

**Community, Leisure, Arts, Heritage and Culture Strategic Policy Committee Hybrid Meeting
15/04/2026**

A meeting of the Community, Leisure, Arts, Heritage and Culture Strategic Policy Committee (CLAHC SPC) was held on Wednesday, 15th April 2026 at 3pm in the Council Chamber Dooradoyle and Online via Microsoft Teams.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Acting Chairperson:

Cllr. Azad Talukder
Cllr. Brigid Teefy
Cllr. Catherine Slattery
Cllr. Dan McSweeney
Cllr. Daniel Butler
Cllr. Gregory Conway
Cllr. John Sheahan
Cllr. Michael Collins
Cllr. Olivia O'Sullivan
Cllr. Pdraigh Reale
Cllr. Shane Hickey O'Mara
Cllr. Tommy Hartigan
Mr. John Ward
Ms. Marion Hurley
Mr. Pdraigh Lohan

APOLOGIES:

Mr. Brian McCarthy, Director of Service
Cllr. Fergus Kilcoyne
Cllr. Sarah Beasley

NOT PRESENT:

Mr. Khurram Iqbal
Ms. Louise Crowley
Mr. Pete Moles
Mr. Randal Hodkinson
Cllr. Martin Ryan
Cllr. P.J. Carey

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr. Sean Lenihan, Director of Service
Ms. Karen Burke, Town Centre First Officer
Mr. Damien Brady, City & County Librarian
Ms. Louise Magner, Administrative Officer
Ms. Eileen Gleeson, Staff Officer
Mr. Thomas O'Neill, Heritage Officer
Ms. Joanna O'Donoghue, Staff Officer
Ms. Aisling Coughlan, Assistant Staff Officer

Declaration of Interest:

The Meetings Administrator stated that, in line with Part 15 of the Local Government Act, 2001, as amended, and the Standing Order, all present members should notify the Cathaoirleach of any declaration of interest in any item due for discussion at the Meeting. No such interests were declared.

Item 1: Minutes:

The Minutes of the Community, Leisure, Arts, Heritage and Culture Strategic Policy Committee held on 11th February 2026 were proposed by Cllr. D. McSweeney and seconded by Cllr. G. Conway and adopted.

Item2: Matters Arising

No matters arising were brought forward.

Item 3: Update on Strategic Policy Committee work plan development

Director of Service, Sean Lenihan, informed members of the progress made on the development of the Community, Leisure, Arts, Heritage and Culture Strategic Policy Committee Work Programme. Members were advised that Corporate Services organised training workshops for all SPC members on 14 January 2026, delivered by the Institute of Public Administration. Following this training, a decision was taken to work with the Limerick SPC to schedule the planning of individual SPC Work Programmes. A Work Programme workshop was subsequently held on 26 February 2026 and was attended by both members and officials. It was noted that work is currently ongoing on the draft Work Programme, which was presented to members at the meeting.

The presentations on the draft Work Programme were delivered in sequence as follows: Culture by Damien Brady, City and County Librarian; Community and Rural Development by Karen Burke, Town Centre First Officer; Sports by Louise Magner and Eileen Gleeson; and Heritage by Thomas O'Neill, Heritage Officer.

In outlining the next steps, it was advised that the draft Work Programme will be circulated to all members for observations, comments and feedback. Any feedback received from members will be considered prior to circulating the final Work Programme. The final version will then be submitted to the CPG for approval.

Item 4: Seanad Public Consultation on Culture and Arts Infrastructure- Limerick Submission

The Town Centre First Officer, Karen Burke, informed members that the Limerick submission for Seanad Public Consultation on Culture and Arts Infrastructure had been completed; however, the

deadline has been extended until Friday, 17 April 2026. Members were advised that there remains an opportunity to submit additional comments for inclusion or to make individual submissions directly to the Seanad. It was also noted that the Arts Officer was involved in the process to prepare a joint submission by the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and the Association of Local Authority Arts Officers.

Members were advised that the Rural Development submission highlighted the importance of the late-night economy in both urban and rural areas, alongside the need to engage with local groups to identify barriers and opportunities.

The submission further noted that, while local planning policy recognises the importance of arts and culture in supporting quality of place and societal wellbeing, current levels of state investment are insufficient to meet demand or realise full potential. Significant gaps were identified in the availability of arts and cultural infrastructure, especially in relation to artist studio spaces and rehearsal facilities. While some provision exists within Limerick City and limited rural locations, a lack of facilities in parts of the county, most notably west Limerick, was highlighted. Concerns were also raised regarding the long-term sustainability of existing and proposed studio spaces due to limited funding for ongoing maintenance and operational costs.

Challenges associated with the operation of public-facing cultural venues with intermittent use were also outlined. The submission identified co-location and multi-use of spaces as a more sustainable approach and highlighted the temporary or adaptive use of vacant buildings as a viable solution, referencing previous successful initiatives in Limerick. The submission recommended the development of a coordinated and funded national strategy for arts and cultural infrastructure, increased direct revenue support for local authority-led arts facilities, support for multi-use cultural hubs, and dedicated resourcing for cultural needs assessments as part of development planning processes.

Members thanked the Town Centre First Officer for the update and emphasised the importance of protecting late-night venues through appropriate planning and zoning policies. It was noted that a number of venues have closed in recent years due to complaints from nearby residential developments. Members also highlighted the need to ensure culture is embedded within regeneration areas and to encourage greater collaboration so that arts and cultural activity can reach a wider audience.

While acknowledging the value of purpose-built venues, members noted that such spaces can be intimidating for some audiences. The benefits of shared use of spaces and looking beyond traditional arts venues were highlighted, as this approach could be mutually beneficial for businesses and audiences alike. Concerns were also raised regarding the lack of rehearsal space, particularly for young people, the limited availability of housing for artists, and ongoing insurance challenges faced by venues.

The Town Centre First Officer acknowledged the issues raised by members and advised that these would be incorporated into the submission. Once finalised, the submission will be circulated to members.

Director of Service, Sean Lenihan, advised that there may be a further opportunity to use another building for artist accommodation and that this process is currently ongoing. He noted that while the use of vacant buildings presents potential opportunities, significant funding is required to ensure such buildings are made safe and fit for use; however, this option will continue to be explored.

Ms M. Hurley asked about the potential use of the Coach House located to the rear of 2 Perry Square, noting that it could represent a valuable space that may not require significant funding to bring into use. Ms Hurley also enquired about the current level of usage of the Belltable space and whether it is fully utilised and popular.

Cllr S. Hickey O'Mara advised that the Belltable is very busy and that the rates are reasonable; however, accessibility for people of all abilities was identified as a concern.

The City and County Librarian, Damien Brady, advised that the Belltable appears to be well utilised. In relation to the space at the rear of 2 Perry Square, members were informed that the building is currently occupied by the Civic Trust and that the potential use of the Coach House would need to be explored with them. Members will be updated once this has been clarified.

Item 5: Date of next meeting

The Acting Chairperson Cllr A. Talukder thanked all speakers. The next meeting of the Community, Leisure, Arts, Heritage and Culture SPC will take place on Wednesday 10th June 2026 in Council Chamber, Dooradoyle at 3pm and online.

Meeting ended at 3.50 pm

Minutes Proposed By: CLLR G. CONWAY

Minutes Seconded By: CLLR D. BUTLER

Minutes Signed by Chair: *Acting* [Signature] Date: 10/06/26