

**COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE**

**MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING OF GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Held at GMT, DUBLIN ROAD, GALWAY**

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020 at 11:00am**

**CATHAOIRLEACH:**

Cllr. James Charity

Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway

**I LATHAIR FREISIN:**

**Baill:** Comh./Cllr. T Broderick, J. Byrne, I. Canning, L. Carroll, D. Collins, D. Connolly, M. Connolly, G. Cronnelly, D. Ó Cualáin, J. Cuddy, S. Curley, T. Ó Curraoin, Albert Dolan, G. Donuhue, G. Finnerty, D. Geraghty, S. Herterich Quinn, M. Hoade, P. Hynes, C. Keaveney, P. Keaveney, D. Kililea, M. Kinane, G. King, P. Mac an Iomaire, M. Maher, J. McClearn, K. McHugh Farag, A. McKinstry, E. Parsons, A. Reddington, P. Roche, J. Sheridan, N. Thomas, S. Walsh and T. Welby.

**Oifigh:**

Mr. K. Kelly, Chief Executive (Interim), Mr J. Cullen, Director of Services, Ms E. Ruane, Director of Services, Mr G Mullarkey, Head of Finance, Mr L. Hanrahan, Director of Services, Mr. M. Owens, County Secretary  
Ms. I. Martyn, Senior Staff Officer, Ms. U. Ní Eidhín, Oifigeach Gaeilge, Ms. B Ryan, A/Staff Officer, Ms S. Elwood, A/Assistant Staff Officer

**Thosnaigh an cruinniú leis an paidir.**

**ITEM NO. 1 CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETING:**

**3638**

(a) Minutes of Monthly Plenary Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020.  
On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Welby the Minutes of the Monthly Plenary Meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2020 were **AGREED** and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Kililea **SECONDED** by Cllr. Hoade the Minutes of the Monthly Plenary Meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 were **AGREED** and signed by the Cathaoirleach.

**ITEM NO. 2 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**3639**

(a) Minutes of Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Roche **SECONDED** by Cllr. McHugh the Minutes of Corporate Policy Group meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020 were **NOTED**.

(b) Minutes of the Planning, Environment, Agriculture & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee of 19<sup>th</sup> May.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kililea the minutes of the Planning, Environment, Agriculture & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee of 19<sup>th</sup> May were **NOTED**.

(c) Minutes of the Climate Change & Biodiversity Strategic Policy Committee of 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McKinstry **SECONDED** by Cllr. Cronnelly the minutes of the Climate Change & Biodiversity Strategic Policy Committee of 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020 were **NOTED**.

(d) Minutes of the Community and Culture Strategic Policy Committee of 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Carroll **SECONDED** by Cllr. Collins the minutes of the Community and Culture Strategic Policy Committee of 16<sup>th</sup> July 2020 were **NOTED**.

**ITEM NO.3 TO CONSIDER VARYING THE BASIC RATE OF THE LOCAL PROPERTY TAX IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LOCAL PROPERTY TAX (LOCAL ADJUSTMENT FACTOR) REGULATIONS 2014.**

**3640**

*Report dated 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.*

The Chief Executive addressed the members noting this annual decision is a very significant decision which members must make in the best interests of the county. While

the Chief Executive and Head of Finance provide the best information correctly available the members must decide. He noted that the financial position of Galway County Council had been discussed at length in the chamber over the past six years and it is widely accepted that we have less resources both in terms of finances and staffing levels than that of our comparator counties. He noted that unexpected increases in funds had come in recent years by way of an increase in the rateable valuation for utilities, wind farms and IPB monies, however there is nothing to suggest anything similar at this time. The impact of Covid 19 financially in 2020 has been mitigated to some extent by the Government Rates Waiver Scheme but we will experience the same issues in 2021 but the impact on finances will be far greater.

The Chief Executive reminded members that the options available to them to balance a budget for 2021 are to increase Local Property Tax (LPT), reduce expenditure or increase Commercial Rates. He summarised the main points of Chief Executive's Report on the Local Property Tax noting the council face a deficit in 2020 of between €1.5 million and €2 million. He outlined that a 15% increase in LPT:

- would amount to an extra €2.2 million in funds.
- would amount to a €13.50 per annum increase for 36.5% of homeowners, €34 per annum increase for 32% of homeowners and a €47 per annum increase for a quarter of homeowners.

He stressed if there was no increase in LPT the remaining options are an increase in Rates and for cutbacks in the area of discretionary spending, reducing significantly council services. He noted that the LPT rate had remained unchanged since its introduction in 2014. He reminded members that Commercial Rates cannot be increased in 2022 due to the general re-evaluation and if not increased for 2021, it will not have increased for 15 years. He said that this position was unsustainable. He recommended an increase in the LPT rate.

**The following queries and points were raised by Cllrs Welby, Byrne, Hoade, McClearn, Killillea, Cronnelly, Kinane, Donohue, Cuddy, Sheridan, Connolly, Maher, Ó Curraoin, Keaveney, Reddington, Geraghty, Carroll, McHugh, Canning, Broderick, Roache, Thomas and Hynes:**

- Any increase in LPT would impose further hardship on the citizens of the county already struggling due to the Covid crisis.
- While the Covid crisis presented unexpected challenges this year, the real issue for Galway County Council is the serious underfunding which existed prior to Covid.
- GCC has not got its fair share from the equalization fund of LPT despite being a net contributor to overall system of funding for other councils.
- We cannot increase LPT if we are not providing additional services. An increase in LPT should not be used to bridge the shortfall in funding from Central Government.
- It was suggested that there has been a dereliction of duty by the Government and Oireachtas members. The state of our finances has been recognized by Government, but they have refused to address the issue. It is clear they are

acutely aware of underfunding based on the one-off grants delivered - in 2019 we received €1m in additional funding but we have a shortfall in the region of €20-40m.

- It was queried if local Oireachtas members had made any real case for proper funding for the Council and are content to draw from the resources of the local authority but make no attempt to increase funding.
- Members need to put party politics aside and send a very clear message back to Government that we need funding to a level that is fair with other County Councils. A persistent and concerted effort needs to be made to increase funding for the council.
- It was queried why the position of Chief Executive had not been filled permanently and if this had any bearing on our financial situation.
- The Chief Executives recent briefing to Oireachtas members regarding the underfunding of Galway County Council was noted and that the Oireachtas Members were left in no doubt as to the state of Galway County Council finances following the presentation.
- It was noted that many people are not paying property tax in County Galway.
- The possibility of clawing back money from Galway 2020 legacy funds costs was raised and also funds from Capital.
- No submissions were received for the Chief Executives Report on the Local Property Tax in 2020 or 2019 and it was queried if this was a reflection on the language used in the notifications inviting submissions.
- It was suggested that people in rural areas are getting no services from LPT, particularly in places where roads have not been taken in charge and where people have their own private wells.
- It was proposed that while there is a funding crisis there are always ways to deliver efficiencies.
- The need to revisit the 25% levy put on vacant properties was raised, originally the idea was that it would stimulate business but a lot of businesses are not open today due to Covid.
- It was noted that there are anomalies in the Restart and Restart Plus grants and it was queried why businesses in default of rates and who have judgements registered against them are in receipt of restart grants.
- It was hoped that the decision not to increase LPT would not been seen as a good news story but it is difficult to accept we will be providing less services as a result, reducing the quality of life for our citizens.

The Cathoirleach said there was a real sense of deja vu as the issue of underfunding of the local authority has been a consistent issue each budget for the past six years. At a time when the incomes of many people have been decimated and the overall picture is one of job uncertainty, we can't look to our own citizens to plug the gap. He noted that his first task as Cathoirleach was to write to all Oireachtas members outlining the financial issues facing Galway County Council. The response he said was underwhelming.

**Members queries were responded to as follows by Head of Finance:**

- No increase in LPT means there will need to be cuts in the budget for 2021.
- A rates increase maybe the only way we can now present a balanced budget for 2021.
- Clarified we do pursue people in default of rates payments but noted there are limited steps we can take once a judgement has been secured. The matter is in the hands of the Sheriff who is an officer of the court.
- Confirmed that 11 ratepayers who had judgements registered against them by Galway County Council had been paid the Restart or Restart Plus grant and two further applications were received but had not yet been paid.
- Confirmed that the payment of Restart grant to ratepayers in arrears had been queried and the advice received was that the Restart Grant should be paid without reference to arrears.

**Members queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:**

- He clarified the terms of the Restart Grant scheme were set by the Department of Business Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI). The Local Authority had no input to the terms and could not make changes to the scheme. The local authority was merely acting as a conduit for the money from DBEI. He noted that had we refused to be involved in the scheme we may have been accused of not facilitating businesses getting money from Government.
- He noted that while we agree we are unfunded and agree we need to increase our services, there has been no increase in LPT since 2014 and no increase in Rates since 2008 which is unsustainable.
- Regarding submissions for the Chief Executives Report on the Local Property Tax, he clarified that the wording used in the notification requesting submissions is a prescribed format.
- He agreed that we need to continually strive for efficiencies and invited members who had proposals or suggestions on achieving efficiencies to submit them.
- He explained that the Chief Executive role has no bearing on the current financial situation of Galway County Council. The issues in relation to the finances are historical, which can be traced back to the Needs and Resources model. As a result of further changes in 2014 (the elimination of the general-purpose grant, setting up Irish Water and the introduction of LPT) we lost more than other local authorities.
- He expressed the view that as Chief Executive he could not have done more to raise and address the funding issue for Galway County Council and all avenues had been pursued in this regard.
- With reference to the €500,000 currently funding Galway 2020 including legacy he confirmed that at this point in considering the upcoming budget, everything is on the table.
- He acknowledged the role of the management team and other senior management in keeping within budget despite the constraints.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Byrne **SECONDED** by Cllr. Welby it was **AGREED** not to vary the basic rate of the Local Property Tax in accordance with the Local Property Tax (Local Adjustment Factor) Regulations 2014.

**ITEM NO. 4 TO CONSIDER AND IF DEEMED APPROPRIATE ADOPT THE GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN 2020, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 134(A) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED).**

**3641**

*Report dated the 15<sup>th</sup> September was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting*

**The following queries and points were raised by Cllrs Hoade, Finnerty, Keaveney, McHugh-Farag and Sheridan**

- Clarification sought on why electronic data from CCTV could not be used by Galway County Council in bringing prosecutions against litter pollution offenders as it is being used by other County Councils. It was noted that illegal dumping was costing the County Council significant money on clean-ups.
- The position on staffing levels and the filling of vacancies was queried.
- The issue of a delay in the issuing of road opening licenses was raised and if the area offices could deliver these locally.
- Confirmation was sought on whether a Tourism officer been appointed?
- Concerns were raised over issues relating to general customer services and phone answering specifically difficulties getting through to sections, difficulties getting through to the right person and waiting times while being transferred.

**Members queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:**

- Regarding the use of CCTV the Chief Executive advised that Galway County Council was one of the local authorities audited by the Data Protection Commission. This resulted in a view by the DPC that the electronic data should not be used. If we continue to use CCTV we are liable for fines. Other local authorities using it have not yet been audited and continue to use it. It was confirmed that the matter was raised with the Oireachtas members in the past week. The law may need to be changed to allow local authorities use CCTV for this purpose.
- It was confirmed that there were 50-60 vacancies last summer and approval was given to fill these positions at that time. However, in light of current financial position we have paused recruitment at least until the Budget for 2021 is known.
- The issue in respect of road opening licenses will be examined as there shouldn't be significant delays regardless of where processed.
- It was confirmed the tourism officer had been appointed.
- Regarding Customer Services improvements the Chief Executive confirmed that we are looking at a number of areas in this regard. We need to update our website and to improve the phone system. We need to do this with current



technology. It is hoped to undertake some investments to deal with these issues and ensure a good quality service is provided.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. C. Keaveney it was **AGREED** to adopt the Galway County Council Service Delivery Plan 2020, in accordance with section 134(a) of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended).

**ITEM NO.5 APPOINTMENT OF REPLACEMENT NOMINEE TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC) FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION.** 3642

*Report dated the 15<sup>th</sup> September was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting*

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McHugh **SECONDED** by Cllr. C Keaveney it was **AGREED** to approve the appointment of Ms. Regina Higgins as a member of Galway County Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

**ITEM NO.6 REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES AND REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES AND OPERATION OF BODIES ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 141 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 ACT (AS AMENDED BY SECTION 53 OF THE 2014 ACT)**

3643

*Report dated the 21<sup>st</sup> September was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting*

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr C. Keaveney, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Curley it was **AGREED** to note the report on the *Lough Corrib Navigation Trustees*.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Canning **SECONDED** by Cllr. Hoade it was **AGREED** to note the report on the *Local Authority Members Association (LAMA)*.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Canning it was **AGREED** to note the report on the *Western Inter-County Rail Committee*.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. C Keaveney, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Canning it was **AGREED** to note the report on the *Regional Health Forum Representation, West*

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McHugh **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher it was **AGREED** to note the report on the *Forum Conamara Ltd*.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. C Keaveney, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Canning it was **AGREED** to note the report on the *Association of Irish Local Government*.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cronnelly, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Collins it was **AGREED** to note the report on the *Athenry Heritage and Tourism Co. Ltd*.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. C Keaveney, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kinane it was **AGREED** to note the report on the *Galway Rural Development Company*.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McHugh, **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher it was **AGREED** to note the report on the *Galway 2020*.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Comh Ó Curraoin, **SECONDED** by Comh O'Cualain it was **AGREED** to note the report on Comhar na nOilean.

In response to a query the County Secretary confirmed that that the October Plenary meeting would take place in the Loughrea Hotel on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> October. Tuesday the 20<sup>th</sup> October was provisionally booked if required.

Following discussion, the Cathaoirleach with the agreement of the Members adjourned the meeting to reconvene at 11:00 am on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September in GMT.

**MINUTES OF DEFERRED COUNCIL MEETING OF GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Held at GMT, DUBLIN ROAD, GALWAY**

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at 11:00am**

**CATHAOIRLEACH:**

Cllr. James Charity

Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway

**I LATHAIR FREISIN:**

**Baill:**

Comh. /Cllr. T Broderick, J. Byrne, L. Carroll, D. Collins, M. Connolly, G. Cronnelly, D. Ó Cualáin, J. Cuddy, S. Curley, T. Ó Curraoin, Albert Dolan, G. Donuhue, D. Geraghty, S. Herterich Quinn, M. Hoade, C. Keaveney, P. Keaveney, M. Kinane, G. King, P. Mac an Iomaire, M. Maher, E. Mannion, J. McClearn, K. McHugh Farag, A. McKinsty, E. Parsons, P. Roche, J. Sheridan, N. Thomas, and T. Welby.

**Oifigh:**

Mr. K. Kelly, Chief Executive (Interim), Mr J. Cullen, Director of Services, Ms E. Ruane, Director of Services, Mr L. Hanrahan, Director of Services, Mr A Farrell Director of Services, Mr. M. Owens, County Secretary, Ms M Mannion Heritage Officer, Ms. I. Martyn, Senior Staff Officer, Ms. U. Ní Eidhín, Oifigeach Gaeilge, Ms.



B Ryan, A/Staff Officer, Ms S. Elwood,  
A/Assistant Staff Officer

**ITEM NO.7 TO CONSIDER AND IF DEEMED APPROPRIATE ADOPT THE GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL DRAFT TENANCY SUSTAINMENT STRATEGY 2020-2022**

**3644**

*The Draft Tenancy Sustainment Strategy 2020-2022 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.*

Mr. Hanrahan gave a brief overview of the Draft Tenancy Sustainment Strategy 2020-2022. The strategy recognises the importance of early intervention when issues arise to avoid tenancy breakdowns and long-term tenancy issues. It sets out a roadmap to promote good tenancies:

- Prevention – identifying issues affecting tenancy sustainment at an early stage
- Tenancy Support - initiating corrective and supportive action at an early stage to avoid long term issues.
- Interagency Supports -working with relevant stakeholders to provide a joined-up support service to assist vulnerable tenants.

He noted the strategy was part of a suite of documents which, when used together, will promote good tenancies and sustainable communities. The follow up draft Anti-Social Behavior Strategy will be presented to the SPC in November. It will focus on dealing with undesirable behaviour in estates when things have gone wrong. He welcomed members feedback.

Cllr. Byrne welcomed the draft Tenancy Sustainment Strategy 2020-2022 and acknowledged the work of the Housing Department. He noted the follow up Anti-Social Behavior Strategy was equally important. He invited all members to provide feedback for this follow up document to ensure all points are considered and included in the draft strategy prior to presentation at the plenary meeting.

The Cathoirleach encouraged members to engage in the consultative phase at SPC stage, noting the 2-hour time limit for meetings may restrict time for discussion at plenary.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Byrne **SECONDED** by Cllr. McClearn it was **AGREED** to adopt the Draft Tenancy Sustainment Strategy 2020-2022.

A discussion arose regarding the current arrangements and the two-hour time limit for plenary meetings.

**The following points were raised by Cllrs. Cuddy, O'Curraoin, Kinane, McKinsty, Geraghty, C. Keaveney**

- Queried the possibility of extending the current two-hour time limit on plenary meetings as some Members were travelling long distances twice in a week to

attend plenary meetings. It was noted that Dáil sittings currently exceed this two-hour meeting limit.

- Queried the possibility of resuming plenary meetings on the same day for a further two hours following a reasonable break.
- Queried the possibility of members attending plenary meetings remotely via zoom. Referred to legislation currently going through the Dáil which will allow State bodies to hold meetings with some attendees participating remotely and if local authorities can be added to this list of state bodies.
- Stressed that elected representatives need to lead by example and not reject the public health advice given.

**The members queries were responded to as follows by the Cathoirleach:**

- Acknowledged the frustration and the inconvenience but reminded members that we are in the middle of a pandemic.
- Restated the current public health advice – meetings should not exceed two hours in one 24-hour period. He would not support any motion contrary to public health advice, particularly in light of the threat of Galway moving into phase 3 of government restrictions.
- Asked the County Secretary to seek clarification on why there are different rules apply to the local authority meetings and the Dáil sittings.
- Regarding the question of attending meetings remotely via Zoom, it was his understanding that while a member may join a plenary meeting via Zoom, they could not vote or actively participate in the plenary meeting.

**ITEM NO.8 TO APPROVE GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL ENTERING INTO A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY DATA CENTRE IN RELATION TO THE ALL IRELAND POLLINATOR PLAN.** **3645**

*Report dated the 14<sup>th</sup> September was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.*

The Heritage Officer outlined the framework for the partnership. Galway County Council will work in partnership with The National Biodiversity Data Centre in the delivery and implementation of the National Pollinator Plan. Working in partnership Galway County Council will:

- Support the ethos of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan and consider the plan in our policies where possible.
- Decide which pollinator friendly actions we want to pursue
- Update the All-Ireland Pollinator Team on the positive pollinator projects we have undertaken at the end of each year.

She emphasised Galway County Council is already doing a lot of work to support pollinators. Entering into partnership with The National Biodiversity Data Centre ensures we receive recognition for the work we are currently doing. This will further support our efforts and promote the work in this area. Currently 22 local authorities have signed up. The National Biodiversity Data Centre receive yearly reports from their partners on their activities giving a cohesive picture of what is happening around the country.

The Heritage Officer recommended approval of entering into a partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre in relation to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

**The following points and queries were raised by Cllrs. O'Cualan, Thomas, McKinstry, McClearn, Carroll, Donohue, Curley**

- Complimented the Heritage Officer on her ongoing work in this area.
- Noted mistakes had been made in the past in terms of biodiversity but the importance of pollinators and biodiversity in general is now widely acknowledged.
- Noted the plan needs huge community involvement and support.
- Noted investment will be required to raise awareness, educate and train. Renville Park wildflower garden was cited as a good example of work already done which could be used by schools as part of a school's programme.
- Concerns were raised on the implications of the plan in terms of planning in rural areas. Queried if the plan would require zoned areas resulting in the type of restrictions similar to other designated areas. Emphasised there would need to be huge flexibility if this was the case.
- Emphasised the need to plan biodiversity properly. Noted that existing protected areas didn't work because they didn't invest money to improve the biodiversity.
- Noted that there are a lot of people beekeeping as a hobby. Their efforts are undermined by current legislation which places huge obstacles in the way when selling their produce.
- Suggested one way to do so is to actively rewet the bogs to help build up the bogs
- Queried if Galway County Council had identified any public lands suitable and if there is a list of these lands available.
- Queried if an application for funding had been made to the Department Agriculture Forestry and Marine under the Woodland Creation & Public Land Scheme - Augusts 2020.

**The members queries were responded to as follows by the Heritage Officer:**

- Noted that Galway County Council had a strong track record of community engagement in relation to the delivery of a wide range of biodiversity projects including pollinator projects.
- All work in this area will be done in conjunction with the community. Intend to prepare pollinator plans for Municipal Districts but ultimately the community decides what they want to do. Have always operated on the ethos that the work will be done "by, with and for the community".
- Awareness is key and a lot of the work is about raising awareness and training. We are working closely with local community groups, tidy towns, schools and training staff. Noted we have produced a huge amount of advice and guidance has been provided to pollinators in the community.
- Confirmed there will be no designated areas but the aim is to spread around the county.

- Confirmed no applications have been made to date for the funding available under the Woodland Creation & Public Land Scheme - Augusts 2020. It is important to not to rush. It will be more beneficial in long run if we plan well.
- Regarding the identification of suitable landbanks there is a huge body of work to be done to assess suitability for planting. We may have landbanks, but they may not be suitable for planting. Similarly, we need to ensure the right trees are planted in the right place. Emphasised the need to plan and take advice to ensure the legacy is correct.

Ms. Ruane acknowledged the Heritage Officer on her excellent work in Galway for the past 20 years.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McHugh **SECONDED** by Cllr. Curley it was **AGREED** to approve Galway County Council entering into a partnership with the National Biodiversity Data Centre in relation to the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan.

**ITEM NO.9 TO CONSIDER AND IF DEEMED APPROPRIATE TO AUTHORISE THE ATTENDANCE AT CONFERENCES, MEETINGS, OTHER EVENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 142(5) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED).** 3646

*Report dated the 15<sup>th</sup> September was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.*

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. McClearn it was **AGREED** to authorise the attendance of the following members at the *AILG Module 3 Moorhead Report – A Briefing for Elected Members* at the following locations:

**Carrickdale Hotel, Dundalk, Sligo Park Hotel, Sligo, Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone**  
**Dates: 30th July 2020, 8th August 2020, 11th August 2020**

- **Members who expressed an interest in attending at the assigned locations:**  
Cllr. J. McClearn, Cllr. T. Welby, Cllr. M. Hoade, Cllr. G. King, Comh. T. Ó Curraoin, Cllr. M. Maher, Cllr. D. Collins
- **Member seeking authorisation to attend Training at alternative location:**  
Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford on 25th July 2020  
Cllr. M. Kinane
- **Member seeking authorisation to attend Training at alternative location:**  
Horse & Jockey, Thurles on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2020  
Cllr. S. Curley

**ITEM NO.10 TO CONSIDER THE MANAGEMENT REPORT – JULY 2020 IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 136(2) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED)** 3647

*Management Report September 2020 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting*

On the **PROPOSAL** of Curley **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher the Management Report – September 2020 in accordance with Section 136(2) of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended) was **AGREED**

**Matters arising.**

**The following queries and points were raised by Cllrs Hoade, Byrne, Thomas, Mannion, King, Maher, M Connolly, Kinane, C. Keaveney and Collins**

- Further clarification sought on staffing levels and the filling of vacancies. Queried if the 50 -60 vacancies outstanding last July were new positions or replacements.
- Inadequate staffing levels leaves existing staff stretched to the limit and services are also coming under pressure as a result.
- It was noted that we may lose out on funding because staff not available to apply for grants or follow up.
- It is vital members get involved and participate fully in the County Development Plan process and it was suggested that workshops are arranged for members to ensure they are clear on the reserved functions and statutory requirement with regards to the County Development Plan.
- It was queried if the Local Area Plans (LAPs) are being discontinued
- It was suggested that one of the biggest issues facing members in the preparation of the next County Development Plan is the lack of wastewater facilities and this needs to be addressed at national level.
- The construction of 26 houses in Clifden on site of old St Joseph's school was welcomed.
- Regarding illegal dumping, concerns were raised about CCTV usage - despite having cameras we can't use the footage in litter prosecutions. In addition, we don't have staffing resources to do the work as vacancies have not been filled.
- Highlighted that the North West Region was recently downgraded by the EU Commission from 'Developed' to a "Transition region". Ireland has the highest economic disparity in relation to regions. The trend will continue as it is expected that Brexit and Covid-19 will have a greater economic impact in the region
- However, this represent a significant opportunity for have us as the EU pledged to contribute €60 for every €100 invested by the Government in the next wave of regional funding.
- Stressed the importance of ensuring the North West region is given control over how funds are spent.
- Clarification was sought on the number of developers who expressed an interest in the call for housing turnkey projects details of the towns and villages and the number of projects involved.

Cllr. Cronnelly noted the position of Sports Coordinator has not been filled since the departure of Mick Curley. He complimented Mr. Curley on his years of service to Galway County Council. The Cathoirleach joined in congratulating him and wishing him well on his retirement

**The Members queries were responded to as follows by Ms. Ruane:**

- Welcomed the engagement of member in the County Development Plan process as soon as possible.
- Confirmed that the Forward Planning section will be setting up workshops for members.
- Regarding LAPs clarified we were trying to consolidate the work and bring some LAPs into the County Development Plan.
- Confirmed there is a statutory provision for LAP's.

**The Members queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:**

- Confirmed there were 60 staff vacancies last July and it was agreed to fill all these at that time. We are now at a point where we need to pause future appointments in light of our financial situation. He noted reference to acquiring additional 60 or 70 staff but at an average of €30,000 we are talking of a cost of €2m.
- Confirmed that based on the most recent established baseline of staffing levels in staff vacancies have been filled and are being filled.
- Some vacancies are in the process of being filled at the moment. If a panel is in place they will be filled quickly but If there is no panel it takes time.
- It was noted that there are also posts funded from elsewhere like the Sports Coordinator and confirmed the filling of this position.
- Aware that there are many units in Galway County Council where more staff are required but any positions arising now will have to wait until after the budget.
- Regarding the illegal dumping noted that with additional funding received two additional staff will be recruited on a 1 year contract.
- Referring to the use of CCTV there has been an outcome in the case between Kerry County Council and the Data Commissioner and a change in legislation needs to be considered.
- He concurred with the sentiments in relation to being a region in transition. It is a concern but also a great opportunity to secure additional funding.
- With regard to the County Development Plan he welcomed and encouraged a high level of engagement with members.
- Regarding LAP and in relation to towns and villages confirmed we had piloted having clusters which wasn't accepted by An Bord Pleanála but they have said they may reconsider their approach.

Re turnkey developments Mr. Hanrahan confirmed that there were 40 applications from throughout the county. He confirmed that the Stage 1 assessment was completed last week and we will be advising applicants if they are going forward for Stage 2 assessment. He noted that we will not be proceeding in areas where we have our own landbanks.

**ITEM NO.11 Electric Vehicle Charging Points**

**3648**

Mr. Cullen gave a brief update on the provision of electric vehicle charging points:



- The Department of Communications Climate Action and Environment last year indicated funding would be made available to local authorities for the rollout of public charge points across the country. He noted since then there has been no further developments.
- The ESB also had proposals to roll out electric vehicle charging points nationally. There is no information available in respect of their proposed locations in County Galway.
- The CCMA are currently preparing a report on the rollout of EV charging points on a national level.

**The following queries and points were raised by Cllrs Herterich Quinn, McHugh McKinistry, Thomas, Dolan and Welby**

- Concerns was raised over the lack of impetus and that we should be rolling out EV points given the funding was made available in 2019.
- From a tourism point of view, we are impeding growth due to the lack of EV charging points in the county.
- While capital support of 75% of the costs is provided by the department it was queried how are we going to come up with the remaining 25%.
- Raised concerns that we may have a problem with the grid and where points can be installed. We need 3 phase power and not everywhere will have it. We need to organise a meeting between the council and Eirgrid to coordinate where we can place charging points and confirm where they are placing their charging points
- Clarification sought if we rollout these points will they be in the ownership of Galway County Council and could be an investment opportunity. While there are initial costs if private companies are making money, we need to examine this.
- Need to engage with Oireachtas members to ensure this can be progressed as soon as possible before a massive rollout of EV's hit the market.

**The Members queries were responded to as follows by Mr Cullen:**

He noted that a lot of preparatory work had yet to be done requiring a huge level of detail:

- Assess the demand for EV charging points in the county.
- Review the current network of existing charge points to decide suitable locations.
- Decide on the most appropriate business model for the rollout of any network
- Further analysis of fee structures and contractual arrangements with the SSB will also be required.

The Chief Executive noted that he expected a report on a Pilot study in Dublin will be available in October. It would be beneficial to have the report available and examine the findings before any decisions are taken.



**ITEM NO. 12 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS & CORRESPONDENCE**

**3649**

*The following items of correspondence which were published on the Extranet prior to the meeting were noted:*

- Letter dated 6.8.20 from Mary-Lou MacDonald, TD. acknowledging correspondence re resolution - to support the Suckler Beef sector.
- Letter dated 7.8.20 from Office of the Tánaiste acknowledging correspondence re resolution - to support the Suckler Beef sector.
- Email dated 11<sup>th</sup> August from Minister Eamon Ryan TD re resolution – to support the Suckler Beef sector.
- Letter dated 11.8.20 from Galway City Council re resolution adopted.
- Letter dated 12.8.20 from Office of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection acknowledging correspondence re resolution –Introduction of a Pension Scheme for the CES Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors.
- Email dated 12.8.20 from Office of the Minister for Justice & Equality acknowledging correspondence re resolution - Garda Numbers, Policing Model & CCTV in Rural Ireland.
- Letter dated 14.8.20 from Office of the Tánaiste acknowledging correspondence re resolution - to support the Suckler Beef sector.
- Letter dated 14.8.20 from Kerry County Council re resolution - State Public Service Fund.
- Letter dated 18.8.20 from Office of the Minister for Agriculture acknowledging correspondence re resolution - to support the Suckler Beef sector.
- Letter dated 20.8.20 from Louth County Council re resolution adopted – Taskforce on impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health & Wellbeing.
- Letter dated 21.08.2020 from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council re resolution – Care Homes.
- Letter dated 31.08.2020 from Uisce Eireann/Irish Water re resolution - Strategic Plan on the roll out of Waste-Water Infrastructure in Galway County.
- Letter dated 02.09.2020 from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection re resolution - Introduction of a Pension Scheme for the CES Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors.
- Letter dated 10.09.2020 from Kildare County Council re resolution – Stillbirth Register.
- Letter dated 14.09.2020 from Sligo County Council re resolution –Conditions of employment of Tús and CE participants on employment schemes.
- Letter dated 17.09.2020 from the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government – Allocation of €1million for use in 2021.

**Matters arising:**

Cllr. Byrne clarified details of the letter dated 11.8.20 received from Galway City Council. He noted Galway City Council will, in future, consult and engage with Galway County Council in advance of any plans it has to purchase houses for social housing purposes in the county functional area.

Mr. Cullen referred to correspondence received on 23.9.20 from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht regarding funding for works on Inisboffin and Inis Mór. He noted there was a requirement that the works were to be completed by 9<sup>th</sup> October. As this is not possible he will seek permission to complete works at earliest opportunity next year.

The Cathoirléach said he had discussed with the Chief Executive the prospect of Galway being moved to Phase 3 restrictions following the recent comments by the Taoiseach and the Acting Chief Medical Officer. He acknowledged that people have been extremely compliant in following the public health advice. He reiterated the need to continue to keep your distance, wash your hands, wear a mask in all public places and reduce your contacts. He asked members to convey the message back to constituents.

Mr. Farrell addressed the meeting updating members on ongoing discussions with Coral Leisure and the operations of the two leisure centers in Ballinasloe and Tuam. He said he had briefed members of the Ballinasloe and Tuam Municipal Districts yesterday outlining to them the significant gap in funding required to keep both centres open. Discussions are ongoing with Coral Leisure to examine the options and he advised that there would also be costs associated with a temporary closure. He acknowledged a lot of people will be affected by any decision taken including staff, users and particular groups using the facilities. He will keep members briefed on further developments.

**ITEM NO. 13 CATHOIRLEACH'S BUSINESS.**

**3650**

The following Motions were submitted:

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Charity the members **AGREED**:

*"I propose that a delegation from members of this Council meet with Government Ministers to address the ongoing inadequate funding of Galway County Council."*

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Collins **SECONDED** by Cllr. McClearn the members **AGREED**:

*"According to the European Commission, regional disparities in Ireland are among the highest in the European Union. As a result of our poor economic performance the west and border region (NUTS II) has been downgraded from 'Developed' to 'in Transition'. All the economic indicators show a trend towards widening regional inequality. Management and delivery of European Regional Development Funds is essential to the regions performance and we ask that these funds continue to be managed by the regions (NWRA), in the regions with increased flexibility and consistent with regional priorities".*

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Broderick **SECONDED** by Cllr. Geraghty.

*"The retention of the remaining financial commitment namely €500,000 to Galway 2020 and the use of same towards our overall budgetary commitments for 2021."*

Following a brief discussion, it was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher and **AGREED** to defer the motion to the Budget Meeting.

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Curley **SECONDED** by Cllr. C. Keaveney

*"In relation to delivery of services Galway County council do not carry out housing repairs on any council house where the tenants have breached the rules of their tenancy in the previous 24 months."*

With the agreement of the members the motion was withdrawn.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Herterich Quinn **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kinane the members **AGREED**:

*"Propose that the elected members write to the Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage and request that the position of Acting Chief Executive Officer in Galway County Council be addressed immediately and without delay".*

## **NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **Notice of Motion No. 14 - Cllr. Sheridan**

**3651**

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

*"that Galway County Council notify our rate payers in writing, that no vacancy tax will be proportioned to their vacant properties during the present council term as was voted in 24<sup>th</sup> November 2019 by the Council Coalition".*

The following written reply was issued to Cllr. Byrne.

"I wish to advise that at the 2020 Annual Budget Meeting held on the 25.11.2019 the request by the Chief Executive for a 6% increase in the commercial rate was rejected by the elected members and consequently an estimated shortfall of €1m in income had to be funded in order to achieve a balanced budget. A schedule of amendments involving €850k reductions in discretionary expenditure and a 25% rate demand on vacant properties estimated to raise €150k in income was proposed and the Budget was passed with these amendments by 20 votes to 15 (0 abstained) As the variation of the vacancy refund was adopted by the members in order to produce a balanced budget the Council have no option but to collect the amounts so levied."

Following discussion, it was agreed to defer further consideration of the Motion to the October meeting to allow for legal advice to be obtained.

**Notice of Motion No. 15 - Cllr. C. Keaveney**

**3652**

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

*"I call on Galway County Council to put forward Budget allocation expenditure headlines to facilitate expenditure from Conference & Training Budget to the discretion of the elected representative. This would require consultation with each elected representative to solicit their preferences".*

The following written reply was issued to Cllr. C. Keaveney.

"The approach to funding for training and conferences was the subject of further consideration at a recent meeting of the Corporate Policy Group and it was agreed to recommend to Plenary Council that the unspent balance of funding for training and conferences in 2020 be brought forward to 2021 subject to the limitation on conferences set by the Department for the specific purpose of attendance at training and conferences and that any re-allocation of the 2021 Conference and Training Budget should take place at the 2021 Budget Meeting in November. This would require proposed re-allocations to be proposed, seconded and approved by Council at the Budget meeting."

**Notice of Motion No. 16 – Cllrs. Kinane & McClearn**

**3653**

Cllrs. Kinane & McClearn submitted the following Notice of Motion prior to the meeting:

*"We wish to propose the establishment of a working group to support the progression of a Park & Ride Service at Ardaun, Oramore".*

The following written reply was issued to Cllrs. Kinane and McClearn.

"Galway Co. Co. will consider the progression of a Park & Ride Service in the Ardaun Area and propose to do so in consultation with Galway City Council and the Galway Transport Strategy."

Following a brief discussion, it was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Kinnane **SECONDED** by Cllr. McClearn and **AGREED** to establish a Working Group to support the progression of a Park & Ride Service at Ardaun, Oramore".

**Notice of Motion No. 17 - Cllr. Finnerty**

**3654**

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

*"There is a serious concern from county fire stations and the public in relation to keeping crew in stations and to getting new recruits to join, as there are no incentives. With the*

*draconian measures in place of having to be living inside a 1.5 mile radius of the station is a joke, and thus needs to be extended to 5km like in some other counties. Also the high rate to be changed to 5pm - 9am in line with all other public services/council workers. Fire crews to be alerted to all Rtc's automatically and not to have to wait up to 45 mins for an ambulance to arrive to be alerted. Which could be too late for the casualty".*

The following written reply was issued to Cllr. Finnerty.

"Galway County Council comply with all National Agreements in place between unions and management in respect of the employment terms and conditions for Retained Fire Fighters across the service. The target mobilising time for a fire appliance from time of alert to leaving the fire station is 5 minutes, which is in line with NOAC KPIs and the KCS Keeping Communities Safe Document. In order to meet this 5-minute target, the distance set by fire authorities is generally in the region of 1.5 – 2 miles. The fire authority accepts that in some station areas it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain fire fighters and is aware that this is a nationwide issue which is under consideration at a National level. Mobilisation to all incidents (including RTCs) is dependent on phone calls from members of the public (either involved in, or witness to an incident) to ECAS (999/112) who then contact the requested emergency service control centre. The fire service is unaware of any incident until the control centre receives the emergency call, after which the nearest fire service is immediately alerted and mobilised."

**Notice of Motion No. 18 - Cllr. Byrne**

**3655**

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

*"This Motion calls on Galway Co. Co. to make lands available, which are not suitable for Social Housing Projects, for the purpose of providing Hockey facilities to cater for the ever-increasing number of young girls who are playing Hockey in our County. There is a huge imbalance here and in the Year 2020, which is the year for promoting Women in Sport, we as a County should take the lead in this to provide land, so that Hockey Clubs and Connacht Hockey may promote their sport".*

The following written reply was issued to Cllr. Byrne

"No lands in the ownership of Galway County Council have been identified that are considered suitable for the purpose of providing Hockey facilities"

Cllr. Byrne referenced lands in the ownership of the Council located at Station Road, Gort as a possible site. The Chief Executive noted a review of any proposed site would be required to advise on its suitability.

**ITEM NO. 19 – VOTES OF SYMPATHY /CONGRATULATIONS**

**3656**

**Resolutions of Sympathy:**

**A resolution of sympathy was extended to the following:**

- The Glynn Family, Dunmore
- Michael Vaughan, The Woodside Bar, Monivea
- Tadgh & Pat Mullen, Kilcreevanty, Tuam
- Olga Stockwell, Ardgannon, Tuam
- Anne Kelly, Ballygaddy Road, Galway
- Marion Broderick, Newtown, Gort
- Bridie Nolan, Corker, Gort
- Geraldine Mullan, Moville, Donegal
- The Connaughton Family, Williamstown
- Padraic Lee, Carnakib, Headford
- Una Mannion, Carnakelly, Athenry
- Johnny & Mary Hession, Cregcarragh, Claregalway
- Tom & Mary Rock, Gurteen, Mountbellew, Ballinasloe
- Tomas & Gina Mannion & Family, Moyloughmore, Ballinasloe
- Mary Laffey & Family, Windfield Road, Menlough, Ballinasloe
- Jim Gavin, Killascobe, Menlough
- Eugene & Winnie Burke, Mullaghmore, Moylough, Ballinasloe
- Padraic Chearra, Lochán Beag, Indreabháin
- Nora O'Donnell (C.P.C.), Galway University Hospital, Newcastle Road
- Bríd Mac Sharry, Cornarone Middle, Inverin
- Barry Ó Fahartha, Baile an tSleibhe, Ros a Mhíl
- Pat Monahan, Ballynagran, Craughwell

**Chriochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.**

**Submitted Signed and Approved:**

**Cathaoirleach:**

James Charley

**Date:**

23/11/2020

