

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE
MINUTES OF MONTHLY MEETING OF GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL
Held at ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PROSPECT HILL
Monday, 22nd September 2025 at 1.00pm

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

I LATHAIR FREISIN:

Baill: Comh. /Cllr. S. Broderick, D. Connolly, M. Connolly, S. Cunniffe, T. Ó Curraoin, G. Donohue, P. Feeney, D. Geraghty, T. Grealish, A. Harney, L. Harney, M. Hoade, C. Keane, D. Kelly, D. Killilea, P. Killilea, M. Kinane, G. King, M. Lee, M. Maher, J. McClearn, S. McHugh Ryan, M. McNamara, E. F. Parsons, A. Reddington, N. Thomas, O. Turner, S. Walsh and T. Welby.

Baill ar líne: Comh. /Cllr. I. Canning, G. Finnerty, P. Keaveney, M. Leainde, P. Mac an Iomaire, E. Mannion, K. McHugh Farag, M. Regan.

Oifigh: Mr. L. Conneally, Chief Executive, Mr. M. Owens, Director of Services, Mr. L. Hanrahan, Director of Services, Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services, Ms. K. O'Connor, Director of Finance, Mr. D. Mitchell, Director of Services, Mr. T. Prendergast, Senior Engineer, Ms. J. Brann Meetings Administrator, 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.

ITEM NO.1 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING MEETINGS

4584 (c)

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. D. Killilea the minutes of the Monthly Plenary Meeting held on 21st July 2025 were **AGREED**.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Following a commitment made at the July plenary meeting, an update on hedge cutting works was requested.
- Traffic calming ramps should be provided in every town and village. The position of speed ramps near flashing lights should be reviewed.
- As Chair of the Housing Strategic Policy Committee (SPC), Cllr. Maher informed the Members that 3 letters and a text message have been sent to everyone on the Housing Waiting List. He highlighted the need for Social Housing Applicants to update the Housing Office if there is a change of their circumstances. Otherwise, they may be removed from the Housing waiting list.
- An update was requested from the Physical Development, Transportation & Emergency Services SPC on the previous proposal to introduce 1 hour free carparking in Ballinalsoe.
- Information was requested on the speed limit review.
- Concern around the use of Satellite Navigation devices was raised following incidents of people driving straight through road junctions.
- For clarity purposes, the Hedge Cutting Policy must be finalised soon. It is not fair on those that pay the Local Property Tax (LPT) and then in addition pay to have hedges trimmed.
- The Council do not have sufficient funding to cut hedges on every side road in the County.
- The Council should consider using weed killer on hedges instead of trimming.
- Elected Members should not have to use their Notice of Motion (NOM) monies to pay for hedge cutting.
- The accumulated growth that has occurred over the last number of years needs to be removed.

- Oireachtas Members should be lobbied to change the legislation on the prohibition of cutting hedges during nesting season.
- The inclusion of the swimming area in Portumna in the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) of Lough Derg needs to be reviewed.
- The Council need to increase the amount of physical equipment to carry out hedge cutting.
- Trees in urban areas must be addressed in advance of the upcoming storm season.

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

- A hedge cutting policy is currently being developed in the Physical Development, Transportation & Emergency Services SPC. It will be finalised over the next few months. The draft policy will be brought back to the SPC. It will then be presented to the Municipal Districts (MDs).
- Galway County Council cut a greater length of hedges per kilometre compared to other Local Authorities.
- Increasing the amount of hedge cutting will impact our budget and reduce the amount that will be available to spend in other areas of work.
- The 2023 Speed Limit Review is being implemented in 3 phases. The next phase will be the reduction of speed in urban cores from 50 km/h to 30 km/h. We are currently awaiting guidelines from the Department for this phase. They are expected to be issued in October.
- Once the guidelines are received, they will be brought to SPC, then to the MDs. Draft Bye Laws will then be addressed.
- The changes in the speed limits on rural local roads from 80km/h to 60km/h and on national secondary roads from 100km/h to 80km/h were introduced by default. Changes to the speed limits in urban cores is a Reserved Function.

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

- It is problematic when Social Housing Applicants do not keep the Housing section informed on changes of circumstances.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The serious impact on the people of Ballinasloe and surrounding counties was vocalised following the Health Service Executive's (HSE) announcement on maternity services at Portiuncula Hospital in Ballinasloe. Correspondence from the Minister, that was circulated in the meeting documentation was referred to.
- The procedure for dealing with trees infected by Ash Die Back was requested. A particular tree that needs to be removed on the N59 was mentioned.
- In the past Coillte marked dangerous trees for removal, it was asked if this procedure could be reinstated.

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

- Notices have been issued regarding dangerous overhanging trees. He will revert to Cllr. Thomas on the next steps to be taken under Section 70 of the Roads Act.
- He will respond outside the meeting regarding the query regarding marking dangerous trees.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. King the minutes of the Special Meeting held on 16th September 2025 were **AGREED**.

ITEM NO.2 CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 4585 (c)

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Hoade the minutes of the Corporate Policy Group held on 14th July 2025 were **NOTED**.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Donohue **SECONDED** by Cllr. Keane the minutes of the Environmental Protection and Agriculture Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 12th November 2024 were **NOTED**.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Donohue **SECONDED** by Cllr. Keane the minutes of the Environmental Protection and Agriculture Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 11th March 2025 were **NOTED**.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Comh. Mac An Iomaire **SECONDED** by Comh. O Curraoin the minutes of the Physical Development, Transportation & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee Meeting held on 16th June 2025 were **NOTED**.

It was agreed by the Members, as per recommendation from the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) that Galway County Council would hold a Civic Reception to honour the Galway Senior Camogie All-Ireland Champions 2025 following the October plenary meeting.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- It was suggested that the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) discuss the current procedure for holding Civic Events. That Municipal Districts may have a greater role in hosting them going forward.

ITEM NO.3 FILLING OF A CASUAL VACANCY AS THE CHAIRPERSON ON THE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND AGRICULTURE STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE.

4586 (b)

Report dated 9th September 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Welby **SECONDED** by Cllr. Parsons it was **AGREED** to appoint Cllr. Karey McHugh Farag as the Chairperson on the Environment Protection and Agriculture Strategic Policy Committee.

ITEM NO. 4 FILLING OF TWO CASUAL VACANCIES ON THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (LCDC) 4587(b)

Report dated 22nd July 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Hoade it was **AGREED** to appoint Mr. Vincent Lyons & Ms. Aoibheann O'Brien to The Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

ITEM NO. 5 TO CONSIDER OVERDRAFT ACCOMMODATION FOR THE 12 MONTHS 1ST JANUARY 2026 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2026. 4588(b)

Report dated 22nd September 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

Ms. O'Connor, Head of Finance gave an overview on the request being made of the Elected Members. It was asked that they approve the overdraft accommodation level of a minimum of €8.5m for the 12 months from 1st January 2026 to 31st December 2026. It is necessary to have Council and Ministerial approval to cover the peak requirement, which is in line with previous years.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Regan **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher the Overdraft Accommodation for the 12 months, 1st January 2026 to 31st December 2026 was **AGREED**.

ITEM NO. 6 TO CONSIDER AND IF DEEMED APPROPRIATE AUTHORISE THE ATTENDANCE AT TRAINING IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 142(5A) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED). 4589(b)

Report dated 12th September 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Comh. Mac An Iomaire it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs D. Killilea, Leainde & Canning to attend AILG DHLGH Training for SPC Chairs and Senior Officials Supporting Strategic Policy Committees (SPC's) at Midlands Park Hotel, Portlaoise on 2nd September 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Lee it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. Turner, McHugh Ryan & Hoade to attend AILG Autumn Training Seminar 2025 at The Westport Woods Hotel, Westport on 17th & 18th September 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Donohue it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. L. Harney, Lee, Thomas, McHugh Ryan, Donohue, Cunniffe & Mac An Iomaire to attend AILG Video Content Creation for Local Authority Members at Galway County Council on 24th September (In-Person) & 1st October (On-line).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Donohue it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. Mc Clearn & Turner to attend AILG October Training Module – OPR Elected Member Planning Training at Arklow Bay Hotel, Wicklow on 9th October 2025.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Donohue it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. Cunniffe, Hoade, Mc Clearn & Turner to attend LAMA Autumn Training Seminar at Amber Springs Hotel, Gorey, Co. Wexford in 16th & 17th October 2025.

ITEM NO. 7 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(b)

Report dated 12th September 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McClearn **SECONDED** by Cllr. Hoade it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. Cunniffe & Cllr. Mc Clearn to attend 35th La Touche Legacy Seminar – “The Emerging New Ireland” at Greystones Golf Club, Co. Wicklow on 19th & 20th September 2025. (Retrospective Approval).

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. McHugh Ryan it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllrs. Turner & Cllr. Finnerty to attend Celtic Conferences – A Practical Guide to Budget 2026 at the Four Seasons Hotel, Carlingford, Co. Louth on 10th 11th & 12th October 2025.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Donohue **SECONDED** by Cllr. Grealish it was **AGREED** to authorise Cllr. G. Donohue to attend FLIARA Final Conference – “Women Leading Rural Innovation: From Vision to Action” at European Committee of Regions, Brussels on 17th October 2025.

**ITEM NO. 8 TO NOTE THE SUMMARY OF PROCEEDING OF CONFERENCES
ATTENDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 142(5F) OF THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED)**

4591(b)

Report dated 12th September 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Maher **SECONDED** by Cllr. Lee the Summary of Proceedings at conferences attended were **NOTED**.

ITEM NO. 9 TO CONSIDER THE MANAGEMENT REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2025 IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 136(2) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED). **4592 (b)**

Report dated 19th September 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

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

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The Management Report was complimented as being a useful document that covers all the activities of the Council.
- The success of the recent trip of Galway County Council to its sister county Washington County and the Irish Festival in Milwaukee was flagged. Also, the co-operation and good work carried out by both Galway County and Galway City Councils in promoting Galway whilst in Milwaukee was highlighted.
- The delegation was thanked for their work in Milwaukee and for attending the various business meetings in Chicago.
- The trip was important in promoting County Galway.
- Special thanks were given to the Leas Cathaoirleach Cllr. Mary Hoade, in this regard.
- The work of the Tourism Officer, John Neary was also praised.
- It was suggested that the itinerary for future trips to Milwaukee / Chicago and Washington County could be revised owing to the busy itinerary in 2025.

ITEM NO. 10 TO CONSIDER THE COUNTY GALWAY AGE FRIENDLY STRATEGY 2025-2030. **4593 (b)**

Report was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

Director of Services, Mr. Owens welcomed Ms. Maria Wall Consultant on the Age Friendly Strategy who joined the meeting online. This is County Galway's second Age Friendly Strategy, which will build on the progress made since 2011. The aim of

the strategy is to continue working towards a vision of making Galway a great place in which to grow older. Embedding an age friendly approach into the development of our infrastructure, policies, services and programmes in the local authorities and across all partner agencies on the Age Friendly Alliance. He thanked all those that responded to the survey and were involved in the consultation process. Workshops were held for each of the eight World Health Organisation (WHO) Age Friendly Themes, under three strategic goals of Information & Wellbeing Services, Built & Public Environment and Community & Social Inclusion. In 2022 73,985 individuals in County Galway were aged 55 and over. He highlighted the main trends under the key demographic information. He drew attention to the number of people that engaged with the strategy via surveys, attending workshops, focus groups and action planning sessions. He outlined the key achievements made between 2016-2025. He informed the Members of the 8 priorities contained in the Action Plan. He explained how the strategy will be monitored and evaluated to ensure that the activities are implemented as planned, that the strategy is meeting older people's needs and that resources are being used efficiently and effectively.

This is a joint strategy between Galway City and County Councils and is before the Members today for their approval. It will be launched following approval by both Councils. Mr. Owens acknowledged the work of the Age Friendly Alliance, Older People's Council, SPC, Staff of the Council and attendees at the workshop. The Galway Councils are honoured to be hosting the National Age Friendly Recognition & Achievement Awards Gala event on 23rd October 2025. He recommended that the Members approve the strategy and welcomed any questions the Members may have.

The Age Friendly Strategy was welcomed and the work involved in preparing it was recognised by the Members.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Parsons the County Galway Age Friendly Strategy 2025-2030 was **AGREED**.

**ITEM NO. 11 UPDATE ON THE REVIEW OF THE GALWAY RESIDENTIAL
ZONED LANDS.**

4594(b)

Report dated 22nd September 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

Director of Services, Mr. Mitchell spoke on the review of the Galway Residential Zoned Lands report. The County Council carried out a review on all residential zoned lands in County Galway. The purpose of the review was to identify the infrastructural constraints that are delaying residential development in the County and to justify the necessary funding required to remove these constraints. Galway County has approximately 740ha of land zoned residential, which equates to a capacity of 18,807 units. 78.66ha of this land has been granted planning permission. 205ha of land zoned residential is deemed short term and without constraints, of this 126ha is available to potentially provide 2,770 units. Many of these lands are not in the areas of greatest housing demand or are in locations where there is already a large concentration of social housing. 178ha is deemed medium term and 356ha of land zoned residential is deemed long term. A total of around 535ha of land in County Galway is currently zoned for residential development but remains undevelopable in its present state due to critical infrastructure deficits, most notably inadequate footpath provision, public lighting, road widening and upgrades, junction upgrades, sewer network upgrades, watermain network upgrades, storm water network upgrades, land acquisition, overhead electricity lines and insufficient capacity at existing wastewater treatment plants. This 535ha of land accounts for approximately 72% of the total residential zoned land available across the County, representing a major bottleneck in Galway's ability to meet current and projected housing demand. The estimate costings to upgrade these lands to facilitate residential development are €33.9m for lands deemed medium term and €41.4m for lands deemed long term. This is a total combined cost of €75.3m.

The infrastructure requirements will now be submitted to the Housing Activation Office (HAO) for consideration and further negotiation and discussion will take place to address the constraints outlined in this report, seek funding and open up more lands for potential development.

The Chief Executive added that the Council are meeting with the Housing Activation Office on 7th October. It is his intention to ask for the infrastructural deficits in the report to be addressed. He will keep the Elected Members updated.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Exception was taken at recent criticism from the Taoiseach towards Chief Executives of local authorities on not being proactive in delivering housing.
- Criticism was expressed towards Uisce Éireann and also the failure of successive governments to address the housing needs of the Country and fund local authorities.
- It was asked if the Council would consider using the services of Housing Infrastructure Services Company (HISCo).
- That the reports submitted to the HAO should be detailed and show exactly where houses could be delivered.
- Town boundaries need to be revised, notably in Headford.
- The Office of Public Works (OPW) have overridden previous Council decisions on land zoning.
- There should be an increase on fees for lodging planning objections to the Council and to An Coimisiún Pleanála and for enforcement notices.
- €20m was allocated to provide wastewater facilities in Craughwell and Clarenbridge 3 years ago, to date nothing has happened. The Government want Galway County Council to co-fund the project by €5m. It is felt that Uisce Éireann should provide the €5m balance, as they will be in a position to recoup monies via connection charges upon completion of the project.
- We need to encourage people to live in rural areas to keep communities alive.
- The restrictive nature of the County Development Plan needs to be looked at regarding density guidance, as it is affecting development in Milltown and Dunmore.
- Housing needs to be provided in smaller towns.
- The amount of red tape is excessive and required specifications on house building is too high.

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

- The report for submission to the HAO contains detailed information and each parcel of residential zoned land has been thoroughly examined.

- The planning application approval rate of 91% proves that Galway County Council are pro development. However, the Council can only approve the applications that it receives.
- Galway County Council have the opportunity to make a Variation to the County Development Plan, to facilitate additional zoned housing land. He reminded the Members that this process relates to a Variation of the plan and is not a full review.
- Fee charges for all planning applications should be reviewed to reflect the cost of processing them.
- The Executive will ask the HAO and Uisce Éireann for our share of the €2bn funding allocation to Uisce Éireann.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The use of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO) and the implications relating to capital gains tax should be examined.
- Will Government funding be in the form of a loan or grant.
- If there is a funding stream for private developers to provide housing.
- Does the Council have the facility to sell serviced sites, whereby the Council will be repaid if this housing was later sold on.
- Does the report contain information on all lands in the CDP or only Galway County Council owned lands.

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

- HISCo have previously presented to the Council. The developer is charged when the units have been sold, it aids cash flow. It is an option to be considered.
- Every site in the report has been assessed and associated costs calculated for lands in the areas where land is available and there is demand.
- Villages without wastewater treatment plants cannot be considered.
- CPO is a tool of last resort.

- Government funding would be provided in a similar manner to the provision for social housing. He doesn't expect it to be in the form of a loan.
- Where the Council develops infrastructure it will open up private lands for private development.
- There is not a specific fund for private developers to improve infrastructure to build social or affordable housing.

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

- The Council has obtained a landbank of sites only in the last 2-3 years.

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

- There is a huge financial cost to service lands of lower density that do not already have the necessary infrastructural network in place. Significant Government support is required.

ITEM NO. 12 PROGRESS OF LOCAL DEMOCRACY TASK FORCE

4595 (b)

Cllr. McClearn as a member of the Local Democracy Task Force spoke on this item. The task force is part of the programme for Government. It commits to reforming and strengthening Local Government. The Task Force has 14 members, including the chair Mr. Jim Breslin and 5 Elected Members. There are 3 representatives from Association of Irish Local Government (AILG), of which he is one and 2 representatives from Local Authorities Members Association (LAMA), 2 independent members and 2 Chief Executives. Other bodies such as National Oversight and Audit Committee (NOAC) and the Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, Local Government Audit Service, are also on the task force. They are finalising a programme for the reform and strengthening of Local Government. The task force consists of 4 sub key pillars of Structure, Finance, Functions and Governance/Accountability. It is examining the possibility of devolving more decision making powers to Councillors is. It will consider granting Councillors

greater input and control over the development and implementation of the local authority budget and mechanisms to enhance fiscal autonomy. It is a programme supported by the Council of Europe. Ireland has the 2nd lowest level of Local Government in Europe.

Cllr. Mary Hoade as the AILG representative on the Finance pillar gave an update as follows. The committee are looking at what is currently in place, how to strengthen Municipal Districts (MDs), the functions and roles of Elected Members and the erosion of their powers over the years. The power of the Executive versus the Elected Members. How to increase the role of Elected Members in the budget process. She outlined that she would welcome any submissions from Elected Members on these topics.

The Chief Executive said that if additional powers or functions were to given to the Council then additional staff and funding would be required. Further discussions need to take place on the LPT Equalisation Fund. An uplift in funding will be required from the Department based on functions and powers. If the functions of MDs increase, we need to ensure that we have the staff and finance to provide these additional services.

ITEM NO. 13 TO CONSIDER THE CONSOLIDATION OF OFFICE

ACCOMMODATION

4596(b)

Report dated 19th September 2025 was published on the Extranet prior to the meeting.

Director of Services, Mr. Owens outlined the report on the consolidation of office accommodation that was circulated to the Members in advance of the meeting. A workshop was held the previous week with the Members, to outline the feasibility study.

He outlined that the report was commissioned to assess office accommodation requirements and propose options for consolidation, optimization, or expansion to meet operational goals. This was to be driven by efficiency, evolving service demands, and the need for co-location of services; with a requirement to explore and

validate consolidation of staff and services into a single civic campus aligned with strategic and environmental targets, with a focus on County Hall.

He advised that the work was undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team, led by Tom McNamara & Partners, to include expertise in project management, architecture, M&E, civil/structural, cost consulting, property advisors, environmental, archaeological & ecological assessments.

He detailed that the market assessment and supply constraints study of available suitable office space in Galway identified a severe supply shortage with only two suitable buildings, both in pre-construction phase, limiting immediate feasibility. It also identified inadequate existing stock with most existing offices lack sustainability credentials, centrality, accessibility and sufficient space to meet the requirements of Galway County Council. The development risk & timeline associated with greenfield developments require long planning and design phases; unlikely to deliver by the 2030 deadline. While the cost implications of high rental costs (€30–€34/sq. ft.) for high-spec buildings make leasing less attractive than adapting owned assets.

A lease review and assessment of financial exposure associated with the existing lease office accommodation portfolio found significant annual costs with annual rent across three properties exceeds €505k; total occupancy cost (incl. services) €568k, with limited ability to restructure existing leases and an inefficient use of space.

The obligations for retrofitting leased properties based on legal & strategic compliance requirements were assessed with a requirement to cut emissions by 51% and improve BER to B or NZEB for public buildings by 2030, retrofit 3% of floor area annually to NZEB or BER B under EU and national law. This will require Galway County Council to engage landlords on retrofit plans, cost-sharing, and grant access with the 30-year retrofit liabilities for leased assets estimated to exceed €5.9M with no residual value.

Mr. Owens detailed the six strategic Options Assessed including options that include retrofit, expansion, lease continuation, and new build on the basis of a 30-year cost analysis with all scenarios modelled in constant 2025 Euros with 4% real discount rate in accordance with the requirements of the Public Spending Code.

He detailed Option 3 the extension and exemplar retrofit of County Hall as the preferred option including a new 4,438 m² NZEB/A1+ extension plus deep retrofit of existing County Hall. This allows for a phased decant and completion by 2031, enabling termination of all leased offices, facilitating the consolidation of staff, and the accommodation of 200 additional staff in a single modern campus. He outlined that it was the preferred solution, balancing sustainability, consolidation, and value for money.

He confirmed that it was the strategic choice for the expansion of County Hall providing a strategic fit, accommodating 606 staff with flexible layouts and limited archive space, cost-efficient delivery with costing at feasibility stage estimated at €61.8M initial capital cost incl. fees, excluding VAT with an optimal lifecycle cost-performance ratio, providing infrastructure synergy with unified systems reduce operational complexity and retrofit costs.

He detailed the indicative programme and procurement strategy including a phased delivery timeline of Q3 2031 with the potential for a fast-track version based on completion by December 2030 while noting that this required an intensive programme management regime. He noted that the preferred procurement strategy was by way of traditional design-bid-build route given the retrofit complexity. It was intended to progress by way of integrated appointment of a combined IPM/Cost Manager and Integrated Design Team to ensure alignment and performance. He also detailed the arrangements for governance and mobilisation to include the project team formation, feasibility closure, with design and procurement scheduled from 2025–2026.

He concluded his presentation by outlined that Option 3 as the preferred option provides a roadmap for a unified civic campus with the County Hall retrofit and expansion selected as most cost-effective, strategic solution, delivers lifetime savings, enhanced public service, and staff wellbeing, while meeting national sustainability mandates and energy performance goals.

He outlined that the next step was to secure the agreement and approval of the Members to mobilise project governance & conduct procurement of consultants to include the appointment of a combined Independent Project Manager and Cost

Manager (IPM/CM) to provide integrated client-side leadership across programme delivery, procurement, cost control, and risk management and the appointment of an Integrated Design Team under a single commission to lead the design of both the extension and retrofit elements, ensuring coordinated, high-quality, and performance-led outcomes.

He emphasised that ongoing engagement with key stakeholders including the Members and staff would be a key and central element of the project and that the Members will have a key decision-making role in the project.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- All Council staff being under the one roof was welcomed.
- The cost of renting other office space is a waste of money.
- Clarification was sought that Municipal Area Offices would not be affected.
- It was asked how the project would be funded. Would the cost have an impact on services provided by the Council.
- Could issues arise with current lease arrangements.
- Is it affordable? It was asked if the costings are robust, if there is a chance the costs could increase. Is the Council insured if the figures are incorrect.
- It was asked if the staff not already based in County Hall, have been consulted on the proposed move.
- The presentation of the report to Members at this early stage was welcomed.
- It was asked if the proposed new building will be large enough.
- A new independent site should be considered, the proposed ring would provide easy access resulting in less staff coming into Galway city.
- The proposal was broadly welcomed. It was agreed that it is necessary.
- Was the prospect of expanded to the lower carpark explored.

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

- Staff have been surveyed and a preference was shown to remain in County Hall.
- An exercise was being carried in relation to the requirement for capital investment, retrofitting and to increase capacity in the MD offices as part of

the feasibility study. It was recognised that investment was also required in the MD offices.

- Communications have issued to staff in relation to the project, including an update prior to the plenary meeting.
- A staff oversight committee will be established, and staff will be able to contribute to the process.
- The proposed extension of County Hall will facilitate 606 staff. It will house the current staff of County Hall, the staff of the 3 leased buildings and an additional 200 staff. There will also be more staff accommodated at Municipal level.
- The design will allow for further floors to be added to the extension to County Hall, if required in the future.
- Experts in property management will manage the exit from current leases.
- All possible revenue funding streams will be explored, grants, national funding, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) grants. Engagement will take place with the Housing Finance Agency to draw down capital funding, interest rates and terms. This will be brought before the Members in due course as a Reserved Function.
- It will be possible to stop the process at any stage.

The Cathaoirleach added that the process will now move to the next stage, design, costings and planning.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Regan **SECONDED** by Comh. O Curraoín it was **AGREED** to mobilise project governance and proceed with the procurement process and appointments of a combined Independent Project Manager and Cost Manager and the appointment of an Integrated Design Team under a single commission.

ITEM NO. 14 UPDATE OF KEY LOCAL ENTERPRISE OFFICE (LEO) SUPPORTS
– PRESENTATION BY HEAD OF ENTERPRISE.

4597 (b)

Ms. Caroline McDonagh, Head of Enterprise gave a high-level overview of the work of the Local Enterprise Office (LEO). The supports it offers, grants and events that it

supports. She explained the Green for Business and Energy Efficiency Grant, Digital for Business and Grow Digital Voucher. The supports offered to entrepreneurs with up to 10 employees and First Time Exporters. The financial packages, mentoring and training that can be availed of by all sectors. The LEO office has assisted in the creation of 111 jobs in the last year which is an 158% increase post covid.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- The LEO office was commended for the fantastic work and supports that they provide.
- It was asked if they provide supports to the construction industry.
- The Ireland's Best Young Entrepreneur (IBYE) was praised.
- It was asked if LEO can assist businesses in attracting staff from overseas.
- It was asked how many digital for business grants have been approved.
- The extension to the local craft fair was welcomed.
- The work with the BIA Innovator Campus in Athenry was described as incredible. A seamless support system for small business, that not every country can avail of. It is important to encourage innovation and smaller companies.
- It was asked if a person is in receipt of a payment from the pilot scheme for artists would it exclude them from applying for a grant from LEO.
- It was enquired if the LEO office could schedule regular outreach clinics in the Municipal areas.

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

- The IBYE will be coming back under a different formation.
- The LEO office cannot directly assist the construction sector however it can support parts of the sector that add value. They can be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- The LEO can sign a letter to waive the 50/50 rule with the Department of Justice to help micro enterprises to employ staff from overseas.
- An artist in receipt of payments would not be excluded from applying to LEO.

- A commitment has been made to hold outreach clinics in the County. There are plans in Ballinalsoe, Portumna and Clifden before the end of the year. It is a huge part of our plans to increase the clinics.

The Chief Executive thanked Ms. McDonagh, her team, and Director of Services Mr. Hanrahan for the excellent work being carried out at the Galway LEO office. Galway County Council is pro-business and are actively looking for funding from every possible funding stream.

ITEM NO. 15 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BUSINESS & CORRESPONDENCE. **4598 (b)**

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

- Letter dated 15.07.25 from Waterford City & County Council – Resolution – Carers Allowance and Benefit Reform
- Letter dated 12.06.25 to Minister for Housing – Resolution letter – Review of Affordable housing Policy
- Email dated 22.07.25 from Jack Savage, Private Secretary to Minister Browne – reply to Resolution letter dated 12.06.25.
- Email dated 22.07.25 to Oireachtas Joint Health Committee – Resolution letter forwarded.
- Email dated 22.07.25 from Fiona O Hara, Junior Clerk, Oireachtas Health Committee – Acknowledgement of email
- Emails dated 22.07.25 to Oireachtas Members in area and all Local Authorities – Resolution letter forwarded
- Letter dated 24.07.25 from Limerick City & County Council – Resolution – College Contribution Fee
- Letter dated 25.06.25 to Department of Education & Youth – Resolution Letter – Guidelines for Bus Drivers

- Email dated 28.07.25 from Matthew Errity, Private Secretary to Michael Moynihan T.D. Minister of State for Special Education and Inclusion – Reply to Resolution letter – School Bus Drivers
- Letter dated 22.07.25 to Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll MacNeill – Resolution letter – Downgrading Portiuncula Hospital
- Email dated 30.07.25 – Reply from Eoghan Flynn, Private Secretary to the Minister for Health – Reply to Resolution Letter Downgrading Portiuncula Hospital
- Letter dated 06.01.25 to Minister for Transport – Resolution – Grant for Felling of Roadside Trees
- Email dated 07.08.25 from Gordon Ryan, Private Secretary to Minister O'Brien – Reply to Resolution letter dated 06.01.25
- Letter dated 08.08.25 from Limerick City & County Council – Resolution – Community Welfare Support
- Letter dated 08.08.25 from Galway City Council – Resolution – Safeguard Triple Lock
- Letter dated 08.08.25 from Limerick City and County Council – Resolution – Ribbon Development Rules
- Letter dated 12.08.25 from Tipperary County Council – Resolution – Regulations for Renewable Energy
- Letter dated 14.08.25 from Donegal County Council – Resolution – Support of #addthe10th
- Letter dated 14.08.25 from Offaly County Council – Resolution – Part 5 Tenant Purchase Scheme
- Letter dated 14.08.25 from Donegal County Council – Resolution – Key National Affordable Housing Initiatives
- Letter dated 22.07.25 to CEO of HSE – Resolution Letter – Downgrade of Portiuncula Hospital.
- Letter dated 15.08.25 from Ann Cosgrove, Integrated Health Area Manager, Galway Roscommon HSE West and North West – Reply to Resolution letter dated 22.07.25
- Mayors for Peace – Peace Exhibition

The Chief Executive advised Members that, under Section 153 of the Local Government Act 2001, he recently sought permission from the Elected Members to defend a High Court challenge. He referenced the Dún Laoghaire–Rathdown Oceanscape judgment noting that the Court of Appeal has clarified that defending judicial review proceedings is now clearly an Executive function. As such, it is no longer necessary for Elected Members to pass a resolution authorising the Chief Executive to defend legal proceedings against the Council.

ITEM 16. NOTICE OF MOTION

4599(b)

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

'That the Executive write to the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg) to request the attendance of a senior representative at a plenary meeting and, in advance of the meeting, the provision of county-level coverage data, planned improvements, timelines, and enforcement measures within ComReg's remit.'

The following reply issued:

Telecommunications infrastructure in County Galway has undergone substantial enhancement in recent years, driven by both commercial investment and state-led initiatives. In Q1 2019, only 19% of premises in the county had access to fibre broadband. By Q2 2025, this figure had risen significantly to 84%, reflecting a marked improvement in digital connectivity.

Mobile network operators continue to invest in infrastructure across the county to support enhanced service delivery. Notably, in September 2024, one provider announced the upgrade of its legacy 3G infrastructure to bolster the performance and coverage of its 4G and 5G networks.

In areas where mobile coverage remains limited, the expansion of fibre broadband has played a critical role in improving connectivity. Technologies such as Wi-Fi calling (where supported) and various communications applications have helped bridge service gaps. Nonetheless, challenges persist, and the Broadband Officer

(BBO) is actively engaging with the telecommunications sector to highlight service deficit areas in the County to support improvements

Subject to the motion being passed, Galway County Council will formally write to ComReg to outline the concerns raised and request their attendance at the next council meeting to discuss these issues further.

Cllr. Reddington & Cllr. L. Harney voiced their concerns at lack of proper mobile coverage in some areas. The potential risk to elderly people reliant on personal safety alarms was highlighted.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Reddington **SECONDED** by Cllr. L. Harney the above motion was **AGREED**.

ITEM 17. NOTICE OF MOTION

4600

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

'On behalf of the residents of Galway and the elected members of Galway County Council, we request that Galway County Council write to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and to the Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications to urgently request the publication of updated, comprehensive regulations governing renewable energy development, including but not limited to biomethane, solar, and wind energy, as well as conventional generation facilities.

The Council recognises Ireland's legally binding climate targets and supports the accelerated transition to renewable energy. However, we stress that this transition must proceed in a manner that is properly planned, environmentally sustainable, and protective of public health and community well-being.

In light of the absence of up-to-date national guidelines, the Council calls on the Minister to:

1. *Prioritise the immediate publication of clear, enforceable regulations to provide certainty for communities, local authorities, and developers.*
2. *Introduce, as an interim measure, a temporary pause on the approval of large-scale projects above an appropriate capacity threshold until such regulations are in place, in order to avoid inappropriate or premature development.'*

Cllr. McNamara expanded on his motion saying that it is not anti-development or anti-energy. He feels that mis-information is creating uncertainty and confusion. This motion is calling for information to ensure that energy developers proceed in a clear and precise way.

Cllr. Feeney called for a set of guidelines to be issued to allow applications be assessed against them. There is currently a vacuum of information. He called for major decisions to be put on hold until clear guidelines are published.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McNamara **SECONDED** by Cllr. Feeney the above motion was **AGREED**.

ITEM NO. 18 CATHAOIRLEACH'S BUSINESS

4601

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

'We propose that this Council calls on all Oireachtas members of Galway East, Galway West and Galway Roscommon to work to secure adequate funding for the full and safe restoration of maternity services at Portiuncula University Hospital throughout the forthcoming Health Budget process.

Council further calls on these representatives to demonstrate this commitment not only in statements but in their lobbying, parliamentary actions, and votes at every stage of the Budget and Estimates process, and to firmly oppose any cuts or reallocations that would undermine PUH maternity services.

We also propose that this motion be placed before the plenary meeting of Galway County Council on 22 September.

Signed: Evelyn Parsons, Declan Geraghty, Dermot Connolly, Peter Keaveney, Alan Harney.'

Cllr. Parsons spoke on her motion and thanked her Municipal District colleagues for their support in the matter. This is a critical time to lobby against the downgrading of services in Portiuncula Hospital as it is budget time. We need to ensure that adequate resources are provided to the hospital. This is an issue of rural health care for Ballinasloe town and the counties surrounding it. She called for transparency on decision making. The Minister has twice been requested to meet representatives. This needs to be debated on the floor of the Dáil. If funding is not allocated in the upcoming budget, it will be inevitable that it will be downgraded. The Government have not provided robust medical evidence to support the downgrading. Risk assessments have not been carried out in the units that the services have been diverted to.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- There is a risk to women that now must travel to Galway.
- The 52 recommendations from the reviews that have taken place need to be implemented.
- The staff in the hospital must be listened to, to get to the root of the problems.
- Recommendations from the Walker and Sam Coulter-Smith reports on Portiuncula Hospital have not been implemented.
- There is a managerial problem in the hospital that must be identified and solved.
- The Minister has pledged a return to maternity services in Portiuncula.
- Clarity was sought on this pledge and the position of the Minister.

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

The following motion was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Kinane **SECONDED** by Cllr. P. Killilea:

'Minister O'Brien on December 2023 approved €20m under measure A8 of the multi annual Rural Water Programme for the provision of wastewater infrastructure in the village of Craughwell and Clarinbridge.

I wish to propose that GCC write to Uisce Éireann requesting that they provide GCC co-funding requirement of 15% of the total project cost (approx. €5m) with the understanding that Uisce Éireann, upon completion of the project, would recover this funding through the collection of connection charges.'

Cllr. Kinane spoke on her motion, €2bn has been allocated to Uisce Éireann. €20m in funding has been allocated for the provision of wastewater plants in Craughwell and Clarenbridge but the Government are looking for Galway County Council to co-fund €5m towards construction. After the infrastructure is complete, Uisce Éireann will have the opportunity to recoup monies through charges.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Kinane **SECONDED** by Cllr. P. Killilea the above motion was **AGREED**.

Members raised the following points and queries:

- Concern was expressed for residents, especially the elderly, in three Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) in Killimor, Clonmoylan and Barroughter that could not cut turf this summer. Holes have been dug in some bogs to provide material to block drains.
- The pledge for a Retail Crime Strategy was welcomed.

The Cathaoirleach spoke on the recent trip to Inis Oírr for the announcement of over €35m in state funding for the development of a new pier. He thanked the Minister for

Rural and Community Development, Dara Calleary. When constructed it will have a positive impact on tourism on the Island and on daily life for the inhabitants.

ITEM NO. 19 VOTES OF SYMPATHY / CONGRATULATIONS

4602

A resolution of sympathy was extended to the following:

- Brendan Kelly, Sarsfield Road, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway
- Sinéad & Enda Kelly, Tonemoyle, Tuam, Co. Galway
- Peggy King, Glann, Oughterard, Co. Galway
- P.J. Gavin & Family, Patch, Moylough, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway
- Orla Leyden, Castlecoote, Roscommon.

Expressions of sympathy were made by the Members to Orla Leyden on the passing of her husband.

Congratulations and best wishes were conveyed to Fiona Murtagh taking part in the World Championships that are being held in Shanghai.

The Cathaoirleach reminded the Members of the upcoming planning workshop on the Variation of the County Development Plan to take place on the 1st October.

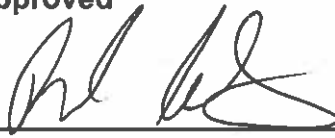
He also invited all in the Chamber to attend the civic reception that will follow the meeting to honour:

- U15 Turloughmore Camogie All Ireland Féile Champions
- U15 Claregalway Girls Football All Ireland Féile Champions
- U23 All Ireland Camogie Champions 2025

Chriochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.

Submitted, Signed and Approved

Cathaoirleach:



Date:

20/10/2025 .
