

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE
MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING OF GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL
Held at ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, PROSPECT HILL
Friday 14th November 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, A. Harney, L. Harney, M. Hoade, C. Keane, P. Keaveney, D. Kelly, D. Killilea, P. Killilea, M. Kinane, G. King, M. Lee, M McNamara, M Leainde, P. Mac An Iomaire, M. Maher, E. Mannion, J. McClearn, K. McHugh Farag, S. McHugh Ryan, E. F. Parsons, A. Reddington, M. Regan, N. Thomas, O. Turner, S. Walsh, T. Welby, J. Charity and T. Grealish.

As Láthair: I. Canning, G. Finnerty

Oifigh: Mr. L. Conneally, Chief Executive, Ms. K. O'Connor, Director of Finance, Ms. E. Ruane, Director of Services Mr. M. Owens, Director of Services, Mr. U. Finn, Director of Services, Mr. L Hanrahan, Director of Services, Mr. D. Mitchell, Director of Services, Mr. M McGovern, Management Accountant, Ms. Áine Fenton, Financial Accountant, Ms. J Brann, Meetings Administrator, Ms. M Jordan, Administrative Officer, Ms. S McDermott, Administrative Officer.

Thosnaigh an cruinniú leis an paidir.

The Cathaoirleach D. Collins welcomed Members to the annual statutory Budget 2026 Meeting and noted apologies.

ITEM NO. 1 CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF BUDGET FOR YEAR 2026

4618

The Cathaoirleach thanked the Chief Executive, Members, Director of Finance Ms O'Connor and the Finance team for preparing the budget. He said that it was the largest budget in the Council's history with an increase of €10M on last year's budget. He welcomed the workshops and engagement with the Director of Finance and the Directors of Services in preparing the budget and the funding available for businesses, housing and URDF/RRDF funding. The increase in funding for extra staffing is welcome. He also welcomed the extra funding for hedge cutting, public lighting, digital security and disabled persons grants and requested that the Members assist the Executive in achieving extra funding from Central Government. The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. E. Ruane and her team for the successful staff induction day which he attended.

The Chief Executive, Mr. Liam Conneally welcomed the Members and the Executive to the Budget 2026 Meeting. He stated that it was an ambitious budget of over €203M, the largest budget in the Council's history with an expansion of over €10 million from last year.

He highlighted that the proposed budget strikes the right balance between necessary revenue generation for the provision of public services and supporting our local economy. In this regard the ARV will be maintained at its current level for 2026, with a focussed Rate Incentive Scheme providing direct financial support to eligible businesses as they navigate the current economic climate.

The CE stated the proposed budget contains critical investment of €33.38m in Housing and Building Services with Housing remaining as a central focus for the Council in 2026. This investment will help the Council to deliver its 5-year target of 1,717 new social housing units by end of 2026. He stated that there is an increase in the Disabled Persons Grant funding to €1.5 million, as this is match funded it leverages significant support for enhancements for homes across the County from central funds. This investment secures an increase of over €444,000 to accelerate the refurbishment of vacant properties.

He highlighted that the investment of €1 million in staffing will enable the strengthening of the Council's resources by recruiting additional MD staff, planners, engineers, technicians, and community liaison officers to help local communities with project funding drawdown and to deliver better services right across our five municipal districts.

The budget includes crucial infrastructure and safety allocations of €400,000 in match funding for key ERDF/URDF regeneration projects, €250,000 for digital transformation and cybersecurity, €200,000 for hedge cutting to improve road safety and €200,000 for improvements in public lighting.

Other supports include the second round of the €762,000 Community Climate Action Fund, Active Travel: upgrades to footpaths, cycle lanes, public lighting, and pedestrian crossings, continued advancement of the N6 Galway City Ring Road planning process and delivery of Greenways, such as the Galway-Oughterard and Clifden-Oughterard Greenways.

The Council will project manage the redevelopment of the Inis Óírr pier, which is the largest single investment in offshore islands by the Department of Rural and Community Development whilst improving our public amenities, including earlier deployment of our lifeguards in May as part of an enhanced Summer Ready programme.

The Chief Executive thanked the Elected Members for their intensive work and collaboration in developing this ambitious and forward-looking work programme, which provides a clear and ambitious roadmap for growth and a decisive plan to improve essential services on which every resident, business, and community relies on across County Galway.

He paid special thanks to the Director of Finance, Ms O'Connor and her staff for the work on the preparation of the Budget 2026.

He stated that the Council will continue to actively pursue all available funding opportunities from Central Government to further expand the work programme in 2026. The Chief Executive recommended the adoption of the 2026 Budget book as presented.

Ms. O'Connor, Director of Finance outlined the agenda items to be covered in her presentation and informed the meeting of the journey taken in the budget process to present a balanced Draft Budget for 2026.

She outlined the build up to the budget including meetings with the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) and Plenary and five Municipal Districts (MDs) which gave her the opportunity to meet with the elected members and hear comments on the draft plan for the MDs, which were incorporated into the formation of the full Council Budget.

The General Municipal Allocations (GMAs) were passed in all five MDs, However, she stated that the Executive is cognisant of the common threads from each of the MDs, which are that Galway County Council is significantly underfunded and areas such as hedge cutting, footpath resurfacing and burial grounds extensions and maintenance, to name a few, need significant additional funding.

She then discussed each of the directorates under the main areas of expenditure and income and outlined the proposed expenditure for 2026 by each service division and how it will be funded. She said that she was happy to report that this is another

expansionary budget where we can see a proposed increase in expenditure for most of the Directorates.

She outlined the buildup of the projected income from grants, subsidies and other sources relating to the service divisions totals nearly €136m.

The income from the LPT has an increase of €1.5m obtained in the baseline. The commercial rates figure for 2026 is €42m which is calculated by multiplying the ratable valuation, which is determined by Tailte Eireann, by the Annual Rate on Valuation, which is determined by the elected members. There is no proposed increase in the Annual Rate of Valuation for Budget 2026.

It was noted that the presentation is in line with the Draft Budget Book, and the numbers outlined included the Central Management Charges, as they were distributed into each directorate as part of the production of the Budget Tables at the back of the Budget Book, in the format prescribed by legislation. There is not a separate service line J for the Central Management Charges as they were incorporated in the individual Directorate budgets already.

In the Housing Directorate, there was a further increase in expenditure bringing the budgeted spend to €33.38m. The main drivers of the expenditure include the maintenance and improvement of Local Authority housing units, with a budget spend of €9.2m. Included are works on our housing stock of 3,200 homes, such as, voids maintenance, annual servicing of heat pumps and estate maintenance. There is a slight increase for the administration of Homeless Services which is 90% funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage.

Housing expenditure also includes the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) and leasing programs. These areas see an increase with the main drivers of the increase including, an increase in the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) properties and an increase in the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) properties.

In relation to the Housing Grants, there was an increase in match funding for disabled persons grants of €500k to €1.5m in the 2026 Budget. This gives a huge opportunity to obtain significant match funding for enhancements to homes across the County.

This revenue budget deals with the national (primary and secondary) roads, regional and local roads. Galway is the 2nd largest County in the Country in terms of road length, GCC maintains 6,513km's of regional and local roads, therefore we can understand why Roads is our largest spend. The principal areas of expenditure here included a proposed spend of over €55million in the maintenance and improvement of both local and regional roads, which is a significant increase from previous years. Also, included in the overall budget of nearly €66m spend in this Directorate are areas such as public lighting, traffic management improvement, maintenance and improvement on the national primary and secondary roads. Hedge cutting, will have an additional provision of €200k for the current year.

Galway County Council continues to support Uisce Eireann on the delivery of public water and wastewater services across the County. Expenditure is recouped from Uisce Eireann and it is anticipated that our expenditure and income will continue to reduce due

to the transition to Uisce Eireann. The other main activity is the Group Water Schemes budget which is recoupable from the department.

Our development management section continues to guide and facilitate the sustainable development of the County supporting forward planning, economic development, community development and social initiatives. These are areas of great focus for the Chief Executive. The Economic Directorate is where we have our strategic projects being developed by our Regeneration, Forward Planning and Community Teams and then delivered by a Project Management Office to ensure the effective delivery of strategic infrastructure and other capital projects.

There is provision for expenditure of €6.3m in the Community and Enterprise function which include items on empowering communities, creative Ireland programs and social inclusions works. Also, included is an increase in the Social Inclusion & Community Activation Programme which has match funding of €2.3m in 2026. This is a fully funded programme.

Economic Development and Promotion sees a proposed expenditure of €5.5m, an increase of €400k to support a variety of projects which will be match funded under the URDF, RRDF and TCF projects. There is an increase in expenditure relating to local heritage plans and conservation grants, which are also match funded.

Environmental services have proposed expenditures including the operation of Fire services which incorporates approximately €20.5m of the total spend in this Directorate. The main driver for the increase here relates to the retained fire fighters in Galway County and the City. There is a welcomed increase in the income from the Department, from €2.6m to €3.5m for the 2026 Budget.

Other areas included are Litter management with a proposed spend of over €2.5m, maintenance of burial grounds, street cleaning, recycling facilities, climate change, water quality and environmental awareness. Overall, expenditure has increased by over €3m.

The main category in recreation and amenity is the proposed expenditure on the operation of our Library services of €7.3m. Galway library services provide an ample selection of online resources, lending services, PC access, and event spaces for community groups.

The community employment schemes (CES) of €3m is a contra item. There is an increase of over €300k related to outdoor leisure areas including parks, pitches, open spaces and playgrounds

Expenditure in Agriculture, Education Health and Welfare includes the operation and maintenance of piers and harbours, land drainage and veterinary services. The proposed expenditure here has remained relatively stable year on year. The veterinary services have moved out of the remit of Galway County Council since 2025, so there was a decrease in the salaries here.

Expenditure included in Miscellaneous Services is administration of rates of nearly €6m in the current year. This includes a provision for strike-offs relating to vacant properties, bad debt provisions and the cost of the Rate Incentive Scheme. The main driver for the decrease in this code is due to the reduction in the G factor provision relating to the valuations on commercial operations.

Also included in this Directorate is €2.4m in relation to expenditure regarding our local representatives and the annual allowances for same and €2.5m in relation to the costs associated with the operation of motor taxation services. Overall, this directorate has seen a slight decrease year on year

In relation to Commercial Rates, there is no proposed increase in the Annual Rate on Valuation in this balanced budget book. It is proposed that it remains at 0.2400 in line with last year. This budget book, includes a Rate Incentive scheme in the current year for compliant rate payers with a rate bill under €30k. This will give eligible rate payers a 5% refund on their 2026 rate bill, with a cap on the rebate of €500. She said that from feedback received at workshops and a variety of meetings the Members will welcome the fact there is no increase in the ARV and the inclusion of a Rate Incentive scheme with the capacity to support over 97% of our rate payers.

On the three-year capital programme 2026 to 2028 the Capital expenditure includes assets such as the purchase of land, house building, major road improvement works, new fire stations and new and improved office buildings. It also includes the housing delivery action plan, house purchase loans, R1 and R2 land acquisitions, and capital investment in Local Authority housing stock.

Under Infrastructure and Operations, she outlined that the Council has plans for our national and non-national roads, active travel plans, the roll out of our digitisation strategy, fire services and our piers and harbours.

In Economic Development and Planning there are larger RRDF, URDF and TCF projects. She stated that the CE has put a focus on increasing the number of strategic projects developed by Directorates and delivered by both Directorates and the new PMO.

Under corporate services we have listed the works on the consolidation of office accommodation and libraries and in Rural, Community & Tourism Development and Integration we have a variety of proposed capital projects to include, the new HQ extension, the acquisition of Dunguaire Castle, Aughrim Visitor Centre and Joyce County GeoPark. She stated that the three-year capital programme includes many projects to enhance the County of Galway and with the focus of Management Team will expand in size.

Ms O'Connor concluded by stating that this is another expansionary budget for 2026 with an increase in expenditure across all directorates. This Budget strikes the right balance between revenue generation and supporting our local economy. She said that the

Council is continuing to enhance all service delivery areas, while future-proofing County Galway for emergency events.

She thanked the Members for their time, input and support throughout this budgetary process and each of the DOSs for their support and input into the budget and the Finance team. She also thanked the Cathaoirleach and the Chief Executive for their ongoing support and early morning meetings.

The Cathaoirleach then invited contributions from the Elected Members.

Cllr McClearn welcomed the increase of €10m in the 2026 budget and the fact that there was no increase in the Annual Rate in Valuation (ARV). He said that it was a good news budget and proposed the passing of the 2026 budget.

Cllr Hoade also welcomed the budget and thanked all involved. She welcomed the fact that there was no increase in the ARV and stated that this was important for businesses. She also welcomed the additional funding for housing to enable GCC to meet the housing provision targets and the €6.6m funding for the development of Tuam station house and the funding for Town Center First programmes. The €1m investment for staffing will enable the recruitment of outdoor staffing including Engineers, Technicians and Community Officers.

Cllr Hoade seconded the proposal of the 2026 budget.

Cllr Welby thanked the Chief Executive and Head of Finance and stated that it was a most interactive budget. The funding of €33.38M for housing will assist in delivering 1,717 housing units in areas including Moycullen and Barna, €440,000 to address vacant properties and extra funding for disabled grants and social housing energy upgrades.

He acknowledged the engagement of Members and the Executive in producing the 2026 budget. He said that he wished to jointly propose the budget as presented.

The Elected Members comments are summarised as follows;

- The members thanked the Chief Executive, Director of Finance, the Directors of Service and the Finance staff for the preparation of the budget report 2026.
- They welcomed the increase in the budget of €1m for staffing, €200,000 for hedge cutting, €200,000 increase for public lighting and the inclusion of €250,000 for digital transformation and cyber security.
- Increases in the Disabled Persons Grant funding to €1.5 million, leveraging significant co-funding support for enhancements for homes across the County was welcomed.
- The fact that there was no increase in the Commercial Rates ARV was important as it is difficult for small businesses to survive in the current economy.
- Provision for the upgrade to footpaths throughout the County should be included.
- While the extension of the period for provision of Beach Lifeguards was welcome consideration should be given to extending it all year round.
- The Galway City Ring road is an essential project for Galway and is a priority.

- URDF - N6 Greenway is important for Connemara.
- The Members acknowledged the work of the Regeneration Team on Part 10 approval for the Clifden Regeneration project.
- Issues were highlighted in relation to the recycle centre whereby Barna waste no longer accept textiles. It was requested that the Environment Section examine alternative options.
- The Geo Eco Park status delivery is a priority in the budget and welcomed.
- The Council should work with Tailte Eireann to increase the rating of all premises in the county.
- The €6.6m of funding for the development of Tuam station house through THRIVE funding is welcome and THRIVE funding for various Town Centre First plans.
- The Members welcomed the increase of an extra €1M for recruitment of staff. The increased staffing should be beneficial to local communities and priority given to hiring outdoor staff. Increased staff needed for 5Municipal District offices.
- The Members said that businesses could not sustain a rate increase, and they would not vote in favour of any increase in rates.
- The Members expressed their dissatisfaction at the funding available to Galway County Council considering the size of the County. The Council's underfunded situation is unacceptable compared to other Local Authorities.
- Executive should write to Central Government to request increased funding.
- Uisce Eireann will not be upgrading the water/waste infrastructure until 2030, this will affect delivery of housing.
- Investment should be made in Ballinasloe Fire station.
- Just Transition Funding was secured for Aughrim Visitor Centre and GCC should work closely with Failte Ireland to develop it.
- There is a delay with public lighting connections.
- Funding should be included in the next budget to finalise the Loughrea by-pass.
- The cost of providing signage for the new speed limits was approximately €900,000.
- Island communities need more investment.

Members queries were responded to as follows by the CE and Ms O' Connor

- The policy on hedge cutting is currently being drafted and the extra funding in the budget will assist the Council in implementation of the policy.
- The Council needs increased baseline funding, the CE has written to the Department requesting increased funding.
- There was no increase in the ARV for 2026. The Council is delighted to have a new Rate Incentive Scheme for 2026 the terms of which are 5% for eligible customers under €30,000 and capped at €500.
- There is €2.4M included in the budget for the extension to office accommodation for Aras an Chontae.
- When preparing the budget, the initial deficit was reduced by cutting expenditure and increasing revenue.
- Aughrim Interpretive Centre funding has been increased for 2026.
- The early employment of Beach Lifeguards will enhance water safety and all year round water safety measures can be discussed for future budgets.

- There were four staff recruited for the register of electors funded by the Department.
- Increasing staffing figures remains a HR priority and the operational business of GCC.
- There is no specific Rates Incentive scheme for the islands but there is an increased budget to support provision of civic amenities.

Members queries were responded to as follows by Mr U. Finn

- There is an increase in funding for hedge cutting in the budget.
- It was acknowledged that extra staffing is needed in GCC. Staffing for 2025 in the Strategic Workforce Plan increased by 82 additional staff and there are budgetary measures in place to support additional staff in 2026.
- The Council tendered early in 2025 for road restoration works which yielded savings.
- Significant improvement in funding for the capital programme. e.g. €43m for Inis Oirr harbour, Galway City Ring road and active travel.
- Tuam traffic management plan €16,000 included for 2026.
- Provision for footpaths will be decided at MD level.
- Public lighting retrofit to LED is 90% upgraded. Climate Action Targets have been met.
- Rural public lighting funding is on a case-by-case basis.
- Funding for Ballinasloe fire station has been submitted to the Department. The Council has been successful in getting funding on previous fire station projects.
- The project for Craughwell/Clarinbridge requires €5m match funding from the Council. Match funding is not available therefore will seek 100% from the Dept.

Members queries were responded to as follows by the Chief Executive

- Staff recruitment is challenging due to full employment in the Irish economy and the Council is in competition with the private sector where wages are higher. Some extra staff may be redeployed within the Council after the transition of water services to Uisce Eireann in 2026.
- The Council will continue to seek increased equalisation funding and assistance in leveraging increased baseline funding from central funds by the Elected Council and Oireachtas Members is welcome. The Chief will continue to work with the Department officials.
- Communication is ongoing with Minister Burke and DETE in relation to Dunguaire Castle with a view to reopening the castle as a vital Galway tourism project.
- In relation to the consolidation of office accommodation we will seek Government supports in energy retrofit of county hall and significant savings in rent of leased office properties which will be factored into the project costs. The detailed figures will be brought to Members. Any loan cost will have to be budgeted for over a 25/30yr period.

Cllr Noel Thomas asked that it be noted that he objected to the budget.

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. McClearn **SECONDED** by Cllr. Hoade the Members **AGREED: to adopt Budget 2026, as presented.**

The Cathaoirleach confirmed the Draft Budget 2026 as **ADOPTED.**

ITEM NO. 2 DETERMINATION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE BUDGET ADOPTED, OF THE RATE ON VALUATION TO BE LEVIED FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING 31ST DECEMBER 2026.

4619

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Welby the Members **AGREED:**

“That Galway County Council hereby determine in accordance with the Budget adopted, of the rate on valuation to be levied at 0.2400 for the financial year ending 31st December, 2026”.

ITEM NO. 3 CONSIDER SCHEME FOR THE ABATEMENT OF RATES DUE BY LIABLE PERSONS, OR CLASSES OF LIABLE PERSONS, IN RESPECT OF VACANT PROPERTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 9 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT RATES AND OTHER MATTERS ACT 2019, AS AMENDED.

4620

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Welby **SECONDED** by Cllr. Hoade the Members **AGREED to APPROVE** the scheme for the abatement of rates due by liable persons, or classes of liable persons, in respect of vacant properties in accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Local Government Rates and Other Matters Act 2019, as amended.

ITEM NO. 4 TO APPROVE THE RATES PAYMENT INCENTIVE SCHEME.

4621

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. McClearn the Members **APPROVED** the Rates Payment Incentive Scheme.

ITEM NO. 5 TO APPROVE THE ESTIMATED OUTTURNS 2025.

4622

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Welby **SECONDED** by Cllr. Mannion the Members **APPROVED** outturns 2025.

ITEM NO. 6 TO NOTE THE REPORT ON THE THREE-YEAR CAPITAL PROGRAMME.

4623

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Welby the Members **NOTED** the Three Year Capital Programme.

ITEM NO. 7 TO NOTE THE ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT ON THE GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2025-2029 IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 134 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2001 (AS AMENDED). 4624

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr. Hoade **SECONDED** by Cllr. Maher the Members **NOTED** the Annual Progress Report on the Galway County Council Corporate Plan 2025-2029 in accordance with Section 134 of the Local Government Act 2001 (as amended)

Chriochnaigh an Cruinniú Ansin.

Submitted, Signed and Approved

Cathaoirleach:



Date:

