



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe  
Galway County Council

**Minutes of the Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning Strategic Policy Committee**  
**Meeting held on Tuesday 03<sup>rd</sup> March, 2026 at 11am via MS Teams**

**I LÁTHAIR:**

**Baill:** Cllr. Donagh Killilea, Chairperson

Cllr. Mary Hoade

Cllr. Gerry King

Cllr. David Collins

Cllr. Declan Geraghty

Cllr. Tom Welby

Ms. Lyn Donnelly, Community/Voluntary

Ms. Helena McElmeel, Business/Commercial

Mr. Paul Carey, Development/Construction

**Oifigigh:** Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services, Planning & Economic Development

Ms. Valerie Loughnane, Senior Planner, Planning

Mr. Brian Corcoran, Senior Executive Planner, Planning

Ms. Ciara Cosgrave, Senior Executive Planner, Planning

Mr. Eoin Connaire, Business Advisor, Local Enterprise Office

Ms. Hazel Fox, Town Regeneration Officer, Urban & Rural Regeneration

Mr. Ronan Conway, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Urban & Rural Regeneration Office

Ms. Eileen Keaveney, Administrative Officer, Planning

Ms. Sinéad Burns, Assistant Staff Officer, Planning

**Item No. 1 – Minutes of meeting dated 03/12/2025**

Cllr. Killilea (Chairperson) opened the meeting. Minutes of the SPC meeting held on 03/12/25 were proposed by Cllr. Hoade and seconded by Mr. Paul Carey. No matters arising.

**Item No. 2 – Planning Act 2024 Implementation Report**

Ms. Loughnane explained that various stages of the Planning Act and significant sections have been enacted. A number of training sessions have taken place. A workshop for staff is being held tomorrow 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2026 hosted by the OPR.

Agents and public need to be made aware of the new processes and site notices etc updated.

Part 3 of the Act deals with the Development Plans and Urban Area Plans. Further updates are due to issue from the Department regarding the transition process.

Part 4 of the Act deals with the Development Management changes. There will be changes in the Part 8 process.

Ms. Loughnane added that Ms. Keaveney is on a working group with regard to the formulation and implementation of regulations.

Cllr. Hoade asked if training is for staff only and that it would be in the interest of the Local Authority to hold training for the public.

Mr. Hanrahan said that the training is currently for Local Authority staff only. The Local Authority may be able to consider training and that another agents seminar will be planned.

Cllr. Geraghty said that the 10 year plan for the County Development Plan is a very long time.

Cllr. Welby said that when negotiations were taking place, Elected Members were the only ones against the plans being for a 10 year period.

Ms. Loughnane said that the next county Development Plan will be 10 years, there may be a possibility of extending the existing plan to allow for the RSES to be reviewed but there is no confirmed statutory timeline yet.

Ms. Loughnane also clarified that zoning maps under the former Local Area Plans will now be included in the new County Development Plan and will be a more efficient system.

Ms. McElmeel supported Cllr. Hoades suggestion that a training session for the transitional period would be beneficial and added that pre-planning meetings would be more important now, noting there are significant delays in wait times in some MDs.

Cllr. Killilea said he is waiting for 13 weeks for a pre planning meeting for a proposed commercial development.

Cllr. Geraghty said this waiting period for pre planning meetings is too long.

Mr. Hanrahan said that there are resource issues and that the team are continuing to schedule meetings as quick as possible.

Cllr. Welby said that if agents are good enough, they should be aware of the regulations and be able to lodge successful applications.

Mr. Carey said that a 10 year plan gives a vision but wondered if something radically changes how it is incorporated and that it is a long process either way.

Ms. Loughnane said that plans will look different and there will be monitoring throughout the lifetime of the plan, if something needs to be incorporated.

### **Item No. 3 – Report on County Development Plan Variation**

Mr. Corcoran shared a presentation giving an update on the CDP Variation.

- **Part A:** Review and update of the existing Housing Strategy and Housing Need and Demand Assessment of the GCDP with associated updates to the CDP
- **Part B:** Updates to existing Policy Objectives and narrative in the CDP which will place a new focus on Residential Phase 2 lands in the County.
- **Part C:** Rectification of Land Use Zoning Map for Oranmore

Notice initially sent to relevant stakeholders in relation to SEA screening on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025 as required. Associated Determinations and Screening Reports were placed on public display with the Variation documents. Public display 24 November – 23 December. A total of 46 valid submissions were received. A Chief Executive's Report was then prepared. The

Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) made 2 recommendations as outlined in the Chief Executive's Report. The Chief Executive's Report was presented to Members on 16<sup>th</sup> February. The variation was made and came into effect on that date.

Ms. Loughnane thanked the Elected Members for their participation and thanked the Forward Planning Team for their work on the variation.

Cllr. Killilea thanked Ms. Loughnane, Mr. Corcoran and all the Forward Planning Team for their work.

#### **Item No. 4 – Economic Development Strategy**

Ms. Loughnane said that the Strategy is being compiled by Galway County and Galway City Councils. Consultants Grant Thornton have been engaged to work on the strategy. An in person meeting was held on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March with personnel from Galway County and City Councils alongside consultants Grant Thornton to discuss and agree parameters of the strategy. Key stakeholders have been consulted and their feedback is being recorded. A utilities workshop is scheduled to take place in City Hall on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. There will be further engagement with stakeholders and SPC members as the strategy progresses.

#### **Item No. 5 – Planning Report for Galway Housing Taskforce meeting**

Mr. Corcoran explained that the Galway Housing Taskforce meetings take place on a quarterly basis. The latest meeting took place on Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2026. The Forward Planning Section provided an update on Housing Delivery up to the end of December 2025 (planning permissions and commencements). The Team consistently monitor, retain data and keep an eye on commencements. Approximately 2,000 multi units were permitted on greenfield sites since the Galway County Development Plan came into effect in June, 2022. Other land uses are also being consistently monitored.

Housing Need Demand Assessment was reviewed as part of Variation No. 1 and gives effect to the Ministers guidelines in terms of housing targets.

Mr. Hanrahan said that the details are included in the Management Report after the Task Force has met.

Cllr. Collins asked if it is possible to go back to the Department making a case for the need for more affordable housing.

Mr. Hanrahan explained that the Housing Section send a request to the Department in advance of a particular development. The approval is based on assessment of housing need, affordability and social housing need.

#### **Item No. 6 – S.254 Outdoor Licences procedure**

Ms. Loughnane explained that the system in place for outdoor seating had operated well for a period but there have been issues of late with regard to public safety, furniture being left out causing damage and it is proposed to update the licencing procedure as follows:

1. Licences will only be permitted for the operation of outdoor seating from March to October during daytime hours
2. Insurance details will need to be provided with the application
3. A letter of permission will be required from the property either side of the premises
4. Seating can only take up a maximum of 2 parking spaces

If the members are agreeable to this proposal, the new rules and regulations will be advertised in local newspapers and social media platforms and will apply for the coming season.

Ms. Loughnane confirmed that there are a number of applications with the Planning Section at the moment and these are currently on hold in order to agree the new procedure for the next season. She added that the Area Engineers are consulted on all the applications and currently have the final say on licences. They have been finding the situation in areas extremely difficult. Further discussion continued with the members around the problems and new proposals. Mr. Hanrahan stressed that seating cannot block footpaths and public access. It was finally agreed that the proposal for the new procedure was acceptable and that the Engineer would exercise discretion should there be an issue with regard to a particular application.

#### **Item No. 7 – Local Enterprise Office Update**

Mr. Connaire gave an update on LEO year end performance metrics.

##### **Grants Approved – Financial Supports 2025**

- Priming Grants = 3
- Business Expansion Grants = 7
- Feasibility Grants = 7
- Market Explorer Grants = 5
- Trading Online Voucher = 37
- Energy Efficiency Grant = 50
- Grow Digital Voucher = 20

##### **Productivity Supports Approved**

- Digital Start = 62
- Green for Business = 103
- Lean for Business = 15

##### **Training**

- 76 Training Programmes/Workshops – 1,423 individuals/businesses Participants

##### **Start Your Own Business Programme**

- 18 Programmes – 334 Participants

##### **Management Development Programme**

- 6 Programmes – 124 Participants

##### **Mentoring**

- 882 businesses/individuals received mentoring support in 2025

##### **MFI – LEO Applications Submitted**

- 40

76 jobs created with assistance from the Local Enterprise Office Galway in 2025.

Local Enterprise Week will take place from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> March with a packed itinerary for the week.

#### **Item No. 8 – Rural Regeneration Office Update**

Ms. Fox gave an update on the projects to date.

**Item No. 9 – Work Programme & Schedule of Meetings for 2026**

The meetings scheduled for the remainder of the year are as follows - 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

**Item No. 10 – AOB**

Cllr. Geraghty asked if there are any plans for developing lands with the IDA.

Mr. Hanrahan said that discussions are being held with the IDA. The consultants working on the Economic Development Strategy will also be looking at this.

Ms. McElmeel suggested that the Economic Strategy have workshops and engage with various groups in all locations and to have a submission process.

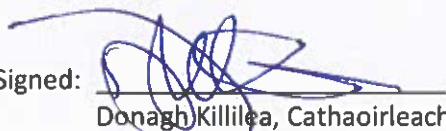
Cllr. Geraghty said that it is important to reach out to smaller towns.

Cllr. Killilea wished to note that in recent events in the Dáil and online, individual Planners names were mentioned. He expressed his disappointment and asked if there was a facility to support staff who were involved.

Mr. Hanrahan said that the current staff member is being supported and the Local Authority have gone back to the political party to communicate the disappointment to a number of individuals. He added that legal measures are being considered.

The meeting concluded.

Signed:

  
Donagh Killilea, Cathaoirleach

Date:

9/9/2026

