme of making our city more accessible for pedestrians and new crossings are proposed for the Dock Road at Courtbrack Avenue and at the Childers Road/Hyde Road Junction.

12. Taking in Charge

A new program for taking in charge of housing estates was prepared during 2007 and a priority list was agreed with the members. Eleven estates have been prioritised for attention and will be brought before council for approval in 2008.

Water Services

The estimate for Water Services (Water & Waste Water) for 2008 is €15,023,171. This compares with €12,471,757 for these services in 2007 resulting in a net increase of €2,551,414 (20% increase)

This increase can be explained as follows

- €600,000 is for increased costs in running the Waste Water Treatment plant
- €1,725,000 is associated with inflation and the operation of the water treatment plant at Clareville.

As members will be aware Clareville Water Treatment Plant is now under the operations of a private contractor and the additional expenditure here can be accounted for in improved water quality controls such as Ultra Violet for the control of Cryptosporidium. Additionally, the cost of water per m³ will reduce in time once the demand meets the increased capacity associated with the refurbishment. This increased capacity is predominantly to meet the needs of Limerick County and will be recouped accordingly.

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

Water Conservation / Water Distribution Network

Limerick City Council is committed to the implementation of its five-year Water Services Strategy as approved by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government. The strategy provides for the strategic provision, rehabilitation and maintenance of the water production, distribution and conservation systems within the city area. The DoEHLG have provided an additional sum of €9M in the Water Services Investment Programme 2007-2009 for this work.

The development of a new ring water main for the city to support present and future development is being advanced. New ring water mains have been laid along the course of the Southern Ring Road and the Monaleen Road. The provision of a new water main from Rosbrien to Caherdavin including a river crossing will be completed in the coming year. Over 200 metres of the existing Distribution Water Main were replaced during 2007. Additional valving works were carried out in the City to improve the water supply system and to minimise those areas affected during periods of works or shutdown. This also facilitates the advent of the Find & Fix project.

The leakage detection programme in the city mains system continued during the past year with in excess of 300 leaks identified and repaired resulting in additional savings in the supply of water. The Council is currently completing its Metering Programme to ensure that all non-domestic water consumers will be metered for 2008.

Clareville Waterworks

The signing of the contract for the redevelopment of Clareville Waterworks by DBO contract took place in December 2006. The Contractor began the transition period of this contract on the 16th January 2007 and took control of the operations of the plant on the 20th April 2007. The contract period is for 20 years. 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.

Limerick Main Drainage

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

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

Flood Alleviation

In 2007 flood alleviation works were completed along Clancy Strand. The works consisted of a reinforced concrete wall to support the existing structure and also raising the existing wall. Floodgates were also purchased. The Office of Public Works funded this project.

Public Toilets

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

Funding for the purchase of this toilet has been secured from the National Disability Fund however Limerick City Council will have to provide for the cost of maintenance and upkeep from within our own resources.

Water Pricing

Whilst the capital infrastructure allows for the continued expansion of the city the increased operational and maintenance costs of the entire water and waste water network must be provided for in the revenue budget of the Council and recovered as appropriate through charging mechanisms.

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

City Centre Strategy

Limerick City Centre is undergoing a period of pivotal redevelopment; the City Centre Strategy will underpin and provide an impetus for this redevelopment.

Limerick City Council launched an Issues Paper on the Draft City Centre Strategy in mid 2007. The Issues Paper served as a precursor to the Draft City Centre Strategy and formed the framework from which submissions from the public and private sector were incorporated into the Draft City Centre Strategy.

The Draft City Centre Strategy was published in October 2007. The City Centre Strategy will be presented to Council in January 2008 and will form the basis for the identification of key redevelopment opportunities in the City over the coming years.

Gateway Innovation Fund

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

The Gateway local authorities were invited to submit proposals on a competitive basis to be funded under the Gateway Innovation Fund. The fund provides a total of €300 million for the three years 2008 to 2010 and will require at least 20% matching funding at local level.

Limerick City Council in collaboration with Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary County Councils has submitted a proposal for projects which include pedestrianisation, extensive public realm works, the provision of an orbital traffic route and enhancement of riverside walks.

Retail Strategy

It is intended to conduct a review of the Retail Strategy in 2008 in conjunction with the implementation of the City Centre Strategy.

Borough Boundary Extension

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

Integrated Area Plan

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

Conservation of Protected Structures

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

Planning Applications

The Council will receive c.500 planning applications in 2007. Amongst the significant developments granted permission during 2007 were:-

- (1) Redevelopment of former Redemptorist Monastery, South Circular Road
- (2) Development at Greenpark Racecourse, South Circular Road

Work has commenced in 2007 on the implementation of a scanning system for planning files. Provision has been made in the budget for 2008 to fully implement a system of scanning for all new applications. This will facilitate the viewing of current planning files on the City Council's website before the end of 2008. A small provision has been made in the budget to commence the back scanning of completed files. It is anticipated that this process can be completed in 2009 subject to funding.

Development under construction

A number of large developments commenced construction in 2007 including:-

1. Redevelopment of Thomond Park
2. Development of Hotel & Health Spa at Barrington Street & Pery Square
3. Offices On O'Connell St & Thomas St.

It is expected that the Opera Centre will commence development in early 2008.

General Promotional Work

The budget for 2007 included an increase in general promotional work of €130,000 from €285,000 to €415,000. It is proposed to further increase this allocation to €445,709 for 2008. Included in this provision are contributions towards Civic Week, Christmas Lighting, promotion of special events and the Limerick Co-ordination Office.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Regional Waste Management Plan

The first annual report on a Replacement Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 was presented to the Environment Strategic Policy Committee in October 2007. The annual report outlines how the region is progressing in relation to the targets outlined in the plan.

A regional waste management office under the stewardship of Limerick County Council, as the Lead Authority for Waste Management in the Region continues to co-ordinate and oversee the implementation of the plan. Limerick City Council contributes financially to the costs of the implementation of the plan and participates fully on all technical, operational and policy committees to ensure that the interests of the city are reflected.

Waste Collection Permit Regulations, 2001

Under the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations 2001, a total of 450 Waste Collection Permits have been issued to Waste Collectors in the Limerick, Clare and Kerry region. 27 Collection Permits have been issued to collectors whose principal place of business is based in Limerick City - 5 of these permits were granted in 2007. To date 22 permit holders have been audited by Limerick City Council staff.

Notices are served under Section 34 and Section 18 of the Waste Management Act 1996-2007 for breaches of the Waste Collection Permit Regulations 2001. During 2007, 20 notices were served under Section 34 and a further 20 under Section 18. Section 18 notices are issued to persons found carrying waste to determine if they are collecting waste for profit. Two Section 18 Notices were complied with, 2 were cancelled and 13 are awaiting a response

Roadside checkpoints were carried out during the year with Garda assistance at 2 locations in the City. The purpose of these checkpoints was to check for compliance with the Collection Permit Regulations and to increase awareness among the public.

Waste Management Permit Regulations 1998 - Waste Site Facilities

There are currently 12 active permitted sites for waste processing in the Limerick City area. The waste types and methods of processing are varied. During 2007, 1 new site permit was granted and 2 permits were renewed. Of the 12 permitted sites, 9 have been audited.

Waiver Scheme

The Council continued to provide a waiver scheme for low income families and old age pensioners during 2007. A provision of €530,000, an increase of €60,000 has been included in the proposed budget for 2008.

Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment Regulations 2005

There are 115 electrical and electronic retailers registered with Limerick City Council under the above Regulations. These retailers are obliged to take back old electrical equipment similar to the type they have sold. Spot checks were carried out on 15 of the larger electrical retailers in the city centre in 2007. A number of small non compliances with the regulations were noted and warning letters were issued. It is proposed to continue auditing retailers in 2008.

Environmental Awareness and Education

Limerick City Council continues to work towards the principals of waste management in accordance with the Replacement Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 with particular emphasis on waste prevention. The Council also continues to support home composting, the Green Schools Initiative, Gum Litter & Litter Awareness program and many other worthwhile initiatives.

The City Council uses recycled paper as part of its policy of leading by example in relation to waste management and procurement.

The support of the Council members in relation to the City's Fairtrade status was very much in evidence in 2007.

Recycling Facilities

Limerick City Council has provided 19 bring bank sites in the city and a mini Recycling facility at Park Road. Newspaper recycling was introduced at the Park Road Depot in 2007 and this facility continues to provide a recycling collection point for small waste electrical and electronic equipment.

Wetlands

Limerick City Council is responsible for the ecological resource of wetlands existing within the City Boundary. Wetland areas are important ecological systems that are under threat worldwide.

There are a number of initiatives underway in relation to wetlands. Work was undertaken in Westfields to curb reed growth in areas of the open water area. These efforts will continue in 2008. Maintenance and repair work of footpaths in the area has also been carried out. A wildflower meadow has been established on the Sallybank in Corbally and preparatory work is ongoing on the Baggot Estate Nature Park initiative.

Longpavement Rehabilitation

Work is ongoing on the rehabilitation works at Longpavement, under EPA License W0076-01. The work includes:-

- the collection and flaring of landfill gases
- the collection and treatment of leachate generated throughout the site
- the permanent capping of the site covering the landfill with a synthetic sealing material and soils to prevent rainwater seeping into the landfill
- reshaping and profiling of the landfill mass, associated civil engineering works and landscaping

The final picture of the restored landfill is not finalized but the plan is, to increase the biodiversity of the area, have a low maintenance management program and allow for increased passive recreation in the area. The plan will also include augmentation of existing wetlands on the site.

Litter Pollution

Limerick City Council's dedicated Enforcement unit continued to deal with matters related to litter, illegal dumping, monitoring of plastic bag levy, the ban on smoky coal, illegal transport of waste and wandering animals and dog licences during 2007. Set out below are some sample statistics for the year to date.

Number of complaints processed	2,268
On the spot litter fines	611
Number of households surveyed in respect of their waste disposal Arrangements	1,000
Section 18 Notices, Waste Management Act 1996 (requires any holder of waste to submit information in relation to their waste activities)	97
Section 55 Notices, Waste Management Act 1996 (requires any holder of waste to take certain measures in relation to the holding, recovery or disposal of waste in order to prevent or limit environmental pollution)	37

Air Pollution

As in previous year's results produced at the Council's three air monitoring stations at Moyross, Southill and City Centre did not exceed the smoke and sulphur dioxide levels allowed.

Enforcement Officers have begun inspections of retailers in the city and the four main suppliers of solid fuel based in the city have been visited. A programme of spot checks of 'bell men' selling coal in the city took place in February, and another programme of checks will be carried out before end of December 2007. The council will continue to enforce these regulations in 2008.

Street Cleaning.

Under the Council's street cleaning mandate, the Cleansing Department continues to place an emphasis on keeping the City Centre and the main gateways to the City free of litter. In addition a Rapid Response Unit was set up to deal with litter blackspots and illegal dumping. Gum soiling was again removed from our most heavily trafficked pedestrian areas. Currently the Environment Department in partnership with Union officials are reviewing the street cleaning schedule with a view to making it more efficient, effective and transparent.

Cemeteries Department

During 2007 130 additional grave spaces were provided at Mt. St. Lawrence as well as 140 additional spaces in Mt. St. Oliver. Improvement works were carried out to pathways in both cemeteries. On going provision and maintenance work on kerbing, pathways and driveways continues to be carried out in both cemeteries. A tree survey was carried out in Mt. St. Lawrence which resulted in a number of trees being removed. These trees were replaced by trees and mature saplings.

In the year to date 177 people have been buried in Mt. Saint Lawrence and 188 people have buried in Mt. Saint Oliver.

Fire and Rescue Service

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

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

Fire & Emergency Operations

Achievements for 2007 include:

- A general purpose utility vehicle was purchased to enhance service delivery.
- The service successfully attended 1737 incidents from 1st January to 31st October, 2007. Of this number, 1055 were fire incidents and 194 were road traffic accidents.
- Refurbishment of Fire Station – Line Rescue Training Area.
- Enhancement of Health & Safety measures.
- Work-related tests for recruit firefighters were conducted in-house for the first time.
- A number of training courses were provided for staff in the following areas – First Responder, Senior and Junior Officers Courses, National Incident Command System, Peer Supporter and CPR.

Plans for 2008 include:

- Block Training.
- Progress extension of Fire Station.
- Achieve a standard fire & rescue equipment inventory on the first turnout of fire appliances.
- Continue the roll out of swift water rescue training for fire-fighters.
- Further enhance the training regime within the Fire Brigade.
- Maintain and improve on standards of health and safety.
- Upgrade aerial appliance fleet.

Fire Prevention, Building Control & Dangerous Buildings Department.

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

Major Emergency Planning Section

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

Plans for 2008

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

FIRE SERVICE MOBILISATION AND COMMUNICATIONS:

The Munster Regional Communications Centre (MRCC) is located at the City Fire Station. The MRCC Project was set up to improve the speed of response and efficiency of the call-out system for the fire authorities in Munster and became operational in December, 1992.

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

In 2007, achievements included:

- Munster Regional Communications Centre handled in excess of 23,000 emergency calls from the public in the Munster Region.
- Ongoing development of geographic information systems in MRCC
- There have been significant developments of management information systems in accordance with the requirements of the MRCC and the participating fire authorities.
- Re accreditation to ISO 9001:2001 has been achieved over all business areas
- On-going development of new telecoms system
- Implementation of broadband backhaul pilot with Kerry County Council
- Commencement of regional mobile data project
- Further development of management information system analysis tools both internally in the MRCC and externally for the participating authorities
- Further development of regional mobile data system to bring risk information to front line personnel.
- Maintenance and development of ISO9001:2000 standard.

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 major emergencies.

Achievements in 2007 included:

- Provided ambulance cover for local inter-provincial and international rugby matches at Thomond park and other venues
- Provided crowd control for St. Patrick's Day Parade
- Continued the provision of transport for the Chernobyl Children Project
- Participated in courses on fire fighting both conventional and forest fires, inflatable boating, GPS, map reading and search management
- Launch of Civil Defence Strategic Plan for 2007-2010 at King's John's Castle

Plans for 2008 include;

- Development of water rescue capacity further
- Continue to support community activities and to enhance the capacity of the service to respond as a second line emergency service
- Implement programmes in accordance with the National Strategic Plan

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

PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

Parks General

The Parks Section is responsible for the management and development of public parks, public open spaces and civic decoration. During 2007 grass cutting was carried out on all verges, parks and open spaces on a regular basis. Flower and tree pruning and planting took place in all our public parks.

The second shelter in the Peoples Park was completed in March of 2007 and officially opened by Mayor, Joe Leddin. Work has commenced on the refurbishment of the shelter in O'Brien Park, Clare Street. This work is being carried out in partnership with Limerick Civic Trust. The railing around Arthur's Quay Park was removed following representations from the Members which has added to the security and enhancement of the Park. Work will be carried out on the limestone plinths to facilitate flower beds and some seating.

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

Development work at Shelbourne Park commenced in August 2007. The first stage of this project will be completed by 31st December 2007. The next stage involving grow-in will be completed by December 2008. Stage three, the provision of a children's playground, is scheduled to take place in 2008.

City Enhancement - Gateways

"Welcome to Limerick" signs were erected at the entrances to the City during 2007. Work, including grass cutting/edging, shrub/bulb planting, was carried out by the Parks Department at 10 of the gateways. Further work on enhancing and defining the gateways will be carried out in 2008.

Baggot Estate

It is proposed to thin out the trees in the urban forestry area of the Estate and provide walkways for pedestrian use during 2008. A survey was carried out on the mature trees during 2007 and it is intended to carry out tree surgery as recommended in the survey in 2008.

Playground Facilities

Ongoing work on the management and maintenance of playgrounds in the city parks was carried out in 2007. A proposal to improve and extend the playground in O'Brien Park will be progressed in 2008.

Grants for Community and Voluntary Groups

The Grant Assistance for Environmental Improvement Initiatives Scheme was introduced in 2003 to assist community and voluntary groups financially, in their efforts to improve the visual amenity of their area. This year €75,000 was allocated to 30 groups from all over the City. The type of work eligible for grant assistance included tree/shrub and flower planting, grass cutting, skip hire, equipment purchase and hire, etc. It is intended to continue this worthwhile Scheme in 2008.

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE

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

Limerick City Development Board

Review of Limerick City Development Strategy

In accordance with Local Government Circular LG 2/05A a comprehensive review of the Limerick City Development Board's Strategy for Economic Social and Cultural Development 2002-2012 was completed, and adopted by the Board in December 2005. The Board is currently monitoring the implementation of the key priority projects earmarked for completion over the next three years. Limerick City Council continues to uphold its commitments under this strategy and the recent production of the draft City Centre Strategy is a clear example of this as is the plan for the regeneration of St Mary's Park.

Funding for volunteering Measures

A successful application for funding was made by the City Development Board to the Dept. of Community Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs; €75,000 was allocated to the Board under the volunteering strand of the Cohesion Fund. This funding has been used to strengthen Community and Voluntary activity in Limerick City through a programme of support, recognition and training delivered through city-wide agency collaboration. This included the Community Voluntary Fair held in City Hall on the 17th November.

The Interagency Plan for Travellers Services

Limerick City Development Board facilitated the drafting of the Inter-Agency Plan for Traveller Services, this is a two-year action plan designed to improve the range of services delivered to travellers across the city. A working group was established by the Board and this group is overseeing the implementation of the action plan and reporting to the Board.

Local Anti-Poverty Strategy (LAPS)

A Local Anti-Poverty Strategy was developed on behalf of the Board by the Social Inclusion Measures (SIM) Working Group. The City Development Board submitted a proposal for funding to the Dept. of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and received €78,596 to fund the project. The project is now into its first year.

Sustainable Indicators Project

This project is lead by the University of Limerick; and to date has identified a set of measurable baseline sustainability indicators for Limerick city and environs, and a set of indicators for which data is available for the past and present, so that trends over time are clear. The final report is currently being drafted.

City Comhairle na nÓg

Limerick City Development Board in partnership with Limerick Youth Service hosted the Limerick City Comhairle na nÓg in November 2007, 52 young people attended the event, five delegates were selected to represent Limerick City at Dáil na nÓg in Dublin which will take place on the 18th February 2008. 18 young people also expressed an interest in participating in the Limerick City Youth Forum which meets monthly and offers young people a platform to voice opinions.

City of Learning

There are two key, interdependent purposes to establishing Limerick as a Learning City. The first is to support social and economic regeneration, by promoting awareness and understanding of how Limerick is changing and how the different elements of city life can interact more effectively in order to shape its future. The second is to support Lifelong Learning in Limerick, by encouraging individuals, groups, employers and institutions to involve themselves in learning throughout their lives. A data base on learning in the City was completed in 2007. Consultation has commenced on a draft Strategy for Limerick as a City of Learning. This will also feed into the regeneration strategies currently being drafted. A strategy for Limerick as a City of Learning will be completed in May 2008.

RECREATION AND SPORT

Municipal Golf Course

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

The Management Company continue to operate and manage the Golf Course. As well as promoting the public nature of the golf course, hosting regional inter club competitions and facilitating the running of other competitions, the company introduced a Junior Golf Programme, which has now been superseded by the Tiger Woods US First Tee Programme. Rathbane Golf Course was the second 1st Tee Affiliate Venue in Ireland after Druids Glen Golf Resort. This programme helps to develop important Life Skills in Young People through the medium of golf.

Limerick City Council are currently finalising plans to carry out further major improvements to the course in 2008. These works are being part funded by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and will further consolidate Rathbane Golf Courses standing as a top class golfing facility. Extensive improvement work to the course will commence in 2008 including tee boxes, bunkers, short game facility and others. These works will take place in full consultation with local councillors and members of the golf club.

St Endas Sports Complex

Limerick City Council co-operates with St Enda's school authority (who own the facility) in the operation through a Management Board of St Enda's Sports Complex. This facility provides public access for all on a pay as you go basis at socially inclusive rates. St Endas has a sports hall, fitness/dance studio, tennis courts, all weather pitch, twenty-five metre pool and sauna in the complex. Limerick City Council contributed the budgeted sum of €75,000 towards this facility in 2007. An additional once-off contribution of €40,000 was also contributed in recognition of its socially inclusive nature and the extra costs of providing such a facility. Limerick City Council have secured provisional approval of funding of €130,000 from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism which will be used to carry out maintenance and improvements to this valuable public facility. Limerick City Council and the school authority are working closely with the Southside Regeneration Company to ensure the inclusion of St. Enda's as part of the strategic plan for the area. In the interim Limerick City Council will continue to support the facility and have reserved €75,000 towards its costs in 2008.

Skateboard Park

The provision of additional recreational facilities for teenagers within the city is an objective of the Sport and Recreation Policy Framework Plan and a goal of the Development Plan. Limerick City Council at its monthly meeting of the 22nd of October, 2007 approved the Part 8 planning report, recommending the provision of a Skateboard Park in Mount Kennett, Dock Road. Limerick City Council with grant assistance from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism have committed a sum of €275,000 towards the provision of this much sought after facility in 2008. It is hoped to complete this project by summer 2008.

Support for Sporting Organisations

Limerick City Council's Annual Budget 2008 proposes the creation of a modest fund to assist sporting organisations develop their activities particularly for younger members of the community.

This fund of €35,000 will be disbursed to groups, who typically are not in receipt of other substantial state funding such as provided by the Sports Council, sports capital funding and others. Meetings will be held with Ward Councillors early in 2008 to help prioritize those organisations that are in greatest need of support.

Limerick City Council will also make a financial contribution to Limerick City Sports Partnership following their proposals to Council in late 2007. The scale of this contribution will be subject to available funding and following further discussions with the Sports Partnership.

Slí Na Sláinte

Limerick City Council in conjunction with the Irish Heart foundation is developing two new walking routes in the city. The development and promotion of these routes is seen as a positive measure in the drive to promote the health of the cities residents and also as a leisurely way for visitors to enjoy the heritage and vistas of the City.

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

The highlight for the library service in 2007 was the opening of the new library facility at Watchhouse Cross at the beginning of June. Already there have been 31,560 items issued to members of the public and 3,601 people have become members of the library.

Storytelling, Arts & Crafts and Computer Classes have been very successful and the Community Rooms have been in constant use. The community in the area are very appreciative and proud of this new facility on their doorstep. The Vice-President of Dell Manufacturing for Europe, Mr. Nicky Hartery paid a visit to the library some weeks ago to see this new facility. We received a very generous gift from Dell to purchase state of the art I.T. equipment, which is being used by all age groups even “Dells’ Belles” as Nicky Hartery christened our “Silver Learners”.

Another highlight was the book by Matthew Potter “First Citizens of the Treaty City: A History of the Mayors & Mayoralty of Limerick 1197-2007” launched by Minister John Gormley T.D. This book was researched and written in the library by Matthew over the last 3 years.

The Public Library User Survey (**PLUS**) was carried out in the 3 Branch Libraries during September. The responses were interesting with members of the public being extremely satisfied with the level of service and assistance offered by staff in all 3 Branches.

As we look forward to 2008 we are hoping to send an Application-in-Principle to An Chomhairle Leabharlanna for a new, modern and purpose built Central Library to be situated in a prominent City Centre location.

Children's Library Services

Children's Lending and Reference Library services are provided at all three library locations:- The Granary, Roxboro and Watchhouse Cross Community Library. The School's Library Service, which operates from The Granary, serves the library needs of thirty primary schools and 6,600 pupils in the city. The School Mobile Library Service operates during the school year providing a regular lending service to eighteen schools. Events for children, such as visiting authors, quizzes, talks, workshops, craft sessions, etc. are held throughout the year at all locations. Children's Book Festival takes place nationwide every October and Limerick City Library Service provides a full programme of events and competitions aimed at encouraging children to read and visit their local library.

Reference & Local Studies

2007 was an exciting year in the reference department as various new resources became available to the library and its patrons. Library users now have online access to the Irish Times Archive, Encyclopaedia Britannica on-line for all age groups, Ordnance Survey Ireland and Marketline Business Database. We have also launched a wide range of local studies and genealogy materials on the City Library website, which include the 1901 & 1911 census, full copies of various history books, journals and many other resources.

Library Statistics 2007.

Issues:	209,219
Membership:	13,587
Internet Usage in Hours:	20,204
Visits Granary only:	105,489

Free library membership is now available to all age groups since the opening of the new library at Watchhouse Cross. All the facilities at each branch are available to everyone who is a member.

Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum

There were 205 additions to the museum collection during the year. Notable among them were: a Victorian officer's sword by Delany, Limerick, a collection of memorabilia associated with the Harrison Lee Foundry, a bronze medal awarded by the Department of Science and Art to Benjamin Brew, Limerick, a collection of War of Independence and later political memorabilia associated with Michael Conway, commander of Patrickswell IRA during the War of Independence and late C19th tokens of McDonnell, Limerick,

The assistant curator acted as the Limerick representative on the Walled Towns Network. A grant of €50,000 was received from the Heritage Council for a report and plan on Limerick's walls. The findings and recommendations will be presented to Council during 2008.

A grant of €4,000 was received from the Dept. of Arts towards the mounting of an exhibition of photographs of St. Mary's Park c.1945 from a collection of glass negatives in the museum collection. This was opened by the Mayor on 22 November 2007.

There were 877,268 hits on the museum internet catalogue during the year, totaling nearly three million since the launch in June 2004, and email enquiries and comments were received from all over the world. Information exchange with these is two-way, particularly from the descendants of Limerick people living abroad. More than 2000 enquiries were dealt with in total, from personal callers, by phone, letter and email.

Visitor numbers were approximately 14,000.

ARTS SERVICES

The Arts Office provided a range of services in 2007 including information and advice, provision of support in developing the arts infrastructure, provision of financial support and opportunities for individual artists, Art in Education Projects for the South and Northside of the City and a Programme of Arts events that establishes Limerick as the Cultural Capital of the Mid West.

Highlights of 2007

The Arts Service co-ordinated the Cultural Services within City Council for a special event as part of the Bealtaine Festival. Limerick City Library, City Gallery, City Museum and the Social Inclusion provided a bus service to tenants in City Council housing estates which brought them to visit each facility where they were introduced to the nature of what was on offer in each of these facilities.

The Love Spotters Dance Group is a collective group of performers with special needs and magical talents. Daniel Vais founded the group during the Daghdha Dance Company Mentoring Programme 2005/06 with financial support from Limerick City Council and the Arts Council. The Love Spotters focus on dance, movement and live art, experimenting with different styles and forms. The works of The Love Spotters create a window to experience dance. This new dance group toured the country in 2007.

The Arts & City Gallery undertook workshops to explore the need for a children's art festival in Limerick. Bosca Filiochta, as part of Cuisle, worked with children from 8 – 12 years in creating images based on descriptive poems. Halloween Masks were created with children from 4 – 14 years of age. In December a Christmas craft workshop will take place for children.

This year **Music Factory** took place in Limerick at St. Mary's Band Hall. No prior music experience was needed, but children could bring along any instrument/soundmaker they could play. Diane Daly and fellow musicians from the Irish Chamber Orchestra, created a five-day adventure with music, movement and story-telling. Stories were absorbed from the richly historic city of Limerick and turned into music using rhythm-games, improvisation, drama and instrument making. The musical piece was performed for friends and family at St Mary's Cathedral and a special public performance as part of the MBNA Shannon International Music Festival.

Cuisle, provides a chance to meet with poets, get involved in literary discussions, take part in poetry slams or attend workshops as part of the four days of poetry. During Cuisle, Limerick honoured the power of poetry by hosting readings and workshops by local, national and international poets, 20 in all from 6 different countries. Prizes were awarded to Young Poets who came from all parts of the country. New books were celebrated through book launches; first time poets were encouraged to participate in the poetry slam; lunchtime readings to celebrate living Limerick poets; an open and lively discussion on 'Can Poetry Make Things Happen' brought together and harnessed all the energies of the audiences and the poets to rediscover the power and the pulse of poetry.

e v⁺ a 2007

29th March - 24th June 2007

Open e v⁺ a

A Sense of Place. Curator Klaus Ottmann (Germany/USA)

Young e v⁺ a puzzle map was designed for young people to have access to contemporary art through a map with clues to explore the exhibition displayed at LCGA. It was devised by artists Paul Aherne and Olatz Aizperu and was targeted at children between the age range 4-12.

Art Gallery

Limerick City Gallery of Art held **11** Contemporary Art exhibitions with **6** Solo Exhibitions by artists originating or based in Limerick and 5 group exhibitions with over 90 artists exhibiting. The exhibitions were accompanied by Artists lectures/talks hosted by the gallery. All the exhibitions included guided tours for schools and groups, with workshops held by exhibiting artists. The Exhibitions were: **Jan/Feb: Retrieval Unit** – Sean Lynch; **Patrick Hall 50 Years Painting** – Patrick Hall; **March/June: Open ev+a 2007 A Sense of Place** –Curated by Klaus Ottmann (USA/Germany), Irelands Pre-eminent Contemporary Art Exhibition, featuring the work of **30** artists. **July/August: Blind Spot** - Diana Copperwhite ; **Family Man** - Joe Duggan; & **The Colour of Surprise** ; **September/October: Here Now** - Michael Minnis; **Art from the Rucksack 3** – Japan/Ireland exchange exhibition; **November/December: The Divine Comedy** – Samuel Walsh; **Winter Exhibition 2007** – Limerick Art Society – Group Exhibition; **Presence** – Group Exhibitions by leading Irish Artists associated with Limerick.

LCGA loaned out artworks from The Permanent Collection for exhibitions in The National Gallery of Ireland; The Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda; The Court House Gallery, Ennistymon; & The Office Baroque Gallery, Antwerp, Belgium.

LCGA produced three catalogue publications, and co-produced 1 with the Model Arts & Niland Gallery, Sligo. Also produced were 6 small exhibition brochures, and 2 DVD's associated with exhibitions held in the gallery.

LCGA hosted three Performances, Dance and two music events, and six workshops/family events by artists, and an Adult Master Class drawing class.

LCGA also purchased five artworks for inclusion in the Permanent Collection; works by Diana Copperwhite, Joe Duggan, Siobhan O'Malley, Sean Lynch, Samuel Walsh.

AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE, CORPORATE SERVICES

ICT Department

In line with the strategic requirements for Limerick City Council the ICT department continued to support, recommend and provide the computer infrastructure, applications and systems required for all sections of Limerick City Council. Administrative and payroll functions were performed to the highest standards throughout the year.

During the year, the ICT Department continued its focus on consolidation and efficiencies within Limerick City Council. A new Government Networks LAN/WAN connection was enabled providing the ability for secure network communications between various government agencies and the necessary infrastructure for Limerick City Council to develop internet based services. Virtualisation technologies were introduced to replace older server systems while increasing the flexibility to provide new systems and reducing the environmental impact associated with server rooms. A new service desk system was deployed providing comprehensive support to end user and upgrades to the servers and databases system increased capacity, speed reliability and productivity

In partnership with the Limerick City Library Service the ICT team set up a state of the art PC suite, language laboratory and public internet access PC's in the new Library at WatchHouse Cross Limerick. The PC's are available to schools, community groups and members of the library for free high-speed internet access and educational purposes.

The City Councils corporate website (www.limerick.ie) was redesigned and presented to the public by the Mayor and City Manager in July. The project, which ran for the previous 12 months, focused on giving the site a fresh new look and on making it accessible to all of the 150,000 visitors each year. Departmental pages on the new site are now updated and maintained by the individual sections within the organisation which represents a new departure for web content management within the organisation. Two new websites for Childcare and LCDB are to be rolled out in the coming months with further cross-departmental website initiatives being planned for 2008. The team also worked on the development of a 'Time Recording' system for the organisation and on-going maintenance and updates of the corporate Intranet and its' associated applications.

A distributed spatial data capture module was also rolled out across the organisation in 2007. Centrally managed, this application allows individuals from any department to record and manage their own map-based information. The rollout has been successfully deployed in several departments including Fire, Environment, Planning and Housing. The promotion of this software has been supported by on-going data capture work in the ICT Department. Approximately 25% of the staff in City Hall are now interacting with a map-based applications. Further roll-out and development of this software is envisaged for 2008 as the Team concentrates on joining up the information from multiple departments for the first time using a standardised address database.

Partnership

The Partnership process, over the past number of years, has been a mechanism to secure delivery of change and modernisation in the City Council and is based on the model of National Partnership that has been very beneficial in securing economic and social progress. During 2007 this process continued with the establishment of new committees to work on specific items of change on a directorate basis. Long Service awards were held in 2007 and provision has been made for a number of partnership initiatives in 2008.

Performance Management Development System

As part of Sustaining Progress all local authorities are required to implement a system of Performance Management and Development (PMDS). Two trainers have been assigned to implement the PMDS and for 2008 all staff will have completed a personal development plan and each team will have completed a Team Development Plan. Training requirements are identified as part of the personal development plan and courses are organised to meet identified training needs.

Register of Electors

The 2007/2008 Register was published on the 1st February, 2007 and came into force on the 15th February, 2007. Work commenced in the summer on the preparation of the Draft Register for 2008/2009 that was published on the 1st November, 2007. Revised requirements specified by the Department of the Environment that are designed to improve the accuracy of the register came into force and were implemented.

Higher Education Grants

428 applications have been processed to date (up to and including 30th November, 2007) in 2007.

Official Receptions and Meetings

Details of Meetings, Civic Receptions and Mayoral Receptions for 2007 is as follows (the following figures cover the period up to and including 30th November, 2007) :

No. of Council Meetings (including Special Meetings)	21
No. of Area Meetings	8
No. of SPC meetings	23
No. of Civic Receptions	4
No. of Freedom of City Ceremonies	1
No. of Mayoral Receptions	20
No. of Tender Openings	18

Finance Department

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

Further efficiency improvements to payment processes were implemented in 2007. Preparations will commence in 2008 for the implementation of a new payroll, superannuation and human resources system. The new system is currently being procured by the Local Government Computer Services Board and will be rolled out to two pilot authorities in 2008. Limerick City Council has indicated its interest in implementing the new system and provision has been made in the 2008 budget for initial costs relating to this system of €20,000.

There will be a continued emphasis on cash flow management in 2008. Unfortunately in 2007 the cash position deteriorated during the year. A number of factors gave rise to this. An internal audit review of recoupment procedures is currently being carried out by the Internal Auditor in conjunction with Deloitte and Touche. The recommendations will be reviewed and where appropriate implemented in 2008. It is expected that this review and the implementation of its recommendations will improve the recoupment process.

The Accounts Receivable section implemented a new system that allows customers pay their rates and water bills by direct debit. A new e-payment system is to be introduced in 2008. It is planned to introduce further enhancements to the billing systems in 2008. The implementation of the new water meters onto the billing system will commence in early 2008. There will be a significant workload involved in the smooth transition from the current charges to the proposed new basis of charging.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government are currently recommending the implementation of a costing system for Local Authorities. Limerick City Council has established a project team and commenced the implementation of the system. Once implemented the system will change the format of the budget. The 2008 budget will be re-formatted to the new format by the end of February 2008. A copy of the re-formatted budget will be circulated to members.

Property Management

The Property Management Section will continue to coordinate and oversee all property transactions in 2008. The section has now been merged with future planning and derelict sites sections to form an Economic Development Section. Provision has been made in the budget for the implementation of the economic development actions contained in the City Centre Strategy, the employment of an executive planner to work on future planning and additional resources for the implementation of derelict sites legislation.



LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL

ANNUAL BUDGET

For the Year Ending 31st December 2008

CERTIFICATE OF ADOPTION

I hereby certify that at the Budget meeting of Limerick City Council held this 18th day of December 2007 the City Council by resolution adopted for the financial year ended 31st December 2008, the Budget set out in Tables A and B and by Resolution determined in accordance with the said Budget the Rates set out in Table B to be the annual rate on valuation to be levied for that year for the purposes set out in that Table.

Signed: _____
Mayor

Countersigned: _____
City Manager

Date: 18th December 2007