

**Minutes of Meeting of Planning Strategic Policy Committee held on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020  
via Zoom in Galway City Council, City Hall, College Road Galway.**

**Presiding:** Cllr Peter Keane

**Present:** Cllr Frank Fahy  
Cllr Owen Hanley  
Cllr Niall McNeilis  
Cllr Clodagh Higgins  
Cllr Noel Larkin  
Cllr Imelda Byrne  
Marian Spelman (Irish Congress of Trade Unions)  
Mr Brendan Mulligan (Galway City Community Network)  
Mr Derrick Hambleton (Galway City Community Network)  
Ms Patricia Staunton (Business Sector)

**In Attendance:** Ms Ruth McNally, Director of Services  
Ms Caroline Phelan, Senior Planner  
Ms Helen Coleman, Senior Executive Planner  
Mr Liam Blake, Senior Executive Planner  
Ms Kate Moloney, Assistant Planner  
Ms Emma Silke, Administrative Officer  
Ms Norann Keane, Senior Staff Officer  
Ms Patrice Keane, A/Assistant Staff Officer

**Guest Speaker:** Niall Cussen, Office of Planning Regulator

Cllr. P. Keane, Chairperson, welcomed members and officials to the meeting which was being held in the City Council Chamber where the Chair and senior officials were present and the balance of members joined virtually.

**1. Minutes & Matters Arising**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020 were proposed by Cllr N. Larkin and seconded by Cllr. C. Higgins.

In response to a request for an update on works proposed for the three castles - Menlo, Terryland and Merlin, Ms C. Phelan confirmed there had been a delay due to Covid-19 but surveys had now been carried out. Agreed an update would be given at the next SPC meeting.

**2. Office of the Planning Regulator Presentation**

A presentation was given by Mr. Niall Cussen, Planning Regulator to the members on the role of the Office of the Planning Regulator followed by a general discussion and clarification sought from the Regulator on the following:

- Implications of the perceived lack of Local Area Planning in the City Centre
- Developer led regeneration planning
- Lack of public consultation
- Upward trend in unauthorised developments and retention planning applications
- Multi-agency planning approach in relation to flood defences, which greatly impacts on Galway City

In response the Regulator noted:

- The importance of public consultation
- Significant constraints facing Local Authorities in delivering their planning function
- No noticeable trends in retention applications for unauthorised developments and drew attention to the so called “bad builder” clause in the Planning & Development Amendment Act 2018, whereby an applicant’s history of previous developments which have not been satisfactorily completed or previous convictions against the applicant for non-compliance may be taken into account when determining a planning application.
- The significant timescale involved in delivering on flood defence schemes but the growing sophistication of the process resulting in improved implementation of schemes
- On-going review by his Office as to the efficiency of the relationship between multi-agencies, local authorities and public bodies.

Mr. N. Cussen exited the meeting and agreed that a copy of the presentation would be circulated to the members.

### **3. Update on Variations to the City Development Plan**

Ms. H. Coleman gave an overview and update to the members on the proposed variations to the current City Development Plan as circulated to the Members.

**Proposed Variation No. 5** - To align the Development Plan with the National Planning Framework (NPF), Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (RSES) and Galway Metropolitan Area Strategic Plan (MASP) and to incorporate the Galway City Council Climate Adaptation Strategy.

**Proposed Variation No. 6** – To insert a Specific Development Objective on RA zoned lands at Cappagh Park to allow for consideration of an Aquatic Sports and Fitness Centre.

It was confirmed that the deadline for submission was 31/08/2020 and approximately 100 submissions were received, including 90 objections to Variation No. 6

It was further confirmed that under the legislation a Chief Executive's report must be prepared within the next 6 weeks and will go before the Council Members at a scheduled meeting.

Following a general discussion clarification was given on the following:

- The lack of provision within the legislation for the Council to defer making a decision beyond the specified period to allow for further input from the SPC
- That the SPC had no decision making role in relation to a variation but could make a recommendation which would be fed back to the Council by the SPC Chair when the matter comes before the members for consideration.
- Proximity of the site to the existing Leisureland facility.
- Details of the Urban Development and Building Heights Guidelines for Planning Authorities (2018) to be circulated to members

#### **4. Update on Vacant Site Levy**

Ms. K. Moloney gave a presentation and update to the members on the Vacant Site Levy and its implementation in Galway City, a soft copy of which was circulated to members following the meeting.

A general discussion ensued and clarification was given on the following:

- Application of the levy to agricultural lands
- Penalties for non-payment of levies
- Basis of valuation
- Difference between Derelict Sites Levy and Vacant Sites Levy.

#### **5. A.O.B.**

- **SPC Work plan 2020** – Noted that plan as circulated at start of year was indicative only and was solely driven by the members of Galway City Council in terms of review of planning policy as well as legislative policy related requirements. The Director re-iterated the role of the Planning SPC as a policy advisory committee which does not have any decision making role.
- **Additional agenda items** - Cllr. P. Keane acknowledged the request by Galway Community Network for a number of specific items to be included on the SPC agenda and advised that a report would be circulated to members in the coming days addressing each of the specific requests
- **Additional SPC Meeting** – In response to a request for additional meetings, the Director confirmed that due to extremely busy workloads until the end of the year and the demands on planning staff there was no capacity to service additional meetings of the SPC outside the next scheduled quarterly meeting in November

The date of the next SPC meeting was agreed to be held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 at 8.30am via Zoom. This concluded the business of the meeting.

