

Minutes of Meeting of Environment & Water Services

Strategic Policy Committee held on 27th March 2019

I Láthair:

Baill: Cllr. Shane Donnellan, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. Gabriel Cronnelly
Cllr. Tim Broderick
Cllr. Peter Keaveney
Cllr. Ivan Canning
Mr. David Courtney
Mr. Aodán Mac Donnacha
Mr. Henry Walsh
Cllr Tomás O Curráoin
Mr. Mark Greene

Oifigh: Ms. Eileen Ruane, Director of Services;
Mr. Ronan Conway, Assistant Engineer;
Ms. Joanne Perry, Veterinary Inspector;
Mr. Paraic Carroll, Administrative Officer.

Apologies: Cllrs. Noel Thomas, Niamh Byrne, Mr. Colm O Dowd

1) Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th December 2018 and which had been circulated were proposed by Cllr. G Cronnelly, seconded by Cllr T O Curráoin and agreed

2) Veterinary Services – Update

Ms. Perry presented a report on the Galway County Council Veterinary Service. She stated that the Veterinary Service is part of the Environment Directorate, comprising Ms. Rita Gately County Veterinary Officer and herself as Veterinary Inspector, with responsibility for Veterinary Public Health – Abattoirs, Meat processing plants, Animal disease control, Dog Control, advisory role on Control of Horses (administered by Housing) and advisory role on veterinary & public health matters. Their primary role is public health and involves approval and licensing by them of new approved premises in Galway, with regular unannounced inspections of 23 premises. There are a number of temporary veterinary inspectors who carry out inspections of abattoirs under the supervision of the Veterinary Officers. Their duties also include extensive cross agency sampling programs on carcass residue, nitrates, sulphites, dangerous bacterial contamination, hygienic preparation of food, shelf life,

premises hygiene. Other duties include cross agency disease outbreak control, zoonosis investigations and verification of the provenance of meat, meat products and ingredients used (farm to fork). Referring to the local abattoirs the veterinary department regulates 11 premises who are EU approved to slaughter cattle, sheep, pigs, goats, poultry and process wild game – deer. In 2018 1,408 cattle, 13,093 sheep, 85 goats, 41 pigs and 188 deer were slaughtered. There are 11 small meat processing plants, employing 150 workers, whose products vary from sausages, bacon, ham, burgers, black & white puddings, spiced beef, air dried Connemara lamb and steaks, mince etc, and the veterinary service advise and support these artisan businesses. There are 3 year-round or seasonal farms who rear and slaughter poultry. Referring to the BIA Innovation Campus in Athenry, Galway County Council is one of the founding partners, the campus is a dynamic food and drink innovation centre, offering 12 food grade production units, time share food incubators, product development facilities and labs and envisage the creation of 360 jobs within 3 years involving more than 40 businesses and where 2,400 individuals will receive training, development and support from the founding partners, which include Teagasc, Athenry Community Council, Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board, SCCUL and Western Development Commission. The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) is responsible for the safety of all food produced, distributed or marketed in the country and this is carried out by means of a service contract with agencies, such as Galway County Council, HSE, DAFM, SFPA). Referring to dog control Ms. Perry said that the Council employs 2 full time dog wardens and has a dog pound in Loughrea and Camus. The Wardens are responsible for the licensing and control of dogs, through checking for dog licences, seizing of stray dogs, surrender of dogs, dealing with concerned public and work with Gardai in dealing with dangerous dogs and sheep kills. In 2018, 337 dogs were surrendered or seized, 9,211 dog licences and 91% of dogs re-homed in County Galway. She stated that dog fouling is a public health hazard with the Community Wardens responsible for dog fouling fines. During 2018 30 dog waste bag dispensers were provided at amenity areas – parks, beaches etc. Referring to control of horses the Housing Section seized 66 horses in 2018 and 44 to date in 2019. Veterinary checks are made before reclaimed horses can be handed back, to ensure proper identification of the animal and that there is adequate land for the horse. She added that the majority of horses unclaimed are unchipped.

Cllr. Canning stated the veterinary service was understaffed and underfunded, that with regard to dog fouling offenders don't have to give their names and data protection laws are protecting the people who break the law. He welcomed the dispensers but stated that they should be in areas where there are litter bins for ease of disposal. Mr Mac Donnacha suggested the use of biodegradable waste bags. Ms. Perry said that Loughrea ran a successful dog fouling campaign while there are regular dog safety education talks by the Dogs Trust in over 200 schools and libraries and which includes dog fouling and that education is the key to the problem. She advised that there have been no new abattoirs and that there is a concern that there is not enough interest in the business adding that there are rising costs in the disposal of animal hides. Cllr. Keaveney stated that cost of setting up an abattoir is significant while Cllr. Canning stated that abattoirs were being crippled with the level of rates payable. Responding to Cllr. Broderick's concern with restricted dog breeds and the dangerous situation the Dog Wardens are exposed to, she said that any out of control animal should be reported to them and that the Gardai work hand in hand in unsafe areas with the Community Wardens and Dog Wardens. Mr Green queried whether the Dog

Breeding Act and regulations applying to premises of 6 or more breeding bitches should be reduced to 2 or more breeding bitches. Ms Perry advised that there are 2 premises in Galway with more than 6 breeding bitches and that there are talks of strengthening the regulations by reducing the number to 3. Cllr. Donnellan stated that the remit of the veterinary service is a lot broader than he had thought. Referring to dog control there needs to be a clear focus on who owns dogs where they have no licence and that there needs to be a change in behaviour.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Ms. Perry for her presentation.

3) Climate Action Plan - Update

Mr. Conway gave a report on the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy, a copy of which had been circulated to members. He advised that a draft template document has been prepared with about 70% common to all local authorities in the region, while the remaining 30% relates to county specific geographical and background information; case studies; and actions under each thematic heading – Governance & Support, Critical Infrastructure & Infrastructure, Natural & Cultural Capital, Water Resource & Flood Risk Management and Health, Wellbeing & Community. A pilot scheme, entitled Climate Action Support Scheme 2019, will be advertised in May to coincide with the public consultation period. The scheme invites applications in the following areas – Community Facility-Energy Audit Scheme; Solar Primary Schools; Climate Action Workshops; Community Water Bottle Filling Scheme; Tidy Towns Water Butt Scheme; expressions of interest- support for community allotments & grow it yourself centre.

The Cathaoirleach thanked Mr. Conway for his presentation.

4) Any Other Business

Cllr. Donnellan stated that as this was the last meeting of the SPC before the local elections, he wished to thank all the Committee members for their input in the issues that came before it and that it was great to see policies being developed and solutions found through the work of the Committee.

The meeting then concluded.