

**Minutes of Meeting of Galway City Planning Strategic Policy Committee held on 27th February
2023 via MS Teams & Council Chamber**

- Presiding:** Cllr. Peter Keane, Galway City Council
- Present:** Cllr. Níall McNelis, Galway City Council
Mr. Brendan Mulligan (Galway City Community Network)
Mr. Derrick Hambleton (Galway City Community Network)
Ms. Patricia Philbin, Director of Services
Mr. Liam Blake, A/Senior Planner
Ms. Laurena Mitchell, Senior Executive Officer
Ms. Helen Coleman, Senior Executive Planner
Ms. Kate Moloney, Executive Planner
Ms. Marcella Kilgarriff, Assistant Staff Officer
- Present Online:** Cllr. M.J. Crowe, Galway City Council
Cllr. Clodagh Higgins, Galway City Council
Cllr. Frank Fahy, Galway City Council
- Apologies:** Cllr. Noel Larkin, Galway City Council
Cllr. Imelda Byrne, Galway City Council
Ms. Betsy Boland, Galway Chamber
Mr. Jim Higgins, Heritage Officer

Cllr. Peter Keane, Chairperson, welcomed members and officials to the meeting which was being held virtually via MS Teams & from the Council Chamber.

Cllr. Keane referenced the recent retirement of Ms. Caroline Phelan, Senior Planner He acknowledged Caroline's commitment to Planning in Galway City throughout her tenure as Senior Planner. On behalf of the Planning SPC, Cllr. Keane wished Caroline and her family health and happiness in her retirement.

1. Minutes & Matters Arising

Cllr. N. McNelis advised that he was in attendance online at the meeting of the 8th November. It was agreed to rectify this in the minutes.

The minutes of meeting dated 8th November 2022 were proposed by Cllr. F. Fahy, seconded by Cllr. N. McNelis and agreed by all.

Mr. D. Hambleton requested an update on the Heritage Plan and the Heritage Forum.

Mr. B. Mulligan asked for an update on the framework plan for Sandy Road and the Dyke Road, the cultural review in relation to the replacement for the Black Box, and an update on the recruitment of a Conservation Architect for the Planning Department. He also expressed disappointment at the lack of discussion around the population figures for the city in relation to the preliminary Census results.

It was agreed that the updates in relation to Sandy Road and the Dyke Road would be taken under Item 4: Regeneration Sites.

Cllr. M.J. Crowe also requested an update in relation to the design and maintenance of ESB utility boxes and it was agreed that Mr. L. Blake, A/Senior Planner, would come back to him directly in relation to that matter.

Ms. H. Coleman, Senior Executive Planner, advised that Mr. J. Higgins sent his apologies for the meeting. An update on the Heritage Forum will be given at the next SPC meeting. It is envisaged that the Forum should be up and running early this year.

Ms. Coleman advised that the position of Conservation Architect has been sanctioned and that the matter is now with HR.

Ms. Coleman stated that the Planning Department are awaiting the CSO data in relation to the population results. It was agreed that the population statistics will be an agenda item for the next SPC meeting.

2. City Development Plan 2023-2029

Ms. H. Coleman gave an update on the progress of the City Development Plan to date. The 2023-2029 Plan was adopted by Elected Members and came into effect on 4th January 2023. A draft direction was subsequently issued by the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) to the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage and all but one of the OPR directions was accepted by the Minister. A public consultation period took place, and 60 submissions were received from the public, Elected Members and the NWRA. A summary report of all submissions is being prepared and will be sent to the OPR no later than 2nd March 2023. There is scope for the OPR to appoint an inspector should they deem it necessary. It is expected that the final decision will be made by May 2023.

Further to this, it was agreed that the Ardaun LAP should be an agenda item for the next SPC meeting. It was agreed following discussion that the Chief Executive be written to, requesting that the Chief Executive's Report on submissions received in relation to the Draft Ministerial Direction, include a recommendation from the Planning SPC asking for urgent consideration of the current deficit in the infrastructure to allow development of the Ardaun LAP area.

Update on Local Area Plans

Ms. H. Coleman advised that the Ardaun LAP expires in 2024. A review is due to take place in 2023 which will consider all aspects of the current plan including Environmental Impact Assessments, Flood Risk Assessments and Transport Plans. This will require the procurement and appointment of consultants to assist with the preparation of the relevant reports and stakeholder consultation will take place. An area-based transport assessment was done as part of the initial LAP, and another will be done as part of the review.

The Headford Road and Murrough LAPs will be expedited once the Ardaun LAP is completed. Regarding Murrough, discussions have taken place with ATU as a major landowner in the area and Irish Rail in relation to the railway line and how access could be achieved.

The Castlegar LAP has been put on hold until a decision is reached on the N6 Galway City Ring Road.

A discussion took place in relation to the limited resources in the Planning Department and the difficulty in recruiting the necessary technical and planning staff. Ms P Philbin advised the group that this is a national issue and that there are 150 positions vacant across the country.

Regeneration Sites Progress

Ms. P. Philbin, Director of Services, gave an update on the progress of the Sandy Road and Dyke Road regeneration projects. She advised that the Sandy Road site is 21 acres approx., and a site review took place in 2020. Capacity for approx. 750 residential units is estimated. A meeting of the steering committee is to take place on 6th March to discuss a draft spatial framework. Briefings for staff and Elected members will take place and the framework is due to be published in July/August 2023.

It was proposed by Cllr. P. Keane and seconded by Cllr. N. McNelis that the Spatial Framework would be put on the agenda for the next SPC and that any input from the SPC can be brought to the Council by Cllr. P. Keane as Chair of the SPC in advance of the framework being published.

In relation to the Dyke Road site, Ms. Philbin advised that it is 4.5 acres and that it will be phased development with capacity for around 175 residential units and a commercial/mixed use element. The Black Box will stay functional until another location is sourced. This planning application will most likely be submitted as a Part 10 to An Bord Pleanála.

3. Residential Zoned Land Tax

Ms. Kate Moloney, Executive Planner, gave a presentation in relation to the Residential Zoned Land Tax. The aim of the tax is to activate and bring forward the development of housing on lands which are suitably zoned and serviced, as indicated on maps to be prepared and published by local authorities for their respective functional areas. Revenue will be responsible for collecting the tax. The draft maps were put on display on 1st November and submissions were invited from Landowners and third parties, with a closing date of January 2023. 13 no submission were received by Galway City Council. Determinations will issue on these submissions in April 2023 with a right to appeal to An Bord Pleanála. She advised that the next public consultation period will take place in May and there will be notices in the newspaper, on social media and on the Galway City Council website to ensure the public are informed. It was agreed to circulate information to Councillors when the consultation period is advertised so they may inform their constituents. A supplemental map must be published on 1st May 2023 with the final map published on 1st January 2024.

4. ePlanning Update

Ms. L. Mitchell, Senior Executive Planner, gave an update on ePlanning to date. The project is being rolled out on a phased basis. Ms. Mitchell pointed out the benefits of the new online system and advised that Galway City Council will be in the final stage of the rollout with a date of June 2023 for the system to go live. The Planning Department are working with the LGMA and the ICT section on the project. The LGMA will be responsible for the data and an additional server and software has been procured for ICT.

5. Draft Work Programme 2023

The draft work programme for 2023 was circulated to all members in advance of the meeting. Cllr. P. Keane advised that he would be willing to take any proposals on policy that the SPC wished to put forward.

6. Schedule of Meetings

It was proposed that the next meeting take place on 29th May 2023 with the following meetings on 5th September and 5th December. Ms. Philbin advised that once the documents are finalized in relation to the MASP Governance report a Joint Meeting will be called with Galway County Council.

7. AOB

Cllr. N. McNelis raised the concerns of Galway City Business Association in relation to retail units being converted to coffee shops. Mr. L. Blake advised that businesses where food or drink is not consumed would not usually require a change of use but any establishment where food or drink is consumed on the premises would require an application. Ms. H. Coleman advised that the City Development Plan includes an objective to commence a joint retail strategy within one year of the adoption of the Plan.

Mr. L. Blake gave an update to Cllr. Crowe in relation to the utility boxes.

Cllr. P. Keane thanked all for attending and the meeting concluded.