



Coiste Polasaí Straitéiseach Pobal & Cultúr Community and Culture Strategic Policy Committee (SPC)

Minutes of Meeting of the Community and Culture SPC held at the Council Chamber, Aras an Chontae, Galway, on Thursday 28th May 2020 at 11.00 a.m.

Members in attendance:

Cllr. Martina Kinane	Galway County Council
Cllr. Shelly Herterich Quinn	Galway County Council
Cllr. Liam Carroll	Galway County Council
Cllr. Padráig Mac An Iomaire	Galway County Council
Cllr. Andrew Reddington	Galway County Council
Megan Flynn	PPN Representative
Máirtín Davy	PPN Representative
Helena McElmeel	Business Representative

Staff in attendance:

Alan Farrell	A/Director of Services
Kieran Coyne	A/Senior Executive Officer
Bernie Kelly	A/County Librarian
Mary McGann	Administrative Officer
Sharon O'Grady	Arts Officer
Una Ní Eidhin	Irish Officer

Apologies

All members were in attendance and no apologies were received.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Cllr Martina Kinane welcomed everyone to the first Meeting of the Community and Culture SPC (Strategic Policy Committee) and introduced the Council staff present and welcomed the community representatives. She reminded everyone of the social distancing rules in place for the duration of the meeting to ensure the health and safety of SPC Members and Council staff.

2. Overview of Strategic Policy Committees – Purpose and Operations

Mr Alan Farrell gave a presentation to the Members on the purpose and role of SPC's and stated that the agreed annual programme of work would be linked to the strategic policies in the Council's Corporate Plan. He advised on the reporting arrangements which included the SPC Chairpersons

reporting to the Council on the proceedings of the Committee and each SPC Chairperson being a member of the Corporate Policy Group (CPG) which was responsible for overall co-ordination and monitoring of the work programmes of SPC's. He confirmed that the role of SPC's as set down in legislation is the formulation, development and review of policy, and clarified that these were all functions of a strategic nature reserved to Elected Members in statutory frameworks, however, the final policy decisions in all cases rests with the Plenary Council who are the decision-making authority. He stated that although the SPC had no role in operational issues, there would be some discussion of operational issues across the relevant programme areas in order to facilitate and enhance the policy-making role of the Members. In this regard, he had invited the relevant staff members to give a brief overview of their area of work and policies to the Members and this would form the basis for the annual programme of the SPC.

3. Draft Programme for the Community and Culture SPC

Sharon O'Grady, Arts Officer, outlined the role of the Arts Office and the policies currently adopted and in draft which includes Galway County Culture and Creativity Strategy 2018-2022; Arts Plan 2020-2024 (draft) and the Public Art Policy (draft). She outlined that the Culture and Creativity Strategy is linked to the Creative Ireland Programme and was adopted in 2018. A comprehensive consultation process for the Arts Plan had been completed and a draft Plan was about to be brought to SPC and the Council to be adopted immediately prior to the COVID 19 outbreak. She advised that the current pandemic has drastically altered the cultural landscape and the plan now needs to be put in context and revised to reflect the current situation. This will be done as soon as possible with the plan to present the draft plan to SPC at the next meeting. She advised the Members that the Public Art Policy has been drafted to oversee the governance and delivery of a public art programme for Galway County Council and a central element is referencing the setting up of a Public Art Management Group to oversee the commissioning of a Public Art Programme.

Cllr. Shelly Herterich-Quinn welcomed the drafting of a Public Art Policy and stated that the creation of a policy to guide the provision of public art was a very welcome development. In relation to the Arts Plan, she stated that it would be beneficial for the Members to examine the 'before' and 'after' drafts of the Plan to guide discussion on policy developments.

Bernie Kelly, Acting County Librarian, outlined the range of programmes provided by the Library Service across its 29 branches (26 in County and 3 in City). She confirmed that libraries remain some of the most visited public spaces in County Galway, with 638,608 visits and 619,789 items issued throughout 2019. She outlined that activities in the Library Service are guided by a national strategy - the Public Library Strategy 2018-2022 which is underpinned by 4 strategic objectives:

- Spreading information and literacy skills
- Promoting the library service as a key community resource
- Seeking to increase library membership and usage by individuals and communities
- Continuing investment in library buildings, technology and facilities

She stated that the focus was now on re-opening and operating the libraries and delivering programmes in a safe manner in the post-Covid-19 era and contributing to the current needs of communities through adapting programmes such as Healthy Ireland at your Library.

Cllr Liam Carroll thanked all the library staff for the dedication and great work, in particular he mentioned the Summer Reading Programme for children which was very successful. He stressed the importance of the library service as it is one of the few free services of the Council and hoped it would continue. In response, Bernie Kelly outlined alternative plans to continue with the Summer Reading programme and that they could offer the programme throughout the summer with bags of books available for children to collect at their local libraries.

Helena McElmeel questioned how the Galway Libraries were performing in relation to percentage of usage by the general public. Bernie Kelly confirmed that in Galway, 11% of the population were using libraries and the National Library Strategy aims for 30% by 2022.

Una Ni Eidhin, Irish Officer, gave an overview of An Scéim Teanga 2019-2022 which was adopted in 2019 and is in place until 2022. She stated that the Scheme was prepared having regard to the Guidelines of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in line with the Official Languages Act 2003, and compliance with the scheme and Act has particular significance in Galway County which has the largest Gaeltacht area in the Country. The Scheme outlines the responsibilities of the Council in specific services to be delivered through English, Irish or bi-lingually.

Cllr. Shelly Herterich Quinn complemented the Council and stated that it was positive that we were championing the Irish Language.

Mary McGann, Administrative Officer, Community Development, commenced by giving an update on the Community Response to Covid-19 as although it was not policy-related, it would have an impact on policy formulation and development into the future. In relation to the Community Response Helpline established to provide practical supports to vulnerable or older individuals who were cocooning, she confirmed that the Helpline had dealt with over 700 calls to date and over 110 Groups and Organisations had signed up to be part of the Community Call delivering supports at local level. She stated that the system had been successful and that calls to the Helpline were now reducing, indicating that local individuals and businesses were aware of local initiatives in place and were contacting local Groups directly for support. In that regard, the Community Response had moved to Phase 2 which was concentrated on Wellbeing Initiatives and based on findings that social isolation was a developing issue, especially for those who were not online, Packs to include a booklet with information and advice, were being prepared for distribution to vulnerable and older adults who had been receiving practical supports. The Covid-19 Emergency Fund had been advertised as a closed call to groups in the Community Call and €50,000 of the €85,789 allocated to Galway County had been disbursed in the first tranche of funding which had concentrated on maintaining frontline services such as Meals on Wheels, providing Food Vouchers or Resource Packs

to vulnerable individuals, and PPE Equipment or technology aids to facilitate Care Organisations to deliver their services. She advised that many policies in the community area were under the remit of the LCDC (Local Community Development Committee) including the Healthy County Galway Strategy (in draft), Migrant Integration Strategy (expired), Age Friendly Strategy (expired) and the LECP (Local Economic & Community Plan) 2016 – 2022. She stated that the Council-funded Community Support Schemes were already allocated for 2020 and the Council had approved €256,544 of funding at their February Plenary Meeting, however, there would be an important role for the SPC and Council Members in defining the priorities for economic, community & cultural supports going forward in the post-Covid environment.

Cllr. Andrew Reddington queried whether Community Support Scheme (CSS) allocations for 2020 would be paid and Mary McGann stated that in relation to her own area, these were for improvement of community amenities and facilities and ensuring communities were socially inclusive, and these issues were more important now than ever, and every effort would be made to work with applicant Groups to complete or adapt their projects and complement the Wellbeing Initiatives under Phase 2 of the Community Response to Covid-19. Mr. Alan Farrell stated that in relation to events and festivals, our staff would be in contact with applicant groups to determine what funding was practicable and would report back to the SPC and Council in due course. Cllr Shelly Herterich Quinn welcomed that the Council would work with Community Groups to receive their funding from the CSS schemes.

Cllr Martina Kinane thanked all of the Helpline staff and all those involved in delivering on the Community Call through the Covid Community Response Forum. Several of the Members stressed the importance of recognising the voluntary effort of communities through the Community Call and Mr. Alan Farrell confirmed that this had been raised as a priority by the Community Response Forum Members and some form of public recognition or acknowledgement would be made in due course, however, the priority at the moment was recommencing frontline services and re-opening communities for business.

4. Schedule of Meetings

The following schedule of meetings was agreed for 2020:

Thursday 9th Jul 2020

Thursday 24th Sep 2020

Thursday 10th Dec 2020

5. Any Other Business

Cllr Martina Kinane (Chair) thanked everyone for their participation, in particular the voluntary members of the committee and the Council staff for their presentations.

The meeting concluded.