

## **COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE**

### **Ceantar Bardasach Chonamara** **Municipal District of Conamara**

#### **Minutes of the Meeting of the Municipal District of Conamara held at the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae, Galway on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2015 @ 2.30 p.m**

#### **I LATHAIR:**

##### **Baill:**

Cllrs. E. Mannion Cathaoirleach ,S. Walsh, T. Welby, S. Ó Tuairisg, N. Thomas, S. Ó Cualáin, T Ó Cuarraoin, T. Healy, N. Byrne.

##### **Oifigigh:**

C. McConnell A/Director of Services  
B. Barrett, A.O Community & Enterprise.  
P.Breathnach S.E.E Conamara  
K. Finn, Area Engineer S. Conamara  
T. J Redmond Area Engineer N. Conamara  
S. Groarke, Meeting Administrator.

##### Apologies:

G. Mullarkey, Head of Finance

#### **Minutes of the Meeting held on the 6-11-2015**

**CMD 15054**

The adoption of the Minutes of the meeting held on the 6-11-2015 was proposed by Cllr. S. Walsh and seconded by Comh. T. O'Curraoin.

#### **Matters arising from the Minutes**

Comh. S. O'Tuairisg requested further clarification in regard to the proposed works for Ceibh Inis Oirr and was advised by K. Finn that he would refer his query to L. Gavin DOS. In response to a query from Comh. O' Cualáin –K. Finn confirmed that a recent meeting took place between the Council and the Udarás.

#### **To Approve the Statement in respect of the Galway County Local Economic and Community Plan ( LECP ) 2016-2021**

**CMD 15055**

The presentation was made by Catherine McConnell and Brian Barrett. Ms. McConnell advised that local authorities were given an enhanced role in economic and community development as part of the recent reform of local government which culminated in the

Local Government Reform Act 2014. This required each local Authority to make a 6 year Local Economic and Community Plan ( LECP ) for its functional area for 2016-2021. She stated that the purpose of the plan was to identify and implement actions to strengthen and develop the economic and community dimensions of the County. The plan consists of 2 elements:

- An economic element-to be developed by the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee ( SPC )
- A community element-to be developed by the Local Community Development Committee ( LCDC )

She advised that the Council has prepared the 2 elements in an integrated manner which can be adopted as a unified plan. This single, integrated economic and community plan will provide the basis for a more coherent, streamlined and coordinated approach to service planning and delivery locally. She explained that an Advisory Steering Group representing the Economic Development and Enterprise SPC and the LCDC was responsible for overseeing the preparation of the LECP. The preparation of the plan involved;

- Preparation of a socio-economic profile of the County
- Extensive consultation with community interests and relevant stakeholders.
- Review of relevant strategies and plans.

She stated that a draft LECP has now been completed and circulated and this has been approved by the Advisory Steering Group, the Economic Development and Enterprise SPC and the Galway County LCDC- it is envisaged that a final draft of the LECP will be on the Agenda for adoption in regard to the January 2016 meeting of the Council. She explained that the process also requires that each Municipal District considers the LECP and agree, by way of adopted Statement, that the economic and community elements of the Plan are consistent with the following.

1. The core strategy and objectives of the County Development Plan.
2. Any regional spatial and economic strategy or as appropriate regional planning guidelines that may apply and
3. The economic and community elements of a draft Plan are consistent with each other.

She advised that the members of the Conamara Municipal District are requested to adopt the following Statement:

**“ Conamara Municipal District has considered the draft Galway County Local Economic and Community Plan 2016-2021 and is satisfied the economic and community elements of this plan are consistent with the following:**

- 1. The core strategy and objectives of the County Development Plan 2015-2021.**
- 2. The West Regional Planning Guidelines 2010-2022.**
- 3. The economic and community elements of the draft LECP for County Galway are consistent with each other.**

Mr. Barrett explained that the draft Plan consists of 10 main themes with high level goals, outcomes, indicators, objectives and actions listed. The 10 themes are:

- Employment & Enterprise.
- Poverty & Social Inclusion
- Education & Training
- Health & Wellbeing
- Community Safety
- Towns, Villages & Islands
- Balanced Sustainable Development.
- Natural Environment
- Culture & Language
- Harnessing our Natural Resources.

He explained that the Plan was formulated following extensive consultations with socio, economic and community bodies and relevant stakeholders such as Enterprise Ireland, Udaras na Gaeltachta, Teagasc, NUI, GMIT, Bord Bia, BIM, Failte Ireland, SEAI, Western Development Commission, HSE, Chambers of Commerce, Galway Education and Training Board, Local Development Companies etc. He advised that there were various actions identified to address each objective and for each action the Plan has identified an owner/nominated body tasked with its delivery. He stated that the focus of the Plan is on undertaking actions that can be delivered and there will be an ongoing review process.

Cllr. Healy referred to the fact that while a lot of work has gone into the Plan- it was not going to change the dynamics of the County as some areas have distinct geographical disadvantages associated with infrastructural deficits/challenges, lack of access and isolation. He stated that Galway is not an average County as there is a clear split between the City & the County. He enquired as to how Conamara can make the most of the Plan and the funding mechanisms for same.

In reply-Ms. McConnell advised that it was not an infrastructural plan but a community based plan with a strong focus on community needs. She explained that the plan was formulated following extensive consultation with local communities and has identified local actions that can be delivered by local groups/bodies.

Comh. S. O'Tuairisg complimented the Community & Enterprise team on the production of the draft LECP. He advised that the priorities of Conamara are different to the other areas and enquired if a separate plan could be produced or the existing plan be broken down relevant to each Municipal District. Priorities for Conamara would include items such as aquaculture, tourism, seaweed production, angling and promotion of the Irish Language. He stated that it may be useful to classify the actions into short, medium and long term categories. He referred to the Clár programmes which were very relevant in the past –but had now ceased. He referred to the Rural Enterprise objectives on page 3 and referred to a project in his area which An Taisce objected to and which was subsequently refused planning permission by Bord Pleanála. He stated that the Irish Language is a real source of employment in Conamara and advised of the need to encourage day trippers to stay on the Aran Islands and other parts of Conamara. He enquired if Udarás na Gaeltachta and the

Local Development Committees were on board as regards the plan and how can the Council be sure that they can deliver on the actions/projects.

In response Mr. Barrett confirmed that the actions which were identified as relevant to Udarás na Gaeltachta and the other stakeholders/partners in Conamara such as maximizing the use of the language schools were those which had been agreed with them following extensive consultation. He advised that bodies such as Udarás and Comhairle na nOileáin were satisfied with the plan. He stated that the Clár programme had ceased but it still exists as regards the distribution of National Lottery funds.

Comh. O’Cualáin spoke of the need to prevent the decline in rural communities and in regard to Conamara infrastructure such as good roads and access to broadband are essential and this has been emphasized by Udaras na Gaeltachta.

Cllr. Welby referred to page 18 and the goal of revitalizing the towns and villages with a focus on increasing the urban population. He advised that the Council should not have a policy of denuding the rural areas of people and the County Development Plan should not support this. This is a need to have an appropriate mix of rural and urban dwellers. He referred to the fact that the proposed Geological Park for the Joyce Country was included in the plan. He mentioned the good work being undertaken by the Galway Sports Partnership. He referred to the Health & Wellbeing goals and outcomes listed on page 13 and enquired if the Council should aim higher. He also referred to the apparent detrimental effect the NPWS designations were causing to infrastructural projects in Conamara.

Ms. McConnell advised that the plan was not a wish list but an action plan where most of the actions listed are achievable. She agreed that funding for the plan was critical and that each action required an appropriate budget. She referred to the extensive consultation undertaken by the Council with communities and relevant agencies. She referred to the proposed Geological Park for Conamara and advised that the Council had met representatives of the local community and that there was funding available to employ a geologist. She stated that the plan places a major focus on rural communities. In regard to the goal listed on page 18 in regard to revitalizing the towns and villages –she referred to the Core strategy which stated that the population would be directed towards them.

Cllr. Mannion complimented the work done on the plan and welcomed the progress on the Geological Park. She referred to the need to concentrate on increasing sustainable employment and referred to the fact that unemployment had increased by 94 in Clifden last month which could in part be associated with seasonal factors such as tourism. She advised that there is a demand for allotments and whether this could be rolled out by the Council in the near future.

Comh. O’Tuairisg highlighted the potential of Conamara as the location for a marina for yachts and also for sea safaris and sea angling. He advised that such a marina would be an ideal location as a berth for yachts sailing the route from Poole, Dorset in the U.K to Scandanavia. He also referred to the fact that the World Masters Fishing competition would be staged in Conamara in June 2016 and it required funding.

Ms. McConnell advised that C & E would look at the issue concerning the allotments as some of the actions can be implemented in the short term. She stated that the yacht route from Poole-Ireland-Scotland-Scandinavia was on the agenda.

Cllr. Welby referred to objective AFF 8 –Aquaculture on page 32 and referred to the fact that BIM appear to be going blindly down the route of developing a fish farm in Galway Bay regardless of the consequences associated with the potential decimation of fish stocks in fisheries in Conamara. He also referred to the fact that Udarás na Gaeltachta was involved with a fish farming body that was openly flouting the planning laws. He stated that there was a lot of good development on Inchagoill

Comh. O’Curraoin stated that he was totally opposed to a fish farm in Galway Bay and other fish farms as their process of producing fish stocks was not natural and they cause damage to our own natural resources. Many of these fish farms are controlled by foreign companies and foreign trawlers have depleted the fish stocks. He referred to the fact that the spin off from the fishing industry was gone. He also referred to the damage caused by TB to livestock associated with contact with wild animals. He stated that Udarás na Gaeltachta was set up to promote the establishment of small local industries and is not given adequate funding by the Government.

Cllr. Healy referred to the Statement which the Councillors were requested to adopt and stated that he had never read the West Regional Planning Guidelines.

In reply, Ms. McConnell advised that there was no mention of fish farms as an action in the draft LECP. In regard to the West Regional Planning Guidelines she advised that these were very general and they are all consistent with the LECP- there is no conflict of interest.

Cllr. Walsh complimented the work done on the plan and stated that its potential to deliver required adequate funding. He then proposed that the Municipal District of Conamara adopt the Statement- this was seconded by Cllr. Byrne and agreed.

### **Cathaoirleach’s Business**

**CMD 15056**

Cllr. Mannion acknowledged the work being done by Council staff on call day and night during the bad weather conditions. The other Councillors also wished to be associated with complimenting the staff on call. Cllr. Welby advised that roads that are prone to flooding should be prioritized when the 2016 Roads Programme is formulated. He cited as an example the Pier Road at Oughterard which has problems with access.

### **Municipal District Director’s Business**

**CMD 15057**

### **AOB**

**CMD 15058**

Cllr. Byrne sought clarification as to the phone number the public should ring –if they required assistance from the Council. K. Finn advised that the Council emergency number is 091-509069 which is manned by Council staff from 9.00 a.m to 5.00 p.m throughout the

week including Saturday & Sunday. Calls made after 5.00 p.m would be handled by a call center in Cork who would relay the calls to the appropriate area supervisor on call. He stated that this phone number was listed on the Councils website [www.galway.ie](http://www.galway.ie). In response to a query from Cllr. Mannion he also confirmed that members of the public can dial 999 in an emergency and request the operator to transfer them to the Council. Cllr. Byrne sought clarification as to the Council's role in regard to flooding –was it primarily involved in the distribution of sandbags. K. Finn advised that the Council's role was set out in the Emergency Flood Plan which provided that the Council can also request the assistance of the Defence Forces. Along with the provision of sandbags –the Council can also take other practical measures such as raising the height of sections of roads prone to flooding, digging channels and clearing gullies etc. He stated that the Housing Office will provide temporary accommodation for any person who has to be evacuated due to the flooding. Comh. O'Tuairisg explained that some of the flooding was associated with the blockage of streams and gullies and advised that Trá Mór was flooded as the pipes were blocked up- there is a need to clear the mouth of the stream which is not a big job. Comh. O'Cualáin enquired if anything could be done in regard to the flooding at Ballinahown- in response P. Breathnach advised that he would examine the matter. Cllr. Healy stated that there was a 2 mile stretch on the N59 at Recess with a lot of water on the road and was advised that TII would be notified about the matter.

#### ***CROCHNAIGH AN CRUINNIU ANSIN***