Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Customer Services Action Plan

2025-2029



CONTENTS

Message From an Cathaoirleach & Chief Executive 2
Introduction 3
Our Core Values 4
Our Ambition for Equality & Human Rights 7
Our Vision for Galway County Council 11
About Galway County Council 12
Our Services 12
Our Six Directorates 14
Operating Environment & Limitations on Resources 14
Serving our customers 15
Universal Access for all our customers 16
Customer Participation 18
Customer Service Actions 2025-2029 18
Customer Charter 19
Statement of Quality Service Standards 21
Customer Service Delivery Response Targets 24
Customer Role 27
Customer Code of Conduct 28
Our Complaints Policy and Procedure 30
Our Appeals Procedure 39
Appendices 41
- Appendices 1. 42
  - (i) Equality and Human Rights Issues Relevant to our Customer Service. 42
  - (ii) UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) 43
- Appendices 2: Our Complaints Form 44
- Appendices 3: Request for Information and / or Assistance in Alternative Format 47

Message From an Cathaoirleach & Chief Executive

An Cathaoirleach Councillor David Collins



As Cathaoirleach of Galway County Council, I am pleased to introduce our Customer Action Plan 2025–2029, which reflects our unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality, responsive and inclusive public services to the people of County Galway.

This Action Plan is firmly rooted in the strategic vision set out in our Corporate Plan 2025–2029, which aspires to build a connected, sustainable and vibrant County. It reinforces our shared values of integrity, accountability, innovation and community engagement and sets out clear standards for how we interact with and support our citizens. Galway County Council serves a diverse and dynamic population across a broad geographic area. This Plan ensures that our approach to customer service is consistent, fair and continuously improving. It recognises that excellent service is not just about meeting expectations—it is about exceeding them, fostering trust and strengthening the relationship between the Council and the communities we serve.

As Cathaoirleach, I am fully committed to the successful implementation of this Plan and to ensuring that its principles are embedded across all areas of our work. On behalf of the Elected Members, I commend the Chief Executive and staff for their dedication in developing this important initiative. I look forward to the positive impact it will have over the coming years.



Liam Conneally, Chief Executive, Galway County Council

I am pleased to welcome the publication of Galway County Council's Customer Service Action Plan 2025–2029, which marks an important step in our commitment to delivering high-quality, inclusive and responsive public services to the people of County Galway. This plan outlines our approach to service delivery over the coming years, with a clear focus on meeting the needs of our communities in a way that is visionary, fair and forward-looking. It sets out a series of practical actions to improve how we engage with our customers, including the development of new teams and systems, enhanced digital access and the creation of more welcoming and accessible service portals. These improvements are designed to make it easier for people to interact with the Council and to ensure that every customer experience is positive and respectful.

Our customers are central to everything we do. Whether they are residents, businesses, visitors or community organisations, their feedback and participation help shape our services and strengthen our connection with the communities we serve. We value this relationship and are committed to building on it.

Working with our Staff and Elected Representatives, I look forward to seeing the impact of this plan and to continuing our strong relationship with the people of County Galway. We will work together to build a more connected, sustainable and vibrant county.

Introduction

The **Customer Action Plan 2025–2029** sets out the standards of service that Galway County Council customers can expect, placing the customer at the centre of everything we do. It is a key enabler of Strategic Goal 1: Business Transformation through Enhanced Customer Service, as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2025–2029 and reflects our commitment to innovation, accountability and continuous improvement.
The Action Plan was adopted in December 2025.

To support broader organisational change and deliver on Strategic Goal 1: Business Transformation through Enhanced Customer Service, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2025–2029, Galway County Council will implement a series of coordinated actions. These include the reconfiguration of the Customer Services Team, the strengthening of Municipal Districts through enhanced resources and functions and the establishment of a Project Management Office to lead master planning and project delivery. A dedicated Innovation Team is now established to champion new approaches and drive continuous improvement across all aspects of customer service. These initiatives are underpinned by a comprehensive Strategic Workforce Plan, ongoing service reviews and staff development programmes, all designed in accordance with Public Sector Design Principles. In parallel, the Consolidation of Office Accommodation will guide the reconfiguration of office spaces to ensure our physical infrastructure supports the evolving needs of the Customer Service model—creating more accessible, efficient and customer-focused service environments.

Our newly redesigned website www.galway.ie further enhances service delivery by offering a more accessible, efficient and user-friendly experience. While digital access is improved, customers continue to have the option to liaise directly with staff, ensuring services remain inclusive and accessible to all, in line with our obligations under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Galway County Council is committed to meeting its obligations under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, which requires a significant increase in the delivery of services through Irish by 2030. Over the term of the plan, we will incrementally expand our capacity to provide services in Irish, ensuring that Irish-speaking customers can engage with the Council in their preferred language.

Customer participation is central to how Galway County Council plans, delivers and improves its services. We believe that meaningful involvement of our customers—reflecting the diversity of our communities—leads to better decisions, stronger civic engagement and greater trust in local government. In line with Strategic Goal 4: Strengthening Democratic Engagement and Civic Leadership, we are committed to ensuring that customer voices are heard and valued in decision-making. Customers can shape and influence our work through a variety of channels, including engagement with elected representatives, participation in public consultations, feedback via our online comments system and involvement in local structures such as the Public Participation Network

(PPN) and Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs). We are committed to engaging with all our customers and ensuring their voices help shape our services.
At Galway County Council, our mission is to foster a culture of excellence in customer service, grounded in our public sector duty and our commitment to the communities we serve.

Implementation and Oversight
The implementation of Galway County Council's Customer Action Plan is led by the Customer Services Officers Group (CSOG), a cross-organisational team comprising representatives from all major service areas. The CSOG plays a central role in delivering on our Quality Customer Services Strategy, drafting and implementing annual actions to improve service delivery. The group reports to the Management Team, which includes the Chief Executive and Directors of Services, with progress updates published in the Annual Report and Budget documents.

The CSOG is also responsible for reviewing and updating our Statement of Quality Service Standards, which outlines the level of service customers can expect and guides staff in maintaining high standards of interaction. The Customer Service Officers ensure that complaints and appeals are handled in line with our Complaints Policy and Procedure and Appeals Process, with a strong emphasis on fairness, consistency and staff training.
To support our goals, the CSOG will implement the following strategies:

- Clearly and accessibly communicate the level of service customers can expect from Galway County Council staff
- Optimise resources to deliver services that are responsive to customer needs and reflect the diversity of our communities
- Learn from service gaps and address areas where standards and expectations are not met
- Actively seek feedback from across our customer base and benchmark performance against recognised standards to ensure continuous improvement.

Our Core Values

At the heart of Galway County Council's service delivery is a strong foundation of shared values that guide our actions, shape our culture and define our relationship with the public. These values are central to achieving Strategic Goal 1: Business Transformation through Enhanced Customer Service. They underpin every interaction we have with our communities.

Our core values reflect who we are, what we stand for and how we strive to serve the people of County Galway. They ensure that our services are not only effective and efficient, but also principled, inclusive and future-focused.

We are committed to the following values:

Accountable

Adhere to and promote the highest standards of integrity, ethics, transparency and accountability in the performance of our various functions for our diverse customer base.

Helpful

Support and encourage our staff to deliver effective and responsive public service in a friendly, helpful, engaging, fair and inclusive manner that promotes public confidence, accessibility and respect for diversity.

Inclusive

Respect all citizens and members of the community and promote County Galway as a place that upholds dignity, is socially cohesive and accessible.

Democratic

Alongside the Elected Members we will provide clear effective democratic and civic leadership by informing, engaging, listening and responding to our people and our communities to enable participation.

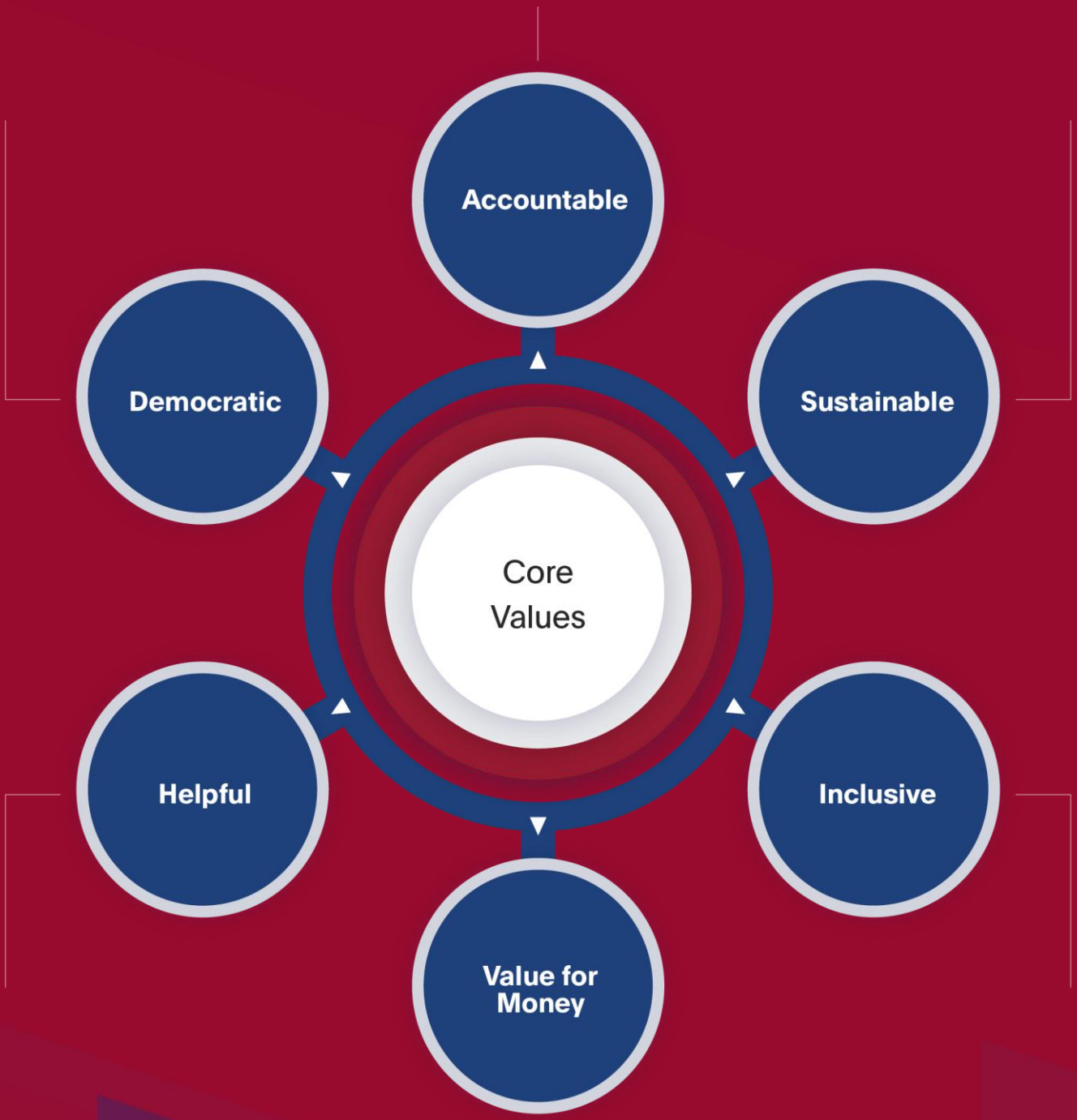
Sustainable

Ensure the progressive and sustainable development of the County in partnership with our communities, in a way that promotes the well-being and quality of life for all our citizens.

Value for Money

Provide cost-effective, efficient services and continually assess and evaluate our performance.

Our Core Values



Our Ambition for Equality & Human Rights

Galway County Council is the only democratic body focused exclusively on the county and one of the main public service providers for County Galway.

We are committed to embedding equality and human rights at the heart of our work. Our ambition is rooted in our implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty and the Equal Status Acts. We aim to ensure that all individuals and communities, especially those from the identified groups for the Duty, experience dignity, accessibility, participation and inclusion in every interaction with the Council.

We recognise our responsibility under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty to proactively consider the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity;
- Protect the human rights of staff, service users and the wider community;

This commitment extends to all groups protected under equality laws and international human rights agreements. These groups include those defined by gender (including gender expression, gender identity and sex characteristics), civil status, family status (including lone parents and carers), age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, membership of the Traveller community and disadvantaged socio-economic status. It also includes those at the intersections of these categories. These ten groups show the range of our focus on diversity in this Customer Service Action Plan.

This ambition is supported by the Council's ongoing implementation of the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. The Council's Equality and Human Rights Duty Working Group prepared an implementation plan for the Duty. This plan, called the Adopted PSD Implementation Plan, was adopted by Galway County Council's Management Team on 25th July 2023. This plan can be found on our website.

https://www.galway.ie/sites/default/files/2025-06/Implementation%20Plan%202025.pdf

This implementation plan sets out:

- An equality and human rights values framework for the Duty;
- The assessment of equality and human rights issues relevant to the Council's functions;
- The ongoing steps to be taken to enable, realise and report on the Council's implementation of the Duty;

How Our Customer Services Action Plan Supports Our Values Statement

Benchmarking our commitment to Equality and Human Rights in Customer Service

Our Equality and Human Rights Values Statement benchmarks our ambition in how we implement the Duty. It is aligned with our core values as an organisation and draws from these to define and establish the practical implications of the four values motivating our concern for equality and human rights—Dignity, Diversity, Participation and Inclusion. These values guide both our strategic priorities and our day-to-day operations, including customer service.

Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment

The assessment of equality and human rights issues in our implementation plan for the Duty was used to establish the equality and human rights issues facing the identified groups for the Duty and relevant to our customer services function. These issues were used to undertake an equality and human rights impact assessment of this Action Plan at final draft stage. These issues will continue to inform the ongoing implementation of the plan and are set out in Appendix (i).

Compliance with the Equal Status Acts

We will develop, promote and implement an Equal Status Policy to establish our commitment to the elimination of stereotypes and non-discrimination and to adapting for diversity while promoting equality across the nine grounds covered by the Equal Status Acts including the additional ground of socio-economic status (introduced under the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty), and to set out the steps, that we will take to realise this commitment.

Our Customer Services Action Plan upholds these values through:

- **Dignity:** Ensuring respectful, fair and courteous treatment of all customers, with policies that uphold privacy and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Diversity:** Delivering services and infrastructure that reflect the diversity of our community and making reasonable accommodations where needed.
- **Participation:** Creating inclusive consultation that amplify the voices of underrepresented groups and their representative organisations.
- **Inclusion:** Targeting resources and supports to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of those experiencing inequality, ensuring equitable access to services and opportunities.

Through this integrated approach, Galway County Council aims to lead by example in building a County where equality and human rights are not only protected but actively promoted in every aspect of customer service delivery.

These strategies are supported by the following core sections of this Customer Services Action Plan:

- Customer Charter, including our Customer Code of Conduct
- Statement of Quality Service Standards
- Customer Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Appeals Procedure

Together, these documents form our Customer Services Action Plan, available at all public service counters and online:

- www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/your-county-council/customer-service

You may also request copies by emailing customerservices@galwaycoco.ie. Alternative formats are available upon request.

Reporting

Senior management will be provided with periodic updates on the number and type of complaints received, timeline for response and where appropriate matters arising and actions required. Actions required to improve service delivery shall be noted by senior management. Annual reporting of the number of complaints processed by service area shall be facilitated to include any changes to services resulting from issues raised.

In fulfilling the annual reporting requirements under the Duty, we will track and report on:

- Requests for reasonable accommodation or adaptations, the ground on which these were made and the response made to these.
- Developments and improvements made to service delivery systems to respond to and address the specific needs arising from diversity, number, type and ground addressed.
- Complaints that relate to discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or failure to make reasonable accommodation or adaptions, the ground on which the complaint was made and the ultimate resolution of the complaint made.

Our Mission 2025-2029

"Building on our core values, Galway County Council is driven by a clear and ambitious mission that guides our work and shapes our vision for the future of the county.

"It is our mission to promote the creation of an attractive, resilient and inclusive county in which to live, work and visit.

We will enable our diverse communities and businesses to flourish in an environment that offers a range of housing options, a robust range of employment opportunities, access to quality infrastructure and community facilities with a high-quality sustainable environment, to meet the needs of all.

We will do so as the leading local democratic body in Galway County, representing its people, with dignity, in all aspects of their lives and identities, committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of our democratic role. We will be strategic in our future planning and focused on our daily delivery of services to the people of Galway County."

Our Vision for Galway County Council

"A county with a clear sense of identity that reflects its diverse heritage, cultures and communities, while promoting sustainable and inclusive economic and community development, and engagement through collaboration with stakeholders and participation of its many diverse communities."

About Galway County Council

Galway County Council is the local authority responsible for the administration and development of County Galway, serving a population of 193,323 across five Municipal Districts. The Council is composed of 39 Elected Members and supported by a dedicated workforce of over 925 staff (Q3 2025), including emergency response personnel available 24/7.

Operating under a dual governance model, the Council combines democratic representation with professional service delivery. Elected Members set policy direction and represent the interests of their communities, while the Chief Executive and Management Team oversee the implementation of these policies and the delivery of a wide range of public services.

Galway County Council plays a pivotal role in shaping the county's future through strategic planning, democratic leadership and inclusive community engagement. Its work is guided by the Corporate Plan 2025–2029, which outlines a vision for a resilient, inclusive and sustainable Galway that honours its diverse heritage and culture.

The Council's governance framework includes a Corporate Policy Group and six Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), which bring together elected members and sectoral representatives to shape policy in key areas such as:

- Housing
- Economic Development & Enterprise Planning
- Physical Development, Transportation & Emergency Services
- Community, Irish Language, Gaeltacht, Tourism & Integration
- Environment Protection & Agriculture
- Climate Action, Biodiversity & Heritage

Through its strategic goals and actions outlined in the Corporate Plan 2025-2029, Galway County Council strives to be a leading public service organisation—responsive, transparent and accountable to the people it serves.

Our Services

With an annual budget of €194 million (2025), Galway County Council delivers over 1,000 services and functions across a wide range of areas. These services are central to the Council's mission to promote an attractive, resilient and inclusive county in which to live, work, study, visit and invest.

As outlined in the Corporate Plan 2025–2029, our services are designed to support sustainable development, community well-being and economic vitality. We are committed to delivering high-quality, accessible and inclusive services that reflect the diverse needs of our population and the unique cultural and environmental heritage of County Galway.

Each year, Galway County Council reviews the findings of the Annual LGMA Customer Survey, a national initiative that captures public sentiment and service expectations across local authorities. The insights help us understand how local authority services are perceived, identify areas for improvement and adapt to changing customer needs. We use this feedback to inform service

planning, enhance accessibility and ensure our delivery remains responsive, inclusive and community focused.

Galway County Council is committed to equality and human rights and to dignity, diversity, participation and inclusion in all aspects of service provision. We work in partnership with national, regional and local stakeholders to ensure that our services meet the evolving needs of our communities and align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Our services include:

Corporate Services, Rural, Community & Tourism Development and Integration

Manages democratic governance, elected member support, and corporate administration. Services include maintaining the Register of Electors, Freedom of Information, Customer Service and Recreation & Amenities. It also delivers rural and community development programmes, arts and tourism promotion, grant schemes, and migrant integration strategies.

Physical Infrastructure, Fire & Emergency Services and Climate Change

Responsible for roads and transportation, including maintenance, pothole repairs, and major projects like greenways and national routes. Provides 24/7 fire and emergency response, fire safety certification, and major emergency planning. Leads climate action through energy efficiency programmes, decarbonisation zones, and community climate grants.

Environment, Human Resources, City & County Libraries

Delivers waste management, recycling facilities, litter control, and environmental inspections. Oversees HR functions such as recruitment, staff development, and workplace planning. Operates 29 libraries offering book lending, digital resources, My Open Library access, and community programmes like Healthy Ireland and sensory services.

Planning & Economic Development

Provides planning application services, development control, and enforcement. Prepares Local Area Plans, regeneration projects, and supports enterprise through the Local Enterprise Office. Drives economic growth with initiatives like the Strategic Economic Corridor and tourism development, while ensuring compliance with planning legislation**.**

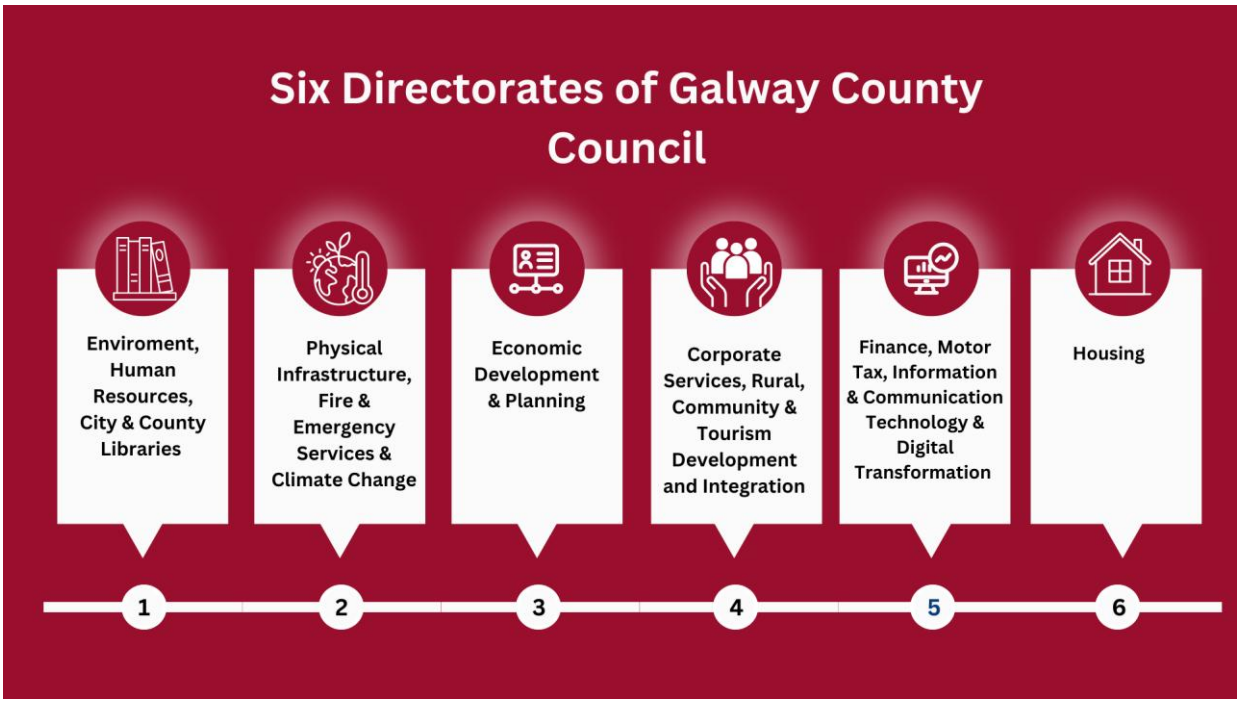
Housing

Manages social and affordable housing delivery, homelessness prevention, and Traveller accommodation programmes. Services include housing grants, adaptations for older persons and people with disabilities, estate management, and differential rent schemes. Also oversees energy retrofit programmes and vacancy activation.

Finance, Motor Tax, ICT & Digital Transformation
Handles financial management, budgeting, and revenue collection. Operates the Motor Tax Office for vehicle licensing. Leads ICT and digital transformation by expanding online services, improving the Council website, and implementing the National Local Government Digital Strategy. Ensures strong governance, audit, and compliance systems.

Our Six Directorates

Six Directorates set out below, have responsibility for delivering the services of Galway County Council.



Operating Environment & Limitations on Resources

Galway County Council operates in a complex and evolving environment shaped by global, national and local forces. As the leading democratic body in the County, we must remain agile—ready to seize opportunities and resilient in the face of challenges.

Key External Influences
During the lifecycle of this plan, several external factors will shape our service delivery and community engagement:

- **Global Instability**: Political conflict and economic uncertainty
- **Policy Shifts**: EU agricultural reform, planning legislation and demographic change
- **Social Pressures**: Rising service demand, rural isolation and evolving equality and human rights needs

- **Technological Change:** Advancing digitalisation and AI integration create opportunities for improved service delivery but also introduce challenges such as digital exclusion and technical constraints, which must be addressed in line with legal and regulatory requirements
- **Environmental Challenges**: Climate change and biodiversity loss

Internal Priorities

To meet these challenges, the Council is strengthening its internal capacity through:

- Workforce development and continuous professional learning
- Enhanced governance, transparency and risk management
- Improved financial systems and local service delivery
- Stronger collaboration with regional partners, especially Galway City Council

Equality and Human Rights Commitment

Our operating environment is also defined by our leadership in promoting *equality and human rights*. In giving effect to this and in line with the Public Sector *Equality and Human Rights* Duty, we have:

- Conducted an evidence-based and participative assessment of equality and human rights issues.
- Adopted a Public Sector Duty Implementation Plan to guide ongoing implementation of the Duty
- Undertaken equality and human rights impact assessments, in line with the overarching element of the Duty, in the development and review of key plans, policies, strategies and programmes, to ensure an adequate and appropriate response to the equality and human rights issues identified, including in the preparation of this Customers Services Action Plan.
- Developed targeted strategies for key groups, in line with the Strategic element of the Duty, that address a number of the equality and human rights issues identified, including:
    - Age Friendly Strategy
    - Housing Strategies
    - Traveller Accommodation Programme

A Flexible and Future-Ready Council

Our Corporate Plan is designed to be adaptable, ensuring we can respond to change, protect our communities and deliver inclusive, high-quality services. This approach underpins our Customer Services Action Plan and reflects our commitment to a fairer, more resilient County Galway.

Serving our customers

At Galway County Council, we recognise that our customers include everyone who lives, works, studies, or visits County Galway—as well as the businesses, organisations and communities that engage with us. If you have a reason to contact the Council, you are our customer.

We view our customers not just as service users, but as active participants in shaping the future of their communities. Our engagement spans a wide network, including:

- Local residents and elected members,
- National representatives and government departments,
- Community leaders, local development groups and sectoral organisations.

County Galway, excluding Galway City, is home to 193,323 people (Census 2022). Our population reflects national trends in diversity and disability, while also being uniquely defined by the presence of Ireland's largest Gaeltacht communities. While the county includes several key towns, much of the population lives in dispersed rural areas,

We are committed to transforming how we serve our customers. This includes:

- **Enhancing service delivery** through innovation and digital transformation, taking steps to address digital inequality and/or take it into account
- **Improving communication** and responsiveness across all channels
- **Building organisational capacity** through staff development and leadership
- **Establishing new structures**, such as a Project Management Office and Innovation Team, to drive continuous improvement.

Our goal is to ensure that every interaction with the Council is inclusive, efficient and aligned with the evolving needs of our communities—urban and rural, and across all life stages and backgrounds.

Universal Access for all our customers

Our **Customer Charter** demonstrates our commitment to dignity, diversity, participation and inclusion by making reasonable accommodation for diversity and ensuring adaptability and flexibility in the delivery of our services and the provision of additional supports, towards meeting the specific needs that arise from diversity.

This includes the requirement to make reasonable accommodations, to ensure access for customers with disabilities, as provided for under the Equal Status Acts and for flexibility in making adaptations for the specific needs of the wider diversity of our customers across the identified groups for the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty. Where reasonable accommodation is sought to meet needs specific to diversity, the customer may contact the Customer Services Officer to seek any adaptation required to enable access to a service.

Our front-line staff are trained and continue to receive training on issues of equality, diversity and human rights to enable and secure access for the diversity of our customers.

The culture and atmosphere of our service provision environments are managed and prepared to be welcoming to the diversity of our customers and to communicate this welcome.

We will look to develop systems to track the accessibility of our services and the steps we take to respond to diversity and the specific needs of the diversity of our customers, both internal and external.

Galway County Council actively collaborates with other public bodies and local communities to promote inclusive service delivery, including participation in Ireland's Age Friendly Programme. This national initiative supports the development of age-friendly policies, environments and services that enhance the quality of life for older people.

Further information is available at: https://www.agefriendlyireland.ie

Accessibility and Alternative Formats
Galway County Council is committed to ensuring universal access to our services in accordance with the Disability Act 2005 and all other applicable national and international accessibility and equality standards.

Where practicable and appropriate, all information available to the public will be provided in accessible formats upon request, including:

- Large print
- Braille
- Audio files
- Electronic formats
- Sign language interpreting (with advance notice)

Members of the public can request accessible formats by completing the **'Request for Information and Assistance in an Alternative Format'** application form, available for download at:

https://www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/customer-service/how-complain-and-appeal

Completed forms should be returned to:
Access Officer
Corporate Services
Galway County Council
Áras an Chontae, Prospect Hill, Galway
Tel: (091) 509225
Email: accessofficer@galwaycoco.ie

Complaints under the **Disability Act 2005** can also be submitted to the Access Officer using our standard complaints procedure. Full details are available on our Customer Services page:
https://www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/your-county-council/customer-service

Customer Participation

Customer participation is central to how Galway County Council plans, delivers and improves its services. We believe that meaningful involvement of our customers and of the diversity of our customers, leads to better decisions, stronger communities and greater trust in local government.
You can shape and influence our work through a variety of channels, including:

- **Engaging with your elected representatives**
- **Attending public consultation events**
- **Submitting feedback via our online comments system**: Galway County Council Comments
- **Participating in local structures** such as the Public Participation Network (PPN) and Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs).

In line with **Strategic Goal 4** of the Corporate Plan 2025–2029, we are committed to strengthening democratic engagement and civic leadership. This means:

- Ensuring customer voices, across the diversity of our customers, are heard and valued in decision-making
- Supporting elected members in their representational roles
- Enhancing communication and collaboration with the public and key stakeholders, including civil society organisations, in particular those organisations representative of the diversity of our customers.

These efforts ensure that customer participation is not just encouraged but embedded in how we operate—making our services more transparent, accountable and responsive.
In this, we are concerned to hear the perspectives of the diversity of our customers from across the identified groups for the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, taking steps to support and enable these perspectives to be brought forward, as requested and required, and to track the level of this participation and its impact.

Customer Feedback

We welcome your feedback. Whether it's a comment, compliment, or suggestion, your input helps us improve. You can share your views at any time through our online comments service.
https://apps.galwaycoco.ie/comments/

Customer Service Actions 2025-2029

Actions to Be Progressed During the Lifetime of This Customer Action Plan

To deliver a modern, customer-focused service, Galway County Council will strengthen its customer service model, advance digital capabilities, and ensure our physical infrastructure supports evolving needs. These actions align with national strategies such as the *Digital Public Services Plan 2030* and our commitment to accessibility, efficiency, and the Public Sector Duty.

Key Actions

- **Review Customer Service Model**
  Undertake a comprehensive review of the customer service model to strengthen service delivery across all Municipal Districts.

- **Reconfigure Office Accommodation**
  Consolidate and redesign office spaces to create accessible, efficient, and customer-focused environments that support the evolving service model.
- **Advance Digital Transformation**
  Implement the *Digital Public Services Plan 2030* by digitalising key public services, ensuring 100% online availability and achieving 90% digital uptake for applicable services.
- **Drive Innovation and Capacity Building**
  Progress recruitment of a dedicated Digital Transformation Team to work with the Innovation Working Group in leading and sustaining these initiatives.
- **Irish Language Capacity**
  Incrementally expand Galway County Council's capacity to deliver services through Irish, in line with the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021, ensuring Irish-speaking customers can engage fully by 2030.

These actions will enable Galway County Council to deliver a responsive, inclusive, and digitally enabled customer experience, meeting the needs of our communities now and into the future.

Customer Charter

At Galway County Council, we are committed to delivering high-quality, accessible and inclusive services to all our customers. Whether you live, work, study, or visit County Galway—or represent a business or organisation—your experience matters to us.

Our **Customer Charter** outlines the standards you can expect when interacting with us and aligns with the 12 Guiding Principles of Quality Customer Services established through the Quality Customer Service Initiative (QCSI) under the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform. It reflects our commitment to fairness, transparency and continuous improvement and supports our goal of building a more responsive and accountable organisation.

Our Commitments to You

1. **Quality Service Standards**
   We aim to deliver services to the highest standard. If we are unable to meet these standards, we will inform you and explain why.

2. **Equality and Diversity**
   We treat all customers with dignity and respect, ensuring equal access to services for everyone, regardless of background or need.

3. **Physical Access**
   Our public offices are clean, safe and accessible, meeting all health, safety and disability access requirements. We take steps to facilitate access for people with disabilities, as and if required.

4. **Clear Information**
   We provide accurate, up-to-date information at all service points and on our website. We are committed to making our forms and materials easy to understand.

5. **Correspondence**
   All correspondence will include a named contact person for follow-up.

6. **Timeliness and Courtesy**
   We aim to respond promptly and courteously. If delays occur, we will explain the reason and provide a timeline for resolution. We ask that all customers treat our staff and others with the same courtesy and respect.

7. **Complaints**
   We welcome feedback and are committed to resolving complaints fairly and efficiently. Our complaints procedure is simple, transparent and available at all customer service points and online:
   - Submit a Complaint https://www.galway.ie/en/contact

8. **Consultation and Evaluation**
   Your feedback helps us improve. We will make it easy for you to take part in consultations and share your views on our services, including taking steps to accommodate any specific needs arising from diversity.

9. **Choice and Accessibility**
   We seek to be flexible in offering options and supports for the diversity of our customers to enable their access to services and making payments. If seeking such flexibility, customers should contact the relevant Customer Services Officer.

10. **Official Languages**
    We provide services in Irish and English in line with our language policy.

11. **Working in Partnership**
    We collaborate with other public service bodies to improve service delivery across the region.

12. **Internal Customers**
    We value our staff, including the diversity of our staff, as internal customers and actively involve them in service improvement through our Customer Services Officers Group and other forums, ensuring within this the perspective of the diversity of our staff is articulated and responded to.

For more information, please see our Statement of Quality Service Standards and Customer Services Strategy available at any office, or on:

English: www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/your-county-council/customer-service



Statement of Quality Service Standards

This **statement outlines the standards** you can expect from us based on our **Customer Charter**. Our Customer Charter is displayed at our public service counters and online at Galway County Council. Our goal is to foster a culture of excellence in customer service. We will utilise our resources to consistently deliver and maintain high standards. However, if we occasionally fall short, we will inform you and explain the reasons.

In Person:
If you visit one of our offices, we will:

- Provide a clean and safe environment.
- Ensure public signs are in both Irish and English.
- Meet you punctually if you have made an appointment.
- Respect your privacy and provide private meeting facilities if necessary.
- Interact with you in a polite, courteous and fair manner, recognising some customers' preference for service in Irish and accurately accepting any customer's details in Irish as required.
- Address your enquiry and provide relevant information as quickly as possible.
- Use our staff resources effectively to minimise queuing times for services. If queues are unavoidable, we will inform you and explain the reasons.

- Facilitate access for people with disabilities and additional needs**.**
- Respect the diversity of our customers in flexibly seeking to meet specific needs that arise from diversity to ensure full and effective access to our services.
- Make every effort to respond to issues of language diversity with translation as required, including Irish Sign Language.
- Ensure the culture and atmosphere of our service environments are managed and prepared to be welcoming to diversity.

We provide an Irish language counter service at all public counters in Áras an Chontae and Centrepoint office locations as follows:

- If an Irish speaker (able to provide the requested service in Irish) is available, an Irish language service will be provided.
- If an Irish speaker is not available, the person dealing with the customer will courteously explain the situation and inform the customer of when an Irish speaker will be available (this will only be done if an Irish speaker will be available within a reasonable time). Alternatively, the customer will be offered the following options:
    - To arrange a specific time when an Irish speaker will be present.
    - To continue the conversation in English, if the customer so wishes. This option will only be offered if all other options have been offered and declined by the customer.
- Ensure that any correspondence following a counter transaction where you indicate your preference to use Irish will continue to be in that language, even if the transaction may have transpired in English.

In Writing:

When we write to or email customers or reply to correspondence, we will:

- Use clear and plain language, minimising technical terms.
- Acknowledge all correspondence (letter, email, webcomment) within 5 working days and endeavour to reply within 20 working days or less.
- Include the writer's name, contact number, email address and file reference number.
- Notify you by 'out of office' email response if a staff member is absent for more than 3 working days and provide you with an alternative contact number.
- Make every effort to ensure written correspondence is the most appropriate and accessible form of contact for the diversity of our customers.

By Telephone:

If you telephone us, we will:

- Be available to take your call from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm (Monday to Friday).
- Answer calls as quickly as possible and respond courteously.
- Call you back if we cannot deal with your query immediately.
- Be helpful and clear, directing you to the most appropriate person to deal with your query without delay.

- Always provide you with a contact number if you need to call us back.
- Direct you to a member of staff who can deal with your query in Irish.
- Make every effort to return your call within 24 hours.
- Update messages recorded on our phones to inform you if the staff member is absent.
- Make every effort to respond to issues of language diversity with interpretation as required.

By Application Form:

If you apply for one of our services, we will:

- Explain precisely what is required to avail of a service.
- Make the application form easy to find and provide accurate and precise instructions on how to complete it.
- Only ask for information that is essential to a fair and prompt assessment of your application.
- Ensure that personal data acquired by us is used only for the purpose for which it was sought.
- Acknowledge receipt of your application and deal with it within agreed time limits.
- Write to you with a decision on your application or appeal, providing reasons if it was unsuccessful.
- Respect the diversity of our customers in being flexible to meet specific needs that arise from diversity of relevance to our application processes.

Online:

If you visit our website, we will:

- Provide information on services and how to find out more about them.
- Publish copies of our Annual Reports, Major Plans and Budgets.
- Enable online payment for as many services as feasible.
- Provide copies of all our application forms.
- Offer alternate accessible formats of our publications on request (e.g., Large Print).
- Make it easy to submit a comment and promptly update our site.
- Ensure our website and online systems meet the accessibility requirements under the EU Web Accessibility Directive.

As Gaeilge:

If you wish to use our services through Irish, we will:

- Provide our brochures, information leaflets, application forms and policy documents in Irish to comply with the provisions of An Scéim Teanga and The Official Languages Acts 2003 and 2021.
- Reply in Irish to any correspondence received in Irish.
- Establish, to the greatest extent possible, a dedicated Irish Language telephone service for those who wish to conduct their business through Irish.

- Inform you of the services available in Irish at each public counter and the extent of the service available in Irish.

Customer Service Delivery Response Targets

The **Statement of Quality Service Standards** applies to all service areas and outlines our commitments as follows:

- **Acknowledge** all correspondence (letter, email, webcomment) **within 5 working days** and endeavour to reply within **20 working days or less**.
- Reply in Irish to any correspondence received in Irish.
- Our Complaints and Appeals Procedure states that **all complaints will be responded to within 30 working days**.

The following tables provide customer service delivery response target times for specific service areas.

EMERGENCY SERVICES	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Fire Service response to an Emergency Mobilisation.	Mobilise full time in City within 1-2 minutes & target to attend within 10 minutes within response area. Retained in City & County, within 8-9 minutes and target to attend scene within 20 minutes
Senior Fire Officer on call assistance at fires or other emergencies including Major Emergencies if required.	If required to attend, respond within 10 minutes and attend within one to two hours
Fire service inspection of premises following written complaint from public.	Complaint prioritised and response within 10 working days or less depending on priority. Life Critical complaints prioritised to respond within one working day.
Consultative appointment with member of the public/ consultant on fire safety matters.	Prioritised and within 2 weeks of request.
Fire safety inspections of public assembly venue at annual licensing.	Applications prioritised. Within 4 weeks for annual licensing inspections of selected licence applications.
Fire safety certificate applications processed.	Within 2-month statutory period.

**Fire Service performance standards set out above are aligned with the national performance measurement and statutory reporting requirements.*

ROADS & TRANSPORTATION SERVICES	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Pothole Repairs	
(a) National Roads & Roads where daily traffic exceeds 5000.	(a) Within 2 working days of notification *

(b) Regional Roads (daily traffic between 3000 - 5000).	(b) Within 5 working days *
(c)Regional, Local Primary & Secondary Roads (daily traffic between 250 – 2999).	(c) Within 10 working days *
(d) Local Tertiary & Local Roads (daily traffic less than 250).	(d)Within 20 working days *
Acknowledge requests during emergencies & advise complainants of planned action.	As soon as possible.
Response to emergency flooding in houses/structures.	On priority basis.

** The ability to achieve the response targets detailed will be directly influenced by the level of resources available to the Council to undertake routine road maintenance at any given time.*

PLANNING SERVICES	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Issuing of planning decisions.	Before statutory deadline.
Building Control Inspections.	Comply with the requirements of the Building Control Regulations 2014.
Planning consultation meetings for the Conamara North / South, Tuam/Ballinasloe and Oranmore/Loughrea areas held in Aras an Chontae.	Once per week.
Registration and acknowledgement of planning applications.	Within 7 working days.
Referral of applications to statutory bodies.	Within 14 working days.
Submission of documents to An Coimisiún Pleanála	Within 14 working days.
Acknowledge complaints of unauthorised development.	Within 14 working days.

FINANCE SERVICES	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Process motor tax applications.	3-5 working days.
Efficient payment of accounts payable.	Efficient administration of accounts due.
Payment and E-day statutory requirements.	Early notification and liaison with customers regarding account issues.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Acknowledgement of complaints regarding illegal dumping or environmental pollution issues.	Within 3-5 working days Serious pollution incidents to be prioritised with a response on same day.

Acknowledgement of complaints regarding control of dogs.	Within 3-5 working days
Delivery of Recycone Home Composter to purchasers.	Within 10 working days.

HUMAN RESOURCES	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Notification of outcome of job interviews	Within 10 working days
Acknowledgement of Job Application	Within 5 working days

CORPORATE SERVICES	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Register of Electors	Meet statutory deadlines
Issue of Casual Trading Licences	Within 15 working days
Freedom of Information and Access to Information on the Environment/Data Subject Access Requests	In line with regulations
Complaints to the Access Officer	In line with regulations

LIBRARY SERVICE	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Library Service response to request for information	Within 8 working days if not immediately available.
Library service advice on books and reading.	Within 8 working days if not immediately available.

RURAL, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM & INTEGRATION	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Advice on Rural, Community development, Arts and Culture, Integration, Social Inclusion and Participation issues.	Within 5 working days.
Acknowledge receipt of Grant Applications.	Within 5 working days.
Review Community Support Schemes, Grant applications and recommend approvals to Council.	Within two months of advertised closing date of Schemes.
Payment of Grants.	Within 20 working days of receipt of completed drawdown claim and compliance with conditions.
Initial Notification of relevant national and local funding programmes to Elected Members and Public Participation Network (PPN)	10 working days' notice.

HOUSING SERVICES	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Acknowledge receipt of housing application/transfer request and advise of procedures.	Within 10 working days
Acknowledge receipt of housing loan application and advise of any omissions.	Within 10 working days

Acknowledge applications and advise of any omissions for Disabled Persons Grant/Mobility Aids Grant.	Within 10 working days
Acknowledge application for Housing Aid for Older Persons Grant.	Within 10 working days

WATER SERVICE	**RESPONSE TARGET**
Public Water Services	Uisce Éireann is solely responsible for the provision and management of public water and wastewater services. All public water queries should be directed to Uisce Éireann via 1800 278 278 or www.water.ie
Rural Water Services	Support and oversee the operation and quality of rural water services, including group water schemes and well grants, in line with national rural water policy, ensuring timely response to customer queries, grant applications and compliance with water quality and environmental standards.

The Council continues to support the group water scheme sector, enabling communities to sustain themselves and manage their own water affairs into the future.

Customer Role

We can assist you most effectively if you:

- Follow our **Customer Code of Conduct**, available in Section 18 of this report and at all our public service counters and on www.gaillimh.ie and www.galway.ie .
- Use a reference number in your dealings with us, where one has been provided.
- Provide any information relevant to your enquiry.
- Complete your application form accurately and clearly and ensure it is signed prior to submission.
- Be aware of closing dates and fees when applying for services.
- Inform us of any changes in your circumstances that might affect a decision.
- Respond promptly if we request additional information.
- Make an appointment in advance so we can prepare for your meeting and inform us if you cannot keep your appointment.
- Inform us in relation to any specific needs that might arise from diversity if you come from within the identified groups for the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty.

Customer Code of Conduct

Galway County Council is committed to delivering high-quality public services in a safe, respectful and inclusive environment. We ask all customers to engage with our services in a manner that reflects mutual respect and consideration for staff, other service users and Council facilities.

Expectations from Customers

Customers are expected to:

- Treat staff and other service users with courtesy and respect.
- Respect Council offices, branch libraries, parks and other public amenities.
- Follow posted rules and guidelines in offices, libraries, parks, playgrounds and open spaces.
- Take responsibility for personal belongings and avoid leaving items unattended.
- Dispose of litter responsibly.

Persistent complaints

Galway County Council is not expected to accept an unreasonable burden on its complaints processes produced by persistent complaints that have been subject to a determination by Galway County Council in accordance with our Complaint Complaints Policy & Procedure.

- All customers are expected to treat staff with courtesy and respect and refrain from intimidating or disruptive behaviour. Where unacceptable conduct occurs, staff may end interactions, withdraw or suspend services, or request individuals to leave Council premises.
- Complaints will be addressed through established processes for frontline resolution, investigation and formal response. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they will be informed of their right to **seek a review by the Office of the Ombudsman**. At this point, the case will be deemed closed by Galway County Council unless and until the Ombudsman contacts the Council to engage further on the matter.

Unacceptable Behaviour

Galway County Council does not tolerate any form of inappropriate, intimidating, abusive, or disruptive behaviour. This includes:

- Harassment, bullying, or use of racist, obscene, or threatening language.
- Violence or threats of violence towards staff or other service users.
- Use of alcohol or illicit drugs on Council premises.
- Smoking or vaping in prohibited areas.
- Damage to or theft of Council property.
- Disruptive or dangerous behaviour, including behaviour that interferes with others' enjoyment of facilities or staff duties.
- Use of audio or video recording equipment, including mobile phones, without prior written authorisation. This includes taking photographs or posting recordings on social media without permission.

- Abusive, defamatory, or threatening behaviour towards staff on social media platforms.

Sanctions and Appeals

In response to unacceptable behaviour, staff may:

- End a phone call or meeting.
- Discontinue an interaction at a public counter.
- Withdraw or suspend a service temporarily or permanently.
- Request the individual to leave Council premises. Customers who refuse to leave Council facilities when requested may be referred to **An Garda Síochána**.

Sanctions will be proportionate and time bound. Customers may appeal any decision to withhold or suspend a service through Galway County Council's Appeals Procedure. Entitlement to the service will remain suspended pending the outcome of the appeal.

The Complaints Policy & Procedure is available at any public counter, library, or online at:

English: www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/your-county-council/customer-service
Irish: www.galway.ie/ga/rialachas-agus-riarachan/do-chomhairle-chontae/seirbhís-do-chustaiméirí

Peaceful Protest

Galway County Council respects the right to peaceful protest. To ensure safety and service continuity:

- Peaceful protest is permitted **outside** Council buildings only.
- Protests **inside** Council facilities are not permitted under any circumstances.
- Protest activity must not obstruct access to services or endanger staff or service users.

Where these conditions are not observed, the Council may refer the matter to **An Garda Síochána**.

Safeguarding Children

Galway County Council is committed to safeguarding children in all its services and activities. In line with our **Corporate Child Safeguarding Statement**, we expect all customers, staff, volunteers and service providers to uphold a child-centred approach that promotes the welfare, safety and development of children.

All interactions with Council services must respect the dignity and rights of children, free from discrimination or harm. The Council has clear procedures for reporting concerns, and a **Designated Child Protection Liaison Officer** is available to support this process.

Our **Child Safeguarding Statement** is available at:
https://www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/governance/child-protection
https://www.galway.ie/ga/rialachas-agus-riarachan/rialachas/cosaint-leanaí

Our Complaints Policy and Procedure

This section sets out Galway County Council's policy on complaint handling and sets out the complaints procedure of Galway County Council including the complaints recording system.

- An effective complaint handling system provides significant benefits to any organisation. It resolves issues in a timely and cost-effective way.
- It provides safeguards for employees operating in public settings where incidents may occur.
- It provides valuable information that can lead to service improvement, and it can improve the reputation of and strengthen confidence in, an organisation.
- Staff at every level in Galway County Council are equipped with the appropriate skills and resources to deal with a complaint and have a full understanding of the Galway County Council complaints procedure including the complaints recording system. All staff shall direct persons who wish to make a complaint to the relevant Officer when appropriate. The complaint handling procedure forms part of the induction programme for staff joining Galway County Council.
- Appropriate training is provided for staff who may have to deal with persons who are vulnerable or who have particular needs.

Complaint Definition and Duty of Galway County Council to Give Reasonable Assistance

- **A complaint is** defined as "An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about an organisation's action or lack of action or about the standard of service or communication provided by or on behalf of the organisation".
- It could be about anything, including:
    - When we do not deliver a satisfactory service.
    - When we provide incorrect information.
    - When you receive a poor quality or below-standard service.
    - When you are unhappy with the quality of service provided by a member of staff.

What is not a complaint:

- An initial service request is not a complaint, for example reporting a pothole – this can transition into a complaint if, for example, there is an undue delay in dealing with the matter.
- Complaints about matters that are outside of the Council's remit to examine/deal with – However Galway County Council will assist the person by directing them to the relevant organisation if we can do so.
- Complaints about reserved functions of the elected members of Council – the executive of the Council cannot examine such decisions from members of the public.
- Complaints about breaches of Ethics legislation should be referred in the first instance to the Council's Ethics Registrar at ethics@galwaycoco.ie. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they may contact the Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO),

which will carry out its own independent investigation. SIPO can be contacted at info@sipo.ie.

- Complaints about planning decisions as there is a right of appeal to An Coimisiún Pleanála (formally An Bord Pleanála). – Galway County Council can however examine complaints about the administration of the planning process and those relating to planning enforcement. (bord@pleanala.ie / planning@galwaycoco.ie / enforcements@galwaycoco.ie).
- Complaints about alleged data protection breaches should be directed to the Data Protection Officer (dpo@galwaycoco.ie) or the Data Protection Commission (info@dataprotection.ie).
- A Complaint made under the Disability Act must be investigated by an Inquiry Officer in accordance with Section 39 of the Disability Act and where the complainant is not satisfied, they can seek review by the Ombudsman. (accessofficer@galwaycoco.ie / complaints@ombudsman.ie).
- Protected disclosures (whistleblowing or 'reporting wrongdoing in the workplace') should be directed to the Chief Executive/Protected Disclosures Officer (protecteddisclosures@galwaycoco.ie). Further information is available on our website https://www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/governance/protected-disclosures or on the website of The Protected Disclosures Commissioner https://www.opdc.ie/en/publication/3a25c-what-a-protected-disclosure-is/.
- Decisions based on the Freedom of Information Act or Access to Information under the Environment Regulations. Queries can be directed to foi@galwaycoco.ie or aie@galwaycoco.ie. More information is available on our website https://www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/governance/freedom-information or https://www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/governance/access-information-environment-aie.

Section 4A of the Ombudsman Act 1980 (as amended) outlines the duty to give reasonable assistance and guidance to persons in any dealings with the "reviewable agency" (in this case Galway County Council).

Reasonable assistance includes dealing with persons in a timely manner and providing information on any rights of appeal or review. It also includes informing the public about their right to complain to the Ombudsman in the complaint decision letter.

Giving reasonable assistance to a person making a complaint might also include providing assistance or support to making/formulating a complaint and/or teasing out an implied complaint. Complaints received by the Ombudsman will be investigated against these criteria.

Any disciplinary, or other such actions, taken with regard to a Council employee, on foot of complaints made to a Council, are dealt with in the context of Employment Legislation and the Council's HR policies and procedures. No details of this process will be disclosed to a complainant.

Decisions/Actions Where Galway County Council has Exercised Discretion

- Administrative decisions by their nature sometimes include the exercise of discretion where a decision maker has the power to make a choice about whether or not to take action or whether to approve an application or not (either fully or with conditions).
- In such cases the role of the decision maker is to make a judgement taking into account all relevant information and the particular circumstances of the case.
- Where such discretion is exercised, in as far as possible, a record will be kept showing the pertinent issues that were taken into account by the decision maker and why; the weight given to these issues; and reasons for the decisions made.
- This information is key when investigating a complaint about a decision as it shows how the decision was arrived at. Good reasons supporting the decision taken should be provided to the complainant. Galway County Council recognises the importance of strong record keeping, especially where a decision is not covered by an express policy or legislative provision or in line with the terms of a particular scheme etc.

How to Make a Complaint

- Galway County Council ensures there is a culture and environment in the local authority that encourages people who are dissatisfied with a service to make a complaint. Making a complaint will not adversely affect a person's interaction with Galway County Council.
- The process for making a complaint is user centred, simple to access and easy to use. It is flexible depending on the complaint and the complainant and supports the early resolution of complaints. Complaints are accepted in a number of accessible ways including online, in person, over the phone and in writing:
    - **By Post:** to the relevant section (you may use our Complaint Form see appendix 2)
    - **By email:** to customerservices@galwaycoco.ie
    - **Online:** by using our Customer Comment System on our website https://www.galway.ie/en/contact
    - **By Phone**: 091-509000
- It is easy for a person to find out how to make a complaint and it is simple and convenient to do so. **Galway County Council:**
  Ensures that all service users have access to simple and clear information about how to make a complaint as set out here or available on our website at:
  English: www.galway.ie/en/governance-administration/your-county-council/customer-service
  Irish: www.galway.ie/ga/rialachas-agus-riarachan/do-chomhairle-chontae/seirbhís-do-chustaiméirí
    - Information about our complaint's procedure is clearly signposted to service users on our website, social media and on signs and posters in our local authority offices.
    - Takes account of service users with particular requirements, such as those with intellectual or physical disabilities. Galway County Council Access Officer is familiar with the complaints process and information on how to contact the Access Officer is included with information on how to make a complaint. (accessofficer@galwaycoco.ie).

- Some people may find it challenging to make a complaint or may have literacy issues or difficulties putting their complaint in writing. Galway County Council will utilise support resources at our disposal, if necessary, to assist a person making a complaint.
    - Where such issues are identified Galway County Council will take the complaint over the phone/in person or, ask the person if they wish to nominate a friend, family member or advocacy service as an advocate. Citizen Information Centres can also assist such individuals subject to GDPR requirements. Where a complaint is taken verbally in person a note of the discussion will be agreed by both parties and signed by both parties where possible.
- Takes account of persons for whom English or Irish is not their first language and notes that if a person is able to articulate their complaint in their first language that this will ensure that the salient points are not lost. Galway County Council will aim to accommodate in as far as possible a translation service noting that this may extend the timeframe for responding to the complaint.
- Accepts complaints brought by a representative of the complainant, provided the appropriate written consent has been obtained from the complainant.
- Makes information about the complaints procedure and policy easily accessible at all times, not just when a person wishes to complain. This information will be available at all public reception areas and any areas which the public may use.
- Information about the complaints procedure and policy will be notified in all decision letters/emails.

Support from Citizen Information Centres and Advocacy Agencies

Galway County Council is committed to ensuring that all customers have access to independent advice and support when making a complaint. In addition to the Council's own procedures, customers may seek assistance from the following agencies:

Citizen Information Centres

Citizen Information Centres provide free, confidential and impartial information, advice and advocacy on public services and entitlements. They can help individuals understand the complaints process, prepare documentation and access further supports.

- **Galway Citizens Information Centre**
  Augustine House, St Augustine Street, Galway, H91 Y7XH
  Tel: 0818 07 7600
  Email: galway@citinfo.ie
  Website: https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en

Other Relevant Advocacy Agencies

- **Galway Advocacy Council (Brothers of Charity Services West Region):**
  Supports people with disabilities in Galway city and county, ensuring their voices are heard and acted on.
  Website: https://west.brothersofcharity.ie/advocacy/galway-advocacy/

- **Galway County Public Participation Network (PPN):**
  Provides support and representation for community and voluntary groups and offers a complaints procedure for issues related to public participation.
  Tel: 091 509 310
  Email: administrator@galwaycountyppn.ie
  Website: https://www.galwaycountyppn.ie
- **Office of the Ombudsman:**
  Independent body investigating complaints about public services, including local authorities.
  Tel: 01 636 5600
  Website: https://www.ombudsman.ie
- **Threshold Galway:**
  Provides free, confidential advice and advocacy to tenants experiencing housing problems and works to prevent homelessness by helping tenants remain in their homes.
  Tel: 1800 454 454 or (091) 563 080
  Email: advicegalway@threshold.ie
  Website: https://www.threshold.ie

NOTE: If the Ombudsman receives a complaint where the person has not been advised of the complaints procedure and policy in the decision communication, the complaint will be dealt with once it is deemed within remit. In such circumstances the Ombudsman may not advise the person to engage with Galway County Council's complaints procedure. The Ombudsman may take Galway County Council's failure to notify about the complaints procedure and policy into consideration when deciding whether to uphold that aspect of the complaint.

Confidential Complaints

- In some cases, a person may wish to keep their complaint confidential (particularly if a complaint is being made about a specific person in respect of Anti-Social Behaviour where there is a fear of reprisal). In such circumstances Galway County Council may allow a person to keep details of their complaint confidential. However, if information received from the complainant, or if the complaint itself, would tend to identify a complainant who requests confidentiality then they will be made aware of this and asked if they wish an investigation to proceed. The provisions of the FOI Act also apply when processing any request for information from the person against whom the complaint is made. There may be situations where the public interest outweighs the right to privacy of the individuals to whom the information relates. In cases where the public interest factors favour withholding the records the following should be taken into account:
  - The public interest in protecting the right to privacy of individuals in relation to making complaints.
  - The public interest in individuals being able to communicate in confidence with the Council and without fear of disclosure in relation to personal or sensitive matters.

- The public interest in the Council as a public body being able to perform their function in relation to complaints from members of the public effectively.
- The need to preserve confidentiality having regard to the subject matter and the circumstances of the communications.

Anonymous Complaints

- Galway County Council will not deal with anonymous complaints unless there is a risk of injury to person or property and substantial information that warrants investigation – e.g. Galway County Council will not investigate trivial, frivolous or complaints without substance.

Resolving Complaints

- On receipt of a complaint Galway County Council will clarify exactly what the person is complaining about.
- The person may be asked for more information to get a full understanding of the complaint, the outcome they are seeking and how they believe the complaint can be resolved.
- If aspects of the complaint are outside Galway County Council's remit to investigate (for example if the complaint concerns the actions of third parties that are not under the remit or contracted to act on behalf of Galway County Council) this will be clearly communicated to the person at the outset. Galway County Council will advise the person of their right to contact the Ombudsman if they do not agree with the decision not to deal with the issue as a complaint.

There are **potentially two stages** involved in resolving complaints:

- **Frontline Resolution**, or where this is not successful then;
- **Investigation Resolution.**

Frontline Resolution

- Galway County Council will seek to resolve a customer's queries and complaints as early as possible and, ideally, at the first point of contact.
- Dealing with customers in a fair, reasonable and timely manner through an informal process will minimise complaints being escalated to a formal complaint investigation.
- Frontline resolution occurs where the staff member can achieve the expected complaint outcome quickly and effectively either by phone, in person or in writing.
- Complaints resolved through the frontline process will be recorded on the complaints record system. Details recorded will include the category or nature of the complaint; the outcome; any action taken and whether the person making the complaint was satisfied with the outcome.
- Persons making a complaint **should be given a unique reference number** concerning their complaint to quote on any future correspondence. The same reference number should be used if the complaint proceeds to investigation.
- Decisions on time critical complaints, Galway County Council will advise the complainant to contact the Office of the Ombudsman directly for urgent review, skipping the investigation. In these cases, the Council will consider its complaint process closed unless and until the Ombudsman engages further.

- Where complaints relate to an immediate negative consequence i.e. the issue is urgent, the Ombudsman will consider a complaint in those circumstances.

Investigation Resolution

- Where a complaint is not resolved through the frontline resolution process set out above, it will be referred to the **Customer Services Officer for that unit** immediately for formal investigation.
- The aim is to resolve the complaint where possible, or to give the person making a complaint a full, objective and proportionate response that represents the final position.
- Whenever possible, complaints will be investigated by a manager not involved with the issue complained of. It is important to be realistic and clear with the person making the complaint about timeframes and to advise them early if it will not be possible to meet the timeframes set out below:
- The following deadlines apply to complaint investigations cases (counting day one as the day of receipt for investigation, or the next working day if the complaint was received on a weekend or public holiday):
    - A complaint will be **acknowledged within 5 working days,** and all reasonable means will be applied to resolve the issue. The acknowledgement should issue in a format which is accessible to the person, taking into account their preferred method of contact.
    - Managing expectations of complaint outcomes and clarifying the scope of the investigation at the outset are essential to complaint handling efficiency and effectiveness.
    - The complaint should be investigated with the issues raised considered afresh at the outset and without relying on any previous assumptions or conclusions made. The Customer Services Officer or person assigned to investigate the complaint should:
        - Ensure they have access to all necessary communications and evidence – this could include records of phone calls or meetings, work requests, recollections of staff members and internal emails;
        - Examine what happened;
        - Consider what should have happened – this should include any relevant policies or procedures that apply including the Local Authority's Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty;
        - Contact or meet with the complainant, if necessary to fully understand the complaint being made. If such contact takes place, complete a written record of same; and
        - At all stages in the investigation process the Customer Services Officer should seek opportunities to resolve the matter amicably. In forming his or her final view, having taken the above and any other relevant matters into consideration, the investigator should simply decide if there is a difference between what happened and what should have happened.

- Where the relationship with the person making the complaint has broken down or the complaint relates to serious/high-risk/high profile issues the complaint will **be investigated at a suitable level** as required.
- In some cases, it may not be possible to agree the points of complaint. It may be that the person expects more than can be provided or has unrealistic or unreasonable expectations about the scope of the investigation. Such matters should be clarified for the person as soon as possible in order to manage expectations at the outset.
- Galway County Council will ensure that any party assigned to carry out the investigation of a complaint shall be independent of the content of the complaint and **not have a direct reporting relationship with any person under investigation as a result of that complaint**.

Dealing with Multiple Complaints/Unreasonable or unrealistic complaints

- Galway County Council is not expected to accept an unreasonable burden on its complaints processes produced by an organised campaign or multiple versions of the same complaint.
- In such circumstances Galway County Council may either issue a single 'form' response or may ask the group to nominate a single person to receive Galway County Council's response. For this to apply it would be necessary to be clear that all of the complaints being brought to Galway County Council are the same and to clearly set out what issues are being considered under the complaint.
- Any other additional or separate concerns that a person (making a complaint as part of that campaign) may raise would need to be handled as a separate complaint and addressed in the normal manner. These types of complaints are distinct to persistent complaints which involve repeated correspondence about the same issue previously decided on by Galway County Council.

Outcome of the Complaint

The outcome and response to the complaint will be signed off by the **Customer Services Officer** and recorded on the complaints record system. Where service failings have been identified, Galway County Council will in so far as possible rectify the matter give an explanation and/or apologise.

- A full response to the person making the complaint will be provided as soon as possible, but not later than **30 working days** from the time the complaint was received.
- If this **timeframe cannot be met, extensions will be agreed by both parties**. This will be carried out on a case-by-case basis with the circumstances fully explained and will only occur in exceptional circumstances.
- If the **extension date cannot be met the timeframe for provision of response** may be further extended by agreement of both parties and to a specified date.
- If the person has not received an investigation decision **after 30 working days or the agreed date of extension**, they should be informed that they **can complain to the Ombudsman**.

It is noted that extended delays may increase the dissatisfaction felt by the complainant.

Complaint Response

The complaint response is very **important** and will:

- Be clear and easy to understand
- Where possible, share the information informing the investigation outcome with the person so they can understand the findings. Galway County Council will ensure that any legislation/policy/guidelines relied upon are be explained in a way that makes it easy to understand the decision that has been reached.
- Avoid technical terms and if these must be used provide an explanation of the term(s) being used.
- All issues agreed/ identified at the outset of complaint should be addressed to demonstrate a fair and fully considered decision.
- Where a failure on **Galway County Council's** part is identified and Galway County Council proposes to take action to resolve the issue, the response will include details of what will be done and when.
- Where administrative failings have been identified include an apology.
- Highlight any area of disagreement and explain why no further action can be taken.
- Indicate a named member of staff, for example the Customer Services Officer, who is available to discuss/clarify any aspect of the response. If the complainant is still dissatisfied with the response or does not accept the **Galway County Council** decision, explain that they have been given Galway County Council's final decision/response on the matter and **inform them they may seek a review by the Ombudsman.**

Record Keeping and Reporting

Record Keeping

- A cornerstone of dealing with a complaint in a timely and effective manner is good record keeping. **Galway County Council** has a suitable system in place which will capture and record complaint data and which is capable of producing complaint insights.
- **Galway County Council** maintains a complaint file containing complete and accurate records of all contact regarding a complaint and ensures that this information is easily accessible.

Reporting

- Senior management will be provided with periodic updates on the number and type of complaints received, timeline for response and where appropriate, matters arising and actions required. Actions required to improve service delivery shall be noted by senior management.
- Annual reporting of the number of complaints processed by service area should be facilitated within the Chief Executives Report to include any changes to services resulting from issues raised.

Our Appeals Procedure

Appeals Process

If you are satisfied with the service provided by Galway County Council but unhappy with a decision made, you may submit an appeal. Appeals are distinct from complaints and relate specifically to decisions made regarding service provision or entitlements.

Before submitting an appeal, we recommend reviewing the Complaint Definition section of our Complaints Policy & Procedure. It outlines where appeals concerning legislative or regulatory matters should be directed.

Sanctions and Appeals

Where sanctions have been imposed under Galway County Council's Customer Code of Conduct, customers have the right to seek an appeal. Customers may appeal any decision to withhold or suspend a service through Galway County Council's formal Appeals Procedure. Please note that entitlement to the service will remain suspended pending the outcome of the appeal.

Submitting an Appeal

Appeals can be submitted in a variety of accessible formats:

- **By Post**: To the relevant section (you may use our Complaint Form – see Appendix 2)
- **By Email**: customerservices@galwaycoco.ie
- **Online**: Via our https://www.galway.ie/en/contact
- **By Phone**: 091-509000

Your appeal will be referred to the Customer Services Officer for the relevant unit. It will be investigated at an appropriate level by someone **not involved in the original decision**. The appeal will follow the same standards and timelines outlined our Complaints Policy & Procedures on Resolution, Multiple Complaints, Unreasonable Complaints, Outcome and Response, but applied specifically to the appeal context.

Further Review by the Office of the Ombudsman

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of an appeal, they will be informed of their right to seek a review by the Office of the Ombudsman. At this point, the case will be deemed closed by Galway County Council unless and until the Ombudsman contacts the Council to engage further on the matter.

Office of the Ombudsman:

Tel: 01 636 5600

Website: https://www.ombudsman.ie

For Further Information on our Customer Services please contact:

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL

Áras an Chontae, Prospect Hill, Galway

www.gaillimh.ie / www.galway.ie

www.x.com/galwaycoco/

www.facebook.com/GalwayCounty

www.instagram.com/galwaycountycouncil/

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Telephone: 091 509000

Email: customerservices@galwaycoco.ie / Email: gaeilge@cocogaillimh.ie

Áras An Chontae, Prospect Hill, Galway	Tel: 091 – 509000	
General Office Opening Hours:	Monday – Friday	9.00am – 4.00 pm
Telephone Service:	Monday – Friday	9.00am – 5.00 pm
Out of Hours Telephone Service	Tel: 091 – 509000	
	Monday – Friday	5pm – 9am
	Saturday – Sunday	24 hours

*During these times, calls to the main Council number 091 509000 are redirected to Key Answering Ltd, the Council's service provider, who will record and forward urgent queries for follow-up with Council staff.

Appendices



Appendices 1.

(i) Equality and Human Rights Issues Relevant to our Customer Service.

The equality and human rights issues, drawn from our overall assessment in implementing the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty, that face the identified groups for the Duty and that are of relevance to our customer services function are:

*Relevant equality and human rights issue(s) related to **Dignity***

- Bias, false assumptions and stereotypes
- Discrimination, systemic and individual
- Harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, abuse and violence
- Having to hide one's identity for fear of discrimination or harassment at work, in accessing services and in public spaces
- Lack of support and provision for assisted decision making for people with disabilities
- Lack of access to information and failure to enable informed choices
- Lack of policies and procedures to respond to and resolve issues of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment that arise and failure to adequately apply such policies and procedures when such issues arise.
- Under-reporting of discrimination for fear of victimisation, lack of awareness of rights, perspectives that change is not possible and lack of information on policies and procedures in place.

*Relevant equality and human rights issue(s) related to **Diversity***

- Failure to make reasonable accommodation and adapt for specific needs in employment and in service provision
- Lack of supports and services to meet specific needs of people from the identified groups
- Lack of understanding of diversity, lack of knowledge on how to make reasonable accommodation, absence of a policy on adapting for diversity and lack of capacity to put in place the systems required to accommodate and adapt for diversity
- Lack of information made available and accessible on the reasonable accommodation available and how to get access to this
- Unwelcoming institutional environments, workplace and service provision settings
- Barriers of physical access faced by people with disability
- Communication and consultation and participation processes failing to take account of specific needs and barriers
- Lack of equality data on the identified groups

*Relevant equality and human rights issue(s) related to **Participation***

- Lack of opportunities to have a say and participate in consultations and in decision-making processes
- Lack of influence through consultation processes and in decision-making processes and lack of feedback after consultation and participation

Relevant equality and human rights issue(s) related to ***Inclusion***

- Digital inequality, lack of infrastructure, equipment and skills

The final draft of this Customer Services Action Plan was checked to ensure it responded adequately and appropriately to these issues, as part of the equality and human rights impact assessment carried out. The ongoing implementation of the Action Plan will have regard to the need to address these issues and will include for tracking and reporting on the progress made in addressing them.

(ii) UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs)

Goal 1 - End poverty in all its forms everywhere
Goal 2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
Goal 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Goal 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
Goal 6 - Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
Goal 7 - Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all Galway County Council Corporate Plan 2025-2029 36
Goal 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
Goal 9 - Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
Goal 10 - Reduce inequality within and among countries
Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
Goal 12 - Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
Goal 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
Goal 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
Goal 15 - Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Goal 16 - Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
Goal 17 - Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Appendices 2: Our Complaints Form

Seirbhísí Custaiméara Foirm Ghearáin	Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council	Customer Service Complaint Form
Tá an fhoirm seo le fáil i gcló mór chomh maith		This form is also available in large print
Tá míle fáilte an fhoirm seo a líonadh i nGaeilge		

Sonraí an Ghearánaí		Complainant Details
Ainm	Name	
Seoladh	Address	
Fón	Telephone	
R-phost	Email	
Dáta	Date	
Luaigh le do thoil cé acu de na modhanna thuas ar mhaith leat go ndéanfadh muid teagmháil leat.		
Please state by which of the above methods you would like us to contact you.		

Má bhíonn aon deacracht agat leis an bhfoirm seo nó le do ghearán a dhéanamh, inis dúinn le do thoil ionas gur féidir linn plé a dhéanamh ar an gcaoi a bhféadfadh muid cabhrú leat. De ghnáth, ba chóir don duine a raibh an fhadhb acu an fhoirm seo a líonadh. Má tá tú á líonadh seo thar ceann duine eile, líon isteach cuid B le do thoil. Tabhair faoi deara, sula gcuirfidh muid an gearán ar aghaidh, go gcaithfidh muid a chinntiú go bhfuil an t-údarás agat gníomhú thar ceann an duine lena mbaineann an gearán.		If you have any difficulty with this form or making your complaint, please tell us so that we can discuss how we might help you. The person who experienced the problem should normally fill in this form. If you are filling this in on behalf of someone else, please fill in section B. Please note that before taking forward the complaint we will need to satisfy ourselves that you have the authority to act on behalf of the person concerned.
Cuid B	Section B	
Ainm	Name	
Seoladh	Address	
An gaol atá leis an duine atá ag déanamh an gearáin	Relationship to the person making the complaint	

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GCC-CS-06(B)-02 1/3

Cén fáth a bhfuil gearán á dhéanamh agat thar a gceann?	**Why are you making a complaint on their behalf?**	

Maidir le do ghearán **(Lean ar aghaidh le do chuid freagraí ar na ceisteanna seo a leanas ar bhileog(anna) ar leith más gá)** **Céard faoi ar mhaith leat gearán a dhéanamh?** **Déan cur síos ar an gcaoi ar fhulaing an duine nó ar an gcaoi ar cuireadh isteach ar an duine** **Cad a cheapann tú gur chóir a dhéanamh chun rudaí a chur ina gceart?** **Ar léirigh tú d'imní cheana féin don fhoireann atá freagrach as an tseirbhís a sholáthar? Más ea, tabhair sonraí gearra faoi conas agus cén uair a rinne tú amhlaigh.** **Má tá aon doiciméid agat chun tacú le d'imní/gearán, ceangail iad leis an bhfoirm seo le do thoil.**	**About your complaint** **(Please continue your answers to the following questions on a separate sheet(s) if necessary)** What do you wish to complain about? Describe how the person affected suffered or has been affected What do you think should be done to put things right? Have you already put your concern to the staff responsible for delivering the service? If so, please give brief details of how and when you did so. If you have any documents to support your concern/complaint, please attach them with this form.

Síniú:	Signed:	
Dáta:	Date:	

Gearáin agus Réiteach	Complaints and Redress
Léiríonn gearán fúinn nach bhfuil tú sásta leis an mbealach atá muid ag plé leat. Pléifidh muid le gearán áit a ndearna muid cinneadh nó gníomhaíocht bainteach le soláthar seirbhíse nó cur i gcrích feidhme nach bhfuil, a ndeirtear, ag cloí le rialacha, cleachtas nó polasaí nó prionsabail ghinearálta ghlactha cothromais agus cleachtas maith riaracháin agus a chuirfeadh as don duine i gceist. Cuirfear freagra chugat laistigh de 15 lá oibre. **Is féidir aiseolas a chur ar fáil faoin seirbhís a bhfuair tú trí foirm thuairime ar chúram custaiméara ar líne agus tá seo ar fáil ar www.gaillimh.ie.**	A complaint against us indicates your dissatisfaction with the manner in which we have dealt with you. We will address a complaint where a decision or action is taken by us which relates to the provision of a service or the performance of a function which, it is claimed, is not in accordance with our rules, practice or policy or the generally accepted principles of equity and good administrative practice and which adversely affects the person concerned. You will receive a response within 15 working days. It is also possible to provide feedback on the service you received using our on-line customer care comment form located on www.galway.ie

Úsáid oifigiúil amháin	Official Use Only	
Dáta a fuaireadh an gearán	Date complaint received	
Dáta admhála	Date acknowledged	
Dáta a éisíodh an cinneadh	Date Decision issued	
Uimhir thagartha	Reference Number	

Cuir ar ais agus seol do ghearán chuig an Rannóg nó Aonad ábhartha sa gComhairle nó seol é chuig:	Please return and address your complaint to the most relevant Section or Unit of the Council or alternatively address it to:

eol an fhoirm ar ais chuig: **Gearáin Custaiméara** **Seirbhísí Corparáideacha** **Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe** **Áras an Chontae** **Cnoc na Radharc** **Gaillimh**	Return to: Customer Services Corporate Services Unit Galway County Council Áras an Chontae Prospect Hill Galway	Tel. (091) 509225 Fax (091) 509010 customerservices@galwaycoco.ie www.gaillimh.ie www.galway.ie

Tá Polasaí Cosanta Sonraí Chomhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe le fáil ar www.gaillimh.ie
Galway County Council's Data Protection Policy is available on www.galway.ie

Appendices 3: Request for Information and / or Assistance in Alternative Format

Iarratas ar Eolas agus Cabhair i bhFormáid Malartach	Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council	Request for Information and Assistance in an Alternative Format
Tá an fhoirm seo le fáil i gcló mór chomh maith		This form is also available in large print
Tá míle fáilte an fhoirm seo a líonadh i nGaeilge		

Sonraí Custaiméara		Customer Details
Ainm	Name	
Seoladh	Address	
Fón	Telephone	
R-phost	Email	
Dáta an Iarratais	Date of Request	

Iarratas ar Eolas i bhFormáid Malartach		Request for Information in an Alternative Format
Doiciméad agus dáta atá ag teastáil	Document and date required	

Formáid (cuir tic sa bhosca cuí ✓)	Format (please tick ✓)	
Formáid Leictreonach	Electronic Format	
Leagan le Cló Mór	Large Print Version	
Braille	Braille	
Leagan Fuaime	Audio Version	
Formáidí Malartacha Eile	Other Alternative Formats	

Iarratas ar Sheirbhís Ateangaireachta Teanga Comh-arthaíochta (Fógra 10 lá le tabhairt roimh an ócáid)	Request for Sign language Interpreting Service (10 days notice required prior to event)

Dáta / am atá ag teastáil	Date/Time Required	
Ócáid Láthair	Event/Location	

Seol an fhoirm ar ais chuig: **Oifigeach Rochtana** **Seirbhísí Corparáideacha** **Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe** **Áras an Chontae** **Cnoc na Radharc** **Gaillimh**	Return to: Access Officers Corporate Services Galway County Council Áras an Chontae Prospect Hill Galway	Tel. (091) 509225 Fax (091) 509010 accessofficer@galwaycoco.ie www.gaillimh.ie www.galway.ie

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GCC-CC-07(B)-00 1/1