

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF TUAM HELD AT
THE OFFICES OF THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF TUAM, TUAM, COUNTY GALWAY
ON MONDAY 15th JULY 2024 AT 14.30 pm.**

CATHAOIRLEACH:

Cllr. Roche

I LÁTHAIR FREISIN

Cllr. Cuniffe, Cllr. Hoade, Cllr. McHugh Farag, Cllr. Reddington,
Cllr. Roche, Cllr. Turner, Cllr. Kililea (remote)

AS LÁTHAIR

BAILL OIFIGH:

Mr. Michael Owens, D.O.S., Ms. Rachel Lowe, SE, Mr. John Coyle –
SEE, Sean Kennedy E.E. Tom Regan E.E. Ms. Geraldine Byrne, -
Meetings Administrator, Ms. Mary Dunne A.S.O.

Helena Mc Elmeel, Architect, Reimagine Tuam, Carolann Courtney,
Creative Places, Fiona Hession, Creative Places, Derek Mitchell,
Rory Murphy.

Cllr. Roche welcomed everyone, he welcomed back both Sean Kennedy and Tom Regan. Cllr. Roche acknowledged the wonderful achievement of the Galway Senior Football Team on their victory the previous day in the All-Ireland Football Semi-Final.

Cllr. Killilea asked that a minute's silence be observed, as mark of respect to John O'Mahony R.I.P. Cllr. Turner paid tribute to the late John O'Mahony, he stated that he was the greatest ever manager and mentor and he was proud to be from Galway yesterday in Croke Park, as the mark of respect and the guard of honour was phenomenal, with an outpouring of sympathy to John's family.

A minute's silence was observed.

MDT240051

4. – Reimagine Tuam Presentation

Cllr. Roche welcomed Helena Mc Elmeel, Reimagine Tuam, Carolann Courtney, Creative Places Tuam, Fiona Hession, Derek Mitchell, Rory Murphy, and Deputy Sean Canney to the meeting.

Ms Mc Elmeel, providing a comprehensive update on the Reimagine Tuam Project.

This presentation was a follow on to a previous presentation to the Elected members on the 11TH of December 2023 and outlined the developments that have since occurred. Advancements included Building Owner Engagement which involved one to one meetings, building surveys, consultation with stakeholders such as Galway Rural Development and Galway County Council's Vacant Homes Officer.

Progress also included Team Design workshops, matching buildings with potential briefs, considering Planning and Building regulations, together with presentations to and feedback from building owners and Community Focus Groups.

On May 25th, 2024, an open shop community presentation event was held in the brewery one of the buildings selected, where there was a public display of work and a building owner /Project team presentation. This was attended by building owners, Community Focus Groups, local representatives, and members of the public.

The chosen sites are:

- The Mall House, an 18th Century protected building located at The Mall, with potential benefits of co-living accommodation, social housing, or private rented accommodation.
- The second unit is a three storey Building with three two storey vacant commercial units with separate entrances situated at the junction of Chapel Lane and High Street.
- The third building known as The Brewery (formally Furniture Stores), a protected structure, vacant for over twenty years and was previously used as a retail outlet but has a potential for use as a community Arts facility.

Mr. Derek Mitchell, whose family own property close to the junction of High Street and Chapel Lane stated that he is willing to invest in units here but the street scape and road safety measures at the location require improvement measures. He compared this project to a successful project he had viewed in Clonakilty, stating that there were a lot of similarities.

Mr. Rory Murphy spoke in relation the Brewery building, which is in ownership of his family and stated he is the third generation of the family living in Tuam. His family were retailers by trade, he confirmed that this building would be no longer suitable for retail but has enormous potential and is conducive to several different projects. It is a fully detached building in the town centre, close to parking facilities and open plan. He is willing to engage with Galway County Council to progress the project.

Ms. Fiona Hession stated that she is an artist living in the town and would like to see an Arts centre in the centre of the town to cater for the variety of other nationalities living in Tuam.

Ms. Carolann Courtney, Co – Ordinator of Creative Places gave a brief update on Creative Places Creative Places Tuam launched in 2020 and marks a new approach to funding by the Arts Council. Led by Create, the national development agency for collaborative arts we look to bring artists and communities together to respond to their home place of Tuam.

Since then, they have supported artists and community members through community seeding funds, artist bursaries and residencies, public conversation series, workshops, and training opportunities as well as an incredible two-day community weekend event, The West's Awake.

They have welcomed all Tuam to be part of this by making space for new ideas and new collaborations. This is the space for gathering with new ideas, and make great art. This is the space to think globally, to act locally, to make together. As a direct result of this work, it was found that there was a need to bring expertise and knowledge to the community around vacancy and the skills needed to change it within the context of the Town Centre.

The connection of Niall O'Cleirigh and Jonny Greigs research workshop with Architecture at the Edge in 2022 led to an application with Helen McElmeel Architects to the Irish Architecture Foundation. This ensured that a programme could bring the skills to the work to ensure they could give time, resources, and expertise to create solutions to the issues identified by community participants.

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The Irish Architecture Foundation's Reimagine Hometown Architect initiative support the Tuam's project, the Tuam One Stop Shop by funding it to the tune of €10,000.

The team of architects, designers, artists, local community groups and residents supported the delivery of the work and brought together the business owners, creative thinkers, members of the community to create clever solutions to housing, community space and public realm needs within the town.

For more information on the Creative Places Tuam programme: <https://creativeplacestuam.ie>

Cllr. Mc Hugh Farag thanked everyone involved in the presentation and project. She stated that she attended the workshop at Shop Street, stating that there are so many artists in Tuam who require workspace. She believes this building at Shop Street would be very suitable, cognisant of the need for funding and the town needs more than one facility.

She pointed out that Tuam should be able to achieve what Clonakilty and Westport have done so far. Referring to the dangerous situation that exists at Chapel Lane for drivers and pedestrians, Cllr. Farag would like to see funding sought for a suitable scheme to make this area safer.

Cllr. Farag also referred to the building at the Mall which she would like to see developed but that this would not compete for funding with the Brewery at Shop Street.

Ms. Mc Elmeel added that the development at the Mall would be private which would provide more manageable funding and therefore would not be competing.

Cllr. Hoade welcomed the group and thanked them for all their presentations. She stated that she attended the last online presentation and put down a motion to bring the group to the Municipal District Meeting. Cllr. Hoade said she would be very anxious to support the project and sees no reason why Tuam couldn't have the same success as Clonakilty, and it is very important to take these projects to the next stage. She stated that if they needed a delegation, she would be happy to contact the Fianna Fail Ministers, in consultation with Deputy Canney who is present at the meeting today.

Cllr. Cunniffe stated he was delighted to see the interaction between public and private and while sport is well looked after in Tuam, the culture aspects in Tuam have achieved an excellent reputation despite not having facilities such as an Arts Centre. He would love to see a whole town approach where the diverse groups come together and enquired if there was any interaction with Action Tuam on this matter. He understood they have a project list which is funded and would like to invite them to a Municipal District Meeting.

He enquired if there was any update on the Railway Station and the Town Hall and stated that he would like to see the Town Hall used as a Civic Building to facilitate the Arts and for Community use.

Cllr. Reddington welcomed the group and thanked Helena for the splendid work conducted in Headford and agreed with other members that the Old Brewery would ideally be used as a Community space and asked Galway County Council to consider this.

He requested an update on the current position with the Town Hall and the old Railway station.

He asked the Tuam Senior Executive Engineer if funding could be used from the overall Tuam budget to provide safety works at Chapel Lane,

Cllr. Turner complimented the presentation and stated the challenging work is now done, property owners are open to further engagement and stated that these are active tangible ideas and acknowledged that this was a thoroughly exceptional presentation. He stated that funding should be

sought and €600,000 would not be excessive for this project, also referring to the need for investment in the Mall Theatre.

Cllr. Turner asked Derek Mitchell on the full pedestrianising of Chapel Lane, he replied that he felt that would not be necessary, what was required was a scheme to slow down traffic and make it safer for pedestrians and drivers.

Cllr. Killilea thanked all involved and stated that there are various funding streams for such projects, he noticed recently where towns with a population greater than 10,000, can access funding. He queried if there is a mechanism where property can be bought by Compulsory Purchase Order (C.P.O) by Galway County Council and make better use of derelict buildings.

Cllr. Killilea gave his full support to Reimagine Tuam and Creative places and enquired if some Notion of Motion (N.O.M) funding would help with the safety measures at Chapel Lane and recommended that this be looked at separately when costings are available. An update on the Tuam Town Hall has also been requested.

Ms. Rachel Lowe, Senior Engineer, outlined that safety measures at Chapel Lane were dependant on Departmental funding and while N.O.M funding could be used, significantly more funding would be required. John Coyle advised that he engage with the Active Travel Team and ascertain if Phases 2 or 3 could incorporate this scheme to include the whole of High Street and Chapel Lane.

Deputy Canney addressed the meeting, complimenting all involved in the presentation and adding that a masterplan has been done for Tuam which provides a foundation, there is a unique opportunity here as the projects would have access to Urban and Rural Regeneration funds which could provide up to one million euro, but a plan and feasibility study were required.

He advised that members of the public be advised of the masterplan and where it would be on display.

There is huge enthusiasm and there is funding available, but a masterplan is needed and while a lot of facilities have been provided recently in Tuam the town needs amenities such as an art centre.

He applauded the business people and the Reimagine Tuam members, stating that the work is impeccable, but a Forum /steering committee is necessary to drive forward these projects.

Mr. Owens, Director of Services, complimented the quality of the presentation commenting that the projects involved were ambitious but credible. He welcomed the extend of public consultation and involvement with Property owners. He acknowledged the need for funding and stated that he will engage with his colleagues with regard as to what type of funding is available.

Cllr. Cuniffe suggested that a fulltime or part time administrator is needed to co- ordinate and seek funding and that this could be done through the library.

The Cathaoirleach thanked everyone involved and wished them continued success.

MDT240052

1. – Confirmation of Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Municipal District of Tuam held on 28th June 2024

On the **proposal** of Cllr. Reddington and **seconded** by Cllr. Mc Hugh Farag the minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Tuam Municipal District held on 28th June 2024 were **agreed**.

MDT240053

2. - Confirmation of Minutes of the meeting of Municipal District of Tuam held on the 28th of June 2024

On the **proposal** of Cllr. Reddington and **seconded** by Cllr. Turner the minutes of the meeting of the Tuam Municipal District held on 28th June 2024 were **agreed**.

MDT240054

3. - Confirmation of Minutes of the special meeting of Municipal District of Tuam held on the 15TH of May 2024 at 10.00 am

On the **proposal** of Cllr. Hoade and **seconded** by Cllr. Mc Hugh Farag the minutes of the meeting of the Tuam Municipal District held on 15th May 2024 were **agreed**.

MDT240055

5. - Adoption of the revised Tuam Municipal District Standing orders

Ms Geraldine Byrne outlined the changes in the Standing orders.

On the **proposal** of Cllr. Mc Hugh Farag and **seconded** by Cllr. Reddington the revised standing orders of the Tuam Municipal District were **agreed**.

Matters Arising:

Cllr. Killilea queried the vetting process on prospective council housing tenants and if applicants with a criminal conviction are excluded from the offer of accommodation or removed if a house has already been provided.

Mr. Owens advised that the local authority tenant and Galway County Council as landlord both have rights and responsibilities under the tenancy agreement, and both are required to adhere to their obligations. He emphasized that in a small minority of tenancies issues may arise, similar to tenancies in other housing tenures, and when there is a process to address same, through the courts if necessary. He emphasized that any changes to the tenancy agreement must ensure that due process is afforded to both parties and that any such changes cannot apply retrospectively to existing tenancy agreements. He indicated that it was open to the Housing SPC to consider the matter as part of the policy work programme to be agreed on the formation of the SPC.

MDT240056

6. - Municipal District of Tum Director's Business

Ms Lowe said that there is a National Speed limit Implementation plan which will be implemented by the end of November 2024. This plan will introduce a default speed limit of 60km/hr on local primary, local secondary and tertiary roads unless byelaws are enacted by the Local Authority to retain the current speed limits of 80km/hr on certain roads. A lot of work including surveying is ongoing at present and the bye laws with details of roads to be retained at 80 km/hr will be brought to the members of the Municipal District this year.

Cllr. Reddington welcomed the decrease in speed limits, particularly close to schools, he enquired if speed limits close to schools be reduced to 40 or 50 km/hr.

Ms Lowe said that local roads close to schools will go to 60 km/hr and other locations can be looked at as part of Galway County Councils speed limit review next year.

In reply to Cllr. Roche, Ms Lowe clarified that where roads which cross Local Authority boundaries, communication will take place between the Authorities involved in the interest of consistency.

In reply to a matter raised at the last meeting in relation to Tuam Cemetery, Mr. Owens confirmed that additional works will take place, weeding and grass cutting, road resurfacing , and a quotation is being sought for works on railings and will be considered in the context of funding .He confirmed that Draft Burial ground bye laws will be circulated to the members in September, they will be open to Public Consultation in October and should be in place by the end of the year .

Mr. Owens gave a comprehensive presentation on Housing “Delivering Homes -Building Communities” to the members.

Mr. Owens directed the members to the Galway County Council’s housing webpage on www.galway.ie which updates daily with the most up to date statistics on supply and demand and delivery of units.

There are 931 social housing units in the Tuam Municipal District, and it is envisaged that a further 108 units will be delivered in the Tuam Municipal District during the second half of 2024.

Mr. Owens also gave details on the Affordable Housing Scheme and the Vacant Homes Action Plan 2023-2026. www.galway.ie/en/services/housing/supplydemand.

The Members thanked Mr Owens and complimented the presentation.

Mr. Owens in reply to Cllr. Roche advised that the derelict properties being advanced for disposal by the local authority had been vacant and derelict for several years and the number of such properties also accumulated over many years. Mr. Owens advised that following assessment of the cost of bringing the properties back to a standard for allocation and the housing demand in the relevant areas, being predominately rural in nature, it was deemed appropriate to bring forward the sale of the properties to allow for their redevelopment and occupation. It was anticipated that the next tranche of properties would be advertised for sale in August 2024 with any sale the subject of approval by Plenary by way of the Section 183 process.

Cllr. Roche referenced R1 residential zoned lands as lands serviced and available for immediate development and R2 residential zoned lands, reserve lands capable of being serviced during the lifetime of the Tuam Local Area Plan, should all R1 lands not be advanced for development.

Cllr. Roche also referenced the approach adopted by Councillors in advocating for the zoning of additional residential lands in the Tuam LAP process.

Mr. Owens advised that the response to a recent call for expressions of interest for R1 and R2 lands was disappointing, with a single expression of interest received, with the land located in Tuam. Mr. Owens outlined that it was essential that the local authority acquired additional lands to support the local authority direct build housing programme and to ensure a consistent pipeline of housing projects. He indicated that it was intended to readvertise for expressions of interest and in the event of a similar response it would be necessary for the local authority to consider all other options to acquire the residential lands required to support housing delivery.

Mr. Owens in reply to Cllr. Turner confirmed that the local authority had recently acquired a property on Bridge Street, Dunmore and was aware of a further property on the market. Mr. Owens advised that the local authority was open to considering all options in relation to meeting the social housing need in the Dunmore area.

In reply to Cllr. Hoade, Mr. Owens advised that he was not aware of any properties acquired by Galway County Council for housing purposes where proposals for development or occupation were not being advanced. Mr. Owens advised that at present there are three housing maintenance crews working across the five Municipal District with the intention to increase same to five allowing a crew to be dedicated to each Municipal District to improve response maintenance and property turnover and reletting time. He advised that the process and timeframe would be influenced by the process for staff to opt in or out of a transfer to Uisce Eireann

Mr. Owens in reply to Cllr. Reddington advise that Part V applied to all lands the subject of planning permission that included residential development with a requirement to provide 10% for social or 20% for social/affordable housing unless the development met the relevant exemption criteria.

Mr. Owens in reply to Cllrs. Reddington and Killilea advised that it was challenging to deliver affordable housing outside the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) that was both viable and affordable while the challenge within the Galway MASP area related to affordability. He indicated that a sub-group of the Galway Housing Taskforce was established to review the challenges and acknowledged a willingness on the part of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to work with and support the local authority in addressing the issues identified. He confirmed that affordable housing could be delivered directly by developers with the benefit of an Affordable Housing Subsidy Agreement with the local authority, by means of Part V or by way of direct build by the local authority.

In reply to Cllr. Killilea, Mr. Owens advised that the Part 8 public consultation process or alternatively the Section 179A public notification process would apply in relation to the proposed social housing developments on the Galway Road, Sun Street and High Street. The Planning and Development Bill currently proposed an extension of the commencement timeframe for developments under Section 179A process from December 2024 to December 2025. The final outcome of the Bill and provision in the Act will therefore determine the relevant process. He noted that the design proposal for the Galway Road was very well advanced, while Sun Street was at an earlier stage in developing the design concept and proposal. He confirmed that the Municipal District would be kept updated as the proposed developments are advanced.

Cllr. Cuniffe referred to the serious situation with the lack of rental properties and the cost of rent and referred to it being a wonderful day when someone is allocated a social house. Cllr. Cuniffe, complimenting the work done, stated that we need to ensure that where housing is provided social infrastructure such as playgrounds, playing fields and other amenities are in place.

In reply Mr. Owens advised that at present funding from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage was limited to the direct cost of the land and the development cost of the houses, in general it did not extend to providing community facilities and amenities. He outlined that he had raised this at a recent meeting of the Galway Housing Taskforce, and it was indicated that the matter was under review by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, particularly for larger social housing developments.

Mr. Owens in reply to Cllr. Cuniffe advised the playground at the Dublin Road was closed in 2022 due to the requirement for significant repair and remedial works, estimated at the time to cost in excess of €50,000. Mr. Owens outlined that any works to be undertaken would need to take into consideration the location of the site and the proposals both short-term and longer term for the site of the former Tuam Mother & Baby Home. Mr. Owens outlined the preliminary works at due to commence on the site of the former Tuam Mother and Baby Home later this year followed by full exhumation in 2025. Therefore, it is not intended to progress any works to the playground. He further outlined that

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the long-term proposal for the playground would be directly influenced by the process to inform the appropriate memorialisation of the site and environs of the former Tuam Mother and Baby Home.

Cllr. Killilea acknowledged the amount of work involved and complimented the involvement of Ms Lowe and her team's involvement in purchasing many of the land banks used.

Mr. Coyle updated the members on the current position in relation to the provision of a Sensory Garden at the Palace Grounds. He advised that work commenced 3 weeks ago, the foundation for the paths is completed and the landscaper will commence work in the next few weeks. The work will include a meditation/performance area with paving works, a lavender lane, additional trees, installing of park benches and two water features.

MDT2400057

7. - Municipal -District of Tuam Cathaoirleach's Business

Cllr. Roche raised the issue of verge trimming at Castlegrove.

Ms. Lowe clarified that there is a provision under Section 70 of Roads Act to provide verge trimming outside the specified period where Road Safety issues may occur. She referred to the reduction in the allocation for maintenance of Local Roads this year and stated that this affects the amount of verge trimming possible. Mr. Coyle requested that members provide a list of junctions where they believe there is a safety issue in relation to overgrown verges.

MDT2400058

On the proposal of Cllr. Cunniffe seconded by Cllr. Reddington the following motion was agreed.

I propose;

"That action Tuam be invited to our next meeting in September 2024, to advise on their efforts and work plan going forward and their interaction with Creative Tuam efforts "

MDT2400059

On the proposal of Cllr. Turner seconded by Cllr. Cunniffe the following motion was agreed.

I propose;

"That each of the 7 Councillors in the Tuam M.D. contribute €1500 each from their Notice of Motion monies towards completion of the Sensory Garden in the Palace Grounds Tuam "

Chríochnaigh an cruinniú ansin @ 16.55

Approved by:


Cllr. Roche, Cathaoirleach.

Date: 9/9/2024