

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE
MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL
Held at ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PROSPECT HILL
Monday, 23rd June 2025 at 1.00pm

CATHAOIRLEACH: Cllr. D. Collins
Cathaoirleach of the County of Galway

I LATHAIR FREISIN:

Baill: Comh. /Cllr. S. Broderick, I. Canning, J. Charity, D. Connolly, M. Connolly, S. Cuniffe, T. Ó Curraoin, G. Donohue, G. Finnerty, A. Harney, L. Harney, M. Hoade, D. Kelly, D. Killilea, G. King, M. Lee, M. Maher, E. Mannion, J. McClearn, S. McHugh Ryan, E. F. Parsons, A. Reddington, M. Regan, N. Thomas, O. Turner, S. Walsh and T. Welby.

Baill ar líne: Comh. /Cllr. D. Geraghty, T. Grealish, C. Keane, P. Keaveney, M. Kinane, M. Leainde, P. Mac an Iomaire, K. McHugh Farag, M. McNamara, Mr. U. Finn, Director of Services.

Oifigh: Mr. L. Conneally, Chief Executive, Mr. L. Hanrahan, Director of Services, Mr. Michael Owens, Director of Services, Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services, Ms. K. O'Connor, Head of Finance, Mr. D. Mitchell, Director of Services, Ms. J. Brann Meetings Administrator, Mr. Sean Devaney, Senior Engineer, Ms. L. Keady, A/Senior Executive Officer, Ms. S. Lawless, Administrative Officer, Mr. M. O Donnchadha, Oifigeach Forbartha Gaeilge, Ms. H. Riordan, Staff Officer, Ms. L. O'Donnell, Assistant Staff Officer.

Thosnaigh an cruinniú leis an paidir.

The Members and the Cathaoirleach on behalf of Galway County Council, offered their condolences to the family of Mr. Christy Reilly and the farming community on his sudden passing.

ITEM NO.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS

4585

Cllr. Parsons raised an issue of inaccuracy and omission in the draft minutes as presented, specifically on page 27.

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Parsons **SECONDED** by Cllr. Welby:

'The text currently reads: 'The Cathaoirleach gave a commitment that the matter of would be at the June meeting of the SPC. The recommendation of the SPC thereafter could be discussed if appropriate at the June meeting.'

I propose that this be amended to accurately reflect what was conveyed at the meeting, namely:

'The Cathaoirleach and the Chief Executive gave commitments to the holding of an urgent Housing SPC to expressly consider the amendments proposed in the motion (page 26 May minutes – re returning Irish born emigrants / Safe Home Ireland) so that the Housing SPC's recommendations and the GCC Housing Allocation Scheme would come before the elected members to consider in relation to exercising their reserved powers on the agenda in the June plenary meeting'

This more accurately reflects the substance and sequence of what was conveyed. It has not been listed on the agenda. There is no written update or reference to the recommendations of the Housing SPC arising from meeting provided to members in any documentation before us today.

I ask that my motion to include amendments is taken now.'

Cllr. Parsons expanded on the proposed amendment. A commitment was given by the Cathaoirleach and Chief Executive at the May plenary meeting, that her motion on returning Irish born emigrants, would be discussed at the next Housing Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) meeting. That the recommendation from the SPC and the updated scheme would then be included on the June plenary agenda. She noted that the item was not on the June plenary agenda and a written update had not been received by the Members. She outlined that as the motion as raised at the May plenary meeting was not voted on by the Members nor was it withdrawn, that therefore it remains a valid motion.

The Cathaoirleach informed Cllr. Parsons that the matter was discussed at the Housing SPC meeting on Friday 13th June. The agreed recommendation from the SPC meeting must now be discussed at a Corporate Policy Group (CPG) meeting. A CPG meeting was held on Monday 16th June, however there was not adequate time for the item to be included on the June CPG agenda. It will be on the agenda of the next CPG meeting, which is to be held on Monday 14th July. Following consideration there, it will be included on the July plenary agenda.

The Chief Executive indicated that he had no difficulty with regard to the proposed amendment of the May plenary minutes, as proposed by Cllr. Parsons. The matter was due to be discussed at the Housing SPC meeting in May, but this meeting was unavoidably deferred until 13th June. It was agreed at the Housing SPC meeting on 13th June that the Housing Allocation Scheme be amended. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to include this item on both the June CPG agenda and the June plenary agenda. He apologised for the oversight and gave a commitment that the matter will be considered at the next CPG meeting on 14th July, in advance of the July plenary meeting. Amendments to the Housing Allocation Scheme must follow a prescribed two-step process. If the addition of the Special Category is approved by the Members at July Plenary, the amended Housing Allocation Scheme will then be forwarded to the Minister for Housing for the required sanction.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- An update was sought on a previous motion that proposed one hour free parking in Ballinasloe.

- The budgetary effect of introducing free parking must be investigated.
- If free parking is introduced, it should be introduced County wide.
- Clarity was sought on the process to introduce free parking in Ballinasloe, if the matter must be discussed at SPC or plenary.
- Businesses in Ballinasloe are closing, which is reducing the level of rates received by the Council. The proposed initiative to introduce one-hour free parking will encourage people to go to Ballinasloe. This will keep businesses open and increase the revenue that the Council collects from rates.
- Increasing enforcement of existing parking bye laws would increase revenue.
- Ballinasloe should be considered independently of other towns in County Galway, due to its proximity to Co. Roscommon which does not implement paid parking.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- There are two elements to be addressed when considering reducing parking fees; the byelaws which are considered at SPC level and the financial implications. Parking fees form a substantial stream of income for the Council. Members must consider how any loss in income will impact the overall provision of services by the Council and this should be done as part of the overall budgetary process.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- A report on the proposed introduction of one-hour free parking was presented to the SPC. The current byelaws were adopted by the Members 22 years ago. The income derived from parking fees contributes to the funding of town centre enhancement and residential parking permits.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- A better process for managing Notices of Motion is required.
- Members individual contributions are not recorded in the minutes of the meetings.

- Implementation of live streaming and transcription of Council meetings was sought.
- Is it a requirement that a Housing SPC meeting be convened before the July plenary meeting to discuss the Safe Home Ireland motion.
- If the proposed Special Category was to be included in the Housing Allocation Scheme, could those currently on the Housing Waiting List be adversely affected.
- Returning emigrants are already eligible for housing under the current Housing Allocation Scheme.
- Procedures and Standing Orders must be followed. There will be implications if they are not adhered to.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The planned CPG meeting of the 14th of July is coinciding with a meeting of the Loughrea Municipal District.
- An update on the roll out of affordable housing in the Tuam Municipal District (MD) was requested.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Mitchell:

- At the May plenary meeting, it was decided that Cllr. Parsons proposed motion would be considered at the Housing SPC meeting on 13th June. At this meeting it was agreed by the Members to include returning emigrants as a Special Category in the Housing Allocation Scheme. He pointed out that it was not agreed that the proposed special category would enjoy a higher order of priority than the existing special categories. He apologised for the timing issue, explaining that the Housing SPC meeting was held only two working days before the agenda for the June plenary meeting was issued.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Clarity was sought on the next scheduled meeting date of the Housing SPC and if the minutes of the last Housing SPC are required to be approved before the motion may progress.
- The draft minutes for the May plenary meeting are an accurate reflection of proceedings.
- The current Housing Allocation Scheme facilitates returning emigrants.
- As the parking byelaws are 20 years old, they require updating.
- It is understood that correspondence was issued by the department informing the Council that it will not provide funding toward Dunguaire Castle in Kinvara. It was stated that this correspondence has not been shared with the Members. It was queried how the Council propose to obtain the necessary funding for the Castle.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- The next CPG meeting will be held on 14th July.
- The minutes of the Housing SPC meeting held on 13th June are not required to be approved at SPC for Cllr. Parson's proposal to be considered at CPG.
- He clarified that the Council are not seeking funds to purchase Dunguaire Castle but are seeking funding to address the capital upgrade of the castle. The transfer of ownership to the Council will only take place if the Government provide the capital investment to bring it up to adequate health and safety opening standards. Any correspondence from the Department in relation to Dunguaire Castle will be attached to the Council Plenary documents.
- The Council will continue to seek funding for the upgrade of Dunguaire Castle.

The Cathaoirleach called for the Members present to vote on the proposed amendment to the Draft May 2025 Plenary Minutes.

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Parsons **SECONDED** by Cllr. Welby:

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I propose that this be amended to accurately reflect what was conveyed at the meeting, namely:

'The Cathaoirleach and the Chief Executive gave commitments to the holding of an urgent Housing SPC to expressly consider the amendments proposed in the motion (page 26 May minutes – re returning irish born emigrants / Safe Home Ireland) so that the Housing SPC's recommendations and the GCC Housing Allocation Scheme would come before the elected members to consider in relation to exercising their reserved powers on the agenda in the June plenary meeting'

This more accurately reflects the substance and sequence of what was conveyed. It has not been listed on the agenda. There is no written update or reference to the recommendations of the Housing SPC arising from meeting provided to members in any documentation before us today.

I ask that my motion to include amendments is taken now.'

A vote was taken on the motion

The following was the result:

For 26

Cllr. Broderick	Cllr. Canning	Cllr. Collins
Cllr. D. Connolly	Cllr. Cuniffe	Comh. Ó Cualáin
Cllr. Donohue	Cllr. Geraghty	Cllr. Grealish
Cllr. A. Harney	Cllr. L. Harney	Cllr. Hoade
Cllr. Keane	Cllr. Keaveney	Cllr. Kelly
Cllr. D. Killilea	Cllr. King	Cllr. Lee
Comh. Mac an Iomaire	Cllr. McHugh Farag	Cllr. McNamara

Cllr. Dr. E. F. Parsons
Cllr. Turner

Cllr. Reddington
Cllr. Welby

Cllr. Regan

Against 3

Cllr. M. Connolly

Cllr. Maher

Cllr. Mannion

Abstain 6

Cllr. Charity

Cllr. Kinane

Cllr. Leainde

Cllr. McClearn

Cllr. McHugh Ryan

Cllr. Walsh

No-Voting 4

Cllr. Feeney

Cllr. Finnerty

Cllr. P. Killilea

Cllr. Thomas

The Cathaoirleach confirmed that the motion was carried.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Canning the amended minutes of the Monthly Plenary Meeting held on 26th May 2025 were **AGREED**.

ITEM NO.2 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4586

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Regan the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group held on 19th May 2025 were **NOTED**.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Lee **SECONDED** by Cllr. Thomas the minutes of the Community, Irish Language, Gaeltacht, Tourism & Integration Strategic Policy Committee held on 17th February 2025 were **NOTED**.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Following the recent power outage in Clifden, it was asked if there are plans to continue providing Community Hubs that were established during Storm Éowyn, for future similar events.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- A number of learnings can be taken from the events around Storm Éowyn. Community Hubs can be stood up, if and when required.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Regan the minutes of the Economic Development, Enterprise & Planning Strategic Policy Committee held on 5th March 2025 were **NOTED**.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Regan **SECONDED** by Cllr. Kinane the minutes of the Climate Action, Biodiversity & Heritage Strategic Policy Committee held on 9th April 2025 were **NOTED**.

ITEM NO.3 FILLING OF CASUAL VACANCY AS THE CHAIRPERSON ON THE COMMUNITY, IRISH LANGUAGE, GAELTACHT, TOURISM & INTEGRATION STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE **4587**

Report dated 16th June 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cuniffe **SECONDED** by Cllr. Thomas it was **AGREED** to appoint Cllr. Leainde as the Chairperson on the Community, Irish Language, Gaeltacht, Tourism & Integration Strategic Policy Committee.

ITEM NO. 4 REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES AND OPERATION OF BODIES ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 141 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED BY SECTION 53 OF THE 2014 ACT). **4588**

Report dated 16th June 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. M. Connolly it was **AGREED** to approve reports on the activities and operation of the following bodies in accordance with section 141 of the Local Government Act 2001 Act (as amended by section 53 of the 2014 act) for the period June 2024 to May 2025 inclusive:

- (a) Lough Corrib Navigation Trustees
- (b) Northern & Western Regional Assembly
- (c) Athenry Heritage and Tourism Co. Ltd.
- (d) Association of Irish Local Government
- (e) Irish Public Bodies Mutual Insurances Ltd.
- (f) Western Inter-County Rail Committee
- (g) Galway & Roscommon Education & Training Board
- (h) Regional Health Forum Representation, West
- (i) Galway Rural Development Company
- (j) Forum Conamara Ltd.
- (k) Comhar na nOileán Teoranta
- (l) Údarás na Gaeltachta

ITEM NO.5 TO CONSIDER THE DRAFT GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL FLAG AND SPECIAL LIGHTING PROTOCOL. **4589**

Report dated 16th June 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

Ms. Ruane, Director of Services spoke on the draft Galway County Council Flag and Special Lighting Protocol. The protocol sets out the procedures to be followed at Civic Buildings, including at Municipal District offices and at County Hall. The protocol states the order and height requirements of flags when flown. It also outlines the procedure for the lighting up of the building. She gave an overview on the protocol, the events covered and application processes.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- An objection was made to the flying of the European Union flag at County Hall due to the EU's position regarding the current war in Gaza.
- A list of the National Flags that are recognised by the Department of Foreign Affairs, as mentioned on page 2 of the protocol was requested.
- It was asked that the draft protocol not be adopted.
- The Palestinian flag is currently flown in the Chamber, as there is not room on the flag poles at the front of County Buildings. It was queried if the new protocol will allow for the Palestinian flag to continue to be flown in the Council Chamber.
- Clarification was sought on whether the protocol allows for the EU flag to be removed for 7 days a month, which would allow for a guest flag to be flown.
- It is regrettable that solidarity cannot be shown through flying the Palestinian flag.
- The protocol does not appear to apply to the internal Chamber of County Hall.
- Is it standard procedure for Council's have a Flag and Special Lighting Protocol.
- The protocol should be considered at SPC.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Ms. Ruane:

- The list of National Flags that are recognised by the Department of Foreign Affairs, will be provided to Cllr. D. Connolly.
- It is standard practice to have a Flag and Special Lighting Protocol.
- The draft protocol will be brought to the Community, Irish Language, Gaeltacht, Tourism & Integration SPC.

The Cathaoirleach confirmed that the Draft Galway County Council Flag and Special Lighting Protocol will be referred to the Community, Irish Language, Gaeltacht, Tourism & Integration SPC.

ITEM NO. 6 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).

4590

Report dated 14th May 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Comh. O Curraoin it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllr. Maher to attend AILG May Training Module – ‘Emergency Response – Councils Supporting Communities in Weather Crises’ at Radisson Blu Hotel, Sligo on 22nd May 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. L. Harney it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. Turner, Kinane & Finnerty, to attend AILG June Training Module – ‘A New Approach to Planning – the Revised National Planning Framework & Planning Act’ at Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan on 21st June 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. L. Harney it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. King & Welby, to attend AILG June Training Module – ‘A New Approach to Planning – the Revised National Planning Framework & Planning Act’ at Radisson Blu Hotel, Cork on 19th June 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

ITEM NO. 7 TO CONSIDER THE MANAGEMENT REPORT – MAY 2025 IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 136(2) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED).

4591

Report dated 18th June 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

The Management Report – June 2025, in accordance with Section 136(2) of the Local Government Act 2001 (As Amended) was **NOTED**.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- It was requested that in future the Summer Ready Report that accompanied the Management Report come before the Members in March, in advance of the summer season.
- It is not acceptable that there will be only weekend lifeguard presence in North Connemara.
- The provision of toilet facilities and toilets was welcomed.
- A policy is required to govern wild camping and camper vans.
- The provisions contained in the byelaws are not implemented. Beach Wardens are required.
- It was asked that the Council engage with Offaly County Council regarding the provision of lifeguards in Banagher.
- Toilet facilities at beaches need to be open from May onwards and remain open longer during the day.
- Enquires were made as to when the Bearna road leading to the bypass will re-open.
- It was asked to increase funding to Community Groups next year to support them in running summer festivals.
- The Council should investigate the opportunity of business that are willing to take responsibility for looking after the facilities at locations such as the lake in Loughrea, in conjunction with receiving permissions to operate coffee shops there.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Ms. Ruane:

- She will discuss the possibility of additional lifeguards with the Water Safety Officer and Director of Finance.
- Acknowledged that the Summer Ready Report should be provided earlier in the year.
- The Casual Trading Byelaws need to be considered when appointing traders at locations.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- Agreed that the Summer Ready Report is required earlier in the year.
- The opening hours of facilities at beaches will be investigated. There will be cost implications to consider.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- The road referred to in Bearna has partially re-opened, temporary closures now in place. The Area Office is working to ensure it is fully re-opened as soon as possible.

ITEM NO. 8 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN COUNTY GALWAY. **4592**

Mr. John Waters, Administrative Officer in Housing gave a detailed presentation to the Members on Affordable Housing in County Galway. He outlined the Affordable Housing Fund Supported Affordable Housing Delivery Targets 2022-2026. He updated the Members on the Garraí na Gaoithe and Droim na Gaoithe Affordable housing schemes in Claregalway and the Raheen and Páirc na hAhbainn sites in Athenry. The next part of his presentation focused on the future focus and challenges facing the Council in the provision of Affordable Housing in County Galway. He explained the constraints of the departmental requirement for the Council to ensure affordability gain, the density requirements and the difficulty in obtaining these, outside of the Metropolitan area.

Director of Services, Mr. Damien Mitchell informed the Members that the Council have written to the Minister requesting a bespoke Affordable Housing Scheme for County Galway, to which we have received a positive response. He proposed that two potential schemes are identified and will be submitted to the Department for feedback. Positives can be taken that the data shows that affordability gains are getting closer, this will enable schemes to be established in other areas of the County.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- It was asked if developers in Headford have been approached to provide housing schemes there.
- The only housing being provided in Loughrea is Social Housing.
- Affordable housing should be provided in all County Galway towns.
- The scheme is operating under an outdated circular, which does not account for inflation.
- For an affordable housing scheme to progress, the cost of housing must increase to achieve the affordability gains to satisfy the current scheme.
- Clifden was not mentioned in the presentation.
- There needs to be a mixture of housing tenure provided in Tuam.
- The absence of match funding to provide wastewater treatment plants is holding back housing development, notably in Craughwell and Clarinbridge.
- It would be more cost effective to provide subsidies to people to provide their own housing then for the Council to spend €400,000 on building a house.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Mitchell:

- There is constant engagement and meetings held with different developers. Land is not readily available in the Headford area.
- The towns mentioned in the presentation are not indicative of proposed schemes.
- Agreed that the current governing circular is out of date.
- The upcoming population circular from the Minister will require more residential land to be zoned thus more land available.
- Acknowledged that the absence of wastewater treatment plants is a constraint to the provision of housing.
- The figures provided in the presentation are estimates. Changes in inflation rates influences affordability.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- An update on the wastewater treatment system for Craughwell and Clarinbridge can be found on page 66 of the June Management Report. There is a requirement from the Department for the Council to meet a required 15% co-funding contribution towards the overall project cost, estimated to be €5 million. Once the project is completed, the ownership of the infrastructure will be transferred to Uisce Éireann. No subsequent revenue stream will come back to the Council to repay any loans taken out to build it. We cannot take on this debt unless we have a means to repay it.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- It was asked how many of the affordable houses in Claregalway were bought by people from Claregalway.
- If an affordable house can be built on a private site.
- Have the Department examined affordable housing proposals on a 'case by case basis' as promised. If so, what criteria was used.
- The number of students enrolled in rural schools is falling while town schools are bursting. Houses need to be provided in rural areas to combat this.
- It was asked where the Council have its own land will they lead the affordable housing project or is the scheme developer led.
- The process for tackling unoccupied houses was enquired of.
- Clarification was sought on the proposal that is being prepared for submission to the Department.
- The Council need to be more proactive in the zoning of lands.
- Commencement notices have fallen by 20% this year. First time buyers should be able to avail of a reduction in VAT.
- The mid-term review of the Corporate Plan will provide insights into the current situation.
- It was enquired if developers could avail of staged payments.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Mitchell:

- Staged payments do not form part of the scheme. This issue has been raised with the Department and they have informed that it is not under consideration. If staged payments were to be introduced, the finance would have to come from Council's own funds.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- A mixed housing tenure is needed as we are building more than housing, we are building communities.
- We need to look at higher density developments on residential zoned and serviced land.
- Re-zoning is part of the solution, for Galway County wastewater treatment plants are a large determining factor in the provision of housing.
- Facilities such as playgrounds, community halls and creche's are also needed.
- Housing is the number one priority for all of Government.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Waters:

- 30% of affordable houses must be given to people living in the administrative area of County Galway. If a scheme is oversubscribed, then the requirement changes to within 10km of the housing development. If applications for the scheme are still oversubscribed, then a lottery system is applied. Both schemes in Claregalway were allocated by lottery.
- For one off houses, there is a First Home Scheme available which is administered by the banks.
- No 'case by case basis' schemes have been submitted to the Department, but there will be shortly.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Mitchell:

- The lack of wastewater treatment facilities in South Connemara is inhibiting the provision of an affordable housing scheme there. There are also Irish language clauses in specific areas.
- Developers are more inclined to develop in towns where demand exists.
- We are developing schemes on our own lands. Both schemes in Athenry were built on Council owned lands.
- The Vacancy Homes team are working on bringing vacant buildings in urban areas back into use, under the Croí Conaithe Scheme.
- The Department have indicated that they are open to providing a bespoke affordable housing scheme for County Galway. We will bring forward a proposal from each MD and ask the Department to tell us how they can help us make it a viable scheme.
- In the current economic climate developers are risk adverse. When building affordable housing, the financial risk is with them. The risk is transferred to the Council in the building of social housing schemes.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- It was asked if the Members could be provided with a list of the areas outside main urban areas, that either do or do not have wastewater facilities. More affordable housing in rural areas will replenish the areas.
- Can the fees involved in building houses be reduced.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive:

- A report is being prepared by the Council for the Housing Activation Office. This report will detail the current zoned land and identify site by site infrastructure deficits which will determine our resulting ask of the Government. The report when ready will be circulated to the Members.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Mitchell:

- There are 35 wastewater treatment plants in Galway. 10-15 of those are situated where demand is greatest. 3 are in locations where it is possible for us to build.
- The soft costs of building houses apply to everyone.

ITEM NO. 9 TO RECEIVE AN UPDATE ON RATE WAIVER REGULATIONS. 4593

Ms. O'Connor, Head of Finance, gave the members an overview of the Rates Waiver Regulations and recent changes to Sections 9 and 15 of the legislation. Section 9 details the provision for abatement of rates in respect of vacant properties. Section 15 covers the scheme for waiver of rates. She outlined the process for introducing a Rates Waiver Scheme. The Members of the Corporate Policy Group and Economic & Development SPC had already received the presentation. She informed the Members that 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 abatement scheme. Galway County Council will undertake a public consultation in June 2025. This will allow flexibility for a review of the scheme in the future.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Confirmed that the decision of the Economic & Development SPC was to retain the waiver of rates in respect of vacant properties.
- The retail market has changed, retail will not return to towns and villages.
- Rates on vacant properties are difficult to collect.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Ms. O'Connor:

- The incentives scheme can be discussed as part of the budgetary process. By holding public consultation now, it will give the Council scope to make amendments to it later in the year if desired.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Vacant properties create financial and social costs. Developers need a financial incentive to deter them from leaving premises idle.
- Derelict properties should be issued with a Compulsory Purchase Order.
- Very little monies have been collected in the past via derelict sites levies.

The decision of the Economic Development SPC not to introduce a new Rates Waiver Scheme as it would duplicate the current Rates Payment Incentive Scheme W.. The item on the agenda is an update on the Rate Waiver Regulations and is for Noting by the Members.

ITEM NO. 10 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS & CORRESPONDENCE. 4594

The following items of correspondence which were published on the extranet prior to the meeting were **NOTED**:

- Letter dated May 2025 from Carlow County Council – Resolution – Occupied Territories Bill
- Letter dated May 2025 from Carlow County Council – Resolution – Tenant in Situ Scheme
- Letter dated May 2025 from Carlow County Council – Resolution – HIQA – Paediatric Coeliac Disease
- Letter dated 29.05.25 from Donegal County Council – Resolution – State of Israel Bonds Issuance Programme
- Letter dated 03.06.25 to Football Association of Ireland – Resolution – Football League Registration Period
- Letter dated 05.06.25 from Ciaran Griffin, Assistant Principal, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage – Second Hand Acquisitions Programme 2025
- Letter dated 12.06.25 to Mr. James Browne, Minister for Housing, Local Government & Heritage – Resolution – Affordable Housing Review
- Email dated 13.06.25 – with Resolution letter on Affordable Housing Review dated 12.06.25 circulated to all Local Authorities

- Letter dated 13.06.25 from Donegal County Council – Resolution – Dismantling of Triple Lock
- Mayors for Peace News Flash – International Day of Peace 2025

ITEM 11. QUESTION

4595

Cllr. Donohue submitted the following Question prior to the meeting:

'To ask the Director of Housing to confirm what is the delivery timelines to have the 2 vacant former HSE houses on the Ennis Road Gort and now in Council ownership reoccupied. Note they are vacant for over 10 years.'

The following reply issued:

The acquisition from the HSE of the Grove in Gort was completed on the 23rd of January 2025.

The proposed development is to renovate the existing semi-detached units to provide 2no. 3 bedroom units and to build and additional 2 new 3 bed units on the site. It is expected that the development will be submitted for planning in Q4 2025. Subject to a successful grant of PP, the procurement of a contractor to carry out the development work will be sought.

Cllr. Donohue requested that the process be escalated.

ITEM 12. NOTICE OF MOTION

4596

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

'That Galway County Council writes to our local TDs to inquire about the timeline for the implementation of the updated wind turbine legislation. Currently, the 2006 guidelines remain in force, while a new set of guidelines are apparently being

developed. It is crucial to know when these new guidelines will be in place, especially as we approach the development of a new County Development Plan.'

The following reply issued:

At this time, it is unknown the timeline with respect to the publication of the revised Section 28 - Wind Energy Development Guidelines. Should there be draft guidance on this subject published at any stage, the Local Authority will be afforded the opportunity to make a submission during any public consultation process. If and when this occurs, the Local Authority will bring this to the attention of the Elected Members.

ITEM 13. NOTICE OF MOTION

4597

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

'Galway Co Co write to Department of Transport, Bus Éireann and the Department of Education asking them to change the guidelines for bus drivers who are 70 years of age or over

Presently you cannot drive the school run if you are over 70 plus, yet you can come back a half an hour later for a private bus operator and bring them to school matches, swimming and school tours

Any bus driver that is 70 or over has to do a medical every year to have bus license, its coming extremely difficult in rural areas to get drivers and going forward if this guideline is not changed, we will not have bus drivers to bring our children to some of our schools.'

The above motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Regan **SECONDED** by Cllr. Finnerty and **AGREED**.

ITEM 14. NOTICE OF MOTION

4598

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

'How many houses have Galway County Council purchased in the last year with the tenant in place.'

The following reply issued:

Galway County Council has acquired 14 properties under the Tenant in Situ scheme since 2024 with two additional properties currently sale agreed.

ITEM 15. NOTICE OF MOTION

4599

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

'To ask the Chief Executive since the introduction of the Derelict Sites Levy how much Levies has been received by Galway County Council each year on each site on the Derelict Sites Register.'

The following reply issued:

The Council endeavour to work closely with owners of derelict properties once identified and encourage that owners of such properties co-operate in addressing the dereliction noted. During 2024 and in 2025 to date 9 derelict sites reported to the Environment Section have been dealt with satisfactorily through owner engagement and did not require entry on to the derelict sites register. 24 notices under the Derelict Sites Act have been issued to property owners in 2025 by the Environment Section.

At present we have 36 open derelict site files which have been issued with notices, and where we are actively engaging with registered owners (where identified) in regard to the required remediation. The most significant challenge remains establishing

ownership or clear title and which continues to greatly hamper the Council's efforts at progressing the necessary remediation of sites reported.

Galway County Council are yet to recoup the derelict sites levy but are engaging with a number of property owners at present, some sites of which had been previously remediated, in regard to outstanding levies owing and are working with them toward a resolution on same. The levy is calculated at 7% of the market value of the property, which comes into effect from the 1st day of January following the valuation of the property by the Council. Sites that have been added to the derelict sites register in 2025, will have a levy imposed in January 2026 following the valuation of the properties by the local authority.

File Ref	Location	Eircode	Date of Entry	Market Value of Land	Comment
DS36	Site of former Cloonabinnia Hotel,	H91 RD98	30/06/2022	€300,000	€300,000 *dispute re valuation, matter ongoing with valuation tribunal* Indicative levy – €21,000 p.a.
DS247	Former Hop Inn, Davis Street, Athenry	H65 EC44	23/08/2024	€285,000	€285,000 Levy demand effective from 01.01.2025 Indicative levy- €19,950 p.a.
DS248	Kelly Street, Loughrea	H62 X368	02/01/2025	€100,000	€100,000 Levy demand will issue in 2026. Indicative

					levy - €7,000 p.a.
DS251	The Green, Dunmore	Unknown	25/02/2025	Awaiting valuation	Levy demand will issue in 2026
DS254	Vicar Street, Tuam	H54 Y207	29/05/2025	Awaiting valuation	Levy demand will issue in 2026.

The most common difficulties that the Council are faced with when looking to collect levies are the following;

- Probate difficulties,
- Lack of financial resources of property owners
- Multiple owners, sites in receivership or legal dispute are common challenges around solving dereliction which lead to intensive engagement efforts with auctioneers and solicitors.

These difficulties continue to greatly affect the Council's ability to collect levy demands issued and remediate properties that have fallen into dereliction in a timely matter.

Derelict sites legislation in its current format often does not lend itself to timely resolution of derelict properties reported and there is a need to increase our capability to effectively deal with the issues we are currently encountering. The Department of Housing did initiate a review of the Derelict Sites legislation in 2022 and invited local authorities to make submissions on potential improvements to the legislative provisions and the way they are applied. Galway County Council made a submission in respect of same and we await the outcome of their recommendations on same.

Cllr. Donohue questioned the number of sites on the list and queried that no monies have been received from the Derelict Sites Levy. She asked if the outcome of

recommendations following the submission made by the Council to the review of the Derelict Sites legislation in 2022, has been received.

Cllr. McClearn raised the site at the former Shannon Oaks Hotel in Portumna, that is not included on the Derelict Sites Register. He has safety concerns regarding the site. He queried the requirements that deem the closed site to have complied with regulations.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Ms. Ruane:

- The Council fed into the review of the Derelict Sites legislation in 2022.
- The current legislation is not fit for purpose.
- Additional resources have been directed to the Housing Directorate to address derelict sites.

ITEM 16. NOTICE OF MOTION

4560 (b)

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

'I propose that Galway County Council undertake to remove all ragwort growing on council property including road sides. Farmers in the past have been prosecuted for having same growing on their lands.

It is not good enough now that the Council be seen as not controlling same.'

The following reply issued:

Galway County Council is aware of its obligations under the Noxious Weeds Act, 1936, and recognises the threat that ragwort poses to livestock.

However, ragwort control is not a once off effort. Based on best practice and TII guidelines, at least two treatments over successive years are required, ideally in April–May or August–October (Year 1), and March–May (Year 2), due to the plant's persistent seed bank.

While we follow national TII guidance on roadside weed management, it is important to note there is no national programme for eradication, and resources must be targeted where risk is highest. The risk of ingestion by livestock is generally lower on public roads, where animals typically do not graze, but we remain committed to appropriate and proportionate control measures within current budget resources and priorities.

Should there be a particular area of concern it can be reported through the Municipal District Offices

Cllr. Finnerty said that ragwort is very prominent in certain areas. He called for more resources to be directed to tackle it.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Ragwort is appearing on the roadside following road upgrade and widening works.
- Farmers are suffering because of ragwort
- There is rapid growth at this time of year, road signs are obscured by bushes.
- The trimming of grass at dangerous overgrown junctions should take place earlier in the year.

Members Queries were responded to as follows by Mr. Finn:

- Acknowledged the responsibility of the Council regarding noxious weeds.
- Two treatments are required over a two year period to tackle it.
- He invited the Members to notify the Municipal Districts of any areas of concern.
- Funding to address this needs to be balanced with other budgets, such as hedge cutting and road surface dressing.

ITEM 17. NOTICE OF MOTION

4561 (b)

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

'Background information to motion

This Council notes the significant impact of the Community Climate Action Fund in supporting local climate action initiatives. The Council acknowledges the rising costs associated with implementing these projects, including increased material and labour costs. The Council notes that the 2nd round of the fund is due to open shortly and notes that the funding allocation of €762,000 will remain the same as in the 1st round.

I am calling on the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) to increase the funding allocation to the Community Climate Action Fund in line with inflation. An enhanced allocation will ensure that local authorities can continue to support a high number of projects across the County.

Therefore, I, Cllr Martina Kinane, wish to propose that Galway County formally request the Department of the Environment,

Climate and Communications to increase the funding allocation to the Community Climate Action Fund to adequately address the rising costs and ensure the successful implementation of climate action projects across the county.'

The above motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Kinane **SECONDED** by Cllr. Harney and **AGREED**.

ITEM NO. 18 CATHAOIRLEACH'S BUSINESS

4562 (b)

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Finnerty:

'I propose we write to Minister James Browne at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage of Ireland to examine the situation in relation to the number of impediments to the delivery of affordable housing in rural areas.

The viability of the scheme is compromised as the cost of provision of units are unable to meet the scheme requirements to be 15% lower than the OMV.

Can the link be removed of the affordable subsidy to LAP densities and providing a higher or standardised subsidy.

Considerations should be given to conditioning planning of new housing developments to include an allocation of 30% affordable, 50% private and 20% social.'

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Finnerty the above motion was **AGREED**.

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Cunniffe **SECONDED** by Cllr. Geraghty:

'Galway County Council propose that Affordable Housing Schemes / Legislation be amended to include stage payments to Affordable Housing Developers to facilitate the building of Affordable Homes which are vital to the tenure mix of our towns and villages and the retention of our young people from emigration.'

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Cunniffe **SECONDED** by Cllr. Geraghty the above motion was **AGREED**.

ITEM NO. 19 VOTES OF SYMPATHY / CONGRATULATIONS

4563(b)

Cllr. Geraghty offered his sympathies to Michael Fitzmaurice TD, on the passing of his mother-in-law Mrs. Frances Griffin.

A resolution of sympathy was extended to the following:

- Deputy Peter Roche, Moyne, Abbeyknockmoy, Tuam, Co. Galway.
- Paul Geoghegan, IsserKelly, Kilchreest, Loughrea, Co. Galway
- Alan Minogue, Gort na Ri, Gort, Co. Galway

- Joe Barrett, Cross Street, Loughrea, Co. Galway
- Katrina Moloney, Baratoor, Loughrea, Co. Galway
- Eugene Monahan & Family, Curra, Kylebrack, Loughrea, Co Galway
- Enda Briscoe & Family, Derryfrench, Tynagh, Co. Galway
- Mike Reilly, Killamonagh, Caherlistrane, Co Galway
- Terry & Breda Sweeney, Castlepark, Ballybane, Co Galway
- Ena Owens, Glenina Heights, Dublin Road, Galway
- Owens Family, Ballagh, Menlough, Co Galway
- Griffin Family, Creggs, Co. Galway.

Chriochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.

Submitted, Signed and Approved

Cathaoirleach:



Date:

