



Galway City Community Network
Líonra Pobail Chathair Na Gaillimhe

Galway City Community Network

The Public Participation Network in Galway City

Plenary Meeting 26th June 2019

Minutes

Attendance

Please see below.

Apologies

Kerry E'lyn Larkin, Bernie Glynn, Orla Molloy, Basil Fenton, Brendan O'Gorman, Martin O'Connor.

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.

Minutes

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

Matters Arising

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. Since the previous Plenary in March two emails have been sent to Tom Connell to seek clarification on this issue. No response has been yet received.

Progress Report

The GCCN Co-ordinator, Ann Irwin, provided an update on **Linkage Groups**

- **Environment LG:** Wrote to GCC on lack of collaboration in the Urban Regen Fund applications and on Canal and other works. There is a proposal to establish a Waterways Forum;
- **LCDC** – wrote to DRCD in relation to lack of progress on the review of the LECP;
- **Housing Linkage Group** – wrote to GCC to request an update on the outcomes of the Homelessness Conference.

The Co-ordinator proceeded presenting the projects GCCN were involved in since the previous Plenary in March:

- **Evolve** (Galway Community Excellence Network) – GCCN actively participate on Steering Group;
- **Access for All** – GCCN continue to support members participating in Linkage groups and Committees/ delivery of training around GCCN structures on July 2nd;

- **Galway Age Friendly Alliance** – GCCN member of working groups on Civic Participation & Inclusion;
- **Local Community Development Committee** – GCCN participating in the development of Equality and Human Rights tools as part of the initiative funded by the Irish Human rights & Equality Commission;
- **Healthy Galway** – GCCN participated and spoke at launch of the Healthy Galway Strategic Plan;
- **Galway Environmental Network** – the group grew out of Environment LG and is open for membership.
- **Galway 2020** – GCCN sat on The Small-Town Big Ideas assessment panel. Three Galway 2020 Champions are GCCN Reps;
- GCCN facilitated two **Community Enhancement Programme** Information Sessions with **GCC** and **GCP**
- **Magdalene Women Commemoration** – GCCN co-organised and held on March 31st

EqualityVotesGalway

The GCCN Co-ordinator introduced the work done on #EVG since last Plenary. An Equality based Manifesto was developed and presented to the local candidates during the hustings held prior to the Local Elections. Most of the candidates signed a pledge based on the Manifesto.

The Elected Councillors were invited to the June Plenary and asked to address priorities for their term in relation to the five areas highlighted by the Manifesto:

- Social Inclusion, Local Development and Community Development
- Housing and Accommodation
- Recreation and Amenity
- Planning, Transport & Infrastructure
- Accountability and Transparency

In the future GCCN will take up identified areas of manifesto in LGs and SPCs.

GCCN submissions since March

The GCCN Co-ordinator provided an update on the submissions completed since the previous Plenary:

- National Volunteer Strategy
- PPN Users Guide
- Social Enterprise Policy
- GCCN Submission on Traveller Inclusion

Communications

The Communications and Support Worker, Oana Nicoara, introduced herself and the work done so far, mentioning that a new Communications Strategy is currently being developed. She gave a brief introduction of the areas that require most attention at the moment: enhancing member's visibility on the GCCN website, improving communications with all members through Newsletter and Feedback, optimising the GCCN website and Social Media online presence.

Reports from GCCN Representatives

There was a general discussion on representation. It was mentioned that Marian Maloney had to step down from the LCDC due to her candidature to the Local Elections. Maria Molloy substituted her as a Rep.

It was stated again that GCCN members are very often treated with disrespect by some councillors and the SPCs themselves are treated with disrespect by some councillors, with a number consistently not attending. The Chairs will need to insist that the business is taken seriously. GCCN are looking for better practices for the Cllrs. attending the SPC meetings. The bad practice of leaving after less than half a meeting needs to stop as that has an influence on the quality and decisional-powers of the meeting.

Local Community Development Committee

James Coyne gave an update on the LCDC report highlighting that there is a lack of response from Local Authorities to community requests. Margaret O’Riada suggested to request accountability from September on.

It was mentioned that Cllr. Martina O’Connor and Cllr. Owen Hanley are sitting on the LCDC and are engaged positively.

Galway City Partnership

The Board of GCP continue to oversee the SICAP programme along with other areas of work.

The issue of SICAP members being also GCP members and LCDC Reps has been discussed. From September the LCDC membership criteria will be reviewed to avoid overlaps.

Western Regional Drugs and Alcohol Task Force

Tommy Flaherty gave an update on the Alcohol Strategy to be soon put out with one of the GCCN Newsletters.

Planning SPC

Derrick Hambleton gave an overview on the Report on Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy & Due Diligence Report on Harbour Lands Transfer Plan. This is not yet ready and is expected in Q4.

Joe Loughnane asked for further info on Planning in Galway. It has been mentioned that areas as the East side of Eyre Square, Nun’s Island, Dyke Road and other are in public ownership and currently there are plans made for their development under the Urban Regeneration Fund.

Frustration was expressed at the fact that individual developers are doing what they wish in the areas with little involvement from the communities. Joining Galway Environmental Network (GEN) could help the communities to have a say in how Galway Grows.

Environment, Recreation and Amenity SPC

Eleonor Hough provided an update on the Environment, Recreation and Amenity SPC. The management plans for Terryland and Merlin Park were briefly discussed with the mention that a Tree Officer would be appointed over the summer. In the meanwhile, the three appointed Park Officers are considered to be not enough, and their work is not very impactful so far. There is a need for more Tree Officers.

Funding is sought from GCC for the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. The Busking Bye-Laws need further community engagement while the Cash-for-Cans scheme is being currently reviewed.

Housing SPC

It was mentioned that on the issue of Homelessness the SPC tend to be reactive rather than pro-active. Not much progress has been made re the initiatives started on housing for people with disabilities. It was mentioned that ILMI are responsible for this, not GCCN. The issue of renting and Airbnb destroying the fibre of community in Galway City has been raised. Inclusion needs to be part of Planning and Housing.

GCCN Reps Elections

Following the New Council Elections all GCCN reps on structures associated with the Local Authority will need to resign. The Co-ordinator introduced the process of Rep Selection and Election started by GCCN. This includes an open meeting on GCCN Representation to be held on 2nd July, a **Training on the Role of GCCN Reps** to be offered in early October, **Nominations** to be held from early to mid-September culminating into the **GCCN Reps Elections** that will take place during the Plenary Meeting on 25th September.

Motions

There was one motion presented and approved:

- It was agreed that all current GCCN Representatives remain in place until the Elections for New GCCN Reps that will be held on 25th September at the Plenary meeting.

Meeting with Galway City Councillors

Four councillors were present: Cllr. Owen Hanley (SD), Cllr. Frank Fahy (FG), Cllr. Martina O'Connor (GP) and Cllr. Colette Connolly (Ind) joined the meeting from 8pm.

Apologies received from Cllr. Pauline O'Reilly (GP), Cllr. Declan McDonnell (Ind), Cllr. Terry O'Flaherty (Ind), Cllr. Niall McNelis (LP), Cllr. Michael Crowe (FF), Cllr. Mike Cubbard (Ind) and Cllr. Eddie Hoare (FG).

The Co-ordinator offered a brief introduction on GCCN to the councillors in attendance.

- **Cllr. Collette Connolly** spoke first expressing her understanding towards the volunteers' work and efforts and asking for understanding on the work and efforts of the councillors also who work only part-time. On the issue of housing Cllr. Connolly mentioned that the prior Council has failed as no funding is provided to minor issues in the area of social housing. Cllr. Connolly further stated that private housing/renting has been privileged. She stressed that Dyke Rd.'s current development plans include a hotel, parking, student accommodation and no housing or cultural structures.
- **Cllr. Martina O'Connor** followed also mentioning her understanding of the effort and issues that volunteers go against, having herself been involved in this type of work. Cllr. O'Connor mentioned that her way of working is based on tangible info and actions not on reports.
- **Cllr. Frank Fahy** acknowledged the volunteer work also mentioning how impressed he is by people giving their time voluntarily. The main concern discussed by Cllr. Fahy was transport. He promotes a dedicated school transport system where all church car parks could be used as drop-off point for parents. The bicycles lanes are problematic due to debris and bad planning as in Doughiska the lane finishes with a 20cm high edge. The issue of double bus stops for Bus Eireann has also been presented with a suggestion for joint efforts to be sought.
- **Cllr. Owen Hanley** acknowledged the GCCN values briefly mentioned in the Introduction offered by the Co-ordinator. Cllr. Hanley said that the values he brings forth are the same. On the issue of Social Inclusion, he highlighted that only in Doughiska there are 42 nationalities with a need for cultural bridges to be built while on the housing front a housing stock will need to be built to represent the people that need homes not for profit oriented aims.
Cllr. Hanley also mentioned that the accountability of councillors voting for Bye-Laws cannot be traced with the current system.

Accountability and Transparency:

- **Cllr. Frank Fahy** stated that he received invitations to many events prior to the Elections, but afterwards organisations seem to forget about their requests to the councillors. He was hence

delighted to see that #EVG is going ahead with their initiative. Cllr. Fahy also mentioned that in regard to Merlin Woods, he has proposed a plan to get funding for Transport in 2021 to create a bus corridor to the woods.

- **Cllr. Collette Connolly** spoke about openness as part of the councillors work and how this is facing obstacles due to bureaucracy. Cllr. Connolly mentioned that councillors are passive participants often and she requires more participation from the other councillors also, with reports handed in on time and joint work from all.
- **Cllr. Martina O'Connor** expressed her opinion on transparency issues and the language used by the Local Authorities. She recently raised the issue with the other councillors showing how ambiguous is the use of the terminology “a business developer” in the planning permissions for the development of the Dyke Road area.
- **Cllr. Owen Hanley** concluded that their presence at the Plenary was a statement of their commitment. Cllr. Hanley highlighted that LCDC needs more consultation and that the voice of people is not being listened to, given that 90% voted against the Buskers Bye-Law and this is still going ahead.

The chair of GCCN Tommy Flaherty stated that more respect and support will be needed for the community sector. Also, since there is no direct communication between councillors and GCCN representatives this aspect needs improvement.

Action Points:

- Set up an email for all councillors and GCCN representatives
- Give councillors the contacts of the SPC members

Among the matters discussed:

- The issue of **Social Inclusion Funding** has been raised. The councillors said that the budget starts in September, brought then out in October. The funding works on the idea that if funding grows in an area it must decrease in another area due to limitation. There is not much funding for Climate Change in Galway, the event-based funding being predilected.
- A discussion on **Motions and Accountability** followed. Motions have a reference number and need to be accountable, but as Cllr. Collette Connolly stated, there seems to be reticence from councillors in giving out info and documentation. It is not easy to keep track of motions and they move forward very slowly.
- The issue of **Language and the Regeneration Areas** in the city to be developed. In the documents there is no Social Development listed, just development. The use of Plain-English was suggested to make the language accessible to the broader native public and non-nationals.
- **Antiracism** was touched on in reference to councillors and GTM. There is a need for better practice from some councillors.
- The issue of **Accessibility** was raised by Eljona from GVIA Club.
- **Biodiversity and Climate Breakdown** were again touched on briefly, with the mention that the available areas in the city need a vision that is sustainable and not limited to individual development which is profit oriented.

Any other business

No AOB.

Signed _____

Date _____

List of Attendees – Plenary 26th June 2019

Name	Organisation
Martina O'Connor	Councillor
Owen Hanley	Councillor
Collette Connolly	Councillor
Frank Fahy	Councillor
Eliona Gjecaj	GVI Activity Club
Helen Ogbu	Volunteer Galway
Brendan Mulligan	Engineers Ireland West Region
Louie Maguire	Eastside Community Drama
Nichodemus Onwubiko	IGBO Progressive Union
Tommy Flaherty	Ballybane Resource Centre
Eleonor Hough	Grattan Court Residents Association
John Rabbitte	Grattan Court Residents Association
Karina Timothy	Threshold
Maria Molloy	Amach LGBT Galway
Maura Ó Cróinín	-
Lochlan Scott	Helplink Support Services
Dan Clabby	Conservation Volunteers Galway
Caroline Stanley	Friends of Merlin Woods
Lorraine Grimes	Abortion Access Campaign West
Imelda Brophy	Abortion Access Campaign West
Tim O'Toole	Serve The City
M. Conneely	Galway City School of Judo
Helen Ogbu	IGBO Women Wing
James Coyne	Westside Resource Centre
Sophia Wessin	Galway Anti Racism Network
Silvia Trentin	Galway Anti Racism Network
Pat Burke	Merlin Woods Sport Club
Wally Nkikita	Galway African Diaspora
Maggie Woods	Galway Activism
Marian Maloney	Access for All
John Cleary	Galway Age Friendly Older Persons Council
Margaret O'Riada	Galway Traveller Movement
Derrick Hambleton	An Taisce
Shane Foran	Galway Cycling Campaign
Brendan Smith	Ballinfoile Mór Community Organic Garden
Joe Loughnane	Galway Anti Racism Network
Cornellus D.	Indian Cultural & Sports Community, Galway
David Byrne	Cope Galway
Lisa Fenwick	Disability Federation of Ireland
Joan Kavanagh	Galway Age Friendly Older Persons Council