

MINUTES OF THE TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE
STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING
HYBRID MEETING HELD IN
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, ÁRAS AN CHONTAE
ON WEDNESDAY 22ND MARCH 2023 AT 10.00am

I Láthair:

Baill: Cllr. Peter Roche (Chairperson)
Cllr. Jim Cuddy
Cllr. Gerry King
Comh. Tomás Ó Curraoin
Mr. John Finn
Mr. Kenny Deery

Baill ar Líne: Cllr. Geraldine Donohue
Cllr. Declan Kelly
Mr. Diarmaid Kelly

Oifigi: Mr. Derek Pender, A/Director of Services, Roads & Transportation
Ms. Rachel Lowe, Senior Engineer, Roads & Transportation
Ms. Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner
Ms. Geraldine Byrne, Administrative Officer, Roads & Transportation
Ms. Sajil Elwood, Assistant Staff Officer, Roads & Transportation

Apologies: Cllr. Albert Dolan
Mr. Tom Madden

Absent: Mr. Tom Prendergast, Senior Engineer

ITEM NO. 1 - MINUTES OF TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE SPC MEETING HELD ON THE 8th December 2022.

On the **Proposal** of Comh. Ó Curraoin and **Seconded** by Cllr. King, the minutes of the meeting of the Transportation & Infrastructure Strategic Policy Committee held 8th December 2022 were agreed.

ITEM NO. 2 – MATTERS ARISING

Cllr. Donohue requested an amendment to the Draft Minutes, under Item No. 8, paragraph 6, the minutes should have read, “*Cllr. Donohue raised the issue of traffic congestion etc in Galway*”. The minutes have been approved as corrected.

Mr. Kelly at the December 2022 meeting looked for an update as to how Objective MCC4 – Integrated Framework Management Plan of the County Development Plan is going to be put together and what is the pathway/timeframe and would the SPC be involved. Ms. Loughnane, Senior Planner attended the meeting to provide answers and clarification to the questions raised by Mr. Kelly. Ms. Loughnane outlined that GCC role is support the preparation of the document and feed into it. She advised that it will be a significant amount of time before it is up and running. The National Planning Framework highlights the importance of co-ordination between the stakeholders to achieve balanced marine spatial planning and GCC will collaborate with the appropriate stakeholders and agencies to safeguard the delivery of marine related development in a sustainable manner. She advised that there is a Maritime Area Regulatory Authority currently been set up and this will be where integrated plans will originate. If submissions are required to be made, they can be done through the SPC.

ITEM NO. 3 – DRAFT SUSTAINABLE PLANT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Ms. Lowe advised the committee on the aim of this draft document, last updated 18 January 2023. The aim is to develop a Sustainable Plant Protection Plan to assist GCC in reducing the use of pesticides in areas managed by GCC. The plan came about as GCC receives various correspondence from public etc asking about how to deal with pesticides and it became clear that it was needed to outline in a document on why pesticide reduction is important and to educate the public. GCC needs to be the leader as a local authority, a Working Group has been established working alongside Sheila Murphy, Ecologist. She advised that the position for the appointment of a Biodiversity Officer has been advertised.

A discussion took place. Cllrs. Roche, Donohue, Cuddy, King and Mr. Finn raised the following queries/comments:

- Issues in dealing with Ragwort on the roads of the county and by the farming community of County Galway. Need to find the best way to control this noxious weed ragwort.
- Why is this matter not been dealt with as part of the role of the Department of Agriculture?
- Massive problem to find a solution, impossible to find alternative options
- A balanced approach is needed to take account of the farming community

ITEM NO. 4 – DISCUSSION ON POLICY FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT (as proposed by Diarmaid Kelly at meeting held 8th December 2022)

Mr. Kelly outlined that this item arose after presentation made by Sean Breathnach SEE, NRDO. He said he put this item on the agenda to have a discussion to see what can be done. In preparation for this item, he had done some research and the National Transport Authority (NTA) are the lead agency when it comes to developing public transport in rural Ireland through their initiative "Connecting Ireland". He outlined that the aspiration is for GCC is to have a sustainable public transport system for example a Park and Ride facility. Another example local authorities play a key role in are authorising new bus stopping places. NTA provide the funding to local authorities, and he said that what he would like to see GCC develop a public transport policy and that instead of Galway been known as the city of traffic to become a city known for its public transport system instead.

Mr. Pender advised that the Galway Transport Strategy (GTS) is currently under review and that GCC and TII will be heavily involved in the process. He advised that funding has been received from the NTA for the delivery of Local Transport Plans.

Ms. Lowe advised that as part of the GTS review, GTS review tender - gives legal power to NTA to develop transport plans nationally. NTA will work closely with GCC. GCC have a contract with SYSTRA in relation to the modelling of the Local Transport Plans. As part of the modelling of Local Transport Plans for towns in County Galway, they will be looking at the travel trends in these towns and each plan will be linking with NTA and there is also a Walking and Cycling Plan as part of each LTP. There are LTPs for the following towns: Athenry, Ballinasloe and Tuam. There are draft plans prepared for Tuam, East Galway City Suburbs, Gort and Loughrea. There are discussions currently taking place with Galway City Council in relation to developing a LTP for Garraun, Oranmore. In each LTP public transport is an important element. At present there are proposals to install a disability bus shelter in Ballinasloe.

A discussion took place, and the following comments were made:

- Cllr. Donohue outlined how she recently had to travel into Galway to collect visitors from Ceannnt Bus Station as there was no bus out of the city that evening to bring them out to their destination.
- Cllr. Cuddy expressed concerns at the delays been experienced in the Galway Ring Road project progressing. People living in rural areas have no public transport into the city, only for private buses operating the situation would be worse. There is a need to look at the provision of a new public transport system. Cost of parking your car in Galway city has greatly increased. People would travel by bus to the city if there was a proper public transport system in place.
- Mr. Deery concurred with comments made, this is a huge issue, Galway has followed the statutory process fully and the traffic/transport issues are not getting resolved. He outlined that there are great individuals within all the organisations involved that are trying to make changes. He advised that the business community of Galway are looking for a meeting with the Minister of Transport, local elected members, and local Ministers. He outlined that the brief from the business community and their core focus is to lobby at Ministerial level and that a central voice is now what is needed. 46% of cars that are travelling into the city are from outside the county.

ITEM NO. 5 – SCHEDULE A DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of Transportation & Infrastructure SPC is scheduled to be held 21st June 2023 at 10.00am.

ITEM NO. 6 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS/CORRESPONDENCE

Cllr. Roche raised the issue of the recent decision made at the December 2022 Plenary Meeting to form a Transportation & Infrastructure SPC sub-committee to interact with the NTA regarding the development of Park and Ride. He outlined that this is a vexed issue, and the formation of this sub-committee is undermining the working of this SPC. He advised that he has expressed and would expect that this sub-committee are to be reporting to the Transportation & Infrastructure SPC on a regular basis on their progress and plans. He would expect that whatever they propose to bring forward to Plenary Meetings/NTA, Irish Rail and other bodies in relation to the progress of the Park and Ride would first be presented to this SPC. He stated that this new forum is not to interfere with the work of this SPC. He advised that he would see this assembly of people as a group that would come up with ideas and then would brief this SPC and give regular updates.

Cllr. Kelly fully concurred with Cllr. Roches comments and stated that there should be clear parameters in place.

Cllr. King stated he was very surprised at the formation of this sub-committee and wonders where this will lead too. He stated that there needs to be a chairperson appointed on this sub-committee who will attend this SPC meetings and give regular updates on the progress of their work.

Cllr. Cuddy agreed with all comments and cannot see the logic in the formation of this sub-committee as at the end of the day the key role of an SPC is policy formation.

Comh. Ó Curraoin commented that it feels like they are undermining the work of this SPC and giving the impression that this SPC is not conducting their role successfully. He would not like to see the work of this SPC dictated too by this sub-committee.

Cllr. Donohue commented that the formation of this sub-committee was rushed upon the members at the December 2022 meeting, and it was a disrespectful to this SPC.

Mr. Roche replied that he would expect this sub-committee to be reporting to this SPC as they are undertaking a function of the Roads & Transportation SPC. He would expect that all decisions made come through this SPC.

Comh. Ó Curraoin referred to the structure of this sub-committee and can this SPC submit nominees. It was clarified that no member of the SPC can be a member.

It was agreed that the SPC would submit a statement at the next Plenary meeting outlining their concerns and how they wish the sub-committee to carry out their function, setting out parameters, requesting that they report to this SPC and expressing that this sub-committee is a duplication of the work carried out by the SPC.

Mr. Pender advised that the Roads Programme 2023 has been approved by all the Municipal Districts and all works are currently out to tender and contracts will be awarded in April/May. He thanked the staff of the Area Offices and Headquarters for all their work.

Cllr. King looked for an update on the closing date for the Speed Limit Review. Mr. Pender advised that there is no closing date at present and any submissions can be submitted to Mr. Tom Prendergast, Senior Engineer.

Cllr. Cuddy raised the issue of Traffic Calming Islands and that the kerbs need to be painted yellow as people are prone to hitting the kerbs. He said that if the yellow painting was maintained it would be safer for drivers.

Cllr. Cuddy looked for clarity on what GCC policy is for compensating motorists whose vehicles get damaged because of potholes on public roads through no fault of the motorist.

Mr. Pender replied in relation to the fluorescent painting of the kerbs, each MD has responsibility for their own area. Regarding compensating motorists, GCC has a Risk Control Officer who deals with all claims made and he consults with Irish Public Bodies Insurance and all reports of vehicle damage are investigated and GCC in the past has compensated motorists.

The meeting concluded. Cllr. Roche, Chairperson thanked the committee members for their attendance and thanked Cllr. Cuddy for stepping in as Acting Chairperson for the December 2022 meeting.

Críochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.

**Signed &
Approved by:**



Cllr. Peter Roche
Cathaoirleach
Transportation & Infrastructure S.P.C.

Date: 10/7/2023

