

Minutes of Meeting of Environment & Water Services Strategic Policy Committee held on 15th July 2015

I Láthair:

Baill:

Cllr. Gerry Finnerty, Cathaoirleach
Cllr. Gabriel Cronnelly
Cllr. Niamh Byrne
Cllr. Tomás Ó Curraoin
Cllr. Anne Rabbitte
Cllr. Noel Thomas
Mr. Mark Green
Mr. David Courtney
Mr. Bertie Roche
Mr. John Mannion

Oifigh:

Mr. Jim Cullen, DOS
Mr. Paraic Carroll AO
Ms. Patricia Morley

Apologies:

Cllr. Peter Keaveney; Cllr. Tim Broderick

1. Minutes of Meeting of the 15th April, 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the 15th April 2015 were proposed by Cllr Tomás Ó Curraoin, seconded by Cllr Gabriel Cronnelly and agreed.

2. Burial Grounds

Mr. Carroll informed the Committee that there are over 230 burial grounds listed on the Council's burial ground register, most of which have Burial Ground Caretakers. There are over 150 Community Groups who apply for the annual Burial Ground Maintenance grant. Between 2004 and 2014 25 extensions were carried out at a cost of €1.2m. It is estimated that a cost of providing extensions to a further 14 burial grounds that are at or near full capacity would be in the region of €750,000.

€20,000 is provided in the Annual Budget for extensions which is far below the revenue required.

Cllr Ó Curraoin complemented Mr. Carroll on the work done to date and queried the possibility of a new site at Leenane which is urgently required.

Mr. Carroll explained that a retaining wall would cost in the region of €80,000, however he has met with a local landowner and a solution may be found in the near future. He will meet with the Leenane Community group when he has more information.

Cllr Rabbitte stated that ivy was getting out of control and causing damage to walls and buildings in Killimor and Portumna and asked if the Council could engage with Fás or Tús to carry out works. Mr. Carroll explained that the Council do engage with these agencies, both of which have been of great help in the development of burial ground extensions. However he pointed out that the Council cannot remove ivy from protected structures. It was agreed generally that some of these directives can cause more problems as eventually the ivy may cause the wall to collapse.

Cllr Thomas asked if a bay could be provided at Inverin burial ground for waste materials. Mr. Carroll explained that our policy is to encourage the removal of bays as it can lead to rubbish accumulation and then the Council have the associated problem of costs to clear up the site.

Mr. Green asked if there was a coming together of Local Authorities to see best practise in relation to burial ground space etc. Mr. Carroll said that Galway County Council is using best practise as can be seen from the works completed on the limited budget available

Cllr Cronnelly asked if the Council could establish whether there were spaces available in some of the older burial grounds Mr. Carroll said it is difficult to establish if there is space left in some graveyards as graves may have been sold in advance and basically the Council depends on local knowledge.

3. Litter Management Plan

Mr. Carroll informed the Committee that there is a legal requirement to review the Litter Plan every three years. He stated that the draft Litter Management plan 2015 – 2018 was put on public display and submissions were invited. The closing date was the 8th July 2015 and no submissions were received.

Members expressed their disappointment that no submissions were received on the draft Plan.

Cllr Thomas queried whether abandoned sites could be dealt with under the Litter Acts. Mr. Carroll advised that the appropriate legislation would be the Waste Management Acts and that the Council serves notices on landowners directing them to remove waste, failing which prosecutions are initiated.

Cllr Finnerty said that plastic bags left on side of road for collection are the cause of littering, getting split and their contents strewn all over the place. They should be made of a stronger material or replaced by bins. He also referred to rental dwellings where no bins are provided by either the landlord or tenant and queried whether action could be taken through the private rental supplement and to ensure that details of how they dispose of waste is obtained. It was

agreed to follow this matter up with the Housing Section and if possible include it in the Litter Management Plan.

Cllr Byrne queried the grants available through anti litter initiatives and schools grants. She added that plastic refuse bags are still required in some areas where there is no service due to access problems. Mr. Cullen stated that the new pay by weight requirement may reduce use of plastic bags.

Cllr Thomas referred to an issue with regard to roadside cleaning by voluntary groups and the new stringent health and safety obligations on these groups. Mr. Cullen stated that while we have to comply with health and safety requirements that the Council would provide expertise where they can.

Cllr Rabbitte stated that litter is a problem and that there needs to be an extensive awareness campaign especially in schools. Mr. Cullen said that activities in relation to environmental awareness would be included for discussion on the agenda for the October SPC meeting where awareness officers will make a presentation to members.

Cllr Cronnelly stated that there are problems of dumping in Coillte forests.

Mr. Mannion referred to the good work done recently by Weirs Waste in conjunction with the Tidy Towns Committee where they collected bags left by the Tidy Towns following clean ups.

On the proposal of Cllr Thomas, seconded by Cllr Byrne it was agreed to recommend the draft Litter Management Plan 2015 -2018 to the Council for adoption.

4. AOB

Cllr Cronnelly asked what environment impact resolution is in place if the fish farm off the west coast goes ahead. Mr. Cullen replied that Ms. Ni Chionna would contact him directly in relation to this issue.

Mr. Cullen referred to the Water Supply Options Working Paper prepared by Irish Water, which would be circulated to members and brought the closing date for submissions to the attention of the members of the Committee.

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on 21st October 2015 at 3 pm.

The meeting then concluded.