

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE, LIMERICK, AND ONLINE, ON FRIDAY, 21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER 2025, AT 10.00 A.M. TO CONSIDER THE MAYOR'S DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2026.**

**PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:**

Príomh Chomhairleoir, Councillor C. Slattery

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mayor Moran.

Councillors Beasley, Benson, Butler, Carey, Collins (B), Collins (M), Conway, Daly, Donoghue, Doyle, Foley, Galvin, Gavan, Hartigan (S), Hartigan (T), Hickey-O'Mara, Keary, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin, McSweeney, O'Donoghue, O'Donovan, O'Hanlon, O'Sullivan (O), O'Sullivan (T), Pond, Reale, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Ryan (M), Scanlan, Secas, Sheahan, Stokes, Talukder, Teefy, Teskey, Ward.

**OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Director General (Dr. P. Daly), Deputy Director General and Director, Corporate Services, Human Resources and Organisational Development (Mr. J. Delaney), Director, Finance, Economic Development, Digital and ICT Services (Mr. M. White), A/Director, Housing (Ms. Sarah Newell), Director, Regeneration, Sports and Recreation (Mr. B. McCarthy), Director, Rural, Community, Culture and Tourism Development (Mr. S. Duclot), Director, Transportation and Mobility (Ms. P. Liddy), Director, Environment, Climate Action and Shared Services (Mr. K. Lehane), Director, Planning and Place-Making (Mr. V. Murray), Financial Accountant (Mr. P. Murnane), Management Accountant (Ms. I. Griffin), Meetings Administrator (Ms. C. Farrell), Administrative Officer, Corporate Services, Governance and Customer Services (Ms. A. Foley), Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Services, Governance and Customer Services (Ms. C. Sheehy).

Circulated, (a) Draft Mayor's Budget Report and Tables, including Capital Programme 2026-2030; (b) Proposed Vacant Property Refund Scheme 2026; (c) Proposed Small and Medium Business Support Scheme 2026; (d) Proposed Vacant Business Premises Rates Incentive Scheme 2026.

The Príomh Chomhairleoir opened the meeting by stating that the Members were required to consider the Mayor's Draft Budget of Limerick City and County Council for year ending 31st December, 2026, the Draft Budget having been served in accordance with Section 103 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, and the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act, 2019, as amended.

In recommending the Budget to the Council for consideration, the Mayor outlined the achievements from 2025, including delivery of a budget of almost €1bn, progress on housing, dereliction reduction, and major regeneration projects. He noted that Limerick's reputation

has improved both nationally and internationally, highlighting awards for active travel and community engagement, visits from the Taoiseach and several Government Ministers, and securing hosting rights for EuroPride 2028. The Elected Members promoted Limerick internationally, through delegations to the United States, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and Bilbao.

The Mayor stated that Limerick's appearance and safety improved significantly in 2025, through Council investment in public realm. He informed the Members that major regeneration projects advanced in 2025, including the launch of One Opera Square, progress on Cleeves and Docklands sites, and upgrades to key civic and cultural buildings.

The Mayor stated that housing remains a priority for 2026, with plans to bring more homes back into use by seeking additional funding. Key projects like the Adare bypass, Foynes rail line, flood protection, housing developments, and public realm upgrades will continue, ensuring Limerick moves forward and is ready for the Ryder Cup in 2027. He noted that these developments will further strengthen Limerick's future.

The Mayor acknowledged that there is a new way of doing Local Government in Limerick City and County Council and he believed that the 2026 budget process built better engagement between Councillors, the Executive, and the Mayor with clearer accountability for almost €1 billion in spending.

In presenting the Annual Budget for the year ended 31 December 2026 to Council, the Mayor summarised the financial position of Limerick City and County Council and he outlined the challenges faced by the Council due to rising costs and loan repayments.

The Mayor stated that the capital repayment to the European Investment Bank for Opera Square is a key challenge for 2026, which he considered will further limit funds for the Council's core services. He emphasised that LCCC was committed to meeting its repayment obligation, while exploring refinancing options to ease future repayments and free up resources for critical investments, particularly in housing.

The Mayor stressed the need for a multi-year corrective plan to ensure financial sustainability and avoid future service cuts.

The Mayor highlighted that a balanced budget requires corrective measures, including 6% commercial rates increase, review of parking fees, and use of capital reserves to part-fund housing voids. He proposed structural reforms to include better coordination of housing delivery, maintenance, and public realm management. Priority projects for 2026 included housing, flood protection, transport strategy, and Kings Island health initiative.

The Mayor stated that he believed the Budget proposed could be improved, and recommended the circulated Draft Budget to the Elected Members for adoption, with the following amendment:

- a) Amend the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme with the effect of capping the impact of the Commercial Rates increase by providing additional relief of an

additional 2.5% on business with a annual rates amount up to €32,000, subject to a maximum grant of €1,500.

- b) Raise the limit, at which businesses at risk of losing benefits as they pay rates at the margin of relief, from €30,000 to €32,000.
- c) Allocate funding from the hedge-cutting grant scheme, which had a low up take in 2025, to provide extra funding for burial-ground maintenance.
- d) Fund these changes through a reduction in reliefs for vacant property owners.

In conclusion, the Mayor stated that the cost of providing core services is rising faster than income, creating significant challenges for the Council and that he believed the budget he was recommending, with the proposed amendments, was fair, and would protect core services in 2026.

The Mayor thanked the Elected Members, the Director General and the staff for all the work and time that went into preparing Budget 2026. He stated that with shared leadership and a commitment to working together, we can ensure Limerick continues its journey toward a bright future for all its residents.

The Mayor's Report on the Draft Budget 2026, as circulated to Members, was read into the Minutes of the Meeting as set out below:

### **Introduction**

The Draft Budget for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2026 has been prepared, circulated to Members and public notice of the Budget Meeting placed in the press, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the Local Government Rates & Other Matters Act 2019 as amended and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2024.

Circular Fin 10/2025 refers to the prescribed period that applies for the holding of the 2026 Budget meeting for Local Authorities as follows: 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025 to 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025. It was agreed by the Members at the September Council meeting to hold the statutory Annual Budget Meeting on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025 at 10am, at Council Chamber, Dooradoyle. Section 103 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014 and Local Government Rates & Other Matters Act 2019 as amended provides that the Budget must be adopted within a period of 14 days beginning on the day on which the local authority budget meeting meets. The Budget therefore must be adopted with or without amendment by 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

### **Budget Process**

The budget process for the preparation, consideration and adoption of the budget requires statutory compliance with a number of steps, which can be summarised as follows:

**Step 1 – Preparation and publishing of Mayoral Programme.** The Mayoral Programme was prepared and published on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024, as set out in Section 31 of the Local

Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2024. The Mayoral Programme outlines the Mayor's key objectives and priorities for his term of office.

***Step 2 - Decision by the Council on the adjustment factor to the Local Property Tax (LPT) following a public consultation process.*** This decision was made at the Council Meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> August 2025 to leave the LPT adjustment factor at the 2025 levels for 2026.

***Step 3 - Allocation of the General Municipal/ Metropolitan Allocation (GMA). The Draft Budgetary Plan was presented at the following meetings:***

Newcastle West Municipal District	15 <sup>th</sup> October
Cappamore / Kilmallock Municipal District	16 <sup>th</sup> October
Metropolitan District of Limerick	20 <sup>th</sup> October

*Members of Adare/ Rathkeale Municipal District deferred the presentation of the Draft Budgetary Plan – it was originally scheduled for 7th October.*

***Step 4 - Consultation with the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) and adoption of the Draft Budget by Council.*** Initial CPG meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> July to discuss Local Property tax proposals. CPG meetings have been held on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 5<sup>th</sup> November, with further meeting to be held on the 17<sup>th</sup> November. The Statutory Budget meeting is scheduled for 21<sup>st</sup> November with a budget workshop with Councillors to be held on the 17<sup>th</sup> November.

***Step 5 - Consideration and adoption of the schedule of Municipal works by each of the Metropolitan / Municipal Districts.*** These meetings will be convened in early 2026 following the adoption of the Budget.

***Step 6 - Consideration and adoption of the Service Delivery Plan.*** The 2026 Service Delivery Plan will be presented to Council at the January 2026 Council meeting.

Through consultation with the Corporate Policy Group and consideration of the views of Council as expressed through the different stages of the budgetary process, as expressed through the meetings of the Municipal/ Metropolitan Districts, the budget as presented considers this feedback.

At the Statutory Budget Meeting, the Members will be asked to make the following decisions:

- Adopt the Budget with or without amendment
- Determine the Annual Rate on Valuation (ARV)
- Determine the vacancy abatement scheme on vacant commercial premises.
- Adopt the Vacant Property Refund Scheme.
- Adopt the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme (SME Scheme)
- Adopt the Vacant Business Premises Rates Incentive Scheme (replacing the former Retail Economic Incentive Scheme)

## **Budget 2026 Context**

The draft Annual Budget for 2026 has been prepared in very difficult circumstances for Limerick City and County Council (LCCC). Inflation has continued to impact adversely on the cost of service delivery. Other increases in outgoings are scheduled to arise. In addition, a number of significant payments (such as the first principal repayment of €1.2 million on a borrowing by LCCC from the European Investment Bank to part fund the Opera Square development) are occurring for the first time in 2026.

In the absence of additional measures, this would have generated a deficit. As a balanced budget has to be presented for approval, it was necessary to propose corrective measures such as a percentage increase in the commercial rate and income maximisation from available sources, as buoyancy in income was not sufficient to bridge the gap. These measures are set out in more detail below.

In framing these measures certain key principles were applied. Firstly, the budget was prepared in the context of using existing resources to maintain the service provision at the same levels of 2025 despite the continued challenges of rising costs. It will be obvious that providing the same levels as in 2025 is in practical terms a reduction per capita as demand is also increasing for services with the growth of Limerick's population and economy. We have also tried to enhance resources in key priorities areas identified during 2025 – most notably our key priority of increasing housing delivery to get closer to reaching our targets which have not been met with the result that Limerick is seeing some of the fastest rises in cost of housing for households.

Allocating resources without making changes to how we deliver will not in my opinion on its own help us achieve our objectives. I have therefore placed a renewed focus on the way we deliver services by proposing the items below. I have been advised by officials that these changes would be possible within the context of the proposed budget.

#### (a) Housing

Within this Budget, there is a renewed focus on improving housing activation through greater coordination among existing Council resources also working closely with teams from the Land Development Agency and Limerick Twenty Thirty. I remain open to using the Mayoral Fund in 2026 and beyond to supplement these resources once realistic delivery targets are set and are being met as we progress through site assembly to master planning and delivery.

I am keen to ensure that there is a greater focus on maintenance of our housing stock and managing voids. Proposals below to increase rental income on social housing stock will include charges for maintenance which will be ring-fenced to provide for additional maintenance works above existing levels. The objective is to publish enhanced information about the scale of the challenge, forward planning for life-cycle maintenance and published KPI's for delivery and regular transparency about how well these KPIs are being met. I would like to evolve towards a Housing Maintenance Review Board: councillors and officials to review the delivery against representations made by councillors and to reduce the length of time houses are in a void state.

#### (b) Public Realm

This Budget will enable a renewed focus on better coordination of services responsible for the delivery of public realm, roads and the maintenance thereof to ensure enhanced public realm delivery and road maintenance to ensure more effective responses for the public. This should make the sharing of equipment and scheduling of maintenance in the most efficient way possible.

(c) Mayoral Programme Management Office

As the next few weeks progress, I expect to see the delivery of enhancements arising from the review by the team from Grant Thornton to improve delivery of the mayoral programme and better coordination of its outcomes with other operations of LCCC, including statutory obligations.

(d) Forward Planning

I am committed to ensuring that the progress being made this year will continue in future years to ensure that the services for all of Limerick can grow in line with that of our population. Taxpayers need to be able to plan for the future too and in that respect it is important that we provide improved guidance about the future. While the final information is not yet available I can and wish to advise that some of the measures being introduced this year will need to be repeated in future years to ensure the sustainability of the finances of LCCC, unless much greater government funding of local authorities in Ireland, including LCCC is forthcoming.

The budget also reflects increased income from increased commercial rates buoyancy, differential rents, and Local Property Tax.

The Council is also pursuing an ambitious capital programme, focused on key priorities like housing and infrastructure deficits while also maximising investment into the City and County from a range of national programmes including URDF, RRDF, Outdoor Recreation Scheme, Town and Village Renewal etc. All of these projects require co-funding from Council resources.

Revenue funds from the Mayoral Fund are being prioritised to enhance our delivery capacity in key areas, advance projects to alleviate housing pressure, prepare projects for submissions to central Government Departments to seek additional funding, to carry out assessments of existing facilities to help guide future spending decisions, or in some cases to provide necessary co-funding thereby leveraging resources – therefore utilising the Mayoral Fund most efficiently. Other smaller items targeted will unlock projects long in gestation and identified in the mayoral programme or to help small and local businesses.

### **Corrective Measures**

To fund increasing demand, rising costs, and fund significant payments coming due in 2026, based on discussions with officials, I am recommending difficult decisions this year.

The most significant is to increase the Commercial Rate level by 6% (with protection for smaller businesses continued for this year). This will raise approximately €3.96 million, with a portion used to support a revised scheme to ease pressures on smaller businesses.

However, the burden is not just falling on businesses in Limerick. A number of other measures are reflected in the budget. The decisions that lead to the Draft Budget 2026 will be presented when this Budget is presented to the Council on November 21st.

The Budget proposes a set of broad income and efficiency measures. These include broadly distributed modest increases where activity levels justify it but done in a way which protects the most vulnerable in our society. We have proposed updated projections for income streams such as rents, planning and fire services, and the inclusion of additional dividend income. Where income is raised from housing, it will be prioritised for housing maintenance and delivery.

Finally, the other required savings will be achieved, as in previous years, through efficiencies in our own operations, without impact on direct service delivery.

Together, these steps maximise available income while protecting the most vulnerable in our society, avoiding deeper service cuts and maintaining flexibility should economic conditions change.

### **National Economic Outlook**

As outlined in the Department of Finance Budget 2026 Economic and Fiscal Outlook, National Budget 2026 is prepared against a rapidly evolving backdrop, one in which long-established economic norms (and, indeed, geopolitical norms) are increasingly being challenged where aggressive trade policies – tariffs, export restrictions non-tariff barriers are being pursued in some global regions with the aim of re-shoring manufacturing. From an Irish perspective, these geo-economic shifts pose a very real threat to the Irish economic model of dependence on multinationals. Looking ahead, higher tariffs are likely to have some dampening effect on trade, while elevated levels of uncertainty are assumed to weigh on investment spending.

The importance of continuing to build fiscal buffers is an important part of Government's budgetary policy for 2026, particularly in light of the risks to corporation tax receipts. For this reason, the Government is transferring €4½ billion to the Future Ireland Fund next year.

***Short-term economic and budgetary outlook:*** Perhaps the most noteworthy macroeconomic development was the frontloading of Irish exports in the early part of the year, as firms sought to pre-empt the introduction of higher taxes on imports of goods (tariffs) by the US authorities at the beginning of the second quarter. From an Irish perspective, ***Modified Domestic Demand (MDD)*** at end-June was 3 per cent higher than at the end of last year. The labour market has reaped the benefits from this higher level of activity, with employment increasing by 1.3 per cent over the same period. Indeed, the employment rate – the share of the working age population in employment – remains at near record highs in the second quarter.

Relative to the Department's spring forecasts, two key policy changes – working in opposite directions – have been incorporated into the current projections. In relation to trade policy, the EU-US Framework Agreement provides that tariffs apply on a majority of EU goods exported to the US, with the maximum tariff capped at 15 per cent, whereas the average tariff in the US was 2.4% in 2024. In terms of domestic policy, the Government has recalibrated its budgetary policy, most notably by increasing the capital envelope for the second half of this decade.

Turning to the ***national budgetary outlook***, tax revenue is projected at €104.6 billion this year (excluding the impact of Court of Justice of the European Union related receipts). Nearly one-third (€32.1 billion) of this revenue stream is sourced directly from the corporate sector, highlighting the vulnerability of Ireland's tax base to any change in corporate profitability. A general government surplus of €10.2 billion (3.0 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI)) is in prospect. The structural budgetary position – in other words, excluding the impact of the economic cycle on the public finances as well as estimated windfall corporation tax receipts – is less favourable; a structural deficit of 3.0 per cent of GNI is estimated for this year.

***Tax revenues*** are projected at €109.2 billion for next year, with ***corporation taxes*** reaching €34.0 billion. ***Public indebtedness*** is projected at €209 billion (61.7 per cent of GNI) this year.

The ***tax base for Government remains very narrow***, with just ten large corporate tax payers accounting for €1 in every €6 that flows to central government by way of tax revenue.

On the ***domestic side***, despite historically elevated levels of uncertainty the Irish economy has continued to perform strongly in the first half of this year, with momentum evident across a range of indicators. Relatively modest inflation in the first half of the year has helped support solid growth in real incomes which, in turn, has underpinned the continued expansion of consumer spending. Against this backdrop, consumer spending is projected to increase by 2.9% per cent this year.

***Export growth*** is expected to moderate significantly next year at just 1½ per cent. While the introduction of tariffs weighs on growth, the weakness in exports next year is primarily attributable to the unwinding of the temporary boost from 'front-loading', i.e. a negative 'base effect' arising from the exceptionally large, albeit temporary increase in the levels of exports in the first half of this year. As such, goods exports are expected to fall by around 5½ per cent as cross-border exports re-normalise. Services exports are expected to grow by 7 per cent, supported by continued strength in computer services exports.

***Labour market developments:*** Labour market dynamics are broadly consistent with continued strong growth in activity. The level of employment reached a record-high of 2.82 million in the second quarter, with around 35,000 jobs added since the end of last year. As a result, the employment rate remains close to its highest level ever, with 3 out of 4 people of working-age in employment. Employment gains continue to be geographically dispersed. At a regional level, the West and Mid-West regions have experienced the strongest employment expansions in the post-pandemic period, increasing by 21 and 25 per cent respectively since Q4 2019 as per Central Statistics Office data. The growth rate in Dublin was just under 17 per cent for the same period.

**Inflation:** The annual rate of inflation has stabilised at around 2 per cent in the first eight months of this year. Energy prices acted as a continued drag on inflation over the period. While broad-based inflationary pressures have subsided, some pockets of inflationary pressures remain. Food has emerged as an additional source of inflationary pressure this year, reflecting *inter alia* higher prices for agricultural commodities.

**Population:** The CSO's latest population estimates indicate that Ireland's population in 2025 reached its highest recorded level since 1841, standing at almost 5.5 million.

**Government Budget 2026:** Taking into account measures introduced in Budget 2026, voted expenditure is set at €117.8 billion for next year. Voted current spending is set at €98.7 billion, with capital spending set at €19.1 billion in line with the National Development Plan (NDP) review in order to address infrastructural bottlenecks and to boost competitiveness.

**Table 1** below outlines the main economic and fiscal variables underlying the Department of Finance's budget for 2026.

Variable - % change (unless stated)	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<b>Economic Activity</b>	<b>% change (unless stated)</b>					
Real GDP	2.6	10.8	1.0	4.2	3.2	3.2
Real GNI	4.8	3.3	3.3	2.5	2.4	2.3
Modified domestic demand	1.8	3.3	2.3	2.9	2.9	2.8
<b>Prices</b>						
Core HICP (inflation measure)	2.4	1.9	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.0
<b>Labour Market</b>						
Total Employment ('000)	2,757	2,819	2,860	2,896	2,926	2,954
Employment	2.7	2.2	1.5	1.2	1.0	0.9
Unemployment (per cent)	4.3	4.6	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.0
<b>Public Finances (per cent of GNI)</b>						
General government bal (€ bn)	23.4	10.3	5.1			
Net debt ratio (year-end)	48.3	40.2				

**Table 1: Summary of Main Economic and Fiscal Variables (per cent change (unless stated))**

Source: Department of Finance Economic and Fiscal Outlook Budget 2026, p.4 & p.43

## Implementation of the Mayoral Programme

The implementation of the More for Limerick Mayoral Programme is designed to deliver transformative changes across Limerick over the next five years through a rigorous, multi-faceted approach. The programme sets ambitious actions designed to meet Limerick's evolving needs. Recognising that a significant increase in national funding will be required, I have committed to advocating for more resources for Limerick and building stronger partnerships between Limerick and government departments to ensure the programme's success. The programme also introduces innovative governance structures, creating a new delivery framework across local government and in partnership with private sector and community stakeholders' involvement.

Key to this approach will be the alignment of the Mayoral Programme with Limerick City and County Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2029, which serves as the operational document for achieving the programme's objectives. The creation of the Mayoral Programme Delivery Office within the Council will ensure ongoing coordination and tracking of all initiatives, with quarterly updates provided to maintain transparency and accountability. This office will work closely with the Mayoral Advisory and Implementation Committee, a newly established body that brings together representatives from public and private sectors, ensuring actions remain relevant and adaptable to changing circumstances.

High Level Expert Groups, Task Forces, and the Limerick Mayoral and Government Consultative Forum have all been introduced to provide expertise and support across a broad range of areas including housing, transport, and economic development. These groups will guide policy formation and alignment to the Mayoral Programme with broader national frameworks, including the National Planning Framework and Project Ireland 2040.

The Mayoral Fund Revenue proportion for 2026 is assumed at €3,750,000 (subject to Departmental confirmation mid-December), & is summarily outlined in the **Table 2** below.

<b>Expenditure Description (Sub-Service area of Revenue Budget)</b>	<b>2026</b>
Mayoral Programme Support (H0902)	€450,000
Transformation/ Strategic HR Team (H1101)	€600,000
LT T Housing Delivery Unit – Vienna Housing Model and SMART Homes (A0601)	€1,000,000
LT T Housing Delivery Unit – review of Mullingar Modular Housing (A0601)	€250,000
Abbeyfeale Town First Delivery (D0901)	€100,000
Bloomberg/ LSE Kings Island Project – delivery and enhancement (D0601)	€250,000
Roches Street – street makeover and economic support (D0905)	€500,000
Christmas 2026 and other activities (F0505)	€250,000
Progression of Health Equity Office (D0601)	€250,000
Europride Support Delivery (F0505)	€100,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€3,750,000</b>

**Table 2: Mayoral Fund 2026 assumed Revenue allocation**

## **Budget Strategy & Objectives**

The Draft Budget has been prepared on the principle of a “balanced budget” based on the overall level of resources available to the Council and the requirement to meet statutory, contractual, legal and other obligations. It incorporates the decisions made by the Council in relation to the Local Property Tax and General Municipal/ Metropolitan Allocations. Under the Local Government Act, 2001 as amended by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, Local Government Rates & Other Matters Act 2019 as amended and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2024, the Draft Budget is required to set out the expenditure necessary to carry out the functions of the Council and the income estimated to accrue to the Council.

***The key objectives of the 2026 Revenue Budget are set out below:***

### **Housing & Regeneration**

- Maintain resources for the maintenance budget to meet the ongoing demands of our social housing stock
- Continue our planned maintenance programme to leverage additional sources of funding
- Maintain resources in Estate Management and Tenancy Enforcement (A04)
- Continue to support the Regeneration Programme (Physical, Social & Economic)
- Maximise Housing Adaptation Grants
- Additional Resources towards the Homeless Service
- Deliver on the 2026 targets across the 4 pathways within the 'Housing For All' plan
  - Pathway 1: Supporting Home Ownership and Increasing Affordability
  - Pathway 2: Eradicating Homelessness, Increasing Social Housing Delivery and Supporting Social Inclusion
  - Pathway 3: Increasing New Housing Supply
  - Pathway 4: Addressing Vacancy and Efficient Use of Existing Stock
- Focus on innovative Housing delivery models and renewed focus on dereliction.

### **Sport & Recreation**

- Adoption of a Local Sports Plan for Limerick in conjunction with Sports Ireland
- Develop the strategic potential of Regional Athletics Hub and continue to maintain it to the highest standards
- Develop other local smaller facilities as required and dependent on resources
- Support other stakeholders to enhance their facilities

### **Environment & Climate Change**

- To lead our communities to protect and enhance the natural and built environment for Limerick
- To progress the Climate Action Plan
- To work in collaboration with Government and its agencies for environmental improvement and transitioning to a circular economy
- Provides financial support to the flood relief schemes such as Kings Island & Castleconnell.

### **Planning & Place Making**

- To implement the provision of the new Planning & Development Act as they are enacted.
- Work with national and regional partners to implement the revised National Planning Framework (NPF) and the development of Regional, Spatial Economic Strategy (RSES) and the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and Strategies key partners and the Southern Regional Assembly.

- Continue to appraise development proposals across the City and County to facilitate quality resident residential commercial and community development to create sustainable neighbours.
- To advance the Place Making and Public Realm Programme to enhance and revitalise the city centre and our town centres and villages in partnership with relevant stakeholder.
- Promote land use planning and active land management in tandem with creating sustainable healthy, inclusive, and resilient communities.
- Protect, conserve and enhance the built and cultural heritage of Limerick.
- Progress, conserve and enhance the built and cultural heritage of Limerick.
- Progress the delivery of the Catchment-based Floor Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAMS) approval programme for Limerick in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW).

### **Rural and Community Development**

- Deliver on the Town Centre First policy which aims to create town centres that function as viable, vibrant and attractive locations for people to live, work and visit, while also functioning as the service, social, cultural and recreational hub for the local community
- Revitalisation of our urban areas and villages through a stronger focus on addressing dereliction, vacancy and delivering public realm improvements
- Facilitate the delivery of the Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant
- Deliver high quality Community Development Support and Engagement
- Advise and support community groups and organisations to avail of relevant funding streams and support these groups to securing funding
- Support the LCDC in the delivery of its functions
- Secure the maximum level of funding from national funding calls
- Continue and where possible enhance our programme of supports to all our communities including, the Migrant Community, Older People, Young People and those who are marginalised

### **Cultural Development**

- Delivering a cultural and arts programme for the benefit of the Citizens of Limerick and visitors to our City and County
- Supporting the role our libraries, gallery and museum play in enhancing the quality of life of our citizens

### **Tourism Development:**

- Driving the finalisation and implementation of the Limerick Tourism Development Strategy and Wild Atlantic Way Gateway Strategy. Also to focus on resourcing and leveraging match funding ahead of hosting major events.
- Support Discover Limerick DAC a wholly owned subsidiary of Limerick City and County Council to operate and develop key tourism attractions in Limerick including King John's Castle, Lough Gur and Adare Heritage.
- Enhanced Support for our key existing and compelling new festivals and events including preliminary Ryder Cup plans.

- Continue to maintain and market the 40km Limerick Greenway from Rathkeale to the Kerry bounds which is delivering a significant economic return for Limerick.

### **Economic Development**

- Deliver the Local Enterprise Office programme of supports along with other Council initiatives to support the SME sector
- Continue to enable economic growth in the City and County
- Deliver economic growth through business development / investment attraction activities at a local, regional, national and international level
- The economic revitalisation of our city centre and towns, including the Night-Time Economy, and continue to encourage growth in the retail sector
- Lead a digital strategy that will lay the foundation for a ‘Smart & Greener Limerick Region’
- Continue to promote and develop the Limerick Brand and Limerick as a destination for investment, socialise, work and reside

### **Transportation & Mobility**

- To continue to invest in the rural and urban infrastructure through the delivery of the 2026 schedule of municipal district works subject to the availability of national funding
- Progress key infrastructure projects to provide momentum to the economic growth in Limerick and the mid-west, including major capital transport projects such as the Foynes to Limerick scheme
- Delivery of sustainable and active travel projects identified in the Limerick Shannon Metropolitan Area Transport Strategy in conjunction with the National Transport Authority

### **HAP Shared Services Centre:**

- Deliver 2026 targets set for HAP shared service

### **City Centre Improvement**

- Keep up the strong focus on improving the look, feel, and overall appeal of the city centre in 2026, building on the progress made through recent regeneration and streetscape projects.
- Continue improving public spaces and walking routes to make the city centre easier to move around, more welcoming, and better for the environment and to support additional residential delivery in the city centre and support businesses operating there.
- Focus investment on upkeep, lighting, greenery, and clear signage to keep the city centre attractive and well presented as Limerick’s main commercial and cultural area.
- Work closely with local businesses, residents, and community groups to keep the city centre clean, vibrant, and well managed throughout 2026.

### **Directly Elected Mayor (DEM) with Executive powers**

- Support the DEM in exercising new political role and transferred executive functions, ensuring full implementation of the Mayoral Programme and alignment with Council strategic priorities.
- Embed strong governance, performance monitoring, and transparency frameworks to underpin the DEM's decision-making and delivery capacity.
- Provide administrative, financial, and data-analytic support structures, within existing statutory and budgetary frameworks, to enable evidence-based policy, efficient execution, and measurable outcomes under the new model of local leadership. This includes enhancing the flow and accessibility of management information to the Directly Elected Mayor to support informed decision-making, and progressively expanding data availability to elected members, reflecting the Council's commitment to greater transparency and shared situational awareness across governance structures.

## Outturn 2025

In presenting the Annual Budget for the year ended 31 December 2026 to Council, I wish to take this opportunity to summarise the financial position of Limerick City and County Council. The Annual Financial Statement of Limerick City and County Council for the year 2024 shows the accumulated balance on the Revenue Account is in a credit position of €982,962. I have reviewed the up to date position and it will be challenging to break-even on the Revenue Account for 2025 due to financial challenges faced by the Council. In particular, I am concerned with inflationary pressures, which are affecting not only our own services but also those of our subsidiary companies, the stagnant nature of grant-aid from central Government, impact of Uisce Eireann funding being reduced in real terms, additional costs from Homelessness contribution, increased coroner costs and increased payroll & pension costs. The 2026 draft Budget reflects the need to continue a strong financial management ethos while making every effort to meet the ever-increasing demands on the services of Limerick City and County Council.

## Analysis of Expenditure Requirements 2026

The total estimated expenditure included in the Draft Budget for 2026 amounts to €940.53 million, an increase of €16.59 million on the adopted figure for 2025. As this expenditure is matched by a corresponding income, it has no net effect on the Budgetary Provisions. The following Table 3 depicts Revenue expenditure by Division.

Division	Draft Budget 2026	Adopted Budget 2025
A - Housing & Building	€99,390,627	€77,206,627
A - HAP Shared Service Centre	€639,827,225	€656,474,093
B - Road Transport & Safety	€56,105,646	€54,546,338
C - Water Services	€14,098,602	€16,521,845
D - Development Mgt	€38,896,994	€33,143,540
E - Environmental Services	€50,498,939	€46,840,285
F - Recreation & Amenity	€21,744,234	€19,891,536
G - Agri, Ed, Health & Welfare	€1,326,621	€1,346,239
H - Misc Services	€18,641,462	€17,973,714
	<b>€940,530,350</b>	<b>€923,944,217</b>

Table 3: Analysis of Expenditure by Division

The following chart gives a breakdown of expenditure by each division.

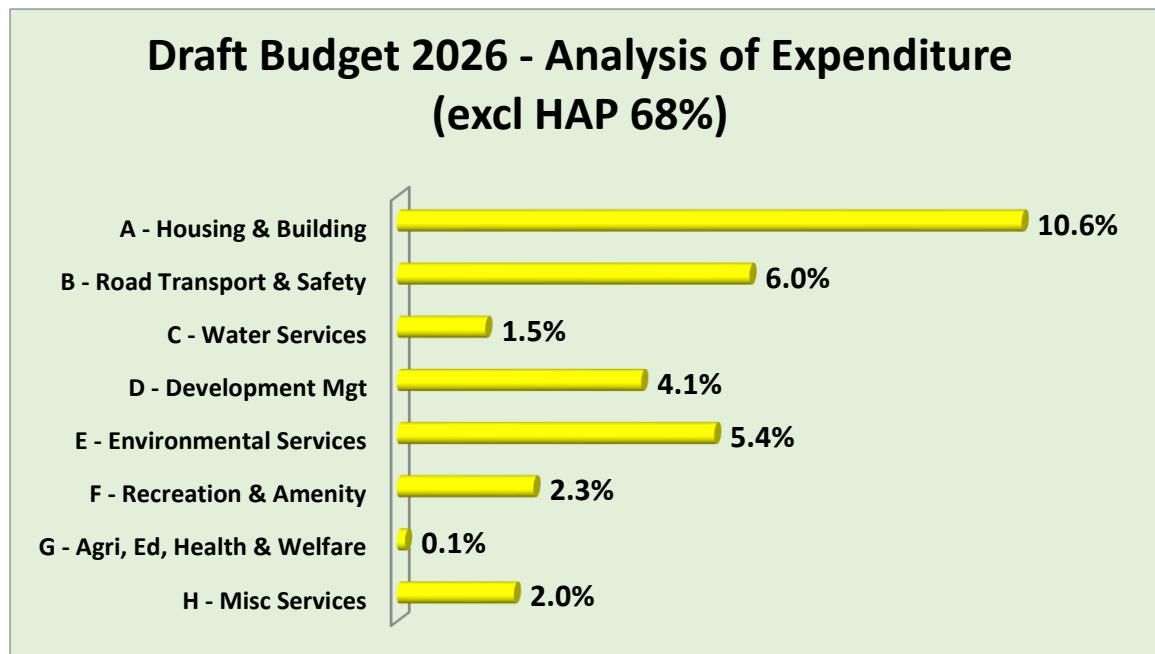


Chart 1: Analysis of split of Expenditure (excl HAP) by Division

The following bar chart shows the estimated expenditure for Draft Budget 2026 for each Division, with comparative figures for 2025:

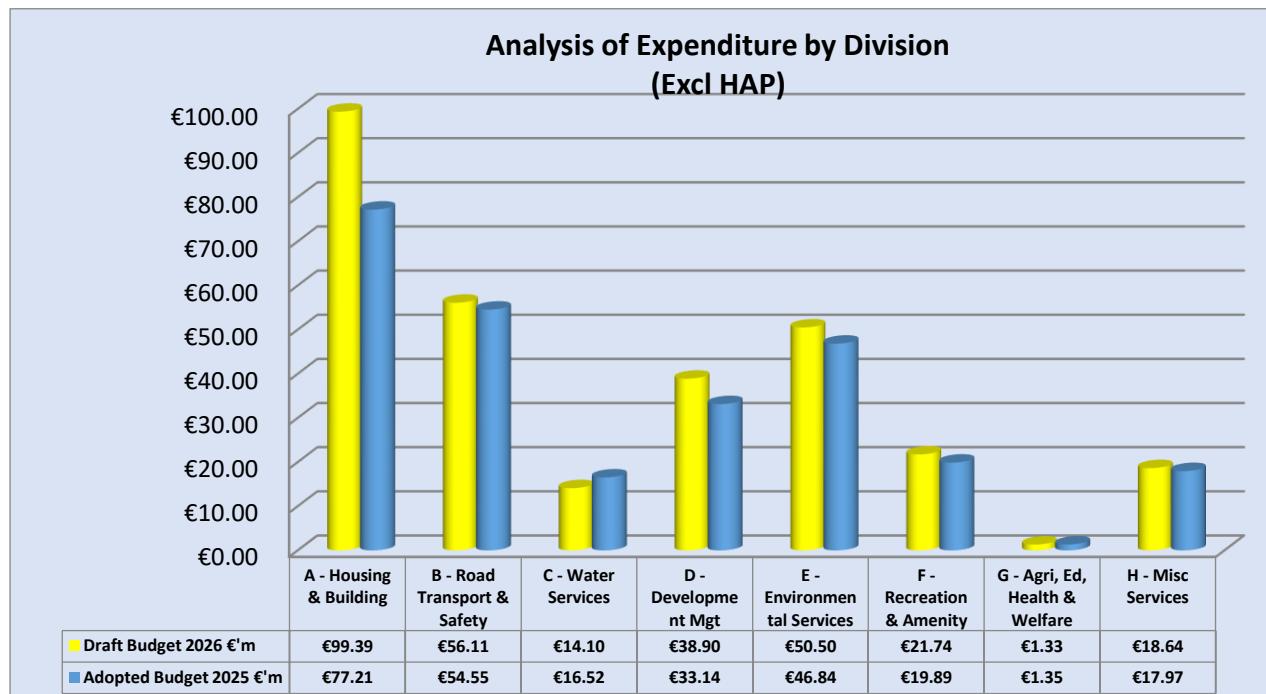


Chart 2: Analysis of Expenditure (excl HAP) by Division - Draft Budget 2026 versus Budget 2025

## Analysis of Income 2026

The level of expenditure shown above, at €940.53 million, will be financed from the following

Source	Amount
1. Local Property Tax	€22,691,264
2. Commercial Rates	€70,450,179
3. Grants & Subsidies (net of HAP)	€146,876,398
4. Goods & Services (net of HAP)	€60,708,001
Sub Total Income (Excluding HAP)	€300,725,842
1. HAP Differential Rent	€160,054,018
2. HAP Subsidy from DHPCLG	€479,750,490
Sub Total HAP	€639,804,508
<b>Total including HAP</b>	<b>€940,530,350</b>

Table 4: Analysis of Draft Budget 2026 Income

The following Pie chart highlights the % split by income category excluding HAP.

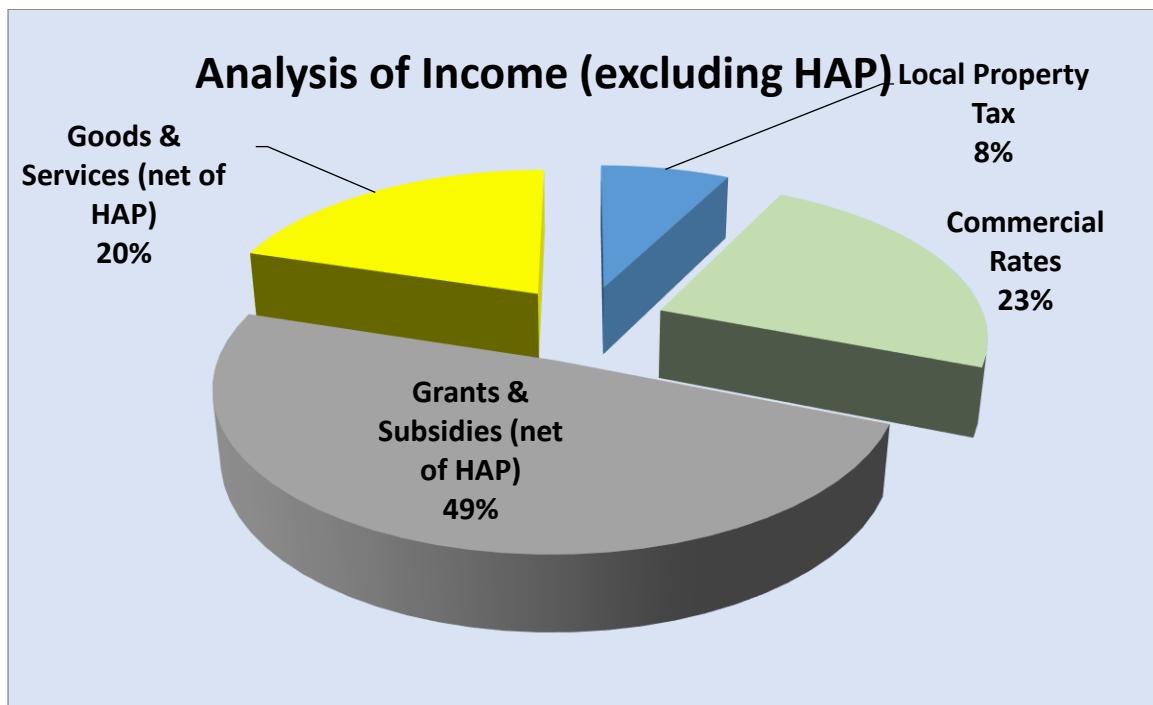


Chart 3: Analysis of Draft Budget 2026 Income (excluding HAP)

51% of the Council's income (excluding HAP) is now generated locally through Commercial Rates (23%), LPT (8%) and Goods & Services (20%).

Comparative figures for Budgets 2026 and 2025 are shown hereunder.

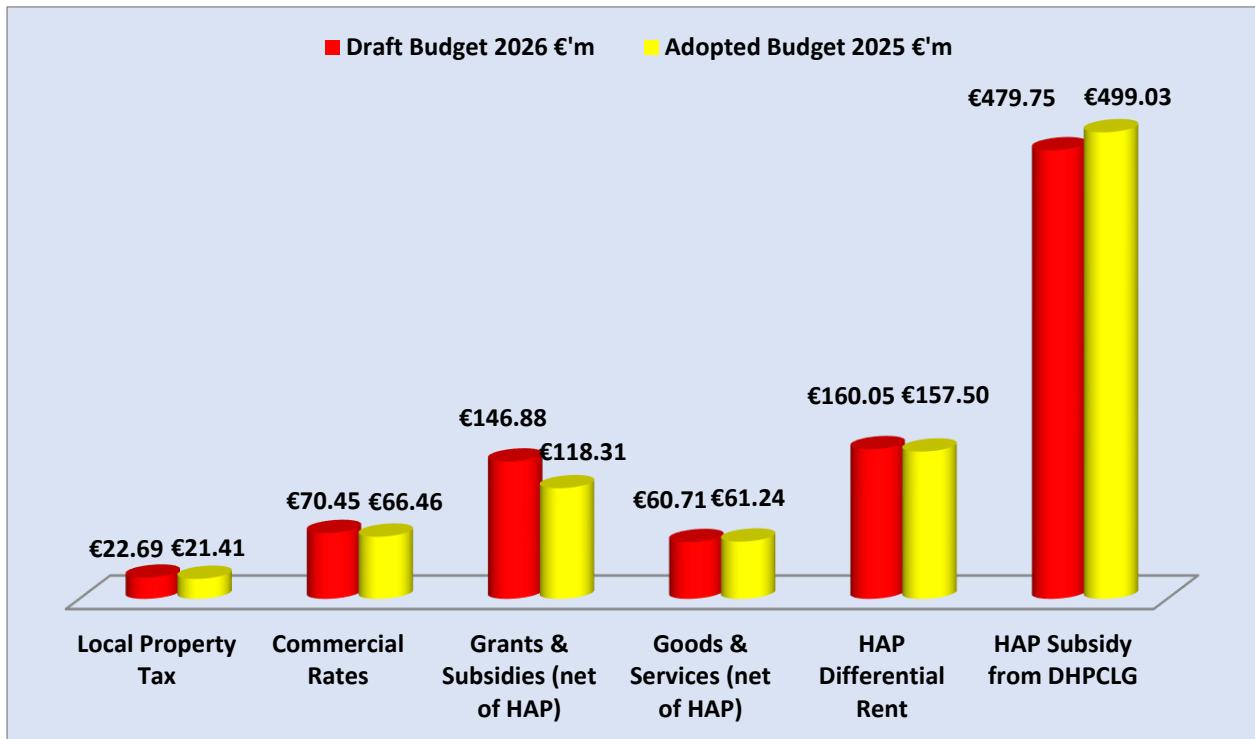


Chart 4: Analysis of Income: Draft Budget 2026 v's Budget 2025

### Goods and Services Income

Goods and Services income excluding HAP income for Draft Budget 2026 is €60.7m and is noted in Table D. This includes income headings such as:

- Differential rent income of €24.9m for Budget 2026 (increase of €4.1m on Budget 2025).
- Income from Uisce Éireann (formerly Irish Water) is also accounted for under this heading with Budget 2026 at €5.131m compared to €8.057m (difference is part-funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage).
- Planning Fees income of €1.47m noted for Budget 2026 (compared to €1.15m in Budget 2025).
- Parking Fines & Charges with income of €2.19m noted for Budget 2026 (compared to €2.1m in 2025).
- Non-Principal Private Residence income is no longer an income source for Budget 2026, income noted in Budget 2025 was €200k.

## **Grants and Subsidies Income**

Grants and Subsidies income excluding HAP income for Draft Budget 2026 is €146.88m and is noted in Table E. Some of the key income sources under this heading include:

- Social Housing Current Expenditure Programme (SHCEP) supports the delivery of social housing by providing financial support to local authorities and Approved Housing Bodies for the leasing of houses and apartments. Such long-term leasing is noted at €19m for 2026 compared to €13m in 2025 (increase of €6m), which is 100% recoupable.
- Road Grants are assumed to remain at 2025 levels.
- Compensation for increases in rates of pay and PSPR resulting from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation and increases in pay and pensions relating to the Public Sector Stability Agreement and assumed pay increases for 2026 (pending national pay-talks) is noted at €21.956m in Draft Budget 2026 (increase of €2m compared to 2025 due to pay increases in 2025 & 2026).

## **Local Property Tax (LPT) Allocation and LPT Baseline Review 2026**

Local Property Tax (LPT) is a key funding source for Local Government replacing the General Purpose Grant funding allocation.

Under the current LPT allocation model, every local authority is entitled to receive a minimum amount of funding under the LPT allocation process, known as the Baseline. Following a review of LPT Baselines in 2023, local authority Baselines were increased overall to €428.4m for 2024 and 2025. Government has now agreed that LPT Baselines in 2026 be further increased from €428.4m to €470.4m; in line with the Government Agreement of 26th March last that any additional LPT generated as a result of the upcoming revaluation is to be retained by local authorities for discretionary spending. Accordingly, Limerick City & County Council's Baseline for 2026 is €20,154,464, compared to €19,054,464 for 2025 (increase of €1,100,000).

## **Equalisation**

LPT baseline allocations for 2026 are set in line with the methodology whereby 100% of the estimated LPT yield is retained locally within the local authority area where it is collected, and for Limerick to reach the Baseline it's a net recipient from the equalisation fund by the amount of €3,242,488.

## **Local Adjustment Factor**

The Local Property Tax (Local Adjustment Factor) Regulations 2022 do not refer to yearly decisions but instead to "a period as specified in the resolution", meaning elected members can now set a local adjustment factor for a period of their choosing. The Local Government Reform Act 2014 and associated Regulations permits the Members of the Council to vary the Rate by a maximum increase or decrease of 15%. On 26<sup>th</sup> August 2025, the Council decided to adjust the LPT rate upwards by 15% for 2026 equating to an increase of €2,536,796 (compared to €2,351,468 in 2025, an increase of €185,328).

The total revised LPT allocation for 2026 is €22,691,260 (compared to €21,405,932 in 2025, an overall increase of €1,285,328).

The 2026 allocation from the Local Property Tax and the calculation provided by the DHPLG on the basis of this allocation is set out in **Table 5** below:

<b>Limerick City and County Council - 2026 LPT Allocation</b>	
<b>LPT Retained Locally 100%</b>	€16,911,976
<b>2026 Baseline</b>	<b>€20,154,464</b>
<b>2026 Shortfall (LPT retained locally -2025 Baseline)</b>	-€3,242,488
<b>Distribution of equalisation funding</b>	€3,242,488
<b>Total LPT Funding to be provided in 2026</b>	<b>€20,154,464</b>
<b>15% increase in LPT rate</b>	€2,536,796
<b>Revised LPT Allocation 2026</b>	<b>€22,691,260</b>

**Table 5: LPT Reconciliation 2026**

### **Commercial Rates**

Commercial Rates is a significant contributor to the total budgeted income for the Council and it is vital to the level of service delivery that income from this source is maximised. In this respect it is critically important that the Valuation Office reverts promptly with new valuations during 2026. Limerick City and County Council will continue to ensure that all commercial properties in the City and County are included on the rates records and are properly rated.

Draft Budget 2026 is presented with a commercial rate increase of 6% for 2026 in order to fund demands from rising costs in key areas and initiatives to help businesses, with a 1.5% increase in the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme.

### **Vacant Property Abatement Scheme 2026**

The commencement of section 9 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019, as amended, will allow local authorities to adopt schemes for the abatement of rates in respect of vacant property for 2026. These schemes are to replace the refund of rates on vacant property adopted annually. The Local Government Act 1946 are now repealed and replaced by section 9. Vacancy abatement schemes under section 9 are a reserved function to be approved at the local authority budget meeting. The scheme rewards businesses moving into vacant premises more than those owning properties which remain vacant. Therefore I am proposing that there would be no abatement of rates due to Limerick City and County Council by a liable person for vacant properties for the financial year ending 31 December 2026. The vacancy abatement percentage would therefore remain at 0%, similar to percentage adopted in 2025.

Separately the Council will be asked to consider the adoption of the **Vacant Property Refund Scheme 2026** to encourage the beneficial use of previously vacant commercial property in

accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 as outlined in Table 6 below:

Band	% Refund
Up to €3,000 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 25% required)	75%
€3,001 to €12,000 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 50% required)	50%
€12,001 to €60,000 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 75% required)	25%
Over €60,001 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 100% required)	0%

**Table 6: Vacant Property Scheme 2026**

#### **Small and Medium Business Support Scheme 2026 (SME Scheme)**

The proposed Small and Medium Business Support scheme will pay a financial support to occupiers of commercial properties with a total annual commercial rate bill of up to and including €30,000 but not less than €1 in 2026. The proposed support for 2026 rates is 15% (2025: 13.5%) subject to a maximum refund of €1,500 (2025: €1,500) which will be subject to a number of terms and conditions.

#### **Vacant Business Premises Rates Incentive Scheme**

The objective of the proposed Vacant Business Premises Rates Incentive scheme is to aid regeneration of towns and villages and support job creation by viable businesses. This grant is intended to incentivise and encourage reoccupation of vacant retail/commercial properties to combat vacancy in the core retail area of Limerick City Centre and some county towns, which some specific retail activities being excluded from the grant process.

The proposed grant aid support are as follows

- 100% Grant of value of commercial rates, subject to maximum of €12,000 in Year 1.
- 75% Grant of value of commercial rates, subject to maximum of €9,000 in Year 2.
- 50% Grant of value of commercial rates, subject to maximum of €6,000 in Year 3.
- 25% Grant of value of commercial rates, subject to maximum of €3,000 in Year 4.

#### **Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Transactional Shared Service Centre**

The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is the principal platform for underpinning the provision of housing support in Ireland and has been in operation for a number of years. HAP is one of the largest non-capital financial support packages for housing in Ireland and is provided by all Local Authorities under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. The availability of HAP enables all Local Authorities to provide housing support to over 50,500 households with a long-term housing need, including many long-term Rent Supplement recipients.

The HAPSSC will administer circa 7,000 new tenancies in 2026 and process in excess of €605 million in payments to HAP landlords and collect €158 million in differential rent from HAP tenants.

### **City Centre Response Team (CCRT)**

The City Centre Response Team (CCRT) is a dedicated unit established to contribute to the effectiveness of city centre maintenance in Limerick. Working alongside existing teams, the CCRT provides targeted, responsive assistance to improve the public realm and address public realm challenges efficiently.

Core functions include:

- Tackling litter black spots.
- Supporting footpath repairs and surface cleaning.
- Painting and upkeep of street furniture and fixtures.
- Delivering minor capital works such as laneway upgrades.
- Collaborating with local businesses, stakeholders, and the public to resolve issues promptly.

The CCRT will continue to play a key role in maintaining and improving the city centre environment, ensuring a high standard of presentation and usability for residents, visitors, and businesses.

### **General Municipal/ Metropolitan Allocation (GMA) 2026**

Circular Fin 08/2015 referred to the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) (Amendment) Regulations (S.I.363 of 2015), which amends the Local Government (Financial and Audit Procedures) Regulations 2014 by providing that the meeting at which Municipal/ Metropolitan members consider the draft budgetary plan must conclude no later than 10 days prior to the local authority budget meeting.

The draft budget has included a general Municipal/ Metropolitan allocation of €1,652,500 compared to €1,639,500 in 2025. There is an objective of moving towards equal funding per councillor (parity) over the coming years in how GMA is allocated across the four municipal/ metropolitan areas, with overall GMA funding linked to Local Property tax increases, any Commercial Rates increase, and contribution from revenue budget process.

Area	2025 Budget	Amount per Councillor 2025	Budget 2026	Amount per Councillor 2026
Metropolitan Area	€763,300	€36,348	€763,300	€36,348
Adare Rathkeale MD	€270,000	€45,000	€280,800	€46,800
Newcastle West MD	€278,600	€46,433	€280,800	€46,800
Cappamore Kilmallock MD	€327,600	€46,800	€327,600	€46,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>€1,639,500</b>		<b>€1,652,500</b>	

**Table 7: General Municipal/ Metropolitan Allocation (GMA) 2026 v's 2025**

**Schedule of Municipal/ Metropolitan works:**

Following the adoption of the budget a schedule of proposed works of maintenance and repairs to be carried out during 2026 in each Municipal/ Metropolitan District will be prepared for consideration and adoption by the Municipal/ Metropolitan District Members.

**Capital Budget 2026-2030**

In accordance with Section 135 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended the Local Government Reform Act 2014, a 3-year capital programme must be prepared and considered by the member of the Council. Please find attached a report on the programme of capital projects proposed for the 5 years 2026 to 2030. Given the fact that the capital programme as proposed is over a 5-year time-frame, it would be unrealistic to suggest that these allocations are definitive and are subject to funding being available in future years. Capital projects by their very nature are flexible rolling plans which involve an annual review and possible adjustment and alignment to the Mayoral Programme. An important evolution over my term will be the increase in allocations to housing supply. Below please find a summary of potential recommended spend and source of funding for the 5 year capital plan 2026-2030 as of this year. All grant-aid funding is subject to Departmental approval.

Capital Expenditure 2026 -2030	Grant funded	Loan funded	Development Levy Funded	Revenue Funded	Mayoral Fund	Other (Land Sales / Contributors/ ICRs)
€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
3,638	3,036	493	19	13	10	67

**Table 7: Summary Capital Plan 2026-2030**

**Chart 6** profiles the Capital Expenditure for each of the five years:

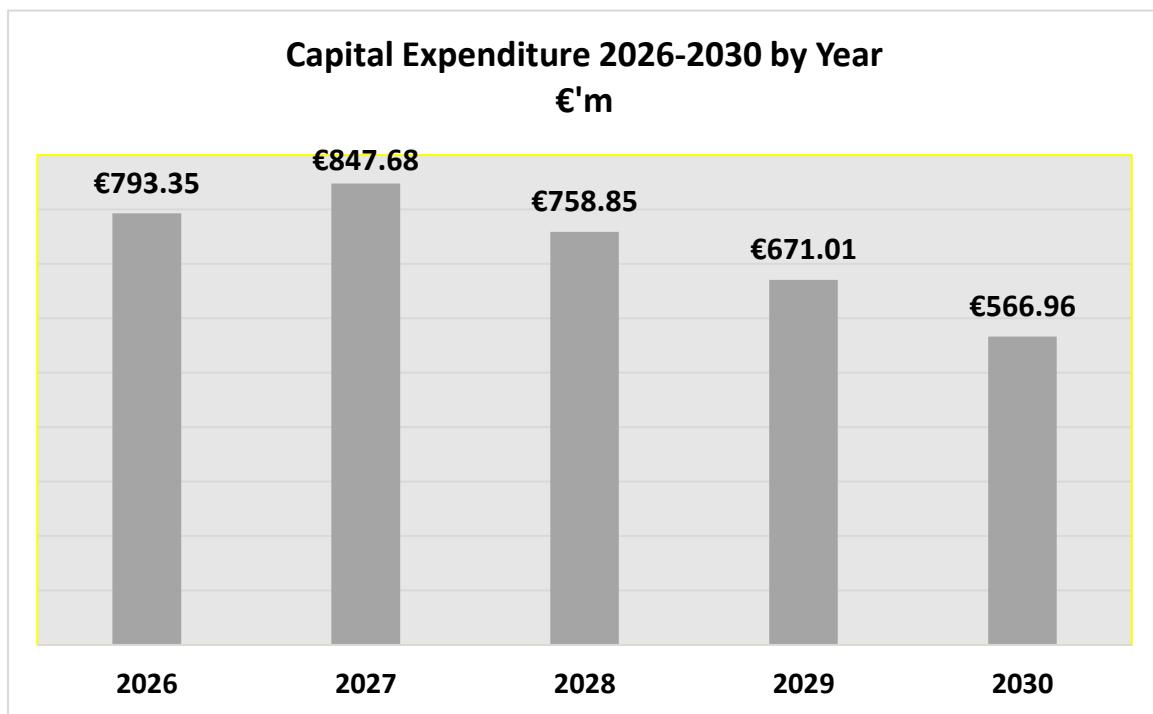


Chart 6: Summary Capital Plan 2026-2030 by year

### **Conclusion**

The overall objective of the budget preparation for 2026 has been again to maintain existing services to a high standard, implement Mayoral programme enhancements while also enhancing resources in key priority areas, and ensure that Limerick City and County Council fulfils its statutory and regulatory obligations in an environment of increased costs and limited funding. The demand for services across Limerick continues to grow and this is matched by an increase in public expectation. The housing crisis in which we find ourselves has however to be our number one priority and therefore this remains the priority for enhanced services delivery and resource allocation.

In balancing the budget, I have tried so far as possible with limited resources to accommodate members' feedback particularly in relation to increased maintenance demands on our social housing stock, the level of match funding for housing grants, continued investment in our road infrastructure, and demands on our horticulture section with new and existing amenities to be maintained.

The Mayoral Programme under Section 31 of the Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2024 will continue to be delivered upon during 2026 to ensure key objectives and priorities as set out in this programme such as Housing Delivery are achieved, with the aim to stimulate a More Liveable, a More Prosperous, and More Healthy Limerick.

A renewed focus will also be placed on transparency, data, and information reform. Work is under way to ensure that the Directly Elected Mayor, elected members, and the public have access to clearer, more-timely, and better-linked information to support effective decision-

making, oversight, and accountability. The Council is moving in the right direction by building stronger systems for open data, financial reporting, and performance monitoring so that decisions at every level are based on evidence, accessible to citizens, and move Limerick steadily toward becoming a leading national example of modern, transparent local governance under the new mayoral framework.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Príomh Chomhairleoir and the Elected Members, for their assistance and support, particularly the Members of the Corporate Policy Group in preparing this budget.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Council's Management Board and their own teams for their commitment and hard work in preparing this document. The coming year will again be challenging, but it will offer significant opportunities.

The excellent work and dedication of Council staff remain central to everything achieved across Limerick. Their professionalism, adaptability, and public service ethos have underpinned the delivery of improvements in our communities, from city centre regeneration to housing, climate action, and local amenities. As Limerick moves forward into a new era of local government with the establishment of the Directly Elected Mayor, the experience and commitment of staff will continue to be vital. Together, we are building the systems, culture, and ways of working that will support this new model of local leadership and ensure that Limerick continues to deliver high-quality services and visible results for its people.

I look forward to the full support of the Members at the Statutory Budget Meeting to be held Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025.

### **Councillor Sheahan**

Councillor Sheahan, speaking on behalf of the Fine Gael Group, stated that this was a lengthy opening statement and required significant consideration. He noted that this was the first time that a draft budget was brought before the Elected Members with an amendment. Councillor Sheahan welcomed the proposed enhancement of the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme (SME) and queried the cost of the proposed amendment and how it would be funded. He acknowledged the low take up for the hedge cutting grant, noted that an increase in residential parking fees would only generate a small amount of additional income and raised concerns that the core services were not protected in the proposed budget.

Councillor Sheahan referred to commentary in the week leading up to the Meeting, which had provided a stark assessment of the Council's financial position and the challenges it faced.

The Mayor outlined that the amended proposal had been fully costed and details could be circulated to Members for consideration.

The Director of Service, Finance, Economic Development, Digital and ICT Services confirmed that the €280,000 required to increase the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme was proposed to be funded from changes to the vacant property scheme and hedge cutting grant.

It was agreed, on the proposal of Councillor Sheahan, seconded by Councillor Teefy to take an adjournment to consider the proposed budget presented to the Members by the Mayor. The Meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.

Upon resumption, it was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sheahan and seconded by Councillor Collins (M) to extend the adjournment until 1.30 p.m.

Upon resumption, it was agreed on the proposal of the Príomh Chomhairleoir, Councillor Slattery and seconded by Councillor Collins (B) to extend the adjournment until 2.30 p.m.

Upon resumption, it was agreed on the proposal of the Príomh Chomhairleoir, Councillor Slattery and seconded by Councillor Sheahan to extend the adjournment until 3.00 p.m.

Upon resumption, it was agreed on the proposal of the Príomh Chomhairleoir, Councillor Slattery and seconded by Councillor McSweeney to extend the adjournment until 4.00 p.m.

Upon resumption, it was agreed on the proposal of the Príomh Chomhairleoir, Councillor Slattery and seconded by Councillor O'Hanlon to extend the adjournment until 5.00 p.m.

The Meeting recommenced at 5.00 p.m. and the Príomh Chomhairleoir thanked everyone for their patience.

The Mayor confirmed that his Budget Speech had been amended on foot of a request from Councillor Ryan (M).

### **Councillor Sheahan**

Councillor Sheahan, speaking on behalf of the Fine Gael Group, thanked all those attending the meeting in the public gallery and online. He expressed his appreciation to the Mayor, the Director General and the Executive for the work that had gone into the preparation of the Budget. Councillor Sheahan acknowledged that it had been a long day but noted the importance of the Annual Budget Meeting.

Councillor Sheahan expressed strong support for the amendments to the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme for 2026. He emphasised the importance of maintaining core services and welcomed the additional allocations provided for these services.

He highlighted that the condition of local roads as an issue affecting all Councillors and supported the adoption of the budget with the following amendments:

- An allocation of €400,000 for local roads under code BR015,
- An increase of €219,500 to the General Municipal Allocation (GMA) to bring all areas into alignment,
- An increase of €80,000 for burial ground improvements, with the additional amount of €80,000 ring-fenced specifically for Burial Ground maintenance.

### **Councillor Collins (M)**

Councillor Collins (M), speaking on behalf of the Fianna Fáil Group, acknowledged that it had been a difficult day but hoped that the agreed changes would benefit all citizens and business in Limerick. He referred to the workload in the preparation of a Budget and thanked the Mayor, the Director General and the Executive. In particular, he thanked the Director, Finance, Economic Development, Digital and ICT Services, and the Financial Accountants.

Councillor Collins (M) welcomed the proposed increase for burial grounds, noting the significant number of enquiries received by Members regarding their maintenance. He believed that increasing the Rates Collection would result in reducing the bad debt provision.

Councillor Collins (M) acknowledged that the Mayor had made the difficult decision to increase Commercial Rates by 6% and thanked him for working with the Elected Members to agree the Budget for 2026. He emphasised the need for a further discussion on capital expenditure at a future date.

### **Mayor Moran**

The Mayor welcomed the additional funding identified for local roads and noted that it is an area where all Councillors receive numerous complaints and maintenance requests. He acknowledged that if the Council borrows in the future, it may provide an opportunity to consider loan restructuring but reiterated that the Council is fully capable of repaying its existing debts.

Proposed by Mayor Moran;  
Seconded by Councillor Scanlan;  
And Resolved:

**THAT** the draft Annual Budget for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2026 prepared and circulated by the Mayor of Limerick, be adopted as per the amendments set out in the schedule attached hereunder.

**AND THAT**, the Annual Budget be and is hereby adopted as per Tables A, B, D, E & F, in accordance with Section 103 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014, the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 as amended and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2024.

**AND THAT**, in accordance with the Annual Budget, thus amended, adopted and subject to section 6 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 as amended and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2024, **€0.2965** be and is hereby determined as the General Annual Rate on Valuation to be levied for the several purposes specified in the said Tables as amended, for the financial year ending on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 2026, in accordance with section 3 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019 as amended and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2024.

**AND THAT**, in accordance with Section 135 of the Local Government Act 2001, as amended by the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2024, the Report on Capital Projects 2026 – 2030 as presented to the meeting is considered (Item 3 on Meeting Agenda)

**AND THAT** Limerick City and County Council makes a ***scheme for the abatement of rates*** due to it by liable persons, or classes of liable persons, in respect of vacant properties in accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019, as amended and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2024. Such a scheme in respect of vacant property will provide for an abatement of 0% of rates due to Limerick City and County Council by a liable person for the financial year ending 31 December 2026 (Item 4 on Meeting Agenda).

**AND THAT** the ***Vacant Property Refund Scheme 2026*** to encourage the beneficial use of commercial property in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2024, is adopted with the following amendments (Item 5 on Meeting Agenda)

The following amended Vacant Property Refund Scheme is proposed for 2026 subject to the terms and conditions of the scheme:

<b>Band</b>	<b>% Refund</b>
Amend - Up to €3,000 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 50% required)	50%
Amend - €3,001 to €12,000 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 75% required)	25%
Over €12,001 Annual Rate Demand (with payment of 100% required)	0%

**AND THAT** the ***Small and Medium Business Support Scheme 2026*** in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous Provision Act 2024, is adopted with the following amendments. (Item 6 on the Meeting Agenda)

The proposed Small and Medium Business Support Scheme will pay a financial support to occupiers of commercial properties with a total annual commercial rate bill of between €1 and €32,000 in 2026, subject to the Scheme being approved by Council on the basis of the following parameters:

- **The support payment aimed specifically at small and medium-sized businesses will be 17.5% of 2026 rates subject to a maximum limit of €1,500.**

**AND THAT** the ***Vacant Business Premises Rates Incentive Scheme 2026*** in accordance with Section 66 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended by Section 43 of the Local Government Reform Act, 2014 and Local Government (Mayor of Limerick) and Miscellaneous

Provision Act 2024, is adopted as circulated without amendment. (Item 7 on the Meeting Agenda).

Schedule of amendments to the Budget originally proposed:

**Schedule of Amendments**

	<b>(Decrease)/Increase expenditure</b>
<b><i>Increase in Income headings</i></b>	
H1101 income from IPB Historic Dividend	€449,500
<b><i>Increase in the following expenditure headings:</i></b>	
D0905 Increase in cost arising from amended SME Scheme	€280,000
E0901 Burial Grounds - increase in expenditure	€80,000
B0405 Local Road General Maintenance	€400,000
F0401 GMA Metro increase	€219,500
E0901 Maintenance of Burial Grounds	€80,000
<b><u>Reduction in the following expenditure heading</u></b>	
-H0303 Estimated Saving/ Decrease in Expenditure: amended <b><i>Vacant Property Refund Scheme 2026</i></b>	(€310,000)
-B0405 Hedge Cutting reassign to Burial Grounds (E0901 Burial Grounds)	(€50,000)
-H0303 Reduction in Bad Debt Provision-improve collection	(€250,000)

It was confirmed that the €400,000 for B0405 Local Road General Maintenance, was for local roads only.

Councillor O'Donoghue queried the impacts and uptake of the Small and Medium Business Support Scheme.

The Príomh Chomhairleoir suggested that the details of the rates increase and rebate for smaller businesses would be clearly communicated to the public through all platforms, including limerick.ie.

Councillor Benson, speaking on behalf of the Sinn Féin Party, acknowledged that it was a long day and commended everyone for working together to agree the budget. She highlighted that the outcome showed that working together creates better results.

Councillor Hartigan (S), on behalf of the Green Party, welcomed the budget for 2026 and thanked the Mayor, Director General, the Management team and staff for their work in preparing the budget. He welcomed the engagement with the Elected Members and stated that he considered the concerns raised by the Members were addressed during the Budget

process. Councillor Hartigan (S) highlighted housing as the top priority for 2026 and welcomed the use of capital reserves to part-fund housing voids.

The Príomh Chomhairleoir acknowledged that it was a long process to get to agree the budget and thanked the Mayor, the Director General and the Staff for their assistance in the formation of the Budget.

This concluded the business of the Meeting.

Signed:

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**Príomh Chomhairleoir**

Date:

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