

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE
MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL
Held at ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PROSPECT HILL
Monday, 24th February 2025 at 11.00am

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr. M. Kinane
Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway

I LATHAIR FREISIN:

Baill: Comh. /Cllr. S. Broderick, I. Canning, J. Charity, D. Collins, D. Connolly, S. Cuniffe, T. Ó Curraoin, G. Donohue, P. Feeney, G. Finnerty, D. Geraghty, T. Grealish, A. Harney, M. Hoade, C. Keane, P. Keveney, D. Kelly, D. Killilea, P. Killilea, G. King, M. Lee, P. Mac an Iomaire, M. Maher, E. Mannion, J. McClearn, S. McHugh Ryan, M. McNamara, A. Reddington, O. Turner, S. Walsh and T. Welby.

Baill ar líne: Comh. /Cllr. M. Connolly, M. Leainde, K. McHugh Farag, Dr. E. F. Parsons, N. Thomas.

Oifigh: Mr. L. Conneally, Chief Executive, Mr. L. Hanrahan, Director of Services, Mr. U. Finn, Director of Services, Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services, Ms. K. O'Connor, Head of Finance, Mr. M. Owens, Director of Services, Ms. J. Carroll, Director of Services, Ms. J. Brann Meetings Administrator, Mr. M. O Donnchadha, Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge, Ms. H. Riordan, A/Staff Officer, Ms. L. O'Donnell, Assistant Staff Officer.

Thosnaigh an cruinniú leis an paidir.

The Elected Members that contested the recent Seanad elections were all congratulated. In particular, the newly elected members of the Seanad, Senators Curley, Murphy and to Senator Rabbitte. Congratulations were also extended to previous Members of Galway County Council Deputies Canney and Grealish on their appointments as Super Junior Ministers. Also, to Senator Kyne on being appointed as leader of the Seanad. The number of representatives in the Oireachtas from Galway was widely welcomed and hope was expressed that this representation would bring positive benefits to County Galway in the future.

The Cathaoirleach congratulated Director of Service Eileen Ruane and the library team on winning the 'Best Environmental / Ecological Project' in the (Local Authority Members Association) LAMA Community & Council Awards for their project 'Fish and Chips – Sustainably.' She also congratulated the other projects that were short listed for awards.

Ms. Ruane, Director of Services said that the winning project aimed at promoting community participation, social inclusion, and the protection of heritage and the environment. It adopted a multidisciplinary approach to cultivate and actively engage with enterprises, communities, voluntary sectors, third level institutes and the research community. Galway Libraries developed programming that encompassed 'Science from land to sea' as the driving theme for programme delivery with workshops, interactive sessions, coding and VR experiences for children of all ages on the importance of marine life, biodiversity and the impact of pollution.

Three other projects were shortlisted in separate categories at the awards. Leenane Development Association was shortlisted in the 'Collaboration and Leadership' category for the key role it has played in the development of the age-friendly Leenane Community Park, which features accessible walkways on a disused plot overlooking Killary Harbour. Shortlisted in the 'Best Mental Health' category, Positive Ageing Week Local Heroes is a joint initiative of Galway City and County Councils, COPE Galway, Galway City Partnership, Galway Rural Development and Galway Libraries. Portumna-based Solar Structures was shortlisted in the 'Best Micro Start-up' category for its work to develop and implement innovative solutions for clients

who want to install solar panels which do not fit a 'standard solution' template. The company commenced trading in 2022 following receipt of training, funding and business supports from LEO Galway. The company has since created 6 fulltime and 1 part time positions and plans further growth in the coming years.

ITEM NO.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS

4508

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Keaveney the minutes of the Monthly Plenary Meeting held on 27th January 2025 were **AGREED**.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The Membership of the Joint Local Authority Working Group for the Joint Retail Strategy was requested. It was asked if Elected Members could sit on the Working group and if Expressions of Interest were being sought for membership of it. Also, if a draft strategy document is available.
- An update was sought on the ongoing repairs to electricity connections following storm Éowyn.
- It was suggested that a 5-to-10-year plan is required to address the impact of roadside trees on overhead wires. The responsibility for this cannot lie with landowners.
- If the damaged caused by Storm Éowyn will impact the delivery of the Roads Programme.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Hanrahan:

- The Joint Local Authority Working Group for the Joint Retail Strategy of Galway City and County Councils comprises of the relevant Directors from the two Councils, Senior Planners and Consultants. The group will make a presentation to the Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) before addressing the full Council at plenary.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- The Electricity Supply Board (ESB) are not within the remit of the Council. Once all powers are restored it would be expected that ESB would return to normal operations. A national review following the storm is expected. The Council will feed into the review and implement the findings following it.
- The Surface Dressing Programme will be back before the Municipal Districts (MDs) next week for approval. An update is included in the Management Report. An allocation of €43m was received this year, which is an almost 10% increase on last year. The funding is not enough to address all 7,000km of roads in County Galway. It will be spent on high traffic roads in the County.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Trees damaged during storm Éowyn were damaged further by winds last weekend. It was asked if the hedge cutting season could be extended past March 1st.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- The responsibility of roadside trees lies with the landowner. The Council can step in where there is a safety issue, works of this nature will be funded by the Storm Relief Fund.
- Local Authorities are governed by the same rules as the public on the prohibition of cutting vegetation during nesting season.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- The Council will meet with Coillte.
- The distance between planted areas and critical infrastructure is not sufficient and separation distances will need to be addressed at national level.
- The Council will also meet with ESB. If the Members have any particular matters of concern, he invited them to inform him and he will bring them to the attention of the ESB.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- An up-to-date assessment of damaged trees was requested, due to the high winds that have occurred since Storm Éowyn.
- It is essential that Ballinasloe Water Treatment Plant is supplied with a generator and that a changeover switch be installed.
- Frustration at the lack of communication from Eir was expressed.
- It was asked how matters raised in the Chamber are communicated to the relevant Government Departments.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- Agreed that Ballinasloe and Luimnagh Water Treatment Plants require generators. This will be raised at the Councils next meeting with Uisce Éireann.
- Eir have stated that it will be 3 weeks before broadband services are restored to the entire County.
- Matters that are raised in the Chamber are brought to the attention of the relevant departments. Concerns are communicated to Department Inspectors at their visits to the Council. These visits occur 3 to 4 times a year. The County and City Management Association (CCMA) is another avenue for communication. Political channels should also be utilised.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- The complications of trees located at the roadside is a national issue. To deal comprehensively with the issue, a specific funding stream and new policies are required at a national level. It is not in the remit or budget capabilities of the Council to address the issue. However, the Council will take action in urgent cases.
- The Executive are actively seeking a meeting with Uisce Éireann. In addition to the compliance issues, Uisce Éireann must also be called on to service lands to facilitate growth in towns and villages.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- It was requested that Uisce Éireann and Eir be invited to a plenary meeting of the Council.
- It was asked that a county wide hedge cutting policy be introduced to ensure consistency in the operations between the MDs.

The County Secretary read the following response from Eir that was received on foot of a request from the Members that Eir attend a Plenary Council meeting. The response had been circulated to the Members in the February correspondence:

'I wish to acknowledge the letter dated January 6th and the invitation to attend a plenary monthly meeting of Galway County Council.

eir is a private company but recognises the important role elected local authority representatives play in the community. To that end eir has a channel where councillors can raise specific issues, including escalations, through the mailbox oireachtas@eir.ie. We suggest councillors utilise this channel in the first to address any customer escalations they have.

In addition, Government and Local authority management have established state-funded communication channels between local authorities and telecommunications companies via the local broadband officer network for broader policy or infrastructural issues.

If members have other questions, can I please suggest they be collated and sent directly to me. I will direct them to the relevant areas of eir and we will provide a response in writing in due course.'

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The importance of a national review following Storm Éowyn was emphasised. The shortcomings identified from the review will help the Council to prepare for future extreme weather events.

- The Council have a responsibility to ensure that all necessary structures and facilities are in place in the County.
- The lack of connectivity for people reliant on personal alarms is concerning.
- It was raised that Group Water Schemes are unable to acquire generators as they are not within Uisce Éireann.
- The Council need to conduct their own review following the storm.
- It was asked if the Council had an estimated cost for the storm clean up.
- It was enquired if the Council can apply for funding to address overhanging trees.
- If a time extension past 1st March could be introduced for those burning vegetation following the storm.
- If the Community Hubs will stay in place until all services have been restored.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- The Council are carrying out their own review of Storm Éowyn. It will incorporate the pre-event and response to the event. It will examine the re-opening of roads, the support to other agencies and establishment of community hubs.
- A Regional Meeting to review Storm Éowyn response will be held on 11th April. The Regional Response Team, Health Service Executive (HSE), Gardaí, Emergency Services, Mayo, Roscommon and both City and County Councils will be in attendance.
- Several weather warnings occurred over the winter period. Not every weather event will impact trees. We require protocols for all possible scenarios.
- It is understood that a funding stream for the storm response will be provided by the Department.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- The Crisis Management Team was launched without delay and within the Council no resource was spared in dealing with the Storm clean-up.

- County Galway established the highest number of Community Hubs in the Country.
- Facilities are still available in the Council libraries for those still without utilities.
- The cost of these efforts will be met by the Exchequer.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The response received from Eir to the invitation to attend plenary meeting is disappointing.
- The role of National Broadband Ireland (NBI) was queried.
- The Membership of the Regional Crisis Group was also queried. It was asked if there is political representation on it and if the minutes from the meeting were available.
- If there is a mechanism for Elected Members to make inputs into the review on the storm.
- Phone bills are still being issued to those that did not have service following the storm.
- If those that purchased generators used in community hubs could recoup the costs.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- Thanked the Elected Members for the instrumental role they played following Storm Éowyn. This allowed the Executive to prioritise work in the immediate aftermath and in the time since.
- The Council's draft report of the storm response will be circulated to the Members for their inputs.
- The minutes from the Crisis Management Team meetings will be shared with Cllr. Charity and any other Members that wish to receive them.
- The central messages from the Crisis Management Team were circulated by me to the Members as they arose.
- The financial costs of the storm and the aftermath are currently being compiled. The longer-term recovery costs will take time to be determined.

- When information on burning of vegetation following the storm is received it will be circulated to the Members.

ITEM NO.2 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4509

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Comh. Mac An Iomaire the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group held on 20th January 2025 were **NOTED**.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Parsons **SECONDED** by Cllr. Thomas the Draft minutes of the Climate Action & Biodiversity Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 24th and 30th April 2024 were **NOTED**.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- If there has been any further advancement with rolling out Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging points.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- A significant roll out of EV Charging Points has been carried out by the private sector. Donegal County Council are the lead authority for the roll out of EV Charging Points by Local Authorities. The towns of Ballinasloe and Oughterard are currently being examined.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Charity the Draft minutes of the Planning, Environment, Agriculture & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 30th April 2024 were **NOTED**.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Geraghty **SECONDED** by Cllr. Collins the Draft minutes of the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 24th May 2024 were **NOTED**.

It was agreed by the Members, following recommendation from the Corporate Policy Group that Galway County Council would hold a Civic Reception to honour CLG Carraroe All-Ireland Club JFC Final Winners after the March plenary meeting.

ITEM NO.3 TO CONSIDER REPORT UNDER SECTION 183 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 TO DISPOSE OF 0.0053 HECTARES OF LAND AT LOUGHCURRA NORTH, KINVARA, CO. GALWAY. **4510**

Statutory Notice issued in accordance with Section 183(1)(b) and report dated 7th February 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. P. Killilea **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher it was **AGREED** to dispose of land at Loughcurra North, Kinvara, Co. Galway in accordance with the Statutory Notice dated 7th February 2025.

ITEM NO. 4 TO CONSIDER AND IF DEEMED APPROPRIATE ADOPT THE WEST REGIONAL HOMELESS ACTION PLAN 2025 – 2027. **4511**

The Draft plan was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Mannion it was **AGREED** to adopt the West Regional Homeless Action Plan 2025-2027.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The short timeframe to consider the plan was queried.
- Lack of clear funding, details addressing mental health issues and general oversight of the plan was raised.
- Representations from Members on the action plan have previously been submitted.
- If increasing the powers of Housing Liaison Officers could be considered.
- The lack of information received by Elected Members on the Compulsory Purchase Order Activation Programme was raised. It was said that the

Elected Members could have a role to play in the identification of potential properties under the scheme.

- Difficulties in the Notice to Quits and Tenants-in-situ schemes were raised.
- If rent reviews could happen more frequently. This would avoid arrears accumulating due to changes in households' circumstances.
- The Safe Home Scheme has not been addressed in the Action Plan. It will be considered at the Housing SPC meeting in May.
- The inclusion of domestic violence in the plan was welcomed.
- Emergency accommodation should be provided in areas outside of Galway City.
- There is an urgent need for housing in Moycullen and Oughterard.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Owens:

- The Action Plan will cover the administrative areas of Galway City and County Councils and Mayo and Roscommon County Councils. Galway City Council is the lead authority. Galway City Council liaise with the Department on behalf of the regional group on proposals and funding.
- The plan was brought to the Housing SPC in advance of this meeting.
- The time frame for bringing the plan before the Members was a result of the number of authorities and level of collaboration involved.
- The submissions submitted by Cllrs. McNamara and Donohue were considered at SPC.
- The Galway County Council Homeless Action Plan will be on the agenda for the May SPC meeting and will be brought back before plenary in the second half of the year.
- While Members cannot change national policy they can seek to influence it.
- Mental health considerations in the plan are under the remit of the Health Service Executive (HSE). He is happy to liaise with the HSE on the Galway County Council's own Action Plan.
- The Housing SPC will receive an update on the CPO Activation Programme at the May meeting. He undertook to circulate the information to the Members and include an update in the Management Report.

- The Data Protection Officer has stated that the CPO Activation Programme contains sensitive information. This restricts the information that can be circulated in relation to the specific properties and ownership at particular stages of the process.
- The operational criteria of the Tenant-in-Situ Scheme may change. Clarification is to be issued by the Department. The scheme is currently on hold.
- A rent review for Local Authority and Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) tenants has commenced. Where changes in household income are found, the rent calculation will be backdated. If arrears occur, then engagement will take place with tenants and a payment plan put in place. Applications may be reviewed in hardship cases.
- Emergency accommodation is managed on behalf of Galway City and County Councils by COPE Galway. The accommodation and supports offered by COPE are primarily based in Galway City.
- Community based housing is being extended, including for youth community based housing.
- The Management Report outlines the stage 1 funding approval for supported accommodation at Vicar Street, Tuam and Cold Weather Response Unit. It is envisaged that this model will be rolled out to other areas of the County in the context of supporting families experiencing homelessness.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- If the Council will write to the Minister requesting that the Tenant-in-Situ Scheme be continued.
- If the Safe Home Ireland programme will be supported in every Municipal District.
- The number of downsizing requests received by the Council from Local Authority tenants was requested.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- Committed to writing to the Minister to request the continuance of the Tenant-in-Situ Scheme.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Owens:

- He will revert with the number of transfer applications include tenants wishing to downsize.
- The proposal in relation to Safe Home Ireland has been deferred until the May meeting of the Housing SPC. There are currently 13 applications on hand. He will circulate the report to all Elected Members.
- He acknowledged the benefit of the Tenant-in-Situ Scheme continuing.
- There is a commitment to Community Based Housing in the Action Plan.
- The Department have committed to funding 90% of the costs of an additional 2 members of staff to the Homeless team.

ITEM NO. 5 FILLING OF CASUAL VACANCY AS THE CHAIRPERSON ON THE CLIMATE ACTION, BIODIVERSITY & HERITAGE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE **4512**

Report dated 11th February 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Lee it was **AGREED** to appoint Cllr. Canning as the Chairperson on the Climate Action, Biodiversity & Heritage Strategic Policy Committee.

ITEM NO.6 TO CONSIDER AND IF DEEMED APPROPRIATE AUTHORISE THE ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 142(5A) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED). **4513**

Report dated 14th February 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. McClearn it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllr. Maher to attend LAMA Spiring Training Seminar at The Kilford Arms Hotel, Kilkenny on 30th & 31st January 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. McClearn it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllr. Maher to attend Association of Irish Regions annual Training Seminar 2025 at Radisson Blu Hotel, Athlone on 5th & 6th February 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McClearn **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. Welby, Turner, McClearn and Comh. Ó Curraoin to attend AILG February Training Module 'An Overview of Wind Energy: Contribution to Economy, Climate Action and Future Potential' at Fairways Hotel, Dundalk on 20th February 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McClearn **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllr. Maher to attend AILG February Training Module 'An Overview of Wind Energy: Contribution to Economy, Climate Action and Future Potential' at Newpark Hotel, Kilkenny on 22nd February 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. McHugh Ryan it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. Turner, McClearn and Comh. Ó Curraoin to attend AILG March Training Module 'Embracing Equality – Cultivating Inclusive Local Communities at Clayton Hotel, Galway on 22nd March 2025.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Lee it was **AGREED** to authorise Comh. Ó Curraoin to attend AILG Annual Training Conference at Limerick Strand Hotel, Limerick on 2nd & 3rd April 2025.

**ITEM NO.7 TO NOTE THE SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF CONFERENCES
ATTENDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 142 (5f) OF THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED).** **4514**

Report dated 14th February 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.
On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. McClearn the Summary of Proceedings at conferences attended were **NOTED**.

**ITEM NO. 8 TO CONSIDER START TIME FOR THE MARCH 2025 PLENARY
MEETING.** **4515**

The Cathaoirleach informed the meeting that a start time of 1pm for the March plenary meeting was proposed at the February Corporate Policy Group. This is recommended as a Civic Reception is being held that evening.

A discussion took place on a proposal to delay the start of all plenary meetings until 2pm, for all plenary meetings up until the Annual General Meeting.

The County Secretary informed the meeting that a change in starting time for plenary meetings should be channeled through the Corporate Policy Group and will require a change in Standing Orders.

It was agreed that the proposal would be considered at Corporate Policy Group.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Mannion **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher it was **AGREED** to hold the March Plenary Meeting at 1:00pm.

**ITEM NO. 9 TO CONSIDER THE MANAGEMENT REPORT – FEBRUARY 2025 IN
ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 136(2) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001
(AS AMENDED).** **4516**

Report dated 20th February 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

The Management Report – February 2025, in accordance with Section 136(2) of the Local Government Act 2001 (As Amended) was **NOTED**.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The installation of the bus shelter in Headford was welcomed.
- The planning approval rate of 83% was praised.
- Can the Council suspend enforcement notices on modular homes until the proposed legislation comes into force.
- It was asked how many applications were received for the advertised lifeguard positions.
- If the income received from the increase of the Local Property Tax could be used to extend the days and hours of lifeguards on duty, especially at Connemara beaches.
- Will the acquisition of 2 salt spreaders increase the number of roads that will be treated during the winter.
- What the current waiting time for pre-planning meetings is.
- Is the deadline of 1st April for applications to apply for exemptions from the Residential Zoned Land Tax being promoted.
- The purchase by the Council from the HSE of 'Grove House' in Gort was welcomed.
- If Value Added Tax (VAT) could be claimed back from works granted under the Croi Conaithe Vacant Property Refurbishment Grant. This would be an incentive for people to renovate vacant homes.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Owens:

- An initial site visit to 'Grove House' has taken place and the feasibility of the property and associated site for the development of social housing is currently being assessed.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Ms. Ruane:

- She will revert to Cllr. Mannion with the number of applications received for lifeguard positions.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- The 2 new salt spreaders replaced old vehicles. They have a greater range and effectiveness than the older vehicles that they replaced.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Hanrahan:

- The deadline for applications on the Residential Zoned Land Tax is advertised on the Council website.
- There is no delay in obtaining a pre-planning meeting. Meetings can be scheduled either on Teams or in person and will occur within 2-4 weeks.
- Enforcement files cannot be paused in anticipation of new legislation regulating the installation of modular homes being received.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- Legislation has not been issued regarding permissions on the installation of modular homes. Considerations such as residential amenities and wastewater treatment will need to be taken into account. When guidance is received from the Department it will be conveyed to the Members.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The expected legislation on modular homes was welcomed. It will help people remain in their communities, those that wish to downsize and those that wish to build their own homes.
- It was asked if the Department have issued any details on the proposed modular home legislation.
- Is the County Development Plan due to be reviewed.
- If outdoor staff are being recruited in the Ballinasloe Municipal District.
- Development in North Galway is hampered by the lack of infrastructure from Uisce Éireann.
- The community based residential facility in Athenry was welcomed. It was asked if this model will be replicated in other housing developments.

- An update was sought on the Headford Transport Plan.
- Stage payments for Croi Conaithe Scheme were welcomed.
- If the Executive would consider using contractors to deal with repairs after events such as the recent storm Éowyn.
- The procedure for excluding land from the Zoned Residential Land Tax was asked.
- The progress on the Safe Routes to School works at St. Pauls school in Oughterard was welcomed.
- If the 2021 circular was still governing the affordable housing scheme. The circular is severely limiting the delivery of the scheme in County Galway.
- If there are plans to re-examine the potential for housing in Nan Burkes field in Oughterard.
- The preparation of a masterplan for the Tuam Station Quarter was welcomed.
- A timeline for the delivery of accommodation at Vicar Street, Tuam was requested.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Ms. Ruane:

- Outdoor staff are being recruited in line with the Strategic Workforce Plan. Human Resources are working with Director of Services Mr. Finn.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Hanrahan:

- Landowners may apply to have their land either included or excluded from the Residential Zoned Land Tax. The process for submissions is outlined on the Council website. The e-mail contact is rzlt@galwaycoco.ie.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Owens:

- The Part 8 proposal for social housing developments in Athenry will be lodged shortly. It will be brought before the Athenry Municipal District (MD). It is due to commence to site in quarter 2 2024. Expressions of Interest have been

sought from potential service providers. The Brothers of Charity have been selected as the approved service provided for the supported housing element.

- Preliminary housing repairs following the storm have been carried out, however further works are required. A tender process will be required for the completion of some of the outstanding repairs.
- Applications for affordable housing in Baile Chláir opened this morning with 112 applications received by 12.30pm.
- He confirmed that the 2021 circular continues to govern and determine the level of subsidy received for affordable housing. The department have indicated that proposed schemes will be assessed on an individual basis.
- An expression of interest was lodged to develop the Nan Burke's site, however the successful Approved Housing Body deemed that the scheme is not viable. It is intended for Galway County Council to advance the development of the R1 zoned lands by way of a direct build project.
- The land in Moycullen is zoned R1. It is intended to advance the development of the R1 lands.
- The Cold Weather Response unit at Vicar St., Tuam has an expected delivery date of 2027.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- Data is currently being collated for the Headford Traffic Management Plan.
- He will discuss the timing of the traffic lights in Headford after the meeting.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- Affordable housing should be provided in all parts of the County and not restricted to the Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) area.
- The review of the County Development Plan will commence once the new Planning & Development Act comes into force and the National Planning Framework is approved by the Government.
- He clarified that backland development is different to the proposed modular homes legislation. A policy for backland filling on an existing site is not

required. Backyard development policies will be required in order to facilitate modular homes.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- It was asked if any part of County Galway qualifies for funding for affordable housing due to the current densities outlined in the 2021 circular.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Owens:

- Garraun could possibly qualify for funding for affordable housing under the required density levels.

ITEM NO. 10 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS & CORRESPONDENCE. 4517

The following items of correspondence which were published on the extranet prior to the meeting were **NOTED**:

- Letter dated 05.02.25 from Roscommon County Council – Resolution – Powerlines in Forestry.
- Letter dated 06.01.2025 to Open Eir requesting them to attend a Plenary Meeting of Galway County Council.
- Email dated 11.02.25 from Paul Callaghan Eir Public affairs – Reply to letter dated 06.01.2025
- Letter dated 11.02.25 from Sligo County Council – Resolution – Desist from increasing VAT rate on Electricity costs.
- Letter dated 11.02.25 from Sligo County Council – Resolution – Abolish plans to introduce further carbon tax.
- Letter dated 11.02.25 from Sligo County Council – Resolution – reinstate tenant in situ scheme.
- Letter dated 11.02.25 from Sligo County Council – Resolution – Implement an eviction ban.

- Letter dated 11.02.25 from Sligo County Council – Resolution – Awareness campaign to highlight dangers of Vaping.
- Letter dated 13.02.25 from South Dublin County Council - Resolution – Initiative for a Non Proliferation Treaty.
- Letter dated 17.02.25 from Roscommon County Council – Resolution – Incentive for Landowners to move Trees from Roadside.
- Letter dated 17.02.25 from Roscommon County Council – Resolution – Frontline Service access to GOV NE.
- Letter dated 17.02.25 from Roscommon County Council – Resolution – Extra Exam time for students with Dyslexia Dyscalculia.
- Mayors for Peace News Flash January 2025.

The Chief Executive reminded the Members of their obligations to submit their Annual Declarations by 28th February 2025, in accordance with Part 15 of the Local Government Act 2001 as amended.

ITEM 11. QUESTION

4518

Cllr. Donohue submitted the following Question prior to the meeting:

'To ask the Chief Executive in collaboration with Irish Water to put in place a Fire Hydrant mapping system for Galway and City County. Note. It has been brought to my attention that Fire Crews have no maps of Fire Hydrants and in the case of emergency they cannot identify same. Also, some are tarred over not exposed after tarring.'

The following reply issued:

Thank you for raising this important matter regarding fire hydrant mapping and accessibility in Galway City and County. I have consulted with the Chief Fire Officer on this issue, and I am pleased to provide the following information. A comprehensive map layer of all Irish Water hydrants is already available to all fire crews in County Galway. This map layer is accessible through the National Unified

Risk Operating Platform (NUROP), which is a centralised system used by fire services nationwide.

All station officers and fire crews in Galway City & County Fire Service have been granted access to NUROP and have been trained on how to locate and use the hydrant map layers thus ensuring that fire crews can quickly identify hydrant locations during emergencies.

The Fire Service conducts regular training exercises, hydrant testing, and pre-fire planning activities. During these exercises, if any hydrants are found to be tarred over, damaged, or otherwise inaccessible, the issue is reported to the Roads Department for investigation. At present, the Fire Service does not have any specific information regarding hydrants that are currently tarred over. However, if any such instances are brought to our attention, we will ensure they are investigated and addressed. Members of the public or elected representatives can report any concerns about hydrant accessibility to the Roads Department at Roads@galwaycoco.ie.

ITEM 12. NOTICE OF MOTION

4519

Cllr. Reddington submitted the following Notice of Motion prior to the meeting:

'That Galway County Council invites a representative from the ESB to attend our next plenary council meeting to discuss the ESB's plan to "future-proof Ireland's energy grid and adapt to the challenges of climate change.'

The above motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Reddington **SECONDED** by Cllr. Keaveney and **AGREED**.

ITEM 13. NOTICE OF MOTION

4520

Cllr. Donohue submitted the following Notice of Motion prior to the meeting:

'To ask the Chief Executive will he put in place chainsaw training for the Galway County and City Fire Crew as a matter of urgency.'

Note: It has come to my attention that Fire Crew are not trained on chainsaw handling, and if a tree falls on a road or a car the Fire Crew do not have the training or tools to tend to same.'

The following reply issued:

It is the policy of Galway County Council that our fire service personnel do not carry or operate chainsaws. Our fire service is highly trained and well-equipped to respond to a wide range of emergency situations including fires, chemical incidents and road traffic collisions.

The decision not to equip fire personnel with chainsaws is based on a detailed Activity Risk Assessment (Reference No. R008), which has identified chainsaw use as a high-risk activity, particularly in emergency situations where conditions may be hazardous such as darkness and severe weather. Chainsaw operations require specialised training, appropriate PPE, and ongoing refresher courses to ensure safe use. For this reason, a smaller number of roads operational personnel have been trained and equipped for such tasks.

In the event of a fallen tree on a vehicle that the fire service needs removed with the assistance of a chainsaw, roads personnel, who are on 24/7 call-out, will provide support, using not only chainsaws but also additional equipment such as JCBs where necessary.

In cases where roads are obstructed, diversions will be put in place until the roads crews can clear the tree under safe conditions.

Given these established procedures and considering the significant risks involved in chainsaw operations, Galway County Council does not deem it necessary or appropriate to introduce chainsaws for fire service personnel at this time.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Have any Council General Operatives undertaken this training.
- Chainsaws should be viewed as a lethal weapon.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- The Council provide extensive training for chain saw use.

ITEM 14. NOTICE OF MOTION

4521

Cllr. Harney submitted the following Notice of Motion prior to the meeting:

'That Galway County Council invites a representative from the EIR to attend our next plenary council meeting to discuss the EIR's plan to future-proof it's network to help it adapt to the challenges of climate change and ensure that critical customers are protected to the greatest extent possible.'

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The response from Eir to the previous invitation to attend a plenary meeting of the Council was disappointing. Eir are asking for the public to report faults. They need a better system to detect issues.

The above motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Harney **SECONDED** by Cllr. McClearn and **AGREED**.

ITEM NO. 15 CATHAOIRLEACH'S BUSINESS

4522

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Keaveney **SECONDED** by Cllr. Harney and **AGREED**:

'I will propose that Irish Water officials be brought to our next plenary meeting to address their dealings with the aftermath of Storm Éowyn.'

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. D. Connolly **SECONDED** by Cllr. McNamara and **AGREED**:

'I propose that Galway County Council calls on the Minister of Housing & Local Government to afford Galway County Council the ability to proceed without any added restructuring criteria in the Tenant in Situ Scheme for 2025. This should allow Galway County Council the ability to proceed as a matter of urgency and to allow sufficient applications to be considered.'

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. McNamara **SECONDED** by Cllr. D. Connolly:

'To give Housing Liaison Officers discretionary powers when deemed appropriate in the allocation of housing as local situations and circumstances must be taken into account and better outcomes would be arrived at in some circumstances.'

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- An agreed Scheme of Letting Priorities is already in place.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Owens:

- Social Housing tenancies are allocated in accordance with the approved Housing Allocation Scheme.
- Housing Liaison Officers (HLO) generate a short list and make recommendations for tenancies. Garda background checks are carried out. The HLO is an integral part of the process, they initiate and make recommendations for tenancy allocations, with input from the Tenancy and Estate Management Unit and other staff as appropriate to inform a final recommendation.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- HLOs are at the cold face of housing and are the first point of contact. They should have greater powers in making the tenancy decisions.
- Long term housing applicants maybe at a disadvantage if more discretion was afforded to the HLOs.
- The allocation scheme as it stands prevents favouritism. The allocation process must be fully transparent.
- The HLOs on the ground have an insight into the background of housing applicants.
- The Resolution should be discussed at Housing SPC level before plenary.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- Any amendments to the Scheme of Letting Priorities should be first considered at SPC level.

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. McNamara **SECONDED** by Cllr. D. Connolly:

‘To provide careworkers with a parking pass to be utilised in the delivery of their duties.

Parking and paying for parking is an unnecessary burden on home care workers and providing a parking disc would be one way to alleviate this additional cost for low paid workers.’

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- Advised that it would be more prudent to submit notices of motion 10 days in advance of meetings, as per Standing Orders. This will allow a considered response to be issued.
- The granting of parking permits is governed by byelaws.

- He suggested that it is a matter that could be considered at the Physical Development, Fire & Emergency Services, Climate Change SPC meeting in March.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Thanks and warm wishes were expressed to Ms. Jackie Carroll, Director of Services at her last plenary meeting of Galway County Council.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- Thanked Ms. Jackie Carroll on behalf of the Executive team and wished her well in her new post in Wexford.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Ms Carroll:

- Thanked the Members for their warm wishes, kind words and the help and assistance she received from the Members during her time at Galway County Council. The Executive Team have been very supportive. The Council is very forward thinking.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- If the Council could contact Merlin Park Hospital regarding the lack of parking at the hospital.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- Issues relating to Merlin Park Hospital should be directed through the Regional Health Forum.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Cllr. Mannion undertook to raise the issue of parking at Merlin Park Hospital at the Regional Health Forum meeting.

The Cathaoirleach informed the meeting that herself and the Chief Executive have been invited to New York to attend the St. Patricks Day Parade and also to business meetings with Dexcom in San Diego. The trip and will afford the opportunity to present the strategic economic opportunities that County Galway has to offer. The Chief Executive outlined that it is his intention during this trip to connect with the diaspora and business communities, the Industrial Development Agency (IDA), Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland in America, to highlight to them the business and tourism opportunities County Galway has to offer.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The trip to America by the Chief Executive and Cathaoirleach will be a very worthwhile trip. We need to sell what Galway has to offer to the rest of the world.
- It is important to continue to forge links and encourage other companies to follow Dexcom to Galway.

The Cathaoirleach reminded Members that a Seachtain na Gaeilge event will take place after the plenary meeting in the foyer.

ITEM NO. 16 VOTES OF SYMPATHY / CONGRATULATIONS

4523

A resolution of sympathy was extended to the following:

- Margaret Coyne & family, Letterbrickaun, Leenane, Co. Galway
- Sean & Anne Ruane, Circular Road, Gort, Co. Galway
- John Flaherty, Cussaun, Athenry, Co. Galway.
- Mattie Hynes, Waterview, Turloughmore, Co. Galway

Chriochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.

Submitted, Signed and Approved

Cathaoirleach: Martina Kinane

Date: 24/March/2025

