



Galway City Community Network  
Líonra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

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# A Local & Economic Plan for Galway City

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## Initial Submission to the Local Economic and Community Plan Advisory Group

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### 1. Introduction

Galway City Community Network, the Public Participation Network in Galway City, welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the draft Socio-Economic Statement for Galway City.

We are restricting our comments to the Socio-Economic Statement and High-Level Goals and look forward to making further submissions on suggestions to populate the LECP. Our comments are divided into two general categories. The first refers to the content of Socio-Economic Statement. The second refers to the process of developing the Socio-Economic Statement and the LECP.

Also included below is a Submission to the Local Economic and Community Plan prepared by the GCCN Housing Linkage Group.

#### 1. Socio-Economic Statement – Content

- 1.1. We welcome the underpinning principles but strongly suggest that they are prominently presented as part of the Socio-Economic Statement and not in the Appendix.
- 1.2. A Statement of Equality and Human Rights as outlined in the document issued by the Local Government Management Agency and circulated to all local authorities, *Promotion of Equality in the Delivery of the Local Economic and Community Plans*, should be developed and included.
- 1.3. GCCN welcomes the Socio-Economic Statement outlined in the draft document. However, we believe that it lacks vision and fails to capture the imagination necessary to ensure buy-in from statutory agencies and communities. As an alternative, GCCN suggests:  

*Galway, a creative and inclusive city that respects and values its people and communities, their wellbeing and quality of life, that will develop a vibrant, sustainable, economy and environment and participative and transparent governance.*
- 1.4. The use of the term 'City Region' is not useful. Galway is a city. The term region is confusing and superfluous.

1.5. Given the very clear need for public bodies to work together to achieve the strategies and actions, there needs to be a very clear statement about public sector renewal and interagency systems that enables co-ordination and co-operation between public bodies and publicly funded organisations.

1.6. High-Level Goals:

- The high-level goals are useful but the sub-goals are less so. As they are presented, they are discordant, with a number very board, others vague and some restating work that is already in hand. We suggest a small number of medium level statements that will encourage deliberations on the actions to be developed to achieve the goals.
- The third high-level goal should be amended as follows:
- Encourage a sustainable, resilient urban environment for Galway city and its hinterlands
- The fourth high-level goal should explicitly include human rights and include as a sub-goal the promotion of equal access for all.
- The European Youth Capital bid is for 2019 – not 2017 as stated

1.7. Approach:

1.7.1. We are suggesting that the approach to be used should emphasise the following:

- The need for strategies and actions to provide added-value. The LECP should not be a restatement of actions that are a part of other plans
- The need for collaborative approaches to strategies and actions. All actions should involve two or more partners/actors;
- The need for integration between social and economic planning and integration;
- Focus on intervention, prevention and breaking the cycle;
- Have a combination of flagship actions, seed actions and actions that seek to address identified gaps.

## 2. Socio-Economic Statement – Process

2.1. As the Public Participation Network for Galway City, Galway City Community Network is concerned that the community, voluntary and environmental sectors are afforded sufficient notice and time to develop submissions to the Socio-Economic Statement and the LECP. It is not considered good practice to hold consultations with the community, voluntary and environmental sectors during the summer months as many organisations and groups are not active at this time. It is particularly difficult to organise member meetings etc.,

necessary to ensure that the submissions are evidence-based and inclusive of the diverse range of views that the PPN represents.

- 2.2. GCCN notes that the deadline for the completion of the LECP is considerably earlier than that determined by the Department of the Environment, Community & Local Government as set out in Section 22 of the Guidelines on Local Economic and Community Plans issued to local authorities in January 2015. Presumably this is to bring the LECP into line with the deadline for the application to become the European Capital of Culture 2020. Though fully supportive of the bid, GCCN believes that the imposition of this overly-ambitious deadline will have a detrimental impact on the LECP - process and product.
- 2.3. We note that a number of 'Speak Outs' are planned to inform the LECP. While GCCN is in favour of the concept of Speak Outs and notes how well they have worked in the context of the European Capital of Culture 2020 bid, we believe that to use the same approach will be confusing.
- 2.4. We strongly suggest the immediate publication of a consultation plan with both thematic and geographically based workshops identified with dates and venues assigned for the autumn period. A review session should be included to test the strategies and actions to be included. GCCN will be happy to support this.

### 3. Moving Forward

#### 3.1. Parity

- Galway City Community Network believe that equal attention needs to be focused on the community elements as the economic elements of the LECP;
- Equal and adequate resources need to be committed to the community elements of the LECP as to the economic elements.

#### 3.2. Social Inclusion

- A definition of Social Inclusion should underpin the LECP;
- The economic and community elements of the plan should be regarded as two sides of the same coin. We wish for a focus on the socio-economic elements of the Plan

#### 3.3. Participation/Consultation/Engagement

- The right to participate should be an underpinning principle of the LECP consultation process;
- Participation and engagement of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors must be at all stages of LECP development;

- Participation needs to be defined and meaningful and needs to regard the community, voluntary and environmental sectors as partners in the process of developing a plan for Galway City;
- The participation of a diverse range of groups and communities should be considered;
- Representative organisations should be allowed to define appropriate approaches to consultation with their communities;
- There needs to be an inter-agency commitment to resources required;
- We urge consultation with communities and representative organisations in relation to the both elements of the Plan – community and economic.

#### **3.4. Strategies and Actions**

- Strategies and actions must not be tokenistic – they need to be measurable and outcome focused;
- All actions should be anti-poverty and equality proofed with measurable targets, outcomes;
- In developing strategies and actions, the interests of minorities must be protected;
- Target groups must be explicitly named;

#### **3.5. Community Impact**

- The effect of the plan on local communities must be made clear. Communities should benefit directly and indirectly from actions.

#### **3.6. Feedback**

- We are seeing assurance that issues raised and actions suggested will be given due consideration. We request that feedback is given for actions that are not included;
- We request a scheduled series of updates on the implementation of the LECP.

#### **3.7. General**

- We would ask you to be aware that there is a lot of information already collated and many communities can experience consultation fatigue if there are constantly being asked what the issues are without seeing progress. Previous consultations should be taken account of and used as a starting point.

# Submission of Housing Linkage Group to Local Economic and Community Plan

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Housing and accommodation are fundamental cornerstones of community. They have a central role to play in community cohesion and development and underpin societal well-being. The availability of adequate, secure, good quality, affordable housing is also critical to economic activity and development.

## **A Partnership Approach**

There needs to be close co-operation between statutory agencies, in particular Galway City Council, businesses and approved housing bodies to access the funding necessary to deliver sufficient housing to meet existing and future housing need in the city. The City Council should adopt a partnership approach in housing provision and management and there should be on-going engagement with strategic partners, and the public, in housing planning.

## **Planning**

Planning for social housing should not happen in isolation from private housing; rather it should be part of an integrated planning process for the entire city. Care should be taken to ensure the type of housing delivered corresponds to actual housing need, in particular the greater need for housing for single-person households.

It is essential that there is community planning as well as planning in terms of housing delivery. Local statutory agencies such as the Local Authority, Department of Social Protection, Department of Education and the Health Services Executive have important roles to play to ensure that innovative approaches are employed to promote community and that there is adequate investments in schools and community facilities.

## **Housing Development**

Galway City Council must work to ensure that it has the necessary capacity to take full advantage of available funding streams to maximise the amount of social housing delivered in the city. It should maximise social housing delivered through Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

## **Sustainable Communities**

Galway City Council has a central role to play in ensuring that sustainable communities with a healthy social mix are developed. Sustainable communities require a good mixture of housing tenures and there needs to be integration between private owner occupied housing, social housing and local authority housing as well as the private rented sector housing.

## **Housing Maintenance & Community Engagement**

The importance of the maintenance, renewal and regeneration of social housing needs to be recognised. Failure to maintain housing in good condition can, in time, lead to significant refurbishment costs. There needs to be on-going engagement and communication with tenants and

investment in estate management. Maintaining social housing stock in good condition can also help engender pride of place and help communities invest in their neighbourhood.

### **The Private Rented Sector**

In Galway, 40% of people live in the private rented sector, a fact which needs to be acknowledged. The private rented sector is not just a short-term measure/tenure, but rather a long-term housing option for many people and efforts should be made to facilitate and support greater community participation from people living in the sector.

### **Homelessness**

All of the range of statutory, voluntary and community groups in Galway City have an important role to play in both preventing the occurrence of homelessness in the first instance and where it does occur in addressing it in a timely manner so as to ensure that people are supported to find suitable housing and rebuild their lives. Early identification of households at risk of homelessness is the role of all agencies in the city and the prevention of the loss of housing has to be the focus of whatever interventions are made in such circumstances. The availability of affordable and good quality housing is vital to the prevention of homelessness as it is to addressing homelessness when it does arise. Similarly a range of support services appropriate to the needs of at risk and homeless households are vital to help safeguard against the damaging experience that homelessness can be in the lives of those affected by it.

## **About Galway City Community Network**

Established in 2014, Galway City Community Network is the Public Participation Network in Galway City. GCCN acts as the representative, collective voice of community, voluntary and environmental organisations in Galway City. The role of Galway City Community Network is:

- To act as a platform for the groups/organisations engaged in the community, voluntary and environmental sectors in Galway City to develop policy and positions on issues of common concern to the sectors and to communities and to advocate for these policies and positions to be implemented.
- To facilitate the representation of the community, voluntary and environmental sectors on the Local Community Development Committee, the Strategic Policy Committees, the Joint Policing Committee, other local government and local development bodies and any local, regional, national or international body deemed appropriate by the Galway City Community Network.
- To contribute to the development and achievement of a vision for the well-being of this and future generations.