

TO THE MAYOR AND EACH MEMBER OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL

Re: The Limerick Local Economic and Community Plan – Draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals

A Chomhairleoir, a chara,

I attach for your information a copy of the Limerick Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals.

The Local Government Reform Act 2014 provides a stronger and clearer role for local government in economic development and community development, which is a key element in achieving the vision set out in the Action Programme for Effective Local Government: *“that local government will be the main vehicle of governance and public service at local level, leading economic, social and community development”*.

Section 36 (1) of the Local Government Reform Act 2014, provides for the establishment of a Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) in each local authority area *“for the purpose of developing, co-ordinating and implementing a coherent and integrated approach to local and community development.”*

A primary function of the LCDC, in conjunction with the Economic Development and Planning Strategic Policy Committee, is to prepare and adopt a 6 year Local Economic and Community Plan.

The purpose of the LECP, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and the local and community development of the relevant local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders.

The expansion and strengthening of local authority functions in economic development and local/community development provided for in the Act is an important means to advance the overarching purpose of local government, as highlighted in the *Action Programme for Effective Local Government – Putting People First*, *“to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities”*.

As the framework for the economic development and local/community development of the local authority area, the LECP will also be the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant action arising from measures under the *Action Plan for Jobs* and other statements of Government policy including the report of the *Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas* (CEDRA).

Accordingly, the LCDC is responsible for developing the community elements of the Plan, and the Economic Development and Planning SPC is responsible for developing the economic elements of the Plan.

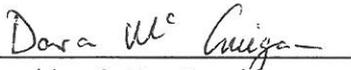
In accordance with Departmental Circulars LG 1/2015 and AL 1/2015 the LCDC has undertaken a Socio-Economic Analysis of Limerick city and county, and the findings of this have informed the attached draft Socio-Economic Statement and High Level Goals.

Both the LCDC and the SPC have adopted the draft Statement and Goals in accordance with the circulars, and it is now proposed that the draft Statement and Goals will go to public consultation.

Members will be afforded the opportunity to input into the development of the LECP through consultation with the Metropolitan/Municipal Districts.

The LECP as a whole, into which both the economic and community elements will be integrated, will be adopted by the local authority.

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2015

Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP) for Limerick City and County

Background Information and Draft Socio-economic Statement

April 2015

Limerick City and County Local Community Development Committee
(LCDC)



1. Background

“Putting People First” (2012) sets out the rationale and proposals of government for a major reform of local government in Ireland. An important objective of the reform is to bring local government closer to the citizen, to improve the delivery of services to citizens and achieve greater efficiency. The reforms expand and strengthen the role of local government in economic and enterprise development and community development including support and coordination of the range of social, environmental / physical, economic and community-based activities delivered in to local communities.

1.1 Key Structures at Local Level and their Role

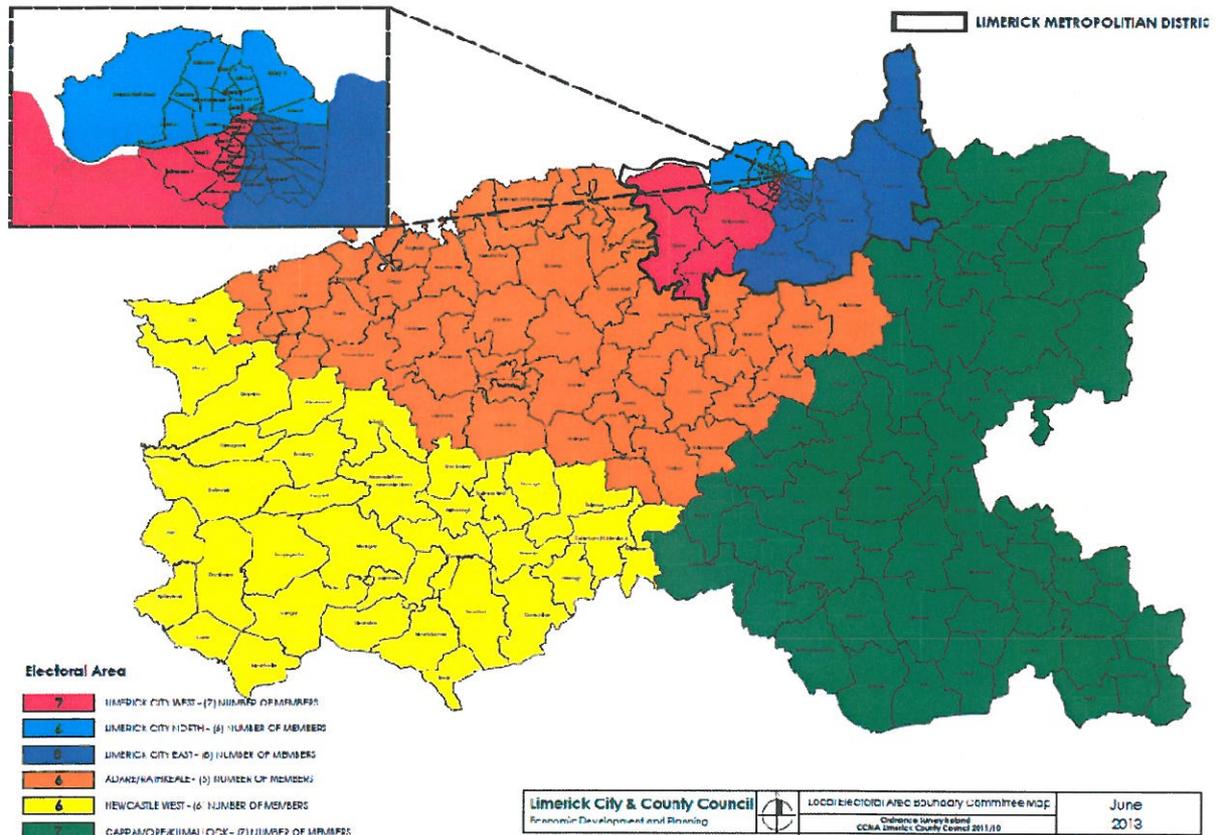
The Local Government Reform Act (2014) gives legislative effect to the proposals in “Putting People First”. This includes setting up new structures and processes to work with local communities to deliver economic development, social inclusion, environmental and community participation and development objectives. The key structures and processes and their role in making the LECP are as follows:

- ▶ Limerick City and County Council. The preparation of the LECP is a reserved function of the local council – i.e., it is required to adopt the LECP.
- ▶ The establishment of the Local and Community Development Committee (LCDC) for Limerick City and County – a partnership-based structure of public, private and community and voluntary sector interests with the majority of its members drawn from outside public agencies. This is an independent statutory sub-committee of Limerick City and County Council. It has planning, coordination, oversight / monitoring and decision-making functions in relation to local economic and community development.
- ▶ The preparation of a six-year Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP), to be led by the LCDC in relation to the community elements, and by the Strategic Policy Committee for Economic Development and Enterprise, Limerick City and County Council in relation to the economic elements.
- ▶ The setting up and roll out of the Public Participation Network (PPN) throughout Limerick City and County, led by the local authority. The purpose of the PPN is to engage communities and citizens in local decision-making and planning. Participation in the PPN is structured around three pillars of voluntary and community organisations - Social Inclusion, Voluntary Action and Environmental. A registration process for community and voluntary organisations in Limerick City and County has been completed recently and over 450 organisations registered. The PPN operates at Municipal District and city and county levels. Community representatives on the Limerick Local Community Development Committee will be nominated by the PPN.

1.2 Progress with Implementation of New Arrangements in Limerick

In terms of progress to date, the amalgamation of Limerick City and County Council came into effect following local elections in June 2014. The local authority area is divided into sub-units known as Municipal Districts (4), which were defined in the *Local Electoral Area Boundary Committee Report 2013*. These are: the Metropolitan District, which covers the city urban area and extends outwards towards Patrickswell to the south west and Castleconnell to the north east and three Municipal Districts in the County: Adare-Rathkeale in the north west of the county, Newcastlewest, in the south west of the county, and Cappamore-Kilmallock, covering the east of the county.

Figure 1: Limerick Metropolitan (Limerick City West, Limerick City North, Limerick City East) and Municipal Districts



The Limerick LCDC has been established, holding its inaugural meeting in July 2014, and is operational. An Advisory Steering Committee has been set up to assist in the preparation, adoption, publication and monitoring of the economic and community elements of the LECP. A detailed socio-economic analysis of Limerick City and County has been prepared. The SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise has also been set up and had its first meeting in March 2015.

The LECP will be prepared over 2015 and, following a consultation and development process with all the key stakeholders and communities, the final LECP will be adopted by Limerick City and County Council in early 2016.

The PPN process is being rolled out. A registration process for community and voluntary organisations in Limerick City and County has been completed and over 450 organisations have registered. The PPN operates at Municipal District and city and county levels. An ICT-based / digital platform has been constructed and is being piloted in Limerick for communication and exchange of information across the PPN, and to facilitate election of representatives from the communities onto various statutory structures. Community representatives on the Limerick Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) will be

nominated by the PPN and they will take on the representation of the communities on the LCDC.

1.3 The Local Economic and Community Development Plan (LECP)

The purpose, key elements of the LECP, structures and process for its preparation and guiding principles for development of the LECP are outlined below.

1.3.1 Purpose of the LECP

The purpose of the LECP, as provided for in the Local Government Reform Act 2014, is to set out, for a six-year period, the objectives and actions needed to promote and support the economic development and local and community development of the local authority area, both by itself directly and in partnership with other economic and community development stakeholders. The overarching aim of the LECP is *“to promote the well-being and quality of life of citizens and communities”*.

1.3.2 Elements of the LECP and integration

The LECP involves two elements:

1. Economic elements, to be developed by the SPC for Economic Development and Enterprise;
2. Community elements, to be developed by the Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

The LECP as a whole is to be prepared as an integrated plan, meaning that the various elements will work together to create mutually reinforcing strategies and action and, in the process, maximise the benefits to the local area and local communities.

The economic elements of the LECP will support economic development in the local authority area and also contribute to the economic development of the region, into neighbouring local authority areas, where appropriate, and supporting actions of strategic regional importance. The community elements, potentially, include the widest range of issues and policies that affect local communities across economic, social and environment / physical development. The purpose of the community element is to promote local and community development across the local authority area, ensure coordination of publicly-funded local and community development actions such that resources can be targeted on where they are needed most, resources can be shared where appropriate and duplication and inefficiencies can be avoided. All of the effort across economic and community elements is directed to improve quality of life and maximise benefits to local communities.

1.3.3 Role of Structures in Making the LECP

In the preparation of the LECP, specific structures have defined roles in drafting, adoption, implementation and monitoring, evaluation and review of the Plan – principally, the LCDC and the SPC for Economic and Enterprise Development. The structures are centred on local government and the LECP will be adopted by the council (the elected members). The performance of the local authority will be subject to examination and audit by the National Oversight and Audit Committee.

1.3.4 Guiding Principles

The preparation of the LECP and the work and operation of the LCDC are underpinned by a number of guiding principles, which are consistent with the European approach as

articulated in Europe 2020 strategy and with key national and local policies / plans, some of which are mentioned above. These guiding principles include:

- ▶ A developmental “bottom-up” approach
- ▶ Respect for the democratic mandate and a strengthened role for elected members
- ▶ A strong focus on social inclusion including providing opportunities for participation by marginalised communities and social groups at risk of exclusion
- ▶ Promotion of enterprise, employment, training and education
- ▶ Integration of sustainable development considerations into the Plan and its implementation
- ▶ Working in partnership and collaboration, harnessing existing local and community development infrastructure to make best use of resources as well as optimising available public and private resources and funds
- ▶ Promotion of voluntary activity and active citizenship
- ▶ Working with integrated evidence-based approaches to local service planning and delivery.

1.4 The Planning and Policy Context

The preparation and implementation of the LECP and the work of the Local Community Development Committee are being undertaken in a complex planning and policy context. The LECP is also being prepared at a time of public sector reform and, in itself, is taking on a reform agenda.

The LECP must be consistent with the existing *Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022* and the *Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSEs)*, to be prepared by the Regional Assemblies, and a new *National Planning Framework*, to replace the current *National Spatial Strategy*. There is also a link to the *City and County Development Plans* in that the LECP must be consistent with the statutory City and County Development Plans.

The LECP must fit with and contribute to implementation of a range of public policies, from EU through national, through regional and to local level. These include the *EU 2020 Strategy* which sets out the approach and targets for the EU to achieve *smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* – see Figure 2 below; Ireland’s *National Reform Programme*, which sets out the broad macro-economic context and provides updates on Ireland’s progress under the EU 2020 Strategy; Government’s *Medium Term Economic Strategy 2014-2020*, which sets out the policy framework to rebuild the Irish economy, achieve sustainable economic growth, strong public finances and sustainable jobs; and the enterprise strategy, set out in *Making it Happen – Growing Enterprise for Ireland*. Other key national policy initiatives and programmes particularly relevant to the LECP are: the *Action Plan for Jobs (2015)* and *Pathways to Work*, which is government’s flagship programme to address unemployment, long-term unemployment and youth unemployment.

Programmes directly relevant to the LECP at local level in terms of oversight/ decision-making and requiring local strategies and implementation arrangements are: the *Rural*

Development Programme (2014-2020), LEADER and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP). In the rural context, the recent report and recommendations of the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA), to address economic decline of rural areas and promote economic activity particularly in towns/villages with potential benefit to rural hinterlands is also relevant. All of these programme work up to achievement of the EU 2020 strategy and targets.

Figure 2: EU2020 Strategy

The EU 2020 strategy aims to deliver growth that is:

- “smart”, through more effective investments in education, research and innovation,
- “inclusive”, by tackling job creation and poverty reduction, and
- “sustainable”, through a move towards a low carbon economy.

Five high goals have and specific targets for the EU as a whole and each member state, to be achieved by 2020, have been set. The definition of goals and targets for Ireland are:

High Level Targets: Definition	Targets for Ireland
Employment: increase in the employment rate (%) for men and women aged 20-64 years	69-71%
R&D / innovation: combined public and private investment levels in this sector as % of GDP	2%
Climate change / energy: (i) Reduction in greenhouse gas emissions %lower than 1990 (ii) Increase in % of energy from renewables (iii) % increase in energy efficiency	(i) 20% (ii) 16% (iii) 13.9%
Education (i) Reduction in the school drop-out rates (%) (ii) Increase in rates (%) of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education	(i) Early school leaving: 10.5% in 2010, target 8% (ii) Third level education 30-34 year olds: 60%
Poverty / social exclusion: reduction in the number of people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion	200,000 fewer people in / at risk of poverty

The strategy also includes seven “flagship” initiatives in the following areas:

“Smart” growth:

1. Digital economy / digital agenda
2. Innovation
3. Youth on the move (education and employment for young people in Europe)

Sustainable growth

4. Resource efficiency
5. An industrial policy for the global era (integrated industrial strategy, strong, competitive, diversified economy, delivering well-paid jobs and resource efficient)

Inclusive growth

6. Agenda for new skills and jobs
7. Platform against poverty (including improved access to work, social security, essential services such as healthcare and housing, education, social innovation, new partnerships between public and private sector).

The LECP must also be consistent with local-authority led strategies and plans including *Limerick City and County Council’s Corporate Plan 2015-2019 (to be adopted in 2015)*,

Limerick 2030 Economic and Spatial Plan, the strategy to promote the economic development of the city working in partnership with key stakeholders including the Higher Education Institutions and the private sector; and the *Limerick Regeneration Framework Implementation Plan*, an integrated plan targeting the most disadvantaged estates of Limerick City and involving an integrated plan across physical, economic and social pillars of action.

The *Corporate Plan* strategy is also structured on the three pillar of social, economic and physical development underpinned by a new model of local governance and service delivery based on excellence in council leadership.

Limerick 2030 aims to position Limerick to take advantage of new economic opportunities, build a strong local economy with significant job creation and marketing Limerick effectively for investment, business location, tourism, retail and as a place to live. It includes a spatial plan for the city centre, focusing on renewal of the urban fabric and including transformative civic and economic projects. There is potential to extend strategic interventions, including sector-specific projects identified for development under Limerick 2030 into the county towns.

In relation to the *Limerick Framework Regeneration Plan*, there is potential to transfer experience and learning into the county in small areas with a profile of social disadvantage and to support improved outcomes for social groups at highest risk of social exclusion.

The *Corporate Plan for Limerick City and County Council* identifies the local authority as “ambitious” in relation to its strategy and vision for the local authority area, and Limerick’s role in the region. As well as promoting Limerick as a location for investment, business, education and as a place to live, the Corporate Plan places a strong emphasis on “*inclusive participation of all citizen in the development of their community*” and community empowerment.

The LECP will also build on the experience and achievements of the local development companies in Limerick City and County, the PAUL Partnership in the city, and Ballyhoura Development and West Limerick Resources in the county.

1.5 The Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP): What type of plan?

The LECP is a framework plan for the economic development and local/community development of Limerick City and County. It will be the primary mechanism at local level to bring forward relevant actions under the various strategies, policies and programmes including those outlined above.

The LECP identifies high level **Goals** for the integrated Plan, supported by specific **Objectives** for the economic and community elements. The objectives will be achieved through the implementation of **Actions**. Types of action in the LECP are identified by theme. These are developed in a way which is consistent with existing plans of Limerick City and County Council, in particular, its corporate plan structured around the three sectoral pillars: economic, social and physical / environmental development.

The LECP is not intended to be a detailed operational programme. Delivery of the strategy and actions “on the ground” will be the role of the relevant public bodies and agencies

including the local authority itself, the Local Enterprise Office (LEO), organisations such as the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board, TUSLA the Child and Family Agency, the HSE, the Intreo Offices of the Department of Social Protection, the higher education institutions as well as non-public agencies including the local development companies, voluntary organisations and community-based organisations across the city and county.

1.6 Stages in the Preparing, Adoption and Monitoring of the LECP

In regard to the preparation of the LECP, guidelines entitled, “Guidelines on Local Economic and Community Plans”, have been issued by the Department of Environment Community and Local Government. Based on these Guidelines and legislation, the following process in preparation of the plan is proposed:

Stage 1: Preparation

- a) Establish & analyse the socio-economic evidence base
- b) Review of relevant high level strategies and plans.
- c) Develop a socio-economic statement for Limerick and develop high level goals for the integrated LECP
- d) Advisory steering group to prepare, SPC & LCDC to adopt the statement for public consultation

Stage 2: Public Consultation

- a) Undertake a public consultation on the socio-economic statement & high-level goals
- b) Revise the statement and refer to the Municipal Districts (MD) & Regional Assembly (RA)

Stage 3: Develop the Objectives & Actions

- a) Develop detailed objectives for the plan underpinned by clear, measurable actions
- b) Advisory steering group to prepare, SPC & LCDC to agree to the objectives & actions
- c) Advisory steering Group to submit a final draft incorporating the statement & goals, objectives & actions for consideration by MDs and RAs.

Stage 4: Finalise Plan

- a) SPC & LCDC consider & adopt final draft (revised as necessary following consideration by the MDs and RAs).
- b) Local Authority to adopt the final draft of the LECP
- c) Final Plan submitted to the Minister & published by LA

Stage 5: Monitoring & Review

- a) Advisory Steering Group to monitor progress on actions & against measurable targets for the objectives.

The process is at Stage 1. A detailed socio-economic analysis of Limerick City and County has been prepared. The Advisory Steering Group to prepare the LECP has been set up. The

draft socio-economic statement, identifying the high level goals, specific objectives and structure of the programme is presented here (Section 2).

2. Draft Socio-Economic Statement

The remainder of this document presents the draft socio-economic statement for the LECP, including the findings of the SWOT analysis, articulation of high level goals, presentation of the proposed structure of the programme (i.e., the pillars and foundational elements – see below), the specific objectives and action areas and a small number of key targets, developed with reference to the EU 2020 targets.

2.1 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis is presented below. A summary of the main findings of the socio-economic analysis is contained in Appendix I.

This SWOT has been used to inform the preparation of this draft socio-economic statement. The high level objectives and strategy for the LECP flow from the detailed analysis of the local situation in Limerick City and County.

Limerick Socio-Economic SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Integrated labour market across the city and county, mixed economic structure, high levels of employment in services in the County and significant number of jobs in the suburbs</p> <p>Lower unemployment rate in County Limerick than national average (17.5% compared to 19%) and employment rate at the national average (58%), 2011</p> <p>Strong FDI IT manufacturing sector</p> <p>Established high-tech sectors in ICT, Medi-Tech, Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering, Food & Drink</p> <p>Performs well in medium technology manufacturing jobs</p> <p>Strong agriculture sector / system of farming in comparison to some other regions</p> <p>Strong education assets (UL/LIT/MIC) and associated research capacity including SFI centres</p> <p>Availability of key access transport infrastructures including</p>	<p>Limerick is one of the poorest performing of five cities in state</p> <p>High levels of social and economic disadvantage in the City</p> <p>Insufficient numbers of jobs in the city</p> <p>Loss of over 11,000 jobs in the city and county labour market between 2007 and 2012</p> <p>Decline in micro-enterprises and in jobs in small and medium enterprises between 2007 & 2012</p> <p>Comparatively poor performance in high tech manufacturing</p> <p>Low rate of FDI jobs to Limerick since 2010</p> <p>Rates of third level qualification in City well below national average and amongst the worst in the state</p> <p>Labour Force Participation Rate in the city (55%) and employment rate in the city (47%) well below national average</p> <p>Extremely high unemployment in metropolitan Limerick (28.9%) including high rates of long term</p>	<p>Amalgamation of Limerick City and County</p> <p>High and improved retention rates to Leaving Cert</p> <p>81% of pupils sitting Leaving Cert in City and County schools offered places at third level colleges in 2013</p> <p>Improved progression rates to third level from disadvantaged (DEIS) schools</p> <p>Over 20,000 places available in third level institutions in Limerick and 6,000 in PLC & FAS training in the region</p> <p>Creation of new City Centre third level education campus</p> <p>Potential to increase tourism including rural and urban-based tourism & to connect to Irelands Ancient East initiative</p> <p>Potential for start-up and further development of micro- and small enterprises, which are of great importance</p> <p>Significant reduction in most categories of recorded offences, especially serious crime between</p>	<p>Trend in population decline in the city over a long period of time (-13% over last 30 years) compared with significant growth in the county (+40%)</p> <p>Population decline in the city between 2006 and 2011 was -4.5% compared with growth of +8.4% in the county in the same period.</p> <p>High level of commercial and retail vacancy in Limerick City and main County towns</p> <p>Gaps in motorway network</p> <p>Some local areas characterised by health inequalities, low education, long history of unemployment and welfare dependence resulting in deep structural problems which make successful revitalisation complex and difficult</p> <p>Social and cultural barriers to building wider community cohesion across communities in the city, the county and across city and county</p> <p>Poor broadband connectivity in parts of rural Limerick limiting</p>

<p>Shannon Airport and Foynes Port</p> <p>Motorway accessibility to other urban centres especially Dublin</p> <p>Generally short commuting times to work / school / college</p> <p>High percentage of people in good or very good health</p> <p>Availability of natural, historic, heritage, recreational and cultural tourism assets in the city, the county and & tourism networks</p> <p>Strong sporting culture (Munster Rugby, GAA and soccer), sports' science and education and sporting facilities</p> <p>Distinctive City Centre environment including Georgian character</p> <p>Natural assets of the city including the river</p> <p>Well developed community organisations and strong community spirit and attachment to local areas</p> <p>Clubs, activities and facilities for young people with a profile of disadvantage in the city</p> <p>Government commitment to regeneration process & funding</p>	<p>unemployed, youth unemployment and male unemployment (Census data 2011)</p> <p>Multi-faceted aspects of social and economic deprivation in areas where it is deeply embedded (e.g. long-term unemployment, low education, poor health, social housing, youth offending, poor outcomes for children)</p> <p>19% of city population live in Small Areas classified as extremely or very disadvantaged</p> <p>Larger numbers living in areas of deprivation and greater extremes of social inequality in the city</p> <p>Pockets of deprivation in the county including parts of Rathkeale, Abbeyfeale and other towns & rural areas</p> <p>Underutilised City Centre and high commercial, retail & residential vacancy in City Centre, towns & villages</p> <p>Poor broadband connectivity in parts of rural Limerick and low levels of PC ownership and internet access in parts of the city (where low education and low incomes are key factors)</p>	<p>2007 and 2013, and Limerick City is no longer a "high" crime city</p> <p>High levels of voluntary participation especially in sport and charitable activity which could be mobilised</p> <p>Multi-agency coordination structures in place (e.g., Children's Services Committee) and history of partnership working</p> <p>Limerick 2030 Strategic Sites</p> <p>Proposed footbridge</p> <p>Regional Economic Forum including personalities with excellent wider networks</p> <p>Underused high quality historic & physical assets in City Centre (Georgian Limerick, Shannon)</p> <p>Limerick City of Culture legacy</p> <p>Unrealised potential for building cooperation within the region, tapping into national and international networks and wider funding and investment opportunities</p> <p>Strong third level presence with potential for associated niche industries</p> <p>Potential of rural economic development zones</p>	<p>social, economic development, access to services participation and other aspects of development (e.g., education and learning)</p> <p>Poorly performing City Centre</p> <p>Legacy of negative image of the city</p> <p>Strong competition from other areas (Dublin, other cities and other local authority areas in the state) for investment and R&D and Innovation more established in other centres.</p> <p>Health inequalities of disadvantaged people</p> <p>Absence of a rural tourism destination management support scheme</p>
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2.2 Overall High Level Goals

The overall goal of the LECP is to promote improved quality of life and well-being of people and communities in Limerick City and County. Specific high level goals are:

- To promote equally **vibrant communities** with high quality of life, access to quality services in urban and rural Limerick, engaged in civic life and local decision-making.
- To increase the **population and incomes** by creating conditions for, and promoting, new sources of **jobs and enterprises** in the local economy, retaining the young population and attracting in new talent and investment.
- To increase **the employment rate and reduce unemployment**, particularly in the city where the employment rate is low and unemployment highest, and in areas of county with high unemployment, under-employment and economic inactivity.
- To reduce the number of people living in deprivation, promote **social and economic inclusion and a reduction of social inequalities** particularly addressed to local communities and groups in Limerick with a profile of social disadvantage and / or at risk of exclusion
- To create a **strong urban core, thriving towns, attractive and socially sustainable villages and countryside**¹, protecting and enhancing the environment for the current and future generations
- To promote **urban rural linkages** across city and county, increasing social cohesion and extending economic opportunities to benefit the whole population
- To build **networks of cooperation** including local partnerships and regional, national and European and other international networks, to develop new economic, social and cultural opportunities and enhance the reputation of Limerick city and county.

The LECP is developed based on an integrated territorial approach structured around three sectoral pillars – economic, social and physical / environment. This emphasises the strong links and inter-dependencies across city and county, functional areas within the territory and into the broader region (based on economic activities, transport links, labour market / commuting to work patterns etc.). The integrated territorial development approach draws on the Europe 2020 strategic framework of “*smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*”. Community elements are contained in all pillars - social, economic and physical / environmental. This reflects the underpinning “bottom-up” and inclusive approach to the whole LECP and the view that there is scope for, and great benefits to be achieved, through community level action and participation in decision-making across all areas of public policy.

The integrated structure of the LECP is illustrated in Figure 4. At the centre – the intersection of the three pillars - is the creation of vibrant communities across Limerick City and County. Developments in relation to the built / physical environment will have economic impact including creation of jobs and also offer potential for business and new skills development in green energy and contribute to improving energy efficiency. Economic development through successes in attracting investment, new business start-up and development and job creation

¹ For clarification CEDRA definition of area types defines ‘Rural Areas’ as everywhere outside of the 5 main cities including all towns, villages and countryside and ‘City’ as the 5 largest cities including Limerick.

can help address problems of long-term unemployment (LTU) and youth unemployment as well as create new opportunities for social enterprise. Village renewal can provide new opportunities for developing skills / upskilling, develop facilities in local communities, for instance, for community-based education / outreach to access public services (library) and social services.

The three sectoral pillars are underpinned by the following cross-cutting priorities:

- *Community* participation and engagement, to community participation in decision-making, community-based planning, developing / implementing local initiatives.
- Policing and community safety where low crime, trust in policing and safe communities are fundamental to creating the conditions for economic and social interventions to be successful.
- *A whole of government approach* and improving local coordination across public policies is a core purpose of the LCDC.
- *Promoting innovation across all sectoral pillars, economic, social, environment and furthering the public sector reform agenda in Limerick.*

Figure 4: Structure of the Integrated LECP: Sectoral Pillars and Foundational Elements



The proposed specific objectives by each of the pillars and priority action areas are identified below.

Social Pillar

<u>Action Areas</u>	<u>Specific Objectives</u>
Education, skills and learning	<p>Raise the education level in the population, particularly in the city where it is lowest;</p> <p>Develop opportunities and access to “second chance” education for those with lowest education (lower secondary and below);</p> <p>Match education and training programmes to current and future skills needs, particularly targeting new / developing sectors in the local / regional economy;</p> <p>Support retention in school for those at risk of early school leaving and earliest interventions for those at risk of educational under-achievement;</p> <p>Support access to third level education for groups under-represented in higher education working with schools, third level colleges and voluntary and community organisations;</p> <p>Develop actions to address the “digital” divide affecting specific communities in city and county (with low education) and specific age groups (e.g., older people);</p> <p>Establish a culture of, and provide opportunities for, lifelong learning accessible throughout city and county including outreach facilities in local communities where needed.</p>
Health & Well-being	<p>Promote population health and well-being drawing on a social determinants of health approach (covering social aspects including education, lifestyle, healthy eating, environment, housing and economic status);</p> <p>Work with statutory agencies and voluntary and community to promote access to primary care services across city and county and access to specialist services for those who need them;</p> <p>Work with statutory agencies and voluntary and community organisations to improve access to services for treatment of problems particularly affecting socially disadvantaged populations – including addiction, mental health and physical health problems.</p>
Ageing Well / Age-Friendly County	<p>Work with statutory agencies and voluntary and community organisations to improve health and well-being of older people and safety in their homes and communities;</p> <p>Combat isolation of older people in both urban and rural areas through social initiatives including inter-generational initiatives (young people and older people engaging with each other);</p> <p>Work with statutory agencies and community and voluntary organisations and older people themselves to create age-friendly environments in urban and rural areas (paths, seating, access to building), services (transport) accessible to older persons, and improved community-based services in primary care and social care;</p> <p>Support older people to live independently for as long as possible through initiatives such as housing adaptations, support families in caring, technology-based responses and monitoring and peer support for older people;</p>

	<p>Promote positive ageing, older people feeling valued and participating in society and in their communities.</p>
<p>Employability and work: Social inclusion and activation</p>	<p>Create access to employment for job seekers, economically inactive and under-employed people (e.g., involuntary part-time workers) ; Identify and address barriers to participation in economic activity (e.g., childcare, caring, transport, skills) in both urban and rural areas and with reference to the needs of specific groups; Increase employability of people distant from the labour market targeting long-term unemployed and groups at high risk of social exclusion (lone parents, early school leavers, people with disabilities); Increased retention and sustainable integration of young people into the labour market, especially young unemployed not in education employment or training (NEETs); Connect employability and access to employment interventions with jobs developing in the local economy, including community enterprise, small enterprises, jobs in construction and jobs in new / developing sectors in the local economy (energy, tourism, agri-food, hospitality, retail); Develop links with enterprises / businesses and employers (public and voluntary bodies) to inform provision of Further Education and Training (FET) and access to job placements, internships and sustainable jobs in the local economy.</p>
<p>Children, young people and families</p>	<p>Coordinate objectives for the LECP with the multi-agency structure of the Children and Young Person’s Service Committee (CYPSC) for Limerick City and County. The objectives below reflect priorities in the CYPSC Plan (2015-2018) Support early childhood intervention and prevention strategies to achieve positive outcomes for children and families at risk of social exclusion; Implement and support positive parenting and access to family support services for those who need them in Limerick City and County; Establish positive youth mental health and well-being in city and county; Facilitate the creation of restorative practices in organisations working with young people including schools, youth services and community organisations; Introduce holistic interventions to address the needs of youth in city and county at highest risk of poor outcomes (e.g., at risk of offending); Identify needs of young people aged 18-25 years to inform interventions to address them (education training and careers, employability, employment, housing); Promote Limerick as a child-friendly city, and extend this to county towns and the countryside; Promote and support participation of young people in their communities and in society; Build links and engage in assessments and consultations to promote the successful expansion of the geographical remit of the Limerick City CSC into Limerick County.</p>

Economic Pillar

<u>Action Areas</u>	<u>Specific objectives</u>
Sectoral development strategies and zoning	<p>Create diversification, improved competitiveness and jobs in all local economies to facilitate balanced economic development, targeting sectors with growth potential: agri-food, green energy, niche engineering, ICT, financial and back office services, medical services, tourism, hospitality and catering, city and rural tourism, cultural industries and heritage, green economy, creative industries, speciality food, marine and retail and linked to zoning plans;</p> <p>Develop / prepare strategies supportive of sustainable and inclusive economic development – e.g. renewal energy strategy and a digital strategy for Limerick;</p> <p>Facilitate the development of the Shannon Estuary as a key driver of economic development in the region.</p>
ICT and broadband	<p>Promote and facilitate broadband connectivity and high speed broadband development especially in rural areas with deficiencies;</p> <p>Promote and support enterprise start-up and development in local and wider markets in ICT;</p> <p>Support SMEs to develop in new markets by going “on line”.</p>
Physical business infrastructure	<p>Develop physical business infrastructure in key locations in city and county, compliant with zoning, to support new business location (inward investment);</p> <p>Implement Limerick 2030 strategic sites, seeking out investment and partnerships in development projects (see below);</p> <p>Develop workspace for SMEs including space for start-ups (low cost; easy in- easy out- terms), expanding businesses and community enterprise in urban and rural areas;</p> <p>Create or improve sites for retail outlets in urban and rural areas (including local markets) and support enterprises to access them;</p> <p>Promote and facilitate excellence in design and integration of environmental priorities (energy efficiency, low carbon) into physical business infrastructure development / improvements (to brownfield sites, building, and village renewal) in urban and rural areas.</p>
Access to finance / unlocking resources for investment	<p>Promote and facilitate access to finance for enterprises including support to access Microfinance Ireland as well as existing sources of finance for start-ups (LEO programmes), Section 66 financing in the form of grants and loans and the Business and Retail Incentive Scheme;</p> <p>Promote and provide more diversified sources of finance for business start-up and expansion including low interest loans for rural businesses; peer lending initiatives and financing for community and social enterprise;</p> <p>Facilitate partnerships between the local authority, private sector and other partners (e.g., philanthropic) to invest in new sources of economic activity in Limerick City and County including Limerick 2030 transformative projects;</p> <p>Facilitate and encourage wide application of the Prompt Payments Schemes across public sector organisations.</p>
Business support for	<p>Support business start-up, consolidation and expansion of micro- and small enterprises throughout city and county, providing training, advice,</p>

micro-enterprise and SMEs	<p>mentoring drawing on the role of the LEO and other support structures including local development companies and LEADER and where possible lessen administrative burdens;</p> <p>Support specific target groups in enterprise start-up and development – community centres, women, unemployed, young people;</p> <p>Improve coordination and flows of information to businesses on financial supports available and business supports and networking opportunities;</p> <p>Promote research and development and knowledge transfer to improve competitiveness of small businesses.</p>
Promotion and marketing	<p>Promote Limerick city and county as a location for Foreign Direct Investment and as a place to do business;</p> <p>Develop Limerick as a destination for visitors;</p> <p>Build a connection with the Limerick diaspora, and market Limerick to its diaspora;</p> <p>Establish Limerick as a location for events including cultural activities, building on the legacy of city of culture 2014, sporting, historic and heritage activities addressed to local resident population as well as visitors;</p> <p>Develop Limerick as a destination for third level education nationally and internationally;</p> <p>Coordinate the marketing of Limerick by the Limerick Marketing Company with marketing activities of regional organisations (Shannon Airport, Shannon Foynes Port Company).</p>
Networks and partnership	<p>Draw on the Limerick Charter (local authority, higher education and private sector), under Limerick 2030 to progress strategic projects;</p> <p>Promote local and regional networks of businesses oriented to pursuing common interests and access to wider markets;</p> <p>Develop corporate social responsibility initiatives;</p> <p>Develop public agency links with local and regional employer networks to match education and training provision to skills and competency needs of employers, open up access to work experience / placements, apprenticeships and sustainable jobs particularly for unemployed people;</p> <p>Build strategic education / industry partnerships in R& D and Innovation and knowledge transfer to support economic and employment development in sectors with high value added;</p> <p>Build strategic partnerships in the local, regional and national context to progress regional strategic initiatives, cross-local authority cooperation, EU transnational cooperation opportunities and city-to-city cooperation.</p>

Physical / Environmental Pillar

<u>Action Areas</u>	<u>Specific objectives</u>
Public capital / infrastructure programme	<p>Support the development of strategic public infrastructures to meet the current and future needs of the population in terms of housing, schools and health infrastructures working with new models of financing public capital programmes where appropriate;</p> <p>In the capital infrastructure programme, promote links to skills development, jobs and business development in the local economy including application of the social contract in public procurement to support access to training, work experience and sustainable jobs for unemployed people;</p> <p>In the capital infrastructure programme, promote improved energy efficiency and excellence in design.</p>
Urban and village renewal	<p>Promote and facilitate urban and village renewal utilising in particular EU Structural Funds: sustainable urban development (ERDF) and the rural development programmes including LEADER, and new financial instruments resulting in improved quality of the build environment;</p> <p>In urban and village renewal, promote links to skills, employment and business development in the local economy, new or improved services in local communities and community-based planning and participation;</p> <p>Develop transformative civic infrastructure projects including those identified in Limerick 2030 linked to “the living city” and increase footfall into the city centre and key attractions in city and county;</p> <p>Develop strategic recreation / leisure facilities building on the natural and historic / heritage and cultural resources in parts of the city and county, to improve quality of life and well-being for the population, making areas more attractive to visitors and encourage tourism based enterprise;</p> <p>Develop smaller scale public realm and community facilities’ projects engaging local communities, linked to improved access to services and quality of life;</p> <p>Build on the successful model of Tidy Towns, to promote wide community engagement in urban and village renewal.</p>
Transport	<p>Facilitate public investment to fill gaps in the strategic road infrastructures, improving connectivity within the local authority area, to other urban centres and international access transport infrastructures and services (including Shannon Airport and ports);</p> <p>Progress proposals relate to rail links and Colbert Station redevelopment / renewal, identified in Limerick 2030;</p> <p>Further develop SMARTER Travel in the urban environment including development of routes, local educational campaigns and other initiatives including car pooling / shared transport and reduction of car usage linked to promoting the low carbon agenda, quality of life, health and well-being;</p> <p>Establish innovative rural transport initiatives to improve access of rural populations to key services (health, education), employment and day-to-day activities (shopping), especially targeting those without own</p>

	transport and vulnerable groups (e.g., elderly persons on low incomes).
Low carbon, improved energy efficiency and local responses to climate change	In partnership with statutory, voluntary and community organisations, promote the low carbon agenda, improved energy efficiency, careful use of water resources and local action to mitigate effects of climate change; Promote and support local employment and community-based initiatives in these areas; Support access to wider networks of local initiatives to bring new knowledge, exchange of experience and joint action in these fields including international experience.
Natural environment, bio-diversity / green city and waste	In partnership with statutory, voluntary and community organisations, promote high environmental quality of the natural environment including local clean-ups and Tidy Towns, protection and enhancement of fragile sites (e.g., Lough Gur) and natural resources; Promote and support local employment and community-based initiatives in these areas; Support access to wider networks of local initiatives to bring new knowledge, exchange of experience and joint action in these fields.

The three sectoral pillars are underpinned by the cross-cutting priorities outlined below. These are supportive of all other actions.

Community Participation and Engagement

Action Areas	Specific objectives
Public Participation Network	To support the roll-out and operation of the PPN process in Limerick, at Municipal and Metropolitan District, and city and county levels; To learn from the PPN process with a view to enhancing effectiveness in relation to participation, information flows and bringing local communities into decision-making process of local government.
Capacity building	To increase and strengthen participation in community organisations / voluntary activity, particularly engaging groups at risk of social exclusion and new communities in Ireland to help eradicate barriers between communities; To promote an empowerment and equality agenda in community organisation and action and support these objectives as part of capacity building programmes; To strengthen the ability of community organisations and groups to build structures, systems, people and skills so that they are able to define and achieve objectives for their communities through planning, setting up and implementation of community projects, taking part in partnership and fora to input to local decision-making; To build the capacity of statutory and other partners to work effectively with community-based and voluntary organisations (i.e., working together).
Information	To support information and knowledge exchange and cooperation (e.g.,

exchange and networks	joint projects) across community and voluntary organisations in Limerick City and County; To encourage participation of community and voluntary organisations in wider information and knowledge networks (regional, inter-county, national, European) to build up learning and develop new opportunities for action.
Local initiatives	To encourage and support local communities to engage in local development initiatives across all areas of the LECP including economic activities (enterprise, jobs), physical and environment issues (from Tidy Towns, to new areas such as low carbon / energy efficiency), community safety, local services in education, care, youth work etc.

Policing and Community Safety

Action Areas	Specific objectives
Fora / structures to support crime prevention and policing in local areas	<p>To underpin quality of life and create conditions for successful social and economic development across city and county through effective policing appropriate to different settings (city, other urban areas, rural areas) building on what has been achieved in the city in addressing serious crime and reductions in crime rates;</p> <p>To maximise the benefits from the existing structures / fora for consultations and input to policing and crime prevention. These structures include the Joint Policing Committee involving senior Gardaí, public agencies, elected members and communities representatives to discuss, review and make recommendations for policing and community safety strategies and plans in local areas across city and county; the Limerick City and County Children's and Young Person's Services Committee, the Alliance of partners associated with the Age Friendly County Programme, Local Regeneration Committees and other structures and specific projects (e.g., Garda Youth Diversion, Restorative Practices, etc.).</p> <p>To build trust and confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system in communities where there is a history of low trust (e.g., regeneration areas of the city).</p>
Communities-based interventions in crime prevention and community safety	<p>To strengthening existing approaches and methods to promote community safety in urban and rural areas including monitoring systems (e.g., CCTV in urban areas), alerts (e.g., text alerts) developed through multi-agency approaches and in cooperation with local communities;</p> <p>To promote community safety through interventions across the social and economic programme and physical design aspects of communities / estates (e.g., designing out crime);</p> <p>To support and test innovative measures in local communities to respond to key issues of concern such as anti-social behaviour, which can be a problem on city estates and in county towns, again working with multi-agency / stakeholder approaches.</p>

Innovation: Economic, Social and Public Sector Reform

Action Areas	Specific objectives
Service delivery to the citizen and communities	To introduce innovation in local government services to achieve quality, improve efficiency and enhance the experience of service delivery to citizens and communities in Limerick
Strategic innovation through partnership and Innovate Limerick	To accelerate innovation by providing a supportive environment to facilitate and encourage higher levels of innovation across the various stakeholders and sectors in Limerick, led by new structure of Innovate Limerick based on public-private partnership; To strengthen capacity for innovation through exposure to wider experiences, internationalisation and building local capacity for innovation; To progress the innovative proposals in Limerick 2030 (sectoral strategies in key areas, incubation space for high potential start-ups in key sectors and FDI, clustering initiative) and the Limerick Framework Regeneration Plan (National Innovation Hub, social innovation), extending activities and impact into the county where appropriate, led by Innovative Limerick
Innovation in service delivery into local communities	To support innovation, including social innovation in service delivery into local communities, based on cooperation between public agencies, social enterprises and communities including, users in order to improve services (quality, access) and add new services to address local needs
Local initiatives	To encourage and support local communities to innovate in collective action – for instance, to create enterprises and jobs, enhance and protect the environment, promote the environmental agenda related to low carbon, energy efficiency, waste reduction and management, bio-diversity and climate change.

Whole of government approach and local policy coordination

Action Areas	Specific objectives
LCDC	To develop the role of the LCDC as a key structure to drive the agenda of local policy coordination and joined up action, to benefit citizens and communities in Limerick City and County; To prospect and pursue opportunities to bring additional funding from public programmes and private investment to Limerick; To bring a stronger strategic perspective to planning developments and opportunities for Limerick, building up cohesion across city and county.
Economic Forum, Limerick 2030 Charter and other networks	To maximise the potential economic benefits to Limerick City and County, drawing on the expertise and structure of the Economic Forum; To progress new forms of cooperation based on the commitment reflected in the Limerick Charter (Limerick City and County Council, Higher Educational Institutes and the private sector); To pursue and participate actively in networks, especially EU networks, to open up access to new opportunities, enhance the reputation of Limerick and its internationalisation.

Annex I: Summary

Limerick City and County:

Socio-Economic Analysis of the Territory in the National and Regional Context

1. Key Findings: Socio-economic analysis

Key Population Statistics 2011 (Census of Ireland):

Limerick City, 56,106	Limerick County, 134,703
Limerick Metropolitan District, 102,161	Limerick County excluding the suburbs, 89,648
Limerick City and Suburbs statistical unit, 91,500	Limerick City and County, 191,809

Limerick City comprises 30% of the total population of city and county and the Metropolitan District 53% of the total population of city and county.

The settlement structure is dominated by the city and suburbs; the county is largely rural including small towns and villages; the second largest urban area (Newcastle West) has a population of some 5,500.

The city has an older population structure (13%, 65 years and over) compared with the county (12%) and city and suburbs (11%).

The trend is one of population decline in the city over a long period of time (-13% over last 30 years) compared with significant growth in the county (+40%) and the state (+33%). Population decline in the city between 2006 and 2011 was -4.5% compared with growth of +8.4% in the county in the same period.

Third level qualification:

Mid-West Region: 62% of 30-34 year olds with third level qualification.

Limerick County: 29% of the adult population with third level qualification compared with 23% in Limerick City. The latter is well below the national average and amongst the worst in the state (Census 2011).

Second level: retention and progression rates:

Retention rates to Leaving Cert: Limerick City, 86.6% for 2006 entry cohort and Limerick County, 92.7% for 2006 entry cohort. Retention rates to Leaving Cert are high and have improved in recent years. There are higher retention rates to Leaving Cert in the county compared with the city.

81% of pupils sitting Leaving Cert in Limerick City and County schools were offered places at third level colleges in 2013.

86% of pupils from non-DEIS schools progress from Leaving Cert to third level education compared with 64% from DEIS² schools in 2013. Progression rates to third level have increased significantly from both DEIS and non-DEIS schools in Limerick.

60% of pupils in Limerick second level schools progressing to third level go to colleges in Limerick: University of Limerick (UL), Limerick Institute of Technology (LIT) and Mary Immaculate College (MIC).

²Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools: schools located in areas of social deprivation or with a pupil intake which is socially disadvantaged

Third level: capacity and profile:

Over 20,000 students at under-graduate and post-graduate level are enrolled in third level colleges in Limerick and some 5,000 students graduate each year from Limerick third level institutions. The disciplinary mix of new enrolments is: science and engineering, manufacturing and construction (35%), business, social sciences and law (19%) and arts and humanities (21%).

Third level educational provision is of regional as well as local importance.

Further Education and Training including Skills Training for Unemployed and Early School Leavers

Mid-West Region: Capacity of the Further Education and Training (FET) sector is some 6,460 places for PLC and FAS-certified skills training (approximately 9% of FET provision in the state). There are 3,789 skills training places and 2,671 PLC places. This assessment includes second chance education (Youthreach), training for unemployed distant from the labour market (e.g., Community Training Centre, Local Training Initiative), offender reintegration projects and community education.

Mostly PLC places are taken up by new entrants coming directly from second level education. While there has been some expansion in provision in general in the state (new programmes) due to high unemployment, capacity of the FET sector is not completely adequate in view of the large numbers unemployed. The situation is likely to improve with changing demand for entry to FET due to the economic upturn.

Labour force participation, employment and unemployment rates:

In 2011 (census), the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was 60% in Limerick County and 55% in Limerick City (compared with 62% at national level). The Employment Rate in the city was particularly low (47%) compared with the county (58%). The County Employment Rate was approximately the same as the national average (2011 Census data).

Unemployment rates are extremely high in Limerick City (28.6%) generally compared with the county (17.5%) and the state (19%) in 2011 (Census 2011, based on Principle Economic Status).

Unemployment rates are particularly high in certain age groups (15-19 year olds, 67.9% unemployment rate in the city; 56% in the county; 59% in the state) and certain areas (male unemployment rates of 50-60% in regeneration areas in the city and up to 39% in Rathkeale in the county) based on 2011 census data.

Approximately, 15,500 are on Live Register in Limerick city and county DSP offices in December 2014; 37% are female and 14% under 25 years.

17% of the working age population in Limerick City and County are on a social welfare payment linked to unemployment / under-employment. Long-term unemployment rates are approximately 60% based on Live Register data at national level.

Social exclusion:

19% of the city population live in Small Areas classified as **extremely or very disadvantaged** compared with 0.7% of the county population living in Small Areas classified as extremely or very disadvantaged based on the Pobal-Haase Pratschke Deprivation Index

(2011). Approximately, 20,500 persons in the city (36%) and 12,500 persons in the county (9%) live in Small Areas classified as **disadvantaged through to extremely disadvantaged**. There are larger numbers living in areas of deprivation and greater extremes of social inequality in the city.

30% families with children (in receipt of Child Benefit) receive Back to School allowance (2013). This provides some quantification of the level of financial distress amongst families in Limerick City and County.

Regional level data show that the “deprivation” rate (lack of essential items considered the norm in society), at 21.2%, and “consistent poverty” rate (below the 60% median income threshold and lacking essential items), at 5.7%, in the Mid-West Region have been lower than the national average (26.9% and 7.7% respectively). The “at risk of poverty” rate (below 60% median income), at 17.1%, up until the most recent period (2012), has been higher than the national average (16.5%).

Based on national data, “deprivation” and “consistent” poverty rates are lower for rural areas compared with urban areas but the “at risk of poverty” rate is higher in rural compared with urban areas. This highlights differences in experiences of poverty between urban and rural areas. In rural areas, poverty is more strongly connected with low incomes (more persons below the 60% national median income threshold) while in urban areas, there is a stronger association with deprivation based on lacking items considered the norm by society.

Economic competitiveness, enterprises and jobs:

Between 2006 and 2011, in Limerick City and County, 9,484 jobs were lost (census data) with the largest number of job losses in construction (-5,530), manufacturing (-4,500) and wholesale / retail (- 900).

Analysis of change in the numbers of enterprises and jobs in private businesses in Limerick City and County over the years of recession (2007-2012) show:

- Decline in the number of businesses by -1,123 (-13.9%)
- Decline in the number of jobs by -11,698 (-23.1%)
- There was some recovery in jobs the year 2011 to 2012 in the following sectors: accommodation and food, finance and insurance, real estate, transport and storage.
- Jobs in the construction sector were still declining while jobs in manufacturing stabilised between 2011 and 2012.

The ratio of active enterprises to the population of Limerick City and County (191,809) was 1:25.8 in 2011 (1 enterprise for every 26 persons), more or less the same as the ratio for the Mid-West Region and the state as a whole (1:26). The ratio of active enterprises to the total population dis-improved between 2011 and 2012, to 1:27 in 2012 (1 enterprise to every 27 persons).

Analysis shows the importance of micro- and small enterprises in the local economy of Limerick City and County. In 2012, 90% of all enterprises and 33% of all jobs were in micro-enterprises (<10 persons engaged).

Large enterprises (>250 persons engaged) account for only 0.2% of enterprises, but 23% of jobs (2012) in Limerick City and County.

Reflecting churn in the micro-enterprise category (enterprise start-ups and closures), the largest absolute decline in the number of enterprises by size structure between 2007 and 2012 was in firms with less than 10 employees (-870 firms), resulting in a significant decline in employment (-3,158). The largest decline in jobs by size structure was in enterprises with between 20 and less than 50 engaged (-3,271); there was also a significant decline in jobs in medium-size firms with 50-249 persons engaged (-3,047).

Agriculture:

While employment in agriculture now accounts for a relatively small proportion of jobs (8% of jobs in the County), farming remains important in the local economy and to the society and culture in County Limerick. Trends in farming include the reduction in the number of farm holdings, consolidation of land to create larger farms and the ageing of farm holders. In Limerick County, in 2010, 23% were 65 years or older and 6.5% under 35 years. However, farming in Limerick County and the Mid-West has a more favourable demographic profile and farm size structure compared with other regions, particularly the West and Border Regions (which are characterised by an older age structure and smaller size holdings). The predominant system of farming in the Mid-West Region and Limerick County is dairying and cattle rearing. Dairying is characterised by higher average farm incomes, lowest reliance on direct payments / agricultural subsidies and significantly higher rates of economically viable family farms compared with other systems of farming (especially sheep farming and cattle). Cattle rearing is amenable to part-time farming. There is a tradition of this in County Limerick where the availability of off-farm jobs in manufacturing, agricultural contracting, services and construction enabled the sustainability of family farms that, on their own, were not economically viable. Such off-farm employment opportunities were affected by the large job losses (particularly, in construction and manufacturing) over the years of the recession. However, based on Teagasc National Annual Farm survey data, the Southwest Region (Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary) proved more resilient in the face of the recession in terms of farm viability and sustainability compared with the weakest farming regions (the West and Border). The situation in terms of farm viability and sustainability has improved in the most recent period (2013). Non-farm factors associated with vulnerability (not viable in their own right, nor sustainable linked to off farm income / employment) are: older age of the farmer, low education and low level of work-related skills. Farm holders with such a profile, not unlike urban counterparts, are most at risk of social exclusion.

R&D Innovation and the Knowledge Economy:

Firms attracted to the area / region through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and large enterprises (in general) make an important contribution in terms of jobs and income but also by bringing new technologies / skills, sectoral specialisation, research and innovation, sub-supply links to local and regional business and new opportunities for businesses in service industries (including personal services, hospitality, leisure, tourism).

In the manufacturing sector, the Mid-West Region performs poorly in terms of the technology intensity of jobs: it accounts for 9% of all high tech jobs in manufacturing in the state, well behind the best performing regions (Dublin, 27% and South West region, 25%). The Mid-West Region performs better in relation to medium-technology intensity jobs in manufacturing (9,900 jobs) with the third highest share (8%) of medium tech jobs across regions in the state after the West (13%) and South West (11%).

On R&D, the level of business expenditure on research and development (BERD) is relatively high in the Mid-West Region (11.9% all national expenditure, 2011) but it is limited to a small number of large companies.

In third level education, while the University of Limerick has two Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) research centres and has specialisations in key areas in the knowledge economy (software, materials science, pharmaceuticals and marine robotics), performance indicators show that R&D in third level institutions in the Mid-West Region lags behind that in public research bodies in Dublin, the South West (Cork) and West (Galway) Regions.

While the Mid-West Region (Limerick) has strong infrastructures for R&DI, it is lagging behind in terms of innovation capacity and performance.

Tourism:

Tourism as an economic driver is of great importance in Limerick City and County. In terms of overseas visitors and expenditure, Limerick performs relatively well. When compared to, for example, County Clare, Limerick has a higher revenue than Clare despite lower visitor numbers. Domestic tourism to Limerick accounted for €31 million in expenditure in the local economy (2013), an increase from that spent in the previous two years. Whilst domestic visitor numbers and expenditure are beginning to show an upward trend, there is significant scope to increase both overseas and domestic visitor numbers to Limerick by tapping into under-utilised or latent tourism resources.

Retail:

Limerick City Centre offers a range of retail services. However, interaction between the city centre and the other retail centres in the suburbs has impacted on shopping patterns in the city centre. The city centre is experiencing high levels of commercial and retail vacancy, with 273 vacant commercial premises and 96 vacant retail units (2014). This trend in vacancy is also present in the county towns, in particular Kilmallock and Rathkeale, both of which have high numbers of vacant retail premises – with over 40% vacancy in both towns. Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale are also suffering from retail vacancy, albeit to a lesser extent than the other areas identified.

Transport:

Limerick City and County is the location of, or is within short distances, of key access transport infrastructures including Shannon Airport and the Shannon Foynes Port Company. Because of its location and with improved motorway connections (particularly to Dublin and to a lesser extent the other major cities), Limerick is within relatively short commuting times to the main urban centres in the state.

Shannon Airport – now an independent company in state ownership - is running significantly under capacity, though there has been some improvement in passenger numbers in the most recent year (2013).

There are gaps in completion of the motorways networks (to Galway, Cork, Waterford and onto Rosslare) and in the secondary roads infrastructure within the county, with negative implications for economic (location of businesses and commuting) and tourism development.

Limerick County has one of the highest rates of car ownership in the state (89% of households). Limerick City, like other cities in the state, has lower rates of car ownership (32% of households do not have a car).

There is strong reliance on the car for commuting to school, college or work (accounting for 68% of all journeys) while only 7% across city and county use public transport (7.3% in Limerick County and 6.9% in Limerick City). One-third of all journeys in the city are “on foot” or by bike compared with 12% on foot or by bike in the more rural environment of the county. The low rate of use of communal or public transport is a negative factor vis-à-vis the environmental sustainability agenda.

Mostly, commuting times to work, school or college are relatively short, which is positive in terms of quality of life.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Broadband:

ICT and broadband is part of the critical infrastructure for economic development, access to information and to many public, private and consumer services, especially as services move “on line”. Access to internet is also of social importance, to keep in touch with family, friends and social connectedness within communities.

There is evidence of a “digital divide” and gaps in coverage within Limerick City and County. Households with Personal Computers are at higher rates in the County (70%) compared with the City (65%) in 2011. Broadband connectivity is also slightly higher in the county (60%) compared with the city (59%).

At local community level, there are very low rates of PCs in households and broadband connectivity in parts of the city and county. This is associated with different factors: in the city, it is connected with low education and in the rural areas of the county, mostly with lack of broadband coverage.

2. Other relevant issues

Other issues have been identified in the analysis which impact on quality of life, economic and social development and social inclusion.

Health:

The vast majority of the population area is in very good or good health. Self-rated health is better in the county (90% in very good /good health) compared with the city (86%). As expected, health deteriorates as people move into the older age groups. However, a significant proportion of older persons (65 years and over and indeed of oldest old, 80 years and over) rate their health as good / very good.

There is evidence of health inequalities linked to social class and socio-economic factors, including low education, in Limerick. People living in relatively more disadvantaged areas have poorer health, particularly, poorer mental health.

The HSE West region (including Limerick) has the highest rates of hospital admissions for mental health disorders, especially, depressive disorders, while Limerick City has the highest rates of deliberate self-harm in the population, especially high amongst females, of all local authority areas in the state.

Youth Offending and Crime:

Rates of youth offending in Limerick City and County (based on referrals into Garda Youth Diversion projects per 1,000 persons in the young population) are within the average range. Youth offending is mainly an urban problem. Based only on the urban area of Limerick City, rates of youth offending are relatively high and comparable with other urban areas in the state.

Between 2007 and 2013, there has been a significant reduction in most categories of recorded offences, especially serious crime.

While Limerick City has higher rates of recorded crime per 100,000 population compared with the county, Limerick City is no longer a “high” crime city. Crime rates in the city metropolitan area, generally, are well below those of Garda divisions in urban areas of the state with highest crime rates (Dublin Metropolitan Region). Rates of recorded crime in Limerick County approximate those of a rural county.

The highest volume of reported crimes is in the city-based stations (particularly, Roxboro and Henry Street). Higher numbers of recorded crime in the County are linked with urbanization: Newcastle West, Abbeyfeale and Kilmallock have relatively larger numbers of reported offences compared with smaller towns / villages and more rural areas. The level of deprivation impacts on crime, reflected in crime rates and types of offences.

Social capital:

Rates of voluntary activity in Limerick City and County are more or less the same as the national average (16% of the adult population involved in some voluntary activity in 2006). Rates are higher in the County (17%) compared with the city (13%) based on 2006 census data.

Of those involved in voluntary activity, there are some differences between city and county in terms of type of voluntary organisation in which they are involved. The largest proportion in the county is involved in sport (40%) and in the city, in social and charitable activity (36% of all those involved in voluntary organisations).

At local community level, there is a relationship between involvement in voluntary activity and level of affluence / deprivation. Rates are lower in disadvantaged areas, especially in disadvantaged urban areas in the city, and higher in more affluent areas as well as many rural areas widely dispersed across the county.

Drawing on local studies in city neighbourhoods, there is strong community spirit across all types of community (affluent / disadvantaged) and people have strong social networks of family and friends. However, there are deficits in trust in people in general and in institutions in the most disadvantaged areas.

