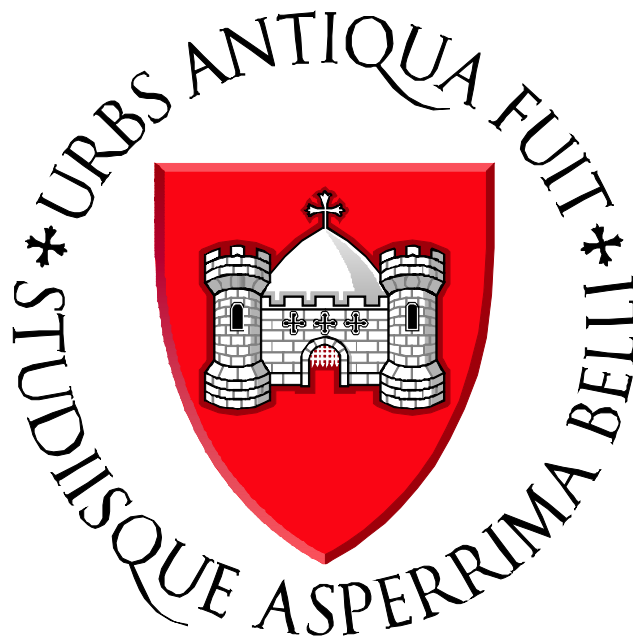


LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL



DRAFT ANNUAL BUDGET FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST DECEMBER 2010

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**LIMERICK CITY COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE CATHRACH LUIMNIGH**

Árus na Cathrach
Luimneach

15th December 2009

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

**Annual Budget for the year
1st January 2010 to 31st December 2010**

Introduction

The recession in the Irish economy has continued to deepen during 2009, with a continuing fall in consumer confidence, stagnation of the property sector, businesses going into liquidation, examinership or forced to close down, rising unemployment, and dramatic fall in Government receipts from taxation. As per the latest Department of Finance report, income from taxation is at 2003 levels, whereas Government expenditure in 2009 is 70% above the level it was in 2003, therefore necessitating significant adjustments to be made.

During 2009 a number of measures were introduced to stabilise the public finances and to commence a return to a sustainable fiscal position. For Limerick City Council some of these measures included:

- Road grants halved mid year during 2009 (Reduced to €2.9m in August '09 from initial allocation of €4.7m).
- Reduction mid-year in the Local Government Fund (LGF) of 3.22% (reduction of €367,462), bringing Local Government Fund allocation to €1,050,841 in June 2009. This revised is much lower compared to LGF allocation received for 2008 of €12,258,639 (reduction of €1,207,798).
- Introduction of Non-Principal Private Residence (NPPR) charge (i.e. €200 per residential unit) to compensate for reduction in Local Government Fund. The introduction of the NPPR charge has helped to reduce the negative impact of the reduction in the Local Government Fund. The amount budgeted for in 2010 is €1,000,000.
- Request by central Government for an 8% reduction in the cost of Professional & Consultancy Fees. Tendering processes have been commenced in 2009, which should ensure such costs being controlled in 2010.

- Request for 3% cut in payroll costs by central Government, and this was followed by a staffing embargo in the public sector. The 3 % payroll cuts were to be achieved by non-replacement of staff leaving, retiring or contracts not being renewed.
- Staffing embargo in place, and in exceptional circumstances the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government have the discretion to sanction any appointments for periods greater than six months in duration.

Other measures that are currently being implemented in 2010 in order to introduce further efficiencies and value for money in Limerick City Council include the introduction of fortnightly payroll (to be implemented in January 2010), and the introduction of new CORE Human Resource/ Superannuation. Limerick City Council are also looking at the possibility of introducing a central customer service unit, and also reviewing core public services with a view to obtaining better value.

Budgets brought to you in previous years have been expansionary with service and works programme initiatives being developed year on year. The circumstances in which we operate have changed as outlined above. We must reflect economic realities and have due regard for those who benefit from our services and those contributing to the costs of service in the preparation and adoption of budget 2010.

Economic Outlook

The short and medium term economic outlook points to a period of contraction. Ireland is a small open economy with consequent vulnerability to global market shifts. This harsh and difficult external environment has and will cause considerable pressure on the Irish economy. GDP (a measure of level of productive output in the state) has fallen by around 7½ per cent over the last year, which is the largest fall since records began. Average GDP for 2010 as a whole is projected to be down by around 1¼ per cent from the average level in 2009.

Tender prices for many new projects have also fallen back significantly thus enabling us to get better value for money. Such savings should continue to be replicated in 2010.

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

It should be noted that the Minister for Finance in his Budget 2010 speech outlined that “an adjustment in day to day spending of about €2 billion for 2011” has been “penciled in”, which indicate likely further costs reductions for Budget 2011 for Limerick City Council.

Budget 2010

In presenting the Annual Budget for the year ended 31st December 2010 to Council, I wish to take this opportunity, to summarise the financial position of Limerick City Council at 31st December 2008. The Annual Financial Statement of Limerick City Council for the year 2008 shows that the accumulated Balance on the Revenue Account is a credit position of €178,404 at 31st December 2008 (compared to the accumulated Credit Balance on the Revenue Account at 31st December 2007 of €120,870).

Current outturn figures indicate that the Revenue Credit will be maintained in 2009. 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 2010 budget reflects the need to continue the strong financial management ethos while making every effort to meet the ever increasing demands on the services of Limerick City Council.

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

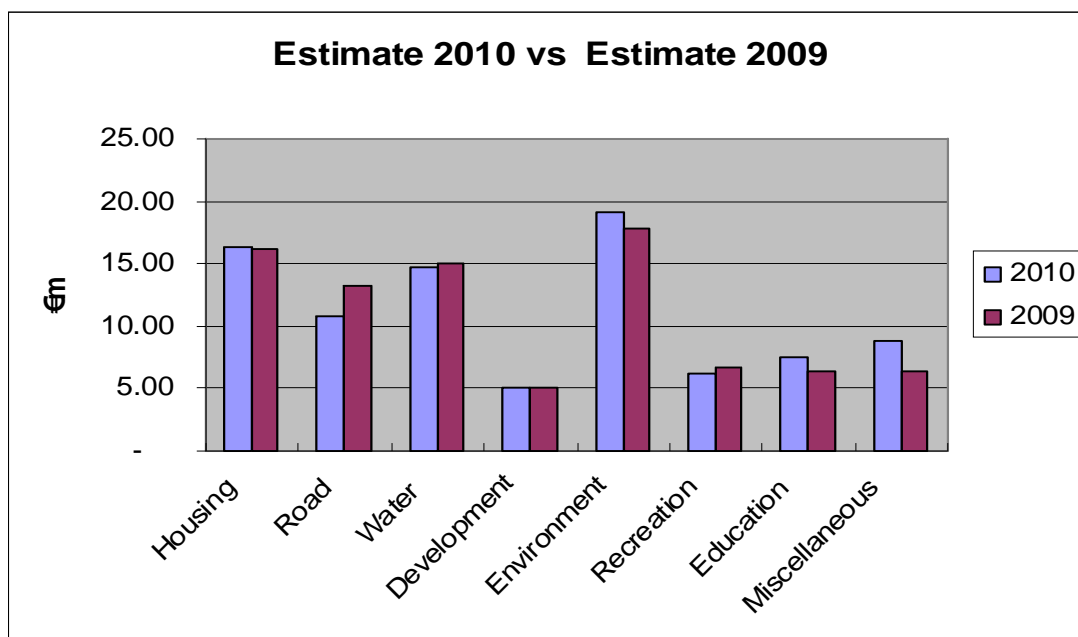
I will now set out the proposals for Expenditure and Income for 2010.

Expenditure – 2010

The Budget for 2010 provides for expenditure of €88.40 million. This represents an increase of almost €346,264 over the Budget for 2009, a decrease of 0.04%. The following table sets out the expenditure by Division:

	Budget 2010	Budget 2009
1. Housing and Building	16,277,882	16,240,436
2. Road Transportation and Safety	10,716,849	13,252,956
3. Water Supply and Sewerage	14,704,617	14,980,811
4. Development Incentives and Controls	4,999,501	5,055,795
5. Environmental Protection	19,144,370	19,737,125
6. Recreation and Amenity	6,241,610	6,673,528
7. Agriculture, Education, Health & Welfare	7,521,899	6,377,907
8. Miscellaneous Services	8,824,635	6,429,069
TOTAL	88,401,363	88,747,627

The following graph depicts estimated expenditure by Division for 2010, compared to 2009.



Payroll and Pensions

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

- The ***pension levy***, which has reduced their pay by an average of nearly 7 per cent (this money is retained by Limerick City Council, but it's deducted from the overall Local Government Fund allocation).
- Overall staffing numbers have been reduced by the moratorium and career breaks (2 staff leaving on career break). No staff availed of the incentivised early-retirement scheme in Limerick City Council during 2009. There is a large number of staff due to retire in 2010, with a consequent increase in the sum provided in Pensions and Gratuities.

While acknowledging the above changes upon staff in the public sector, the Minister for Finance outlined further pay cuts in his Budget 2010 speech as follows (which have been reflected in the Draft Budget 2010 as set out before you):

With effect from 1 January 2010 staff pay will be cut as follows:

- a reduction of 5 per cent on the first €30,000 of salary;
- a reduction of 7½ per cent on the next €40,000 of salary; and
- a reduction of 10 per cent on the next €55,000 of salary.

This reduction in payroll costs has had the effect of reducing payroll by €1.56m. Such pay cuts will not be applied to existing public service pensioners as outlined by the Minister for Finance in his budget speech, and in order to avoid a destabilising rate of retirement among older public servants, the Minister further outlined that the pension entitlements of those retiring in 2010 will not be affected. Of the €1.56m payroll reduction, 35% (€0.55m) will have to be returned to the central Exchequer as per

Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government circular, dated 11th December 2009.

The details of payroll costs are noted below for 2010 and 2009:

Payroll versus non-payroll	Draft Budget 2010	Adopted Budget 2009
Wages & Salaries	27,133,496	30,403,781
Pensions	12,709,404	10,411,326
	<u>39,842,901</u>	<u>40,815,107</u>

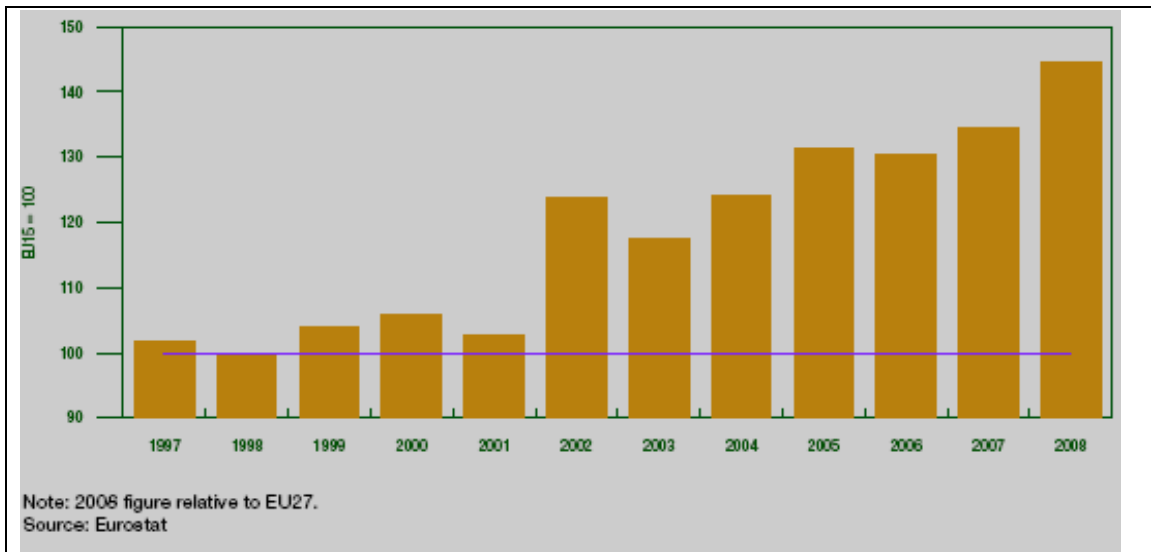
To continue to minimize the increase in payroll costs in 2010 and to comply with the Government directive to reduce payroll costs a number of measures have been reflected in the budget. These include the non renewal of temporary contracts, non filling of vacancies that arise in 2010 along with the non filling of a number of vacancies that arose in 2009 and reductions in overtime and allowances. The pay costs and staff numbers will continue to be examined during 2010 in order to identify further savings where possible.

Non-Payroll Costs

There are a number of new costs and unavoidable increases in current costs facing the City Council for 2010. I have made every effort to maintain expenditure in critical areas. In particular insurance, public lighting, energy, overdraft, loan financing and provision for rates refunds and bad debts provide a significant drain on resources. Details of proposals are set out in the following pages.

Non-Payroll costs, particularly utilities, are a significant cost. Irish electricity prices increased by 70% between January 2000 and January 2007, twice the average rate of increases across the EU-15 (32.8%). Non-wage costs compare poorly with other countries across a range of cost types. This was highlighted in the National Competitiveness Council's benchmarking exercise, which showed that Ireland performed poorly in property costs (both purchase and rental), utilities costs and a range of domestic services such as accountancy, information technology and legal services fees. (Davys, 2009). The government have a regulatory role when there is reduced competition in the market, and such regulation is in the form of the energy regulator. There has been no significant change in Ireland's electricity prices during 2009.

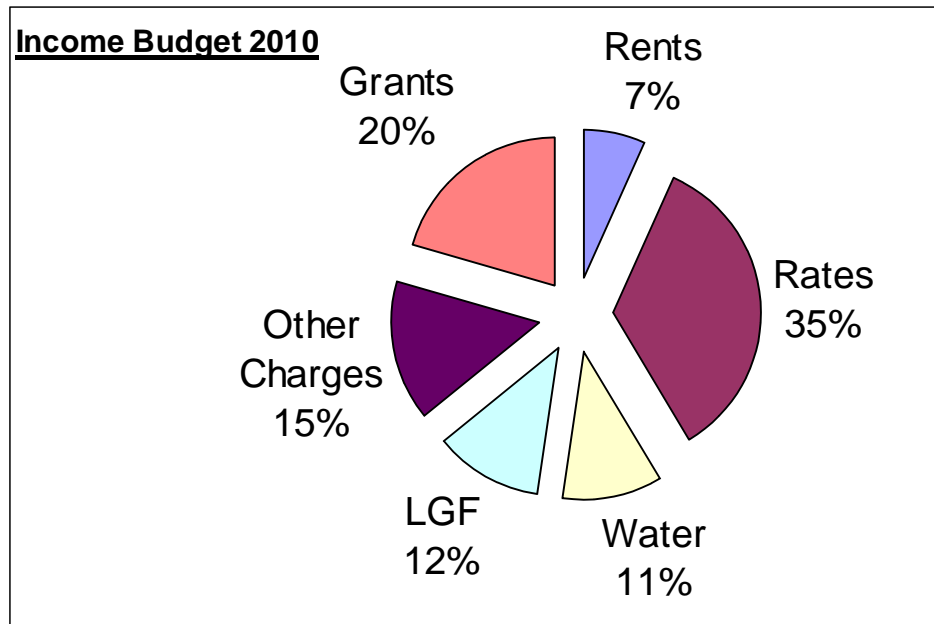
Energy prices indirectly impact on wages and directly impact on non-pay costs, and generally the cost of doing business. The graph below highlights industrial electricity prices in Ireland relative to the EU average rate, with Ireland significantly above the EU average, which illustrates how much more expensive electricity is for businesses in Ireland than the average EU rates. Such costs need to be addressed at national level.



Industrial Electricity Prices in Ireland relative to the EU (Baseline 100), extracted from Central Bank Quarterly Bulletin, Spring, 2009

Telecommunications rates and specifically mobile telephony rates were found to be very high in Ireland according to the National Competitiveness Council (NCC), Annual Report 2008. Limerick City Council has successfully tendered for mobile telephony services and has managed to reduce down such costs significantly during 2009.

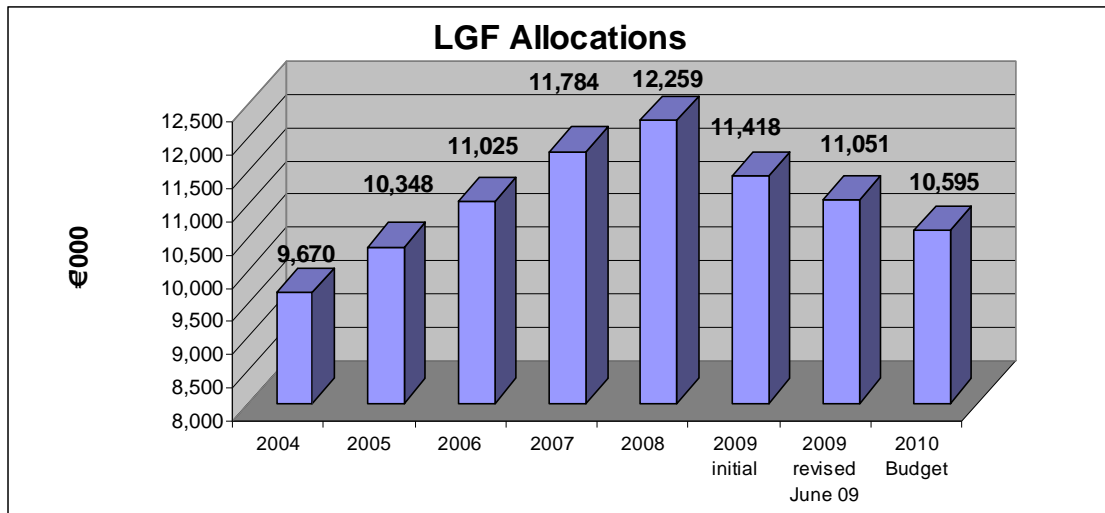
Income Proposals – 2009



The Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government has requested that local authorities exercise restraint in setting any increases in commercial rates and local charges for 2010, in order to support competitiveness in the economy, nationally and locally, and to protect the interests of communities. In line with this request and in recognition of the difficult trading conditions for Retailers/ Businesses in the Limerick City Council area, this draft Budget 2010 there is no increase proposed in the Annual Rate on Valuation, and no increase in Water/Waste Water Charges proposed.

Local Government Fund

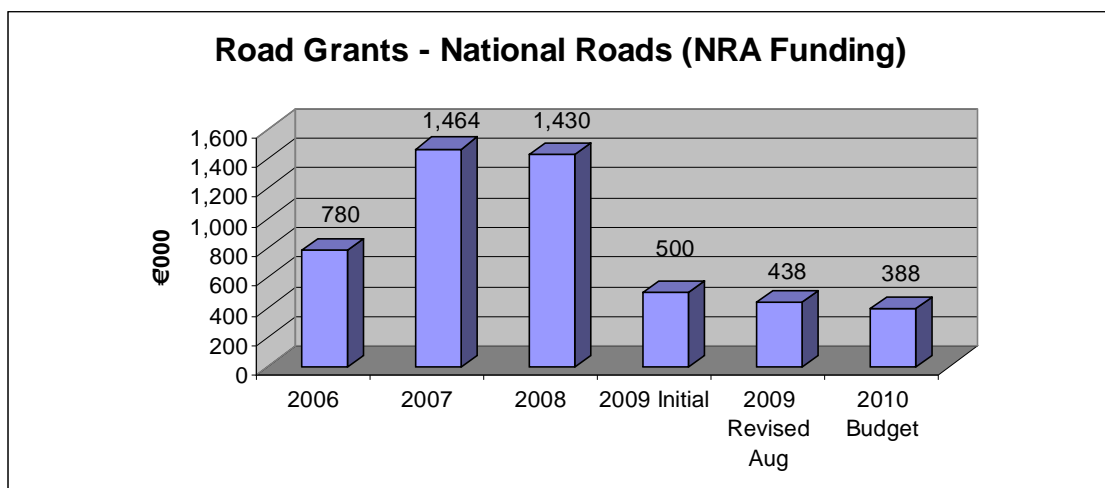
The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government have advised that Limerick City Council's Local Government Fund (LGF) Allocation for the year 2010 is €10,595,040. The initial LGF allocation in 2009 was €11,418,303, which was subsequently revised downwards on 24th June 2009 to €11,050,841. The 2010 allocation represents a 7.2% decrease (€23,263) from the 2009 initial allocation as set out in the graph below. The impact of the reductions in the Local Government Fund have been lessened by the introduction of the Non-Principal Private Residence during 2009, which will result in Euro 1,000,000 income for Limerick City Council during 2010.

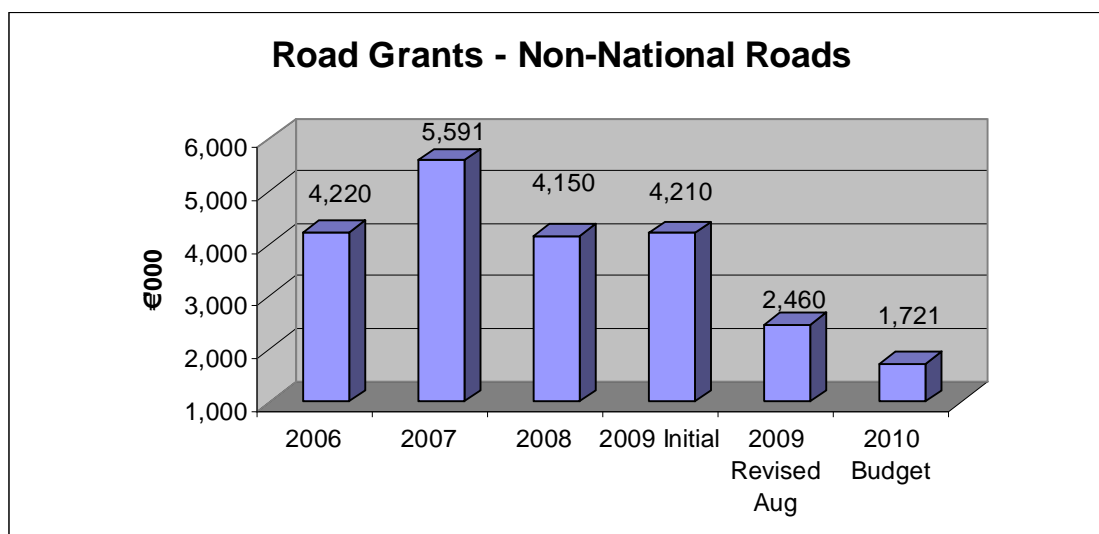


This reduced allocation arises through a reduced level of buoyancy in the Motor Tax yield and financial management measures applied as part of overall control of public sector spending.

Road Grants

There has been a significant reduction in road grant allocation during 2009 and this trend is expected to continue for 2010. Details of the funding reductions during 2009 and the expected income figures for 2010 are noted below. Such reductions will impact on the roads programme Limerick City Council is able to deliver during 2010.





Commercial Rates and Other Income:

The effective valuation of 396,362 (2009) has increased by 4,673 to 401,035 for 2010. This represents an increase of 1.17%. The increase in valuation primarily arises as a result of a back-log of valuations being valued by the Valuation Office.

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

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

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

This Council has demonstrated a commitment to the competitiveness of the City by being the first Local Authority to reduce the rates charge in adopting the annual budget for 2006. This initiative was continued in the 2007 and 2008 budgets. It is proposed to leave the Annual Rate on Valuation at the 2009 level for Budget 2010, which is: €76.4576.

In 2009, Limerick City Council had the fourth highest Annual Rate on Valuation of the main 34 local authorities. This is despite Limerick City Council making considerable cost savings since 2004 to date.

Local Authority Name	2009
Kerry County Council	80.35
Wicklow County Council	76.78
Roscommon County Council	76.66
Limerick City Council	76.46
Cork County Council	74.75
Donegal County Council	74.46
Cork City Council	74.05
Clare County Council	72.99

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. In light of this the *formation of the Limerick Local Government Committee* is welcomed. It is hoped this report's recommendation will ensure the city maximises its potential under the National Spatial Strategy, and enable Limerick City Council in meeting the challenges it faces in regenerating the city.

Water/Waste Water Charge:

Despite no confirmation of grant-aid from central government towards water or waste water costs being received, it has been decided that the consolidated (water and waste water) volume charge for 2010 is proposed to remain at the 2009 charge at €2.30 per m³ and the consolidated standing charge is proposed at €300 per annum.

New sources of income from Budget 2011 onwards

As per Minister Lenihan's budget speech on 9th December the following work will commence in 2010, which will impact on Local Government funding when implemented (likely to be 2011 onwards), and reduce down the dependency on funding from central Government for local authorities:

- The Government have "accepted the recommendations of the Commission on Taxation on the need for a *property tax*. Considerable ground work will need to be done before a Site Valuation Tax can be introduced. Work will shortly begin on the registration of ownership and the valuation of land".
- "A commitment to introduce a system of *water metering for homes*. Preparations are underway. *(Domestic) Water charges, when introduced, will be based on consumption above a free allocation*. Further details will be announced by the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government".

Another initiative announced by Minister Lenihan in his Budget 2010 speech was an *efficiency review of local authorities*, his speech outlines the following:

“The Government has decided to undertake an Efficiency Review of Local Authorities. This work will begin immediately and report by mid 2010”. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is to establish a Special Group to undertake a new independent efficiency review of local authorities. The Group will examine the cost base of local authorities and advance a new efficiency drive to achieve greater value for money, best use of resources, eliminate inefficiencies and contribute to the national requirement to address the imbalance in the public finances. The Group is to complete its work by mid 2010.

Conclusion

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

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

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 Kevin Kiely and his predecessor, Councillor John Gilligan 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, Mr. Oliver O’Loughlin and their respective teams for their commitment and high quality work. I am very grateful to all the staff in the Finance Department, in particular Mr. Pat Murnane, Mr. Mark Connolly, Ms Irene Griffin, Ms. Angela Murphy and Ms. Deirdre Byrne, for the many hours of work involved in the compilation of this Budget.

I look forward to the full support of the Members at the Statutory Budget Meeting to be held at 4pm on Tuesday, 22nd December 2009.

Tom Mackey
City Manager

SOCIAL POLICY & HOUSING

Housing Capital Programme in 2009

Government Housing Policy is “to enable every household to have available an affordable dwelling of good quality, suited to its needs, in a good environment and, as far as possible, at the tenure of its choice”. Good quality housing is the bedrock of communities. The City Council is the housing authority for the city and has a strong tradition in the direct provision of housing as well as a range of housing options and services. While continuing with construction, the Council has in recent years also expanded its house purchase programme. The availability of capital is dependent on exchequer funding and the state of government finances. In the period 2005-2008, the Council spent €13m in capital housing services. This investment continued during 2009 with considerable capital resources being expended and the funding role of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government is acknowledged. The estimated outturns on the principal exchequer funded programmes for 2009 are as follows:-

Housing Construction/Acquisition	€10.0m
Regeneration	€10.0m
Home Improvements	€1.65m
Capital Assistance Scheme	€12.0m
Energy Efficiency	€0.50m
Overall Total	€34.15m

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

It is now widely acknowledged that there is undue concentration of social housing in Limerick city. As a result of this the council is supply constrained within the current city boundary with a high dependence on casual vacancies. As regeneration progresses it is possible that the supply of casual vacancies will decline.

Glasgow Park Remedial Works

Work has commenced on the remedial repairs to the above houses and it is expected that these will be completed in 1st quarter of 2010.

Hyde Road & Bourke Avenue Flat Complexes

Following representations from Councillors, considerable and welcome progress has been made in the de-tenanting/demolition of the above obsolete flat complexes. This programme will be completed shortly.

Regeneration

The council has a team of 8 staff employed to facilitate Regeneration. Considerable and welcome progress has been made on the regeneration programme during 2009 in Moyross, Southill, Ballinacurra Weston and Saint Mary's Park. The total budget for Limerick Regeneration in 2009 was €24.65m of which €10.0m was allocated to the Council. The Council will spend more than this and indeed since the commencement of the process, has spent in excess of €30m on regeneration. This work will continue in 2010, again with the funding support of the Department of the Environment. An action plan will be prepared for 2010 for consideration by the members of the council.

Housing Needs Assessment

A statutory Housing Needs Assessment was carried out as of 31st March 2008 and revealed that a total of 1,928 households were considered to be in need of housing. The previous assessment carried out in March 2005 showed a net need of 845 households. This represented an increase of 128% in a 3 year period. In effect the net waiting list is rising by 30 new households per month. Data for 2009 shows that there is a continuing high level of new applications for housing. Possible reasons for such a large increase may include a rise in applications from non national households and more rent supplement applications opting for local authority housing. It is likely that owing to the deterioration in the economy that this growth in the waiting list will accelerate. The Housing Department is currently considering how best to respond to this increased demand through a range of social housing options.

Rental Accommodation Scheme (R.A.S.) and Housing Standards

The implementation of the Rental Accommodation Scheme has continued in 2009 with a total of 90 transfers completed. The Council has been very active in this area for a number of years with over 300 households now accommodated under the scheme. Expenditure in 2010 on RAS is estimated to be c. €3.3m and is fully recouped from the state. The Scheme caters for the needs of persons in receipt of rent supplement for 18 months or longer and who have a long term housing need. The aim of the scheme is to provide good quality rented accommodation with security of tenure for qualifying applicants. It is anticipated that an additional 100 qualifying applicants will be catered for under the Scheme in 2010. The target for inspections under the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008 in 2009 is 550. The Council is one of the most active housing authorities in this area in the country. This improved regulation coupled with

transfers under RAS means the volume of sub-standard accommodation in the city has declined greatly.

Management and Maintenance of Estates

A Housing Inspector was appointed in 2008 who is responsible for ensuring that tenants comply with the terms of their tenancy agreements in relation to the upkeep of their homes and other matters.

This official has carried out almost 500 inspections in 2009 to ensure that dwellings are properly maintained.

The Council also has a very active anti social behaviour unit who opened and investigated almost 280 cases/reports in 2009 with a 78% satisfactorily closed

Expenditure in Estates

A sum of €200,000 is being provided in 2010 for Social and Community Grants. In addition to the above, a further sum of €260,000 is being allocated to fund estate groups located in O'Malley Park, St. Mary's Park, Keyes Park, Carew/Kincora, Watergate, Our Lady of Lourdes, Moyross and Saint Munchins. Works carried out directly by the council will also be funded from this budget.

Community Safety Partnership Scheme

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

It is important to note that delivery of both the grant and the community safety partnership is dependent on exchequer finances under the Sustainable Communities Fund.

Housing Grants

As a result of a Government decision, responsibility for Housing Aid for the Elderly was transferred from the HSE to Local Authorities in 2008 and re-named Housing Aid for Older People. The Council now operates three types of housing grants, viz:- Housing Adaptation Grant, Mobility Aids Grant and HAOP. Councillors are aware that there is a very high level of interest and applications for all grants but HAOP in particular. A special report was submitted to Council on the operation of these schemes in September

2009 showing that 339 applications were received in the first eight months of the year and that the schemes were oversubscribed. The Council received an initial allocation of €60,000 for the above schemes in 2009 and was then notified of a supplementary allocation of €457,000 which will allow an overall expenditure of €1,417,000 in 2009. This allocation will be fully utilised. A sum of €350,000 is being provided from the council's own resources in 2010 to fund grants .

Housing Maintenance

The Housing Section services a rented stock of c. 2,800 units and maintains 7 halting sites. Services are provided to houses in the Northside from the Moyross Depot and in the Southside by the Rathbane Depot. A dedicated re-lettings crew operates from Garryowen, dealing with in excess of 120 casual vacancies per annum. The budget for maintenance, repair and improvement for 2010 will be €3.1 million. Over 1,600 requests for repairs are dealt with annually. Over €8m has been spent in capital improvements on traveller accommodation in the past two years but maintenance costs in 2009 will be over budget. It is intended that a report on this matter will be brought to Council in 2010.

Homeless Services

In 2008 the Government launched “The Way Home: a Strategy to Address Adult Homelessness 2008-2013” which has the aim of eliminating long term homelessness and the need to sleep rough in Ireland by 2010. The focus for the Council will be on the provision of units for the City’s homeless population with special regard to the needs of single persons. There will be greater inter and intra agency cooperation with all statutory and voluntary agencies. In 2009 the open access hostel moved from Bridgeland House to McGarry House and this transfer will facilitate greatly improved services for homeless persons in accordance with the council's homeless strategy.

RAPID Programme

The RAPID programme in Limerick is based in 3 areas of the City. In 2009 the programme has helped to secure funding for works such as; traffic calming measures estate enhancement works such as improvements in public lighting and removal of graffiti. The graffiti removal programme commenced in November 2008.

Energy Efficiency Programme

This is a new programme introduced by the Department in 2009 and the Council received a capital allocation of €390,000 with an element of supporting matching funding from the Council in respect of this programme. These monies can be used to fund improvements to the council's rented stock to deliver an energy efficiency rating of C1. This is a high rating level that is not easily achieved.

The Council is currently carrying out works to almost 50 dwellings and anticipates that the necessary works to 20 of these dwellings will be completed in 2009. It is intended to continue with this scheme in 2010, subject to Departmental funding.

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE – ROADS & WATER SERVICES

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

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

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

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

Roads and Traffic

The Roads and Traffic Section of Limerick City Council is primarily responsible for the design and construction of roads, maintenance of the existing street network, traffic management and safety, provision of public transport facilities, strategic transportation planning, regulation of street use and the management of public lighting. In addition to this the roads and transportation department are also responsible for the delivery of projects under the City Centre Strategy and the Riverside Strategy including Bedford Row, Thomas Street and Clancy Strand, O’Callaghan Strand and the Orbital Route. The transportation department is also playing a role in forward planning and are currently project managing studies such as The Mid West Area Strategic Plan and the public Transport Feasibility Study.

The public road network in the city is 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. Additional declassification of the National road network in the city is expected this year with the opening of Limerick Tunnel. This provides challenges to the city council in respect of reduced maintenance

grants from the NRA and the necessity to renew all the cities road signage to reflect the reclassified road network.

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 now expected to be completed in mid 2010 and this new river crossing is expected to remove circa 20,000 vehicles per day from Limerick city centre over the next 20 years. The contracting consortium is Direct Route and they have won a 35-year concession from the NRA to build, maintain and operate this road.

2. Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road

Limerick City Council appointed Malone O'Regan McGillicuddy Consultant Engineers for the design of the Coonagh to Knockalisheen Distributor Road which includes a link road to Moyross. This road will open up the north side of the city, is a vital component for the regeneration Moyross, and may form part of an overall Northern Distributor Road of Limerick City. Progress on the scheme has been good during 2009 with the constraints study, route selection process and site surveys now complete. The EIS for the scheme was completed in June and will be currently awaiting departmental approval to submit this to An Bord Pleanála. Limerick City Council is proposing the construction of a dual-carriageway to high quality urban standards with at-grade junctions. The scheme will involve the construction of two new rail bridges and the upgrading of Knockalisheen road back into Watchhouse Cross. This scheme, subject to funding and approval by the Department of Transport and a favourable outcome from the EIS process should be fully designed and tendered by the end of 2010 with construction starting in 2011. The estimated cost of this scheme including land Acquisition is circa €35 million.

3. Road Maintenance

In 2009 Limerick City Council carried out in excess of 100,000m² road surface overlay and strengthening works at various locations throughout the city including major resurfacing works at;

1. Condell Road (N18)
2. St James Street/Gerald Griffin St
3. North Circular Road
4. Howleys Quay
5. Honans Quay
6. Harveys Quay
7. Glentworth Street Lower

8. Hartstonge Street Lower
9. Old Dublin Road
10. Castle Park Moyross

In addition to the above almost 15,000m² footpaths were reconstructed throughout the city. The ongoing programme of road and footpath restoration will be continued in 2009. Again priority will be given to the reduction and minimisation of risk with specific road works to be carried out in a number of areas in accordance with the funding that is expected to be allocated to Limerick City Council by the NRA and the Department of Transport in 2010. It is worth noting that Road Maintenance grants provided by the NRA and the DoT were significantly reduced by the Mini Budget of April 2009 resulting in less road pavement renewals been carried out. These grants are not expected to be increased during 2010 and are most likely to be further reduced.

A roads programme will be brought before the Council in early 2010 in line with available funding. This program will take into consideration all requests for road improvements received from members during 2010.

4. City Centre Remodelling Project

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

(a) 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 was completed by John Craddock Civil Engineering Limited in early 2009. The completion of this scheme will mark a significant milestone in the transformation of the City centre as remodelling will have been completed on a central spine in the city centre stretching from Harvey's Quay up to Wickam Street including Bedford Row and all Of Thomas Street including streets and lanes of these streets.

(b) 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. A significant milestone on this scheme was reached during 2009 when contracts commenced for the reconstruction of Sexton Street and the construction of a new Link Road at

Cathedral Place. Extensive consultation has been carried out with all stakeholders during 2007 and 2008, to create plans that best reflects the type of city centre the citizens of Limerick city will desire in the future.

(e) **William Street Remodelling**

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

This scheme was advanced through the detailed design phases during 2009 and is now ready for tendering.

5. Public Transport

Limerick city centre like other cities suffers from traffic congestion at peak times as a result of our over dependence on car based transport. Several initiatives at reducing our level of dependency on cars are currently being promoted including the improvement of Public Transport Facilities and the provision of bus Lanes. These initiatives will help reduce bus journey times and result in an increase in the frequency of service thus offering choice and a better service to people choosing to use public transport 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. Work has continued during 2009 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

Contracts in excess of €3.5 million (Fully funded by DoT) were awarded during 2009 for the construction of Green routes in Limerick City. these projects are summarised below;

Mulgrave Street

The construction of a green route between The Pike and Cathedral place along Mulgrave Street is well advanced and should be completed within the next 8 weeks. Mulgrave Street is benefiting from improved footpaths, public lighting, surfacing and pedestrian crossings as part of the scheme.

Condell Road

Construction has commenced this Autumn on the extension of the Green Route and Cycle Paths on the Condell Road out to Clonmacken Roundabout. This route will enhance access to the city for buses coming from Shannon and Galway and for the rerouting of some north side city bus services. This route will also provide access to the city from a further Northside Park & Ride facility.

Childers Road

Limerick City Council are currently working on designs for the widening of Childers Road between the Parkway and Killmallock road to accommodate bus lanes and improved capacity junctions.

Ennis Road

Construction is now almost complete on the construction of a section of Green Route on the Ennis Road between the Maternity Hospital and Sarsfield Bridge. This route will enhance access to the city for buses by giving them a level of priority on the advance to the Sarsfield Bridge Lights. The area where the green route has been constructed has

benefited from improved footpaths, public lighting, surfacing and pedestrian crossings as part of the scheme.

Public Transport Feasibility Study

Limerick City Council is required by the department of transport to carry out a public transport feasibility study to look at the infrastructural requirements of the city for the next twenty years. This study is examining the feasibility of providing Light rail service, bus Rapid Transit systems, High quality Bus Corridors and Park and Ride facilities for Limerick Commuters. This study should be completed by April 2010.

Walking & Cycling Strategy

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

6. Riverside Strategy

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

a) O'Callaghan Strand

A contract to create a riverside promenade at O'Callaghan Strand and to upgrade the roadway was awarded to Murphy International in 2008 and completed in early 2009. This project has delivered a beautiful riverside promenade constructed in high quality materials with first class public lighting and riverside railings where users can now safely enjoy the fantastic riverside environment.

b) Clancy Strand Boardwalk

A contract for the construction of a Boardwalk on Clancy Strand between the new riverside park and the Treaty Stone was completed during 2009 by Carillion/Irishenco. This boardwalk 150 metres long and cantilevering three metres out over the river provides a fantastic iconic riverside facility that provides a safe walkway over a section of Clancy Strand where the road was too narrow to provide a footpath. It is now a fantastic location to view the river, King Johns Castle and the Curragour Falls. Assistance in this project was provided to Limerick City council by Failte Ireland and Shannon Development.

d) Other Riverside Projects

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

- Full upgrade of the riverside promenade between Shannon Bridge and Sarsfield Bridge along Bishop's Quay, Howley's Quay and Harvey's Quay.
- A study for the enhancement of the riverside walk between Shannon Bridge and Limerick Tunnel and the general Coonagh area was prepared during 2009. The study entitled the Coonagh Recreational Strategy sets out a number of schemes that the council hopes to implement over the next few years to improve leisure facilities in the city.

7. Traffic Management

Continuing investment in effective and efficient enforcement of all traffic and parking regulations is important to maintain the city as a vibrant retail, economic and social centre. Conscious of the ongoing requirement to reduce congestion and to promote business and commerce in the City Centre the following proposals were developed during 2009.

a) UTC System

Limerick UTC System was further expanded during 2009 with new junctions being added in the Sexton Street, Dock Road and Newtown Mahon areas of the city. Significant investment of almost €100,000 was required at Ivans Cross to install a MOVA control system. A MOVA control system was also installed at the Mill Road junction which has significantly improved capacity. CCTV cameras were installed this year on 6 of the busiest junctions in the city.

b) Park Magic

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

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

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

This scheme has continued to operate successfully during 2009 and now accounts for over 20% of all paid parking transactions in the City.

c) Road Safety

The promotion of road safety awareness at every conceivable opportunity is a priority of the City Council Traffic Department. A major crash scene simulation was carried out this autumn in collaboration with the emergency services and Limerick County Council where secondary school students were able to observe the often terrible consequences of speeding and dangerous driving. This road safety awareness policy will be continued and expanded, using modern 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 2010 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 2010 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.

d) Anti-Skid Surfacing

Anti skid surfacing was installed on the approaches to a number of key junctions in the City during 2009. This surfacing should help to reduce the impact of rear end collisions and pedestrian accidents and the program will be continued during 2010.

8. Traffic Calming

In respect of engineering measures to provide and enhance road safety, the City Council is committed to an extensive roll out of traffic calming measures and traffic management initiatives at locations, which warrant appropriate works. The City Council will continue to collaborate and work in tandem with the Garda Síochána, the traffic authority, in the installation of the new speed detection camera installations within the city, scheduled to commence in 2010. The City Council spent in excess of €150,000 on traffic calming measures in the four old Wards during 2009 in agreement with the Councillors. In 2010 we are proposing to continue the budget for member's discretionary traffic calming measures in each ward area to reflect the requirement for traffic calming measures in our housing estates.

9. Taking in Charge

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

1. The Georgian Village
2. Richmond Park
3. Coolraine Heights

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

- a. Churchfield
- b. Springfield
- c. Stenson Park
- d. Allandale & Courtbrack
- e. Aspen Gardens

10 Mid-West Area Strategic Plan (MWASP)

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

- Strengthen and enhance the functionality of the Limerick / Shannon Gateway and Ennis Hub, as identified in the National Spatial Strategy 2002 - 2020
- Provide guidelines for the promotion of sustainable development in existing urban centres and rural areas within the region
- Identify the regions strategic requirements for the next 20 years
- Inform authorities future social, physical, educational, economic infrastructural spending programmes as well as upcoming local authority development plans
- Inform future National Development Plan (NDP) reviews and the future Regional Planning Guidelines (RPG) and National Spatial Strategy (NSS) reviews.
- Aid in identifying and securing National Government funding

The output of the Strategy is not intended to be an ‘end-state’, but rather the first substantial step in a rolling strategy that shall help shape the future of the Mid-West Region. It is currently expected that the study will be completed by mid 2010.

Water Services

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

Clareville Water Treatment Plant

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

Water Conservation / Water Distribution Network

Limerick City Council is committed to the implementation of its five-year Water Services Strategy as approved by the Department of the Environment Heritage and Local Government. The strategy provides for the strategic provision, rehabilitation and maintenance of the water production, distribution and conservation systems within the city area. A proposal for restructuring the infrastructure in public open space to facilitate the elimination of common looped lead mains is with the DEHLG for their approval.

Limerick City Trunk Mains

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

Over 1000 metres of the existing Distribution Water Main were replaced during 2009. Additional valving works were carried out in the City to improve the water supply system and to minimise those areas affected during periods of works or shutdown.

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

Non Domestic Metering Project

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

Limerick Main Drainage

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

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

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

Flood Alleviation

In 2008 flood alleviation works were completed along O' Callaghan Strand. Floodgates were installed in the vicinity of the boat club. The Office of Public Works part funded this project. The Water Services Department is currently operating a proactive gully cleaning programme whereby all gullies in the City will be cleaned at least once a year. It is a credit to the City Council that the recent flooding almost nation wide had little or no impact on the City.

Public Toilets

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

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

PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Planning Related Policy

- *Limerick City Development Plan 2010-2016*

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

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

During this notice period Limerick City Council invited submissions and/or observations regarding the review of the existing City Development Plan and the preparation of a new Development Plan. The pre-draft consultation period has taken place and further consultations will take place after the draft has been prepared. The initial stage of consultation period took place up from 20th January to Monday 16th February 2009. Approximately 200 people attended 13 meetings which were held throughout the City, a total of 88 submissions or observations were received from a broad range of individuals, voluntary groups, property owners, interested groups and state agencies. The Draft City Development Plan will be published in December 2009.

The new City Development Plan must be adopted by December 2010. The Plan will set out an overall strategy for the proper planning and sustainable development of the City for the six-year period - 2010-2016.

- *Regional Planning Guidelines*

The Mid West Regional Authority are currently undertaking a review of the existing regional planning guidelines that will provide a strategic basis for the development of the region till 2022. The guidelines will be incorporated in the City Development Plan.

- *Mid West Area Strategic Plan (mwasp)*

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

- *Retail Strategy*

A review of the Mid-West Retail Strategy is presently being undertaken on behalf of the Mid West Regional Authority and the administrative areas of Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and Clare County Council.

The review is taking place in the context of substantial retail development in the region over the last number of years and the decline of the city centre. The review of the retail strategy for the Mid-West Region will be for the period 2010-2016.

The strategy will provide guidance on the scope for and the location of retail developments in the region. The strategy will be incorporated into the Regional Planning Guidelines and the Draft City Development Plan

- ***Housing Strategy***

A regional housing strategy is currently being prepared on behalf of the Mid West Regional Authority and the administrative areas of Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and Clare County Council.

The preparation of a housing strategy is a requirement of The Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended and is unique as it being prepared for the region as opposed to a single authority.

The strategy will provide guidance on the scale of housing demand in the region and the anticipated levels of demand for social housing. The strategy will also provide guidance on how the demand for social housing should be allocated across the region.

- ***City Centre Strategy***

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

The City Centre Strategy is the approved strategy for the identification of key redevelopment opportunities in the City over the coming years that underpins the status of the Limerick as a gateway under the National Spatial Strategy.

Ongoing progress was made during 2009 in advancing many of the strategic objectives and actions set down in City Centre Strategy.

Three key policy documents that were highlighted and identified in the City Centre Strategy as being in need of completion and/or review have been either significantly advanced or completed during 2009. These include as follows:-

- The Mid-West Housing Strategy
- The Mid-West Area Strategic Plan
- The Mid-West Retail Strategy

Proposals around particular sites were considered during 2009 however the current economic climate has made it difficult to advance these proposals to any significant level.

It is intended that a renewed and targeted focus will be directed towards assembling key strategic sites for future development during 2010. This is consistent with the overall

policies set down in the Mid-West Retail Strategy which advocates the development of substantial new retail floorspace in the City Centre in order to allow the City Centre to recapture trade which it has lost to other retail schemes across Metropolitan Limerick.

Planning Operations

- ***Derelict Sites***

The Derelict Sites Act, 1990 provides specific powers to Local Authorities in dealing with derelict sites.

Limerick City Council inspected 90 sites during 2009. This included the inspection of potential new derelict sites (15 sites) and the ongoing re-inspection of sites currently identified as derelict or potentially derelict (75 inspections involving 62 sites). As a general policy Limerick City Council will seek to have sites remedied through constructive correspondence with the owner/occupier without having recourse to the specific powers provided under the Derelict Sites Act 1990.

A total of 22 sites were remedied during 2009.

- ***Conservation of Protected Structures***

In April of 2007, Minister John Gormely wrote to Limerick City Council requesting that more than 700 buildings be added to the Record of Protected Structures following the completion of an inventory of architectural heritage in the City by the Minister's department. From a preliminary analysis it would appear that some 300 are already on the RPS. The draft city development plan will propose additions to the Record of Protected Structures.

In the course of 2009 the Planning Authority distributed €44,000 of conservation grants to owners of protected structures to carry out works.

- ***Planning Applications***

The Council will receive approximately 350 planning applications in 2009. Amongst the significant developments received during 2009 were:-

- (1) The redevelopment of Richmond RFC, Rhebogue for residential development.
- (2) The development of part of the former Limerick Racecourse lands at Greenpark.
- (3) The redevelopment of the former Bishops Residence at the North Circular Road.

Work has progressed in 2009 on the implementation of a scanning system for planning files. The system has been set up and is now operational. This facilitates the viewing of current planning files on the City Council's website.

- ***Significant Development under construction***

The development of a new greyhound racing stadium on part of the former Limerick Racecourse lands at Greenpark commenced construction in 2009..

- ***Enforcement of Planning***

The council received in excess of 150 complaints in respect of unauthorised development in the course of 2009. A number of these complaints have resulted in prosecution in the course of 2009.

- ***Casual Trading***

Limerick City Council is charged with the control of casual trading in the city. This is done by the enforcement of the casual trading by-laws. In the course of 2009 a dedicated markets inspector was appointed to ensure compliance with the existing by-laws. It is intended that the existing by-laws will be reviewed in 2010 with a view to extending the scope of casual trading within the city.

- ***Event Management***

In the course of 2009 Limerick City (Thomond Park) hosted 2 outdoor concerts which required the granting of an Event Management Licence under the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended. These events make a substantial contribution to the local economy. It is anticipated that in the course of 2010 that a number of similar events will be held in the city and will require an event management licence.

Economic Development Initiatives

- ***City Centre Strategy – Georgian Quarter***

One of the key zones identified in the City Centre Strategy is the Georgian Quarter of Limerick City.

During 2009 the Economic Development Section submitted a proposal to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government seeking funding for a pilot demonstration project for the Georgian area of Limerick. This submission set down the many significant issues that Limerick City is encountering in the Georgian area of Limerick City. These issues include dereliction, vacancy, poor economic returns and a limited future use for the fabric of the building.

This proposal for funding was successful and it is intended that work will commence on this pilot demonstration project during 2010.

It is anticipated that this pilot project will address the many issues that are encountered in dealing with Georgian buildings and examine an economically viable way forward which will demonstrate how these buildings can be sensitively re-adapted to provide modern day living standards while also preserving their character, integrity and uniqueness for future generations.

It is proposed that this pilot project will serve as a catalyst for the private sector on which to model redevelopment within the Georgian area of Limerick.

- ***Seventh EU Framework Programme Ireland (FP7)***

Limerick City Council, BRE Ireland and the University of Limerick has made a submission for European funding under a call for funding proposals entitled “Energy Efficient Buildings” 2010. This call for funding is under the Seventh EU Framework Programme. This funding application was made with the assistance and support of Enterprise Ireland.

This funding submission seeks to explore new, innovative methods and technologies and establish best practice models that can be utilised for the delivery of energy efficient retrofitted homes. Limerick City Council if successful is seeking to build upon the above pilot demonstration project in the Georgian area of Limerick City in order to develop a best practice model through which energy efficient residential accommodation can be provided in the Georgian quarter of Limerick City.

- ***National Spatial Strategy Gateways & Hubs European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Grant Scheme***

The Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly was responsible for the allocation of €1m under the National Spatial Strategy Gateways & Hubs (ERDF) Grants Scheme during 2009. This Scheme is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund under the Southern & Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2007-13.

Gateway Lead Authorities within the four designated Gateways in the Region (Dublin, Cork, Limerick/Shannon & Waterford) were invited to apply for project funding for either one large-scale urban regeneration project, or a series of integrated projects

Limerick City Council as the Gateway Lead Authority for the Limerick/Shannon Gateway was invited to make an application under this grant scheme. This application was submitted in consultation with the adjoining Local Authorities in the Gateway.

Limerick City Council was successful in securing funding of €3m for public realm works and other associated works at Sarsfield Street, William Street and Upper William Street.

The application for funding was on a competitive basis. Funding was distributed to the other Gateway Regions as follows:- Cork - €2.8 m, Waterford – 2.7 m and Dublin 2.4 m

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

- ***Creative Limerick – connect to the grid***

A new initiative entitled Creative Limerick – connect to the grid was launched during 2009.

The initiative is concerned with temporarily filling vacant retail window space, in the prime retail spaces of the City Centre (Bedford Row, Henry Street, Thomas Street /Catherine Street and Sarsfield Street), with work from Creative Industry practitioners who are in their final year or graduated from a third level institution based in Limerick. The practitioners will be responsible for fitting out the window space, lighting and keeping the display updated.

This initiative seeks to enhance vibrancy and active frontages in Limerick City Centre while promoting the work of the Creative Industries in our region. International experience has shown that association with local arts, culture and design encourages City Centre prosperity and growth.

- ***Creative Spaces***

Limerick City Council has made an application for European funding under the Interreg IVB North West Europe (NEW) Programme.

Interreg IVB NWE is a financial instrument of the European Union's Cohesion Policy. It funds projects which support transnational cooperation. The aim is to find innovative ways to make the most of territorial assets and tackle shared problems of Member States, regions and other authorities

This application is seeking funding for the Creative Sector and seeks to capitalise and build on the indigenous talent that exists in the Creative Sector in Limerick. If successful the funding will provide a dedicated space for the Creative Sector with the necessary physical and technological infrastructure and supports required to establish a sustainable business model. More specifically the project will provide one usable resource website, 4 physical creative hubs, one cluster in each European area with the aim of assisting 95 SMEs in the Creative Sector to start up or expand in each locality and the provision of a Creative Spaces Strategy. It is also anticipated that the shared learning that will be acquired from our European partners through the implementation of this project will provide the basis for establishing a European cluster which will further assist and support the Creative Sector in Limerick.

- ***Borough Boundary***

In December 2009, the Minister for the Environment Heritage and Local Government announced the establishment of a Limerick Local Government Committee under Section

28 of the Local Government Act 1991. The Committee is required to examine the most appropriate arrangements for local government for the city and county of Limerick.

The Committee will examine the governance and development of Limerick as a Gateway under the National Spatial Strategy and shall, in particular, include recommendations for improved arrangements including inter alia:

- whether there should be changes made to the boundary of Limerick City, having examined the City Council's 2005 application for a boundary extension;
- whether the County Council of Limerick and the City Council of Limerick should be unified;
- whether alternative arrangements should be made to share/co-ordinate the functions, administration and leadership of Limerick City and County, either at county/city level or on a wider and more regional basis;
- whether there should be an adjustment between the boundary of County Clare and Limerick City or County

Other areas of activity in 2009 include as follows:

- Completion of enhancement/upgrading works at Summerville during 2009
- Completion of Newtown Mahon CPO and Bank Place CPO
- Facilitating proposed development works at the Belltable Arts Centre through the purchase of 69/70 O'Connell Street
- Provision of temporary alternative accommodation for the Belltable Arts Centre at Cecil Street

Continued assistance will be provided towards supporting the Belltable Arts Centre in 2010.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Introduction to Environment Department

The strategic approach of the Environment Department during 2010 will be to continue to maintain existing service levels in core business and essential service areas.

Throughout 2009 particular emphasis on caring for the environment by local community groups has been prioritised. Having regard to the National Climate Change Strategy it is intended that this approach with local community groups will continue during 2010 with initiatives like the Environmental Enhancement Grants Scheme.

With reference to the National Climate Change Strategy, the Environment Department has also commenced the rollout of converting the vehicle fleet to the use of environmentally efficient B30 biodiesel.

To complement the enhanced and pedestrianised areas of the city centre, particular focus will also be applied by the Environment Department during 2010 in the centre of Limerick City.

The Parks Department will continue to maintain service levels during 2010 which will be augmented with the advancement of the Draft Public Parks Bye Laws 2010.

Regional Waste Management Plan

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

Waste Collection Permit Regulations 2007

Under the Waste Management (Collection Permit) Regulations 2007 as amended, 36 no Waste Collection Permits were issued in 2009, 24 of which were multi regional. This brings the total number of Waste Collection Permits issued since the initiation of the Waste Management Regulations 2001 to 630. There are 25 Waste collectors whose principal place of business is based in Limerick City, 8 no of which were audited in 2009. Legal proceedings were initiated against one permit holder under section 34 of the Waste Management Act for breaches to the condition.

Water Pollution/Discharge Licences:

In conjunction with Limerick City Council's Water Services section under the Transport and Infrastructure Directorate, inspections of discharge license holders and water pollution incidents are carried out. All pollution incidents are investigated and legal action initiated where appropriate. The Water pollution database was reviewed and updated in 2009. 11 new water discharge licences were issued since January 2009 with 5 no currently under review. 5 no premises were served notices under the Water Pollution Act 1977 and 1990. Limerick City Council will continue to actively pursue new licences in 2010 and will closely sample and monitor any trade effluent discharge to a public sewer.

Waiver Scheme

The Council continued to provide a waiver scheme for low-income families and old age pensioners during 2009. It is intended to continue this scheme in 2010 with a budget provision of €500,000. The waiver scheme service is currently offered to approx 3,500 households. All lifts are subject to a maximum weight provision of 12 kg per lift. It is expected that costs will increase in 2010 due to increased costs in the disposal of waste generally.

Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment Regulations 2005

There are 95 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. 10 no spot checks were scheduled for the electrical retailers in the city centre in 2009 and to date 8 no checks have been carried out. A number of small non-compliances with the Regulations were noted and warning letters were issued. It is proposed to continue auditing retailers in 2010.

Waste Facility Permits

Limerick City Council currently has 9 Waste Facility Permits. During 2009, 1 no permit was reviewed and granted under the Waste Management Permit Regulations 2007 (as amended). Three other permits are under review and shall be decided upon in 2010. Two more permits will cease being valid in 2010 due to the applicants moving out of Limerick City Councils jurisdiction and functional area. Two other applications are currently being processed with two other permits due to expire in 2011.

Environmental Awareness and Education

Limerick City Council continues to work towards the principles of proper waste management in accordance with the Replacement Waste Management Plan 2006-2011 with particular emphasis on waste prevention. The Council also continues to support

home composting, the Green Schools Initiative, Gum Litter and Litter Awareness programmes and many other worthwhile initiatives.

The ongoing support of the Council members in relation to the Limericks Fairtrade status was very much in evidence in 2009.

Recycling Facilities

In 2009 Limerick City Council provided 19 bring bank sites in the city and a mini recycling facility at Park Road. During 2009, the bring bank services being provided were reviewed and put out for tender. A new bring bank servicing contract will be in place in the first quarter of 2010. Limerick City Council has recently replaced the bring bank facility at O'Callaghan Strand with the intention in early 2010 of also including a bring bank facility in St Mary's Park.

Wetlands

Limerick City Council is responsible for the ecological resource of wetlands existing within the City Boundary. Wetland areas are important ecological systems that are under threat worldwide. Significant work was undertaken to curb reed growth in the open water area at Westfields during 2008 and 2009. This will continue to be monitored throughout 2010.

Preparatory work is ongoing on the Baggot Estate Nature Park initiative. Tree surgery has been carried out on the tree lined avenue and thinning of trees in the 'urban' forest will continue during 2010. The grant application submitted to the Department of Environment Heritage & local Government for funding the compensatory wetland has been successful and we will look forward to progressing this initiative further in 2010.

Longpavement Rehabilitation

The Works on Long Pavement Landfill Rehabilitation have been ongoing in 2009 but with less productivity than might have been expected due largely to very inclement weather and exceptional levels of rainfall in the summer months.

Works are progressing and it is expected that the remediation will be completed in the first half of 2010.

Litter Pollution

Limerick City Council's dedicated Enforcement unit continued to deal with matters related to litter, illegal dumping, monitoring of plastic bag levy, the ban on smoky coal, the illegal transport of waste, wandering animals and dog licences during 2009. Set out below are some sample statistics for the year to 31st October, 2009.

Number of complaints processed	2409
On the spot litter fines	433
Number of households surveyed in respect of their waste disposal arrangements	167

Section 18 Notices, Waste Management Act 1996, (which includes household surveys and requires any holder of waste to submit information in relation to their waste activities) 34

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 pollution). 43

In 2010 Limerick City Council will continue to build on the close working relationship with schools, local communities and the Gardai in the prevention of litter offences and waste blackspots in Limerick City.

Air Pollution – ban on bituminous coal

Enforcement Officers have inspected retailers in the city and the four main suppliers of solid fuel based in the city have been visited. A programme of spot checks of coal delivery operators selling coal also took place. The Council also took a successful prosecution through the District Court under the Air Pollution Act in 2009. The Council will continue to enforce these regulations in 2010.

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

Street Cleaning.

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

Limerick City Council disposed of 1,953 tonnes of waste from January to October, 2009. The waste came from Litter Bins, the Milk Market, Street Cleaning and Fly Tipping.

In recent months a Street Washing Programme on the pedestrianised city centre streets has also been advanced.

Control of Horses

In 2009 120 horses were impounded by Limerick City Council, 6 were re-homed by Animal Collection Services and 2 were returned to their owners. In 2010 the Council will continue to seize horses that are illegally kept in Limerick City as stipulated under the Control of Horse's Bye-Laws.

Cemetery Services

The City Council's Cemetery Department took great pride in the recognition by the Chambers of Commerce of Ireland Award for Best Use of Technology in the Local Government Sector, presented in October 2009. This Award recognised the online burial records service of Limerick City Council.

Restoration of graves was carried out in both Mount St Lawrence cemetery and Mount St Oliver. Ongoing improvement and maintenance work on kerbing, pathways and driveways continues to be carried out in both cemeteries. Flowers and bulbs have been planted in Mount St Lawrence cemetery. Grass, hedge cutting and weed control has been carried out in both cemeteries. A tree survey was carried out in Mount Saint Oliver Cemetery which resulted in fifty trees being removed. This area has been reinstated and seeded.

During 2009, to the end of November, there have been 401 internments in Mount Saint Lawrence and Mount Saint Oliver.

The Environment Department in conjunction with the City Archivist intends to progress the development of a Heritage Project at Mount St Lawrence Cemetery in early 2010. In this regard an application for funding has been made also to the Heritage Council of Ireland.

Parks and Open Spaces

The Parks Section is responsible for the management and development of public parks, public open spaces and civic decoration. During 2009 grass cutting was carried out on all verges, parks and open spaces on a regular basis. Flower and tree pruning and planting took place in all our public parks.

Work on the refurbishment of the shelter in O'Brien Park, Clare Street was completed during 2009. Also in conjunction with the Limerick Civic Trust the restored Richard Russell Fountain was unveiled at the Peoples Park.

A tree planting programme was carried out in various parts of the city from November 2008 to March 2009, using large semi-mature trees. The successes of previous planting programmes are now coming to fruition, which has resulted in an increase in tree pruning activity.

Development work at Shelbourne Park has been completed. The soccer pitches have been drained and newly sown and the park was reopened to the public in April 2009. A new children's playground has also been installed.

Green Flag

Limerick City Council in conjunction with Limerick County Council hosted a presentation and information evening with An Taisce for teachers, in schools participating in the Green Flag Programme from Limerick City and County in November 2009 in City Hall. In September of this year also, An Gaelcholaiste Luimnigh at Sir Harry's Mall were the most recent recipients of the Green Flag.

Urban Forestry

Pruning of the mini forest located on the Childers Road commenced in December 2008 and with work completed in Spring 2009. A major tree pruning programme was undertaken on the tree lined avenue in Baggot Estate in 2008 and 2009. Tree pruning will continue throughout the City on a scheduled basis.

Playground Facilities

Ongoing work on the management and maintenance of playgrounds in the city parks was carried out in 2009. In 2010 we will continue to audit our playgrounds to ensure that ongoing maintenance is provided.

Bridges in Bloom

The Bridges in Bloom programme continued in 2009, with eight bridges decorated with hanging baskets and a new pilot scheme of winter baskets for Matthew Bridge.

Grants for Community and Voluntary Groups

The Grant Assistance for Environmental Improvement Initiatives Scheme was introduced in 2003 to assist community and voluntary groups financially, in their efforts to improve the visual amenity of their area. This year €55,000 was allocated to 32 groups from all over the City. The type of work eligible for grant assistance included tree/shrub and flower planting, grass cutting, skip hire, equipment purchase and hire, etc. It is intended to continue this worthwhile Scheme in 2010.

Shannon River Basin Management

In accordance with the EU Water Framework Directive the Draft Shannon River Basin Management Plan is currently being formatted, with completion expected in January 2010. The draft plan will explain what the key water issues in the river districts are and will set out the current status and condition of its waters. The draft plan will also set out a comprehensive programme of measures for river water status improvements.

EMERGENCY SERVICE

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

- (1) Fire & Emergency Operations
- (2) Fire Prevention, Building Control and Dangerous Buildings
- (3) Major Emergency Management
- (4) Fire Service Mobilisation and Communications

Fire & Emergency Operations

Achievements for 2009 include:

- The service successfully attended 1,368 incidents from 1st January to 31st October, 2009. Of this number, 807 were fire incidents and 174 were road traffic accidents. The average of turnout times for 2009 is 1 minute and 36 seconds.
- Training courses were provided for staff in the following areas, Emergency First Responder, Winching, Hiab Crane, Bloodborne Pathogens, Manual Handling, Incident Command, Road Traffic Accident Instructor, Breathing Apparatus Instructor, Hazardous Materials, Compartment Firefighting Techniques Instructor, various Senior and Junior Officer Training Courses and Seminars.
- Health and Safety awareness and competency was enhanced by the conduct of IOSH-accredited Supervising Safely and Working Safely courses which were attended by Senior & Junior Officers and Firefighters, respectively.
- A new Safety Statement was developed and implemented.
- Ten officers completed 3 days of tunnel firefighting training in Switzerland in preparation for the training and response required for the Limerick Tunnel.
- A records management database was put in place for the inspection, testing and certification of firefighting and rescue equipment.
- Service and maintenance contracts were put in place for the entire emergency vehicle fleet, including full DoE testing.
- A comprehensive programme of pre-fire planning was devised and implemented for high risk premises within the Service's operational area.
- The programme of Fire Station upgrading and maintenance was furthered by the replacement of the rear appliance bay doors.
- Specifications and tender documents were prepared and/or issued for the procurement of new Water Tanker and Water Tender Ladder appliances.

Plans for 2010 include:

- To conduct annual block training and training to prepare for incidents in the Limerick Tunnel.
- To further enhance the training regime within the Fire Service.
- To maintain and improve on standards of Health and Safety.
- The purchase of a new Water Tanker and Water Tender.

- To prepare specifications and tender documents for the procurement of a new Emergency Tender.
- To prepare a specification for the procurement of new structural firefighting kit.
- To continue the development of the pre-fire planning programme.
- To continue the programme of Fire Station upgrading and maintenance.

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 Management Section

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

Achievements for 2009 include:

- The successful completion of a table-top exercise involving members of the Limerick City Council Crisis Management Team (CMT).
- The successful completion of a combined Local Co-ordination Centre familiarisation course and table-top exercise involving 35 members of Limerick City Council, An Garda Síochána and the HSE.
- Fitting out of the Local Co-ordination Centre and CMT Room at City Hall including the Information Management systems and equipment kits.
- Successfully implementing the response and co-ordination function of the CMT and the associated Information Management system during the period of flood risk to the city in November/December and proceeding to the recovery phase upon the threat subsiding.
- Completion of Information Management training courses.

Plans for 2010 are:

- To issue updated MEP appendices and review current mobilisation procedure.
- To conduct further exercises to test Limerick City Council's capacities for Major Emergency response.
- To develop the necessary resources to facilitate the setting up of an On-site Co-ordination Centre.
- To develop procedures for the setup of the Local Co-ordination Centre at City Hall and the control of access to the centre.

- To develop a continuous Major Emergency training programme within Limerick City Council.
- To improve the awareness of Major Emergency Management within all areas of Limerick City Council.

FIRE SERVICE MOBILISATION AND COMMUNICATIONS:

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

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

In 2009, achievements included:

- Munster Regional Communications Centre handled in excess of 22,000 emergency calls from the public in the Munster Region.
- Maintenance and improvement on high performance standards in terms of the accurate and efficient despatch of Fire Service resources within the Munster Region.
- Ongoing development of geographic information systems in MRCC
- There have been significant developments of management information systems in accordance with the requirements of the MRCC and the participating fire authorities.
- Re accreditation to ISO 9001:2001 has been achieved over all business areas. The system has passed its annual systems audit with the NSAI during which the MRCC's quality management systems were found to be "excellent".
- On-going development of telecoms and Radio Communications Systems
- Continued development of regional mobile data project
- Full implementation of all internal and external training programs including National Incident Command and Major Emergency Planning training.

CIVIL DEFENCE

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

Activities for 2009 included:

- 35 volunteers completed Occupational First Aid Course
- 30 volunteers completed in Cardiac First Response.

- 15 volunteers waiting to set Emergency First Responder Exams, will go into 2010
- 15 volunteers completed Basic Firemanship Course, 15 waiting to sit exam, will go into 2010
- 25 volunteers completed Radio operations and procedures.
- 8 volunteers on Pump Operators Course - waiting to sit exam, will be completed in 2009
- 8 volunteers on Road Traffic Accident Course - waiting to sit exam
- 2 Instructors in Search Techniques and Map Reading.
- 3 instructors completed Induction Course at Civil Defence College
- 3 new Cardiac First Response Instructors
- 2 new Radio Communications Instructors
- 13 new Level 2 Coxswains - total now 20
- 12 new VHF marine Radio licence holders
- kayaks back on the water to assist in searches - 7 in total, training ongoing

Conversion of old ambulance to Communications van now complete
Bicycle unit (6 in total) launched in May to cover first aid events and assist in searches.

Mercedes Sprinter purchased in December 2008 - will be shelved to respond to searches, flooding etc

Upgrading of Civil Defence H.Q. - Ongoing

9 vehicles now made over new Civil Defence colours and insignia, last vehicle (Fire Appliance) will be completed late 2009, early 2010

Emergency Response Team in Thomond Park

Plans for 2010 include:

Continue the upgrading of the Civil Defence H.Q.

Continuation of enhancement of training programme across the services.

Recruitment freeze at moment to facilitate multi-skilled training across existing volunteers before recruiting new volunteers.

Continually raising Limerick City Civil Defence's profile within the City and nationally.

9 - 12 Level 2 coxswains to be trained to Level 3

6 volunteers to be trained as Level 2 coxswains

30 volunteers to be trained in Level 2 for kayaks

1- 2 new Occupational Instructor

10 - 15 volunteers to be trained as Emergency First Responders

1 - 2 new Welfare Instructors

Welfare service up and running

Volunteers to receive the following training : -

- water awareness
- swift water rescue
- manual handling
- patient handling
- Hepatitis B vaccination

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

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

Jim Kemmy Municipal Museum

There were 1,386 acquisitions to date in 2009. These include, a major donation of material relating to Michael Colivet, Commandant of the Irish Volunteers in Limerick in 1916 and Limerick's 1st TD; a collection of Limerick business postcards 1910-50; a clock by F. Dilger; memorabilia from Limerick Clothing Factory; several butter wrappers from Co. Limerick Creameries; a photograph of the Royal Munster Fusiliers at Gibraltar; and a suit made by Todd's of Limerick and a jacket by Cannock's.

The assistant curator acted as the Limerick representative to the Irish Walled Town Network. A grant of €5,000 was received through the network for work in Exchange Lane, Charlotte's Quay and St. Lelia Street. This work is now complete.

Culture Night was a major success, with over 500 people on the night and over 100 on the walk around the city walls.

There were 3 art exhibitions in the Museum during the course of the year, by Jennifer Walsh, Cecilia Moore and Paul Weerasekera. Planning proceeds for the "Seen but not Heard" childhood exhibition due to open in January 2010.

The Museum continued to provide space and supervision for visitors wishing to consult the Limerick City Archives. It also continued to provide access to researchers wishing to consult the parts of its own collection not on open display. Images from the collection were provided for a number of books and displays, as well as for a TV production on the Limerick Soviet.

During the year the assistant curator published two articles in the North Munster Antiquarian Journal and contributed a chapter to the Limerick Volume in the History and Society Series.

There was a major update of the Museum Website in the early part of the year and plans are afoot to improve access to the online catalogue. Following the update there was a surge in hits, which tapered away through the year. The total hits for 2009 was in excess of 5,000,000.

Visitor numbers to date in 2009 are c 17,500 an increase of over 25% on 2008. This was largely due to a grant from the Department of Arts Sport and Tourism to extend opening hours during the tourism high season.

Larry Walsh the curator retired at the end of June, we wish him well in his retirement.

Limerick City Gallery of Art

In 2009 the following exhibitions have taken place at Limerick City Gallery of Art:

- *'The Ice Above, the Fire Below', and other works, 2007-2009* Clare Langan
- *Into Irish Drawing*, Curated by Arno Kramer, presenting the work of 22 artists including David Godbold, Alice Maher and Tom Molloy, with an accompanying catalogue
- *Excursions* – Performance Festival in association with Limerick City Arts Office
- OPEN e v+ a 2009, *Reading the City*, Co-Curators: Angelika Nollert and Yilmaz Dziewior. LCGA works with ev+a on co-ordination, installation, marketing, young ev+a and ev+a events. This year a programme of walking tours, meet the artist primary and secondary school events, school tours, family days and Bealtaine activities were co-ordinated by LCGA
- *A Place to Stay*, Gillian Kenny and an accompanying catalogue
- *Behind Smoke and Mirrors*, Open Studio Residencies and Exhibition with artists Aideen Barry, Bernardine Carroll/Maggie Shirley, Garvan Gallagher, Carl Giffney, Emma Wade, accompanied by a catalogue. Curated by Susan Holland, Shinnors Scholarship, LCGA
- *Noughties but Nice, 21st Century Irish Art*, Aideen Barry, Sarah Browne, Amanda Coogan, Denis Connolly / Anne Cleary, Joe Duggan, Ciara Finnegan, Sean Lynch, Andrew Kearney, Tom Molloy, Caroline McCarthy, Seamus Nolan, Eamon O'Kane, John Shinnors, accompanied by a catalogue. Curated by Mike Fitzpatrick and Susan Holland

Limerick City Gallery of Art activities for 2009:

- Steady incremental visitor increase, demonstrating particular growth in February and July
- Exhibited the work of 104 artists
- Published 5 catalogues and 1 DVD
- Developed new accessible web-site, launched January 2009
- Collaborated on 6 multi-venue events; Excursions, Un-fringed Festival, Cuisle Poetry Festival, National Drawing Day, Heritage Week & Culture Night
- Trained 8 art and post-graduate student volunteers to assist on Family Days and artists' workshops
- Hosted 22 Free Family Day Workshops
- Hosted 1 Concert and 5 Theatre Performances

- Hosted 28 Free primary school workshops welcoming more than 2,200 students through our doors for on site tours or workshops
- Hosted 3 Free seminars
- Hosted 9 Free Lectures / Meet the artist /In conversation events
- Given 91 Free exhibition tours to educational and community groups
- Offered 8 Free multi venue public tours
- Hosted two VAI Artists Development Workshops
- Facilitated exhibition for the National Learning Network, students with intellectual disabilities

Heritage Council Museum Standards Programme Accreditation

LCGA houses a fine collection of works by Irish artists, ranging from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century, the National Collection of Contemporary Drawing and the Michael O'Connor International Poster Collection. LCGA is working towards Interim Accreditation in 2010 to reach 25 minimum standards. This year policy documents were developed on Loans, Collections and Disposal and the MSPI accreditation panel undertook an on-site assessment.

Gallery Development Phase II

In 2008 the Gallery received a capital grant offer of €60,000 from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism for the physical development of the gallery. In 2009 additional capital grant aid from of €500,000 the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism was made available to Limerick City Gallery of Art.

The LCGA Gallery Development Phase II includes:

- refurbishing gallery spaces to museum standard to provide high quality contemporary art exhibition display and the addition of purpose built art storage
- improving visitor services through the provision of a multi-purpose workshop, social space, café and library and other necessary facilities

The Design Team has submitted the Tender reports to Limerick City Council. Tenders were very competitive, giving a reduction of over 50% on the previous project cost.

In 2009 the gallery received funding from the Arts Council, the Heritage Council and Fáilte Ireland.

The Arts Service

Limerick City Council was one of the first local authorities to jointly fund, with the Arts Council the position of Arts Officer in 1988. This joint funding arrangement continues to the present day. In 2002, The Limerick Integrated Arts Strategy was published outlining six strategic action areas that set out to achieve an inclusive and co-ordinated approach to arts provision in the city.

- Public planning and support for the arts
- The Creative City
- Public access and participation

- The individual artist
- Infrastructure and facilities for the arts
- Collaboration and partnership

The following are the range of services provided by The Arts Office of Limerick City Council in 2009;

1. Information and Advice

Support and advice for people in the arts community and those interested in engaging with the arts, and the general public.

2. Supporting and developing The Arts Infrastructure of the City

- Recommendations on revenue funding for established arts organisations
- Recommendations on Grants under the Arts Act
- Facilitation of development of cultural infrastructure through partnership
- Management of Limerick Artists' Studios
- Membership of the boards of management committees of a number of events, organisations and institutions.
- ACCESS Funding application for 8 artists' apartments in John's Square

3. Support for the Individual Artist

- For residencies, travel bursaries and specific originated arts interventions

4. Arts Programming

- Annual events such as Excursions, The Kate O'Brien Weekend, e v+ a, Cuisle Limerick City International Poetry Festival and Culture Night

5. Art form development

- Support for festivals as part of the annual cultural calendar
- Support for organisations involved in art forms such as theatre, dance, visual art, music, literature, architecture, community arts

6. Art and Education

Limerick City Council has developed partnerships with other external service providers, agencies and departments within the local authority to ensure that the appropriate resources and expertise are channeled where they are most required.

The renaming of the Arts Office as the Arts Service in 2002 represented a commitment to the concept of a service that understands and works to meet the needs of artists, participants in arts activities, audiences, and the general public. The Arts Service is therefore a proactive developmental endeavour.

Limerick City Library Service

The Public Library Service in Limerick operates from the Headquarters and Central Library at the Granary, Watch House Cross Community Library, Roxboro Branch Library, Caherdavin Branch Library and the Schools Mobile Library to serve the people of Limerick City.

A library should encourage people to visit and stay for a while, to explore, find information or let their imaginations run wild. It should provide an environment for reading and studying for individuals and groups. Visitors should be able to listen to music, read the newspaper, learn a language or use the technology provided.

The public library is one of our first democratic institutions. It provides access to knowledge and knowledge is power. Through its collections and services the public library in Limerick offers access to books, journals, magazines, music, newspapers, languages, exhibitions, educational toys, information technology, events and activities.

Technology such as, Jaws/Kurtzweil which is freely available offers an invaluable service to people who are either deaf or blind. Online access to the entire catalogues of every public library service in the country is available to members of the library via the Internet and a library membership card.

The many benefits from technology include access to the Driver Theory Test on CD; a total of 50 Public Internet PC's; Horizon Library System; Who's Who in Limerick' Newspapers' Collections; Mayors of Limerick; 1197 – 2006; Obituaries; Death Notices; Inquest Reports; Funeral Reports, etc; and Business Databases.

Events and activities include Children's Book Festival; Book Clubs; Bealtaine; Library Ireland Week; Culture Night; and Gramophone Circle, among others.

Reference & Local Studies

Queries:

The main work of this department continues to be assisting people with research queries. There is a continuous stream of call in visitors with a variety of research needs. We also deal with a large and increasing number of e-mail queries.

Family History:

The library now offers a great deal of assistance to people researching their family history. We have developed a large database of local information (almost 200,000 family name records) and have developed a good level of expertise in using on-line genealogy resources.

Lecture Series:

The series for 2009-10 is the 12th series of monthly lectures. The average attendance at these lectures is approximately 70 to 80. The recent lecture on researching family history, given by Séan Gannon of the City Library staff, attracted an attendance of close to 150.

Resources:

The focus of work in the area of resources development continues to be the website and databases. The local studies resources on the website have expanded to include Householder indices for the 1901 & 1911 censuses for both Limerick City and County, Registers of electors from 1923-1950; Landowners in Limerick, 1876 and a full scanned version of *The Cromwellian Settlement of Limerick* by James Grene Barry. Work also continues on the following projects – Database of death notices from local newspapers, Trades directories database and Local studies files. For the local studies files a comprehensive review of the *Limerick Leader* from 1965 to 1989 has been carried out and the items for the local studies files have now been interfiled.

Statistics

From 1st December 2008 to 30th November 2009

No. of Items Issued	305,033
No. of Library Members	13,221
No. of Visitors to Library	240,048
No. of Internet Hours	29,242

In January 2010, Computer Skills Courses will be given 3 nights a week at Watch House Cross. Six volunteers with excellent expertise have agreed to provide the courses. Each course will run for a period of six weeks. Members of the public who have their names listed for computer courses at Watch House Cross will be notified immediately after Christmas.

It is also planned to introduce SMS Texting for overdue books and requests. The software has already been installed. This method of notification will reduce the costs which accrue from postage, paper, envelopes, toner and staff time.

The application for a new Central Library and Headquarters is still waiting approval from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

SPORTS AND RECREATION**Municipal Golf Course**

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

Work continued in 2009 towards the completion of the current development. The feasibility of carrying out further development works at the Golf Course will be examined in the context of available funding in 2010.

Skateboard Park

The Skateboard Park at Mount Kennett was officially opened on the 18th of July 2008. This project was jointly funded by Limerick City Council and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and was designed to complement the other riverside and City Centre projects. Work is currently in progress to provide CCTV at this site in 2010.

St. Endas Sports Complex

The development of this Sports Complex is consistent with the policies and objectives contained within the Limerick City Council Sports and Recreation Policy Framework Plan approved by the City Council in 2005. The complex is now in place for thirty years and capital investment is necessary to maintain the fabric and environment up to modern, acceptable standards. Discussions continued in 2009 in relation to the provision of funding from the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism. Limerick City Council approved a contribution of €5,000 for this complex in 2009. Provision for a contribution to St. Endas has been included for 2010 of €5,000.

Support for Sporting Organisations

A grant-aid provision totalling €25,000 for sporting/recreational activities was included in the adopted Annual Budget for 2009 and these grants were paid out to approximately 38 groups. Due to financial constraints it has not been possible to retain the Sports Grants Scheme for 2010.

COMMUNITY AND ENTERPRISE

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

Review of City Development Board

In common with all other City/County Development Boards, Limerick City Development Board completed a review of its Strategy in 2009 culminating with the publication of Limerick City Development Board's Key Priorities Report for the period 2009 – 2012. Identification of these priorities followed a significant level of consultation between the four pillars of the City Development Board, i.e., Local Development, State Agencies, Social Partners and Local Government.

The following are some of the key priorities identified;

- Planning for the Economic Development of the City and County – jointly with the Limerick County Development Board
- Implementation of Limerick City of Learning together for a brighter future. A collaborative framework for progress

- Facilitating implementation of the Regeneration Plans for Limerick through the Regeneration Agencies
- Development of the culture of the City
- Development of the city docklands
- Addressing social disadvantage in the City
- Development of children's services in the City
- Supporting inter-agency services for the Traveller Community
- Developing the limerick.ie website to promote the city

Significant progress has been made by the Joint City/County Economic Development Committee in forging a cooperative working relationship between Limerick City & County Development Boards through the common identification of issues arising in the City and its environs. Following a Symposium held in November 2009, work programmes have been identified under the following headings;

- Education and Training
- Infrastructure Development
- Enterprise Development
- Tourism
- Energy

Lead agencies have already been identified in respect of each work area and it is expected that work programmes will be finalised early in 2010.

The Interagency Plan for Travellers Services

- The Interagency Traveller Group continued to meet during 2009 and progressed Actions under the Interagency Traveller Action Plan. Interagency work in relation to Travellers operates through a Higher Level Group which deals with strategic issues while an Operational Group deals with implementation of initiatives on the ground.
- Interagency site liaison meetings took place on a number of sites throughout the year. The meetings have proved beneficial on the relevant sites and actions have been progressed as a result.
- A review has been completed of the most recent Interagency Traveller Action Plan which has now expired and a draft Action Plan has been developed for the period 2009 – 2013. Extensive consultation has taken place with members of the traveling community and with participating agencies. It is expected that this draft will be finalised early in 2010.

Youth

Limerick City Development Board in partnership with Limerick Youth Service facilitates Limerick City Youth Forum. The following are the main achievements for 2009;

- Comhairle na NOg: This Comhairle was very successful with over 80 representatives from secondary schools and youth organizations.

- Representatives from Comhairle na NOg were also nominated to attend Dail na NOg.

Work continues apace on an expanded work programme for 2010 incorporating the following;

- Establishment of a Youth Participation Steering Committee
- Expanding the age groups represented on the Forum
- Supporting and expanding the Inclusion Programme to develop best practice in participation by seldom-heard children and young people in decision-making structures and projects

Children's Services Committee

Following the publication of Towards 2016 a new comprehensive and integrated strategic framework of social inclusion was put in place. As part of this policy framework a National Implementation group was established which has overseen the establishment of Local Children's Services Committees in four pilot areas. Limerick City was one of the areas selected. During 2009 the following progress has been made;

- Appointment of Project Manager and Children's Services Co-ordinator
- Development of draft framework of Limerick Assessment of Need System
- Engagement with Youth Fora on structured basis
- Development of Research Framework
- Progressing completion of Audit of Children's services in Limerick City

This work will be continued in 2010.

City of Learning

Work continued on the City of Learning project during 2009. Terms of reference for the group have been finalised and a draft work programme identified. It is expected that the actions identified by the group will be progressed during 2010.

A key goal of the Board's Strategy for the City is that Limerick will become a City of Learning, a city full of opportunities.

Community Smoke Alarm Scheme

The smoke alarm scheme has been in continued in 2009. Work is ongoing to identify qualifying households and distribute alarms.

Cooperation Ireland Pride of Place Awards 2008

- The Pride of Place Competition is run by Co-operation Ireland in partnership with the All-Island Local Authority Steering Forum which encourages strategic and sustainable approaches to cross-border co-operation by local authorities.
- Three groups participated in this competition in 2009, namely;

- New Communities Partnership
- St. Munchins Parish and Community Enterprise Centre
- St. Mary's Area Integrated Development Ltd.
- St. Mary's A.I.D. and St. Munchin's Community Enterprise Centre came first and second respectively in their competition categories.

AGRICULTURE, EDUCATION, HEALTH AND WELFARE, CORPORATE SERVICES

ICT Department

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

The ICT Department continues to focus on consolidation and efficiencies within Limerick City Council. In conjunction with the Finance department and Local Government Services Board the new Non Principal Private Residence system has been introduced in 2009.

In May 2009 the ICT Department deployed successfully a new 400KVA generator in City Hall, providing Limerick City Council with the ability to maintain key services during a prolong disruption to the ESB power supply. The generator is also a critical element of the Major Emergency Management Plan.

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

Maybe the most challenging project that the ICT department undertook in 2009 was the evaluation of open source products. Based on the results of the evaluation Limerick City Council can now embark in a strategic move towards the use of open source and open standards software solutions with the view of reducing costs and enhancing efficiencies.

The ICT service desk system offers comprehensive support to end users in Limerick City Council dealing with over 6,480 support request in 2009.

Working with the Archives and Environment sections the ICT Department posted on the limerick.ie website the burial records for the Mount Saint Lawrence, the city's largest cemetery. Information dating back more than 150 years is now available to the public over the internet.

Work continued in a second phase to publish online more content from the Limerick City Archives. This was the first initiative in the country to allow online access for the municipal archives.

Two new websites for Limerick City Gallery of Art (gallery.limerick.ie) and Access Limerick (access.limerick.ie) have been deployed in 2009.

In 2009 the GIS team has focused on further roll-out of the Geographical Information Systems across multiple departments. MapPin, a new system that allows members of the public to access online spatially enabled data has been deployed in early 2009.

Human Resources/Payroll/Superannuation Information and Processing

These functions of the local authority are currently implemented under separate manual and electronic systems. A number of staff members are now involved in establishing the CORE system within the City Council. This is a national project that integrates all of the above functions under the one electronic system. The outcome when completed in late 2010 will be reduced administrative costs, faster response times and improved management information.

Partnership

Partnership Committees comprise of Union and Management Representatives. The Partnership process is the formal employee consultation mechanism within the City Council. It consists of a Steering Committee and a number of Sub-Committees that broadly mirror the Council's Directorate structure.

The Steering Committee's membership includes Senior Management, Union Officials and Shops Stewards. It meets on a quarterly basis and each of the Directorate Sub Committees meets bi-monthly. A number of change agreements were achieved through this process resulting in a more efficient and effective service delivery.

Partnership has also delivered on a number of projects in 2009, e.g. Return to Learning Programme, Staff Integration Event, Staff Information Sessions, Grapevine publication, Sign Language Classes, Educational Grant Scheme, Equality Training, Team Building and Computer Skills training.

Performance Management Development System (PMDS) and Staff Training

The Performance Management Development System (PMDS) is the process within City Council for managing the performance of teams and individual employees. Staff requirements in respect of training and further education are also assessed and acted upon under this process.

New guidelines were devised in 2009 in respect of the delivery of training programmes. These guidelines prioritize training identified by staff and line managers as necessary for successful job completion. This type of training is 100% funded by the Council.

Where possible, further education courses that develop an employee's knowledge, skills and experiences are supported through a system of co-financing with that employee.

The following is a list of some of the courses completed in 2009: Certificate/Diploma in Local Government Studies, Leadership Programme, Certificate in Management Development, Report Writing/Minute Taking, Expert Witness, MBA, Supervisory Management Skills, MSc Economic Library & Information, MA in Town & Country Planning, Pre-Retirement, BSc in Agriculture, BSc Engineering Honours Degree, Project Management, Team Skills & Computer Skills – a total of 150 employees have commenced/completed these courses to date.

Register of Electors

The 2009/2010 Register was published on the 1st February, 2009 and came into force on the 15th February, 2009. Supplement to the Register 2009 was published for the Local and European Elections and the Referendum to the Lisbon Treaty. Work commenced in the summer on the preparation of the Draft Register for 2010/2011 that was published on the 1st November, 2009.

Higher Education Grants

479 applications have been processed to date this year (up to and including 30th November, 2009) an increase from 423 over the same period in 2008.

Official Receptions and Meetings

Details of Meetings, Civic Receptions and Mayoral Receptions for 2009 are as follows (the following figures cover the period up to and including 30th November, 2009):

No. of Council Meetings (including Special Meetings)	17
No. of Area Meetings	10
No. of SPC meetings	17
No. of Civic Receptions	1
No. of Mayoral Receptions	43
No. of Tender Openings	23

Audit Committee

A new audit committee for the term of this Council was approved at the October City Council and a meeting will be convened in early 2010.

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

Finance Department

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

In relation to charges for businesses in 2010 it is proposed to have *no change in the current charges for rates and water*. The Finance Department continued to work closely

with its customers in 2009. Given the current economic climate the City Council is more than aware of the difficulties that City Centre Business faces. Payment plans have been agreed with those having difficulties in meeting payments. It should be noted that this simply spreads the payment of a current charge to ease short-term cashflow difficulties for businesses. It must be made clear however that there is no question of reducing rates outstanding by city business – all that the Council can do for business is to be flexible in defining the timelines by which rates obligations must be discharged. It must be made clear that all rates must still be paid in full. This is imperative in order for Limerick City Council to maintain and protect its income stream. There is no doubt that the collection of monies due to it will be challenging for Limerick City Council in 2010. The total expected collection percentage for Rates is approximately 75% for 2009 (for 2008 percentage collection was 80%).

2009 saw a new form of local funding for Local Authorities, the introduction of the Non Principal Private Residence Tax (NPPR). This new form of income has been very successful and is expected to generate circa €1,000,000 in income for Limerick City Council, which is reflected in Budget 2010. This goes some way towards negating the reduction in its income that the Council has been subject to in recent years.

Further efficiency improvements to payment processes were implemented in 2009. There is a continued focus on the use of electronic forms of payment where feasible. Fortnightly pay will be introduced in January 2010. This will ensure increased efficiencies in the processing of all payroll for Limerick City Council.

In 2010, as per circular Fin 12/2009, 35% of all payroll savings announced in Budget 2010 will revert to the exchequer. This figure has been reflected in Limerick City Council's 2010 estimates (included in Division H: H1101).

Preparations continued in 2009 for the implementation of a new payroll, superannuation and human resources system. Local authorities require a human resource, payroll and superannuation system to provide an integrated solution – replacing disparate spreadsheets, databases and applications – and offering greater efficiencies, not just at a local level, but at a national level by having commonly agreed processes. This approach also makes it possible to move towards a full shared services model in the future. The new system has been procured by the Local Government Computer Services Board (LGCSB) and has been rolled out to two pilot authorities in 2009. LGCSB have chosen to implement software from Core International, a fully configured and integrated personnel system to meet the requirements of all local authorities. Limerick City Council has commenced implementation of the CORE project in 2009 and the system is expected to be operating early 2010.

There will be a continued emphasis on cash flow management in 2010. Unfortunately in 2009, the average cash position during the year was disappointing. A number of factors gave rise to this including a slowdown in the amount and the timeliness in which Limerick City Council is securing payments from its customers. However, in the current economic environment the securing of all payments to the local authority will be challenging and all directorates will maintain a strong focus on cash flow management in 2010.

The Accounts Receivable Department is constantly striving to give improved customer service and has a system in place that allows customers pay their traffic fines on line (e-payments) and automatically over the phone 24 hours a day. It is planned to introduce further enhancements to the billing systems in 2010. The implementation of the new water meters onto the billing system was completed in 2009. There was a significant workload involved in the smooth transition from the current charges to the new basis of charging by usage. A new kiosk was installed outside the motor tax office allowing customers to access motor tax on-line and thereby renewing their motor tax electronically without having to queue in the motor tax office.