

**Minutes of Meeting of Urban Development Strategic Policy Committee held on 20th February 2025 via MS Teams & Council Chamber**

**Presiding:** Cllr. Donal Lyons, Galway City Council

Cllr. Eibhlín Seoighthe, Galway City Council  
Ms. Patricia Philbin, Director of Services  
Mr. Eoghan Lynch, Senior Planner  
Mr Brendan Dunne, Senior Executive Planner  
Dr. Jim Higgins, Heritage Officer  
Mr. Michael Scott, Architectural Conservation Officer  
Ms Helen Coleman, Senior Executive Planner  
Mr. Brian Barrett, Senior Executive Officer  
Ms. Rachel Stewart, Business/Commercial Stewart Developments  
Mr. Derrick Hambleton (An Taisce)  
Ms. Helena McElmeel (Development/ Construction Network)  
Mr. Reg Turner – Chairman of Galway Cycling Campaign  
Ms. Cliona Clancy, Administrative Officer, Galway City Council  
Ms. Edel Finan, Senior Staff Officer, Galway City Council

**Present on Line:** Cllr. Eddie Hoare, Galway City Council  
Cllr. Frank Fahy, Galway City Council  
Ms. Caitriona Morgan, Administrative Officer  
Ms. Helena Deane, Inspiratrix Limited

**Apologies:** Cllr. Clodagh Higgins, Galway City Council  
Cllr. Josie Forde, Galway City Council

Cllr. D. Lyons, Chairperson, welcomed members and officials to the meeting.

**1. Minutes and Matters Arising:**

The minutes of meeting dated 21st November 2024 were proposed by Cllr. D. Lyons, seconded by Cllr. E. Seoighthe and agreed by all.

**2. Work Programme and Schedule 2025:**

The draft work programme for the Urban Development SPC, and Schedule of meetings for 2025, were circulated to members in advance of the meeting. In line with the adopted standing orders Section 4 (c), Mr. E. Lynch requested that members forward any comments or proposed amendments to this draft work programme by 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025.

### **3. Draft Heritage Plan 2024-2029:**

Dr. J. Higgins, Heritage Officer gave a presentation on the preparation of the Draft Heritage Plan 2024-2029 to date. He confirmed the plan is a non-statutory document and sets out a vision for Heritage in Galway City for the period 2024-2029. Mr. B. Dunne, Senior Executive Planner stepped through the summary of submissions received and recommendations. He confirmed that the Draft Heritage Plan had been presented to the Heritage Forum, who recommended its presentation to the Urban Development SPC with minor changes. If approved by SPC members, the draft Heritage Plan would be presented to members of Galway City Council for full adoption.

Ms. R. Stewart, requested if a submission could be accepted from the Galway Chamber at this juncture raising concerns by businesses who are finding it difficult to get fire certs. She queried if protections could be tiered, similar to the U.K. Mr. E. Lynch, confirmed that the submission period had now passed but advised that the Architectural Conservation Officer was meeting with individual owners of protected structures with a view to positively addressing challenges and supporting applications, where feasible.

Ms. H. McElmeel queried the deliverability of the plan as it stands. Dr. J. Higgins, outlined the funding process for actions contained in the local authority heritage plans. Mr. E. Lynch considered that it was important to get the message out about the positive work being undertaken through the heritage and conservation section which would then reflect in budget allocations.

The Draft Heritage Plan 2024-2029 was proposed by Cllr. F. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. E. Seoighthe.

### **4. Presentation on Galway Enterprise Space Review and Report by Helena Deane:**

Mr. B. Barrett outlined the background to the study which is an updating of a previous study undertaken in Galway City which had been critical in a number of innovation spaces in the City securing national capital development funding under the Regional Enterprise Development Fund.

After Ms Deane made her presentation, there was a number of queries raised.

Cllr. E. Hoare asked if there were any subsidies provided by Galway City Council to innovation spaces in the City. Cllr. D. Lyons queried if a site zoned industrial land in Ragoon could be looked at to reduce the flow of workers from east to west. Cllr. E. Seoighthe referred to people working on the east side of the city and the possibility of contacting the NTA to facilitate buses for workers creating a west to east route with Eyre Square as the main hub

In response Mr. B. Barrett advised Cllr. Hoare that no subsidies were provided by Galway City Council for the operation of the innovation spaces operated by third parties. Galway City Council operates 2 enterprise spaces directly, one at Sandy Road and a second at

Westside. Enterprise supports are provided by Galway City Council to clients in all enterprise spaces in the city through grants and enterprise supports available through the Local Enterprise Office. In response to Cllr. D. Lyons he stated that Galway City Council currently operated two enterprise spaces in westside and sandy road, which are old units, and the priority at the moment is to examine how to modernise these spaces. He confirmed that the report by Ms Deane indicates that more hubs are needed in Galway City and proposals for Salthill and at Galway City Port are being advanced. Mr. B. Barrett outlined that Enterprise Ireland provides funding for preparation of feasibility studies and also for capital setup funds.

Ms. P. Philbin, Director of Services referred to Bus Connects and the Cross City Link and advised she would raise Cllr. Seoighthe's query with her colleagues in the NTA.

## **5. Planning updates**

### **a. Salthill Village and Seafront Framework Plan**

Ms. H. Coleman, briefed members on the Salthill Village and Seafront Framework Plan, advising the project was currently in the Engagement, Listening and Learning stage. A dedicated website and email had been setup and NUIG students were conducting surveys on the prom and online. Meetings had been held with the Business Community, Access for All and Galway Cycling Campaign. Drop in consultations would be held for residents on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> February and a pop-up survey was planned for the prom. Mr. E. Lynch, outlined what's at the core of project delivery, gathering information by engagement and co design for common vision and delivery of Salthill and this engagement had been well and warmly received

Mr. D. Hambleton queried if current developments along the prom were not premature in the context of the development of the Framework Plan. Mr. R. Turner considered that engagement with the cycling community had been positive as was feedback from local swimmers. Ms. H. McElmeel referred to Stage 3 taking place in the summer months and queried if public consultation and engagement would be ongoing.

In response to Mr. D. Hambleton, Mr. E. Lynch, stated that planning applications would continue to be reviewed in the context of the existing development plans, and other projects in the Salthill would continue to be developed in parallel with this one. He added that the aim of the Salthill Framework Plan was to provide a coherence to this area.

In response to Ms. H. McElmeel the Senior Planner advised that the engagement programme was designed to continue throughout the year, conscious of different sectors and catchments.

## **b. Joint Retail Strategy for Galway City Metropolitan Area**

Ms H. Coleman updated members on the Joint Retail Strategy for the Galway City Metropolitan Area. It was outlined that the plan covers not just the city, but also Oranmore, Baile Clar and Bearna. A joint SPC Meeting would be arranged once findings had been analysed.

SPC Members considered issues of concern were vacancy rates and the lack of quality anchor tenants like other towns and cities. Connectivity and public transport were also identified as key issues with a desire for increased communication on transport options into the city. The need to incentivize and assist businesses in the urban core was identified as was the need for a better vision for the city centre. Cllr. E Hoare spoke to the need for shop front enhancements.

Mr. E. Lynch, said the plan, through stakeholder engagement, would identify areas for more active management. Key areas to enhance the city centre offering could be through good planning practices, active travel and public transport reliability along with improved city centre living. Projects such as Thrive in the Westend would have a real positive impact on the urban space. He considered that Galway City had more positive attributes than some other urban centres and hoped that this strategy would help to highlight the items within our power to address.

Mr. B. Barrett, Senior Executive Officer referred to the nighttime economy. He advised members that work was ongoing with the NTAA to develop public transport options from 6pm onwards. He drew attention to surveys highlighting high footfall during October / November and to visitor surveys during the summer which identified Galway as a vibrant city. He considered that while there was work to be done in promoting the nighttime economy, initiatives such as the Café lates had been positive for retail.

In relation to shop front enhancements, he advised SPC members that a new Shop Front scheme is currently being developed and will be brought before this SPC in the near future.

Cllr. F. Fahy raised the issue of enforcement action in relation to plastic neon signs. If we have a timber policy in place, why are we not enforcing it. Mr. E. Lynch, Senior Planner outlined there is a legal process that must be adhered to in relation to planning law.

## **6. A.O.B:**

This concluded the meeting. Next meeting scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2025.

  
Chairperson