



Galway City Community Network  
Líonra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

# Galway City Network

# Community

## The Public Participation Network in Galway City

Plenary Meeting 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019

### Minutes

#### Attendance

Please see below.

#### Apologies

Karina Timothy, Karen Golden, Maeve Mulrennan, Derrick Hambleton

#### Welcome & introductions

Tommy Flaherty, Chairperson, ensured there was a quorum present, opened the Plenary and welcomed members to the meeting. He invited those in attendance to share their names and organisations and noted that there was a microphone available to ensure everyone could hear and be heard.

#### Presentation

The Plenary received a presentation on the development of the Irish language Plan for Galway City.

#### Minutes

The minutes of the previous Plenary were proposed by Joe Loughnane, seconded by Eleanor Hough and accepted.

#### Matters Arising

There were a number of matters arising:

- The GCCN Co-ordinator informed the meeting that the proposal that had been made by the Department of Rural and Community Development to merge independent PPNs with their respective local authority has been withdrawn;
- There is an ongoing issue with receiving reports from representatives. There was a call from the meeting to indicate to GCCN representatives that it is imperative that they submit reports on time so all members can be kept up to date with developments. This was proposed by James Coyne, seconded by Joan Kavanagh and agreed.
- At the GCCN meeting in December, Tom Connell gave a report where he outlined that Galway City Council would have completed 96 new-build houses by the end of the year. However, by year-end, only 18 had been completed. It was agreed to write to Tom Connell to seek clarification on this issue.

## Local Elections 2019

The GCCN Co-ordinator provided an update on the work GCCN and others have been undertaking in relation to the Local Elections. Under the banner, #EqualityVotesGalway, a number of organisations including GCCN, Galway City Partnership, Access 4All, The Bridge Project, Amach, Cope, Galway Traveller Movement and Galway Anti-Racism Network have collaborated to develop a manifesto, based on a survey and workshop, and host a Hustings to which all the candidates have been invited. Social media is being used extensively.

## Update from Galway Buskers Community

An update was given by Nicol Blue around recent developments in relation to the Busking and Street Entertainment Bylaws. The Bylaws were passed by Galway City Council but were not implemented and subsequently revoked because the no commencement date had been inserted. The Galway Busking Community are actively engaging all Buskers to ensure they are aware of and comply with the Galway Buskers Code of Conduct. The Bylaws will be put before Galway City Council at a date to be identified. GCCN and others made submissions to the consultation process.

## PPN User Guide

The GCCN Co-ordinator provided an update on the consultation process on the PPN User Guide being carried out by the Department of Rural and Community Development. She emphasised that the review was on operational procedures and was not a review of the PPNs.

She highlighted the issue of the 'flat' structure under which all PPNs are supposed to be operating. This was discussed at length and in the experience of many of the members, a 'flat' structure has a number of significant number of drawbacks:

- GCCN believes that the User Guide insistence on a 'flat' structure is out of touch with the reality of the nature of the work of a PPN. No other organisation or network in the community, voluntary or environmental sectors is required to have such a structure. It is being imposed on PPNs without an adequate discussion/debate on the difficulties associated with it. GCCN would encourage the department to refer to the 10 Strategy to Support Local and Community Development and to engage with experts in this field such as Community Work Ireland to discuss this issue.
- The lack of a democratically accountable chairperson has the potential to create a void into which individual voice(s) would dominate without being accountable;
- There are inherent power imbalances in networks such as PPNs and bigger/greater resourced organisations could potentially dominate;
- It would leave the PPN without a recognisable leader in the context of often have to negotiate with the local authority, a very hierarchical structure.
- In GCCN, roles rotate in the Linkage Groups and the Thematic Groups, and the Secretariat operates a participatory structure that prioritises the active participation of members, including at Plenary meetings.
- **GCCN recommends that the 'flat' structure should be optional once PPNs can provide evidence that members feel that the structures are participatory and transparent.**

## Reports from GCCN Representatives

There was a general discussion on representation. Members agreed to participate on Strategic Policy Committees on the understanding that the meetings would be held at 4pm. This has tended to change to earlier and this does not suit many GCCN representatives. It was agreed to write to the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Planning, Housing and Local Government to request that they issue a directive to ensure that all meetings are held at times that are suitable to members participating on a voluntary basis.

It was stated that GCCN members are very often treated with disrespect by some councillors. There was a proposal to ensure that all members sign-in and sign-out of meetings. It was also stated that the SPCs themselves are treated with disrespect by some councillors, with a number consistently not attending, including on the Environment, Recreation & Amenity SPC where a discussion on climate change took place with no councillors in attendance.

It was agreed to contact all the new Chairs and insist that they insist that the business is taken seriously. If the Chair does not do so, GCCN will consider the withdrawal of members.

It was stated that there is a more fundamental question in relation to making the PSPCs places where they feel that their time is useful – many believe that they are a waste of time as they are just provided with reports and presentations, and the real work is done at Council level. Some members stated that had been in discussion with other counties and this not the case in some there.

As chair Tommy Flaherty outlined that this is a piece of work that GCCN needs to take on after the Local Elections. Tommy suggested a meeting between the Reps and the SPC Chairpersons to look at the approach of GCCN to the new council.

### Joint Policing Committee

John Cleary gave an update on the JPC. The Garda Commissioner Drew Harris attended the last JPC meeting at the suggestion of GCCN Reps. The Commissioner gave a presentation with a particular focus on the training of An Garda Síochana and mental health. There was question from with regards to details for cybercrime and statistics and the representative indicated that that no statistics are available but will bring the request made to the next JPC meeting. Representatives highlighted that they regularly bring up the issue of community policing and the presence of a community guard not being the same.

### Local Community Development Committee

Terry McDonough gave an update on the proposed review of the Local Economic and Community Plan. Terry emphasised the upcoming workshops and the need to identify fewer actions that are based on collaboration with bigger impact.

### Environment, Recreation and Amenity SPC

Caroline Stanley provided an update on the Environment, Recreation and Amenity SPC. The Draft Litter Management Plan and the proposed Master Plans were discussed. Letters have been sent to Galway City Council requesting a meeting to discuss the impact of the clearances on the canal and waterways.

There was a question in relation to the enforcement of the non-use of smoking fuel. Niall clarified that it is not illegal to burn smoking coal – it is only an offence to sell it so it is difficult for the authorities to act.

## Housing SPC

Apologies were received from the representatives and their report had been circulated. There was an update on the Western Regional Homelessness numbers – November - 292, December - 326, January – 358. In November, there were 82 families with 186 dependents.

Martin O'Connor gave an update on the Family Hub that Cope has been contracted to deliver. The building of the modular homes has commenced in Westside and will be managed by the Peter McVerry Trust.

## Transport SPC

Niall Ó Brocháin provided an update. He stated that Galway City Council have approved the Galway Transport Plan and have a budget of €200m to spend on transport. The plan includes a target of 50% public transport use by 2040, a considerable increase from the current 9%. There are no interim policies in place to achieve this.

## Economic Development, Enterprise Support, Arts & Culture SPC

Maeve Mulrennan sent apologies

## Planning SPC

The following were highlighted in Planning SPC; Harbour Board due diligence process, Urban Regeneration Funds in Galway – Galway Clinic Roundabout & Cycling Infrastructure, Vacant Sites Register and Regional Spatial Strategy. Query as to what is GCCN strategy with regards to Regional Spatial Strategy?

## Galway Sports Partnership

No update was given as no report was received and none of the representatives were present.

## Western Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force

No meetings have taken place since the last Plenary.

## Galway City and County Child Care Committee

Marian Maloney gave a brief update on her attendance at Childcare Committee. As she is only recently on this committee, she is currently seeking to clarify her role. Marian requested that GCCN members consider any questions that they want brought to the next Childcare Committee. Joan Kavanagh brought up the issue of families in homelessness.

## Comhairle na nÓg

Fiona Jennings is the GCCN Representative. She gave an update focusing on the project on Youth Homelessness that Comhairle will be focusing on for 2019.

## Motions

There were two motions presented and approved:

- It was agreed to write to Galway City Council to seek clarification on the number of houses that have been built in 2018 and so far in 2019.
- It was agreed to write to Galway City Council to request that all SPC meetings be held at times that facilitate GCCN members participation.

## Any other business

- A Raise the Roof Rally will take place on April 8<sup>th</sup> at 1pm in Eyre Square.
- The Galway Environmental Network will hold a Hustings on April 4<sup>th</sup> in the Museum Café at 6pm.
- Tommy thanked Ann and Fiona sincerely for their work. He also thanked the GCCN representatives for their participation and commitment.

Signed

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Date

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### List of Attendees - AGM Meeting March 27th 2019

Name	Organisation
Imelda Gormally	Galway City Partnership
Brendan Mulligan	Engineers Ireland West Region
John Cleary	Galway Age Friendly Older Persons Council
Tommy Flaherty	Ballybane Community Resource Centre
John Rabbitte	Woodhaven Residents Association
Joan Kavanagh	Galway Age Friendly Older Persons Council
Fiona Jennings	Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
Nicol Blue	The Galway Buskers' Community
Michael Conneely	Galway City School of Judo
James Coyne	Westside Resource Centre CLG
Shane Foran	Galway Cycling Campaign
Joe Loughnane	Galway Anti-Racism Network
Margaret O'Riada	Galway Traveller Movement
Eleanor Hough	Grattan Court Residents Association
Kathleen Greaney	Respond
Brendan Smith	Ballinfoile Mór Community Organic Garden
Terry McDonagh	An Taisce
Caroline Stanley	Friends of Merlin Woods
Niall Ó Brolcháin	GLUAS
Martin O'Connor	Cope Galway
Niall Ó Brolcháin	GLUAS
Martin O'Connor	Cope Galway
Pauline O'Reilly	Stay-At-Home Parents Association