Knowledge Management Barriers:  
A Review of  
Limerick’s local authorities

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the existence of Knowledge Management (KM) within the Limerick’ local authorities, Limerick City and Limerick County Councils. Further it explores the prevalence of KM, the types of KM activities, and the barriers of KM within the councils.

This research has adopted a managerial perspective. A review of the literature was conducted. The research chose a triangulation approach whereby qualitative and quantitate methods to data collection where employed. This consisted of a questionnaire and case studies. Case Studies were based on semi-structured interviews carried out with employees of Water Service and Planning Department within Limerick City and Limerick County Councils.

Findings from the research indicated that an overall KM strategy did not exist within the councils. Instead an ‘ad-hoc’ strategy was in place whereby individual department set out procedures for documentation and transfer of knowledge. The main barriers to successful KM were seen as lack of resources, protocols and a poorly managed technical infrastructure. However there was evidence of a knowledge sharing culture that focussed on both tacit and explicit forms of knowledge transfer. It is recommended that a hybrid of codification and personification strategy be implemented in order to combat the current barriers the amalgamated council face with regard to KM. Communities of Practices and a properly managed shared drive should be introduced within the newly formed council to aid in knowledge transfer.

The research was limited to a case study of the Water Service and Planning Department due to time restraints. However this area holds particular potential for further research, in particular, due to the timescale the research was conducted within the implementation stage of the merger. Future research would be carried out post-merger which would invariable result in an increased area for research. This research paper was also focussed on the internal environment within the councils, in order to portray the full organisational environment, the external environment must be also analysed. This research contributes to a better understanding of the need for KM within public sectors, especially in relation to KM barriers. It is therefore hoped that this research would serve as a catalyst for future research.

Keywords: Knowledge Management, Public Sector, Local Authorities, Knowledge Sharing, Knowledge Transfer, Communities of Practice, Intranet.
Executive Summary

Knowledge has long been recognised as an important resource however the understanding and managing knowledge is often seen as difficult. The aim of this study is to investigate KM barriers within Limerick’s two Local Authorities, Limerick City and Limerick County Councils. Owing to the current amalgamation of the councils, Limerick City and Limerick County Councils recognise the benefits KM will bring to the newly formed organisation and understand the need to take a more structured approach towards KM.

The main focus of this research was to look at the KM barriers within Limerick’s local authorities. In order to address these, the objectives of this research are as follows;

1. To establish baselines with respect to KM activities within Limerick City and Limerick County Councils
2. To examine the barriers for the integration of KM within Water Service and Planning Departments.
3. To identify the ‘next steps’ in the implementation of KM within the amalgamated council

The research chose a triangulation approach to data collection where both a questionnaire and case studies using semi-structured interviews were employed. This research has adopted a managerial perspective. Prior to undertaking the questionnaire, a review of the literature was conducted focusing on KM fundamentals, KM in the Public Sector and also KM Barriers. KM can benefit public sector organisations such as Limerick’s Local Authorities by having greater access to personnel’s knowledge, as a result the organisation can make better decisions, streamline processes, reduce re-work, increase innovation and allow for greater collaboration. This management of knowledge in turn can lead to reduced cost of operations and improved customer services.

The main research activity was broken down into two phases; Questionnaire and Case Studies. A questionnaire was conducted to allow for better understanding of the KM practices within the councils. This questionnaire addressed 4 areas of KM:

1. KM Strategy
2. Knowledge Transfer Process
3. KM Tools
4. KM Improvement
Following this, semi structured interviews were carried out to gain further insight into many of the issues that were identified. From this, key findings included:

- There are little defined processes in place within the council for creation, capture, and acquisition of knowledge
- Implementation of a KM Strategy would be beneficial
- Intranet would benefit from a strategy/procedures/ better structure put in place

These interviews gave the researcher an insight into the research subject whereby participants were able to demonstrate the current KM processes that were in place within the councils. Analysing the findings from the interviews allowed the researcher to identify specific issues that would be addressed further within the case studies.

Case studies with regard to the Water Service and Planning Departments were carried out to gain further insight into the KM barriers within the councils. This provided examples of KM procedures and how knowledge was created, captured and transferred within the departments. Furthermore, the barriers to effective KM such as procedures and tools have been investigated and discussed. The findings from these case studies revealed that an informal approach to KM was carried out with Knowledge transfer primarily focussed on tacit Knowledge Transfer through informal means such as 1 to 1 and group meeting.

Based on the findings from both questionnaire and semi-structured interview, it can be concluded that KM within the councils operates at a very informal level. Lack of resources is one of the primary barriers to KM within the councils. This barrier reflects the poor KM practices being utilised within the council to date. The organisation culture is supportive of KM. However, the hierarchical nature of the councils has created ‘Knowledge Silos’ which limits knowledge transfer (Riege 2005). The councils lack a formal and strategic approach to KM. KM systems such as the intranet and shared drive are not used to their full potential and as such are often seen to hinder effective knowledge transfer.

A formal KM strategy must be created in order to demonstrate the benefit of KM within the councils. It was recommended that a hybrid of codification and personification strategy be implemented in order to combat the current barriers the amalgamated council face with regard to KM. The creation of a Knowledge Champion’ or ‘Knowledge Manager’ would also benefit the councils as it would allow the formalising of KM practices that can become deeply rooting into the working practices within the various departments. The introduction of Communities of Practice would aid knowledge transfer particularly with regard to knowledge
retention. The creation of a policy document with regard to IT use would be of benefit as it would allow for the IT systems to be exploited to the full potential.

Recommendations are given and future research works are suggested in order to improve the implementation of KM within public sector organisations. The author believes that this research will help the councils to realise the benefit KM can bring and in turn prove to be a catalyst for the enhancement of current working practices in relation to KM.
Declaration

I hereby certify that this material is entirely my own work and has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of the University of Limerick or any other University or Institute of Learning.

Where use has been made of the work of other people, it has been acknowledged and is fully referenced.

Signed:________________________________

Date:__________________________________

Signature (Supervisor):_____________________

Date:____________________________________
Acknowledgements

This Thesis could not have been completed without the support and help of a number of individuals: I wish to acknowledge their help here.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research undertaken. The rational for and structure of the research is also outlined within this chapter.

1.1 Research Aims

Owing to the current amalgamation of Limerick’s Local Authorities, Limerick City and Limerick County Councils recognise the benefits KM will bring to the newly formed organisation. However both organisations are unaware of the fundamentals surrounding KM, therefore the literature review contained in this paper can be seen as an aid for educating the organisations in the fundamentals of KM. This research centres on the understanding and analysis of various KM literature to provide a foundation for this study.

The research questions are defined as:

- What KM practices are currently being utilised within both Councils?
- What KM barriers are evident within the councils?
- What practices should be implemented within the newly formed Council with regard to KM?

Following a review of the literature the objectives of the research were formed. This was seen as an iterative process throughout the duration of the research as objectives were continually refined. Overall the research objective is to investigate the KM barriers within Limerick’s two councils. Therefore the title of this paper is outlined as: ‘Knowledge Management Barriers: A review of Limerick’s local authorities’.

The key research problem is that knowledge is recognised as a critical resource however it is rarely managed appropriately. As a result the objective was further broken down into the following sub-objectives:

- Objective 1: To establish baselines with respect to KM activities within Limerick City and Limerick County Councils
- Objective 2: To examine the barriers for the integration of KM within the Water Services and Planning Departments
- Objective 3: To identify the ‘next steps’ in the implementation of KM within the amalgamated council.
1.2 Thesis Structure

The following sections give a brief overview of the contents of the remaining 4 chapters within this paper.

Chapters two provides a literature review of KM. This allows greater understanding and strength to the research topic. This provides a theoretical basis for the analysis of KM practices within the councils. This chapter aims to give an understanding of the basic principles of KM such as defining knowledge, KM, knowledge transfer processes, Public Sector KM and identifying barriers to successful implementation of KM within the organisations.

Chapter three outlines the adopted research methodology. A triangulation methodology was adopted for this research; this involved a review of the literature, a questionnaire, interviews and case studies. Quantitative research took the form of a questionnaire that was sent to personnel of both councils. This allowed for the current state of KM within the councils to be assessed. Due to the time constraints within this research, a case study approach was then undertaken to gauge the current KM barriers within the councils. The case studies are based on the Water Services and Planning Department within Limerick City and County Councils. It was felt that these departments would yield a rich study area relevant to the title of this research. The Water Service department was selected due to the merger of this department already have taken place. The Planning Department was chosen due to this department not as of yet being merged. As an area of future research it is hoped that a multiple case study approach could be undertaken and ultimately create a complete picture of the KM barriers throughout the councils.

Chapter four presents the findings from the empirical evidence, the questionnaire and the case studies. The findings are then discussed within the context of the research objective and Chapter five outlines the conclusions and recommendations for further research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will introduce the fundamentals of KM through the use of academic literature. The areas that will be discussed in detail include the various methods of knowledge creation, transfer and management within organisations. The areas discussed in this chapter are concerned with the introduction of the concept of KM while also highlighted key areas that will be analysed in the context of organisations being reviewed within this research paper. KM will also be discussed within a Public Sector based environment. Barriers to successful Knowledge transfer will also be discussed.

The concept of KM is nothing new (Hansen et al 1999). Organisations have always used KM practices to make decisions, and to produce goods and services, though not in a deliberate and systematic manner. There has been much discussion of the definition of knowledge. Davenport, David, & Beers (1998) have suggested it is not productive to attempt a definition. Contrasting to this, Gourlay (2000) feels that managers need to be sure of the meaning if they are to effectively evaluate their KM within their organisations. In the context of this research, Duhon’s (1998) definition of KM will be used whereby:

"KM is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, and previously un-captured expertise and experience in individual workers."

The purpose of KM is, in essence, to manage the most significant knowledge within the organisation. The knowledge in question includes both explicit and tacit knowledge (T. H. Davenport & Prusak 2000). By doing so, the collective knowledge for the workforce can be utilised towards achieving organisational objectives, which according to (Alryalat & Al Hawari 2008) may be seen simply as: ‘getting the right information to the right people at the right time’.

Benefits of KM can occur at two levels: individual and organisational. At an individual level, KM creates opportunities for personnel to enhance their skills base by sharing knowledge and learning to each other. At an organisational level, benefits can be seen as improved performance ‘through increased efficiency, productivity and quality’ (Cong & Pandya 2003).

Knowledge that can be expressed explicitly, i.e. in words and numbers, only represents the ‘tip of the iceberg’ in terms of the body of knowledge (Polanyi 2009). It can be shown through
research that common practice of viewing knowledge in both tacit and explicit forms is undertaken.

Using a dictionary definition, tacit knowledge is that which is understood without being openly expressed. Explicit knowledge is that which can be expressed clearly and with nothing implied. The following table demonstrates the definitions of various researchers in terms of tacit and explicit knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Tacit</th>
<th>Explicit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lin &amp; Tseng (2005)</td>
<td>Experienced based knowledge that resides within the individual</td>
<td>Precise, formally articulated, documented and embedded in repositories, documents, routines, operational routines, practices and norms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polanyi (2009)</td>
<td>Subjective and experience based knowledge</td>
<td>Subjective and rational which can be documented and distributed to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonaka et al (2000)</td>
<td>Deeply rooted in action, procedures, routines, commitment, ideals, values and emotions</td>
<td>Expressed in formal and systematic language and shared in the form of data, scientific formulae, specifications, manuals etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Definitions of Tacit and Explicit Knowledge

According to Polanyi (2009), tacit knowledge is very difficult to transfer due to it being deeply rooted in a person’s mind, that it is invariably liked with the experience of the person. This view is shared by Nonaka (1991) whereby tacit knowledge is; ‘highly personal. It is hard to formalize and therefore difficult to communicate to others’. Goguen (1997) also supports Polanyi’s assentation with regard to the transfer of tacit knowledge:

‘people may know how to do something without being able to articulate how they do it In the social sciences this is called the say do problem. Some examples are riding bicycles tying shoe laces, speaking languages and using a word processor’

Organisation have begun to recognise the importance of knowledge and of employees as ‘intellectual assets and suppliers of knowledge’ (Mau 2005). Organisations need to prevent this loss of corporate advantage in the marketplace. In order to retain this knowledge, organisations must find ways to quickly capture, store, and utilize critical processes and best business practices to maintain a competitive advantage (Ray 2008).

At its basic level, knowledge is created by individuals. It is the organisations role to support individuals in the creation of knowledge. Therefore, organisational knowledge can be seen as the transfer of this individual knowledge throughout the knowledge network of the
organisation. As stated by Argote & Ingram (2000) knowledge is embedded in three areas of an organisation. By combining these areas, organisation knowledge can be easily managed.

- People
- Processes
- Technology

While the intentions of an organisation is to try and capture and document knowledge within the organisation there must be a recognition that all knowledge may not be able to be documented, these challenges are further discussed in the following sections.

Knowledge creation, as defined by Nonaka (1991), is seen as an organisational, social and collaborative dynamic process through interaction between tacit and explicit knowledge. Four modes of knowledge creation were identified by Nonaka (1991) through the SECI Model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The model demonstrates four processes of knowledge creation:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Externalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Combination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Internalization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1: SECI Model**

- Socialization refers to the process involving the conversion of tacit knowledge to tacit knowledge through social interactions (Alavi and Leidner, 2001).
- Externalization is the process of converting tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge through the process of codification (Alavi and Leidner, 2001; Nonaka, 1994).
- Combination refers to the process of creation of new explicit knowledge from existing explicit knowledge.
- Internalization is the process of converting explicit knowledge into tacit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994).
The effectiveness of knowledge transfer is influenced by key organisational factors such as structure, strategy and IT (Ives et al. 2000). This view is shared by Rowley (1997) whereby KM is seen as a series of steps:

- Accessing knowledge from external sources.
- Representing knowledge in documents, databases, software and so forth.
- Embedding knowledge in processes, products, or services.
- Transferring existing knowledge around an organisation.
- Using accessible knowledge in decision making.
- Facilitating knowledge growth through culture and incentives.
- Measuring the value of knowledge assets and the impact of KM.

2.1 KM in Public Sector

Since the early 1990s, leading private sector companies have been developing procedures to guarantee effective creation, capture and dissemination of information and know-how and the promotion of knowledge sharing (O’Riordan 2005). Public sector organisations are typically thought to have come later to the concept of KM and considered ‘falling behind these practices’ (Cong & Pandya 2003). Cong & Pandya (2003) believe that most management philosophies are first practiced in the private sector organisations and once the benefits have been realised it then migrates to the public sector. One of the primary reasons for this poor take up can be seen in the environmental differences between private and public sector (OECD 2003). Within the private sector bottom lines and competition are afforded more priority than in the public sector (Saussois 2003). ‘the differences between public and private sectors are so great that business practices cannot be [directly] transferred across’.

However, with ever-increasing pressure to improve efficiency and effectiveness, together with a growing awareness of the importance of sharing knowledge across government organisations and to maintain a whole-of-government perspective on policy making and service delivery, KM is being given greater priority (O’Riordan 2005).

For the successful integration of KM within government organisations, it is necessary for the Government organisations to create their own ‘identity’ with regard to KM (OECD 2003). Saussois (2003) stresses the importance of governments to draw their own conclusions with regard to KM. By not copying the private sector, governments can:

‘endeavour to innovate in accordance with their own identity and specificity and in accordance with their own way of managing their human resources.’
This is supported by Cong & Pandya (2003) who opposes the introduction of KM Practices from privates sector directly into public sector. Cong & Pandya (2003) believe that these difference are so great that a strategy specific to public sector organisations must be created. In recent years efforts to integrate KM within public sector organisations has been seen. This lack of focus towards Public Sector KM is seen whereby in the past decade, more than 11000 peer-reviewed journal articles penned under the subject heading of KM. In the same period, KM within Public sector organisations accounted for just over 1000 articles of the above figure.¹

2.2 KM Barriers
The identification and recognition of KM barriers plays an important role in the successful integration of KM within an organisation (Riege 2005). Mason & Pauleen (2003) propose that 45% barriers to KM are culture related. This view is shared by Koudsi (2000) whereby KM is not technological but cultural. These ‘soft’ factors such as; culture, behaviours, attitudes, people, and processes, seem to add to the complexity to managing knowledge.

Knowledge sharing practices often seem to fail because organisations are seen to adjust their organisational culture to fit their KM strategy, rather than implementing strategies to fit their culture (Riege 2005). Getting an organisation’s culture (including values and behaviours) ‘right’ for KM is typically the most important and yet often the most difficult challenge. KM is first and foremost a people issue. The success of KM initiatives depends upon personnel’s motivation, willingness, and their ability to share knowledge and use the knowledge of others. Barriers need to be identified and reduced. Existing enablers need to be enhanced and additional ones created. This is often where the greatest KM challenges lie.

2.2.1 People
Overcoming cultural barriers is a difficult task, especially the sentiment that holding information is more valuable than sharing it. This enduring notion of ‘knowledge is power’ can go to the heart of organisation culture whereby a competitive environment can foster knowledge hoarding. Sharing of knowledge is often regarded as weakening an employee’s corporate position, power or status within the company (Riege 2005).

¹ Based on search Academic Search Premier; Scholarly Research Database for “KM” and “public sector” published 2003-2013.
The traditionally compartmentalised structure of public sector organisations has created a ‘Silo’ effect with regard to KM. Public sector culture is often based around the principles of ‘Knowledge is power’ faces the ‘what’s in it for me’ situation. People often focus on tasks that are more beneficial to them in the short term rather than long term knowledge sharing practices (Riege 2005). Grayson & O'Dell, (1998) highlighted that lack of resources, in particular time, as a key barrier to knowledge sharing within organisations.

Trust is also seen as a key barrier to effective knowledge transfer within an organisation. Knowledge sharing is unlikely to happen with some level of trust, that the knowledge is accurate, that people do not misuse the knowledge, that knowledge will be used without giving appropriate credit.

In order to combat these challenges an appropriate knowledge sharing culture need to be created. The benefits of KM must be communicated to personnel and managers. The notion of ‘knowledge is power’ must be challenged and measures put in place to ensure that sharing knowledge is seen as a source power. An environment of trust must be fostered as this has a direct bearing on knowledge sharing (Riege 2005). The more trust that exists, the more people are willing to share.

The development and nurture of communities of practice, post project appraisals, storytelling and lessons learned can aid KM within an organisation. Communities of Practice are defined as ‘they're groups of people inform bound together by shared expertise and passion for a Joint enterprise’ (Wenger & Snyder 2000). Communities of practice can address management issues in relation to the sharing of tacit knowledge, which is difficult to transfer. Some examples of tacit knowledge can be seen as; experience, work knowledge and tacit knowledge (Dooly 2006).

The paradox of such communities is that although they are self-supported, they do require specific managerial efforts to develop them and integrate them into an organisation. A designated team assigned to nurture community development can help address these needs:
provides guidance and resources when needed
helps communities connect their agenda to business strategies
makes sure they include all the right people
helps them create links to other communities

This team can also help identify and eliminate barriers to participation in the structure or culture of the overall organization. The existence of such a team sends the message that the organization values the work and initiative of communities of practice (Wenger & Snyder 2000).

2.2.2 Processes
Knowledge sharing practices within organisations are often doomed to fail before they begin due to the absence of basic infrastructure and sharing capabilities (Gold et al. 2001). By providing an appropriate infrastructure and sufficient resources to facilitate sharing practices within and between functional areas is the basis of a successful KM programs (Riege 2005). Therefore the lack of appropriate infrastructure, both formal and informal, can be seen as a key barrier to knowledge sharing. Formal structures tend to be small in size and focus on topics that the organisation considers important, informal groups tend to focus on topics of interest highlighted by the personnel themselves. An organisations KM strategy does not explicitly have to comply with formal structures, it therefore must be appropriate in the context of the organisation. Much like the cultural barriers, the strategy must fit the culture not the other way around.

In order to achieve greater organisational performance a KM strategy must be put inplace, these strategies can be broken into two types:

- Codification Strategy: the ability to codify knowledge into explicit knowledge.
- Personification Strategy: sharing knowledge through interpersonal means

Studies on KM have addressed knowledge codification as a strategy able to increase the efficiency in KM at the organizational level and to support knowledge transfer across individuals and firms (Bettiol et al. 2012). The main economic benefit of this process lies in the reuse of codified knowledge (Gammelgaard & Ritter 2005; Cowan & Foray 1997). However, knowledge codification suffers from many disadvantages connected to the difficulties of applying the same codified knowledge to a large variety of contexts (Bettiol et al. 2012).
Personalization is based on putting in contact and interacting the source and the receiver of knowledge directly, hence speeding up the process of knowledge transfer. The development of technological solutions such as multimedia tools or videoconferencing can reinforce personalization by overcoming the need for codification, through face-to-face interactions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codification strategy</th>
<th>Personalisation strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit and declarative knowledge (e.g. specifications, instructions, definitions)</td>
<td>Tacit and procedural knowledge (e.g. competences, values, norms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional and new information and communication technologies (e.g. documents, databases, email)</td>
<td>Memory representations, personal interaction (e.g. mental models, dialogues workshops, seminars)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Kasvi et al. 2003)

**Table 2: KM Strategies**

Nohria & Hansen (1999) consider personalization (“people-to-people”) a KM strategy opposed to codification (“people-to-document), allowing the reuse of knowledge within the organisation more effectively (Salisbury & Bloodgood 2001). However, a KM strategy must be suited to the organisational context upon which it is applied. A codification strategy fits organisations that offer standardized products while organisations that follow a customized product approach should adopt the personalization strategy.

The retention of knowledge within organisations is a topic that has not been extensively covered within literature (Levy 2011). While much of the literature centres around the process of capturing knowledge from current personnel, Levy (2011) paper focusses on the practices needed to ‘minimize the loss of important knowledge while experiencing high levels of retirees’. One of the important task within this process is to assess ‘what’ knowledge is to be retained. The infinite nature of the knowledge held by personnel can be seen as a challenge due to the ambiguity over what specific knowledge must be retained within the organisation.

A barrier that is often overlooked is the spatial arrangements of work areas within organisations. For organisations that are co-located, offices are traditionally arranged hierarchal rather than focussing on the needs of the personnel i.e. ‘who needs to work together regularly’(Riege 2005). The reliance on technology as a main source of communication can hinder the creation of relationships between personnel. It is these relationships that are needed for the effective transfer of knowledge within an organisation.
2.2.3 Technology

Technology is employed in all the processes of KM and various technological solutions are already available in the market. Advances in technology have facilitated the recent growth in systems designed for managing organisational knowledge (Skok & Kalmanovitch 2005). While email can often be seen as the main tool for transferring knowledge throughout an organisation, supporting technologies can also be used including: intranets, document management systems, information retrieval engines (Offsey 1997).

Ray (2008) states that only after identifying the KM services can IT then be considered. This support the widely held viewpoint that IT is seen as a KM enabler. The problem is actually a matter of selecting an appropriate technology (Asoh et al. 2002; Riege 2005). However, it must be noted that technology is just an enabler, it can help connect people with information, and people with each other, but it is not the solution. The development of a taxonomy will allow for successful integration of the KM system into working practices (Kasvi et al 2003).

Arora (2011) documented the continuing advances in science and technology may result in adverse public reaction. Public sector organisations must acknowledge that while a technological advancement may be of benefit to persons internal to the organisation. If it cannot be applied to the external stakeholders, i.e. the public, this technology cannot be considered. The increasingly diverse nature of government structures, with many organisations merging and becoming centralised it can be seen as a difficult time to implement new management principles into the organisation.

Existing and new technologies are often capable of supporting effective knowledge sharing processes, however, unless there is a close fit to employees’ requirements, technology in itself can become a barrier (Riege 2005). Software systems should support work-related processes of individuals, who decide which information to access and store, or forward to other people. This may not be seen as a technical problems but due to the chosen solution not matching people’s need requirements (Grayson & O’Dell 1998).

Hendriks & Vriens (1999) emphasised the need to move away from an engineering perspective to examine more specific challenges within an organisation. This view is shared by O’Riordan (2005), whereby big infrastructure initiatives, such as the development or improvement of the Intranet site, frequently fail in their objective of promoting internal communication and knowledge sharing. When this happens the issues are seldom technical, rather the sites are not fulfilling their potential due to employees not using them.
With respect to intranet use, unless closely controlled; ‘false knowledge, misinformation, and propaganda’ may be transferred (Skok & Kalmanovitch 2005). Wood & Varey (1999) viewed the role of an intranet as an information tool, a communication tool, or a combination of both. However, an intranet’s role varies according to the users epistemology (Skok & Kalmanovitch 2005):

**Cognitivistic view:** A culturally/socially neutral tool for representing information through the combination of explicit information, as opposed to KM. Encompasses activities such as:

- Acquisition
- Organisation
- Storage
- Retention
- Distribution
- Presentation

**Connectionistic view:** Intranet as a tool, not just to acquire, store and disseminate information for their own group, but also assist in making the right connections between different groups through the communication of the rules and procedures required to locate hidden organisational information (Skok & Kalmanovitch 2005).

**Autopoietic view:** Argues that an intranet cannot deal directly with certain forms of knowledge. Thus, this epistemology places increasing emphasis on an intranet as a communication tool to facilitate the direct conversion/creation of both contingently and inherently tacit knowledge via internalisation and externalisation processes, and indirectly, via socialisation. Also encourage knowledge sharing through the provision of data that enables individuals to identify relevant staff for making contact.

### 2.3 Knowledge Transfer within Merging Organisations

The transfer of knowledge between merging organisations can be seen as a project within itself with a set timeframe for implementation (National Audit Office 2006). Berry (1995) concluded that successful knowledge transfer between merging organisations depends on the creation of a co-operative relationship. Knowledge transfer must be seen as a ‘two way street’ with both organisations teaching and learning (Cummings & Teng 2003). While the right intentions with regard to mergers might be initially set out, a range of challenges may be seen.

**Trust:** When trust is high, people are more willing to share their knowledge this is also true when absorbing knowledge. Levin & Cross (2004) concludes that trust is very important in the transfer of tacit knowledge.
Motivation: Has an effect on the extent of Knowledge Transfer (Argote & Ingram 2000). The challenge is that personnel cannot be forced to share knowledge; they can only do so willingly. Therefore management must demonstrate the benefits of knowledge transfer, therefore moving away from the ‘what in it for me’ scenario.

Resistance to Change: Very often organisational change runs into some form of resistance. It must be recognised that personnel can react very differently to change, passively resisting it or embracing it completely. By ensure ‘regular communication with staff and stakeholders,

Structure: Galbraith (1990) identified the transfer of personnel throughout an organisation as a mechanism for facilitating knowledge transfer. Individuals are required to adapt and restructure knowledge to apply to new contexts (Argote & Ingram 2000).
Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter the research methodology will be discussed examining how the author completed their research and the methods which were used to do so. The objective of this study was to examine the KM barriers within Limerick’s Local Authorities. This involved establishing baselines with respect to KM within Limerick City and Limerick County Councils, alongside examining the knowledge sharing culture and also the KM tools utilised. A number of interviews were completed as part of the data collection and it is hoped that from the findings, recommendations can be made to overcome these barriers.

3.1 Research Philosophy

Research methods have their origins in the philosophies of social science. As a result of this Easterby-Smith states that the philosophical orientation of research should be established. 

**Ontological Approach:** When completing this research, a subjectivist view of knowledge was undertaken whereby knowledge is seen as embedded within culture therefore context dependant (Hislop 2009). This approach links heavily with Polanyi (2009) view of tacit knowledge whereby *difficult to transfer due to it being deeply rooted in a person’s mind, that it is invariably liked with the experience of the person.*

**Philosophical approach:** an interpretivist approach was undertaken within this research whereby data is obtained through social construction and shared meaning. By undertaking this approach allows the researcher to interpret the meanings and actions of actors according to their own subjective frame of reference. These actors may interpret the situations they find themselves in differently. This approach is beneficial in the context of this research, whereby through the use of quantitative and qualitative method of data collection aims to identify the KM barriers within the councils.

3.2 Research Objectives

The starting point in all research activities is to focus on the purpose: to contribute to the body of accumulated knowledge. The overall research objective of this paper is to investigate the KM barriers within Limerick’s two local authorities. The objective can be further broken down into the following sub-objectives:

1. To establish baselines with respect to KM activities within Limerick City and Limerick County Councils
2. To examine the barriers for the integration of KM within Water Service and Planning Departments.
3. To identify the ‘next steps’ in the implementation of KM within the amalgamated council.

Objective one: to establish baselines with respect to KM activities within Limerick City and Limerick County Councils. This objective focuses on the identification of baselines with regard to KM activities and involved two data collection phases of this research. It is seen as foundation for objective two which aims to identify the different KM barriers within Water Service and Planning Departments.

Objective two: To examine the barriers for the integration of KM within the Water Service and Planning Departments. In order to meet this objective the researcher recognised it was necessary to collect data from a specific sample of personnel within the councils. It was decided that the Water Services department would be used due to it being within the post-merger stage. The Planning Department would be used due to it being merged in the near future.

Objective 3: To identify the ‘next steps’ in the implementation of KM within the amalgamated council. This objective aims to examine the barriers and enablers associated with KM that could be addressed in the implementation of KM within the amalgamated council. Recommendations are proposed in order to address the barriers outlined in the above objectives

3.3 Adopted methodology

This section presents the roadmap taken during this study. It introduces an overview of the steps taken, identifies secondary sources of data, the methodology adopted and details the research phases of the study. The methodology selection was influenced by various other factors in addition to the objectives of the study. There were resource constraints that had to be considered, as this research was conducted within the implementation stage of the amalgamation. It was difficult to conduct an overall before/after analysis of the KM barriers within the councils. In order to reduce this limitation a case study approach was undertaken with Water Service and Planning Departments. The approach that was adopted included a pilot questionnaire sent to the author’s sponsors within the councils and also to various colleagues. A questionnaire was sent to the staff Limerick’s City and County Councils and 4 semi-structured interviews were conducted with personnel of councils.

The process was iterative in its nature with each element contributed to the next and often changes were made as a result of feedback and observations.
3.4 Research Phases

Research is described as ‘a systematic and organised effort to investigate a research problem that needs a solution’ Sekaran (1984). In order for research to be systematic it must follow a series of phases that meets research objectives. The research adopted the following approach as illustrated in Figure 2.

![Diagram of research approach]

**Figure 2: Research Approach**

3.5 Data collection

1st Phase: Secondary sources of data used in this study included books; journals and reports. Findings from the secondary data collection phase are presented in the literature review chapter and provide the basis for Step 1 as outlined above. This literature that was reviewed provided an understanding of the research topic and assisted in refining the objectives for this research.

2nd Phase: Questionnaire used a large sample size (all employees of both councils). However with a response rate of 57 participants (53% County, 47% City) the results cannot be claimed as representative of the whole population but provide an insight into the key KM activities within the councils.

3rd / 4th Phase: Qualitative Interviews in the form of Semi – Structured Interviews were used. This approach allows for an aspect of improvisation and allowing the development of
responses/answers, moving away from the structured approach of ‘who/ what/ where/ how many/ how much’ statements.

3.6 Research Approach: Triangulation

Triangulation as defined by Denzin (2009) is seen as: ‘the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon’. By obtaining data from several sources, one can add credibility to the research work and thus increase the validity of the evidence. Methodological triangulation involves combining quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection.

This research undertakes a ‘sequential triangulation’ approach whereby the results of one phase are essential for planning the next phase.

![Figure 3: Research Phases](image)

This study adopted a multi-faceted approach to triangulation whereby the subject matter was examined through the use of a questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative research within phase 2 was used to provide an overview of the main barriers to KM within the individual councils. These barriers were further investigated within phase 3. This research concludes in phase 4 whereby a case study approach was undertaken.

3.7 Evaluation criteria

There is an underlying anxiety amongst researchers that the research will not stand up to outside scrutiny. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Lowe (2002) believe use of interviews is considered a source of valid data. As argued by Hakim (2000), ‘the validity of data obtained as individuals are interviewed in sufficient detail can be taken as true, correct and complete’. The merging of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies; ‘the internal validity of the research design is strengthened ‘Bowen (1996).

This research undertook a case study of two departments and as such does have limitations and may not have implications for generalisation. The limitations of this research can be attributed to the sample size within phase 2 and the case studies in phase 4. This research focusses on the perspective of managerial personnel and was conducted over a relatively short period of time, a two month period. Also KM in the merger of public sector
organisations has not been extensively covered therefore a KM literature gap has been identified.

3.8 Questionnaire

This section presents the approach taken for phase two of the study. It details the questionnaire design, outlines the process for distributing the questionnaire and the method used for analysis of findings.

**Questionnaire research approach:** There are three considerations when designing a questionnaire according to Sekaran (1984) the structure of the questions to be included:

- **Type**
- **Format**
- **Content**

By considering these three factors, a researcher may be able to reduce biases contained in the data and improve the validity of the responses. A questionnaire is highly structured therefore quantitative analysis can be easily compiled.

The limitation of a questionnaire is that it does not usually investigate reasoning as to why certain activities happen. It can be difficult to develop theories based on the survey questions as some of the questions may not appropriate in the context of a questionnaire. If question is deemed too sensitive within a survey, it can affect response rates.

A descriptive survey was used within this research whereby an array of question formats was used. This allowed for an assessment of various KM barriers of the sample population to be analysed. The questionnaire was designed to identify KM methods, culture, enablers and barriers within the individual councils.

While a relatively small sample size was used within this research, a tentative picture on how knowledge is managed has emerged. However results were not relied upon for hypothesis testing, instead was used to identify the range of KM barriers within the individual councils.

**Designing the questionnaire:** This research employs a descriptive questionnaire in order to investigate KM barriers within the amalgamation of two local authorities. The limitation of considering a questionnaire for this research was the participants familiarity with the concept of KM and may be deterred from answering questions The researcher attempted to mitigate this risk by compiling an introductory section to participants within both the distributed email seeking their responses and also in section one of the questionnaire itself (see Appendix A).

Drawing on the main findings from the literature review and the research objectives, the researcher started by drawing up a preliminary draft of the questionnaire and grouped the
questions into four different sections. Question formats varied within and between sections depending on the nature of the data required and included likert, constant sum, open, closed and ranking type questions. The questionnaire structure included the following sections:

1. KM Strategy
2. Knowledge Transfer Process
3. KM Tools
4. KM Improvement

With ranked questions, the respondent was asked to place statements in order of importance, as they deemed appropriate. Open questions were employed where freedom of response was necessary e.g. opinion questions. Likert scale and constant sum questions were the most common.

To ensure clarity and understanding of each question, the wording was given careful consideration. The wording within the survey was simple and where necessary explanations were given.

**Piloting and administration of the survey:** A pilot of the survey was conducted to test the questionnaire prior to its distribution. This was conducted through consultation with the researcher’s sponsors within the individual councils. This resulted in the design of the questionnaire going through a number of iterations. Changes to the questionnaire included: wording within the cover letter and within the questionnaire. A number of questions were eliminated that were similar in nature thus reducing the overall size of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was redrafted to incorporate feedback from the pilot stage before distribution to personnel within the councils. The survey was administered through email with the help of the researcher’s sponsors within the individual councils.

**Data analysis:** In the course of this research data analysis was carried out in parallel with the data collection phase. The researcher kept a log of any issues that became apparent during the data collection phase in order to ensure accurate results were found.

**3.9 Interviews/ Case Studies**

This section presents the approach taken for phase three and four of the study. It outlines the process which includes the design and administration of interviews and describes the data analysis process adopted. Phase 3/4 of the research involved a qualitative approach which centred on semi-structured interviews
**Phase 3:** The interviews within phase 3 expanded the range and depth of topics that were covered in the questionnaire and provided a method of confirming many of the barriers that had been identified. In this way a deeper understanding of KM barriers within the context of the individual councils was sought. These interviews were linked the objectives one and two by addressing the KM culture within the councils and also providing in-depth information with regard to the barriers to KM. While the questionnaire was useful to determine if any barriers to KM were evident, the interviews were used to investigate the reasoning behind these barriers.

Given the negative and sensitive nature of barriers to managing knowledge, interviews opened up new dimensions and provided an opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply into problem areas. Interviewees shared their experiences with regard to enablers of KM, activities, processes, and tools that were used successfully in the respective organisations.

There was overlap between the questionnaire and the interviews which provided an opportunity to delve deeper into the perceptions of the interviewees in relation to the findings emerging from the questionnaire. In order to bridge the gap between phase one and phase two of the data collection the researcher analysed the findings of phase one and created a summary of phase one results that were presented within the interviews.

**Phase 4:** The case study approach to research is not accepted by some as a valid method, and consequently it is appropriate that this section would defend this choice. Even though the questionnaire was appropriate to find out basic information in relation KM barriers within the councils, it was unable to facilitate an in-depth investigation. Thus a triangulation approach was adopted. Following the questionnaire with interviews and consequently by a case study, was deemed the most appropriate approach given the following advantages of case study research within the context of the research objectives.

Yin (1984) states that ‘a case study as an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. For this research two specific departments were analysed and thus the conclusions that are drawn can be seen as specific to these departments.

The majority of participants (3/4) within the interviews gave permission to record the interviews. The advantage of this is that it ensured that the information within in the interview was accurately captured. Once the interviews were transcribed, these were distributed to the interviewee for review to insure that all information was correct.
**Data Analysis:** There are two main methods of analysing qualitative data. Content analysis whereby the information is turned into numbers by measuring frequency. Grounded theory involves the use of the researcher’s intuition to create patterns from the information. This study adopted various elements of content analysis whereby the frequency/infrequency of particular patterns such as barriers what were apparent were analysed.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is a major consideration when conducting research. Therefore within this case study, ethical implications where reviewed at the research design stage of this thesis. Written approval was sought for this research work. Details with regard to this study were inputted into ethics approval form and sent for approval before the Kemmy Business School Research Ethics Committee Board, at the April review sitting. A key consideration which must be made is that the participants must be fully aware of the purpose, methods and uses of the research. This is shown in Appendix A whereby an introduction is given to the participants with regard to the overall aims of the research.

3.11 Summary of Methodology

This chapter outlined the research process, the justification of using the chosen methodologies as well as describing the actual process used during this study. The researcher’s philosophical perspective was also discussed in this chapter.

The chapter describes the reasons why the researcher adopted a triangulation approach within this study. The various phases of the research are described in detail. The first phase of the study examined KM literature which provided an understanding of the research topic and assisted in refining the objectives for this research.

The second phase, through the use of a questionnaire, examined KM within the selected councils, Limerick City and Limerick County, for the creation of baselines. In the third phases qualitative research was carried out in the form of semi-structured interviews. This allowed for further in-depth analysis of the barriers to KM within the councils. The final phase of the study involved a multiple case study of the Water Services and Planning departments. A series of semi-structured interviews were used to ascertain the KM barriers within these departments. The findings of the questionnaire, semi-structured interview and the case studies are presented in the following chapter.
Chapter 4: Findings

The following chapter is a presentation of the findings derived throughout this research and opens with an assessment of the KM limitations within the councils including KM Strategies. Subsequently the barriers of the Knowledge transfer techniques employed by the councils are discussed. Further in-depth discussion is reserved for the following chapter, Analysis of Findings.

4.1 Questionnaire

The KM activities utilised within the individual councils will be outlined in this section. Data from phase two/three was used to compile this section. Interview participants will be referred to as Participant A: Triona Daly (T.D-2013) and Participant B: Donal Brennan (DB-2013).

From a review of the data, it was shown that there no explicit KM strategy (DB-2013) in place within Limerick councils. KM was seen as an ad-hoc basis whereby; ‘it all depended on the section/ supervisor and the people involved.’ (TD-2013). One version of KM that was in place was Freedom of information Section 15/16 with the ‘aim of documenting local interpretations and as you come across situations you would amend and update this. However this process was not utilised…..These things were never really kept up to date or developed’. This lack of strategy was also illustrated within the survey results whereby 68% of respondents disagreeing/ not sure if there were ‘well defined processes in place for the creation, capture and acquisition of knowledge’.

One of the key reasons for the absence of ‘well defined processes’ is the limited resources in terms of personnel and time available to implement KM practices into their working lives:

‘people were so busy and with staff resources dwindling in the last few years and no recruitment and no replacement of maternity leave or term times, you were doing what was coming at you. The time wasn’t there to improve procedures and maybe update them. It just wasn’t there [time]’ (TD-2013)

With limited resources and limited time available, it was clear that KM was not high on the list of priorities:

‘It was all about the immediate as opposed to the future. What’s coming at me today and what I have to do now. The nicer things like documenting the procedures wasn’t as important as making sure that a permit
While there was recognition that the system in place was flawed, however there wasn’t the time or resources available to implement change. While previous attempts to implement change have resulted in little or no effect on KM procedures in place within the councils. The merger of the councils is seen as good time to implement changes:

‘the merger is a time to make a lot of changes in the organisation that may have been put of ….there is efficiencies to be gained now and we need to be looking at steps that we can consolidate and change in order to get the process faster for the company’ (TD-2013)

‘it is good time to build on the KM strategies and practices which do exist……the ideal time would have been 5yrs ago so now [you would be] merging 2 systems’ (DB-2013)

KM was simply not ‘routine’ in previous years within both councils with Personnel favouring a personification approach to KM whereby Knowledge was stored in people’s heads at the detriment of explicitly documenting procedures and practices:

Despite the obvious lack of strategic approach towards KM within the councils, there was an element of effective Knowledge Sharing. Personnel relied on a variety of tools to aid knowledge transfer such as written reports/ email, meetings and face to face discussions.
There was a huge reliance on tacit knowledge, something that is recognised by management. This often manifested itself in the form of ‘go-to persons for certain tasks’ (TD-2013).

While the above section illustrates there is evidence of sharing culture, it can also shown that elements of the organisational structure were not conductive to knowledge sharing. Due to the council’s functional and departmentalized nature, this led to the creation of knowledge silos. This in turn resulted in departments often being ‘insular’ in nature.

‘we can be very insular at times and we tend to treat our departments as separate entities and we need to come together more. Where there is across over of services we need to communicate more’. (TC-2013)

‘You have different departments working under different government departments, Environment, Transport etc. each sending out different pieces of information and don’t necessary talk to each other’. (DB-2013)

Some of the key barriers of the KM System within the councils from the survey were seen as;

• Motivation
• Resistance to Change
• Trust Issues

Management recognises that resistance to change is one of the key barriers not just in terms of KM but also in terms of the merger as a whole; ‘people can become unnerved by it, not just in terms of updating documents but location wise/ change in procedures and new personnel’ (TD-2013). Resistance to change is a huge barrier in terms of this merger with many issues such as job location and department ‘if you are going along happy and nothing is going wrong in your job and your boss is happy and your boss’s boss is happy, why do you have to do extra work.’ (DB-2013). In order to combat this support from both management and personnel must be achieved; ‘communication is vital in the whole integration’ (TD-2013). Much of management consists of ‘leadership or on circumstances’ for the integration of new systems. In the case of the merger the circumstance is there and there is recognition that proper leadership needs to be in place in order to ensure that KM is deeply embedded within the organisational culture:

‘KM is a culture that needs to be fostered within an organisation. It needs to be Corporate led and Progression Planning should be part of every annual plan (TD-2013).’
The practice of training new personal was also not conductive to Knowledge sharing due to time and resource constraints.

‘you were put in a section and shadowed the person you were replacing, you were lucky if you got a few days but usually it was a day or 2. You were thrown in at the deep end (TD-2013).’

If someone was leaving, you had to write up to the department in Dublin for approval to get a replacement and this might be 6 months later.(DB-2013)

The reliance on tacit knowledge in the training of personnel was seen within the Water Service Department whereby explicit knowledge transfer has its limitations a case can be made for tacit knowledge transfer, within training courses, can allow for greater understanding, ensuring that everyone ‘reading the same bible’:

‘There is a standard book of knowledge on running water/sewage plant to provide the basic knowledge. The guy running the course was very good as he gives experience…..’ (DB-2013)

The water services department were very conscious of ‘the skills gap’ with new personnel so used a skills matrix to ‘look at how to formally train somebody to have the skills needed for the tasks you had’. (DB-2013)

- Who had what skills
- What skills are needed for the job
- What training courses to go on (on the job trainings for new people)

Within the councils there is wide variety of Knowledge Transfer tools available, each with their own inherent strengths and weaknesses. There is a high reliance on the use of email as a primary method of knowledge transfer within both Limerick City and Limerick County councils, 45% and 48% respectively, with intranet being the second method of knowledge transfer. The high reliance on email may be seen as the cause of many of the limitations within the intranet with ambiguity surrounding ‘procedures for document management’ within the council.
This ambiguity is shown in the respondent’s views towards the intranet development within the council, were a range of limitations were shown:

- Inaccurate Information
- Out of date information
- Inadequate Training for use of Intranet
- Lack of information
- Lack of dedicated staff within departments
- Complex (slow) document upload/retrieval/ poor speed using intranet
- Poor structure/ not very user friendly
- Regular update notifications should be sent to relevant personnel

These limitations can again be attributed to the limited resources available to manage it:

‘It [intranet] never really took off and wasn’t properly managed. You need to know where it (the info) is, its not easily searchable….. It was tough to get time to do the urgent administrative stuff as opposed to going back and refreshing the intranet.’(DB-2013)
‘You can assign somebody to manage the knowledge base for you but they have no idea what they are managing. The people who have enough experience and knowledge should manage the knowledge base are too busy’ (DB-2013)

One of the key challenges is to communicate the change within the council. Respondents commented that there is lack of communication within the council. Lack of communication in its simplest form is seen in the process of accepting changes within protocols and procedures:

‘Change isn’t accepted until somebody makes a formal decision to do so. That is a deep change in people’s mind-set. Once it is accepted, to communicate this knowledge to those who need it…. You’re moving from information of the change, to knowledge (where people acknowledge the change)’ (DB-2013)

Communication is a 2 way system whereby receiver of information acknowledges that they understand the change/process being implemented. Donal proposed that, under a service catalogue system, an individual would be responsible for a particular service instead of a team; ‘It becomes routine. They can be responsible for transferring that info into knowledge and to communicate to others.’ (DB-2013)

4.2 Case Study: KM within Water Services and Planning Departments

For anonymity purposes, interview participants will be referred to as Participant A (PA-Water) and Participant B (PB-Planning). The findings are documented under the following headings:

4.2.1. Strategy

When addressing the existence of a KM strategy within the departments, the author focussed on whether a strategy existed, the legal implications and barriers to implementing a KM strategy.

There is not an explicit strategy for KM within both departments. Instead KM is practiced in a very informal and unstructured manner. Within the Water Services Department the use of an informal strategy is seen whereby meetings allow for effective knowledge transfer within the department. These meeting often pose as a ‘catch up’ sessions to allow for personnel to be aware of current standing of projects and or issues that have arisen.

This informal strategy is also seen within the Planning Department whereby no explicitly Knowledge strategy is in place. However KM practices are seen ‘within certain elements [whereby there is an] obligation to maintain certain registers’ (PB-Planning) such as mapping
planning applications and appeals. This is a legal requirement and does not address the background knowledge required by personnel within the department for these applications. Very often knowledge within the Planning Department is experienced based and often subjective. An example of this type of knowledge is experiences of dealing with certain people, ‘their reaction if you start digging up the road outside their house…. You may need to notify them first’ (PB-Planning). Much of this knowledge could not be written down for legal reasons. As a result it is often transferred through face to face communication.

4.2.2 Tools
When assessing the KM tools within the Departments, the author focused on the methods of knowledge transfer that are in place, as well as the inherent benefit/limitation of such methods. The following are the tools currently being used by the Departments with regard to KM:

Shared Drive
The shared drive was used for storing documents internally. This was seen within both departments. However there is recognition that the shared drive is not being managed appropriately. There is no set naming convention within the drive (PB-Planning) which results in personnel taking an individual approach to organising their documents. As a result, in the case of personnel leaving, it is invariably very difficult to retrieve documents from their shared drive.

Intranet
The usage of the intranet is limited and rarely used within both departments. There is a reliance on shared drive as a document management system.

Email
Email is seen as one of the primary methods of knowledge transfer within the departments. However limitations are evident due to the absence of structured documentation procedures in place. Within the planning department, measures were put in place to try to organise the email system however this only lasted a few weeks. There is acknowledgement that the system of adding attachments to emails should be replaced with links tying the documents to the document management system within the shared drive. By doing so it is believed that updating and transferring of documents will become more efficient.

Face to face communication
This method of knowledge transfer can be seen as the primary method within both departments. The Water services department regularly hold meetings, often take place once a month with dates ‘not set in stone’ (PA-Water) to allow for everybody to attend where possible. If people are unable to attend there is an effort made to ‘catch people up’ by
explaining what happened through 1-1 interactions rather than sending a mass email that would possibly lead to more questions. This allows for better understanding of the issues and improves trust between personnel.

Within the Planning Department, very often a ‘need to know’ approach is taken whereby knowledge is transferred to personnel when/if required. Due to the small size of the department the issues of trust and motivation is not seen as an issue.

4.2.3 Barriers
When addressing the existence of KM barriers within the departments, the author focussed on many of the barriers that were highlight within the questionnaire and assessed there appropriateness within the context of the analysis departments.

Lack of resources
Is seen as a key barrier to the successful integration of KM within the departments. Lack of recourses such as time, personnel and money, has resulted in a process whereby there is a focus on: ‘getting the job done and no time to record it’ (PB-Planning).

Within the Water Services it was proposed that the creation of an electronic database of water services maps would be beneficial. By scanning all of the water services maps, ‘many of with were 80/90 years old and very fragile and prone to wear’ (PA-Water), would allow for the issues such as storing the drawings a lot easier as there would now be a reliance on the electronic database rather than the physical copies. However the limited amount of time and personnel to undertake such a task resulted in this process not being undertaken.

Structure
The organisational structure can be characterised as hierarchical. This functional and departmentalized nature led to the creation of knowledge silos. With no horizontal communication between the departments led to a culture whereby protectionism of peoples responsibilities is felt ‘that’s their job…….that’s my job and I’m keeping responsibility for it’ (PB-Planning)

Technology
It is felt that there is inadequate training with regard to the technology within the council whereby ‘People haven’t been trained properly to use the technology available to them’ (PB-Planning). As a consequence no formalised filing system is in place for document management. Instead an individualistic approach to document management is being undertaken
Motivation
Motivation may be an issue in the upcoming merger as one system is picked over the other. There is a danger of personnel becoming aggrieved by management not opting for a particular system. In order to address this management must justify the decisions of selecting one process over another and documenting the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen system.

Retirements
The retiring of personnel is seen as an issue within the Planning Department. Due to cutbacks within the city council in the last 5/6 years, a huge amount of personnel have left, as a result a large amount of knowledge has been lost. As a result personnel often have to ‘ring the old boss/manager to ask a quick question’ (PB-Planning). In order to limit the impact of knowledge loss through retirements, training in the form of job shadowing is felt to be the best solution. However as shown in the previous section, there is often a lack of resources available to allow job shadowing to take place.
Discussion of Findings

This section of the research paper will combine analysis of the literature that was researched with the findings that were gathered throughout the research phases as outlined in the previous chapter. This approach will allow for the combination of the KM literature and the KM activities within the councils in order to allow for a portrayal of the councils current position in relation to KM barriers. This chapter will therefore analyse the findings in relation to the research objectives outlined in the previous chapter.

The author draws on (Ives et al. 2000) to highlight the main conclusions from this research;

’The effectiveness of knowledge transfer is influenced by key organisational factor such as strategy, process, culture, structure and IT’

5.1 Strategy

The research showed that there is no systematic approach towards KM within the council. However within the councils an ‘ad-hoc’ strategy towards KM can be seen whereby departments would integrate KM practices that were fit for their own purpose rather than the implementation of an overall strategy; ‘it all depended on the section/ supervisor and the people involved. (TD-2013)’. There is a recognition that KM would be of benefit to the council however there are no formulised process in place for the transferring of documentation, that may exist, with regard to best practice and/or lessons learned.

While it can be shown that within Limerick’s councils some KM practices were being utilised however not in a systematic and deliberate way. One version of KM that was in place is the Freedom of information Section 15/16 with the ‘aim of documenting local interpretations and as you come across situations you would amend and update this. However this process was; ‘not utilised…..These things were never really kept up to date or developed’ (DB-2013).

A Codification strategy is evidence within the Planning Departments whereby planning applications and enforcements are tracked. However this addresses a legal requirement as ‘obligation to maintain certain registers’ (PB-Planning), the knowledge surrounding these registers is not documented.

The findings correlate with the research of Nohria & Hansen (1999) whereby two prevailing KM strategies are evident within the councils. Codification, in the form of documents within the shared drive/ intranet and planning registers. Personalisation in the form of team meeting within the Water Services Department. However, the strategies informal in nature.
5.2 Process

The findings of the questionnaire demonstrated that 68% of respondents felt that there are not ‘well defined processes in place for creation, capture, and acquisition of knowledge’. This lack of appropriate processes can be seen as a key barriers to knowledge sharing within the councils. This lack of processes can be attributed to the lack of resources within the councils

‘people were so busy and with staff resources dwindling in the last few years and no recruitment and no replacement of maternity leave or term times, you were doing what was coming at you. The time wasn’t there to improve procedures and maybe update them. It just wasn’t there (time) (TD-2013)’

This research correlates with the findings of Grayson & O’Dell, (1998) who highlighted that lack of resources, in particular time, as a key barrier to knowledge sharing within organisations. The research findings identified lack of time and personnel as a limiting factor to implementing effective change.

As a result personnel were focused on the short term rather than the long term ‘about the immediate as opposed to the future’ (TD-2013). The links to the finding of Riege (2005) whereby people often focus on tasks that are more beneficial to them in the short term rather than long term knowledge sharing practices. This lack of resources had a knock on effect on the training of new personnel whereby;

‘You were put in a section and shadowed the person you were replacing, you were lucky if you got a few days but usually it was a day or 2. You were thrown in at the deep end (TD-2013).’

Within the Planning department, job shadowing is seen as central to training personnel due to the tacit nature of the knowledge base within the department. In the context of the merger and the speed at which departments are merging, explicitly documenting procedures is often undertaken post amalgamation thus relying heavily on tacit knowledge:

‘to allow the section to move…..[we had to] rely on the knowledge of the person they left behind to cover (TD-2013).’

While the retention of knowledge within organisations is a topic that has not been extensively covered within literature (Levy 2011). Within the context of this research, retention of knowledge is seen as a key issue. Due to the large range of cutback, particularly within the Planning department, a large knowledge base has disappeared. Coupled with the individual filing systems in place, it is very difficult to organise the documents that these people have
left behind. One of the important task within this process is to assess ‘what’ knowledge is to be retained (Levy 2011).

5.3 Structure / Culture
The research correlates with the findings of Riege (2005) whereby the traditionally compartmentalised structure of public sector organisations has created a ‘Silo’ effect with regard to KM. This view was shown within the research findings whereby due to the councils functional and departmentalized nature led to the creation of knowledge silos. This in turn resulted in departments often being ‘insular’ in nature.

‘we can be very insular at times and we tend to treat our departments as separate entities (TD-2013)’

‘You have different departments working under different government departments…… and don’t necessary talk to each other’ (DB-2013).

This organisational culture negatively impacts the motivation of personnel within the councils as the lack of horizontal communication results in personnel becoming defensive with regard to their responsibilities ‘that’s their job/that’s my job and I’m keeping responsibility for it’ (PB-Planning).

Despite the obvious lack of strategic approach towards KM within the councils, there was an element of effective Knowledge Sharing. Personnel relied on a variety of tools to aid knowledge transfer such as email, meetings and face to face discussions. There was a huge reliance on tacit knowledge, something that is recognised by management. This often manifested itself in the form of ‘go-to persons for certain tasks’.

5.4 KM Tools
The findings within this research illustrate that Limerick City and County Councils have the technical capabilities to implement KM. While email can often be seen as the main tool for transferring knowledge throughout an organisation, supporting technologies can also be used including: intranets, document management systems, information retrieval engines (Offsey 1997). However the primary barrier for the use of these tools is that there is a ‘Lack of structure and procedures within these tools’. As a result, personnel are not fully utilising the range of technologies available to them. This links to the findings of by O’Riordan (2005), whereby big infrastructure initiatives, such as the development or improvement of the Intranet site, frequently fail in their objective of promoting internal communication and knowledge sharing. The issues are seldom technical, rather the sites are not fulfilling their potential due to employees not using them. This was shown within the questionnaire
respondent’s views towards the limitations of the intranet focusses on both technical and non-technical issues. It was shown there were no measures put in place for the management of the intranet; ‘It never really took off and wasn't properly managed’ (DB-2013). This lack of management again linked to the lack of resources within the councils. Management of the intranet was seen as an internal rather than an external process:

‘You can assign somebody to manage the knowledge base for you but they have no idea what they are managing. The people who have enough experience and knowledge should manage the knowledge base are too busy’ (DB-2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non - technical</th>
<th>Technical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Inaccurate Information</td>
<td>• Inadequate Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Out of date information</td>
<td>• Complex document upload/retrieval/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of information</td>
<td>poor speed using intranet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of dedicated staff within</td>
<td>• Poor structure/ Not user friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>departments</td>
<td>• Regular update notifications should be</td>
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<td></td>
<td>sent to relevant personnel</td>
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</table>

Table 3: Barriers within the intranet

These limitations link with the work of intranet (Skok & Kalmanovitch 2005) whereby there is a possibility that if used improperly an intranet ‘may also transfer false knowledge, misinformation, and propaganda.’

There is a high reliance on the use of email as a primary method of knowledge transfer within both Limerick City and County councils, 45% and 48% respectively, with intranet being the second method of knowledge transfer. The high reliance on email may be seen as the cause of many of the limitations within the intranet with ambiguity surrounding ‘procedures for document management’ within the council. As a result, files are often transferred as attachments through email rather that links to the shared drive.

To successfully integrate a KM system into working practices requires the development of a taxonomy Kasvi et al (2003), This was not the case within the intranet as:

‘You need to know where it (the info) is, its not easily searchable’ (DB-2013)

The intranet can help connect people with information, and people with each other, but it is not the solution. These limitations can again be attributed to the limited recourses available to manage it:

‘It [intranet] never really took off and wasn't properly managed. You need to know where it (the info) is, its not easily searchable….. it was tough to get
time to do the urgent administrative stuff as opposed to going back and refreshing the intranet’. (DB-2013)

The author believes that the choice of KM tools within the councils are fit for purpose. However personnel are not using these tools to their full potential, therefore it is proposed that the councils should create a policy document with regard to the correct use of the technology available to it.
Conclusions

This research set out to examine how knowledge is managed within a local government setting and what barriers existed for the implementation of KM. As anticipated, the concept of KM has not filtered down from private to public sector organisations. Through analysis of the results, it can be shown that some of the KM barriers outlined by Riege (2005) were evident within this organisation with respect to individual, organisational and technological barriers.

Based on the findings from both questionnaire and semi-structured interview, it can be concluded that KM within the councils operates at a very informal level. Lack of resources is one of the primary barriers to KM within the councils. This barrier reflects the poor KM practices being utilised within the council to date. The organisation culture is supportive of KM, however the hierarchical nature of the councils has created ‘Knowledge Silos’ which limits knowledge transfer (Riege 2005). The councils also lack a formal and strategic approach to KM. KM systems such as the intranet and shared drive are not used to their full potential and as such are often seen to hinder effective knowledge transfer.

It is recommended that a formal KM strategy must be created in order to demonstrate the benefit of KM within the councils. The creation of a ‘Knowledge Champion’ or ‘Knowledge Manager’ would also benefit the councils as it would allow the formalising of KM practices that can become deeply rooting into the working practices within the various departments. The introduction of Communities of Practice would aid knowledge transfer especially with regard to knowledge retention. The creation of a policy document with regard to IT use would be of benefit as it would allow for the IT systems within the council to be exploited to their full potential.

The author believes that this research will help the councils to realise the benefit KM can bring and in turn prove to be a catalyst for the enhancement of current working practices in relation to KM.

6.1 Recommendations

In reviewing the research findings outline previously, the following is a summary of recommendations for improved Knowledge Management within the newly formed council.

- There is a need to develop a formal Knowledge Management strategy that will help the organisation in order to realise the benefits of Knowledge Management and improve current working practices. It is recommended that a range of Knowledge Management strategies be undertaken.
An ‘overarching’ strategy that encompasses the entire council

A detailed KM strategy developed to suit the needs of individual departments.

- It is recommended that a hybrid approach to Knowledge Management be undertaken encompassing both Codification and Personalisation. While Nohria & Hansen (1999) consider personalization (“people-to-people”) a knowledge management strategy opposed to codification (“people-to-document), it is believed a hybrid approach is appropriate in the context of the council. Codification should address the management of explicit knowledge such as best practice models and procedures while also addressing the legal requirements for documenting some practices (planning application/enforcements registers). Personalisation should address the management of tacit knowledge of the personnel within the council.

- The council should consider the creation of a ‘Knowledge Champion’ or ‘Knowledge Manager’ that would be responsible for the Knowledge Management activities within the organisation. Based on the findings of this research, this position should be created within each department with ‘people who have enough experience and knowledge should manage the knowledge base’. By utilising personnel ‘in the know’ will allow for the right knowledge to be managed effectively.

- The functionality of the council's current Knowledge Management systems needs to be addressed. Currently the tools are not being utilised to their full potential. It is recommended that the council create set protocols, in particular with regard to naming conventions and organising folders which will result in a shift from the individual approach that is being currently undertaken. This is particularly appropriate for the shared drive. Emails should use links to the shared drive instead of attachments. There should be a greater reliance on the use of technology where possible which will result in reduced dependence on paper. By undertaking this approach the council would be able to create, capture and share knowledge of their personnel in a more effectively.

- The council should consider the introduction of Communities of Practice which would lead to greater tacit knowledge transfer between personnel. This would be particularly important with the future merger of many more departments and the possibility of retirements as it allows personnel to share tacit knowledge that would
very often be lost due to the difficulty in explicitly documenting it. The overall cost would relate to time and would serve as a tool for greater organisational learning.

6.2 Limitations of the study

It is beneficial to outline the boundaries of this study to understand the scope of this research and to also identify perspectives that were not examined in this study. These limitations included methodological, perspective and time constraints.

The chosen methodology introduced some limitations to this study within both of the data collection phases. Within phase two the sample of personnel chosen for the questionnaire was large however the response rate was relatively small in comparison. Thus the findings cannot be seen an organisational wide approach to KM. However, they do represent an insight with respect to KM practices and barriers within the organisations. This served as a method of creating baselines with respect to KM practices.

This research adopted a managerial perspective; through the case study it examined KM through a management lens whereas KM encompasses a kaleidoscope of disciplines. This may lead to a skewed representation of organisational reality. However the author ensures the readers are clearly aware of this adopted perspective therefore it can also be argued that this cannot be seen as a major weakness.

The research was conducted over a short period of time; thus it is a snapshot of practices within the organisation. The research was conducted within the implementation stage of the merger therefore it can be recognised that KM practices within the councils would have evolved since. It can therefore be seen that area for research will have increased in size. Thus the findings are limited to perceptions of managers at a specific point in time.

6.3 Implications for further academic research

This study has highlighted a number of areas for further academic research. More efforts can also be conducted to enhance the awareness of KM within the public sector in particular the benefits of undertaking a KM approach. Research has shown that Public sector is falling behind private sector in relation to KM adoption.

This research focused on a multiple case study of KM within Water Services and Planning Dept. For future research it may be necessary to undertake a wider scope whereby a multiple case study approach, within all departments within the councils, could be undertaken. This will allow for a range of perspectives to be undertaken and allow for greater generalizability of results.
This research focussed on the KM internally within the councils. Future research should be extended to examine the external environment with respect to KM. Due to the public nature of the councils, it would be necessary to extent future research to the influence the external environment on the organisational culture within the councils. By examining both internal and external aspects will allow for implementation of initiatives that are in keeping with both internal and external environments.
Bibliography


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Appendices
Appendix A: Questionnaire

KM in Local Government

The following survey aims to assess the current perception/barriers to implementation and key requirements of personnel for KM within the Combined Limerick Council.

For the context of this survey KM is defined as:

"a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, and previously un-captured expertise and experience in individual workers."

Survey Contents:

14 Questions:

Q1-3: KM Strategy
Q4-5: KM Process
Q6: Knowledge Transfer Process (Existing Personnel)
Q7: Knowledge Transfer Process (New Personnel)
Q8: Knowledge Transfer Techniques
Q9: Knowledge Transfer Barriers
Q10: KM Tools
Q11: KM tools
Q12: Document Management
Q13: KM Improvement
Q14: Comments
### KM Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q1: People at all levels within the council have a general understanding of the concept of 'KM'</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Q2: There are well defined processes in place within the council for creation, capture, and acquisition of knowledge</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
<th>Q3: Transfer of knowledge would be more successful with the implementation of a KM Strategy.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>

### KM Process

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Q4: Recording and sharing knowledge is routine</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tr>
<th>Q5: All employees are co-operative and helpful when asked for information or advice</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>
Knowledge Transfer Process (Existing Personnel)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q6: Experienced personnel transfer their knowledge to new or less experienced personnel.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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If agree, this process is completed through which of the following:

- Written Communication: Reports and/or Documents through Email
- Written Communication: Reports and/or Documents through Intranet
- Verbal Communication: Telephone
- Verbal Communication: Face to Face
- Other (please state rationale in the following section)

If Other, please state the process in the following box

If disagree, what are the barriers to effective Knowledge Transfer within the Council:

- Trust Issues
- Motivation
- Risk of Misinterpretation
- Other (please state rationale in the following section)

If Other, please state the barrier in the following box
## Knowledge Transfer Process (New Personnel)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q7: New personnel transfer their knowledge to colleagues.</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

If agree, this process is completed through which of the following:

- [ ] Written Communication: Reports and/or Documents through Email
- [ ] Written Communication: Reports and/or Documents through Intranet
- [ ] Verbal Communication: Telephone
- [ ] Verbal Communication: Face to Face
- [ ] Other (please state rationale in the following section)

If Other, please state the process in the following box

If disagree, what are the barriers to effective Knowledge Transfer within the Council:

- [ ] Trust Issues
- [ ] Motivation
- [ ] Risk of Misinterpretation
- [ ] Other (please state rationale in the following section)

If Other, please state the process in the following box

---

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### Knowledge Transfer Techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q8: The use Post project appraisals/lessons learned would be beneficial to aid Knowledge Transfer within the Council</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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</table>

If agree, what are the perceived benefits of Post project appraisals/lessons learned?

Note: Please assign percentages to the following statements. Percentages can range from 0 to 100 while ensuring the total sums to 100. If no statements are applicable please assign 100 to the 'Other' statement.

- [ ] Cost Reduction
- [ ] Time Reduction
- [ ] Better Understanding of Problems/Issues within the Council
- [ ] Increased Productivity
- [ ] Other (please state rationale in the following section)

If Other, please state the benefit in the following box

If disagree/not sure, why do you believe that Post project appraisals/lessons learned are of little to no benefit to the Council?

Note: Please assign percentages to the following statements. Percentages can range from 0 to 100 while ensuring the total sums to 100. If no statements are applicable please assign 100 to the 'Other' statement.

- [ ] Motivation
- [ ] Time Issues
- [ ] Cost Issues
- [ ] Other (please state rationale in the following section)

If Other, please state the barrier in the following box
statements. Percentages can range from 0 to 100 while ensuring the total sums to 100. If no statements are applicable please assign 100 to the 'Other' statement.

______ Waste of Time  
______ Project already over schedule - why add more tame  
______ Personnel already moved to another Project  
______ Lessons learned from the project would be of no benefit to working practices  
______ Lessons learned would not be implemented into working practices  
______ Other (please state rationale in the following section)

If Other, please state the reason in the following box

Q9: Knowledge Transfer Barriers  
Please rank in order of most likely, 1 = most likely/ 7 = least likely

______ Trust  
______ Motivation  
______ Resistance to Change  
______ Retirements  
______ Personnel transferring to other departments  
______ Location  
______ Other

KM Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q10: Technology is a key enabler in ensuring that the right information is available to the right people at the right time</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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</table>
Q11: Assign percentages to the KM tools you use:

Note: Please assign percentages to the following statements. Percentages can range from 0 to 100 while ensuring the total sums to 100. If no statements are applicable please assign 100 to the ‘Other’ statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>Diary (paper/ electronic)</th>
<th>Electronic (Private Hard Drive)</th>
<th>Electronic (Shared Drive – Intranet)</th>
<th>Other (please state rationale in the following section)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If Other, please state the tool in the following box

Effective cataloguing and archiving procedures are in place for document management within the Intranet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q12: Effective cataloguing and archiving procedures are in place for document management within the council</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q12: Effective cataloguing and archiving procedures are in place for document management within the council</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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</table>

If agree/ not sure, are any of the following limitations evident within the Intranet

Note: Please assign percentages to the following statements. Percentages can range from 0 to 100 while ensuring the total sums to 100. If no statements are applicable please assign 100 to the ‘Other’ statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inaccurate Information</th>
<th>Out of date information</th>
<th>Inadequate Training for use of Intranet</th>
<th>Other (please state rationale in the following section)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
If Other, please state the limitation in the following box

______________________________________________________________

If disagree, what issues do you feel are the most evident? Note: Please assign percentages to the following statements. Percentages can range from 0 to 100 while ensuring the total sums to 100. If no statements are applicable please assign 100 to the 'Other' statement.

______ Improper Management of files within Intranet
______ Files not labeled correctly, differing naming conventions
______ No Strategy (manuals) in place with regard to the use of Intranet
______ Inadequate Training with regard to Intranet use
______ Information out of date
______ Other (please state rationale in the following section)

If Other, please state the reason in the following box

______________________________________________________________

Q13: KM Improvement (Please rank in order of importance, 1 = most important/7 = least important)

______ Shared Drive
______ Larger Email Capacity
______ Intranet Development
______ Alternative communication tools (blogs, instant messages)
______ Set naming convention
______ Other (please state rationale in the following section)

If Other, please state the item in the following box

______________________________________________________________

Q14: If there are any issues that you feel have not been addressed within this survey please comment in the box below. (if not please select the next button)

______________________________________________________________
Appendix B: Semi Structured Interviews (Questionnaire Results)

During the course of the interviews, the participants will be asked the following questions.

1. Name
2. Position
3. Previous Position (Limerick City or Limerick County Council)
4. How many years have you worked for Limerick City or Limerick County Council

The following questions will be split into 3 sections covering.

I. KM prior to the Merger
II. Managements approach towards KM
III. KM implementation within the merged council.

KM prior to the Merger

- What is your definition of Knowledge
- Do you understand the difference between tacit and explicit knowledge
- Was there a KM Strategy in place within Limerick City/ Limerick County Council prior to the merger?
  - If yes, what measures were in place to facilitate Knowledge Transfer
  - If no, what do you feel were the challenges for the integration of a KM Strategy within the council?
- What tools did you use to facilitate Knowledge Transfer between personnel?

Managements approach towards KM

- Do you feel there is a limited amount of senior management buy in with regard to KM within the council?
- With regard to KM Processes, is there collaboration between personnel and management in the creation of these processes?
- Do you feel that Management gives little attention to the knowledge/expertise of personnel, instead favouring set protocols/practices?

KM implementation within the merged council

- Do you feel that with the merger of the two councils is the ideal time for the creation of new KM Strategies/Practices?
- If the councils were not merging, do you feel that KM would be easier or more difficult to implement?
• The current change to the councils focuses on the introduction of services catalogues taking an end result viewpoint. Do you believe this is the correct way to approach this merger and does it tie in with the ideals of E-government (Improving government processes and the creation of an e-society by connecting citizens with government agencies)

• With regard to the range of KM tools which are available, which do you feel will of the greatest benefit, conversely, which do you feel will be of the least benefit? Examples:
  - Shared Drive
  - Intranet Development (Set naming convention)
  - Alternative communication tools (blogs, instant messages)
  - Group Meetings (lessons learned, post project appraisals)
  - Other

• Based on the results of the survey, the following statements were compiled.
  - There is a poor general understanding of KM
  - There are little defined processes in place within the council for creation, capture, and acquisition of knowledge
  - KM Strategy would be beneficial
  - Recording and sharing knowledge is not routine
  - Knowledge Transfer is hindered by motivation, trust and resistance to change issues.
  - Intranet would benefit from a strategy/procedures/better structure put in place

Do you feel that these results were expected or where there any issues that you felt would be more prevalent?
Appendix C: Case Study Interview Questions

KM definition

"KM is a discipline that promotes an integrated approach to identifying, capturing, evaluating, retrieving, and sharing all of an enterprise's information assets. These assets may include databases, documents, policies, procedures, and previously un-captured expertise and experience in individual workers."

With a purpose of ‘getting the right information to the right people at the right time’

The following questions will analyse the KM practices within the Planning Department. The questions will address the following aspects of KM:

- People
- Processes
- Technology

5. Was there a KM Strategy in place within Planning Department?
   a. If yes, what measures were in place to facilitate Knowledge Transfer?
   b. If no, what do you feel were the challenges for the integration of a KM Strategy within the council?

2. Do you feel that Management gives little attention to the knowledge/expertise of personnel, instead favouring set protocols/practices?

3. Based on the results of the survey, the following statements were compiled.
   - There is a poor general understanding of KM
   - There are little defined processes in place within the council for creation, capture, and acquisition of knowledge
   - KM Strategy would be beneficial
   - Recording and sharing knowledge is not routine
   - Knowledge Transfer is hindered by motivation, trust and resistance to change issues.
   - Intranet would benefit from a strategy/procedures/ better structure put in place

Do you feel that these results were expected or where there any issues that you felt would be more prevalent?
4. With regard to the range of KM tools which are available, which do you feel will of the greatest benefit, conversely, which do you feel will be of the least benefit in the context of the Planning Department? Examples:
   a. Shared Drive
   b. Intranet Development (Set naming convention)
   c. Alternative communication tools (blogs, instant messages)
   d. Group Meetings (lessons learned, post project appraisals)
   e. Other

5. Do you feel that knowledge retention (ie personnel leaving the department) will be an issue within the Planning Department in the context of this upcoming merger?

6. Consequently, with the introduction of new personnel as a result of the merger, have measures been put in place to throughout the department (ie new-existing/existing to new personnel).

7. Based on the current results, preliminary recommendations with regard to KM within the councils have been made.
   • Explicit Knowledge – Introduction of a revised intranet where by it is designed for the requirements of each department.
   • Tacit Knowledge – Introduction of Communities of Practice to allow for transfer of knowledge between personnel that share a common interest.

Do you feel that these recommendations have any bearing in the context of the Planning Department?