

Minutes of Meeting of Galway City & Galway County Special Joint Planning Strategic Policy Committee held on 7th March 2024 via MS Teams & County Council Chamber

- Presiding:** Cllr. Mary Heade, Galway County Council
- Present:** Mr. Liam Conneally, Chief Executive, Galway County Council
Mr. Denis Holly, Director NWRA
Dr. Sean O' Riordain, Consultant
Cllr. Níall McNelis, Galway City Council
Mr. Derrick Hambleton (Galway City Community Network)
Mr. Uinsinn Finn, A/ Director of Services
Mr. Liam Hanrahan, Director of Services, Galway County Council
Mr. Eoghan Lynch, Senior Planner
Mr. Liam Blake, Senior Executive Planner
Ms. Katie Fahy, Senior Staff Officer
Mr. Peter Staunton, Executive Planner
Mr. John O'Donnell, Assistant Planner
Ms. Katie Fahy, Senior Staff Officer, Galway City Council
Ms. Leanne Casburn, Clerical Officer, Galway City Council
Ms Tanya Whyte, ASEP NWRA
Ms. Eileen Keaveney, Administrative Officer, Galway County Council
Ms. Valerie Loughnane Moran, Senior Planner, Galway County Council
Mr. Brendan Dunne, A/SEP Galway County Council
Ms. Shelly Quinn, Public Representative, Galway County Council
Mr. Michael Leonard, Student, Galway County Council
Ms. Rachel Dowd, Graduate Planner, Galway County Council
Mr. Brendan Mulligan, Galway City Community Network
Mr. Aodan McDonnacha, Community Representative, Galway County Council PPN.
Ms. Helen Coleman, Senior Executive Planner, Galway City Council
Mr. James Russell, Senior Planner, Galway City Council
- Present Online:** Mr. Colm Ryan, Planning Director, MKO
Mr. Mark Green, Applications Consultant, Diatec
Cllr. Dáithí Cualáin, Galway County Council
Cllr. Clodagh Higgins, Galway City Council
Cllr. Frank Fahy, Galway City Council
Cllr. Imelda Byrne, Galway City Council
Cllr. Noel Larkin, Galway City Council
- Apologies:** Cllr. Peter Keane, Galway City Council
Cllr. Michael Connolly, Galway County Council
Cllr. Donagh Mark Killilea, Galway County Council

Meeting commenced at 2.10pm: -

Cllr. Mary Heade apologised on behalf of Cllr. Michael Connolly and Cllr. Mark Killilea who could not attend.

Galway City Community Network (GCCN) members wanted it noted in the minutes that they had been requesting the report to be presented on numerous occasions and their request was refused. He said there was serious concern and that it was agreed at previous meeting that the report would be available before the meetings.

These concerns were addressed. It was stated that although it is the norm of Galway City Council to share reports before meetings it is not the norm of Galway County Council. He stated that it was not the document of either Local Authority but rather the NWRA and that there will be no decisions made during the duration of the meeting and that it is an initial presentation only. Uinsinn stated that further consideration and comments will be taken into consideration.

The NWRA presentation then started.

During the presentation it was stated that this was a draft document and will receive comments and feedback on same. He stated that the report was fact based. The report considered the long-term perspective of Galway and Galway MASP. They also considered the National Framework and National Development Plan.

It was stated that the MASP needs to involve both Local Authorities and other bodies such as the Galway Community, representatives for Corporate Policy Groups.

It was also stated that the report will be signed off at cabinet level.

The key recommendations in the report were: -

1. Existing political/administrative structures remain.
2. Regional Assembly role remains and provides a regional umbrella.
3. A specialist socio-economic unit, consisting of strategic specialisms across a range of spatial, transport, health, education, cultural, environmental, climate action, amenity and wellness and economic planning skills.
4. 20-year Galway MASP Investment Plan.
5. A management group under chair of Minister of State
6. Government sign-off.

Concerns were raised about the link between the City and County Council as they are not amalgamated like other Local Authorities. Will the MASP be a governance model or how will it work? He stated that the EU examples are good to consider and that concept stages need to be taken into consideration.

It was stated that it is important to learn from other areas and the research available to best serve Galway.

Chief Executive for Galway County Council thanked the attendees and the NWRA for presenting the report. He stated that there was work to be done in relation to the MASP.

Chair opened the floor to any questions: -

It was asked if there were any examples which included two Local Authorities in relation to budgets and planning development? It was stated that people who work in the city generally can't live in the city and therefore travel to the county. It was asked does it only work when you amalgamate local authorities?

It was stated that there is a need for three managers and not one in order to represent the Islands, City and County Galway. It was stated that amalgamating would limit representation and there needs to be consideration for this going forward. It was stated that we cannot compare Galway to any other area, and we should be treated differently to any other Local Authority.

GCCN members asked again if they would receive the presentation.

The NWRA stated that he was happy to circulate the report but emphasised that it was a draft report and that comments may need to be added.

It was stated that once they see the document, they can consult with colleagues in GCCN and give their feedback. He asked would there be SPC workshops going forward.

It was stated that the document is a starter document and not the final report. He said that he would be happy to engage in workshops and for them to consider the report and give their feedback.

It was stated that there is no set model and that they looked at models with one local authority and others with multiple. The key focus is on urban setting and how it fits into regional and national plans.

It was stated that the City Development Plan included MASP. He asked what the plan is going forward and when development would begin?

Cllr. Mary Heade apologised on behalf of Cllr. Peter Keane who couldn't attend. She then raised the question of government funding and if the ring road would be supported.

The NWRA stated that it does support the ring road and the voice of Galway needs to be heard in relation to their needs. He stated that they are talking about existing structures and how to manage them.

The NWRA stated that the next step is for both local authorities to digest what was presented and work on their feedback and comments. He stated that they need get it right and a manner that works for all.

It was stated that they need to be aware of what is planned for Galway and that Galway needs to be put at National Cabinet level. He stated the more ideas were need for the report and that this program could be a 20–30-year program.

It was stated by GCCN that the anxiety of not receiving the report before the SPC was based around the fact that they need to get working and that it would have been courteous to have had more time to consider the facts before the meeting.

Cllr. Mary Heade stated that there was no point going back on things already mentioned and that the document will be circulated, and submissions would be received.

THE NWRA were happy to send the report to both Director of Services and to receive feedback. Direct emails were also to be supplied for any outstanding queries.

GCCN then stated that in November 2022 that there was a sense of urgency from the NWRA to get working on this report and he asked if a date could be agreed at this SPC for another discussion meeting.

Cllr. Mary Heade stated that a date could not be fixed at that moment, but it would be agreed in the coming weeks and circulated well in advance.

Chief Executive, Galway County Council stated that a workshop would be beneficial. He stated that there are several elements to consider and that collaboration between the Local Authority's needs to happen. He stated that the City and County Council need to complete workshops and Joint SPCs in relation to this project and that the upcoming months are busy in relation to elections.

Mr. Liam Hanrahan, DOS stated that they need to look at how the plan out meetings going forward as election season is approaching and that this document will be drafted and finalised during the next council's duration, and he would like to get all involved in the upcoming SPCs following local elections.

Mr. Uinsinn Finn, DOS thanked the NWRA and that this discussion was taken as a stimulated debate and consultation and that it was broader than the SPCs. He stated that during implementation other bodies involvement is important as this is broader than the councils. Decisions need to be made at a higher level.

The NWRA stated that a few discussions need to be taken place and that they must agree on the best outcomes to suit Galway. He stated that meetings with the Tánaiste would be arranged to discuss economic of northern and western regions.

Cllr. Mary Heade thanked everyone and concluded the meeting.

-End-

Action List

Action No.	Details of Action	Responsible Person	Status	Complete Y/N
1	NWRA report is to be circulated to both Director of Services in order to be given to the attendees.	NWRA		
2	A date is to be agreed for a future workshop and to be circulated in advance.			