



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Minutes of the Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning Strategic Policy Committee
Meeting held on Wednesday 4th June, 2025 at 11am – Room G01

I LÁTHAIR:

Baill: Cllr. Donagh Killilea, Chairperson
Cllr. Mary Hoade
Cllr. Gerry King
Cllr. Tom Welby
Cllr. Declan Geraghty
Mr. Paul Carey, Development/Construction
Ms. Lyn Donnelly, Community/Voluntary

Oifigigh: Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services, Planning & Economic Development
Ms. Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner, Planning
Ms. Caroline McDonagh, Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office
Mr. Ronan Conway, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Urban & Rural Regeneration Office
Ms. Eileen Keaveney, Administrative Officer, Planning
Ms. Sinéad Burns, Assistant Staff Officer, Planning

Leithscéal: Cllr. David Collins
Deborah Reynolds, Trade Union

Item No. 1 – Minutes of meeting dated 05/03/2025

Cllr. Hoade (Vice Chairperson) opened the meeting. Minutes of the SPC meeting held on 05/03/25 were proposed by Cllr. Welby and seconded by Cllr. King. No matters arising.

Item No. 10 – Rates Waiver Regulations

Ms. O'Connor shared a presentation on the Rates Waiver Regulations and explained details of same. There has been an update on legislation which is required to go through the SPC. There are two schemes:

1. *Section 9* – Provision for abatement of rates in respect of vacant property. Galway County Council presently gives a 100% abatement of rates in respect of vacant properties. A public consultation is required if there is to be a change in the existing vacancy abatements scheme, Galway County Council will do a public consultation in June 2025.
2. *Section 15* – Scheme for waiver of rates - Section 15 provides for local authorities to make schemes to support local and national policy objectives, by waiving rates in certain circumstances. The elected members will have discretion to introduce waiver schemes that support objectives outlined in either county development plans, local area plans, local economic and community plans or indeed the National Planning Framework

With regard to Section 9, Cllr. Welby asked if the public notice on the consultation could be circulated to the Elected Members when available. Ms. O'Connor said this can be arranged. Cllr. Welby also asked if there is a change of rates, does the Local Authority pay the difference or is there any funding from Govt. Ms. O'Connor said that the money does come out of the revenue budget. Government are bringing in the Section 15 scheme but Galway County Council already have a scheme in place through Section 66.

Cllr. Welby proposed for the Section 15 not to go ahead and Cllr. Mary Hoade seconded.

Item No. 2 – Galway City & County Metropolitan Area – Socio Economic Profile, Census 2022

Ms. Loughnane shared information on the Galway City & County Metropolitan Area – Socio Economic Profile, Census 2022. The profile offers a comprehensive overview of the Galway Metropolitan Area in Galway City and County, drawing from the latest data available from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) Census 2022. It provides a detailed analysis of the demographic, economic, and social characteristics of the Galway Metropolitan Area. The profile compares the Galway Metropolitan Area with national and regional planning areas as well as both the Galway City and County local authority areas. The profile also provides details on Galway City and Suburbs, the three main metropolitan settlements (Oranmore, Baile Chláir and Béarna) and local level data for 27 neighbourhood areas within Galway City. The profile is set within the overall national and regional planning contexts, providing relevant data to aid discussion centered around the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) and the Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP). The purpose of the document is to provide a solid evidence base to support future decision making within the Galway Metropolitan Area and will be of use to strategic and forward planning in both Galway City and Galway County Council as well as the Northern and Western Regional Assembly (NWRA).

Ms. Loughnane said that the document will assist in providing information to look for future funding and gives detailed information on housing vacancy rates, housing tenure, public/private transport, population etc. The documents will be published on the website and the link sent to the members.

Item No. 3 – Joint Retail Strategy

The draft strategy is compiled by Galway County Council and Galway City Council and is now at the third draft stage. Galway County Council have comments on it, will discuss these with Galway City Council and will then revert to the consultants KPMG. Thereafter, KPMG will make a presentation to a Joint SPC meeting.

Cllr. Geraghty asked if it would be fair that towns like Tuam and Ballinasloe are not included in the strategy.

Ms. Loughnane explained that the strategy is mainly in the MASP areas, that there is work being compiled in the Athenry area in regard to commercial, retail and residential vacancy. Going forward there will be a focus on all areas that have Local Area Plans and settlement plans within the County Development Plan.

Ms. Loughnane added that Covid did change retail approach and that work is being carried out with the Presentation Athenry and NUIG with respect to gathering information. Trends are changing, behaviours are changing, also the choice of retail has decreased in the city.

Cllr. Hoade said that online shopping has now taken over and shop street in the city has very little shops now.

Item No. 4 – Gort (LAP) Local Area Plan update

Ms. Loughnane said that the Material Alterations to the Draft Gort LAP are on public display until 20th June, 2025. A Chief Executives Report will then be prepared and presented to the members of the Loughrea Municipal District by the End of July. There have been no submissions to date. The final LAP should be in place before any enactment of the Planning Act.

Item No. 5 – Residential Zoned Land Tax (RZLT) update

Ms. Loughnane stated that 2 draft maps were on public display, Athenry and Loughrea had not previously been included as those Local Area Plans had not been finalized at the time. Every settlement has been reviewed except for Gort as that Local Area Plan is currently under review and not yet adopted. 38 submissions have been lodged and all who made submissions have been contacted. Some have received exemption letters, (approximately 8/9 sites) and a new exemption map is available online now also. All maps will be sent to the Department. Some had looked for land to be rezoned when making submissions, some have referred to the possibility of rezoning. They have all been contacted to confirm if they wish for land to be rezoned, some have said yes and some no. The team are currently working on those asking for rezoning etc.

Cllr. Killilea asked if there was anything further from the Department. Ms. Loughnane answered no.

Cllr. Welby complimented Valerie Loughnane, Brian Corcoran and Rachel Dowd on the work to date on the RZLT.

Cllr. Geraghty said that there are some lands that can't be built on and are still being charged.

Mr. Hanrahan said that all of zoned land (R1) is serviced.

Item No. 6 – National Planning Framework (NPF) update

Ms. Loughnane said that both houses of the Oireachtas endorsed the National Planning Framework (NPF). A circular is due to be issued by the Department and we are currently waiting to see what the next steps are. In the meantime, information is being prepared to submit to the Department and background work has been done. The members will be informed when circulars have been issued.

Item No. 7 – Backland Development Report

Mr. Hanrahan shared a report compiled by Deirdre Egan, Executive Planner on Backland Development which is a policy objective of the County Development Plan. There have been issues mainly in Connemara and Oranmore Municipal Districts involving applications for single rural houses behind family homes. Some have long driveways that are not shared with family homes, gaps of lands are being left leading to the possibility of other dwellings being built and these give reasons for refusal. There is a lack of using the pre-planning facility and not taking the policy objectives of the County Development Plan into account. It is also of benefit to have good visual assessment and good traffic reports submitted with applications along with shared drives and good house design.

Cllr. Welby said that Deirdre Egan had explained the issues very well in her report.

Cllr. Hoade said that the presentation should be given to planning agents.

Ms. Loughnane said that it was hoped that there will be another workshop with agents in November and hoping that any changes in legislation from the Planning Act can be explained then also.

Ms. Loughnane also added that the pre-planning report facility available on the website was very helpful also and that applicants should have that information when going to the agent to discuss making a planning application.

Item No. 8 – Updates on Local Enterprise Office (LEO) Programmes

Ms. McDonagh shared the statistics from the LEO programmes which are ahead of targets.

All training courses: 679 participants have been trained to date.

Start your own Business: 154 participants have been trained to date.

Mentoring and 1 to 1 Clinics: 336 participants to date.

Management Development Programmes:

1. AI for owner / managers – programme in development (regional with LEO Mayo and Roscommon). Details will be available on Social Media and on the website.
2. Programme for Food and Creative Sector – programme in development.

Digital for Business Scheme: provides up to 3 days free digital consultancy with the LEO digital mentor identifying business needs and integrating new solutions.

Digital for Business – 33 approved since January 1st, 2025 and €59,000 funding provided.
Grow Digital – 6 approved since January 1st, 2025 and €15,545 funding provided.

Decarbonisation for small businesses through Green supports

Green for Business: 34 Green for business applications approved since January 1st 2025 and funding provided of €75,276.

Energy Efficiency Grant: 17 grants approved since January 1st 2025 valued at €129,390.

consultants around digitized systems and also includes a €5,000 voucher for new/upgrading systems.

33 micro businesses received €60,000 in funding

Green for Business entails of 3 days free consultation

34 businesses received €75,000 in funding

Energy efficiency grants – 17 grants were awarded €130,000

An information workshop will take place at the Ballinasloe hub on 4th September

Grant clinics will be rolled out to porter hubs next month.

LEO also supports Bia Innovator in Athenry and are running enterprise development programmes.

Carbon Literacy workshops took place on April 25th and 26th on how business can be more sustainable.

March 26th BIA Innovator ran workshops.

Bó Wild Beef will be Galway representatives at the National Ploughing Championships this year.

MartEye from Galway have been nominated for the National Enterprise Awards.

Cllr. Killilea said he was amazed at all the work that LEO do

Cllr. Hoade said that more marketing is needed for all that LEO do and all that is available.

Ms. McDonagh acknowledged this and said that they get similar feedback.

Item No. 9 – Urban and Rural Regeneration update

Mr. Conway shared a presentation on Tuam Station Quarter/ Tuam Station House. The project has been approved for a Part 8 application, official communication should be received by mid September. Mr. Conway explained that public engagement had taken place and the community want more amenities for the Town.

Cllr. Hoade acknowledged the work done by the Regeneration Team.

Mr. Conway also gave updates on The Shambles Tuam, Tuam Town Hall, Headford and Clifden. Mr. Conway added that the official opening of Portumna Courthouse will take place on the 25th June at 10am.

Item No. 11 – Government Circulars

- Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2025
- Project Marine Newsletter – Issue No. 8

Item No. 12 – AOB

Cllr. Welby said that there was a gap in student accommodation in the matrix and asked if it can be looked at separately and can it be made specific in the matrix.

Ms. Loughnane said that it would still be residential in the matrix but can be specified within that.

The meeting concluded.

Signed: Chairperson Donagh Killilea

Date: 3/12/2025