

Minutes of Meeting of Environment & Water Services Strategic Policy Committee held on 5th October 2016

I Láthair:

Baill: Cllr. Shane Donnellan, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. Tomás Ó Curráoin
Cllr. Ivan Canning
Cllr. Gabriel Cronnelly
Cllr. Peter Keaveney
Cllr. Noel Thomas
Mr. Aodhán Mac Donnacha
Mr. Mark Green
Mr. David Courtney
Mr. Bertie Roche

Oifigh: Mr. Paul Moroney, S.E.
Ms. Maire Ni Chionna, S.E.
Ms. Ann Dolan, E.S.
Ms. Catherine Seale, W.C.O.
Mr. Paraic Carroll, A.O.

Apologies: Cllr. Tim Broderick, Cllr. Niamh Byrne.

1. Minutes of Meeting of the 6th July, 2016

The minutes of the meeting of the 6th July 2016 were proposed by Cllr Ó Curráoin, seconded by Cllr. Cronnelly and agreed.

2. Environmental Enforcement Policy

Mr Moroney introduced the Enforcement policy. He reported that the policy covered all environmental enforcement activities in Galway County Council and was being done to clearly set out the policy of the council when an environmental matter was being considered and enforcement was an option. He also reported that it was in accordance with the EPAs recommendation to have such a policy in place. He then went through the main issues included in the policy.

Cllr. Thomas stated that there was a very low level of prosecutions for offences in the Conamara area. Mr. Green asked if feedback was given to complainants. Cllr. Ó Curráoin stated that it is nearly impossible to catch offenders and that heavy penalties needed to be imposed. Cllr. Canning stated that the key is education on the environment in schools. Cllr. Cronnelly asked if the pay by weight system had led to an increase in illegal dumping. Mr Roche asked if refuse trucks had a weight limit. Mr Moroney stated that the policy document brought all enforcement policy and legislation together in one document. He stated that prosecutions were a matter for the courts, that the Council bring it to the level of adjudication by the courts. With regard to complaints the challenge is to have the resources to give feedback to complainants but feedback will be given if sought by the complainant. He stated that there were over 1,000 complaints per annum. He clarified that cases involving summary prosecutions were dealt with at District Court level, while the more serious offences, deemed indictable were referred to the Circuit Court. He stated that a new authority – Waste Enforcement Regional Lead Authority (WERLA), will provide additional waste enforcement at a level above that performed by local authorities and in conjunction with local authorities. He stated that environmental education was very important, that there were 220 green schools in the county and one of the green flags awarded is a waste flag. He did not see a sizeable increase in illegal dumping since the introduction of pay by weight. He stated that while refuse trucks had to comply with health and safety requirements there was no restriction on weight.

3. Draft Flood Risk Management Plans

Ms. Ni Chionna updated the Members on the Draft Flood Risk Management Plans being prepared under the National CFRAM Programme, details of which were circulated. They involve the largest study of its kind undertaken in Ireland and identifies what needs to be done to manage flood risk from rivers and the coast. When finalised the plans will be submitted to the Minister for approval and submitted to Councils after approval who may adopt them within three months.

Cllr. Ó Curráoin stated that the Department of the Marine are obliged to keep drains going out to sea clear but they are not doing so resulting in backup of water and subsequent flooding of land. Mr. Roche stated that the Shannon was up by 16 inches already and asked what progress has been made on flood management. Cllr. Cronnelly stated that once flooding runs off roads water tends to go into driveways. Cllr. Thomas asked if any discussions had taken place with the OPW regarding the height of water levels on the Corrib and the opening of gates as they don't seem to open them when required. Cllr. Donnellan stated that already he can see water levels rising and was concerned that there will be issues again especially around the Dunkellin Scheme area. Mr Green stated that while it is the responsibility of the roads department to manage water on the roadway, he felt that it is the responsibility of landowners where water comes off the roadway onto their lands. Ms. Ni Chionna replied that the Dunkellin Scheme is a three year project and the works have started on the bye pass channels. With regard to water levels on the Corrib the OPW say that there is an accepted water level

and there would be consequences if levels were left below normal given the huge catchment area. An appreciable difference in flow would require a deepening of the gate channels

4. AOB

Cllr. Canning stated that the water supply to Portumna town was affected by leakages at the Marina. Ms Dolan said that Irish Water were made aware of the problem.

Cllr. Thomas asked if there was a move towards the removal of fluoride from water. Mr. Moroney stated that fluoridation of water is Government policy.

It was agreed the Cathaoirleach would discuss the changing of the time of meetings from 3pm to 2pm with Mr Carroll.

It was agreed to hold the next meeting on 14th December 2016.

The meeting then concluded.