



Miontuairiscí Chruinniú Choiste Polásaí Straitéiseacha Pobail, An Ghaeilge, An Ghaeltacht, Turasóireachta & Comhtháthú a tionóladh Dé Luain, 17 Feabhra Seomra na Comhairle agus trí Microsoft Teams @ 2pm

Minutes of Meeting of the Community, Irish Language, Gaeltacht, Tourism & Integration Strategic Policy Committee held on Monday 17th February @ 2pm in the Council Chamber and via Microsoft Teams

Members in Attendance:

Cllr Seamus Walsh	Galway County Council
Cllr Noel Thomas	Galway County Council
Cllr Máirtín Lee	Galway County Council
Colleen Baxter	Business/Commercial Representative

Members in attendance online:

Cllr Alan Harney	Galway County Council
Cllr Evelyn Parsons	Galway County Council
Chika Onyia	Social Inclusion Representative
Cllr Michael Leainde	Galway County Council
Paul Carey	Development/Construction Representative
Cllr Shane Curley	Galway County Council

Apologies

Paul Dillon	Community/Voluntary Representative
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Staff in Attendance:

Jacqueline Carroll Director of Services, Kieran Coyne A/Senior Executive Officer, Mary McGann Administrative Officer, Máirtín O'Donnchadha Oifigeagh Forbartha Gaeilge, Diane Gallagher A/Staff Officer.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr. Walsh welcomed all present to the meeting.

2. Adoption of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 11th November 2024 were proposed by Cllr Michael Leainde and seconded by Colleen Baxter. The Minutes of the Community & Culture SPC held on the 11th December 2023 were proposed by Paul Carey and seconded by Cllr Seamus Walsh.



3. Storm Eowyn Response

Cllr Walsh introduced Jacqueline Carroll, Director of Service to give an overview of the Council response to storm Eowyn. Ms. Carroll gave an overview of the work carried out by the Community Response Forum which was an interagency group who met daily. Ms. Carroll also outlined the establishment and vital role played by the 54 Community Response Hubs which provided important basic services and supports to individuals who were without utilities for a period of time. In addition, Ms. Carroll outlined the role of other Units within the Council who responded to calls to the helpline regarding fallen trees, storm damage, temporary water supplies and housing supports in the aftermath of storm Eowyn. Ms. Carroll thanked all the staff and community volunteers involved in the emergency response team and advised that a lot of learning has come from the aftermath of this storm which will be fed back to Government Departments as part of a coordinated response by Galway County Council.

Cllr Parsons thanked all the staff who worked on the emergency response team and the volunteers who operated the various community hubs and provided much comfort to communities during the prolonged outages. Cllr Parsons reinforced the importance of the local hubs as part of the Storm Response and reiterated the importance of ensuring community centres around the County are adequately resourced going forward.

Cllr Harney thanked all the staff involved with the emergency response and stated it would be important to identify a network of designated hubs for any future emergencies. In addition, it was important to identify solutions to the communications blackout such as the provision of satellite phones and comms systems in selected locations.

Mr. Carey complemented the Council and its partner organisations on the response to the catastrophic outcomes to this storm event. He stressed the importance of back-up generators at water treatment plants and satellite communications systems as key learnings moving forward.

Cllr. Walsh reiterated the need for back-up generators, or a mobile network of same, at water treatment plants, and stated that from his experience, there was a high-level of satisfaction with the Council response which was to be complimented in the difficult circumstances.

4. Update from the Irish Language Development Officer

Mairtín Ó Donnchadha gave an update on the key provisions of new legislation which was signed by The Minister of State for the Gaeltacht Thomas Byrne to bring the final provisions of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021 into force on 21 December 2024, in line with the statutory deadline set for it. These provisions include significant ones that will have a major impact on the language rights of the people of Ireland from that date on.

Mr Ó Donnchadha gave a brief run down on the programme of events that would take place across the County during Seachtain na Gaeilge which runs from 01 March – 17 March.

Cllr. Walsh thanked Mr. O'Donnchadha for the presentation and for all his efforts in promoting the Irish language.



5. AOB

Ms. McGann gave a presentation on the development of a new Age Friendly Strategy for the City and County, noting that the last strategy expired in 2019 and the Age Friendly Alliance had been adopting annual workplans since this time, to respond to emerging challenges such as COVID-19.

Ms. McGann confirmed that Ireland is the first country in the world signed up to the WHO (World Health Organisation) Age Friendly Programme on a national scale and this commits each local authority to an age friendly programme structure and 5-year strategy. Ms. McGann outlined the 8 WHO Themes upon which the Age Friendly Strategy would be based and outlined progress which had been achieved across those themes over the lifetime of the first strategy and since that time.

Ms. McGann outlined census 2022 statistics for the County, in particular noting that the proportion of the population aged 55+ increased by 26.6% at the latest census, with over 55's representing the highest proportion of the disability rate for the County, and the County having the 2nd highest proportion of Carers in the region, many of whom were older people themselves. Ms. McGann confirmed that a consultant had been appointed to develop an Age Friendly Strategy and this had commenced with a public consultation survey and a number of focus group sessions with targeted groups across the County. Following the public consultation process, it was intended to carry out a series of action planning workshops with key stakeholders within the local authority and Age Friendly Alliance, at which stage a draft strategy based on emerging issues would be brought back to the SPC for further consideration.

Cllr Walsh thanked Ms McGann for her presentation.

Cllr Parsons stated that the statistical analysis for over 55's and people with disability were alarming and there was a need for more accessible car parking spaces to be made available and had previously made a recommendation regarding an age friendly parking space at Ballinasloe Library. Cllr Parsons stated that in this regard, it would be beneficial to have age friendly parking badges for older people similar to disability parking badges. Ms. McGann advised that she would follow up on the representations regarding an age friendly parking space at Ballinasloe Library.

Cllr Lee queried if anything can be done to link transport services through TII as the current rural transport stops are too widespread and need to be made more accessible for older people. Ms McGann stated that Local Link assess the gaps in services as part of their rural transport provision and it would be important that gaps in connectivity are fed back as part of their local consultations on services.

Ms. Carroll confirmed this would be her last SPC Meeting prior to taking up a Director of Services role with Wexford County Council and thanked all the Members for their active participation in the SPC. Cllr. Parsons thanked Ms. Carroll stating that she was very attentive to local needs which had been highlighted and had made a big difference in a short period of time. Cllr. Harney also expressed thanks to Ms. Carroll, in particular for her work with communities in Ballinasloe.

Cllr. Lee also expressed appreciation to Senator Shane Curley for his contribution to the SPC during his time as an Elected Member and wished him every success in the Seanad.

Chríoghnaigh an chruinniú ansin.