

**Minutes of Meeting of Environment, Recreation & Amenity Strategic Policy Committee held on 29<sup>th</sup> November, 2017 in the Council Chamber, Galway City Council.**

**Presiding:** Cllr Terry O'Flaherty - Chairperson

**Present:** Cllr Pdraig Conneely,  
Cllr Colette Connolly,  
Cllr Donal Lyons  
Cllr. Cathal O'Conchuir,  
Mr. Brendan Smyth,  
Ms. Eleanor Hough,  
Ms. Caroline Stanley  
Ms. Eileen Ruane, A/Director of Services  
Mr. Tom Connell, Director of Services,  
Mr. Stephen Walsh, Senior Executive Parks Superintendent,  
Ms. Anne Ruane, Administrative Officer,  
Mr. Daithi Flood, A/Senior Executive Engineer,  
Mr. Uinsinn Finn, Senior Engineer,  
Mr. Paul Batty, Executive Engineer  
Ms. Arlene Finn, European Green Leaf Project Co-Ordinator  
Ms. Catherine Jennings, A/Assistant Staff Officer  
Ms. Fiona Griffin, A/Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies:** Cllr. Peter Keane,  
Cllr Billy Cameron,  
Mr. Simon Heaslip  
Cllr. Mike Crowe,  
Ms. Helen McDonagh, Administrative Officer

Cllr Terry O'Flaherty opened the meeting by congratulating Daithi Flood & the Environment team for the success and hard work involved in winning the Packman award for the bottle banks on the Western Distributor Road. She also welcomed Paul Batty, Executive Engineer to the City Council Environment & Climate Change Directorate.

**1. Consideration of Minutes of meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2017**

On the proposal of Cllr. Pdraig Conneely, seconded by Ms. Caroline Stanley the minutes of the meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017 were agreed and adopted by the members subject to the matters of accuracy below.

**(i) Matters of Accuracy**

Cllr. Colette Connolly requested the deletion of the phrase "the abuse of playground". This was agreed.

**2. Matters Arising**

- Cllr. Colette Connolly queried the status of motions etc. discussed and agreed at SPC level.

- Cllr Colette Connolly welcomed the funding through the Anti-Dumping Initiative and acknowledged the work completed, particularly in the Ballybane area. Caroline Stanley asked if an Anti-Dumping Initiative could be carried out at Merlin Woods.
- Cllr Padraig Conneely indicated he would be leaving the meeting early and requested an update, at this point, in relation to Derelict Sites. He requested the cost of the purchase of two derelict sites through Compulsory Purchase Order. He asked for clarification on what sites were listed on the Derelict Sites Register and looked for details re any levy applied. Ms. Eileen Ruane advised that she would have details re the purchase of the sites when the item came up for discussion later on in the Agenda. Cllr. Padraig Conneely left the meeting at this point. Ms. Eileen Ruane responded in full to the questions re Derelict Sites when the agenda item was reached.

### **3. Draft Parks, Open Spaces and Beach Bye-laws**

- Mr Tom Connell advised that all observations had been received in relation to the Draft Parks, Open Spaces and Beach Bye-laws. He asked that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the SPC at which time Mr. Stephen Walsh would be available to give a presentation on same. He confirmed that this would be an item on the scheduled meeting in February 2018.

### **4. Master Plans for Merlin Woods & Terryland**

- Mr. Tom Connell advised that the adopted Budget for 2018 includes financial provision for Terryland Forest Park Master Plan. This would be a strategic document with a short, medium and long term plan for the park, examining what is currently there and what will be required for the future. Specialist Consultants will be employed to prepare the document and all users of the park will be consulted.

Following a discussion on the proposed plan the following is a summary of the points raised:

- Mr. Stephen Walsh advised that the process for the Terryland Park project would be a similar process to the Kington project and consultation with the Steering Committee. This report would be brought back to the SPC and the full City Council.
- He confirmed that the Development Plan for Terryland Park would cost in the region of €40,000 and the Terryland River €20,000.
- Mr. Brendan Smyth raised a query in relation to the re-establishment of the 1999 Steering Committee and asked if any further staff would be allocated to the Park. He acknowledged the work of a previous staff member who was working in the Terryland Park and stated that a Park Warden was a necessity due to the significant work in maintaining Merlin Woods, Barna Woods and Terryland Forest Park and with the significant difficulty with Anti -Social Behaviour and dumping. He welcomed the commitment for the inclusion of the Steering Committee in the Plan
- Cllr. Donal Lyons referred to a master plan that was carried out on Hunters Yard a number of years ago and acknowledged that parts 1 and 2 were

completed, however, parts 3 and 4 and the paths to Silverstrand had not been completed. He also advised of the need to examine Barna Woods and Cappagh Park. A seaside walkway adjacent to Barna House at Rusheen was also raised and update on same was requested.

- Cllr. Cathal Conchuir concurred with Cllr. Lyons. He stated that there was an issue with the cutting down the holly bushes in Barna Woods at Christmas time. He referred to illegal dumping on the Silverstrand Road, and thanked the Environment Department for the removal of same.
  - Ms. Caroline Stanley raised the issue of the pollution of the Merlin River and the hope that the River would be restored was noted. The issue of illegal dumping and the cutting of up to 200 trees per year was raised. The requirement of a Habitat and Management Plan for Merlin Woods to give guidance was also raised.
  - Cllr. Colette Connolly raised a number of issues including anti-social behaviour, tree cutting and requested improved lighting at Merlin Woods.
  - Ms. Eleanor Hough agreed and supported previous comments and stated that we need to value what we have with regard to green areas.
  - Cllr. Cathal Conchuir stated that we spend a lot on security on locations such as the Airport and suggested that the security contract be extended to carry out spot checks on the Woods.
- A motion was proposed by Cllr. Colette Connolly and seconded by Mr. Brendan Smyth: “This SPC calls on the Government to introduce a dedicated National Recreation & Amenity Department”.
- Mr. Stephen Walsh addressed the issues raised as follows -
- Signage –would be completed without delay.
  - The Gateway Scheme has been finished and Mr. Eamonn McCormack is now managing Terryland Forest Park and would be in a position to remove illegal dumping. It was noted that staffing is a budget matter which may improve in the coming years.
  - Master Plan for Merlin Woods is not possible at present.
  - Japanese Knotweed - control measures in place for dealing with the issue.
  - He advised that he would look further into the possibility of a Park Warden and to examine the National issues relating to Volunteers. The City Council was endeavouring to move forward within the resources available.
  - Hunters Yard –The difficulties with placing of a path through the yard was discussed, with the issue of funding and the natural habitat needing to be addressed. It was noted that a recent fire in the yard had resulted in a security firm being employed to secure the area.
  - The cutting of holly is an issue nationwide and until sale of it is regulated it will continue.
  - Dumping– when reported, is investigated and removed.

- Boardwalk -He was not aware of any discussion with the Chief Executive in relation to a boardwalk.
  - Merlin Woods – The appointment of a Biodiversity Officer would be required going forward. The issues raised by members would need to be further examined, however, it was pointed out that the Gardai need to be contacted in relation to illegal activities within the Woods.
  - The land for the walkway by the shore adjacent to Barna House is privately owned land and no agreement has been reached with the landowner. This matter is ongoing for a significant number of years.
  - Lighting at Merlin Woods would have a negative impact on the wildlife
- The Senior Engineer advised that he would look into the matter of lighting to Terryland near Suan following it being raised by Cllr. T. O’Flaherty.

## **5. Agree 2018 Strategic Policy Committee Work Programme**

### **Recreation & Amenity**

- Parks, Open Spaces and Beach Bye Laws
- Recreation and Amenity Needs Study
- Develop Master Plans – Kingston, Southpark and Terryland Forest Park
- Provision of Cemetery Services
- Strategic Priorities of the Recreation & Amenity Department
- Recreation & Amenity Capital Project

### **Environment & Climate Change**

- Litter Management Plan
- Derelict Sites
- Waste Management Infrastructure
- Water Quality
- Control of Dogs Policy
- Draft Busking Bye-laws
- Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy
- Green Leaf Programme

The Work Programme was agreed by the members.

## **6. Dates of SPC Meetings 2018**

- Following discussions in relation to the dates for the 2018 SPC meetings it was proposed by Cllr. Donal Lyons and seconded by Eleanor Hough to hold the SPC meetings at **2.30 pm**, and the dates agreed were as follows:
- 21<sup>st</sup> February 2018
  - 30<sup>th</sup> May 2018
  - 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018
  - 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Cllr. Colette Connolly asked it be noted that she does not agree with the meeting times and would prefer if at least two meetings could be held in the morning time.

## **7. Standing Order Update**

- Mr. Tom Connell referred to page 22 Section 71 of the standing orders re SPC's and their functions– and confirmed that the function of the Committee is to focus on policy and clarified that it is not the function of the SPC to deal with operational matters. Operational issues should not dominate meetings.
- Members raised issues and queries with regards to the status of discussions, draft policies and motions that may arise from the SPC. This discussion also included reference to the circulation of material to all elected members of City Council.
- Tom Connell clarified the balance between the discussion of operational issues and the formulation and recommendation of policy.

## **8. Presentation on Anti-Dumping Initiative**

- A presentation was given by Mr. Daithi Flood. A summary of the points in the presentation were as follows:
  - There was a 2017 Galway City wide waste/environment awareness campaign in conjunction with a pilot anti-dumping initiative collectively known as “Managing your Waste – Caring for our Community”
  - The Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment issued an initial country wide allocation of €650,000
  - The funding was delivered through WERLA offices
  - Ballybane was chosen as the pilot area
  - Consultant engaged with approximately 1500 houses in the Ballybane area in early September
  - There was an awareness programme which included leaflet distribution, a media campaign, public meetings and an area wide clean-up.
- A summary of the member's comments included:
  - It is suggested that Fana Glas be monitored to ensure it stays in an acceptable state following the clean-up. Members asked for follow up photos in a few months time with regard to the clean up in Fana Glas.
  - It was suggested that people who are dumping should be “named and shamed”
  - Pay by weight charges being introduced may have increased illegal dumping in the City
  - CCTV at bottle banks – including Westside, Western Distributor Road and Ballybane.
  - Concerns were raised about the dumping of oil from restaurants and disposal of toxic waste.
  - The hazardous waste service
- Mr. Daithi Flood responded to the comments as follows:

- He confirmed the areas cleaned under the Anti-dumping initiative would be monitored and further photo updates made available
- The bottle banks across the City will be included in the Litter Management Plan. There are a number of data protection issues with CCTV.
- In relation to the waste oils he indicated that this was managed by Irish Water.
- The hazardous waste service offered was free of charge which resulted in a huge turnout. Galway City Council are currently examining other options

## **9. Climate Change & Sustainability**

- Mr. Daithí Flood introduced Mr. Paul Batty, Executive engineer to the members. A document drafted by the EPA in relation to Local Authority Climate Change Adaption Guidelines was circulated to all members. It was agreed that Climate Change would stay on the Agenda and further updates would be provided as appropriate at future SPC meetings

## **10. European Green Leaf**

- Ms. Arlene Finn – Green Leaf Co-Coordinator gave a presentation on the European Green Leaf Programme to date. A discussion took place and the members acknowledged the work of Ms. Finn to date. It was agreed further updates would be provided as appropriate at future SPC meetings

## **11. Derelict Sites**

- Ms. Eileen Ruane stated the objective for Derelict Sites is to remove the dereliction from the properties and not to generate income. As requested by Cllr. Conneely prior to him leaving the meeting, Ms. Ruane advised the members that Galway City Council purchased two houses from the Derelict Sites Register, at a cost of €85,000 and €260,000. Both properties were in the Ballybane area and have been added to Housing stock.
- Issues raised by members included: Effectiveness of legislation; length of time to remediate dereliction at various sites; power of the Compulsory Purchase Order; staff resources; identification of sites.
- Ms. Eileen Ruane accepted the comments made by the SPC members. She said limited staff and budget resources were an issue in dealing with Derelict Sites. The Environment Department is active in dealing with derelict properties around the City but the process takes time and is not straight forward. Properties cannot be entered immediately onto the register as a procedure has to be followed under the Derelict Sites Act, 1990. She committed to a further update on the Derelict Sites at the next SPC meeting.

Cllr. Terry O’Flaherty concluded the meeting at 5pm.