SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL

ARTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE, GAEILGE & LIBRARIES SPC

Meeting 6th May 2026 (17:30) - South Dublin County Council IT Conference Room & Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

Attended:

Members	Sectoral Members
Cllr. Dean Donnelly	Emma Kennedy
Cllr. Gino Kenny	Yemi Ojo
Cllr. Sarah Barnes (Chair)	

Apologies:
Cllr. Eoin Ó Broin, Cllr. Glen Moore, Cllr. Louise Dunne, Elaine Vince O'Hara, Noel Gavin

Officials present:
Edel Clancy, Acting Director of Services
Sile Coleman, Acting County Librarian
Ralph McGarry, Acting Senior Executive Officer
Orla Scannell, Arts Officer
Eithne Swaine, Creative Communities Engagement Officer
Carla Soden, Archivist

Donal Shiels, Artistic Director, Civic Theatre

Minute-taker:
Geraldine O'Meara, Senior Executive Librarian

The meeting was Chaired by Cllr. Sarah Barnes.

Chair Cllr. Sarah Barnes opened the meeting at 5.41pm, welcomed everyone and explained she was standing in as chair for this meeting as Cllr. Louise Dunne was unavailable to attend.

Headed Item 1: Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Arts Culture Gaeilge Heritage & Libraries SPC meeting held on 4th February 2026 were proposed by Cllr. Sarah Barnes and seconded by Cllr. Dean Donnelly.

Agreed.

Chair Cllr. Sarah Barnes enquired and confirmed there were no matters arising.

Headed Item 2: The Civic Theatre in 2026: Audience Growth, Inclusion and Future Direction

Mr. Donal Shiels, Artistic Director, The Civic Theatre, delivered a presentation on the development and future direction of The Civic.

The presentation outlined:

- The Civic Theatre's role as South Dublin's flagship arts venue and a key cultural and community asset.
- Significant audience growth from 55,292 attendees in 2023 to 81,500 in 2025, representing an increase of approximately 47%.
- A strong and diverse programme contributing to increased attendance and broader audience demographics.

- Inclusive initiatives including accessible pricing, community partnerships and culturally diverse programming.

- Extensive engagement with children and young people through schools' programmes, workshops and youth pathways into the arts.

- The growing role of digital innovation in expanding audience access and participation.

- The economic benefits of the theatre, supporting the local economy, hospitality sector and employment.

Chair Cllr. Sarah Barnes thanked Mr Shiels for his comprehensive presentation and invited questions.

Cllr Dean Donnelly commented favourably on the use of modern technology and asked how the theatre was engaging older audiences to engage with AI events, especially if they did not have smartphones. Mr Shiels responded that sponsorship to provide smartphones at the event could be looked at down the line but at the moment the theatre providing audience members with the smartphones to participate would be too costly.

Cllr Gino Kenny thanked Mr shiels for the impressive programme of events and wondered if such a cultural events programme could be scheduled for other venues such as the new café at the Clondalkin Round Tower. Mr Shiels responded to say that was an amazing space and it would be great to see the space used in the summer and to have a consistent programme of cultural events there. Mr Shiels offered to play a role in advising on this if SDCC wished to do this. Mr Shiels warned that quality control of such events was required to ensure that people would not be turned off coming along again.

Members welcomed the positive growth and acknowledged the importance of The Civic in supporting community engagement, cultural development and the night-time economy in Tallaght.

The report was **Noted**.

Headed Item 3: Introduction to SDCC Archives

Ms. Carla Soden, Archivist, delivered a presentation on the development of the SDCC Archives.
The presentation outlined:

- The purpose of establishing an archive service to collect, preserve and make accessible records reflecting the history, culture and heritage of South Dublin County.
- The role of the archivist in assessing, cataloguing, preserving and providing access to records of enduring value.
- The development of a structured Archives function including policies for acquisition, access and preservation.
- Ongoing work across Council Directorates to identify records of archival value and support records management processes.
- Activities including digitisation, public engagement, liaison with donors and support for heritage initiatives.

Members welcomed the establishment of the Archives and recognised its importance in preserving the County's history and supporting community identity.

Chair Cllr. Sarah Barnes thanked Ms Soden for the fascinating presentation and for providing a visual idea of the role of an archivist. Cllr. Barnes invited questions from members.

Cllr. Dean Donnelly commented on the excellent work that Ms Soden was doing and acknowledged that the records were not always in great condition for the work to be carried out. Cllr. Donnelly enquired whether records on local sports people and sport awards would be kept. Ms Soden replied that they were reliant on donations from local clubs and organisations for this and that she was interetsed in helping digitise these records. Ms Soden shared her contact details for anyone interested in donating records to get in touch.

Cllr. Gino Kenny commneted that he was sure a lot of people would want to donate items to be archived, particularly with the interest around the recent release of the 1926 census records. Cllr. Kenny thanked Ms Soden for her fascinating presentation.

Sile Coleman informed members that SDCC Libraries has a digital archive called Source which has over 15000 local records on its system. Ms Coleman mentioned that unfortunately public access to this is currently unavailable as it requires an upgrade. More information on the new digital archive would be shared once this upgrade takes place.

The report was **noted**.

Headed Item 4: Summer at Parthalán Place

Orla Scannell and Eithne Swaine presented the Summer Programme for Parthalán Place.

The presentation outlined:

- The development of Parthalán Place as a central cultural and community space in Tallaght since its formal naming in 2024.
- The expansion of programming for Summer 2026.

Key events include:

- Cruinniú na nÓg (6 June 2026) – a full day of free creative activities for children and young people across multiple venues.
- SubSounds Youth Music Festival (11 July 2026) featuring young musicians from across Leinster.
- RePlay Festival (15 August 2026) – a new street arts festival incorporating skate, BMX, music and street performance.

Additional programming includes:

- Lunchtime music series
- Performance art events
- Library-led outdoor engagement initiatives

The programme aims to:

- Activate public space
- Encourage participation across all age groups
- Support young people and emerging artists
- Strengthen Tallaght's cultural identity

Chair Cllr. Barnes thanked Ms Scannell and Ms Swaine for the wonderful initiatives taking place for young people. Cllr. Gino Kenny commented that it was fantastic that there was something in the programming for everybody. Members welcomed the programme and highlighted the importance of accessible, free cultural events and the activation of public space.

The report was **noted**.

Headed Item 5: Any Other Business

Chair Cllr. Sarah Barnes invited contributions for Any Other Business.

Yemi Ojo thanked everyone for their presentations and mentioned that she was in involved in the Africa Day event on 23rd May in Tallaght Library and asked if the Arts Office could help promote this. The Arts Officer asked Yemi to send the details on and they would look into this.

No other items were raised. Chair Cllr. Sarah Barnes thanked members for their attendance.

The meeting concluded at 6.48pm .