

Minutes of Meeting of Environment & Water Services

Strategic Policy Committee held on 20th June 2018

I Láthair:

Baill: Cllr. Shane Donnellan, Cathaoirleach
Cllr Tomás O Curráoin
Cllr. Gabriel Cronnelly
Cllr. Noel Thomas
Cllr. Niamh Byrne
Mr. David Courtney
Mr. Aodán MacDonnacha

Oifigh: Mr. Paraic Carroll
Mr Enda Gallagher
Ms. Ann Dolan
Ms. Catherine Seale

Apologies: Ms. Eileen Ruane D.O.S., Cllr. Ivan Canning, Cllr. Tim Broderick, Cllr. Peter Keaveney, Mr. Bertie Roche, Mr. Mark Greene

1) Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 21st March 2018 and which had been circulated were proposed by Cllr O Curráoin, seconded by Mr. Courtney and agreed.

Matters arising

Ms. Dolan confirmed for Cllr. Cronnelly that the tyre disposal/removal scheme in 2017 was a once off scheme.

2) Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management (CFRAMS)

Mr Gallagher presented background information on CRFAMs and details of allocations that were announced by Kevin 'Boxer' Moran TD in May 2018. Under the 10 year programme, three schemes are to progress in County Galway: Ballinasloe, Clifden and Portumna. Detailed design and environmental assessments are to progress immediately for Ballinasloe and Clifden under Tranche 1 of the funding. No specifics have been provided for the commencement dates of the remaining 68 schemes. Cllr. Cronnelly asked if houses that

prevented flooding of their houses through use of sandbags didn't qualify for the relocation scheme. Mr. Gallagher confirmed that that was the case but that the independent property protection scheme next year might be of benefit to them. He agreed that people don't want to leave their homes generally if there is an alternative option. He stated in reply to members queries that lessons will be learnt from the flooding's in 2009 and 2015 and that information had been supplied to the OPW on houses prone to flooding. Cllr. O Curráoin stated that lack of land drainage led to flooding and that landowners should be responsible for draining their own lands. He stated that more care needed to be taken where houses were built. Referring to Bearna he didn't understand why it was called a flood risk as only small streams were the problem here. Mr Gallagher stated that there were three types of drains – Arterial (responsibility of the OPW), Drainage Districts (responsibility of local authorities) and private drains (responsibility of landowners). The difficulty with private drains is that no one takes responsibility for these but that this issue had been raised with the OPW. He confirmed that priority must be given to situations where houses are at risk from flooding. He agreed that local knowledge was key in identifying problem areas and solutions, that a lot of local knowledge had been lost but that any local knowledge gained had been added to CFRAMS mapping and will be of help to future generations. Cllr. Byrne stated that at the July plenary meeting the Barna Local Area Plan will be discussed and that some of the decisions recommended in the Plan ran contrary to CFRAMS proposals. Mr Gallagher stated that planning officials will have to clarify their position at the plenary meeting. Responding to Cllr Byrne he confirmed that dealing with flooding of road infrastructure was a resource issue. Responding to Cllr Donnellans query on the number of relocations in county Galway, he stated that the OPW had not published a breakdown countywide but that there were only a handful of relocations nationally.

3) River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021

Ms. Seale stated that on 17th April 2018 Minister Eoghan Murphy TD published the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018 – 2021 which sets out approaches to be taken over the next four years to protect and restore good water quality in our rivers, lakes, estuaries, groundwater and coastal waters. The processes behind developing this plan involved extensive consultation with the public, water stakeholders, public agencies and Local Authorities.

Public consultation on the plan was delivered by the Local Authority Waters & Communities Office (LAWCO) through public meetings held in every Municipal District between February and August 2017. Members of the public and community groups were invited to make written submissions on local water interests and issues and these were collated and sent to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and have informed the measures set out in the new River Basin Management Plan.

In addition, a series of regional workshops took place, organised by the EPA and Local Authorities. Here representatives from the relevant public agencies and Local Authorities discussed in detail water quality in every catchment, and a total of 190 priority Areas for Action were identified nationally. In this way resources can be coordinated and focussed over the next four years to deliver water quality improvements for the benefit of all of society.

The new plan establishes a framework for coordination between local authorities and public agencies to achieve water quality improvements that will protect public health and

amenities, wildlife, and our economy. A reliable supply of good water quality is vital for industries like agri-food, pharmaceuticals and tourism, across the entire country.

Local Authorities are currently finalising a recruitment drive for 35 scientists, who will have specific responsibility for implementing the actions set out in the River Basin Management Plan. This new team is called the Local Authority Waters Support and Advice Team (LAWSAT) and they will work closely with local authority staff, LAWCO, the EPA, and other public agencies. In addition, there will be 30 advisors in the Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advice Programme (ASSAP) which is being led by Teagasc and the dairy industry.

The expected outcomes include the progression of some 255 urban waste-water treatment projects, an investment of €73m to reduce water leakage from 45% to 38%, provision of sustainability advice to some 23,000 farmers, inspections of 4,000 domestic waste water treatment systems, registration and authorisation system for over 3,000 water abstractions, water quality improvement to 726 water bodies and improved water quality status for 152 water bodies. Ms Dolan stated that there was a much improved management by the Forestry Services and Coillte of pollution problems. Ms. Seale stated that the new approach was hopeful of leading to quick fixes on the ground rather than having to go down the road of enforcement.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms Seale for her presentation.

4) Illegal Dumping/Courts

Mr. Carroll circulated details of illegal dumping prosecutions and the court decision timescale. In 2016 there were 11 enforcement prosecutions closed, with 1 conviction and 10 struck out as all waste had been removed by the alleged offenders. Costs were awarded by the Court in 5 cases. In 2017 11 enforcement prosecutions were closed with 7 convictions and 4 where cases were struck out as all waste had been removed by the alleged offenders. Several inspections would have been made by the enforcement officer to check if work was completed with a final inspection the day before the Court hearing.

Cllr Donnellan stated that the issue of waste was not being taken seriously at National level, that not enough funding is provided and that a letter should issue from this Committee to the Department of the limited resources of the Environment Section. Ms Dolan stated that in a recent RTE Prime Time Investigates report Galway County Council had been ranked in 5th place in terms of the most active council for regulating and enforcing waste services. Cllr Cronnelly stated that there was too much packaging on products, that only one company in Athenry was using biodegradable cups and questioned whether fly tipping had increased following the phasing out of pre-paid refuse bags. Ms Dolan said that there was not a greater increase in illegal dumping due to lack of pre-paid bags. It was also confirmed to Cllr Cronnelly that there would be no additional landfill facility to deal with waste and that there would more of a move towards incineration

5) AOB

Cllr. Byrne asked what was the position with regard to clean ups by voluntary and community groups. Mr Carroll stated that new policy guidelines put an onus on such groups involved in activities such as litter picking, grass cutting, strimming etc to have appropriate public liability

in place and to complete a self-declaration form for proposed works and submit it to the local Municipal District office. A decision on the works would then be taken by the area engineer, taking into account speed limits and traffic volumes on the particular road. Mr Carroll added that continuing participation of community and voluntary groups was essential to the achievement of a cleaner county and that the Environment Section would continue to assist any groups in clean ups, whether by advice or providing equipment such as litter pickers, gloves, bags etc

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on 19th September 2018 at 3.00.

The meeting then concluded.